

**A Study of Bishop Ting Kuanghsün's  
Theological Reconstruction in China**

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Faculty of Humanities.

**2012**

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**Final Word Count, inclusive of footnotes: 60,257**

## **List of Abbreviations**

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ANS	Amity News Service
BCC	British Council of Churches
CB	Chinese Bulletin
CCC	The China Christian Council
CCP	The Chinese Communist Party
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CTR	Chinese Theological Review
GMD	Guomindang
HKCC	Hong Kong Christian Council
IRS	Institute for Religious Studies
IWR	Institute of World Religions
JL	<i>Jinling shenxuezh</i> (also known as <i>Nanjing Theological Review</i> )
NCC	National Christian Conference (in China); National Council of Churches
NCCCUSA	National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
NPC	National People's Congress
NUTS	Nanjing Union Theological Seminary
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council (later known as SARA)
SARA	State Administration of Religious Affairs (formerly known as RAB)
TJC	True Jesus Church

TSPM	The Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches of China
TSPM/CCC	The Chinese Christian Three-Self Movement of the Protestant Churches of China and the China Christian Council, the two national organizations of Protestant Christians in China (in Chinese, the <i>Lianghui</i> )
UFWD	United Front Work Department
WCC	World Council of Churches
<i>Wenji</i>	<i>Ding Guanghsün Wenji (Collected Works of K.H. Ting)</i>
WMS	Wesleyan Methodist Society

## **Abstract**

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*A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Humanities, 2012.*

### **A Study of Bishop Ting Kuanghsün's Theological Reconstruction in China**

More than half a century has passed since the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement was established, and quickly rose to monopolize institutionalized Protestantism in China. The Three-Self theology remains poorly understood, however, both on mainland China, and abroad. This study intends to uncover why Ting's work has been constructed in the way it has been, to delve beneath its totalizing discourses as they were shaped and reshaped in the transitional period, and on into the 1980s, when Three-Self theologians were active again. As Ting's work is considered an official guide to Theological Reconstruction, this examination of Ting's theology also aims to show how, and why, the CCP accommodated or endorsed Ting's projects, discourses and evaluations, and what the impact of this was. Centring on the idea of the Three-Self, each of the chapters of this study will further elaborate upon the emergence and development of Three-Self principles in China, and how it helped to form the core of Ting's theology, most particularly in the 1980s. Chapter One presents the Three-Self's original meaning. Simultaneously, close attention is paid to how Chinese Christians practised the Three-Self principles, tackled various issues such as the interaction with traditional Chinese culture, religion and science, and Christianity and revolution in the 1920s and 1930s. The key theme of Chapter Two, consequently, is located in the question of how the Three-Self has mutated as a political instrument, and transformed itself into the Three-Self movement between 1950 and 1979. Chapter Three, from a political perspective, is devoted to presenting how we are to understand Ting's Theological Reconstruction, in comparison with the Three-Self in the 1950s. The key consideration of Chapter Four is to engage with Ting's idea of Theological Reconstruction in 1980s, which includes his particular way of appropriating Christianity in the contemporary Chinese context. In the light of Stephen Bevans' classification of contextual theology, this chapter's three thematic parts point to three patterns which were adapted to construct Chinese theology in the past and contemporary history of Christianity in China. Surveying the central concept of the 'Cosmic Christ', and why/how Ting has been so passionate about popularizing this idea in China, this chapter will provide a thorough review of the particular work in *Ting Kuanghsün Wenji* (Collected Essays of Bishop Ting), and this detailed account provides an opportunity to observe how Ting weaves Marxism, process theology and liberation theology into his theological construction, and how he links his theological proposal to mainstream theology. In the final chapter, this study will investigate the strength and weakness of Ting's Theological Reconstruction. I will argue that Ting's main purpose in transforming, as well as reconstructing, Christianity is not to try to make Christianity more easily accepted by the Chinese in their cultural and social situation, but it is instead intended to be used as a 'post-transformational Christianity', specifically as an instrument to provide help for the CCP to find a way out of its political situation.

## **Declaration**

I hereby swear that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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## **A Note on Romanization of Chinese Words and Places**

I use the Hanyu *pinyin* system of Romanization throughout this study. Most letters bear a resemblance to their English pronunciations. I follow the Chinese practice of giving the surname first and the given name second. Therefore, Zhou Enlai's surname was Zhou, and the given name Enlai. However, if the name appears in an original source in a different spelling, I give the pinyin form in square brackets: so 'Lu Hsun' (Lu Xun), or 'Tu Chung-yuan' (Du Zhongyuan)'.

## Introduction

### 1. The last Anglican bishop in post-denominational China: Bishop Ting Kuanghsün and the development of Three-Self theology<sup>1</sup>

Often called the last Anglican bishop in what is now post-denominational China, Bishop Ting is a well-known figure in international Christian circles.<sup>2</sup> He can be regarded as the main leader of Chinese Protestantism in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> He has lived through some of the most turbulent periods in Chinese history, and has played a role with significant impact in the Chinese official Churches. Although retired from his posts as head of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (hereafter, TSPM), and the China Christian Council (hereafter CCC), Ting constantly retains a significant influence.<sup>4</sup> His successor in the CCC also spoke highly of him. They indicated that all the achievements of the TSPM and the CCC ‘cannot be separated from Ting’s crucial perspective and timely guidance’. In particular, in

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<sup>1</sup> The Hanyu Pinyin Romanization of Ting Kuanghsün used by some writers is Ding Guangxun.

<sup>2</sup> Born in a Christian family in Beijing during September 1915, Bishop Ting studied at Shanghai’s St. John’s University, and was ordained an Anglican priest in 1942. Due to the fact that he has not disclaimed his ordination, he is still a bishop, although the Anglican Church no longer exists as an institution in China; along with all recognised denominations, it was merged into the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in the 1950s. He first became known in the West after World War II as a secretary of the Canadian SCM and the World Student Christian Federation. He and his family returned voluntarily to China after the Communist victory. He was an organizer and later national chairman of the Three-Self Movement, which he describes simply as ‘a patriotic movement of Chinese Christians’ (Ting, *Wenji*, p.173). When the parallel church structure, the China Christian Council, was formed, he became its president. Since 1953 he has been principal of what was for many years the only Protestant seminary in China, the Nanjing Theological Seminary. (For details of Ting’s biographical information and a summary of the historical and cultural context of Ting’s life and work, see Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church* [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007].)

<sup>3</sup> The majority of Christian missionaries during 18<sup>th</sup> century arrived with papal authorisation. Throughout the Ming-Qing continuum, ‘Christianity’ actually refers to Roman Catholicism. Protestant Christianity did not enter China until Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society began work in 1807 at Macau. (Lars Peter Laamann, ‘The Inculturation of Christianity in Late Imperial China, 1724-1840’ [PhD thesis, University of London, 2000], p.3.) The Chinese authorities regard Catholicism and Protestantism as two distinct religions. These two branches of the Christian faith are of course closer than the Chinese authorities’ definition would imply, but in this study I use the Chinese authorities’ terminology. ‘Christians’ means ‘Protestants’, and these two terms are interchangeable in this paper. ‘Catholics’ means ‘Roman Catholics.’

<sup>4</sup> The Three Self Patriotic Movement refers to the *Zhongguo jidujiao sanzi aiguo yundong weiyuanhui* (The Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China), commonly called by its shortened title *sanzi* (三自, Three-Self). It is the offspring of the TSM (The Three Self Reform Movement-- begun in 1951 with the writing of the Christian Manifesto), begun in 1954, which focused more on “patriotism” than on “reform”.

building up the Chinese Christian identity, Ting's theological thought plays a guiding role for the leaders of both the TSPM and the CCC.<sup>5</sup>

Over the last few years, essays selected in *Ting kuanghsün wenji* (丁光訓文集) (hereafter, *Wenji*), which was first published in 1998, have become controversial topics among Chinese Christians. The sub-title of the book is 'The Spokesman of Contemporary Chinese Christianity'.<sup>6</sup> Since then, his thinking was further developed in essays, written by younger Chinese theologians, and many books and articles have poured from official church presses calling for a diligent study of Ting's works. In particular, his proposal of Theological Reconstruction became a central concern for churches and Protestant seminaries.<sup>7</sup> In other words, this book is not simply a collection of Ting's essays, but rather it lays down the foundation for Theological Reconstruction.

Here, it is necessary to further define the terminology of Three-Self theology and Theological Reconstruction. Actually, most of the leadership of registered churches in China rarely titled their churches as Three-Self churches. Likewise, they prefer to term their work as Chinese theology, rather than Three-Self theology. Furthermore, one may argue that, due to the fact that the Three-Self is no longer the key theme of registered churches in China, it is thus unnecessary to label their theology as Three-Self theology. However, I do agree in referring to the theological discourse of/for registered churches, including Ting's theology, as Three-Self theology. The following reasons can prove useful.

First of all, the Three-Self theology is mainly constituted by the TSM leadership, and professors of theology, who participated actively with the TSPM, and probe into the theological challenge in socialist China. They play as the key figures of the Three-Self theology. Therefore, it is appropriate to name their theological deliberation as Three-Self theology. It conforms exactly to their actual role and position. Furthermore,

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<sup>5</sup>Chen Lu, 'Ting Guangxun's Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction', *Transformation* 27 (2), p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> The book included: 1. Ting's speeches made during overseas visits; 2. religious policy and religious studies; 3. Three-Self and running the church well; 4. theological lectures and sermons; and 5. memorials, congratulations, prefaces, etc.

<sup>7</sup> 'Zhongguo jidujiao shenxue sixiang jianshe xiaozu di yici huiyi zai nanjing' (The First Meeting of the Small Group on Theological Reconstruction Is Held in Nanjing), *Tian Feng* 3 (2000), inside cover, the first meeting was held at the end of December 1999. See also 'Zhongguo jidujiao shenxue sixiang jianshe tuijin xiaozu (kuoda) huiyi zai nanjing zhao kai' (Small Group for the Promotion of Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction Holds Expanded Meeting in Nanjing), *Tian Feng* 10 (October 2001): 34; and 'Lianxi shiji zhuzhong shixiao dali tuijin shenxue sixiang jianshe' (Connect to Reality, Emphasise Effectiveness, Exert Great Effort to Promote Theological Reconstruction), *Tian Feng* 3 (March 2003): 10.

although the Three-Self is not taken as the core theme of registered churches, it is undeniable that a Three-Self theology is still rooted in the premise of Three-Self patriotism. The concept of Three-Self underpinned the continuity between Three-Self patriotism and theological thinking. In other words, without doubt, either the thesis of the Three-Self theology or, through the main route of its development, their work is unlikely to exist without patriotism. Therefore, the designation of Three-Self theology is applicable. In particular, through investigating the actual circumstances of the Chinese churches, it would definitely be inappropriate to take Three-Self theology as Chinese theology, particularly with the unregistered churches upholding a completely difference voice. To some extent, Three-Self theology can be termed as a part of Chinese theology, yet it consistently should not represent *all* of Chinese theology. It simply stands for the theological thinking of a small percentage of the population.

The term of registered and unregistered churches need to be further clarified in this context. Most scholars employ the term ‘house churches’ to indicate Christian Communities that conduct religious services without government approval in the house of believers. China Watchers from the West often refer to these particular groups of Protestants as ‘underground churches’. Actually, before 1949 the term ‘house church’ was rarely used. Instead, the term ‘home-meeting’ (*jiating juhui*, 家庭聚會) was employed. After 1949, home-meetings enlisted political implications when the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter, CCP) began to affirm control over religion. Various ‘home-meeting’ Christian leaders who saw the TSPM as a government appliance instituted to control the churches intentionally broke away and set up their own meetings.<sup>8</sup> Churches found outside the TSPM were then referred to as ‘house churches’. In the late 1950s, when the number of churches was further reduced, more Christians withdrew to small, secret group prayer meetings. It was then when the term ‘house churches’ began to mean an alternative form of Christianity endeavouring to be free from government control, and believing that religion should be purely personal and spiritual. In this study, due to the fact that they run contrarily to the existing regulations (e.g. registration requirement) on authorised religious activities, I apply the term ‘non-registered churches’ to indicate those Protestant groups outside the officially sanctioned TSPM.

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<sup>8</sup> Tony Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p.13.

Local and foreign observers indicated that in comparison with the patriotic Christian churches, the non-registered churches are both larger and more deeply rooted in Chinese society.<sup>9</sup> Ting held a comparatively tolerant attitude towards non-registered churches and did everything he could to absorb non-registered churches into the mainstream of the TSM.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the term Theological Reconstruction or ‘the reconstruction of theological thought’ is an English rendering of *Shenxue sixiang jianshe* (神學思想建設). A brief word should be said about this translation, for it has been the subject of much debate and speculation in the English-speaking world. Other terms that have been used in translation are ‘building theology’, ‘theology construction’, ‘theological renewal’, and even ‘*jianshe* theology’. The translation of the term as Theological Reconstruction is in the same spirit as the translation of the name of the former Chinese periodical *Zhongguo chongjian* (中國重建) or ‘China Reconstructs’; a publication which Ting wrote for in the 1950s. Theological Reconstruction has become the commonly accepted translation and follows the earlier usage of the term. All of these renderings are questions of interpretation for a non-Chinese speaking reader.

Viewed from within, the Theological Reconstruction movement addresses a vital issue in the history and present reality of Chinese Christianity, namely, the place of Protestants within the Chinese nation. The CCP, for its part, has had to accept the long-term persistence and growth of religion, and adjust its ideology to allow religious believers to be legitimate participants in Chinese socialist modernity.<sup>11</sup> This concern has actually implied debating the role of Christianity in China as a socialist nation under the leadership of the CCP. It has involved key questions of Marxist

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<sup>9</sup> Pitman B. Potter, ‘Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,’ *The China Quarterly* (2003), p.334.

<sup>10</sup> Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity* (Collins: Fount Paperbacks, 1988), p.478. See also, Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the common ground: protestant Christianity, the three-self movement, and China’s United Front* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp.200-201.

<sup>11</sup> The CCP’s initial approach to religious believers reflected its expectation that religion would disappear, in relatively short order. When ‘freedom of religious belief’ (*zongjiao xinyang ziyou*, 宗教信仰自由) was reinstated in 1978, the CCP leaders expected that ‘the disappearance of religion from socialist China was only a matter of time.’ Therefore, the permission of religious activities was simply regarded as ‘a pragmatic and temporary concession to a small social minority, a concession that could have only relatively minor harmful consequences.’ (Ryan Dunch, ‘Christianity and “Adaptation to Socialism”’, in Mayfair Meihui Yang (ed.), *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation* [London: University of California Press, 2008], p.155. See also Mickey Spiegel, ‘Control and containment in the reform era,’ in Carol Lee Hamrin & Jason Kindopp (eds.), *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions* [Brookings Institution Press, 2004]), pp.40-57.

theory and social analysis, on which Protestant leaders, Party theorists, and intellectuals of various convictions have all taken part in. Following ideological discussion and practical preparations, the new policy was made public for the first time in 1979. The Party accepted the existence of five ‘religions’ in China—Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Protestant and Catholic Christianity<sup>12</sup>—and required that all five adopt structures—the ‘patriotic religious organisations’ (*aiguo zongjiao zushi*, 愛國宗教組織)—that would bring them under unified and release them from western influence.<sup>13</sup>

It is not necessary here to sketch out all theoretical debates that led to the new definitional theory. However, in order to get a better picture of the process than a model of state domination and Protestant response, it is worth noting some of the key steps.<sup>14</sup> According to official estimates, Protestantism in China has grown rapidly; multiplying from no more than 1 million in 1949 to at least 30 million adherents—with estimated figures as high as 45 million to 60 million.<sup>15</sup> So, by any measure, the growth has been incredible, particularly when one recalls that there are also many

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<sup>12</sup> The term ‘religion’ in this context can be briefly defined as: 1. Religion must be differentiated from superstition. 2. Religion has a complete and systematic philosophy and doctrine, a sophisticated organization, assemblies, systems, rites and activities. 3. Religion is a way of viewing the world, while feudal superstition is the means by which some people practice fraud. (Ya Hanzhang, ‘Carry out the policy of freedom of religious belief and oppose feudal superstitious activities,’ *Guangming Ribao* [國民日報, *Guangming Daily*], [20 Apr 1981], collected in Donald E. MacInnis, *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice* [NY: Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989], pp. 403-405).

<sup>13</sup> Ryan Dunch, ‘Christianity and “Adaptation to Socialism”’, pp.156-160.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the religious regulation in the People’s Republic of China, original sources from Chinese authorities see Donald E. MacInnis, *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice* (NY: Orbis Books, 1989); Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), *Xin Shiqi Zongjiao Gongzuo Wenxian Xuanbian* (Selection of religious affairs documents in the new era), (Beijing, China: Religious culture press, 1995); Ye Xiaowen, *Duo Shijiao Kan Shehui Wenti* (Seeing social problems with multiple perspectives), (Beijing, China: CCP Central Party School Press, 1997); Central Party School (CPS), *Xin Shiqi Minzu Zongjiao Gongzuo Xuanchuan Shouce* (Propaganda manual on ethnic and religious affairs in the new era), (Beijing, China: Religious Culture Press, 1998); RAB, *Quanguo Zongjiao Xingzheng Fagui Guizhang Huibian* (Collection of administrative ordinances on religion), (Beijing, China: Religious Culture Press, 2000); Luo Guangwu, *1949-1999 Xin Zhongguo Zongjiao Gongzuo Dashi Gailan* (A brief overview of major events of religious affairs in new China 1949-1999), (Beijing, China: Huawen Press, 2001); from Chinese observers in the West, see Richard C. Jr. Bush, *Religion in Communist China* (Nashville, TN, and New York: Abingdon Press, 1970); Julian F. Pas (ed.), *The Turning of the Tide: Religion in China Today* (Hong Kong, China, Oxford, England, and New York: Oxford university press, 1989); Pitman B. Potter, ‘Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,’ *The China Quarterly* 174 (2) (2003), pp.317-37.

<sup>15</sup> Official figures are notoriously unreliable. Publicly available documents usually cite 100 million religious believers; internal reports cite 200 million; and informed outside estimates cite higher numbers than both types of official reports. (See Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, ‘Freedom of Religious Belief in China,’ White Paper (October 1997) ([www.china.org.cn/e-white/Freedom/index.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/Freedom/index.htm)) [accessed November 13, 2008]). An overview of outside estimates is reported in U.S. Departments of State, *International religious freedom report 2002: China* (Includes Hong Kong and Macau), October 7, 2002 ([www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13879.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13879.htm)) [accessed November 13, 2008].)

Protestants not under TSPM/CCC auspices.<sup>16</sup> It had become clear to China's leadership that a total ban on religion served neither economic modernisation nor social stability.

On March 31, 1982, the Central Committee of the CCP promulgated a fresh religious policy which cast aside the radical attempts to eradicate religion that prevailed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Embodied in 'The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period' (hereafter *Document 19*), the new policy presented just how little religious freedom the leaders were actually willing to confer.<sup>17</sup> By limiting the protections to religious belief and to normal religious activities, *Document 19* restricted the realm of religious freedom to individual conviction and government-sanctioned normality. However, the meaning of 'normality' has never been clearly defined. This vagueness has come to mean that anything the authorities deem illegal is *ipso facto* abnormal and, therefore, illegitimate.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For the number of authorised venues, see Bao Jiayuan, 'Update on the Church in China,' *Chinese Theological Review*, Vol.14 (2000), pp.116-32. Figures on the total number of Protestants include those who worship in unauthorised 'non-registered churches,' which are estimated by outside observers and mission organisations that work closely with China's non-registered-church networks to number 40 million to 80 million adherents. See, for instance, Open Doors, 'Chinese House Church Leader: Huge need for more Bibles,' press release, Mar 3, 2003

([www.opendoorsusa.org/Display.asp?Page=Chinabibles](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/Display.asp?Page=Chinabibles) [accessed November 13, 2008].)

<sup>17</sup> See 'Guanyu woguo shehuizhuyi shiqi zongjiao wenti de jiben guandian he jiben zhengce' ('Document No. 19: The basic viewpoint and policy on the religious question during our country's socialist period'), in Xu Yucheng, *Zongjiao Zhengce falu` Zhishi Dawen* (Responses to questions about knowledge of law and policy on religion), (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1997), pp. 287-305. An English translation appears as 'Document 19,' Appendix 2 in Mickey Spiegel, 'Freedom of religion in China' (Washington, London & Brussels: Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1992), pp.33-45. For discussion of circumstances surrounding the issue of *Document 19*, see Luo Guangwu, *Xin Zhongguo Zongjiao Gongzuo Da Shi Yaojian* (Outline of major events in religious work in the New China), (Beijing: Chinese Culture [huawen] Press, 2001), pp.298-304; Mickey Spiegel & James Tong (eds.) 'Documents on Religion in China, 1980-1997: Central Government Policy (1),' *Chinese law and government*, vol.33, no.2. (2000), pp. 56-63.

<sup>18</sup> In an article entitled 'Religion and feudal superstition,' the authorities clearly maintain that superstitions must be eliminated. ('Zongjiao He Fengjian Mixin' [Religion and feudal superstition], *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], [15 May 1979]. See analysis in Jonathan Chao, 'China's religious policy,' *China and the Church Today* 1, no.3 [1979], pp. 1-3, 4-5). Feudal superstitions generally concern sorcerers, magic portions and drugs, divination and fortune-telling, getting rid of calamities and praying for rain, praying for children, exorcism and healing, physiognomy and palm reading, geomancy and other such activities. While this differentiation between religion and superstition seems to make perfect sense, it should be noted that certain practices within the framework of the five approved religions are prohibited, as they are considered superstitious. For instance, some Christian groups also practise healing and exorcism through prayer. There are examples of prohibition clauses in the regulations for normal religious activities issued by a provincial committee of the TSPM. (The provincial committee of the TSPM of Sanxi, for instance, has issued such prohibition among nine regulations set in January 1987). The dividing line is not always clear and the local cadres sometimes use the grey area to suppress religious activities.

In 1993, Jiang Zemin made a major statement on religion which is sometimes referred to as the ‘Three Sentences’.<sup>19</sup> It has formed the foundation of Party policy since then. It was not a policy shift so much as a clarification of the policy connotations of the long-term perseverance of religion in socialist China, and its direction had already been designated by a major Central Committee document, *Document 6*, released in early 1991.<sup>20</sup> According to *Document 6*, in order to prevent the ‘foreign hostile forces’, and renegade elements within China’s borders to keep using religion to destabilise China’s socialist system, and to turn the ‘hearts and minds’ of the young against Marxist doctrine, that it is a must to highlight the rule by law.<sup>21</sup> In other words, ‘regulating religious affairs according to the law’ could not only remove such unwanted influences, but at the same time protect the rights of believers.<sup>22</sup> Jiang’s speech indicated that the Party intended to rely to a greater extent on legal agencies to classify the rights, roles and limits of religion in Chinese society.<sup>23</sup> The effort to build a so-called rule of law had actually allowed the CCP to proclaim that people were being placed under arrest, or otherwise punished, not for religious belief or practice, but rather for breaking the law.<sup>24</sup>

One of the key policy initiatives in Jiang’s 1993 speech was the assertion that religion has to ‘adapt to socialist society’, under close supervision of the Communist Party. Ryan Dunch argued that ‘this was the logical corollary of the recognition, in theory, that religion would persist under socialist conditions, and reflected the Marxist

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<sup>19</sup> Some scholars refer ‘Three Sentences’ as ‘Three Phrases’. The ‘Three Sentences’ prescribed: 1. that the policy of religious freedom must be ‘completely and correctly’ implemented; 2. that the Party must strengthen the administration of religious affairs in accordance with (and by means of) law; and 3. that it must ‘actively guide’ the religions in China to adapt themselves to socialist society. (Ye Xiaowen, ‘On the importance of sincerely implementing the ‘Three Sentences’ when carrying out religious work,’ *China Study Journal*, Vol.11.No.2. (1996); See also ‘The adaptation of religion to socialist society,’

Amity news service release 2003.7/8.2.

<http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=338&pageno=2> [accessed October 19, 2008].

<sup>20</sup> ‘Guanyu jinyibu zuohao zongjiao gongzuo ruogan wenti de tongzhi’ (‘Document No.6: Circular on some problems concerning the further improvement of work on religion,’) extracted in Luo Guangwu, *Xin Zhongguo Zongjiao Gongzuo Da Shi Yaojian* (Outline of major events in religious work in the New China) (Beijing: Chinese Culture [huawen] Press, 2001), pp. 434-37. English version: ‘Document 6: CCP Central Committee/State Council, circular on some problems concerning further improving work on religion’ (5 February 1991), Appendix 1 in Spiegel, ‘Freedom of religion in China,’ pp. 27-32.

<sup>21</sup> Pitman B. Potter, ‘Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,’ *The China Quarterly* (2003), pp.320-321.

<sup>22</sup> The bureau’s official title is now the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA).

<sup>23</sup> Ryan Dunch, ‘Christianity and “Adaptation to Socialism”’, p.170; see also, Ying Fuksang, ‘New wine in old wineskins—an appraisal of China’s religious legislation and the ‘Regulations on religious affairs,’ *China Study Journal* (Spring/Summer, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Mickey Spiegel, ‘Control and containment in the reform era,’ pp. 160-163. See also, Pitman B. Potter, ‘Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,’ pp.320-321.



assumption that changes in the base will produce corresponding changes in the superstructure.’<sup>25</sup> At the same time, it helps to strengthen state supervision of the religious community, and makes available to the CCP a practical way to set up its particular standard of accepting the sectarian and other religious elements.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, social control included religious control, for which firm actions had already been generated during the early Ming (1368-1644). As Lars Laamann stated, ‘the keepers of Communist orthodoxy copied both the anti “heretical” policies and the terminology of the Qing authorities’.<sup>27</sup> For the most part, the approach of the Communist authorities after 1949 emerged as a coherent extension of Qing (1644-1911) policies.<sup>28</sup> In spite of their precise religious identity, the late imperial state considered the propagation of ‘heretical’ beliefs, wandering priests, and Christianity, as a threat to social cohesion and state security. The tension deteriorated further when the Yongzheng (1723-1735) emperor announced the ‘anti-heresy’ policy. After 1724, Christian missionaries were seen as one of the most potentially destabilising factors and Christian clerics were viewed as traitors. The ‘anti-heresy’ policy was continued by the Qinglong administration (1736-1796) and carried out consistently to the Jiaqing administration (1796-1825). Missionary activity was outlawed, and Christian clerics were almost wiped out.<sup>29</sup>

To be sure, State policy is not simply imposed. Religious organisations and individuals have participated in either constructing or modifying official ideological positions on religion, and the policies and regulations governing religion. Here again, Protestants have played a more active role than a model of control and resistance would allow because the prescription that religion must adapt to socialism has fuelled a movement for Theological Reconstruction (*shenxue jianshe*, 神學建設), that has been embraced by some church leaders to sanction theological positions they see as desirable. For instance, taking a somewhat similar stance to the CCP’s politics and the economic pragmatic stance—adopting the market economy by baptising it as ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’—Ting indicated that:

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<sup>25</sup> Ryan Dunch, ‘Christianity and “Adaptation to Socialism”,’ pp. 171-172.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172.

<sup>27</sup> Lars Laamann, ‘Anti-Christian Agitation as an Example of Late Imperial Anticlericalism’, in *Extrême-Orient*, No. 24, (2002), p.57.

<sup>28</sup> Lars Laamann, ‘Anti-Christian Agitation as an Example of Late Imperial Anticlericalism’, p.48.

<sup>29</sup> Lars Laamann, ‘Anti-Christian Agitation as an Example of Late Imperial Anticlericalism’, p.47-60.

(Christianity) has become a religious community of self-government, self-support and self-propagation. It is no longer dependent on foreign missionary societies, but is organized by a part of the Chinese citizenry out of faith in and love of Christ. It is more and more Christianity with Chinese characteristics'.<sup>30</sup>

In short, what we see in the case of Protestant Christianity, and the state, in post-Mao China is a dynamic relationship in which each side influences the other within the field of discourse marked out by the terms 'religion' and 'nation'. The movement for Theological Reconstruction has, in fact, become a foremost centre in the seminaries and publications of the TSPM/CCC since 2001. It also reflects uneasiness about the shortage of trained clerics—a result of deaths and expulsions during most of the Mao era.<sup>31</sup>

Consequently, the range of work published under the set of guidelines of Theological Reconstruction is very comprehensive. Some of this work has merged with the Sino-Christian theology movement, which has developed out of the 'Cultural Christian' (*wenhua jidutu*, 文化基督徒) element in Chinese intellectual life since the early 1990s. In this regard the phenomenon of 'Cultural Christians' is the most interesting development. They tended to decline a narrow interpretation of Christianity to socialism, or a purely ethical understanding of theology.<sup>32</sup> Their main concern lies primarily in contemporary Chinese culture, rather than the traditional culture. These scholars are commonly based in China's leading universities and research institutions, leading figures including Liu Xiaofeng, Yang Huilin and He Guanghu. Instead of taking Chinese Christianity as an object of study, most of them attempted to integrate Christian theology into Chinese-language humanistic scholarship, without actually adopting a standpoint of belief.<sup>33</sup> They have translated Western books of Christian theology, philosophy and history into Chinese, published books and articles to discuss various aspects of Christianity or Christian culture, and

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<sup>30</sup> K.H. Ting, 'Retrospect and prospect—Opening address before the third Chinese National Christian Conference,' *Tian Feng*, (March, 1981); For English translation, see <http://www.christianityinchina.org/PreGen/n359/CTR1985.doc> (accessed 14th October 2006)

<sup>31</sup> Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007), p.339.

<sup>32</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, p. 361.

<sup>33</sup> Carine Defoort, 'Editor's introduction,' in *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol.36, No. 1 (2004); Li Qiuling, 'Historical reflections on "Sino-Christian theology"', Alison Hardie, (trans.) *China Study Journal*, Spring/ Summer (2007); Yang Huilin & Daniel H.N.Yeung, (eds.) *Sino-Christian Studies in China* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006).

lectured on university campuses to introduce Christianity.<sup>34</sup> Many college students and intellectuals have initially been drawn to Christianity through reading their publications rather than through contacts with the church or Christian believers.<sup>35</sup>

One of the major concerns in the Theological Reconstruction mission has been to take the concept of 'reconciliation' as a fundamental principle, paralleling the reconciliation of humanity to God in Christ with social reconciliation between Christians and non-Christians in China. This is a main element in Ting's theology, which has linked a theology of reconciliation to 'affirming the reasonableness of socialist society, thus enabling Christianity to adapt to socialist society'.<sup>36</sup> As Ryan Dunch indicated, 'Theological Reconstruction is essentially the net result of a gradual redefinition of the Communist Party's ideology on religion to allow for the possibility that some forms of religion can exist.'<sup>37</sup>

There are many mixed reviews, from the openly critical to the cautiously supportive within and outside China. For example, critical evangelical voices from North America emphasise the ideological and political dimensions of Theological Reconstruction and resistance by house churches. They regard Ting's endeavours as simply political: he deliberates to 'neutralise' Christianity by shaping it to fit the agenda of the CCP.<sup>38</sup> According to the critics, certain fundamental teachings of Christian doctrine, such as Christology and the doctrine of justification by faith are distorted in a process of 'harmonization' between Christian and non-Christian perceptive; religious faith is eventually substituted by morality. Some of them regard his theology as a 'hegemonic ideology' forced on grass roots Christians in China.<sup>39</sup> The founder of the China Ministries International, Jonathan Chao, for instance,

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<sup>34</sup> ISCCC (Institute for the Study of Christian Culture in Chinese), (ed.) *Wenhua jidutu: xianxiang yu lunzheng* (Cultural Christians: the phenomenon and the debate), (Hong Kong: ISCCC, 1990); Chen Cunfu & Edwin Hsu, 'Wenhua Jidutu' *Xianxiang De Zonglan Yu Fansi* (An overview and reflection on the phenomenon of 'cultural Christians'), *Regent Journal* [Vancouver], (1998), pp.2-3; An Ximeng, 'Wenhua jidutu shi sheme ren?' (What are the cultural Christians?) *Shijie zongjiao wenhua* (World religions culture) (Beijing, 2000) (1), pp. 36-37; Zhuo Xinping, 'Discussion on "cultural Christians" in China,' in O. S. Uhalley Jr. & Xiaoxin Wu (ed.), *China and Christianity: Burdened Pass, Hopeful Future* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Shape, 2001), pp. 283-300.

<sup>35</sup> Yang Huilin, 'Inculturation or contextualization: interpretation of Christianity in the context of Chinese culture,' *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol.36, No.1 (Fall, 2004), 25ff.

<sup>36</sup> Chen Yilu, 'Approaches to Theological Reconstruction in the Chinese Church: A Reading of K.H. Ting's *Love Never Ends*,' *Chinese Theological Review* 16, (2003).

<sup>37</sup> Ryan Dunch, 'Christianity and "Adaptation to socialism",' p.164.

<sup>38</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, pp.341-342; 350-352. A similar comment also can find in David Aikman's work, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> Jason Kindopp, *The Politics of Protestantism in Contemporary China: State Control, Civil society and Social Movement in a Single Party State*, pp. 291-362.

viewed Ting as ‘an unreconstructed liberal who was promoting Theological Reconstruction as the agenda of the Chinese Communist Party.’<sup>40</sup> A similar view was occupied by Liu Yichu who contended that modern Protestant theology in China is ‘compromising unconditionally with the mainstream ideology, cooperating with political need.’ According to Liu, Protestant leaders ‘have destroyed the Chinese church in the name of loving the church.’<sup>41</sup> The well-known theological writer and biblical scholar from mainland China, Li Xinyuan, criticised Ting for his optimism about the world. With a strong emphasis on God’s judgment and human sin, Li condemned Ting’s emphasis on God as love and his ‘Cosmic Christology’ as expressions of a liberal universalism that proposes to ambiguous the distinct identity of Christians. He therefore laid blame on Ting, stating he ‘changes the Gospel and confuses the truth.’<sup>42</sup>

Without a doubt, there have been various appreciative responses as well. They praised the endeavour of Ting as a venture of transforming the conservative face of the church in China.<sup>43</sup> For instance, Kim Yongbock, a Korean minjung theologian, has suggested that Theological Reconstruction should be taken seriously in other Asian churches in order to get rid of the problems inherited from the missionary history.<sup>44</sup> Ecumenical interpreters from North America, such as Don Messer and John S. Peale, also offered positive assessments of Ting’s ‘banyan tree theology,’

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<sup>40</sup>Quoted from Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, p.360.

<sup>41</sup>See Liu Yichun, ‘Why do we leave school?’ [www.chinahousechurch.org/chinese/give%20up.htm](http://www.chinahousechurch.org/chinese/give%20up.htm) (June 25, 2003)

<sup>42</sup>Li Xinyuan, *Theological Construction—or Deconstruction: An Analysis of the Theology of Bishop K.H. Ting* (Streamwood, Ill. And Mountain View, Ca.: Christian Life Press and Great Commission Center International, 2003). Li’s work was originally published as a series of essays in Chinese as Li Xinyuan, ‘Yige “buxin pai” de biaoben—Ting Kuangxun wenji pingxi’ (A Classical Example of the ‘Party of Unbelief’—A critical analysis of the Collected Works of Ting Kuangxun), *Shengming jikan* (Christian Life Quarterly) 4, Nos. 2, 3 and 4 (2000): 23-29, 33-36 and 15-20. For an introduction to criticism, see also Zhu Xiaohong, ‘Reflections on the Reconstruction of Theological Thinking’, in Miikka ruokanen and Paulos Huang (eds.), *Christianity and Chinese Culture: A Sino-Nordic Conference on Chinese Contextual Theology* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004), pp.376-390.

<sup>43</sup>Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, p.365.

<sup>44</sup>Jin Rongfu (Kim Youngbock), ‘Relie zhuhe Ting Kuangxun wenji hanyuban yinxing’ (On the Publication of the Korean Version of the Collected Works of Ting Kuangxun), *Nanjing Theological Review* 43, No.2 (2000): 11-14. See also Kim Youngbock, ‘The Theology of K.H. Ting: From an Asian Perspective,’ 2006, unpublished manuscript, 9 pp. For Hong Kong church leaders’ reflections, see ‘Theological Reconstruction and a Ministerial Order for the Chinese Church,’ ANS 2004. 9/10.4, <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=540&pointer> (accessed 1 December 2005). The report is based on a longer essay by Pan Naizhao (Michael Poon), ‘Cong jiaohui tizhi de jianli kan zhaongguo shenxue sixiang chongjian de zeren’ (Theological Reconstruction in Light of Establishing Ministerial Order), *JL* (Nanjing Theological Review), 4 (2003), pp. 151-64.

considering it a way of promoting dialogue between Christianity and the world beyond the church.<sup>45</sup>

This study is, in part, motivated by a desire to uncover why Ting's work has been constructed in the way it has been, to delve beneath its totalising discourses as they were shaped and reshaped in the transitional period, and on into the 1980s, when Three-Self theologians were active again. No form of knowledge emerges independently of complex networks of power, and that the exercise of power produces certain types of knowledge. About the same time that Ting's *wenji* was published, political essays in China were using the term 'ideological construction' or 'political thought' (*Sixiang zhengzhi jianshe*, 思想政治建設) to speak of the need to develop ideology and morality in the spirit of Jiang Zemin's vision of socialism. As Ting writes in his work, he is offering a Christian theological contribution to this same overall effort. I argue that, having shifted away from its traditional Marxist-Maoist basis of legitimisation, the CCP is compelled to reposition itself in relation to the 'people' and 'nation'. As nationalism is embraced as a supplementary ideology it has opened up considerable room for Ting's theology and enabled him to articulate his theological discourse, under the protection of the official patriotic rhetoric.

As Ting's work is considered as an official guide to Theological Reconstruction, the examination of Ting's theology also aims to seek answers to how, and why, the CCP accommodates or endorses Ting's projects, discourses and evaluations, and what is the impact of this. Simultaneously, it examines the ways in which Ting's theology takes advantage of the official discourse by articulating the meaning of the same signifiers that the CCP wants to hegemonize, such as patriotism, national interest, and national harmony. In particular, with the leadership of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiaobao since 2002, a shift in Party ideology from the rapid growth of the 'socialist market economy' and the 'Four Modernisations' to the construction of a new 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui*, 和諧社會) has occurred. China may well have embarked on a new path of state-led reconstruction of institutional religious life, in which the state is

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<sup>45</sup> Don Messer, 'The Chinese Banyan Tree Theology of Bishop K.H. Ting,' [http://d74249.u23.toughdomains.net/cms/user/3docs/banyan\\_tree\\_theology.pdf](http://d74249.u23.toughdomains.net/cms/user/3docs/banyan_tree_theology.pdf) (access, December 2009); John S. Peale, *The Love of God in China: Can One Be Both Chinese and Christian* (New York, Lincoln and Shanghai: iUniverse, 2005), pp.115-137. See also Tobias Brandauer, 'Jianshe Theology: Reflections about the Process of Theological Reconstruction in China,' *International Review of Mission* 93, No. 369 (April 2004), pp. 199-209; Wang Peng (ed.), *Seeking Truth in Love* (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2006). This is a bilingual volume of reflection on Ting's theology. The Chinese title is *Zai ai zhong xunqiu zhenli*.

no longer content merely to monitor and control the grassroots upsurge of religiosity, but is assuming an active, leading role in managing, guiding, and rebuilding the various bodies of religious clergy, theological doctrines, and institutional religious structures. This study, therefore, intends to explore the role Ting's theology is now playing in the CCP's contemporary propaganda.

## **2.Promoting a theology with 'Chinese characteristics'**

Although the PRC has been established since 1949, many Christians are still very suspicious of the government, and vice versa. Ideologically speaking, due to the fact that the Chinese government is communist and atheist in nature, Chinese Christians find it difficult to cooperate with a government which attempts to extinguish the Christian faith. Some fundamentalist leaders openly deride the CCP as the 'anti-Christ' and a 'big red dragon', proclaiming that 'the whole world lies in the power of the evil one', condemned to imminent destruction. The other indicated that the two-horned beast and the red horse depicted in the Book of Revelations represent the Communist Party.<sup>46</sup>

In particular, the memories of the bitter crackdown on independent churches are not forgotten, and the emotional and spiritual scars of those years have deepened their distrust of the TSPM, and its relationship with the CCP. Christians, in general, do not take an active role to support the government. They hold a literal view of the Bible and are more oriented to personal spirituality than academic theology.<sup>47</sup> They are, by and large, the most determinedly apolitical in their religious outlook; because the distinctive reason for such confrontation is the awareness that the TSPM and CCC are political entities and that the church must remain completely separate from the political sphere.<sup>48</sup> These Protestants argue that they are patriotic citizens who are engaging in normal religious activities that do not subvert the state, or violate the rights of others. However, the state has usually regarded their refusal to register, or to affiliate with the TSPM/ CCC as a political act, and has consistently employed its coercive power against them, with penalties running from short-term imprisonment,

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<sup>46</sup>Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p.22.

<sup>47</sup>Ryan Dunch, 'Protestant Christianity in China Today: Fragile, Fragmented, Flourishing', pp. 203-204.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 209ff.

or fines to prison sentences of fifteen years or more.<sup>49</sup> In this case, unsurprisingly, they became the object of the prescriptive side of both state policy and Theological Reconstruction.

Similarly, Ye Xiaowen, head of the national Religious Affairs Bureau, told church leaders in 2001 that ‘adaptation to socialism’ (yu shehui zhuyi shehui xiangshiyang, 與社會主義社會相適應) meant altering the conservative theological orientation of Chinese Protestants, and he connected Theological Reconstruction clearly to that agenda. His views were summarised as follows in the Christian periodical *Tian Feng*:

Despite the achievement of the past fifty years, there were still numerous problems affecting Chinese Protestant Christianity, Ye conceded. He mentioned conservative currents of theology still popular with many Chinese Protestants. Such theological remnants of the past could impede social development and prove problematic for the adaptation to socialist society, Ye warned. Therefore, the ongoing movement for building theology was of great importance of Chinese Protestantism, Ye maintained. The criterion for its success was whether it promoted Protestantism’s adaptation to socialist society. Ye expressed his hope for broad participation in the movement for building theology and promised the Party’s encouragement and support.<sup>50</sup>

Such explicit state pressure on the internal content of religious belief is seldom expressed as explicitly as this, but it reveals the fundamental dilemma of religion and the state in contemporary China. In political terms, most Protestants, whether or not they are associated with the TSPM/ CCC, see themselves as loyal and patriotic citizens who accept the ‘love one’s nation, love one’s religion’ (*aiguo aijiao*, 愛國愛教) principle, and the need for religious believers to contribute constructively in society. However, on the more particular question of the ‘nation’ as defined in official discourse, Protestants are likely to accept Communist Party rule as appointed by God (following Romans 13), but to view the church and the state as separate, and to be more reserved than their ecclesiastical leaders about the theological implications of socialist modernisation.

In addition, since the open door policy initiated by Deng Xiaopeng in the late 1970s, China has undergone tremendous changes.<sup>51</sup> Although the open door policy is

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<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Watch/ Asia (HRW) *China: Continuing Religious Repression* (New York, London, Washington, Brussels: Human Rights Watch, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> ‘Head of national religious affairs bureau addresses CC/TSPM plenum,’ Amity News Service releases 2000.11/12.2. <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page-750> (accessed August, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> In 1979, China decided to open up to the outside world. Consequently, a few important steps have been taken in this effort: 1. The government has decentralized decision making regarding exports and imports to local governments or regional foreign trade corporations. 2. A series of special economic

basically of economic concern, its impact is not restricted solely to economic life. The shift in Party ideology and theory over the Reform era, toward a more positive assessment of the role of religious believers in the nation allowing for the compatibility of certain forms of religion with Chinese socialist modernity, was due to the changing religious reality on the ground. It also reflected the participation of Protestant and other religious leaders and scholars in theoretical debates, and their efforts to secure greater autonomy for the religions they represented, over the 1980s and 1990s.

In order to speed up the modernisation of China, a relatively open and liberal internal policy has become necessary. This, unavoidably, creates a relatively wider space for religious communities to have more contact with the outside, and, as a result, this in turn could threaten the government. For instance, one of the serious deficiencies of the open door policy is the intensified corruption in China. Jiang Zemin openly offers the criticism that:

(S)ince the open door policy we have had a great achievement in political economy and spiritual development, but there are some things which need to be tackled, that is, the shallowness of political ideology, materialism, hedonism and corruption.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, demographic expansion caused new tensions to arise. For example, in terms of self-propagation more trained church leaders were needed to assist with conveying the dominant ideology of the CCP.<sup>53</sup> On the surface, it appeared as simply a matter of self-propagation; nevertheless, it essentially was the subject matter of theology. It reflected, as a necessity, theological discourse which can advocate the nation-state's ultimate claims to 'truth', and legitimises its exercise of power; in particular providing the spiritual justification for nationalism.

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zones and coastal open cities were assigned for the purpose of stimulating exports and attracting foreign investment. 3. Administrative restrictions on exports and imports were replaced by tariffs, quotas and licensing. 4. Controls on foreign exchange have been loosened over the years, particularly for foreign-invested/managed firms. Since then, China has built numerous direct links with the outside world. Commodity trade, services trade and foreign investment in China have, all, increased by leaps and bounds. (See Wei Shangjin, 'The open door policy and China's rapid growth: evidence from city-level data' in Takatoshi Itō, Anne O. Krueger (ed.), *Growth theories in light of the East Asian Experience* [University of Chicago Press, 1995], pp. 73-76; Sung Yunwing, *The China-Hong Kong connection: the key to China's open-door policy* [Cambridge University Press, 1991], pp. 1-13).

<sup>52</sup> Ying Fuktang, *Church-State Relations in Contemporary China* (Hong Kong: Christianity & Chinese Culture Research Centre, 1999), p. 149.

<sup>53</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, pp. 340-341.



Here, it is necessary to clarify that Chinese nationalism is a many-layered and multi-faceted phenomenon.<sup>54</sup> Modern versions of nationalism did not exist in traditional China. As Michael Hunt pointed out, patriotism is a better term for describing and explaining the particular characteristics of the Chinese search for national identity.<sup>55</sup> It might be fair to say that Chinese nationalism is a by product of how Chinese response to their internal crises and external events. The advocates of change, especially since the year of 1919 May Fourth Movement, outlined their aims as bringing 'science' and 'democracy' to China.<sup>56</sup> And one of the most important organisations that came into sight from the movement was the Chinese Communist Party, founded in 1921. In retrospect, the Party itself might highlight the impact of the movement repeatedly, with the aim of presenting themselves as a powerful 'answer of how China could be made modern in the victory of Mao 1949.'<sup>57</sup>

In this study, the concept of nationalism is regarded as the discourse of official patriotism (*aigou zhuyi*, 愛國主義). As a result of the decline of believing in Marxism or Maoism after the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese leadership was and is certainly alert to the danger of an ideological vacuum. Often consciously more, owing to rapid economic growth, for the first time in modern history China is expanding its ability to bring different parts of China together; including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. The language patriotism employed as a powerful language of unity, and specifically of political unity. As Zheng Youngnian stated, it helped to unite individuals who differed on social, cultural, and religious grounds in the common struggle for emancipation and the extension of citizenship. It offered words and slogans that

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<sup>54</sup> Wang Gungwu, *The Revival of Chinese Nationalism* (Leiden International Institute for Asian Studies, 1996). The development of nationalism in the late Qing and early Republic is overviewed in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Armonk, 1996). Important studies include Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995); Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC, 2002); and Arthur Wadron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925* (UK: Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Michael H. Hunt, 'Chinese National Identity and the Strong State: The Late Qing-Republican Crisis', in Lowell Dittmer & Samuel S. Kim (eds.), *China Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 63-79.

<sup>56</sup> According to Mitter's work, a standard definition of the May Fourth Movement could portray in this way: 'it was a period from the mid-1910s to the late 1920s or early 1930s when a group of Chinese thinkers felt that something was holding their country back from combating evils such as imperialism and warlordism, even though the old imperial Qing dynasty had been overthrown and a Republic established. The answer these thinkers came up with was that traditional Chinese culture, based on the philosophy of Confucius, was largely to blame. The ancient form of hierarchical thinking, they felt, was responsible for the callous treatment of the poor, the persistence of patriarchal oppression of women, and the inability to create a modern nation state.' (Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.14-15.)

<sup>57</sup> Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, p.18.

reshaped people's passions.<sup>58</sup> It is probable to say that the spirit and idea of May Fourth has reminded enormously significant in China since the event of 1919.<sup>59</sup> It still runs through Chinese lives and thoughts, as Mitter remarked, 'a common thread passed from one generation to another.'<sup>60</sup>

While reading Ting's proposal within these considerations, it is not difficult to understand why Ting's theological position in the 1980s became incredibly important. On the one hand, Ting believed that the church in China was mostly fundamentalist, and restricted by a nineteenth-century missionary mentality. Only by moving beyond this could the church become genuinely self-governing, self-supporting, and therefore making possible an authentic contextualisation of Christianity. Thus, one of the main tasks of his theology was constructed with the intention of overcoming the apolitical tendencies of Chinese Christians. In the meantime the 'individualistic wing', which upheld otherworldly interest and a lack of interest in the national destiny, was regarded as not willing to be reconciled to the reality of New China. On the other hand, Ting centred his theological discourse mainly on the affirmation of humanity, the present world, and human history, which we shall consider more fully below. In so doing, Ting not only encourages the Church to take an active role in society, but is also focusing his theological discourse on the moral impact of Christian ethics, more specifically, in new China.

The majority of Ting's writings were in the form of speeches, lectures and occasional articles spread over several decades. From the 1940s to the end of the Cultural Revolution his concerns were very similar to those of Wu Yaozong (1893-1979), better known as Y. T. Wu, founder of the Protestant TSM.<sup>61</sup> Like most Chinese Christian intellectuals of his time, Wu paid most attention to the question of how Christianity can be relevant to the changing Chinese society, and what contribution Christianity could make to the social and spiritual reconstruction of the country.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Zheng Yongnian, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> In 1919, Paris Peace Conference denies return of German colonies to China; patriotic students demonstrate at Beijing on Fourth May and end by attacking and burning government minister Cao Rulin's house.

<sup>60</sup> Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> The TSM has published a collection of essays on Y.T.Wu entitled *In Memory of Mr. Wu Yaozong* (Shanghai, 1982). A short biography of Y.T.Wu is contained in Howard Boorman (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), Vol.3, pp.457-460.

<sup>62</sup> Leung Kalun, *Wu Yaozong san lun* (Y.T. Wu's understanding of Christianity and its relation to the Chinese Communism) (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, Christianity & Chinese Culture

Although China was never fully colonised by Western powers, the urgency of foreign imperialist threatened Chinese sovereignty from Western, Japanese, and Russian powers, contributing the essential ingredients to the violent and totalising nature of state-strengthening in China. Wu made use of the political situation, right after 1949, to accomplish the founding on a national scale of the Three-Self Movement. In 1950, Wu led a group of Christian leaders who drafted 'The Christian Manifesto', in consultation with Premier Zhou Enlai. With this statement the leaders of the newly founded Three-Self Movement declared their support for the People's Republic of China, and its programme of political and social reform. In order to provide a concerted effort to help people discern the influence of imperialism in the church, both past and present, and join with the government in its reform efforts, emphasis was placed on the duty of the churches to 'cultivate a patriotic and democratic spirit...The movement for autonomy, self-support, and self-propagation hitherto promoted in the Chinese church has already attained a measure of success.'<sup>63</sup>

In his work, Wu eagerly embraced all the modern discourses that the West had to offer: Enlightenment, social evolutionism, Protestantism, and scientific atheism. He believed that the essence of Christianity can easily be distilled from its cultural forms. In other words, if one only subtracts Western culture from a Western Christ, the Chinese can obtain the essential Christ. This essential can then be integrated with Chinese culture to produce a Chinese Christianity.<sup>64</sup> Wu situated love at the centre of the Christian faith. He even equated God with love. Love for Wu, however, was not metaphysical but practical. The principle of love was, for Wu, a principle of action. The way to God was through identification with Jesus Christ as the person revealed in the Sermon on the Mount and expressed in utter selflessness.<sup>65</sup> Judged by the criteria of love he considers that the Communists denied God, but put love into practice, while many Christians whilst professing Jesus all the time, lack any commitment to the suffering masses. Wu, therefore, showed his support to the Communist movement,

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Research Centre, 1996); See also, Ng liming, *Christianity and Social Change in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1990, pp.175-234.

<sup>63</sup> Far Eastern Office of Division of foreign Missions, *Documents of the Three-Self Movement* (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963), p.20.

<sup>64</sup> Y.T. Wu (ed.) *Bianzhengfa weiwulun xuexi shouce* (Dialectic Materialism) (Shanghai: The Association Press, 1950), p.21; *Jidujiao yu xin zhongguo* (Christianity and New China) (Shanghai: The Association Press, 1940), p.276; *Shehui fuying* (Social Gospel), (Shanghai: The Association Press, 1934), pp. 17-18.

<sup>65</sup> Wu, 'Cong jidujiao de guandian kan xianshi' (Looking At Reality from the Standpoint of Christianity), in *Hei an yu kuangming* (Darkness and the light) (Shanghai: The Association Press, 1949), p.122; *Meiyou ren jian guo shangdi* (No Man Has Seen God), (Shanghai: The Association Press, 1948), p.148; 'Zongjiao de jianglai' (The Future of Religion), in *Shehui fuying* (Social Gospel), p.156.

seeing it as the only hope for China.<sup>66</sup> In particular, after 1949, Wu devoted all his energies to setting up the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. His principal concern was to find a bridge between the Church and atheistic socialism, between belief and non-belief. He saw the realm of God extending beyond the narrow circle of believers and the special meaning of Christ as the sustainer of the whole cosmos, a theme which his successor Bishop Ting was to explore further after him.<sup>67</sup>

In 1983, Ting indicated that; 'I think we may say that Y.T. Wu in starting the TSM was doing something comparable to the historical role that Paul played, in that they both caused the Christian religion to rid itself of certain deformities and narrowness and ushered it into a new stage of history.' Ting emphasised that it was Wu himself who enabled Chinese Christianity 'to get a fresh image before the Chinese people.' Ting also wrote about how he was inspired by his predecessor when he saw 'how closely Wu's love for Christ and his concern for the well-being of the people were harmonised and how his loyalty to Christ generated in him a great passion for truth, for life's ideals and for the people.'<sup>68</sup> Most of the other leaders of the TSM and certain Western Christians sympathetic to the movement cherish a similar respect for Wu. However, Wu was far from a positive figure in the eyes of quite a few Western critics. The editors of *Ching Feng* (a Hong Kong Christian periodical) wrote: 'Wu has been branded by some as a heretic or an anti-Christ, while others would question his intentions and his integrity as a Christian and wonder if he has not betrayed his faith through the close alliance with the Communist government.'<sup>69</sup> Although the majority of Western critics have made a negative assessment of Wu, there are also a few Westerners who take a middle position, critical but not denunciatory of him, such as Francis Price Jones.<sup>70</sup>

A fair treatment of Wu's thought would need a greater length and depth of study. The purpose here is to present how Ting carries on Wu's unfinished enterprise in the

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<sup>66</sup> Wu, 'The Kingdom of God And The Eumenical Movement,' *Chinese Records* 70 (November 1939), pp. 644-45; Ting, 'Sixiang bu duan de gengxin de Wu Yaozong xian sheng' (The ever reforming Mr. Y.T. Wu), *Wenji*, pp. 463-469.

<sup>67</sup> Wu (ed.) *Bianzhengfa weiwulun xuexi shouce* (Dialectic Materialism), p.21

<sup>68</sup> K.H. Ting, 'Forerunner Y.T. Wu', *Wenji*, pp. 441-452; 'Xianjin de Wu xiansheng' (The forerunner Mr. Wu.) in *Huiyi Wu Yaozong xiansheng* (In memory of Mr. Wu Yaozong), (Shanghai: Zhongguo jidujiao sanzhi aiguo weiyuanhui, 1982), pp. 87-102.

<sup>69</sup> Ng Leeming (Wu Liming) 'Jidujiao yu zhongguo shehui bianqian' (Christianity and social change in China), (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1981); see also 'A study of Y.T. Wu', *Ching Feng* 15.1 (Mar. 1972).

<sup>70</sup> Jones, Francis P. *The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal* (New York: Friendship Press, 1962).

1980s and onward. It is interesting to note that in order to make Christianity more relevant to socialist China, Ting appeals to the cosmic principle. Most often the critics of K.H. Ting view his idea of 'the Cosmic Christ' as a step toward building a bridge between the church and Chinese socialist realities, opening up a way to collaboration with atheistic Communists.<sup>71</sup> The concept of love became central to the understanding of both the nature of God, as well as the principle of religious action in society in his theology. Ting sees the realm of God extending beyond the narrow circle of believers; all who put love into practice are God's co-workers, without even being conscious of it.<sup>72</sup> Ting interprets the universality of Christianity on the basis of the cosmic dimension of God. That is to say, the universality of Christianity is the comic universality of God who has revealed himself in nature, and in the various cultures through their sages and prophets. The difference between Christianity and Chinese culture is not one of kind, but of degree. The emphasis on sin and justification was secondary to the cosmic order of creative love. Christian life was seen to be one of selfless duty and the search for moral perfection.

Ting's work is seen as positive in clarifying the relation of faith to the political sphere, and in showing what the church must do in order that the appropriate relation is realised. More importantly, it meets the needs of the CCP. That is to say, Ting's attempts, by and large, were and are welcomed by the CCP largely because of its accomplishment of the United Front, absorbing the Church into its structure. Even if Christianity is used as a theological base to legitimise socialism, it successfully generates an atmosphere of discussion, and cooperation between the government and the Church. However, the flip side, in this case, has been entering a conversation with the state, on grounds already defined for it, as exemplified in the movement for Theological Reconstruction. Not only are the definitional categories and boundaries set by the state, but the legitimacy of the state's power to set those parameters is accepted and perpetuated by participation in the conversation on the terms given.<sup>73</sup>

In this study, I am suggesting that one of Ting's theological proposal objectives is to 'renationalise' Chinese Christianity by forcing it into the line with a nationalist framework. By consistently and persistently asserting their Chinese selfhood and

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<sup>71</sup>Edmond Tang, 'Theology and Context in East Asia,' *Studies in World Christianity* Vol. 1 (1995), pp. 68-79, and 'East Asia,' in John Parrat (ed.), *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.83-84.

<sup>72</sup>Edmond Tang, 'Theology and Context in East Asia,' pp. 68-79, and 'East Asia,' pp.83-84.

<sup>73</sup>Ryan Dunch, 'Christianity and "Adaptation to Socialism",' pp.155-156.

independence from foreign denomination and control, the terms of producing a truly Chinese theology actually came to include dual particular meanings. They are: support the leadership of the CCP in China, and to modify the attitude of Chinese Christians who played minor roles or showed disinterest in their country's revolution. What has been brought to light is that the faith and function of the Church, as well as the approval of God, find its ultimate expression in support of the State. In this sense, faith and social ethics, together with Church and nation, collapse into one another. Hence, the duty for the Christian becomes inseparable from duty to the nation.

