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Equipping God's Workers With God's Word For God's Work



The Chinese-Filipino Churches in the Postmodern World

Joseph Shao, Ph.D.

We are living in a postmodern world full of different challenges. There are too many choices unlike the previous modern era. At the same time, cultural differences have become less of a problem due to global travel and business transactions. What are some of the issues facing the Chinese-Filipino Churches in such a world? Allow me to direct our focus along three critical areas.

Theological Issues

The Chinese-Filipino churches are evangelical in their fundamental beliefs and pious practices. Within the past hundred years of Chinese-Filipino church history,¹ the Lord, through John Sung, and other great evangelists from China, has sowed the seed of spreading the gospel throughout the islands of the Philippines and even beyond its shores. Until the present, the Evangelistic Band of the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines is still active in church planting endeavors. Of course, other churches have had their share of bringing souls into the kingdom of God through evangelistic meetings and personal evangelism. We also see the founding of many church mission schools that cater to the need of educating the youth in Christian values, affording them the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Strong Pastoral Leadership and BSOP

The evangelical nature of the Chinese-Filipino churches is linked to her strong biblical and doctrinal position. This factor can be traced to the effective and influential pastoral leadership of the late Rev. Silas Wong, the late Rev. Liang Ce Ko, and Rev. Wesley K. Shao, among others, who faithfully taught the Word of God. We also have Chinese-Filipino pastors who have and are still faithfully serving and teaching in many local churches.

Another factor is associated with the contribution of the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines. At the height of potential cultic influences from Hong Kong, Rev. Stephen Chan, then a faculty member of the seminary, wrote an apologetic pastoral letter and distributed literary materials with the help of the Filipino-Chinese Christian Foundation in the early 60s. Until today, the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines continues to be a bastion of faith and sound theological teaching.

God-centered Theology

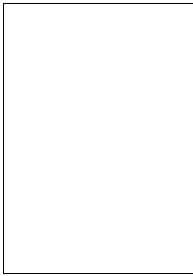
The Philippines, being one of the English-speaking Asian nations, can easily implement new programs from the Western world. For example, many churches today are applying the Purpose-Driven Life (PDL) program of Rick Warren. The Chinese-

(Continued on page 4)

Currently, with the lack of pastors in a number of Chinese-Filipino churches, we need to pray and encourage the best and most mature disciples to come to the Seminary for training in preparation for service.

INSIDE:
Batch 2004
Graduating students' testimonies

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It has been three years and the learning never stops. In seminary, I have learned more and experienced (and still do) God's great love, His abundant blessings, His sufficient grace, His ceaseless mercy despite trials, hardships and disappointments. The best part in learning is knowing "more" about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Knowing God makes us love Him more and

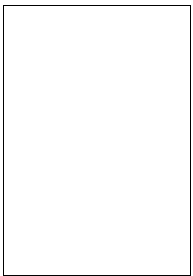
fear Him: respecting and giving reverence to Him for who He is and what He does. J. I. Packer once said, "Knowledge of God must bring us lower and lower as the sinfulness in us becomes more and more obvious to us and this sinfulness must ever be highlighted so that the great grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be appreciated."

As I look back, of course there were hardships in the requirements but I realize that through our studies, we were able to learn more about God through His Word. I thank God for His sufficient grace & faithfulness in my life. He has been very patient with me in spite of my weaknesses. I pray that as I serve Him He will continue to help me be humble, attentive and submissive to His Will.

For me, seminary life is one of learning, knowing, trusting, loving, and fearing God. It is the molding of our character by the Potter's hand; it is being equipped and trained with the Word of God for the ministry. Yes, there are ups and downs in the seminary and in the ministry, but one thing is for sure: it is indeed a privilege and an honor to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Sovereign & Mighty God.

*Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.
Force me to render up my sword, and I shall conqueror be.*
George Matheson

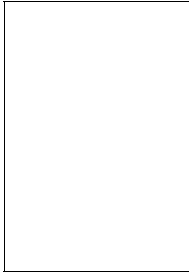
Wensley Go Kiao



I entered BSOP in June 2000. Looking back, I realize it was a defining moment in my life. Looking forward, soon my seminary training will finally reach its conclusion. At any rate, I have definitely come out a new person. My days in BSOP were continuously filled with GOD'S GRACE, as He molded my life into becoming the servant I am today. In the constant surge of academic requirements,

freely did I receive God's provision of wisdom and understanding. In the sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter course of relationships, I have submissively found rest in God's sovereignty. In the stillness and brokenness of spirit, I have continually enjoyed spiritual intimacy with God. I re-sound what the psalmist declared: "I said to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing. I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.'" (Psalm 16:2, 8) It was in BSOP that I undoubtedly tasted that the Lord is good! And it is in Him alone that I have found the confidence and sufficiency to become the kind of servant that He wants me to be.

