


CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN JOURNAL

Advance

MAY 30, 1956



As American as Hot Dogs and Coca-Cola

RYO MORIKAWA TSAI

WHY DO WE HAVE TO SUFFER?

BERNARD M. LOOMER

WHEN ARE MINISTERS TOO OLD?

HORACE G. ROBSON



A practical churchman
tells how he
discovered
the usefulness of
**TWENTIETH CENTURY
BIBLE COMMENTARY**

Extract from a letter from
HARRY T. STOCK,
General Secretary, Division of
Christian Education,
Congregational Christian Churches.

ONE does not sit down to read a commentary through. But I was tempted to do that one Saturday morning when I made my first acquaintance with TWENTIETH CENTURY BIBLE COMMENTARY. I didn't do it, of course, but I read several of the articles, sampled the introductions to some of the books, and looked up particular passages which had been included in courses I had recently edited. It was a satisfying experience. There is sound scholarship behind this book—not the belligerent, partisan kind that characterizes much of the current theology for theologians, and some of the contemporary Bible interpretations for highbrows. The book is written with laymen and preaching and teaching pastors in mind . . . These British scholars (almost forty of them) write to our need.

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Advance Meets Many Needs

I must write to say that Advance is continuously and increasingly meeting a need in my ministry now as it never did before. Your editorials arouse and inspire me.

A thousand congratulations and my prayers for Advance's continued growth!
Ronald E. Kehler
Minister, First Congregational Church,
Mount Carmel, Pa.

We are a church that is four months "young." Of our sixty-nine members, only about six are former Congregationalists. I am sure that Advance is the best source of informing them about Congregational Christian churchmanship.

Charles C. Wallick
Minister, Richmond Heights Community
Church, Cleveland, Ohio.

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IN THIS ISSUE: The charming young woman on our cover is Mrs. Ryo Morikawa Tsai, wife of one of our Congregational Christian ministers and author of the article, "As American as hot dogs and Coca-Cola." Mrs. Tsai is American-born of Japanese ancestry.

She writes with beautiful simplicity and deep feeling of matters with which many of our readers are much concerned. The problem of minority groups in America has never been adequately dealt with though great effort has been and is being made to solve it democratically. This article will help us see the situation from an intimately personal viewpoint.

Advance also presents in this issue a statement of fact which each and every member of our fellowship should study with painful care. It has to do with the sorry and unnecessary plight of some of our ordained ministers who have reached an age regarded erroneously by many church pastoral committees as "too old." When, the writer asks, is a minister "too old?" This question must be faced by our churches with stark realism.

Cover photo by Frederick and Nelson.

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MAY 30, 1956

As American as hot dogs and Coca-Cola

by

RYO MORIKAWA TSAI

I AM WRITING, not as a minister nor as an expert on race relations but because I am a member of a minority race. Perhaps I may help you to see more clearly what it is like to be a "minority" American in America, and also help us both to realize our Christian responsibilities a little bit more clearly.

An American "Interior"

I want to take you back to the year 1940. Picture a young girl with high school and a year of college behind her. She has lived all her life in southern California. Her social activities center in the local Japanese Congregational church and in school. In the summer of 1940, her mother decides to go to Japan to visit her relatives and friends whom she has not seen since leaving her native village in Wakayama more than twenty years before. So the girl and her mother take an ocean liner at San Pedro and arrive in Japan in August 1940.

The girl has known only America, speaks English and has the mannerisms, attitudes and ideals of an American. She speaks very poor Japanese and has a difficult time learning the customs of the land, such as bowing from the waist and sleeping on the floor. For she is in every way an American — an American like other Americans whose ancestors may have come from another part of the world.

That girl, of course, was I; and I have taken the time to tell you this in



"Experiencing prejudice has given me a fuller understanding of people everywhere, no matter what color or what nationality they may be."



order to show you how American I was and how American I felt. Though my "exterior" was Japanese, with my black hair, yellow skin and oriental eyes, my "interior" was as American as — shall I say, hot dogs and Coca-Cola.

Evacuation of Japanese

When I returned to San Diego, it was July 1941. I had cut short my original plan to stay two years in Japan and, upon the advice of the American Embassy in Tokyo, came back after one year. I did not dream that Japan would go to war against America and I felt a shock as deep as any I have ever experienced when I learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

When I was still in Japan with my reservations already made to come back to this country, I had a conversation with one of my uncles about racial discrimination in America. He said to me: "Don't go back, for if you do, they will put you with the other Japanese in one of their concentration camps." I remember how indignant I was when he said that and how I replied: "Of course not. That's not the way things are done in America. The worst that could happen would be that all the Japanese citizens would be put in camp, but not those of us who were born in America. Why, we're American citizens!"

