

The Conversion of a Despondent Lawyer: Reviving One's Value for Society and the Church

*Riverside Tree
Translated by Eleanor Foo*

Part One

Christianity is not the predominant religion in China, yet the number of Christians has been increasing rapidly in recent years. Owing to all sorts of limitations and interference, Christianity is frequently made strange and distorted. In the hearts of many people, Christianity is just another form of superstition and cult. This was exactly my way of thinking until I fell into difficult straits. I was forced onto a new path of life, and right at that moment I encountered the Bible. As I deepened my understanding of the Word of God, my prejudice against Christianity began to change.

The Bible's teachings on equality and justice helped to reconstruct my knowledge of the law. In the past, law was merely a means to achieve one's goals. Legal practices were conducted out of pragmatic concerns—law was only an instrument, a weapon and a fraudulent means to further one's own-interests. My understanding of the law was quite polluted, and it led me into a state of deep depression.

A utilitarian and pragmatic view of law obscures the real meaning of social justice. People often twist the meaning of justice to serve their own interests, and in so doing true justice is seldom revealed. Sometimes it is even misunderstood and misinterpreted.

The obscuring of justice from society leads to all sorts of instability—in families, friendships, corporations etc. Often people can do nothing about the suffering they are undergoing, except to blame it on fate.

I was fortunate enough to get to know God and the Bible in the midst of my suffering. My problems were solved and I gained a new perspective of myself and the things around me. I realized that my suffering had its source in my mistaken view of life.

As I changed my perspective on life, I understood law was no longer an instrument to serve my own interests; it is a vehicle of justice and order. Because of this new vision, the spirit of the law was “resurrected” in me. My previous questions found their answers, and the profession that once made me frustrated now brings me fulfillment.

How can I not share this joy with others? Social justice is no longer ambiguous; the meaning of law is no longer vague. Justice and order are made manifest in the world; the future looks bright. It becomes so attractive and fascinating! After this transformation, I become increasingly aware of social affairs. I now pay attention to every kind of social phenomena. Testing my new perspective, I ask myself how I can show forth justice to others?

Part Two

Social development that is sustainable and constructive should be founded upon justice. All the other kinds of construction and social progress are just a waste of money. When justice is done in important matters, people will return to solid ground. Our contributions to society will be more effective. Society will be healthier, and no longer a series of vanity projects or empty words.

It is not easy to let justice shine through, especially when its perversion was so deeply ingrained. Knowledge comes before thought and thought comes before action. It is important to bring forth justice even in less important matters. We need to repeatedly explain its essence to the people involved. It is a huge challenge, and the old ways and powers do not give in easily. However, every time justice is done, like a tiny candle that shines in the midst of darkness, its power astonishes all those who see it.

The light of justice is as powerful as holiness. Yet it can be dimmed by erroneous intentions. Hence it is necessary to be critical regarding one’s efforts, and to purge all impure intentions. To come out of the dirty mud unsoiled is always easier said than done.

Christians are not holy by default, and this is equally true for Christian lawyers. Yet we differ from others in one way: we know in our hearts what holy justice is. The knowledge of holy justice serves as a standard for discerning the morality of things. This is of

utmost importance to society. Our work is effective only when we set proper goals for it.

Life in society is complex. There are many things going on around us. People's opinions differ from one another. There should be a principle according to which we judge the validity of an idea. Such a principle should be consistent; it becomes hollow if it is always subject to change. A truly valuable judgment is one that is based on sound principles. The current structural and intellectual confusion in our society finds its source in the ever-changing criteria of judgment. Justice is arbitrarily interpreted and, as a result, many problems arise.

The Christian understanding of justice is founded upon God's divine justice, and therefore Christians can unswervingly promote the principles of justice. As Christian lawyers take part in social issues, they act according to a consistent standard of justice. This helps them see through essential problems, and thus they are able to make a special contribution to the promotion of social justice.

Part Three

The Church is a community of Christians. The Bible defines it as a group of people being called by God to form a community. Yet the Church is influenced by the life of its members in every aspect. Nowadays, one particular problem stands out in the Church in China: people talk more about love than about social justice. They keep saying that "love is the foundation of all law," and that "God is love." Love becomes the guiding thought of Christians. There is nothing wrong with this, but the truth is that love is founded upon something else. Many problems can arise if we just talk about love, without reflecting upon its foundations. The spirit of charity dies down, and faith is weakened as a result of this lack of understanding of the proper foundation of love.

Generally speaking, the Chinese do not have an accurate knowledge of the spirit of the law. This holds true even in the Church—Christians do not place great importance upon equality and justice. Consequently, many Christians bear crosses which they could have avoided, and there are many others who suffer unnecessarily.

The participation of Christian lawyers in legal actions can help others to meet their practical needs. At the same time, they can promote a more accurate understanding of the meaning of justice, through which their brothers and sisters may come to know God more deeply. The foundation of God's throne is justice and equality. It is through these two virtues that Christians can experience God's grace, and can help to establish a proper social order, for which we can learn to be grateful.

Many Christians become insular due to the pain they went through in the past. Faith is limited to the life they share among themselves and their brothers and sisters. They seldom reach out to the world outside the Church. Many of them avoid contact with non-Christians and, worse still, look upon non-Christians with apathy.

Their tendency to evade problems and people opens the way for Satan to do his work. God's glory fails to shine through. Many Christians give up their principles easily, and this creates the impression that Christians are just cowards.

Apathy weakens one's faith and love. Being lukewarm creates obstacles in one's spiritual growth. Christians who turn a blind eye to the injustice around them project the negative image that Christians are made numb by their religion.

Christian lawyers can provide a clear assessment of social issues based on the principles of the Bible and an accurate interpretation of the current law. Not only is this an education for our fellow brothers and sisters about the law, but it also facilitates a greater understanding of truth in the light of faith.

In the past, I was unable to appreciate God's grace in the unjust matters going on around me. As time went by, I came to question God's power and justice. My faith was weakened, and Satan broke through the holes in my heart and led me away from God.

The presence of Christian brothers and sisters, who have knowledge of the law and the ability to combine such knowledge with the truth of God, helped to dissolve my doubts and questions. They gave me a correct and a renewed perspective on things. Through their contributions, God's justice and authority were manifested. By not yielding to temptations, and by learning about

the truth and justice, Christians become better adapted to their lives in society. They are now able to stand up for their legal rights. In addition, this is good for the work of evangelization—a role that Christian lawyers also seek to perform.