I argue that, as a whole, Ting's theological discourse conformed its theory and praxis according to the political common ground of the nation-state. The CCP was not only viewed as the subject of history, but also the ultimate ground of theological assessment. As long as Christianity and the 'socialist new Chinese' identity fit in with the nationalist conception of the nation, they will appear valid and legitimate. To look at it another way, in order to present a well-tailored product, having a good fit for the political and religious demands of the CCP, the main purpose of reconstructing Christianity is not to try to make Christianity easier to be accepted by the Chinese in China's culture and social situation. Rather, it is intended to use a 'post-transformational Christianity' as an instrument to provide help for the Chinese to look for a way out of their political situation.

### **3. Ting's theology in a Three-Self framework**

Christians and scholars, both within and outside China, remain deeply divided in their understanding and assessment of Ting's work and contributions. Because of Ting's support for socialism in China, some see him as a Communist Party satellite and propagandist. The TSPM, in their view, is a representative of the government which continues to persecute the 'true Church'.<sup>74</sup> These points of view were made, most notably, by a number of former missionaries in China during the 1950s. They regarded the TSPM and its leadership as a political arm working side by side with an atheist government. It helped the state to line up all the possible elements and

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<sup>74</sup> Samuel E. Boyle, *The Church in Red China 'Leans to One Side'* (Hong Kong, 1950). C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961). Leslie Lyall, *Three of China's Mighty Men* (London: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1973); *Come Wind, Come Weather: The Present Experience of The Church in China* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960).

eliminated obstacles to achieve the given goal of the state.<sup>75</sup> For many others, this position was strengthened, or even vindicated, by the experience of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>76</sup>

Although the assumption that Christianity and Communism should stand in fundamental opposition remains the same, there were other voices in the 1970s Protestant missions—appointing to a more dynamic and constructive approach to the understanding of Chinese Christian existence in light of research surrounding the turbulent history of the 1950s. That is to say, unlike those whose main audiences were Western congregations and scholars concerned with the demise of missions in China in the 1960s and 1970s, Chinese Christian scholars outside the mainland were primarily interested in the relationship between Christianity and Chinese history and culture.<sup>77</sup> These interests resulted in becoming the operative framework by which the analysis of the TSPM's contribution to Chinese Christianity is evaluated alongside conflicts between the indigenous churches and the TSPM. For instance, the impact of nationalist upheavals on Prone, on their drive to indigenise Christianity in China, has been extensively studied in the last three decades.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Lacy Creighton, *Protestant Missions in China* (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1953. Ann. Arbor: UMI, 1967). Patterson, George N., *Christianity in Communist China* (Waco: Word Books, 1969). Victor Hayward, *Christian and China* (Belfast: Christian Journals Ltd., 1974). William H. Clark, *The Church in China: Its Vitality, Its Future?* (New York: Council Press, 1970). Paul E. Kauffman, *China, the Emerging Challenge: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).

<sup>76</sup> Mary Wang, *With God in Red China* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976); *The Chinese Church that Will Not Die* (Wheaton: Tynadle House, 1972). David Shek, 'The Church in China under Communism: The First Six Years,' in Linda B. Hamel (ed.), *The Cross in China: Papers of the China Symposium* (Gordon-Corwell Theological Seminary, 1980). Sonna Schambach, 'The harvest field is white in the People's Republic of China,' in Linda B. Hamel (ed.), *The Cross in China: Papers of the China Symposium* (Gordon-Corwell Theological Seminary, 1980). Patricia Neils, *China Images in the Life and Times of Henry Luce* (Savage: Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Inc., 1990).

<sup>77</sup> David M. Paton (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953). Francis Price Jones (ed.), *The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal* (New York: Friendship Press, 1962). Jessie G. Lutz, *Christian Missions in China—Evangelists of What?* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1965). D. Adeney, *China: Christian Students Face the Revolution* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1973). George A. Hood, *Mission Accomplished? The English Presbyterian Mission in Lingtung, South China* (Frankfurt Am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986).

<sup>78</sup> Most notably by Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-1928* (Notre Dame: IN: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988); *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: NY: Cornell University Press, 1971). Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916-1952* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976). Lam Winghung (Lin Ronghong), *Fengchao Zhong Fenqi De Zhongguo Jiaohui* (Chinese Theology in Construction) (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 1980). Ng Liming, *Christianity and Social Change in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1990). Jonathan Chao, 'The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919-1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movements in Modern China,' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1986). Peter Chenmain Wang, *Wenshe De Shengshuai* (The Rise of Fall of the National Christian Literature Association of China) (Taipei: Yuzhou Guang, 1993); including two major collections of scholarship on Chinese Christianity edited by John King Fairbank, *The missionary enterprise in China*

Overall, before the 1970s the main ideologies of most scholars remained the same. Communism was regarded as ‘the enemy’, and any fellow Christians who had chosen to cooperate were either viewed with suspicion, or labelled as traitors. Nonetheless, in these approaches there are inabilities to get a deeper understanding of either the contribution or deficiencies of the TSM to the survival of Chinese churches. To some extent, it is not unfair to say that most Christian understanding has been formed in social contexts vastly different from that of the PRC. As a result, their theological perspective is bound up with other presuppositions about the nature of society and politics and is unchallenged. Although they appear to be sincere in their evangelical motivations, the fundamental barriers of understanding for the situation of Christianity in the PRC remain. As Philip L. Wickeri points out, for those who are living in a socialist society, this approach is unrealistic. It simply appears that the conservative stance will leave no room for the individual to work deliberately in and for society, and thereby witness to Jesus Christ, specifically within a Marxist framework. As a result, taking the passive and apocalyptic is regarded as the best stance for them. Thus, ‘there is a failure either to take seriously the positive content of Communism or to develop a creative theological response.’<sup>79</sup>

During the ‘Cultural Revolution’ (1966-1976), particularly from 1969 to 1974, not a single article on religion was published in journals, magazines, or newspapers in the PRC.<sup>80</sup> It was during this period of time when the American observer Donald MacInnis (1973) visited China, reporting a totally secularised society with empty churches and temples, and willing atheist young people.<sup>81</sup> Books about religion began

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and America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974) and Daniel Bays (ed.), *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). And the characteristics of traditional millenarian sects in Chinese society have been studied by Daniel L. Overmyer, *Religions of China: The World as a Living System* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986); ‘The White Cloud Sect in Sung and Yuan China,’ *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 42:2, (Dec. 1982), pp. 615-642; ‘Alternatives: popular religious sects in Chinese society,’ *Modern China*, Vol. 7: 22, (April 1981), pp. 153-190. Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976). Jean Chesneaux, *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China, 1840-1950* (Stanford University Press, 1973).

<sup>79</sup> Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China’s United Front* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Yang Fenggang, ‘Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China,’ *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 65, No. 2. (Summer, 2004), p. 104.

<sup>81</sup> C. P. FitzGerald, ‘Religion and China’s Cultural Revolution,’ *Pacific Affairs* 40 (1-2) (1967), pp. 124-129. M. S. Bates, ‘Churches and Christians in China, 1950-1967: Fragments of Understanding,’ *Pacific Affairs* 41 (2) (1968), pp. 199-213; ‘Christianity in the People’s Republic,’ *China Notes* 6.2 (1968). Holmes Welch, ‘Buddhism since the Cultural Revolution,’ *China Quarterly* 40 (October-December, 1969), pp. 127-136; Lucy Jen Huang, ‘The Role of Religion in Communist Chinese Society’,



to be published, including introductions or general surveys, of various religions and historical studies of Chinese Buddhism, Daoism, Islam and Christian missions after 1979.<sup>82</sup> Historians, anthropologists, sociologists and religious studies scholars provide a historical background to the vicissitudes of Chinese religious life in the twentieth century; a period of cataclysmic social change, warfare, trauma, and poverty, as well as economic growth at the end of the century. Monographs on the post-Mao religious revival include: Adam Chau on deity temples and the role of local officials in rural Shaanxi; Richard Madsen and Eriberto Lozada on Catholicism; Jing Jun on lineage revival and collective memory in Gansu Province; Erik Mueggler on spirit possession and healing among the Lolo (Yi) minority of rural Yunnan; Wang Mingming on popular religion as local autonomy and social welfare in rural Fujian and Taiwan; Dru Gladney on the porous boundary between ethnic and religious identities for Chinese Muslims; and Ole Bruun on *fengshui* divination in rural Sichuan and Jiangsu.<sup>83</sup>

With the opening up of China to the outside world, Christians who visited the mainland were amazed to find that Christianity had not only survived the revolution, but had also strengthened and expanded despite forty years of hardship. Accordingly, the scholarship relevant to the various aspects of state/religion relationships, and the governments' religious policies in modern China, became important research topics for understanding China and for theoretical development in the social scientific study

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*Asian Survey* 11:7, (1971), pp. 693-708. S. Strong & J. Strong, 'A Post-Cultural Revolution Look at Buddhism', *China Quarterly* 54 (April-June, 1973), pp. 321-330.

<sup>82</sup> Ren Jiyu, *Zongjiao Cidian* (Dictionary of Religion) (Shanghai Dictionary Press, 1981). Gu Changsheng, *Chuanjiaoshi Yu Jindai Zhongguo* (Missionaries and Modern China) (Shanghai Peoples' Press, 1981). Jiang Wenhan (Kiang Wenhan), *Zhongguo Gudai Jidujiao yu Kaifeng Youtairen* (Christianity in Ancient China and Jews of Kaifeng) (Beijing: Knowledge Press, 1982). Tang Yongtong, *Sui Tang Fojiao Shi Gao* (Manuscripts of the History of Sui-Tang Buddhism) (Beijing: Zhonghua Publishing Co., 1982). Ma Tong, *Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Yu Menhuan Zhidu Shilue* (A Brief History of Chinese Islamic Denominations and Sects) (Ningxia People's Press, 1983). Yu Songqing, *Ming Qing Bailianjiao Yanjiu* (A Study of White Lotus Sect in Ming and Qing) (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Press, 1987). Luo Zhufeng (ed.), *Zhongguo Dabaikequanshu Zongjiao Juan* (China Encyclopedia, Religion Volume), (Beijing: China Encyclopedia Press, 1988). Qin Xitai, *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi* (A History of Daoism) 1-4 volumes, (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Press, 1988-1995).

<sup>83</sup> Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). Eriberto PLozada Jr., *God Aboveground: Catholic Church, Postsocialist State, and Transnational Processes in a Chinese Village* (Stanford University Press, 2001). Richard Madsen, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society* (University of California Press, 1998). Jing Jun, *The Temple of Memories: History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese Village* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996). Mueggler, Erik, *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China* (London, England: University of California Press, Ltd., 2001). Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Ole Bruun, *Fengshui in China: Geomantic Divination between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).

of religion which have received limited but some scholarly attention.<sup>84</sup> In the West, there are two collections of official documents on state religious policies edited by Donald MacInnis, one on the Maoist period, the other on the 1980s.<sup>85</sup> The volume *Religion in China Today*, edited by Daniel Overmyer, provides excellent overviews of various religious traditions from 1949 to the present.<sup>86</sup> The best monograph on the fate of religious life in the Maoist period is Holmes Welch's book *Buddhism under Mao*.<sup>87</sup> It even handed and detailed analysis of Chinese refugee witness accounts, foreign traveller reports and Party documents and media offers an excellent account of the shifting state policies and their implementation in the People's Republic. Additionally, outstanding edited collections include Melvyn and Guo Yuhua's collection on rituals and social change. Three historical treatments trace religious developments from the late imperial to the post-Mao period: Kenneth Dean on Daoist cults and rituals in rural Fujian Province, and Thomas DuBois on popular religion and localism in north Chinese villages.<sup>88</sup> See also Cao Nanlai on the spread of Christianity by Christian entrepreneurs from Wenzhou, a prosperous coastal area.<sup>89</sup>

Even so, more than half a century has passed since the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement was established, and quickly rose to monopolise institutionalised Protestantism in China. However, the Three-Self theology remains poorly understood both on mainland China and abroad.<sup>90</sup> Under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party, the scholarship of religious research in China has changed from virtual nonexistence

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<sup>84</sup> Alan Hunter & Chan Kimkwong, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Madsen, Richard, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society* (University of California Press, 1998). Jason Kindopp & Carol Lee Hamrin (eds.), *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2004). For a particular study on regulations dealing with 'evil cults', see J. T. Richardson & Edleman, B.C., 'Falun gong and the Law: Development of Legal Social Control in China,' *Nova Religio* 6, (2003), pp. 294-311.

<sup>85</sup> Donald E. MacInnis, *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989); *Religious Policy and Practice in Communist China: A Documentary History* (N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1972).

<sup>86</sup> Overmyer, Daniel L. (ed.), *Religion in China Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>87</sup> Holmes Welch, 'Buddhism since the Cultural Revolution', *China Quarterly* 40 (October-December, 1969), pp. 127-136.

<sup>88</sup> Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (Princeton University Press, 1993). Thomas David DuBois, *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> Cao Nanlai, 'Christian Entrepreneurs and the Post-Mao State: An Ethnographic Account of Church-State Relations in China's Economic Transition' *Sociology of Religion* 68: 1 (2007), pp. 45-66.

<sup>90</sup> The voices of the TSPM theologians are included here. Undeniably, the institutionalisation of the five recognised religions has been a major aspect of the state-religion relationships for a century, but the interpretations have often been biased. However, all views, as we shall see, are filters. Different lenses do different things. It promotes another type of viewing lens alongside the others.

in the first thirty years (1949-1979), to flourishing in the reform era (1979-present).<sup>91</sup> Religious research in China, however, remains limited and restricted in many ways.<sup>92</sup> In the past, Chinese intellectuals, as a whole, were most resistant and critical of Christianity which was perceived as a foreign religion and a means of Western colonialism and imperialism.<sup>93</sup> In the 1990s, however, quite a number of Chinese scholars began to publish works about Christianity with sympathy and empathy.<sup>94</sup> Marxist scholarship from mainland China has tended to view Ting's work as the origin of anti-imperialist nationalist resistance and the Communist revolutionary movement, or as a liberal enlightenment grounded in the values of science and democracy. Most of their works have been published in the two quarterly journals; *Studies on World Religions* and *Materials of World Religions*, edited by the Institute for Research on World Religions in China.<sup>95</sup>

Observers from the West, on the other hand, usually emphasise external factors in analysing Ting's work and the TSPM, regarding it as a movement planned and controlled by the new communist regime and forced upon the Chinese Protestant church by regime activities.<sup>96</sup> Examples of this include the scholars who have

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<sup>91</sup> In this thesis 'religious research' includes all scholarly research on religion, such as studies of religion in social sciences, humanities and theologies. 'Religious studies' in the North American context often refers to a discipline, as in such named departments in some universities, which tend to be in the humanities, such as historical and textual studies.

<sup>92</sup> For the details of the changing scholarship of religious research, see Yang Fenggang, 'Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China,' *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 65, No.2. (Summer, 2004), pp. 101-119.

<sup>93</sup> Jessie G.Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-1928* (Notre Dame: IN: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988).

<sup>94</sup> ISCCC (Institute for the Study of Christian Culture in Chinese) (ed.), *Wenhua Jidutu: Xianxiang Yu Lunzheng* (Cultural Christians: The Phenomenon and the Debate), (Hong Kong: ISCCC, 1997). Chen Cunfu & Hsu, Edwin, "'Wenhua Jidutu' Xianxiang De Zonglan Yu Fansi' (An overview and reflection on the phenomenon of 'cultural Christians'), *Regent Journal* [Vancouver], (1998), pp.2-3. Shen Dingpeng & Zhu Weifang, 'Western Missionary Influence on the People's Republic of China: A Survey of Chinese Scholarly Opinion between 1980 and 1990', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22:4, (1998), pp. 154-159. An Ximeng, 'Wenhua Jidutu Shi Sheme Ren?' (What are the Cultural Christians?) *Shijie Zongjiao Wenhua* (World religions culture) (1) (Beijing, 2000), pp. 36-37. Zhuo Xinping, 'Discussion on "cultural Christians" in China,' in O. S. Uhalley Jr. & Wu Xiaoxin (eds.), *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Shape, 2001), pp. 283-300.

<sup>95</sup> The Institute for Research on World Religions in China under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was founded in 1964, and its Department of Christian Studies was headed for the first 16 years by Professor Zhao Fusan, presently Vice-Chairman of the Three-Self National Committee of Chinese Protestant Christians. *Studies on World Religions* is more academic. It has English abstracts of its articles at the end of each issue, but its articles on Christianity are much less than those on Buddhism and Taoism. *Materials of World Religions* largely contains Chinese translation of foreign articles, among which quite a number concern Christianity.

<sup>96</sup> Chen Hisyuan, *Confucian Encounter with 'Religion'* (New York, NY [u.a]: Routledge, 2005). Pitman B.Potter, 'Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,' *The China Quarterly* 174: 2, (2003), pp.317-337.

developed analyses of the modern Chinese state's attitude towards religion, the most influential of which is Prasenjit Dura. In his publications, Dura has explored the Nationalist state's vision of modernity as exclusive of any religious justification or vision, even though Nationalist leaders were influenced by religious projects (in particular Protestant Christianity).<sup>97</sup> Some scholars have found evidence that both the Nationalist and the Communist state have continued to be actually deeply involved in defining orthodoxy from heterodoxy, which is, intervening directly in the religious realm.<sup>98</sup>

These external dynamics are indeed decisive, but they are still not enough for an understanding of current Chinese official Christian theology, namely the theology of Ting.<sup>99</sup> In particular, it hardly shows the continuity and discontinuity between the TSM of the 1950s, and of the 1980s, or how the CCP are constantly urged to wipe out the differences between Christian bodies and other teachings, and present a United Front to the forces of secularism and Communism. More importantly, the kind of surveys people's beliefs about and perceptions of themselves is not able to settle the issue of how Ting's work substantiate and crystallise the idea of an ethnic nation in the minds of the Chinese Christian community by creating a widespread awareness of the TSPM's particular way of interpreting Christian's history and theology in China.

Since this thesis is written from a theological standpoint, it necessarily bears the limitations inherent to such a perspective. As an initial effort in interpretive understanding and descriptive analysis, it does not address important sociological questions or attempt to evaluate these Chinese expressions of Christianity. While these are certainly legitimate areas of inquiry, they are beyond the scope of this study. The emphasis, throughout, is on ideals, and the interpretation of events around a particular dynamic, namely, how Bishop Ting has sought to locate his work in a socialist society within the unifying framework of the united front as proposed strongly, and practiced by the CCP. This dynamic will be discussed with reference to

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<sup>97</sup> Prasenjit Dura, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995).

<sup>98</sup> Rebecca Nedostup & Liang Hongming, "‘Begging the Sages of the Party-State’: Citizenship and Government in Transition in Nationalist China, 1927-1937," *International Review of Social History* 46: S9, (2001), pp. 185-207.

<sup>99</sup> The status of Ting's book for the Church is something like Maoism and Deng's theory for the Chinese government. Since *Wenji* was published, a lot of conferences and symposiums on theological construction based on the study of Ting's book have been held. Besides, the second meeting of the sixth conference of the Three-Self Patriotic Christian Movement and China Christian Council was held in Jinan, and this meeting confirmed that Theological Reconstruction was the fundamental task of the Church in the coming future.

the CCP's religious policy, the patriotism and the resistance of Chinese Protestants, and developments in church and theology.

#### **4. Outline of the dissertation**

Centring on the idea of the Three-Self, each of the chapters of this study will elaborate upon the emergence and development of Three-Self principles in China and how it helps to form the core of Ting's theology, most particularly in the 1980s. Western scholars usually highlight external factors when analysing the TSPM, and regard it as a movement tailor-made by the new Communist regime and forced upon the Chinese Protestant church by regime activists. These external aspects are indeed crucial and vital, but they are still inadequate as a complete explanation of the origins of the TSPM. The movement drew on a legacy of efforts which began in the 1920s to promote the Three-Self principles: self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation among Chinese Protestants. Therefore, it is necessary for this study to start, in Chapter One, by presenting the Three-Self's original meaning and by highlighting its pre-Communist roots. Simultaneously, close attention must be paid to the question of how Chinese Christians endeavour to shape a Christian theology appropriate to the Chinese context(s). In particular, this focuses on how Chinese Christians practice the Three-Self principles tackle various issues such as interaction with tradition Chinese culture, religion and science, Christianity and revolution, etc. in the 1920/30s.

However, due to the scope of this study many details concerning the work of Catholic and Protestant missionaries will have to be omitted. Despite this, as our main concern is not with the history of the missionary movement in China, but with the development of the Three-Self principles that have taken place within the Chinese world, this should not detract from our purpose. Furthermore, in order to restrict the scope of analysis, this research investigates only the Protestant groups. The Catholic Church also faces many different questions and is best dealt with separately. As it is conventional in the PRC to refer to Protestantism as Christianity (*Jidujiao*, 基督教) and Roman Catholicism (*Tianzhujiao*, 天主教) as separate entities, this study follows the same convention without any intention to undermine Catholics as Christians.

The proclamation of the PRC in 1949 introduced a new order. The government moved on many fronts to root out threats to the republic and its people. This included foreign elements identified as imperialist and anti-revolutionary. Christian missions

and missionaries came in for their share of criticism as tools of imperialism. The outbreak of war in Korea in 1950 heightened tensions. Since then, religious policy in the PRC after 1949 was by and large shaped by Mao Zedong's New Democracy as a model which served as the underlying narrative justifying and establishing the institution of the nation-state.<sup>100</sup> More specifically, the place of Protestants in the nation was turned on the compatibility between Protestant adherence and Chinese patriotism. Demonstrating patriotism became interwoven with the Party-State's requirement to cut off ties with and denounce the 'imperialist' legacy of missionary Christianity, and its litmus test was the requirement that all churches be 'self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating'—the Three-Self of the TSPM.<sup>101</sup> In short, in the post-Mao period the basic requirement that Protestants must be patriotic was expressed in the core slogan 'love one's nation, love one's church' (*aiguo aijiao*, 愛國愛教). Essentially, this slogan is an affirmation of Protestant good citizenship, and it often comes up in accounts of charitable work or good character demonstrated by Protestants in society. It is also a way of signalling which forms and expressions of Protestantism are appropriate and which are not.

Consequently, the key theme of Chapter Two is located in the question of how the Three-Self has been mutated as a political instrument, and transformed itself into the Three-Self movement between 1950 and 1979. This chapter examines how this narrative took on theological significance with the establishment of the TSM and later with the TSPM, particularly with the composition of the 'Christian Manifesto' by Protestant leaders, in consultation with Zhou Enlai shortly after 1949. The Manifesto charts out the Church's role and continued existence in a society whose political philosophy was professedly atheist.

I argue that, on the whole, TSM's main Three-Self principle—independence—was predominantly a political product of United Front ideology demanded by the government and dutifully accepted by the churches. As the charter document of the TSPM, the Manifesto provided the symbolic and structural narrative of official Protestantism in China and allowed the TSPM to forge a Protestant unity in China;

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<sup>100</sup> New Democracy is a Maoist concept founded on Mao Zedong's 'Bloc of Four Social Classes' theory throughout post-revolutionary China. (Mao Tse-tung, *On New Democracy* [Honolulu: University Press of The Pacific, 2003]. See also, Stuart R. Schram (ed.) *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912-1949* [Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2005], pp.330-369.)

<sup>101</sup> Richard C. Jr. Bush, *Religion in Communist China* (Nashville, TN, and New York: Abingdon press, 1970); Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988).

whereby social cohesion and ecumenical harmony were achieved by theological differences being dissolved into the greater unity provided by loyalty to the nation-state. Here, it must be emphasised, from the beginning, that the history of Three-Self during the 1950s has been extremely controversial and subject to a wide range of interpretations. My concern will be limited to a consideration of the Three-Self in relation to the question of, for TSPM, *what did love for the motherland mean in terms of their Christian faith?* This question is central.

This is not a history of the development of Three-Self theology. No attempt will be made to cover all phases of its historical development, and the separate histories of particular churches and denominations will barely be touched upon. Besides, rather than giving cursory definitions to terms such as Marxism, imperialism and nationalism, this study grasps these views in light of the conflict itself. This does not mean that contemporary understanding of certain themes should not be considered, rather that it is more important to explain how they function within the conflict itself, and serve to stabilise its meaning.

Any understanding of Ting's Theological Reconstruction of the 1980s must take the historical legacy of the TSM in the 1950s into account. There is continuity between the TSM of the 1950s, and of the 1980s, but there are also significant differences. The Three-Self, however, has been changing. The re-emergence of the Three-Self in 1979 was not simply a continuation from where the organisation had been left behind twenty years before. A great deal had happened in between, and this has shaped the model of the restoration of the TSM. To make this more explicit, here it must be questioned to what sense there has been continuity and where there is change, most notably, in the understanding of the political slogan of Three-Self Movement; especially the concept of 'love one's nation, love one's church' in Chinese Christianity? What new theological initiatives have come out of the Chinese Christian experience?

Chapter Three, from a political perspective, will devote itself in presenting how we are to understand Ting's Theological Reconstruction in comparison to the Three-Self in the 1950s. More accurately, this chapter not only focuses on how Ting heals a wound of a conflict dating back thirty years which TSPM leaders were involved in, but also aims to present how Ting's viewpoint of Theological Reconstruction was deeply shaped by the interplay of Chinese social and political development. The purpose of doing so is an attempt to uncover the essential features of Ting's theology

and reveal in what ways it was preferred and formed, liberated and repressed, or made sensitive and/or blunted? What kinds of ‘truth’ are moulded in this conduct, alongside this very period?

It is possible to say that a valid and a balanced way of looking at Ting’s work are to interpret his theological insight while exploring its political significance. This chapter will also document how Ting committed his work to the power of shaping the truth of history, in order to inform and sustain his work, and to promote the standard form of understanding for the necessity and purpose of assessing Chinese characteristic theology from the inheritance of the 1950s. However, in this chapter I will not analyse the recent TSPM reflections on the 1950’s in that they, for the most part, stick to their position of the 1950s, and their more recent desire to distance themselves from the actions of the government.

Chapter Four is to deal with Ting’s idea of Theological Reconstruction in the 1980s, which include his particular way of appropriating Christianity in China contemporary context. Indeed, no theology can escape the influence of culture and history. In the light of Stephen Bevans’ classifications of contextual theology, this chapter distributes into a series of three thematic parts which point to three patterns once adopted to construct Chinese theology in the past and contemporary history of Christianity in China.<sup>102</sup> Firstly, there is the synthetic model of the early Jesuit missionary movement which gave rise to the infamous ‘Chinese Rites Controversy.’ In this stage, Christianity came to China in the form of the Nestorian church, which derived from the Churches of the East and was introduced during the Tang Dynasty (635 A.D.); a dynasty which ushered in a golden age of Chinese culture. Nestorianism was called *Jingjiao* (景教) in China, which means the religion of sunlight. After the downfall of *Jingjiao*, the arrival of the Roman Catholic Jesuit unveiled a new history of Christianity in China during the late Ming Dynasty. The missionaries and the Chinese literati translated Catholicism as *Tianxue* (天學), which literally means ‘heavenly study’. The Jesuits offered scientific knowledge and advice to the Chinese court and translated both European and Chinese classics.

In the late Qing Dynasty, by which time the splendour of Chinese culture had faded, the Protestant Church in its different denominations came into China, bringing

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<sup>102</sup> Refer Pierce Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996). The five models listed are the Translation, Anthropological, Praxis, Synthetic and Transcendental models.



not only the bible, but also guns and opium.<sup>103</sup> For the duration of this stage, Christianity of all sorts was called *Jidujiao* (基督教, Christianity), which expresses its absolute identification with Western culture. The main endeavour of the Protestant in nineteenth and twentieth century was deliberated to relocate Christianity; seen as product of Western culture on to an unknown soil. Inevitably, most of them encountered the dilemma of accommodation between Christianity and indigenous values.

In the 1920s, the May Fourth Movement (1915-1921) delivered a new sense of pride and evoked fervent nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiment among Chinese; continued missionary activity was viewed with suspicion.<sup>104</sup> In order to indigenise Christian faith in the Chinese soil, Chinese Christians and Protestant missionaries engaged in the anthropological model.<sup>105</sup> Many missionaries were forced to adjust to the changing environment in order to carry on their work in China. Unfortunately, they could not go as far in accommodation as the earlier Jesuits. In fact, their efforts of reconciling Christianity with Chinese culture raised more questions than answers.<sup>106</sup> For many missionaries, accommodating Chinese culture jeopardized the essence of Christianity. Moreover, both missionaries and Chinese Christians faced the issue of essential identity that neither could solve. To some extent, the powerful new political movements in the 1920s shake the whole formation of the foreign presence and role in China. Chinese people understood Christianity as the result of the unequal-treaty system.<sup>107</sup> In some ways this was an antecedent to much bigger pressures to come under communism after 1950.

In order to work closely with the Communist regime after 1949, the praxis model was adopted by Bishop K.H. Ting and the TSPM. In the third part of this chapter, with the aim of revealing how Ting's criticism of the fundamentalist position leads him to a Theological Reconstruction that sees to integrate the Christian faith

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<sup>103</sup> This was a typical character of this encounter, i.e. along with the Western invasion into China; the gospel was brought into China. Its hallmark is the unequal relationship between two dialogical partners.

<sup>104</sup> Xu Xiaoqun, 'The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s', *Historian*, volume 60, Issue 1, pp.21-22. See also Yip Ka-che, *Religion, nationalism, and Chinese students: The anti-Christian movement of 1922-1927* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1980).

<sup>105</sup> Bevans also names this approach as ethnographic model. (See, Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 48); Lam Wing hung, *Chinese Theology in Construction* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983), pp. 49-83.

<sup>106</sup> Ji Jingyi, *Encounters between Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Hermeneutical Perspective* (UK: Transaction Publisher, 2007), pp. 7-19.

<sup>107</sup> Ji Jingyi, *Encounters between Chinese Culture and Christianity*, p. 12.

with humanitarian philosophy, this part is composed by two sections. The first section will briefly explore the development of Ting's vision of reconstructing Christianity through Theological Reconstruction and the need for ecumenical supplement. Tracing the above discussion, the key consideration of second section is to deal with Ting's view of God, Christology and anthropology.

When surveying his central concept of the 'Cosmic Christ', and why/how he has been so passionate about popularising this idea in China, this section will provide a more thorough review of the particular work in *Wenji*, and this detailed account should provide an opportunity to observe how Ting weaves Marxism, process theology and liberation theology into his Theological Reconstruction, and how he links his theological proposal to the universal mainstream theology. In doing so, this section does not attempt to analyse or introduce those theologies, individually, but will mention certain particular parts to show how they have been used to support Ting's Theological Reconstruction. It will also show how Ting selects, translates and adopts western theology by moving away from his personal situation, reflecting upon issues in the contemporary Chinese situation, and identifying applicable resources in western theology. That is to say, the focus will mainly locate itself in how these theories are (re)constructed, (re)produced, and adopted in Ting's work.

Before exploring this in any detail, a serious difficulty must be noted. Ting's works contain almost no references, and the absence of any page references makes assessment difficult. He takes the form of generalised indictments, without reference, to any specific text of a theologian. Even when specific references are cited his criticism sometimes appear based on what the critic 'sees implied' in the text, rather than what it actually may state.

Chapter Five is dedicating to the assessment of the strength and weakness of Ting's Theological Reconstruction. This study will suggest that Ting's essential argument is not so much about challenging the historical veracity of Scripture, and the validity of traditional orthodox interpretation, but about seeking to mitigate what he regarded as unnecessary dogmatic authority of the Scripture, i.e. watering down (*danhua*, 淡化) the doctrine of justification by faith, with appeals to national and cultural progress, due to the particular political climate that he was given. In other words, the political circumstances turned into the elemental basis for him to make the decision to appeal to scripture at all, to help authorise his proposals. In this sense, I argue that the

signboard of 'contextualisation' or 'indigenisation', and the expressions of 'Christianity with Chinese characteristic' is in essence aiming to create either a new religion or an entirely new culture. Finally, I will suggest some ways in which the conclusions of this dissertation can be applied to future research.



## **Chapter One: Three-Self idea in Pre-1949 Chinese theology**

### **1. The original Three-Self idea**

The idea for a native church in China today is commonly associated with Henry Venn (1796-1873) of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Venn was honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society from 1841 to 1873. He is often quoted as encouraging the ‘euthanasia of missions,’ which meant that missionaries were to be considered temporary workers and not permanent.<sup>1</sup> He expounded the basic principles of indigenous Christian missions later addressed and made widespread by the Lausanne Congress of 1874.

Anderson was ordained as a minister in 1826. In 1832 he was given total responsibility for overseas work. He believed that ‘missions are instituted for the spread of a scriptural self-propagating Christianity’. Missions were for (1) converting lost men, (2) organising them into churches, (3) giving these churches a competent native ministry, (4) conducting them to the stage of independence and (in most cases) of self-propagation. Anything further than this, he felt, was less important. The end of the mission was to be ‘a scriptural, self-propagating Christianity,’ the test of which is seen in evidence of a religious life, a genuine change in the church and the individual.<sup>2</sup>

Venn and Rufus Anderson were the first to use the term ‘indigenous church’ in the mid-nineteenth century. Both men saw the necessity of spelling out the goal of missionary work and the means by which the aim might be achieved. They both wrote about the need for creating churches in the missions field that were self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. They came to their insights for the most part independently of each other but with similar conclusions.<sup>3</sup> For Venn, the missionary’s

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<sup>1</sup> R Pierce Beaver, ‘The legacy of Rufus Anderson’, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3 (3): 95, 1979; Wilbert R. Sherk, ‘Henry Venn’s legacy’, in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1 (2): 16-19.

<sup>2</sup> John Mark Terry, ‘Indigenous Churches’, in A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), pp.483-485; C. Peter Williams, *The ideal of the self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Wilbert R. Sherk, ‘Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?’, in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5 (4): 168-172. (In his work, *Christianity in China*, David Cheung, argued that the notion of a Self-sufficient Chinese church can also be traced to the Rev. John Van Nest Talmage. According to Cheung, although Talmage did not actually use the key terms that have become associated with the Three-Self movement, ‘the essential features of the Three-Self ideal were already

aim was to construct the native church, which ‘should potentially be a church of the country, a church that could become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-extending.’<sup>4</sup> In this sense, the church would be planted by the missionary, but would grow and flourish on its own:

If the elementary principles of self-support and self-government and self-extension be thus sown with the seed of the Gospel, we may hope to see the healthy growth and expansion of the Native Church, when the Spirit is poured down from on high, as the flowers of the fertile field multiply under the showers and warmth of summer.<sup>5</sup>

Venn saw the mission organisation as subservient to the church. In 1851 he issued the first of three policy statements, entitled ‘The Native Pastorate’, which was regarded as his most significant contribution to the concept of the indigenous church.<sup>6</sup> He took up the question of the employment and ordination of ‘native teachers’. The central of this concern was the distinction between mission agency and church and between missionary and indigenous pastor. In one of his most quoted passages, he indicated:

Regarding the ultimate object of a mission, viewed under its ecclesiastical aspect, to be the settlement of a native Church, under native pastors, upon a self-supporting system, it should be borne in mind that the progress of a mission mainly depends upon the training up and the location of native pastors; and that, as it has been happily expressed, ‘the euthanasia of a mission’ takes place when a missionary, surrounded by well-trained native congregations, under native pastors, is able to resign all pastoral work into their hands, and gradually to relax his superintendence over the pastors themselves, till it insensibly ceases; and so the mission passes into a settled Christian community. Then the missionary and all missionary agency should be transferred to ‘the regions beyond’.<sup>7</sup>

A similar proposition was recommended by Anderson almost at the same time. Anderson was referred to as ‘the most original, the most constructive and the most courageous student of mission policy’ and provided a remarkably sound basis for the development of American missions.<sup>8</sup> He wrote that Bible translation, literature, schools, press and all other activities should be directed to building a mature local church which evangelized and sent out others as missionaries. He claimed that the

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contained in the Talmage ideal as early as 1848 even though the actual terminology was somewhat different.’) (David Cheung, *Christianity in China: The Making of the First Native Protestant Church* [Boston: Brill, 2004], p. 56)

<sup>4</sup> Max Warren (ed.), *To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 118 & 71.

<sup>6</sup> Wilbert R. Sherk, *Henry Venn—Missionary Statesman* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Henry Venn, *The Native Pastorate and Organization of Native Churches* (London: CMS, 1866).

<sup>8</sup> R. Pierce Beaver (ed.), *To Advance the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Rufus Anderson* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p.37.

advocacy of self-supporting and self-propagating churches was grounded in the announcement of faith in the Bible, rather than to extend Western civilization. In other words, to Anderson, civilization was not a legitimate aim of the mission but would come as an impact of the gospel. He therefore prohibited any mission becoming engaged with a government or engaging in any kind of business.

Anderson further advocated that the missionary was not to be a pastor or ruler but an evangelist, moving on to the next place as soon as possible; their business was with unbelievers, not believers. The society existed solely to help the missionary discharge their duty rather than making them a servant. Native ministers were to be the spiritual leaders. He indicated that American Christians should further Paul's intentions by building independent local churches in mission fields, and the terms of 'ecclesiastical imperialism' were indirectly contradictory to the apostolic pattern set forth in Paul's letters. In Anderson's own words:

When (Paul) had formed local churches, he did not hesitate to ordain presbyters over them, the best he could find; and then to throw upon the churches thus officered, the responsibilities of self-government, self-support and self-propagation.<sup>9</sup>

To some extent, Venn and Anderson believed that the modern tendency of Western imperialism which became intertwined with foreign missions could have been completely avoided. For both of them, the intent of the apostolic missionary model should result in the formation of a local church that would be completely independent of foreign involvement shortly after the initial preaching of the Gospel.

For Roland Allen (1868-1947), an Anglican missionary to China, the problem of imperialism and the task of building independent and indigenous churches were far more urgent than it had been for Venn, Anderson, or any missionary before them.<sup>10</sup> Allen himself had witnessed the Boxer Rebellion, and understood and realised

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.97.

<sup>10</sup> Allen was trained for ministry at Oxford and became a priest in 1893. He spent two periods in Northern China working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The first from 1895-1900 ended due to the Boxer Rebellion, during which Allen was forced to flee to the British Legation in the Beijing. He was chaplain to community throughout much of the siege. After a period back in England, he came back to North China in 1902, but was forced home due to poor health conditions. These early experiences led him to reassess his own vocation and the theology and missionary methods of the Western churches. He became an early promoter of creating Churches which from the beginning would be self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing, adapted to local conditions and not merely imitations of Western Christianity. It is with this background that Allen wrote his book *Missionary Methods* which was first published in 1912. (Leslie J. Francis, *Tentmaking: Perspectives on Self-Supporting Ministry* [Gracewing Publishing, 1998], pp.355-357; David M Paton [ed.], *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings* [Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2006]; *Missionary Methods. St Paul's or*

that theories alone were not enough.<sup>11</sup> As Allen himself recognised, at that time, ‘the Chinese commonly look(ed) upon the missionary as a political agent, sent out to buy the hearts of the people, and so to prepare the way for a foreign dominion.’<sup>12</sup>

In his first book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (1912), Allen acknowledged three ‘disquieting symptoms’ feature of mission-established churches. (1) This variety of Christianity remains exotic. (2) Missions everywhere are dependent. Therefore, their existence is unstable and there are no extra resources to start on new work elsewhere. (3) The results in one place look the same as everywhere else. In saying that, he pointed out that what one reads about in China, except for the names, could just as well be said about the work in Kenya. He sharply indicated that, ‘there has been no new discovery of new aspects of the Gospel, no new unfolding of new forms of Christian life.’<sup>13</sup>

Allen thus called for a return to New Testament principles and a radical dependence on the Holy Spirit. His approach to Mission strategy for indigenous Churches is based on the study of Saint Paul’s missionary methods as he is convinced that in them can be found the solution to most of the difficulties of the day. Allen suggested that, for a church to be truly indigenous, missionary practice ought to observe five apostolic principles: (1) New converts must be taught so clearly that they can readily translate teaching into practice. (2) Church organization must make sense and be supportable within the local culture and economy. (3) The economic basis of the church must be geared to the economy of its members and independent of any foreign subsidies. (4) Christians must be taught and practice mutual responsibility and church discipline. (5) The church should immediately exercise religious beliefs to

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*Ours?* [Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2006]; *Missionary Principles and Practice* [Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2006]; *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes which Hinder it*, [Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2006]; David M Paton [ed.], *Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the Work of Roland Allen* [Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2006]. )

<sup>11</sup> ‘Boxers’ was a name that foreigners gave to Chinese secret society known as the Yihetuan (‘Righteous and Harmonious Fists’). Boxer Rebellion, officially supported peasant uprising of 1900 that tried to drive all foreigners from China. The spread of the Boxer rebellion caused considerable uneasiness for among the foreign community in China. In June 1900, an international expeditionary force was despatched to suppress the attacks. The conflict lasted for nearly two years, hundreds of people were killed, and the matter was not resolved until August, when Beijing was captured. (Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987] provides an outstanding study of the Boxer uprising.)

<sup>12</sup> David Paton (ed.), *Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the Work of Roland Allen* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (London: World Dominion Press, 1930) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 183-184.



serve and strengthen its life.<sup>14</sup> Allen believed it was the recognition of the church as a local entity and trust in the Holy Spirit's indwelling within the converts and churches which was the mark of Paul's success. In contrast was Allen's belief that the people of his day were unable to entrust their converts to the Holy Spirit and instead relied in His work through them.

Setting strong emphasis on the role of the Spirit, he therefore argued that distrusting the ability of new Christians to run their own churches was equal to a denial of the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the main task of the missionary was to turn the convert's mind to Christ, with the liberty to go his or her own way, rather than to do things for the convert, and thus cultivate dependency and paternalism.<sup>15</sup> That is, the growing of churches would take place in God's own time as a more or less 'spontaneous' process. What restrained such expansion was the intervention and manipulation exercised by missionaries over the church.<sup>16</sup> According to Allen, churches had to become self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating right at the beginning of the process.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, he paid more attention to the question of self-support (or the financial question), a subject that was to become paramount for the Chinese church in later years.<sup>18</sup>

Theologically the Three-Self means that, as mentioned above, the church's existence is guaranteed not by human efforts, but by the grace of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is to say, through their reading of the bible, and especially the letters of Paul, Venn, Anderson and Allen came to believe that this was a sound, New Testament basis for establishing churches.

However, owing to a variety of hindrances and difficulties, this aim had not been fully realized before 1949. Part of the reason is that neither of them actually put all these principles fully into practice in China, although they were involved in missionary societies. To inquire into this particular situation, from the missionary perspective, although Venn's and Anderson's missions were guided by theological persuasion, neither of them was concerned to subject his proposal to a careful examination.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, neither of them had ever been involved in the practice of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 32-42.

<sup>17</sup> Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods*, pp. 65-81.

<sup>19</sup> C. Peter Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), p.3; Peter Beyerhaus & Henry Lefever, *The Responsible Church and the Foreign*

setting self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches, yet they presumed that churches so built would bear 'a faithful replica of the Church of England and which they controlled.'<sup>20</sup> It appears that the key concern of their policies was to shape a truly independent and responsible churches modelled after the Church of England. In short, although the Three-Self idea originated in the West, none of the Western missionaries were ever actually successful in building up local churches based upon these principles.<sup>21</sup>

## **2. Early Three-Self Efforts**

### **2.1 The investment of education and social welfare**

In the nineteenth century, missionaries believed that only when Chinese Christian workers were fully educated, would they be freed from their dependence on the guidance of the Western missionary.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the interest in higher education which they exemplified was not just an extension of, but also a new departure in missionary educational work in that country.<sup>23</sup> They contributed to a large investment in social welfare efforts and were responsible, to a great extent, for the establishment of medical system in China. They offered enhanced access to primary, secondary and advanced education, leadership opportunities, economic betterment, medical care, and the vast world outside of China. In brief, before 1949 the contribution of missionary institutions to Chinese society was substantial, especially, in terms of medicine and education.

To take the Wesleyan Methodist Society (hereafter, WMS) in Wuhan as an example, whether their services were evangelical, educational or medical, the newcomers of the WMS in Wuhan, had to spend a year studying the languages before

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*Mission* (London: World Dominion Press, 1964), p. 56; See also, R Pierce Beaver, *To Advance the Gospel*, p.37.

<sup>20</sup>C. Peter Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church*, p.xiii.

<sup>21</sup>Wilbert R Sherk., 'The origins and evolution of the Three-Selfs in relation to China', *International bulletin of missionary research*, (January, 1990).

<sup>22</sup>As early as 1877, Bishop Schereschewsky declared: 'if education has been an element of such importance in establishing Christianity in the West, have we any reason to believe that it will be a less powerful agent in establishing Christianity in the East?' Similarly, when Peking University was founded in 1886 it was the belief of the Methodist educators that as well as providing training for Christian workers, the University should extend the advantages of science and Christianity to as many Chinese as possible. Bishop Fowler particularly emphasised the fact that the Chinese government was providing only few opportunities for modern education to its subjects at that time. (See Liu Kwangching, 'Early Christian Colleges in China,' in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No.1. [Nov., 1960], p.73.)

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

they were considered useful for missionary work. Although many missionaries continued to perfect their Chinese after their pioneer period, it was gradually felt that preaching to the Chinese would be more effective if done by native Chinese. Moreover, it had been the goal of the missions to establish self-governing churches. It became a trend therefore for the home societies to request that missionaries train Chinese pastors and preachers. Apart from training Chinese ministers, in some special cases the WMS also arranged for selected students to study in England.<sup>24</sup>

Essentially, the founders of the colleges all shared one basic conviction that it was necessary to pay greater attention to Chinese Christian workers'—ministers and teachers—education, in order to advance evangelism in China. Calvin Mateer and Samuel Scereschewsky, for instance, indicated that modern science would strengthen Christianity in China; in particular, the knowledge of science would help do away with Chinese superstitions. The year between 1882 and 1911 was the period when the foundations of the Protestant church in China were actually laid.<sup>25</sup> That was, unsurprisingly, also the period when Christian colleges were the most advanced educational institutions in China, providing instruction in modern subjects for a country newly awakening to its needs.<sup>26</sup>

The influence of these Christian colleges was remarkable, although up to 1912 total enrolment in the colleges was still relatively small. Many well-educated Chinese Christian leaders were produced, and it was undoubtedly these groups that laid the foundations of the Chinese church in the twentieth century. For instance, the alumni of Peking University were some of the most effective Chinese pastors of the Methodist church, and St. John's was famous for producing outstanding Y.M.C.A. leaders as well as Chinese Episcopal bishops.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Chang Ning J., 'Tension within the church: British missionaries in Wuhan, 1913-1928,' *Modern Asia Studies* 33, (Cambridge University Press, February 1999), p.428.

<sup>25</sup> Liu Kwangching, 'Early Christian College in China,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No.1. (November, 1960), pp.71-72.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, the four earliest Christian colleges in China, Shantung Christian University, founded by Calvin Mateer of the Presbyterian Mission in 1882; Peking University, founded by Bishop Charles H. Fowler and the Reverend Leander W. Pilcher in 1886; North China College at Tungchow (near Peking), founded by Davello Z. Sheffield of the American board in 1889; and St. John's College at Shanghai, first founded by Bishop Samuel I. J. Schereschewsky in 1879 and actually functioned as a college in 1890. (See Liu Kwangching, 'Early Christian College in China,' pp.71-72.)

<sup>27</sup> Although the Y.M.C.A. was regarded as an athletic club in other parts of the world, it was, 'church-centred' in Communist China. Many of its graduates later became top leaders of the TSPM. (See, Richard C. Bush Jr., *Religion in Communist China*, pp.96-98; Xu Yihua, "'Patriotic' Protestants: The making of an official church,' in *God and Caesar in China*, pp.111-112.) It was established by Willard Lyon at the end of the last century. His intention has been written by Shirley Garrett as below: 'The Association in America stipulated that the Chinese Association, like all others started by the

The contribution of the Christian colleges, however, was not only confined to the education of a Chinese ministry. In fact, their students represented many sectors of Chinese society.<sup>28</sup> While the major portion of the graduates of Shantung and North China found employment in school and hospitals operated by missions or churches, a number of graduates of the Methodist Peking University worked for the Chinese Government. Many students of St. John's became very prominent in Chinese business or in government circles, notably the diplomatic services.<sup>29</sup> In short, the Christian colleges played a vital part in the development of the missionary movement in China and in Chinese cultural change in general. Through these teachers in mission schools, and also through those college graduates who worked for government, the influence of Christian colleges spread far and wide.

## 2.2 Indigenisation and contextualisation<sup>30</sup>

In the first half of nineteenth century, in order to tackle the question of indigenisation, James Legge undertook the task of translating Chinese 'classics' into English as a way to affirm the value of the tradition. William Milne, Legge's colleague, took a similar approach. In his gospel tract *Dialogues Between Two Friends, Chang and Yuan*, he affirmed the Confucian ideal of attaining inner saintly personhood expressed in sagely statesmanship, nevertheless questioned the interpretation of such a vision of life, demonstrating the reality of sin in human nature and to the prodigy of the Creator's love manifested in Jesus Christ.

The American missionary W.A. P. Martin (1827-1916) presented a slightly different approach.<sup>31</sup> He promoted the formula of 'adding Confucius and Jesus together.' In his book *Tiandao Yaoyuan* (天道遙遠, Pursuing the Source of the Way of Heaven), based on two Confucian concepts, *Gewu* (格物, investigation and

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International committee outside the United States, should become self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting as quickly as possible. Lyon was pledged to start not a movement that would be an alien growth, but one that would become truly indigenous.' (Quoted from Gao Wangzhi, 'Y. T. Wu: A Christian Leader under Communism', in Daniel H. Bays [ed.], *Christianity in China from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996], p.346).

<sup>28</sup> Liu Kwangching, 'Early Christian College in China,' pp.76-78.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>30</sup> Yu, Carver T., 'Chinese Protestantism to the Present Day', in Alister E. McGrath & Doreen C. Marks (eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004); Lam Winghung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1998), Chapter 1 & 2 provide a great detail information.

<sup>31</sup> William Alexander Parsons Martin (1827-1916) was an American Presbyterian missionary to China and translator, famous for having translated a number of important Western treatises into Chinese, such as Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*.

understanding of things in accordance with their own nature) and *Zhizhi* (致知, comprehensive and ultimate knowledge), he indicated that the Chinese had contributed profound insights into the understanding of the nature of things. To arrive at a comprehensive and ultimate knowledge, the Christian faith could add illumination to insight.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from finding a common language with Chinese philosophy, ‘ancestor worship’ was one of the more difficult issues for missionaries. The struggle is known as Rites controversy. It raged intermittently from the 1630s, becoming wider at the end of the century and it impacts up to the present day. The particular concerns included the problem of how to deliver the name of God in Chinese, whether Chinese Christian should continue to perform rituals in honour of their ancestors; and issues of adjustment of Western Christian liturgy and the church law and practices to Chinese conditions. The position of most Jesuits, such as Matteo Ricci, was willing to make considerable absorptions of Chinese traits and complexes. Yet the majority of Franciscans and Dominicans were willing to tolerate only a minimum of change in traditional Catholic doctrine, as they felt that the Jesuits had formed the Christian faith around the Chinese culture to point of no longer being the same faith.<sup>33</sup> In the nineteenth century, with the coming of Protestant missionaries, the problem reappeared in a new pattern. In the course of their strong Biblicism the Protestant missionaries, besides a horror of ‘idolatry’, were confronted with the dilemma of translating the biblical *Yahweh/Theos* into Chinese. Besides, having to negotiate the dangerous rapids of Chinese ancestor and other rituals, they had to employ with the Chinese ‘terms’ issue. For instance, *Tian*(天, Heaven), they tended to associate with imperial idol worship. In their anxiety to stress their difference from the Catholics, they avoided the Catholic compromise *Tianzhu* (天主, Lord of Heaven). So the argument came down to a choice between *Shangdi* (上帝, the traditional ‘Lord on High’), and *Shen* (神, a generic term for gods or spirits). Two versions of the Chinese bible were thus created; a *Shangdi* and *Shen* version.

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<sup>32</sup> Covell, Ralph R., W.A. P. Martin, *Pioneer of Progress in China* (Washington: Christian University Press, 1978); See also, Spence, Jonathan D., *To change China: Western Advisers in China, 1620-1960* (Harmondsworth & New York: Penguin Books, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> Morton H. Fried, ‘Reflections on Christianity in China’, *American Ethnologist*, vol 14, issue 1 (February 1987), pp.94-106; Lam Winghung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949*, pp.27-30.

As Addison argued, 'the religious side of ancestor-worship was too obvious to be ignored and too dangerous to be permitted'.<sup>34</sup> It is not surprising that, with a few exceptions, the missionaries of Protestant churches have flatly condemned ancestor-worship as 'idolatrous'.<sup>35</sup> However, this is the fact that for Chinese Christian it might be comparatively easy to stop the worship of the various popular gods; but to refuse the ancestral rites often means ostracism from the family and the clan.<sup>36</sup> It often brings down upon the Christian believer the scorn and hatred of his own kin, and incurs the bitter insult that the Christian has no ancestors.<sup>37</sup> As a whole, it presents 'a microcosm of a large number of theological, cultural, and political differences'.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3 The Ecumenical Movement in China

One of the obstacles for the emergence of a truly indigenous Chinese Church was the confusing variety of denominations compounded by differences in national origin, theological persuasions, church organization, and liturgy. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the church was highly fragmented. The so-called 'co-operation' simply refers to the avoidance of competition.<sup>39</sup> Most of them were intent on duplicating the pattern of church life in China from which it had come in the West.

At the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, missionaries joined with the goal of uniting different traditions. It gave a real stimulus to the ecumenical movement in China. We can take the Anglican Communion as an example. There were originally separate and independent missionary efforts by Canada, Australia, United States and Great Britain in China. In 1912, all the churches developed by these missions were amalgamated into one independent church, namely the *Zhonghua Sheng Gong Hui* (中華聖公會, Holy catholic church of China;

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<sup>34</sup> Addison, James Thayer, 'Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity', *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 5, No.2 (The University of Chicago Press, March 1925), p.145.

<sup>35</sup> This orthodox position was clearly expressed in the three conferences. See *Records of the General conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, held at Shanghai, May 10-24, 1878* (Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1878); *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890); *Records of China Centenary Missionary Conference, Held at Shanghai, April 25-May 8, 1907* (Shanghai: Centenary Conference Committee, 1907).

<sup>36</sup> Ball, *The Chinese at Home*, p.23; Macgowan, *Lights and Shadows of Chinese Life*, p.71.

<sup>37</sup> James Thayer Addison, 'Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity', *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 5, No.2 (The University of Chicago Press, March 1925), pp.144-145.

<sup>38</sup> Paul A.Rule, 'The Chinese Rites Controversy: A Long Lasting Controversy in Sino-Western Cultural History,' *Pacific Rim Report*, number 34, (University of San Francisco: USF Centre for the Pacific Rem, February 2004), p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, Francis Price, *The Church in Communist China* (New York: Friendship Press, 1961), pp.10-16.

*Zhonghua*, meaning China, is sometimes omitted.)<sup>40</sup> Congregationalists later united with the Presbyterians.

The China Continuation Committee was set up, by two outstanding secretaries, Chen Jingyi and an American Presbyterian, E.C. Lobenstine, to facilitate such unification. The main purpose was the fostering of an indigenous church and church unity. In 1923, the formation of the National Christian Council represented a considerable step forward within the Chinese Protestant Church. It was a response to the growing spirit of Chinese nationalism and important in the formation of a new generation of Chinese Christian leaders, especially, the expression of metropolitan intellectual elite. However, it was remained heavily dependent on foreign sources for funds and staff.

In 1917, processes for unity were promoted: 'uniting churches of similar ecclesiastical order, intercommunion between churches in particular areas, and finally the formation of the Chinese Council of Churches.'<sup>41</sup> Denominational union within Chinese missions of differing national origin guided the path. In 1922, for example, the Presbyterian Churches of Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, together with churches belonging to the London Missionary Society and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, united as the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in China. Lutherans, Baptists and Methodists also united soon after.

The interdenominational union did not happen until 1927. After a series of steps, six major denominational bodies joined together as the Church of Christ in China.<sup>42</sup> It became the largest Protestant church in the nation, reaching almost every province. To some extent, it represents a much more widely inclusive organization. Although only one-third of Protestant churches in China were represented, this was a remarkable step forward.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This church is recognised by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lambeth Conference as a part of the world-wide Anglican Communion.

<sup>41</sup> Carver T. Yu, 'Chinese Protestantism to the Present Day', p.225.

<sup>42</sup> Denominational membership is given in Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity* (Collins: Fount Paperbacks, 1988), p.200.

<sup>43</sup> Francis Prince Jones, *The Church in Communist China*, pp. 10-16.

### **3. Early Independent Churches**

After an analysis of what was the Western missionaries' understanding of their own role in setting up local churches, according to Three-Self principles, it is necessary to present how Chinese Christians came to identify with the 'Three-Self' at different times, with different understandings and a variety of possibilities.

It can be argued that the forerunners of the independent church movement could be found in the 1860s. In 1862 union efforts undertaken by the missions of the Reformed Church in America and of the English Presbyterians in Xiamen, Fujian, resulted in the Quanzhou-Zhangzhou Presbyterian Assembly (*Quan-Zhang Zhanglao hui*, 泉州長老會). A degree of independence was granted by the two Presbyterian missions, and two of the churches in Xiamen began to hire and support their own native pastors. Such self-support and self-government was limited, however, as the majority of annual funds, including a salary for the rest of the Chinese personnel, the budget for the schools, and the rent for the church building continued to come from the missions.<sup>44</sup> This type of independent church movement, on the whole, was primarily an attempt to embody the Three-Self principle.<sup>45</sup>

In 1873, Chen Mengnan organized in Guangzhou the East Guangdong Zhaoqing China Evangelization Society. It began with two churches, but, later on, it had as many as forty or fifty. This was the first independent Chinese Church, and it was followed by other independent congregations established in Manchuria.<sup>46</sup>

There could be no doubt that by 1890, Christian activity was increasing rapidly, and Christian missionaries became caught up in the reform movement, speedily growing in strength. Just after the turn of the century, inspired by the various nationalist and revolutionary movements, several Shanghai YMCA activists founded the Chinese Christian Union (*Zhonghua Jidutuhui*, 中華基督徒會).

In 1906, Yu Guozhen, a Presbyterian pastor in Shanghai who had been one of the organizers of the Chinese Christian Union, made similar but unrelated efforts in northeast China, throughout the nineteenth century. He declared his own church self-supporting and independent of the Presbyterian mission, calling it *Zhongguo Yesujiao*

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<sup>44</sup>*Zhonghua Jidujiaohui nianjian* (The China Church Year Book, hereafter *ZJN*) Vol. 1 (1914), pp. 32-33; Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, p.366. See also, Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp.126-128.

<sup>45</sup> Lam Winghung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949* (China Alliance Press Inc, 1998), pp. 80-81.

<sup>46</sup>Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, p.127.