But I had not reckoned with the war hysteria nor with the turn of events which brought about the fulfill-

ment of my uncle's prophecy. Unbelievably, every person of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast, from the newborn babes to the aged and feeble were ordered to leave the area—solely on the grounds of racial origin. We could not disguise ourselves. We could not transform the color of our skins or change our Japanese faces. Though it could be argued that the removal was for our own safety or for the national welfare, the mass evacuation of the Japanese was a dramatic manifestation of racial discrimination in this land where liberty, equality and brotherhood are the banners under which we live.

Illustrations of Prejudice

I remember a day in Chicago in the summer of 1942, where we had gone after the evacuation orders were issued. Women were selling poppies on the streets for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I was on my way to work and, seeing a woman selling poppies right ahead of me, I stopped to take out my money. The woman looked hard at me when I offered my contribution. Then she withdrew her poppy and said, "You're not American!" and turned away with obvious scorn.

At another time in 1946, after VJ Day when the Japanese were allowed to return to California, I was sitting in the forward part of a streetcar. A

Ryo Morikawa (Mrs. Ai Chih) Tsai is the wife of the minister of the Japanese Congregational Church in Seattle, Washington. Photo by Frederick and Nelson.

woman who had just boarded the car stopped to stare at me and said quite loudly and with feeling, "I'm not going to sit near a Jap!"

I do not recall these illustrations in bitterness for, though at the time these incidents hurt, I could also see very clearly the reasons why those two women reacted in the way they did.

Influence of Faith

Each of them very likely had to see loved ones go to war, perhaps to lose them forever. They were angry, fearful and helpless and they vented their anger and fear on me, whom they identified with the hated enemy.

No, I do not recall those days with any sort of bitterness. Rather, I feel that through such experiences I have gained a fuller understanding of the problems of people everywhere, no matter of what color or nationality they may be. I feel that I have been enriched instead of injured because of what I believe about Christianity.

My father had become a Christian in California several years after he established a home in that state in the 1930's, and the four of us, his children, were baptized in the Japanese Congregational Church in San Diego. I was then about twelve and attended church school regularly.

When I went to Japan I was fortunately led to attend a Christian school founded by the late Miss Michi Kawai, a graduate of Bryn Mawr and an out-

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... Hot Dogs and Coca-Cola

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standing Japanese educator. Those of us who attended her school went to chapel every morning and as the tension increased between Japan and America, Miss Kawai prayed with many other Japanese for better understanding between the two countries. I remember that she once spoke to those of us who were American-born and said: "If ever there is war, please, let us not hate each other but love each other as Jesus wants us to. There will be many misunderstandings but God loves us all. Christians do not have enemies."

So I have tried to pray for those who have persecuted me and I have tried to forgive those who have hurt me. It only matters to me that those who hate, who injure, who discriminate may learn in time the truth of Jesus' words.

Marian Anderson, the outstanding Negro singer of our time, was in Seattle, where I live, a year ago to give a concert. I read the notices about her in the newspaper the next day and the reporter wrote that she sang a song called "Crucifixion" so movingly that, had she sung only that song, it would have been worth the price of admission to hear it. How many barbs of discrimination she must have received in her life because of the color of her skin! But because of them she could move the audience to suffer with her the fact of the crucifixion. The lovely spirituals and the voices that sing them are, one of the Negroes' richest contributions to American life, wrought out of the pain and anguish of their long struggle for freedom in the U. S.

The Negro has suffered more in this land than any other group of people, I believe, solely because of his color. It is true that great strides have been made to equalize the Negro's rights. The Supreme Court decision to ban school segregation was a tremendous forward step, but you and I know, though the law was passed, there were, there are and there will be many more instances of rioting and violence in the attempt to keep southern schools segregated.

We do not have the problem of desegregating the schools in the Northwest. Therefore, we may say to ourselves that we do accept the Negro as an equal, or that we do not practice race discrimination against any group of people. But let us think again. For example, we say that our schools are open to all. But chil-

dren go to school according to the districts in which they live. Can Negro or Japanese or Chinese families live in Broadmoor or Windemere or West Seattle or parts of Beacon Hill? It is a sad fact that there are still restrictive covenants in Seattle which do not allow a family of another race to buy a piece of property in certain areas.

