



## Trends Among the Chinese-Filipino Churches in the Third Millennium<sup>1</sup>

By Joseph Shao, Ph.D.  
BSOP President

God has blessed the Chinese-Filipino churches through generations of faithful believers and worshippers, even as different spiritual waves surged in and out. In the third millennium, the world has witnessed changing trends in fashion, food and faith. Likewise, there are various changes noted in the churches. We need to prepare and face the reality of changes by taking a serious look at the changing reality within the Chinese-Filipino Churches.

### Multi-Cultural Setting

In the past millennium, the Chinese churches in the Philippines were quite a homogenous group. Most people in the Chinese community could read, write and/or speak the Chinese language. The believers then, had either migrated from China, or their ancestors were from China. Hence, the setting in any given church in the Philippines was mono-cultural.

The "Chineseness" of Chinese-Filipinos may explain one's *ancestry*, that is, parents coming from China. It may also depict one's *ethnicity*, that is, someone may have some, if not all "Chinese" blood flowing through his body. It may also express one's cultural way of thinking and living as being "Chinese."

At the turn of the millennium, many factors are influencing and changing the Chinese-Filipino churches into a multi-cultural setting. With the passing of the Cold War that used to divide the world into the East and the West, comes the reality of globalization.<sup>2</sup> The world is now flat.<sup>3</sup> On the local scene, comparing with our neighboring countries like Malaysia, many believers are now integrated, if not, assimilated into the

Filipino society. We are called *tsinoy*, from a combination of *tsino* for Chinese and *pinoy* for Filipino. Being naturalized citizens or natural born Filipinos, many Chinese are now Chinese-Filipinos.

Yet, most, if not all, churches still use Chinese during the worship service. Within the last decade, however, we can see transformation in many Chinese-Filipino churches, indicating the multi-cultural setting and the changing face of the Christians. Many, if not all churches, have adjusted from using Chinese as the sole medium of language, to either bi-lingual translation or simply English as the main language. There are churches in Metro-Manila, such as Grace Gospel Church and United Evangelical Church of Greenhills, that employ English as the sole medium of language in their prime time worship service. Many churches in Metro-Manila such as St. Stephen's Parish Church, United Evangelical Church of the Phil, United Evangelical Church of Pasay, Jubilee Evangelical Church, Quezon City Evangelical Church, Christian Bible Church of the Philippines, and Grace Christian Church have added a separate English worship service that focus on the needs of the younger congregation. Within the past few years, we have also observed that some churches in Metro-Manila are using Mandarin as the medium of preaching in a separate worship service.

Pastoring in the Chinese-Filipino churches has now become very challenging with the rise of this multi-cultural setting. We need to focus on the cultural needs of our congregations. We are more Western than we would like to admit, and we are

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**We are more Western than we would like to admit, and we are more Chinese than we would like to admit, too. The "tsinoy" worldview is very perplexed, living underneath enigmatic changing subcultures.**

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## The Compleat Love of God By Jean Uayan

*(continued from last issue.)*

Another source is the hymns of the famous poet-theologian of the Church of the East – Ephrem the Syrian. In Hymn II.1 of Ephrem’s book, *The Pearl: Seven Hymns on the Faith*, the imagery is applied to the Father. The passage reads,

*Thy mother is a virgin of the sea, though he took her not [to wife]: she fell into his bosom, though he knew her not; she conceived thee near him, though he did not know her. Do thou, that art a type, reproach the Jewish women that have thee hung upon them. Thou art the only progeny of all forms which art like to the Word on High, Whom singly the Most High begot. The engraven forms seem to be the type of created things above. This visible offspring of the invisible womb is a type of great things. Thy goodly conception was without seed, and without wedlock was thy pure generation, and without brethren was thy single birth.*<sup>5</sup>

The Feminist Movement has been quick to such Biblical and extra-canonical texts, interpret them in their own way to formulate an inclusivistic theological language referring to God as both male and female, and then

push for their platform of equality between the sexes, some even going as far as advocating for the revival of worshiping mother-goddesses as the pagans did.