Zilihui (中國耶穌教自理會, China Christian Independent Church),<sup>47</sup> and issued a call to all Chinese Christians to:

(g)ive up the unequal treaties which protect the church...awaken churches in all areas and Christians with lofty ideals to plan for independence, self-support and self-propagation...(and) absolutely refuse the jurisdiction of Western churches.<sup>48</sup>

However, neither the Chinese Christian Church nor Yu's *Yesujiao Zilihui* church primarily engaged in promoting the spirit of independence, and neither one established its own churches. Even though they became financially independent, and were managed by Chinese Christians themselves, their organization was loose and short lived. Financial weakness was another serious difficulty for these early autonomous churches. Their relationship with Western mission societies was complicated. Although these churches broke free from established denominations, they preserved much of their denominational identities and practice.<sup>49</sup>

The mid-1920s were disturbing times for Chinese Christians. The Christian community was persistently under attack from the scientific world, from nationalistic groups, and from various anti-Christian groups. Although the anti-Christian movement (1922-1928) of the 1920s lasted only six years, Christian churches in China suffered an unexpectedly negative impact on their activities.<sup>50</sup> In particular, with the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925, the nationalistic reaction led Chinese activists to accuse Christian churches and their educational institutions were closely related to imperialism.<sup>51</sup> As a result, many churches, YMCAs, and church-sponsored schools

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<sup>47</sup> Yu was regarded as the first Chinese to speak of Three-Self by combining a love of his country with a love of his church. (See Wickeri, *Common Ground*, p.41.)

<sup>48</sup> Quoted from Wickeri, *Common Ground*, p.41.

<sup>49</sup> Xu Yihua, "'Patriotic' Protestants: The Making of an Official Church', p.108; see also, Hunter, Alan & Chan Kimkwong, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 114-119.

<sup>50</sup> On the anti-Christian movement of the 1920s, see Lam Winghung [Lin Ronghong], *Fengchao zhongfengqi de Zhongguo jiaohui* (Chinese theology in construction) (Hong Kong: Tien Dao, 1980); Lutz, Jessie G., *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-1928* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988); Yamamoto, Tastsuro & Sumiko Yamanoto, 'The Anti-Christian Movement in China,' *Far Eastern Quarterly* 12.2 (Feb. 1953): 133-47; Yip Kache, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1980). On Chinese Christian and missionary responses to the anti-Christian movement, see Chao, Jonathan Tienen [Zhao Tianen], 'The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919-1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movement in Modern China', Ph.D. Diss., (University of Pennsylvania, 1986); Ling, Samuel D. 'The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese "Christian Renaissance," 1919-1937', Ph.D. diss., (Temple University, 1980); Varg, Paul A., 'The Missionary Response to Nationalist Revolution,' in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 311-335.

<sup>51</sup> It was a result of a local incident: the death of a striker in a Japanese spinning mill in Shanghai, and the bloody repression of a demonstration organized in his memory. On the May Thirtieth Incident see

and hospitals were forced to close. This stage culminated in the killing of numerous missionaries in Nanjing in March 1927.<sup>52</sup> And the Northern Expedition was launched in 1926 from Sun's southern power base in Guangdong province. Chiang Kaishek (1887-1975), after Sun Yatsen (1866-1925) died, began a military drive to defeat the warlords who ruled northern China and hence unify the country. Chiang's 'Northern Expedition' led to the establishment of a Nationalist government in 1927 at Nanjing.<sup>53</sup> Throughout that long War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945), many churches were used as army garrison or badly damaged in the fighting, as they were later in the civil war between Nationalists and Communists that did not end until the People's Republic was established in 1949.<sup>54</sup> Unsurprisingly, after 1927, these independent churches became even more marginalized, due to the establishment of the National Party government and the increasing indigenisation of mainstream denominations in China. By the end of 1930s, the number of independent churches had decreased from more than six hundred in the mid-1920s to about two hundred.<sup>55</sup>

On the whole, although the so-called indigenous churches merely appeared to be a phenomenon of Chinese control of western model churches, it is obvious that, at that time, Chinese Christians were conscious of the need for independence from the missionaries, and took the realisation of the three-self as an urgent task, if the Church in China was to adapt itself to the rising tide of nationalism. In spite of their limited and small historical significance, the independent churches formed a remarkable influence on and an inspiring part of early efforts to promote three-self principles, among China's Protestants. They were also the pioneers of the conservative evangelical Protestants, who counteracted the hegemony of the TSPM after 1949.<sup>56</sup> It

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Rigby, Richard, *The May Thirtieth Movement: Events and Themes* (Melbourne: Australian National University Press, 1980.)

<sup>52</sup> Yip Kache, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-1927* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1980), pp.62-64; Jonathan Chao Tienen [Zhao Tianen], *Zhonggong dui Jidujiao de zhengce* (Chinese communist policy toward Christianity) (Hong Kong: Chinese Church Research Centre, 1983), pp.39-60.

<sup>53</sup> Donald Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926-1928* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976); and, for the Workers' Uprisings, see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labour* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>54</sup> The period of the Japanese occupation remains a resentfully remembered one in China. A particularly significant event in this regard was the Rape of Nanjing, which outspread in late 1937 and 1938. During a short dreadful period in Nanjing, 'an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 Chinese were killed' and 'an estimated 20,000 women were raped' by Japanese soldiers. (R.Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History* [Upper Saddle river, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002], p.235; see also, Longsuen Hsu & Chang Mingkai, *History of The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* [Taiwan: Chung Wu Publisher, 1971.]

<sup>55</sup> Xu Yihua, "'Patriotic' Protestants: The Making of an Official Church', pp. 108-109.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109.

is not possible to enter into a lengthy consideration of all the individual independent churches, but some discussion is essential to our understanding of how Ting's Theological Reconstruction is shaped by those particular circumstances.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, some Chinese Christians began to work towards a wholly indigenous church, namely, a more radical break with the Western tradition, integrating more deeply with Chinese customs and religiosity.<sup>57</sup> Although the concepts of self-support, self-government, and self-propagation were never actively sought out by these organisations, these indigenous churches are often cited as examples of Three-Self Christianity, extant in China before the TSPM.

Fundamentally, most of them were based in rural areas, and some, like the Jesus Family (*Yesu Jiating*, 耶穌家庭) in Shandong, were characterized by an isolated communal style of living. Most of them had little contact with missionary societies, were founded by charismatic and often authoritarian Chinese Christian personalities. They emphasized autonomy and independence in their institutions, and often established ecclesiastical traditions of their own. Their theology was imported from the West—most notably the charismatic Pentecostal and Holiness traditions—and elements of Chinese folk religion. They emphasized personal evangelism but had little interest in social involvement and welfare or politics. The most significant were The True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family and the Local Assemblies, all of which survive in the 1990s.

### 3.1 The True Jesus Church

The original founder of True Jesus Church (hereafter, TJC) was Paul Wei (*Wei Enbo*), a member of the London Mission. He was cured of a serious illness through the laying on the hands of Elder Shengming Xin of the Faith Mission in 1912. Shortly afterwards, while praying in his home in Beijing, he baptized himself.

Another two founding leaders, Zhang Lingshen and Barnabas Zhang, similarly to Wei, after experiences of spiritual healing decided to form a Pentecostal church in China. In 1910, Zhang took the baptism of immersion and was ordained as an elder by

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<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Chao Tienen, *The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement: 1919-1927*, provides a brilliant account of this movement.

Elder Peterson of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Beijing. Barnabas Zhang was ordained by Wei as an elder in Weixian, in 1919.

On that time, the TJC was one of the largest single churches in China. Its goal was 'to revive the true Church like the one of the Apostolic Age' and to correct the many errors in the teachings of the various confessions, their own interpretation of the scripture, or their arbitrary additions and subtractions.<sup>58</sup> In its credo, it advocated itself as the 'true church' whose mission was to correct the hypocrisy of others.<sup>59</sup>

Apparently, by claiming that all churches since the Apostolic Church were heretical, the TJC was able to extract itself from centuries of western church history.<sup>60</sup> In addition, the desire to be separate is also shown through a pronounced concern for purity and a tendency to regard the rites and doctrines of other churches as 'contamination.'<sup>61</sup>

Their first church was founded in Tianjin in 1917, and emphasized faith healing, speaking in tongues and a communal living style. By 1920, it had spread into Hubei and Hunan, by 1923 into Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian. In July 1926, the headquarters of the TJC was set up in Nanjing and at the same time the members began to publish

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<sup>58</sup> Deng Zhaoming, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations,' in Anderson, Allan & Tang, Edmond (eds.), *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Regnum Studies in Mission: Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies Series 3, 2005), p. 441.

<sup>59</sup> The Credo of True Jesus Church stipulates: (1). Jesus Christ was the Word turned flesh; that he died on the cross for the redemption of sinners, resurrected on the third day and ascended into heaven; and that he is the only saviour of humankind, the Lord of heaven and earth and the only true God. (2). Both the New and the Old Testaments are inspired by God, the only proof of the true Word and the criterion for Christian life. (3). The TJC was founded by Jesus Christ through the latter rain Holy Spirit to restore the true church of the Apostolic Age. (4). Water baptism is a sacrament of remission of sin and regeneration. One must receive the baptisms of both the water and the Spirit, in the name of Jesus and be immersed in living water, with the head bowed in the likeness of Jesus' death. (5). Receiving the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom. Speaking in tongues is the evidence of having received the Spirit. (6). The sacrament of foot-washing is to have part in the Lord. It teaches us to love each other, to be holy, humble, to serve and to forgive. Every new convert must receive this rite once after baptism, in the name of Jesus. Mutual washing of feet is practiced when necessary. (7). The Holy Communion is held as a memorial of the death of the Lord. It is the sacrament of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Lord together, to be united with the Lord for eternal life and resurrection in the last days. It needs to be administered frequently with unleavened bread and grape juice. (8). The Sabbath (Saturday) is the day on which God gives his blessing. We observe it to remember his creation and redemption in grace and hope for an eternal rest in the age to come. (9). One is saved by grace through faith, but one must seek holiness, practise the teaching of the Bible, honour God and love one's neighbours through the prompting of the Spirit. (10). The Lord will come at the end of the world to judge all people; the righteous will have eternal life, the sinners eternal punishment. Among these, the following five are cardinal doctrines: (1). Water Baptism. (2). Washing of feet. (3). Holy Communion. (4). Baptism of the Holy Spirit. (5). The Sabbath. [See Deng, Zhaoming, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations,' pp. 444-445].

<sup>60</sup> The True Jesus Church had its origins in the Pentecostal mission movement, which emanated from Los Angeles, in 1907. (Alan Hunter & Chan Kimkwong, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, p.120) The history of this movement is well documented in a number of studies, and, in great detail in Deng Zhaoming's recent paper.

<sup>61</sup> Deng, Zhaoming, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations,' pp. 445-446.

the *Shengling Bao* (聖靈報, The Holy Spirit Monthly). In 1929 a split arose within the leadership over a difference of policy and Barnabas Zhang left the church and set up a new congregation in Hong Kong. By 1948, the TJC had spread to each province, with more than 700 churches.<sup>62</sup>

### 3.2 The Jesus Family

The Jesus Family also was characterized by a Pentecostalist style of religion, with emphasis on healing and other 'spiritual gifts'. It was started in the village of Mazhuang in Shandong in 1921, by the converted Buddhist, Jing Dianying (1890-1957).<sup>63</sup> In fact, the Jesus Family was planted under perennial political unrest and economic hardship. In 1921, Jing and others established, in Mazhuang, a Christian Savings Society, on a cooperative store basis. It attempted to serve the needs of the economically and socially marginalized. By 1926, a silk reeling cooperative was formed which became known as the Jesus Family in 1927.

At the heart of the Jesus Family identity, the Holy Spirit was the revelation and the guidance. Obedience is the principle of life. Every member is obliged to listen to the Family head.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, all members of the Family were required to live a simple and frugal life, to be hardworking, be ready to suffer for the Lord and each had to contribute his/her part to the Family. Just like the disciples in the primitive church, no one held private property, and all things were communal.<sup>65</sup>

The Family has yet to develop its theology, but it has a rich treasure house that is its hymnal. Jing was a gifted scholar. Hymns written by him numbered several dozen, all threaded with Christian Spirit and relevant to the Chinese situation and its cultural background. Although his political ideal might show tints of the

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<sup>62</sup>Hunter, Alan, & Chan Kimwong, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, pp.120-121.

<sup>63</sup> Jing Dianying was raised in a Confucian environment. It was not until 1910, when he entered a middle school in Tai-an, run by a Christian church that he came into contact with Christianity. Yet 'it seems that after his initial conversion to Christianity about 1913-14, he still considered becoming a Buddhist monk and, in 1918 or 1919, may have joined the Dao Shenxian, a syncretistic sect in the main White Lotus tradition that was prevalent in parts of Shandong, even up to the 1960s.' Then, in the mid-1920s, he was reconverted, through contact with Pentecostal Christianity.

<sup>64</sup> For instance, Jing once said, 'if somebody received God's oracle in a dream to go to the east, the Family head can tell him to go the west if he did not get the same oracle. The dreamer, for the sake of absolute obedience, must take the advice of the leader instead of God's command. Under such circumstances to obey man rather than God will not enrage God but will get His reward.' (See Deng, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations,' p.455.)

<sup>65</sup> For details of organization and life of the Jesus Family, see Deng, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations,' pp.452-455; See also, Lian Xi, 'The Search for Chinese Christianity in the Republican Period (1912-1949)', *Modern Asian Studies* 38, 4 (2004), pp.862-867.

revolutionary or the counter-revolutionary, no one can deny that his hymns are very indigenous.

Even though the Family did not spread as widely as the TJC, by 1941, there were a hundred and forty communities, in eight provinces, with six thousand members. The largest community was still the old home in Mazhuang, with about 500 members in the late 1940s, over 100 houses and more than 10 working units.

### 3.3 Independent Evangelism

By the end of the 1930s several independent revivalists had become evangelical celebrities. This was not tied to any one denomination, but was rather a religious trend which affected them all from time to time.<sup>66</sup> Mostly, they were well educated, some of them having degrees from American universities, they were well versed in the scriptures and all held a conservative theological position.<sup>67</sup> The best-known among them were Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng) (1903-1972), John Sung, Wang Mingdao and others. As Abbott remarks, 'these men are making a profound impression on the Christian community. Their work cannot be ignored in any estimate of present day religious trends in China.'<sup>68</sup>

While many missionaries were insisting on greater social involvement, the indigenous movements were far more concerned with other-worldly issues and finding a greater response. They were determined to distance themselves from the claims of the Social Gospel. Their biblical fundamentalism led them to question the authority of the state over the Church, even as liberal and modernists theologically

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<sup>66</sup> An excellent study is Lee, *Theology of Revival*; Bays, Daniel H., *Christian Revivalism in China*, provides a good review of the movement.

<sup>67</sup> In this study, the terms *conservative* and *liberal*, as they are used here, signify different approaches of theological interpretation. They are only intended to facilitate discussion, not to draw hard and fast lines between opposing camps. The crucial difference between conservative and liberal theology concerned the relative importance of social service, as compared to individual salvation. The liberals maintained that the ultimate goal of the Christian enterprise was to transform the whole of society, so that every person could lead a dignified, secure existence, and that Christian witness by deeds would be far more meaningful in the long term than preaching. Their theological stance was for building the Kingdom of heaven on earth rather than hoping to gain it after death; their pragmatic critique of fundamentalists pointed out that it was relatively easy to convert individuals, in the short term, but that such individuals often did not continue to practice an alien faith in a hostile environment, with the absence of social support. In other words, their great concern in the 1930s was that the church was irrelevant to the political and social needs of the Chinese masses. They believed that the sorry state of the rural church in particular was the result of a mistaken strategy, based on lack of understanding. The traditional style of mission, according to them, was 'foreign in character, isolated from the larger life of the community, standing apart from the life of the majority, and ministering only to a single aspect of the human need and only to a small fraction of the community.

<sup>68</sup> Abbott, Paul R., 'Revival Movements', *China Christian Yearbook*, 1934, p.177. (Quoted from Hunter & Chan, *Protestantism in contemporary China*, p.129.)

justified that control, by claiming that God's will is manifested immanently in the establishment of the modern nation-state. They highlighted individual salvation, through Jesus Christ, and strongly disagreed with the presentation of Christianity as exclusively an ethical system. In other words, for them, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus were the true heart of the Gospel. Therefore, in their eyes, institutional work should be secondary.

Watchman Nee, founder of the 'Little Flock', was a dynamic and controversial Fujianese.<sup>69</sup> He rebelled against the formalism and rituals of the Anglican tradition, while still a student at the Anglican Trinity College at Fuzhou. In the main, he was greatly influenced by a former Church Missionary Society missionary, Margaret Barber, who had become associated with the Brethren Movement and been re-baptized in England, before returning as an independent missionary in 1920.

Early in the 1920s Nee joined a few friends in a home meeting, where they established the practice of 'breaking bread', performing a kind of lay communion, without the assistance of a pastor. They ignored western church customs, had little contact with foreigners and established new ecclesiastical traditions of their own, which they maintained were those of the first apostles. By intense personal evangelism they attracted large numbers of Christians to follow their example.

In 1928 Nee founded his own central church in Shanghai and became the recognized leader of the movement. On the whole, the church was independent from missionaries and had no foreign stigma, although it is true that much of its theology derived ultimately from western sources, most notably the Plymouth Brethren. The teaching was simple, based on reiterated statements of doctrine that led to an intense loyalty and sense of belonging. It was pious and spiritual in orientation, with a minimal emphasis on social welfare. Many of the church leaders were unpaid, and had to be supported by contributions from the congregation.

Despite confrontations with the Japanese and war devastations the church continued to spread until 1949. Nee was arrested in the 1950s, accused of being a Guomindang (hereafter, GMD) agent as well as opposing the TSPM, and died in jail. The movement was ordered to merge with the TSPM in the drive towards unification

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<sup>69</sup> Kinnear, Angus, *Against the Tide* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1978), is a useful biography of Nee. A critical assessment of his theology is given by Covell, *Confucius, the Buddha and Christ*, pp.196-200; a more positive one by Lee, *Theology of Revival*, pp.253-259.

in 1958, but the impact of the ‘Little Flock’ tradition is still very strong among house churches, especially in southeast China.

Wang Mingdao was an independent evangelist, who preached a similar message to that of Watchman Nee, but without any pretensions to establishing his own sect. The general tenor was, however, other worldly, and his appeal was not dissimilar to that exercised by the Little Flock. He was born in Beijing in July 1900 and educated in a school run by the London Missionary Society. He started preaching in 1925, and in 1936 built a large church in Beijing, which he later named ‘*Jidutu Huitang*’ (基督會堂, The Christian Tabernacle).

In *Jesus in Beijing*, David Aikman affectionately refers to Wang as one of the ‘Patriarchs’ of modern Chinese Christianity.<sup>70</sup> Since starting his own independent church in Peking in the 1920s, he had never been connected with any foreign group, or, received any financial support from the British or the Americans. Throughout his career as a pastor and evangelist, Wang insisted that the Chinese churches needed to be completely independent of foreign mission organization or foreign church denominations. He believed Chinese Christian churches should also support themselves financially, and do their own evangelizing and disciplining of new Christian believers.<sup>71</sup>

His message was plain: it dealt with sin, repentance, Hell, and Heaven. He indicated that, ‘the real indigenous church is one that is set up in the manner of the apostles’ and involves ‘neither Westernization nor Sinicization.’<sup>72</sup> His *Spiritual Food Quarterly* was widely read for twenty years, or so and from 1948 to 1950, his influence was probably at its greatest. Unlike many of the other evangelists, Wang addressed an urban audience, including many students, and this was to provoke a major confrontation with the Communist authorities, after 1949.

John Sung, the son of a pastor, studied chemistry in the United States, gaining a PhD in 1926. He pursued a religious career and enrolled in the Union Theological Seminary in New York the following year. However, he soon found the atmosphere there too liberal, could not accept the interpretations of Christianity that were being offered, and suffered a nervous breakdown that led to a period in a psychiatric

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<sup>70</sup> Aikman, David, *Jesus in Beijing*, pp.49-57.

<sup>71</sup> David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, p. 51.

<sup>72</sup> Wang Mingdao, ‘Eshi Zhong de husheng’ (An Quarterly in the Midst of an Evil World), in *Wang Mingdao wenku*, Vol.2, (1928), pp. 190, 202; see also, Lian Xi, ‘The Search for Chinese Christianity in the Republican Period (1912-1949)’, pp.872-873.



institution. After his recovery, he found his spiritual home in a radical revivalist environment.

On the return journey to China, he threw his diplomas overboard, and started the most successful campaigns for conversion ever undertaken in China. He first gained experience as an evangelist in the 'Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Band'.<sup>73</sup> Basically, he simply focused upon spiritual matters, showing little interest in social welfare. He thus consistently opposed the programs of the National Christian Council and other liberal institutions.

Many stories circulate concerning Sung's gifts as faith healer. His work produced psychological dynamics, by referring to repentance as 'cleansing', by making restitution for sins and making much use of predictions of imminent apocalypse. The individual Christian should surrender to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and revived living would be shown by constant confession, Bible study, prayer, preaching and service.<sup>74</sup> Sung and his colleagues were generally recognized as orthodox Christians. He did not try to start his own church, but rather led people to Christianity and then let local organizations take over the care of converts.

Taken together, the contribution of these movements to the survival of the Church is undoubted. Most of these indigenous movements rapidly became a formidable force in the Protestant church in China. The TJC, for instance, had as many as 120,000 followers and seven hundred churches throughout the country, by 1949. Despite their popular appeal and home grown credentials, however, these indigenous groups came under attack by the TSPM in the early 1950s and were forced to merge with the TSPM.

#### **4. Towards an Indigenous Theology in pre-1949 China**

The 1920/30s were one of the most active periods of Chinese theological development. A large number of theological publications were produced and a vast diversity of theological positions voiced.<sup>75</sup> Theologically speaking, they all tried to open up the possibility of self-propagation, self-government, and self-support.

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<sup>73</sup> The Bethel Mission was an independent enterprise founded by three women, two Chinese and one American. Its primary purpose was to train enthusiastic young Chinese evangelists. They visited towns and villages, preaching to huge meetings on the theme of repentance and salvation.

<sup>74</sup> Lee, 'Theology of Revival', pp.194-201, gives an account of the ideas of Sung and his fellows.

<sup>75</sup> Those publishing houses became centres for producing original Chinese theologies and translating western works. One example is the Chinese Christian Literature Society (*Zonghua Jidujiao Wenshe*, 1925-28), which emphasized the origination of indigenous theology and published far more original

In that very period, the Chinese Christian community faced the issue of Christianity and traditional Chinese culture. Despite this, the ideological impact of the new cultural movement, highlighting science and democracy, and the rapid social and political changes, also constituted a serious challenge to Chinese Christianity. Religion in general and Christianity, in particular, was accused as unscientific.<sup>76</sup> The challenges can be concluded in two main concerns: What does the Christian religion mean and what is the place and function of the Church in the life of China?<sup>77</sup>

In order to cope with those challenges posed above, particularly, of Christianity that originated from the West, many Chinese Christian scholars applied themselves to the question of indigenisation in the 1920s in an attempt to show how Christianity could be recast in a Chinese way.<sup>78</sup> Jian Youwen (Timothy Jen Yu-wan, 1896-?), for example, translated some materials on the subject of religion and science, in order to prove that Christianity was not contradictory to science. On the other hand, for the purpose of setting indigenous theology in response to the criticism that Christianity was a foreign religion, he pleaded for 'a Christianized China by a Sinicised Christianity'.<sup>79</sup>

Another interesting example is Y. T. Wu, who translated into Chinese A *Common Faith* by John Dewey (1859-1932).<sup>80</sup> As it is widely known, Wu was inclined to socialism and therefore could not possibly identify himself with Dewey's

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works than translations. Unfortunately, it lasted for only a very short span of time for financial and other reasons. Another noteworthy institution was the Association Press of China (*Qingnian Xiehui Shuju*), founded in 1902. It was a publishing house managed by Chinese editors throughout without any interference from foreigners. It published works of famous Chinese theologians including Zhao Zichen (T.C. Chao, 1888-1979), Liu Tingfang (Timothy Tingfang Lew, 1891-1947), Xu Baoqian (P.C. Hsu, 1892-1944) and Wu Yaozong (Y.T. Wu, 1893-1979). By the end of 1940s, it had published more than 500 monographs and pamphlets, among which only small portions were translations and books originally written by Chinese authors.

<sup>76</sup> Scientific atheism is manifested as one of the CCP's fundamental doctrine. As an offspring of the European Enlightenment movement, scientific atheism, regards religion as illusory, nonscientific, and backward. Therefore, they believed that the advancement of science and education will lead to the natural demise of religion. (Yang, Fenggang, 'Triple Religious Markets in China', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 47 [2006] 93-122.)

<sup>77</sup> Leung Kalun, *Blessing upon China: Ten Talks on the Contemporary Church History of China* (Tien Dao Publishing House Ltd, 1988), Chapter 9.

<sup>78</sup> For a particular study on theological indigenization in the 1920s, see Lam Winghung, *Chinese Theology of Construction* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983).

<sup>79</sup> Jian, Youwen, 'Foreword,' in Harry Ward, *Geming de Jidujiao* (A Revolutionary Christianity), Jian Youwen (trans.), (Shanghai: Zhonghua Jidujiao wenshe, 1926), p.1.

<sup>80</sup> Dewey, John, *Kexue de zongjiaoguan* (A Scientific View of Religion), Trans. Wu Yaozong, (Shanghai: The Association Press of China, 1936). (This example is adapted to Lai, Panchiu, 'Chinese Culture and the development of Chinese Christian theology', *Studies in World Christianity* Vol. 7. Issue 2,[2001].)

liberal stance.<sup>81</sup> In fact, Wu criticized Dewey's thought and its capitalist ideology in the preface to the translation. Wu's purpose in translating the book is clearly illustrated in the Chinese title he chose for the Chinese version. Instead of translating 'a common faith' directly and literally, he named the Chinese version *Kexue de zongjiaoguan* (科學的宗教觀, A Scientific View of Religion). Wu says: 'Dewey advocates a scientific religion, which means a religion liberated from the mystical "supra-naturalism".' Wu further clarifies,

Our purpose of introducing this book of Dewey could be summarized as follows: firstly, because of its substantial metaphysical elements, religion can easily become superstition, a danger which could be alleviated by adopting a scientific attitude; secondly, religion in the past tended to be alienated from daily life, and a scientific view on religion, which starts from reality, can help to correct this problem.<sup>82</sup>

Theological indigenisation, in the main, involves the adoption of traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, especially Confucian thought and terms, in constructing theology with Chinese characteristics. As Carver T. Yu indicates, what they aimed to achieve was 'trying to maintain continuity with their cultural tradition (dominantly Confucianism), while aiming to bring it to a new height of achievement through the Christian faith.'<sup>83</sup> This can be seen in the theological development of Zhao Zichen (T.C. Chao or Tzu-ch'en Chao), arguably the most famous Chinese theologian, at that time. Zhao studied in America from 1914 to 1917, where he imbibed the spirit of the 'Social Gospel'. In the reorganization of the importance of the Chinese context for the Chinese Christian theology, he thus made an effort to develop a theology that was integrated with Chinese culture, and recognized the Chinese context.

Zhao's *Jidujiao Zhexue* (基督教哲學, Christian Philosophy) was basically a response to challenges made against the Christian faith, by contemporary Chinese

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<sup>81</sup> During 1920/30s, Wu showed no sympathy with Communist ideology at all. On the contrary, he took 'love' as a principle of action and the transcendent will of God. By the end of the 1920s, Wu was deeply stirred by the misfortune of the great world-wide depression. He came to believe that the most urgent need of Chinese society was not just 'love' but material reconstruction. From then on, Wu became increasingly interested in the politics of China. From 1939 to 1949, Wu's thought, by and large, can be characterized as procommunist or Christian socialist, although it is hard to say when and how Wu definitely came to favour communism. In 1948, he published a challenging article entitled 'The Present-Day Tragedy of Christianity', which was actually his declaration of war against the foreign missions, particularly the American missions, in China. (Gao, Wangzhi, 'Y. T. Wu: A Christian leader under communism', in Daniel H. Bays [ed.], *Christianity in China from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996].)

<sup>82</sup> Dewey, John, *Kexue de zongjiaoguan*, p.14.

<sup>83</sup> Yu, Carver T., 'Chinese Protestantism to the Present Day', p.228.

intellectuals, from the perspective of scientism, especially scientific positivism.<sup>84</sup> Zhao acknowledged that, he made extensive use of western theologies, particularly his indebtedness to Borden Parker Bowne, William James and Henri Bergson, among others. Some years later, Zhao made some critical reflections, on his previous works after he had been exposed to and apparently influenced by Karl Barth's work. Apart from writing what was probably the first Chinese monograph on Karl Barth,<sup>85</sup> many other later works by Zhao, such as *Jidujiao de lunli* (基督教的倫理, Ethics of Christianity), were also influenced by Barthian thought, highlighting God-centered ethics, God's transcendence, Christian ethics as being distinct from other cultures without confusion or compromise, *etc.*<sup>86</sup>

During the 1930s, due to the problems of reconstruction and then of invasion and war, the focus of discussion among Chinese Christian theologians shifted from 'how to indigenise Christianity' to 'whether and how Christianity may save the nation.'<sup>87</sup> More specifically, as Lai indicates, 'whereas theological indigenisation attempted to make Christian theology compatible or even united with traditional Chinese culture, theological contextualisation aimed at making Christian theology relevant to the contemporary social and/or political context.'<sup>88</sup>

Some of them started to pay great attention to the immanence of God and called the church to take an active part in society. This trend, by and large, was influenced by the thought of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) and his early twentieth-century social gospel movement.<sup>89</sup> Some Chinese theologians introduced the theology of the social gospel, as they became aware of how this theology could be related to the contemporary Chinese situation. Chinese translations of *Theology for the Social Gospel* and *Social Principles of Jesus* by Walter Rauschenbusch were published as

<sup>84</sup> Zhao, Zichen, *Jidujiao Zhexue* (Christian Philosophy), (Shuzhou: Zonghua Jidu jiao wenshe, 1925).

<sup>85</sup> Zhao Zichen, *Ba-te de zong jiao si xiang* (Barth's Religious Thought), (Shanghai: Qingnian Xiehui Shuju, 1939). Reprinted in: Deng, Shaoguang (Andres Tang Siu-kwong) and Lai, Pinchao (Lai Panchiu) (eds.) *Ba te yu hanyu shenxue* (Karl Bath and Sino-Theology)(Hong Kong: Institution for Sino-Christian Studies, 2000), pp.3-40.

<sup>86</sup> Zhao, Zichen, *Jidujiao de lunli* (Ethics of Christianity), (Shanghai: Qingnian Xiehui, 1948).

<sup>87</sup> Lai, Panchiu, 'Chinese Culture and the development of Chinese Christian theology', *Studies in World Christianity*, vol. 7. Issue 2, (2002), p. 222.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>89</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch was a Christian Theologian and Baptist Minister. He was a key figure in the social movement in the USA. His view of Christianity was that its purpose was to spread a Kingdom of God by leading a Christlike life. In his *Theology for the Social Gospel* (1971), he wrote that for John the Baptist, the baptism was 'not a ritual act of individual salvation but an act of dedication to a religious and social movement.' (Rauschenbusch, Walter, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, [New York: Abingdon Press, 1917].)

early as 1923. The aim of these translations was to emphasise that Christianity was thoroughly ethical, social, and revolutionary so much so that the Christian social gospel might meet the needs of modern China.

Here, it must be pointed out that the theological liberals of Chinese Protestantism did not blindly follow the Western theological trends. The Christian messages from the West were interpreted by them through the double lenses of their national experience, and their cultural heritage. Along with theological conservatives, they stressed national salvation and social reconstruction, two major themes of Chinese theology in the first half of the twentieth century. But they differed from their conservative counterparts in their emphasis on applying rationalism and science to theological issues, and taking a reformist or even radical approach to social issues. In these contexts, Western liberalism did provide them with a strong foundation. By making their theology more relevant and adaptable to the revolutionary social environment of the time, they also brought themselves closer to the communist ideology, and were thereby more acceptable to the new regime.

For instance, Wu Y.T. insisted on the need to maintain a dialectical unity between God's transcendence and his immanence. He said:

If we see God only in his transcendence, we are bound to arrive at a pessimistic view of man....According to this one-sided emphasis, man is sinful, miserable and utterly depraved. God and man are separated from each other by an absolute chasm...<sup>90</sup>

He went on to argue that this view was responsible for the split between evangelism and social involvement in that being 'above politics' is 'but a service to reactionary politics'. He emphasised that 'Christianity has no understanding of today's revolutionary movement.' On 10 April 1948 he published an article 'The Present Day Tragedy of Christianity', which caused a furore, and forced him to resign as editor of *Tian Feng* (天風, Heavenly Wind).<sup>91</sup> He came to attack the association of Christianity with capitalism, and, in particular, its subservience to American policy in China. He made the point that,

If our thinking had remained the same as Western Christian thinking, we should indeed have become unconscious tools of imperialism and cultural aggression. If the religion we preach should avoid reality, and be concerned only with individualism and revivalism, then, in the

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<sup>90</sup> Wu, Yaozong, 'The present day tragedy of Christianity', in Francis P. Jones (ed.), *Documents of the Three-Self Movement: Source materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China* (Far Eastern Office, Division of Foreign Missions National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963), p.3.

<sup>91</sup> *Tian Feng*, was a liberal Christian Journal. It started in February 1945.

eyes of the great masses who are demanding liberation, Christianity would be nothing but an opiate. The times demand a move forward; if our religion is superstitious, backward, and opposed to the interests of the people, then all we stand for will be swept away under the ruthless judgment of history. It will indeed be tragic if at that time we still think we are being persecuted for righteousness' sake and are bearing the cross of Jesus.<sup>92</sup>

Obviously, the key insight for Wu was to claim a special role for the Church in the secular movement for social change. Based on his combination of theological and political perception, he made efforts to encourage Chinese Christians to take their place in the movement for national salvation, with their faith intact, as well as for intellectuals mindful of the national fate to take their place, among Christians.<sup>93</sup>

During more or less the same period, works of Harry Frederick Ward (1873-1966), also an advocate of the social gospel, though less prominent than Rauschenbusch in the United States, were also translated into Chinese. Particularly noteworthy is the publication of Ward's *Geming de Jidujiao* (革命的基督教, A Revolutionary Christianity). Rather than a translation of a book already published in English, it consisted of a compilation and translation of Ward's speeches during his visit to China in 1925, and some other writings. Jian Youwen stated in his foreword to the book:

This is a time of revolution, which I especially true for China in transition. The crime of 'anti-revolution' charged by revolutionaries or revolutionary governments is more serious than the crime of being Marxist charged by reactionaries and imperialists. The first and foremost reason for non-Christians' opposition to Christianity is the latter's 'anti-revolutionary' nature. Thus it should indeed be appropriate and timely to publish a book on the revolutionary nature of Christianity in this era of revolution.

Following Ward, Jian attempted to emphasize that the ethos of Christianity was purely ethical, social and revolutionary. After introducing Ward's views, Jian went on the say: 'if all members of Chinese Christianity continue to proceed in this direction, then critics of Christianity could no longer charge Christianity as 'anti-revolutionary'. Positively speaking, Christianity might even play a role in the great movement of social reform in the nation's renaissance. By that time, people may talk about religion as the stimulant of the people rather than religion as 'the opium of the masses. The life of Christianity will last forever in tandem with the Republic of China.' Liu Tingfang, who explicitly acknowledged his indebtedness to Ward, also endeavored to argue that it could meet the needs of the Chinese context.

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<sup>92</sup> Wu Yaozong, 'The present day tragedy of Christianity', p.4.

<sup>93</sup> K.H. Ting, 'Forerunner Y.T. Wu', in *Huiyi Wu Yaozong*, (Three Self Patriotic Movement, Shanghai 1982), p. 90.

At that time, the liberal theology of the ‘Social Gospel’ also played an important role in Zhao’s early theology. In his essay ‘Can Christianity Be the Basis of Social Reconstruction’, Zhao had clearly indicated the link between the call for indigenisation and the desire for national reconstruction. He suggested that Christianity could contribute to social progress and the solution of the national crisis by forming human beings ready to rise to the challenges of their time.<sup>94</sup>

Although in the early 1930s Christianity was seen as providing the basis for a new spirit in society which would lead to national regeneration. Zhao’s proposal to save the nation through a reforming of the individual personality, reminiscent of the Confucian approach, however, was ultimately revealed as a hollow approach, it offered no way forward in a stage of chaos. As Ng Leeming indicates,

As China’s situation became worse, the ‘liberal’ approach was found by most Chinese to be too slow for the occasion. With the burst of this liberal bubble, indigenization also lost its place in the all important task of national reconstruction, and accordingly stopped being the entering point to the hearts and minds of the Chinese people.<sup>95</sup>

After 1949, however, there were fewer original works and translated works in the publications of the institutional church in China, particularly when compared with the 1920/30s. The Three-Self principle of complete independence from foreign control was adopted and indigenisation took on a new political meaning.<sup>96</sup> Theological responses, especially among the Three-Self Church, were highly standardised with a view to implementing government policies and assisting in patriotic education and united front campaigns, *etc.* Some Chinese Christians, e.g. Wu Yaozong preferred a much more radical proposal of Marxism and revolution, which might involve the use of violence. Wu’s theological position became popular within the institutional church in China, as we shall see in Chapter Two.

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<sup>94</sup> Winfried Gluer, *Zhao Zichen de shenxue sixiang* (Zhao Zichen’s Theological Thought), Deng, Xiaoming (trans.) (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1998), pp.173-184. (Chinese translation of: Winfried Gluer, *Christliche Theologie in China: T.C. Chao, 1918-1956*. Gutersloher Verlagshaus, 1979.)

<sup>95</sup> Ng Leeming, ‘The promise and Limitations of Chinese protestant Theologians, 1920-1950’, *Ching Feng* Vol.21 No.4.(1978), p.177. (Quoted from Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp.182-183.)

<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Chao & Rosanna Chong, *A History of Christianity in Socialist China, 1949-1997*, Chapter 1 ; Lam, Winghung, *A Half century of Chinese theology 1900-1949*, Chapter 5 & 6.





## **Chapter Two: Three-Self idea in post-1949 Chinese theology**

As we have seen, the idea of Three-Self did not begin all at once, in China. Instead, it progressed slowly, was interpreted inconsistently and developed with many twists and turns. In the discussion which follows, it will be important to consider how Three-Self Movement's (hereafter TSM) comprehensive approach to Christian faith has been combined with a strict adherence to political principle and in support of the post-1949 government on theological as well as political grounds.<sup>1</sup> These issues became the fundamental concern of Ting's Theological Reconstruction in the 1980s.

### **1. Three-Self as the slogan of Patriotism**

#### **1.1 The theoretical and the political assumptions**

The terms of *zongjiao* (宗教, religion), *mixin* (迷信, superstition), and *shenquan* (神權, divine right), were adopted from Japanese and were used to express Western notions that did not exist in the Chinese discourse prior to 1900.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the notion of *zongjiao*, religion, first appears in the Chinese discourse about 1900, but does not effectively portray religious life in the Chinese context. In fact, it is part of the process under consideration and has served anti-superstition policies; it referred fundamentally to Christianity in the early phases of its use in Chinese.<sup>3</sup> As Bob Whyte makes the point, on the whole, the CCP had never worked out a coherent policy concerning religion, beyond an instinctive dislike of 'superstition' and of foreign missionaries.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the government was not

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<sup>1</sup> Richard C. Bush, *Religion in Communist China* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press) is an excellent study of the situation before 1970. Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, Chapter 6 & 7, discusses the period from 1949 to 1979.

<sup>2</sup> For the detailed of the changing in the discourse on religion in China around 1898, see Vincent Goossaert, '1898: The Beginning of the End of Chinese Religion?', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65:2 (May 2006), pp.307-336; 'The concept of religion in China and the West', *Diogenes* 205: 13-20. (The online version of this article can be found at: <http://dio.sagepub.com>). See also Francesca Tarocco, 'The Making of "Religion" in Modern China', in Nile Green and Mary Searle (eds.), *Religion, Language, and Power* (Routledge, 2008), pp.42-56; T.H. Barrett, 'Chinese Religion in English Guise: The History of an Illusion', *Modern Asian Studies* 39, 3(2005), pp. 509-533; Chen hsinyuan's work, *Confucian Encounters with Religion: Rejections, Appropriation, and Transformations*, which examine the complexities in the conceptualisation of the Western concept of 'religion' in the course of social, cultural, and political movements from late-Qing to early Republication China.

<sup>3</sup> Goossaert, '1898: The Beginning of the End of Chinese Religion?', p.309.

<sup>4</sup> Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp.205-206. See also Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The missionary movement and the growth of Chinese anti-foreignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge,

opposed to religious belief per se, but the possible imperialistic influences connected with Western religions.<sup>5</sup> To some extent, Marxist view of religion merely reinforced a hostility that was already present.

After the establishment of the Communist regime, atheism is taken as a fundamental doctrine, which is presented in two major patterns: scientific atheism and militant atheism.<sup>6</sup> The former regards religion as irrational, backward and non-scientific; therefore atheist propaganda, with the advancement of science and education, is critical to eradicate religion. In other words, with the development of modern science and political liberation, theistic religion would eventually wither away.<sup>7</sup> Militant atheism views theistic religion as simply a product of ignorance, which has been used as an 'opiate of the people' by the exploiting class. It treats religion as a troubling political ideology that serves the interests of anti-revolutionary forces. Therefore, it has to be eradicated by force. In essence, the early days of CCP policy was based upon the theoretical basis for tolerating religion of scientific atheism. Nevertheless, militant atheist propaganda turned out to be vicious, and leads to anti-religious procedures.<sup>8</sup>

As soon as the CCP followed the hard line of militant atheism, within a decade, all religions were brought under iron control. Folk religious practices considered feudal superstitions were vigorously suppressed; cultic or heterodox sects regarded as reactionary organisations were resolutely forbidden; foreign missionaries,

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Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963.) (Arguably, in the early state, for Communist leader, religion and superstitious was same. The debate on the distinguish religion from superstitious, see Bush, *Religion in Communist China*, p. 28 ; Lucy Jen Wang, 'The Role of Religion in Communist Chinese Society,' *Asia Survey*, Vol. 11: 7, [Jul., 1971], pp. 695-697.)

<sup>5</sup> May M.C. Cheng, 'House Church Movement and Religious Freedom in China', *China: An International Journal* 1: 1, (March, 2003), p.19.

<sup>6</sup> Yang Fenggang, 'Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China', *Sociology of Religion*, Vol.65, No.2. (Summer, 2004), p.103; 'The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China', *The Sociological Quarterly* 47(2006), pp. 100-102.

<sup>7</sup> A significant measure is the attempt to stop further transmission of religious ideas through traditional mythological literature and dramas. Mythological fiction and their versions in serial pictures were often confiscated from bookstores and sidewalk bookstands and destroyed. Since 1951, there has been a persistent effort to purge supernatural notions from traditional drama by rewriting it. Other measures are taken to reduce supernatural influence. A special tax was imposed on 'superstitious commodities' such as incense sticks, candles, and paper articles to burn to the dead, with the obvious purpose of using financial pressure to reduce religious rites. (See C.K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, pp.388-393, for detailed information.) (The research on the topic of anti-superstition policies, focusing on the 1911-37 period, include: Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing history from the nation: Questioning narratives of modern China* [University of Chicago, 1995], pp.85-114; Vincent Goossaert, '1898: The beginning of the end for Chinese religion?', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65:2, [May 2006]: 307-336).

<sup>8</sup> Dai Kangsheng, 'Xin Zhongguo Zongjiao Yanjiu 50 Nian' (50 Years of Religious Research in New China), in Cao Zhongjian (ed.), *Annual of Religious Research, 1999-2000* (Beijing, China: Religious Culture Press, 2001), pp.38-57.

considered part of Western imperialism, were expelled. Within such a political climate, Christianity was viewed as the colonial powers used religion as a mask to penetrate into interior rural communities that could further future military action against China.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it became inevitable for the CCP to closely supervise China's Christians. Moreover, at a time when the Communist power was trying to consolidate its social and political system, there was a necessity to demand not only that the religious population and their organizations refrain from political deviation and resistance, but also that they take part in all phases of socialist construction and various patriotic movement of the motherland.<sup>10</sup> When those regulations apply to Christian organisations, which automatically meant unconditional support of the Communist Party, they became intertwined.<sup>11</sup>

Based on that theoretical and practical concern, in order to eliminate the influence of foreign religion, the CCP deployed the Leninist strategy of the United Front, to unite and to divide.<sup>12</sup> The tactics were to unite with a strong force to defeat the weak and to cooperate with more friendly oppositions against less friendly oppositions.<sup>13</sup> For example, it was tactically easy to single out the small number of foreign missionaries who remained in China in the early 1950s, and to associate their activities with past colonialist military and economic invasions in China. All foreign missionaries were labelled as the 'major enemies', especially America, which obviously needed to be opposed. Regarding the leadership of indigenous churches as 'lesser enemies', the Party co-opted and persuaded them to join the government in a United Front to denounce past actions of foreign missionaries against the Chinese people.

So, for detaching from all possible influence and missionary power in the churches, there was a desperate need of Chinese Christians to support the governmental policies and to create a unified church structure under governmental

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<sup>9</sup> Although Protestants and Catholics represented only a fraction of the Chinese population, because of their education and expertise their influence far exceeded their number. (See Chapter One for reference.) Christian universities, colleges, and prep schools had been highly effective in training a significant percentage of the intellectuals in China whose expertise was now needed to help build New China. Many of these intellectuals, particularly in the medical professions, served in the plethora of hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable institutions that had been set up by Western missions.

<sup>10</sup> C.K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, pp.393-398.

<sup>11</sup> Carver T. Yu, 'Chinese Protestantism to the Present Day,' in Alester E. McGrath & Darren C. Marks (eds.), *Blackwell companion to Protestantism* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> Wickeri's work, *Seeking the Common Ground*, provided a good study on this issue.

<sup>13</sup> John K Fairbank & Edwin O Reishauer, *China: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1979), p.477.

control as Chinese who love their mother land and as Christians who love their church.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, severing the links between Christianity and imperialism was a manifestation of love for the church as well as patriotism, because it helped to purify the church from corrupt and non-Christian influences. To put it differently, although religion represented a contradiction in a socialist society, the phrase ‘love one’s country, love one’s church’ was positioned as non-antagonistic in this contradiction. This did not suggest a separation between Church and state. Rather, this phrase emphasised that love of country and love of church were synonymous.

Our Lord Jesus loved His own country. Patriotism is the duty we Chinese Christians owe our country as citizens, while devotion to the Church is the expression of a precious faith. Since the Church has been used, influenced and defiled by imperialism, so in order to purify the Church it is necessary for us to oppose imperialism and show our love for our country... We can understand the mutual relationships of opposing imperialism, loving country and loving Church if we devote ourselves to sincere study and align ourselves with the people.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, to ‘align oneself with the people’ meant to align oneself with the TSM and the United Front. The Christian could not bypass the TSM by suggesting that s/he was indeed a loyal citizen, but for theological reasons felt constrained not to participate in the TSM. On account of the historical connection between the missionary and imperialism, the TSM urged the need to emphasise patriotism alongside the love of church. The slogan ‘love one’s country’, as an emphasis of patriotism, represents the political dimension of the TSM. It came to include the efforts for the eradication of imperialistic influences from the Chinese churches, intellectual remoulding and the organisation of a patriotic mass movement. Love for the church represents the goal of creating a self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating Chinese church.<sup>16</sup> It aims to have the slogan that Protestant Christianity, as a whole, could be convinced that ‘love one’s country, love one’s church’ was a legitimate expression of Christian existence in a socialist society. In other words, ‘love

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<sup>14</sup> From the mid 1930’s up to 1949, through its United Front operatives, the CCP not only established an ongoing dialogue with non-Communist parties and individuals, it actively infiltrated these groups with United Front cadres’ who considered as non-Communists in order to penetrate all levels of society to locate potential enemies and to enlist support for the CCP. For all non-Communist parties it was important early on to publicly express loyalty to the leadership of the CCP and the overall program of the nation. Rejection of either the party or its program could expose up an individual or a group to the charge that they represented an antagonistic contradiction and thus were an enemy of the people. (Fairbank & Reischauer, p.477; Slyke, Lyman P. Van, *Enemies and Friends: The United-Front in Chinese Communist History* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967], pp. 100-101).

<sup>15</sup> Wu, Y.T., ‘Report to Protestant Leaders’ (1954), in Donald e. MacInnis (ed.), *Religious Policy and Practice in Communist China: A Documentary History* (N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1972), p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p. 176.

one's country, love one's church' was not an abstract or arbitrary phrase, but meant that one was in alignment with the TSM and thus under the supervision of the state.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, it also can be regarded as a key concept for the TSM to restore and restructure a renewed understanding of unity within the common ground after the Cultural Revolution.

## 1.2 The social and political context

The Chinese empire's supremacy was challenged throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was further humiliated as foreign powers continued to make demands the empire was powerless to refuse. As a consequence of China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1895), together with the denunciation by Western forces following the Boxer Rebellion, Chinese patriotism and xenophobia reached a new peak.<sup>18</sup> The exploitation from the imperialists and merchants, many missionaries' actions were seen as abusive by the Chinese. Thousands of Chinese Christians and dozens of missionaries were slaughtered. The Church in China was categorically perceived as foreign and thus met with strong emotional rejections. From the May Fourth Movement of 1919 onward,<sup>19</sup> there was a drastic anti-Christian movement, both among intellectuals and at the popular level.<sup>20</sup> In a sense, it is possible to say that Chinese nationalism was built largely without, and even partly against, religion.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, there were many Christians who were active supporters of the CCP both before and after 1949. It was particularly marked amongst young Christian intellectuals who were part of the 'Christian Movement'.<sup>22</sup> This group of young

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<sup>17</sup> Harvey, Thomas Alan, 'Challenging heaven's mandate: an analysis of the conflict between Wang Mingdao and the Chinese Nation-State' [Unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University, 1998], pp.92-93.

<sup>18</sup> Yu, 'Chinese Protestantism to the Present Day,' p. 225; see also G. Thompson Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China* (Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986); Thomas A. Breslin, *China, American Catholicism, and the Missionary* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press).

<sup>19</sup> The May Fourth Movement was triggered by a student demonstration in Beijing (on 4 May 1919), against the decision of the Paris Peace Conference to transfer Germany's 'rights' in Shandong to Japan. Japan had first put forward her claim to Shandong and other parts of China in her 'Twenty-one Demands' issued in January 1915. (Quoted from Whyte, p.148) See also, Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 2005), which is especially strong on the legacy of the May Fourth Movement.

<sup>20</sup> Carver T. Yu, 'Chinese Protestantism to the Present Day,' p. 225.

<sup>21</sup> Vincent Goossaert, *State and Religion in Modern China: Religious Policies and Scholarly Paradigms*. Paper for the panel 'State and Society,' 'Rethinking Modern Chinese History: An International Conference to Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institute of Modern History,' Academia Sinica, Taipei, Republic of China, (June 29—1<sup>st</sup> July, 2005), p.4.

<sup>22</sup> The term 'Christian Movement' appears to be a name invented by David Paton, which he gave to a group of young Christian activists who were committed to making Christianity 'socially effective'.

Christian intellectuals saw in the revolution and the establishment of the CCP the evidence of the social gospel and saw in the CCP's social and economic plan a form of realized eschatology.<sup>23</sup> These Christians believed the Church should be active in its support of the CCP and the establishment of 'New China'.<sup>24</sup>

In practice, almost as soon as it took power in 1949, the CCP took advantage of the acquiescence of these intellectuals and co-opted all other versions of nationalism, pressing their own specific version of the nation.<sup>25</sup> At that time, because the United States was categorically the number one enemy, Christianity was viewed as a cloak of imperialist and other reactionary elements. Therefore, to 'draw a clear line' between patriotic Chinese Christians and American imperialism' was presented as the most immediate tasks of CCP's religious policy.<sup>26</sup> Under that very situation, Three-Self principle was given a new interpretation: 'Self-governing meant freedom from imperialist control; self-supporting meant freedom from imperialist finance; and self-propagating meant preaching "the truth" not imperialist "poison"'.<sup>27</sup>

It's worth highlighting that the phrase 'imperialist poisonous thought' (*Diguo zhuyi de dusu*, 帝國主義的毒素), demonstrates an important point of unity within the TSM. It never thoroughly defined 'imperialism', and 'imperialist poisonous thought' could refer to a number of different things and also to a most important category representing all of them at once. Therefore, it refers both to the historical invasion and hegemony exerted on China from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards as well as to the intellectual and spiritual residue that stayed behind the minds and action of the people. It also could refer to the value of anything Western, particularly if that value was compared to the Chinese. It referred to the ongoing attempt of the United States Government and all other 'reactionary forces' which were actively trying to

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(Harvey, *Challenging Heaven's Mandate*, p.75). They were deeply influenced by Walter Rauschenbusch and saw in the 'social gospel' their own yearnings for national salvation. Most of these leaders were found in the YMCA and YWCA and would form the initial leadership of the fledgling Three-Self Patriotic Movement. (Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.125; Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp. 214-215.)

<sup>23</sup> This can be particularly seen in the writing of Y.T. Wu, 'On Reforming Christianity', in Francis P. Jones, (ed.), *Documents of Three-Self Movement*, p.14.

<sup>24</sup> 'New China' was a term coined to capture the new reality of China after liberation in 1949.

<sup>25</sup> Prasenjit Duara argues that in the effort to build the nation, all other voices were silenced; that is, a single meta-narrative emerged in China that subsumed all other voices. National history, according to Duara, secures for itself a false unity and national purpose by appropriating particular themes and submerging others from the vast historical reality. (See Duara, Prasenjit, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988].)

<sup>26</sup> Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.136.

<sup>27</sup> Lyall, Leslie, *Come Wind, Come Weather: The Present Experience of the Church in China* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), p.28.

overthrow the Revolution. In terms of the United Front it could refer to anything that served to divide society; hence, religious or theological division was seen as a result of 'imperialist poisonous thought'.<sup>28</sup> In short, the endless permutations of 'imperialism' allowed it to refer to nearly anything that the state found noxious.

The Party's demands for total control over all social organisations resulted in a pressurised integration of all Protestant institutions by the TSPM, accomplished through the constant repetition of the chorus of denunciation campaigns.<sup>29</sup> Major world religions, including Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism, were coerced into 'patriotic' national associations under close supervision of the CCP. Religious believers who dared to challenge these policies were mercilessly banished to labour camps, jails, or execution grounds. Moreover, in order to control religious matter, the Party created a number of institutions. For instance, the Bureau of Religious Affairs, which functions as an agent of the Party, connects with religious groups and conveys the Party's policies, values, and ideology.

## **2. The establishment of Three-Self Patriotic Movement**

In May, 1950, a group of Protestant Christians met with Zhou Enlai (1898-1976) to discuss problems which had arisen relating to church and government.<sup>30</sup> In connection with a discussion of imperialism, Zhou indicated that no new missionaries could enter China, and no furloughed missionaries might return. Those who were already in China might stay if there was no question of their having engaged in political activity. Zhou suggested that the church rid itself of imperialism by an inward cleansing of imperialist connections, which cleansing would result in government protection. To follow up, Christians not only should clean imperialists from the church, but also join in the suppression of anti-revolutionaries, and take part in the Oppose America-Aid Korea Movement, on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1950. To some extent, China's involvement in the Korea War became more of a reality for Christians, as on the one hand, money was raised in all churches for guns, ammunition, and airplanes.

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<sup>28</sup> Harvey, *Challenging Heaven's Mandate*, pp.94-95.

<sup>29</sup> The circle of professors, scholars, writers, entrepreneurs, and religious leaders' victims in the campaigns were especially numerous. (See Gao, Wanchi, p.348.)

<sup>30</sup> Zhou was the first premier of the PRC.

It only increased the necessity to talk about American imperialists and for Chinese Christians, on the other hand, to dissociate themselves from such imperialists.<sup>31</sup>

In 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1951, 'The Conference for the Handling of Christian Organisations Receiving Subsidies from the United States of America', in Beijing, which was called by the Bureau of Religious Affairs, marked the shifting of attention to the churches which had received funds and missionaries. For all practical purposes, institutional funds from abroad had been cut off and missionaries were already on the way out. It became quite clear that Chinese were now to suffer as well as missionaries, and that much would be required of the Christian church in China after missionaries were gone and foreign funds denied.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the Conference, a twenty-five person Preparatory Committee of the Chinese Christian Resist-America-Aid-Korea Three-Self Reform Movement was set up. The group, simultaneously, drafted a document known as 'The Christian Manifesto'.<sup>33</sup> Y.T. Wu was chairman. Although there were a number of Divisions, the Committee became more and more prominent as Church leaders.<sup>34</sup> Its influence spread through the country by means of local visitations and the establishment of local Three-Self Committee. In particular, through the Manifesto campaign and the denunciation meetings, it recruited the support of many ordinary Christians.

## 2.1 The 'Christian Manifesto' and TSM

As the charter document of the TSM, the Manifesto provided the symbolic and structural discourse of official Protestantism in China and allowed the TSM to create the basis of a Protestant unity in China, whereby social cohesion and ecumenical harmony were achieved by theological differences being dissolved into the greater unity provided by loyalty to the People's Republic. The purpose of the Manifesto was explicitly stated as:

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<sup>31</sup> Bush, *Religion in Communist China*, p.202.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.188.

<sup>33</sup> The manifesto, originally entitled *Zhongguo Jidujiao zai xinzhongguo jianxe zhong nuli di dujing* (Direction of endeavour for Chinese Christianity in the construction of new China), is reprinted in Francis P. Jones, (ed.), *Documents of Three-Self Movement: Source Materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963), pp. 19-20.

<sup>34</sup> The Propaganda Division was headed by Liu Liangmo, the Liaison Division by Zheng Jianye and the General Affairs Division by Y.C. Tu. The initial draft was sharply criticized by Church leaders in Shanghai and had to be modified and brought back to receive the approval of Zhou. Though misgivings remained, Y.T. Wu refused to make any further changes. (Jones, Francis P., *The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal* [N.Y.: Friendship Press, 1962], pp. 52ff ).



Under the leadership of the government to oppose imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism...to purge imperialistic influence from within Christianity itself; and be vigilant against imperialism, especially American imperialism, in its plot to use religion in fostering the growth of reactionary forces.<sup>35</sup>

It was to be distributed nationally to collect the signatures of Protestants as a sign of their endorsement of this new relationship. To some extent, it is possible to say that the manifesto was welcomed by the CCP simply due to it setting a highly political agenda for the church; its main objectives were to ensure that Christians would support the new government and cut their links with foreigners.

As a 'principal draftsman' of the Manifesto, the document clearly reflects Wu's theological and political views regarding the Christian Church in a radically new context.<sup>36</sup> After bearing the signatures of 40 Christian leaders, the Manifesto was published with a front page endorsement in the national newspaper, the *People's Daily*. Official delegations were sent to churches throughout the nation to collect signatures and gather support for the Manifesto as the declarative statement of Protestant solidarity with the united-front and the Common Program set out by the CPCC.<sup>37</sup>

In 1954, Wu made use of the political situation to accomplish the founding on a national scale of the Three-Self Movement. In an important conference of church delegates in Beijing, he reviewed the accomplishment of TSM of last four years and remarked that:

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted from Alan Hunter & Chan Kimkwong, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.23. (For this and other texts of the period see Jones, Francis P., (ed.), *Documents of the Three-Self Movement* [New York: National Council of Churches, 1963]; Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, pp.21-26).

