



漢言客

基督教文化研究所

INSTITUTE OF SINO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

News

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Interview with our Visiting Scholar



Dr. Wu Zengding was Visiting Scholar at our Institute from July 21 to August 20, 2000. Born in 1971, he began to study at the Fuyang Normal University of Anhui Province in 1989. Four years later, he went to pursue his graduate studies at Peking University, where he got both his Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy. Dr. Wu is presently lecturer in philosophy at Peking University. His publications include writings and translations, such as *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, and *Philosophy of Religion*.

Interviewer: Samuel Ho (Academic Assistant, ISCS).

Mr. Ho: Dr. Wu, I am told that you have planned to work on the question of the sociology of knowledge and historicism during your stay here as Visiting Scholar at ISCS. But one may well wonder whether this kind of sociology and historicism in the strict sense bear any relevance to Christian theology. How would you react to such skepticism?

Dr. Wu: In a post-Christian context, 'thought' and 'word' of any theory of knowledge must have some kind of religious dimension, as modern theory of knowledge takes its very point of departure from the breakdown of the conventional Christian picture of the world (Weltbild). As a result of this breakdown, knowledge itself has lost its religious transcendent dimension: knowledge itself has suffered de-mystification (Entzauberung), and is no more the unity of meaning by which both an individual faith from within and a social system from without are established.

Mr. Ho: How come?

Dr. Wu: This is because of a split in modern knowledge between form and contents. On the one hand, knowledge has become a purely positive knowledge, stripped of any contents of value or connotation, so as to ensure the general validity of knowledge. But on the other hand, knowledge at the same time has its own appeal to beliefs and values; thus knowledge has already been transformed into a purely ideological discourse. The former lays the foundation for the positivistic trend of modern knowledge while the latter exhibits the characteristics of historicism in modern knowledge. Fundamentally, though, both of them embody the nihilistic ethos of modern knowledge. Concurrently, modern society moulded by modern knowledge also generates a fundamental division: freedom and values in the life world of individuals can no longer claim general validity, and the system

of social differentiation does not constitute the substantial content of values any more.

Mr. Ho: What does sociology of knowledge mostly concern itself with, as you see it?

Dr. Wu: What the modern sociology of knowledge is concerned with is precisely this: How to find a way in this post-theological period of 'God is Dead', a way to bridge the gap between form and contents, and a means to surmount potential threats from positivism and of historicism.

Mr. Ho: What else in the concrete have you done during your stay here?

Dr. Wu: The greater part of my time has been devoted to a translation of classic works of historians of ideas such as Karl Loewith, Hans Blumenberg and Jacob Taubes. Apart from translation, I have also made use of the easy access to the ISCS library and read extensively on Gnosticism and other related philosophical and theological works by and on Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Karl Barth, Hans Kung, and Paul Tillich.

Mr. Ho: Have you got any new ideas from your work here?

Dr. Wu: Translation and reading have broadened my trains of thought, and my own awareness of issues has become clearer. What is more important is now I realise that questions of my concern are already embodied in the ancient thoughts of Gnosticism. In other words, the modern discrepancy between form and contents is a descendant of the dualistic antithesis between 'God the Creator' and 'God the Saviour' in Gnosticism: — God the Creator embodies the historical dimension of Gnosis while God the Saviour symbolises the truth-dimension of knowledge. Gnostics sharply enquire: Can history, which is fallen, and truth which is salvation (Gnosis) ultimately be reconciled? Can knowledge obtain its general legitimacy and universal validity in history? Such kind of enquiries has guided me eventually to a historical dimension, and thereby a new horizon occurs to me of investigation in sociology of knowledge. I begin to realise that sociology of knowledge should not merely follow in the footsteps of M. Scheler and K. Mannheim but ought to investigate as well in a broader perspective the relevant issues of socio- history and history of thought.



Remarks on Kant's *Religion Within the Boundary of Pure Reason* [*Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*]

by Chen Yue, Visiting Scholar at the ISCS



Immanuel Kant claims that his philosophy is to “answer” the following three questions: 1) What can (kann) I know? 2) What should (soll) I do? 3) What may (darf) I hope for? The first two are answered by his ‘philosophy of critique’ while the third is answered by his philosophy of religion, which is therefore a ‘critiqued philosophy’.