Harvey cautions that such use of gender imagery “may constitute an aspect of identity in ways that do not correspond to social or biological constructions of gender, because it is beyond our ability to understand what gender within the divine essence might mean (writer’s emphasis). In this instance, gender’s metaphorical significance lies precisely in its suggestive capacity; it is related to the prototype yet it cannot be equated with it.”<sup>6</sup> In Harvey’s analysis of Ephrem’s work, God’s use of female imagery is like putting on a “garment of words” just like putting on a physical body in order to reveal Himself to man. Ephrem calls this incarnation into language or words, in comparison with what is theologically called incarnation into a body. Harvey’s words give us the proper perspective in understanding female imagery and should be used to counter the extremes of the Feminist Movement.

Just as gender was a part of creation in God’s image – and thereby consecrated – so, too, could it be used as an image for contemplat-

ing the Creator. Religious language, according to this understanding, serves as a reminder that gender lies within the essence of identity in ways that exceed literal (social, biological) understandings; but being metaphorical by its very nature, religious language cannot define that essence here, on the matter of gender, or in any other considerations. The Godhead remains transcendent.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding the love of God as comparable to the love of a father and a mother is compleat and biblical. It must be reclaimed from the dangerous reinterpretations that feminist authors are offering to the church and the world at large. Through metaphors in revelation, God has communicated truth to believers through analogical and prepositional statements about His nature. He wants us to distinguish between pagan representations and beliefs about Him and the truth that is found in Him alone. May our faith be founded on His truth and may all of us experience God’s compleat love every moment of our lives!

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<sup>5</sup> Ephraem the Syrian, *The Pearl: Seven Hymns on the Faith*, trans. J. B. Morris, ed. John Gwynn, Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, ser. 2, vol. XIII (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 294.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

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ANGELO GUTIERREZ  
Gerizim Evangelical Church

When I was a carefree young boy, we were taught to do good to others. We were also brought up to be faithful church-goers because my family was a devout Catholic. I thought doing good was enough to merit my passport to

heaven. I was like an obedient sheep, never asking any questions, thinking that at the end the path would be full of fresh, green grass. But a friend of mine shared something to me that changed my life forever.

It happened on an ordinary day to an ordinary boy with ordinary dreams.

Riding on a bus on our way home, he shared to me the gospel as part of his youth EE training. That was the time that I came to know the real God—the just, merciful and loving God. He explained to me very well about man, sin,

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SHEILA HUANG  
Westminster Student Church

Being born in a Christian family, our parents used to take us to church and let us attend the Sunday School. Every Sunday, I learned more of God’s Word and knew the miraculous life of Jesus. I also learned that by God’s grace He gave Je-

sus Christ to die on the cross for my sins. I decided to accept Jesus Christ when I was in grade school.

Our church held summer conferences for children; I’ve attended most of them but it was on my 6<sup>th</sup> grade that I decided to step forward during dedication night and indicate that I wanted to be used by God in His ministry. It was a wonderful night because aside from me, my two other cousins also dedicated their lives to fulltime. If I’m not mistaken, the theme that summer was “Use Me”.

Part of my decision to go fulltime was the influence of

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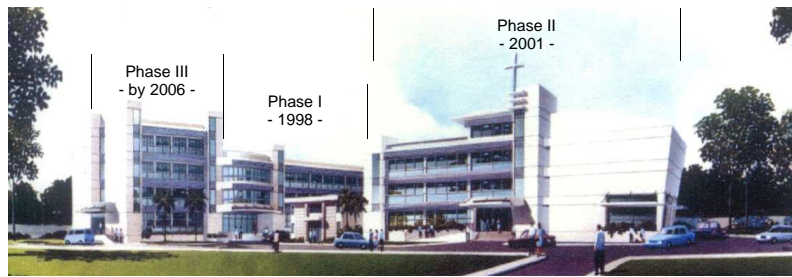
**FACULTY ON THE MOVE**

☞ Dr. Joseph Shao taught “Pentateuch” at the Bandung Theological Seminary from September 5-10, 2005. On October 17-21, 2005, Dr. Shao and board chairman Elder Ernesto Tanchi, Jr. will be attending a Seminar for Administrators of Theological Institutions to be held in Macao. This seminar sponsored by the Overseas Council. Dr. Shao will also speak on the topic: “Biblical Foundation for Servant Leadership.”

