



Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window.
(Dorothy Britton, Trans.). Tetsuko, Kuroyanagi
(1982). Japan: Kodansha International Ltd.
(Original work published 1981). 229 pp.

Kuroyanagi who is affectionately known as Totto-chan was expelled from school when she was a Primary One kid!

Amazingly, her curriculum vitae did not reveal a record of failure but a woman of achievement. She is a television presenter of a popular and award winning talk show, "Tetsuko's Room" in Japan and an accomplished actress gifted in training deaf actors. Her compassion for social welfare wins her Asian's first UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and her battle for conservation motivates her to sit on the board of the Worldwide Fund for Nature. She is also the author of 10 books. What is her secret of success?

Totto-chan attributes her success to her life transforming experience at Tomoe, the second elementary school that has helped to shape her life and character. What she is today, she owes it to Mr. Kobayashi, the Founder and Principal of the school who gave her a second chance! The book is a dedication to an excellent educator who has given her pleasant childhood memories she will never forget, "I have invented none of the episodes. They are all events that really happened ... I have tried to reveal, to as many people as possible, what sort of man Mr Kobayashi was, his great love for children, and how he set about educating them" (p. 189).

The school was built with a deep understanding of child development. Children at Tomoe experienced love, acceptance and security. Totto-chan felt that the moment she entered the school as a first grader when Mr. Kobayashi "listened patiently to her for four hours" and there was "warmth in his voice when he had said to her, 'Now you're a pupil of this school'" (p. 178). Students with physical handicaps studying in such a warm environment soon learn to shed their shyness and complexes about their bodies. Takahashi who suffers from dwarfism is made to walk tall and he never forgets the Principal's consistent words that builds his self-worth, "You can do it!" The author believes that her spirit of learning and growth is "sustained by the way he [Mr. Kobayashi] used to keep saying to her, 'You're really a good girl, you know' " (p. 190) to which she would say, "Yes, I am a good girl" and she

"believed it." (p. 141). The child's self-esteem can be a determinant to his or her character formation and survival as the author testifies, "Had I not entered Tomoe and had I never met Mr. Kobayashi, I would probably have been labeled 'a bad girl,' becoming complex-ridden and confused" (p. 190).

Secondly, the school was not built with classrooms of concrete walls to "fit the children into preconceived molds" to "cramp their ambitions" (p. 196). It was built with railroad cars and the curriculum was constructed to "bring out the child's individuality and promote self-respect. Study was done in the mornings. Afternoons were devoted to walks, plant collecting, sketching, singing, and listening to discourses by the headmaster" (p. 195). The experience of doing eurhythmics, a "sport that enables the body and mind to understand rhythm" (p. 77) and giving lunchtime speeches (p. 91^{ff}) must have shaped Totto-chan's talents and ambition to be a dancer, actor and television personal in her adult years. The curriculum makes learning fun but with sound educational values. For example, the school gave vegetables for Sports Day prizes and the Principal explained, "Get your mothers to cook for you for dinner tonight. They're vegetables you earned yourselves. You have provided food for your families by your own efforts" (p. 104). It must have taught them the value of the family and the virtues of responsibility and hard work.

The educational philosophy of Mr. Kobayashi is based on his belief that "all children are born with an innate good nature, which can be easily damaged by their environment and the wrong influences. His aim was to uncover their 'good nature' and develop it, so that the children would grow into people with individuality" (p. 191). The belief contradicts the teaching of the human nature in the Scripture but the book has valuable contribution towards Christian education. It provides tested theories of child development. It advocates how the environment should be created to guide children in the church and the home to uncover their need for salvation and to desire growth towards Christian spirituality. The calling is tough but a rewarding task for Christian educators and parents to work with the Divine Teacher.

(Review by Dr Ng Peh Cheng)

Chapel Notes

Chapel speaker on 31 July was our Dean, Dr Quek. On Wednesday, 7 Aug, our chapel speaker will be the Rev Stephen Siauw, Director of the Gunung Wilis Pioneer Missions, East Java, Indonesia.

Dr. Satterthwaite, spoke on 1 Peter 4:1-11 at Chapel on 24th July. He began with two important questions: What should be our attitudes and aims be as Christians? What sort of people should we be? The answer may be found in 1 Peter.

