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CHINESE THEOLOGICAL REVIEW 33

CONTENTS

- From the Editor v
- Annual Work Plan for the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China
(2023-2027): Priorities and Measures 1
- Discussing the Transformation of Mr. Wu Yaozong:
Speech at the Symposium Commemorating the 130th
Anniversary of Wu Yaozong's
Birth and the Further Contextualization of Christianity in
China
谈谈吴耀宗先生的转变——在纪念吴耀宗先生诞辰130周年
暨基督教中国化座谈会上的讲话
XU XIAOHONG 徐晓鸿 9
- IMC's Development in Its Understanding of Evangelism and
Chinese Christian Early Ministry in the Self-propagation of
the Gospel
试从国际宣教协会传福音观的发展看早期中国基督教的自
传尝试和努力
LIN MANHONG 林曼红 20
- Wu Yaozong's Sinicized Christology: An Analysis Based on
Two Texts
吴耀宗的中国化基督论——基于两个文本的分析
CHEN YONGTAO 陈永涛 42

**The Pioneer's Inner Voice: T. C. Chao and Contextualizing
Christianity in China**

赵紫宸与基督教中国化展示馆之：“先驱心声”的史料解说

LOU SHI BO 楼世波 57

Brother Shao's Stove Flowers:

The Dynamic Integration of Faith and Folk Culture

邵弟兄的灶花：信仰与民间文化的灵动融合

ZHUANG YUNQIU 庄韵秋 82

**Chinese Christians' Frugality and Abstinence from Luxury in
the New Era**

中国基督徒崇俭戒奢的新风貌

WANG LIPIN 王礼频 87

**Newly-elected Members of the Leadership of the National
TSPM and CCC.**

93

From the Editor

Despite the major political, economic and social disruptions of the last two centuries in Chinese history, researchers are beginning to rediscover some of the continuities that Churches in China have shared through the years, through analyzing the thoughts and ideas of key Christian leaders whose theological influence and social impact have yet to receive the attention and appreciation they deserve. Their thoughts and practices were time and space bound but come alive today as Chinese Christians, scholars and researchers seek a deeper understanding of earlier experiences and ideas, bringing new insights to current efforts in running the church well.

Articles in Chinese Theological Review 33 cover some of the efforts of the CCC&TSPM in advancing the further contextualization of Christianity in China. It includes papers on outstanding Chinese Christian leaders and theologians such as Wu Yaozong (吴耀宗) and T. C. Chao (赵紫宸), detailing their contributions in adapting Christian theology and social practice to a radically changing political landscape in the 20th century and exploring more deeply their implications for Chinese Christianity today.

The focus on Further Contextualization of Christianity is reflected in the opening speech of Xu Xiaohong delivered at the Symposium to celebrate the 130th birth anniversary of renowned Chinese Christian leader Wu Yaozong (also known as Y. T. Wu) who had initiated the Three-Self movement in the late 1940s. Aimed at “establishing a Chinese church led by the Chinese people themselves,” its goal is to liberate the Chinese church from western traditions and the ideological

constraints of China's old society, so as to "restore the original essence of Jesus' Gospel, and forge Christianity into a positive force in the construction of a New China." In tracing the three phases of Wu's theological transformation, Reverend Xu shows how dramatic historical events had made an impact on Wu Yaozong and his theological understanding. Wu became a Christian in 1918 just when China was undergoing profound social upheavals following the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Like many of his youthful contemporaries he had joined the struggle to find solutions for 'national salvation.' In his encounter with Christianity, he had been deeply moved by the sacrificial love of Jesus which he personally experienced as a positive, transformative force.

Wu Yaozong's early pacifist approach however, was profoundly challenged with Japan's invasion of China in the 1930s. Exposed to the horrors and brutality of that war he then passionately supported the Chinese resistance to the Japanese invasion and became disillusioned with the republican regime of Jiang Jieshi (also known as Chiang Kai Shek) and its strategy of passive resistance. As his admiration for the Communist Party grew, he subsequently joined the struggle against Chiang Kai Shek's regime, supporting students' patriotic movements, opposing civil war, and fighting for democracy. Wu's patriotic enthusiasm grew stronger after the establishment of the New China. Besides promoting the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, he also actively participated in socialist construction.

Probing deeper into Wu Yaozong's theological legacy, Professor Chen Yongtao shows that there is a need to go beyond the Three-Self Movement, the social Gospel and the Absolute Love doctrine which have been common themes in scholarly research. His exploration of Wu's Sinicized Christology through an analysis of two texts: *The Worldview*

and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus and No One Has Ever Seen God, offers new insights. He argues that Wu regarded experience as a crucial theological resource and thus sought to construct a Christology that integrates reason and emotional appeal, very much in alignment with both the rationality and the spirit of the times. According to Professor Chen, Wu Yaozong's Christology maintains the uniqueness of Christian faith while attempting to offer a new and creative interpretation of Christianity within the Chinese context of his time.

Professor Lin Manhong's paper "IMC's Development in Its Understanding of Evangelism and Chinese Christian Early Ministry in the Self-propagation of the Gospel" briefly outlines the conceptual development of evangelism or the theology of evangelism in the ecumenical movement through the lenses of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches. It then investigates the ministry of self-propagation in Chinese Christianity in the first half of the 20th century and demonstrates how the understanding of proclamation has evolved. The author is critical of some Chinese approaches to evangelism in China today, seeing in them vestiges of ideas brought by early Western missionaries to China. Despite this beginning, she traces the meaningful changes in approaches to evangelism in the IMC (International Missionary Council), through the 20th century to its present day embodiment in the CWME and how, over the last century, significant key issues have been identified, debated over and addressed, if not yet completely resolved.

Importantly, she brings to our attention the fact that early Chinese Christian leaders, in their call for indigenization, had already struggled with many of the issues surrounding the understanding of evangelism and its implications in a post-colonial setting. She recasts these

issues and the debates they generated, describes the current interpretations in the ecumenical movement and explicates on their relevance to the contemporary Chinese context.

Reverend Lou Shibo's paper "The Pioneer's Inner Voice: T. C. Chao and Contextualizing Christianity in China" gives a condensed introduction to the life and extensive contributions of T. C. Chao, considered one of China's most important theologians of the 20th century. T. C. Chao has been described variously as a reformer and innovator of Chinese Christian theology, an early founder of contextualized theology in China, an inspiring teacher, and an outstanding poet. Mr. Chao believed that Christianity in China must be de-Westernized for it to preserve its authenticity and become organically integrated with the essence of traditional Chinese culture. For him, it was the pathway to making Christianity relevant and acceptable to the Chinese people. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of cultivating church talent, of the need to encourage the writing of indigenized works so as to create a Christian theology that combines the revelation of God in Christ with a Chinese cultural background and social context.

To explore and promote T. C. Chao's theological concept of the "Further Contextualization of Christianity in China," the Zhejiang CC&TSPM mobilized resources to build the Exhibition Hall dedicated to T. C. Chao at the Xinshi Town Church in Zhejiang Province, in 2022. Reverend Lou Shibo showcases Chao's thoughts and visions in his description of the exhibition hall's contents. Known as "the man with the Eastern mind" by his friends in the West, Chao was indeed richly gifted with personal skills and talents that enabled him to bridge the theological, cultural and intellectual differences between east and west.

T. C. Chao was ahead of his time. He brings to our attention the rich fabric of Chinese Christian spirituality and how contextualization becomes the means to combine different perspectives in creative and innovative ways. His poetry collections, literary and theological works, plays, and hymns remain highly respected and influential in contemporary Chinese Christian thought, in the Chinese church, in religious studies, and even in the literary world.

Two papers from *Tian Feng* magazine have been included to show how individual Christians have expressed their faith understanding in the larger context of Chinese culture and ethics. In his paper on “Brother Shao’s Stove Flowers: The Dynamic Integration of Faith and Folk Culture” the author, Zhuang Yunqiu, shows how a contemporary Chinese Christian artist, Shao Yunlong, has endowed his works of decorative Stove Flowers with special meaning and ingeniously combined ‘Christian elements’ such as crosses, grapes, pigeons, fish, eagles, wheat ears, sheep, and green grasslands with traditional Chinese painting techniques and concepts. In addition, the inclusion of biblical verses in his paintings clearly expresses his faith response. Through his brush strokes, Brother Shao has integrated faith and folk culture, transforming his creations into hymns of praise.

On another front, traditional Chinese culture and ethics place great emphasis on the relationship between frugality and extravagance and the rise and fall of nations. In China, present day calls for frugality and abstinence from luxury is driven by deeply rooted concerns that profligacy can have enormous negative consequences for a country’s future. In his paper on “Chinese Christians’ Frugality and Abstinence from Luxury in the New Era,” Wang Lipin, not only cites examples from Chinese history but draws from biblical sources to illustrate how rulers have led their nations to ruin

through unnecessary extravagance and the misuse of public resources.

Lessons in frugality is also an obvious reference to greed and corruption in modern Chinese society. The promotion of frugality requires not only laws and policies but also the conscientious practice of the people. Reverend Wang thus urges Christians, whether in government positions, in business or in other sectors of society, to avoid indulging in extravagant lifestyles that lead to corruption. Pastors are reminded that the temptations posed by money, fame and fortune inevitably lead to a decline in faith and spirituality. The practice of simplicity and moderation is also advocated in church architecture and construction, which should incorporate the elements of faith as well as promote the concept of environmental protection.

To provide an overview of the programs and goals of the CCC&TSPM, the fifth part of the Five-Year Work Plan for Advancing the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China (2023–2027) has been translated and included in this volume. Approved and adopted at the 11th National Conference of Chinese Christianity in December 2023, it elaborates on the annual themes and implementation measures. Names of the national leadership team for 2023–27 led by Rev. Xu Xiaohong as Chair of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and Rev. Wu Wei as President of the China Christian Council have been included as well.

I wish to thank the authors as well as Dr. Lin Manhong, Mr. Zhou Xuebin and the indefatigable team of translators for their most valuable contributions in the production of the Chinese Theological Review Number 33.

Please note that the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA) has changed its name to Foundation for Theological Education in Asia and the Pacific (FTEAP). Digital copies of the Review are

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Editor: Theresa Carino

Annual Work Plan for the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China (2023-2027): Priorities and Measures

【Translator's Notes】

The 11th National Conference of Chinese Christianity was held in Beijing from December 20 to 21, 2023. The conference reviewed and adopted a resolution on the Work Report of the 10th Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and the 8th Standing Committee of the China Christian Council. A new leadership team was elected, with Rev. Xu Xiaohong elected as Chairperson of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and Rev. Wu Wei as President of the China Christian Council.

The conference also approved *the Five-Year Work Plan for Advancing the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China (2023–2027)* (hereinafter referred to as the Plan), a follow-up document to the first five-year plan (2018–2022), aiming at further adapting Christianity with socialist society. The Plan consists of five sections, outlining the overall requirements, objectives, principles, key tasks, annual themes, priorities, and implementation methods for the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China (hereinafter referred to as the Further Contextualization) over the next five years. Core objectives include strengthening theological construction, deepening scriptural interpretation, cultivating a new generation of clergy suited to the modern era, consolidating strict governance of the Church, and rooting Christianity in China's fine traditional

culture. The formulation of this Plan signifies a deeper phase in the further contextualization of Christianity in China, aiming to better integrate the religion into the nation's development and contribute to the mission of building China into a modern socialist country.

The following are the translation of the fifth part of the Plan, "the Key Annual Work (2023-2027)," elaborating on the yearly themes and specific implementation measures for each year.

Key Annual Work

(A) 2023 Theme: Loving Country and Loving the Church, Governing the Church Well

29. Compile "*Readers for the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China*" to enhance believers' understanding of the Further Contextualization with a full comprehension of the relationship between advancing the Further Contextualization and running the churches well, consistently adhere to the direction of contextualization of religion in our country, firmly walk on the path of loving the country and the Church.
30. Take the opportunity of the 130th anniversary of Mr. Wu Yaozong's birth and the 25th anniversary of the initiation of theological construction, to summarize and refine the exploration of Mr. Wu Yaozong, Bishop K. H. Ting and other pioneers of the Chinese Church regarding further contextualization and to publish a special collection.
31. Encourage regional Three-Self Patriotic Movement committees and Christian councils (hereinafter

referred to as regional TSPM&CCs), seminaries, and churches across the country to actively explore ways to promote the Further Contextualization according to local conditions. Establish exhibition halls for the Further Contextualization where conditions permit, regularly conduct exchanges and achievement exhibitions on the Further Contextualization.

32. Organize field research on the current situation of the churches across the country and on the progress of the Further Contextualization, regularly review practices, identify existing problems, and explore effective solutions.

(B) 2024 Theme: Respecting Life, Bearing Witness to the Divine Glory

33. Take the opportunity of the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China to hold various celebratory activities, inspiring believers to take concrete actions to follow the socialist core values and to love the Party and the socialist country.
34. Use the opportunity of the 70th anniversary of the National TSPM Committee to hold symposiums and seminars, deepening the research on the significance of the TSPM in terms of promoting the Further Contextualization.
35. From the perspective of the Further Contextualization, begin exploring the construction of a "theology of God" with characteristics of the Chinese Church. Hold a thematic seminar on "the doctrine of God" and publish a collection of papers, to enrich the traditional "theology of God" by grounding the discussion in the biblical teachings that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and integrating

Chinese cultural understandings of “Heaven” and “Shangdi” (上帝). Through sermons by the Preaching Team of the Construction of Theological Thought,¹ inspire believers to practice the teaching of “loving others as oneself,” respect life, value God’s creation, and contribute to building a beautiful China.

36. Encourage regional TSPM&CCs, seminaries, and churches with relevant resources to establish or continue improving exhibition halls featuring patriotic Christians, to collect and compile exemplary stories of Chinese Christians, and tell the stories of Chinese Christians being of one heart with the motherland and keeping pace with the times.

(C) 2025 Theme: The Word Became Flesh, Glorifying God and Benefiting People

37. Take the opportunity of the 75th anniversary of the initiation of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Chinese Christianity and the 45th anniversary of the China Christian Council to hold celebratory

1 The Theological Thought Construction Preaching Team was established in 2012 as an essential component of the Theological Thought Construction in Chinese Christianity which can be traced back to the 1998 Jinan Conference. At this conference, the *Resolution on Strengthening Theological Thought Construction* was adopted, marking the formal establishment of theological thought construction as a core task of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement the China Christian Council (TSPM & CCC). Thereafter, Chinese Christianity deepened its contextualized interpretation of the Bible and Christian doctrines, aiming to translate the theoretical achievements of theological thought construction into practical guidance for grassroots churches. Annual training conferences for the Preaching Team are held, inviting experts and scholars to interpret policies and share preaching techniques.

activities, deepening research on the transition from “Three-Self”² to “Three-Wells” and its positive role in promoting the Further Contextualization, and further clarify the relationship between the Further Contextualization and running the Church well.

38. From the perspective of the Further Contextualization, begin exploring the construction of a “Christology” with characteristics of the Chinese Church. Commemorate the 110th anniversary of Bishop K.H. Ting’s birth by organizing seminars and publishing papers that delve into the theological implications of the Incarnation, the Cosmic Christ, and the kenotic Christ in the new era, integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture. Transform these reflections into pulpit teachings, providing materials for theoretical research and church practice.
39. Hold activities for the Christian community to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the victory of “the Chinese people’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War,” exploring how Chinese Christianity can play its due role in maintaining world peace and development.

2 The “Three Wells” (Well-governed, Well-supported, Well-propagated) were first put forward at the 6th National Conference of the Chinese Christianity in 1996. The transformation from the “Three Self” (Self-governance, Self-support, and Self-propagation) to the “Three Wells” represents a strategic upgrade of Chinese Christianity from “independence and self-governance” to “active integration” into Chinese culture and the socialist country.

(D) 2026 Theme: Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself, Living a Fulfilling Life

40. Take the opportunity of celebrating the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese Red Army's Long March to hold related activities to promote the "Red" heritage, study the exemplary Christians who actively participated in and supported the Chinese revolution to assist forming believers' conviction of being of one mind with the Communist Party and moving in the same direction.
41. From the perspective of the Further Contextualization, explore the construction of an "anthropology" with characteristics of the Chinese Church by integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture and the holistic teachings of the Bible, modifying the anthropology that features overly negative and one-sided views on such concepts as "original sin" and "total depravity." Through seminars, anthologies, and sermon exchanges, actively discuss how to construct a balanced Christian "anthropology" that embraces both the ecumenical church traditions and Chinese cultural heritage. Through the publication of *An Introduction to Chinese Christian Ethics*, further guide and help believers to establish a positive and correct outlook on life, values, and worldview, and to be both good believers and good citizens in terms of moral character, professional ethics, social morality and family virtues.

