Who's Who

THE NI FAMILY (or Nga in the Fuzhou dialect)

Watchman's grandfather

The Rev. Ni Yu-cheng (U.C. Nga) of Fuzhou, born c.1840. Congregational pastor with the American Mission Board, Fuzhou. Died 1890.

Watchman's parents (married in 1899)

Father: Ni Wen-xiu (W.H. Nga) of Fuzhou, born 1877, the fourth of nine boys. Officer in the Imperial Customs Service. Died in Hong Kong, December 18, 1941.

Mother: Lin He-ping (Peace Lin) of Fuzhou, born 1880; died in Shantou in 1950.

Their nine children:

1. Ni Gui-chen, born 1900 (Mrs. H.C. Chen).
2. Ni Gui-zhen, born 1902 (Mrs. P.C. Lin).

3. Ni Shu-zu, or Henry Ni, born in Shantou on November 4, 1903. In 1925 he took the name Ni Tuo-sheng, or Watchman Nee. In 1934 he married Zhang Pin-hui (Charity Chang) of Fuzhou. No children. He died in Anhui Province on May 30, 1972.
4. Ni Huai-zu, or George Ni, research chemist.
5. Ni Xuan-zu, died in school years.
6. Ni De-zhen (Mrs. L.H. Wang).
7. Ni De-cheng (Mrs. Zhang).
8. Ni Hong-zu, or Paul Ni.
9. Ni Xing-zu, or John Ni.

THE ZHANG FAMILY

Charity's father

Zhang Ru-zhou of Fuzhou, Master of Surgery, sometime President of Ren Ji Hospital, Shanghai.

His four children

1. Zhang Pin-tseng, or Beulah Chang (Mrs. G.S. Ling).
2. Zhang Pin-fang, or Faith Chang (Mrs. K.L. Bao).
3. Zhang Pin-hui, or Charity Chang (Mrs. Watchman Nee), born in Fuzhou; died in Shanghai, November 7, 1971.
4. Zhang Yi-lun, or Samuel Chang.

Some Christian elders, workers and others associated with the Church Assembly Halls' ("Little Flock") Movement

John K.Y. Chang (Zhang Guang-rong), early Shanghai worker.

James Chen (Chen Ze-xing) of Xiamen, worker in Hong Kong and Bangkok.

Stephen Kaung (Jiang Shou-dao), worker in Chongqing. Translated W. Nee's writings into English.

Miss Ruth Lee (Li Yuan-ru), worker in charge of Shanghai Gospel Book Room. W. Nee's editorial assistant.

Witness Lee (Li Chang-shou) of Yantai (Chefoo), worker in Taiwan and San Francisco.

Philip Luan (Luan Fei-li) of Shandong, worker in Hangzhou.

Faithful Luke (Liok, or Lu Zhong-xing) of Gutian, worker in Singapore and Indonesia.

Shepherd Ma (Ma Mu), Christian merchant in Shanghai.

Simon Meek (Miao Shao-xun) of Lian-jiang, worker in Manila.

Daniel Tan (Chen Zhu-yan) of Xiamen, worker in Singapore.

John Wang (Wang Lian-jun), elder in Fuzhou.

Miss Peace Wang (Wang Pei-zhen), worker in Shanghai.

K.H. Weigh (Wei Guang-xi) of Gutian, worker in Hong Kong.

K.S. Wong (Wang Kai-seng), Christian merchant in Singapore.

Lukas Wu (Wu Ren-jie) of Jin-jiang, worker in Manila.

Alan C.L. Yin (Yin Zhu-lan), Christian manager of China Biological and Chemical Company.

Dr. C.H. Yu (Yu Cheng-hua) of Zhejiang, ophthalmologist, elder in Shanghai.

Y.A. Wu (Wu You-an), elder in Shanghai.

D.C. Du (Du Zhong-chen) of Shandong, elder in Shanghai.

Zhu Chen of Shanghai, elder in Shanghai.

Other Christian leaders mentioned in the story

Mary Stone, MD (Shi Mei-yu), first female Chinese doctor and founder of Bethel Hospital, Shanghai.

