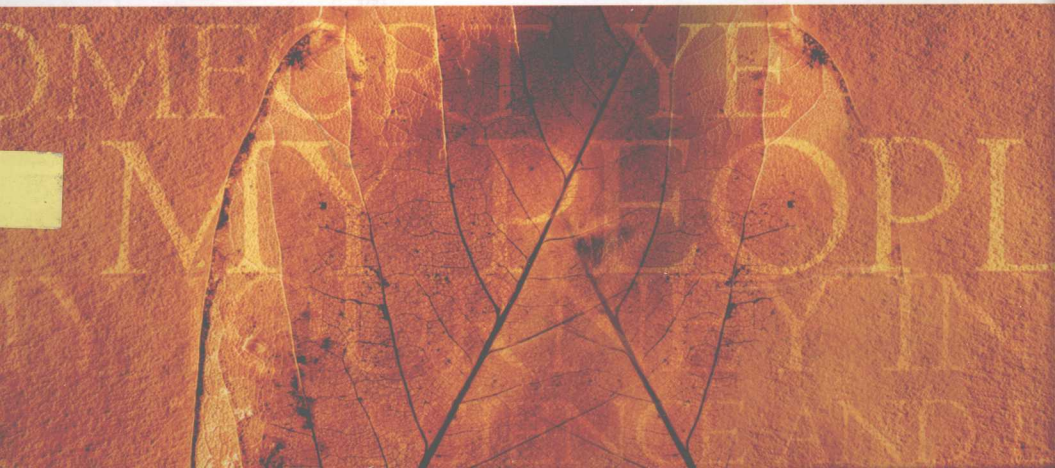


**COMFORT YE,  
MY PEOPLE!**  
**MY JOURNEY IN  
SCIENCE AND LIFE**

*T. C. TSO*



*Comfort ye, my people!*

*MY JOURNEY IN SCIENCE AND LIFE*

*T. C. Tso*



## *-A Memoir-*

*Am I remembered in Erin?  
I charge you, speak me true  
Has my name a sound, a  
Meaning  
In the scenes my boyhood  
Knew?*

*-Thomas D'Arcy McGee-*



# 左天覺回憶錄



*Comfort Ye, My People*  
*My Journey In Science And Life*

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## *Prologue*

### *Comfort Ye, My People* *My Journey In Science And Life*

My father sent me, a naive boy of 11 without benefit of preparatory schooling, to a Christian elementary school named Trinity. I was in the fifth grade. The schoolmasters issued strict instructions to attend daily morning worship services without fail. Though I understood little of the services, at Christmas I came to love the music of the Messiah. It gave me a sense of peace and security. It does today, almost eight decades later. One morning in sixth grade, I skipped the morning service for last minute study for a final examination scheduled for later in the day. Unfortunately, my absence was duly noted. A teacher discovered me hiding in the washroom, and proceeded to deliver three strikes on my right hand with a ruler before my fellow students. Though the punishment did not hurt a lot, my young pride and soul were badly bruised. At graduation, when that teacher handed my diploma to me, I gathered the courage to tell him that I would never again attend church for the rest of my life. I was so upset that I changed from Christian-sponsored schools to public Chinese schools for my middle school years.

Nevertheless, six years later I enrolled in the University of Nanking, a university with an excellent reputation in agricultural sciences, and sponsorship by the United Christian Board of the United States. The University of Nanking also is a sister university of Cornell University. I was fortunate to share a dormitory room with two students who came from a Christian middle school. One played violin and the other sang beautifully. It was November 1936. Both roommates, members of the university choir, were engaged in intensive choir practices for the Christmas performance of

Handel's Messiah. When they practiced "Comfort Ye, My People" memories of first hearing the stirring music at Trinity School flooded my mind. Suddenly I was inspired with love and forgiveness. From then on I gradually began to attend the worship service at the university chapel.

Another year passed. After narrowly escaping the invading Japanese army in Nanking and suffering hardship during the early part of the war, I arrived with many other refugee students at our wartime campus at the Western Union University in Chengdu. There were five Christian universities on the same campus. The university housed newly arriving students in a big gymnasium. While we awaited the construction of our own dormitory, we refugee students slept, ate, studied, and practiced our music in the gymnasium. At Christmas there was a formal performance of the Messiah with more than a hundred musicians on the stage in tuxedos or long gowns. It was wartime! When the performance opened with "Comfort Ye, My People" I felt tears of joy.

Another eight years passed. I came to Pennsylvania State University as a graduate student, having only a few dollars in his pocket. It was December 1947. In my rented room there was a small radio. When I turned it on, the little radio boomed out the Messiah! Without hesitation, I rushed out and bought a huge, standing RCA radio with record player, and a complete set of the Messiah recording of the London Symphony Orchestra. To this day, whenever I need solace, I listen to "Comfort Ye, My People" to regain peace and inner love.

During my lifetime, most of my contemporaries and I experienced war, peace, hunger, pain, success, defeat, blood, tears, joy, and sorrow in several ways, places, and times. The Chinese people suffered time and again from natural and human-made disasters. My personal story equals only one tiny grain of sand on this great earth. As we look into the world, there is much remaining suffering and need.

Still, I have great faith for the human race that crooked roads will be made straight; that pain will be relieved. There will be no more warfare or inequity. Yes, there will be great comfort for all.

