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# Ching Feng

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*In memoriam*

Philip Shen

(1931–2004)

# Ching Feng

*A Journal on Christianity and Chinese Religion and Culture*

NEW SERIES, VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1, 2004

*Special Issue: Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, Part II*

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# The Sacred and the Ordinary: Spiritual Maturity According to the Teaching of Teresa of Avila and the Ox-Herding Pictures

EKMAN P. C. TAM

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to show the commonality of Christianity and Chan Buddhism in their portraits of a spiritually mature person. In studying mainly the writings of the Christian mystic, Teresa of Avila (1515–82), and the ox-herding pictures in Chan tradition, this paper will show how the Christian view of the journey of mystical prayer under discussion is in some ways similar to the teachings of the Chan masters on spiritual maturity.

It is believed that the Chan Buddhist and the Christian, although each journeys through phases of spiritual growth unique to his/her religious tradition, may at the end reach the final stage where each finds in the other similar spiritual wisdom for everyday life, and can both share a deep passion for the well-being of the human world. That ultimate stage of spiritual maturity can be called "rediscovered ordinariness." In rediscovering the value and joy of ordinariness, the Christian or the Chan Buddhist will no longer seek for spiritual proficiency or anything mystical and profound in a sense that is distant from everyday life.

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This paper consists of four sections. The first section addresses the common starting point in the spiritual journey of both the Christian and the Chan Buddhist. It is found out that the Christian and the Chan Buddhist share the same state of mind and may even experience similar "calling," which consequently leads them away from the *status quo* of life and onto a spiritual path laid out by the religious tradition they choose to follow.

The second section reviews Teresa of Avila's well-known metaphor of the "interior castle." According to Teresa, the Christian, as he/she moves deeper into the centre of the "interior castle," will enter into a loving union with God. In the total union in love, God is so fully present to the individual that the person's sense of self and reality will be transformed. The mystical experience is said to be akin to that of St. Paul, the apostle of Jesus in the first century, who describes the experience in a famous line: "It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me."

The third section studies the Chan Buddhist mystical path by unfolding the meaning of the well-known Ten Ox-herding Pictures. The ox-herder can be said to represent the Chan Buddhist who sets out to tame the defiled mind and appropriate the Buddha-nature through Chan practice. Reaching the final stage of spiritual maturity, the Chan Buddhist enters the marketplace with open hands, fully liberated and filled with compassion and equipped with skilful means to meet the needs of living beings.

The final section of the paper lays out the similarities and divergences between the Christian and Chan paths from a dialogical perspective. It highlights among others things that the two paths converge in the final stage of the spiritual journey, where a similar kind of transformation of self happens to the individuals. Being transformed from inside out, the Christian and the Chan practitioners, while taking on a new attitude toward life and humanity, unanimously stress the importance of being ordinary and of being together with common people. They would agree that the Sacred is seen in the ordinary and simplicity is by no means profane, but a true sign of spiritual maturity.

## 2. GETTING START ON THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

For many different reasons people affiliate with or dissociate themselves from religions. At the turn of the new millennium, more people, espe-

cially in the Western countries, are interested in spirituality than in religion. "Spirituality," like the seven lean cows, is absorbing everything around it, eclipsing and supplanting all the other words in the sphere of religion. The attention to spirituality is revived even in the field of medical and psychological science. Courses in spirituality have sprung up in medical schools, which in earlier time might have been called courses in "religion and medicine." While more people choose to dissociate themselves from established religions, many seem to have found spiritual fulfilment under the label "spirituality." The traditional view that those who "practice" religion are more advanced in their spiritual pursuit than the non-religionists is now questionable.

For a spiritual seeker, to follow the teaching and practice of a religion is to drink from the well of its spiritual tradition. To nurture one's spiritual longing in and through an established religion adopts a kind of "religious spirituality."[1] Understandably in almost every major religion, there are dry wells or polluted well caused by lifeless dogmas or impersonal hierarchal constrictions, which have disappointed many spiritual seekers. Moved by their inner spiritual longings, some drink from the wells of other religious traditions. Those who move comfortably in two or more religious traditions may be identified as having "multiple religious belonging."[2] Still others may try to quench their thirst by exploring areas such as new age spiritualities or humanistic philosophy or simply anything where their soul could find an anchor.

### *Moved by Inner Yearning*

In any case, real spiritual seekers are tireless. It is the yearning for life, for meaning, for transcendence that keeps them on the spiritual journey. The thirst in spirit is the driving force for an ardent search for the "water" of life, the taste of which only causes stronger thirst for more. Spiritual seekers are restless. What is sought at one point on the journey does not provide contentment for a complete rest, but only heightens the urging of the heart and motivates faster steps on the road. Spiritual seekers are always questioning and doubting, trying to glimpse the fullest of truth and yet never rest assured of what is said to be *the* truth.

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[1] Sandra M. Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (1994): 10.

[2] Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002).

Every human person can be a spiritual seeker, for we are intrinsically spiritual in the sense of having self-reflective, self-transcendent, and meaning-making capacities. Given all the spiritual potentialities, human persons, however, are not necessarily spiritual seekers. It is only when one is "called" or "awaken"—the terms used in the spiritual classics from both the Christian and Chan traditions—that one begins to activate the inner potentials and embarks on the path toward spiritual fulfilment.

### *Awakened to the Call*

Recognized by sacred traditions everywhere as the first step in the pursuit of spiritual wisdom, the Call or Awakening is received as hearing a still small voice, which summons a change of heart. One who responds to the voice is led to shift one's interest and focus from the circumference to the centre, from appearance to reality, from the sensible to the intelligible, and from time to eternity. The Call changes the way one approaches life and the way one looks at oneself and the others. Some 2,500 years ago, a man left his family, his wealth, and his position behind in search of the highest knowledge. He had been born a prince and was brought up in an overprotected environment where he never needed to consider the dark sides of life. When, as an adult, he was confronted with human suffering for the first time, with aging, illness, and death, this man, Siddhartha Gautama, was so traumatized he decided to abandon everything to seek the truth.

The still small voice, as described in the biographies or stories of the spiritual mentors, often comes unexpectedly. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) heard the voice in a chapel during a regular service. Brother Lawrence (1611–91) heard the Call quietly on a winter day. Thomas Merton (1915–68) was suddenly awakened to the voice of God in his young adult life as he was reading for his masters thesis.[3] Similarly in the Chan tradition, almost every Chan master would tell his disciples that their spiritual journey always begins with a sudden sensing of an invitation to search

[3] Thomas Merton was born in France and grew up in America. He was a monk of a Catholic religious order with very strict rules and a prolific writer. In his somewhat short life, Merton published altogether about 60 books, many uncollected articles, book reviews, and prefaces, and about 3,500 letters. His journals amounted to seven thick volumes. Interestingly, in the last ten years of his life, he was interested in and wrote with great depth on the thought of Chan and Taoism. For a reference of Merton's view of Christian contemplation and Chan, see Ekman P. C. Tam, *Christian Contemplation and Chinese Zen-Taoism: A Study of Thomas Merton's Writings* (Hong Kong: Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, 2002).

for the true and unchanging nature of their being, and that only in reclaiming the lost nature can they be at peace.

Hearing the Call is an entirely personal and interior experience that may not even be noticeable to or understood by those around us. Ignorant about the impact of the Call to those who hear it, they may wonder why and how their friends or family members would make a seemingly dramatic change in attitude and perception of life. In the case of Merton, it took many years for his friends to fully understand his urge to live a solitary life in a secluded monastery in the age of twenty-seven.

### *The Way Still Small Voices Are Spoken*

The spiritual Call enters a person's life in many circumstances. Some hear the Call when they have every thing they want from life and then discover it is not enough and there is still something missing. At times the Call can be triggered by a sickness or a setback, by an episode of suffering so intolerable a person is forced to seek refuge in something stronger than the ordinary mechanism of the ego or to seek a way of total liberation from the unending cycle of pain and suffering. In the case of Siddhartha Gautama, the realization of suffering and pain in other people suffices to disturb his heart. For some the Call arises as a slow-growing realization, born of the passing days and years. For others it may come from a recognition that the things of ordinary life are leaving us hungry and incomplete, and that some deeper part of ourselves is yearning for a higher form of nourishment.

In numerous forms the spiritual Call may dawn on a person. Sometimes it reveals itself in dreams. The inviting voice may take the form of archetypal images which convey advice and messages to us, appealing to our deeper need for both guidance and transcendence.[4] At other times people are drawn to it through a special book, a profound philosophy or idea: Does what we see and think reflect the true reality? What really defines who we are? Is not there more to life than this? In certain cases the inner summons are brought by a messenger, such as a teacher, a mentor, or a provoking stranger we meet on the road of life, like the people mentioned in the Biblical scripture who encountered Jesus and were summoned to live a totally different way of life. The media of sacred art,

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[4] See for examples: Louis M. Savary, Patricia H. Berne, and Strephon Kaplan Williams, *Dreams and Spiritual Growth: A Judeo Christian Way of Dreamwork* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1984); and Joan Mazza, *Dreaming Your Real Self: A Personal Approach to Dream Interpretation* (New York: Perigee Book, 1998).

myth, scripture, and music can also be the source of the Call. These sublime sounds, words, and images speak to the deepest sectors of our consciousness and arouse a response, like a celestial echo, from our deepest parts. For some people the Call simply comes as an answer to the inmost longing: "Oh, yes, this is what I have been looking for all these years! This is what is missing in my life!" There are as many types of Call as there are of human persons. While in many different ways the Call may come to us, its message is always direct and persistent: Wake up! Go deeper!

### *Who Responds Well to the Still Small Voices?*

Does the Call usually come to specific age group? No, the Call is not necessarily age-related. Yet, more people experience the spiritual Call in their adult life. Indeed, serious and fruitful search for spiritual maturity usually occurs in the middle and later parts of one's life, because at this stage of life one is clearer about the light and shadow of one's personal life, and is more certain of what one really wants for one's life. If and when one hears the Call in young age, one does not have enough experience in life to understand it. In this case, assistance of a mentor is of great importance. The famous Old Testament story about the young Samuel hearing the voice of God and relying on the discernment of his teacher Eli may illustrate the case. If, however, one first hears the Call in midlife, one is old enough to know its potentials and urgency, and is young enough to carry it through.

Spiritual awakening is a process, not a single event; it is a journey of stages, not a one-shot awakening on a mountaintop. We shall look at the stages of growth in the following sections of this paper. Here we note that the still small voice, like a wake-up call, initiates us into a new day, a new itinerary. Thomas Merton once thought that his decision to enter the monastery of Gethsemani at age twenty-seven was a complete response to the Call of God and that the Call would also have rested with him in the monastery. However the same voice kept ringing in the ears of Merton, such that he was continuously called to go deeper in his understanding and practice of contemplation. In the last ten years of his life, when he was about forty-four, he ventured out to the uncharted territory of Chan and other religious traditions where he tried to look for other wells of life and meaning.

*Advance in the Journey by Spiritual Practice*

Receiving the Call, the spiritual seeker embarks on the journey toward where the still small voice comes. Through some spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, visualization, breath control, ritual, chanting, sacred dance, invocation, the seeker attempts to dispose herself/himself in a more receptive mode in responding to the voice of the Call. These practices are only means to keep one alert to the Call. To take any of these practical techniques as an end in itself is devastating for the spiritual seekers, for they will be fixated at certain techniques and never be really growing in their spiritual life. Merton once quoted the famous Chan story about a master using a symbolic act of polishing a tile to make a mirror to remind Christians that they could not get closer to God by practicing contemplation, as Chan students could not become Buddha by practicing meditation.[5]

However, to practice alertness is important. Meditation and many other spiritual practices are just to serve that purpose so that when the sun rises we are not asleep. As a Chan master writes, "when you meditate you are not trying to have any particular experience. You are simply awake."[6] In a similar fashion, Merton talked about praying as seeing. "Prayer," he said, "transforms our vision of the world, and make us see it, all men, and all the history of mankind, in the light of God."[7]

To summarize, the Call does not only spur the seeker to get started on the journey by engaging in spiritual practice, but also nudges her/him to go through phases of transition until reaching the final goal. While the Buddhist and the Christian, in responding to the Call, take on different spiritual paths outlined by their specific traditions, they somehow, in reaching the stage of maturity, could see in the other person similar quality of holiness expressed in ordinary life. To compare the two paths, we begin by introducing the Christian spiritual itinerary laid out by Teresa of Avila.

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[5] Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1961), 20.

[6] Clark Strand, *The Wooden Bowl: Simple Meditation for Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), 96.

[7] Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1996), 112.

## 3. REACHING THE CENTRE OF THE "INTERIOR CASTLE"

In the Christian tradition there are different metaphorical descriptions of the maturing journey toward union with the Divine in love. Teresa of Avila (1515–82), a Spanish Carmelite nun and mystic, likes to employ *comparaciones* or images to depict the dynamics of spiritual life.[8] As a spiritual writer her influence was epoch-making because she was the first to point to the existence of states of prayers intermediates between discursive meditation and ecstasy—"quiet" and "union"—and to give a scientific description of the entire life of prayer from meditation to the so-called mystical marriage. Teresa's position among writers on mystical theology is unique. In all her writings on this subject she deals with her personal experiences, which a deep insight and analytical gifts enabled her to explain clearly.