John Sung, PhD (Song Shang-jie), revivalist preacher associated with the Bethel Evangelistic Band.

Leland Wang (Wang Zai) of Fuzhou, founder of China Overseas Missionary Union.

Wang Ming-dao, conservative evangelical pastor of the Tabernacle, Beijing.

Wilson Wang (Wang Chi) of Fuzhou, brother and colleague of Leland Wang.

Miss Dora Yu (Yu Ci-du), evangelist and Bible teacher used by God in the conversion of Watchman Nee. She died in 1931.

1

The Gift

It was late spring in the Middle Kingdom and the season of Pure Brightness had given way to the season of Corn Rain. The night air was clear, with fleecy clouds drifting across a silvery moon. Ancient Fuzhou had closed its seven gates beneath their fantastic storied towers. From the crumbling, crenellated walls obsolete cannon looked out over broad rice fields and sprawling suburbs. Foot traffic had ceased on the eight-century-old Bridge of Ten Thousand Ages that linked the town on the north bank with Zhong-zhou and Nantai Islands. Tonight no mist shrouded the huddled sampans of boat-dwellers on the Min River.

Among the closely packed streets and houses, the day's cacophony had long since died. Gone were the rhythmic noises of the streetside craftsmen, the song of bamboo coolies hefting giant loads, the grinding of huge pestles hulling rice, the unending slip-slip of straw sandals, the squeal of trussed pigs borne to market, the cries of hawkers, and the whining pleas of beggars.

All these had fallen silent and so too, very gradually, had the last homebound footsteps through the narrow lanes: a sedan chair with toiling bearers bringing home a late-working scholar official; a chattering band of longshoremen returned from loading a junk to catch the tide; a shuffling addict drawn along by his ceaseless craving for the deadly "foreign smoke." Now at last all was still. In the rambling Ni home the large household slept.

Po-po! Po-po! Beside her sleeping husband Lin He-ping stirred uneasily on her mat, aware tonight of the third child secretly within her. She listened. From her two young children, Gui-chen and Gui-zhen, there was only quiet breathing. Po-po! Po-po! Again that staccato sound, and louder. It would be the night watchman on his circuit, alert while most people slept, to give the alarm of fire or thief or any other danger. Po-po!

Po-po! The assuring clapper-note (*tuo-sheng*) of his bamboo rattle was receding now as the voice came back, reedlike, calling: "Past midnight, neighbors. All is well!"

An oil lamp with a floating wick bathed the little room in its faint glow. The flame guttered and flared as He-ping lay back, somehow reassured. She closed her eyes once more, but not to sleep. Again, perhaps for the hundredth time, she whispered, "Let it be a boy!" She recalled with burning resentment today's household gossip: the barbed, mocking words that had made this visit to her in-laws' home so painful. Chinese society placed a premium on male offspring, and she and her gentle husband, Ni Wen-xiu, already bore two girls. Her Cantonese mother-in-law had been furious. The unfortunate wife of her eldest son could conceive only

females—six of them—and she affirmed Wen-xiu's wife was just the same.

"Avenge me, O God," He-ping cried now in bitterness, "and take this reproach away from me!" Then somehow there came back to her mind the halfhearted promise she had made and as quickly forgotten when her second child was on the way a year ago. "God," she had prayed then, in words that echoed Hannah's (see 1 Sam. 1:11), "if you give me a little boy, I will give him back to you to be your servant all his days." They were good, familiar words. She knew the Samuel story from childhood. But now, all at once, its words aroused in her heart an impulse she had not felt before. She wouldn't only say them this time; she'd mean what she said. She didn't hesitate. "I'll keep my word, Lord!" she exclaimed. Quiet then came to her at last. Smiling, He-ping drifted back again to sleep.

Long weeks passed, along with a return journey by sea to their home in Shantou, her husband's workplace. But her birth pangs finally arrived, and oh, the inexpressible relief when she heard him cry, "It's a boy!" She released tension in tears as joy overwhelmed her. This time, when the red-tinted duck eggs went out to neighbors and friends, it announced their longed-for son and heir.

