

EDITORIAL

Human beings are on a never-ending quest to achieve self fulfillment and find happiness. This quest, common to all cultures, lies at the very depth of every human heart. It is a search to find an answer to life's deepest questions: What does it mean to be human? What is the meaning of life? Does life have any meaning? How do humans find happiness and self-fulfillment?

All cultures throughout all ages have sought ways to help their people find answers to these nagging questions, hoping to give their peoples the key to happiness.

In the West the ideal for achieving happiness and self-fulfillment has been rooted in Christianity. For more than 2000 years, Christianity has dominated Western culture and sought the answers from religion. The East has rooted its ideal for living in Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, Zen and I-ching, etc. The Chinese have sought the answer through what most people call Confucian humanism. "I set my heart on the Way," says Confucius, "base myself on virtue, lean upon benevolence for support and take my recreation in the arts" (VII.6). Some consider this Confucian humanism a religion as well as a philosophy, but this long standing debate is not within the purview of this issue of *Tripod*. We seek rather to reconcile, albeit in a very modest and limited way, certain elements of commonality in the Chinese humanist culture and Christianity. For centuries this Confucian humanist tradition permeated the Chinese psyche. In an effort to build a better Socialist civilization the unenlightened fashioners of the Cultural Revolution sought to eradicate all vestiges of Chinese culture by suppressing the "Four Olds": (ideology, thought, habits, customs). In attempting to do this they seemed unaware that they were dismantling the infrastructure that held together the nation's moral fiber. As a result, many were left rootless without traditional or humanistic grounding. Many had lost the Chinese humanist ideal: the only worthwhile thing a person can do is to become as good a person as possible. The leaders soon realized the need to reinstate the Confucian humanistic ideal.

Three articles in this issue, "The Qi in the Ethical, Social and Spiritual Domain" taken from Madeleine Kwong's doctoral dissertation "*Qi* Chinois et Anthropologie Chrétienne," "Christianity's First Arrival in China" by Gianni Criveller, and "A Christian Hermeneutical Approach to the Texts of Confucianism and Taoism" taken from Paper 96 of the Federation of Asian Bishops, all focus on certain affinities between the Chinese religious-humanistic ideal and Christian theology.

The concept of the *Qi* is no longer confined to China. *Qi* is recognized worldwide as more and more people, for a variety of reasons, embrace various forms of *Qi*, e.g., Qi Gong and the Falun Gong, which has gained so much notoriety with the repression imposed on it by the Beijing government.

In his essay "Christianity's First Arrival in China," Gianni Criveller explores startling new studies on the history of Christianity in China. "The Jesus Sutras" sealed sometime in the 11th century and found in a secret library, in Gansu Province, in Northwestern China, shed new light on Christian history in China. These also bring into serious question the long accepted notion that the Nestorians constituted the first presence of Christianity in China. These updated studies point rather to an exceptional inculturation and understanding of Taoism and Buddhism and to the fact that much of the mutual interaction between Christianity and these religions has been grossly underestimated and overlooked.

The new discoveries seem to indicate that the origin of Chinese Christianity came from the "Church of the East" which was either linked to the ancient Eastern rites in communion with the Roman Catholic Church or perhaps the Orthodox Churches. There is nothing to indicate that these first missionaries were Nestorian heretics.

The third major contribution, "A Christian Hermeneutical Approach to the Texts of Confucianism and Taoism" explores possible understandings between Christianity, Confucianism and Taoism. All three of these articles help us better understand the words of Father Yves Congar, "Different expressions of the same faith are possible, starting from other perceptions and setting into motion other ways of thinking."