In her earlier writing, the *Book of Her Life* (1565), she compares the growth of spiritual life to a flowering garden and the degree of spiritual maturity to different ways of watering the garden.[9] The mature Christian will resemble the joyful gardener who no longer counts on her/his own effort of prayer to water the garden but simply watches the garden being showered by the grace of God. In her later work, the *Interior Castle* (1577), Teresa uses an image of one entering an "interior castle" to describe the spiritual itinerary of a prayerful Christian.[10] In light of the castle image, the prayer journey is depicted as an inward movement from the first to the seventh dwelling place. As Teresa repeatedly states, the spiri-

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[8] Books and articles written on the life and writings of Teresa of Avila are numerous. See for examples some more well-known books: Deirdre Green, *Gold in the Crucible: Teresa of Avila and the Western Mystical Tradition* (Longmead, UK: Element Books, 1989); Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Feminity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Francis L. Gross and Toni Perior Gross, *The Making of a Mystic: Seasons in the Life of Teresa of Avila* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); J. Mary Luti, *Teresa of Avila's Way* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1991); Rowan William, *Teresa of Avila* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 1991).

[9] Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 1, *The Book of Her Life*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1987).

[10] Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa Avila*, vol. 2, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980). Unless otherwise stated, all the citations of Teresa's works will be noted in the order of section, chapter, and paragraph, when applicable, so as to facilitate easier reference to other translations.

tual journey takes place within oneself; it is a movement from the peripheral to the very centre of the soul where God is.

The *Interior Castle* is an important classic in the Christian tradition that sheds great light on the Christian journey of prayer. A hundred years after Teresa completed the *Interior Castle*, Juan de Roxas y Auxa made an iconographic version of the *Interior Castle* in 1677, drawing out the mystical elements of the castle image.[11] Unfortunately, Roxa's graphic imagery cannot elucidate Teresa's mystical imagery, for Roxa bent it to conform to mainstream Counter-Reformation Catholicism. Readers are advised not to take Roxa's graphic image as the true representation of Teresa's own descriptions.

### *What Is "Interior Castle"?*

The castle image created by Teresa is pregnant with insights on prayer and spiritual maturity. Teresa describes the castle image as follows:

> [The castle is] made entirely out of a diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many dwelling places … some up above, others down below, others to the sides; and in the centre and middle is the main dwelling place where the very secret exchanges between God and the soul take place … For if this castle is the soul, clearly one doesn't have to enter it since it is within oneself … But you must understand that there is a great difference in the ways one may be inside the castle … You have already heard in some books on prayer that the soul is advised to enter within itself; well

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[11] Juan de Roxas y Auxa, *Representaciones de la verdad vestida, misticas, morales, y alegoricas, sobre las siete Moradas de Santa Teresa de Iesus, careadas con la Noche Oscura del B. Fr. Juan de la Cruz* (Madrid, 1977). Roxa's iconographic version of Teresa's *Interior Castle* is criticized for having distorted Teresa's own description of the castle image. While Teresa visualizes the castle as "a single diamond or of a very clear crystal," Roxa depicts Teresa's castle as a tower, an erect edifice with precise and ladder-like stages by which the devout can ascend to the heavenly "Gloria." A contemporary scholar, Catherine Swietlicki, makes this insightful comment: "Rather than a precisely delineated place, the castle-soul through which Teresa travels seems to be round and massive with rooms like layers concealing the innermost mansions from view." Swietlicki contends that Roxa's practice was common at the time of mainstream Counter-Reformation Catholicism. He needed to transform the imagery of Teresa's text so as to interpret her work as orthodox and to duly present her as a saintly model for Christian spirituality and mysticism. Teresa's potentially heterodox images were made to express a more exterior, more patriarchal, and less obscure conception of her spiritual experience. See Catherine Swietlicki, "The Problematic Iconography of Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle," *Studia Mystica* 11, no. 3 (1988): 37–47.

> that's the very thing I'm advising … The door of entry to this castle is prayer and reflection.[12]

From the above description, four characteristics of the castle image should be highlighted. First, the soul is imaged as the castle. The castle is therefore not exactly the kind of castle commonly known by people of the time; it is an interior castle created by Teresa. In other words, the castle is the soul of the human person. It is to be entered by the person who seeks the most precious place within. Teresa advises her sisters to enter within themselves, journeying inward to their inner selves where God is.

Second, Teresa describes the castle as having many dwelling places. The different dwelling places are milestones on the journey toward the centre "where the very secret exchanges between God and the soul take place." But the dwelling places are not systematically or logically arranged; instead, "some up above, others down below, others to the sides."[13] It seems to suggest that throughout the journey the traveller is repeatedly faced with choices about which direction to take.

Third, Teresa stresses that to reach the centre of the castle one must roam through the many dwelling places of the castle. However, she does not suggest that one could reach the inmost centre by neatly passing one dwelling place after the other. For Teresa, the path of spiritual development is less like a linear one. "You mustn't think of these dwelling places in such a way that each one would follow in file after the other," she warns.[14] Furthermore, as Teresa points out, the castle is like a round palmetto surrounded and covered by thick layers of leaves.[15] It implies that prayer life does not progress in a clear cut stage-after-stage fashion. Struggles and temptations encountered in one dwelling place may repeat in the next, perhaps in different forms and intensity. Discernment is therefore indispensable for one who embarks on the inward journey of prayer.

Fourth, the castle looms like a crystal globe. It is "made entirely out of diamond or of very clear crystal." It is transparent and the transparent quality of the castle bears two implications. On the one hand, it excites

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[12] *Interior Castle*, I, 1, 1–7.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., I, 2, 8.

[15] "Well now let's get back to our castle with its many dwelling places. You mustn't think of these dwelling places in such a way that each one would follow in file after the other; but turn your eyes toward the centre, which is the room or royal chamber where the King stays, and think of how a palmetto has many leaves surrounding and covering the tasty part that can be eaten" (ibid).

and encourages the traveller in her/his journey by allowing a glimpse of the magnificent beauty of the soul at the centre where God is. On the other hand, since the castle is transparent, one cannot know for certain how many dwelling places separate one from the deceptively visible centre. In other words, one does not know where the boundaries of the dwelling places are. One may mistake at least some of the dwelling places for the central and final one. If one does fall into this trap, one never reaches the real centre.

Lastly, the gate of entry into the castle is prayer. Prayer is a door that leads one toward the centre where God is. The castle is a soul-castle of one who seeks to reach the depth of oneself and God through prayer. While vocal prayer should not be completely discounted by the traveller, pure lips movement or verbal utterance is meaningless. "Without being care to see how he is speaking, but saying whatever comes to his head and whatever he has learned from saying at other times, in my opinion is not praying," Teresa says.[16] As one moves from one dwelling place to the other, one's prayer life transforms accordingly. This transformation process is what Teresa tries to explain in the rest of her book, which begins from the first and culminates in the seventh dwelling place.

### *The Seventh Dwellings of the "Interior Castle"*

The first dwelling place speaks of the experience of one who is attempting to hear God's voice among many other voices in life. Those who enter this first dwelling place have begun to pray as a result of an initial conversion. One's determination of turning away from sin marks the beginning of the inward journey. Since the first rooms of the castle are closer to the outside than those to the centre, paying attention to God at the centre of one's life is difficult when so many things in life have themselves become "central." Teresa stresses that self-knowledge is the key to prayer in this beginning stage, although it is always important for the pilgrim to maintain self-awareness throughout the entire journey.[17] In the first dwelling place one discovers one's wretchedness, self-indulgence, and self-excusing despair as well as one's given potential for growth toward the centre.

In the second dwelling place God's invitation is heard in a more personal way, although distraction is still strongly felt. Here the soul is

[16] Ibid., I, 1, 7.
[17] Ibid., I, 2, 9.

gradually aware of being personally addressed and challenged. One is entering into a relationship with God. The deepened involvement in this relationship calls for more sensitive responses. Teresa's advice is to use the intellect in reminding oneself of the objective superiority of what God promises to anything the pleasures of the world can deliver.[18] Moral constancy becomes the functional goal for Christians in this stage, although setbacks may also be expected. Despite the setbacks of the moral and prayer life of the pilgrim, God continues to call the pilgrim closer to the centre through the words of good people, sermons, good books, illnesses, trials, and moments in prayer.

The third dwelling place represents a period of settling down into a stable and serious religious life. Prayer is now an integral part of life and its effects are obvious in life's activities. In many ways, the third dwelling place can be characterized as an adult Christian life. Teresa believes "that through the goodness of God there are many of these souls in the world." These people are living well-ordered lives, with enough energy left over to help others, to teach others how to achieve the same state. However, a well-ordered religious life can be a real danger to the traveller in the castle, for it may become a solid carapace of religiosity. The traveller is pleased about the stability of the situation, in which penance, recollection, kindness to others, good judgment, and so on, come without much effort. But wanting to stay in security and stability is a temptation to be resisted. The challenge at this stage is to move on, entering into new insecurities, and avoiding complacency.

The fourth dwelling place marks a time of transition in the prayer life of the traveller. "Supernatural experience begins here," says Teresa.[19] Prayer becomes less and less discursive or an activity totally controlled through human effort. Gradually, the prayer experience becomes one in which God draws the soul into an interior state of recollection. The individual is now passive in prayer. This infused prayer is the beginning of contemplation. To distinguish between active meditation practiced in the first three dwelling places and the contemplative prayer of quiet experienced in the fourth dwelling place, Teresa uses the examples of two troughs of water.[20] One is filled through great effort by means of long aqueducts. This activity is likened to active prayer. The other trough sits next to a spring and fills quickly and easily. This trough is likened to contemplative prayer which occurs in the fourth dwelling place and will con-

[18] Ibid., II, 1, 4.
[19] Ibid., IV, 1, 1.
[20] Ibid., IV, 2, 2–4.

tinue till the seventh. However, Teresa warns that Christians at this stage "is not yet grown but is like a sucking child. If it turns away from its mother's breast, what can be expected for it but death?"[21]

The fifth dwelling place is a phase of deepening contemplative prayer which Teresa calls the prayer of union. In this phase there is an experience of union with God in which one "neither sees, nor hears, nor understands, because the union is always short and seems to the souls even much shorter than it probably is."[22] One loses any way of formulating what is happening in that kind of prayer experience, but is certain that "it was in God and God was in it."[23] Teresa likens the experience to that of the silkworm that dies in the cocoon and is transformed into a butterfly—an experience of dying in Christ and rising to new life. She also describes the experience at this stage as the beginning of "spiritual betrothal," in which God and the soul make a conscious mutual commitment.[24] Since the betrothal is not yet finalized, it is not in itself the reality of lasting union. All one has in this betrothal stage is a declaring of intention. One may still deceive oneself in this stage, as if one has reached the depth of mystical journey. Therefore it is important for one to maintain in this stage a union with God's will in everyday life and not to indulge in fantasy of the ultimate union.

The sixth dwelling place represents an intensification of union begun in the fourth dwelling place and heightened in the fifth dwelling place. As a newly emerging butterfly that is "vulnerable, restless, and confused," the prayerful Christian at this sixth dwelling place encounters acute trial and suffering. The experience of union with God is comparable to an arrow penetrating into one's body and then being drawn out, leaving even deeper yearning for God.[25] Being aware of the promised union, one can hardly wait for its final fruition. The tension of "already but not yet" is difficult to bear. In addition to this internal suffering, there are also external trials coming from unfriendly gossip, accusation of spiritual arrogance, unwelcome praise, inexperienced spiritual directors, and physical illness correlated to prayer experience. Ecstatic experiences are not uncommon in the sixth dwelling place and the testing principle is the presence of "virtue, peace, calm, and improvement in the soul."[26]

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[21] Ibid., IV, 3, 10.
[22] Ibid., V, 1, 9.
[23] Ibid., V, 1, 9.
[24] Ibid., V, 4, 4.
[25] Ibid., VI, 2, 4.
[26] Ibid., VI, 5, 10.

According to Teresa, the seventh dwelling place is the fulfilment of "spiritual marriage," a complete union with God.[27] It is the culmination of the journey through the castle. At this final dwelling place, the pilgrim, like the little butterfly, has died; it is Christ in whom she/he now lives.[28] There are some distinctive features of this stage of complete union with God: (1) the sense of joy in union will sometimes well up in words of praise and gratitude;[29] (2) the desire to serve God increases immensely;[30] (3) there are no interior disturbance or feelings of dryness, for now "the soul lives with a remembrance and tender love;"[31] (4) there is no more restless longing for tangible signs of God, such as consolations or spiritual delights, and no experience of rapture;[32] (5) the anxiety that attends the emotional heights and depths of the early dwelling place and the fear of making a fool of oneself in public, have disappeared, because "the soul has found its repose."[33]

Teresa is hesitant in providing details about this last dwelling place, fearing that "others will think [she] know[s] about it through experience."[34] She however emphasizes that the mystical experience of the union with God by no means refers only to the inner life of a person or to the so-called spiritual realm. It is unhealthy growth if one seeks only interior life but ignores virtues in everyday living. "It is necessary that your foundation consists of more than prayer and contemplation. If you do not strive for the virtues and practice them, you will always be dwarfs," Teresa says.[35] The unitive experience that transforms one's life is verifiable by the way one resolves to live every single day in and with love. Although one may occasionally feel the urge to leave the present life in desiring so much to enjoy total union with God, one never attempts to escape the demands and challenges of everyday routines.[36] Being in union with the loving God in this life, the pilgrim is committed to growth in love, which is realized in the obligations of mission and ser-

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[27] Ibid., VII, 1, 2.

[28] Ibid., VII, 2, 5. Similar expressions can be found elsewhere in this book; for example, in 3, 8, she writes, "the Lord Himself is present with these souls and it is His Majesty who now lives."