Thus on November 4, 1903, Henry Ni came into the world to the delight of his quiet father and his strong-willed mother. Chinese names are significant. Eventually, children will either be given or assume a new one at some fresh turning point in their career. In childhood he was Nga Shu-jeo in the local Fuzhou (Foochow) dialect and Ni Shu-zu in the northern bai-hua speech, meaning "glorifying the ancestors'

merits." His English name was rarely used. By 1925, however, conscious of a new mission in life, he sought a fresh name that would express his duty as God's under shepherd to watch for His people. He tried Jing-fu, "one who warns or admonishes," but that seemed harsh. Then his mother proposed Tuo-sheng, a gong-note, reminding him of her prayer that night she awoke as the watchman went through the streets striking his bamboo gong or rattle (*tuo*) to send out its far-reaching note (*sheng*) with its good or bad news.

So he became Ni Tuo-sheng, or in English, Watchman Nee. After his childhood, we shall generally know him by this name. He disciplined himself through life to be like Samuel, God's priestly bell-ringer: staying alert while others slept, warning his people of peril and arousing them to a new day's dawning (see 1 Sam. 3; Isa. 21:6, 11–12; 62:6–7).

2

Honor Your Ancestors

Fuzhou is the capital city of Fujian Province and one of south China's gateways to the Pacific. For generations it had been home to the Ni (or Nga in the local dialect) family, whose members went each springtime to a nearby hillside to tend their ancestors' graves. In 1839, around the time when Watchman's grandfather Ni Yucheng was born, hostilities had broken out between China and Britain over what those intruding Westerners found so annoying: the Chinese Empire's ban on foreign trade. Some fifty years earlier the well-educated Qing Emperor Qian Long, perhaps aware of Britain's encroachment in India under Clive and Warren Hastings, patiently explained in a letter to King George III of England that his Empire's self-contained economy had no room for the unusual products of people living far away across a distant sea. "As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange and ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures."

That view still prevailed in official circles. Yet, Europe had recently discovered China as a potential market and source of raw materials when wealthy Europeans began demanding Chinese porcelain, silk and lacquer goods to decorate their homes. Since imperial edict banned barter, English merchants were forced to pay for everything in silver. This acute cash flow problem was only resolved when they realized they could persuade the Chinese to buy—illegally—their Indian opium. Only then did the principle of exchange work to the foreigner's advantage. The Mandarins, however, reacted strongly against this illegal trade. In protest, they hardened their resistance against the English by burning vast quantities of opium. A three-year Opium War with Britain followed—and ended in China's deep humiliation. The British forced the Chinese to pay a $6 million indemnity and to open diplomatic relations with the West.

In 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing forced China to cede Hong Kong to Britain, and open Fuzhou, along with four more key southern seaports, to foreign commercial interests with all their scandals and abuses. As Fuzhou's coastal trade in timber, paper, fruits and textiles continued, alongside it arose a new and unwelcome business settlement of foreign factories and residences on the mid-river islet of Zhong-zhou and on the further hill-slopes of Nantai Island. France, Germany, Portugal, and soon Japan and the United States, followed Britain's lead. The imperialist powers who had divided up Africa's territory between themselves would in turn strangle China with an economic "occupation" of its key seaports and riverside cities. They would also stealthily encroach upon its legal, policing, banking and services

infrastructure under the guise of economic aid and financial loans. As early as 1842 the British foreigners assumed control of the Imperial Customs Service. Its revenue now went into foreign-owned banks operating in China—and the war indemnities and the interest on foreign loans were deducted from it. The foreigners also decided when (and to whom, to assure good behavior) the Chinese balances were paid. By 1851 the import of opium became legalized.

