

English Corner: Suggested Article of Discussion

1. Article 12-6: The Majestic Light. Dr. Lin Yu Tang (林语堂)

Introduction: Dr. Lin (1895-1967) was a world-renowned philosopher and scholar, He has authored of more than twenty books written in English. The most important one is probably the “From Pagan to Christian.(信仰之旅)” He describes not only his journey back to Christianity, but also declared that “Only Jesus, and no one else, could bring us to direct knowledge of God.” The following article is condensed from the last chapter of the book “From Pagan to Christian”.

The article: “Blow out the candles! The sun is up!” said a great philosopher when Emperor Yao mounted the throne. Such is the natural imagery (比喻) when mankind sees an incomparable light. The world of Jesus is the world of sunlight by comparison with that of all the sages (贤人) and philosophers and the scholars (学者) of any country. Jesus’ teachings have that immediacy (直接) and clarity (明瞭) and simplicity (简单) which puts to shame all other efforts of men’s minds to know God or to inquire after (询问) God.

Quite apart from the content of Jesus’ teachings, I think the light and the power of Jesus came from the manner and the voice of His teaching and from His personal example. Jesus spoke as no teacher of men ever spoke. Jesus never expounded (解说) His faith, never reasoned it out. He spoke with simplicity and certainty (肯定) of clear knowledge. He taught without hypothesis (假设) and without argument. With the utmost naturalness (自然) and gentility (有风度). He said, “He that has seen me has seen the Father.” With perfect simplicity, He said, “These things I command you, that you love one another. He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest (显现) myself to him,” That is altogether a new voice in history, a voice never heard before. It is the very same voice which later said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Such simple words have power. Also as in “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Thus it is that the world of Jesus contains both that power, and something else – the absolute clarity of light, without the self-limitation of Confucius (孔子), the intellectual analysis of Buddha, or the mysticism of Chuang-tse (莊子). Where others reasoned, Jesus taught, and where others taught, Jesus commanded. He spoke out of the fullness of the knowledge and love of God. Jesus spoke out the truth, which is to love another. All great truths are simple. We stand here in the presence of a simple truth which contains the germ (胚芽) of the principle for all human development, and is sufficient.

2. Discussion:

1. How does Lin Yu-tang characterize the teaching of Jesus?
2. Compare Jesus’ teaching and attitude with other great religious teachers.
3. What is Jesus’ source of power and truth?

3. Proverbs:

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

The Father and I are one." (John 10:30)

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. (John 12:32)

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13:34)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:12 – 13)

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.