[29] Ibid., VII, 2, 6.

[30] Ibid., VII, 3, 6.

[31] Ibid., VII, 3, 8, 10.

[32] Ibid., VII, 3, 8, 12.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., VII, 4, 9.

[36] Ibid., VII, 3, 6.

vice.

## 4. TRANSFORMATION IN THE PROCESS OF OX-HERDING

In major world religions different metaphors of spiritual growth are devised to express the dynamics of spiritual growth. While Teresa's "interior castle" is highly commended in Christian spirituality, the image of "herding the ox" is considered a source of spiritual wisdom in the Chinese Buddhist lore. By the time the Chan tradition was reaching its full institutional development in the Song dynasty (960–1276), "tending or herding the ox" had become a well-known metaphor for Chan training. There were various versions of the metaphor existing in the period with different number of pictures ranging from five to twelve. Historically speaking, two sets of ox-herding diagrams, titles, and didactic verses have proved the most enduring—one by the Linji 臨濟 master Kuoan Shiyuan 廓庵師遠 (12th century), the other by a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century master of uncertain provenance known simply as Puming 普明.[37] Kuoan's diagrams and verses were introduced when Chan was transmitted to the Japanese isles during the Southern Song (1127–1279) and Yuan (1279–1367) periods. There they were circulated in the medieval Rinzai Zen monasteries as one of "four foundational works of the Zen school."[38] With the recent publication of several English-language translations, Kuoan's ten ox-herding pictures and verses have become popular among Western practitioners connected with Japanese Zen.

### *Ox and Ox-herder in the Pictures*

The images of the ox-herding pictures are not difficult to comprehend. The ox-herder is the practitioner, in the more specific sense of the inner "self" or "I," who is motivated to practice and seek enlightenment and is engaged therein. The path of spiritual growth leads back to one's original "home" of intrinsic enlightenment, or Buddhahood. The ox, on the other

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[37] Sheng-yen, *Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 201.

[38] The Four Foundational works of Zen School consists of Kuoan's Ox-herding Pictures, Sengcan's *Verses on Faith in Mind* (*Xinxin ming* 信心銘), Yongjia's *Song of Enlightenment* (*Zhengdao ge* 證道歌), and Changlu Zongze's Treatise on Sitting in Meditation (*Zuochan yi* 坐禪儀).

The Ten Ox-herding Pictures



I



II



III



IV



V

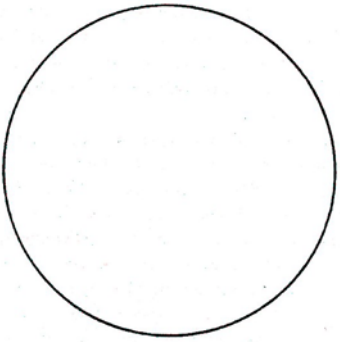
The Ten Ox-herding Pictures (cont.)



VI



VII



VIII



IX



X

hand, is more ambiguous. Generally speaking, the ox represents the "mind" and its activities. It is the primary object to which the practitioner directs his or her attention, and that which he or she strives to cultivate or domesticate. In this sense the "mind" is characterized as wild and unruly, and must be forcibly restrained from wandering off into the weeds of desire and deluded thinking. In short, the ox is the mind of vexation. However, in Chan, the "mind" is also regarded as inherently enlightened, and "seeing the ox" is often interpreted as "glimpsing one's original nature." Therefore, the ox may be seen as the great white ox of enlightened Buddha-nature. Seeking, discovering, taming, and riding the ox home would then signify the process of awakening to and actualizing one's true nature to the point where it is fully integrated with all aspects of life. In this second sense, the ox is the mind of enlightenment.

Both views of the ox are acceptable and never in contradiction. Huineng 慧能 the sixth patriarch (638–713) says, "Deluded, a Buddha is a sentient being; awakened, a sentient being is a Buddha. … If the mind is warped, a Buddha is a sentient being; if the mind is impartial, a sentient being is a Buddha."[39] In light of Huineng's saying, the mind of affliction is not separate from the mind of enlightenment. The whole process of harnessing, taming, and herding the ox home involves a simultaneous effort to subdue the mind of vexation and to further actualize the mind of enlightenment. As practice progresses, the ox, the ox-herder, and the relationship between the two change radically. One teacher outlines the major points of this series of pictures in counselling an advanced Chan student:

> If you continue with zazen, you will reach the point of grasping the Ox, i.e., the fourth stage. Right now you do not, so to speak "own" your realization. Beyond the stage of grasping the Ox is the stage of taming it, followed by riding it, which is a state of awareness in which enlightenment and ego are seen as one and the same. Next, the seventh stage, is that of forgetting the Ox; the eighth, that of forgetting the Ox as well as one-self; the ninth, the grade of grand enlightenment, which penetrates to the very bottom and where one on longer differentiates enlightenment from non-enlightenment. The last, the tenth, is the stage in which … one moves, as himself, among ordinary people, helping them wherever possible, free from all attachment to enlightenment.[40]

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[39] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, trans. Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 180. Quoted in Sheng-yen, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 203.

[40] Taji-roshi, in P. Kapleau, ed., *The Three Pillars of Zen* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 231.

## 5. BRIEF COMMENTARY ON EACH OF THE TEN PICTURES[41]

In the first picture, "Looking for the Ox," the ox-herder is depicted in the countryside or wilderness outside of town, who, carrying a harness, has discovered that he has lost his ox and is looking about anxiously, trying to decide which direction to go. This picture represents the beginning of the spiritual quest. It illustrates a growing sense that deep in one's being there must be a true and unchanging nature, a nature that we have lost and desperately need to reclaim in order to be at peace. The search itself creates a new obstacle, one of seeking outside oneself for what is within. Those who are searching must eventually come to believe that they can "find" the Buddha-nature within themselves.

The second picture, "Seeing the Tracks," shows that the herder has found hoofprints of the ox. Seeing the hoofprints, the herder becomes more confident that the ox is out there somewhere, and now he has a hunch of the direction to take and the path to follow. People in this stage have developed a firm belief that Buddha-nature is real and that they can accomplish what the Chan patriarchs experienced. The seeker has begun to study Buddhism seriously. Study of various scriptures and accounts of the lives of Buddhist sages brings an intellectual understanding of basic Buddhist truths. Yet, without personal experience, they are not sure how to proceed and doubt if they are making any progress in their practice.

In the third picture, "Glimpsing the Ox," the ox's tail sticks out from behind a tree and the ox-herder is overjoyed to spot the ox. However, the ox-herder is yet to see it face to face, let alone grasping it. The first glimpse of the ox is equivalent to seeing one's true nature for the first time. The encounter with the ox is not a result of study or abstract contemplation, but through direct experience. It is really the beginning of genuine Chan practice. This initial glimpse into one's true nature will not be very deep; but it does mark an important watershed in a person's practice. This first glimpse is, for but a moment, realization which comes and goes. Practitioners at this stage are like newly hatched chicks. Adhering to continued practice, the five precepts (not to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sexual misconduct, not to deceive or speak falsehood, and not to indulge in intoxicants), and the outer forms and rituals of Chan prac-

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[41] This section of brief commentary on the ten pictures is drawn mainly from two sources: Sheng-yen, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 202–22; and Robert Frager and James Fadiman, *Personality and Personal Growth*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 446–76.

tice form the safe nest for them.

The fourth picture is "Getting Hold of the Ox." The ox is so unruly that the ox-herder applies the whip and firmly holds the reins in order to restrain it from wandering off to graze in the fields. At this stage, the practitioners have a full glimpse of the ox or, in other words, have gained control over their vexations and are able to maintain conformity with their true nature. Now the Chan practitioner must make certain that Buddhist self-discipline permeates the whole of daily life. The ox here illustrates the raw energy and power of enlightenment. As the ox may wander off due to overwhelming pressures of the outside world, subtle thoughts of enmity and lust may arise. To avoid carrying such thoughts into word and deed and avoid falling back into their previous condition of moral and spiritual darkness, they redouble their efforts in keeping the precepts and Chan practice. Practitioners at this stage can make rapid progress by following a more advanced master. On the other hand, they can help beginners who come to ask for guidance.

The fifth picture, "Herding the Ox," shows that the herdsman, with a whip in one hand and reins held lightly in the other, was leading the ox gently along the path or walking alongside it. As imagined, the ox may from time to time stop and nibble the grass along the road. An effortless intimacy or friendship with the ox is now established. The sense of struggle is gone. Every act, every thought begins to reflect the true self. The herdsman, however, must be alert and not allow himself to become too frivolous or self-satisfied, although the ox readily responds to his command. The main focus at this stage of "herding the ox" is the development of one's power of samādhi—the deliberate cultivation of a deeper, unmoving concentration. Through deep samādhi one reaches and uproots the suppressed seeds or predispositions of vexation.

The sixth picture is "Riding the Ox Home." To reclaim and fully actualize one's original Buddha-nature is to "return home." The struggle is completely over. Seated at ease atop the ox, the ox-herder is playing the flute in a self-absorbed and carefree spirit. With the reins loosely tied to his waist, the ox-herder does not bother to guide the ox at all. The ox is completely tame and familiar with the way home. At this stage, the Chan practice is effortless, like no practice at all. Life has become simple, natural, and spontaneous. Formal external training is no longer essential once one has become firmly anchored in awareness of the Buddha-nature. The individual's six sense faculties are purified of the taint of vexation. They are lucidly, and intimately, aware of the world around them; but the world does not generate feelings of greed or anger in them. They feel close to all that they see, touch, and hear, as if the world is a Buddha-world where every object speaks and proclaims the Dharma. Practitioners

at this stage still see practice as necessary to cultivate the mind to reach the higher goals. But they do not urge themselves to practice nor deliberate about practice. Precepts, samādhi, and wisdom become part of their being.

In the seventh picture, "The Ox is Forgotten, but the Ox-herder Is Still Present," the ox-herder and ox have returned home, only the ox-herder is seen. Here the ox is not "missing," as in the first picture; the ox-herder sits contentedly at home, in full possession of himself and with no worry whatsoever about the ox or herding. At this stage, the practitioner no longer feels the need to tame the mind or cultivate enlightenment. The distinction between religious and worldly categories disappears, as everything is seen to possess the Buddha-nature. Training and discipline have become indistinguishable from daily life. The state of meditation is as normal now as walking or breathing and is no longer associated with any sense of motivation of or separation from the goal. Analogous to the process of learning to swim, the practitioner has gone through the stages where they struggle against the water and must work hard to stay afloat and now at this stage they become one with the water, so much that the water is gone out in a sense that they are no longer aware of it. At this stage, swimming and self-cultivation, in the normal sense of the words, cease; only the person is still there.

The eighth picture, "Herder and Ox Both Forgotten," is an empty circle; neither the person nor the ox is to be seen. Both the ox of self-nature or mind and the ox-herder of the subjective self disappear when one truly identifies with one's original Buddha-nature. At this stage, there is no longer a self-nature to realize or a self that realizes it. All is one. When a self is really the original self-nature, there is no self, no nature. The ox and the ox-herder are actually both unreal; they are a perfect totality—one, not in the arithmetical sense of the word. This refers to the experience of void, the essential nothingness of all creation. The individual nature and the Buddha-nature were transcended in the previous stage, and now it is enlightenment itself that is transcended. But this is not the end of the spiritual journey toward highest wisdom. People at this stage are yet far from being a Buddha. The presence of a blank circle itself suggests something more. As long as there is a circle, attainment still exists, and that is not the end. In some drawings, the circle is made by one single brushstroke and is not closed. This again suggests that further growth is possible.

The ninth picture, "Reverting to the Origin and Returning to the Source," shows a spotless world of green hills and blue streams, luxuriant bamboo and dainty plum blossoms reappearing in the circle. If the eighth stage is thought of as the static aspect of absolute Truth, this ninth stage

may be said to bring a new dynamic appreciation of the world. It expresses a return to an awareness of the world after the deeply inner experience of absorption in the oneness of the original nature. When awareness returns, everything is perceived as ordinary persons perceive, but in a different light. This awareness emerges as pure wisdom that illuminates everything lucidly and precisely. Whatever it encounters, it sees it for what it is, without the interference of vexation. Practitioners at this stage do not think of the world in dualistic terms, such as enlightenment versus vexation, noumenal principle versus phenomenal manifestation. Neither the ox nor the herdsman is in the picture; things are just as they are, in and of themselves.

The tenth and final picture is "Entering the Market with Open Hands." It depicts a rotund, self-contented monk carrying a cloth bag. His hand is outstretched to a destitute old beggar. Usually it is the itinerary monk who seeks and receives alms; but here the roles are reversed; the monk is doing the giving. This illustrates how the fully liberated practitioner is able spontaneously to generate great compassion and skilful means to meet the needs of living beings. Appearing in the market place, the monk seems to come from nowhere. This is the final stage, the stage of Bodhisattva who is free to associate with and help all other beings without limitations. The marketplace refers to the secular world, in contrast to the secluded Chan temple or contemplation retreat. The enlightened ones may present themselves as Chan masters, laypersons, or even someone who is despised by others. In whatever form and personality they take, they appear very ordinary and natural. Without artificial calculation, they do what is appropriate to the dispositions and needs of others.