What is ‘critique’? The Enlightenment movement first set free the word ‘critique’ from philological tradition and appropriated it to describe what arose within the movement: a new ideological territory, ranging from literary communication to political propaganda and religious conflicts. Critique of religion has been taken as the characteristic par excellence of the Enlightenment. However, the reason why the Enlightenment’s critique carries a function of ‘general ideology’, i.e., the ‘modern’ world having formed its selfconsciousness in the Enlightenment, is simply because of its being a critique with the so-called self-acquired ‘meta-critique’: The philosophy of critique, as Kant understands, has provided the pre-requisite for the legitimate application of reason, that is, having set the condition for the Enlightenment itself.

Thus, only Kant is capable to write down the treatise ‘Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?’, because it is only a ‘post-critique’ critique that enables the critique of religion in this century to set off its stage of synthesis of modernity. In other words, the question,— when I, as a finite being, have done what I should, then what may I hope for?—can be raised without assumption and honestly only when human as a finite, rational being knows both his/her limits and (therefore) freedom. So as not to let ‘kategorischer Imperativ’ degenerate into a moral Utopia, one has to accept a teleology merely as ‘the result prescribed by law’ rather than a motive of moral conduct, thereby the ‘summum bonum’ is postulated as an a priori synthesis of virtue and happiness. And for the sake of this synthesis is postulated a supreme being of holiness, grace, and justice —i.e., God. Hence, ‘morality leads unavoidably to religion’ and ‘hope only starts with religion.’

If religion, according to Kant, is the ‘destination’ of morality, then it is also the ‘destination’ of critique. How peculiar a journey 18th century thought has taken! However, ‘having gone through critique’ is by no means ‘having done away with’ critique. Critique is rather an unshakeable cornerstone— ‘meta-critique’, subjugated in Kant’s total framework of enquiry, i.e. that of anthropology, sustains directly its transcendental dimension. We are told that in order to unite the foundation of a faith in morality with an experienced faith which seems to have come into our hands by some coincidence,... we are called to work out an interpretation of the revelation given into our hands, i.e.: to interpret it radically as the significance in accordance with those general and practical rules of a religion of pure reason. Throughout this book Kant seems to be self-contradictory. On the one hand, he displays so evidently a logic of choice between the two above-mentioned types of faith, between the ‘invisible church’ and the ‘visible

church’, between autonomy and God’s grace, as if all of its purpose is to shed once again the bright light of moral rationality on the level of religion. But on the other, once the text of Kant is set in its own context, we are able to recognise the true historical texture between the inter-text. The texture may be described as follows: from the preceding two centuries in which the search of humanist theology for a ‘religion within human boundaries’ and the Reformers’ stress on the separation of divine grace from humanity stood as mutual supplementary counterparts, via the age represented by Pascal who applied a rationalist form of proof for the mystery of original sin, to the time when deists attempted to place moral imperatives on the basis of religion, thus receiving a heavy blow from sceptical philosophy, we perceive that at least three roads have been followed. The first road was taken by Shaftesbury, whose worldview was centred on a sort of aesthetic experience. Rousseau took the second way: he offered to the old riddle of fallen humanity a new solution based on a philosophy of law. The third path was trod by Lessing, who turned historical criticism of the Bible into a religious vindication for historical theodicy. After these forerunners came Kant, who continued the attempt to lay an ‘a priori foundation’ for religion.

So, on the background of this period of ‘anti-religion’ we can see the history of difficult formation of the modern ‘subject’ and its intellectual form. For every step it takes forward, the subject has to destroy, and then to re-establish, the objective foundation on which its superiority relies, and therefore the problematic character of religion is repeatedly laid bare. There is no reason to suspect Kant’s honesty as he appeals to religion; for the case of religion he betrays - in a repetitive, indecisive and hesitant style - his weakness in reasoning (e.g. from ‘ought to’ inferring to ‘can’). This weakness forms a broken track, which makes Kant’s attempt at a reconciliation of religion with morality less significant compared to the actual discrepancy of the two. This track heads towards the necessary compromise in the historical conflict (the so-called ‘critique’) between philosophical rationality and religious revelation, a compromise on an even deeper political level. In the latter part of his preface to the first edition of 1793, and in the ‘general remarks’ (Allgemeine Anmerkung) attached to every chapter, as well as in his letters written in the same period, Kant, just like any other great philosopher, speaks on the political dimension, the ‘powerful critique’ formed of various systems of knowledge, of moral conduct, of faith and of law. This is a historical ‘limit’ or ‘boundary’ of ‘reason’, that must be obeyed not without respect, because it is within this very boundary that religion, seen as the primary target of the Enlightenment’s critique, actually acquires its modernity both as a dimension and an achievement of this critique.