## *Acknowledgement*

*Over the past five years, I devoted much time to writing and rewriting this Memoir. The process has been frequently interrupted by other projects; and thus there may be a certain lack of continuity among earlier and later chapters. At times, I was tempted to take the easy way out by giving up this Memoir project. Yet, because of my unusual background, my special experiences, and my long journey, I feel a strong obligation to tell this story. I sense an overriding responsibility to complete this work, to express my feelings and faith in total honesty and frankness. In the end, I hope it may represent a reference to the history of my life and times.*

*This Memoir covers a period of almost 90 years, and I know that memory and writing ability may at times fail. It is in large measure the continued support and encouragement of my family and friends that brings this Memoir into being.*

*Words of thanks are far from sufficient to express my deep gratitude toward many friends and experts who guide me, literately hand in hand, through out the whole period of writing, editing, and printing of this Memoir. Two dear friends, Jim Butcher of Maryland and Lin Yu of Florida were of great help in many ways. They did far more than one might expect of good friends, working tirelessly on this Memoir with great patience and expertise and in various ways and in different areas.*

*Thanks are due to Elizabeth Pennisi, Science writer of AAAS, for her professional guidance; and to Matt Butcher of SiteSafe for technical help.*

*I wish to express my deep appreciation to Michelle Luijben of the Netherlands for the trying and difficult task of reading the first part of this Memoir and to Beth Adle for expert proof reading and preparation of the final copy.*

*Finally, I wish to emphasize that this Memoir expresses only my personal feelings at various times and locations during my blessed journey,*

*including love, hate, fear, anger, tears, hope, and faith, with Comfort and peace.*

*Partial funding for this book come from the Institute of International Development and Education in Agricultural and Life Sciences (IDEALS), a philanthropic, nonprofit, organization located in Beltsville, Maryland. The author dedicates this book to IDEALS and directs any donation that may arise from this book to IDEALS and to the Berwyn Baptist Church at College Park, Maryland.*

## *Preface*

### *History—Drop by Drop*

History is made by people recording what they have experienced, what happened during a particular period. Scholars encourage people to write about their lives and interpretations. Such chronicles may be worthless at the time of writing, but they accumulate, drop by drop, to shape history.

Many events happened during my lifetime. Some of those drops are fresh in my memory. Big and small, these appear as reflections in my mind's eye:

—The moment a local “guard” using a long sword cut into my lunch bag without saying a word to my grandmother as we walked from one village to another. I was about seven years old.

—The moment as a ten-year-old when I stood in front of my house waving a flag at a passing KMT victory parade celebrating the defeat of warlords.

—My active participation in student demonstrations for two days and two nights against the Japanese occupation of the Custom House in Hankou, and the moment I crossed the Yangtze River to Hankou by ferry in the face of the enemy.

—My joy of hearing the war against Japan had finally begun, the first downing of a Japanese fighter plane.

—My narrow escape from Nanking in the dark of night when the Japanese invaders attacked Nanking.

—The first time I attended a performance of the Messiah. A soloist in coat

and tails, accompanied by a five-university symphony orchestra, sang “Comfort Ye, My People” while war raged beyond the campus.

—The first time I saw a B-29 Superfortress bomber and U.S. pilots at an airbase in the mountains of western China.

—The frightful experience of being jobless with little money and no sign of support or affiliation with any school or organization. The war was at a critical stage.

—My total wild joy when hearing from a street loudspeaker that Japan had surrendered and almost being crushed by thousands of celebrating people.

—The moment my ship arrived at San Francisco, and I learned from an announcement that someone was waiting for me on shore.

—The moment when Prof. Richer asked me, “Is here better than home?”

—The moment when I stood 15-feet from a car bearing the expressionless, side-by-side Truman and Eisenhower riding to the Eisenhower presidential inauguration.

—The moment when Kennedy was shot, and running to listen on my car radio with colleague Tom Theis.

—A snowy Saturday afternoon when Ken Keller asked me to drop him on a main street near his College Park home. The road was slippery and I was a new driver, but I insisted on taking him to his door, telling him “this is the Chinese way”.

—The moment when Challenger exploded. I was in a local bank.

—The moment in Japan when I delivered a keynote address on tobacco as a food source.

—The moment I stepped on Chinese soil after 30 years.

—The fleeting shadow of a person running from my sight after delivering peanuts and millet to my door. This happened during my first trip back to China after 30 years.

—The moment when my aunt, whose husband had been “liquidated”, walked into my hotel announcing how good the government was to her and her family, telling me to be thankful.

—The moment when my ship was prepared to depart from Hankou and I saw an old man with bent back and a heavy bag struggle to catch the ship to say good-bye to me. He had been a handsome young Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota 30 years before.

—The early Sunday morning following the Tiananmen Square Massacre, our whole family jointed hands with others in protest at the front door of the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

—After the Tiananmen Square massacre, the moment of a private dinner with six close friends for the departing Chinese Ambassador and his wife.

—The moment when meeting a top leader in China, we greeted by touching fingers instead of shaking hands, furtively looking away rather than at each other.

—The moment I witnessed Xinjiang farmers moving to a new settlement with housing, water, and land.



—The moment when Chinese farmers counted the kinds of taxes and fees they had to pay.

—The moment I chatted with young college students sharing their dreams with me.