<sup>36</sup> By reason of being deeply influenced by the theories of Henry Frederick Ward (1873-1966), who was called the 'leftist prophet of labour,' and Reinhold Ward (1892-1971), an outstanding popular liberal theologian, Wu had long asserted that belief in God was not contradictory to materialism, and that it was possible in the future that the two would come together in a new synthesis. This theological basis represents his sincere expectation that the Christian Church in China could become 'China's Christian Church', (Francis P. Jones, *The Church in Communist China*, p.52) and that the Christian church would be able to get rid of discrimination and prejudice and enjoy a real freedom of faith. Throughout his career, Wu thus confronted Christianity with the question of political accountability. By so doing, his theological emphasis on God's immanence in history and nature corresponded with his political commitment to a social program which would bring fundamental change to China. (Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, pp.122-123.) Wu indicated repeatedly that Christians must devote themselves fully to the movement for revolutionary change which was led by the CCP. Because the churches as churches had no way of solving China's social problems, Christians could enter into a broader social movement and respond to God's promise there. ('The Transformation of Christianity,' *Tian Feng* 173, [July 30, 1949], p.9.)

<sup>36</sup> Quoted from, Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, p.30.

<sup>37</sup> Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.129.

The principle accomplishments of the Three-Self Reform Movement during the past four years have been the freeing of the personnel, management and finances of the Church from imperialistic control, the cutting off of imperialistic relations, the beginning of wiping out of imperialistic influence and the first steps in self-government, self-support and self-propagation.<sup>38</sup>

Wu made the point that ‘for the sake of unity’, ‘the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement’ was now to substitute ‘the Three-Self Reform Movement’. He acknowledged that the word ‘Reform’ had always suspected by those Christians that one objective of the Movement was the reform of church doctrine. Therefore, the removal of the offending word was necessary. Since then, political neutrality ceased to be an option. No one could any longer object to a merely patriotic movement. What is most at stake is that Christian self-understanding find its ‘common ground’ in light of the social and political issues and terms of national identity and political consciousness.

Based on the Manifesto, the formal establishment of the TSPM at the First National Christian Conference in 1954 effectively set the context for the Church in China.<sup>39</sup> The role of the TSPM was designed to operate in relation to the Protestant churches as the agent intermediating between the Party and the churches. It was led by church leaders mostly liberal in theology and sympathetic to the CCP aims. In other words, the organisation was given the task of reforming the churches and leading them into the route of government policies. However, it turned out to be a divisive issue. The denunciation campaigns and antagonistic methods of ‘criticism’ used by the government, and by church leaders against each other, certainly led to the split between the so-called Three-Self churches and the unregistered churches.<sup>40</sup> This will be discussed in the next section.

Many commentators have interpreted the actions and statements of this group, Wu and his supporters, as a betrayal of Church. Wu has been criticized for placing his political allegiances above his religious ones.<sup>41</sup> For instance, Leslie Lyall, who worked in China for 22 years with the China Inland Mission (CIM) up to 1951 when

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted from, Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, p.30.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, *The Church in Communist China*, p.58.

<sup>40</sup> According to Deng, there are at least three kinds of unregistered churches. First, there are the rural churches. They may or may not have contact with TSPM, yet they are not ‘looked after’ by TSPM due to their remoteness. They are probably the majority. Second, there are those unregistered churches having contact with TSPM, some belonging to certain designated meeting points. Third, there are those rejecting TSPM, upholding their purity as believing communities. (Deng, pp. 7-11) In this context, the term of unregistered church refer to the first type of unregistered protestant communities.

<sup>41</sup> Such as Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, Chapter 3 & 4.

he was forced to leave China, portrayed the leadership of the TSPM as having sold out the Church. For him, Wu and the TSPM had not created a true Church, but a puppet of the CCP. He, therefore, interprets the 'Christian Manifesto' as a 'Manifesto of Betrayal' and its chief architect, Wu, as more Communist than Christian.

Jonathan Chao, director of the Chinese Church Research Centre, regards the ordeal of Chinese Church since 1949 as a reflection of 'the suffering, death, resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit.' Christianity and the Chinese revolution are still in opposition, but Christians should see their suffering as 'a gift of God's profound grace.'<sup>42</sup> Although he constantly doubts the motives of the Three-Self leaders, who organized the process, he validates the importance of their efforts to eliminate denominationalism and free the Chinese church from foreign control.<sup>43</sup> In Chao's view, there is a 'house church movement', in China, the only authentic voice of the Protestant community there.<sup>44</sup>

Britt E. Towery holds a slightly different view on this issue. He regards the three-self movement in the 50s as simply a movement of the indigenous. In this manner, those who rejected to join the three-self movement are regarded as against the dismissal sects.<sup>45</sup> Bob Whyte's work provided a completely positive view to appraise the history of the TSM. He does not see Y.T. Wu as a time-server and Party satellite. He indicates that, for creating a truly Chinese Church, the over-all direction of the Three-Self was, and remains, a necessary stage.<sup>46</sup> He further explains that:

The role of the TSPM was to act as an intermediary between the Party and the churches: reacting to the demands of government while seeking to defend the Church from attack. That it sometimes found itself pushed into extremist positions or unable to correct abuses by local officials in some parts of the country, should not blind us to its positive function in moving the mass of church people away from attitudes that could only have condemned them to a negative existence and continual confrontation. For all its exaggeration and unfairness, the Communist charge that Chinese Christianity was linked to imperialism was historically justified. The painful and hazardous road towards discovering a self-hood for the Chinese Church could only begin by the acceptance of a role within the United Front.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Chao, 'The Witness of a Suffering Church', *China and the Church Today* 5:5, (September-October, 1983), pp. 8 & 12.

<sup>43</sup> In his early work, Jonathan Chao indicated that Western churches should discourage the return of their missionaries to China, and not anticipate the conversion of Chinese Christians, away from a socialist way of life. See his work, 'Prospects for future mission work in China,' in Donald Douglas (ed.), *Evangelical Perspectives on China* (Farmington: Evangelical China Committee, 1976), pp. 102 & 108-109.

<sup>44</sup> Paul E. Kauffman, upholds a similar idea as well. See his work, *China, the Emerging Challenge: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), p.193.

<sup>45</sup> Britt E. Towery Jr., *The Churches of China* (Hong Kong: Amazing Grace Books, 1986), p.48.

<sup>46</sup> Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.233.

Undoubtedly, there were many who looked upon the Manifesto and subsequent actions as genuine, positive steps to save the church as an institution.<sup>48</sup> Francis Price Jones takes a more sympathetic approach, critical but not denunciatory of Wu.<sup>49</sup> In his book, *The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal*, Jones regarded the development of the TSPM as an attempt to 'adapt itself to its new situation in such a way as it may continue to preach the way of salvation through Christ.'<sup>50</sup>

Some of the overseas observers, such as W.H. Clark and G. Thompson Brown, regard the TSPM as a positive influence, upon the Church. It helps the Church to accommodate to the new regime. Simultaneously, without the hostile sentiments towards the Communists, from the historical sketch of the Western missionary enterprise, their opinions reflect a more positive appreciation of the Chinese Revolution, and view the changes that were taking place, in China, in a more dynamic way.<sup>51</sup> What they were trying to do is uphold a sense of involvement in one's historical situation, as well as the necessity of critical reflection about one's involvement. As such, in their work, they show both the strength and the weakness of the Christian missions in China and indicate the challenge posed by the Christian experience in China.

The missionaries such as Paton, who saw 'God at work' in the revolution, believed that what was ultimately important about religion is the transformation of society. In other words, he considered the revolution and establishment of the PRC as God's judgment upon the entire missionary enterprise of Western nations and of Western capitalism and imperialism. Thus, in many ways reflecting the viewpoints of Wu, Paton deemed that Christians ought to take their cue from those 'who not only do not recognize Him but deny His existence.'<sup>52</sup>

Some critics even believed that the survival of the church may be regarded as the principle achievement of Wu in his capacity as the leader of the Three-Self

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<sup>48</sup> Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, pp. 32-42; Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp.219-228.; Lee, Peter, 'The Coming and Going of Protestant Christianity in China Today,' *Inter-religio* 9, (Spring 1986), pp.4-6.

<sup>49</sup> Francis P.Jones, was an American Methodist missionary in China from 1915-1951. During his 36 years in China he translated into Chinese theological and philosophical classics of authors as diverse as Luther, Wesley, Calvin, Edwards, Fox, Kant, Newman, RauschenBusch, Niebuhr, and Temple. Upon leaving China, Jones became editor of the *China Bulletin*, which served to keep Western Church audiences informed of events in China.

<sup>50</sup> Jones, *The Church in Communist China*, p.6.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, *The Church in China*, pp.161-167; G. Thompson Brown's work, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China*, Chapter 10.

<sup>52</sup> Paton, *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God*, p.18.

Movement. For instance, M.Searle Bates argued that ‘Wu’s stand, as viewed closely in 1949-50, seemed to be –and indeed was, I believe—an earnest attempt to find a place for the Christian faith and people to live and to serve in a totalitarian revolution and reconstruction convinced of the early demise of religion.’<sup>53</sup> The most notable of these works is Philip L. Wickeri’s *Seeking the Common Ground*, which serves as a detailed theological defence of the TSPM. He argues that the TSPM was the critical institution that allowed the church to survive and even flourish in China, and Wu’s leadership of the Three-Self Movement, and his involvement in the Chinese Revolution deserved a positive appraisal.<sup>54</sup> In terms of developing a Christian perspective on Marxism, Wu played a significant role, in Wickeri’s words: ‘almost to the point of advancing a synthesis between communism and Christianity.’<sup>55</sup> Wu not only pointed out a greater sense of clarity and direction that was possible for Chinese Protestant, at the time, but also helped to reconcile their Christianity with the new social reality, then emerging in the PRC.<sup>56</sup>

However, this kind of statement does not sound too convincing. Theologically, independent indigenous Chinese churches such as the Jesus Family, the True Jesus Church, and The Little Flock were the most indigenized of all Christian churches. These churches represented between 20-25% of Protestant believers in the 1949.<sup>57</sup> Most of these churches had been Three-Self from their establishment well before 1949. Yet, after 1949 these groups were persecuted by the state. The leaders of the Jesus Family, the True Jesus Church, and The Little Flock were all arrested and imprisoned and their groups were either forced to go underground or were eventually broken up by the government. To see the main reason of this circumstance, one only has to contrast the above with the battle between Protestants and TSPM, which swept over China during 1954-1955.

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<sup>53</sup>Bates, M. Searle, ‘Christianity in the People’s Republic’, *China Notes* 6.2 (1968).

<sup>54</sup>Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.45.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 248

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp.248-249.

<sup>57</sup>Bays puts this figure at up to 25% of the Protestant population in the 1940s. Daniel Bays, ‘The Growth of Independent Christianity’ in Bays, Daniel H., (ed.), *Christianity in China from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 310.

## 2.2 The battle between indigenous churches and the TSPM<sup>58</sup>

Protestant sectarian groups became increasingly important for they constituted a significant portion of the Protestant Church in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most of these groups, including the True Jesus Church (founded in 1917), the Jesus Family (1912) and the 'Little Flock' (1922), were headed by charismatic leaders who maintained strict standards of social control, guided by theologies, which were as distinctive as they were fundamentalist.

As we mention in chapter one, these churches or sectarian movements represented a more radical break with the Western tradition, integrating more deeply with Chinese customs and religiosity in the early twentieth century. They emphasised autonomy and independence in their institutions and often established ecclesiastical traditions of their own. They emphasised personal evangelism but had little interest in social involvement and welfare or politics.<sup>59</sup> Their biblical fundamentalism led them to question the authority of the state over the Church, even as liberal and modernists justified that control theologically by claiming that God's will is manifested immanently in the establishment of the modern nation-state.

### 2.2.1 The question of authority and the role of Church

After 1949, the situation has been masked by political positions adopted, since the official church leadership has presented itself as anti-western, and accused independent Christian groups of being pro-imperialist. The tensions between their different presuppositions regarding the true issue at hand and describing the world as it really is, particularly, led to many of the contradictions associated with the question of authority and the role of Church, in succeeding years.

For indigenous Protestants, to a large extent, the parameters of obedience or disobedience to human authority is, even though God's law and human law might overlap, the ultimate loyalty for the Christian is reserved to God. If conflict should arise between these two authorities, the Christian must obey God's law. Furthermore, God is immanent in the world through the Church by its communal character shaped

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<sup>58</sup> The following arguments of this section mainly taken from Harvey's work, 'Challenging Heaven's Mandate: An Analysis of the Conflict between Wang Mingdao and the Chinese Nation-State'. (Unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> Xu Yihua, "'Patriotic' Protestants: The Making of an Official Church." p.109.

by the ultimate authority of God's revelation. The Church is to offer another way of being in the world in conformity to God's ultimate authority. Failure to recognize these realms obliterates the essence and mission of the Church in the world.<sup>60</sup>

However, for the great majority of the leadership of the TSPM, the ultimate manifestation of God's work in the world was the People's Republic of China. Severing the relationship with foreign mission boards and expressing loyalty to the People's Government were the preconditions for the existence of the church in the PRC. Those who would seek a social ethic apart from or in conflict with the state become its avowed enemies. Indeed, the faith and function of the Church as well as the approval of God find its ultimate expression in support of the PRC and working with it to root out its enemies especially if they hide 'under the cloak of religion'. Under that term of logic, all who opposed the TSPM were in fact counter-revolutionary.<sup>61</sup>

One might consider that the separation from the TSPM in terms of biblical authority and doctrine and thus considered is irrelevant to politics. Nevertheless, by calling into question the PRC's authority over public religious expression, this very claim had fundamentally challenged the project of the PRC to establish a national identity. Bearing this climate in mind, it is not surprising to see that those indigenous churches were attacked and dissolved one after the other.

A vivid example can be found in the case of dissolution of the Jesus Family. In a time of radical political change, the Family with its communal pattern of organization, no foreign ties, no private property, *etc.* made many outside observers believe that it would adjust smoothly to the new order. Indeed, it was even described as a 'proletarian church' and Jing himself took this interpretive stance in dealing with the new government. His groups accounted for the largest number of initial signatures on the 'Christian Manifesto', the cornerstone of the Three-Self Movement and Jesus Family members actively supported the 'Resist America/ Aid-Korea Movement'. Even so, Jing was arrested in 1952 and the Family was disbanded. Charges were brought against Jing and other leaders. People who formerly praised the Family made

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<sup>60</sup> Cook, Richard R., 'Fundamentalism and Modern Culture in Republican China: The popular Language of Wang Mingdao, 1900-1991', (Unpublished PhD thesis, 2003), chapter two.

<sup>61</sup> Harvey's work, 'Challenging Heaven's Mandate: An Analysis of the Conflict between Wang Mingdao and the Chinese Nation-State', chapter three, provides an excellent and thorough debate on this issue.

an about turn apologizing to the ‘people’ for their misleading articles. In brief, there can be little doubt that the dissolution of the Family was politically motivated.

### 2.2.2 The biblical ground of the ‘grand unity’ of TSPM

Since the TSPM’s creation, leading figures within the official church have sought to precisely process a Christian theology that clouds the contradictions between Christian doctrines and communist ideology. The product of their efforts contrasts sharply with the beliefs of most Chinese Protestants and many young church leaders, who remain firmly fundamentalist in their beliefs. Christian groups such as the Jesus Family and the Little Flock regarded the Communist party with suspicion and refused to accept either the Three-Self or the political leadership of the CCP.

The TSPM argued that Christians, though diverging from atheists in their belief in God, hold nearly all other things in common with unbelievers and should thus participate actively with the CCP. Therefore, what creates disunity is division over ‘small issues’ which ignore the central issue of modern history which is imperialism. This sharp dichotomy between forces for and against the revolution becomes the backdrop that defines not only the social ethics of the state, but also of the Christian Church as it awakens to social history. Those who support the state have joined with the forces of human liberation.

To some extent, these forces shape the true nature of social ethics. Those who ‘divide the people are tools of the reactionaries’, ‘a hindrance to cooperation and unity between Christians and Communists’. This understanding of the world is then applied politically and theologically to the conflict with those who have refused to cooperate with the TSPM. Under this very political strategy, that ‘divide the people’ between the ‘godly and ungodly’, or ‘believers and unbelievers’ are unnecessary. In attempting to establish social unity based on Scripture and doctrine, the TSPM condemns Christian’s views, especially fundamentalist, as dogmatic and lacking in Christian charity, while upholding the slogan of mutuality and tolerance.

Pastor Wang Mingdao, who has been regarded as a symbol in Protestant circles of resistance to the government, had opposed the idea of a united church from the early days of his ministry in the 20s as well as during the Japanese occupation.<sup>62</sup> He

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<sup>62</sup> After Pastor Wang was incarcerated, the remaining ‘non-cooperative’ personalities were relatively weak and were nullified in short order. (See Bush, *Religion in Communist China*, p.218.)



saw Three-Self submission to the government as consorting with atheists, and thus a betrayal of the church. More precisely, he associated the leaders of the Three-Self Movement with non-believers, and continued to maintain that believers could not associate with them. Despite that, he also challenged the use of such phrases as ‘imperialist poison’ to characterise everything that had come from the West.

However, under the new state ideology, which combines Stalinist and Maoist thought, every human endeavour, from economic production to scientific research, must be seen to serve the welfare of the people and must be brought under the direction of the State.<sup>63</sup> Wang’s theological declaration was taken by the leadership of the CCP as an evidence of his opposition of New China, and thus on political grounds was a danger and should be contained.<sup>64</sup> Especially, in 1957, under the slogan ‘Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom, Let a Hundred Schools Contend,’ intellectuals in particular were encouraged to raise complaints about official transgression, after which subjugated cadres were expected to embark on reflection and reform.<sup>65</sup> In 1958, Mao called for the pursuit of a ‘Great-Leap-Forward’, which would be achieved through rapid collectivization and audacious campaigns to increase crop yields and raise steel production, in order to support China achieve full-scale Communism before the Soviet Union and attain economic equality with the West.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bush, *Religion in Communist China*, p. 216.

<sup>64</sup> Harvey, ‘Challenging Heaven’s Mandate’, pp.57-60.

<sup>65</sup> The Hundred Flowers campaign has been interpreted as a cynical effort by Mao to smoke out all intellectuals with dangerous ideas. A competing interpretation holds that it was meant to demonstrate that the Party was firmly enough in control that it could benefit from advice and, by doing this further increase its support among intellectuals, who would feel better about supporting a regime that allowed more freedom of speech. In this view, the crackdown on critics that soon came was a response to the unexpectedly harsh nature of the commentary unleashed. In either case, the end result was that a brief flourishing of open discussion was followed by a series of purges. These purges were known as the Anti-Rightist campaign. (See, John Gittings, *The Changing Face of China* [Oxford University Press, 2006]; Jonathan Fenby, *The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850-2009* [Penguin, 2008]; Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Truggle with the Modern World* [Oxford University Press, 2005].)

<sup>66</sup> The Great-Leap-Forward campaign, aimed at ‘rushed growth’ of steel production, was the immediate cause of the disaster of the 1959 to 1962 period in rural China. Launched in the name of strengthening the nation by calling upon all people’s energies, the state mobilized not only workers in the steels industry, but also intellectuals, workers in other industries and even peasants in the campaign. The initial results of the program seemed impressive, as enormously high crop yields were reported. Nonetheless, the fault lines of an impending disaster were occurring. Fearing that the central authorities would punish them for being insufficiently supportive of Mao’s directives if they failed to report exciting results, local officials grossly overstated the size of crop yields. And in order to boost steel-production figures, useful farm implements were melted down to create useless hunks of metal. When these problems were compounded by bad weather, the result was the most lethal famine in world history. (Mark Selden, *The People’s Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change* [New York, 1979], p.213.) See also, Frank Dikötter, *Mao’s Great Famine: The history of China’s most devastating catastrophe, 1958-1962* (Walker Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 2010.)

As Jones acknowledged that, Wang's opposition, which was based on his fundamentalist disagreement with Three-Self liberals, was largely ignored. Then the whole affair was given a political connotation is clear from Y.T. Wu's statement in March, 1956:

During the national campaign to root out counter-revolutionaries, which took place in the latter part of 1955 and the early months of 1956, some counterrevolutionaries hidden within the church were uncovered. These men under the cloak of religion had formed a reactionary imperialistic clique which acted as spies, spread rumours and disrupted all the central campaigns of the Chinese people. Within the church they used the pretext of 'faith' to oppose the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, trying in this way to use a religious slogan to cover up their counterrevolutionary activities, confuse their fellow Christians, corrupt youth, and destroy Christian unity in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.<sup>67</sup>

The case of Wang was not the only case of oppression of a Christian leader by any means. Watchman Ni of the Little Flock was charged with having made derogatory statements against the Communist Fourth Route Army in 1944-45, for having told spies in Hong Kong about conditions in Shanghai in 1950, and for having pornographic pictures and literature in his possession. He, therefore, was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment on June 21, 1956.

### 2.3 The Evolution of the Three-Self into a Patriotic Movement

As we can see, the ideology of the United Front takes on spiritual and doctrinal significance in the actual ideological lexicon of the TSM and the later TSPM becomes increasingly manifest.<sup>68</sup> United Front ideology not only became the political ideology of the TSM churches, it also transformed the theology and practice of these churches. The founding of the nation-state showed the way to the establishment of its history as the consistent account defining official Protestantism understands of the Church. To challenge that singular unitary history would in fact challenge the justification of the nation-state's existence and the justification of its ultimate authority. With this effectively achieved in the Christian Manifesto, replacing this new storyline for older account of the faith in the minds of the faithful now became

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<sup>67</sup>Quoted from Bush, *Religion in Communist China*, p. 217.

<sup>68</sup> The United Front is a rather unique feature in the Chinese system. With its power of analysis, it recognizes three components in society: the progressives, the moderates (usually in the majority), and the reactionaries. The definition of 'progressives,' 'moderates' and 'reactionaries' are purely relative, depending on the target, which shifts all the time. Mao Zedong called the United Front one of the nation's 'three-treasures,' and he used it extensively all through his career. It can become a ruthless weapon for it recognizes no ultimate moral principles.

the focal point of the movement. This was to be achieved individually, corporately, through denunciation meetings, political study and thought reform.<sup>69</sup>

### 2.3.1 Denunciation Movement

The denunciation movement was different from other political movements of the time insofar as its main arena was within the churches and other Christian institutions.<sup>70</sup> For the Three-Self leadership, the denunciation meetings became an intensification of the process which began with the launching of the 'Christian Manifesto.' Its purpose was to get people to change. They pushed church leaders to a clearer sense of the differentiation which was now needed, and the Christian teaching was brought into line with prevailing trend in Chinese politics. The pulpit became a forum for political propaganda. Church leaders were instructed to preach on topics such as anti-imperialism and the leading role of the CCP in the reconstruction of society. These indications were related to the program of political study and ideological remoulding, which can be seen as a big step toward the formation of the TSM.

Denunciation meeting began on April 19, 1951, at the meeting called by the SAC in Beijing.<sup>71</sup> There can be no doubt that such campaigns were never happen spontaneously but were launched by the CCP. During 1951 to 1966, there were frequent denunciation campaigns in China. In order to uncover 'counter-revolutionaries' hidden in the churches, expose the relationships, personal as well as institutional, between Chinese Christians and foreign interests, Protestants were required to prepare the denunciation meetings in cooperation with the local authorities by starting with a thorough investigation into foreign missionary activity in each area. The general approach was for the speaker to identify the individual being criticized as an agent or 'running dog' of American imperialism, substantiate the charge with particular examples or evidence, and provide a self-criticism for one's

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<sup>69</sup> Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, pp.38-48; Ying Fuksang & Leung Kalun, *The Three-Self Patriotic Movement in 1950s* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1996.)

<sup>70</sup> Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.133.

<sup>71</sup> Actually, the denunciation movement began before the Chinese revolution had been firmly consolidated, and when there were still serious internal and external threats to Chinese security. It was a period of open trials, mass arrests and public executions, during which the state started setting up its extensive public security apparatus. The continuing concern over the sabotage and espionage activities of GMD remnants and other disaffected elements was expressed in a series of draconian laws and new policies.

own complicity in the relationship. In that meeting, particular American missionaries and Chinese church leaders were singled out for criticism and attack in speeches by former colleagues and associates. Major denunciation meetings were held to criticize the NCC, the YMCA and YWCA, and the Christian Literature Society (CLS). There were also denunciation meetings for individual denominations, including the Anglicans, the Little Flock, the Methodists and the Church of Christ in China.

To some extent, the denunciation movement was itself part of a process of re-education and ideological remoulding. The TSPM's theological adaptations were not merely rhetorical but were employed to transform Protestant beliefs and identities. Church pastors and congregants alike were forced to participate in 'small group' study sessions in which they were pressured to voice support for selected themes.<sup>72</sup> Basically, the study group concentrated on the criticism of imperialism and the meaning of Three-Self. Each person had to write a personal and autobiographical review essay which was then discussed in small groups. Protestants were instructed to refute the principle that 'all Christians are children of God (and therefore) must be one big family,' on grounds that 'the whole of organized Christianity has a class nature.'<sup>73</sup> Notions of Christian pacifism and universal love were rejected as 'imperialist opiates,' while militant revolution and class warfare were extolled as Christian virtues.<sup>74</sup>

Despite of its political interpretation, a theological rationale for the denunciation movement was provided by Wu. He argued that denunciation did not mean sitting in eternal judgment on others, but pointing out evil and identifying sin. In Wu's understanding, Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees was the deepest kind of denunciation. Others saw the denunciation movement as a humiliation and pain they would have to endure if they were to be able to identify with the people and continue to witness in the new society, namely, the possibility of a Christian existence which would no longer be disfigured by imperialism.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For a thorough analysis of *xiaozu* (小组, small groups) as a form of mass indoctrination, see Martin King Whyte, *Small groups and political rituals in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

<sup>73</sup> Wu Yaozong, 'How the Communist Party Has Educated Me,' in Francis P. Jones (ed.), *Documents of the Three-Self Movement*, p.53.

<sup>74</sup> Dozens of *Tian Feng* articles sought to make a biblical claim for hating one's enemies, citing Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees for support. See Jones (ed.), *The Church in Communist China*, p.89.

<sup>75</sup> Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather*, p.47.

The denunciations were unjustifiable in essence; often the victims were selected not because they had done or spoken anything unpatriotic, but only because they were, in the eyes of the officials, too influential or too popular. In other words, the target of the accusation meetings was ‘imperialist elements and their helpers as well as other bad elements hidden in the Church’. Hence, denunciation was at once ideological, but on the other hand personal. If we were to draw up a list of the Protestant victims of the campaigns, we would easily see that the most influential theologians and the charismatic evangelical leaders were the most vulnerable to denunciation. To illustrate, there were campaigns against the prestigious Methodist leader Bishop Chen Wenyuan in 1951, against the renowned theologian and dean of the Yanjing School of Religion, Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao) in 1952; against the founder of the Jesus Family, Rev. Jing Dianying (Ching Tien-ying) later in 1952; against the famous evangelical leaders Wang Mingdao and Ni Tuosheng (Watchman Nee) in 1955-56; against Rev. Chen Chonggui (Marcus Cheng), president of the Chongqing Theological Seminary and one of the vice-presidents of the Three-Self; and against Rev. Shao Jingsan (Luther Shao), leader of the Disciples’ Church, during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957.<sup>76</sup> What happened to the people who were accused of denounced is seldom clear. Some were imprisoned for a time and then released, after which very limited information about them reached the outside world.

In defending the necessity of the denunciation movement, Wickeri consider it as a part of the price which Chinese Christians had to pay in the process of their identification with the Chinese people. In his explanation, due to the chaotic situation of China in 1951, it is difficult to see how the extremes could have been avoided. More importantly, Wickeri argues, the denunciation movement helped to cleanse the Chinese churches from their alleged foreignness.<sup>77</sup> In saying that, Wickeri sought to clarify that the imprisonment and arrests of Chinese Christians need to be ‘differentiated on a case-by-case basic’, rather than simply look at them from the ‘Western’ criterion. In order to distance the TSPM from the actions of the government, he states that ‘the rejection of the Three-Self may have implied an anti-government stance, but it was not in and of itself grounds for arrest.’ In other words,

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<sup>76</sup> Gao Wangzhi, ‘Y.T. Wu: A Christian Leader under Communism’, p. 348.

<sup>77</sup> Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.139.

the arrests of Chinese Christians had to do with other government bodies, not the TSPM.<sup>78</sup>

As one might imagine, an account like this faces something of a dilemma when confronted with the situation of the indigenous Chinese churches. As the foregoing discussion shows, the Three-Self concept is by no means unique to the TSPM. In fact, these three goals had actually been realized within a number of indigenous Protestant churches before the Communist government came to power. They had nothing to do with both foreign funds and foreign domination. They ran their own operations and were funded by the donations of members or, in the case of the Jesus Family, simply held all things in common. If, as Wickeri suggests, the ultimate issue was indigenization and the removal of Western influence, then these churches could have already accomplished this. This condition simply shows the implication that denunciation and re-education served to remould not only the individual Christians relationship with the nation-state, but also served to centralised United Front ideology into Christian hermeneutics.

### 2.3.2 Church Unification

In the 1950s era, the TSPM's announcement of a 'post-denominational era' was one of the most important issues. Because of denominations were criticized as a remnant of imperialism, Christians were told to organize themselves into one united church movement: only TSPM churches were permitted to operate.<sup>79</sup> In other words, the independent denominational church structures were gradually destroyed and were controlled by the TSPM. After the unification of 1958, independent Protestant denominations ceased to exist in China; the Three-Self took on the function of an ecclesiastical authority instead.

Undoubtedly, the process was not a truly voluntary one, especially as it was carried out within a short period throughout the nation. Various cities in China carried through ecclesiastical unification on their own, without major dissension, or getting the approval from corresponding denominational authorities.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, it is necessary to indicate that an ending of denominational differences was an aspiration

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.160.

<sup>79</sup> For this sequence of events see Jones, *The Church in Communist China*, pp.156-157.

<sup>80</sup> Gao Wangzhi, 'Y.T. Wu: A Christian Leader under Communism', p. 347.

of many educated leftist Chinese Protestants. Thus there appeared a strong insistence on this-worldly rather than other-worldly concerns, and a tendency to proclaim a justification by works rather than by faith alone.<sup>81</sup> All the church leaders were expected to educate their congregations on the relationship between imperialism and the missionary movement. For instance, regarding the unification of churches in the city of Taiyuan, provincial capital of Shanxi, and the instruction was:

On the plans for unification: Worship in the city of Taiyuan shall be unified with a ministerial staff of three or four. Except for the ministerial staff and fellow workers in the Three-Self office, all other church workers shall throw themselves into the socialist construction of the motherland. The physically weak and the elderly many retire. All real and movable church property and church funds shall be turned over to the Three-Self Committee to be administered in common.

On the Reform of Church Organization: 1. Church organization: all former church committees, governing committees and boards and all administrative organs shall cease operations. The administration of the churches shall be unified under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. 2. Ritual, regulations and Church order: (A). Worship shall be unified. No church shall stress its own religious ritual. (B). Hymns used in worship shall be unified and a hymnal committee established to undertake reform of hymn content. (C). Examination and criticism of all books and publications used by churches in interpreting the Bible shall be undertaken. Those containing poisonous material shall be rejected without exception. Teachings which promote co-operation and which accord with socialism should be encouraged. At the same time a critical approach shall be taken of all material received from abroad. (D). Negative and pessimistic doctrines such as the Last Days and the Vanity of this world should no longer be stressed. Efforts should be made to bring into play the principle of the unity of faith and practice and to inspire in believers a consciousness which upholds the dignity of labour, the control of nature, recognition of the division between us and our enemies and of the distinction between right and wrong. (E). Belief and unbelief shall not be an issue in marriage.

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<sup>81</sup> The TSPM leadership favoured a 'social gospel' approach. They were acutely aware of the need for radical social reform and were active in such movements as the YMCA. But many fell easy prey to the CCP manipulation of the church in the 1950s. Research shows a surprisingly large number of present TSPM leaders were active in the YWCA or YMCA in the thirties or forties, which were known as hotbeds of radicalism or even of Communist sympathy.

Reform in individual churches: 1. The Little Flock shall abolish its women's meetings and its outdated rule against women preaching. 2. Members shall no longer be required to submit to an interview before the breaking of the bread. The Salvation Army should no longer stress its military regulations. 3. The Seventh Day Adventists shall abolish their daily morning prayers. Beneficial good works and economic production may be done on the Sabbath. The clergy shall not be supported by the tithe system in Shanxi. The unification of accounts shall be abolished and local churches shall manage themselves. 4. YMCA secretaries shall temper themselves by taking part in productive labour or change jobs so as to effectively enter into socialist construction. The closing of the Taiyuan YMCA as a separate organisation is currently underway.

Such a nationwide ecclesiastical unification was something unique in the universal history of the Protestant church. It meant the wholesale abandonment of ritual differences between the denominations and the curtailment of many activities.<sup>82</sup> In a sense, unification on these terms was especially deleterious to the evangelical churches. The government purposely took the opportunity of the unification to subjugate the evangelicals. Most urban churches were closed, the buildings usually handed over to other work-units as a patriotic gesture. In Shanghai the two hundred churches were down to twenty-three; in Beijing, sixty-five churches were reduced to four. Similar reports came from many other provinces. The number of congregational attendance was dropped to the bottom. Most church leaders had left for factories or labour camps. The situation became even worse in the mid-1960s and during the Cultural Revolution. It seemed that the CCP had achieved its objectives in exterminating Christianity.

Apart from that, through government-backed political campaigns, within a few years of its establishment in the 1950s, the TSPM came to monopolize institutionalized Protestantism in China. Remaining in the wake of all these manoeuvres was one church (the TSPM), one theological seminary (the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary), one Christian press (the United Christian Publishing House in China), one Christian periodical (*Tian Feng*), and one history project (the Historical Data Unit).

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted from Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp.267-268.



After all, it is clear from above that TSM's main 'Three-Self principle'—independence—was predominantly a political product of United Front ideology demanded by the government and dutifully accepted by the churches. The government's concerns are found in the Manifesto itself. Independence of Protestants from their missionary roots and financial support had to do with the problem of foreign influence and the danger that posed to the state. Besides, separation from Western resources and influence prevented the churches from being institutions financially and ideologically independent of the state. Once foreign connections were cut off, it would be impossible for denominational churches to survive without close supervision of the state. In removing the ties between the churches and their foreign missionary control and support, this strengthened the ability of the state to join the churches in the united-front, to unify the churches into a more controllable entity, and to carry out re-education and thought reform of Protestant believers by making them dependent upon the state for survival.

### **3. Christians in the Cultural Revolution Era**

The period between 1966 and 1979 was misery for the churches, arrests and executions were widespread. These thirteen years were a period of large scale repression, growing confusion and selective persecution in almost all areas of social and cultural life. Almost everyone in China suffered to some extent during the Cultural Revolution. Millions people survived on a restricted diet as a result of the precariousness of the economic situation. Social and cultural life was strictly controlled and the whole of China was swept by a Communist fervour.<sup>83</sup>

To be sure, anti-religious movement itself was not the main or only struggling issue in Cultural Revolution era. During that chaotic period, issues involving China's economic development, organizational structure and political orientation were in the balance.<sup>84</sup> The command for the subsequent struggle against religion is covered with the famous sixteen-point 'Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' adopted by the CPC Central Committee on August 8, 1966. Although the main object of this commission was 'those who have wormed their way into the Party

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<sup>83</sup> Alan Hunter & Chan Kimwong, *Protestantism in contemporary China*, p.27.

<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Chao & Rosanna Chong, *A history of Christianity in socialist China, 1949-1997* (Taipei: CMI Publishing Co., 1997), pp. 171-182; Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.183.

and are taking the capitalist road,' it was also led against 'bourgeois' educational and cultural institutions, which would enclose the Christian churches. Specifically, the first point called for the eradication of 'Four Olds' (old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits) and the transformation of 'education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base'.<sup>85</sup>

In Beijing, a poster dated August 22, 1966 was pasted on the former YMCA building:

There is no God; there is no Spirit; there is no Jesus; there is no Mary; there is no Joseph. How can adults believe in these things?... Like Islam and Catholicism, Protestantism is a reactionary feudal ideology, the opium of the people, with foreign origin and contacts....We are atheists; we believe only in Mao Zedong. We call on all people to burn Bibles, destroy images and disperse religious associations.<sup>86</sup>

In Shanghai the Red Guards broke into churches and temples to seize scriptures and religious symbols. With possible minor exceptions, all churches were closed down and even the TSPM was dissolved. Most religious institutions and church buildings were taken over and used as factories, residences or Red Guard command posts. All religious activities were proscribed and all church assets confiscated. Bibles were burned. Secretly keeping a religious scripture or an artefact was a crime, and some people took great risks to save scriptures, sculptures, and buildings in the name of preserving antiques or cultural heritages.<sup>87</sup> Countless pastors, including leaders of the TSPM, and believers, were attacked, criticized, humiliated or sent to the prison. Christians working in factories and schools were harassed, interrogated, beaten and tortured. During the most difficult times of the Cultural Revolution, some denied their faith, others joined in the attack against friends and fellow Christians. For many the strain was too great. Some individuals were literally persecuted to death, and others were driven to suicide or even murdered during the Cultural Revolution era.<sup>88</sup> Under the shadow of anti-religious fervour, the Christian movement went truly underground,

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<sup>85</sup> Chao & Rosanna Chong, *A history of Christianity in socialist China, 1949-1997*, pp. 182-187; Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.183.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted from Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, p.11. See also, Chao & Rosanna Chong, *A History of Christianity in Socialist China, 1949-1997*, p. 183; Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p. 180.

<sup>87</sup> Lang, Gaeme, 'Religions and regimes in China', in Madeleine Cousineau (ed.), *Religion in a Changing World* (Westport, CT: Praeger), pp.149-158.

<sup>88</sup> Chao & Rosanna Chong, *A history of Christianity in socialist China, 1949-1997*, pp.187-201.

in order to hide their activities from the police.<sup>89</sup> It is possible to say that, the only churches that would survive were the ‘unregistered churches’.<sup>90</sup>

After the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, in a sense, the relic of institutional church in China was swept aside. Paradoxically, it created conditions in Chinese society from which the church was to re-emerge animated in new, largely de-institutionalized forms.<sup>91</sup> The leaders of CCP came to realize that religion could not be erased after all, but could be controlled. We turn now to this realisation.

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<sup>89</sup> Under the increasingly pressure from the CCP, after the 1950s, many believers quietly began meeting in their homes. In retrospect it might be fair to say that, there were neither against the CCP or its government, nor TSPM or its Three-Self principles, although they adopted an attitude of separation from the state. However, such private meetings were altogether prohibited by TSPM by 1958. This prohibition, in fact, did not stop the Christians who continued to share their faith and enjoyed the fellowship in homes. In particular, although the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution made it even more dangerous for Christians to meet in homes than in the late fifties, the evidence demonstrates that many did. (Chao & Rosanna Chong, *A History of Christianity in Socialist China, 1949-1997*; Paterson, R., *Heart Cry for China* [Chichester: Sovereign World Ltd, 1989]).

<sup>90</sup> By reason of the clandestine nature of its operation, for obvious reasons, the ‘unregistered church’ simply means that they had to carry out their religious obligation of receiving sacraments in private homes and in small groups. Most members refused to join in the TSPM in spite of their long-term imprisonment and sentences across China province, and were largely found in rural villages. There was no formal established organization structure. Most of them did not have open meetings with other unregistered church members. The complexity of the unregistered church in China deserves more detailed exposition but is beyond the scope of this chapter. The history of ‘unregistered churches’ is well recorded in a number of classic studies. Notable examples are ‘House Churches’ by Chao&Rosanna Chong, *A history of Christianity in socialist China, 1949-1997*; Paterson, *Heart cry for China*. Studies sympathetic to the official churches include: Whyte, *The Unfinished Encounter*, and Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*.

<sup>91</sup> Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, p.11.



## **Chapter Three: Retrospect and Prospect of TSM**

### **1. The changing of the political climate**

Throughout the Cultural Revolution, many believed that Christianity had finally ceased to exist in China.<sup>1</sup> In particular, under the ‘iron curtain’ of the CCP, most religious practices were decisively banned. Foreign missionaries, considered as part of Western imperialism, were expelled. Within such a political environment, religious believers who dared to challenge the CCP’s political stance were mercilessly banished to labour camps, jails, or execution grounds. The government was convinced that religion would die off naturally, as progress was made in social and economic development; as this distorted and unscientific worldview would find less ground to attract the naïve and ignorant masses.

However, only a few years later, with the Reform and Opening (*Gaige Kaifang*, 改革開放) policy,<sup>2</sup> initiated from the late 1970s, churches were being reopened across China, and in 1984, Ting indicated that the Christian population had expanded, at an astonishing rate.<sup>3</sup> The influence of this phenomenon lead some scholars to argue that the centrality of world Christianity had already shifted from the West, to Asia, and even predicted that Protestant missionaries from China might be the next major wave of Christian expansion, in the world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Since the death of Mao Zedong and the purge of the Gang of Four in 1976, the phrase *kaifang zhengce* (開放政策, which has been variously translated as ‘an open door policy’ or ‘a more open economic policy’ or ‘a policy of opening to the outside world’) has appeared with increasing frequency in Chinese commentaries and policy pronouncements. It is an integral part of China’s new development strategy of intensive growth-through adaptation and diffusion of technology, especially foreign technology. (Samuel P.S. Ho, & Ralph W. Huenemann, *China’s Open Door Policy: The Quest for Foreign Technology and Capital—A Study of China’s Special Trade* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984], pp.1-27; Susan L. Shirk, ‘The politics of industrial reform’, in Elizabeth J. Perry & Christine Wang (eds.), *The political economy of reform in post-Mao China* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985], chapter 8.)

<sup>3</sup> According to the report of ‘The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Affairs during the Socialist Period of Our Country’—which has become known as ‘Document: No. 19’, the whole population of religious believers had about doubled from 1950 to 1980. In 1949 there were fewer than a million Protestants. In 1982 the government estimated that there were more than two million religious believers worshiped in eighty-five thousand authorized venues, and virtually the figure estimates by outside observers are much higher. (Chan, Kimkwong, ‘Religion in China in the Twenty-first Century: Some Scenarios’, *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 33: 2 (June 2005), p.115; Jason Kindopp, ‘Policy dilemmas in China’s church-state relations: An introduction’, in *God and Caesar in China*, pp.1-2.)

<sup>4</sup> This is a common speculation among scholars of world Christianity. See, for example, based on the experience of Christianity explosive growth in China and Korea, P. Jenkins argues that Christianity will be overwhelmingly a non-European, non-white religion. P.Jenkins, *The next Christendom*, (Oxford,

The explosive growth of all five major religions showed that Marxists failed to make their statement consistent. They wrestled with the evidence before their eyes of a massive ‘Christianity fever’,<sup>5</sup> when the CCP ideology insisted that all religions would ultimately die out.<sup>6</sup> The whole situation reflects the implication that the society of China carries a certain dynamism that attracts followers, from all walks of life. In particular, if the existence of religion was simply the reflection of ‘the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people’,<sup>7</sup> then it appears to be suggesting that the development of religion in China, in the 1980s, was simply demonstrating the fact, under the government of the CCP, that people were living in a suffering society, and, were desperately in need of an anaesthetic function from religion. In a word, according to the CCP’s Marxist atheism, the situation of a ‘Christianity fever’ should not occur in China, at all. In order to bring reconciliation between reality and theory, it is necessary to revise interpretations of Marx’s religious theory.

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Oxford University Press, 2002); Kindopp, ‘Policy dilemmas in China’s church-state relations: An introduction.’ [Regarding the development of Christianity in Korea, see David Chung, *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings in Korea* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Donald N. Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986); Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).]

<sup>5</sup> ‘Christianity fever’ as a social phenomenon first appeared during the 1980s, a golden age of growth of Christianity in China during which the number of followers exploded to more than ten million within a decade. The impetus was the end of the Cultural Revolution, when the CCP implemented its Open Door policy, allowing Christians and three other religions to once again spread their teachings to a limited extent, and allowing the reopening of churches that had been closed for more than ten years. Many people disappointed with social conditions turned to religious faith, and many young people were drawn to churches out of curiosity and worship of the West. Urban churches were unable to accommodate the masses of worshippers. During this same period some intellectuals also became interested in Christianity. They were people who care about social and cultural development, and hoped through a comparison of Chinese and Western culture to determine the reasons for China’s backward development and explore possible direction for the future. The questions they raised included: Why did the feudal period last so long in China? Why did cruel and anti-intellectual movements such as the Cultural Revolution occur in China? This concern for global cultural trends and comparisons between East and West became common in intellectual circles, to the point of becoming a new intellectual movement referred to as ‘cultural fever’. (See Li Suju & Liu Qifei, *Qingnian Yu Zongjiao Re* (Youth and Religious Fever) [Beijing: Zongguo Qingnian Chu Banshe, 2000].)

<sup>6</sup> There are a number of scholars devoted their research interest upon the development of religion under the socialist regime. Such as Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Protestantism & Politics in Eastern Europe & Russia: The Communist & Post-Communist Eras* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992); Christel Lane, ‘Some Explanations for the Persistence of Christian Religion in Soviet Society,’ in Steve Bruce (ed.), *The Sociology of Religion*. Vol. II (Aldershot: An Elgar Reference Collection, 1995), pp.433-443; James T. Myers, *Enemies without Guns: the Catholic Church in China* (New York: Paragon Book, 1991); Jr., Richard C. Bush, *Religion in Communist China* (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, *Introduction to a contribution to the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of right* (1844) <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>.

### 1.1 Modifying the interpretation of Marx's religious theory

The modification of a Marxist view of religion took place in the early 1980s. The research team at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, publishing their empirical research findings and a rereading of Marxist works, in the book *Religious Problems in the Era of Socialist China*, argued that religion and socialist society *can* be compatible, and should adapt or accommodate each other, stirred up debates.<sup>8</sup> Because of the involvement of numerous scholars and ideologues, from both sides, this debate has been referred to as the 'North-South Opium War'.<sup>9</sup> The leftist camp was based, mainly, in Beijing, at the Institute for the Study of World Religions (ISWR), in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the liberal camp was, loosely, clustered in Shanghai, although there were liberals in the North, and leftists in the South, as well.<sup>10</sup>

Primarily, the debate was around the opium thesis. The leftists insisted that the 'opium' thesis was the cornerstone of a Marxist view of religion, whereas the liberals obtained opposite arguments within the parameters, upholding orthodox Marxism, making painstaking efforts with fragile rhetoric. The liberals argued that:

- . The opium statement was only an analogy and an analogy was not a definition;
- . The opium analogy, of Marx, should not be understood, in complete negative terms, as opium was used as a pain reliever, in Marx's time;
- . This analogical statement did not represent the complete view of Marxism on religion and Marx, but especially Engels, made other important statements on religion; and
- . Before Marx other people had already compared religion to opium so this was not a uniquely Marxist view.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, they indicated, due to the vastly different historical conditions, of the Chinese revolution, as well as different experiences of Christianity, within the revolutionary process, the remark of Karl Marx—'religion is the opium of the people'—should not be understood from a one-sided point of view, upholding an absolutely negative attitude towards religion. In opposition, the understanding of a

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<sup>8</sup>Luo Zhufeng (ed.), *Zhongguo shehuizhuyi shiqi de zongjiao wenti* (Religious Problems in the Era of Socialist China) (Shanghai: Shanghai Social Sciences Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Wei Dedong, *Zongjiao yu shehuizhuyi shehui xiangshiying lilun yanjiu huigu* (A review of the theoretical research on the compatibility of religion and socialist society), in Cao (ed.), *Annual of Religious Research in China, 1997-1998* (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2000), pp. 66-72; See also, Ng, Peter Tze Ming, 'From ideological Marxism to moderate pragmatism: Religious policy in China in the turn of the century', *China Review* (The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000), pp.405-422.

<sup>10</sup>Yang Fenggang, 'Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality', pp.105-106.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Yang Fenggang, 'Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality', p.106; see also, He Guanghu, 'Religious Studies in China, 1978-1999—And Their Connection with Political and Social Circumstances', *Studies in World Christianity* Vol. 7, Issue 1, (2001), pp.25-27.

Marxist view of religion—‘an organisation used by the opposition capitalists to uphold the system of privilege and to suppress the working classes’ might be suitable for use in Europe, at that time. However, it would be inappropriate to apply this pessimistic assessment of religion, to socialist China, as Christianity did not have the same social implications in China, as it did in Europe. In particular, since the class struggle has been overthrown, religion has lost its roots in China.

They further explained that, ‘domestic inconsistency’ and community troubles, left over from the old society, in China, required the continuation of religion. Nevertheless, this type of temporary hardship was essentially different from the suffering of exploitation and oppression.<sup>12</sup> They believed that the phenomenon of people moving towards assistance, from religion, would not last forever. Regarding the former situation, the negative effect of religion, not only can be prevented, to a minor degree, but can, also, turn it into a positive function, and be compatible with socialist society. They indicate that, in the eyes of Marx, religion is a product of the development of human society; a self-initiating fundamental worldview with a certain historical logic. Religion is not completely negative, nor is it counter-revolutionary or stupid, and it definitely is not the force behind opposition to a socialist society.<sup>13</sup> They made the point that, actually, when Marx said: ‘religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people’; it merely shows his belief that religion has an important communal function; namely, it provides spiritual comfort for people who are suffering. Therefore, when people, in real life situations, meet with terrible loss, religion acts to soothe people’s souls, giving them courage to continue living, thereby, bringing out an ‘emotional compensation function.’<sup>14</sup> Following a certain interpretation, religion is being given a certain level of positive confirmation, especially when emphasis is placed on the role religion plays in society.

This new understanding of religion offered a ‘new’ foundation for religious policy in socialist China. On the basis of this foundation, they were able to develop a

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<sup>12</sup> He Guanghu, ‘Zhongguo zongjiaoxue lilun yanjiu huigu’ (Theoretical development of religious research in China), in Cao Zhongjian (ed.), *1997-1998 Zhongguo zongjiao yanjiu nianjian* (Annual of Religious Research in China, 1997-1998), (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2000), pp.79-91.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-85.

<sup>14</sup> He Guanghu, ‘Zhongguo zongjiaoxue lilun yanjiu huigu’ (Theoretical development of religious research in China), pp.79-91; Gao Shining, ‘Zongjiaoxue jichu lilun yanjiu licheng’ (Historical development of the basic theoretical research in religious studies), pp.73-78; both in Cao Zhongjian (ed.), *1997-1998 Zhongguo zongjiao yanjiu nianjian* (Annual of Religious Research in China, 1997-1998), (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2000).



functionalist approach affirming that religion had unique contributions to human society, irreplaceable by scientific or materialist ideology alone.<sup>15</sup> Both government spokespersons, and Religious Studies scholars, came to the conclusion that it would deal with religious affairs within a pragmatic, rather than an ideological, framework.

As Sabrina P. Ramet's points out: 'Religious doctrines may be influenced by, and adapted to, changes in political ideology. By the same virtue, political ideologies may draw upon or be influenced by religious texts and religious resources, which may serve to reinforce and underpin ideological transformation.'<sup>16</sup> In terms of the disparity of theory and reality, the crucial difference between Deng and Mao is that the former departed from a pragmatic approach; modifying the theory on behalf of rationalising the reality. The latter, using the ideology as the leading role on the basis of one particular type of Utopia to reform, or even remove the reality at any cost.

Subsequent to this debate, more and more scholars discarded the dogmatic interpretation of a strict Marxist theory of religion, adopting a more open attitude toward religions thus achieving wider horizons in their research. Some of them have even entirely neglected their original points.<sup>17</sup> The CCP's interpretation of religious function and nature since the 1980s, by and large, is based on Deng's route.

Taken together, from this post-Maoist point of view, religion received a positive affirmation in China, precisely, because it has been theoretically adapted to socialism. The functionalist definition of religion within a socialist society implies a distinction between orthodoxy and cultism. A religion is orthodox if it performs the community building function and it is considered an evil cult if it fails to perform its appointed function. Whether Protestant Christianity, Roman Catholics, Buddhism, or Daoism are orthodox or a cult depends on its social function.<sup>18</sup> When viewed from the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, 'Sacred Values and the Tapestry of Power: An Introduction,' in Sabrina P. Ramet & Donald W. Treadgold (eds.), *Render Unto Caesar: The Religious Sphere in World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: The American Univ. Press, 1995), p.13.

<sup>17</sup> The work of Lu Dajin is one of the striking examples. Lu, who has become one of the most respected theorists of religious research in China, has been a research fellow at Institute for the Study of World Religions (ISWR) since it became functional in the late 1970s. He was one of the major representatives of the Northern leftist camp, who followed Lenin's emphasis that the opium statement was the cornerstone of the Marxist view of religion. By the end of the 1980s, however, he openly turned away from that position, in favour of scientific neutrality and objectivity. (Yang Fenggang, 'Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality' pp.109-111.)

<sup>18</sup> Dai Kangsheng, 'xin zhongguo zongjiao yanjiu 50 nian' (50 Years of religious research in New China), in Cao Zhongjian (ed.), *1999-2000 Zhongguo zongjiao yanjiu nianjian* (Annual of Religious Research in China, 1999-2000), (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2001), pp.38-57; see also, Daniel L. Overmyer, 'Chinese Religious Traditions from 1900-2005: An Overview,' in Kam Louie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.173-197.

standpoint of functionalist value judgments, the transcendent aspect of religion, as will be discussed in the next chapter, recedes from importance. In this sense, religion has an inseparable relationship with politics, and must develop only under the guidance of the government.

## 1.2 Mutual Accommodation

Throughout the discussion in the previous section, it is clear that, post-Maoist China kept its loyalty to Marxist principles; yet religion is being read in a much more positive way. After the return of Deng Xiaoping to full power in the late 1970s, the regime moved away from the Cultural Revolution's destructive approach, towards religion, reviving the more tolerant approach of a traditional China.<sup>19</sup> To some extent, they recognised the fact that religious expression was too deeply embedded to be rooted by directive or force. Furthermore, the Party's harsh, repressive policies had driven religion underground and outside its control. In particular, in light of the tremendous socio-economic structural changes following China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the government faced unprecedented challenges in leading China back to the international community as a significant power, and at the same time preserving the CCP's absolute leadership over China.

As Merle Goldman pointed out, in order to win the cooperation from religious groups, the policy of religious tolerance was promoted by the Party. Ironically, the Party's tolerance and re-institutionalisation of religion led to a retightening rather than a loosening of the reins on religion.<sup>20</sup> For instance, the crushing of the student movement on 4 June 1989 resulted in a severe tightening of control of religious affairs as part of an overall crackdown on the democracy activities. Likewise, Ramet remarks that Deng leadership's liberalisation of religious policy did not mean that it had a new

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<sup>19</sup> There have a numerous scholars devoted to the study regarded the issue of Deng leadership relaxed control and opened up to the outside world. Regarding the discussion of religious issues, see Donald E. MacInnis, *Religion in China Today: Policy & Practice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989), Merle Goldman, 'Religion in Post-Mao China,' in Robert J. Myers (ed.), *Religion & the State: The Struggle for Legitimacy & Power*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science, Vol. 483 (Beverly Hills: Sage Pub., 1986), Julian F. Pas (ed.), *The Turning of the Tide: Religion in China Today* (Hong Kong: H.K. Branch of Royal Asiatic society, 1989). Regarding the discussion of Christianity, see Alan Hunter & Chan Kimkwong, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Alan Hunter & Don Rimmington (eds.), *All Under Heaven: Chinese Tradition & Christian Life in the People's Republic of China* (Kampen: uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Hok, 1992); regarding the discussion of Catholic, see Edmond Tang & Jean-Paul Wiest (eds.), *The Catholic Church in Modern China: Perspectives* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Goldman, 'Religion in Post-Mao China,' pp. 150-151.

appreciation of religion, a policy of religious freedom, or a desire for more religious believers. In contrast, by offering the religious groups tolerance, it shows that the Party intended to reassert its control.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, in spite of the new understanding of religion there is, fundamentally speaking, no change in the mechanism of dealing with the religion. Religious affairs are highly politicised, and part of the continuing priority of maintaining 'stability' and 'unity' at all cost.

In 1982, the CCP formulated its religious policy, in the famous 'Document 19.'<sup>22</sup> As Lambert indicated, 'this is a carefully crafted statement which rejects the excesses of Maoism and grants some limited autonomy to religious believers while asserting the Party's right to maintain ultimate control of all religious affairs.'<sup>23</sup> In the internal version of Document 19, it is made very clear that the CCP must 'powerfully direct, and organise all relevant departments', including 'people's organisations', such as the TSPM and the Catholic Patriotic Association, to implement the Party's religious policies.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the CCP do bear in mind that any thought of the elimination of religions is unrealistic; on the contrary, an idea of mutual accommodation seems to be a more reliable strategy to develop the proper relationship between the government and religious communities. While a tight religious policy is unfavourable to the open door policy, a loose religious policy would be dangerous to its authority.

In 1993, the authorities officially adopted the language of 'mutual adaptation,' although with its own twists in policy application 'to actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society.'<sup>25</sup> President Jiang Zemin issued three authoritative regulations (so called the 'Three Phrases'), at the National United Front Work Conference. These three phrases included: (1) implementing the Party's religious policies both thoroughly

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<sup>21</sup> Ramet, 'Adaptation & Transformation of Religious Policy in Communist & Post-Communist Systems,' pp.166-167; See also, Chan Kimkwong, 'Religion in China in the Twenty-first Century: Some Scenarios', *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 33: 2, (June 2005).

<sup>22</sup> *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian 19 hao: 'Guanyu woguo shehuizhuyi shiqi zongjiao wenti di jiben guandian he jiben zhengce' di tongzhi.* (Concerning our country's basic standpoint and policy on religious questions during the Socialist period), 31 March 1982. It has been the basis of the religious policy since then. This document concludes that religion in socialist China has 'five characteristics' (wu xing, 五性): it will exist for a long time; it has masses of believers; it is complex; it entwines with ethnicity; and it affects international relations. Therefore, religious affairs should be handled with care; religious believers should be rallied for the central task of economic construction; religious freedom should be guaranteed as long as the believers love the country, support the CCP's rule, and observe the socialist laws. (Lambert, 'The present religious policy of the Chinese Communist Party,' p.125.) (Full translation published by Christian Communication Ltd, Hong Kong, September 1983).

<sup>23</sup> Lambert, 'The present religious policy of the Chinese Communist Party,' *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 29, No.2 (2001), p.123.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> 'Mutual adaptation' and 'mutual accommodation' are interchangeable in this context.

and correctly; (2) strengthening control of religious affairs in accordance with the law; (3) to positively guide religion to be compatible with socialist society. In his speech, Jiang highlighted that:

We oppose and correct any discrimination against believers and non-believers. We do not employ any political power to extinguish or support religions. We implement the policy of religious freedom, that is, to unite believers and non-believers, believers of this religion and that religion to live peacefully and respect one another in order that we can concentrate our will and power for the contribution to the development of socialism in the Chinese way.<sup>26</sup>

Mutual accommodation can be understood, as ‘an extension of the ideology of the united front, rather than a respect for religious freedom.’<sup>27</sup> In fact, this type of religious policy had been proposed by Zhou Enlai in the 1960/70s, but was completely ignored, due to internal political struggles within the Party, finally endorsed on 11 November 1993, by President Jiang Zemin’s speech.<sup>28</sup> Since then, the Chinese government has repeatedly reaffirmed Jiang’s speech, on numerous occasions.