Above all else, Europe's demand for tea caused trade to soar. In 1853, when Ni Yu-cheng was around fourteen years old, the first cargoes of Fuzhou tea, brought from the Wuyi Shan highlands by coolie and sampan and downriver by local junk from Nantai to the deep-sea port, were already being exported to markets in Europe and America. The ocean port itself was at White Tooth Rock, a sharp peak midway down the twenty-two miles from the Fuzhou bridge to the estuary's mouth. Here the Min River's course makes a right-angle turn northwards to curl round the foot of an island pagoda by its left bank—hence the name Pagoda Anchorage.

It was in fact across the fairway in the bend's deeper outside that the tall sailing ships dropped anchor and secured their sterns to a low right-bank cliff. While coolies transferred the tea chests from junk to hold, they took the opportunity here to paint their ships and, as sailors will, also to largely paint their proud ships' names on the nearby cliff face. "In 1938 one could still read there those of Thermopylae, Cutty Sark, and other famous vessels."[1] Thus, year by year, until steamships replaced them, these tea clippers came, loaded up and raced back across the world with the

new season's first clip of leaf, making Fuzhou second only to Shanghai in that prosperous traffic.

As an indirect consequence of the Nanjing Treaty and the grasping foreign trade, Protestant Christianity with its quite different message also began to enter China. The vermilion pencil of the Qing Emperor had decreed that the Christian faith be tolerated throughout the Middle Kingdom, but regrettably this too was a decree extracted under military pressure. This threw wide the door for dedicated Western missionaries, with their evangelistic zeal and true humanitarian concern, to move in and stake out new claims for righteousness in Chinese hearts. Soon a variety of established Christian missions from Western church denominations arrived with the best of intentions. The first to reach Fuzhou in 1847 were Congregationalists of the American Board, followed that same year by American Episcopal Methodists and in 1850 by Anglicans of the English Church Missionary Society.

Not surprisingly, the missionaries quickly protested against the iniquitous opium imports. As distinctive "red-haired" aliens, however, they also claimed the traders' extra-territorial privileges of residence. As a result, native minds too easily linked the missionaries to the foreign traders. Of the 1842 Treaty and its sequels, one contemporary Western writer penned with astonishing complacency, "The ways of God's dealings with this people began to open, and He entered into judgement with them that He might show them His mercy."[2] It was perhaps conceit such as that which prompted the Manchu Emperor's brother Prince Kung to give his often-quoted advice to Sir Rutherford Alcock:

"Take away your missionaries and your opium, and you English will be welcome!"

In 1853, in a suburb of the old city, the American Board opened the first school to offer a Western-style education. It was here as a boy that Watchman Nee's grandfather, Ni Yu-cheng, learned of the love of God in Jesus Christ and gave his heart to Him. Four years later, in 1857, the year in which the first Christian church or fellowship of believers in Fuzhou was established, he, along with three other students, declared his faith in Jesus by being baptized in the Min River.[3] He progressed so well and with such zeal and love for his Lord that the missionaries trained him as an evangelist, and soon, for a modest wage, he and other young men, began proclaiming the gospel in this city of a half million souls. Eventually, Ni Yu-cheng became the first ordained Chinese pastor in the three north Fujian missions. Long after his death in 1890, he would be remembered for his perceptive gift in reciting the Scriptures.

His biggest test, however, came when he reached the age to marry. Since few women in Fujian believed in Christ, he couldn't find a suitable Christian bride there. Furthermore, Fuzhou folk at that time were extremely conservative and would not think of intermarrying with those of another province. Nonetheless, if Ni Yu-cheng wanted to marry, he only had two choices: look for a bride outside of Fuzhou or compromise his testimony by marrying an unbeliever. Dedicated to the Lord, his faith prevailed over tradition.

Four hundred and fifty miles away, by coastal boat at the mouth of the Pearl River in the city of Guangdong, he accepted a Christian girl who proved to be God's choice for

him and made him a true, if somewhat sharp-tongued, life partner.

They were blessed (in Chinese eyes) with nine boys. Their fourth child, Watchman Nee's father, Ni Wen-xiu, was born in 1877. As a pastor's son, Wen-xiu attended Christian elementary school. He then memorized the Confucian classics using the rote method for the state's competitive civil service examinations. Fuzhou was a literary center of the region. Consequently, several thousand students from the prefecture gathered here twice every three years to take the first degree examinations. Then, twice in five years, students from the whole province returned to the city to take the second degree exam.