## 6. SPIRITUAL MATURITY: TEACHING OF TERESA OF AVILA AND THE OX-HERDING PICTURES

The spiritual paths delineated respectively by Teresa of Avila and the ox-herding pictures in Chan tradition demonstrate some common characteristics, although the religious frameworks of and terminologies used by the two sources are utterly different. In the following we shall look at the two paths again through the lens of a spiritual growth model proposed by Harry R. Moody and David Carroll, who observe five essential phases in the process of spiritual growth—the Call, the Search, the Struggle, the

Breakthrough, the Return.[42]

*The Call*

As mentioned in the first section of this paper, both the Christian and the Chan practitioner begin the journey by receiving the Call. The Call may come in and through religious contexts and symbols unique to the Christian and the Chan student. But individuals of each of the two religious traditions may also hear the still small voice spoken in non-religious terms through art, music, human conditions, reflection on life and death, and so on. It is the Call that plunges the seeker, Christian or Chan student, into the restless journey of spiritual growth. As seen in the first stage of Teresa's castle image and the ox-herding metaphor of spiritual journey, the seeker is awakened to spiritual possibilities and potentials.

*The Search*

The first step on the journey is to search for deeper truths of oneself and of God. In the first three of the ox-herding pictures, the Chan practitioner is seeking her/his own true self. Teresa, on the other hand, describes the Christian in the first dwelling as one who is seeking to hear God's voice among many other voices in life.

*The Struggle*

To move on further, she/he needs to pay effort in keeping spiritual disciplines. The Chan practitioner, as seen in the pictorial process of finding, glimpsing, catching, and taming the ox, engages in serious studies of various scriptures and accounts of the lives of Buddhist sages and Chan practices. The keeping of the five precepts and of the forms and rituals of Chan practice is necessary to safeguard falling prey to vexations. According to Teresa, the Christian travelling to the second and third dwellings

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[42] Harry R. Moody and David Carroll, *Charting the Spiritual Passages that Shapes Our Lives* (New York: Anchor Books, 1997). I am indebted to the insight of Moody and Carroll. Their five-phase model is a very helpful tool in understanding different religions' teaching on spiritual growth. Their model can apply to non-religious spirituality as well.

involves the Christian practitioner in a deepened relationship with God by active responses to God's invitation. It is necessary to put God in higher priority than anything the pleasures of the world can deliver. Letting go of sensual pleasures and of worldly attachment, together with disciplined prayer life, is integral and its effects are obvious in one's activities in life. The struggle in the early stages of the spiritual itinerary is indispensable and rewarding. For both the Christian and the Chan practitioner, to be able to experience a breakthrough in spiritual growth, they must not be sloppy in their practice. No pain, no gain!

### *The Breakthrough*

Breakthrough amazingly comes after ardent struggles in knowing God more deeply or in extending the awareness of one's Buddha-nature to every act and thought. There is a time when the Chan practitioner feels that the struggle is all over. In Chan, the sixth stage of "Riding the Ox Home" marks the first sign of breakthrough, at which the relation between the ox-herder and the ox is so intimate that he can ride it effortlessly without needing to pay the slightest attention to where it is going. At the next stage of "Ox Forgotten, Self Alone," training and discipline have become indistinguishable from daily life. Everything is sacred, and there is no distinction between enlightenment and ignorance. The breakthrough experience is almost indescribable. The eighth stage of "Herder and Ox Both Forgotten" refers to the experience of void, the essential nothingness of all creation. All delusive feelings have perished and ideas of holiness too have vanished. These are clearly important breakthrough phases in Chan spirituality.

On the other hand, the fourth dwelling place of Teresa's castle image is regarded as a transition in the prayer life of the spiritual traveller, where supernatural experience often occurs. For the Christian, prayer becomes less and less discursive, shifting from an active to receptive mode of relating to God. In other words, prayer is more of God drawing the human person to intimate union than of human person striving for closer contact with God. The Christian is now passive in prayer and her/his prayer is often silent contemplation. Prayer at this state is recognized as grace of God. In the fifth dwelling, silent contemplation is developed into an experience of union with God. The sixth dwelling is the intensification of union begun in the fourth and heightened in the fifth dwelling. The ecstatic experience of union with God brings forth the yearning for its final fruition and the graceful sense of God's presence in all things. The Christian experience of union with God defies any formu-

lation by words. To borrow Merton's expression, the loving union of the Christian and God can be described as "Love Loving in Freedom":

> What happens is that the separate entity that is you apparently disappears and nothing seems to be left but a pure freedom indistinguishable from infinite Freedom, love identified with Love. Not two loves, one waiting for the other, striving for the other, seeking for the other, but Love Loving in Freedom.[43]

To experience the loving union with God as such is indeed a remarkable breakthrough in one's spiritual journey. And yet this is not the end.

### *The Return*

It is an illusion to think that spiritual maturity is evaluated by extraordinary experiences. Both Teresa's castle image and the Chan's ox-herding pictures deny this kind of illusive thinking. Spiritual maturity, according to the teachings of Teresa and of Chan's ox-herding pictures, is seen in one's graceful return to the ordinary life after one has special spiritual breakthroughs. Neither the mature Chan practitioner nor the Christian will approach life with negative attitudes. They will not become reclusive and shy away from daily life, never thinking "the world is useless to me" or that "the sooner I die the better." Such a mentality is definitely not a sign of spiritual maturity; it is a step off the right path. As far as the right path is concerned, it is essential to realize that spiritual development does not end with formless extinction. The *Heart Sutra* says that "form is emptiness and emptiness is itself form." When St. Paul writes: "I no longer live," he simply highlights: "It is Christ who lives in me."

Neither does the ox-herding pictures stop at the eighth nor Teresa's castle image ends with the sixth dwelling. Both the Christian and Chan traditions deny any fixation at the stage where ecstatic and extraordinary experience is predominant. To start with the Chan tradition, the ninth ox-herding picture, "Reverting to the Origin and Returning to the Source," reaffirms the world of phenomenal distinctions. It corrects the misconception of some Chan practitioners that in reaching the eighth stage of "Herder and Ox Both Forgotten," all distinctions and conventions are

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[43] Thomas Merton, *What Is Contemplation?* (Springfield, Ill.: Templegate Publishers, 1996), 184–85.

meaningless and can be dealt with as one chooses. Other people's wives and husbands are still other people's wives and husbands; one cannot take other people's wives or husbands, belongings, and simply do what one wants to do. The ninth stage confirms one's responsibility in human life. Fixation at the breakthrough experience is immature self-contentment. Spiritual maturity for the Chan practitioner is "returning to the Source," where worldly conventions are regarded as valid, and where the practitioner wants what is best for all, wants all things to be just as they are, fully.

There is an old saying in Chan that in the beginning, before one deeply engages in the practice, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers, for they are perceived with attachment and discrimination.[44] Then, with a breakthrough in training, the practitioner claims that mountains are no longer mountains and rivers are no longer rivers, as shown in the eighth ox-herding picture, in which both the ox-herder and the ox vanish. But toward the very end of the spiritual growth journey, mountains are again seen as mountains and rivers are again rivers, for at this spiritually mature level all things are seen as helpful on the path to enlightenment. Not only that the mature Chan practitioner sees things in a totally new light, she/he "returns" to the market place, as the final ox-herding picture indicates. The enlightened is the Bodhisattva willing to share all the amusements and activities of the world, not because of personal desires or attachments, but in order to teach others. Neither the sacred temple nor the secluded temple—but the secular world—is the home of the enlightened Bodhisattva. Every place is her/his home. Taking on any personality and any walk of life, the enlightened practitioner leads innkeepers and fishmongers and all living beings in the way of the Buddha.

Teresa also emphasizes that Christian spiritual maturity is not so much defined by the "pious" desire for being with God than by the commitment to live everyday life in a down-to-earth manner. That explains why the castle image does not end in the sixth dwelling. Ecstasy, locutions, and visions are not uncommon for those who reach the fourth to the sixth dwelling places. Teresa herself admits that she has some very dramatic supernatural or infused experiences which transcend human understanding and perception. Yet, despite the mystical nature of the prayer journey,

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[44] "Before a man studies Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after he gets an insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, mountain to him are not mountains and waters are not waters; but after this when he really attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters"; listed in Nancy Wilson Ross, ed., *The World of Zen: An East-West Anthology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 258.

Teresa does not consider mystical prayer as constitution of holiness or perfection. Much less does she suggest that mystical phenomena are *the* signs of Christian maturity. It will be a grave misunderstanding of Teresa's spirituality if we focus too much on her extraordinary experience and overlook her insistence on pursuing a love-giving life in every day interactions with people around.

For Teresa, there is one true sign of spiritual maturity—one's conformity of one's will with the will of God. The will of God is twofold: "Love of his majesty and love of our neighbour."[45] The degree of one's spiritual maturity is manifested in the depth of one's love toward one's neighbour.[46] Mystical journey does not result in withdrawal from the human scene. Teresa describes the gift of mystical marriage in the seventh dwelling place as a call to service, not a haven in which to hide oneself from the struggles and demands of human life. To her sisters living in small cloistered convents, she says: "This is what I want us to strive for, my sisters; and let us desire and be occupied in prayer not for the sake of our enjoyment but so as to have this strength to serve."[47] Maturity is authenticated by the love that one embraces and expresses in daily encounters with people in the world.

While reflecting on the final dwelling of the castle image, Teresa stresses that when the pilgrim reaches the centre of the castle, the pilgrim may feel being propelled back into the world with new commitment and strength. The deeper the union with the loving God is attained, the stronger is the commitment to mercy and love. The rapture of union with God in love plunges one back to the world with a new transformed vision of reality—seeing all things in God. The end of the spiritual journey is not a departure for the heavenly world, but a "return" to the everyday realities. The union with God in love is to be consummated here and now in this world, a world so much wounded by wars, violence, sufferings, and pains. Mystical prayer and love is interconnected and at the same time grounded in human life. Toward the end of her book, Teresa warns her sisters about the potential danger of being unreal and retreating from the concrete reality of humanity: "In sum, my Sisters," she says, "what I conclude with is that we shouldn't build castle in the air."[48] Teresa knows so well the human tendency to romanticize and "spiritualize" her castle image and to use it to create a kind of private spirituality, caring

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[45] *Interior Castle*, V, 3, 7.
[46] Ibid., V, 3, 8.
[47] Ibid., VII, 4, 12.
[48] Ibid., VII, 4, 15.

for the destiny of one's soul but nothing else. However, the fruit and goal of spiritual maturing is not so much for the good spiritual feeling of oneself than for the well being of the others. Feeling good is never the measurement of one's maturity, but the ability and willingness to do works for the good of other people is. Teresa wisely reminds her sisters before she closes her book, the *Interior Castle*: "This is the reason of prayer, my daughters, the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works."[49]

## 7. CONCLUSION

Both Teresa and the Chan's ox-herding pictures guide us to think of spiritual maturity from a different vantage point. It is not the profound nature of one's experience that counts, but the depth of one's commitment to serve others. Interestingly though, to be willing to commit oneself wholeheartedly for the service of others, one needs to go through the process of purification. For the Christian, it is important to journey through different spiritual stages beautifully described by Teresa in an image of interior castle. The Chan practitioner, on the other hand, may consult the ten ox-herding pictures as a guide for practice toward full enlightenment. For the Christian and the Chan student, their journey begins with a Call, an invitation to go deeper and awake to life, to self, and to God.

Responding to the Call, they search for the truth or the way to the truth. The most difficult part of the journey is the struggle to keep up the practice while dealing with distraction, frustration, and even sporadic surges of consolation and desolation. At this phase, discernment, humility, and discipline are necessary in order to keep one on the move.

Sooner or later, the struggle will be rewarded with a breakthrough in one's practice, which brings so much joy and ecstasy that one may be tempted to cling to these results. However great is the experience of the breakthrough, it is not the end of the journey. It is until one can take experience, good or bad, lightly and see the world in a totally new light, one reaches the final stage of maturity.

At the final stage, the Christian and the Chan practitioner are said to be returning to the world, after going all the long way in secluded practice

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[49] Ibid., VII, 4, 6.

and silent prayer. Reaching the goal of the spiritual journey, they are purified and filled with the love and compassion of the Sacred so much so that they return to the world and serve the people who are in needs. The Christ-like Christian and the enlightened Bodhisattva return to ordinary routine of everyday life like any other common persons. The difference is that their presence is for others a sense of the presence of the Sacred. In this sense, the Sacred is in the ordinary. It is in the ordinary and yet love- and compassion-filled life of the spiritually matured Christian and the enlightened Chan Buddhist that we can glimpse the presence of the Sacred. Truly for them, ordinary life is the platform for the practice of holiness. And in and through them holiness is no longer experienced as abstract and distant, but earthly and fleshy. Spiritual maturity is a realization of the mystery of the Christian truth, Incarnation—God became flesh.

As "spirituality" becomes almost a vogue in the present time, some would see prayer or religious experience as a kind of "spiritual achievement" or a taste of "extraordinary favours." Yet, Teresa would pointedly correct this distorted view of Christian mysticism by pulling us down from the air so that we can stay in touch with everyday life. In a similar vein, the Chan master would urge us to return to the realities of this world and to enter the market place with blessing-bestowing hands.

However, Teresa's *Interior Castle* and Chan's teachings on spiritual growth are different in a number of ways. Teresa's image describes for the Christian a spiritual journey toward union with God in love. She is aware of the paradoxical tension between human effort and God's grace with regard to spiritual maturity. She writes about the distinction between what one can achieve in prayer through grace and what God accomplishes within the human person through the gift of mystical prayer. The first three dwelling places of the "interior castle" describe the Christian life of dedicated prayer and virtue with emphasis on self-knowledge, humility, and detachment. In these early dwelling places the spiritual discipline of the Christian seeker is of importance in spiritual growth. The fourth dwelling place marks the transition from graced human effort to mystical prayer, which inaugurates supernatural or infused experiences that culminate in the spiritual marriage described in the seventh dwelling place. The interplay between human effort and the grace of God is a unique aspect of Christian spirituality. In Chan there is no mention of an intervention of God or grace from a divine agent along the ox-herding process.

