

From the Editor

As we have done in previous July-August issues of *Tripod*, we, this year, again depart somewhat from our regular format to feature a short work of fiction, *Dragon Prays*, by Yang Ni.

Literature, of whatever kind and in whatever language, is meant to appeal to the mind and to the heart, to communicate emotions and ideas effectively and to stimulate thoughts and insights. The value of any piece of writing lies in the ability of an author to set before his or her readers the truth of life by making the human condition clearly discernible. Furthermore, those writings which depict human situations and religious values clearly often become means of contemplation which help clarify relationships and increase understanding among peoples. We think that *Dragon Prays* satisfies these conditions.

In addition, *Dragon Prays* is an excellent vehicle for conveying the difficulties Christians in China encountered when they tried to practice their faith after China offered its people a modicum of religious freedom in the early eighties. Through the eyes of the main character, Longqi, whose name means *Dragon Prays*, we also discover another very real difficulty: the struggle of the traditional Chinese Catholic to make the quantum leap into the Vatican II Church in the West.

Although *Dragon Prays* may seem nothing more than a simple and enjoyable story, the fact of the matter is that the translation of this narrative poses a number of substantial problems. The original Chinese of the story is replete with linguistic nuances, as well as allusions to events and experiences often quite unfamiliar to the Western reader. For the translator also, the language of the original narrative provides only subtle hints to the context's variety of possible meanings. The translator as well as the editor, therefore, was confronted with the challenge to provide the English reader with an coherent, readable and entertaining story, all the while being faithful to the original text. We hope we have succeeded.

Since the story was actually written by a woman, although at first glance the reader might be tempted to think it was written by a man, it seemed only fitting to ask a Chinese woman and

theologian to give us her insights into this story. Pandora Khor has done this for us in *Dragon Prays: A Reflection*.

Chen Shunxin's article also relates literature to religion but in quite a different vein and style. Chen attempts to show how literature and religion operate on three levels of communication: the first is the expression of religious feeling so often found in literature; the second is the intersection of religion and literature on questions of ultimate concerns or values; and the third is where the subject matter and the form of expression interact, permeate and influence each other. The author illustrates these three levels through well known Chinese poets and novelists.

Although we had not planned to include any documentation in this issue, we decided not to wait for the September-October issue to publish the new regulations concerning the *Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities*.

We also asked a special commentator on China issues, to reflect on religion in a socialist society, a topic included in several recent meetings, documents and speeches.

Finally, we include items which we consider newsworthy and which hopefully will be of interest to our readers.