For instance, this statement was stressed by Ye Xiaowen<sup>29</sup> in 1996 as the guiding policy for the CCP’s religious work together with Document 19 of 1982, Document 6 of 1991, which reaffirmed Document 19, but called for a tightening of control, and Li Peng’s two Regulations 144 and 145.<sup>30</sup> In February 1998, Li re-emphasised the significance of Jiang’s three phrases, stressing that ‘religion can develop positively only when it is compatible with our society’—again, the clear assumption being that religious doctrines and practices which do not accord with ‘Scientific Socialism’ should be reformed, or phased out.<sup>31</sup>

All in all, the ideology of the CCP perseveres, mainly, with ‘Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought’.<sup>32</sup> After 1949, the major problem from the Chinese Communist side was to separate the churches from reactionary foreign influences. That also became the major duty of the TSM, in its effort to identify with the Chinese people. Since the 1980s, it turned into a posture that facilitated Christian cooperation, with the

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<sup>26</sup>Quoted from Lap Yankung (2002) ‘What to preach? Christian witness in China, with reference to the Party’s policy of mutual accommodation’, *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol.8, Issue, 2, (2002), p.207.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, pp.147-153.

<sup>29</sup> Ye Xiaowen was appointed the new director of the RAB, in mid-1995.

<sup>30</sup> In January 1994 the prime minister, Li Peng, issued two important regulations (No.144 and 145) to tighten control over the religious activities of foreigners within China, forbidding them to make converts and to tighten control of internal religious affairs within China. (Lambert, ‘The present religious policy of the Chinese Communist Party,’ p.125.)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>32</sup> Lambert, ‘The present religious policy of the Chinese Communist Party,’ p.121; Potter, ‘Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,’ *The China Quarterly*, (2003).

CCP, on important social and political issues, while at the same time preserving the Christians' identity, as religious believers. Apparently, what they aim to achieve is removing "the prejudices"—namely, considering Communism as a theological problem, and seeing Christianity and Marxism as enemies—from the Chinese fundamentalist Christians. In order to make the Christian-Marxist relationship in China a more cooperative enterprise, mutual accommodation became the contemporary Chinese government's attitude, towards religions.

The government constantly highlights the slogan that 'Religion must mutually adapt to Socialist society'. Literally, what adaptation is required, by which religion is completely dependent on the definition of government. Basically, the meaning of mutual accommodation can be found in the article of Duan Qiming,<sup>33</sup> summarised below:

1. Politically, religious communities have to be directed to love their country, support socialism and the leadership of the Communist Party, and obey the existing religious and non-religious regulations, and laws.
2. Economically, religious communities have to be directed to support economic reform, and contribute to the development of socialist market economy.
3. Ideologically, religious communities have to be directed to respect non-believers, and other religions.
4. Culturally, religious communities have to be directed to enhance the bright side of their faiths, and denounce their dark side.
5. Socially, religious communities have to be directed to support normal social production, social life, and social order.
6. Finally, morally, religious communities have to be directed, to enhance their moral teachings to support socialist morality.<sup>34</sup>

The government officially recognises only five religions in China: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>35</sup> Each was encouraged to set up its own 'patriotic' organisation. Principally speaking, they were covered by religious freedom, fairly defined under the Republic, and which stays the same today.<sup>36</sup> Through

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<sup>33</sup> Duan is the Head of the Division of Politics and Law of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. His understanding is shared by most of the Chinese officials though there are slight differences.

<sup>34</sup> Duan Qiming, 'Shilun Zongjiao Yu Shehui Zhuyi Xiang Shiying De Ji Ben Neihan' (Basic Content of the Mutual Accommodation Between Religions and Socialism), *Religions in China* 18, (1998), pp. 23-26.

<sup>35</sup> *The China Quarterly* dedicated the whole of its June 2003 issue to religion, and the articles in that issue propose up-to-date and thorough description of each of the five recognized religions in China.

<sup>36</sup> The China Central Committee issued a major document outlining religious policy during the Reform and Open period: citizens would enjoy freedom of religious belief, but within the five recognised religions and under the supervision of the government; religion as a personal affair could not interfere with or influence civil matters such as education; Chinese religious groups could not be subject to foreign organisations. All in all, this is freedom of religious belief but not of religion. (There are many publications presenting research on this topic. A recent comprehensive study is Potter, 'Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,' *The China Quarterly* 174: 2, (2003), 317-337. See also

the CCP's policies towards religion, it is possible to say that the government is markedly suspicious of sectarian activities, which it knows from history can transform and become hotbeds for insurrection.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, besides the five religions mentioned above, other religions are regarded as evil cults or feudal superstitions (folk religion) and are dealt with separately. The forbidden Falungong sect, for example, professed tens of millions of practitioners before the government launched its nationwide campaign to wipe out the group, in 1999.<sup>38</sup>

Within this particular type of political climate, to some extent, Ting's theological discourses present a well-tailored product, having a good fit for the political and religious demands of the CCP. This reflects clearly in his speech, for the opening address, before the Third Chinese National Christian Conference on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1980. We now turn to explore how Ting re-locates and re-defines Christian theology within the framework of socialist society.

## **2. Defence for the necessity of TSM in the 1950s**

In order to show his support to the CCP, the majority of Ting's comments about the TSM in the 1950's end with a re-affirmation of Party policy, and the need for its correct implementation. Regarding the accomplishment of the TSM, Ting's conclusions are threefold: It made Chinese Christians into patriotic Chinese citizens; it made Christianity into a Chinese religion; and it 'helped persons in various circles of society to change their impressions of Chinese Christians and of Christianity.' These are significant achievements, providing a basis for the creation of a truly indigenised Chinese Christianity.<sup>39</sup> Unlike the 1950s, Christianity is, today, accepted as a Chinese religion, and churches are regarded as legitimate expressions of Chinese social life.

I shall now explain each of these points, in the following section. The discussion of the first point will be at greater length, as it reflects a fresh understanding of how

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Chan Kimkwong, Chan Kimkwong, 'Religion in China in the Twenty-first Century: Some Scenarios', *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 33: 2 (June 2005), pp. 87-119.)

<sup>37</sup> See, generally, C.K Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); David Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in mid-Qing China: The Formation of a Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> Kindopp, 'Policy dilemmas in China's church-state relations: An introduction.' p.2. See also, James Tong, 'An organisational analysis of the Falun Gong: Structure, communications, financing,' *China Quarterly* 171, (Sept 2002), pp.636-60.

<sup>39</sup> K.H. Ting, *Wenji*, pp. 295-299. English translation also available online <http://www.christianityinchina.org/PreGen/n359/CTR1985.doc> (14th October 2006)

Ting defended the TSM in the 1950s. The second and third points are similar to the earlier understandings.

Apparently, in terms of making Chinese Christians into patriotic Chinese citizens, the 'patriotic' did not refer to a general meaning of loving one's country, nation, and culture. It came to include dual particular meanings. There are: support the leadership of the CCP in China, and modifying the attitude of Chinese Christians who played minor roles, or who showed a disinterest in their country's revolution. Ting made the point that:

In 1949, many Christians did not quite understand the people's liberation movement and objected to it so much that 'some of us, in complying with the wishes of certain individuals, prayed that God would drown the Liberation Army in the Yangtze River which it was about to cross to liberate the whole country. Today, no matter where we Chinese Christians meet, the overwhelming majority supports the people's liberation movement heartily. We give thanks to God in our prayers for the achievements of socialist New China. We are all willing to make our contributions toward the four modernisations of our country.'<sup>40</sup>

What becomes obvious, at this historical paradigm, is that faith and function of the Church, as well as the approval of God, find its ultimate expression in support of the state. In this sense, faith and social ethics, together with Church and nation, collapse into one another. Therefore, the duty for the Christian becomes inseparable from duty to the nation. This form of speech-making is therefore applied politically and theologically to those religious groups who have refused to cooperate with the TSPM, as disloyal both to the nation, and church. Hence, those who support the state joined with the forces of human liberation. On the contrary, showing no concern for the social and political issues was understood as confrontational towards national security and prosperity.

To put it differently, Ting's affirmation of the TSM's achievement in the 1950s, 'making Chinese Christians into patriotic Chinese citizens,' is perhaps even better understood in relationship between religious and political realms in the new situation. It refers openly to the self-evident historical essence that through the intellectual remoulding, and the organisation of a patriotic mass movement, the TSM has made Chinese Christians into patriotic Chinese citizens. In this sense, severing the links between Christianity and imperialism was a manifestation of love for the church, as

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<sup>40</sup>Ting, 'Huigu yu zhanwang' (Retrospect and prospect) *Wenji*, pp. 292-307.

English translation also available online

<http://www.christianityinchina.org/PreGen/n359/CTR1985.doc> (accessed 14th October 2006).

well as patriotism, because it helped purify the church from corrupt and non-Christian influences.

In the meantime, Ting's account also pointed toward the success of reforming fundamentalist Christians such as The True Jesus Church, and the Jesus Family, who emphasised personal evangelism but showed little interest in social involvement, welfare or politics. That is to say, the TSM has made Christianity socially effective, playing a reforming and transforming role, in this world. In particular, the TSM has made Chinese Christians arrive at a 'clear political standpoint' and concern for love, service and social change politically relevant. They took Jiang Peifen, who comes from a fundamentalist background, as a vivid example. Her acceptance of the TSM was regarded as evidence that the separation from missionaries and the purification of faith went together.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, this type of indication lends support to a disguise of political repression, by some means. The divergent approach of theological concern was regarded as a political offense. Therefore, the correction, or even eradication, of that diversity theology, different from the TSM, automatically turns it into a political mission. In this sense, political neutrality was impossible. Especially, an irresponsive approach to the CCP's political activities and events were taken as an offensive position.<sup>42</sup> As a result, it shed a welcome light on the assumption that the fundamental nature of a non-politicised theological viewpoint is a serious political transgression. Without a doubt, those who adopt a theological or political standpoint different to the TSM are deemed 'unpatriotic'.

Taken as a whole, Ting's second and third appraisals are, by and large, employed to strengthen the first point and justify the necessity of the TSM. In the eyes of many, the TSM leadership, before 1949, and the Chinese church, without its selfhood, was merely an enterprise of Western missionaries.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, Christianity was neither rooted in Chinese society, nor accepted by the Chinese. For instance, both Kiang Wenhan and Zhao Fusan regarded Christianity as a foreign religion imported from the

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<sup>41</sup> Jiang indicates that, 'the Bible does not teach against communism, nor does it say that we must separate ourselves from our fellow citizens in order to be good Christians. Our separation from the missionaries was a way of returning to the Bible and purifying the faith. It enabled us to speak from our hearts, and in the process, the Bible gained new meaning.' (Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground*, p.116; Ying Fuktang & Leung Kalun, *The Three-Self Patriotic Movement in 1950s*, pp.201-202.)

<sup>42</sup> Clark, *The Church in China*, p. 116.

<sup>43</sup> Jiang Wenhan (Kiang Wenhan), 'How "Foreign" was the Christian Religion in China,' *A New Beginning: An International Dialogue with the Chinese Church*, pp.90-93.



West in the same way that the Bible was viewed as opium and guns brought in by the West in order to assault China.<sup>44</sup>

Ting pointed out that the TSM 'has changed the countenance of the Christianity of the semi-colonial, semi-feudalistic old China to bring it into consonance with the face of socialist New China.'<sup>45</sup> Namely, Christianity has become a religious community of self-government, self-support and self-propagation in China. Taking a somewhat similar stance to the CCP's politics and economics pragmatic stance—adopting the market economy by baptizing it as 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics'—Ting said:

(Christianity) has become a religious community of self-government, self-support and self-propagation. It is no longer a dependent of foreign missionary societies, but is organized by a part of the Chinese citizenry out of our faith in and love of Christ. It is more and more Christianity with Chinese characteristics.<sup>46</sup>

What has been brought to light, in this political declaration, is twofold. First, it demonstrated how the TSM differs from indigenous churches, in terms of its political standpoint. Especially, under the supervision of the TSM, Christianity in China has rid itself of the control and exploitation of imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism and feudalism. Second, it was presented as a way to support the correctness and necessity of the cause of the TSM. That is, the TSM conformed to the essence of the church and was in accord with the tide of history. Then, these characteristics verified that the TSM had actually helped Chinese Christianity and 'ceased to be a replica of foreign Christianity, did not antagonise or dissociate or alienate itself from the cause of the Chinese people but joined them in that cause, planted its roots in Chinese culture, formed a Chinese self, and became a Chinese entity.'<sup>47</sup>

Ironically enough, most of the official churches of the 1990s essentially maintained a church tradition inherited from western missionaries. Comparatively speaking, the unregistered churches (or, so-called 'house churches') are more closely related to indigenous forms of religion. They are strongly influenced by traditional

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<sup>44</sup> Jiang Wenhan, 'How "Foreign" was the Christian Religion in China,' & Zhao Fusan, 'Colonialism and Missionary Movement'; 'Church Autonomy from a Theological Perspective,' both in T. Chu & C. Lind (eds.), *A New Beginning: An International Dialogue with the Chinese Church* (Montreal: Canada China Programme of the Canadian Council of Churches, 1982), pp. 90-96.

<sup>45</sup> Ting, 'Huigu yu zhanwang' (Retrospect and prospect) *Wenji*, pp. 292-307.

English translation available online: <http://www.christianityinchina.org/PreGen/n359/CTR1985.doc> (accessed 14th October 2006).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

culture although their members are more likely to be poor with a lower standard of education. Unquestionably, in this context, the terms of ‘Christianity with Chinese characteristics’ was derived from the basis of political and national security rather than on the basis of religion and culture.

We may argue that the expressions of ‘Christianity with Chinese characteristics’, in itself, can also be construed as setting up a potential assumption that the essential nature of Christianity is equated to Western Imperialism. Thus, it is a need for those ‘advanced TSM thinkers’, who actually were either trained *by* or *in* the institution of the State, to monitor indigenous churches’ leadership how to organise their churches within a politically nationalistic framework, and prevent themselves from becoming extensions for advancing foreign interests. Although most of the indigenous churches have been operated with Three-Self principles, for quite sometime, it does not mean that they could get away from the suspicion of being an instrument, and/or a hotbed of imperialism. In particular, regarding the understanding of Bible or theology, even if most of the indigenous churches leadership have rarely had proper theological training, in the eyes of the TSM, it does not mean that they keep up the exact awareness of the ‘essence of Christianity’. For TSM thinkers, it is always possible that indigenous churches leadership consciously or unconsciously become related to imperialism.

Therefore, comparatively speaking, because they have a strong background of western theological training, the TSM leaderships are more likely to reveal the conspiracy of Christianity in China, and construct Christianity with ‘Chinese characteristics’ much better than the indigenous churches leadership. For these reasons, it is probable that Ting affirms openly that the TSM not only made Christianity in consonance with Chinese national conditions, but also helped persons in various circles of society to change their impressions of Chinese Christians. He openly makes the criticism that, ‘the anti-Three-Self road was politically unjust and religiously self-destructive for Christianity. Without the TSPM, Chinese Christianity could not have a present to speak of, nor would it have a future.’<sup>48</sup>

Theoretically speaking, to a large extent, the defence of the legitimacy of the TSM, mostly due to the re-emergence of Christian sects immediately following the Cultural Revolution, affected the TSM. They utilised their survival during this period as evidence of their *politicalnecessity*. In other words, without the re-emergence of

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<sup>48</sup>Ting, ‘Huigu yu zhanwang’ (Retrospect and prospect) *Wenji*, p. 297.

Chinese churches in the 80s, it would be senseless to defend the necessity of continuing the power of the TSM; above all, it would be hard for the TSM to find a dependency in Chinese politics, for their movement.

Incontrovertibly, Christianity has been used as an appendage to the machine of Western aggression, and is connected with colonialism and imperialism in order to expand its political power and benefit during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, it seems reasonable to claim that without the TSPM, Chinese Christianity might not have a present to talk about, nor would it have a future. However, just as George Hood indicates, this particular form of accusation, based on the Christian missions' historical error, had come to an end by the 1920s. In this sense, it might be possible to say that for the CCP and the TSM during the 1950s to the late 1970s, history itself has been taken as a self-evidential object for the political purpose that it can always be operated as a useful political instrument by exaggerating its negative influence repeatedly.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, most of these unequal treaties came to an end by 1943. Therefore, it would be insufficient to stand as a validation for the political necessity of the TSPM.

The inconsistency at this point is particularly acute considering the continuing advocacy of the edification of the TSPM, upon which the continued existence of Christianity in China rests. To some extent, churches are not fully self-governing, simply because they still receive a measure of financial support from the state and propagate an ideology acceptable to the state. In fact, there is no evidence that the indigenous churches have been widespread in China based on the support from the TSM. On the contrary, the number of Christians has not increased, but significantly decreased after 1949 (particularly when compared to the 1920/30s). Furthermore, most of the indigenous churches were fundamentalist. Due to divergent theological concerns, they refused to join the TSM. As chapter one and two have demonstrated, most of them, during the 1920s through the 1940s, actually put up with a more radical break from the Western traditions, integrating more deeply with Chinese customs and religion in the early twentieth century. However, they were attacked and dissolved one after another during the 1950s. Some of them retreated underground and survived throughout the first three decades of Communist rule.

In his investigating of this issue, Thomas Harvey makes a significant point that despite the fact that the CCP charged Christians with complicity with foreign missions

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<sup>49</sup> George Hood, *Neither Bang Nor Whimper: The end of a Missionary Era in China* (Singapore: The Presbyterian Church in Singapore, 1991), p.21.

and imperialism, many leaders of independent churches such as the Little Flock, the Jesus Family, and the True Jesus Church, were actually attacked by the CCP because of their independence. That is, they could survive without the help of foreign or external subsidies, and thus they could afford to ignore the orders of the CCP.<sup>50</sup>

As a whole, Ting's theological discourse conforms to the theory and praxis of the political common ground and the nation-state. It is primarily political and allowed theological difference to remain intact. The CCP was not only viewed as the subject of history, but also the ultimate ground of theological assessment. When Ting repeatedly claimed that 'the accomplishments of the TSM have been great', to some extent, based on the political concerns, it simply demonstrated its political necessity by attaching itself onto the dependency of the CCP.<sup>51</sup> That is, it applauds the CCP's religious policy and the need for its correct implementation in order to find out the legitimate expressions of Christianity in socialist society. The second declaration, that 'the mission of the TSM is not over', appears as an affirmation of accepting the 'ongoing mission' from the CCP; namely, not only to root out 'imperialist thought', but also to replace it with the "pure gospel" which will bring unity to the Church, and solidarity with the nation. For instance, in relation to the history of China, Ting indicated that 'the gospel of Christian reconciliation' is far more important for the Chinese people. For the reason that, as he further explains, China has 'already entered an historical stage in which class antagonism is no longer the primary contradiction. We have gone from a historical period of emphasising class struggle, into one of emphasizing stability and unity.'<sup>52</sup> Ting argued,

'Reconciliation is the continuation of liberation, its expansion and development, a way of creating conditions for a more profound liberation. The recognition that struggle is no longer the key link is politically and historically significant, but more than this, for the church it means that witness to the gospel has also entered upon a new period, the entire significance of which can only be understood in the future.'<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Harvey writes, 'From a theological perspective, the idiosyncrasies of these groups which led to their rejection of foreign hegemony also mitigated against the hegemony of the nation-state. Their *raison d'être* was their difference. ... (P)aradoxically, it was their very success apart from the foreign influence and control that made them far more threatening than the denominational churches.' (Harvey, 'Challenging Heaven's Mandate', pp.96-97.)

<sup>51</sup> On the basis of those three points of the TSM's accomplishment, which has been analyzed above, Ting summarised the contribution of the TSM, in three sentences. Firstly, the accomplishments of the TSM have been great; secondly, the mission of the TSM is not over, and, thirdly, the church must not only be self-run, but well-run. (Ting, 'Huigu yu zhanwang' (Retrospect and Prospect) *Wenji*, p.293.)

<sup>52</sup> 'A Reconciling Faith,' *Nanjing Theological Review*, No.5 (December, 1986), p.5. English translation available online: <http://www.christianityinchina.org/PreGen/n359/CTR1987.doc> (accessed 14th October 2006).

<sup>53</sup> 'A Reconciling Faith,' *Nanjing Theological Review*, No.5 (December, 1986), p.7.

All through 1996, in his speeches, Ting laid the underpinning for Theological Reconstruction. He highlighted that ‘running the church well according to the Three-Self principle’ should be firmly on the first four characters (*ban hao jiaohui*, 辦好教會). These were not a decorative accumulation to Three-Self, but its fulfilment, realisation and means of implementation. In a word, ‘running the church well’ is also a concrete expression of patriotism. Because, when Chinese Christians speak of ‘love country, love church’, it is not to separate church from society but rather, to say that to love country is also to love church, and to bring the nation and church together; thus joining the two.<sup>54</sup> At the very least, following this assumption, a church without any commonality with society is unbearable. He thus persistently claimed that Theological Reconstruction was a continuation of the Three-Self and Chinese Church needed not only to be Three-Self but also doing them well. What is highlighted by Ting, in this context, is Theological Reconstruction should help make the church more in tune with the times, which will make society more receptive to the church’s voice. In short, Theological Reconstruction must aim to promote the adaptation of Christian faith to socialist society.

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<sup>54</sup>Ting, ‘Zenyang kandai jidujiaohui yiwai de zhenshanmei’ (How to understand the Truth, Goodness and Beauty outside Christian Church) *Wenji*, pp. 240-253.



## **Chapter Four: Towards a Chinese Theological Reconstruction**

In 1981, Ting followed up on Wu's 'self evangelism' idea, and represents it as a way of contextualisation.<sup>1</sup> This chapter focuses on the content of Ting's principal characteristics and how the conflicting aims between his theological position and fundamentalist leads him to a Theological Reconstruction that seeks to integrate the Christian faith with humanitarian philosophy.

As stated in the introduction, due to differences in the historical context, Christianity in China inevitably was understood, interpreted and appropriated in various ways. The present context of the Chinese Church can never be divorced from its historical experiences. For a better and deeper understanding of Ting's Theological Reconstruction, it is necessary to briefly discuss the models that were used to construct Chinese theology before. For the purpose of this study, in consideration of Stephen Bevans' categorisations of contextual theology, this chapter is summarised in three main aspects, which will show three approaches once employed to construct Chinese Christian theology in the past and contemporary history of Christianity in China.<sup>2</sup>

### **1. A synthetic model: Jesuit Accommodation**

The effort of contextualisation started as early as the Ming Dynasty (1368AD-1644AD).<sup>3</sup> Being alert to Chinese xenophobia and disbelief of foreigners, the Jesuits adopted the ancient classics, attempted to introduce Christianity by relating it to Confucian concepts, and dressed themselves like the Chinese scholars in order to gain utmost acceptability in Chinese high society. In 1588, for instance, Italian Jesuits, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) entered China, the first groups of scholarly Jesuits who gained some recognition from the imperial court by offering scientific knowledge and

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<sup>1</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, pp.342-356; see also Ting, 'Jintian women xiang Wu Yaorong xiansheng xuexi shenma?' (What can we learn from Y.T. Wu today?) *Wenji*, pp. 473-481.

<sup>2</sup> Refer Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996). (The five models listed are the Translation, Anthropological, Praxis, Synthetic and Transcendental models.)

<sup>3</sup> Nestorian Christianity existed in China as early the seventh century. (Alvyn Austin, *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007]). However, the Nestorians declined after heavy persecution from Emperor Wuzong of Tang (r. 840-846) who also suppressed Buddhism. Christianity emerged in China again during the 13th century, when leaders of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty sought a political alliance with the Vatican and welcomed Franciscan monks from Italy. Nevertheless, both Nestorians and Franciscans tradition failed to take root and disappeared by the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (Overmyer, 'Chinese Religious Traditions from 1900-2005: An Overview,' pp.188-189.)

adapting Christianity to the Chinese culture. Ricci was the first Christian in the modern period to wrestle with the issues of contextualisation in the Chinese context. He learned to speak, read and write Chinese, and dressed as a Confucian scholar. His works occupy a critical place in the history of Chinese Christianity.<sup>4</sup> In 1584, Ricci published his first Chinese book: *Tienzhu shilu* (天主實錄, The True Account of God), discussing the existence and attributes of God, the incarnation of Christ the Word and the sacraments. In 1601, Ricci eventually managed to enter the imperial capital, Beijing. He also made some influential converts who paved the way for other Jesuits to obtain positions as court astronomers and to do missionary work. The last Ming empress was converted to Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, in 1724 the Qing government proscribing Catholicism led to a considerable reduction in the number of European missionaries in China. The years between 1724 and 1840 were regarded as a more hostile environment for Chinese Christianity.<sup>6</sup> The whole condition was to last until the 'Unequal Treaties' of the nineteenth century.

We might argue about the deficiencies of accommodation as a method of missionary, the Jesuits were founding contextualisation in seventeenth century China. In the externals of dress, language and mastery of the classics, mannerisms and moral conduct, they effectively identified with Chinese society and culture. Moreover, in their utilization of mathematical and scientific knowledge as a way to find a hearing for their message, they were perceptibly addressing a felt need in the minds of Chinese literati to overcome the dominant views of ancient Chinese prejudice against foreign barbarians which saw civilizations other than China's as uncultured.

In addition, in order to form bridges for the communication of the gospel to other culture, in their translations and writings, they were not afraid to relate traditional Christian concepts to indigenous Chinese terms, with all the associated risks involved. As we mention in the chapter one, for instance, concerns the choice of the term for God, the Jesuits had decided in 1583 to use the term *Tianzhu* (天主, Master of Heaven). But this was not native to the Chinese. They, therefore, borrowed the terms *Shangdi* (上帝, Sovereign on High) and *Tian* (天, Heaven) from the

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<sup>4</sup> The work of Ricci and fellow Jesuits in 17<sup>th</sup> century China has been well-documented in Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christianity / New York: Macmillan 1929), pp.91-198; Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> W.Scott Morton & Charlton M. Lewis, *China: It's history and culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1995), p.141.

<sup>6</sup> Laamann, 'Anti-Christian Agitation as an Example of Late Imperial Anticlericalism', pp.48-51.



Classics, and used them as equivalents to *Tianzhu*.<sup>7</sup> In order to do so, they had to attribute theistic significance to *Shangdi* and *Tian*, a procedure that went against the whole Confucian commentary tradition, which had always regarded them as a naturalistic ‘anonymous power of order and animation in the universe’.<sup>8</sup>

However, the question of faithfulness to the Christian message is found in Ricci’s missionary approach. As Kenneth S. Latourette indicates that, ‘whatever may be true of a few of the educated, for the great masses the prohibited rites had in term much of animism.’<sup>9</sup> Ricci’s ‘accommodation’ went too far when he argued, regarding to the rites in honour of ancestors and Confucius that these had no more than civil significance, and, therefore, were acceptable for the Christian. It is probable to say that, Latourette might be right, with respect to the Rites Controversy, that had it not been for the papal decisions, the Church would have ultimately lost its distinctiveness, in the course of too much compromise.<sup>10</sup> It points out a noteworthy matter: how far should missionaries go in accommodating Chinese culture and the demand for an indigenous church? The risk of accommodation was that in overstating the national character, the church’s traditional character was put at risk.

Jacques Gernet holds a rather pessimistic approach to the whole enterprise of accommodation.<sup>11</sup> Gernet argues that, by the debates over ancestral rites, the European Church actually presented a severe failure to see the fundamental incompatibility of the worldviews of missionaries and the Chinese.<sup>12</sup> Although Gernet’s suggestion might not be accepted by those concerned with critical contextualisation, he is undeniably correct in his observation that the missionaries had failed to take hold of the cultural gap that separated them and the Chinese. Unsurprisingly, for all their efforts and accomplishment, the Jesuit experiment at ‘accommodation’ failed to actually go far or deep enough.

## **2. An anthropological model**

### **2.1 The change of Western missionaries’ approaches**

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<sup>7</sup>Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, p.25ff

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.30.

<sup>9</sup>Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, p.154.

<sup>10</sup>Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, pp.152-155.

<sup>11</sup>Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, pp.238-247.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.247.

By the early nineteenth century, nevertheless, industrialisation and the development of science and technology had driven Western nations extensively ahead of China and other Asian countries. This newly attained progression in material culture reinforced the pride of the nineteenth century Protestant missionaries in the achievements of Western civilization. As a result, most missionaries projected their spiritual superiority by criticising the Confucian philosophy as ‘a dark and dismal, hopeless blank’, and paganism had directed China into ‘darkness,’ which caused all moral and social problems.<sup>13</sup> This arrogant attitude increased the missionaries’ beliefs that their work targeted not only at converting individuals but also ‘taking the lead in remoulding society, in purifying it and in forming it on the basis of those principles of the Christian religion.’<sup>14</sup>

However this stance changed noticeably after 1915. Numerous reasons influenced the change in attitude. One of the reasons is the growth of modern theology and the Social Gospel within the Protestant Church generated a new sympathy with native cultures. Furthermore, the May Fourth Movement and rise of nationalism in China in the 1920s also created a necessity for missionaries to reassess Chinese culture.<sup>15</sup> For instance, during the nationalist movement, Chinese Christian converts were condemned as traitors and ‘running dogs’ of Western imperialism. As historian Leslie Lyall stated, ‘many Chinese intellectuals concluded that it was quite impossible to be both a patriot and a Christian.’<sup>16</sup> These circumstances definitely amplified the pressure of the missionaries.

By the 1920s, missionaries’ evaluation of Chinese culture was thoroughly different from that of earlier Protestant missionaries. They began to recognise positive aspects of Chinese culture. The search for a new approach was manifested in undertaking a more realistic assessment of China’s situation and re-evaluating the problem of adapting the Christian message to Chinese conditions.<sup>17</sup> For instance, they came to view ancestor worship, which was the main mark of earlier criticism, in a different light. Instead of denouncing ancestor worship as incompatible with

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<sup>13</sup> Xu Xiaqun, ‘The Dilemma of Accommodation’, *Historian*, Vol 60, Issue 1 (September, 1997), p.23.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>15</sup> Hutchinson, ‘Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1945,’ *The Missionary Enterprise*, pp. 111-112; Xu Xiaqun, ‘The Dilemma of Accommodation’, pp.26-31. See also, Evan N.Dawley, ‘Intellectuals, and Cultural Internationalism, 1919-1921’, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol.12, Nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2003), p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from Xu Xiaqun, ‘The Dilemma of Accommodation’, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Dawley, ‘Intellectuals, and Cultural Internationalism, 1919-1921’, pp.16-18.

Christianity, most missionaries tended to view ancestor rites as the principle of filial piety, and a symbol of the continuity of human life.<sup>18</sup> In other words, throughout that particular period, Chinese philosophy and religions, especially Confucianism, turned into the focuses for missionary work.

Ironically, while missionaries adopted new attitudes and sought for values within the Confucian tradition to support Christianity, Chinese intellectuals approaches were utterly contrasted to the missionaries' effort. They blamed that same tradition for China's weaknesses and celebrated Western notions of 'democracy' and 'science.'

## 2.2 The growth of a Chinese Christian indigenous movement

The beginning of the twentieth century brought tough challenges for a once proud nation. In the hope of finding national salvation, China opened itself to foreign influences, including Christianity, in a way as never before.<sup>19</sup> Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement (1915-1921) rejected the old imperial system of government, and perceived traditional Confucian philosophy as backward and useless. Christianity was considered as a form of cultural imperialism. As Xu accurately pointed out, 'western culture had become so intertwined with Christianity in the minds of many Christians that to reject the culture was to reject the faith.'<sup>20</sup> Chinese Christians experienced a crisis of identity.

This movement paved the way for the Anti-Christian tension of the 1920s.<sup>21</sup> The leading idea of the movement conducted Chinese intellectuals in the 1920s further rejected Christianity by arguing that Christianity was mere superstition and therefore irrelevant to national reconstruction.<sup>22</sup> Science was now reckoned as the 'saviour' of the new China.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, based on Chinese nationalism and heartened by Marxist thought, the anti-Christian Student Federation in 1922 labelled Christianity as the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-32.

<sup>19</sup> Xu Xiaogun, 'The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s', pp. 21-38; Tatsuro & Sumiko Yamamoto, 'The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, pp.133-147.

<sup>20</sup> Xu Xiaogun, 'The Dilemma of Accommodation', p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Tatsuro & Sumiko Yamamoto, 'The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927', pp.136.

<sup>22</sup> Lam, 1983, 5-26; see also, CR vol. 54, No. 8 (August 1923), pp. 463-464.

<sup>23</sup> Tatsuro & Sumiko Yamamoto, 'The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927', pp.138-139.

exploiter of the poor and oppressed.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously, Christian educational endeavours were charged as a means of denationalization and an extension of the western imperialism.<sup>25</sup> These accusations and the anti-religious movements forced the Church taking part in a process of change and indigenisation (*bensehua* 本色化) or contextualisation (*chujinghua* 处境化) with greater Chinese participation in all aspects of Church life.

Accordingly, Chinese Protestants began to develop a self-critical attitude and to build up concepts of separation from missions, identification with the Chinese people and society.<sup>26</sup> As Lam pointed out, it was not an attempt to withdraw from Christianity and revert to Chinese traditional culture, nor a pattern of anti-foreignism. Neither was it an uncritical mixing of Christianity with culture.<sup>27</sup> Chinese church leaders made genuine efforts to produce a theology that sought to address the socio-political and cultural issues of the day.<sup>28</sup> As this study indicated in chapter one, Chinese Christians believed that the formation of an indigenous Chinese church was the best way to response to the challenges. A number of approaches were applied. For instance, Wu Leiquan regarded the Chinese classical tradition and Christianity as a different expression of the same *Dao*(道, the truth), he therefore laid emphasis on a need of dual loyalty to both aspects.<sup>29</sup> He synthesised Christian theology and Confucian philosophy by drawing parallels between the Christian Bible and the Confucian *Zhongyong* (中庸).<sup>30</sup> Based on the pragmatic belief, some underlined the ‘harmonisation of cultures’, that adopting Christianity would have a positive impact on Chinese traditional culture.<sup>31</sup> For instance, Cheng Chingyi, suggested that,

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<sup>24</sup> Lam Wing-hung, *Chinese Theology in Construction* (Pasadena/California: William Carey Library, 1983), pp.85-119; Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The missionary movement and the growth of Chinese anti-foreignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.40.

<sup>25</sup> Tatsuro & Sumiko Yamamoto, ‘The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927’; Xu Xiaoqun, ‘The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s’.

<sup>26</sup> Xu Xiaoqun, ‘The Dilemma of Accommodation: Reconciling Christianity and Chinese Culture in the 1920s’.

<sup>27</sup> Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, p.57ff.

<sup>28</sup> Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, pp. 27-48.

<sup>29</sup> Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, pp. 102-105; Philip West, ‘Christianity and Nationalism: The career of Wu Leichuan at Yenching University’, in John K. Fairbank, *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp.226-246.

<sup>30</sup> *Zhongyong* (The Doctrine of the Mean) is one of the books of Confucian teachings.

<sup>31</sup> Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, pp. 105- 115.

The Chinese church should bring together the good points of both Chinese and western cultures, selecting the virtues of each and rejecting the shortcomings of both, extracting their essence and using them extensively and thereby establishing our frontier.<sup>32</sup>

This approach, as Jonathan Chao pointed out, ‘took Chinese culture as the context into which Christianity was to be “injected” as a revitalising spirit.’ As a result, the idea of integration easily lends itself to ideological fusion.<sup>33</sup> The conservative and popular preacher, however, Wang Mingdao, showed no interest at all in indigenisation but upheld the cultural dualism of classical fundamentalism.<sup>34</sup> Some, such as Chang Yiching, promoted a truly evangelical apologetic which saw God as both working in and judging Chinese culture.<sup>35</sup>

The Chinese indigenous church movement did not become a continuing movement, or presenting as a forceful progress to transform Chinese culture and society. It came to an end when the weight of the anti-Christian movement was removed. Yet it might be fair to say that they had laid the foundations for what may develop into a mature indigenous Chinese Christian theology in due course.

After 1950, Chinese religious history is tightly intertwined with the theme of state and Communist Party control, interference, and repression. As this study presents in chapter two and three, what was important in the 1950s, theologically speaking, was that Chinese Christians began to raise questions about how to reconcile their Christian faith with the new social reality emerging in the PRC. Contextualisation was mainly understood in a political sense. It stood against Western intervention, and was concerned with removing any connection with foreign missions. They aimed to demonstrate the relevance of the Christian faith in questioning social change and national reconstruction.<sup>36</sup> Unless Christianity could be shown to offer a social contribution to the New China, it would be regarded as of little use by the population. The church, therefore, was compelled to take positions on questions of war and aggression, ‘new democracy’ politics and national unity. To some extent, the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted from Chao, ‘Christianisation of Chinese Culture: An Evangelical Approach’, p.101.

<sup>34</sup> Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, pp. 115-119. See also chapter one and two for reference.

<sup>35</sup> Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, pp. 119-122.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Y. T. Wu (ed.), *Christianity and New China* (Shanghai: Association Press, 1948), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Originally published in 1940, the book contains twenty-seven essays by Xieh Fuya, Xu Baojian, Wu Leichuen, Chao T.C, Jiang Wenhan and others.

direction of 1950s theological approach played a key role in the guidance of making Christianity Chinese, but the context of Chinese culture was largely left untouched.<sup>37</sup>

With the coming of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 all churches, temples, and venues for any kind of religious activity were closed for more than a decade. Organisations such as the Religious Affairs Bureau and the patriotic religious organisations found in 1950s now had no purpose, and they too were dissolved. The end of the Cultural Revolution immediately after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 signified the beginning of a new era. The economic reform and the open-door policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping brought China to a different track of development and gave rise to a drastically different socio-political context. In 1998, the official sanctioned church (TSPM) launched a campaign to reconstruct a 'contextualised' theology to meet the need of the time. On the same year, Ting collected many of his theological reflections and treatises written in different periods of Communist China, and published them as a book, *Ding Guangxun Wenji*, which was also translated into English two years later. As a product of time, Ting's theological proposal plays a key guidance for the leaders of both the TSPM and the CCC in building up the Chinese Christian identity.<sup>38</sup> We now turn to his work.

### **3. A praxis model: Ting's Theological Reconstruction**

Ting's theology is due primarily to his understanding of the contemporary Chinese context, rather than a commitment to any traditional Chinese culture. His theological position is very consensus from 1940s and 1980s. In the 1980s, Ting carries on tackling the sharp challenges inherited from the 1950s. In sharing the similar political and theological standpoint of 1950s, Ting highlights the importance and urgency of Theological Reconstruction and regards it as a concern, not so much of Who, or of Why, but of How was the Christian message to be understood, interpreted and communicated in a new historical situation. He considers the process of Theological Reconstruction as the third stage of the church after 1949. The centre of the first period was patriotism, anti-imperialism and the independence of the Chinese church. The main concern of the second stage was located on the good management

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<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Chao, 'Christianization of Chinese Culture: An Evangelical approach,' *Transformation* 17:3, (2000), p.100.

<sup>38</sup> Chen Lu, 'Ting Guangxun's Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction', *Transformation* 27 (2), p. 96.

of the church. Finally, in the third and present stage the endeavour is to build up and to strengthen the theological reflection.<sup>39</sup>

Ting speaks highly of the contextual approach, believing it is the exclusive way to establish a theology that is able to reflect the reality of the Chinese situation. He holds that:

The opposite of the contextual approach is a departure from, and disregard of reality, this is, saying only those things that are unrelated to any period of time, forgetting one's social responsibilities and disregarding the social consequences of one's viewpoint...We must pay special attention to contextualisation.<sup>40</sup>

By raising those comments, Ting points his finger to the traditional conservative Christian, saying: 'there were some in the church who refused so stubbornly to be impressed by the new arrivals on the scene that they began to advance theological, but highly political, arguments to oppose Liberation and anew China.'<sup>41</sup> It is very noticeable that Ting's Theological Reconstruction was motivated not only theologically but also politically. He was not comfortable with the contemporary major faith-oriented theological status of Chinese Christianity. He believes that this theology is a stumbling block for fitting Christianity into the socialist society and it would lead 'Christianity in China to the verge of a disastrous collapse'.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, for Ting, Theological Reconstruction has to be made in order to fight against the separation of faith from social change and encourage people to devote to the progressive cause in socialist China. He writes:

Now that people are not forbidden to believe in Christianity, they should not be forbidden to understand it philosophically. If so, they will devote themselves to the progressive cause more than ever, otherwise, they will regard all truth, goodness and beauty in the world as coming from Satan, and so the religious believer will be captured by opponents. Believers who seek a more suitable and proper theology to fight against reactionary theology, should be encouraged.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> K.H. Ting, 'Shenxue sixiang ye yao yushi ju jin' (Theological thinking also must progress with the times). *Tian Feng* (1 June 2002), pp.22ff.

<sup>40</sup> Ting, 'Jintian women xiang Wu Yaozong xiansheng xuexi shenma?' (What can we learn from Y.T. Wu today?), *Wenji*, (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 1998), pp. 477-478.

<sup>41</sup> Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p.22.

<sup>42</sup> Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China); 'Jintian women xiang Wu Yaozong xiansheng xuexi shenma?' (What can we learn from Y.T. Wu today?), *Wenji*, pp. 22, 479.

<sup>43</sup> Ting, 'Zenyang kandai jidujiahui yiwai de zhenshanmei' (How to understand the Truth, Goodness and Beauty outside Christian Church), *Wenji* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 1998), p. 253.

In view of that, Ting points out there are three major pitfalls in traditional conservative theology: (1) misrepresenting the doctrine of justification by faith, (2) misunderstanding the character of God, (3) nullifying the need for morality.

(1) Misrepresenting the doctrine of justification by faith

Ting believes that a theology with too much attention on the issue of the belief and non-belief association is fragile in content and short-sighted in standpoint.<sup>44</sup> Here, Ting particularly refers to the doctrine of justification by faith, which is regarded by him as a piece of serious religious and political ideology.<sup>45</sup> This is an issue that touches on the relationship between believers and non-believers, apparently, including the Communist Party. More to the point, it is primarily concerned with the question of how Chinese believers should look at justification by faith in PRC.<sup>46</sup>

Ting emphasises that because of the misunderstanding of the doctrine of justification by faith, massive ‘grassroots churches’ ignored and denied any possibility of existence of truth, goodness and beauty outside the church.<sup>47</sup> According to Ting, this was used in the early 1950s as the main theological weapon by those who were determined not to be reconciled to the fact of new China, and the separation was deepened because of this theological stance.<sup>48</sup> He says,

But some Christians only pay attention to the salvation of the individual, accusing the Christian who are also concerned with ethical behaviour of having impure faith, and also saying that those (those) who do not distinguish between right and wrong and who do not believe in Christ in a certain way of being bad. I would like to point out to them, as Christians, they have gone to be part and parcel of those outside the church who hold leftist views.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ting, ‘Xianjin de Wu xiansheng’ (The forerunner Mr. Wu), *Wenji*, pp. 441-452; see also, Chen Lu, ‘Ding Guangxun’s Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction’, pp.98-100.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Xianjin de Wu xiansheng’ (The forerunner Mr. Wu), *Wenji*, p.448.

<sup>46</sup> K.H. Ting, ‘Establish a Correct View of the Bible,’ Foreword to *Papers from the Forum of Chinese View of the Bible* (Shanghai: CCC/ TSPM, 2000), p.2.

<sup>47</sup> Ting, ‘Zenyang kandai jidujiahui yiwai de zhenshanmei’ (How to understand the Truth, Goodness and Beauty outside Christian Church), *Wenji*, pp.243-244.

<sup>48</sup> Ting, ‘Zenyang kandai jidujiahui yiwai de zhenshanmei’ (How to understand the Truth, Goodness and Beauty outside Christian Church), ‘Xianjin de Wu xiansheng’ (The forerunner Mr. Wu), *Wenji*, pp.448, 242.

<sup>49</sup> Ting, ‘Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong’ (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p. 23.



Ting argues that the justification by faith originally had a progressive meaning, and that it was a banner of liberation in its original manifestation.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, at the height of the western missionary movement, most obviously, in the nineteenth century, foreign missionaries' eager to convert Chinese linked justification by faith to heaven and hell, using the threat of hell and eternal damnation as a means to scare the Chinese, and thereby compel them to convert to the Christian faith. As a result, the doctrine of justification by faith became a belief that no matter what one does, if one believes inevitably then one will be saved. On the contrary, no one will be saved regardless of what he or she has done unless they believe in Christ.<sup>51</sup> Ting, therefore, advocates that the question of belief and non-belief appears on the surface like a question of faith, but, because it has been linked to heaven and the treatment of hell extends, thereby becoming a political question.<sup>52</sup> It is, undoubtedly, a serious piece of content, most specifically of a political ideology. In the context of new China, it has become a stumbling block to the continued development of Christianity.<sup>53</sup>

## (2) Misunderstanding the character of God

Ting challenges the traditional perception of the attributes of God, which overemphasizes the majesty, omniscience, omnipotence, holiness and righteousness; love is just one among many.<sup>54</sup> In reference to A. N. Whitehead's criticisms of the traditional doctrine of God, Ting reasons that 'the Christian theological tradition has for long mistakenly conceived of God either as the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover'.<sup>55</sup> He therefore believes that to correct the understanding of the character of God is true liberation for Chinese Christians. In his own terms:

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<sup>50</sup>Ting, 'Tan jitudu yige sixiang shenchi de wenti' (On Profound Christian Question), 'Xianjin de Wu xiansheng' (The forerunner Mr. Wu), *Wenji*, pp. 286, 448.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>K.H. Ting, 'Establish a Correct View of the Bible,' Foreword to *Papers from the Forum of Chinese View of the Bible* (Shanghai: CCC/ TSPM, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup>Ting, 'Tan jitudu yige sixiang shenchi de wenti' (On Profound Christian Question), 'Xianjin de Wu xiansheng' (The forerunner Mr. Wu), *Wenji*, pp. 285-287, 448.

<sup>54</sup>Ting, 'Nüxing, muxing, shenxing' (Womanhood, motherhood, divinity), 'Ai daodi de ai' (Love that loves to the end), *Wenji*, pp. 229-233, 258-263.

<sup>55</sup>Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God) *Wenji*, p.107.

For Chinese Christians, to discard the image of a vengeful, frightening God, God the omnipotent in dealing with humans, and to come to adore God the Lover, the Sympathiser, the fellow-suffer who comes to us, is a shift that is truly liberating.<sup>56</sup>

Additionally, Ting suggests that the traditional view of God has encouraged the conception of humanitarian atheists;<sup>57</sup> they become atheists because they are not happy with the ‘unjust God’. He writes:

They have to reject God because the God they have been told about is nothing better than a maintainer of the status quo, an opponent of any change in structures and in values, a protector of any social order which is moribund and has no justice in it, a God who gets himself involved in the injustices of the oppressive society. He has taken the side of the oppressor/ exploited and oppressed must reject him.<sup>58</sup>

By highlighting love as the most important attribute of God, Ting illustrates that God is a loving God and therefore judgment of God should be discounted.<sup>59</sup> In other words, according to Ting, it is totally unacceptable to perceive that in the last days God will throw millions of people, especially non-believers who have a high moral level, into the eternal fire of the hell. Ting says:

Imagine how many new lives are brought into this world each day at any single maternity hospital in any of our cities and the indescribable joy of their parents. God certainly knows that many of these will not be believers, yet every moment he creates more new lives. If what awaits most of them some decades along the road is eternal hellfire, then God is not a God of love.<sup>60</sup>

In making these claims, Ting argues that, ‘how can we say to those who have not received the gospel of Christ, but are of high character, such as Zhang Side, Lei Feng, and Jiao Yutuan that they would be in hell?’<sup>61</sup> On this occasion, Ting emphasises the famous saying by Einstein, ‘the development from (a) religion of fear

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p.108.

<sup>57</sup>In Ting sight, atheists are not homogeneous; he groups atheists into three categories. The first group he calls ‘the unscrupulous atheists’, for them ‘if there is no God everything is permitted’. He does not discuss this group in detail, for he considers, ‘Their atheism is really a sort of opium to benumb themselves’. The second group consists of those who take the concept of God seriously and honestly and find it impossible but to be nihilists and agonistics. Their honest doubts and unbelief deserve sympathetic understanding. The third group consists of those who are social reformers and revolutionaries; they are humanitarian atheists.(Ting, ‘Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong’ [Theological Mass Movement in China], *Wenji*, pp.21-33.)

<sup>58</sup>Ting, ‘Yige zhongguo jidudu zenyang kan wu shen lun ze’ (A Chinese Christian’s Appreciation of the Atheist ), *Wenji*, p.109. See also Ting, ‘Yige zhongguo jidudu zhenyang kan wu shen lun ce’ (A Chinese Christian’s Appreciation of an Atheist), *Wenji*, p, 140.

<sup>59</sup>Ting, ‘Zhuangchao han jiushu’ (Creation and redemption), ‘Yige zhongguo jidudu zenyang kan wu shen lun ze’ (A Chinese Christian’s Appreciation of the Atheist ), ‘Ai daodi de ai’ (Love that loves to the end), *Wenji*, pp. 275-280, 106-116, 100-105.

<sup>60</sup>Ting, ‘Tan jitudu yige sixiang shenchi de wenti’ (On Profound Christian Question), *Wenji*, p. 287. See also, ‘Tan jitudu yige sixiang shenchi de wenti’ (On a Profound Christian Question), ‘Yige zhongguo jidudu zenyang kan wu shen lun ze’ (A Chinese Christian’s Appreciation of the Atheist ) *Wenji*, pp. 285-287, 109.

<sup>61</sup> These people are Communists who devoted their lives to the people.

to (a) religion of morality is a great leap in the evolutionary history of human religions.’ Ting acknowledges that ‘God’s justice is still God’s love.’<sup>62</sup> When love is popularised among the masses, or has entered the world, it becomes justice. Loving God will not put people into hell, merely because of those who do not believe in Him.<sup>63</sup>

Ting then argues that good behaviour is a lot more important than pure faith in God. Christianity must lift up its morality high, rather than simply emphasise the justification by faith, which simplistically posits the conflict of believer and non-believer.<sup>64</sup> Justice is derived from love. If anyone talks about God’s justice apart from God’s love, it will result in a twisted religion.<sup>65</sup> To put it alternatively, for Ting, the concept of ‘justice’ (righteousness) is actually a moral concept, or is a demand for people to carry out righteousness. God is not concerned whether one believes in him or not, but is concerned with one’s attitude towards those, most specifically in need. The significance of Christianity is its morality.<sup>66</sup>

### (3) Nullifies the need for morality

Ting censures the conservative Christians took the eternal security for granted and neglected the ethical distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice.<sup>67</sup> In Ting’s word, the conservative Christians have actually employed ‘faith abolishes the need for works’.<sup>68</sup> He claims that,

The doctrine of the security of the believer ensures those elected by Christ have the freedom to do anything, while others are condemned no matter how good their work is. This provided the assurance of God’s acceptance of a Christian even if he or she should commit all sorts of crimes against the new life of the people had only recently into.<sup>69</sup>

Ting considers that theological approach grounds Chinese Christians to stand against the people’s liberation movement with all its goodness and beauty.<sup>70</sup> He

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<sup>62</sup>Ting, ‘Tan jitudu yige sixiang shenchu de wenti’ (On a Profound Christian Question), *Wenji*, p.,287.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.pp.288-289.

<sup>64</sup>Ting, ‘Zhuangchao han jiushu’ (Creation and redemption), *Wenji*, pp. 279-280.

<sup>65</sup>Ting, ‘Lijie Shangdi de xin’ (Understanding the Heart of God), *Wenji*, p.102.

<sup>66</sup>Ting, ‘Tan jitudu yige sixiang shenchu de wenti’ (On a Profound Christian Question), *Wenji*, p. 285.

<sup>67</sup>Ting, ‘Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong’ (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.,p.22.

<sup>69</sup>Ting, ‘Yige zhongguo jidudu zenyang kan wu shen lun ze’ (A Chinese Christian’s Appreciation of the Atheist ), *Wenji*, p.138.

<sup>70</sup>Ting, ‘Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong’, *Wenji*, p. 22.

therefore condemns those Christians who hold such theological position for eradicating the need for morality, and intentionally holding an opposite political stance in contemporary China's situation.<sup>71</sup>

Ethics and morality weight heavily in Ting's Theological Reconstruction. His view of ethics and morality is not limited only to the individual, but expands to the social society. As he says:

It is worth saying, for those whose conscience has awakened, to conduct oneself morally and ethically it is not just behaving according to certain regulations and norms, but also to go a step further. They are inspired by their inner conscience to throw themselves into the complete destruction and reconstruction of a social system of enslaving, exploiting and oppressing without fear of old traditional power and their own dangers.<sup>72</sup>

Accordingly Ting utilises a suggestion proposed by the German Catholic Karl Rahner to convey his standpoint by signifying that there are many 'unnamed' Christians outside the Christian church even though they do not name themselves Christians.<sup>73</sup> From Ting's viewpoint, these unnamed Christians might have nothing to do with Christianity; nevertheless, they perform extraordinarily moral acts. That is to say, they actually should be regarded as Christians without a Christian label.<sup>74</sup> Ting writes,

All those who make every effort to do good will have a share in the presence of God. Through our faith by the grace of God they will have a share in God's dwelling place. We believe that this principle may be used for all human beings. In Christ, the Word of God, all human beings have a share, all those who practice according to their knowledge, are Christian, although they are regarded as having nothing to do with God.<sup>75</sup>

From this particular point of view, Ting believes that by the time of judgment, what really matters to God is not whether you exalt Christ, but whether you bring a cup of water to the thirsty.<sup>76</sup> This perspective leads him to conclude that regardless of what type of Christian you are, named or unnamed, it is as long as you carry out a number of good works that you will be accepted by God in the last days.<sup>77</sup>

Taken together, it appears that Christian ethics was taken as a common ground as well as a point of contact between Christianity and the Chinese political climate

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<sup>71</sup>Ting, 'Saizi weihe biyao' (A rationale for three-self), *Wenji*, pp. 34-46.

<sup>72</sup>Ting, 'Zai jianada yisuo shenxueyuan de jianghua' (A Speech to a Canadian Seminary), *Wenji*, p.51.

<sup>73</sup>Ting, 'Zenyang kandai jidujiahui yiwai de zhenshanmei' (How to understand the Truth, Goodness and Beauty outside Christian Church), *Wenji*, p. 252.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 253

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

and culture in Ting's theological context. More importantly, this common ground actually played as a point of mutual complementary fulfilment between Christianity and the Chinese society.

### **3.1 Ting's main theological context**

The time between 1984 and 1985, predominantly, can be seen as the watershed of Ting's work.<sup>78</sup> The main reason is because, from 1978 to 1984, the religious policy of the CCP was still up in the air; what Ting could do was merely saying something which was already there and confirmed. For instance, in 1983, in the statement entitled *The Truth of Resurrection*, Ting mentioned that the 'Cultural Revolution' for the Chinese church was basically like Christ's resurrection.<sup>79</sup> During this very period, his speech in Toronto in 1979 entitled *Talk about the problem of starving and weary human beings*, based on the sermon of 'five loaves and two fishes' in Luke, Ting pointed out five positions to support the CCP; including being opposed to Capitalism, as a system of selfishness, encouraging believers to accept non-believers and an appreciation of the emancipation of the CCP in China for providing good conditions of life.<sup>80</sup>

Since 1984, the CCP has developed a clear religious policy and route in *Document 19*, the government recognizes the possible positive function of religions in a socialist country, and allows them to participate in the development of a socialist society. It acknowledges that a formulation of religious policy based on socialism in the Chinese way with patriotism is more appropriate to the Chinese context than historical materialism. Ting responded positively to it.<sup>81</sup> In 1996, Ting gave speeches at national meetings of religious leaders, and seminars, organised by the Chinese

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<sup>78</sup> Li Jinglun, 'Ting Kuanghsun sanzi shenxue li lun jichu' (The element of Ting's Three-Self Theology; Chang Zhicong, 'Ba ling niandai hou sanzi shenxue zhongguo te se hua jian gou' (The development of Chinese characteristic Three-Self Theology after 1980s), in Jonathan Chao & Edwin Lee (et al.), *Analyzing Three-Self Theology* (Taiwan: CMI, 2003), pp. 72-82, 196-213.

<sup>79</sup> Ting, 'Fuhuo de zhenli' (The truth of the resurrection), *Wenji*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>80</sup> Ting, 'Tan renlei de ji eh han bingkun wenti' (Talk about the problem of starving and weary of human being), *Wenji*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>81</sup> K.H. Ting reiterated his support for Jiang Zemin's call for the adaptation of religion to socialist society in many subsequent speeches. See, for example, K.H. Ting, 'Sanzi aiguo yundong de fazhan he chongshi' (Development and Enrichment of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement) *Tian Feng* (January 2000): 4-5; translated in *CTR 17* (2003): 131-35. See also, Ting, 'Zai Sanzi aiguo chuzi chengli sanshi zhounian jinian hui shang de kai mu ci' (Opening speech on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Protestant Three Self Patriotic Movement), *Wenji*, pp. 324-325.

People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).<sup>82</sup> In these he made it clear that the new dimension of the development of Chinese Christian theology is to turn Christianity into a religion which particularly emphasises morality. He indicated that he wanted to see changes in Chinese Christian theology, most notably, as he was speaking about the need to 'adjust' (調整, *tiaozheng*) religious perspective, so that Christianity thereby might best 'adapt' (適應, *shiyi*) to socialism.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.1.1 Shifting from 'Patriotic' to Three-Self

In celebrating the thirty years establishment of the Three-Self, Ting defends the imperative of the Three-Self in the article entitled 'The Holy Spirit and Us'.<sup>84</sup> Perceptibly, his argument did not pay attention to either the political situation, or the main task of the Three-Self in the 1950s. Nevertheless, in order to emphasise the necessity of the Three-Self, rooted in terms of contextualisation, he set out his argument proposition, from 'spreading the gospel', and 'building up the body of Christ'. This intention, interestingly enough, leads him to conclude that the Three-Self was neither made up by the Communist Party, nor initiated in the 1950s. He indicated:

Some people overseas say that Three-Self is an invention of the Communist Party of China. Not only have these people not studied the Bible, they have not even studied history. In England in 1850, long before there was a Communist Party in China, Henry Venn coined the terms 'self-administration', 'self-support' and 'self-propagation', saying that these were to be the goal of mission. ... Based on the Bible and on history, we can say that wherever the gospel has been propagated over the last 2000 years, the 'Three-Self' question has accompanied it. Whether the term has been used, or not, is of minor importance.<sup>85</sup>

Obviously, what Ting aims to do is break through the past stereotype of thinking of Christianity only in terms of ideology and politics, and to link the concept

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<sup>82</sup> The second meeting of the sixth conference of the Three-Self Patriotic Christian Movement and China Christian Council was held in *Jinan*, and this meeting confirmed that Theological Reconstruction was the fundamental task of the Church in the coming future. (See, 'Ding Guangxun zai Quanguo Zhenxie Bajie Sici Huiyi Xiaozu Taolun de Fayan' ['Speech by K.H. Ting in Small Group Discussion at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the 8<sup>th</sup> CPPCC'], *Zongjiao Gongzuo Tongbao* 3: 30 [8 March 1996].)