Buddhism is sometimes referred to as an atheistic religion, a religion without god(s). As a rule Buddhists go against the idea of God when it is referring to the understanding of God that monotheism and Hinduism

hold, with their belief that God or gods have created and maintain the universe. Ultimately, then, Buddhist teachings appear to imply that gods and divine worlds are to be regarded as mental constructs that may be used to aid us in our search for the highest truths, but to reach enlightenment it will be necessary eventually to abandon these notions. This is another important area that separates the Chan path from the Christian itinerary.

However, there are some Christian mystics envisioning God in a way similar to that of the Chan's paradox. For example, Christian mystic Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) once writes: "I pray God to rid me of God."[50] Eckhart tries to say that God is more than anything we can know of the divine. Our ability in knowing God remains but a drop in the big deep sea of mystery. The fullness of God can be known and yet cannot be known. "In God there is always—and always will be—the mystery that beckons humanity beyond the known."[51] In this light, it is interesting to engage the Christian and the Chan practitioner in a dialogue on human understanding of God.

Thomas Merton, a contemporary mystic, goes as far as to compare Chan enlightenment with Christian union with God. He says that for the Christian, it is the Call toward finding one's true self in union with God, whereas for the Chan practitioner, it is the Call toward finding one's original face. The difference may not be on the nature of the Call, but the religious context of the person who receives it. In Merton's own words: "There is always a possibility that what an Eastern mystic describes as Self is what the Western mystic will describe as God because we shall see presently that the mystical union between the soul and God renders them in some sense 'undivided' (though metaphysically distinct) in spiritual experience."[52] In fact, Teresa also depicts the castle image in terms of entering into the deepest core of one's self where God is. Her description of a journey to self and to God is in harmony with the famous saying of Augustine of Hippo (354–430): "Noverim me noverime te,"[53] as with the insight of Merton, who says: "If I find God I will find myself and if I

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[50] Quoted in Stefan Einhorn, *A Concealed God: Religion, Science, and the Search for Truth*, trans. Linda Scheck (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation, 2002), 80.

[51] Richard P. Hardy, "Delighted to Be Who I Am for You," *Carmelite Digest* 18, no. 2 (2003): 29.

[52] Thomas Merton, "The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation (I)," *Cistercian Studies* 18 (1983): 11.

[53] The theme of "knowing self and knowing God" in Augustine's writings has been well articulated by Robert Innes. See his article, "Integrating the Self Through the Desire of God," *Augustinian Studies* 28 (1997): 67–109.

find myself I will find God."[54] The topic on Christian mystical understanding of the self and Chan's teachings on "no-self" is also an interesting one in Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

Lastly, one should not inflate the importance of the formal representations of the Chan path described by the ten ox-herding pictures, for it may create the impression that there are hard and fast definitions of the enlightenment and spiritual progress to which everyone's practice will conform. Likewise, Teresa also warns her readers not to take her metaphor literally. She repeatedly states that while the *comparaciones* or images are useful in understanding spiritual life, they could not exhaust the mystical reality of prayer.[55] One therefore must not read her images literally with the lack of imagination and acceptance for mystery. Ultimately the journey toward spiritual maturity can hardly be clearly laid out once and for all. Spirituality is never a kind of mechanical work with which you can seize a manual and follow through. From a Christian point of view, it is sheer grace of God.

[54] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), 36.
[55] See *Interior Castle*, V, 1, 1; VI, 4, 8.

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# Onto-Dynamics of the Triunity and Its Contribution to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue

LAI SHEN-CHON

In the following, the onto-dynamics of the triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, the common foundation of Chinese Universism and the related inter-cultural philosophy of interreligious dialogue, will be investigated.[1] The following themes in the philosophy of Buddhism and the related interreligious dialogue will be discussed:

(a) The theory of the onto-dynamics of the triunity, which has three essential elements: (1) triadicity, (2) negation, and (3) dynamic. All three elements belong to a cycle, an empty circularity. This is the totality and entirety in the theory of the triunity.

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[Instead of a previously mentioned paper (see *Ching Feng*, n.s., 4, no. 2 [2003]: 111), the present article is issued here as its author's contribution to our special issue on Buddhist-Christian dialogue.—Ed.]

[1] In his theory of the onto-dynamics of the dialectical-triadic understanding of reality in an "East-Asian, horizontal-pragmatic manner," and above all in East-Asian Buddhism, Heinrich Beck explains a "distant analogy towards the Christian enigma of trinity" and develops an inter-cultural philosophy of interreligious dialogue for the Western and East-Asian religions. See Heinrich Beck, "World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Contrarieties: The Onto-Hermeneutic Basis for an Understanding of the Structure of the Culture of Mankind as a Perspective for a 'Dialectic-Triadic' Conception of Reality," in *Creative Peace through Encounter of World Cultures*, ed. Heinrich Beck and Gisela Schmirber (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1996), 19–68.

(b) "Negation" is non-vertical and non-horizontal, and rejects both the synchronic-epistemological-horizontal understanding and the diachronic-ontological-vertical understanding of other Buddhist schools. The non-vertical and non-horizontal is not only a negation of nihilism, however; it also implies a twofold articulation, because the triunity not only corresponds to non-vertical and non-horizontal negation, but also implies an onto-dynamics of revolving around one another.

(c) The two kinds of theory of the triunity in classical Chinese philosophy will be explained. The theory of the triunity has two trends: (1) an epistemological triunity (earth, heaven, humanity) and (2) an ontological triunity (*T'ai-chi* 太極, *Yin* 陰, *Yang* 陽). These two trends also develop further in later Chinese Buddhism.

(d) Chih-i's 智顗 (538–97) theory of the triunity implies a new dimension for interreligious dialogue in global thought, the conversation of religions, and an inter-cultural philosophy, because (1) the triunity and the themes related to it are also core concepts of Western theology and philosophy, and (2) the theory of the triunity presupposes a methodology of the pluralism of the theology of religion.[2]

## 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF NĀGĀRJUNA'S THEORY OF TWO TRUTHS INTO T'IEN-T'AI'S THEORY OF THREE TRUTHS

Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250) develops a theory of Two Truths (Chinese: *erh-ti* 二諦), *paramārtha* and *saṃvṛti-satya*, in order to explain the relationship between the profane and the sacred in his Mādhyamika philosophy. The former is called sacred truth (Chinese: *sheng-ti* 聖諦; Japanese: *shōtai*) and corresponds to the Sanskrit expression *paramārtha*; the latter is ordi-

[2] Cf. Heinrich Beck, "Europa – Afrika – Asien: Komplementarität der Weltkulturen," in Erwin Schadel, ed., *Ganzheitliches Denken: Festschrift für Arnulf Rieber zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 80: "Hegel's dialectical view of reality is influenced above all by the three-hypostases theory of neo-Platonism. Here the second member of the triunity-model is the Hegelian 'antithesis,' in our view of the 'standing opposite'—already clearly characterized as 'consciousness' or 'reason'; so, for example, with Plotinus. ... According to East-Asian philosophical tradition the entirety of being lives in the complementary contrariety of the forces (or movement-trends) Yang and Yin, which can also be interpreted in the sense of triadic circular motion" (here I use my English translation).

nary, earthly truth (Chinese: *su-ti* 俗諦; Japanese: *zokutai*), which corresponds to the Sanskrit term *saṃvṛti-satya*. Nāgārjuna maintains that his theory of emptiness is not nihilistic, but instead a middle way. *Saṃvṛti-satya* is an *upāya* (Chinese: *fang-pien* 方便) of the *paramārtha*; in other words, ordinary earthly truth is the skill of attaining sacred truth, and thus the former is a necessary element of the latter.[3]

The way of thought of the Two Truths implies the possibility of misinterpretation. It explains the Two Truths from the understanding of the dualism of the sacred and the profane. T'ien-t'ai Chih-i develops a cyclical model of the triunity, in order to exclude the possibility of a one-sided misinterpreted explanation of the Mādhyamika philosophy. The relationship between the sacred and the profane is not dualistic, but cyclic. That means that there is neither an ontological vertical dichotomy of the sacred and the profane nor an epistemological horizontal dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, but only a non-vertical and non-horizontal triunity.

Concerning this Chih-i says:

> Suppose that one understands [the three statements of] "identical with emptiness," "identical with the provisional," and "identical with the middle" in such a way that though they are three, they are all one. And though they are one, they are still three. [That is to say,] they do not impede each other in any way whatsoever. All three [statements] are empty because the path of speech and discursive thought is cut off. All three are provisional because they are name only. All three are the middle because they are identical with ultimate reality. [The term] "emptiness" is merely used as a name; thus it implicitly includes the provisional and the middle. If one awakens to emptiness, then one [simultaneously] awakens to the provisional and the middle. It is the same for the other two as well.[4]

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[3] One can say, therefore, that Nāgārjuna's philosophy not only rejects by negative dialectic all opinion as *prapañca* (chap. XVIII, 5 *te prapañcātprapañcastu śūnyatāyām nirudhyte*), but also acknowledges a positive role for the "dependent skilfulness of the means" (*prajñaptir-upādāya*; Chinese: *chia-ming fang-pien* 假名方便). Nāgārjuna formulates that in his reply to his opponent[s] as follows (XXIV, 7–10): "Based on the Two Truths, on the earthly, limited truth and on the highest truth, the Buddhas proclaim the teaching. ... Based on the truth valid in practical life (*vyavahāra*), the highest truth (*paramārtha*) is taught. Without the highest truth, *nirvāṇa* is not attained."

[4] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan* 摩訶止觀, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 [hereafter abbreviated as T] 1911, 46:7; English translation is found in Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i's* Mo-ho chih-kuan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,

Furthermore:

> This Bodhisattva hears the perfect teaching and as a result a perfect faith originates. ... What does it mean to hear the perfect teaching (i.e., a teaching that the cycle of birth is the body of truth, is perfect wisdom, and karma fruit is salvation)? They indeed have three names, but they are not three different substances. They are indeed one substance, but one uses three names. That is a character of the triunity. In reality there is no distinction among the three. If the body of truth were final, the salvation of perfect wisdom would also be final. If the perfect wisdom were pure, the others would also be pure.
>
> What does perfect faith mean? Perfect faith means to believe that all things are at the same time empty, temporary, and intermediate, that all things have no unity, duality, nor triplicity, but at the same time do indeed have unity, duality, and triplicity. What does "no unity, duality, nor triplicity" mean? It means to give up unity, duality, and triplicity. What does "but at the same time have indeed unity, duality, and triplicity"? It means to illuminate unity, duality, and triplicity. Neither giving up nor lighting up, that means that all things are final, pure, and calm.[5]

Michael von Brück and Whalen Lai explain this relationship between the sacred and the profane as a cycle:

> The modification of the absolute other by the circle began with the School of *San-lun* (sinicized School of Mādhyamika, since the fifth/sixth century A.D.). For Nāgārjuna in India, worldly truth (*saṃvṛti satya*) was still the "lower" truth, which could neither come up to the standard nor express the higher truth (*paramārtha satya*) of *nirvāṇa*. In China, however, the circle was introduced, in order to break up the Indian steps or pyramidal structure of truth. The symbol of the circle called attention to the fact that *all* languages and expression of truth at *all levels* of the experience of reality (and not only at the highest point) can demonstrate *nirvāṇa*. …
>
> T'ien-t'ai, however, went an additional step. It considered the finger and the moon to be non-two. Instead of dwelling on the negative dialectic of emptiness, T'ien-t'ai preferred a positive way of language in order to comprehend the one reality, namely, the *triune language* of *being*, *emptiness*, and *the middle way*. In the *act of pointing*, the finger (here), the moon (there, thus not here), and the pointing (neither-nor

1993), 178 [7b12].

[5] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, T 1911, 46:2; here I use my English translation of Chih-i's *Moho chih-kuan*. For Donner and Stevenson's translation, see *The Great Calming and Contemplation*, 114–15.

and both-and "here and there") are brought together in the triune whole. This, in turn, has an example in the language of the *Lotus Sūtra*, where the Buddha reveals the truth in a simple parable (his skillful middle way, *upāya*).[6]

## 2. EXPLANATION OF THE TRIUNITY IN T'IEN-T'AI: THREE ELEMENTS OF T'IEN-T'AI'S TRIUNITY

The way of thinking of Chih-i's triunity comes from *Ta-chih-tu lun* 大智度論 (or *The Great Treatise of Perfect Wisdom*) and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (Chinese: *Ta po nie-p'an ching* 大般涅槃經). Chih-i says:

> Fourth, it corresponds to the three virtues. … *The Great Treatise* says: "Since his first promise, a Bodhisattva always looks at nirvāṇa and practices the Buddha way." The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* says: "Buddha and living beings are both placed in the mysterious matrix." Mystery and nirvāṇa are identical. Nirvāṇa and the Three Virtues are identical. The three virtues are identical to concentration and visualization. … How can there be Ch'an without Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Wisdom without Ch'an? It is a non-two and yet a two, a two and yet a non-two. The non-two is the dharma body and the two is concentration and wisdom.[7]

Concerning the relationship between Chih-i's triunity, *The Great Treatise of Perfect Wisdom*, and *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, we can observe the following three essential elements of Chih-i's theory of the triunity:

(1) An "outer," triadic structure: All existence can be classified according to this model. For example, there are ten sets of three kinds of existence: three kinds of Buddha nature, three kinds of virtue, three kinds of Boddhi, three kinds of karma, etc.