(E) 2027 Theme: Enhancing Unity, Pursuing Harmony

43. Take the opportunity of major national celebrations and commemorative activities to organize related symposiums, review the development of the Chinese Church since the Reform and Opening-up under the implementation of the policy of religious freedom, strengthen the belief that Chinese Christianity shares the same breath and destiny with the motherland and the people, and resolutely safeguard national unity.
44. From the perspective of the Further Contextualization, explore the construction of an “ecclesiology” with characteristics of the Chinese Church. Summarize the relevant practices of the uniting church in China, enrich the theological implications of the “governance model of the two councils,”³ and collect and compile research papers on worship theology, sacramental theology, and pastoral theology. Organize thematic seminars on “ecclesiology” and publish papers; enhance believers’ comprehension of the uniting church through sermons by the Preaching Team on the Construction of Theological Thought. Explore worship formats, pastoral models, sacred music, and Christian artistic expressions conducive to the healthy growth of the Chinese church, laying the foundation for a distinctive Chinese “ecclesiology.” Conduct in-depth research and revise documents such as the “Order of Chinese Christian Churches” to strengthen the self-construction of the church

³ The two councils here refer to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and the Christian Council both at national and regional levels.

body and promote the transformation of the achievements of the Further Contextualization.

45. Review and summarize the implementation of the Plan for further advancement.

Discussing the Transformation of Mr. Wu Yaozong

—Speech at the Symposium Commemorating the 130th Anniversary of Wu Yaozong's Birth and the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China

谈谈吴耀宗先生的转变

—在纪念吴耀宗先生诞辰130周年

暨基督教中国化座谈会上的讲话

XU XIAOHONG 徐晓鸿

Distinguished leaders, experts, scholars, pastors, and co-workers: Greetings!

Today, we are gathered here for a symposium to solemnly commemorate the 130th anniversary of Mr. Wu Yaozong's birth.

Mr. Wu Yaozong was one of the principal initiators of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), an outstanding leader in both Chinese Christianity and the broader religious community in China. He was a firm supporter of the Communist Party of China and a model of devotion to the socialist motherland. Mr. Wu was a key advocate and practitioner of the spirit of patriotism and love for the church, which serves as the foundation for all endeavours of the Chinese church and the basis for the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China.

Wu Yaozong organically integrated patriotism with the Christian faith. As Bishop Ding Guangxun (also known as K. H. Ting) once remarked, “Mr. Wu was able to combine his deep love for Christ with his profound love for his motherland.”¹

His achievements were inseparable from his continuous pursuit of progress. Throughout his life, he underwent multiple transformations, each closely linked to the progress of the times and his unwavering commitment to integrating personal faith with a concern for social realities.

Today, I will focus on three key aspects of Wu Yaozong’s transformation.

I. From a Proponent of Pure Love to a Practitioner of Patriotism

Wu Yaozong was born on November 4, 1893, in Guangzhou. He was baptized in Beijing in 1918 and, in 1920, resigned from his position at the General Administration of Taxation to join the Beijing Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). From that moment on, he began to devote his life to Chinese Christianity until his passing in 1979.

Wu Yaozong began to embrace Christianity just at the time when China was undergoing immense social upheavals and the nation was teetering at the brink of survival. Like many of his contemporaries and as an intellectual, he actively sought solutions for ‘national salvation.’ In his encounter with Christianity, he had been deeply moved by the love of Jesus—particularly as depicted in His willingness

1 Ding Guangxun. “The Advanced Mr. Wu.” In *GOD IS LOVE: Collected Works of Ding Guangxun*. Nanjing: Yilin Press, 1998, 443.

to sacrifice Himself for the sake of others. Wu saw this love as a transformative force capable of changing individuals and society.

During this period, the philosophy of Pure Love that had originated in Europe had begun to spread to China.² Advocates of Pure Love believed that love was the highest principle of human existence and the lone driving force for building an ideal society. They promoted the idea that love and service could transform society, bring reconciliation among people, and establish an ideal world. This ideology resonated deeply with Wu Yaozong, leading him to join the Pure Love Society where he became an active member and later its chairman in China. He also served as the editor-in-chief of Pure Love magazine, where he described Christianity's mission in China as one which was "to follow the spirit of Jesus' *pure love*, unite with like-minded individuals, transform the environment, reform society, liberate the people, and realize the Kingdom of Heaven."³

It was a time when China was suffering from imperialist aggression, with invading forces inflicting war upon the Chinese people. From his pacifist, "Pure Love" standpoint, Wu Yaozong opposed all wars, declaring, "We absolutely do not participate in any war because we believe that war can

2 Editor's note: The concept of "Pure Love" emerged in Europe, particularly during the Romantic Era, emphasizing an idealized, romantic love free from earthly desires. The idea of "Pure Love" did not directly translate into Chinese language or philosophy but resonated with existing Chinese concepts of love, compassion, and human relationships.

3 Wu Yaozong. "Where Is Chinese Christianity Going?" In *Social Gospel*. Shanghai: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1934, 132.

never truly resolve problems.”⁴

However, reality soon reshaped his convictions. The September 18th Incident of 1931 and the January 28 Incident of 1932 profoundly changed Wu Yaozong. He became actively involved in refugee relief work and witnessed firsthand the horrors of war and the brutality of the Japanese military. He passionately supported the Chinese army’s resistance and had exclaimed, “Hearing that the 19th Route Army fought bravely, I was overjoyed. The pent-up anger of the past four months was finally relieved. From that moment on, like everyone else, I eagerly read the news every day, thrilled by reports of Chinese victories and Japanese defeats.”⁵

Through his experiences of exposing Japan’s invasion and advocating for national salvation, Wu Yaozong⁶ transitioned from a Pure Love idealist to a steadfast patriot.

II. From Opposing the Kuomintang to Supporting the Communist Party

Following the Manchurian Incident on September 18th, 1931, Japan’s imperialist ambitions in China became increasingly evident. Meanwhile, the Kuomintang (KMT)

4 Wu Yaozong. “A Proposal on the Creed and Principles of the Weiai Society.” *Weiai*, no. 1 (1931): 17.

5 The September 18th Incident (1931), also known as the Mukden Incident, was a staged event by Japanese military personnel in Manchuria, China, used as a pretext for their invasion of the region. The January 28th Incident (1932), also known as the First Shanghai Incident, was a brief armed conflict between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan that occurred in Shanghai.

6 Wu Yaozong. “The Shanghai Incident and the Principles of Weiai.” *Weiai*, no. 4 (1932): 2.

government pursued a policy of non-resistance toward Japan while suppressing democratic movements domestically. This led Wu Yaozong to gradually recognize the KMT's reactionary nature.

After the full-scale outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937, patriotic fervor swept China. However, the KMT continued its strategy of passive resistance while prioritizing efforts to suppress the Communist Party. Disillusioned with Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai Shek) and his regime, Wu Yaozong became increasingly interested in learning about the Communist Party.

In May 1938, while in Wuhan on official business, Wu Yaozong expressed his long-standing admiration for the Communist leader Zhou Enlai and requested a meeting. To his surprise, Zhou Enlai personally visited him on May 20th around ten in the morning and engaged in a deep discussion that lasted over an hour. Later, in Chongqing, Wu met with Zhou twice at the Eighth Route Army's offices in Zengjiayan.

On May 25th, 1943, Wu Yaozong had an extended conversation with Zhou Enlai. Zhou comprehensively explained the Communist Party's policies, its history, and the KMT's scheme to start a civil war with the support of American imperialists. Wu Yaozong later recalled:

“That was my longest conversation with Premier Zhou—lasting nearly an entire day. From then on, I had even greater faith in the Communist Party and deeper respect for Zhou Enlai. I also gained more confidence in China's future.”⁷

7 Wu Yaozong. “Firm Stance, Clear Banner, Hardworking and Simple, Approachable—Commemorating the 81st Anniversary of Comrade Zhou Enlai's Birth.” In *The People's Good Premier: Comrade Zhou Enlai Will Always Live in Our Hearts, Volume III*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1979, 277.

Following this, Wu Yaozong actively cooperated with the Communists. After the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan, he engaged in the struggle against Chiang Kai Shek's dictatorship, supported students' patriotic movements, opposed civil war, and fought for democracy. After the victory over Japan, with the support of U.S. imperialism, Chiang Kai Shek engaged in deceptive negotiations (with the Chinese Communist Party) while simultaneously preparing for an all-out civil war.

On June 23rd, 1946, dozens of civic organizations in Shanghai elected an eleven-member delegation to travel to Nanjing to petition for peace and oppose civil war. Mr. Wu Yaozong was not only a member of the delegation but was also chosen to draft an English memorandum to be handed to General (George C.) Marshall, expressing the Chinese people's stance against civil war.

Upon the delegation's arrival at Xiaguan Station in Nanjing, the members were ambushed and brutally attacked by Kuomintang secret agents, resulting in multiple injuries and hospitalizations. Upon hearing the news, Zhou Enlai and his wife rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night to visit the wounded. Three days later, Zhou hosted a banquet for the delegation at the Chinese Communist Party's office in Meiyuan Xincun. After Mr. Wu Yaozong's return to Shanghai, Zhou Enlai arranged for Deng Yingchao, his wife, to visit Mr. Wu's home to express concern and support.

From September 21st to 30th, 1949, the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was held in Beijing. A total of eight religious figures participated as representatives, including five from the Christian community. Mr. Wu Yaozong was

honored as the chief representative of the religious sector.⁸

The convening of the CPPCC, initiated by the Communist Party of China, deeply inspired Mr. Wu Yaozong. He remarked, “This is an unprecedented great unity of the Chinese people. With the founding of the new China, the people have truly become masters of the nation.”⁹

With the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, Chinese Christianity faced a crucial decision about its future. Wu Yaozong keenly observed that: “Christianity is entering a new era, requiring new understandings, awareness, and positions.”¹⁰

Under the personal care and guidance of Premier Zhou Enlai, Chinese Christian leaders, led by Mr. Wu Yaozong, issued a document on July 28th, 1950, entitled “The Path of Effort for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China” (commonly known as the “Three-Self Declaration”). This statement articulated the position of Chinese Christianity in the newly founded People’s Republic of China under the leadership of the Communist Party.

As a result, it marked the beginning of the vigorous Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Chinese Christianity,

8 *People’s Daily Report*. “The Religious Delegation of the People’s Political Consultative Conference Held a Press Conference Yesterday, Exposing the Reactionary Policies of U.S. Imperialism and Resolutely Eliminating Imperialist Influence.” *People’s Daily*, September 25, 1949, (4).

9 Shang Kai. “An Account of the Visit of the Representatives of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference: Wu Yaozong, a Representative of the Religious Community.” *People’s Daily*, September 29, 1949, (6).

10 Wu Yaozong. “Christianity Under the People’s Democratic Dictatorship” in *Darkness and Light*. Shanghai: Young Men’s Christian Association Press, 1949, 262.

leading the Chinese church onto a path of independence, self-governance, and self-support.

III. From a Patriotic Democrat to a Socialist Builder

In July 1951, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, Mr. Wu Yaozong wrote an article entitled “The Communist Party Educated Me.” In it, he stated: “Over the past thirty years, the historical achievements of the Communist Party of China and its contributions to the Chinese people are beyond estimation, and no words can adequately describe them. Today, the Chinese people are able to stand up, enjoy happiness, and have absolute confidence in the bright future of New China—this is all granted by the Communist Party of China.”

“After the founding of New China, Wu Yaozong’s patriotic enthusiasm grew even stronger as he took on multiple important roles.”¹¹ While promoting the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, he also actively participated in socialist construction. As a Christian leader, he used his participation in conferences on world peace as an opportunity to advocate for New China’s commitment to peace and its efforts to safeguard world peace, as well as to introduce the new image of Chinese Christianity to the international community. In the decade from 1949 to 1959, Wu Yaozong attended fifteen conferences on world peace, only one of which was held in Beijing. At a public reception upon his return from one of these visits, he remarked: “I have witnessed the demonstration of the strength of the world’s

11 Li Xinzhi. *Chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1898–1976: Volume I*. Beijing: Central Literature Press, 2011, 271.

people, and I have seen the guarantee of world peace.”¹²

In 1949, during a visit to Prague, Mr. Wu Yaozong met with Ding Guangxun (K. H. Ting), who was working in Europe at the time. He encouraged Ding to return to China and take part in the country’s socialist construction. Wu spent considerable time explaining to Ding the United Front policy of the Communist Party of China, detailing the background and rationale of the Party and the new government’s policy on religious freedom. He assured Ding that Christianity in New China was both protected and had a promising future. At the same time, he pointed out: “For Christianity to continue existing in New China and to gain a position where it can engage in dialogue with the Chinese people and bear witness to the Gospel, it must seriously address the issue of self-reform.”¹³ Under Wu Yaozong’s influence, Bishop Ding Guangxun unwaveringly resolved to return to China in 1951 to participate in socialist construction.

Mr. Wu Yaozong actively promoted the adaptation of Christianity to New China, striving to integrate the Chinese church into the larger family of a socialist China. He believed that loving both the church and the country should go beyond external manifestations and bring about ideological transformation. He remarked: “We still believe that an internal renewal of Christianity is inevitable. Christianity evolved from the feudal-era Roman Church into Protestantism during the capitalist era—this was a historical stage. Now, as the world progresses from capitalism toward socialism, Christianity must inevitably enter a new stage as well.”¹⁴

12 Ibid., referring to note 7.

13 Ibid., referring to note 1, 445.

14 Wu Yaozong. “The Reform of Christianity.” In *Darkness and Light*, 232.

The launch of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was a milestone in Chinese Christian participation in the construction of a New China. Wu Yaozong stated: “The Christian reform movement that we advocate today is not just about addressing individual weaknesses of the past. Its goal is to fundamentally and comprehensively transform Christianity in China—to free it from the traditions of Western society and the ideological constraints of China’s old society, to restore the original essence of Jesus’ Gospel, and to forge Christianity into a positive force in the construction of a New China.”¹⁵

Mr. Wu Yaozong became an iconic figure in the religious community, a distinction inseparable from his lifelong pursuit of patriotism and devotion to both country and church, as well as his continuing education under the Communist Party. The TSPM, which he had initiated, aimed at essentially “establishing a Chinese church led by the Chinese people themselves.” This movement enabled Chinese Christians to truly “stand up” alongside the entire nation, completely severing ties with imperialism in order to build a genuinely self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating Chinese church. It was a moment that unfurled a new chapter in the history of Chinese Christianity. From the perspective of mobilizing Christians to actively participate in the construction of New China, this movement’s significance far surpasses earlier indigenization efforts and those of historical church movements for self-reliance. More importantly, it assumed the lead in advancing the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China in relation to national sovereignty, laying a sound foundation

15 Wu Yaozong. “Raising the Banner of the Christian Reform Movement.” In Luo Guanzong, *Selected Writings on the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Chinese Christian Church (1950–1992)*. Shanghai: Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, 1993, 6.

for promoting Christianity's contextualization in China today.

It has been forty years since Mr. Wu Yaozong left us, yet the TSPM, which he had started and led, continues to play a historic role in enabling the Chinese church to achieve independence, self-governance, and self-support, transforming Christianity from being perceived as a "foreign religion" into a faith truly belonging to Chinese Christians. His efforts laid a strong foundation for severing Christianity's ties with imperialism and for its adherence to the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China. His love for the Party, the country, and socialism remains an enduring example for us to follow.

Therefore, we must inherit the legacy of senior Chinese church leaders such as Wu Yaozong and Ding Guangxun, fully implement the guiding principles of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and deeply study General Secretary Xi Jinping's important discourse on religious affairs. We must profoundly grasp the great significance of the "Two Affirmations," strengthen the "Five Recognitions," reinforce the "Four Consciousnesses," solidify the "Four-sphere Confidences," and uphold the "Two Upholds," while deeply cultivating the "Threefold love sentiment."

Guided by socialist core values and nurtured by China's outstanding traditional culture, we must continue to advance the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China, actively align with socialist society, and make our due contributions to the new journey of Chinese modernization and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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IMC's Development in Its Understanding of Evangelism and Chinese Christian Early Ministry in the Self-propagation of the Gospel¹

试从国际宣教协会传福音观的发展看早期中国基督教的自传尝试和努力

LIN MANHONG 林曼红

Introduction

It is not widely known that, except for the period between the 1950s and the early 1990s, Chinese Christians and churches have always been active participants in many of the activities organized by the International Missionary Council (IMC) and subsequent mission and evangelism units of the WCC. Founded in 1921, the IMC was integrated into the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961 as the Division of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME) which was later renamed in 1971 as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Chinese Christians have been making their voices heard since the IMC's inception. At its inaugural conference held in the autumn of 1921 at Lake Mohonk, New

1 This paper is based on the presentation delivered at one of the IMC Centenary Study Centres—Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS) in October 2021 under the theme of “Towards the Independence of the Chinese Church: From the Perspective of Mission and Evangelism,” and translated into English with moderate revisions. In this paper, the terms “Christian” and “Christianity” refer to Protestant and Protestantism respectively.