With age-old ceremony, at the appointed time, Wen-xiu and a throng of others entered the vast examination area northeast of the city by a gateway that bore the words, "For the Empire: Pray for Good Men" [English translation of Chinese characters]. Confined there for three days in his own individual cell, he adorned his scroll of ruled paper with columns of beautiful characters, pouring out his classical knowledge in a poem and two essays on a set theme. The papers were judged with strict impartiality, and his success in the second degree gained him, shortly before his marriage, the secure post of a junior officer in the Imperial Customs.

His wife, Lin He-ping was three years his junior. She was born in 1880 of peasant stock and the youngest of a large family. Very poor and darkened by superstition, they lived in fear of demons, dragons and fox-fairies. It was a famine year in Fujian, and with so many hungry mouths to feed,

she stood little chance of survival. Even in normal conditions, an infant girl risked being exposed to the elements, drowned or buried alive by her father just because she was one child too many. Indeed, a child still living but sickly or pining from hunger might be cast, along with the dead, into the high opening of Fuzhou's huge baby-tower—an urn-shaped granite receptacle at the town's edge designed to save the expense of child burials. For a few girls, however, the Roman Catholic orphanage outside the southern gate offered a home. The inscription over its entryway quoted the words from Psalm 27:10, "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in."

He-ping's father did better for her, though. For the three or four dollars he so desperately needed, he sold her, through a go-between, to a better-off family in the city who thought of bringing her up as their slave girl. But she was a lively child, and soon this family was approached, again through an emissary, by a merchant named Lin employed in a foreign firm in Nantai. His concubine was barren and desired to adopt her as a daughter, so again He-ping changed hands. In the providence of God the merchant too loved children, and here she found a home. Though there were already two boys and a girl in the family, the couple took the spirited little newcomer to their hearts and brought her up as their own child.

When she was six, according to almost universal custom, her adoptive mother began binding her feet. With this procedure, a young girl's toes were balled and bound under her foot's sole, forcing the unossified heel and tarsus together. The bindings were then tightened daily to stunt

the foot's growth, causing her to hobble for life. As a peasant girl, He-ping would have escaped this treatment, for the Fuzhou field-women had long resisted the custom. They strode about fiercely adorned with daggers in their hair and took their place alongside boys and grown men in the rice cultivation. Although the cruel pain caused her to weep copiously each morning, He-ping never once thought of resisting. She was now a merchant's child, destined for better things. Lily, or bound, feet were a part of the price she must pay.

But that year Mr. Lin became sickened with a mystery disease that defied the skills of all the doctors. Recently, a business superior of his named Zhang had become a Christian Methodist, and he suggested that they ask the Methodist pastor to come and pray for him. The Lins could scarcely refuse—and to their surprise, the prayer was answered. In fact, they were so moved by Mr. Lin's dramatic recovery that they also sought Christian instruction. Trusting in the Lord Jesus, they threw out the ugly little idols from their place of honor in the home, and Mr. Lin and his wife were baptized in the Methodist Church near his place of employment.

The concubine and her child, He-ping, however, attended the Church of England instead because it was closer to their home. To He-ping's joy, the painful foot-binding ceased and she could run again freely. As she learned the hymns and Bible stories, she found her heart warming to divine things. Her new happiness soon proved infectious. When her primary teacher asked why she was always singing, she told him the family's story. As a result, he and his wife and children also joined the church. He-ping went on to study

at a local primary school with Christian teachers that was opened by a foreign businessman. Then in 1891, at eleven years old, He-ping began attending the American-staffed Methodist Mission School for Girls in Fuzhou. Here she did consistently well in class, and through spiritual default and repentance, she said she tasted some of God's mercy. Consequently, her religion remained one of merit-seeking through good conduct.