(2) An "inner" triadic structure, which is neither vertical nor horizontal: *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* explains the circular structure of the non-verticalness and non-horizontalness of the triadic three virtues of the

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[6] Michael von Brück and Whalen Lai, *Buddhismus und Christentum: Geschichte, Konfrontation, Dialog* (Munich: Beck, 1997), 628; here I use my English translation.

[7] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, T 1911, 46:22; here I use my English translation of Chih-i's *Mo-ho chih-kuan*.

great *nirvāṇa*. The three virtues are at the same time neither vertical nor horizontal (*fei-tsung fei-heng* 非縱非橫).[8] Chih-i takes this circular, triadic structure of the salvation experience as a fundamental structure of the Buddha nature and the themes related to it.

(3) A second inner triadic structure, and indeed the heart as the principle of activity and its triadic structure: *The Great Treatise of Perfect Wisdom* was translated by Kumarajiva and is in his opinion a treatise of Nāgārjuna. It is an explanation of the *prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. It explains the teaching "a heart contains three wisdoms," which is a core concept of Chih-i's triunity. Chih-i finds that the teaching "a heart contains three wisdoms" in *The Great Treatise of Perfect Wisdom*, on one hand, illuminates the hidden positive dimension of the *prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* and, on the other hand, stresses the activity principle of the heart. Therefore, Chih-i explains his teaching "One Thought contains three thousand worlds" on the basis of this teaching "a heart contains three wisdoms" in *The Great Treatise of Perfect Wisdom*.

We now have three steps of the theory of the ascending triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. First, we have an external classification of the triunity, which can be an endless classification. Second, we have the internal structure of the triunity, i.e., a non-vertical and non-horizontal triadic structure. "The non-verticalness and non-horizontalness of the triunity" can be seen as the principle of the T'ien-t'ai hermeneutics of the Buddha nature. This triadic, circular structure is the common basis of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Chinese Universism. Third, the theory of the triunity attains the principle "One Thought contains three thousand worlds" (*i-nien san-ch'ien* 一念三千), which is the pinnacle of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. "One Thought contains three thousand worlds" offers the principle of activity for T'ien-t'ai hermeneutics of the Buddha nature. This principle of activity of the triunity makes possible a special religious-phenomenological understanding of temporality.

### *2.1. The First Element: Triunity as Cycle*

The name of the Two Truths in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism comes from *Ying-*

[8] Chih-i says: "One must believe in the non-vertical and the non-horizontal of the three virtues of the great nirvāṇa, which is the same as the three points of the sign that is pronounced like the Chinese character 伊 and the three eyes of the Īśvaradeva. One must believe in the non-vertical and the non-horizontal of the three concentrations and the three views." See T 1911, 46:23.

*lo Sūtra* (Ying-lo ching 瓔珞經) and *Jen-wang Sūtra* (Jen-wang ching 仁王經), which probably are apocryphal Sūtras from China.[9] Nāgārjuna describes the Two Truths in chapter XXIV, verse 18 of the *Madhyamikakārika*: "Dependent origination is what we call emptiness. Emptiness is dependent upon conventions (*prajñaptir upādāya*) and it is the middle way."[10] According to Chih-i, this verse is an explanation of the Threefold Truth (*san-ti* 三諦). He says:

> Perfect teaching explains the *li* 理 [reality] of the Threefold Truth in a circular way. Therefore, those who keep this teaching "open" the knowledge of the Buddha in their first heart, and then the sea of emptiness flows in naturally. ... The *Lotus Sūtra* explains only the One Thought of the Threefold Truth. The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* explains the Threefold Truth subtly. ... These verses of the *Mūla-Madhyamikakārikā* say: "Dependent origination is what we call emptiness. It is mere naming on whatever basis [*upādāya prajñapti*] and it is the middle way."

It is explained:

> "Dependent origination is what I call emptiness" explains the Truth of Emptiness; and "It is mere naming [*upādāya prajñapti*]" explains the Truth of Temporariness; and "it is the middle way" explains the truth of the middle way in the most primary meaning. These verses are an explanation of the theory of the Threefold Truth of Mahāyāna.[11]

According to philological analysis of the Sanskrit texts, Nāgārjuna never mentions the names and the concepts of the Threefold Truth. He only explains that emptiness is the characteristic of dependent origination. "Naming" and the "middle way" are only oblique references to emptiness, which is the grammatical subject of this verse. Therefore, according to this philological explanation, "naming" and the "middle way" belong

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[9] Chih-i says: "On the basis of the Threefold Truth we can explain the reason that is clarified by the Four Teachings. ... The name of the Threefold Truth comes from the *Ying-lo Sūtra* and the *Jen-wang Sūtra*. The first is the Truth of Temporariness [*chia-ti* 假諦]. The second is the Truth of Emptiness. The third is the Truth of the Middle (i.e., the Truth of the Middle with the most primary meaning). ... Therefore one says that the Truth of the Middle with the most primary meaning can be called a real truth, and can also be described as emptiness, Buddha nature, dharma-dātu, suchness, and the matrix of the *Tathāgata*." See *Ssu chiao-i* 四教義 [The meanings of the Four Teachings], T 1929, 46:727.

[10] Erich Frauwallner, *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus*, 4th ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1994), 190.

[11] Chih-i, *Ssu chiao-i*, T 1929, 46:728.

to emptiness, and thus are secondary. Therefore, this verse does not refer to the theory of the Threefold Truth, but only to the theory of the Two Truths, and the theory of the Threefold Truth has nothing to do with the explanation of Mādhyamika philosophy. We must, however, take into consideration that the importance of the explanation of the Threefold Truth by Chih-i does not lie in philological analysis, but in philosophical hermeneutics and in the further development of Mādhyamika philosophy. The question is: What is not yet conclusively explained in Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy and the related theory of the Two Truths? What is an extended explanation of Nāgārjuna's theory of the Two Truths and how is it possible?

Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy has two sources. One is the Pali Canon, or more precisely the Abhidharma philosophy, which presupposes a dualism of the relative and the absolute. The other is the philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, which illuminates the intuitive and at the same time dialectic wisdom. These two trends contradict one another and, consequently, we have an internal tension in the explanation of Mādhyamika philosophy. When Nāgārjuna puts forward the theory of the Two Truths, one can ask from the standpoint of a dualism of the relative and the absolute: If emptiness is the holy truth of the absolute, and temporariness is that of the relative, is there a dichotomy between the two? Emptiness is in the hereafter and the theory of the Two Truths is probably only a nihilistic view.[12] On the other hand, Nāgārjuna formulates his Mādhyamika philosophy from the philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. With the philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, one can observe the following points: (1) The relative and the absolute are identical through a view of perfect truth. (2) The dialectical formula "A, ~A, then A′" is a standard formula of the dialectical absolute in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. Therefore, one can maintain: (1) Nāgārjuna develops his Mādhyamika philosophy primarily on the basis of the intuitive and simultaneously dialectic wisdom of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, but a one-sided, dualistic interpretation is nevertheless still possible; (2) Nāgārjuna develops the negative dialectic in the *Madhyamikakārika* from the formula "A, ~A, then A′" in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, but the positive meaning of the four propositions of the *Catuṣkoti-nisedha* or *ssu-chü* 四句 (i.e., ~A, ~B, ~A ∧ ~B, ~(~A ∧ ~B)) in his negative dialectic is un-

[12] Nāgārjuna formulates that in his response to his opponent(s) as follows (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, XXIV, 7–10): "On the basis of the Two Truths, the Buddhas proclaim the theory, on worldly, limited truth and on the highest truth. ... On the basis of the truth valid in practical life (*vyavahāra*) the highest truth (*paramārtha*) is taught. Without the highest truth, *nirvāṇa* is not attained."

clear. The positive meaning in the Buddhist dialectic is, however, clear in the formula "A, ~A, then A′" in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. T'ien-t'ai Chih-i explains his theory of the Threefold Truth against this background, in order to overcome the existing possibility of misinterpretation and to explain the positive dimension of Nāgārjuna's negative dialectic.

T'ien-t'ai Chih-i explains the theory of the triunity on the basis of his understanding of Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy. The transformation of Nāgārjuna's Two Truths into Chih-i's Threefold Truth has two meanings: (1) Chih-i attempts to explain the Absolute Identity of the Two Truths by the absolute mediation of the middle way in the triunity and to overcome the dualism between the sacred and the profane. (2) Chih-i attempts to explain the dynamic of the universe and the activity of living beings.

Therefore, it is understandable why Chih-i transforms the theory of the Two Truths into the Threefold Truth and why he classifies all things according to the model of the triunity.

### *2.2. The Second Element: Non-Verticalness and Non-Horizontalness*

The triunity is neither vertical nor horizontal. It is the fundamental structure of the experience of salvation. Chih-i says:

> Awakening (*Bodhi*) is great perfect wisdom. One thus attains the dharma body. The dharma body is true salvation. These three points are neither vertical nor horizontal, and are called the great nirvāṇa. This nirvāṇa is the dharma realm of the Buddha. The one who visualizes in this way enters into the room of the Buddha.[13]

The theory of emptiness is the basis of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It maintains that emptiness is the ultimate reality. The Chinese way of thinking, however, is positive. As Indian Buddhism entered China, the Chinese Buddhists attempted to explain the positive dimension of Mahāyāna Buddhism. If emptiness is the reality of the world, is a positive dimension of the concept and of action still necessary and possible? One can ask in the following two ways:

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[13] Chih-i, *Ssu nien ch'u* 四念處 [Four places to meditate], in T 1918, 46, here chap. 4, p. 580.

(1) The ontological question: What is the relationship between this concrete world and emptiness? What is the ontological status of the concrete world?

(2) The epistemological question: How can one recognize the representation of things in emptiness? Before Chih-i, there were two Buddhist schools in China: the Ti-lun 地論 School, which was based on the *Shih-ti ching* 十地經 or *Ten-Levels Sūtra*,[14] and the She-lun 攝論 School, which was based on the *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra* (Chinese: *She ta-ch'eng lun* 攝大乘論).[15] These two schools provide answers to the two questions above. According to Chih-i, the explanations of the two schools are incorrect. Both presuppose a false understanding of ultimate truth. Chih-i says:

> If all things originate from a heart, that is vertical. If the heart simultaneously contains all things, that is horizontal. The vertical is incorrect and the horizontal is also not correct, because the heart is all things and all things are the heart. It is neither vertical nor horizontal. It is neither identical nor different. It is dark, fine, and most profound, it cannot be comprehended by consciousness and cannot be said with words. Therefore, one calls it [the relation between things and the heart] the incomprehensible and wonderful world. ...
>
> The School of the *Ten-Levels Sūtra* says: Everything, unharmed and disturbed, true and false, depends on the dharma-nature. The dharma-nature has the properties of truth and falsehood, and truth and falsehood depend on the dharma-nature. The *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra* says: Dharma-nature cannot be tarnished by disturbance and cannot be purified by truth. Therefore, the dharma-nature does not have properties. If one speaks of something that has properties, one means the *ālaya*-consciousness. Eternal ignorance has all seeds. If we follow the School of the *Ten Steps Sūtra*, then the heart contains all things. If we follow the School of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra*, then relativity contains all things. Each of these two schools has an extreme and false opinion. [When the School of the *Ten-Steps Sūtra* maintains that] dharma-nature produces all things, [I ask,] because dharma-nature is non-heart and non-relativity [when it maintains] that [dharma-nature] is non-heart and nevertheless the heart produces all things, [then one can also maintain that] non-relativity should also produce all things relatively. How can they

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[14] The *Ten-Levels Sūtra* is a part of the *Hwa-yen Sūtra*.

[15] The *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra*, which was translated by Paramartha, is a more important treatise of the Only-Consciousness philosophy in China before Hsüan-tsang.

> maintain that only the dharma-nature has the properties of truth and falsehood? [When the School of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra* maintains that] dharma-nature has no properties, but instead the *ālaya*-consciousness has properties, [I think,] if something outside the dharma-nature has properties and is the *ālaya*-consciousness, then it has nothing to do with dharma-nature. If dharma-nature is not different from *ālaya*-consciousness, then *ālaya*-consciousness as something with properties is identical to dharma-nature as something with properties. Why do they [the School of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra*] maintain that only the *ālaya*-consciousness has properties? Furthermore, this assertion also contradicts the Sūtra. The Sūtra says: It is not inside, not outside, and not in the middle. It is not eternally itself. This assertion also contradicts Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna says, All things neither produce themselves out of nothing nor are produced by other things, not from these two and not without a cause.[16]

The Ti-lun School maintains that the dharma-nature (*dharmatā*) produces all things. Dharma-nature is thus ontologically primary and the existence of things is ontologically secondary. The dharma-nature and the existence of all things thus stand in an *ontological* and *diachronic* relationship. Because it is ontological and diachronic, one can call it vertical. This is the vertical understanding of Buddhist ontology. Chih-i rejects this vertical view of the Ti-lun School. He says:

> [When the School of the *Ten-Levels Sūtra* maintains that] dharma-nature produces all things, [I ask] because dharma-nature is non-heart and non-relativity, [when it maintains that dharma-nature] is non-heart and nevertheless the heart produces all things, [then one can also maintain that] non-relativity should also produce all things relatively. How can they maintain that only the dharma-nature has the properties of truth and falsehood?[17]

According to Chih-i, in this vertical explanation of the Ti-lun School, the dharma-nature still lacks a principle of activity and therefore dharma-nature cannot produce all things. Contrary to that, Chih-i maintains a *non-vertical* view of Buddhist ontology.