York, of the only seven non-Euro-American participants out of the total of sixty-one attendees, two were from Chinese churches. They were Professor Y. Y. Tsu (朱友渔) of the then St. John's University in Shanghai and Mr. William Hung (洪业) of the China Continuation Committee, a founding member of the IMC.² More recently in 2018, the China Christian Council sent six delegates to the 14th World Mission Conference convened in Arusha, Tanzania, one of whom was a speaker at the plenary session. When the CWME met again in 2019 it also included a member from the Chinese Church.³

The IMC, DWME and currently, the CWME, have held, in succession, fourteen world mission conferences, with different themes, concerns and topics, among which evangelism has never been absent. This paper will briefly outline the conceptual development of evangelism or the theology of evangelism of IMC-DWME-CWME. It will then investigate the ministry of self-propagation in Chinese Christianity in the first half of the 20th century from the perspective of how the understanding of evangelism has changed. It will conclude with a brief reflection on the current ministry of evangelism among churches in China.

I. The development of a theology of evangelism

Incorporated in the theological discussion on evangelism was the need to ponder and seek answers to the following questions: a) what is the motivation for evangelism b) who proclaims the gospel c) what is the message d) what is its

2 William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 203-204.

3 See the official website of CCC&TSPM of the Chinese Protestant Churches, <http://www.ccctspm.org>

purpose and goal, and e) how to proclaim?⁴

At its founding, the IMC completely echoed what had emerged from the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 when it declared that the gospel will be proclaimed to the whole world within a generation—as long as the churches managed to utilize all their resources and apply the best scientific methods. The purpose of evangelism then was to convert as many people as possible, to “save souls” and to “win people for Christ.”⁵ Winning people for Christ in those days often implied contributing to a growth in membership of one’s own church, denomination or group. Church growth was practically regarded as the equivalent of consolidating God’s reign over the world. The success of evangelism was thus measured by the number of people who had been converted. Consequently, the effective methods of converting people and how to develop these methods became the core marketing strategies for evangelism. Notably, this was at a time when the “senders” of the gospel message were mostly white westerners, while the “receivers” were mostly those from Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁶

Given the fact that the gospel message has been and is being proclaimed to people of different regions, cultures, races and ethnicities, certain issues have to be properly addressed in the process of proclamation. In what follows, the IMC-CWME’s response to three key relationship issues will be selected to demonstrate the changes that have taken place in the development of evangelism theology.

4 Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau, “Evangelism,” in *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, eds. Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt (Oxford: Regnum / Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016), 152.

5 *Ibid.* 153.

6 *Ibid.*

(1) The relationship between evangelism and non-Christian religions

This was a most discussed and debated issue at both the world mission conferences in Jerusalem (1928) and in Tambaram (1938). The related questions that were covered at these conferences included the following:

First, should Christianity, as the unique truth, replace non-Christian religions or fulfil the best values of these religions? If Christian faith was to replace non-Christian religions, then the unique characteristics of Christian faith must be made explicit. If Christianity was to fulfil non-Christian religions, then dialogues must be sought accordingly.

Second, was there one “universal faith in a supreme being,” embodied in various ways that corresponded with different religious faiths? In 1932, the IMC’s report entitled “Re-thinking Missions: A Laymen’s Enquiry after One Hundred Years” endorsed the second view, stating that Christian missionaries were called to coexist with other faiths and work together to grow in the “completest religious truth.”⁷ Nevertheless, at the meeting in 1938, representatives from the supposedly “younger churches” opposed this position, arguing that evangelism was still important, but that it should be implemented through a process of dialogue and listening.⁸ Later, this issue was again debated at the IMC conference held in Mexico City in 1963. Some participants argued that other religions “belonged to the devil” and therefore should be excluded; others maintained that God

7 Ibid. 155.

8 Nicholas Lossky, Jose Miguez Bonino, John S. Pobee, Tom F. Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Pauline Webb, eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications & Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 282.

also existed in other religions. Eventually, the Mexico City Conference took a middle path and proposed that the gospel of Christ was for all humankind.⁹

Underpinning the relationship between evangelism and non-Christian religions was the fundamental question of salvation, that is, whether God's salvation was restrained to Christians or extended to adherents of other religions. Discussions around this issue continued until the WCC mission conference held in San Antonio in 1989, when a commonly-accepted view was put forward, with the claim that "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time, we cannot set limits to the saving power of God." It is apparent that there is a tension between these two affirmations that cannot be resolved but calls for respect.¹⁰ In 2006, the WCC published a study paper titled "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding" which proposed a new approach to this issue. It took religious traditions not as absolute truths, but as a personal journey or pilgrimage in their respective religious traditions. In the document, it was stated that:

We need to acknowledge that human limitations and limitations of language make it impossible for any community to have exhausted the mystery of the salvation God offers to humankind...It is this humility that enables us to say that salvation belongs to God, God only. We do not possess salvation; we participate in it. We do not offer salvation; we witness to it. We

9 "Mexico City – Witness in Six Continents" in Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt ed., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum/ Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016), 83.

10 "San Antonio 1989 – Mission in Christ's Way," in Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt ed., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, 126.

do not decide who would be saved; we leave it to the providence of God.¹¹

(2) The relationship between evangelism and church mission

The two World Wars drastically undermined the authority of western Christianity. Meanwhile, the collapse of colonialism in Asia and Europe, the withdrawal of missionaries from China, the questioning of missionary work and the increasing secularism in the “Christian West” all made people feel that the mission of the church was in crisis. As a consequence, IMC had to start considering the relationship between evangelism and the mission of the church. How was church mission to be defined? In 1952, “*Missio Dei*” was formulated at the IMC Conference held in Willingen. It advocated that the mission of the church, first of all, was the action of God. Out of God’s deep love for us, God sent God’s own beloved son to reconcile all things with Christ. The church only participated in the mission of God as mission instrument rather than as the goal of mission. The centre of the mission lied in God, not in the church.¹² This concept has a profound impact on the whole ecumenical movement.

In addition, participating in God’s mission, the church needed to proclaim the full message of the gospel. In 1967, based on the WCC’s view that the kingdom of God was gradually fulfilling the fundamental transformation in the

11 World Council of Churches, *Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding* (Geneva: WCC, 2006): 17, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/pb-14-religiousplurality.pdf> (accessed September 19, 2021).

12 “Willingen 1952-Missio Dei,” in Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt ed., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, 62-63.

world by God, evangelism was redefined and perceived to include the church's participation in liberation and reconciliation, not only through the work within the church but also through political and social engagements of the church for peace with justice. The WCC document "The Church for Others: Two Reports on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation" described evangelism as the church's discovery of and participation in God's actions in secular movements for peace. The World Mission Conference held in Bangkok in 1972-73, under the theme of "Salvation Today" further regarded salvation as "economic justice against exploitation, human dignity against oppression, solidarity against alienation, and hope against despair in personal life."¹³ Afterwards, the document of WCC in 1982, "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation", released an important message. It discarded the outdated dichotomy between evangelism and Christians' participation in social life. Moreover, it stated that the word "conversion" applied to both individuals' acceptance of "the saving lordship of Christ" and "to the change from war to peace, from injustice to justice, from racism to solidarity, from hate to love."¹⁴ At the later conference in San Antonio in 1989, it was further affirmed that the gospel included both "material gospel" and "spiritual gospel," which are supposed to be integrated into one gospel.¹⁵

With regard to the relationship between evangelism and mission, CWME made a clear distinction between the two terms "mission" and "evangelism" in its document "Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today" published in

13 Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau, "Evangelism," 158.

14 "Mission and Evangelism – an Ecumenical Affirmation" in Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, ed., *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 372-373.

15 Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau, "Evangelism," 160.

2000, which proposed a holistic understanding of mission. Mission, as was argued in the document, involved not only sharing the Good News “through word (*kerygma*), deed (*diakonia*), prayer and worship (*leiturgia*) and everyday witness of Christian life (*martyria*),” but also enhancing human life through improving human relationship with God, with other humans and with God’s creation.¹⁶

(3) The relationship between the gospel and culture

This is another crucial issue that occurs in the process of proclaiming the gospel, which can mostly be understood as the issue relating to contextualization. In 1996, this issue received special attention at the World Council of Churches’ Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Conference in El Salvador. A popular misconception then was that contextualization was a process to capsulize the gospel into some abstract and universal truths before translating them for different cultures. It was thought that in this way, the gospel may change culture, but culture cannot change the gospel. However, the truth is that the gospel has come to us through all kinds of already existing filters, that is, the Gospels and the epistles have already been shaped by certain cultures and contexts at certain historical times. At the same time, the conception of culture is difficult to define as culture itself is never static—it always contains elements corresponding to the gospel message as well as those that contradict it. Therefore, evangelism must be a dynamic process of collective and continually updated exploration, in the search for approaches to tell the story of Jesus Christ for a specific group of people at a specific time and place.

16 *Ibid.* 161.

Meanwhile, the understanding of the gospel by the listener will also “recreate” the ideas of the evangelist.¹⁷

(4) The development of evangelism theology

The above succinct elaboration on the three major issues encountered by the IMC-DWME-CWME in the past hundred years of evangelization illustrates that the ecumenical view of evangelism today is quite different from that held a century ago. Viewed from today’s evangelistic perspective, the motivation for evangelism of a hundred years ago had strong colonial features. Those who did not accept the gospel were regarded as uncivilized people, and evangelizing was understood as “winning souls” and transforming them into civilized Christians in accordance with western standards. Today’s theology of evangelism holds a different view that understands the real motivation for evangelism as proclaiming God’s deeds, sharing Christ’s love, and a rejoicing in Christ with a renewed mind. The purpose of evangelism can no longer be confined, as before, to the increase in the number of members in one’s own church, denomination or group because the effectiveness of evangelism should not be evaluated or measured by church growth, but by faithfulness to the gospel that is accompanied by the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The approach to evangelism of the past is therefore no longer fit for the new conception of evangelism. Evangelizing should be carried out in the same way that Jesus Christ carried out his ministry: characterized by an attitude of humility, a dialogical approach and a harmonious relationship resulting from the church’s respect for non-Christian religions and different cultural practices.

17 *Ibid.* 163.

When proclaiming Christ, we are not presenting propositional truth, but telling a story about what God has done for the world in Christ and about the kingdom of God for which we hope. We are inviting people to follow Christ and make changes to their lives. The gospel includes both the spiritual gospel and the material gospel, because salvation also contains multiple dimensions including promoting justice, human dignity and hope for life.

With regard to the “actor of proclamation,” it was thought a century ago that evangelism was the burden on the shoulders of the white. This colonial concept has long been abandoned, just as it was simultaneously necessary to cut off ties with colonialism and capitalism. As early as the Tambaram Conference in 1938, the IMC had begun to challenge the colonial mentality with which the gospel had been spread from the developed countries in the West to the developing countries. In 1947, the Whitby Conference held in the United Kingdom opposed the dichotomy between Christian and non-Christian countries, a concept which had justified many “Christian countries” often acting as aggressors, while “non-Christian countries” became their victims. At the Bangkok Conference of CWME in 1973, developing countries demanded that the West cease to send missionaries and funds to them. Later, the report of the Melbourne Conference in 1980 pointed out that the church’s entanglement with capitalism and neo-colonialism had made it an obstacle to evangelism.¹⁸ Likewise, the WCC report “Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in a Changing Landscape” also warned that, in view of the connection between evangelism and colonial forces, there

18 Metropolitan Coorilos Geevarghese, “Towards and Beyond Edinburgh 2010: A Historical Survey of Ecumenical Missiological Developments since 1910,” *International Review of Mission* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2010), vol. 99, 7-13.

was a risk that evangelism would be distorted by those who evangelized by means of economic power or cultural hegemony.¹⁹

II. The self-propagating ministry of Chinese Christianity and its view of evangelism in the first half of the 20th century

Although the independence movement and the indigenization movement of the Chinese churches as well as the national salvation movement were among the most discussed topics and most urgent issues for Chinese Christianity in the first half of the 20th century, the Chinese churches had never ceased their efforts in evangelism, especially in self-propagation. Various attempts and efforts had been made since the early 20th century to facilitate self-propagation along with the independence movement. Some of the earlier ones included the Northeast-Three-Province Domestic Mission (东北三省国内布道会), established by Chinese believers of the Northeast Presbyterian Church in 1906, to engage in evangelism led by Chinese Christians. In 1909, Ding Limei (丁立美), a Chinese Christian minister, conducted evangelising work independently at Weixian County, Shandong Province. In 1910, he founded and served as its general secretary, a self-propagating organization of Chinese Christians which was renamed in 1914 as the Chinese Student Volunteer Movement for the Ministry (中华学生立志布道团). In 1910, Rev. C.Y. Cheng (诚静怡) was elected as chairman of the National Missionary Society, which facilitated the further development of the self-

19 "Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in a Changing Landscape," 2012, World Council of Churches, at https://missionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Together_towards_Life.pdf 98.

propagating ministry of Chinese Christianity. In 1918, the Domestic Chinese Missionary Society (中华国内布道会) was founded, becoming one of the earliest self-reliant, self-supporting and self-propagating missionary organizations of Chinese Christians.²⁰ The indigenization movement of the 1920s also attached great importance to the ministry of self-propagation. In May 1922, the National Christian Conference of China adopted and published the “Message of the Church” which formally put forward the goal of the indigenization of Chinese churches. It stated that the Chinese churches should be supported and governed by Chinese people who would also propagate the gospel by themselves. Specific measures were proposed:

We ask the disciples of Jesus Christ in China to collaborate to achieve the goal of self-support through systematic donation. By decisive practice, not being afraid of experiment or failure, we can achieve self-governance. By more adequate religious education, cultivation of leaders, and dedicated individual preaching, the goal of self-propagation can be achieved.²¹

Large-scale and influential evangelical programmes included the Rural Reconstruction Movement advocated by the China National Council, the Five-year Revival Movement, and the later Three-year Revival Movement and the Border Service of the Church of Christ in China.

Did early Chinese Christianity also encounter the same three key issues as the IMC in its attempts and efforts at

20 Zhuo Xiping, *Basics of Chinese Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2005), 108.

21 Duan Qi, *The Path of Endeavour: The Indigenization of Chinese Christianity* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2004), 231.

evangelism? How did the Chinese churches respond to the related questions? What were their answers to the basic questions of evangelism theology?

One of the concerns of IMC-DWME-CWME in evangelism was proclaiming the gospel in relation to culture. This was not officially put forward by the WCC until its Assembly in 1996, but it had been a constant concern of Chinese Christianity throughout the first half of the 20th century. There were then three prominent views about the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. First, Christianity recognized Chinese culture, and it was possible to interpret Christian faith via Confucianism. The key representatives of this thought were Wu Leichuan (吴雷川) and Wang Zhixin (王治心). Second, Christianity was opposed to Chinese culture. This view emphasized the disparity between the sacred and the mundane. Its main representatives were Wang Mingdao (王明道), Watchman Nee (倪柝声) and several others. Third, Christianity transformed Chinese culture, which highlighted the sacredness and irreplaceability of Christianity. According to this view, the holiness of Christ could be integrated into Chinese culture. The prominent figures of this line of thought included Francis Wei (韦卓民), Chang Wankai (张亦镜) and T.C. Chao (赵紫宸).²² As the relationship between Christianity and culture is more a reflection on indigenization, that is, the traditional culture's response to the gospel of Christ, the participation of Christians in the May 30th Movement, the Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the national salvation movement, and so on, is the embodiment of the contextualization of Chinese Christianity since contextualization involves not only indigenization, but also the struggle for human justice

22 Xu Xiaohong et al., eds., *History of Chinese Christianity: Textbook for Chinese Protestant Seminaries* (Shanghai: TSPM&CCC, 2019), 207.

and concerns about secularization. In this sense, it could be said that early Chinese churches were ahead of others in the ecumenical churches in exploring the issue of contextualization.