<sup>83</sup> The most frequently cited of these is Ting, 'Zai Sixiang shen chu shiying shenhuizhuyi' ('On a Profound Ideological Level Adapt to Socialism'), unpublished manuscript, translated and revised in *Love Never Ends*, pp.506-510. The speech was first delivered in Dalian in May 1996. See also 'Ding Guangxun zai Quanguo Zhenxie Bajie Sici Huiyi Xiaozu Taolun de Fayan' ('Speech by K.H. Ting in Small Group Discussion at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the 8<sup>th</sup> CPPCC'), *Zongjiao Gongzuo Tongbao* 3: 30 (8 March 1996).

<sup>84</sup> Sermon preached at the Service of Thanksgiving on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Protestant Three Self Patriotic Movement, August, 1984. See *Tian Feng*, 5 (September, 1984). The English version is available online: <http://www.christianityinchina.org/PreGen/n359/CTR1985.doc> (accessed 14<sup>th</sup> October 2006) (pp.132-136)

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

of the Three-Self to the context of Bible, and the history of the Church, and its mission. Although the idea is not a really new invention, it played a very great role, in the political and social circumstances peculiar to China in the late 1980s. That is to say, this shifting is important, because it represents the route of re-locating and re-defining the understanding of the TSM in the 1980s. The composition of Ting's theological discourse is not only keeping the consistency of the TSM between the 1950s and the 1980s, namely, the establishment of the TSM was out of necessity; but also broadening the region of theological discourses in China by adjusting the focus of the TSM, from a strong political propaganda, to turn to the essence of Church.

Subsequently, the central message of Ting's articles, largely, focuses on the reconciliation between God and humans; in particular, highlighting that Christians and non-believers should be able to work together for the betterment of society, and that the difference between belief and non-belief should not be a hindrance for cooperation in society. He emphasised, repeatedly, that Christians must take historical movements for social change seriously. That is to say, establish a theology in order to recover a Christianity that stressed ethics and morality, alongside religious faith, became the main tune of Three-Self theology. Simultaneously, liberation theology, the thoughts of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and process theology, were either taken, or developed, by him.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.1.2 God is love

As I mention above, Ting locates the concept of the loving God as the primary category of Christian faith in his work. This theme was not very prominent in Ting's writing in the 1940s and 1950s, but was in the 1980s. As God's abiding love and a theology of reconciliation struck a chord among men and women recovering from the 'ten years of chaos.'<sup>87</sup> In doing so, it is probable to say that liberation theology provided broad guidelines for Ting to discover, and activate, the transforming energy of Christianity in China. It proposes not only reflection upon the way of reading the historical experience of the community in China but also an analysis of the historical

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<sup>86</sup> In Ting's work, the term of liberation theology mainly refers to Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff's theological framework. (See, Ting, 'Laizi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, pp.188-214.

<sup>87</sup> Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, pp.107, 97-98.

causes of those circumstances. For instance, the framework of love in liberation theology is particularly useful for Ting to tackle the issue of the differentiation between the believer and non-believer. He made the point that God is love. Love transcends everything.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, if God is love, all love has God dwelling within it. Love in itself is, by its nature, theologically significant. Whoever practises love is already within the sphere of salvation. Love lived in the wider relationship of society, love that goes beyond the limits of the heart and reaches the structures of society.<sup>89</sup> Love understood in this larger dimension means the ability to harmonise opposing views with the ideology of the CCP, and turn the relationship of opposition into relationships of collaboration.

In other words, it appears as a useful theological illustration of reuniting past and present. Ting tries, on the one hand, to integrate these guidelines into his synthesis, and, on the other, to clarify them in a creative manner for the specific context of China. The work of integration and clarification is founded in the dynamic and open nature of the social teachings of the church. For instance, it may prove helpful, using praxis as a criterion of truth, to criticise the conservative and evangelical Christian; pointing out the necessity of the believer to participate actively in the development of China's economy. That appears as the fundamental reason why Ting encouraged Chinese Christians 'to keep abreast of liberation theology'.<sup>90</sup>

Ting freely borrows from liberation theology certain 'methodological pointers' that have proved fruitful, in understanding the world of the oppressed, such as: the attention to the class struggle, the mystifying power of ideologies, including the importance of economic factors, in his earlier work.<sup>91</sup> He highly appreciates liberation theology's emphasis on its context and praxis, and its aim of mobilizing Christians to join with the masses of people around them, in their struggle for independence, democracy and a more humane socio-economic system.<sup>92</sup> According to Ting's understanding, the composition of liberation theology lays no special emphasis on the

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<sup>88</sup>Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), *Wenji*, pp.110-114.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.113-115.

<sup>90</sup>Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p.107, 29.

<sup>91</sup>Ting, 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), in *Wenji*, pp.189-197.

<sup>92</sup>Ting indicates that 'although Chinese Christians, situated politically in a post liberation situation, have these reservations about liberation theology, we yet believe that liberation theology is great and new thing in the history of Christianity. It is without peer, surpassing many traditional systematic theologies. I treasure it greatly, and have little sympathy for certain people who oppose it.' (*Ibid.*, p.196.)



demarcation of believer and non-believer, but lays stress upon the morally impelling and the politically conscientising; therefore, believers should play a part in this world and channel the light of the Bible from current accumulative inheritance and circumstance, as the creative activity of the loving God.<sup>93</sup>

Nevertheless, Ting does not uncritically agree with everything said by theologians of liberation. Liberation theology, in a sense, has been taken as a sort of technique, a tool in a box of tools, which can be resorted to when necessary, and then returned to the box. For instance, in Ting's theological framework, 'the poor' was simply reduced to an economic concept. He refuses to identify his theology with liberation theology; especially, the idea of 'poor'. He says,

Some liberation theologians give a broad meaning to 'liberation,' and this is fine in our view, but some do not. One professor puts it thus in one of his essays: "I still contend that the gospel is identical with the liberation of poor people from socio-political oppression." He says it is "identical," he does not say "supports." If he said he "supports," we would agree; if he had said "includes," that would also be good; "requires," would also be fine. But he says "identical," identifying the gospel with social and political liberation. We have reservations about this.<sup>94</sup>

Because he regards the privileging of the poor by liberation theology as an obstruction in pushing ahead China's economic advancement, Ting therefore states that 'poverty is *not* a virtue'.<sup>95</sup> Ting criticised liberation theology for idealising the poor. He explicates that, since 'the poor may accept quite a lot of the ideology of the ruling classes; they are not necessarily the most conscientised section of the population.' More often than not, in Ting's words, 'it is not the poor themselves who produce the correct theory. It is often only those comparatively better off intellectuals who live in more stable conditions who are able to develop revolutionary theory.' Particularly since, once the Chinese 'have stood up and gained liberation and live under a people's government, to call once more for the poor to oppose the rich leads to social chaos. This is to damage the very cause of the people themselves.'<sup>96</sup> Ting then concluded that 'liberation is extremely important, but liberation does not engage, let alone solve, the question of reconciliation with God.'<sup>97</sup> He made the point that,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-196.

<sup>94</sup> Ting, 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.195.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.195.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.196.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.195.

Reconciliation between God and humanity is the eternal theme in Christian theology. Under this theme there will certainly be discussion of social and political liberation. The latter cannot easily be denied, but they are not the same theme. China has experienced political liberation, but the question of reconciliation between God and humanity still exists.<sup>98</sup>

Then, he proudly acknowledged that ‘China seems to be one of the few places on the entire globe where Latin American liberation theology has had the least influence.’<sup>99</sup> The core explanation is simply because ‘China has already been liberated’ by the CCP; situated politically in a post-liberation situation, having another era of emancipation is certainly intolerable.<sup>100</sup>

One of the great benefits of emphasising the concept of love is that, in recognition of the difficulty of refuting the eschatology of pre-millennialism, which was accepted by the majority of Chinese Christians, Ting made his resistance by emphasising a universal fulfilment will eventually to be brought by God through a subtle combination of De Chardin’s, and process theology’s, understanding of God, rather than lead to any biblical debate. Focusing on Whitehead’s understanding of how God acts in the world, Ting highlights that God is a cosmic love, both causative and affected. He is not only the creator, but He also receives the responses the world makes to him, and makes to these his own response. Things matter to Him and they have their consequences in Him. Divinity implies inexhaustibility, eternal devotion and the ability to withstand the provocations of evil, and absorb it, turning it to the service, and the increase of the good.<sup>101</sup> To a certain degree, the emphasis on God as the great lover working out his purpose of the world brings an understanding of reality in the process of becoming. It gives us hope for, and beyond, history.

### 3.1.3 Christology

In terms of Christology, the key concept is the notion of the ‘Cosmic Christ’, with an emphasis on Christ as God incarnate, and on human beings seeking

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. See also, ‘Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong’ (Theological Mass Movement in China), p.29.

<sup>99</sup> Ting, ‘Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa’ (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.189.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.196. See also, ‘Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong’ (Theological Mass Movement in China), p.30.

<sup>101</sup> Ting, ‘Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa’ (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.207.

redemption, renewal, and reconciliation in him.<sup>102</sup> Ting's universal principle of God and the universal Christ are mutually-defined, and mutually enforcing. Since God's highest attribute is his love, 'he would not toss people into hell just because they do not believe in him.'<sup>103</sup> Then, the universal nature of Christ provides a strong guarantee of the salvation of the entire universe. To emphasise the difference between belief and non-belief has to be condemned, and Christians and atheists must become 'fellow travellers'.<sup>104</sup> In other words, from debating the level of God's creation, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, not only in the church, but also in the world, and in history, the participation of human beings in God's work requires a positive assessment of human potential and the possibilities for change.

In fact, the idea of Universal Christ, or Cosmic Christ, began to be used by German theologians in the 1820s, and spread around the English world after 1859. The discussion was based on Jesus' divine nature, and within the revelation of the Bible. It first appeared in Teilhard de Chardin's (1881-1995) diary on March 13, 1916. He provided additional explanations for this idea, in his 1920 thesis, entitled *Note on the Universal Christ*, and his 1924 article entitled *My Universe*, and some subsequent works. In his context, Jesus Christ was not only a teacher, nor was he only a saviour, he participated in creation. Without him, was not anything made.<sup>105</sup>

In fact, the idea of the 'Cosmic Christ' is more controversial in China than in Europe, because, in China, the idea of the cosmic Christ has a threefold political significance. (a) Its concern and care were universal; this cosmic dimension would allow an affirmation of the good things in contemporary Chinese culture and experiences, including socialism which worked for freedom and social justice in China; (b) It corresponded to the belief that God is Love, the work in Christ may extend to all things in the whole of creation, including social reconstruction in China. Finally, (c) It entailed the Christian attitude of harmony, hence Christians must care and work for the good of the wider world, to build up a positive relationship between Christians and non-Christians, and between Church and State.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, pp. 90-99.

<sup>103</sup> Ting, 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), 'Tan jitudu yige sixiang shen chu de wenti' (On a Profound Christian Question), *Wenji*, p.205, 288.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p.205, 287-289.

<sup>105</sup> N.M. Wildiers, *An introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, Hubert Hoskins (trans.), (Collins: The Fontana Books, 1968), pp.127-149.

<sup>106</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, p.93. See also, Janice and Philip Wickeri (eds) *A Chinese Contribution to Ecumenical Theology: Selected Writings of Bishop K.H. Ting*, p.94.

The significance of Ting's Cosmic Christ is also to unite the doctrine of creation and redemption. Ting's Christ is regarded as the creative force or 'potential force' underlying the 'universal principle' of love.<sup>107</sup> While seeing the kingdom as God's universal project in history and eternity, it helps Ting in finding the link joining creation and redemption, time and eternity. According to his article *The Cosmic Christ*, Ting asserts the unfolding of historical events as part of the process of Christ's creation and redemption, which is in continuity with creation. In Ting's words, 'within this redemptive work of Christ, all human movements fighting for progress, liberation, democracy and universal love are bonded together.'<sup>108</sup>

Ting explains that, as creativity is inexhaustible and creation is a long process, Christ has everything to do with Creation thus far and with Creation as it goes on now. His concern is to bring Creation to its fruition when love, justice and peace become the rule. Redemption like education and sanctification does not stand against Creation but is one process with Creation. Not only communities of Christians here and there but humankind as a whole, and, indeed, the whole cosmos are within the realm of Christ's redemptive work.<sup>109</sup> In this context, the Cosmic Christ also plays the role of decentralizing the church with an emphasis on Christ as God incarnate, and on human beings seeking redemption and reconciliation in him. Although the church has an important role to play to proclaim and worship God, it is never the only means of God's salvation. As Christ is Cosmic, God's redemption is universal.

#### 3.1.4 Anthropology

It is possible to say that if Ting proposes his theory of the Cosmic Christ for the purpose of promoting his theory of universal salvation, then, his ultimate goal in discussing the humanistic theory of man is to promote the theory of self-salvation. The key theme of his theory of anthropology is more about the possibility of self-transcendence than the condition of sinfulness. As he said, there is no qualitative difference between a sinner and God. The only difference is that the Christ in Man is

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<sup>107</sup>Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), *Wenji*, pp.113-114.

<sup>108</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, p.96.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.93-98.

a little less than the Christ in God. However, little bits of an arc may ultimately form a perfect circle within which is Christ or the Cosmic Christ.<sup>110</sup>

Unlike his theoretical God and Christ, as abstract universal principles, Ting locates man as a real, practical and concrete entity. In comparison, Man, in his evolution, moves steadily from the status of a semi-product to a finished product, or, towards perfection, and thus appears to be more real, more noble and more in a central position of the universe than God Himself.<sup>111</sup> Ting lays his emphasis upon the doctrine of the image of God rather than on original sin. It upheld that the image of God, despite being corrupted in the fall, has not been totally lost in humanity. Although there is sin in the world, God is the Creator and Redeemer of the world.<sup>112</sup> Christians thus should learn to appreciate all good things, including those outside the Church, because they too are born of God's love, and the image of God is found in them. Christians should neither take a dualistic view, nor be at conflict with non-believers.<sup>113</sup>

Process theology and De Chardin's theology are particularly taken on board to sustain Ting's theory of man. Ting indicates that, because God's creation has no end, it is a process of long duration. The world and Man are actually in the process of reformation, in the process of God's creation, in which they are evolving from semi-finished products into better products. Within this gigantic process of reality, one in which matter and simple organisms attain higher and higher forms of existence, with the loving community as the ultimate attainment of the image of God, on the part of man and women, just like the triune God in a community of love.<sup>114</sup> In this sense, since the world and Man are simply regarded as 'the semi-product of God's creation', the dichotomy of believer and non-believer appears as unnecessary.

The existence of atheists, in Ting's category of Man, demonstrates that mankind has an enormous capacity for self-perfection. They all have the nature of God, and they

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<sup>110</sup>Ting, 'Zai jianada yisuo shenxueyuan de jianghua' (A Speech to a Canadian Seminary), *Wenji*, p.53.

<sup>111</sup>Ting, 'Lijie Shangdi de xin' (Understanding the Heart of God), 'Zhuangchao han jiushu' (Creation and redemption), *Wenji*, pp. 100-105, 278.

<sup>112</sup>Ting, 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), 'Jiangshen yu chaoyue' (Incarnation and transcendence), *Wenji*, pp.202-203, 264-265.

<sup>113</sup>Ting, 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), 'Zhuangchao han jiushu' (Creation and redemption), *Wenji*, pp.203, 275-280.

<sup>114</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), 'Huozhe gai you shiming' (Life should have a mission), *Wenji*, pp. 93-98, 109-114, 184.

are all part of the Cosmic Christ. As they have participated in the undertaking of God's creation, they certainly have a share of God's eternity.<sup>115</sup> Because God receives our responses and participates in the joys and anguish of the enacted order, He and all things therefore will eventually respond to their Creator and cooperate among themselves lovingly, intelligently, and voluntarily. They will then be truly sons and not slaves.<sup>116</sup> It is very obvious that the significance of this shift opens the way for justifying the leadership of the CCP, in the history of salvation, as they participate in the process of God's creation.

Ting advocated that the degree of perfection of the social system determines that of human nature. Only through a perfect social system can one find a reasonable explanation for Man's need of God. Only by establishing a healthier social system, by practising more reasonable distribution of wealth, with resulting prosperity, peace, joy and advancement, can we help people see that the Christian view of the almighty Father and God is reasonable. Only then, people find a reason to thank this God.<sup>117</sup>

In his rejection of the salvation history in the Bible as being normative in theology, Ting concludes that when mankind can handle the universal principle of love to engage in self-governance and self-management, they can then claim the attributes of God as their own. They can thus replace God, who will then retreat both from and into the history of mankind. Evolution will then have been completed, and God—whether 'autocratic dictator' or 'God of love'—will finally retire from the stage. He says 'to re-discover the seed of fire means that mankind can fully control and exploit the energy of love, and, thus, can exercise self-governance and self-management.'<sup>118</sup> Apparently, if we remove the embellishment of God, and change creation to evolution in Ting's discussion, it would appear that Ting's theology is simply renovating the theory of evolution; and 'creation' is synonymous with 'evolution'. What Ting aims to present is that Man is the master of his own destiny. He must and can engage in self-perfection in the process of evolution.

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<sup>115</sup>Ting, 'Zai jianada yisuo shenxueyuan de jianghua' (A Speech to a Canadian Seminary), Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), 'Yige zhongguo jidudu zhenyang kan wu shen lun ce' (A Chinese Christian's Appreciation of an Atheist), *Wenji*, pp. 51-53, 109, 38-145.

<sup>116</sup>Ting, 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.205.

<sup>117</sup>Ting, 'Tan renlei de ji eh han bingkun wenti' (Talk about the problem of starving and weary of human being), *Wenji*, p.5.

<sup>118</sup>Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), 'Lai zi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, pp. 114, 203.

As a whole, in his search for a way to make Christianity more relevant to Chinese contemporary context, Ting's theological proposal does open up a new prospect in viewing Christian theology. As some critics pointed out, being the protector of the church and the defender of the faith, Ting's theology provides the possibility 'to renew and expand the traditionally rather narrow, individualistic salvation orientation in Chinese Protestantism to a larger view of how God relates himself to his creation.'<sup>119</sup> In particular, his harmonising effort in marrying the two opposite sides—belief and non-belief—creates a more inclusive way for Chinese people to approach Christian faith. More specially, faith is no more a narrow expression of church existence or a pure form of religious life.

In addition, as Chen Lu indicated, one of the valuable insights of Ting's theology is that 'whatever kind of tendency the Chinese contemporary theology will have, it has to be sensitive to and reflective of the contemporary Chinese culture.'<sup>120</sup> In other words, Ting's theology does present a great potential for the creative engagement of Christian faith with Chinese culture. To some extent, it helps Chinese Christians cope better with their distinctive social, political, and cultural context.<sup>121</sup> Especially his Christology provides comparatively wider space for discussions about the patterns and contents of Christian faith. Unfortunately, on deeper inspection in the next chapter, it would become clear that, in close connection with contemporary society politically, and culturally, the scope of Ting's 'contextual theology' is essentially restricted to the limited range of politics.

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<sup>119</sup> Ruokanen, Mikka, 'K.H. Ting's contribution to the contextualization of Christianity in China,' in *Modern Theology* 25 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1 January 2009), pp.108-109.

<sup>120</sup> Chen Lu, 'Ding Guangxun's Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction,' in *Transformation* 27(2) (Sage: 2010), p.106. (see also: <http://trn.sagepub.com>)

<sup>121</sup> See also Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp.478-479.





## **Chapter Five: Remarks of Ting's Theological Reconstruction**

With reference to the last chapter's analyses, this chapter underlines Ting's contributions and the difficulties of his work from the following perspectives: firstly, how Ting broadens the scope of Three-Self theology; secondly, how Ting constitutes his view of seeking the common ground; and thirdly, to examine the contexts of his theologies and what he wanted to achieve through them.

### **1. Broaden the Three-Self theological range**

#### **1.1 Ting's critique of fundamentalism: A misconstruction of conservative theology**

Ting's comments that the conservative theological position ignored the impact of the context of socialist China have certainly brought some significant issues to light. For instance, Ting accurately pointed out that conservative theology held a strong individualistic tendency which made the Christian faith difficult to establish itself within Chinese culture and socialist society. Hence, it is in serious need of reconstruction. However, the main concern of Ting's Theological Reconstruction, as Chen rightly points out, is not on how the context forms a certain conservative theological position, 'but on the overriding impact of conservative theology on Chinese Christians, which shapes the current theological background as part of the context of socialist China that has to be taken into consideration in Theological Reconstruction.'<sup>1</sup> It appears that the vital concern of Ting's theology, in essence, is not pursuing or presenting a theological truth, but aiming to accommodate Christianity to the current Chinese political regime.

In fact, conservative Christians such as Wang Mingdao and Wu Weizun had indeed highlighted the importance of morality in their teachings. There is nothing in their work to suggest that they did not take seriously the context they lived in. Nevertheless, they held radically different theological interests and methods from Ting and TSPM in seeking to contextualise the Christian faith in China. Whereas Ting and others of the TSPM perceived a necessity to contextualise faith through appeal to science, culture, or national history, and for Wang the world should be contextualised

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<sup>1</sup> Chen Lu, 'Ding Guangxun's Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction,' in *Transformation* 27 (2), pp.103-104.

through the reading and preaching of Scripture. He regarded the Protestant bible as the standard for critiquing society and as the source for the solution to China's problems.<sup>2</sup> Wang therefore thoroughly disagreed with Ting, expended a tremendous amount of energy attacking the TSPM and defending his method of interpreting scripture.<sup>3</sup>

At the heart of Wang's viewpoint for China was that China would be saved through the conversion of Chinese individuals to Christianity and purified through the individual moral piety of every Chinese Christian believer.<sup>4</sup> He held a rather optimistic view of traditional Chinese culture, and never encouraged the desertion of Chinese culture or of all Chinese traditions. Thomas Harvey puts it this way:

Rather than defining modernity solely in terms of the nation-state, Wang offered a religious and Christian understanding of history and human existence which resonated deeply with Confucian piety and the practical outlook of Chinese culture. Wang's message was not anti-Chinese, it was simply a Christian alternative...<sup>5</sup>

To look at it from another perspective, it might be possible to say that what Ting intended to do was to avoid a type of modern Gnosticism which attempted to ignore or escape the vicissitudes of reality through appeal to a purely spiritual realm by adjusting the true nature of Christian identity in accordance with the needs of nation. For instance, according to Ting, the problem with Wang's theology was that it was individualistic and escapist, yet, paradoxically, as Thomas Harvey pointed out, it was Wang's social and political relevance which vexes the authorities.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2 Expended the Three-Self theological scope: Identify Christian faith with politics

Most theological perspectives which had begun to develop in the 1950s remained intact in Ting's theological framework; nevertheless it was broadened to include a whole new theological program. By doing so, however, the design of Ting's

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<sup>2</sup> Wang, 'Determination', in C.C. Wang (ed.) *Wang Mingdao Wen Ke*, Vols. 1-7, (Taichung, Taiwan, R.O.C.: Conservative Baptist Press, 1996), p. 90

<sup>3</sup> The debate between Wang and the TSPM was carried on through articles written in the TSPM's journal *Tian Feng* and Wang's own journal *Lingshi*.

<sup>4</sup> Wang, 'We Because of Faith', in Francis P. Jones (ed.), *Documents of Three-Self Movement: Source Materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963), p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Alan Harvey, 'Challenging heaven's mandate: an analysis of the conflict between Wang Mingdao and the Chinese Nation-State' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University, 1998), p.207.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.152.

theology appeared as too ready to identify a Christian faith within the political and social environment. This did not result in a rejection of this Christian faith, but in the de-emphasis of that which is unique in the Christian message. One of the vivid examples can be found in Ting's interpretation of Wu Yaozong's theology. Based on the assumption of 'all good comes from God', for instance, Wu believed that 'there is no essential difference between the good deed of a non-Christian and that of a Christian,' however, from the standpoint of a Christian, *he still believed that 'faith in Jesus is the only way to be saved.'* He said,

Are we denying the uniqueness of the Christian faith? No, we are not denying it, we believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of our soul; we believe that Christian truth can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts. Then what is the point at issue? It is the question of who the true believer in Jesus is, and who is only a nominal or hypocritical believer. What does it mean to be saved by faith in the name of Jesus? Is it saying Lord, Lord brings salvation? No, those who are saved by faith in the name of Jesus are the ones who do the will of the Heavenly Father.<sup>7</sup>

For Wu, whether Christian or not, or who was to be saved, were not his ultimate concerns. The most important thing is *whether one has practised the will of God*. 'Wu believed that Communism could be the vehicle for human betterment, and that Christians could learn from people, even atheists, who did not confess the name of Jesus Christ.'<sup>8</sup>

Ting altered Wu's theological concerns, about how Chinese Christians interact within a non-believing world and builds up the relationship with non-believers into a political doctrine. In particular, in line with the universality of Christ, Ting indicates that the Holy Spirit is also not to be restricted to the visible church. Rather, the Spirit of Almighty God, which is the universal life-giving spirit, constantly moving and at work in the universe is in all and through all in human history.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, *all humanity and the entire universe will ultimately be saved, whether they believe in Jesus or not*. What Christians need to learn is to discern and appreciate the work of Christ *outside the Church*, and to give up a belief that the Christian confession is a yardstick for measuring all human things.<sup>10</sup>

Alternatively, Ting indicates that many atheists in China,

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<sup>7</sup> Wu Yaozong (1954), 'Who Caused the Death of Jesus?', in Francis P. Jones (ed.), *Documents of the Three-Self Movement*, p.84.

<sup>8</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, p.248.

<sup>9</sup> Ting, 'Shangdi shi ai' (God is love) 'Zenyang kandai jidujiaohui yiwai de zhenshanmei' (How to understand the Truth, Goodness and Beauty outside Christian Church), *Wenji*, pp.55, 252.

<sup>10</sup> Ting, 'Yu jiao wai you ren tan "yapian wenti"' (On religion as Opiate), *Wenji*, pp.398-408.

...are working honestly and diligently to create a more humane society. Their denial of God is in reality an affirmation of humanity. Their atheism is a criticism of the mistaken view of God that has been propagated by those in the religious communities. Every one of their criticisms is worthy of our sympathy. What kind of God have these people denied? It is an autocratic Zeus, who chained Prometheus to a mountain because Prometheus obtained seeds of fire in order to raise Man's quality of life. It is an autocratic ruler of hell, who sent his messengers to toss people who have made mistakes into the eternal fire of hell as a punishment. Atheists who preach humanism as a means of seeking a higher meaning of life may be our allies in the development of a superior faith.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, to these individuals, *the salvation of Jesus is no longer regarded as a necessary path*. They 'left the church to join what they believed to be a stronger organisation.' (i.e. the Communist Party). In particular, due to the universal nature of the Cosmic Christ, Ting indicated that Christ will also save those who do not believe in Him.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, the vital issue of faith and non-belief was no longer a focal question in the discussion of Christian faith by Ting and his supporters. Ting asked: 'is it possible to harmonise the existence of atheism with what is done by the Cosmic Christ? I think so. The existence of many things in the world can be made to be consistent with the work of Christ'.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, Ting's Cosmic Christ became the basis for uniting believers and non-believers behind the Party and the precondition for mutual accommodation between Three-Self Christianity and socialism.

At this point, it is very obvious that Ting mainly presented his forms of theology more as a conceptual grounding of 1950s theologians' insights rather than as expressing a different understanding of the theological task. For instance, Chen Zemins' theological reflections, in terms of continuity and discontinuity between the Christian faith and the world, remained exactly the same in Ting's theological framework.<sup>14</sup> In highlighting the grace of God, Ting joined God's creation to redemption, seeing these as two expressions of the same thing. All creation is the object of redemption. To oppose the redemption of creation, or maximize Christ's redemptive work while minimising His creative work, is a denial of natural

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<sup>11</sup>Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguang' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), *Wenji*, pp.106-116.

<sup>12</sup>'A Chinese Christian's View of God,' *Wenji*, p.109.

<sup>13</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, pp.93-94, 97-98.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p.95.

<sup>14</sup> Chen was a liberal systematician. He became dean of the seminary in 1981. K.H. Ting's theology was closer to Chen's. For Chen, theology traces out the figure of an ellipse whose two foci are God and 'Man.' The shape of the ellipse varies because its form is determined by the distance between its two foci. The church, as it moves through history, is sometimes at a point on the ellipse closer to God and at other times closer to 'man,' depending on the relative emphasis given to the divine and the human in the theological task. Between the two foci, however, there must always be both a relationship and a certain distance. (See, Chen Zeming, 'Living as Christians Today: Biblical Insights', *Chinese Theological Review* [1988], pp.41-46.)

grace.<sup>15</sup> An overemphasis on redemption makes Chinese Christians fail to discern that everyone bears the images of God, and that everyone can experience the love of God without knowing Christ personally. As Ting concludes, 'creation includes redemption; redemption is for the completion of God's creation.' Christ is guiding the entirety of creation towards the goal of unity in God.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, Ting applied Chen's theological context in the socio-political map of China. He made the point that the world and Man are actually in the process of reformation in the process of God's creation; in that they are evolving from semi-finished products into better products.<sup>17</sup> In the process of moving forward, because the community is still under the condition of 'not yet accomplished' where inevitably, ugliness and devilry have their place. Therefore, regardless of what kind of errors have been made by socialist society, the realisation of a perfect community is still worthy to look forward to because 'this is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the saving work of Jesus Christ and the creative work of God.'<sup>18</sup> Within this context is the understanding that the world in which they were living was not completely fallen. This is because love neither destroys nor condemns, but sustains and heals. There is not a total disparity between divine grace and the natural world, for then even the incarnation would be impossible.<sup>19</sup> Ting therefore confidently declared that the eschatology means the victory, and union, of grace and love.<sup>20</sup> As Christians began to develop a positive appreciation of creation and society, the feeling of impending doom was replaced by a sense of hope for the future. Thus, in the direction of secularisation that reflected a sense of continuity between the Chinese revolution and the biblical promise of humanisation, theological reorientation toward the world represented a positive turn in the dialect between biblical faith and Chinese society during the 1950s and 1980s.

### 1.3 Cosmic Christ and the love of God without the cross

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<sup>15</sup>Ting, 'Zhuangchao han jiushu' (Creation and redemption), *Wenji*, pp.276-279.

<sup>16</sup>Ting,, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, p.94.

<sup>17</sup>Ting, 'Zhuangchao han jiushu' (Creation and redemption), *Wenji*, p. 278.

<sup>18</sup>Ting, 'Laizi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.199.

<sup>19</sup>Ting, 'Shangdi shi ai' (God is love) *Wenji*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, p.98.

Ting's theology detached the love of God from the cross. Therefore, unsurprisingly, in Ting's theological framework the term of 'love' was understood, chiefly, in terms of 'action' rather than an 'idea'. That is to say, the spirit of love should be the means of solving the problems of society, as well as solving those in human relationships. 'Love' is a principle of action, in the sense of a means or a strategy.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, 'love' is also understood in terms of 'service'. To love was and is also to serve. By 'service' we do not only mean the work of charity and welfare but also the effort to improve the conditions of society, in order that pain and suffering may be eradicated from and for mankind, and that they may all live in freedom and dignity. The dimension of service therefore inevitably implied the need of social involvement for the betterment of society and of life.<sup>22</sup> The meaning of love, with its two dimensions, is that Christians should serve their fellow men through the improvement of society, by the means or in the spirit of love.

The concept of God, while embellished by this very type of love, created an opportunity for Ting to water down the CCP's previous intention of eliminating the Christian faith and to give it a theological garment, especially when this loving God was located in terms of morality. By the same token, Christ comes to be understood as a pantheistic God, whose incarnation was not an intrusion, but a renewal.<sup>23</sup> Christianity, then, is simply regarded as an expression of the desire for one's own personal blessedness, and the resurrection of Christ assures us that this desire will be realised. The desire for the former, of course, can only be guaranteed by the existence of the latter. It is definitely an ascending Christology, which bases the divine quality of Christ's personality on free and ethical acts of his will, rather than dwelling on the passive inheritance of a divine essence. That is, Christ achieved a personality in which the consciousness of the absolute unity of the human and the divine life came into being. His consciousness of God, and his understanding of the kingdom, were both socially inherited and transformed in such a way that the reign of God came to mean the organised fellowship of humanity acting under the impulse of love.

It is noticeable that the main objectives of Ting's theological concern is no longer a question of leading people to their salvation in the next world but rather

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp.95-96. See also, Ting, 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), *Wenji*, p.115.

<sup>23</sup> Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (A Chinese Christian's View of God), *Wenji*, pp.96-98, 106-116.

guaranteeing it in *this* world. Therefore, he believes that the degree of perfection, specifically of the social system, determines human nature. Only through a perfect social system can one find a reasonable explanation for Man's need of God.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively speaking, only by establishing a healthier social system and by practicing a more reasonable distribution of wealth with prosperity, peace, joy and advancement can we help people to see that the Christian view of the almighty Father and God is reasonable. Only then, people can find a reason to thank this God.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, 'religious aims', in Ting's theological context, can be easily shifted to a series of 'worldly' aims, such as, health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, *etc.*

The church, therefore, can no longer keep out of politics, *per se*, when certain political ideologies are responsible for implementing conditions which are taken as pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Then, holiness demanded participation in the constructive process of history; the identity of the church was to be redefined in terms of openness to the non-believer's world for the betterment of Chinese society. Ting immanentizes the transcendent in humanity itself. God is in history, or rather, God has become history. Underneath this illustration, history will never be just secular. Nothing that occurs in history can leave the Christian indifferent in their faith. Christianity is called to share responsibility for history. Together with the dynamic of nationalism, every effort was made in the meaning of progress and development. In this way, to advance the motherland's welfare, spontaneously, became the main mission of the church. Thus the secular comes to be of theological value. What they have to do is to secularise many of its symbols, and adapt to the ideology of the state.

In this sense, it is questionable whether revelation from Scripture plays an important part in Ting's Theological Reconstruction, as he purports above. More specifically, even if Ting shows positive acceptance of how liberation theologians read the Scripture as a powerful witness to a God who acts in behalf of the poor in order to liberate them,<sup>26</sup> it is inappropriate for him to uphold the decisive authority of the Scripture within a socialist society where religion contends against scientific interpretations and outlooks. As a Bishop, it seems very surprising that he disclaims

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<sup>24</sup>Ting, 'Tan renlei de ji eh han bingkun wenti' (Talk about the problem of starving and weary of human being), *Wenji*, p.5.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Ting, 'Laizi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.191.

the ultimate authority of Scripture. However, the authority of Scripture becomes relative and negotiable, since the Scripture is regarded as a collection of ancient writing.<sup>27</sup> Ting made the point that, ‘we should not expect a collection of ancient writings to meet a scientific criterion’, although it has some ‘original scientific views.’<sup>28</sup> Following that assertion, it appears natural that the Scripture is merely taken as a supplemental basis of theological thinking rather than as fundamental resource of theology. In Ting’s words, ‘the Scripture throughout its words, with its hymn and its beauty, inspire us with abundant resources of theological thinking.’<sup>29</sup>

## **2. Seeking the common ground**

It becomes clear that Ting’s theology is anthropocentric in character. As Chen spells out, ‘it brings truth, goodness and beauty outside the church to people’s attention at the expense of Christian challenge to anthropocentric secular culture.’<sup>30</sup> From moralising Christianity to the issue of reconciliation between believers and non-believers, Ting made the state the arbiter of truth for the church.

### **2.1 Moralising Christianity: Situating Chinese Christian identity on stake**

Moralising Christianity seems to be one of the more possible and promising ways to bridge the relationship between believers and non-believers. Ting clearly acknowledged that the sharp dichotomy between believers and non-believers, could easily stir up ethnic nationalism and separation in China.<sup>31</sup> On the one hand, it removed the tension between believers and non-believers. On the other hand, however, it encouraged Christians to appreciate and even work with all good-hearted people, even those outside the Church.

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<sup>27</sup> Once introducing the subject matter of the Scripture, Ting indicated that ‘the Bible is the story of how Hebrews regard the beginning of the world and human beings. It includes the history, law, poetry, hymn, legacy, politics, doctrines, internal letters of churches, and the passion of religion and patriotism.’ (Ting, ‘Shengjing wenxue cidian quanyan’ [Preface to the Dictionary of Biblical Literature], *Wenji*, p. 498. my translation.) Ting states nothing about the God’s revelation and the book of Revelation was completely ignored.

<sup>28</sup> Ting, ‘Shengjing wenxue cidian quanyan’ (Preface to the Dictionary of Biblical Literature), *Wenji*, p. 499. (my translation)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>30</sup> Chen Lu, ‘Ding Guangxun’s Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction,’ in *Transformation* 27 (2), p. 105.

<sup>31</sup> Lap Yankung, ‘What to Preach? Christian Witness in China, with Reference to the Party’s policy of Mutual Accommodation’, *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 8: 2, (2002), p. 217.



In addition, it is acceptable to say that there is no religion outside morality. In particular, in the case of Chinese tradition, people can barely understand religion without reference to a moral life. Religion and morality are virtually synonymous. To highlight the terms of morality, it is not only compatible with the religious policy of the CCP, but it also plays the role of lifting up the 'spiritual civilization' in new China. At this point, Ting's Theological Reconstruction successfully generated an atmosphere of discussion and co-operation between the government and the Church. More importantly, Ting's attempt met the need of the government. Ye Xiaowen says,

In order to direct religion to accommodate to socialism, religions cannot avoid being changed. In the Christian faith, love is the most important among faith, hope, and love. Christians not only hold justification by faith, but also justification by love. Among all religions, we can find a lot of good acts, altruism, high morality... The future of Chinese religions lies in their religious values in the service to socialism.<sup>32</sup>

However, there is a question of who sets the rule? Who defines what the right morality is? As Lap sharply pointed out, 'if the content of morality is mainly defined by the state, such as supporting socialism and patriotism, I do not see how an emphasis on the love of God and good works are the result of this contextualisation.'<sup>33</sup> Although it seems to be an accessible approach for Ting to underline a 'Christian's morality' in Chinese churches, it was a completely different story when it came to reducing and grouping Christianity into merely an ethical system. More precisely, if Christianity is simply identified as morality, why do we not just talk about morality straightaway? If Christianity is to be given a purely moral interpretation, why should we bother to pay attention to a, or any, religious theme? The value of morality, *i.e.* sacrifice, indiscriminate love, freedom and equality, *etc.*, can be pursued and developed outside the frame of either 'religion' or 'Christianity.' Why should we make an unnecessary move to convert people to Christianity?

Speaking of morality, whether one is a believer or a non-believer, moral behaviour is the same, only the impetus and the goal differ. In particular, while highlighting the importance of morality, the different religions are only the results of the different experiences of man in the universe, and represent the different conception or interpretations of a universal whole. The knowledge of God is not the monopoly of any one specific religion. At this level, Christianity is no different from

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<sup>32</sup> Ying Fuktang, *Church-State Relations in Contemporary China* (Hong Kong: Christianity and Chinese Culture Research Centre, 1999), p. 154.

<sup>33</sup> Lap Yankung, 'What to Preach?', p. 217.

other religions, or any theory, but appears as one of the many paths for seeking truth. Therefore, Christians should not critique or exclude the value of other religions; on the contrary, they should appreciate their values, and believe that their righteousness also comes from God.

In light of the last point, there is a reasonable concern about Christian identity. What does it mean to be a Christian in contemporary China? In his Theological Reconstruction, Ting reminds us that the barriers of contextualisation should be removed and advocates eradicating the antithesis between belief and non-belief, saved and unsaved, and grace and nature.<sup>34</sup> Obviously, Ting was not trying to say that a Christian is dissimilar from an ordinary person without any characteristic. However, his intention to remove the demarcation line between believer and non-believer in order to assimilate both sides into the program of Three-Self Theological Reconstruction in the 1980s placed Christian identity at stake. It is not surprising that there are some who have accused him of selling out the Gospel.<sup>35</sup> In view of that, one could argue that regardless of how Philip Wickeri and Bob Whyte, or members of TSPM support and praise him, Ting still encountered the challenge of how to define a meaningful Christian identity while seeking to remove the dichotomy completely.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.2Reconciliation: Reconciliation between humanity and creation

Ting's theological concern was confined within the theological themes of reconciliation between Christian and non-Christian, humanity and creation, but not sin and reconciliation between God and humanity through the cross.<sup>37</sup> In the cause of 'mutual respect', from which Ting takes the terms of 'reconciliation' and 'unity', is

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<sup>34</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (Cosmic Christ), 'Laizi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, pp. 90-99, 191-195.

<sup>35</sup> Whyte, *Unfinished encounter*, p. 478. See also, Li Xinyuan, *Theological Construction—or Deconstruction: An Analysis of the Theology of Bishop K.H. Ting* (Streamwood, Ill. And Mountain View, Ca.: Christian Life Press and Great Commission Center International, 2003). For an introduction to criticism, see also Zhu Xiaohong, 'Reflections on the Reconstruction of Theological Thinking', in Mikka Ruokanen and Paulos Huang (eds.), *Christianity and Chinese Culture: A Sino-Nordic Conference on Chinese Contextual Theology* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004), pp.376-390.

<sup>36</sup>Whyte, for instance, supports Ting's Theological Reconstruction praising that Ting is making one of the most important contributions to the reconstruction of Chinese Christianity in contemporary China. Whyte speaks highly of Ting's new Chinese theology suggesting that it is full of potential for the creative engagement of Christian faith with Chinese culture. See Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*, pp. 478-479. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, pp.361-363.

<sup>37</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), 'Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan' (Chinese Christian's View of God), *Wenji*, pp.90-99, 106-116.

fundamentally interpreted as a term referring to political union. More specifically, the term of ‘reconciliation’ in Ting’s theology actually corresponded to the desire for social, moral and political unity.<sup>38</sup>

It is not a mere ideal, but the analytical and prescriptive lens through Chinese history, politics, society and culture. It can be understood as an extension of Mao Zedong’s United Front tactic. According to Mao, the grand unity of China was the accomplishment of ‘a well-disciplined Party armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, an army under the leadership of such a party, and a United Front of all revolutionary classes and all revolutionary groups.’<sup>39</sup> Mao knew that the CCP’s rise to power and its continued success depended on the ideology and the institution of the United Front which was the foundation of China’s new-found unity. Its genius lay not only in its holding forth the ideal of a politically and economically powerful nation, but in establishing the ideological and the institutional means to secure national identity and unity. It set the terms of political/theological synthesis which established Christian unity in the ‘common ground’ of national identity. It represented a norm of faith and life neither derived from nor in deference to the authority of Scripture and doctrine of the church.

Therefore the manifestation of reconciliation took place through the necessity of identifying with the people. Fundamentally, it occurred *within the society of Man* rather than *the Christ*.<sup>40</sup> This reconciliation required neither a sacrificial offering nor trust in Christ as the Son of God and the saviour of Man, therefore devaluing the concept of sin and the meaning of the cross. In this regard, Christ has been reduced to a figure within a ‘universal reconciliation’, in which the relation between Jesus and the kingdom of God is lost.

Furthermore, the term of ‘the people’ referred to a concrete social substance and historical existence rather than an abstract philosophical concept. Here, God’s universal love was submitted to some kind of nationalism doctrine—such as ‘consider

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<sup>38</sup>Ting, ‘Yige zhongguo jidudu de shangdiguan’ (Chinese Christian’s View of God), *Wenji*, p.115.

<sup>39</sup>Mao Zedong, ‘On the people’s Democratic Dictatorship’ in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* vol.4 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p. 422. See also James Chieh, Hsiung, *Ideology and Practice: The Evolution of Chinese Communism* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), Chapter 3 to 7; Gerry Groot, *Managing Transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism and Hegemony* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), chapter 2 to 4.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.* See also, ‘Laizi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa’ (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, pp 188-214. (My italic.) Thomas Alan Harvey, ‘Challenging heaven’s mandate: an analysis of the conflict between Wang Mingdao and the Chinese Nation-State’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University, 1998), p.207.

love as identifying with the Chinese people'. Ting thus claimed that, in order to evangelise, Christians should reflect what 'the people' believe and be attentive to what they are concerned about.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the element of evangelism is nothing to do with the commandments of Christ but to fuse with the identity and reconciliation with the people.<sup>42</sup> This shift in vision, a church of and with *the poor* in liberation theology, is then automatically turned into establishing a church of and with *the Chinese people*.

Tracing this particular mode of interpretation, it is shown clearly why Ting had to substitute 'love for the people' for 'faith in God'. As Harvey pointed out, what hid behind Ting's appeals for tolerance, dignity and culture is his interchange to supplant Scripture and doctrine with the narrative of the nation-state based upon the ideology of the United Front, was an intention to provide the authoritative 'common ground' for the Church.<sup>43</sup> In this case, should one reject Ting's theological proposal which revealed a lack of Christian tolerance, and love, as revealed in Christ.

With this understanding, theology has actually been turned into sociology. The question of 'what is' faith in a transcendent God is reduced to the question of 'what we can know'; a social phenomenon with an accompanying political vision. Accordingly, religious identity represents no more than a particular preference, as long as national identity remains essential. One's preference is protected as long as that preference carries with it no ontological claim to any fundamental essence. What is most at stake in theology is that any Christian self-understanding finds its 'common ground' in the light of the social and political issues and terms of national identity and political consciousness. As we have seen, the 'common ground' between the Christian and the state is justified theologically when 'national progresses and the establishment of the nation-state are understood theologically as alternative forms of revelation.

### 2.3 The validity of theology: Set the context and praxis as the testing ground for truth

Ting based his Theological Reconstruction on a theological validation that set appropriateness to context as a criterion for theological validity. For him, the context

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<sup>41</sup>K.H. Ting, 'Evangelical and building up the body in love', in *Tianfeng* (February, 1983), pp. 19-22.

<sup>42</sup>Ting, 'Sanzi zai renshi' (Another look at three-self), *Wenji*, pp. 308-323.

<sup>43</sup>Harvey, 'Challenging heaven's mandate', p.214.

and praxis was the testing ground for truth.<sup>44</sup> But then again, what were the key features in defining this appropriateness, and who could take charge for the legitimacy of so-called appropriateness?

Ting took over the Marxist understanding of history in parallel with the Christian understanding of eschatology; seeing history as moving towards a 'better history' and socialism as a sign of progression. More prominently, on emphasising the immanence of God, he believed that all good things originated from God. Therefore the CCP; the agent that lead the people towards the stage of socialism, deserved Christian support wholeheartedly because they too embodied God's love.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, stressing the importance of identification with the 'time and tide', Ting indicated that everything should serve to identify with and commit to the current situation. He believed that cultural context was deterministic in Theological Reconstruction.<sup>46</sup> For this reason, Christians living in Communist China had to give up their fundamentalist theological position and follow the current need of the times.

At this point, it is not difficult to see that the fundamental theme of 'God is love' actually exists as an extension of the ideology of the United Front. It manipulates a kind of political absorption, and makes religious and governmental agencies no different. Here, what was often missed by Ting, and the TSPM who gloried in relativism, was how quickly they conformed to whichever way the milieu turns.<sup>47</sup> They had no anchor by which to question the tide of history, trapped as they were to 'make its rhythms (their) own, to move within its currents in search of reality, of beauty, of freedom, of justice, that its fervid and perilous flow allows.'<sup>48</sup> For those who have ridden the tide of history, as the authoritative ground of identity and existence, reality tends to follow to the arch of that existence. It is doubtful that Ting would have praised the Christians in pre-war Germany who argued 'if God has given us a Hitler, it must be that Hitler is what we should have', yet, Ting argued in the specific Chinese case, that passive acceptance of coercion and manipulation of the Church was not merely practical but also theologically justified. Those who offered

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<sup>44</sup> Ting, 'Zongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p.29

<sup>45</sup> Ting, 'Laizi jiefang shenxue, Derijin shenxue han guocheng shenxue de qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p.205.

<sup>46</sup> Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, p.95.

<sup>47</sup> This latter argument was initially proposed in Thomas Harvey's work.

<sup>48</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 2.

even the mildest of criticism were subjected not only to the abuse of the state, but also that of the TSPM, often beforehand.<sup>49</sup>

### **3.Hermeneutic tasks**

#### **3.1Creating a theology with Chinese characteristics: Inserting Christianity into Chinese culture**

In Ting's endeavour to relate Christianity to a Chinese cultural and socio-political context, connections were principally made between Christianity and Confucianism.<sup>50</sup> Ting argued that: 'in China, where Confucianism has had a deep impact, the question of ethics is particularly important from a missiological point of view. Many have been brought to Christ because they were first attracted by the ethical content of the Gospel'.<sup>51</sup> Ting therefore began from the nature of humanity; he believed that the doctrine of the total depravity of humanity had been the major obstacle in recognising the value of non-Christian culture. Because the doctrine of 'original sin' is essential to the total depravity, Ting criticised foreign missionaries for imposing this 'strange' teaching on China. He said,

It is important for any understanding of the Chinese Christians' mind to know that for thousands of years in the teaching and writings of sages and scholars there has been no idea of an inborn perversity in human nature. Rather than seeing any need for trying to explain this perversity by resorting to some theory of a fall on the part of the first human beings, ancient Chinese folklore simply accepts the natural goodness and strength of human beings.<sup>52</sup>

In other words, Ting tended to ignore the existence of 'original sin', saying there is no root for such teaching in Chinese traditional culture. He quotes from the Chinese classical literature to prove that, 'at birth, a person is good by nature'.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, from the nature of the Chinese characteristic, he stressed that good

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<sup>49</sup> As Cheng has pointed out, no Chinese citizens have actually been put in jail for being religious. However, many religious personnel have been jailed for being counter-revolutionary, particularly in the 1950s. Although there has been more toleration towards religion since the 1980s and greater stress on handling religious affairs according to the policy, attacks and persecutions were not rare, especially during political campaigns. (Cheng, May M.C., 'House Church Movements and Religious Freedom in China', *China: An International Journal* 1:1 [Mar, 2003], p.24.)

<sup>50</sup> See Leung Ka Lun, 'Jidujiao zai er shi shiji de dong nan ya de jiao se' (The role of Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asia), *Jian Dao: A Journal of Bible and theology* 20 (2003): 105-106. See also, Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, pp. 21-33.

<sup>51</sup> Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p.24.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp.24-25.

<sup>53</sup> The quotation is taken from the Chinese classic Three-Character Rhyme. In his work, Ting also takes examples from Chinese classical literature, such as Lie Zi: Emperor Tang's Queries; Huai Nan Zi;

nature shows itself in any circumstance, thus 'in spite of all the sufferings that have been borne, at the bottom of their hearts they are optimistic'.<sup>54</sup> Thirdly, from the current context, through direct contact with revolutionaries, he realised that they are not 'monsters' and 'rascals', but normal human beings with idealism and high ethical commitment.<sup>55</sup> In his understanding:

For the liberation of their compatriots, many of them sacrifice their all. To serve the people was not only a slogan but also their life-purpose. They have taken over from ancient Chinese sages the teaching that they were to be 'severe in making demands on themselves' and 'sad before the whole people are sad and happy only after the whole people are happy'.<sup>56</sup>

Accordingly, Ting did not take Adam's fall very seriously. Instead, he argued that God's free gift of grace in Jesus Christ surpasses the sin of Adam. To be sure, human beings are still sinners, and it is in recognition of this that people may come to accept salvation in Jesus Christ.<sup>57</sup> When speaking of the manifestation of sin, Ting attributed the existence of some 'ugly and violent' phenomena in the world to 'Man being still in the process of creation' and 'far from perfection' rather than Man being universally and truly sinful.<sup>58</sup> Because, no matter how sinful human beings are, humans still reflect God's glory.<sup>59</sup> Following that particular perceptive, sin is no longer regarded as affecting the whole of human nature. It becomes merely an 'awareness of sin' that a Christian should have, or a 'sinful inclination'.<sup>60</sup> Due to the fact that the grace of Christ abounds even more than the sin of Adam, the awareness of sin should encourage its own transcendence. Tingsaid,

The awareness of sin is awareness that not all things are very good; it should mutate into an awareness of concern, concern about the suffering in the world. Only by starting from this point can one speak of improvement and achieving a greater height.<sup>61</sup>

Here, what has been highlighted in this illustration, are the dissimilar degrees of human corruptibility, rather than their essential difference. On the one hand, sinful

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Lessons from Surveying Cosmic Mysteries. He even quotes Mao Zedong's poem.(See, Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' [Theological Mass Movement in China], *Wenji*, pp. 21-33.)

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p.25.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.,p.21.

<sup>57</sup>Ting, 'Yuzhou de jidu' (The Cosmic Christ), *Wenji*, p. 95.

<sup>58</sup>Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, pp.24-26.

<sup>59</sup>Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), 'Lijie Shangdi de xin' (Understanding the Heart of God), *Wenji*, pp. 21-33, 100-105.

<sup>60</sup>Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), 'Jiangshen yu chaoyue' (Incarnation and transcendence), *Wenji*, pp.23, 263-267.

<sup>61</sup>Ting, 'Jiangshen yu chaoyue' (Incarnation and transcendence), *Wenji*, p.265.

inclination ‘merely shows that people are constantly in need of God’s forgiveness, correction, healing and spiritual support.’<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, to interpret the concept of sin in this way makes the role of the Christians participatory and critical. At this point, it merits noting that in support of locating the United Front ideology at the centre of Christian hermeneutics in the 1950s, sin was understood as failure to denounce, exclude and punish the enemies of the nation-state.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, in Ting’s work, sin came to be understood as having the tendency of not supporting the CCP. Righteousness was defined by improving the welfare of the motherland. Conformity with the ethical standards of the nation-state had become the ultimate measure of Christian ethical practice, most specifically for those who were associated with official Protestantism.

Throughout his work, Wickeri supported Ting by arguing that Ting’s theological approach was true to his identity as a Chinese Christian and his liberal Anglican heritage.<sup>64</sup> Instead of following Karl Barth’s single-dimensional transcendence, which shows the emphasis on discontinuity between God’s action and the human response, Ting affirmed the tradition of ‘humanity as the base’ (*yirenweiben*, 以人爲本). With highlighting a strong tendency of Chinese humanism toward Christian incarnation of *Dao* (道, the word of God), Ting actually had made Christianity more accessible to Chinese people.<sup>65</sup>

However, certain types of complementing inclinations of Chinese theological approaches are strongly criticised by many Chinese scholars. Chin Ken Pa, for instance, attacked such a theological attempt by arguing that, ‘whether it is to synthesise, to complement, or to surpass Confucianism (合儒, 補儒, 超儒), Christian theology was never a theology defending for “a stranger.”’<sup>66</sup> That is to say, the complementing of Chinese culture with Christianity only affirmed and strengthened the moral potential of Confucianism and simultaneously encouraged the already existing superior sense of Chinese nationalism. As such, it was simply defending the Chinese ethical system rather than defending the [Christian] faith. It did not deal with

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<sup>62</sup> Ting, ‘Jiangshen yu chaoyue’ (Incarnation and transcendence), *Wenji*, p.265.

<sup>63</sup> Luo Zhufeng (ed.), *Religion under Socialism in China* Trans. Donald E. MacInnis and Zheng Xian, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1991), p.77.

<sup>64</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, pp.214, 316..

<sup>65</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, p.249.

<sup>66</sup> Chin, ‘Sheme shi hanyu shenxue?’ (What is Sino-Theology), Third Chinese Theology Round Table conference, Kunming, 18-23 September 2005, *Concilium*, no. 2 (2008), p. 91. .



theological issues, but issues relating to the Chinese national political identity.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, rather than 'converting' the Chinese culture, Christianity itself is being 'domesticated' by, and identified with, Chinese culture.<sup>68</sup>

Chin furthered his critical comments by arguing that this complementing tendency and the moralising approach are the two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, Christianity was used as an ethical system with the intention of supporting the already existing Chinese ethical and value system. Namely, moral values were abstracted from the Christian system and then injected into the host culture. On the other hand, Christianity was called to the 'doctrine of love.' However, the real purpose was to meet the needs of China's nationalist struggle, 'in which the redemptive faith of Christianity would be subordinated to the tool of which to achieve political dominance.'<sup>69</sup> Chin writes,

Its pursuit of becoming more 'ethically Chinese,' in actual fact, became a rather heavy burden for Chinese Christian theology, as it blurred the central teaching and basic values of the Christian faith by distorting the truth, while the Chinese ethical position was further strengthened...<sup>70</sup>

From a historical perspective, Yang Huilin makes the similar comments. He notes,

It was the two basic methods employed after Matteo Ricci that really contributed to the effective propaganda of Christianity in China. The first one tried 'to please' the Confucian way. The second one was to show off the new technology. The traditional mission strategies to synthesize, to complement, and to surpass Confucianism are actually results of the combination of these two methods. However, from the historical viewpoint, when Christianity was accepted by Chinese culture, or when Christianity overcame the ban on maritime trade through physical force, they were indeed times when its inner vitality was most weakened. If we disregard the external form of the [Christian] religion, and pay more attention to its fate in Sino-thoughts, maybe we can say that, in reality, these two effective mission strategies actually became the methods that gradually dispelled the influence of Christianity.<sup>71</sup>

Yang called attention to the earliest converts in the Ming dynasty as an example and indicated how they misunderstood Christian faith by simply situating their discussion on the ground of secular ethics.<sup>72</sup> He highlighted that, with the aim of fitting Christianity into Confucianism uncritically, would simply make Christian faith

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<sup>67</sup>Chin, 'Sheme shi hanyu shenxue?' (What is Sino-Theology), p.146. Similar comments made by Franklin J. Woo, 'Reconstructing Christianity in China: K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church' (Review), *China Review International*, Volume 15, Number 1, (University of Hawai'i Press 2008), pp.54-55.

<sup>68</sup>Chin Ken Pa, "What is 'Sino-Theology'?" p. 91.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p.90.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Yang Huilin, *Jidujiao de dishe yu wenhua yanshen* (The grounding and cultural manifestations of Christianity) (Harbin: Heilongjian People's Press, 2002), p. 292.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

lose its absolute presupposed meanings that transcended secular ethics. At the same time, it would severely deteriorate its foundation within the Chinese cultural context. As a result, the Christian faith was utterly compromised and domesticated by the local host culture. The unavoidable result, Yang assessed, was that,

When it moves from the absolute goodness to the secular moral standard, the original critical strength of Christian faith is replaced by its accommodation to and its compromise with the local authority, or it simply becomes ... 'the religion of the good citizens.'<sup>73</sup>

From Chin and Yang's critiques, it is very obvious that these complementary and moralising attempts of past approaches are problematic when again adopted by Ting. Particularly, Christian faith and its teachings could never be presented without serious misrepresentations within these theological approaches.

### 3.2 Dancing between contextualisation and ideological manipulation

Without a doubt, there is no theology or practice of Christian faith that can be hermetically sealed off from the wider cultural world. It takes place in time and a culture and is therefore inevitably bound by its own context. Most theologians thus recognise that 'contextualisation is part of the very nature of theology itself.'<sup>74</sup> And, to some extent, the contextualisation approach cannot avoid a certain amount of accommodation.