Academic Studies



Visiting Scholars

During the period from May to August, ISCS received three young Chinese scholars in the capacity of visiting scholars. They are Dr. Wu Zengding, Prof. Mao Dan, and Mr. Chen Yue.

Mr. Mao Dan, assistant professor and assistant to the Dean of the College of Arts, Zhejiang University, was first to arrive in May for his two-month in residence research. The main topic of his research as he proposed is 'Martin Luther and the Origin of Thought of Modernity'. Mr. Mao attempts to present his thesis in the following way: It is Martin Luther, the great Reformer and Christian theologian, while applying a formally very conservative form of theological reflection, who fundamentally laid down the spiritual foundation for legitimacy of modern changes. During his stay at Tao Fong Shan, he made good use of all the three libraries in the vicinity, i.e. those of ISCS, of Hong Kong Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) and of Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre (TFSCC). He became familiar with the contemporary situation of Luther studies in the world and made a collection of hundreds of works relevant to his further research. He submitted a draft outline of his thesis with a bibliography at length.

Mr. Chen Yue, lecturer of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Shanxi Normal University in Xi'an, stayed in Hong Kong from August 24 until September 20, as our ISCS visiting scholar. Mr. Chen's subject for studies is 'Critique in the Enlightenment and Christianity: A Study in Modernity of Ideology'. The emphasis of Mr. Chen's study is the historical conflict on the political level between philosophical reason and religious revelation. He tries to draw from this study an analytical system of 'original text - system' regarding the 'ideological modernity', so as to locate the place of religion in modern society, which he views as a 'dimension and a result of the Enlightenment's Critique'. His stay at our Institute was mainly occupied by collecting material, gathering notes and formulating a rather substantial outline. One can have a glimpse of his fruitful labour by reading his "Remarks on Kant's *The Religion Within the Boundaries of Pure Reason*", which appears in the present issue of our Newsletter.

Guest Professor

The main work of our Research Fellow Zhang Xian is proof-reading of translation drafts, but during the period from May to August, Prof. Zhang has not only done proof-reading but has translated articles for our publication as well.

In addition, Prof. Zhang has published several papers, which include 'Towards a Faith in God Accompanied with Reason- An Enquiry into Thomas Aquinas' View of Truth', which appeared recently in *Zhongshan (Dr. Sun Yatsen) University Journal* (Humanities Edition), one the first-rate ("kernel") academic journals in China. Another recent writing of Prof. Zhang entitled 'From Bottom Up vs. From Top Down - A Preliminary Study on the Christian Denkform (Patterns of Thinking) in Theocentric and Anthropocentric Theologies', is to be published in the forthcoming proceedings from 'Simon Ho Cultural Lectures'. His article 'The Life-World: Life, World, and Husserl's 'Life-World' in Ontological Interpretation of Chinese Philosophy' is a contribution to the collection *Being and Interpretation* edited by Professor Cheng Zhong Ying in the USA. For *Open Times* Prof. Zhang has written a short paper "Heidegger's 'Nazi Experience' and Related Topics", which one can read and download from our website.