What Peter says constantly applies to these two linked aspects of Christian living: mindset and action: belief and conduct. In verses 1-6 Peter 'starts where his readers are', reminding them of what they used to be, and how coming to believe in Christ has transformed their lives. Turning away from their former way of life has cost them, for their neighbours and colleagues are offended that they no longer do the things they used to do (vv.3-4). But they have no choice: they now view life in a different way, in the light of God's coming judgment (v. 5-6), and that must affect the way they live now. Note how skillfully he relates Christian teaching to the experience of those he is writing to, starting with Christ's work on the cross (vv. 1-2), inviting his readers to reflect on what becoming Christians has meant for them (vv. 3-4), and moving on to set their present experience in the light of God's future judgment (vv. 5-6). He sketches God's plan of salvation in such a way that his readers can see their own place in it with crystal clarity. In this he is a model for Christian preachers today.

In vv. 7-11 Peter gives more details on what living for Christ involves:

- There should be a discipline and focus in our lives, reflected in our prayers: 'Be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray' (v. 7). As far as possible we should lead uncluttered lives, cutting out what is inessential. Our lives and our prayers should both be going in the same direction.
- We are to 'love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins' (v. 8). Peter has in mind a love which forgives sins and seeks to restore people when they have fallen. Being sinners, we stand in need of such love ourselves, and we each must display it towards others.
- We are to be generous (v. 9). That may mean offering hospitality on occasions, but more generally, we should have a generous attitude to others, for God has been so generous towards us.
- This means that we use what God has given us to benefit others (v. 10). We have been given many and various gifts so that we can use them to benefit others. This should not mean that we try to serve so many people that we burn ourselves out; or that we turn other people into our 'projects' with the aim of feeding our ego. It does mean that we are to make an effort to overcome selfish inertia, to think of others as well as ourselves. If we do not, there will be something missing in our lives and in the lives of others.
- Finally, we are to do what we do as service offered to God, undertaken in God's strength, and done to God's

glory, 'so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ' (v. 11).

These last words are seriously meant and tie in to the beginning of chapter 4, where Peter reminded his readers of God's grace towards them. As Christians we must aim in some measure to glorify God, who has done so much for us. And we must testify of his great grace to others.

NEWS BITS

1. Biblical Basis of Missions by Rev Dr David Harley.

The course has commenced last week but if you are still keen, please call before you come today, Friday, Aug 2 for Lecture 2 at Rm 302, 7.30-9.30pm.

2. Understanding Esther & Ruth by Dr Satterthwaite.

If you love the Old Testament and can spare only two weekends for training, you may want to consider registering for this course held at Bishan on 10 & 17 Aug, Rm 302, 2.30-9.30pm. Call us at 63538071 to register.

3. New Courses. The first tutorials have been set for the courses listed below. Those unable to make it to the tutorials must contact Admin Office immediately. New registrations accepted:

• **Introduction to Church History (CH101)** - Friday, Aug 23, 6-8pm. Students to be ready for the first two sets of tutorial questions.

• **The Christian Faith (TS101)** - Monday, Aug 19, 7-9pm. Introduction to the study of theology. Students to be ready for the first two sets of tutorial questions.

• **The Christology of the New Testament (NT354)** - Wednesday, Aug 28, 8.30-10.30pm. Tutorial questions to be issued when ready.

4. Change of Email Addresses. We will discontinue the use of bgst2@pacific.net.sg and bgst@starhub.net.sg with effect from 1 Aug 2002. You may contact Library staff at lib@bgst.edu.sg and Faculty/Admin staff at bgst@pacific.net.sg (no change).

5. Condolence. The Staff of BGST would like to extend our sincere condolences to Mr Lam Yuen Foong and his family on the demise of his mother, Mdm Ho Jiat Eng, on 30 July 2002.

6. Away From Office. Ms Tan Lee Pin has left for the Philippines from 29 July -11 Aug. Dr Quek Swee Hwa will be in the USA & Canada from 3-18 Aug.

7. Library will be closed at 7pm instead of 9pm on Friday, Aug 2. We apologise for any inconvenience.

Wishing you God's blessings on your Birthday!

Dr Fong Ngan Phoon 30/7
Mr William Chew Soon Leong 31/7
Mr Ding Yew Soong 1/8
Ms Christina Chua Chwee Hoon 2/8
Rev Hong Tiong Peng 2/8
Mr Lam Yuen Foong 2/8
Mr Peter Goh Boon Leong 3/8
Mr Kenny Tan Ban Leong 3/8