On the issue of evangelism and church mission, the early Chinese churches did not fully realize that the mission of the church was the mission of God, but they were very much aware of the importance of preaching the whole gospel although it remained outside of the mainstream. Hsu Pao-chien (徐宝谦), the General Secretary of Lichuan Christian Rural Experimental Zone in Jiangxi Province once said:

Traditional Christianity believes that the only task of Christians is to preach the gospel and make people repent and be converted. We cannot fully agree with this narrow view. We agree that the gospel should be preached, but the evangelizing method is not limited to words either oral or written. The purpose of evangelism is by no means restrained to repentance and conversion. We believe that it is of the most significance to embody the spirit of Christ in our daily life and behaviour, which allows others to “see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven.” In short, our goal is to improve and transform the entire rural life which involves an increase in both quality and quantity. The improvement and transformation of quantity is a scientific task, and the improvement and transformation of quality is a religious task.²³

23 Hsu Pao-chien, “Theory and Practice of the Experimental Zone of Lichuan,” in *The China Christian Year Book 1934-1936*, 101, quoted in Duan Qi, *The Path of Endeavour*, 456.

Additionally, Professor Chen Zemin, in one of his articles written in 1947 when he was hospital chaplain in Zhejiang, made the following comment:

The core of the revival movement is the proclamation of the gospel, but the proclamation refers more to evangelism in its broad sense than to the oral preaching in the traditional narrow sense. Everything Jesus did on earth set an evangelistic model for us, such as giving the thirsty a cup of cold water, encouraging the disheartened, casting off loneliness, anxiety and fear from people's hearts, listening attentively to the sick with sympathy, comforting the grief of widows, collecting one's depressing and scattered minds through firm beliefs, and resolving inner conflicts. All of these are more meaningful and effective than oral preaching. They are urgently needed by patients in pain and groaning, and extremely important for the ministry of the ministers at hospitals.²⁴

Some Chinese Christian intellectuals in the first half of the 20th century had already realized that both the material gospel and the spiritual gospel were equally essential for evangelism, something which was not put forth by the WCC until its 1989 conference at San Antonio, based on its development since the 1960s. In fact, this conception was also truly embodied in the Chinese Christians' participation in and response to the National Salvation Movement.²⁵

24 Chen Zemin, "How to Promote Revival Movement in Hospitals," *TIANFENG* 72 (May 1947):8, quoted in Duan Qi, *The Path of Endeavour*, 504.

25 The National Salvation Movement in China was a widespread campaign in the 1930s to resist Japanese aggression and invasion led by many groups to pressure the Kuomintang government to take a firmer stance against Japan.

During that era, Chinese Christians were not yet substantially engaged in the discussion on the churches' relationship with non-Christian religions and the related issue of salvation. Although the Chinese Religious Fellowship had already been established in Chongqing in 1943, with members coming from Protestant, Catholic, Islamic and Buddhist backgrounds, it existed mainly for the purpose of broadening their horizons and to help them associate with people of other religions.²⁶ During the first half of the 20th century, the most heated discussion among Chinese Christians was about how to deal with the two Anti-Christian Movements and how to participate in the national salvation movement.

In its attempts and efforts at self-propagation, early Chinese Christianity had its own answers to the basic questions of evangelism theology. In terms of motivation and purpose, early efforts at self-propagation were deeply influenced by the prevailing understanding of evangelism of that era, which stressed the growth in the number of converts and the application of evangelistic strategies. For example, at the National Christian Conference in Shanghai in 1922, there were proposals to reform the rural churches. Christians were encouraged to go into the midst of the general public, and to go to the countryside. Christian rural reconstruction projects were subsequently launched. All these actions were for the purpose of facilitating the "Christianization of the countryside" and ensuring the "Christian occupation of the Chinese countryside."²⁷ Although people in rural areas were not forced to join

26 Xu Xiaohong et al. eds., *History of Chinese Christianity*, 222-223.

27 T.C. Chao, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Chinese Church," in *The Christian Occupation of China*, 87, quoted in Lam Wing-hung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1998), 344.

churches, because the focal point of ministry was not placed on proclaiming the gospel alone but on improving the everyday lives of people, rural areas were still expected to be reconstructed with public education being replaced by religious education and rural life being transformed by religious spirit.²⁸ It was argued that if Christianity was to make great contributions to China, it must enter the depth of rural society and Christianize it.²⁹

In the same way, the Five-year Revival Movement, which began in 1930, was even more clear-cut in its goal of expanding evangelism so as to double the existing number of Chinese believers within five years.³⁰ The Border Service of the Church of Christ in China was launched in 1939. Despite the fact it was purposed to provide various services to the people in the border area in the spirit of Christian service so as to enlighten people's knowledge, relieve their sufferings and improve their lives, it also required that preachers influence the people with their exemplary services so as to convert them into church members.³¹ Similarly, the most important goal of the "Three-year Revival Movement" initiated in 1946 also aimed at increasing the number of believers.³²

Since the motivation and purpose of evangelism were to convert people and increase the number of believers, the "material gospel" that could have been accepted in helping rid people of poverty and backwardness, improve

28 Duan Qi, *The Path of Endeavour*, 452.

29 *Ibid.*, 459.

30 Lam Wing-hung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949*, 360.

31 Xu Xiaohong *et al.*, eds., *History of Chinese Christianity*, 223-224. (The Border Service Department of the Church of Christ in China was a cooperative effort between the Church of Christ and the Nationalist Government in the 1940s, focusing on social and evangelistic work in China's western border areas.)

32 Duan Qi, *The Path of Endeavour*, 502.

people's educational levels, and eliminate "ignorance, poverty, weakness and selfishness"³³ in society then, was unfortunately regarded simply as the "marketing strategies" of evangelism.

Even so, there were some church people who had indeed realized the necessity and importance of proclaiming the "whole gospel." Besides Hsu Pao-chien and Chen Zemin mentioned above, Y. T. Wu (吴耀宗) was another one of them. When commenting on the Five-year Revival Movement, he argued that the multiplication of believers' in terms of quality and quantity was a good thing, but if spiritual revival alone was set as the goal, the church would be paying undue attention to Christians' personal lives and ignoring society as a whole. Wu pointed out that Christians who often emphasized personal spiritual practice should now shift their attention to their contribution to society. According to Wu, the greatest need of the church in China in those days was material reconstruction, which was also the indispensable stage that would lead to the realization of the heavenly kingdom on earth. He therefore claimed that "the ultimate goal of the Five-year Revival Movements was not to ask the Lord to revive the church, but to ask the Lord to make his kingdom come as soon as possible."³⁴ In the same way, the Three-year Revival Movement was also criticized by Zheng Xinmin (郑新民), a minister of Ningbo Methodist Church. Zheng asserted that as long as the current civil war was raging, there was no place in the country that would be peaceful and safe; people's lives were in danger. Thus, the church had to mobilize all its members to help with

33 These were the problems of society then, as pointed out by James Yen (晏阳初) who had advocated the social movement of educating the common people (平民运动).

34 Y. T. Wu, "Thoughts on and Hopes for the Five-year Revival Movement," *Truth and Life* 4, no.14 (March 15, 1930): 6,17, quoted in Lam Wing-hung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949*, 363-364.

production. It was because “saving lives” and “saving souls” were not contradictory but compatible. In Zheng’s opinion, refugee relief, rural reconstruction, border service, civilian education, and training were all urgent and obligatory ministries of Chinese churches.³⁵

In early Chinese Christianity there was a definite consensus on who should proclaim the gospel. The early independence movement was to realize the Chinese people’s desire to run their own churches. In the whole indigenization movement, seeking the church’s self-reliance was also the key point, emphasizing that “the mission of the Chinese church should be completely undertaken by the Chinese people alone,” and that the church should consciously assume the governing responsibility without further involvement of western clergy.³⁶ Of course, Chinese Christians did not see the fruit of their arduous effort in self-reliance and indigenization until after the launch of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Nevertheless, the Chinese churches, much earlier than IMC, had become aware of the entanglement between the church and capitalism, colonialism and imperialism, especially the latter, because an important feature of the independence movement was anti-imperialism and saving the country. The later Three-Self Patriotic Movement helped Chinese Christians become increasingly knowledgeable about the ties between Christianity and imperialism and therefore encouraged every effort to eliminate them.

35 Zheng Xinmin, “An Alternative Route for Church Revival,” *TIANFENG*, no. 117 (1948):4, quoted in Lam Wing-hung, *A Half Century of Chinese Theology 1900-1949*, 456.

36 Timothy Tingfeng Lew, “The National Christian Conference,” *Life Monthly* 2 (October 1921): 2, quoted in Duan Qi, *The Path of Endeavour*, 214-215.

III. Some thoughts on the present evangelistic ministry of Chinese Christianity

The prominent issues such as the relationship of evangelism with culture, with church mission and with non-Christian religions were also given attention and response to various extents in the self-propagating attempts and efforts of Chinese Christianity in its early times, which occurred even earlier than that of IMC in some respects. However, regarding the understanding of evangelism, imperceptible progress has been made by Chinese churches either during the early period of Chinese Christianity or today. Therefore, the one hundred years' development of IMC-DWME-CWME in its understanding of evangelism can be an inspiration for current Chinese churches.

The question of who proclaims the gospel has already been addressed properly according to the Three-self Principles (Self-government, Self-support and Self-propagation of the gospel.) Nevertheless, it remains an issue as to what should be the content of proclamation and whether or not the whole gospel is being preached. The goal set at the beginning of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has not been reached to say the least. As Y. T. Wu once pointed out:

To achieve authentic self-propagation, Chinese believers must explore the treasure of Jesus' gospel on their own. They must rid themselves of the fetters of western theology, reckon with the escapist thoughts, and form their own theological system. In this way, we may embody the true spirit of the gospel of Jesus in the context of the New China.³⁷

37 Y. T. Wu, "The New Stage of the Renovation of Christianity," Luo Guanzong, ed. *Collection of Essays of the TSPM of Chinese Protestant Churches 1950-1992* (Shanghai: TSPM&CCC, 1993), 22-23.

Today, the pulpit messages and the missiological thoughts of many grassroots churches remain the same as those of previous decades and even over a century ago. As such, they fail to meet the needs and development of Chinese churches in the new era. Moreover, Chinese churches have yet to fully establish their own theological system. Consequently, there are not many pulpit messages that can carry the Chinese Christians' own vision. On the contrary, many grass-roots churches are still affected by westernization and secularization, advocating the worship models, pastoral methods and liturgies of certain groups in other countries, and even promoting the theology of prosperity, which has cast a thick colour of self-interests on the Christian faith, and has inadvertently betrayed the true spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To evaluate the success of evangelism, many grassroots churches still take the increase in believers and the expansion of the church as the yardstick. As a result, different approaches and strategies are adopted to preach the gospel as if it is a commodity to be marketed. Some churches and believers even regard the Christian's responsibility to serve society as a means of conversion. None of these accords with biblical teachings and will lead to adverse witnessing as the church may be viewed as an inward-looking organization.

Developments in the theology of evangelism among the ecumenical churches can be a source of inspiration and lessons for Chinese churches in their choice of benchmarks for measuring the effectiveness of evangelism. Evangelism consists of proclaiming the work of God and sharing Christ's love. The effectiveness of evangelism should be measured by its faithfulness to the gospel. Evangelistic ministry should be implemented by following the humble and dialogical style of Jesus Christ rather than the marketing models of the secular world. The understanding of salvation can help

Chinese Christians to be truly humble and to imitate Christ. As the IMC-CWME have concluded, salvation belongs only to God; we do not own salvation, nor do we provide it. Rather, we merely testify to God's salvation. Thus, we do not decide who will be saved since the decision-making power lies only with God. This understanding of salvation will help many Chinese believers resolve disputes and abandon judgments concerning whether or not believers of other groups are saved, thereby promoting church unity.

The IMC-CWME's understanding of the relationship between evangelism and non-Christian religions will also inspire Chinese churches to actively participate in inter-religious dialogues and contribute to inter-religious harmony. Other dimensions of the ecumenical view of evangelism may also be conducive to promoting the further contextualization of Christianity in China and bearing witness to Christ in the present context and deserve further exploration.

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Wu Yaozong's Sinicized Christology:

An Analysis Based on Two Texts¹

吴耀宗的中国化基督论——基于两个文本¹的分析

CHEN YONGTAO 陈永涛

Abstract. This paper primarily explores Wu Yaozong's Sinicized Christology based on an analysis of two texts: *The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus* and *No One Has Ever Seen God*. It argues that Wu regarded experience as a crucial theological resource and sought to construct a Christology, aligning with both rationality and the spirit of the times, that integrates reason and emotional appeal. His Christology maintains the uniqueness of Christian faith while attempting to offer a new and creative interpretation of Christianity within the Chinese context of his time. In light of the efforts of the contemporary Chinese church to promote the further contextualization of Christianity, Wu's Christian thought and theological legacy deserve in-depth and comprehensive study.

Keywords. Jesus Christ, Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, Sinicization

1 Namely, Wu Yaozong's "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus" (1929) and *No One Has Ever Seen God* (1943).

Introduction

Wu Yaozong (also known as Y. T. Wu) was the principal initiator and most significant leader of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) of the Chinese Protestant Church. He dedicated himself to ensuring the survival and development of the Chinese church in a new context, making immense contributions in the process. He was also an important Christian thinker in the first half of the 20th century, whose theological reflections were a response to the Chinese context in which he was immersed. Until now, research on Wu Yaozong's thought has primarily focused on areas such as the Three-Self Movement, the Social Gospel, the Absolute Love doctrine, and the doctrine of God. However, other themes within his theological thought have not received sufficient attention and study. Therefore, to fully understand Wu Yaozong, it is essential for both the church and academia to conduct broader and deeper research into his theological legacy. This would allow for a better appreciation of his theological efforts and contributions to the Chinazation of Christianity.

It is undeniable that Wu Yaozong's theological endeavors aimed to construct a Sinicized Christianity in response to the various challenges posed by social change. In his pursuit of truth, Wu Yaozong's Christology, or his understanding of Jesus Christ, was highly Sinicized and deeply rooted in the faith experience of a Chinese Christian.² In his article "In Memory of Wu Leichuan," Wu Yaozong pointed out that Wu Leichuan's theology was influenced by three intellectual currents: Confucian humanism, the general, modern scientific thought of the time, and modern social sciences. Among these, modern social sciences had

2 Wu Yaozong. "Preface" in *The Jesus I Know*. Shanghai: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1929: 1.

the most profound and significant impact on him.³ In fact, in Wu Yaozong's own efforts to construct a rational and scientifically compatible Chinese Christianity, his theology was also influenced by these three intellectual currents. As a result, his interpretation of Jesus Christ was humanized, rational, and aligned with the spirit of the times.

1. Jesus: An Ordinary Man and a "Superman"

In 1929, Wu Yaozong edited and published the book *The Jesus I Know*, which included his own lengthy article, "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus." In this article, Wu begins by discussing his understanding of Jesus and his experience of converting to Christianity. He writes:

Eleven years ago, at the home of an American friend, I read Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 for the first time—the so-called Sermon on the Mount. Suddenly, I experienced an illumination in my heart that made me involuntarily leap for joy. I was filled with an indescribable happiness, feeling as if what I had been arduously seeking for years but could not find was now completely revealed to me in those three chapters.....Between the lines, I vaguely saw the one who was speaking—his countenance, both majestic and gentle; his demeanor, courageous yet reserved; and from his face radiated the light of love... I could not help but fall to the ground and say to that luminous figure: 'Lord, you are my Savior!'⁴

3 Wu Yaozong. "In Memory of Wu Leichuan." *Christian Journal*, 1945 (10): 16.

4 Wu Yaozong. "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus" in *The Jesus I Know*: 75.

This was a profoundly transformative experience. There is no doubt that Wu Yaozong's acceptance of Christianity was deeply influenced by the compelling character of Jesus. As he had stated, he was captivated by Jesus' personality and found himself unable to escape its influence.⁵ In this profound experience, we can discern the image of Jesus as Savior in Wu Yaozong's understanding. To him, the personality of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, provided clear guidance on how to conduct oneself in life. He recognized that while Jesus did not offer ready-made solutions to all of life's problems, he did provide a belief and a direction, enabling people to seek answers for themselves.⁶ In this sense, Jesus Christ as Savior resembles a life mentor. However, unlike other human teachers, Jesus serves as the prototype and standard for humanity—one who surpasses all other human mentors.