☞ Rev. and Mrs. Doyle Carblom, Dr. Jane Chuaunsu, Prof. Jay Hallowell, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Pan, Dr. Tan Chiu Eng and Prof. Jean Uayan will be leading different teams on short-term missions to Angeles, Mindoro, Dagupan, and Los Baños, Laguna around October 27 to November 4, 2005.

**Final Phase of Construction**

Praise the Lord! Ever since the Seminary initiated the complete make-over of the whole campus in 1997, Chinese Christians in the Philippines as well as abroad have showered us with love and covered us with prayers so that our financial needs for the first and second phases were fully met. In 1998, the Staff and Student Dormitory was constructed; in 2001, the Academic and Administration Building was completed. The first dormitory was supposedly for the female students, but the men temporarily occupied one floor area. Now the room capacity has reached its limit. The Board has therefore taken action and launched the third and final phase of the project: to build the Men’s Wing of the dormitory building. The estimated cost of construction is thirty million pesos. It is our hope and prayer that you, dear friends of BSOP, will continue to help us take yet another giant leap to attain a brighter future of training servants for the Lord.



(Angelo Gutierrez , Continued from page 2)

God, Jesus Christ and true faith. He also made me realized that doing good is not enough for me to merit my way to heaven. Only through the blood of Christ and accepting Him as my personal Lord and Savior can I really have the eternal life that God has promised to give. I accepted Jesus Christ into my life and started to get to know God better by attending Bible studies and reading His Word.

The next year, I attended a summer camp where the speaker talked on Matthew 9:35-38. The message and the Word of God struck me and left me burdened to be God’s worker in the harvest field. During the camp’s altar call for those willing to serve God fulltime, and after some discussions with my counselor and prayers, I stood up and signed my name.

I prayed to God to open the way for me to be trained for the ministry.

God answered my prayer because since then, He’s been giving me opportunities to be trained spiritually and intellectually, to attend classes and to serve in our church as a full-time worker.

Being in Seminary does not mean that I am perfect; I still have much to learn about the ministry. To be used by the Lord for His harvest field is indeed a great honor!

**TWO VISITING PROFESSORS**

Two special lecturers will be teaching modules during the second quarter of this school year: Prof. Lydia Huang will teach Church History I and I-II Kings from September 26 to October 28, 2005. Prof. Wei Yuqin will be teaching Church History II from November 7-12, 2005.

**BSOP SUNDAYS**

BSOP kept in touch with the following churches by conducting “BSOP Sundays” at Jubilee Evangelical Church (June 12), Grace Christian Church (July 31), St. Stephen’s Parish (August 7), Bethany Church (August 14), United Evangelical Church of the Philippines (August 28), Quezon City Evangelical Church (September 4), Glory Evangelical Church (September 11), and Diamond Jubilee Evangelical Church (September 18).

**VIPs in BSOP**

The Seminary welcomed many special visitors as Chapel speakers in September: Rev. Dr. Gordon Siu (Senior Pastor of North Point Alliance Church, Hong Kong and Board Chairman of Alliance Biblical Seminary); Dr. Edward Yu (Vice-chairman of Haggai Institute Asia Chapter); and Rev. Tai-shen Chu (Senior pastor of Glory Covenant Church in Taipei).

(Sheila Huang, Continued from page 2)

my parents. I’ve seen their godly living and dedication in the ministry of God. They encouraged us to go on mission trips with them, especially doing the “puppet show” ministry to different places in Davao.

But as years passed, I’d become cold and undecided whether to study in a seminary or not. I became confused if it really was God who wanted me to go fulltime. It was through Youth Gospel Center’s full-timers camp that God reminded me again of my desire to serve Him. In that camp, I had a clearer view that God indeed wanted me to go fulltime.