Due to the fact that contextualisation is concerned with how the gospel and culture relate to one another across geographic space and through time, as a result, it not only changes and transforms the context; it also expands our understanding of the gospel because we now see the gospel through a different cultural lens. As Lap demonstrated, 'contextualisation is always controversial, not only because the context is very dynamic, but also because contextualisation is involved in a two-way process'.<sup>75</sup> That is, in order to find its identity and fulfil its mission, the Church looks

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>74</sup>Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p.1. For useful introductions to the historical development of the contextual theology movement from an evangelical perspective, see Harvie M.Conn, 'Contextualisation: Where Do We Begin?', in Carl E. Armerding (ed.), *Evangelicals and Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), pp.90-119; Robert T.Coote& John Stott (eds.), *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture: The Papers of the Lausanne Consultation on Gospel and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); Bruce Fleming, *Contextualization of Theology: An Evangelical Assessment* (Pasadena: William Carey library, 1980).

<sup>75</sup>Lap Yapkung, 'What to preach? Christian witness in China, with reference to the Party's policy of mutual accommodation', *Studies in World Christianity*, vol.8, issue 2, (2002), p.224.

for the relevance of the Gospel in relation to a context; at the same time, the Church is formed by the context. Without the second process, there is no contextualisation.<sup>76</sup> In this sense, Ting certainly could justify his hermeneutical task as an involvement of contextualising an ancient faith in the modern world and in Chinese culture. In particular the key themes of what he called Theological Reconstruction (*shenxue sixiang jianshe*, 神學思想建設), in the late 1990s, such as the love of God in Christ; the work of the Holy Spirit inside and outside the church; the inter-relatedness of creation and redemption; the importance of Christian ethics; the continuity between transcendence and immanence; and human beings as ‘works in progress’ who cooperate with God in historical movements for change and renewal.

Even so, in this juncture what need to notice is that Ting’s concern was far beyond the general idea of contextualisation or indigenisation. For instance, in respect to method, I find too little effort to verify exegetically his use of a given text, and too much reliance on the present situation in China as controlling factors in interpreting the text. It goes far beyond what the quotations from the text actually say and in fact remains somewhat arbitrary. The most vivid example can be found in his hermeneutics. Rooted in his particular political circumstance, Ting publicly claimed that the verse of *Romans* Chapter 13, verse 1—‘everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God’,<sup>77</sup> and in terms of the Guomintang (國民黨) they signify that it was ‘opium’ to anaesthetise the people. However, when that statement refers to the CCP, it simply denotes the positive influence for Chinese people nowadays; as ‘it can provide the function to stabilise and maintain solidarity in socialist society.’<sup>78</sup>

This particular form of illustration sheds light on establishing a truth, which no longer requires attention to the text itself and a study of its historical context. It enabled Ting to open up his particular way of presenting his theology; which was founded on the existing social-political situation in interpreting the text, and simultaneously, by the use of the text to theologise the political situation in China. In the end, one is no longer concerned about what the text says, but what it should have

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> *The Holy Bible*, New international version. (Singapore Bible Society, 1984).

<sup>78</sup> Ting, ‘Yu jiao wai you ren tan “yapian wenti”’ (On religion as Opiate), *Wenji*, pp.406.

said, and by which its constituent parts can be traced back through the text.<sup>79</sup> In other words, the fundamental element of doing theology is not grounded on the scripture but the given political circumstance. The crucial question revolved around the relationship between the religious and political realms in the new situation.

With this approach, the historical results weigh heavily in the process of deciding what logical force is to be ascribed to the texts in question. Society and the issues before it becomes the critical lens by which scripture must be understood and applied. By reinterpreting the Christian symbols in the light of the realities of their own situation, they are operating on that broad level of symbolic knowledge that can give meaning to and release energy for concrete action. Ting then was able to recognise and formulate the power for shaping the knowledge, the truth of history, and the certainly which history has, in fact, held in traditional Christian theology.

Simultaneously, history, in this case, serves as a principle of knowledge, a means of legitimation and elaboration, and the source of the purpose of theology. The difference between the believer and the non-believer is not whether a given event occurred; rather, the difference lies in the way the event is interpreted and the significance attributed to the event.<sup>80</sup> When the whole theological and political narrative and structure becomes orthodoxy, then the impression of security is further intensified. For now the statements assume a social function.

It comes into view that biblical language was turned into a structure of thought whose selling point was that it offered people reassurance and security by trying to relate biblical themes with China's historical and current situation. Christians only discover the meaning and relevance of scripture when it is understood according to the social and political conditions of human existence in the given age of its interpretation. As we can see over and over again in Ting's work, in order to coalesce the necessarily of the TSM and Theological Reconstruction with his current political climate, he highlighted that the historical transformation of socialist China since 1949 facilitates the Chinese Christians to comprehend the Bible from a new perspective in gripping the 'new inspiration' (*liang guang*, 亮光) and finding the new implications from the scripture. Consequently, they realised that there is a need to 'open a new

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<sup>79</sup> K.H. Ting, 'Laizi Jiefang Shenxue, Derijin Shenxue han Guocheng Shenxue de Qifa' (Inspirations from Liberation theology, process theology and Teilhard de Chardin), *Wenji*, p. 191.

<sup>80</sup> Van Austin Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1967), p.252.

path' for their 'new spiritual pursuit'; namely, Three-Self theology.<sup>81</sup> As a result of that, it seems to me that his signboard of 'contextualisation', in essence, is suggesting creating either a new religion or new culture.

There are, however, some difficulties regarding his way of using Scripture to validate his theological proposals.<sup>82</sup> His theological work is in point of fact beset by incongruities which undermine his own intention to permit history to shape the content and strategy of his work. This incongruity arises from his inability to permit history to permeate his theological methodology as a factor which, in its own integrity, is free to function normatively. He related it axiologically to the historical factors in his work such as denying that any normative power, except as their integrity, had been altered to fit his understanding of Scripture. Furthermore, Ting's understanding of history is incapable of presenting a viable understanding of history, which can do justice to the dynamic movement of history, while at the same time avoiding the meaninglessness of relativistic historicism. The source of this inability is easy to locate: Ting's constructive category imposed a unity on history, and his axiological propensity compelled him to reject, as perverse, all of the phenomena which fell outside this unity. Relativistic historicism could scarcely be a problem for his work, because his constructive category restricted so decisively the range of the dynamic relativistic movement of the historical continuum. That is to say, he reduced the force of this relativistic movement because he subsumes all of the phenomena of history under one category. By means of this category, he reduced the phenomena to relevance, or irrelevance. Ignoring the latter, he reduced the relevant phenomena to adequacy, or inadequacy, whereupon he rejects the latter. Therefore, the historical continuity of religious development demonstrated itself, more than anywhere else, in a continuity (or agreement) in piety. Ting, then, proclaimed that in a Chinese context, the final end is socialism, and that the history of China is in the process of moving toward this.

Another way of putting it is to say that the issue here is not merely of using history, but also taking it seriously in its own integrity—of providing a place for history in which to allow it to play to a constitutive and regulative role at every point

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<sup>81</sup>Ting, 'Zhongguo de shenxue qunzhong yundong' (Theological Mass Movement in China), *Wenji*, p.23.

<sup>82</sup>The arguments which follow takes shape largely from the reading of the work of Van AustinHarvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1967), pp.204-245.

of the theological enterprise in its own right, and not simply as a dynamic proof-text for the concerns which the theologian, inevitably, brings to his consideration of history. The point of this criticism is not that, I assume, there must be one paradigm for understanding history. Consider, for example, the sweeping assertion that all good historical inquiry is without presupposition. This claim has generated an equally sweeping counterclaim: every historian has his own presuppositions. Both claims are not so much false as crude and therefore leads to confusion. It is unnecessary to argue that the historian is without presuppositions; it is not as if his task is merely to discover the facts, and let them speak for themselves. It does not, however, follow from this concession that 'every man is his own historian,' and carries around a monolithic set of warrants that apply in the same way, in every field.<sup>83</sup> A theological methodology which does not allow history to play this constitutive and regulative role does not really take history seriously; it inevitably depreciates history to the status of means to some other constructive end. As a consequence, Ting ultimately violated the integrity of the very historical reality that he was bound to, because he placed this history at the mercy of a constructive category which distorted it.

As a result of this, Ting's attempt simply appeared as an ideological manipulation and political instrument. As we have seen, regardless of what he said, conceptually or metaphysically about God or the Cosmic Christ, Ting's ultimate goal was to present the Church not only as faithful to the CCP, but also as a reliable supporter for the development of socialism in a Chinese way. He offered a system of doctrines with authorised interpretations. He presented us less with a theory of religion than a total system of thought that itself resembled a religion. In particular, the direction of Ting's theology is from context (political situation) to Text (Bible), rather than from Text to context. Scripture and doctrine are to be understood and applied through the interpretive lens of history, politics and society. As Chow explains:

If we begin with the context, we may be able to set a theological agenda, but very often the Scripture is used, if not manipulated, to support theologians' viewpoints or conclusions which are primarily shaped by sociological psychological, political and cultural factors.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>This example is summarised from Van Austin Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, pp.214-221.

<sup>84</sup>Bong Rinro & Ruth Esheneaur (eds.), *The Bible and Theology in Asian Context* (Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), p. 85.

The main purpose of transforming and reconstructing Christianity is not to try to make Christianity easier to be accepted by the Chinese in China's cultural and social situation, but it is intended to use a 'post-transforming Christianity' as an instrument to provide help for the Chinese to look for a way out of her political situation. Rather than call this course of action 'contextualisation', it would be better to say that it uses the source materials of western Christianity to make a new religion which could fit with the CCP's expectation.





## **Conclusion**

The contextualisation of Christian faith in China is a long process involving many features, including internal dynamics and external conditions. As this study shows, it has been a major subject of debate within Chinese Protestant circles since the 1920s, and even earlier if we see it as linked to missionary concerns with self-support. However, as a consequence of the political disruptions and institutional limitations imposed on the church under the PRC, the campaign progressed slowly and inconsistently.

Given the reality of the Chinese church, the promotion of Theological Reconstruction in 1980s has been taken on an important significance not only for the leaders of the Chinese Church but also for Chinese Christians. Although Ting's theology was not as yet mature theology in itself, it exhibited a substantial effort of creating a contextual theology. It offers wider and broader theological context which show the potential way of the dialogue between Christianity and the world beyond the church.<sup>1</sup> In particular, in urging Christians to witness the Chinese socialist experiment, Ting proclaims that God's grace is active outside the Church as well as within. It meant that the church was not diametrically opposed to the secular world. Christians should therefore be committed to the success of the Chinese revolution because of the contribution it could make to humanisation and social change.

Moreover, it is largely interpreted for the sake of mutual accommodation. Ting gives special attention to the spiritual experience of the Three-Self leadership and regards it as the fundamental element of producing genuine Chinese theology. On the one hand, it recreates the dialogue between Christianity and political development, which can be a fruitful interchange and mutually enriching. On the other hand, Ting demonstrates the possibility of integrating theology into both science and humanism.

At this point, it is understood that most of Ting's successors regarded Theological Reconstruction as the way to make Christian theology Chinese. Chen

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<sup>1</sup> Don Messer, 'The Chinese Banyan Tree Theology of Bishop K.H. Ting,' [http://d74249.u23.toughdomains.net/cms/user/3docs/banyan\\_tree\\_theology.pdf](http://d74249.u23.toughdomains.net/cms/user/3docs/banyan_tree_theology.pdf) (access, December 2009); John S. Peale, *The Love of God in China: Can One Be Both Chinese and Christian* (New York, Lincoln and Shanghai: iUniverse, 2005), pp.115-137. See also Tobias Brandauer, 'Jianshe Theology: Reflections about the Process of Theological Reconstruction in China,' *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 369 (April 2004), pp. 199-209; Wang Peng (ed.), *Seeking Truth in Love* (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2006). This is a bilingual volume of reflection on Ting's theology. The Chinese title is *Zai ai zhong xunqiu zhenli*.

Zemin, for instance, argued that Theological Reconstruction will never be out of date, and the road to Theological Reconstruction had no end.<sup>2</sup> To a certain degree, one could even argue that Ting's Theological Reconstruction has a strong similarity to contextual theologies from Korean Minjung theology.<sup>3</sup> As it has produced its own biblical hermeneutics, its own formation of Christian doctrines, and firmly rooted in a particular situation in China. It therefore provides great capacity of developing a more comprehensive approach to contextual theology that can provide a solid theological grounding for the churches in the future.

Unfortunately, Theological Reconstruction met with primary opposition, a natural dualistic opposition arising between modernists and fundamentalists, liberals and evangelicals. Although it would be going too far to suggest which group is right, it surely would be true to say that both camps confirm their insistence in their own way. To some extent, it might be fair to argue that Ting's theological intention was not so much about making his thought to become a new theological orthodoxy. What he had in mind was to challenge fundamentalism, which he saw as the actual accepted view of Chinese Protestantism.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, unsurprisingly, Ting's Theological Reconstruction appears to be more like a politically motivated theological reflection.<sup>5</sup> Commenting on the general trend of TSPM that is consistent with Ting's theology, Wang Syhyueh states,

Advocating socialist patriotism, United Front, and contextualisation, TSPM theology emphasises more on pragmatic rather than on theology and culture, and this pragmatic characteristic made it limited in term of theology. In order to break through the theological weakness and disadvantage, the TSPM theology has to shake off the bondage of politics and adjust its pragmatic orientation to establish a new theology... Only then could the TSPM theologians be able to get rid of the Party-State oriented theology, United Front oriented theology, or politics oriented theology, and establish a genuine Chinese theology.<sup>6</sup>

Wang's term 'pragmatic' refers to following the political guidance of the Chinese Communist Party so as to be consistent with the times. Ting's theology begins with adaptation to the existing political environment, therefore, unavoidable,

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted from Wickeri, p.359.

<sup>3</sup> Minjung theology emerged in the 1970s, is a people's theology. It introduces a movement which has emerged out of the involvement of Christians in the struggle for social justice in one particular nation-South Korea. It is related to the entire history of Korean Christianity over the last century. (*Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, edited by the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983], p.17).

<sup>4</sup>Wicker, pp. 356-357.

<sup>5</sup>Chen Lu, 'Ding Guangxun's Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction,' in *Transformation* 27 (2), p.105.

<sup>6</sup>Wang Syhyueh 'Sanzi shenxue de xingchen yuanyin yaosu' (Construction of Three-Self Theology: Its Reasons and the Controlling Factors), pp. 4-73.

has to work within the framework of the CCP. That is to say, although Ting is trying to make Christianity more relevant to Chinese contemporary context, the impact of his theological endeavour was seriously limited by his narrowly chosen context.

Borrowing Jonathan Chao's delineation, in Ting's theological framework, 'politics is taken as substance and theology as the functional means' (政治為體,神學為用).<sup>7</sup> The vital concern of Ting's theology, in essence, is not pursuing, or presenting, a theological truth, but aiming to accommodate Christianity to the current Chinese political regime. The bottom line of his theology is politics; it entails the responsibility of leading the church to think *politically*. It is the nation-state, and its political ideology, that set the terms of Christian existence. In Ting's theology, there is no prearranged model of doctrines, logically related, according to an explicit method, and indicative of a comprehensive view. As Peale points out, 'Ting did not write a systematic theology,' what he did was 'respond to specific movement(s) and occasions, and wrote what he thought needed to be said about the Chinese national situations.'<sup>8</sup> Thus it seems reasonable to brand this type of theology as occasional, and not systematic. In particular, Ting theologises politics on behalf of the Party, by using theological contexts, and so his theological content must also change accordingly. As the needs of the party changed, so did the content of his theology. In this respect, the nature of Ting's theology appears relative, and therefore limited.

Taking the above into consideration, Ting's theology simply appears as an ideological manipulation rather than contextualisation or indigenisation, which is seeking to use a 'post-transformational Christianity' as an instrument to provide help for the Chinese to look for a way out of her political situation. In this sense, the so-called genuine Chinese theology or 'a theology with Chinese characteristics' should merely be considered as an elegant slogan to justify the necessity of creating a new religion which could meet the CCP's political expectations.

In closing, I would like to suggest some possibilities for further studies of the themes identified with this work. First, this dissertation does not have space to examine the theological differences between Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan individually. As this study demonstrated the development of Chinese

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Chao & Edwin Lee (et al), Susanna Chen (ed.), *Analyzing Three-Self Theology* (Taiwan: Christianity and China Research Centre, 2003), p.252.

<sup>8</sup> John S. Peale, *The Love of God in China: Can one be both Chinese and Christian?* (New York: Lincoln University, Inc. 2005.) p.120. See also, Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, p.247.

Christian theology is actually closely related to concrete social and political developments. Owing to their political separation from Mainland China, the development of Christian theology in Hong Kong and Taiwan has, since the 1950s, been significantly different from that in China. Theological activities in China, in the twenty years following 1950, slowed down dramatically, with fewer theological books being published and the theological positions becoming more and more homogenous. Most of the theological publications simply parroted the slogans of the Three-Self Movement, with a view to implementing government policies, assisting patriotic education and joining United Front campaigns. Although the dominance of such theological discourse was ended by the Great Cultural Revolution and later by the Four Modernisations, theologians in Hong Kong and Taiwan have formulated their theologies in response to the challenges arising from their respective social context. The nexus of hermeneutical, political and theological differences during these years in China deserves to be focused upon. This would add much to the development of current Chinese Christian theology.

## Glossary of Chinese Terms

ai	愛
aiguo, aijiao	愛國愛教
aigou zhuyi	愛國主義
aiguo zongjiao zushi	愛國宗教組織
ban chengpin	半成品
ban hao jiaohui	辦好教會
bensehua	本色化
buxin pai	不信派
chujinghua	處境化
dan hua	淡化
dao	道
de	德
Diguo zhuyi de dusu	帝國主義的毒素
Edu	惡毒
Gaige Kaifang	改革開放
Gewu	格物
Guangming Ribao	光明日報
Hexie shehui	和諧社會
Jiating juhui	家庭聚會
Jidutu Huitang	基督會堂
Jidujiao	基督教
Jidujiao de lunli	基督教的倫

Jidujiao Zhexue	基督教哲學
Jinling shenxuezh	金陵神學誌
Jingjiao	景教
Kaifang zhengce	開放政策
Kexue de zongjiaoguan	科學的宗教觀
liang hui	兩會
liang guang	亮光
Lingshi	靈食
Quan-Zhang Zhanglao hui	泉漳長老會
san juhua	三句話
sanzi	三自
Shangdi	上帝
Shen 神	
Shenggong Hui	聖公會
Shengling Bao	聖靈報
shenxue sixiang jianshe	神學思想建設
shenxue zaisi	神學再思
shenxue zaizao	神學再造
shiyi	適應
Sixiang zhengzhi jianshe	思想政治建設
Tian	天
Tiandao Xaoyuan	天道遙遠
Tian Feng	天風
Tianxue	天學

Tianzhu	天主
Tianzhujiao	天主教
Tienzhu shilu	天主實錄
Tiaozheng	調整
wenhua jidutu	文化基督徒
wu xing	五性
xiaozu	小組
Yesu Jiating	耶穌家庭
Yu shehui zhuyi shehui xiangshiying	與社會主義社會相適應
zheng	政
Zhizhi	致知
Zhonghua Jidutuhui	中華基督徒會
Zhonghua Sheng Gong Hui	中華聖公會
Zhonguo chongjian	中國重建
zhongguo jidujiao sanzi aiguo yundong weiyuanhui	中國基督教三自愛國運動委員會
Zhongguo Yesujiao Zilihui	中國耶穌教自理會
Zhongyong	中庸
zongjiao	宗教
zongjiao he fengjian mixin	宗教和封建迷信
zongjiao xinyang ziyou	宗教信仰自由

## **Glossary of Chinese Names Mentioned in the Text**

Chao Jonathan	趙天恩	conservative evangelical critic of the TSPM/ CCC (Zhao Tian'en) and founder of the Chinese Church Research Center
Chao T. C.	趙紫宸	China's most prominent theologian of the first half of the twentieth century and one of the first elected presidents of the WCC
Chen Zemin	陳澤民	dean of Nanjing Seminary from the 1980s to the late 1990s and prominent Chinese theologian
Deng Xiaoping	鄧小平	China's paramount leader from the late 1970s to the early 1990s and architect of the policies of 'reform and openness'
Duan Qi	段琦	academic working on Christianity in China at the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing
Han Wenzao	韓文藻	TSPM/ CCC leader in Nanjing, first general secretary of the Amity Foundation and CCC president, 1997-2002
Jia Yuming	賈玉銘	prominent evangelical associated with the TSPM in the 1950s
Jiang Peifen	將佩芬	prominent evangelical and faculty member of Nanjiang Seminary in the 1980s
Jiang Wenhan (Kiang Wenhan)	江文漢	YMCA leader and later TSPM leader in Shanghai
Jiang Zemin	將澤民	CPC official and China's paramount leader after the retirement of Deng Xiaoping, president of the People's Republic of China, 1993-2002
Kan Baoping	闡保平	young theologian on the TSPM/ CCC staff in Shanghai
Lei Feng	雷鋒	'model worker' promoted in the Cultural Revolution era
Li Weihai	李維漢	CPC official and secretary general of the first CPPCC; head of the UFWD until he was purged in 1964
Lin Xiangao	林獻羔	house-church leader from Guangzhou, imprisoned for many years and opposed to the TSPM



Liu Liangmo	劉良模	TSPM leader in the 1950s and secretary of the National YMCA in Shanghai
Liu Tingfang	劉廷芳	prominent Christian educator and church leader before 1949
Luo Guangzong	羅冠宗	TSPM/CCC leader in Shanghai, and TSPM chair, 1997-2002
Luo Zhenfang	駱振芳	biblical scholar and faculty member of Nanjing Seminary
Luo Zhufeng	羅竹風	CCP official in Shanghai involved in religious policy, and, after 1979, prominent in establishing the social-scientific study of religion
Mao Zedong	毛澤東	leader of the CCP and the Chinese Revolution, and chairman of the CCP until his death in 1976
Ni Tuosheng	倪柝聲	founder of the ‘Little Flock’ and prominent spiritual (Watchman Nee) writer, imprisoned in the 1950s
Shen Yifan	沈以藩	TSPM/ CCC leader, elected bishop in Shanghai in 1988, who also served as CCC vice-president
Song Shangjie	宗尚節	prominent Chinese evangelist, active in the 1930s (John Sung) and 1940s
Ting Kuanghsun (Ding Guangxun)	丁光訓	China’s most prominent Christian leader and Protestant theologian from the late 1980s to the present
Wang Aiming	王艾明	young theologian on the faculty of Nanjing Seminary, editor of the <i>Jinling shenxuezh</i>
Wang Mingdao	王明道	prominent fundamentalist from Beijing opposed to the TSPM, imprisoned for twenty-three years in 1955
Wang Weifan	王維藩	teacher and theologian at Nanjing Seminary, criticized during the ‘Anti-Rightist’ movement, but returned to Nanjiang Seminary in the 1980s
Wu Yaozong	吳耀宗	prominent Christian leader formerly with the YMCA; founder and leader of the TSPM in 1954
Wu Yifang	吳貽芳	TSPM leader and former president of Jinling Women’s College

Ye Xiaowen	叶小文	the CPC official, director of RAB, now SARA, 1996-
Zhao Fusan	趙復三	Sheng Gong Hui priest and TSPM/CCC leader in Beijing, prominent in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; left China in 1989
Zhou Enlai	周恩來	prominent CPC leader and diplomat, premier of the People's Republic of China, 1949-1976

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## Appendix

### 來自解放神學, 德日進神學和過程神學的啟發

我想向同學們陸續介紹今天海外一些神學學派. 它們有的對我們有參考價值.

爲了使同學們能夠理解一個神學學派, 我不得不針對中國神學思想現狀, 突出它的某些特點, 並且盡可能通俗化和簡單化. 這麼一來, 對一個學派未必很公道. 這是先向大家打招呼的.

第二個招呼是: 研究神學切忌給別人貼標籤, 說這個是‘屬靈的’那個是‘不屬靈’的, 或這個是‘正統的’那個是‘不正統的’. 做自封的審判官是容易的, 但對自己的神學思想的形成, 豐富, 長進沒有什麼幫助. 這是一個不準備提高自己的態度. 遇到你聽不大進的點, 先不要遣責, 應當試圖理解: 究竟是什麼東西使這個人提出這樣的論點? 他這樣講究竟要解決什麼問題? 這問題你自己能不能解決? 是怎麼解決的? 這就是說, 不要急於做裁判員, 要做聆聽者和對話者. 我們對新觀點不要求全責備, 要有同情, 要進入對方的體系, 要看到它企圖解決某個問題的善良意圖. 不同意某一論點是可以的, 但先要好好瞭解它, 知道它說了什麼, 沒有說什麼, 不要歪曲它, 給它無限上綱. 先歪曲和醜化一個論點, 賦予它以荒唐的形象, 以便不費吹灰之力加以打倒, 那不是神學家和任何正派學者應有的手法.

#### 一. 解放神學

解放神學 (Liberation theology) 起源於拉丁美洲, 主要是拉丁美洲天主教. 它現在在北美和亞洲都有影響. 它甚至在福音派方面也有一定影響. 在整個地球上, 中國可能是拉丁美洲神學最沒有影響的地方之一.

解放神學突出和強調<聖經>裡出埃及這件事. 出埃及是上帝在希伯來歷史上所做一件非常重要的事情. 他聽了希伯來人民在痛苦中的呼求, 讓他們經過鬥爭脫離埃及, 得到解放. <舊約>的許多書告訴我們, 在出埃及後幾百年, 一千年之後, 以色列人, 猶太人經常不斷地要回顧這件大事. ‘神爲我們成就了大事.’ 這個話裡的‘大事’, 指的每每都是出埃及. 出埃及這件事在希伯來民族身上打下了很深的烙印.

除了出埃及是解放神學突出的主題之外, <聖經>裡面解放神學家用得特別多的馬利亞的<尊主頌>-- <路加福音>第一章第 46 節起的詩: ‘我心尊主爲大, 我靈以上帝我的救主爲樂, ... 他用膀臂施展大能, 那狂傲的人, 正心裡妄想, 就被他趕散了. 他叫有權柄的失位, 叫卑賤的升高, 叫饑餓的得飽食, 叫富足的空手回去.’ 此外, 他們的文章裡面引用得特別多的是<路加福音>第 4 章耶穌在拿撒勒會堂裡講的段話: ‘... 傳福音給貧窮的人, ... 報告被擄的得釋放, 瞎眼的得看見, 叫那受壓制的得自由, 報告上帝悅納人的禧年’. 還有一處他們引用得特別多的, 就是<馬太福音>第 23 章第 31 至 46 節, 講到上帝根據人們對貧窮無告的人的態度進行最後的審判.

解放神學有一個特別重要的觀點, 就是認爲上帝不是不偏不倚的, 上帝有偏袒, 他偏袒窮人. 解放神學最有代表性的神學家, 秘魯神父古斯塔沃·古鐵雷斯 (Gustava Gutierrez) 寫的一本書就叫<解放神學>. 他是第一個把解放神學的旗幟打

出來的。他說，傳統神學集中注意力於不信的人(non-believers)，而對被剝奪了人格的人(non-persons)卻毫不注意。傳統神學對這種人缺乏敏感。他說，告訴這樣一個過著非人生活的人說，他是上帝的兒子，這句話會有什麼意義呢？這位神學家更關心的是世界上那些窮苦的人，受排擠的人，被疏遠的人，被人踐踏在腳底下的人，這些人過著簡直不是人過的生活。他認為，神學應該關心這樣的人，不要專把注意力集中在不信者身上。他認為，上帝偏袒世界上的窮人，出埃及就表現了這一偏袒。

解放神學提出的幾個詞，現在在國際神學界用得很多，其中一個就是實踐(praxis)。這個詞有時指人民的一般實踐，有時指基督徒在神學指導下的實踐。解放神學不推崇大部頭的系統神學，主張通過實踐來取得神學思維更多的原料。

解放神學強調它是一個入世的神學，主張進入世界。古鐵雷斯說：‘神學的中心問題不是人死後(after death)怎麼樣，而是人出生後(after birth)怎麼樣。’死後上天堂呀，下地獄呀，他認為這不應該是神學的中心問題。神學的中心問題應該是人世。怎樣使人生出來以後活得有人的尊嚴。

解放神學反對發展主義(developmentalism)。你們知道，世界上有些人一直在那裡講第三世界國家的發展，或是說開發，卻不講解放。解放神學認為，拉丁美洲和第三世界很多國家首先不在開發，不在發展，而在社會制度的根本改造。這些國家越讓外國來投資搞開發，對外國的依賴性就越大。巴西有個卡馬拉(Camara)大主教說過：‘當我給一個窮人面包吃的時候，人們說我是個聖徒；但當我問窮人為什麼沒有面包吃的時候，就有人說我是共產黨。’他們認為，在這個二十世紀，最大的愛在於創造正義社會。他們說，真正的問題不在於不發展，而在於不獨立。不獨立帶來壓迫和各種痛苦，所以人們出發點應該是尋求解放，而不是增加全國人口年平均收入的數值。

解放神學流派很多，其中至少有一部分人明確表示，必要的時候不得使用暴力，因為統治者為了維持他們的統治使用大量力，這決定了反統治被迫使用暴力去推翻他們。拉丁美洲現在至少已經有幾十個解放神學派的神父被反動勢力的暴力打死，或是在社會鬥爭中被暗殺。這些事迫使人們考慮使用暴力對付暴力的問題。

持解放神學觀點的人對於教會當局，即天主教教階制度中的上層領導，竭力維持正常關係。他們在教堂之外成立了許多基督教基層共同體。在這種小的聚會裡面，神父跑去同大家一起做彌撒，一起做禱告，一起讀<聖經>。讀<聖經>有時每個人都講話，談談讀了<聖經>以後有什麼體會。我看過三本書，記錄了些普通的打漁的人，一般的工人，一般的農民，望了彌撒和讀了<聖經>之後，一個一個的發言。這是在解放神學思想指導下產生的一種組織形式。

解放神學代表著一種解釋<聖經>的原則和方法。我們研究<聖經>，大家都喜歡知道，這一本書或者這段經文的背景是什麼。我們知道，愈知道背景就愈能夠理解經文。解放神學派並不反對研究背景，不過他們說，研究背景不總是很有成效的，<聖經>裡面許多段落的背景究竟是什麼，我們沒有辦法重新發現。他們認為，重要的是了解一段<聖經>從一代傳到一代，從那批基督徒傳到這批基督徒，積累了什麼亮光。譬如說，<出埃及記>是<舊約>裡的一本書。我們學習<出埃及記>，不但要知道出埃及的歷史背景，也要知道<出埃及記>那麼許多年傳下來，希伯來人和基督徒是怎樣理解它，接受它的，這個知識是寶貴的。那就是說，我們今天讀一節‘經文’的時候，應該看到這節‘經文’有它的教會性，歷史性，公性。歷史傳下來的許多亮光都積累在那裡，要加以認識。今天我們讀<聖經>，我們又把新的亮光加進

去,即便是沒有多少知識的打漁的人,種田的人,他們在那些基督教基層共同體裡面的共同發現也是寶貴的.按照我的理解,用主精神讀<聖經>,這是解放神學學者很重視的一點.這一點也正是我們重視的.

關於傳福音,他們認為教會的歷史使命不僅僅在於把基督帶到人間.基督受父的差遣,一直不斷地在來到世界,藉著聖靈在他自己選擇的時間,在他自己選擇的地方進行工作.因此,教會的使命不是把基督帶到一個沒有基督的世界來,教會的使命是去認識基督已經在哪裡工作,然後把認出來的基督作為好消息去告訴窮人.教會的使命主要是向人宣告上帝悅納人的禧年.由於道成肉身,由於復活升天的基督充滿萬有,人間已經有了基督.教會藉著聖靈的光照,認出基督來,然後像耶穌所愛的那門徒一樣去指出:‘是主.’教會做見證的任務是把主的作為指出來.既然如此,傳福音不僅是把基督帶給窮人,而且也是發現窮人身上的基督.傳福音不僅是把基督帶到人間 (bring Christ to),而且是要從人間把基督發現出來 (bring Christ out of),因為世界上的人身上已經有一點基督.把他們身上的基督發現出來,這也是傳福音.

持解放神學觀點的人中有些人對普世教會合一運動評價不高.他們指出:‘基督教共同體這一神話,必須要破除,因為它使得人們認不清楚社會分成階級的,這些階級是相互鬥爭的.’古鐵雷斯說:‘普世教會合一運動是上層公民間的一樁婚姻.’這當然是諷刺話.他還講,世界人類沒有合一以前,教會是不可能合一的.他們這個觀點我們中國基督徒比較容易理解.我們認為,教會的標志道先應當是聖潔,然後才是它的‘一體’或‘大公’.把‘一體’提到不恰當的高度,一切服從‘一體’,這每每會混淆是非.

解放神學的影響達到世界很多地方,產生了一些神學激進派.譬如說,美國有黑人神學 (black theology).黑人神學就是解放神學在北美的體現.還有婦如感覺受壓迫,他們得到解放神學的啟發,就出來了女權主義神學 (feminist theology),認為婦女對於基督教的真理有一種特殊的敏感,兩千年來受到了壓抑,現在她們要解放,解放之後她們可以對基督的豐盛作出獨特的更加深切的貢獻.在這個神學的影響下,她們反對男權中心主義,有的還對稱神為父,卻不稱為母之類的神學語言.

持解放神學觀點的人對於國際政治問題的表態是很少的,所以我不能夠說他們對蘇聯怎樣,對中國怎樣.他們對古巴是有同情的,覺得古巴代表解放.對我們中國偶然也有一點友好的表示.古鐵雷斯作過一篇演講,專門講中國,他是很肯定新中國的.解放神學書本裡提到古巴,有時也要把到中國.提到蘇聯的話我沒有見到,解放神學似乎沒有反對蘇聯,也沒有擁護蘇聯.對美國和西方本主義的批評較多.

解放神學開始於六十年代,當時別人覺得這也是一家之言.當拉丁美洲主教團一九六八年在麥得林(Medellin)開會的時候,請了解放神學家去做顧問,出來的決議有不少解放神學的語言.不是這些教都完全擁護解放神學,是因為主教們依靠一批神學家替他們起草文件.解放神學的觀點集中表現在麥得林會議的文件上.材料發到全世界,神學家中間擁護的人很多,反對的人更多.過了十年,拉丁美洲主教團在普埃布拉(Puebla)又開會.這次開會教宗若望·保祿二世親自駕到.他也不敢表示反對解放神學,因為解放神學已經有不少群眾.可是看來他也不甘心讓解放神學繼續擴大影響,所以講了一些模稜兩可的話,一句是:‘神父不是社會工作者.’這句話的含意很清潔,是不利於解放神學的.還有一句話是:‘階級鬥爭不是

一條達到社會秩序的道路.’這是否定階級對抗社會中的階級鬥爭的. 他要維護的是所謂‘社會秩序’.

尼加拉瓜這個國家推翻了法西斯統治, 成立了一個民主政權, 這一起義有好多位解放神學的神父參加. 因此, 今天尼加拉瓜裡面有三個部長是神父, 其中一個是外交部長, 一個是文化部長. 全國掃盲運動委員會主任也是神父. 教宗要他們辭職, 說神父不能參加政府. 美國有一名神父是國會議員, 他先奉命出了國會, 此後教宗就好對付尼加拉瓜的幾個神父了. 現在據知尼加拉瓜的神父拒絕出. 他們說, 神父不參加政府, 原則上固然是對的, 但是在特殊情況下, 應該有例外. 一個神父說: ‘譬如說, 我作為一個神父, 在通常情況下不應該去做駕駛員, 但是在革命運動需要的時候, 我開過大卡車.’

外國朋友時常要問: 你們中國基督徒對解放神學抱什麼態度? 我們是擁護解放的, 我們也是重視神學的, 我們認為, 神學應該從舊的傳統中解放出來, 從它在資本主義社會裡受到的束縛中解放出來. 解放神學用大量事實揭露社會黑暗, 揭露殖民主義, 帝國主義, 有很大的啟蒙作用. 拉丁美洲持解放神學觀點的人要改造社會制度, 我們中國基督徒是欣賞的. 解放神學主張神學應該多同社會科學對話, 少同哲學對話, 這我們也覺得很好的. 關於上帝有偏袒, 上帝在有錢人跟窮人之間並不是各打五十板的. 解放神學是那麼好的一個東西, 我們不能完全把它擁抱起來, 我們感到難過. 但是, 許多中國基督徒到底還是認為, 基督教和它的神學的永恆主題, 不應該是政治解放這一限於一定時期的任務, 而應該是神人和好. 如果不把神人和好作為神學的主題而以解放作為神學的主題, 這個彎轉得很大, 即便我們中國已經解放了三十多年, 許多基督徒也感覺到很難轉. 人與神和好, 這是基督教神學的永恆的主題. 社會, 政治解放是這一主題之下應有之義, 不容抹煞, 但不是主題. 我們中國經歷了政治解放, 神人和好的問題仍舊存在著. 持解放神學觀點的人中有的給予‘解放’廣義的理解, 那就很好, 但有的不這樣. 紐約協和神學院詹姆斯·孔在他的一篇文章裡是這樣說的: ‘我還是堅持, 基督的福音同窮人脫離社會政治壓迫的解放運動是等同的.’他說的是等同的, 他不是說支持, 如果他說支持, 我們就可以同意了; 如果他說包容, 也可以; 如果他說要求, 心是很好的. 但是他說的是等同的, 福音和社會, 政治解放等同了起來. 對這個我們就有保留了.

我國解放以後, 人民的生活有重要的改變和提高, 人民的精神也有很大的改變和提高, 這些我們都是歡迎的. 但是我們在中國看到的變化, 不能同保羅在他的書信裡講到在基督裡面成為新人相等同. 解放是非常重要的, 但是解放並不接觸, 更不解決與神和好的問題. 奧古斯丁曾說過, 我們的心如不安息在上帝懷中, 便不會安寧. 任何社會制度下都有許多人渴求這種靈性上的釋放. 我們不要把這個釋放同社會政治的解放混為一談.

解放神學講上帝是偏袒窮人的, 這是有啟發的. 窮人值得我們同情, 但是窮人不是世界的彌賽亞, 好像只要解放窮苦的人, 窮苦的人就能解放世界似的. 我們中國基督徒不是這樣看的. 我們同情和支持窮苦的人, 這是應該的. 一般說來, 窮人更有條件接受革命的道理, 這也是對的; 改造社會, 解決貧窮問題是不容忽視的. 但是不要把窮苦的人理想化, 絕對化. 我們中國人民要富起來, 但是我們不是平均主義者. 硬要人人一塊兒富, 人人一樣富, 如果全國人口平均每人每月收入五百元, 就得人人拿五百元, 不可以有一個人拿一千元, 這個平均主義是不行的. 事物總是參差不齊的, 要富起來, 總有一部分人先富, 總有人後富. 如果窮人由於窮就是救星, 那麼昔日的地主的土地被剝奪之後, 他已經窮了, 那他又變為革命的動力了. 本來是受窮的人, 今天他勞動得好, 收入多了, 他先富起來了, 他倒變為革命的對

象了。這不又是‘無產階級專政下的繼續革命’嗎？我們在‘文化大革命’十年當中已經嘗過味道了，社會被搞得一塌糊塗。在舊社會，被壓迫者是窮的，壓迫者是富的，大體上是如此，但不能說，革命就是窮人反對富人。社會發展所按照的規律不是這麼簡單。尤其在人政治上得到翻身和解放之後，再要號召窮人反對比他們富的人，社會就亂了，這是破壞人民自己的事業，是親痛仇快的。在帝國主義侵略的問題解決之後，在土地改革的問題解決之後，在生產資料所有制問題解決之後，我們就要安定團結，提高生產，讓人們參差不齊地從貧窮過渡到富有。

再者，窮人盡管窮，他的頭腦裡也可能接受了不少統治階級的思想，窮人不一定是最有覺悟的，所以我們不要把窮人偶像化。正確的理論往往不是窮人自發產生的，每每是較富有的家庭裡的知識分子在比較安定的條件下才能發展出先進的理論來。

盡管我對解放神學有這麼一些保留，我還是覺得解放神學是基督教史上出現的一個偉大的新事物，它是了不起的，勝過許多傳統的系統神學體系。我很愛護它，而對某些反對解放神學的人，我倒是並不同情的。

解放神學不是統治階級把人們從馬克思主義引向宗教從而放棄鬥爭的一種手段或陰謀？我認為不是，因為就拉丁美洲的大部分來說，馬克思主義還沒有到達；對第三世界的天主教，基督教信徒，馬克思主義並不是具有多大吸引力的思潮。正相反，解放神學是把宗教信徒從忍受痛苦引向現實，引向覺醒，引向鬥爭。就它二十來年的歷史來看，他不是把群眾從鬥爭引向順服。

喜歡以‘宗教是鴉片’一句話來對待任何宗教現象的人，在解放神學面前有一點為難。宗教就是鴉片之說，未免太簡單化。一個人吸了鴉片，處在麻醉狀態底下，不會主張解放，不會自覺去鬥爭，不會去為解放事業犧牲生命的。如果解放神學也不過是鴉片，那麼教宗就不必到拉丁美洲去澆冷水了，南非反動政府也不必大張旗鼓反對黑人神學，沒收它的出版物了。我想一個比較科學的態度是在各種不同的宗教現象之間細加區分，承認有的宗教現象比較另一些宗教現象要好，而不把它們看為鐵板一塊。

## 二. 德日進神學

德日進(Teillard de Chardin) 是法國人，是一個考古學者，一名耶穌會士。他許多年在中國參加考古工作，發現北京人的工作他也參與。我國抗戰時他一直在內地，五十年代死於美國。

德日進的神學視野跟解放神學一樣，不局限於一個信與不信的問題。有的人的神學繞來繞去以信與不信為軸心，解放神學同德日進的視野很開闊，超越了這個問題。

按照我的理解，德日進要我們看見上帝進行創造的宏偉目的，和上帝創造事業的整個過程。他要我們把目光轉移到那個上面去。有的人可能會說，我不在信與不信或得救不得救的問題上轉圈子，那我的基督教信仰還有什麼呢？德日進告訴我們，基督教信仰可豐富呢，處理的不僅僅是救贖問題。也可以說，救贖是個極廣闊的問題。

在德日進的心目中，整個歷史不完全就是人類的歷史。歷史就是從最初創造開始一直到歷史的終了。整個歷史的大部分時間是沒有人類的。人不過是在這久長的歷史‘最近幾分鐘’才出現的動物。按照德日進的看法，整個歷史，或整個的時間，就是上帝為實現他的目的而努力的歷史。



讓我們至少暫時不要看人，把信與不信的問題放一放，暫時轉眼去看上帝。

上帝的目的是什麼？上帝的目的就是要創造出一個對象來，要在受造物當中出現一個品種，或是一種動物，或是一種對象——上帝渴望要創造出來的這一對象是擺脫了低級趣味，具有神的形象的人。神的形象究竟是什麼呢？神是一個共同體，是一個三位一體。三位一體告訴我們，上帝是一個團契，一個集體。上帝的創造就是要使宇宙中出現人的共同體，或是共同體的人。上帝要擴大他的共同體，光是聖父，聖子，聖靈的共同體不夠，還是擴大，使人類都進入愛的共同體。用德日進的話來說：‘上帝不是權力意志，上帝是團契意志。’先要理解德日進對上帝的用心的認識，然後我們才能夠理解德日進。

有人要問，上帝是無所不能的，他既然希望要同人有團契，希望世界上出現一種甘心願意同上帝保持團契的人，那麼上帝只要說一句話就可以成功了，為什麼這種人到現在還難於出來？回答是：自覺自願是非常重要的。人要做到同上帝共享團契，首先要自覺自願，如果不是自覺自願，如果是被動的，如果上帝得施加壓力，那甚麼談得上團契呢？譬如說，在《紅色娘子軍》電影裡，人家迫使一個女青年同一塊木頭結了婚，成為這一家的媳婦，一塊木頭放在床上，說是她的丈夫。他們兩個能夠談得上團契嗎？能夠組成共同體嗎？當然不能。上帝發出命令所能得到的最多不過是一個木偶，一個機器人。上帝同機器人是不能夠相愛，建立共同體的。因此，創造不能不是很長很長的歷史過程。德日進不會讚成上帝用六天的時間進行創造，然後就永遠休息了的觀點。這個觀點是同德日進格格不入的。德日進的觀點是，上帝一直在創造，而且還要繼續創造下去。創造的過程是很長很長的，創造的目的就是最後要有一種新的人出來。這種新的人的出現就是保羅書信裡面講的基督裡面的新人到了完成的地步。這是多麼浩大的工程。

我們是人，不是神，所以講整個創造的過程不宜粗不宜細。要很細地講，德日進也沒有講過。在毛主席的詩詞裡，點到唐宗宋祖，成吉思汗等幾個人就代表了中國古代史，至於曹操甚麼樣，乾隆甚麼樣，用不著一個一個去講，至少毛主席的詩詞沒有一個一個都講，粗粗點一下就可以了。德日進的神學也是這種詩詞，橫掃歷史，氣魄雄偉，不很細的工筆劃。

有一點在德日進思想中是很突出的，就是這個創造也是救贖的過程，也是聖化的過程，也是教育的過程。創造，救贖，聖化，教育是合而為一的。

基督教裡有人把三位一體的三位分得很清楚，上帝聖父是創造的主；聖子是救贖的主；聖靈使人成聖。甚至有一種觀點，是從孟他努主義 (Montanism) 這異端開始的，索性把歷史分成三個階段：第一個階段是上帝聖父創造的階段，然後是基督聖子救贖的階段，現在是聖靈的階段。德日進不是這樣分，他強調創造，救贖，聖化的統一。關於三位一體，有人強調三位的分開，很容易把救贖主和創造主對立起來，這樣就會重複早期教會阿里烏 (Arius) 學派的異端。當時教會不得不開一系列會議。教會歷來主要不是強調三位的分立，而是強調三位雖然是三位，但是一個上帝。創造，救贖，聖化這三者是同一上帝一直在進行中的工作的三個方面。

今天有人把自然神學同啓示神學拆開，或者否定自然神學啓示，也要造成同一個不好的後果，就是鄙視創造，在三位一體的第一位和第二位之間形成對立，同時也削弱第三位的作用。

《尼西亞信經》講到聖靈的時候說，‘曾藉著先知訓言。’加上這句話，就足以說明，聖靈早就有了，就是聖靈的先在。基督教強調基督的先在和聖靈的先在。基督不是聖誕夜才從無變有的，聖靈也並不是基督升天之後才從無變有的，基督和聖

靈早就在那裡工作。聖父，聖子，聖靈從創造之前，就在一塊兒工作。提到基督和聖靈的先，是爲了要保護創造，救贖，聖化三者分不開的觀點。

我們知道，德日進和解放神學所代表的，並不是一般的所謂社會福音。從前西方的社會福音是很簡單的，在基督論方面特別簡單：基督是一個偉人，一個教師，我們應該好好向他學習，以他爲我們的榜樣。它沒有一個<新約聖經>的基督觀。而德日進有一個很高的基督觀。他不是只講拿撒勒人耶穌，他時常講到宇宙的基督。這位宇宙的基督<新約>有許多地方是講到的：‘太初有道，道與上帝同在，道就是上帝。這道太初與上帝在。萬物是藉著他造的；凡被造的，沒有一樣不是藉著他造的。’耶穌基督不光是教師，也不光是救贖主，他是參與了創造，萬有不是通過他的話，不可能創造出來，這就是宇宙的基督。<約翰福音>第 8 章第 58 節，第 17 章第 24 節也有這個意思。還有<哥林多前書>第 8 章第 6 節，<以弗所書>第 3 章第 9 至 11 節等等，大家可以自己去看。特別是<歌羅西書>第 1 章第 15 至 20 節值得讀一下：‘愛子是那不能看見之神的像，是首生的，在一切被造的以先。因爲萬有都是靠他造的，無論是天上的，地上的，能看見的，不能看見的，或是有位的，主治的，執政的，掌權的，一概都是藉著他造的，又是爲他造的。他在有以先，萬有也靠他而立。他也是教會全體之首，他是元始，是從死裡首先復生的，使他可以在凡事上居首位。’我從前在做神學生的時候，我們的教師是從來不叫我們背<聖經>的，唯有兩段經文，有一位神學教師希望我們能背得出，這就是一段。另一段就是<希伯來書>第 1 章第 1 至 3 節：‘....早已立他爲承受萬有的；也曾藉著他創造諸世界。他是上帝榮耀所發的光輝，是上帝本體的真像，常用他權能的命令托住萬有。’德日進要我們重新認識這樣一位宇宙的基督，先的基督。

在創造，救贖，聖化的神的手掌底下，歷史究竟是怎麼回事呢？歷史大體上分成這樣三個階段：第一階段是準備有機物的出現。歷史開始是很長很長的時期，神在那裡準備有機物的出現。因爲德日進是一個考古學家，他對這個特別有興趣。他寫的很多東西都有開這個階段，是我們看不大懂的。第二段是從有機體的出現直到人的出現。開始有機體是非常簡單的，分化和個體化的結果是有機體越來越複雜，最後在有機體出現了人。他認爲，人的出現是歷史特別重要的一點。第三階段，就是人的共同體的完成。人是出現了，但是共同體還沒有完成，人與人之間還在那裡鬧矛盾。這一階段要以什麼爲結束呢？要以共同體的完成爲結束，這個是聖靈的聖化工作，也是基督的救贖工作，也是上帝的創造工作。

上帝是父，他的無限權能受到愛的制約。上帝的權能是大的，但是他的愛約束了他的權能的使用。上帝所憧憬的人在萬有之中是一個獨特的，非常高級的品種。上帝與人的關係，不是建築師同大廈的關係，好像建築師在那裡設計了一個圖樣，然後造出一幢樓來，不能用這幢樓同建築師的關係來看人同上帝的關係。也不能說是一隻表，而表的設計者和製造者就是上帝。不是這樣的。上帝同人的關係是父母與子女的關係，是教育和成長的關係。上帝在宇宙中要培養出一個自我來，這將是一個能夠正確地運用自由去進行選擇，因爲如果沒有言自由，就談不到自我。但是因爲這個自我已經認識了上帝的愛，所以他又不願意去作錯誤的選擇。能自覺自願地運用自由來作出正確的選擇，這才自是上帝心目中後來要實現的人，新人。照德日進看，到今天爲止，人是過去的創造或進化的一個半成品，他是今後進一步改造的對象，又是進一步人化的力量。我們在一定的程度上已經有了這個自覺，有點願意同上帝建立共同體。因此，在這個意義上，我們是半成品。儘管我們是半成品，上帝已經要用我們去促進歷史，促進進化，促進創造。這正是半成品成爲成品的過程。

<羅馬書>第 5 章第 15 節有這樣一個意思：恩典勝過罪惡。我們承認人是罪人，我們希望人能夠認識自己是罪人，從而接受基督的救恩。但是我們不把罪說得神乎其神，好像罪天罪地，好像世界上除了罪沒有什麼別的了。按照保羅的這段話，基督裡面的恩典勝過亞當裡面的罪。他是這樣說的：‘過犯不如恩賜。若因一人的過犯，眾人都死了，何況神的恩典與那因耶穌基督一人恩典中的賞賜，豈不更加倍地臨到眾人嗎？’是的，亞當犯罪影響了整個人類，但是基督對整個人類的恩典勝過了亞當的作用。是的，亞當一個人的罪把人類都牽連進去，但是基督一個人的恩惠更加倍地在人們身上起了作用。讓我們注意‘更加倍地’這個副詞，那就是說，起決定作用的是基督的恩典，不是亞當的遺害。現在有的基督徒傳起道來，或者寫起文章來，把亞當在人們身上的烙印說得那麼深，比基督的恩惠的烙印還要深。保羅不是這樣想的。德日進特別強調基督的恩惠。我們整個人類同基督的一體，大大超過人類同亞當的一體。基督給人類的好處大大超過亞當給我們的害處。恩強於罪，新亞當的恩強於老亞當的罪。福音的信息是上帝的愛，是基督的恩典。原罪不是福意。原罪已經伏在基督的原恩之下。

我們在看德日進的神學著作的時候，覺得他要我們作一個過渡，就是從一個較小的，只同教會信眾聯合的基督，過渡到一個很大的，充滿萬有的基督。基督不是光同教會聯合，基督不僅是教會之主而已，基督是那充滿萬有的。德日進要我們過渡到這樣一個認識。這也就是從信與不信為軸心的，局限於救贖論的，比較狹隘的那麼一個神學觀，過渡到認識三位一體上帝的偉大，榮耀，聖善，恩惠，看到上帝在宇宙中的創造，救贖，聖化。

在德日進心目中末世就是這個第三階段的終結。這個由特殊品構成品種的人，就是享有自由而又能正確地作出選擇的人，同上帝和同別人相團契的人，這種人湧現出來了。上帝創造的奇功實現了，上帝滿足了。這一個歷史階段告終了，新耶路撒冷降臨了。這就是人們較能理解的末世觀。而這個末世也是一個新的歷史階段的開始。至於下一個歷史階段是甚樣的，我們無法推測。德日進是這樣說的：‘到一天，在我們能夠管好風雨，潮汐和地心引力之後，我們將為上帝駕馭愛這一能源，那時，人類將像是在世界史上第二次發現火種那樣。’我們知道，第一次發現火種，對人類文化的提高起了多大的作用。我們能夠用火，文化大大地豐富起來了。第二次發現火種是指人類能夠把愛這個能源駕馭好，發揮好，就是能夠自治，自理。達到這一目標的那個點，用德日進的話來說是 **Omega** 點。**Omega** 是希臘字母最後一個。耶穌基督是 **Alpha**，又是 **Omega**，他是創始，又是成終。歷史到了這一點，我們目前這世界是到了終點。這是德日進的末世論。

德日進的思想是很開闊的。他不是在一個小圈子裡轉圈子。他感覺到基督是這個宇宙之主，是歷史的主宰。所以他做人非常坦坦自如。他看到真，善，美的一切，就肯定是基督的，是上帝的。有一次有人帶他到上海玉佛寺，他看到玉佛，喜愛得不得了，盡管他是基督徒。他說，‘我愛玉佛，看見玉佛使我覺得，基督教應該擺脫其地中海的框框，把玉佛的美吸收進去。’我的理解是，玉佛是一個美的作品，裡面積淀了無數人們追求善良和真理的汗水，而一切美的東西不在基督之外，所以基督教應讓加以吸收。梵諦岡就在地中海，他認為，真正的人類的宗教應該脫地中海的局限性，而能夠把廣大的真，善，美的東西吸收進去。難怪梵諦岡要不喜歡德日進，幾十年間不讓發表他的書了。

德日進的英國好友李約瑟(Josheph Needham) 是一個專門研究中國科學史的自然科學家，他是很接近德日進的觀點的。他把德日進的觀點引到現代世界史，在一篇講中國的文章裡，他談了這樣一段話：‘我們沒有任何理由假定，我們西方當

前的文化就是人類組織化的最後成品，就是自然所賦予的最高秩序。有很多根據使我認為，有一種我們所能讚同的集體主義，是人類一種更高級的組織形式，它比西方中產階級國家的文化要高，正像西方中產階級國家的文化要比原始部落文化高一層。從經濟個人主義進到生產資料公有制這一步，好比無生命蛋白質進到活的細胞，或是從原始野蠻生活進到第一個社會生活體一樣重要。這個過渡有進化史的全部事實為其後盾。’他這話反映出他對中國的友好態度。

德日進認為，今天世界上認識基督的人盡管少，但是我們對這個世界，要在升天的基督的光芒裡頭看。這就是說，這個世界的地位已經有了變化。基督的道成肉身和復活升天使這個世界的處境有了變化。基督不但是基督徒的先知、祭司、君王，他更是那首生的、永恆的邏各斯，上帝的聖子，萬有的托住者。

聖靈不但是在教會裡工作，他首先是在世界中工作，教會只不過是世界的一部分。教會是世界上的一個標志，提醒人們想到存在著一個靈性的方面，有一個超在的方面。德日進說，‘我認為，世界不會接受基督教，除非基督教先接受世界，並且把世界的希望加以聖化。’持解放神學觀點的人也好，德日進也好，他們都認為，真正的教會只能是一個小的組織，它是要在世界上起作用的。主耶穌說，你當要在世界上做鹽；他沒有說，你們要把整個世界變成一個大鹽塊。他說，你們是世界上的酵，要使世界這面團發酵，變成麵包；可是耶穌沒有說，把整個世界變成一大塊酵母。因此，真正的教會總是一個比較小的組織。

信與不信是有差別的，不是無所謂的。全世界的人都是天父的創造，但並不是人人都是耶穌的朋友。耶穌基督渴望友誼，但是能夠稱為朋友的是少數。基督徒就是認識神，認識基督的，我們應該比別人對上帝的用心有更深的體會，讓上帝能夠更好地享受同我們團契。但不能說不相信上帝的人就不是上帝的兒女，更不能說他們都是與上帝為敵的。上帝是非常偉大的，以中國來說，他的關心不限於幾百萬基督徒。上帝的氣量是那麼大，以致盡管今天有許多人承認他的存在，不感謝他，上帝不太計較，只為他們可惜，巴不得他們覺地和他相認。上帝不像我們，只知道在信與不信一個問題上做文章。

你們聽得出來，我是有點欣賞德日進的神學觀點的。德日進令我失望的是，他到底是法國文化和法國高等教育的產兒，有他局限性的一面，突出地表現在他的歐洲中心主義。他對西方世界以外的主要興趣在考古。他認為，當代的東方沒有多少可以向全世界提供的價值。他心目中的東方是‘無所作爲’。我國抗戰是偉大的事業，他當時生活在中國，可是對我國民的奮戰的歷史意義，他視而不見，只就戰爭的苦難表示傷感。他對歷史前進的阻力，對罪惡勢力的猖獗，也嫌估計不足。

### 三. 過程神學

進入二十世紀以來，西方人的世界觀發生了重大的變化。原來，在歐幾裡得、伽利略、牛頓等影響下，人們把世界看為穩定的、靜止的。愛因斯坦的相對論和隨之而來的學說指出宏觀世界和微觀世界都在不停地動著，變著。從柏拉圖起，哲學總是談存在(being)，這個存在是靜止的。今天，人們承認，一切——包括最小單位的物質——都是在變動和‘成為’(becoming)之中，連一位毫不接受世界的影響，毫無變更的上帝也難於想像了。辯證法的要點，特別是量變、質變和聯係，已經為越來越多的知識分子所接受。在這樣的思想氣候裡，懷特海(Alfred North Whitehead)提出了過程哲學。這一學派影響到神學，出現了過程神學。‘過程’意味著變動，發展，新陳代謝，肯定事物和現實的根本狀態是這些不是靜止。

過程神學論上帝：

過程神學肯定並且突出上帝是愛。也許有人會說，這是一切神學學派的老生常談，怎麼成了一個學派的第一特點？這裡要求我們細加區別。

懷特海在〈過程與現實〉一書裡指出，傳統的基督教神學實質上總是容易傾向於三種錯誤的上帝觀：把上帝視為‘統治一切的凱撒，或者是嚴峻冷酷的道德家，或是自己不為任何事物所動的推動者。’他認為，被傳統神學忽視的是那‘加利利的遠象’，就是看見上帝為愛。一般教會所推崇的上帝，‘具有屬於凱撒的性格’，‘賦予他以帝國統治者的形象’，或者把他看為‘統極哲學原則’，某種‘存在自身’(being itself)，他以外的一切的一切的終極始因，但絕對不受他以外任何事物的影響。

過程神學思想談上帝的屬性，首先肯定的是他的愛，而他的無所不能，無所不知，自在永在，超過一切，絕對公義等等，都被置於從屬地位。

‘上帝是宇宙的愛者，他不但是始因，而且也是受到事物影響的承受者’（諾曼·比廷格 Norman Pittenger）。舒伯特·奧格鄧帝同世界密切相連。他不但是創造者，他也是接受世界對他作出的反應，並對之作出他的反應。這不否定上帝的超越性，因為上帝的超越並不意味遠離世界或不受世界的影響。超越性意味無窮，意味永久的忠誠，意味能承受惡的刺激，能吸收它，把壞的事物轉化而去為善良服務，去增長善良。懷特海說：‘上帝很在乎事物是怎樣的，事物是怎樣對上帝是能造成這樣或那樣的後果的。’超越性首先意味這宇宙摯愛的無窮無盡，而內在性則是指這個摯愛和整個被創造世界同在。上帝的超越性決不意味他的無動於衷。

如果宗教的上帝不也是宇宙的上帝或世界的上帝，如果這位上帝不能給人一個關於世界的遠象，那麼，他只管宗教，他就不是至高者，他可能只是某些人崇拜的對象而已。

比廷格下面這段話很說明問題：

‘當我閱讀基督教史中一些最偉大的神學家——奧利金，奧古斯丁，阿奎那，路德，加爾文等等——的著作的時候，我在他們每個人身上遇到兩個不同的人物。一方面這個人對上帝有深信，強調上帝的恩受眷顧，反映自己是一個正在受造和成長中的愛者，願意向上帝這位最大的愛者作出好的反應。這是明顯的，感人的。可是同時還有另一個神學觀念存在他們身上，強調上帝的絕對性，人世間諸多事物同上帝的不相關性，以及上帝的不變，他不能感到痛苦，不能有份於人類的遭遇。’本來，系統神學應當使我們自覺地尋找統一的，和諧的神學思想，可是事實上一個人的神學認識內部就會不自覺地存在不少矛盾。

什麼是‘上帝的榮耀’？比廷格是這樣說的：‘一切都是為了上帝更大的榮耀。這個榮耀不是全能的統治者施行權力或自高的帝王輝煌登座的那種。這個榮耀無非是發諸行動的愛，它無私地把自己給予人們，它在恩愛中從人類接受一切有點價值的成就，將這些成就用在世界上，因為在這個世界上，上帝正在工作者，為的是在更大的場合出現更多的善良。’

早期教會有一個‘戴沃乃德斯書信’，其中有這樣一段話，為持過程神學見解的人所欣賞：‘上帝是不是人們所設想的那樣，差遣他來...他願意藉著說服而不藉著強迫來拯救人。使用強力不是上帝進行工作的辦法。他差遣他來愛，不是來審判。上帝顯出他實在是人類的朋友。他不恨我們，不趕走我們，對我們毫無惡意。’

哈特桑 (Charles Hartshorne) 寫過一本書名是〈神的相對性〉的書，這是針對傳統神學單單強調神的絕對性而寫的。‘在上帝的生命的每一時刻，世界上都在發生新的，事先不知道的事情。上帝的具體知識得隨從人們世事作出的決定。上帝的

具體知識和世界保持內在的聯係，因而他的‘知’是相對的’考勃 Cobb 和格里芬 Griffin: <過程神學初解>).