An even more subtle test can be given to ourselves. When we pass by lower Jackson Street by bus or car, do we feel contempt for those of another race who are "hanging around" the area? Do we say, when we see a man of another color in a Cadillac or wearing conspicuous clothes, that he doesn't know how to spend his money—that he's lazy, irresponsible and untrustworthy? Are we guilty of sins of that kind?

Let us now put on Christian spectacles, so to speak. When we see them "hanging around" the taverns or wandering aimlessly about, do we consider that those men might have tried hard to get jobs? They may be jobless because no one would hire them because of their color. Can we see them in terms of their need? If a Negro or a person of Oriental ancestry came to you for a job, would you look first at his color or would you study his qualifications and give him a fair trial, as you would a white man?

A while ago, *Time* magazine had an article about the American Negro and the situation about the Negro in a Cadillac was analyzed in this way: Negroes are often prevented from buying or renting the kind of house they want in an area where they can afford to live. When they meet with disappointment time and time again and have to live in the so-called "low-income areas," they begin to spend their money on large cars or perhaps on overly expensive clothes.

Let us not be hasty in condemning those of another color as so often we are prone to do. Not only is it unchristian but it is detrimental to the health of our community and our nation. Let us seek out causes when we read of robberies and other moral crimes committed by men—all men, no matter what the color of their skins. And let us work to remove the causes which create the crimes or the situations we abhor.

We Americans are living in what is often called a goldfish bowl. We believe in freedom of the press. We do not sup-

press the news, so the good and bad news alike goes abroad. But many countries practice the device of printing only news which emphasizes our imperfections. Nor is the false glitter of the Hollywood movies subdued for foreign audiences.

It is sadly true that a few such distortions and a few bad personal experiences can be magnified and may do irreparable damage to our international relations. There are thousands of foreign students in our American colleges and universities, more than 600 in Seattle alone—black Africans, dark-skinned students from India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and yellow-skinned Japanese and Chinese.

In their own countries they are treated naturally as equals. If, over here, they come across unpleasantness from racial discrimination, we will lose their friendship. When they return to their own countries they will be the leaders and have influence. They will point at us and say that Americans boast that every man is equal to the other in the possession of human rights but that in reality only the white man has those rights in America.

There is no reason to be complacent about improvements in race relations in America today, for discrimination does exist. Dr. Robert J. McCracken, minister of New York City's Riverside Church, described one form of discrimination in these words: "Someone made the statement not long ago that there is more Jim Crowism in America at 11 o'clock Sunday morning than at any other time—that the number of whites and Negroes who gather together for worship under the auspices of Protestant Christianity is infinitesimal."

There may be thousands upon thousands of white Christians who believe that colored and white could and should worship together. But those who act and speak out for it are only too few.

As Christians we believe in God, the father and creator of every living creature on this earth. But in our forgetfulness or our neglect in keeping alive this basic fact through practicing it, we are like the atheists who say: "There is no God." When we are truly convinced that there is a God, that he loves us all, that he is our father and we his children, then every person we meet and every person we see becomes a child of God. Skin color, racial or national origins lose their significance.

It is not God's will that we should hate, that we should feel self-righteous, superior or inferior. It is our own human weakness that makes us so. But when we see each other as children of God, what a difference it brings about in our relationships with one another. We can begin to forgive, forget and accept one another as human beings, needing and wanting each other's goodwill and respect.

Why Do We Have To Suffer?

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odds are in the vicinity of fifty-fifty. These odds entail suffering.

Most of us, however, are so protected from the forces of primitive nature that the phrase "depth of nature" is practically meaningless to use. It is difficult for us to grasp the idea that rocks and sand and mud and air and water can indeed have inner depths. This knowledge is the possession of those who have lived with nature in a relatively unprotected manner over a sufficiently long period of time.

Even our basic historical decisions are being made increasingly by our technology, decisions in which we acquiesce. It is, therefore, no longer fashionable to describe education in terms of suffering, which is to say that we seldom define the educational process in terms of depth of encounter between the student, his teacher and the subject matter.

The greater the risk, the greater the possible suffering. The deeper the suffering, the greater the possibility of being sustained by that power which fulfills us with a love and peace that transcend our hope and understanding. The greater the love between husband and wife, the deeper the loss and suffering at death. The deeper the loss, the greater the possibility that the remaining partner may not recover. And yet the deeper the suf-

fering, the more receptive he can be to that inexhaustible store of love which answers the cry of his bottomless despair.