As He-ping entered the top of the school in 1895, a young Chinese woman doctor named Wu Jing-en returned to Fuzhou from medical training in Philadelphia—making her the second woman in all of China to graduate from medical school. Her arrival to work in a mission hospital in the town inspired some local girls and set He-ping dreaming. Next year, at sixteen years old, she asked her teacher to begin negotiations for her to also attend medical school in the United States. Fortunately, her secondary school progress was such that, to her joy, the provisional answer was favorable. She therefore asked her father to send her and a school friend to the Chinese Western Girls' School (McTyeire School for Girls) in Shanghai to improve her English. It was her first trip away from Fuzhou and the sea voyage, touching at fresh ports that were also surrounded by hills like her own, was exhilarating. Past the islands the hills ceased with the Yangtze's silt-laden plain. As they entered the Huangpu River, Shanghai's great foreign buildings soared high above its levels. When she entered the city, she found turbaned Sikh police controlling the busy, prosperous crowds and the many wheeled vehicles that thronged the wide streets of the International Settlement. Beyond, in the wider city, behind

the walled houses of the wealthier classes, narrow lanes led to the dwellings of the poor. At that time, the foreign park gates along the Settlement Bund still bore notices warning, "No dogs, no Chinamen."

Among Chinese of a strange staccato dialect, He-ping soon became homesick. Nonetheless, her ambition kept her there. However, as she began to excel in her studies, she also became captivated by the higher living standards of this semi-foreign city where every man was all for himself. Soon she began using the funds sent to her for music lessons, along with other money-making methods, to buy fashionable clothing. "I learned there," she writes, "much of the pride of life and some of the sins of the flesh."

For her, in God's plan, one particular encounter proved significant. A certain Miss Dora Yu (Yu Ci-du), a young woman not much older than herself, visited the school one day to address the pupils. Dora was from a cultured background, and like many others had encountered Christianity while at a Western-style school. Successful in her studies, she had attended medical school in England. After qualifying and visiting home, she set out once more for postgraduate studies there. As her ship entered the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal, God met her, calling her to abandon her career and return to China to preach Christ to her people. She immediately went to the ship's captain, into whose care she had been entrusted, and told him what had transpired. Thinking she was out of her mind, he became angry; but she stuck so firmly to her request that he finally agreed to transfer her to a liner returning from Marseilles. When she returned to Shanghai, her shocked family's reception

of her was no less hostile in view of the cost of her education, but her quiet testimony was so convincing that they had to recognize the hand of God upon her. From that day she steadfastly set herself to witness to her Lord through preaching and Bible teaching—and all the more effectively because she received no foreign salary, trusting God alone for her needs. Hearing Dora's story from her own lips greatly moved He-ping. She called her to her room to offer Dora a treasured gold ring, a gift from her own mother. Dora's obvious reluctance to accept such a present from a young girl further convinced He-ping of her genuineness. "Then," she says, "I knew she loved God, and not money."

But to an eighteen-year-old He-ping, soon sheer catastrophe struck rather than the call of God. Her adoptive mother, who had been pining for her, opposed her going to America. Consequently, when the Cantonese widow of Pastor Ni Yu-cheng sent a man to Fuzhou seeking a match for their son, Wen-xiu, she leaped at the offer. Unknown to He-ping, her marriage to Wen-xiu was arranged, and now a letter, backed with full parental authority, broke the news to her. It devastated her dream of studying medicine, because no Fujian girl had ever so violated custom by breaking such a parental arrangement. Although *He-ping* means "peace," turmoil would have better described her now. For days she agonized to the point of near despair. Throughout the lovely sea voyage home, with the vessel threading its way among the rocky coastal islands, she remained under a dark cloud of depression. In her heart she nursed a growing hatred for the mother to whom she owed her upbringing, for now the residue of that life seemed in ruins.