Academic Director

In May Dr. Liu Xiao Feng, Academic Director of our Institute, participated in an international conference, held by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, with the subject 'Interpreting



Cultures: China Facing the Challenges of the New Millennium'. Dr. Liu gave a lecture on 'The Kingdom of Divine Justice and the Fervour of Human Justice' in which stressed the fundamental difference between 'Millennium' and 'Utopia'. As he pointed out, 'Millennium' indicates a critical situation, a sort of catastrophe, a holy period of time disclosing the wrath of God, a radical separation of good from evil and its aim is to glorify the justice of God and the eschatological judgement. In contrast, 'Utopia' contains no crisis of separation but describes some kind of time of everlasting bliss. China has since ancient times been familiar with utopian thinking, but still finds foreign the millenarian consciousness of separation and split, because this consciousness originating out of Western philosophy of history, reveals that this world needs the rule of the Holy Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: God's holiness is expressed in this rule. Dr. Liu concluded his lecture with the claim that our most urgent need in this age of complicated globalisation is the salvation of the world by the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Liu's paper 'Money, Sex and Feeling of Life - In Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Publication of Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*', appeared in May in the Guangzhou-based magazine *Open Times*

Executive Editor

Rev. Richard X. Y. Zhang, who got an M.A. from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and has been working on his doctoral thesis in theology at the University of Basle, Switzerland, started in June his service at our Institute by assuming the responsibility as Executive Editor. Mr. Zhang came to Hong Kong and stayed with us three times in June and July. During his first stay at Tao Fong Shan, he was introduced to ISCS colleagues, was given briefings about various sections of the Institute and had an orientation to the facilities in the vicinity. After discussions with both our Academic Director and our Chief Executive, Mr. Zhang got a better understanding of the general framework of the Institute before he returned to Europe. During his third stay in July, Mr. Zhang held a closed-door seminar, sharing with our editors his concern and vision with regard to editorial work in our publishing and translation projects.

When he was in Hong Kong during his second stay, Mr. Zhang also attended with Mr. Daniel Yeung and Dr. Liu a conference held at the Baptist University. The participants, mainly Chinese scholars and theologians from North America and Hong Kong, reviewed and evaluated Christian cultural activities in recent years in China and explored some possibilities of future co-operations between various institutions concerned.

During the period from June to August, Mr. Zhang has proofread several drafts of translations. He also finished in summer the introduction to the translations.

Visits and Visitors



Visits and Visitors from May to August (listed chronologically)

From Lutheran Theological Seminary of Hong Kong:
Dr. James Rimbach

From The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology:
Dr. Lars Ostnor
Dr. Kjell Olav Sannes

From Ethics and Public Policy Centre:
Mr. David BT Aikman

From Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences:
Prof. Li Tiangang

From Katholieke Universiteit Leuven:
Prof. N. Standaert

From Hong Kong University of Science and Technology:
Prof. Chang Hao
Prof. Liao Rongrong

From Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation:
Ms. Liu Yiwen

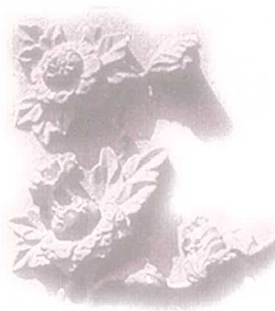
From Singapore Trinity Theological Seminary:
Mr. Chen Junming

From Chinese Christian Scholars Association in North America:
Mr. Wang Zhongxin

From University of Southern Maine:
Mr. Yang Fenggang

From Peking University:
Prof. Chen Lai

From Chinese University of Hong Kong:
Prof. Wang Qingjie



Publication



Preliminary Studies on Chinese Theology

Edited by Daniel Yeung

ISBN: 962-8322-24-9

399 Pages

Translation of cover-text

When seen from a historical perspective of theological development, how could the laity within the institutional church, or even intellectuals outside it, innovate the theological tradition of the church? How could they at a theological turning point in any historical period play an active role?

How is it possible to accelerate the mutual understanding and co-operation between the Church's theological studies and this kind of Christian study carried out by humanities scholars and academicians?

The spontaneous turn of contemporary Chinese intellectuals towards Christian spirit and values is a historical moment that is rare and 'not met with in a thousand years'. How should we respond to this moment?

Scholars of the 80's and later, and intellectuals of previous dynasties of Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, have all had an encounter with Christianity. But what is the threshold of their understanding of Christianity?

A number of Chinese scholars, trained in Chinese and Western traditions of humanities, and well versed in Eastern and Western languages, now are participating in translation of Christian classics. Would they later become interpreters of these classics, reconstructing a Chinese Christian thinking?