Just so, the deepest encounter with God is premised upon the greatest trust. Trust is a hard-won victory, arising from the ashes of suffering which accompanies disillusionment, defect, doubt and despair. Faith is both an achievement and a gift—a gift extended to all but accepted only by those whose suffering has caused them to seek for a power and a goodness beyond the unstable securities of man's creation.

The promises contained in the Beatitudes tell us with unmistakable clarity that God responds most fully to those who are the hungriest, who accept trustfully the boundaries of their finitude, who suffer to the limits of their endurance and who are most receptive to God's renewing and transforming spirit.

The depths of life are to be seen on the other side of the limits of man's conscious and manageable resources. We suffer when our created goods and gods fail us, as fail us they do and must when the strains and pressures of life are the heaviest. At such times we can use our suffering to clothe and feed our hungry and broken spirits. In this way we feed upon ourselves and devour our own self-sufficiency. Or, more wisely, we can

yield to the urging inherent within our suffering which moves us to relinquish our protective shell and to trust a redemptive grace hidden within the very structure of reality.

But why should there be a world in which suffering plays so large a part? Why must we always learn the hard way? How can suffering be justified ultimately? No explanation can be given beyond our profoundest description of the character of life and our world. Finally, we can only attempt to ascertain God's way with man. An explanation is but an elaboration of the description of life which serves as the premise of the explanation. To rebel against this limitation as being unnecessarily arbitrary is a symptom of our desire to be God and of our inability to accept the fact of our finitude. In our rebellion, God appears to be our inscrutable and satanic enemy.

In the Christian faith we speak of God as a suffering God. Why does God suffer? God's forgiveness of man involves his taking man's sin into himself. Forgiveness costs God much because forgiveness cannot be extended by one who has not been offended by the sinner. There is no forgiveness from a distance of detachment and aloofness. To love is to enter into the life of the other and to desire his good. To love is to participate and to participate is to suffer. Such is our faith, our good and such, we believe, is our destiny.

E and R Overseas Missions

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field in India to the Evangelical Synod of North America. The offer of an outright gift now totalling 1,926 acres and valued at 30 to 40 thousand rupees, together with buildings for schools and residences for missionaries and national workers, may have helped the General Synod of 1883 to see "the hand of God" in this proffer! A formal transfer of the mission was made in New York on May 19, 1884, and thus the church was saved from a crippling division.

Throughout the years, the mission in India has stood for cooperation and unity. It was among the first to join the United Church of Northern India. It has cooperated with the Provincial and National Christian councils and has supported various union projects. Its daughter, the Chhattisgarh and Orissa Church Council, with over 11,000 baptized Christians, is a "council" of the United Church of Northern India and covers an area as large as Switzerland.

The oldest mission field of the former Reformed Church in the United States was founded by the Rev. Ambrose D. Gring in Tokyo, in 1879. "Those were

pioneer days for the missionary," writes A. V. Casselman in *The Beginning of the End*. "A foreigner was allowed to travel outside of Tokyo only for his health and then only on a special permit by the ambassador of the nation of which he was a citizen."

Lack of space does not permit us to tell in detail the interesting story of two young Japanese Christians who came to Sendai in their search for a place to re-establish their business and who, while praying for guidance, were led to the decision to open Christian work in this city, which soon developed into a second important mission station of the Reformed Church. North Japan College for men and Miyagi College for girls, with a combined enrollment of over 7,000 students, have become famous throughout north Japan and Miyagi's conservatory of music is said to be "surpassed by none and equalled by only one other in Japan."

Speaking of the *Kyodan* (United Church of Christ in Japan), Miss Katherine Johnson, secretary of the Inter-board Committee in New York, on

which the Board of International Missions is represented, states: "There is evidence today that the *Kyodan* is a growing, maturing church. There is a growing ecumenicity seen in a sense of responsibility for the expansion of the Christian faith in all of East Asia. New ideas of evangelism are seen in the efforts to take the message of the church into such untouched areas as remote farming districts, fishing villages, mining and industrial plants.

"The laymen of the church have come alive. There is a wide emphasis on programs developed in rural training schools and theological seminaries. Much remains to be done in keeping the processes of a big organization flexible and in educating local congregations in the meaning of an outgoing Christianity, but I believe that the United Church of Christ in Japan is on the verge of the greatest age of transition that it has ever known."

The China mission is an example of how "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." The mission was started in Hunan Province by the Rev. William E. Hoy in 1900. He had left Japan in search of relief from a severe case of asthma. By 1926 there were

(Continued on next page)