In order to highlight the greatness and compelling power of Jesus' personality, Wu Yaozong focused on the historical Jesus. To him, this historical Jesus, who possessed a fully realized human nature, was sufficient to be our Savior. Thus, he argued that Jesus was both an ordinary man and an extraordinary one. On the one hand, Jesus Christ had a flesh-and-blood body like ours—he experienced hunger, fatigue, and human emotions, and was shaped by the culture he lived in. On the other hand, Jesus was different from us in that he possessed extraordinary abilities. His words carried authority and a magnetic power; he could even perform miracles. Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane also demonstrated that while he shared our humanity, he transcended it, possessing a strength beyond our own and

5 Wu Yaozong. "Confucius and Christ: A Personal Experience." *Student World*, 1925 (18): 81.

6 Wu Yaozong. "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus" in *The Jesus I Know*: 77.

exhibiting a superhuman nature. Moreover, those who saw Jesus saw the Father. In his great personality, people could see God.⁷ From this perspective, Jesus' magnificent character not only radiated divine glory but was itself the very manifestation of God. Therefore, people could come to know the invisible God through the entirety of Jesus' life and teachings. In this sense, Jesus was the embodiment of the Incarnation—the true presence of God revealed in the world.⁸

2. Jesus: The Revelation of God

Wu Yaozong believed that God is transcendent and that human beings cannot see God's essence; only Jesus Christ can reveal Him. The God that Jesus manifested is undoubtedly a God of love. Jesus affirmed that "God is love" and that He is the Father of humanity. This God cherishes human beings, knows all their needs, and provides for them. He is compassionate, merciful, and a source of comfort. Both Jesus' life and teachings revealed this God of love.

Wu Yaozong acknowledged that the biblical understanding of God underwent an evolutionary process and that the development of the New Testament's concept of God was linked to the "apotheosis" of Jesus by his disciples. He argued that the apotheosis of Jesus led believers to hold Him in higher esteem. As a result, they came to believe that Jesus reflected the glory of God, allowing people to know

7 Wu Yaozong. "The Concept of God in an Era of Great Change" in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers: Volume on Wu Yaozong*. Beijing: People's University Press, 2014: 55–56; and Wu Yaozong. "The Essence of the Christian Faith and Its Significance in an Era of Great Change" in Zhao Xiaoyang op.cit., 274–275.

8 Wu Yaozong. "The Concept of God in an Era of Great Change" in Zhao Xiaoyang, op. cit., 57.

God through Him.⁹ As the perfect image of God, Jesus Christ fully manifested God's will and mysteries. Thus, God's will was no longer unfathomable—it was revealed as divine love through Jesus Christ. Love is God's most fundamental attribute, and through His love, one can understand all of His other attributes. Furthermore, the apotheosis of Jesus resulted in the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity: there is only one God, yet He exists in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The “Son” reveals the “Father,” and through the “Spirit” as the mediating presence, humanity can directly commune with God. This doctrine emphasizes both God's transcendence and His immanence, ensuring that He is no longer seen as a distant and unapproachable deity. Therefore, the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity was intended to express the complex experience of Christians in receiving salvation.¹⁰ Wu Yaozong interpreted the doctrine of the Trinity in a historical and rational manner, affirming its legitimacy as a necessary expression of the complex faith experiences of Christians. He viewed it as a way to articulate the profound experience of salvation.

Wu Yaozong believed that as the revelation of a God of love, Jesus' solution to life's problems was love. In his essay “The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus,” Wu stated:

The only method Jesus used to solve life's problems was a single word—‘love’.....The superiority of Jesus does not lie in the fact that he proposed ‘love’ as the principle of human life, but rather in that he helped us resolve the issue of ‘our own survival,’ so that even in the face of various hardships, even in starvation, we still believe

9 Wu Yaozong. *No One Has Ever Seen God*. Shanghai: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1948: 52.

10 *Ibid.*, 55.

that 'love' is necessary, and we still practice 'love.'¹¹

He pointed out that Jesus “found a living God through the pursuit of love and the struggle for morality.” For Wu, love was the most valuable element in human experience and an essential component of human existence. Without love, humanity could not survive, and life’s problems could not be solved. Wu therefore emphasized that the God Jesus discovered through moral struggle was not an abstract concept but a living God—one who is omnipresent, intimately connected with humanity, listens to human cries, and governs human life. This living God helped Jesus to fulfill his perfect character; the essence of Jesus’ faith was the seamless integration of morality and religion.¹²

Wu acknowledged that suffering is an inherent part of the world, but he believed that the God of love revealed by Jesus provided a solution to the problem of human suffering and evil. Thus, even in the face of suffering, Jesus boldly declared, “God is love.” In Wu’s view, the existence of suffering neither negates the existence of God nor denies the loving nature of God. Suffering is something God allows humans to endure in order to refine them. Moreover, Jesus’ life demonstrated that one of Christianity’s greatest contributions is to teach people to confront life’s hardships with an active, striving, and sacrificial spirit. The cross of Jesus is the best example of this. Even when crucified, Jesus continued to believe in and reveal the truth that “God is love,” fully entrusting himself to God.¹³ The love of God displayed through the cross represents the highest

11 Wu Yaozong. “The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus,” *The Jesus I Know*: 84–86.

12 *Ibid.*, 92–93.

13 Wu Yaozong. “The Essence of the Christian Faith and Its Significance in an Era of Great Change” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *op. cit.*, 274–275.

expression of love. The spirit of love and sacrifice embodied in the cross is essential for human salvation.

Wu Yaozong was deeply aware that the world is filled with suffering and evil—not only natural evil but also human-made evil. He attributed human-made evil to sin, and he identified the most fundamental and absolute sin as human “self-centeredness.”¹⁴ Therefore, humanity cannot save itself; only the gospel of love, only Jesus Christ, who reveals God’s love, can rescue us from a world of suffering and evil. For Wu, Jesus’ life and teachings demonstrated that only a life of love is the true meaning of human existence, the path of life itself. Only through a life of love can people be saved from sin and suffering. Though God is invisible, the unparalleled character of the historical Jesus reflected God’s glory and revealed God’s boundless love. His birth, death, teachings, and all that he was represent the highest ideal of human life. Therefore, “The birth of Jesus should be the birth of new hope, the birth of new strength. Let us honor him as Lord, praise him, and allow him to save us from this world of sin and suffering.”¹⁵

It is evident that Wu Yaozong believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Savior, the Messiah, and even God. However, for the sake of contextualization, he explained how Jesus Christ revealed God from an experiential and historical perspective rather than a metaphysical one. For him, Christians believe that Jesus is God “because his disciples deified him.”¹⁶ He sought to rationally understand how the historical Jesus became the Christ of faith, explaining why believers came to deify Jesus as God. In Wu’s view, Jesus was regarded as

14 Wu Yaozong. “The Liberation of the Self” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers: Volume on Wu Yaozong*: 307.

15 Wu Yaozong. “The Gospel of Love—Commemorating Christmas 1946” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.) op. cit., 325–327.

16 Wu Yaozong. *No One Has Ever Seen God*, op. cit., 52.

God precisely because of the profound impact of his great personality, which compelled people to see him as truth, as God.¹⁷ He particularly emphasized the great personality revealed through the cross—a radiant and awe-inspiring character that left people no choice but to acknowledge that Jesus embodied God’s truth and, therefore, was God. This, he argued, was the reason Christians regarded Jesus as divine.¹⁸ Duan Qi observed that Wu’s interpretation was not only compatible with the prevailing rationalist trends of the time but also closely aligned with Chinese cultural traditions.¹⁹

Wu Yaozong accepted the doctrine of the Incarnation but provided a rational explanation of Jesus’ incarnation. He stated, “God is the truth that permeates the universe, and what Jesus manifests is the truth of human existence. The truth of being human is part of the entire truth of the universe.....Therefore, from a human perspective, Jesus is the embodiment of God, the ‘Word made flesh.’”²⁰ Here, Wu used the relationship between a part and a whole to illustrate that Jesus was God’s incarnation. Furthermore, he sought to explain the rationality of the doctrine of the Incarnation from within the Christian faith. He noted that for non-Christians, the belief in the Incarnation “may seem too extraordinary,” but interpreting this belief through the disciples’ faith experiences made it reasonable.²¹ Wu attempted to explain the uniqueness of the Christian faith from the perspective of Christian experience.

17 Ibid., 84-85.

18 Ibid., 85.

19 Duan Qi. “How Wu Yaozong Rationalized the Christian Concept of God—A Discussion Based on No One Has Ever Seen God” in Mou Zhongjian (ed.). *Religion and Nation: Volume Five*. Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2007: 104.

20 Wu Yaozong. *No One Has Ever Seen God*, op. cit., 83.

21 Wu Yaozong. “No One Has Ever Seen God” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers: Volume on Wu Yaozong*: 125–126.

He emphasized Jesus' awareness of God's will and his own mission, because of his inseparable relationship with God the Father. This connection was not limited to his prayers but permeated his daily life. Jesus had a profound "awareness of God," which enabled him to perceive the integrity of human life and the infinite divine life—God. God is the Father and the source of all life. Since the root of individual life lies in the greater divine life, and since the greater life is eternal, individual life must also be eternal—this is the faith in eternal life. Because Jesus was deeply connected to God at all times, he perfectly manifested God's life and fully carried out God's will.²² For this reason, Jesus is the Lord of life and history, inspiring all who follow him. Jesus had such power, Wu asserted, "because his extraordinary and moving life story was woven together with God."²³

In "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus," Wu concluded with a long poem, the final lines of which read:

Press forward, my friend!
There is only this faint glimmer of light,

This wavering, flickering light
Yet it will show you a way out!²⁴

Before the founding of New China, Wu Yaozong faced a dark and troubled old world, diligently seeking the truth that could save his country. For him, the "faintly discernible path" was the way that Jesus had opened for humanity by

22 Wu Yaozong. "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus" in *The Jesus I Know*: 81–83.

23 *Ibid.*, 83.

24 *Ibid.*, 99.

living out God's love—the path of redemption, paved with a life of love. He deeply understood that in a world full of suffering, the sacrificial love of God revealed by Jesus Christ was hope for humanity—a flickering light of hope. The way out for humanity was to follow Jesus Christ on the path of the cross.

3. The Meaning of Jesus' Cross and Resurrection

Wu Yaozong affirmed the Christian belief in the resurrection, considering Jesus' resurrection as the foundation of human hope. His understanding of the resurrection was inseparable from his understanding of the cross. From his explanations, it is evident that he was more concerned with the significance of the cross and resurrection rather than their epistemological aspects. This perspective aligned with his view that “the essence of Christianity is a religion of life” and was also closely related to his efforts in contextualization.

Wu pointed out that, on the surface, Jesus' crucifixion appeared as a tragic failure. On the cross, the forces of evil seemed to have triumphed, and Jesus' lofty ideals seemed completely shattered. At the moment of his crucifixion, Jesus had only the God of truth as his sole comfort and final hope. However, Jesus had penetrated the truth of life and death: life itself contains the elements of death, and death is merely a process within life. Furthermore, the faith in resurrection demonstrates that Jesus Christ, who represented the power and will of goodness, died on the cross but rose again. He “overcame failure, suffering, and death, displaying his infinite authority and potential, ultimately making the cross the most glorious symbol of human salvation.”²⁵ Wu Yaozong

25 Wu Yaozong. “The Concept of God in an Era of Great Change” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers: Volume on Wu Yaozong*: 57.

firmly believed that the cross is a sign of love, representing the struggle for others—even to the point of dying for them. From the cross of love, a great faith emerges. As long as the life of love revealed by the cross continues, neither death nor suffering can negate this great faith—the faith in resurrection and eternal life.²⁶

Wu Yaozong claimed that faith in the resurrection is a fundamental component of Christianity. He firmly believed that Jesus' resurrection was evidence-based, but this evidence did not lie in the recorded discovery of the empty tomb by the women, nor necessarily in the disciples' visions of Jesus after his death. Rather, the true evidence was found in "the qualitative transformation that occurred in the lives of those who had encountered Jesus—even in those who had never met him, like Paul—after Jesus' death..... This is why believers affirm Jesus' 'resurrection.'"²⁷ This perspective indicates that Wu interpreted the resurrection from the standpoint of experiential faith and historical faith.²⁸ Wu Yaozong believed that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the source of our faith and the foundation of our lives. Since God is unseen, faith in God can sometimes waver. Yet, in such moments, he suggested, "we can look to Jesus on the cross—how he conquered the world, how he pointed out the path of life... He strengthens us, inspires our courage, and enables us, in a world seemingly overshadowed by evil forces, to deeply believe that God's holy and good will is at work, so that we do not lose our self-confidence. In Jesus, we find an inexhaustible and boundless strength given by God."²⁹

26 Wu Yaozong. "The Worldview and Outlook on Life After Knowing Jesus" in *The Jesus I Know*: op. cit., 90–92.

27 Wu Yaozong. "Death and Life—Written for Easter" in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers: Volume on Wu Yaozong*: 298–299.

28 Ibid., 298–299; see also Wu Yaozong. *No One Has Ever Seen God*: 126–127.

29 Wu Yaozong. "The Concept of God in an Era of Great Change," op. cit., 58.

Thus, in Wu Yaozong's view, Jesus' resurrection was not merely the impact of a great personality after death, nor was it simply what Chinese tradition calls the "Three Immortalities" (establishing virtue, achievements, and teachings) or what western thought refers to as "social immortality." His understanding of Jesus' resurrection was not confined to its influence on personality or spirit. He argued that even if Jesus' posthumous influence were merely personal, the sheer magnitude of this influence resulted in a "qualitative" transformation so profound that the disciples felt their entire way of thinking, attitude, and life orientation had changed. They even perceived the once-dead Jesus vividly before them. This "qualitative" transformation, Wu stated, is what is meant by "resurrection."³⁰

It is evident that while Wu's interpretation of the resurrection was experiential and subjective, he still regarded the belief in resurrection as possessing objective validity and transformative power for human life and the world. Therefore, although "'resurrection'... cannot be proven or disproven by science, those who believe may believe, and those who do not cannot be forced to. Yet in terms of life's meaning, this belief seems reasonable and not necessarily irrational."³¹ For this reason, Wu Yaozong firmly declared that when Jesus was crucified, it seemed that goodness, justice, and truth had also been nailed to the cross. However, Jesus was not defeated by death, for on the third day, he rose again. "The tomb was empty; the tomb was too small to contain him; nor could the tomb bury goodness, justice, and truth."³²

30 Wu Yaozong. "Death and Life—Written for Easter" in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.). *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers: Volume on Wu Yaozong*: 299.

31 Wu Yaozong. *Ibid.*, 301.

32 Wu Yaozong. "I Have Overcome the World"—Looking Ahead to 1948" in Zhao Xiaoyang, *op. cit.*, 403.

4. Conclusion

From the discussion above on Wu Yaozong's Christology, it is evident that his theology is contextual, with experience serving as a crucial resource in his theological reflection. However, his efforts in contextualizing or Sinicizing theology were neither aimed at merely rationalizing Christianity nor at constructing a materialist Christian theology. Rather, he sought to develop a theology that harmonizes reason and the spirit of the times—one that is both emotionally resonant and intellectually sound, a theology that addresses the real-life issues of China at the time. The theology he aimed to construct was thus both rational and deeply heartfelt, both tangible and profound—one that balanced sentiment and reason. While upholding the uniqueness of the Christian faith, he also sought to offer new and creative interpretations of Christianity within the Chinese context of his time.

Zeng Qingbao has noted that Wu Yaozong has not yet been seriously regarded as a theologian. In particular, there has been a lack of deeper understanding or engagement with how his theological thought critically reflected on the pressing issues of his time and how his ideas, as a theological legacy, could be appreciated and inherited.³³ Zeng further asserted:

Wu Yaozong confronted his era more as a 'thinker' than as a church leader. In fact, his theological and ideological stance had already been largely shaped before 1949. Through his profound reflection on Christianity and his incisive analysis of his era, he undoubtedly qualifies as

33 Zeng Qingbao. "Wu Yaozong's "Materialist Christianity" and the Critique of Chinese Modernity." *Logos & Pneuma: Chinese Journal of Theology*, 2012 (36): 42.

a true ‘Chinese theologian.’ *No One Has Ever Seen God* can be considered one of the classic works of Chinese Christianity since the Republican era.³⁴

Zeng’s assessment highlights Wu Yaozong’s significance in Chinese theology and the intellectual history of Chinese Christianity. Indeed, Wu was not merely a church leader or a “practitioner,” nor was he solely a key initiator and leader of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement; he was also a Chinese Christian thinker. In the contemporary Chinese church’s pursuit of the Chinazation of Christianity, his theology and Christian thought, as part of the rich intellectual heritage of 20th-century Chinese Christianity—and even of Chinese intellectual history—deserve in-depth and comprehensive study.

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34 Ibid., 44.