When currents from the rich reservoir of Chinese thought and from the unfamiliar system of Christianity encounter and converge, how could the tradition of Chinese thought bear, transform or create new ideas, so that its original Chinese material of thought would be enriched and enhanced?



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The Content of the 13th Issue:

THEME: Nietzsche and Theology

LIU Xiao Feng	Nietzsche's Exotic and Esoteric Teachings
Leo Strauss	Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil
Karl Loewith	Die Auslegung des Ungesagten in Nietzsches Wort "Gott ist tot"
Thomass J.J. Altizer	Eternal Recurrence and Kingdom of God
Paul Valadier	Dionysus Versus the Crucified

THOUGHT AND SOCIETY

YOU Xilin	Virtue Does Not Promise Happiness —— Job and the Decline of the Concept of Reward and Retribution in Ancient Times
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KUNG Lap Yan	Towards a Theology of Body: A Patient's Perspective
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XU Liming	"Religious Seeds" —— Merezhkovsky and the Russian "New Movement on Christianity"
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SUN Shangyang	On "Debate over Religious Problems" during new Cultural Movement
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BOOK REVIEW

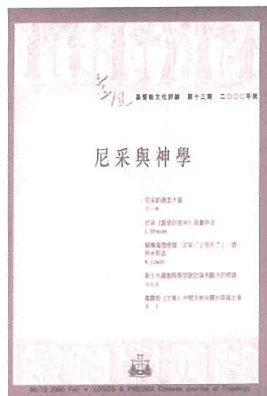
HUANG Yong	Public Reason and Religious Belief: A Review of John Rawls's Collected Papers
CHEN Jianhong	The Interplay of Divine Transcendence and Immanence
Yencheng NING	Amendes Honorables for a Noble Cause (I)

Sales and Promotion

One of our publications The Nag Hammadi Library in Chinese (Volume I) was displayed for sale on May 7, on the occasion of the lecture 'Extra-Canonical Texts and the Tradition of the Church', which was co-sponsored by the Division of Theology, Chung Chi College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the United Bible Societies.

ISCS publications were displayed for sales at a stall in the Baptist Theological Seminary during the month of May.

In co-operation with Logos Publishers Ltd., we have ISCS publications displayed in the Hong Kong Book Exhibition 2000 (July 19 to 24). During the Exhibition we also engaged in a plan for free distribution of our published books together with a local bookstore Bookland.



Two papers have been added to the collection of online papers:

- 1) 'How Can Human Beings Understand Each Other' by Zhang Xian
- 2) 'Remarks on Rashomon' by Wang Lu

Announcement

Internet has been in; its global development is so fast and irresistible that our Newsletter sent out by snail mail is cornered. Now we are preparing with great effort to upload it onto the Internet. Our website will also constantly be updated with new articles. If you are interested in knowing the latest development of our Institute, please visit our site at www.iscs.org.hk for the relevant information. We pray for your continued support. Please also feel free to let us know your criticism and suggestions. Thank you!

Institute of Sino-Christian Studies

News of our Institute

Since its founding in 1995, our staff has long remained in a 'super-stable structure'. During the first five years, we only embraced new members with "Welcome!" and never lost any with "Farewell!" But just as we say in Chinese there is no banquet that lasts forever, this year also saw the departure of two members of our staff. Mr. Ivan Choo of our Department for Academic Exchange (seven years of service) and Ms. Josephine Leung of the Editing Department (five years of service), one after the other left their positions for personal reasons. Their contribution to the Institute has been manifest and appreciated. At the same time, Prof. Qian Wenzhong, who was in charge of our Academic Exchange Department, returned to Shanghai, as he wanted to be united with his family again. He exerts his best efforts to be our co-ordinator of the Institute as satation in China. While sad at the parting with old friends we are happy with the chance to make new ones. Three new members have joined the Institute and their arrival is expected to bring in some new vigour and strength to our work. Of the newcomers, Mr. Richard X. Y. Zhang serves as Executive Editor, while Mr. Samuel Ho becomes Academic Assistant, and Mr. Dantes Mok works as Editorial Assistant.

