

Biography of  
 Watchman Nee by  
 Angus I.  
 Kinnear

moved there from Nanking where pro-Communist riots had caused some missionary deaths. With her excellent literary Mandarin she had volunteered to tidy up the final draft and prepare it for press.

Nanking was to become the headquarters now of the new régime of Chiang Kai-shek whose armies, moving northward through Hunan, had taken Changsha and Hankow and then turned east to gain control of Shanghai. Here, with careless disregard for civilian life, Chiang now put down the Communist movement among Shanghai workers by a ruthless coup on 12 April in which a certain Chou En-lai barely escaped the massacre. Peace, of a sort, had now returned to the city.

It was while Watchman was in Shanghai putting finishing touches to his project that he had an experience which was profoundly to affect his future exposition of its theme of deliverance from sin. Words in the Epistle to the Romans he had preached on many times suddenly came to life. He 'saw' the priority of divine fact over the personal experience that flows from faith. Let him tell it in his own words.

'For years after my conversion I had been taught that the way of deliverance was to reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6. 11.) I reckoned from 1920 to 1927, and the trouble was that the more I did so the more alive to sin I clearly was. I simply could not believe myself dead, and I could not produce death. Sin was still defeating me, and I saw that something was fundamentally wrong. So I asked God to show me what was the meaning of the expression, "I have been crucified with Christ." It had become clear to me that when speaking of this subject God nowhere says "You must be," but always "You have been." Yet in view of my constant failure this just did not seem possible, unless I was to be dishonest with myself. I almost turned to the conclusion that only dishonest people could make such statements. Yet whenever I sought help from others I was sent back to Romans 6. 11. I appreciated its teaching, but I could not make out why nothing resulted from it. No one, you see, had pointed out to me that "knowing" (verse 6) must precede "reckoning" (verse 11). For months I was troubled and prayed earnestly, reading the Scriptures and seeking light. I said to the Lord, "If I cannot be brought to see this which is so fundamental I will not preach any more. I want first to get clear on this."

'I remember one morning—how can I ever forget it!—I was sitting upstairs reading Romans and I came to the words: "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin." *Knowing* this! How could I know it? I prayed, "Lord, open

my eyes!" and then, in a flash, I saw. I had earlier been reading 1 Corinthians 1. 30: "You are in Christ Jesus." I turned it up and looked at it again. "That you are in Christ Jesus, is God's doing!" It was amazing! Then if Christ died, and that is certain fact, and if God put me into Him, then I must have died too. All at once I saw my oneness with Christ: that I was in Him, and that when He died I died. My death to sin was a matter of the past and not of the future. It was divine fact that had dawned upon me. Carried away with joy I jumped from my chair and ran downstairs to the young man working in the kitchen. "Brother," I said, seizing him by the hands, "do you know that I have died?" I must admit he looked puzzled. "What do you mean?" he exclaimed, so I went on: "Do you not know that Christ has died? Do you not know that I died with Him? Do you not know that my death is no less truly a fact than His?" Oh it was so real to me! I felt like shouting my discovery through the streets of Shanghai. From that day to this I have never for one moment doubted the finality of that word: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." "

# The Normal Christian Life by Watchman Nee

~~doubted the finality of that word: 'I have been crucified with Christ.'~~

I do not mean to say that we need not work that out. Yes, there is an outworking of the death which we are going to see presently, but this, first of all, its basis. I have been crucified: in Christ it has been done.

What, then, is the secret of reckoning? To put it in one word, it is revelation. We need revelation from God Himself (Matt. 16. 17; Eph. 1. 17, 18). We need to have our eyes opened to the fact of our union with Christ, and that is something more than knowing it as a doctrine. Such revelation is no vague, indefinite thing. Most of us can remember the day when we saw clearly that Christ died for us, and we ought to be equally clear as to the time when we saw that we died with Christ. It should be nothing hazy, but very definite, for it is with this as basis that we shall go on. It is not that I reckon myself to be dead, and therefore I will be dead. It is that, because I *am* dead—because I see now what God has done with me in Christ—*therefore* I reckon myself to be dead. That is the right kind of reckoning. It is not reckoning *toward* death but *from* death.

## THE SECOND STEP: 'EVEN SO RECKON . . .'

~~What does reckoning mean? 'Reckoning' in Greek means doing accounts, book-keeping. Accounting is the only thing in the world we human beings can do correctly. An artist paints a landscape. Can he do it with perfect accuracy? Can the historian vouch for the absolute accuracy of any record, or the map-maker for the perfect correctness of any map? They can make, at best, fair approximations. Even in everyday speech, when we try to tell some incident with the best intention to be honest and truthful, we cannot speak with complete accuracy. It is mostly a case of exaggeration or under-statement, of one word too much or too little. What then can a man do that is utterly reliable? Arithmetic! There is no scope for error there. One chair plus one chair equals two chairs. That is true in London and it is true in Cape Town. If you travel west to New York or east to Singapore~~