The Pioneer's Inner Voice: T. C. Chao and Contextualizing Christianity in China

赵紫宸与基督教中国化展示馆之：“先驱心声”的史料解说

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Abstract. T. C. Chao (or Zhao Zichen 赵紫宸, 1888–1979) was born in Xinshi Town, Deqing County in Zhejiang Province. He received his early education at a traditional private school before attending Soochow Church Middle School. Chao earned both his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Soochow University. After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Theology at Vanderbilt University he returned to China and taught at Soochow University, becoming dean of its College of Liberal Arts. He subsequently taught at Yenching University, where he became dean of the School of Religion. A prominent advocate of indigenization and theological contextualization, he played a pioneering role in advancing the contextualization of Christianity in China. To date, close to three million words of his Chinese writings and approximately six hundred thousand words of his English writings have been retrieved, most of which have been included in the five-volume *Collected Works of T. C. Chao* published by the Commercial Press. He was awarded honorary doctorate degrees in Arts and Theology by both Soochow University and Princeton University. Notably, Mr. Chao was elected one of the six presidents of the World Council of Churches at its inaugural general assembly in August 1948.

To explore and promote T. C. Chao's theological concept of the "Further Contextualization of Christianity in China,"

the TSPM&CC of Zhejiang mobilized resources to establish the Exhibition Hall dedicated to “T. C. Chao and the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China” at the Xinshi Town Church. This essay contains excerpts drawn from the commentaries located in the section entitled “The Pioneer’s Inner Voice.”

Keywords: T. C. Chao, the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China, Exhibition Commentaries.

Introduction

Zhao Zichen 趙紫宸, better known outside China as T. C. Chao, was born on February 14, 1888, in Xinshi Town, Deqing County in Zhejiang. Located along the Jinghang Grand Canal, this ancient Jiangnan water town, renowned for its unique cultural aura and for producing outstanding individuals, undoubtedly contributed to the nurturing of Chao’s profound intellect and humble, gentle personality. From a very young age, his traditional education had helped lay a solid foundation for his mastery of the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*. After completing his secondary education at Soochow Church Middle School, Mr. Chao attended Soochow University, where he earned his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Arts. In 1907, while attending university, Chao chose to be baptized as a Christian. He left for the United States in 1914 to study at Vanderbilt University and graduated in 1917 with a Master of Arts degree in sociology and a Bachelor of Divinity degree. A dedicated scholar, he was equipped with an extensive knowledge of art, possessed keen insights, and personally endured deeply emotional experiences in a life filled with continuous challenges. These attributes earned him recognition as a distinguished figure, with his Western friends lauding him as “a leading scholar interpreting Christian beliefs for Eastern minds, an inspiring

teacher, and an exceptional poet.”

T. C. Chao’s “Eastern mind” was evident in many aspects of his life, such as his filial piety towards his parents, his care for his brother, and his careful nurturing of his children, all of which reflected the traditional family values deeply cherished in Chinese culture. He regarded sincerity and love as the foundational principles of life that were widely reflected in the respect shown for teachers and the high value placed on education. His life was dedicated to religious education that incorporated the search for truth, the promotion of goodness, and the advocacy of virtue and self-restraint. Known to practice what he preached, his tireless efforts in educating innumerable young students left a rich legacy: many of them settled and flourished in different parts of the world. His exemplary life left countless positive testimonies. These qualities led to his recognition by the global Christian community as “the most significant and influential Chinese theologian, poet, and religious educator of the 20th century,” earning respect for the Chinese Church in the international Christian community.

Academic life

On his return to China after graduating from Vanderbilt University, Chao served as a professor at Soochow University and as the dean of its College of Liberal Arts. He subsequently taught at Yenching University (1928-1951) where he became well known for his academic work as a professor in the philosophy of religion and as the dean of the School of Religion. During his tenure as dean, Chao played a pioneering role in actively promoting the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China. As a distinguished scholar and theological educator with expertise in both Eastern and Western cultures, Chao worked tirelessly to elevate the status of the Church in China

and to expand its global influence, consistently engaging as an active participant on the global Christian stage. At the age of sixty, Chao attended the inaugural Assembly of the World Council of Churches in August 1948. Notably, he was the only Chinese representative and the only Asian among the six elected presidents.

T. C. Chao was a prolific writer throughout his life, with the volume of his retrieved writings reaching three million words in Chinese and around six hundred thousand words in English. In addition, he composed numerous hymns and poems, both traditional and modern, which were published by the Commercial Press as *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, with the fifth volume released in English. Chao was awarded an honorary doctorate in Arts by Soochow University in 1927 and in 1947, received an honorary doctorate in Theology from Princeton University. As a cultural celebrity, he brought great pride to his hometown.

Chao dedicated his life to the pursuit of truth and intellectual progress, serving as a model of patriotism and faith within the Chinese religious community. In September 1949, he was one of the five Christian representatives who attended the first plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Chao actively participated in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China. Together with Wu Yaozong (also known as Y. T. Wu), T. C. Chao was among the 40 Christian leaders who co-authored the "Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China," commonly known as "the Three-Self Manifesto." On April 28, 1951, Mr. Chao made the significant decision to resign from his presidency of the World Council of Churches in protest against U.S. involvement in the Korean War. Following the establishment of the new Chinese government (The People's Republic of China), Mr. Chao wrote letters to his children, who were overseas for study and work, encouraging them

to contribute to the construction of the New China. His eldest daughter, Zhao Luorui, became a renowned Chinese translator and scholar of comparative literature, serving as the professor and head of the department of Western Languages at both Yenching University and Peking University. His eldest son, Zhao Jingxin, was a hero of the “Two Airlines Uprising” that took place in Hong Kong in 1949.

In academia, numerous seminars have been held and collections of T. C. Chao’s works have been published to explore more deeply his academic achievements in theological thought and to promote his reflections on the Further Contextualization of Christianity in the contemporary era. For example, as early as April 21-22, 2004, the “International Symposium on the Religious Thought of T. C. Chao” was held at Tsinghua University’s Jinchun Garden, organized by the Department of Philosophy, the Center for the Study of Ethics and Religion, and the Yenching Academy. Nearly fifty participants, including Mr. Chao’s family members, students, religious figures, and academic representatives from the mainland of China, Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Singapore, attended the conference. The following year, the “Commemorative Essays of Mr. T. C. Chao,” edited by Wang Xiaochao, was published by the Religious Culture Publishing House in Beijing in 2005. Similarly, the academic conference titled “T. C. Chao and the Exchange of Chinese and Western Thought” was held at Huzhou University from October 31 to November 2, 2009. *The Will of the Nightingale*, edited by Tang Xiaofeng and others, was published by the Religious Culture Publishing House in Beijing in 2010.

These efforts aim to ensure the healthy continuation of Christianity in China and to enhance its compatibility with China’s social and cultural contexts. There are numerous doctoral dissertations and monographs, written both domestically and internationally, that study the theological

thought of T. C. Chao.¹ In the summer of 2018, Zhejiang CC&TSPM organized the “Commemoration of T. C. Chao’s 130th Anniversary and Seminar on the Theological Thoughts Concerning the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China” in Mr. Chao’s hometown, Xinshi Town in Deqing County. Essays and speeches delivered during the seminar have been compiled under the title “Embrace Wisdom from the Past to Navigate Today’s Pathway” (执古之道·御今所有). Three years later, with great support and attention from various levels of Party committees and government departments in Zhejiang Province, the Zhejiang CC&TSPM repeatedly mobilized local CC&TSPMs and church members to raise funds for the establishment of the Exhibition Hall on “T. C. Chao and the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China” within the Xinshi Town Church. With the successful completion of the exhibition hall, a Research Summit on “T. C. Chao and the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China” will be held periodically, featuring focused studies on Chao’s life and writings, the historical context and origins of his theological thoughts, and their implications for the Church in China today.

1 For instance, “The Theological Thought of T. C. Chao”, which is part of the Chinese Christian Theology Reference Series and includes a foreword by Bishop K. H. Ting, is an expanded version of a doctoral dissertation by German scholar Winfried Gluer. It was translated by Deng Zhaoming and published by China Christian Council in Shanghai in 1999. Additionally, the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong published Lin Hongrong’s “A Tune Beyond the Common Ear: The Life and Theology of T. C. Chao” in 1994, and the Alliance Bible Seminary published Xing Fuzeng’s “Exploring the Uniqueness of Christianity--Collected Essays on T. C. Chao’s Theology” in 2003. The revised version of Dr. Tang Xiaofeng’s “A Study of T. C. Chao’s Theological Thought”, published by the Religious Culture Publishing House in Beijing in 2018, is also an expansion of his 2005 doctoral dissertation.

The goal is to further explore the path of upholding further contextualization in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Through these initiatives, we can learn from the past in bringing about innovations for the future. The exhibition hall will also periodically showcase the practical achievements of further contextualization by churches in Zhejiang. Its aim is to ground the process of further contextualization more deeply in the practices of grassroots churches and to listen closely to the hearts of believers, thereby contributing to the province's efforts to advance contextualization, modernize religious governance, and support the development of an exemplary model for common prosperity. The following sections will provide a detailed explanation of "The Pioneer's Inner Voice" section of the exhibition hall.

The Pioneer's Inner Voice

Naming a display area in the hall "The Pioneer's Inner Voice" was very much inspired by an inscription made by Professor Chen Zemin. In his appraisal of T. C. Chao, Professor Chen noted:

Throughout the challenging half-century from the early 20th century to the establishment of New China, Mr. T. C. Chao made significant contributions to the theological development of the Church in China and the cultivation of high-level pastoral and theological talents. His work bore abundant fruit, leaving behind a rich and invaluable legacy for the Church in China...His writings are imbued with a vibrant spirit of openness and reform, radiating the truth-seeking faith and the brilliance of wisdom, while also expressing a deep love for the motherland and a longing for a brighter future...We can regard Mr. Chao's lifelong service and

dedication as pioneering efforts in establishing the reform and innovation of Chinese theology for today's Church. The rich intellectual heritage he left behind is indeed the inner voice of a pioneer, worthy of our serious study."²

Overall Approach

Given the profoundness and extensiveness of Mr. T. C. Chao's theological thought, expressed in his voluminous writings totaling three to four million words in both Chinese and English, along with his numerous achievements in academia and in the arts, it was important to make a careful selection of the content given the space limitations of the exhibition hall. The display in "The Pioneer's Inner Voice" section aimed to concisely explain and vividly present the key aspects of Mr. T. C. Chao's role as "a pioneer in the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China." To highlight this theme, the display focuses on Mr. T. C. Chao's understanding, explanation, and practice of "the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China." Based on extensive reading, understanding, organization and summation of Mr. Chao's writings and the research findings of other scholars, the following aspects of his theological thoughts on "the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China" are presented below:

Firstly, Mr. Chao's overall image is conveyed through a widely recognized and highly concise "preface" and three brief titles: the early founder of the contextualization of Christianity in China, the inspiring teacher, and the

2 Refer to "Preface" by the Yen-ching Academy *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, Volumes 1, 2, and 3, (Beijing: The Commercial Press, published in 2003, 2004, and 2007, respectively).

exceptional poet.³

Secondly, the exhibition includes memories and commentaries about Mr. T. C. Chao from several representative church leaders and scholars, such as Wu Yaozong, Bing Xin, K. H. Ting, Chen Zemin, Zhuo Xinping, and Tang Xiaofeng. These accounts serve as a foreword that vividly depicts their impressions of Mr. Chao. (The texts and sources will be detailed below.)

Thirdly, a concise chronology of major events in T. C. Chao's life is presented. This is based on *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao* (Volume 4): "The Chronicle of T. C. Chao's Life" and "A Brief Compilation of T. C. Chao's Chronology." Twenty-five milestones are highlighted to showcase Mr. Chao's life trajectory.

Fourthly, an overview of T. C. Chao's theological thought is provided. This includes a highly-condensed summary of his theoretical discussions and church practices concerning the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China in four sections:

- In Search of the Origins
- Mutual Enrichment and Exchange
- Cultural Establishment
- Steadfastly Practicing the Faith

Lastly, the exhibition features "T. C. Chao and the Further Contextualization of Sacred Music in China" as

3 The first title can be considered a statement of fact, while the second and third titles were conferred upon Mr. Chao in 1947 when he represented Yenching University at Princeton University's bicentennial celebration and was awarded a honorary doctorate Degree in Theology. He was described as "the leading scholar interpreting the Christian faith to the Eastern mind, an inspiring teacher, and an outstanding poet." Considering Mr. Chao's four decades of dedicated efforts and significant achievements as a theologian, religious educator, writer, and poet, these praises are well-deserved.

a study illustrating another facet of Mr. Chao — as an exceptional poet.

Considering that the exhibition is open to the general public, including both church members and people from all walks of life, it strives to balance academic rigor with general accessibility. In addition to explicit themes like “the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China,” it also takes into account the historical context in which this church pioneer lived, ensuring that the content is straightforward, concise, and clear. Trying to cover all aspects comprehensively was indeed a challenging task.

Selected Commentaries on T. C. Chao by:

Wu Yaozong

“After the Pacific War broke out, I heard that Brother Tse-Chen was imprisoned...I am aware of his intellectual and moral cultivation, which are more than sufficient to deal with the Japanese...he did not succumb to suffering; physical torment and mental distress only made him stand stronger, offering a powerful testimony to the truth (of which) he is deeply convinced...Because of his testimony, along with that of many other Christians during the war, we are convinced that Christianity has taken root in China.”

[Wu Yaozong (1893-1979): a key initiator of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China, and the first and second Chairperson of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China.]⁴

Bing Xin

“Dean T. C. Chao was a loving and gentle elder, a scholar with profound and extensive knowledge, and someone who deeply loved his country and people. Learning from him is

4 Refer to *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, Volume 2, 414.

the best way to commemorate his centenary.”

[By Bing Xin (1900-1999) modern writer, poet, and an author of children’s literature.]⁵

K. H. Ting

“Mr. T. C. Chao was an exceptionally talented idealist. His works are essential reading for scholars studying Christianity in China. Mr. Chao’s thoughts have a lasting impact on today’s Chinese church theologians and students, thus he remains alive among us. His life exemplified diligence, simplicity, honesty, and a rigorous pursuit of truth, providing an excellent role model for future generations.”

[K. H. Ting (1915-2012): Vice Chairperson of the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference; Chairperson of the fourth, fifth, and sixth National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China (National TSPM); honorary chairperson of the Seventh and Eighth National TSPM; President of the first, second, and third China Christian Council (CCC); and Honorary President of the fourth and fifth CCC.]⁶

Chen Zemin

“Throughout the challenging half-century from the early 20th century to the establishment of New China, Mr. T. C. Chao made significant contributions to the theological development of the Church in China and the cultivation of high-level pastoral and theological talent. His work bore abundant fruit, leaving behind a rich and invaluable legacy

5 Refer to the inscriptions in *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, Volumes 3, 4, and 5.

6 Refer to *The Selected Chinese Theological Essays*, Nanjing: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, 1992, page 245; Winfried Gluer (translated from German by Deng Shaoming), *The Theological Thought of T. C. Chao*, Shanghai: China Christian Council, 1999. See also the Foreword and the inscriptions in *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, Volumes 3, 4, and 5.

for the Church in China...His writings are imbued with a vibrant spirit of openness and reform, radiating the truth-seeking faith and the brilliance of wisdom, while also expressing a deep love for the motherland and a longing for a brighter future...We can regard Mr. Chao's lifelong service and dedication as the pioneering efforts in the reform and innovation of establishing Chinese theology for today's Church. The rich intellectual heritage he left behind is indeed the inner voice of a pioneer, worthy of our serious study.

[Chen Zemin (1917-2018: vice president of the fifth and sixth CCC, and former Vice President of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.)⁷

Zhuo Xinping

"In reviewing the life journey and spiritual contributions of the renowned Chinese Christian theologian T. C. Chao, and understanding his efforts in exploring the path of Chinese theology by combining both Eastern and Western theological thoughts, we gain valuable insights into the cultural destiny and theological characteristics of Chinese Christianity."

[Zhuo Xinping: a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Honorary President of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, Standing Committee Member of the 13th National People's Congress, and former Director of the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.]⁸

Tang Xiaofeng

"Mr. T. C. Chao made significant theoretical explorations in integrating Christianity with Chinese society and culture. In his writings, Mr. Chao not only set forth the goal of the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China but also explored practical paths to achieve it.

7 Refer to the Preface in *The Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, Volumes 1, 2, and 3.

8 Refer to *The Will of the Nightingale*, 2.

[Tang Xiaofeng: deputy director of the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and executive vice president and general secretary of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions]⁹

An Overview of T. C. Chao's Theological Thoughts on the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China

Given the extensive body of work by Mr. T. C. Chao, spanning three to four million words in theology and other fields, it is impossible to comprehensively cover all his academic achievements and artistic creations. Consequently, "The Pioneer's Inner Voice" section of the exhibition hall chose to feature the key aspects of Mr. T. C. Chao's theological ideas as a pioneer of the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China, emphasizing his understanding, interpretation and practice in this area.