Ramon Khu



I praise the Lord for using BSOP in teaching and training me for His ministry. Aside from the academic knowledge, I also learned the practicalities of Christian living and service. Best of all, in those four years of training, BSOP has taught me the meaning of **TRUST** in being a pastor:

- Training me with God's word for God's people and God's work
- Respecting people in authority and respecting fellow students
- Understanding what the Bible means and preaching to the hearers faithfully
- Selflessly serving everyone
- Trusting God for strength and providence in finishing the race to glorify His name.

Rosaline Lim

"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Ps. 37:4 (NKJV)



This passage has been my life verse since my high school years. It has helped me through my three years here in BSOP. God worked in me, molded me, and placed me into the fire to refine me that I may come out shining for Him. Seminary life is not as easy as what other people think or believe. The most important thing to realize is that no one is perfect. It is rather a place for development,

and these are the things I've learned and continue to pursue: to keep a good and godly character, with moral principles and values; to be firm in every decision and consistent, showing no favoritism; to be true, not deceiving other people for my own benefit; to know my limitations, and be humble and teachable; to protect my integrity and become more strong and mature when struggles beset me. One thing I have realized is that in spite of the struggles I've been through emotionally and spiritually, what has sustained me is the "STUBBORN LOVE" of God that never lets me go. He was always there guiding me and lifting me up every time I fall.

I pray that God will continue to use me as long as I live; that my heart and will will always be in line with His, and that whatever His desire will also be my desire. May that day come when I will meet my Maker and Master face to face, and hear Him say, "well done, my good and faithful servant." I thank God for giving me a very good mentor, friends and teachers to whom I can reach out when in need of comfort, help, correction or advice. I know that I can never please everyone, but the most important thing is for God to be pleased with me.

Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide and Soli Deo Gloria!

FACULTY ON THE MOVE

On February 2-7, 2004, board Chairman Elder Ernesto Tanchi, Jr., Dr. Joseph Shao, Prof. Allen Lim and Dr. Tan Chiu Eng attended the Institute for Excellence in Christian Leadership, focusing on "Leadership and Governance." The event, held in Hong Kong, was sponsored by the Overseas Council International specially for Chinese theological institutions.

VISITING PROFESSOR

Dr. Chuang Tsu-kung taught a module on "Introduction to Missions" from March 1 to 4, 2004. He is the General Secretary of T.K. and True Light Ministry.

RETREAT AND RECREATION

The whole school spent two days for

retreat and recreation at the DJ Paradise Resort last February 16, 2004 and the next day at BSOP for prayer and devotions.

ALUMNI NEWS

This year's alumni officers are as follows: President – Harg Timothy Ang; Vice-president – Florentino Lim; Treasurer: Billy Arcayan; Secretary: William Huang; and PRO – Tony Cheng. The new batch of graduates will be welcomed on March 7, 2004 at the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines, at 6:30 p.m.



Congratulations to Pastor Yu Le Ing (batch '92) who was joined in matrimony with Mr.

Artemio Go last February 21, 2004. She will continue to serve at the United Evangelical Church of Vigan.

2004 COMMENCEMENT



The 45th Commencement Exercises will be held at the BSOP Auditorium on March 28, 2004 (3:30 p.m.) with Dr. Joseph Tong as guest speaker.

SUMMER COURSES (Please contact the Registrar for details)

MACE	Creative Teaching Methods	Dr. Jane Chuaansu	April 5-7, 12-14
	Spiritual Formation	Prof. Jay Hallowell	April 15-17, 19-21
	Research Methods	Prof. Rosa Shao	April 22-24, 26-28
Mandarin	Mentoring Disciples	Li Jing Yan	April 12-16
	Church Administration and Management	Zheng Jia	April 19-23
	Cults and Comparative Religions	Li Jian	April 26-30
TESOL II			April 12 to May 15

Dennis Eric C. Ohsan

"We are not here to be popular, but to tell the naked truth."
– D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Apostle Paul summarized his life's calling when he said, in 1 Co 2:1-2, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Like many others in the ministry, I have experienced rebuff and rejection from people at the slightest mention of what God has called me to do. I believe no other truth has convicted me more, in my three years in BSOP, than the fact that preaching is probably the most unpopular of tasks. It is unpopular because of the content of our message: God is not calling us to reprobation, which is what the world yearns, but that God is calling us to repentance. He is calling all men "to believe in the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31), and "to be reconciled to God" (2 Co 5:20), "because He has appointed a day on

which He will judge the world in righteousness" in Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31). It is not that "God has a wonderful plan for your life," but rather, "you must be holy, because God is holy" (1 Pet 1:16).