The She-lun School maintains that *ālaya*-consciousness is the bearer of all things. *Ālaya*-consciousness is thus a bearer-consciousness and the knowledge basis of the representation of all things. *Ālaya*-consciousness

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[16] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 5; here see T 1911, 46:54.

[17] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 5; here see T 1911, 46:54 (already quoted above).

and the representation of things thus stand in an *epistemological* and *synchronic* relationship. Because it is epistemological and synchronic, one can call it horizontal. Chih-i rejects this horizontal view of the She-lun School. He says:

> [When the School of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra* maintains that] the dharma-nature is not the bearer of properties, but the *ālaya*-consciousness is, [I think,] if there is a bearer of properties outside the dharma-nature and it is the *ālaya*-consciousness, then it has nothing to do with the dharma-nature. If dharma-nature is not different from *ālaya*-consciousness, then *ālaya*-consciousness as bearer of properties is identical to dharma-nature as bearer of properties. Why do they [the School of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra*] maintain that only the *ālaya*-consciousness is the bearer of properties?[18]

Because the *ālaya*-consciousness as the subject of properties still lacks a basis of existence of the dharma-nature in this horizontal explanation of the She-lun School, one cannot explain the dharma-nature and the attainment of the experience of salvation by the *ālaya*-consciousness alone. Contrary to that, Chih-i maintains a non-horizontal view.

Schema I:

1. *Ti-lun School*: Vertical; Ontological and Diachronic relationship between dharma-nature and the existence of all things
2. *She-lun School*: Horizontal; Epistemological and Synchronic relationship between the bearer-consciousness and the representation of all things
3. *Chih-i*: Non-Vertical and Non-Horizontal; Dynamic Cycle

### *2.3. The Third Element: One Thought Contains Three Thousand Worlds*

A third element of T'ien-t'ai's theory of the triunity is the proposition "One Thought contains three thousand worlds" (*i-nien san-ch'ien*):

[18] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 5; here see T 1911, 46:54 (already quoted above).

> There can be no heart. If there were a heart, it would already contain the three thousand worlds. ... If all things originate from a heart, that is vertical. If the heart contains all things simultaneously, that is horizontal. Vertical is not correct and horizontal is also not correct, because the heart is all things and all things are the heart. It is neither vertical nor horizontal. It is neither one nor different.[19]

And he continues:

> A heart contains tens realms of existence [*dharma-dhātu*]. Each realm of existence contains ten additional realms of existence. One realm contains thirty worlds. Therefore, one hundred realms of existence contain three thousand worlds, and these three thousand worlds are contained in one thought. There can be no heart. If there were a heart, it would already contain the three thousand worlds.[20]

The theory of "One Thought contains three thousand worlds" offers (1) a principle of activity, i.e., One Thought (*i-nien*); and (2) a T'ien-t'ai hermeneutical phenomenology of temporality.

(1) *One Thought (*i-nien*) as Principle of Activity* One Thought and the triadic structure of Buddhist ontology are identical. One Thought is at the same time a principle of activity with the abilities of the Three Wisdoms. The Three Wisdoms can in turn illuminate and realize the hidden triadic reality of the matrix of the *Tathāgatagarbha* in openness. Chih-i shows:

> The identity of *Li* 理 [reality] means that One Thought and the *Li* of the matrix of *Tathāgata* [*Ju-lai-tsang li* 如來藏理] are identical. Because of "*ju*" 如 [suchness], One Thought is identical to emptiness. Because of "*tsang*" 藏 [matrix], it is identical to temporariness. Because of "*li* " 理 [reality], it is identical to the middle. This Threefold Truth [*chih* 智] is contained in one thought and this is incomprehensible and wonderful. As said above: Threefold Truth is One Truth. They are not three and not one. Each form, each smell, and all things are also thus. That means that the identity of the *li* 理 [reality] is the heart of illumination [*p'u-t'i hsin* 菩提心 or *boddhicitta*]."[21]

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[19] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 5; here see T 1911, 46:54.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 1; here see T 1911, 46:10.

(2) *The Hermeneutical Phenomenology of Temporality in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism* The theory of the "Three Views" (Three Meditations, *san-kuan* 三觀) implies a T'ien-t'ai phenomenological hermeneutics of temporality. The "Three Views" are three modes of temporality (i.e., the past, present, and future) in the sense of fundamental ontology. The Three Views in T'ien-t'ai correspond to three modes of temporality, i.e., the view of temporariness corresponds to the past (psychological state), the view of emptiness corresponds to the future (possibility as opportunity), and the view of the middle way corresponds to the present (interpretation and activity in religious action). The Three Views illuminate the Threefold Truth of Buddhist ontology against the horizon of the three modes of temporality.

The triunity is non-vertical and non-horizontal. This is the negative dialectic in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. The vertical and horizontal structures of the Buddhist ontology of other schools is assumed to be dualistic. Chih-i makes use of the theme of the triunity from the *Great Treatise of Perfect Wisdom* and in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. He explains the non-vertical and the non-horizontal cycle of the triunity of the heart and of the Buddha-nature. The cycle of the triunity is not only a negation of other Buddhist schools' vertical and horizontal forms of understanding dualism, but also a positive affirmation of the Buddhist ontology and epistemology of T'ien-t'ai.

The Three Views and the Threefold Truth connected therewith have a vertical and a horizontal structure. According to T'ien-t'ai, One Thought contains one thousand worlds. The existence of the living being is a being in the world. The being in the world opens many realms of existence. A realm contains, according to T'ien-t'ai, thirty worlds. One Thought of the living being is thus at the same time a with-being (*Mit-Sein*) and a transcendental there-being (*Dasein*), i.e., a horizontal with-being and a vertical, transcendental there-being. Chih-i says: "When one speaks of the identity of emptiness, temporariness, and the middle way, they are indeed three, but nevertheless one; they are indeed one, but nevertheless three; they do not contradict one another."[22] And he continues:

> Now we explain that the Three Virtues are wonderful and incomprehensible. They are suddenly vertical and all are wonderful and incomprehensible. They are suddenly horizontal and all are wonderful and incomprehensible. … They are indeed one, but nevertheless three. Therefore, they are not horizontal. They are indeed three, but neverthe-

[22] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 1; here see T 1911, 46:7.

> less one. Therefore they are not vertical. They are not three and yet three, therefore the are not identical. They are not one, and yet one, therefore the are not different.[23]

The dynamic structure of the experience of salvation in Mahāyāna Buddhism can be represented as a process with three main stages: (1) articulation, (2) non-articulation and (3) articulation in the absolute. These three stages can also be named in the following ways: (1) differentiation, (2) non-differentiation and (3) differentiation in the absolute; (1) multiplicity, (2) unity, (3) multiplicity in the absolute; (1) the phenomenal, (2) the noumenal and (3) the phenomenal in the absolute.[24]

Thus we can observe the following two positive points of the theory of the triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, which belong to the third of the three present elements of the experience of salvation in Mahāyāna Buddhism:

(1) *One and Three—Ontological, Horizontal, and Diachronic Structure of the Triunity* The identity of emptiness, temporariness, and the middle way is indeed one, according to Chih-i, but nevertheless three.[25] Emptiness, temporariness, and the middle way are three perspectives of the triunity. The Three Views indeed occur in the diachronic perspective, but they nevertheless point to the same entirety. No perspective in the diachronic positions contradicts the other two perspectives against the background of the entirety of the triunity.

(2) *Three and One—Epistemological, Vertical, and Synchronic Structure of the Triunity* The identity of emptiness, temporariness, and the middle way is indeed three, but nevertheless one. The three modes of time are synchronic and the Three Views connected to them are horizontal. Chih-i says: "These three are all empty, because the way of language and of thought is interrupted. These three are all temporary, because they are only names. These three are all the middle way, because they are one suchness (*shih-hsiang* 實相)."[26] The ten existential realms (i.e., from hell to Buddha) are ten existential modes of the living being that is a with-being. All ten kinds of living beings in different realms are diachronic with-beings.

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[23] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 3; here see T 1911, 46:23.

[24] Toshihiko Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), 125.

[25] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 1; here see T 1911, 46:7.

[26] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 1; here see T 1911, 46:7.

One Thought (*i-nien*) is a principle of activity and contains the Threefold Truth. This triunity in the One Thought corresponds to the religious-phenomenological temporality and the hermeneutics of worldliness. By this triadic principle of activity and by this hermeneutic time, the triunity still has a non-vertical and non-horizontal structure, an ontological and epistemological structure in a dynamic cycle. The triunity is "not one and not three," but is also still "one and three." The triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism has not only a T'ien-t'ai negative dialectic (i.e., neither vertical nor horizontal), but also a T'ien-t'ai theory of perfect Buddha-nature (i.e., vertical and horizontal in triunity).

Chih-i says:

> We experience all dharma and know that every dharma is an incomprehensible world.
>
> [What is the incomprehensible experience?] When ignorance of the dharma-nature contains all dharma and realms, one calls it the truth of temporariness. When all realms are a dharma-realm, one calls it the truth of emptiness. When it is neither one nor everything, one calls it the middle way, which is the most primary truth.
>
> We experience all things and everything is the incomprehensible and wonderful Threefold Truth. There are the incomprehensible and wonderful "Three Views" of the One Heart, as Mūla-Madhyamika-kārikās said. The tracks are called Three Ways Methods. What it [the incomprehensible experience] illuminates is the Threefold Truth. What it produces are the Three Views. What it realizes through these views are the Three Visions. In teaching it is called the Three Sentences. When it belongs to the origin, one calls it the Three Realms. When one understands this meaning, everything becomes a dharma gate. …
>
> When ignorance dominates dharma-nature and All Hearts and One Heart are distinguished from one another, it is like being asleep. When one attains the identity of ignorance and dharma-nature and the identity of One Heart and All Hearts, it is like an awakening. … When one believes in the Three Symbols, then one believes in the One Heart.[27]

[27] Chih-i, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, chap. 5; here see T 1911, 46:55.

## 3. THE ONTO-DYNAMICS OF THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY IN THE TRIUNITY THEORY IN T'IEN-T'AI

### *3.1. Triunity as the Common Basis of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and the Chinese Universism of Taoism and Confucianism*

Nāgārjuna explains the theory of the Two Truths, which involves the risk of a dualistic interpretation of Mādhyamika philosophy. Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy belongs to the early period of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore, there are many reasons to assume that several themes are indeed already implied in the Mādhyamika philosophy, but that they are not yet conclusively explained. For example, the theory of the triunity in Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy does not yet exist, but is explained diversely in the Indian *Tathāgatagarbhavada* and *Yogācāra* and in later Mādhyamika philosophy (i.e., in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism). The further explanation of the triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism corresponds to the later history of the development of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Both emphasize the positive dimension in the Buddhist experience of salvation and develop a Buddhist ontology. The explanation of the triunity is a step in this development. Against this background, one can maintain that the detailed explanation of the triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism is based on further reflection and self-critique of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the sense of philosophical hermeneutics.

Before the development of the theory of the triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, there was already a universism in ancient China which was based on a theory of the dynamic triunity. The theory of the triunity in Chinese Universism, against this background, is the foundation and characteristic of the East-Asian world of thought. Chinese Universism in this context is a message for the detailed explanation of the theory of the triunity in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. The concept of the triunity represents the common characteristic of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and of Chinese Universism and at the same time forms their general foundation, which I will explain in the following.

### *3.2. Chinese Universism*

J. J. M. de Groot calls "Chinese Universism" the ancient metaphysical

view that serves as the basis of all classical Chinese thought.[28] This universism is, however, also based on a theory of the triunity. In this universism, the three components of the integrated universe—understood epistemologically, "heaven, earth, and humanity,"[29] and understood ontologically, "*T'ai-chi* 太極 (the great beginning, the highest ultimate), *Yin* 陰, and *Yang* 陽"[30]—are formed. In both cases, these concepts exist in a close mutual relationship to one another and form a comprehensive cycle. One can explain these two variants of the triunity (i.e., the epistemological triunity and the ontological triunity) as follows.

### *"Heaven, Earth, and Humanity" as the "Epistemological Triunity"*

*The Book of Customs* (*Li-chi* 禮記) says: "The human person is the heart of heaven and earth." The human person as the heart of heaven and earth is the principle of action of the triunity. Thus the triunity of heaven, earth, and humanity can be called an epistemological triunity. Heaven, earth, and humanity, according to *The Book of Changes* (*I-ching* 易經), are the three components of the Tao, i.e., the triadic-ultimate elements of the Tao.[31] *The Book of Changes* presents the epistemological triunity as follows:

(a) In the Chinese character of the hexagram (*kua* 卦) the human stroke is in the middle. In *The Book of Changes*' philosophy of time, the middle is the position of the present. The heaven stroke is above and refers to the future. The earth stroke is below and refers to the past. In *The Book of Changes*, the human, heaven, and earth strokes mean three dimensions of ontological time, which represent the sense of being and its realization in the world.

(b) *The Book of Changes* says: "The hexagram (*kua*) means representation. The picture (*hsiang* 象) means copy."[32] According to their sym-

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[28] Jan Jakob Maria de Groot, *Universismus: Die Grundlage der Religion und Ethik, des Staatswesens und der Wissenschaften Chinas* (Berlin: Reimer, 1918).