Besides receiving an education in Western theology, Mr. T. C. Chao had a deep knowledge and expertise in traditional Chinese classics. He devoted his life to integrating traditional Chinese culture with Christianity to establish a theological framework for the Church in China. Even during times of national crises, his profound love for his homeland and compatriots, as well as his passion and faith in Chinese culture, remained unwavering. Mr. Chao believed that Chinese culture not only could interpret the essence of Christian beliefs but even enrich the universal value of Christianity. He tirelessly sought ways to harmonize Chinese and Christian cultures through philosophy, theology, and artistic creations, always striving to embed Christian culture into Chinese society and contribute to the nation's development. His extensive and voluminous writings in both

9 Refer to *Embrace Ancient Wisdom to Navigate the Path of Today*, Hangzhou: Zhejiang Christian Council, 2019, 101.

Chinese and English, are imbued with a profound sense of patriotism and dedication to his country.

Mr. Chao believed that Christianity, introduced to China from the West, must be de-Westernized to preserve its authenticity and become organically integrated with the essence of traditional Chinese culture. In his book *Advanced Studies of Christianity*, Mr. Chao advocated “breaking away from the stereotypes of Western missionaries and establishing an independent Chinese banner.” He emphasized the importance of cultivating church talent, writing indigenized works, and creating a Christian theology that combines the revelation of God in Christ with a Chinese cultural background and social context. These efforts aimed at establishing a Chinese church that embodies both the authenticity of Christianity and the spirit of Chinese culture, transforming Christianity from a foreign belief into a faith that is inherently acceptable by the Chinese people.

In Search of Its Origin

Mr. T. C. Chao argued, “Although Christianity has been shrouded by the liturgies, doctrines, structures and architectures of Western churches, its religious essence remains indelible.”¹⁰

He also stated, “Great religions do not originate from the West, as embracing religious beliefs is inherently an Eastern pursuit...Christianity emerged in Judea, located in the Near East, and thus is not considered a Western religion...Although Christianity was introduced to China from the West, with missionaries from the UK and the USA, my faith is rooted in my own needs and interpretations,

10 T. C. Chao: “Christianity and Chinese Culture” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.) *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers--Volume of T. C. Chao*. Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 2014, 163.

rather than solely relying on Western thought. To be honest, the West may also be awaiting interpretations from the East to offer fresh and insightful contributions.”¹¹

What then constitutes the authenticity of Christianity? Mr. Chao believed that “Christ is the essence of Christianity. There are two meanings of ‘Christ’ : one is the title for Jesus of Nazareth (*Christos*, meaning “the anointed one”) referring exclusively to Jesus Himself; the other is the spirit of Jesus’ character, encompassing love, faithfulness, self-sacrifice, purity, and benevolence, which also resonates in the hearts of those who share Jesus’ vision.”¹²

Mr. Chao’s understanding of the truth of Christianity was deepened during his imprisonment by the Japanese in 1947: “Christianity is the way of life that embodies the love of God as revealed through Jesus, and it is the practice of this eternal love. In other words, Christianity mirrors the ethical life that represents God’s presence among humanity. Furthermore, Christianity is connected to Christ. Through the transcendence of Christ, God became incarnate, revealing the truth in human life. Christianity signifies Emmanuel, meaning ‘God is with us.’”¹³

Mutual Enrichment and Exchange

Mr. T. C. Chao suggested that the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture should involve “mutual enrichment and exchange,” which is peaceful and harmonious, rather than conflicting, contradictory and confrontational. He proposed three key elements for the

11 T. C. Chao *Record of Imprisonment* Nanjing: Jinling Union Theological Seminary Writing Studio, 1996, 18-19.

12 T. C. Chao: “The Future of Christianity in China” in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.) *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers--Volume of T. C. Chao*, 138-139.

13 T. C. Chao: “Introduction to Christianity” 75-77.

interaction of “mutual enrichment and exchange with a shared destiny” between Christianity and Chinese culture:

First, utilizing Chinese expressions to create religious terminology;

Second, organizing and comparing Chinese philosophical ethics;

Third, developing a Christian philosophy of history through the lens of the Chinese historical critiques of Yin (Chaos) and Yang (Order).

To achieve this “relationship,” the propagation of Christianity in China should involve both “cultural integration” and “cross-cultural communication.” This requires “adopting expressive and elegant language” in Christian literature by absorbing the essence of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist classics. Philosophically, it involves supplementing China’s “heavenly order and natural cosmology” with “theories that are both transcendent and worldly, beyond nature and history.” Ethically, it requires “incorporating the relationships between humanity and God” into China’s traditional values of “universal brotherhood,” loyalty, filial piety, and the rectification of names, thereby establishing an ethical society with a religious foundation.¹⁴

According to T.C. Chao:

What we need is to absorb the essence of Christianity and learn from Jesus’ religious experience, faith and practices...Within this experience lies the essence of both Christianity and Chinese culture...The contributions of Christianity to Chinese culture can be manifested in their ways of life...They must practice

14 T. C. Chao: “From Chinese Culture to Christianity”, The Christian Literature Society for China, 1946, 22-23.

a form of Chinese Christianity that preserves and contributes to Chinese culture.¹⁵

Cultural Foundations

Mr. T. C. Chao believed that Christianity's contributions to traditional Chinese culture were demonstrated through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, showcasing the "experience of God" to fulfill (rather than limit) the ethical teachings of beauty and goodness in Confucianism. This allows individuals to access the mysterious experience of spiritually communicating with "the transcendent truth" (namely God), and to receive love, peace, joy and strength.¹⁶ The fulfillment can be understood through three aspects:

The Unity of Heaven and Humanity. This is a vision in traditional Chinese culture, and Jesus taught, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).¹⁷ It emphasizes not only the unity of heaven and humanity, and the unity of humanity and nature, but also seeks the unity of humanity and God.

The Ethics of Filial Piety. Chinese ethics place great importance on filial piety, emphasizing the acknowledgement of one's roots and ancestors, and maintaining reverence for the past. Similarly, Christianity upholds honoring one's father and mother as the foremost command concerning human relations in the Ten Commandments. And it is based on reverence for God, laying a solid foundation for the concept of filial piety.¹⁸

15 T. C. Chao: "Christianity and Chinese Culture", in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.), *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers--Volume of T. C. Chao*, 166-167.

16 T. C. Chao, "Christianity and Confucianism", *International Review of Mission* 17:6 (1928): 595.

17 T. C. Chao: "Christianity and Chinese Culture", 167-168.

18 Ibid., 171.

The Ideal of Perfection. Confucianism upholds that humanity is inherently good...And through resolute commitment to goodness and self-discipline, individuals can achieve completeness. Similarly, Christian beliefs hold that humanity was originally good but became sinful only after the fall of the ancestors. However, through the salvation of Jesus Christ, the transformative work of the Holy Spirit, and personal effort, individuals can break free from the chain of sin, pursue perfection, and fulfill their vision of becoming morally perfect.¹⁹

Steadfastly Practicing the Faith

Mr. T. C. Chao not only contemplated the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China, but also actively worked to realize his vision.

First, by cultivating church talent. During his more than twenty years as the dean of the School of Religion at Yenching University, Mr. Chao nurtured a group of church talents who later became prominent leaders in the Chinese church and in theological education. Notable figures included Cai Yongchun, Lv Zhenzhong, Liu Qingfen, Chen Shiyi, Zhang Shichong, Luo Zhenfang, Xu Dingxin, Mo Ruxi, Han Zongrao, Xie Xueru, and more.²⁰

Second, by composing Chinese writings. Mr. Chao emphasized the urgent need for the Church in China to produce “vibrant works that resonate with the profound voices within the hearts of the Chinese, growing from the inherited cultural lineage of China to touch the readers’ hearts with the essence of life...Chinese literature often convey a triumphant courage, an elegant expression, a serene sentiment, and a beautiful spirit...The Church in

19 Ibid. 17, 596.

20 Refer to related articles in “Commemorative Essays for T. C. Chao”.

China eagerly anticipates literature that reflects indigenous landscapes to illustrate the universal and permanent truths of Christianity.”²¹ As a role model, Mr. Chao diligently authored millions of words in both Chinese and English, using various literary forms, such as poetry and novels, to vividly present Christian beliefs to the Chinese people.

Third, developing Chinese theology. His book *Four Lectures on Theology*, published in May 1948, marked an initial attempt to develop a Chinese systematic theology. Mr. Chao stated, “Our Christian thought and theology are never detached from life. We have our own backgrounds and environments. We live in China, with its unique cultural background and social contexts.”²²

Fourth, establishing the Church in China. The efforts in cultivating talent, composing writings, and developing theology were all directed towards building an indigenized Chinese Christian church. Mr. Chao said, “Indigenized churches should blend Christianity with the virtues of ancient Chinese culture, making the religious life and practices of Chinese Christianity compatible with this land...The Church in China should be financially independent and self-governed to fit into the Chinese context. Theologically, it should be enriched by Chinese thoughts...Indigenized churches must be imbued with a spirit of patriotism...”²³

Additionally, Mr. Chao studied traditional Chinese customs, seeking to innovate church liturgies, advocating for simplicity in worship services, and creating indigenized prayers, hymns, and creeds. He envisioned a church that

21 T. C. Chao: “Discussion on Indigenous Churches”, in Zhao Xiaoyang (ed.), *Library of Modern Chinese Thinkers--Volume of T. C. Chao*, 100.

22 T. C. Chao: *Four Lectures on Theology*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2014, pages 3-4.

23 T. C. Chao: “Discussion on Indigenous Churches”, 95-96.

would include a chapel, an altar, a monastery and space for retreats, as well as a lecture hall, a reading room and library, with tree-lined paths to convey a sense of solemnity and tranquility. This would allow those who sought spiritual growth to engage in contemplation and self-cultivation.²⁴

T. C. Chao and the Further Contextualization of Sacred Music in China²⁵

T. C. Chao's contributions to the contextualization of Sacred Music in China stand out as a remarkable example that vividly reflects his contributions to the further contextualization of Christianity in China. In 1931, T. C. Chao collaborated with Fan Tianxiang (Bliss Wyant) from the Music Department of Yenching University to publish two hymnals: "Hymnal for Fellowship" and "Hymnal for the General Public." T. C. Chao wrote and translated the lyrics, while Fan Tianxiang composed the music. This cross-cultural collaboration signified a bold attempt to indigenize sacred music.

Featuring lyrics and music with profound meaning and elegance, the "Hymnal for Fellowship" was created for use in fellowships comprising faculty and students. The hymnal drew from a wide range of sources, underscored by the belief that the widely celebrated sacred hymns are the shared spiritual heritage of the ecumenical Christian church and should be accessible to all Chinese Christians. Of its 124 hymns, 121 had been translated by Mr. Chao. In his effort to indigenize Christianity and express the richness of Christian

24 Guo Bingduan: "Gongkai and Jesus--An Analysis of T. C. Chao's View on Indigenous Churches", *Heilongjiang History and Annals*, 2013, Issue 13.

25 For the text and the following "Selected Poems of T. C. Chao", refer to the "T. C. Chao's Sacred Music Collection", compiled by the Yenching Academy, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2013.

spiritual experiences, Mr. Chao employed exquisite language and an elegant style to integrate the essence of Chinese culture into traditional hymns, earning him the title of the “Father of Chinese Hymns.”

The “Hymnal for the General Public,” published by Yenching University, included 54 hymns designed for the general public, especially rural believers, with straightforward and simple lyrics. The music, based on traditional Chinese folk tunes, made it easy to sing the newly composed lyrics written by Mr. Chao in vernacular Chinese. He strongly emphasized that Chinese hymns should reflect the characteristics of Chinese culture. Although some hymns, written in the style of classical poetry, might be challenging for believers to understand, Chao argued that “there is no need to fully adjust to the public’s level; instead, we should sometimes seek ways to elevate their minds and perceptions to appreciate beauty.”

Ninety years have passed since the publication of these hymnals, and some of the hymns are still sung in Chinese churches both at home and abroad, serving as an enduring tribute to the indigenization of Chinese sacred music.

Excerpts from T. C. Chao’s Hymns

Song of Jesus’ Pure Beauty
(Sao-style poetry)

*Pure and beautiful is Jesus,
Surpassing all treasures and gems.
Born as the divine spirit and the righteous one,
He is the one I admire,
Whom I revere and esteem,
Above all earthly treasures.*

*Flowers are in full bloom,
 While trees stand lush and somber.
 The vibrant hues of spring emerge and fade,
 Yet the beauty of Jesus endures,
 With virtues and fragrance,
 I long to embrace.*

*Genial spring sunshine brings warmth,
 The autumn moon shines bright.
 Stars sparkle in the cloudless sky,
 Yet the Lord is more radiant and clear,
 More perfect and pure,
 Unparalleled in greatness and strength.*

The Song of Grace
 (Seven-character quatrains)

*Flowing through ages to nourish life with abundance,
 The true God's grace is wondrous and boundless.
 The prophets' words resemble the ocean's vastness.
 With passion and strength, martyrs' hearts surge like
 overflowing waters.*

*God's great grace is impartial and fair.
 All nations bathe in the holy spring,
 Where no spirit feels dry and thirsty.
 No bounds of time or space limit such a grace.*

*Like tides, it rolls in the hearts of the wise.
 In heroes' blood, the waves of grace stir.
 Every word and deed is soaked in this grace.
 The true source flows, never ceasing its way.*

*God's grace baptizes praises and beauty.
 It cleanses sins and vanquishes evil.
 It once purified the disciples' hearts,
 Lifting them from worldly cares.*

*Eternal is the beauty of the spiritual source.
 The true God's grace flows like endless rivers.
 Prophets drank to strengthen their hearts.
 All nations find freedom through this grace.*

*The Song of the Holy Spirit
 (Like a dream)*

*May the knife and axe of the Spirit strike,
 Pierce deep into my heart,
 Teaching me to submit to Jesus,
 Leaving behind the weapons of war.
 Comfort, comfort, to the Lord's grace we surrender.*

*May the Spirit guide and teach,
 Pray deeply for my soul,
 Comfort my weary heart,
 Lift all my worries.
 Knowing, knowing, to love God above all treasure.*

*May the Spirit stay ever close,
 Like the sun's radiant glow,
 Illuminating my heart and soul,
 Teaching me true worship and praise.
 God's love, God's love, is vast beyond the sea of clouds.*

The Family Song
(Chinese family ethics and Christian faith)

*Family is good, Family is good.
With mutual respect, worries decay.
Sharing the weal and bearing the woe,
Love and care make kinship stay.*

*A good family, a good family,
Worships the true God day and night.
Reading Scripture, offering prayers,
Love flows in such a home.*

*Blood and kin, good offspring,
Brothers and sisters enter the same gate.
You understand, I lend a hand,
All in harmony embrace the grace from heaven.*

*Men at work, women at work,
Setting examples for children to observe.
Fulfilling duties in society,
Good citizens make a good family.*

Conclusion

Reviewing the past illuminates the future, while learning from the ancient sparks new ideas. Today, as we diligently study and deeply explore Mr. Chao's theological writings, profound thoughts, and an exemplary life of faith and practice, it feels as though we are listening to the inner voice of this pioneer of the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China.

"The Pioneer's Inner Voice" section draws upon the rich research results of various experts and scholars. Our

goal is to present their findings through the display boards, making the content accessible and engaging for a wider audience. We hope to bring the profound thoughts of this great scholar, often considered “too high to be popular,” into the hearts of both Christians and the general public. Our aim is to rectify the misconception that Christianity is a Western religion. Having originated from the East, it can inherently engage in mutual enrichment and exchange with Chinese culture and harmonize with our daily customs. There should not be, nor should there have been, any sense of discord. If there is, it is due to our misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the Christian faith. Today, the Church in China has the responsibility and obligation to enhance its religious knowledge and theological thinking. Enriched by excellent Chinese culture, the Church should follow in the footsteps of Mr. T. C. Chao and other church pioneers in advancing the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China to grassroot churches and into the hearts of believers. This also resonates with Mr. Chao’s deep aspiration, as demonstrated by his diligent writing and tireless teaching. In the ongoing exploration of the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China, the pioneer’s inner voice calls to us, inspiring us to follow the path of these outstanding pioneers and to contribute our share in this great era.

Reverend Lou Shibo is Vice President of Zhejiang Christian Council and the Deputy Principal of Zhejiang Theological Seminary.