But must we, those of us who share in God's work, shirk our responsibility to preach because of those who refuse to hear God's word? Must we shy away from our appointed task because popularity is not on our side? May it never be that we would succumb to the lure of popularity, and thus abandon the Word of God. We must encourage each other, and remind ourselves as well, that, "Christ must increase, and [we] must decrease" (John 3:30). May we always preach the naked truth, as Lloyd-Jones reminds us, and keep our eyes focused on the cross of Christ. It is not the object of popularity; it is the message of "foolishness to those who are perishing," but "the power of God to those who are being saved" (1 Co 1:18).

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down.
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.*

George Bennard

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Filipino churches have also joined the bandwagon, riding on top of the crest. However, many of these movements may either assist or hinder us. We need to test the theology of each new program, whether it is God-centered or man-centered. The challenge of the "openness of God" theology, a view that holds that God chooses to be helpless with regard to future events, impels us to hold on to our Bible and investigate such individualistic and extreme form of theology. While acknowledging the great attraction of watching Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, let us evaluate the movie along the lines of our distinctive evangelical faith. Many Chinese-Filipino Christians are also heavily influenced by geomancy and other possible cultic practices, especially during festivals or occasions of bereavement. We need all the more to strengthen our cognitive knowledge of doctrine and balance the pragmatic messages of our pulpits with solid biblical teachings.

Ecclesiastical Issue

There are 83 Chinese-Filipino churches throughout our country. Normally the pastor is the servant-leader of the congregation. In the history of the growth of these churches, the leadership issue is directly proportional to the close working relationship between the pastor and the elders and deacons of his church. A good pastor will provide a well-balanced leadership in his congregation.

The Need of Pastors

On one hand, we need more local born Chinese-Filipinos to shepherd and lead our churches. On the other hand, we need elders and deacons who are willing to work closely with their pastors. Currently, with the lack of pastors in a number of churches, we need to pray and encourage the best and most mature disciples to come to the Seminary for training in preparation for service. This is also the policy of BSOP: if a church is not willing to endorse her member to the Seminary, then we will also not accept such a

member as our student.

The Care of Churches

The task ahead of us is very challenging. Previously, younger Christians worshiped and served God at the same church as their parents. One could see different generations worshipping together in the same church. Today's postmodern world with its self-centeredness and individual preferences, family members are dispersing into many different churches. This creates a fuzzy concept of the "home" church. In addition, there is the movement of people toward mega-cities such as Metro-Manila, Cebu or Davao, or from urban cities in the Philippines to urban cities in Vancouver, Toronto, San Francisco, Los Angeles, or Sydney, to name a few. To strengthen our smaller churches in the province, we need to think of creative ways to help support their needs. The felt needs of our pastors of a number of provincial churches, such as medical necessities and educational opportunities for their children, must also be addressed. We have to fortify these needs for the sake of the kingdom.

Missiological Issue

The Chinese-Filipino churches are known throughout the Chinese world as mission sending churches. The mission program of the Grace Gospel Church has been instrumental in building the mission program of the 2000 Chinese churches worldwide. With the church dedication of the United Evangelical Church of Marbel (daughter church of the United Evangelical Church of General Santos) last March 7, 2004, another beautiful page of mission history of the Chinese-Filipino churches has been added to the local program of planting churches. The initial idea of the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines to plant mission stations and churches has been perpetrated, thus becoming a model for her daughter churches and an inspiration for other church groups.

Mission Schools

How should we respond to the

missiological needs of the postmodern era? We hope that the Chinese-Filipino churches will continue to emphasize both local and foreign missions. On the home front, aside from doing the regular tasks of sharing the gospel to our friends, we should put more effort into building up our mission schools. There are already 38 Christian schools throughout the country. Can we nurture Christians who are willing to invest short-term or even long-term periods into the educational needs of our next generation? At BSOP, we have a masteral program training Christian teachers that caters to just such a need.

Mission and Missionaries

With the recent surge of Asian participants in world mission we also must take part and be willing to share our God-given resources. BSOP has been participating in training missionaries by using the creative tool of the TESOL program. Our second training session is being done this summer. With many non-English speaking nations around us, this is certainly a very good way to reach out to them.

We are pleased to see Chinese-Filipino Christians investing their lives and money in serving the nations. To date, such Christians are participating in at least 50 church-building projects. There are many evangelistic teams sharing the good news. We hope that more missionaries and young professionals will become ambassadors for Christ around the world. To date we have more than 30 in the field. We hope that this will increase a hundred-fold or even a thousand-fold.

Concluding Remarks

The postmodern era is here to stay. Let us make the best of it by understanding the issues involved and positively meeting its challenges. With God's help, we shall stand and overcome!

¹ The history of the Chinese-Filipino church commences with the founding of St. Stephen's Parish which celebrated her 100th founding Church Anniversary last November 9, 2003.