Our presently most urgent task, therefore, is to establish a team spirit among the staff and this will be one of the aims to be reached in the secon



A Word from the Chief Executive



In November 1999, the board of directors of this Institute invited three well-known Chinese scholars, from the Mainland, Taiwan and from Europe, to form an independent evaluation committee with a commission to evaluate the entire work of the Institute, its aims and its work, from its formation in 1995 until now. In the reference material for committee evaluation report, which comprises some 200 pages, I, in my role as Chief Executive, at that time wrote down a paragraph of my innermost feelings:

"As I put the full stop to the final sentence of this reference material, I cannot help feeling excited, full of emotions. At the moment those words of a Hebrew prophet in olden times occurred to me: 'Not by might nor by power but by my spirit, says the Lord'. At this I could only remain silent and speechless, but being all the more grateful to the Lord who could use this little flock of ours, a group of simple people, to accomplish His own purpose.

"Personally I feel very honoured to work with this group of young and hard-working co-workers to reach our goal of work. Our mutual relationship is more complicated to describe. We are friends with one another, but we also learn from each other. Among my colleagues, Dr. Liu Xiao Feng, our Academic Director, serves as the spirit of the Institute. His thoughts are so extraordinary and many-sided beyond measure that it becomes impossible for us to stop for a rest! In the process to catch up with him, we have arrived, without our own awareness, at a standing aspiring for excellence. Such a relation of mutual promotion is indeed 'beyond verbal description'."

The result of this evaluation is on the whole to our satisfaction, but we are also reminded of improvements that must be implemented as soon as possible. Now, half a year later, we have already taken one important step forward as we see our academic staff to be on the increase. Such a step also indicates significantly a change from an exclusive monolithic state to a more inclusive and open stage of work. For this purpose we have established the Academic Committee, to involve more people and draw on their wisdom, in uplifting our Institute to a higher 'standard'. We cross our fingers and see what will happen!



Daniel Yeung (Chief Executive)

'Chief Executive' means being at the top carrying the heavy responsibility, but most of my time the situation is rather upsetting although a challenge as well. Development as well as economical matters, - both have to be attended to while time must also be given to co-ordinating the academic staff and the supporting staff so that they work together in order to achieve the common goal. Within the teaching of Jesus, I find these three themes which help me a lot: He who wants to be great should be the servant of others, he should shun arrogance and high-handedness, attend to the weaker ones. Face the various problems, awaiting God's kingdom as a child using the instinct to judge the situation. At Tao Fong Shan where our Institute is located, we lift our eyes towards the mountains from where to await our help.

Richard. X. Y. Zhang (Executive Editor)

Christian academic work in the Chinese-speaking world is like a pilgrimage. No short cut upon this journey; rather, we often find ourselves in less trod places where way and bridges have to be made now and then. Honoured to participate with my ISCS fellow travellers in our literary mission for the Word, I pray for great care, courage and persistence. Homebound for perfection, we are still on the way. To go astray is human; to remain on or return to the right way, grace divine. Step by step forward, I will do my bit.

Rev. Lars Brinth (Research Fellow)

Language is a passion and Chinese language a challenge. I am grateful for the patience with which my co-workers help me out in my work here at the Institute while I learn of Chinese theology and culture.

Zhang Xian (Research Fellow)

As a Research Fellow at the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies my main work consists in editing and proofreading translations. I am also supposed to write on behalf of Chinese readers some introductions to translated texts. Even though it is a very demanding work, I am still quite happy with it, because this type of work requires not only sincerity and delicacy, but a rich sense of creativity as well. I am also grateful for a very fortunate co-operation with my ISCS co-workers.

Samuel Ho (Academic Assistant)

Thanks be to the re-shuffling at the Institute! Otherwise how could I profit from joining it? 'Academic Assistant' is a position without precedence, so nothing to do but jump along and look at the needs - working and looking around. Long nights and a vast, endless road, - far and wide -, I pray that my veteran colleagues will give me all possible assistance and instruction. Let me bow to show my gratitude in advance right away!

Dantes Mok (Assistant Editor)

It is only two months now since I first came up the hill to work at the Institute! At present my work is still in a stage of 'walking into the river and groping for stepping-stones to get across'. Lucky enough, every co-worker gives me utmost support, and I hope soon to be able to get on the track.