人世所發生的事並不是每件都由上帝決定的. 由於他尊重人的自由, 他決定不了的事可多呢. 基督所彰顯的上帝不能不是這樣的上帝. 上帝是愛. 只有團契才能滿足愛. 只有有自由才談得上團契. 只有既能作出好的抉擇, 又能作出壞的選擇, 才是真的自由. 這樣, 上帝的全能和全知就接受了限制.

一位畫家出一張好畫之前, 天上也好, 神的頭腦裡也好, 都沒有這樣一張先在的畫掛著. 盡管顏色, 形式, 畫家的潛在能力, 這些都是上帝的創造和賜予, 但是這張畫是畫家的自由創造. 不管他信與不信, 神照樣尊重已經屬於他的自由.

爲了便於理解, 懷特海設想上帝有他的原始性格和他的後有性格. 前者存在在創造之前和創造之外, 是不受限制和沒有變化的. 它永恆, 絕對, 獨立於世界. 後者是他向世界認同的部分. 它是面向世界的, 相對的, 被影響的, 一直有變化的. 在後者的範圍內, 上帝受到我們所作反應的影響, 也參與被造秩序中的快樂和悲痛.

根據以上介紹, 我想大家能夠同意, 懷特海等對上帝是愛的肯定, 是有其特殊內容的.

論基督: 也許是在基督論方面, 中國信徒會認爲過程主義頗嫌單薄. 可是我們將會發現, 一個宇宙性的愛是可以容納而不是排斥一個宇宙性的基督的, 它也可以容納關於基督救贖的觀點.

過程主義承認, 基督啓示了上帝, 但強調, 這一啓示不是對其他真理的否定, 而是給予它們以深度.

比廷格說: ‘上帝的作爲不限於 (confined to) 耶穌基督, 而是被他所說明 (defined by).’他反對基督教中某一個把道成肉身進入世界說成神的一次‘救援的遠征’, 好像除了基督道成肉身之外, 上帝就不在世界似的, 因而他的進入簡直是他突然到了一個此前上市還沒有到臨過的地方. 他還說, ‘就我來說, 基督的終極性就在於把上帝作爲受苦的, 拯救的, 感動極深的摯愛作出了決定性的顯示. 什麼也不能比這個更具終極性了. 但是, 存在著若干其他可能的途徑, 預示, 輪廓, 準備.’他說, ‘基督論不帶排斥一切的特質. 如果基督中心主義被理解爲只能在耶穌身上才看得見神的實在, 因而把他全然看爲上帝和世界關係史上的一個反常的變態, 那麼, 在懷特海的上帝觀中是沒有這種基督中心主義的. 在那更廣泛的關係中, 耶穌只能是一個具有集中性, 代表性的典型, 一個最說明事實的點, 而不是一個絕對獨特, 任何其他事物都不能同他相提並論的點, 以致他的來到世間, 竟然事先在人間毫無準備, 比晴天霹靂更沒有先兆和期待, 同先於他的和後於他的一切都毫無連續.

對人們在道成肉身之前和之外的看見, 探索, 認識和對神的活動和同在的反應, 道成肉身不是否定其一切, 而是, 用湯朴 (William Temple) 的話來說: 提供一個‘糾正和提高’. 正是基督才能對啓示其他方面的關於上帝的一切加以糾正, 成全, 使之達到頂峰.

關於人的使命:

懷特海認爲人的使命或‘真正的命運’是在‘創造過程中成爲參與者’, ‘成爲宇宙中創造者的同工’.

人們都是‘正在受造和成長中的愛者’, ‘因此是有限的, 有缺點的, 但正在成長的路途上, 日益學會有份於宇宙的摯愛, 後者正是上帝他自己, ---按衛斯理的一首讚美詩的說法—他的‘性格和名字’就是愛’ (比廷格).

海德格爾 (Heidegger) 認為，每個人的孤單是他的終極的實在，默念死的孤單是他得到自我實現的不二途徑。懷特海不同意這個觀點，認為我們首先存在於人的共同體之中，在其中得到我們的相對獨立性。參與和個性不是相克而是相輔相成的。我們的個性越得到發展，我們越能豐富共同體的內容。

作為與神同工的創造者，人雙手的作為的意義不是虛無的。比廷格這一段話值得推敲：‘為人類解放而投入的一切努力，以及這些努力的一切成就，在上帝裡面必然不會失落，而是會安全的，即會得到保存的。上帝不但是最初最根本的創造者，他也是一切後果的最後的接受者。上帝珍視世間人們所行的善，他能夠也必然利用這個善，使善得到更多發揮。他正在進行努力，要從受造秩序中即便頑梗得很的原料中引出和諧來，使多種多樣的有意義的對比和區別，不會導致無意義的破壞性的衝突。對任何一個真正獻身的基督徒來說，為這一目的而努力，像依納爵·羅耀拉 (Ignatius Loyola) 說的那樣‘除了知道這是神的旨意之外’，不求任何其他好處，這就夠了。’

他認為，惡主要是拒不前進，在一個社會性的宇宙中拒不合作。它是自我中心地滿足於現狀，也是故意作出那低於至善的抉擇。還特海說過：‘保守主義者是在反對宇宙的實質。’

懷特海在<成長中的宗教>一書中指出，就原始宗教來說，‘你尋求上帝的旨意是為了得到他的保佑；’在一個高級的宗教，‘你尋求神的善良是為了能像他。’

這一切具有永恆價值。

比廷格說：‘人的記憶是片面的。很多有價值的事都會忘記。上帝的記憶是永恆的，可靠的。受造世界中發生的一切都保存在他的知識之中。沒有什麼被忘記，沒有什麼被當作垃圾，被丟入空虛深淵之中。連罪惡也不是簡單地丟去，而是得到改變，使之成為善的原料。’他引用本紀初美國詩人禮查·荷韋 (Richard Hovey) 的一段詩：

上帝說，到一天你將會消失，  
但你今晚所有的快樂和感動，  
我將珍愛存在心頭，  
即便諸世界都不再存在。’

比廷格還說：‘我們生命中好的，高尚的，有價值的東西，在我們死後將由上帝取去，放在他永恆的現之中。他記得我們。’

懷特海說：‘人由於參與創造過程，就有份於上帝的事業，這一有份就是他的不灭。在宇宙中作為與神同工的創造者，這是人的尊嚴和華美。’

以上是對過程神學的一個粗線條介紹。我希望大家看到一個輪廓，看到一些特點。

#### 四. 結語

讓我再說，光憑自己原來的觀點，去評判別人，說他們多麼離經叛道，那不是我們神學研究的首要目的。應當研究的是：他們企圖解決什麼問題？我有沒有考慮過這些問題？我所持守的觀點是怎樣對待這些問題的？能否說我的對待能更好地照顧到諸多方面的因素？

世界神學學派很多，其中相當部分同我們格格不入，如果研究，不過是增長知識，不值得加以吸收。像解放神學，德日進的神學，過程神學，我認為有值得我們

參考和吸收的東西。做今天中國的神學生和從事神學建設工作的人，必須懂得鑒別，有批評，有吸取，這樣才能為自傳服務。

有些神學承認事物在變動中，並且把這種變動看為同上帝的聖愛和創造相關聯，這就使這一神學學派同世界上期待變革的人有了共同語言。我們中國是個變化極快極大，尚待變革的事物也是極多的國家，人們寄希望於改革。處在這樣一個環境中進行神學建設，在大方向上必然會同過程神學以及解放神學和德日進等人的神學比較合拍。我們可以從它們得到一定的啟發。

從今天一直到上帝旨意中的人類共同體的最後完成是一個長的過程，其間有許多環節。關於中間環節，據我所知，德日進和過程神學家們沒有說過什麼。在他們的思想體系裡，這些是空白點。他們對資本主義有一定反感，他們也預見變革的來臨，可是怎樣變和以什麼來代替，他們沒有提出什麼見解。因此，他們一面由於強調變而不受那些力求保持現狀的既得利益者的歡迎，另一面也未免使要求變革的人們失望。據我所知，德日進至死停留在那個階段上，有些過程神學家則對這一點已經有所察覺。約翰·考勃的〈過程神學和政治神學〉一書可以說在這一點有所突破。

解放神學很強調實踐。求解放就是當前的實踐，其具體內容就是反對帝國主義，反對專制，實現獨立自主的人民政權，有的則還包括反對資本主義，憧憬社會主義。有人以為做基督徒不應反對任何東西，那等於是說，基督徒要無是無非，沒有愛憎。保羅·蒂利希 (Paul Tillich) 說過：‘消除違反愛的事物，這正是愛的一項奇特的工作。’

就中國而論，要求變革是和上述三神學派別共同的，但是就反帝反封建反官僚資本主義和結束剝削的解放任務來說，我們已經處於解放之後的階段，即歷史發展的下一階段。在這一階段已經可以，因此也應當，不再以階級鬥爭為綱。

在歷史的這一環節，我們是建設社會主義。作為一個社會制度，社會主義比資本主義更能體現愛。

資本主義保護生產資料的私人所有，保護剝削，使廣大勞動人民的命運操在資本家的手裡，使中國等少數國家之外的廣大第三世界國家人民的命運操在跨國公司和它們的政治代表手裡。資本家為了同其他資本集團競爭以求維持自己，即便有好良心也不由自主地麻木了。

由於歷史的重擔和各方面的壓力阻力，實現社會主義理想是個艱難的過程。但是它排除剝削，走向各盡所能，按勞分配，使人類達到前所未有的公平程度。把愛普及到大眾，這就是社會主義的目的。社會主義是大規模的愛，有組織的愛，形成為社會制度的愛。

公平，公義，正義——這些不是愛的對立面，這些都仍舊是愛應有的內容。當我們不僅僅在一個小範圍裡實行愛，當我們把愛合理地分配給大眾的時候，愛就取得了公平，公義，正義的形式。

今天，中國還沒有很好地，充分地實現愛。這本來是個艱巨的事業，但是社會主義初級階段為完成這一步社會制度上提供了保證。

這個事業是值得基督徒為之努力的。愛不是一男一女互相欣賞，我看著你，你看著我；愛是他們面對同一方向，一起看著前方，一起迎著困難邁步向前。這樣的愛足以使人們互相鼓舞，互相激勵，互相扶持，同成為神的創造工程中的同工。



## **Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin – K.H. Ting**

I would like to introduce to you students several schools of theology current abroad which may be of some value for us.

In order to enable you to understand a school of theology, I have to bring it into an encounter with the current state of Chinese theological thinking, point out some of its special features and moreover, simplify it as far as possible. In doing this it is difficult to avoid a certain measure of one-sidedness and oversimplification, which is not entirely fair to a school of theology. This is the first point you need to be aware of.

A second reminder is this: in studying theology we need to guard against labelling other people, saying this one is "spiritual" or "of the spirit" while that one is not; this one is "orthodox" and that one "unorthodox." It is easy to set oneself up as judge, but this is of no benefit to the formation, enrichment or progress of one's own theological thinking. This is the attitude of one who is not open to self improvement. When you hear something you do not quite understand, don't immediately condemn. You should make an effort to understand: what is it after all which makes this person raise this argument? What problem does he or she hope to resolve by so doing? Do you have an answer to this question yourself? What is it? That is to say, do not be quick to judge. You must be a listener, you must engage in dialogue. We cannot demand perfection of a new idea. We must be sympathetic, enter into the other's system and see the good intentions behind that system's efforts to answer questions. Of course it is quite all right to disagree with an argument, but we must first understand it well, know what it is saying and what it is not saying. We should not twist or exaggerate it. To begin in this way or to frame an argument in a ridiculous way in order to attack it, are methods unworthy of any theologian or any scholar.

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Liberation theology began in Latin America, primarily in Roman Catholic circles. It has been influential in both North America and Asia and has even had a marked influence among evangelicals. China seems to be one of the few places on the entire globe where Latin American liberation theology has had the least influence.

Liberation theology emphasizes the exodus in the Bible. The exodus is an extremely important event by which God acts in the history of the Hebrews. He hears the cries of the Hebrew people in the midst of their suffering and enables them, after a struggle, to escape Egypt and gain liberation. So many books of the Old Testament tell us that throughout all the years following the exodus, the Israelites, the Jews, have always returned to this event. "God has done a great thing for us." The great thing of this phrase almost always refers to the exodus. The exodus event left a very deep imprint on the Hebrew nation.

Besides the emphasis on the exodus, another Biblical passage which liberation theology makes particular use of is the Magnificat of Mary beginning in Luke 1:46: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,... he has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." Another passage frequently quoted is Jesus' words in the synagogue in Nazareth found in Luke 4: "...preach good news to the poor,... proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Still another is Matthew 25: 31-46, which speaks of the final judgment based on our treatment of the lowliest of humanity.

An especially important idea of liberation theology is its belief that God is not "unbiased" or "impartial." The partiality of God is directed to the poor; God sides with the poor. The most representative of the liberation theologians is the Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez, who wrote the book titled simply "Liberation Theology," making him the first to raise the banner of liberation theology. He noted that traditional theology focuses its attention on non-believers, while ignoring non-persons. Traditional theology is insensitive to these people. He asks what significance it can have to say to one who leads the life of a non-person, "you are a child of God." This theologian is even more concerned about the poor of this world, the cast-offs, the alienated, those trodden underfoot by others; these are people who lead a less than human life. He feels that theology should be concerned about these people and not focus its attention exclusively upon non-believers. He believes that the exodus expresses God's partiality for the poor of this earth.

Some of the terminology of liberation theology is now current in international theological circles. One of these terms is praxis. At times this term refers to the general practice of the people, sometimes it refers to the Christian's practice under the guidance of theology. Liberation theology has no high esteem for the greater part of systematic theology. It proposes that one may gain more of the stuff of which theological thinking is formed through practice.

Liberation theology emphasizes that it is a theology of the world; it advocates entering into the world. Gutierrez says that the central theological problem is not life after death, but life after birth. Whether one goes to heaven or hell after death is not the central theological question. The central theological problem should be the human world, how to enable people to live a life of human dignity after birth.

Many liberation theologians oppose developmentalism. There are some in the world who are continually speaking of the development of the nations of the third world, or their opening up, but these people do not speak of liberation. Liberation theology believes that the problems of Latin America and the rest of the third world are not primarily those of opening up to outside interests or of development, but of a fundamental transformation of the social system. The more these countries open themselves to foreign capital investment, the greater becomes their dependency on foreign countries. The Brazilian Archbishop Helder Camara has said, "A man can give aid to an individual and be called a saint, but let him appeal for justice and he may be called a subversive." They feel that in this twentieth century the greatest love lies in creating a just society. They say that the real question is not development but independence. Lack of independence carries with it oppression and every type of suffering, so the point of departure for the people must be the search for liberation and not the increase in the average annual per capita income.

There are many schools within liberation theology, and at least a portion of those would say explicitly that the use of violence cannot be avoided at times, because the oppressors make use of a great deal of violence to maintain their control, and this means that those opposed to that control are forced to use violence in overthrowing the system. At least several score of liberation theology priests have been violently murdered by the conservative forces in Latin America, or have been assassinated in the social struggle. These events have forced the people to consider the question of using violence to repay violence.

Liberation theologians do their utmost to maintain normal relations with church authorities and the upper strata of the Catholic Church hierarchy. They have established many basic Christian communities outside church buildings. In such small gatherings, the priest comes to celebrate the mass, to pray and to read the Bible together with all the others. At times each one takes a turn to speak, to say what insight he or she gained from reading the Bible. I have read three books in which these ordinary fishermen, workers and peasants have spoken one by one after taking part in the mass and reading the Bible lesson. This is a form of organization which liberation theology has produced.

Liberation theology represents a type of Biblical hermeneutic and method. When we study the Bible, we all like to know what the historical background of a book or passage is. We realize that the more we know about the historical background, the more we are able to understand the text. Liberation theology is not at all opposed to researching the background, but they say that this is not always very productive. We have no way to rediscover the background of many things in the Bible. What is important, they feel, is to understand what light has accumulated as this passage passed from generation to generation, from one group of Christians to another. For example, when we study the Old Testament Book of Exodus, we must know not only the historical background, but how Hebrews and Christians have understood it, how they have accepted it throughout the many years through which it has come down to us. Such knowledge is precious. That is to say, that when we read a passage in the Bible today, we must be aware that this passage has gained its significance as a property of the Catholic Church. Much light which has come down through history is stored up there, and we must add it to our own knowledge. When we read the Bible today, we also bring new light to it. Even the communal discoveries of little-educated fishermen and farmers within their basic Christian communities are precious. As I understand it, liberation theologians lay a great deal of stress upon reading the Bible with a democratic spirit. And this is a point which we also stress.

With regard to propagating the gospel, they believe that the mission of the church is not simply to bring Christ to the people. Christ was sent by the Father and continually comes into the world and works through the Holy Spirit at times and in places he himself chooses. Therefore, the mission of the church is not to bring Christ into a Christ-less world but to recognize Christ where he is at work and then bring this recognized Christ and his actions to the poor as the good news. The mission of the church is primarily to proclaim to the people the acceptable year of the Lord. Due to the subordination of all things to the incarnate, risen Christ, Christ is already in the world. The church, relying on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, recognizes Christ, and then, like the disciple whom Jesus loved, points out: "It is the Lord." The church's duty to bear witness lies in pointing out the actions of the Lord. This being the case, propagation of the gospel is not only bringing Christ to the poor, but discovering Christ in the poor. It is not only bringing Christ to people, but bringing Christ out of people, because there is already a bit of Christ in the people of this world. Bringing Christ out of them is also propagating the gospel.

There are those among liberation theologians who do not set a high value on the ecumenical movement. One of them puts it this way, "It would be necessary that the myth of the Christian community disappear, for it prevents the recognition of the division of society into classes and the recognition of class struggle." Gutierrez calls the ecumenical movement "a marriage between senior citizens." He, of course, is being humorous. He further says that the church cannot be united until humanity is united. This view is one we Chinese Christians can somehow appreciate. We believe that the sign of the church should first be holiness, and next "oneness," or "catholicity." To raise "oneness" to an inappropriately high level, and make everything serve "oneness" often confuses right and wrong.

The influence of liberation theology has reached to many places throughout the world, and has produced some radical schools of theology, black theology in the U.S. for example, which is an expression of liberation theology in North America. Women in capitalist society feel that they are oppressed and feminist theology, which believes that women have a particular sensitivity to the truth of Christianity, has been inspired by liberation theology. Women have been repressed for thousands of years and now demand liberation. Following liberation, they will be able to make a unique contribution to the richness of Christ. Opposed to paternalism, feminist theology's proposals have included women preachers and women's ordination.

Liberation theology says little about international political problems, so I cannot speak of its position on the Soviet Union or on China. They are very sympathetic to Cuba because they feel that Cuba represents liberation, and they have expressed some friendliness towards China. Gutierrez has given a talk especially on China in which he was very affirmative of New China. When books on liberation theology mention those nations which have already achieved liberation, China is sometimes mentioned in addition to Cuba. I have not seen any mention of the Soviet Union. Liberation theology does not seem to oppose the Soviet Union, but neither does it endorse it. Its critiques of the U.S. and of western capitalism are many.

When liberation theology appeared in the 1960's, people saw it as simply one school among many. When the Latin American Bishops' Conference met at Medellin in 1968, liberation theologians were invited as consultants and the resolutions which emerged from the conference used a great deal of liberation theology terminology. This was not due to any endorsement of liberation theology on the part of many bishops, but because the bishops relied on a group of theologians to draft their statements. The Medellin Conference documents are a concentrated expression of liberation theology views. The materials were distributed around the globe and many theologians endorsed them; an even greater number opposed them. Ten years later the Latin American Bishops' Conference met again in Puebla. Pope John Paul II personally attended this meeting. He did not dare express his opposition to liberation theology because it was already quite prevalent among the people. But neither, it seems, was he willing to allow liberation theology to continue to enlarge the scope of its influence, so his comments were equivocal. The public's criticism was that the Pope had come to cast a chill on the proceedings. Let me quote two of the Pope's comments. The first is "Priests are not social workers." The meaning of this remark is quite clearly unfavourable to liberation theology. The other is, "Class struggle is not a path to social order." It is the present "social order" he wishes to maintain.

Many liberation theology priests took part in the uprising in which Nicaragua overthrew its fascist overlords and established a democratic regime. Today, three state ministers of Nicaragua are priests; one is foreign minister, another is minister of culture. The head of the National Campaign to Eliminate Illiteracy Committee is also a priest. The Pope wanted them to resign, saying that priests could not participate in government. After a priest serving as an American congressman obeyed orders to resign the Pope could deal more easily with the priests in Nicaragua. But according to reports the Nicaraguan priests have refused to resign. They say that in principle, it is undoubtedly correct that priests should not participate in government, but that in special circumstances there should be exceptions. One priest said that in normal circumstances a priest should not go to work as a driver, but when the revolutionary movement required it, he did drive a truck.

Foreign friends frequently ask: "What is the attitude of Chinese Christians toward liberation theology?" We support liberation, we also value theology. We feel that theology should be liberated from the old traditions, from the fetters imposed upon it by capitalist society. This we advocate wholeheartedly. Liberation theology marshals a great quantity of facts to expose the darkness's of society - colonialism, imperialism, etc. - and it plays a great enlightening role. We Chinese Christians appreciate the Latin American liberation theologians' desire to transform the social system. They advocate that theology be more in dialogue with social science and less in conversation with philosophy and we also find this very good. As for the partiality of God, that God certainly does discriminate between rich and poor, it was enlightening for us Chinese Christians in our reading of the Bible that liberation theology pointed this out. Liberation theology is such a good thing that it hurts us not to be able to endorse it in its entirety. But in the final analysis, many Chinese Christians believe that the eternal theme for Christianity and its theology should not be political liberation as this is a duty limited to a certain period, but should rather be

reconciliation of humanity with God. If we do not have this reconciliation between God and humanity but only liberation as our theme, this is not good enough. Even though we in China have already been liberated for over thirty years, many Christians feel it would be very difficult to make this turn in our faith. Reconciliation between God and humanity is the eternal theme of Christian theology. Under this theme there will certainly be discussion of social and political liberation. The latter cannot be easily denied, but they are not the main theme. China has experienced political liberation, but the question of reconciliation between God and humanity still exists. Some liberation theologians give a broad meaning to "liberation," and this is fine in our view, but some do not. One professor puts it thus in one of his essays: "I still contend that the gospel is identical with the liberation of poor people from socio-political oppression." He says it is "identical," he does not say "supports," if he had said "supports," we could agree; if he had said "includes," that would also be good; "requires," would also be fine. But he says "identical," identifying the gospel with social and political liberation. We have reservations about this.

Since liberation in our country, there have been significant changes and improvements in people's lives. There have also been great changes and improvements in people's spirits. We all welcome these things very much. But the changes we see in China cannot be equated with becoming the new being in Christ of which Paul speaks in his letters. Liberation is extremely important, but liberation does not engage, let alone solve, the question of reconciliation with God. Augustine once said that God has put into our hearts restlessness, so we can not find rest until we find it in God. Under any social system there are many who yearn for this type of rest. We must not lump this kind of rest together with political liberation.

Liberation theology speaks of God's partiality for the poor. There is enlightenment here. But the poor are not the Messiahs of the world, as if it was only necessary to liberate the poor and they could then liberate the world. We Chinese Christians do not see it this way. It is right that we should sympathize with and support the poor. The poor are more disposed to accept the truth of revolution. This is true. But the difficulties in social transformation and the ending of poverty are not to be overlooked. We must not idealize or absolutise the poor. We Chinese people want to improve our living standards but we are not egalitarians. Rigid insistence that everyone's material conditions improve simultaneously and all equally, - if the per capita income for the entire population is 500 yuan, then each one must receive 500 yuan, no individual should receive 1000 yuan, - this kind of egalitarianism does not work. We do want to grow richer, but there will always be some who grow richer first, some later. If the poor are liberators because of their poverty, then the landlords of the past, once their land had been appropriated and they had become poor, might also become the force for revolution. Those who had been poor to begin with and had now benefited through their labour and become rich first would then become targets of revolution. Is this not the same old doctrine of "perpetual revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat"? We have had a taste of this during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. Society was thrown into chaos. In pre-liberation society, as a general rule, the poor were often the oppressed, the rich often the oppressors. It has been this way for the most part, but we cannot define revolution as the poor opposing the rich. The laws by which societies develop are not so simple. Particularly since once the people have stood up and gained liberation and live under a people's government, to call once more for the poor to oppose the rich leads to social chaos. This is to damage the very cause of the people themselves. After the problems of imperialist aggression, land reform and the ownership of the means of industrial production have been solved, we need stability and unity in order to raise the standard of living, that is, to allow the people to make the transition from poverty to wealth, though not uniformly.

We need to remind ourselves that, in spite of their poverty, the poor may have accepted quite a lot of the ideology of the ruling classes. They are not necessarily the most conscientized section of the population. We should not idolize the poor. More often than not, it is not the poor themselves who produce the correct theory. It is often only those comparatively better off intellectuals who live in more stable conditions who are able to develop revolutionary theory.

Although Chinese Christians, situated politically in a post liberation situation, have these reservations about liberation theology, we yet believe that liberation theology is a great and new thing in the history of Christianity. It is without peer, surpassing many traditional systematic theologies. I treasure it greatly, and have little sympathy for certain people who oppose it.

Is liberation theology a ploy or a plot on the part of the ruling classes to lure people from Marxism to religion? No. In Latin America for the most part, Marxism has not yet arrived. For Protestants and Catholics in the third world, Marxism does not have a great deal of drawing power. Liberation theology leads religious believers from an endurance of suffering to reality, to consciousness and to struggle. Its twenty odd years of history are evidence that it is not leading the masses from struggle to compliance.

Those who like to equate religion with opium in dealing with any religious phenomenon feel rather awkward faced with liberation theology. To say that religion is opium is truly an oversimplification. A person under the soporific influence of opium would not advocate liberation, initiate struggle or sacrifice his or her life in the revolutionary cause. If liberation theology were nothing more than opium, it would not have been necessary for the Pope to go to Latin America to put a damper on it, nor would the reactionary South African government need to oppose black theology on such a grand scale, nor confiscate its publications. I think a more scientific attitude would be to undertake a careful analysis of all the various types of religious phenomena, and to recognize that some religious phenomena are better than others, rather than viewing them as a monolith.

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Teilhard de Chardin was a French archaeologist and a Jesuit priest. He spent many years in China doing archaeological work, taking part in the discovery of Peking Man. He stayed in the Chinese interior all during the Sino-Japanese War and died in the 1950's in the U.S.

If liberation theology has something in common with Chairman Mao's "Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan," then I feel that Teilhard's theology somewhat resembles Mao's poetry. For example, like that of Mao's "Northland Scenes", his language is spare but his vision broad, painting for us a magnificent picture.

His theological vision, like that of liberation theology, is not limited to the question of belief and unbelief. Some theologies revolve back and forth around the belief/unbelief axis. Like that of Teilhard, liberation theology certainly does not deny the distinction between the two, but their field of theological vision is much broader, surpassing this question.

As I understand it, Teilhard wants us to see the grand purpose behind God's creation along with the whole process of that undertaking. This is what he wants us to set our sights on. Some may ask, what is left of our Christianity if we do not circle round the question of belief and unbelief or of salvation? Teilhard says, the riches of Christian faith are many. It does not merely deal with that one question.

In Teilhard's view, human history is not the whole of history. History begins with the first moment of creation and continues till its end. For the greater part of historical time, there was no humanity. Humans are but animals which have appeared within the "last few

moments" of this long history. According to Teilhard, all of history or the whole of time is the history of God working to realize his goal.

Let us set humanity and the issue of belief and unbelief aside for the moment and turn our attention to God.

What is God's purpose? It is to bring creation to the emergence of a partner. This partner whom God yearns to create would put off all baseness, would be a person in the image of God. What then is the image of God? God is a community, a trinity. The concept of trinity tells us that God is a group, a collective. Thus, God's creation must lead to a human community in the universe, or a communal people. God wants to enlarge his community. The community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not enough. It must be enlarged, to enable all humanity to enter. In Teilhard's words, "God is not will-to-power but will-to-fellowship." We must first focus our attention on God, only then will we be able to understand Teilhard.

People say God is omnipotent. If then he desires humanity to be united to him, a humanity wholeheartedly willing to maintain this unity with God to appear on the earth, then God has only to say the word and it will be done. Why then has it been so difficult for such a humanity to be realized? The answer is that consciousness and free will are extremely important. If humanity wants to attain the enjoyment of this unity with God, it must first have consciousness and free will. If these are not present, if humanity is passive, then how can we speak of unity? For example, in the film "The Red Detachment of Women," a young woman was urged to marry a piece of wood representing her deceased fiancé, to put it in the bed and say it was her husband. Could those two be said to be united in any way? Could they become any kind of community? Of course not. The most God could gain by command would be a piece of wood, a machine or a robot. There could be no mutual love between God and a robot, no community could be established. Therefore, creation cannot be other than a very long historical process. Teilhard could not agree with the view that God undertook creation within six days and then rested forever. Such a viewpoint is completely out of tune with his own. His view is that God creates continually and that he will continue to do so. The process of creation is a very long one, with the eventual appearance of a new humanity as its goal. The appearance of this new humanity coincides with the completion of the new being in Christ which Paul spoke of in his letters. What a vast process it is.

We are humans, not gods. When we speak of the whole process of creation it is not easy for us to describe in detail, we speak in generalities. Teilhard has not spoken in great detail either. In his poems, Chairman Mao touches upon the Tang and Song dynasties, using a few people to represent ancient Chinese history. It is not necessary to describe the characters of Ts'ao Ts'ao or Ch'ien Lung one by one. At least Chairman Mao does not do this, a sketchy reference is enough to evoke the response. Teilhard's theology is this kind of poetry, sweeping through history, vast and daring, not an exercise in the detailed brushwork of traditional Chinese painting.

One point is most prominent in Teilhard's thinking. It is that creation is not only a process of creation; it is also a process of salvation, a process of sanctification and a process of education. Creation, salvation and sanctification are joined together as one.

Some Christians tend to make a clear and sharp distinction among the three persons of the trinity. God the Father is the Creator; the Son is the Savior; the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. There is even a view, which began with the Montanist heresy, which simply divides history into three periods: the first period is that of the creation by God the Father, then comes the period of salvation by the Son, while the present is the period of the Holy Spirit. Teilhard does not play up these distinctions. He emphasizes the unity of creation, salvation and sanctification. The separation of the three persons sometimes easily leads to setting the lord of salvation in opposition to the creator. This can lead to a renewal of the Arian heresy of the early church which had to be dealt with in a series of Councils.

Historically, the church has not emphasized the three persons as separate. Rather the emphasis has been that, although there are three persons, there is one God. Creation, salvation and sanctification are three aspects of the ongoing work of the one God.

To separate nature from revelation or to deny natural revelation lead to the same bad result, that is, to debase creation, to form an opposition between the first and second persons of the trinity, and at the same time to weaken the role of the third.

When the Nicene Creed mentions the Holy Spirit, it says "through the word of the prophets." The purpose of this is to indicate the pre-existence of the Holy Spirit. Christianity emphasizes the pre-existence of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. Christ did not first pass from nothingness to existence on Christmas eve, nor did the Holy Spirit first pass from nothingness into existence after Christ's ascension. Christ and the Holy Spirit had been at work long before. Right from the beginning, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were working together. It is in order to safeguard the inseparability of creation, salvation and sanctification that mention is made of the pre-existence of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We know that the gospel represented by Teilhard and liberation theology is not that of the usual so-called social gospel. Formerly the social gospel in the west was quite simple and its Christology was particularly simple: Christ was a great man, a great teacher. We should learn from him and use him as our model. It did not have a New Testament Christology, while Teilhard has a very highly developed one. He does not only speak of Jesus the Nazarene, he often speaks of the Cosmic Christ. This Cosmic Christ is mentioned in numerous places in the New Testament. Verses 1-3 of the first chapter of the gospel of John are as follows: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Jesus Christ was not only a teacher, nor was he only a savior, he participated in creation. And without him, was not anything made. This is the Cosmic Christ. This idea is also found in John 8:58 and 17:24, in I Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 3:9-11, etc.; all these you can look up yourselves. Colossians 1:15-20 is particularly worthy of attention: "He (the beloved Son) is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent." When I was a student, our professors never told us to memorize the Bible, but there were two verses which one theology professor hoped we would memorize; this was one of them, the other was Hebrews 1: 1-3: ... (a Son) whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power." Teilhard wants us to become reacquainted with such a Cosmic Christ, the pre-existent Christ.

What then is history in the palm of the creator, saviour and sanctifier God? In general, it is divided into the following three periods: first is the stage preparatory to the appearance of organic life. At the start of history, there were no organisms at all. This first stage was a very long one. God was preparing the way for organisms. Because Teilhard was an archaeologist, he was particularly interested in this and he wrote much on this period which I do not understand very well. The second period lasted from the appearance of organisms until the advent of humankind. It was again a long process. Organisms gradually divided, subdivided and grew more complex until humanity appeared. In the beginning organisms were extremely simple. Through division, subdivision and increasing complexity, the human being was finally produced of these organisms. He (Teilhard) felt that humanity's appearance was an especially significant point in history. The third phase will be the achievement of human community. Humanity has appeared but the community is not yet accomplished. Contradictions still erupt among



people. What will bring this stage to an end? The realization of community. This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the saving work of Jesus Christ and the creation work of God.

God is the Father, but his unlimited power is restricted by love. God's omnipotence is great, but his love binds the use of that omnipotence. The human being God awaits is of a genre unique among all creation, of a superior standard. The relationship between God and the human being is not that of architect to building, as when an architect draws up a plan and later a building is made. We cannot look at the relationship between God and humanity in these terms. Likewise, we cannot say that the human being is a clock whose designer or maker is God. It is not thus. The relationship between God and humanity is that of parent to child, one of education and growth. God wants to foster a self in the midst of the universe, one which will be capable of correctly practicing the freedom of choice. As a self, naturally it should have freedom and be able to choose freely, because without this freedom, we could not speak of a self. However because this self already knows God's love it would not be willing to choose wrongly. Only the conscious and voluntary use of freedom to make the correct choice is the mark of a humanity desirable in God's eyes, the new being. Up to the present, according to Teilhard, we are a half-finished product of past creation or evolution, an object needing further transformation, or further humanization. We already have this consciousness to some extent; we are in some degree willing to establish a community with God. Therefore, in this sense, we are half-finished products. In spite of this, God wants to use us to advance history, evolution and creation. This is the process by which half-finished products are tempered.

In Romans 5:15 we find the following idea: the free gift surpasses the trespass. We acknowledge that the human being is a sinner. We hope that the human being will be able to know himself or herself as a sinner and through this accept the saving power of Christ. But we do not speak of sin as something terribly overwhelming, blowing it out of all proportion, as if there were nothing in the world but sin. According to this passage from Paul, the free gift in the grace of Jesus Christ far surpasses the sin in Adam. He puts it this way, "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." Yes, Adam's sin affected the whole of humanity, but the grace of Christ for all humanity was victorious over the effect of Adam's sin. Yes, the sin of the one man Adam implicated all of us, but the grace of the one Christ played an even greater role. Let us pay attention to this word "abounded". This means that the decisive factor is the grace of Jesus Christ, not the tarnished legacy of Adam. When some Christians evangelize or write essays today, they speak of the brand of Adam on humankind as if it were extremely profound indeed, more so than the mark of the grace of Christ. Our whole humanity is in solidarity with Christ and this far surpasses our oneness with Adam. The benefit Christ brings to humanity far surpasses the harm of Adam. Grace is greater than sin. The grace of the new Adam is stronger than the sin of the old Adam. Because of this, the message of the gospel is God's love, Christ's grace. Original sin is not the gospel. Original sin has already bowed down under Christ's original grace.

When we read Teilhard's theological works, we feel he wants us to become involved in a process, that is, to pass from a relatively small Christ who is united only to members of the church, to a much greater Christ imbued with all creation. Christ is not united only to the church. He is not merely Lord of the church. Christ brims with all creation. Teilhard wants us to make the transition to such recognition. This is also to make the transition from a theology which revolves around belief and unbelief, which is limited to the idea of salvation - a narrower kind of theology - to recognition of the greatness, glory, holiness and grace of the triune God and see God's work of creation, salvation and sanctification in the universe.

The so-called eschaton is the culmination of this third phase. This unique breed of humanity formed of unique qualities, is one which both enjoys freedom and chooses correctly, one able to unite with both God and others. When this humanity emerges, the miracle of God's creation is realized and God is satisfied. When this phase draws to a close, the New Jerusalem is at hand. This is an eschatological view which people can more readily understand. And this eschaton is also the beginning of another new phase, though we have no way to conjecture what that phase will be like. Teilhard put it this way: "Someday, after we have mastered the wind, the waves, the tide and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love; and then for the second time in the history of the world man will have discovered fire." We know what an important role the first discovery of fire played in the advance of human civilization. This ability greatly enriched our human culture. The second discovery of fire means that we humans will be able to direct well this resource of love, giving it free reign. This means autonomy and the ability to take care of each other. The point at which this goal is reached, Teilhard calls Omega. Omega is the final letter of the Greek alphabet. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the origin and the culmination. This is Teilhard's eschatology.

Teilhard's thought is very broad. It does not revolve within some small circle. He has perceived that Christ is the Lord of the cosmos, the master of history. Thus as a person, Teilhard himself is extremely composed. He sees all truth, goodness and beauty and affirms that this is of Christ, is of God. Once someone took him to the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai and he was so taken by the Jade Buddha, even though he was a Christian, that he said, "I love the Buddha of Jade because it tells me of something that Christianity must annex. I feel more and more strongly the need to free our religion from everything that is specifically Mediterranean." What I understand here is that the Jade Buddha is a thing of beauty which has accumulated within it the sweat and blood of countless people seeking after goodness and truth, and nothing of beauty is outside Christ. Therefore, Christianity ought to annex it. The Vatican is located in the Mediterranean area and Teilhard felt that true human religion should cast off such a narrow character. It could then assimilate much more of the things of truth, goodness and beauty. No wonder the Vatican did not like Teilhard, and for several dozen years did not permit publication of his books.

Teilhard's good English friend, the natural scientist Joseph Needham, specialized in the history of science in China and held views close to those of Teilhard. He extended these to modern world history. In an essay on China, after speaking highly of New China, he said, "We have no reason to suppose that our present condition of civilization is the last masterpiece of universal organization, the highest form of order of which Nature is capable. I believe there are many grounds for seeing in collectivism of the kind which we can approve, a form of organization as much above the outlook of middle-class nations as their form of order is superior to that of primitive tribes. I think it would not be going too far to say that the transition from economic individualism to the common ownership of the world's productive resources by humanity will be a step similar in nature to the transition from lifeless proteins to living cell, and from primitive savagery to the first community, so clear is the continuity between inorganic, biological and social order. By this point-of-view the future state of social justice is seen as not at all a fantastic utopia, not as a desperate hope, but a form of organization having the full force of the authority of evolution behind it." This is true, good Teilhardism.

Teilhard believed that, although those who know Jesus in the world today are few in number, we should view this world in the light of the ascended Christ. This is to say that the position of this world has already undergone a change. The incarnation of Christ and his resurrection and ascension have made a qualitative change in the world. Christ is not only the forebear, priest and king of Christians; but more, he is the first born and eternal logos, Son of God and one who upholds all things.

The Holy Spirit does not work only in the church; he works first in the world of which the church is but a part. The church is a standard for the world, reminding people that there exists a spiritual dimension, a divine dimension. Teilhard says, "I believe the world will not be converted to the hopes of Christianity, until Christianity is converted to the hopes of the world to make them divine." Whether liberation theologians or Teilhard, all believe that the church can only be a small organization which has a role to play in the world. The Lord Jesus said, you are the salt of the earth; he did not say you must make this whole world into a large block of salt. He said you are the yeast of the world and this yeast must work within the world to make it into bread; he certainly did not say that the whole world must become a large cake of yeast. Thus the whole church will always be a rather small organization.

Belief/unbelief is still an issue and this is not a matter of indifference. All people in the world were created by the Heavenly Father, but not everyone is a friend of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ yearns for friendship, but those who can be counted as friends are the minority. Christians know God, we know Christ, we should have a deeper apprehension of God's intentions than other people to enable God to better enjoy unity with us. But we cannot simply say that those who do not believe in God are not then his sons and daughters, even less can we say that they are all his enemies. God is extremely great and in the case of China, for example, his love is not confined to the several million Christians. God's tolerance is so great, even to the point that in spite of the fact that so many people today do not recognize his existence and do not thank him, God is not small-minded; he feels only pity for them. He earnestly hopes that they will come to know him. God is not like us human beings who can only write essays on the question of belief and unbelief.

You may have noticed that I have some appreciation for Teilhard de Chardin's theological viewpoint. Where he disappoints me is that he is after all a product of French culture and French higher education. He has his class and cultural limitations which are mostly expressed in his eurocentrism. His main interest in the world outside the west is archaeological. He feels that the modern orient has little of value to offer to the whole of humankind. His orient is "in a state of inertia." Our resistance to Japan was a great event, and Teilhard was resident in China at the time, but he watched our people's struggle without recognizing its historical significance. He only expressed sorrow at the suffering caused by the war. Also, he seems to underestimate the obstruction to historical progress caused by the rampant forces of evil. This represents my understanding of Teilhard. I have only read a few of his books and some books and essays about him that others have written, so this introduction is subjective and may contain things which Teilhard himself would feel misrepresent his views. I can do nothing about that but hope that you can correct these things when you read him for yourselves.

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Upon entering the twentieth century, the western world view underwent a momentous change. Originally, under the influence of Euclid, Galileo and Newton, people saw the world as a stable, static, solid body. Einstein's theory of relativity and the theories which followed it pointed out that the macrocosm and the microcosm were in a constant state of movement and change. From Plato on, philosophy was concerned with being and saw this being as static. Today, people recognize that everything - including the smallest unit of matter - is changing and "becoming," and even a God who is not in the slightest influenced by the world, who does not undergo the most minimal change, is hard to imagine. The essentials of dialectics, especially quantitative change, metamorphosis and integration/polarization are increasingly accepted by more and more intellectuals. In such an intellectual atmosphere, Alfred North Whitehead put forward the concept of process philosophy. Its influence on theology led to the appearance of process theology.

"Process" implies change, development, the new superseding the old, affirming that the fundamental state of reality and of objects is not static.

Process theology speaks thus of God: Process theology affirms, indeed gives prominence to, God as love. It might be said that this is commonplace in every school of theology: How can it be the main feature of one school? We must make a fine distinction here.

In "Process and Reality," Whitehead points out that in substance, traditional Christianity easily tends toward three types of error in its view of God: seeing God as "the ruling Caesar, or as the ruthless moralist, or as the unmoved mover." He believes that what traditional theology overlooks is that "Galilean vision," which is to see God as love. The God who is usually highly praised by the churches is the one to whom it "gives the attributes which belong exclusively to Caesar." It sees him "in the image of an imperial ruler," or "in the image of a personification of moral energy," or "in the image of an ultimate philosophical principle," some sort of "being itself," the first cause of everything outside himself, but absolutely unaffected by anything whatever outside himself. When process theology speaks of those things which belong to the nature of God, the first one affirmed is his love. His omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, his eternity, his transcendence, his absolute righteousness and so on, are all placed in subservience to this.

"God is the Cosmic Lover, both causative and affected." Norman Pittenger and Schubert Ogden say that God is "the first cause and the final effect." God is intimately connected to the world. He is not only the creator, he also receives the responses the world makes to him, and makes to these his own response. This does not negate God's divinity, because God's divinity does not imply a distance from the world nor being unaffected by it.

Divinity implies inexhaustibility, eternal devotion and the ability to withstand the provocations of evil, absorb it and turn it to the service and increase of the good. Whitehead said, "Things matter to him and they have their consequences in him." Divinity first and foremost signifies the inexhaustibility of true love in the universe and immanence points to the coexistence of this true love with the entire created world. God's divinity in no way implies indifference.

Process theologians use the term "panentheism," a term first used by the German philosopher K.C. Klaus (1781 - 1832). Its implications are that God includes and permeates the entire universe; every component part of universe has its existence in him. What distinguishes this from pantheism is that God's existence surpasses the universe and may by no means be exhausted by it.

If the God of religion is not also the God of the universe or the God of the world, if God cannot convey to humankind a vision as regards the world, but is only concerned with religion, then he cannot be the most high. He may be no more than the object of worship for certain people.

This passage from Pittenger illustrates the point well: "As I read the writings of some of the greatest theologians in Christian history - often Origen, certainly St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin - I am meeting in each of them two different personalities. On the one hand there is the man with a deep faith in God, often a vigorous insistence on his loving care and his gracious concern with creation, and with a feeling of personal relationship which is enjoyed between a prevenient Lover and a creaturely lover-in-the-making who seeks to respond to that prevenience. This is prominent and deeply moving. On the other hand, there is a theological position which seems quite different, with its insistence on absoluteness, unrelatedness, unchangeableness, and impassibility or inability to share in the world's anguish."

Originally, a systematic theology should have enabled us to consciously seek a unified, harmonious whole in theological thought, but in reality a person's

theological knowledge can quite unconsciously maintain a number of internal contradictions.

What is "God's glory?" Pittenger puts it this way: "All is for God's 'greater glory'. And that glory is no majestic enthronement as almighty ruler and self-exalted monarch, but is the sheer love in-act which generously gives, graciously receives and gladly employs whatever of worth or value has been accomplished in a world where God is faithfully active to create more occasions for more good at more times and in more places."

In the early church there was an "Epistle to Diognetus," containing the following passage which process theologians admire: "Did God send for him, as a human mind might assume, to rule by tyranny, fear or terror? Far from it! He sent him out of kindness and gentleness... He willed to save men by persuasion, not by compulsion, for compulsion is not God's way of working.... He sent him in love, not in judgment.... For God showed himself to be a true friend of man. O, the overflowing kindness of God towards men! God did not hate us, nor drive us away, nor bear us ill-will."

Charles Hartshorne wrote a book entitled "The Divine Relativity," which was aimed at the singular emphasis on the absoluteness of God of traditional theology. "In each moment of God's life there are new unforeseen happenings in the world which only then have become knowable. Hence, God's concrete knowledge is dependent upon the developments in worldly actualities. God's knowledge is always relativized by, in the sense of internally related to, the world." (quoted in Cobb and Griffin, "Introduction to Process Theology").

Not every event in the human world has been decided by God. Due to the fact that God respects human freedom, events undecided by him are many. The God manifest in Christ cannot but be such a God. God is love and only union can satisfy love. And only those beings possessing freedom can aspire to union. Only beings which can choose either well or wrongly have true freedom. These are the constraints accepted by God's omnipotence and omniscience. A fine painting has no prior existence before the artist paints it, whether in heaven or in the mind of God. In spite of the fact that colour, form and the painter's innate capabilities are all created and given by God, this painting is a creation of the painter in his or her freedom. No matter whether he or she believes in God or not, God is constant in his respect for the freedom which belongs to the painter.

To facilitate understanding of this, Whitehead hypothesizes the primordial nature and the consequent nature of God. The former exists prior to and outside of creation, there are no constraints upon it; it is immutable. It is eternal, absolute and independent of the world. The latter is geared to the world, in relationship with it, affected by it and changes continually. It is within the realm of this latter that God receives our responses and participates in the joys and anguish of the created order.

On the basis of the above, I think everyone would agree that the affirmation of God as love by Whitehead and other process theologians has its own special features. In Christology: Perhaps it is in terms of its Christology that some Chinese Christians would raise questions with process theology. But we will discover that cosmic love can accommodate rather than exclude a cosmic Christ, and that it can also accommodate ideas about Christ as Saviour.

Process theology recognizes that Christ reveals God, and it emphasizes that this revelation does not negate other truths, but rather gives them depth.

Pittenger says, "God's doing is defined by but not confined to the event we name Jesus Christ." He opposes anyone within Christianity calling the Incarnation and entry of Jesus Christ into the world a divine "rescue-operation," which makes it appear that except for Christ's Incarnation, God has not been in the world and is tantamount to saying that his sudden arrival brought God to a place where he had not been before. He further says, "For myself I believe that the finality of Christ is nothing other than his decisive

disclosure that God is suffering, saving and ecstatic love. Surely you cannot get anything more final than that. But there may be many approaches to this, many different intimations, adumbrations and preparations." He says, "Christology is not something exclusive. There is no Christocentrism in the Whiteheadian vision of God when that word is used to make the event of Jesus Christ the only clue to deity and therefore to see him as an anomaly in the God-world relationship. Jesus must be taken as a classical instance, the defining moment if you will, in that wider relationship, not as the absolutely unique and unparalleled moment, without prior intimations and therefore appearing as a bolt from the blue, unrelated to what has gone on before him and what has happened after him."

As for the way people see, explore and know what is prior to the Incarnation and outside it, and their response to God's action and existence, the Incarnation is not a negation of all this, but, to use William Temple's words, offers a "correction and coronation." It is only Christ who can correct and complete the relationship between God and the rest of revealed existence and bring it to its pinnacle.

On the mission of humanity: Whitehead believed that the human mission or a man's or woman's "true destiny" lay in being a "co-creator in the universe," "partakers in the creative process."

People are all "lovers-in-the-making," "created and hence limited and finite and certainly defective, yet on the way (if we are willing to have it so) towards sharing in the cosmic loving which is nothing other than God himself - whose 'nature and name' (as Wesley's great hymn says) is Love." (Pittenger)

Heidegger felt that the solitariness of every person was his or her ultimate reality, that solitariness was the one and only way he or she could attain self-realization. Whitehead did not agree with this view, believing that our primary existence is within the human collectivity, and that it is there that we attain a relative independence. Participation and individuality are not mutual opposites but are complementary. The more we participate together with others in the life of the collectivity, the more our individuality or personality develops, the more we can enrich the collectivity.

As co-creators with God, the work of our hands is not without significance. The following passage from Pittenger is worthy of consideration: "All our labor for human liberation and all that these efforts and that labor may achieve, are surely safe in God. The divine reality who is the primal creative agency is also the final receptive reality. God treasures the good that is done in the world; he can and does use it for further implementation of good, as he continues the ceaseless divine striving to bring out of the sometimes almost intractable material of a created order, a harmony in which significant and necessary contrast need not bring about senseless and destructive conflict. To serve toward that end, and not to ask for any recompense 'save the knowledge that we do God's will' (as Ignatius Loyola phrased it) is enough for any truly dedicated Christian disciple."

He believes that evil lies in obstructing progress and rejecting cooperation in the social cosmos. It is an egocentrism which accepts the status quo, a deliberate resistance to the choice of the good. Whitehead said, "The conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe." Whitehead, in speaking of primitive religion, pointed out, "one studies the will of God in order to preserve oneself," while in a highly developed religion, "one studies his goodness in order to be like him."

Pittenger: "Human memory is very partial. It is accompanied by a forgetfulness in which much that was valued is lost.... But God's memory is everlasting and unfailing. The divine knowledge is inclusive of all actuality which has been achieved in the creation. Nothing is forgotten, nothing is cast as rubbish to the void - save evil, which is not so much cast aside as transmuted into potentiality for some other achievement of good." He quotes a poem from Richard Hovey, an early twentieth century American poet: God has said,

Ye shall fail and perish:  
But the thrill you have felt tonight  
I shall keep in my heart and cherish  
When the worlds have passed out of sight.

Pittenger further states, "All that has been good, noble and of value in our lives is taken after death by God into his eternal present - he 'remembers' us."

Whitehead spoke of human beings as "partakers of the creative process" who can find their "true destiny" only in seeing themselves as "co-creators in the universe."

The above has been an elementary introduction to process theology, from which I hope you can make out the contours and some characteristic features.

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Let me say again that to rely only on one's own already-held ideas to critique others, saying how far they have strayed from orthodoxy, is not the primary goal of our theological study. What we should ask is: what questions are they seeking to answer? Have I ever considered these questions? How do the views I hold deal with these same questions? Could I deal with these questions better by considering a greater variety of factors?

There are many theological schools in the world and a number of them are incompatible with our situation. If we study them, it is simply to increase our knowledge; they may not be worth adopting. I feel there are elements in liberation theology, Teilhard de Chardin and process theology which are worthy of consideration. As theological students in China today and as those involved in the work of theological construction, we must be able to distinguish among them, be capable of critical judgment and be able to absorb new things in order to serve the principle of self-propagation.

Some theologies recognize that the material world is in a process of change and they see this change as linked to the sacred love and creation of God. And this gives these schools of theology a common language with those people in the world awaiting or promoting transformation. China is a nation in which change has been extremely fast and extremely great and one in which a great many things are yet awaiting transformation. The people place their hopes on transformation or reform. Undertaking theological construction in such an environment, it will do us good to keep abreast of process theology, liberation theology and the theologies of those such as Teilhard de Chardin. We can gain a great deal of insight from them.

It is a long process from today until the final realization of the human collectivity as it exists in the will of God, and there are many stages in the process. As for the mid-segments, as far as I know, Teilhard and the process theologians have said nothing. In their systems of thought, these are blanks. They are rebels against capitalism and they have seen the coming of the transformation, but as to how change would happen and what would take the place of the present state of affairs, they offer no explanations. Thus, on the one hand, though they emphasize change and were not welcomed by the vested interests who strive to maintain the status quo, on the other hand, they could not avoid disappointing those demanding transformation. As far as I know, Teilhard stayed at that stage until he died. Some process theologians are already aware of this dilemma and John Cobb's book, "Process Theology and Political Theology," is a breakthrough work in this area.

Liberation theology lays a great deal of stress on praxis. The search for liberation is the present praxis, its specific content is opposition to imperialism and despotism and the bringing about of people's political power. Some are opposed to capitalism and look towards socialism. We have people who feel that being a Christian means one should not be against anything, which is tantamount to saying that Christians should have no sense

of right and wrong, no love and hate. But Paul Tillich once said, "It is a strange work of love to destroy that which is against love."

Speaking of China, we are sympathetic to the three theological schools described above in the quest for transformation, but as far as anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, anti-bureaucrat-capitalism and the mission of liberation to end oppression goes, we are in the postliberation stage, that is, in the next stage of historical development. In this historical stage we cannot and should not take class struggle as the key link any longer.

In this stage of history, we are constructing socialism. For China, socialism is much more capable, as a social system, of embodying love than is capitalism.

Capitalism safeguards individual ownership of the means of production, safeguards oppression, places the fate of the broad working masses into the hands of the capitalists. In third world countries, except for China and a minority of others, it places the people's fate in the hands of the multinationals or their political representatives. To compete with other capitalist groups and preserve themselves, even well-intentioned capitalists move beyond the control of their consciences. As time passes, their consciences become numb.

Due to the burden of history and pressure and obstruction from all sides, socialist construction is an arduous process, but it casts off oppression and moves toward realization of a new principle of distribution, "from each according to his ability; to each according to his work." It enables humankind to achieve a level of equality never seen before. The universalization of love is the goal of socialism. Socialism is love on a large scale, organized love, love which has taken shape as a social system.

Fairness, equality and justice - these are not the antithesis of love, they are its necessary content. We do not practice love only within a tiny area. When we are able to practice love within a much broader area, when we distribute love to the masses in a rational way, then love takes on the form of fairness, equality and justice.

Today, China has not as yet implemented love in a very good, complete way. This is a vast undertaking, but socialism as a social system offers a guarantee for its realization.

This undertaking is worthy of Christians' efforts. Love is not something just to be enjoyed by two persons, you and me. Love means we have the same orientation, look toward the future together and step forward together. It is this kind of love which is adequate to enable people to be mutually encouraged, mutually spurred on, mutually supportive, and together become co-partakers in God's creative process.

(This translation is taken from *Nanjing Theological Review*, December, 1985, translated by Janice Wickeri)