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1950-05-08, Letter from Charles Roberts to Friends

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[Written on Hunan Bible Institute letterhead]

May 8, 1950.

Dear Friends:

It is now sometime since we last wrote you from China, and we think perhaps you would like to know how things are going with us. Firstly, altho [*sic*] we have been able to secure permission to enter China proper, we are grateful for every day and every opportunity we have had to be on Chinese soil, for even this great Colony is a part of the China mainland. The population has increased to 2,250,000 and less than 10 per cent of those who reside here are foreigners—that is nationals of other countries. Secondly, living here affords an excellent ‘listening post’, as well as headquarters for Hunan affairs. Changsha is only two days away by railway. During the recent weeks we have received letters from Changsha and mail communications between here and there are now quite good. We also have frequent visits from Hunan. In this way we keep good contacts with the Institute and the work in general. Here are a few excerpts from letters received from our Chinese and missionary colleagues. But first let me remark how marvelous it is that God provided two experienced missionaries to be at the Institute at this time. The Ebelings an American family and the Gaussens an English family. They both report the general aspect of the work continues without serious interference: “We continue this term with the old students only. I think we shall have about 35. A number in the Seminary department will graduate this summer. I do wish you could be with us. We have a number of applications for new students, but we shall go slowly so as to be sure who they are and their reasons for coming to us.” “You will be glad to know the orphanage has been re-organized and a Committee of three Chinese is now in charge. We have sent home or gotten position for the older children. We now have 90 younger ones left. The discipline is very good, and we have our regular morning and evening prayers.” “We, Evangelistic Band No. 1., have moved from our last place to another small town about 40 miles from Changsha. Here we have freedom to preach, and continue with our house to house visitation. Conditions in the country side are bad and with banditry and general unrest we have to be very careful. There was a nasty incident near us the other night but God has kept us by His grace. People are very willing to listen to the Gospel and are still eager for our tracts. Many have accepted Christ.” These glimpses will let you see that while the missionary and missions as understood in the past are decreasing, yet the spiritual work of the Church is increasing. And for this we give God praise. An interesting factor in the present situation is the increasing desire of many young people to attend a Bible school or Seminary. Certainly the immediate future holds nothing attractive from the human angle to create such a desire; it is of the Spirit. And reports coming from the larger cities that the churches are crowded to capacity on Sundays are unanimous. Uncertainly, depressing circumstances and fear and causing thousands to listen to the Gospel message as a source of comfort and hope. We are most glad for the word about the orphanage. Soon after the ‘Liberation’ (A term used when the People’s Government takes over a city or area.) there was some difficulty with the older children demanding their ‘rights’ under the new ‘freedom’; also the servants felt the time had come for a representative say in the operation of the institution. This has been straightened out and we are grateful to say with less trouble than some other institutions have had to contend with.

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We have one evangelistic band working with a personnel of seven, and who by their long experience are alert to situation that may arise and call for wisdom. Pray for this Band that their simple work and

testimony may bring hope to many. The overall news from China is perplexing and at times very confusing. What we must recognize is that the great upheaval we knew must come has come. It is going to be many years and there are going to be many changes before China will settle down to a way of life that she alone will find, if our Lord should tarry that long. The news good and bad varies with the difference in places and official personnel. A disturbing piece of news has come to us this past week from a city not far from Changsha in Hunan. A Chinese pastor who returned from America a little over two years ago, and recently spoke to our student body, has been called on to suffer for Christ's sake. He was arrested on the pretext that he was using religion for propagating 'American Culture'! He was forced to kneel for a long period leaning slightly backward. One result is a cracked knee cap and swollen limbs. He is still in detention. A Chinese Christian doctor in the same area has been called before the People's Court to give an account of his stewardship in relief work. One or two others have been confined to their quarters and not allowed to preach. However the Chinese Church Committee at Changsha has called on the Governor and asked permission to take up these cases with him direct. It is hoped that the matter will soon be settled. Sometimes such cases are the result of local relationships and the desire of some to get even with those whom they dislike. Back to Hongkong. The past few weeks we have been able to send out 1,500 sample copies of the Scofield Correspondence Course in Chinese to the centers in South East Asia, where there are large groups of Chinese—Tokio, Manila, Singapore, Bangkok, Jogjakarta, Calcutta and in this great city. The response has been good and many registrations are coming in. We are glad too, that inland China is still free to study the Word by mail. And there is an eagerness for more Christian literature we can possibly meet. We are now working on a translation, just complete of the notes in the Scofield Bible. As it is not possible to print these notes in a Chinese Bible like the English editions for the present, we hope to publish the Notes in two separate volumes, one Old Testament and one New Testament, to be used as companion volumes to the Bible. We would like to bring 2,000 copies and about U.S. \$500.00 will be needed. We shall be glad to hear from anyone or society who would be interested in this project, a great contribution to Bible study. Please write us direct or to Biola at Los Angeles [*sic*]. At this writing Christian literature can be sent into China by mail. Our own efforts in Hongkong have been several hours weekly teaching in the China Bible Seminar and an Evening Bible School. A great joy has been preaching the simple Gospel from the Gospel Boat now anchored in a very crowded bay. By means of the Loud Speaker we can get song, scripture and sermon to the ears of literally thousands as they sit in the cool of the evening on their little ships listening. Thank you again for your continue and kind contribution to the support of the Hunan Bible Institute. Please continue to give and to pray that God's most perfect will shall be accomplished, and that His soon return shall be realized when we shall for evermore praise Him that He is the Victor. With warm Christian greetings, Ever truly yours, HUNAN BIBLE INSTITUTE.

Charles A. Roberts

China Department of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles , Inc. Superintendent.