The Lord has led me to study at BSOP. I believe that I will learn His word and other skills that will train me to become an effective servant of the Lord.



more Chinese than we would like to admit, too.<sup>4</sup> The *tsinoy* worldview is very perplexed, living underneath enigmatic changing subcultures. Many are either living as “third culture persons,” or under post-modern lifestyles rather than the traditional lifestyle of their parents.<sup>5</sup> To complicate things, the broad spectrum is constantly on the move, sometimes moving toward the western way of thinking, other times returning to Chinese way of life.

Since the struggles of the *tsinoy* family are more intense than the typical Filipino family, language could be part of the solution of identity issues. Within the last few years, we can see the changing face of many churches in Metro-Manila, using English and even a mixture of Chinese-Tagalog-English (*Chi-Taglish*) for the younger generation. With the influx of new immigrants, the Chinese-Filipino has revived the use of Mandarin to meet the needs of Mandarin-speaking immigrants and visitors. As the world gets more and more interconnected, many younger generations in various Chinese churches throughout the world are finding interest in using Mandarin as the common language. As China becomes a world power to reckon with, the Chinese-Filipino churches should prepare themselves to reckon with the Mandarin-speaking people

groups.

### **Migratory People**

In the previous millennium, people tended to stay put in one community. Children tended to worship at the same church with their parents and even their grandparents. But in the third millennium, we are moving from the “walking” to the “riding” mode. Previously, believers would walk to church since they live near or around the church, but now they live quite “far” and they need vehicles to ride to church. To further complicate the matter, Christians are constantly moving around, even migrating to different places. Some Christians study in metropolis such as Manila, Cebu, or Davao City, and eventually settle in the city. Others migrate to Asian countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, and to Western nations such as Australia, Canada, and USA. Traveling and transferring their residences start to influence membership in their respective churches.

People in the third millennium tend to focus on their own needs and choices. With so many choices available, egocentricity may have already replaced the old traditional virtue of sacrificing for the common good. Busyness, as well as distance, and even traffic condition are common excuses for transferring to different churches. Gone are the days when a church can easily ask members to come merely by announcing a specific weekday or weekend gathering. There are simply too many choices for them.

Pastoring in the third millennium needs patience and creativity. The Chinese-Filipino churches in the third millennium need to provide for the specific needs of the believers. The church should “go” to the place of the Christians as well as the non-Christians, fulfilling the great commission of going to the world. With the advent of the Web and the popular use of sending SMS through cell phones, the world is smaller than we think. As call centers flourish in Philippines and a new breed of the *sleepless* generation arises, caring and pasturing will be more challenging as we make use of the multi-media as a tool to connect

with people.

### **Multi-tasking Church**

The Chinese-Filipino churches are blessed to have many members with amazingly diverse talents and distinct interests. Many churches today, however, can do much greater mission work for God with the resources He has given.

Pastoring in the third millennium needs some changes in our existing paradigms. *Passivity* on the part of the Christians - sitting and listening to sermons - was known to be the strategy of the past millennium. To stir up the interests of the members, *participatory approach* should now be part of the strategy to win back the hearts of the Christians. Many short-term mission works that allow Christians to participate can motivate them to become caring people for God’s work. With instant access of information, multi-media exposures, the convenience of internet downloads and being connected to the religious world through broadband, many Christians can be trained without even leaving their own homes.

Previously, church members tended to be mere followers. With systematic equipping of God’s word and empowering with leadership skills, many can now be the movers of mighty endeavors for the Chinese-Filipino churches. The Chinese-Filipino churches have come of age to do greater tasks for God’s kingdom with its multi-tasking roles.

May God’s will be done in and through the Chinese-Filipino churches for this globalized generation and more to come!

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at BSOP chapel for Chinese-Filipino students in July 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Friedman (1999), *Lexus and the Olive Tree*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> On issues in the globalization of the world, see Thomas Friedman (2005), *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. London: Allen Lane.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Ling and Clarence Cheuk (1999), *The “Chinese” Way of Doing Things*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth C. Shao, “Neither Chinese nor Filipino; Both Chinese and Filipino: The Perplexities of *Tsinoy* Life,” Unpublished paper submitted to MOR 11, Brent International School Manila, September 2002.