Brother Shao's Stove Flowers: The Dynamic Integration of Faith and Folk Culture

邵弟兄的灶花：信仰与民间文化的灵动融合

ZHUANG YUNQIU 庄韵秋

There is an earthenware stove preserved in Jesus Church located in the Pudong New Area, Shanghai. Although it is no longer in use, the stove's exquisitely painted flowers cannot but remind people of the scene described by Tang dynasty poet Wang Wei in the poem *At My Wang River Retreat*: "Sunset lingers over the ferry crossing, a lonely wisp of smoke rises in the village." With the process of urbanization, earthenware stoves have long been replaced by more convenient liquefied gas and natural gas stoves, causing the "stove flower" techniques of the stove builders and the "curling smoke" to gradually disappear from people's lives. Nevertheless, the exquisite stove flowers and the "fireworks" of the earthenware stove remain entrenched in people's memories, having morphed into a unique cultural phenomenon.

Zaohua or "stove flowers" describes a form of folk art in which flowers were painted on a wood-fired clay stove. As a decorative painting for residential kitchens, various patterns commonly known as "stove flowers" in folk culture are painted on the sides of every household stove. Popular not only in Shanghai, but also in various parts of South China, this art form conveyed the unique culture of water-bound towns and villages in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River and people's longing for a better life. In May 2007, the folk

art Zaohua was included in the first batch of intangible cultural heritage lists of Shanghai.

It is understood that the construction of stoves in Pudong has a long history dating back to the Song and Yuan dynasties. Qing Dynasty documents indicate that people in those eras associated auspicious paintings on salt stoves and household stoves with bringing bountiful harvests and prosperity to the salt industry. The Xiasha Salt Field had paintings from “Getuan Stove” (各团灶舍) and “Qigai Stove” (起盖灶舍)¹ Here, people were accustomed to drawing bamboos on the group stoves in communal cooking areas, symbolizing the “yearning for peace.” Painting fish depicted the desire to have a surplus every year and painting landscapes with sailboats symbolized wishes for “smooth sailing,” while drawing eagles and doves, “with

1 “Getuan Stove” and “Qigai Stove” are concepts related to the sea salt boiling process in the Yuan Dynasty, both derived from *Ao Bo Tu* (《熬波图》, “Illustrations of Salt Boiling”) by Chen Chun of the Yuan Dynasty. Their specific meanings are as follows: “Getuan Stove” (各团灶舍) refers to the salt-boiling sites formed after the implementation of the “tuan jian fa” (团煎法, “group boiling method”) in the Xiasha Salt Field during the Yuan Dynasty. This method merged individual salt-boilers’ workshops into a unified salt-boiling agency, typically with “two to three stoves integrated into one tuan (团, ‘group’).” These stove shelters were located within the “tuan,” which was surrounded by walls and moats. Inside the “tuan,” ponds and wells were dug to store brine, salt barns and plank houses were built, and gates with locks were installed. Government troops were assigned to guard and patrol the area to prevent the smuggling of private salt. “Qigai Stove” (起盖灶舍) refers to the construction of stove shelters within the “tuan” for salt boiling. Since salt boiling was a year-round task from spring to winter, salt workers (*zaoding*, 灶丁) had to work long hours beside the stoves. Thus, shelters were built over the iron boiling pans to shield workers from wind and rain. These shelters were enclosed by low walls, with designated areas for storing raw ash inside. Space was left in front to allow workers to tend to the stoves and boil salt. To avoid smoke and fire from the southeast winds in summer, the shelters were mostly oriented toward the southeast.

the eagle spreading its wings,” was thought to bring peace and auspiciousness. Although Zhaohua or stove flower art is not favored by scholars and the literati, it has evolved through the ages into a unique form of folk art through the cumulative inheritance of craftsmanship transmitted by generations of highly skilled artisans and craftmakers. Through the painting of stove flowers, many skilled craftsmen have also emerged.

Shao Yunlong (1945-2019) was born into a rural Christian family in the former Nanhui area (now under the jurisdiction of Pudong New Area), and was imbued with pure faith, humility, and love for the Lord. Influenced by his father, he developed a special fondness for stove flower art. He not only inherited his father’s exquisite traditional skills, but also created his own unique Christian stove flower art through continuous exploration and innovation. The stove flowers he created, while inheriting the profundity and excellence of traditional Chinese culture, also convey much significance and depth. They meld the highly popular concepts of patriotism and love for religion, with the idea of “loving God and benefitting the people” advocated by Chinese Christianity, bringing us closer to the lives of the people.

As a Christian, Brother Shao had a faith that is deeply rooted in his heart. He not only practiced the teachings of Christ in his personal life, but also combined truth, goodness, and beauty, values advocated by the Christian faith, into his stove flower creations, producing a new type of stove flower art. From lively animals to tranquil landscapes, he ingeniously combined Christian elements such as crosses, grapes, pigeons, fish, eagles, wheat ears, sheep, and green grasslands with traditional Chinese painting techniques and concepts, endowing his works with special meaning. In addition, he also quoted biblical verses in his paintings to express his response and testimony to God’s grace. Through

Brother Shao's brush strokes, the stove flowers have transformed into hymns of praise, expressing gratitude and praise for the Creator.

In Brother Shao's view, integrating faith into stove flower creations is not simply an accumulation (of works), but rather a process of innovation and extension based on respect for tradition. This fusion not only brings breakthroughs in aesthetics, but also deepens the practice of faith. His stove flower is filled with reverence for God's creation, gratitude for God's blessings, and hope for happiness. For example, the fish is not only a symbol of "surplus every year" but also signifies a mission motivation of "catching fish." The image of the carp swimming upstream symbolizes the positive and optimistic attitude of Christians toward life. This fusion reflects his simple practice of sinicizing Christianity. Brother Shao, with his hands and craftsmanship, has shown us how a Christian deeply influenced by excellent traditional Chinese culture can express his faith through simple folk art.

Brother Shao's skills in stove flower art have won him many honors. In June 2009, he was awarded the title of "Representative Inheritor of Nanhui District's Intangible Cultural Heritage Project Zaohua" by the former Nanhui District Administration of Culture, Radio, Film and Television in Shanghai. In June 2012, he was awarded the title of "Representative Inheritor of Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Project Zaohua" by the Shanghai Administration of Culture, Radio, Film and Television. These honors are not only a recognition of Brother Shao's artistic talent, but also represent a heavy responsibility. In order to inherit this traditional folk culture, he actively participated in the painting and calligraphy exhibition of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CPC. During the painting and calligraphy exhibition by people of various religions in Pudong New Area, his personal exhibition on Zhaohua was

featured at the Nicheng Cultural Center, where free lessons were given on the skills of painting “kitchen flowers.” His paintings entered the exhibition hall and were included in its portfolio, helping to enrich Shanghai’s folk art.

The stove flowers hand-drawn by Brother Shao show us the efforts and explorations of a generation of Christian artists who combined faith with folk skills to express the beautiful connotations of Christian faith in a unique art form. It reminds us that these faith practices, which originate from life and are filled with “smoke and fire,” are important assets for promoting the Chinazation of Christianity.

Reverend Zhuang Yunqiu is a pastor of the Christian Jesus Church at the Pudong New Area in Shanghai.

Chinese Christians' Frugality and Abstinence from Luxury in the New Era

中国基督徒崇俭戒奢的新风貌

WANG LIPIN 王礼频

Introduction

Frugality and abstinence from extravagance are both traditional virtues of the Chinese nation that can also be found in Biblical teachings. In *Zuo Zhuan Zhuang Gong* (左传·庄公)¹ it is said that “Thrift is the common denominator of virtue; extravagance is the greatest of evils.” Sima Guang (司马光), writing in *Discipline and Thrift, and Demonstrate Thrift and Well-Being* (训俭·示康), said: “All those who say they have virtue know it comes from thrift. Thrift is to not have desires; the gentleman without desires, will not end in servitude to things, and can walk the straight path; a petty person without desire, can be honored, kept away from the crimes of the wealthy.”

Both the ancient strategic and historical masterpieces of our country as well as the family letters written by Sima Guang have affirmed the value of respecting thrift and abstaining from extravagance. In the Bible, Joseph, as the prime minister of Egypt, conserved grain during the seven years when the harvest was abundant as preparation for the

1 Editor: Often translated as *The Zuo Tradition* or *The Commentary of Zuo*, it is considered a major source of classical Chinese sayings and idioms with ethical teachings.

seven years of famine that followed; and Jesus Christ, after feeding five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fishes, instructed his disciples to gather up the leftovers, which filled twelve baskets. Obviously, acts of frugality and abstinence from extravagance constitute important lessons in the Bible.

The patriotic forefathers of Chinese Christians have also set a good example for us in terms of thrift and frugality. In this new era, Chinese Christians, in upgrading their own life styles, should endeavor to take serious actions in practicing frugality and abstinence from extravagance.

I. The new pattern of thrift and extravagance in the new era

As a large country with a population of 1.4 billion, China is now in a critical period of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and the world is experiencing a great change that has not been seen in a century. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC has led and united the people of all ethnic groups in the country to make great achievements in different fields that have attracted the world's attention. During this remarkable decade, General Secretary Xi Jinping has made a number of important speeches on frugality and abstinence from extravagance, covering various aspects of environmental protection and a low carbon economy such as cherishing every drop of water and saving every grain of rice.

It can be seen that advocating frugality and abstaining from luxury is undoubtedly an important measure taken by the CPC Central Committee to lead the people of all ethnic groups across the country to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and is a concrete manifestation of the whole country "playing a game of chess and concentrating on major affairs."

Traditional Chinese culture places great emphasis on the relationship between frugality and extravagance and the rise and fall of nations. In *Han Fei Zi-Yu Lao* (韩非子-喻老), Han Fei recorded the allusion to the story of “Zhou had chopsticks made out of elephant tusks and Jizi was horrified” (纣为象箸而箕子怖). It is said that Jizi (箕子), the uncle of King Zhou (纣) of the Shang Dynasty, was very perturbed when he saw that the king had ordered chopsticks made of ivory. He feared that once the king had ivory chopsticks he would not be content with using earthenware but would want cups made of rhinoceros horn and jade, and instead of beans and vegetables, would want to eat delicacies of the sea. He would hardly be willing either to wear rough homespun or live under a thatched roof, but would demand brocades and splendid mansions. Jizi worried that all these could lead to the collapse of the kingdom in the long run. Indeed, five years later, King Zhou’s extravagance did lead to the downfall of his kingdom.

In *the Remonstrance to Emperor Taizong on Ten Thoughts* (谏太宗十思疏) written by Wei Zheng (魏征) for Emperor Taizong (太宗) in the 11th year of the Tang Dynasty (637), the first, second and fifth articles were all about admonishing Emperor Taizong to be frugal and to abstain from extravagance. Emperor Taizong attached great importance to this, and incorporated it into his philosophy of governance, which led to the historical heyday of the Reign of Zhenguan (贞观之治).

There is a similar lesson in the Bible: King Solomon’s lavish lifestyle placed a heavy burden on the people of Israel at the time. When he died, the people appealed to Solomon’s son, Rehoboam the new king, to relieve them of their burdens. After three days of deliberation, King Rehoboam said that not only could he not accede to the people’s request, but that he would intensify the (harsh) treatment of the people. This irreconcilable conflict led to the division

of the nation of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms (1 Kings 12:1-20). Since then, both the southern and northern kingdoms have had their ups and downs, but they have never regained their former glory. In contrast, King David, King Solomon's father, had not lived in luxury, but had saved a great deal of material for the building of the temple and palace, which laid an important foundation for the prosperity of King Solomon's dynasty (1 Chronicles 22). The contrast in the frugality and extravagance of the two generations of Israelite kings, seen in the light of the rise and fall of the nation of Israel, confirms from a historical perspective that frugality leads to the rise of a nation, while extravagance leads to its fall. Of course, for the prosperity of a nation, the promotion of frugality and abstinence from extravagance requires not only the policy leadership of the ruler, but also the conscientious practice of the people.

These two aspects can help us understand more deeply the development strategy of the Party and the government in the new era and its establishment of a new plan in relation to it. Thus, in designing a new plan to promote frugality and abstinence in the new era, Chinese Christians should recognize the important relationship between such an advocacy and the country's development and its great national rejuvenation. As citizens, we should, while improving our moral and religious qualities through frugality and abstaining from extravagance, contribute to the development of the nation and actively put plans into concrete action.

II The new era of frugality and extravagance

In the new era, we should not only set up a new plan for advocating frugality and abstinence from luxury, but also put this into practice. According to the spirit of the 'Joint Initiative on Frugality and Abstinence from Luxury,' we

can carry out concrete actions in two areas: frugality and abstinence, and simplicity and moderation.

1. Promoting spiritual civilization through frugality and abstinence

The idea of being frugal and having few desires is taken from Sima Guang's 'Discipline, Thrift, and Demonstration of Well-being' mentioned above, in which he observes that for a gentleman to be able to progress and succeed, he should not be bound by material desires. In the face of temptations posed by money, fame and fortune, pastors may be hampered by material desires that could result in serious problems such as improper teaching styles and a decline in their faith and spirituality. For this reason, pastors should inherit and bring forward the traditional Chinese virtues of diligence and frugality, deeply discover, interpret and promote the biblical values of respecting frugality and abstaining from extravagance, and integrate these into sermons and religious education. This will help strengthen efforts at the ideological and theoretical level, resist the temptation of material desires, and promote the elevation of spiritual civilization through advocating frugality and curbing excessive desires.

2. Simplicity and moderation for the accumulation of material civilization

Simplicity and moderation are based on a correct understanding of the relationship between frugality and luxury. Thrift and luxury is not simply about the use of material goods. Rather, it is about the *rational* use of the resources that one has. For example, at a moment of need, one should not hesitate to make a contribution to the country, no matter how much it would take; in our daily

lives, not a single grain of rice, not a drop of water, not a single unit of electricity should be wasted. In short, what should be used must be used, and what should not be used should never be used.

For the Chinese church, simplicity and moderation can be reflected in the way churches are built: church architecture and construction should focus on Chinese characteristics, reflect the elements of faith, advocate the concept of environmental protection, and actively adopt new building techniques and materials that conserve resources, are environmentally friendly, green and low carbon.

Accompanying this, the liturgy should incorporate Chinese elements and maintain the sanctity, solemnity and purity of church worship in a simple and effective form. Pastors should set an example, take the lead, enable believers to strengthen their faith and act ethically, promoting a simple and modest lifestyle among Chinese Christians, so as to achieve the effect of accumulating material civilization, and to actively contribute to the development of the country and its rejuvenation. It is a concrete manifestation of the whole country "playing a game of chess and concentrating on major affairs."

Chinese Christians in the new era should upgrade themselves, focus on the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and practice frugality and abstinence. They should firmly orient themselves towards the further contextualization of Christianity, constantly improve the level of Christianity in China in keeping with the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics and contribute to the construction of Chinese modernization.

Reverend Wang Lipin is a pastor of Jingling Christian Church at Hongkou District in Shanghai.

The 11th National Christian Conference in China: the New Leadership Team for 2024-2029

The Eleventh National Christian Conference of China was held in Beijing on December 20, 2023. Convened by the China Christian Council and Three Self Patriotic Movement (CCC&TSPM), the Conference drew together more than 300 representatives from across the country to review and summarize the ministries of the previous five years and to envision the blueprint for the next five years. (Source: CCC&TSPM website: <https://en.ccctspm.org/>)

The opening speech was delivered by Rev. Wu Wei, the moderator for the opening session. The Venerable Yanjue, President of the Buddhist Association of China, Taoist Li Guangfu, President of the Chinese Taoist Association, Imam Yang Faming, President of the Chinese Islamic Association, and Bishop Li Shan, President of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and Vice Chair of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China were present to extend congratulatory messages. Bishop Li Shan delivered a congratulatory speech on behalf of the four national religious groups.

On behalf of the Tenth Standing Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China and the eighth Standing Committee of the China Christian Council, Rev. Xu Xiaohong delivered a work report entitled "Continue to Promote the Chinazation of Christianity and Run Chinese Churches Well in Accordance with Socialist

Society.” Rev. Gao Feng presented the work report of the first Board of Supervisors and Rev. Kan Baoping explained the amendments to the constitution of the CCC&TSPM.

Leadership Team of the 11th National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China

Chairperson:

Xu Xiaohong

Vice-Chairpersons (In alphabetical order by surname):

Guo Yun

Lü Dezhi

Shan Weixiang (Residential)

Shi Aijun,

Tang Weimin

Wu Weiqing

Xu Yongbin (Female)

Xu Yulan (Female)

Zhang Keyun

Secretary-General:

Gu Mengfei (Residential)

Leadership Team of the 9th China Christian Council

President:

Wu Wei

Vice Presidents (In alphabetical order by surname):

Chen Tianyuan

Gao Ming

Geng Weizhong (Residential)

Ji Yunpeng

Lin Manhong (Female, Residential)

Pan Xinwang

Wang Jun

Xu Lunsheng

Yue Qinghua

General Secretary:

Lin Manhong (Female)