On her arrival home she was called in and formally given Ni Wen-xiu's photograph and the betrothal gift that clinched the contract. By it she was irrevocably tied to this young man whom she had never seen. As the summer of 1899 dragged by and the marriage arrangements moved forward, her heartache was unabated. "Only unwanted girls are given as brides," she told herself. Others could be independent and rise to professional fame. Life, for her, was at an end. "Marriage: how I hated that word!"[4]

October and the season of Cold Dew (Han Lu) arrived. In Nantai, on October 19, they celebrated the union of the late Congregational pastor's son Ni Wen-xiu, government officer in the Maritime Customs with a new posting to Shantou, and Lin He-ping, adoptive daughter of the wealthy and generous convert businessman. It was a day of joy and hopefulness. The young couple then stayed in the Ni home for two weeks, where Mrs. Ni Senior ruled over seven sons and five daughters-in-law. The brief time there in the uneasy role of a junior wife was, she discovered, more than enough to restore her affection for her own sweet mother. She determined that if she had children, her girls should never suffer, as she did then and later, at the hands of that house's contentious women! It was thus a relief when the time came to set out, bag and baggage, for Shantou and the new appointment.

Amid the farewells of both families, Ni Wen-xiu took his young bride once more the eleven miles downriver by sampan to the ocean anchorage opposite Pagoda Island to board the southbound coastal boat. Like the previous ones, it was crowded with deck passengers, with their bedding

and bundles and little pigskin trunks, and with livestock of every kind. But again the congestion and discomforts of the sea voyage were offset by the rugged coastal beauty as the silt-laden river waters gave way abruptly to the clear green of the South China Sea. A cruise of 250 miles past even more hill-beset southern anchorages eventually brought them to Shantou, the little treaty port at the rock-bound mouth of the Han River. Though tiny compared to Fuzhou, the brisk trade of its resource-rich backcountry kept Mr. Ni busy in his taxation work. Here in its official quarter, the young couple now set up home. Mr. Ni eagerly learned from his superiors the intricacies of the customs duties—first of the native coastal business and eventually of the international trade. That year, 1900, was one of uneasy peace.

In the northern provinces a peasant rebellion led by the *Yi-he-quan* (or Righteous Harmony Fists), and known by the foreigners as the Boxers, spread across the land—murdering Chinese Christians and Western families and spreading anti-foreign madness. In Beijing, the Qing dynasty of the Manchurians had finally fallen on hard times. For two centuries, this powerful minority people from beyond the Wall ruled as Chinese, but treated their Han subjects as inferiors. For some years now, a Tartar woman and royal concubine named Yehonala "The Orchid" remained the dominate power behind the Emperor's Dragon Throne. When widowed in 1861, she became the Dowager Empress and contrived to rule as co-regent with consecutive Emperors, her minor son and another weak relative. Fickle and unprincipled, she now gave erratic support to the revolutionaries, willing to harness their movement to her own xenophobic ends. "Let

them, if they so wish, destroy all aliens China-wide!" But when a foreign military force rescued the Beijing embassies, she fled to the countryside. As a result, new indemnities and oppressive demands were placed upon the Chinese people. From this crisis the southern viceroys, at great personal cost, happily elected to stand by the "unequal treaties" and ignore her edict. Then, at a critical time in Fuzhou city, floods providentially broke the Min River bridge, cutting off the murderers from their desired missionary victims. Here at Shantou a precarious quiet also prevailed.

It was into this comparative calm that to our young couple a first daughter, Gui-chen, was born—and greeted with her parents rejoicing her arrival as God's undoubted gift. But when another daughter, Gui-zhen, followed a year later, their joy was more restrained. The tradition that daughters were "lesser" than sons was so strong that a sense of guilt weighed upon both parents. Why should God have to trust them with a second mere girl? This tested their simple Christian faith and confidence in Him. Happily their anguish brought them to their knees to put their problem to Him. There in Shantou, the third pregnancy reached term, and after a lengthy labor there came the delighted father's cry, "It's a boy!" God had given to He-ping the desire of her heart in this male child. Although she was a weak Christian, she kept her pact with Him. Like Hannah, she brought her treasure back to her God as she came forth to christen her baby in the Anglican tradition. "It was this boy that I prayed for, and the Lord has given me what I asked. Now I lend my Shu-zu to the Lord; for his whole life he is His." (See 1 Sam. 1:11, and Ezek. 3:17.)

God would in His time have a watchman for His people.