[29] Ibid., 6, 9, 22–55.

[30] Ibid., 7–8.

[31] *The Book of Changes*, Shuo kua 說卦, par. 2, says: "The holy sages made the *Book of Changes* thus: They wanted to follow the orders of the internal law and of fate/destiny. Therefore, they established the Tao of heaven and called it: darkness and light. They established the Tao of the earth and called it: soft and hard. The established the Tao of man and called it: love and justice. They took these three basic powers and doubled them. Therefore in the *Book of Changes* six lines always form a sign."

[32] *The Book of Changes*, Hsi-tz'u chuan 繫辭傳.

bolism, the hexagrams are representations of the Great Beginning and the picture of change is the copy of the Great Beginning.

(c) *The Book of Changes* says: "The origin of the representation means creative power (*ch'ien* 乾). Copies of the representation means ability to bear (*k'un* 坤)," [33] and "*Ch'ien* and *k'un* are the gate of *The Book of Changes*." [34]

In the epistemological triunity, the human person is the heart of heaven and earth and the seed of the five states of change. *The Book of Customs* says:

> The human person unites in himself the spiritual powers of heaven and earth ... in him spirits and gods meet, in him are found the finest powers of the five states of change. ... Therefore, the human person is the heart of heaven and earth and the seed of the five states of change. If one takes heaven and earth as a basis, one can achieve all things. If one takes the light as a means, one can fathom the feelings of the human person. [35]

### *"T'ai-chi, Yin, and Yang" as "Ontological Triunity"*

"*T'ai-chi*" is a term from *The Book of Changes*, which names the ultimate reality, the source of being from which everything originates. *T'ai-chi* is the Great Beginning, in order to illuminate the ultimate. [36] The onto-hermeneutics of the *t'ai-chi* has the following three elements:

(a) *Triadic of the Triunity* Yin and Yang are two basic powers of change. *The Book of Changes* says: "There is in the changes the Great Beginning [*t'ai-chi*]. This creates the two basic powers [*Yin* and *Yang*]." [37]

(b) *Negation and the Trans-ontology of the* t'ai-chi Chou Tun-i 周敦頤 (1017–73) says: "The Great Beginning (*t'ai-chi*) is originally the non-beginning." The beginning is identical to the non-beginning. The on-

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] *Li Gi: Das Buch der Riten, Sitten und Bräuche*, trans. and ed. Richard Wilhelm, 2nd ed. (Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1994), 64–65 (Li yün, par. 24, 26).

[36] *Lexikon der östlichen Weisheitslehre* (Bern: O. W. Barth, 1986), 368.

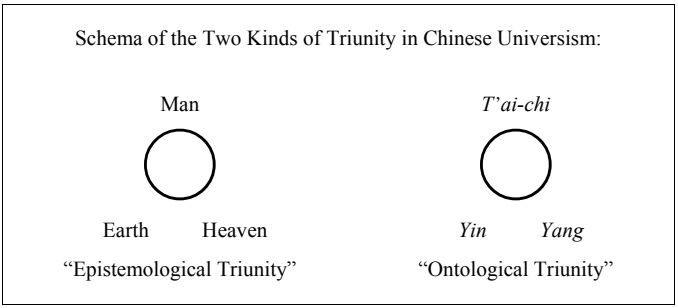
[37] *The Book of Changes*, Hsi-tz'u chuan.

tological principle is at the same time the meta-ontological principle (i.e., the principle of the ontology of the nothing). The original being is the nothing.

(c) *Dynamic* The development of the triunity into the revolving of the five states of change around one another is an extension of the onto-hermeneutics of the *t'ai-chi*. This development explains the dynamics of the triunity of the *t'ai-chi*. The five states of change (wood, fire, metal, water, earth) are five cosmological principles and forces. The five states of change mutually destroy and create themselves. This destruction and creation with one another represents the dynamics of the cosmos and is an example of the principle of revolving around one another (*hui-hu* 迴互), which is a core teaching of Ts'ao-tung Ch'an 曹洞禪.[38]

The teaching of the ontological triunity is a teaching of totality or, more precisely, a totality of the cycle. The opposition of light and darkness, of relative and absolute, which most Western systems teach, is in East Asia the idea of a hierarchy of metaphysical views, which presupposes a dualism of the relative and the absolute, which in their entirety form a harmonious whole. The theory of this harmonious whole includes the elements shown above.

The two kinds of triunity ("heaven, earth, and man" as "epistemological triunity" and "*T'ai-chi*, *Yin*, and *Yang*" as "ontological triunity) belong to the same triune model.




[38] With-one-another-circle (*hui-hu*) is a core concept in Ts'ao-tung Ch'an's theory of the five steps, which represents the dynamics of the ultimate truth. Ts'ao-tung Ch'an's five steps are: (1) the crooked in the straight, (2) the straight in the crooked, (3) the straight become the middle, (4) the crooked become the middle, and (5) both become the middle.

The triunity model in Chinese Universism has the following characteristics:

(a) One is three; three is one. On one hand, each of these three positions is an absolute position, because there is an absolute mediation. On the other hand, all three positions are simultaneously an absolute position, because each position already presupposed the other two.

(b) Trans-ontology (Heidegger: *Metontologie*; Chinese: *ch'ao ts'un-yu hsüeh* 超存有學): beginning is non-beginning.

(c) Negative dialectics of the non-vertical and non-horizontal.

(d) Revolving around one another, convention of One Heart.

(e) Epistemological revolving around one another and ontological revolving around one another. The epistemological-ontological structures of Eastern wisdom. The diachronic horizontal ontological structure and synchronic vertical epistemological structure in Eastern wisdom.

The dynamic structure of the experience of the triunity can be best depicted as a process with three main stages: (1) articulation, (2) non-articulation and (3) articulation. The points named above as elements of the triunity model of Chinese Universism can be depicted in these three stages. Point (a) above corresponds to stage (1), points (b) and (c) to stage (2), and points (d) and (e) to stage (3).

### *3.3. Triunity in Chinese Universism*

The theory of the triunity is an approach in Chinese Universism that has two versions: (1) epistemological triad: man-heaven-earth (man as the heart of heaven and earth); (2) ontological triad: *T'ai-chi*, *Yin*, *Yang*. Both belong to the triune model.

*The Book of Customs*, concerning this, says:

> The human person unites in himself the spiritual powers of heaven and earth; in him the principles of the bright and the shady balance out; in him spirits and gods meet; in him are found the finest powers of the five states of change. ... Therefore, the human person is the heart of heaven and earth and the seed of the five states of change. ... If one takes heaven and earth as a basis, one can achieve all things. If one takes the bright and the shady as means, one can fathom the feelings of the human person. ... If one accepts the assistance of spirits and gods, all work

> is under secure protection. If one takes the five states of change as substance, all work can be repeated.[39]

The "bright" and the "shady" are understood to mean the two cosmic principle, namely: *Yang*, the positive force, and *Yin*, the negative force. The five states of change are the so-called elements—wood, fire, metal, water, earth—which are imagined not as material substances, but as forces and cosmic principles.[40] Wood forms itself organically from within; fire rises upward; metal forms itself mechanically from without; water sinks downward, and earth is the common, native soil.[41]

The explanation of the five states of change is a further development of the onto-hermeneutics of the triunity of *t'ai-chi*. The five states of change are five cosmological principles and forces that mutually destroy and create themselves. This destruction and creation with one another represent the dynamics of the cosmos. The principle of mutual destruction of the five cosmic principles reads:

> The earth absorbs the water, the water extinguishes the fire, the fire melts the metal, the metal cuts the wood, and the wood plows the earth. Another theory lets the elements mutually create themselves: wood creates fire, fire creates earth (as ashes), earth creates metal, metal creates water (when it melts), and water creates wood.[42]

The entire cosmos is an enormous organism in the process of constant, circular change. Thus the five elements are not eternal, ultimate substances, but different modes of existence through which everything expresses the two original forces of *Yin* and *Yang*, which are the causes of the incessant change of all things.[43] The theory of constant, circular change of the triad of "*T'ai-chi*, *Yin*, and *Yang*" and of the five elements in Chinese Universism, rejects the eternal-substance philosophy and maintains a theory of revolving around one another, which seeks to overcome the dichotomy of the relative and the absolute. At the same time, it maintains a theory of the absolute relative and the relative absolute. Chi-

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[39] *Li Gi*, 64–65 (Li yün, par. 24, 26).

[40] Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Die fünf Weltreligionen: Hinduismus, Buddhismus, chinesischer Universismus, Christentum, Islam* (Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1963), 127–28 (1996 paperback edition, p. 144; here I use my English translation).

[41] *Li Gi: Das Buch der Sitte des älteren und jüngeren Dai*, trans. and ed. Richard Wilhelm (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1930), 374.

[42] Von Glasenapp, *Die fünf Weltreligionen*, 128 (1996 paperback edition, p. 145).

[43] Ibid., 128–29 (1996 paperback edition, p. 145).

nese Universism thus stands at the same level as the theory of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which also rejects the eternal-substance philosophy and the overcoming of the dichotomy of the relative and the absolute.

*Yang* is the masculine, active, procreative, creative, bright principle; *Yin* the feminine, passive, receptive, sacrificing, veiling principle. They are counterparts that complement and revolve around one another, not opposites that fight one another. They take turns in law-governed rotation and produce all phenomena in the cosmos through their collaboration. These two prime forces, which manifest their power in the continual interplay of positive and negative, of force and matter, of heaven and earth, of movement and rest, of hardness and softness, of warm and cold, of good and evil, etc., are the two sides of the all-unity (great harmony, triunity), existence in the process of constant change. The triunity, the coexistence and mutual engagement of *Yang* and *Yin* in the all-unity, is symbolized by a sign (i.e., the *T'ai-chi* picture), in which the white half of the circle, which contains a black dot, depicts the *yang* and the black half of the circle, with a white dot, portrays the *Yin*.[44]

This figure, called the "*T'ai-chi*" or the original beginning, represents the state of the universe (i.e., a triunity in the universe), in which the positive and negative prime forces have already become separated. Another state, *wu-chi* 無極 or non-original-beginning, precedes this one, in which all distinctions still exist with one another without separation. It is symbolized by a simple cycle. This state of the universe is not one of an absolute non-existence, but one of a being that has not yet entered into discursive reason.[45]

### *3.4. The* Tao *and the Triunity*

The *Tao* is the prime foundation of the world, because everything has originated from it. The triadic thought of the *Tao* reads as follows:

(a) *Triadic* Out of the unmistakable transcendence, being (i.e., the state of the all-unity, in which all differences are still inseparable) emerges. This unity produces the duality of *Yang* and *Yin*. The life breath, which brings about the harmony of the two forces, originates

[44] Ibid., 129 (1996 paperback edition, pp. 145–46).
[45] Ibid., 129 (1996 paperback edition, p. 146).

from the dualism of the prime forces. Then this trio begets ten thousand beings:

> Tao gives birth to one,
> One gives birth to two,
> Two gives birth to three,
> Three gives birth to ten thousand beings.
> Ten thousand beings carry *yin* on their backs and embrace *yang* in their front,
> Blending these two vital breaths to attain harmony.[46]

(b) *Negation* The cosmological speculations of Lao-tzu postulate a state of non-being before the beginning of the world.[47] He says:

> Reach the pole of emptiness,
> Abide in genuine quietude.
> Ten thousand beings flourish together,
> I am to contemplate their return.
> Now things grow profusely,
> Each again returns to its root.[48]

(c) *Dynamic* The *Tao* is thus the origin of all beings; its force maintains them, its being forms them, and its work completes them.[49] As the all-unity of the *Tao* becomes a multiplicity, opposites are revealed in the world. A cycle and a dialectic of the *Tao* push forward the world, which was not previously present in the non-beginning (*wu-chi*). Good and evil, difficult and easy, long and short, high and low, before and after give rise to one another in the dialectic of the *Tao*.[50] Consequently, the theory originates which asserts that the human virtues first become possible when the dialectic of the *Tao* enters into them.[51] Lao-tzu says:

> On the decline of the great Tao,

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[46] Lao-tzu, *The Tao Te Ching: A New Translation with Commentary*, trans. Ellen M. Chen (New York: Paragon House, 1989), par. 2.

[47] Ibid., par. 40.

[48] Ibid., par. 16.

[49] Ibid., par. 42, 51.

[50] Ibid., par. 2.

[51] Von Glasenapp, *Die fünf Weltreligionen*, 167 (1996 paperback edition, p. 191).

> There are humanity and righteousness.
> When intelligence and knowledge appear,
> There is great artificiality.
> When the six relations are not in harmony,
> There are filial piety and parental love.
> When a nation is in darkness and disorder,
> There are loyal ministers.[52]

The concept of the triunity represents the common characteristic of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and of Chinese Universism and at the same time forms their general foundation.

### *3.5. Paradigm Shift in the Understanding of Religious Time: The Profane, the Sacred, and Their Cycle with One Another*

I would now like to interpret the commonalities presented above, which exist between Chinese Universism and the T'ien-t'ai theory with reference to the structure of the triunity underlying the two theories, as a paradigm shift in the history of Chinese Buddhism. To do so, I would like to present the explanations of Michael von Brück and Whalen Lai.

According to von Brück and Lai, with the arrival of Buddhism in China, a paradigm shift took place, which they explain as follows:

1. the Cosmic Harmony of the Han period [206 B.C.–220 A.D.] over
2. the dualism in the Age of the Divisions [316–589] to
3. the totalism of the Sui-T'ang dynasties until
4. its elimination by the forms of belief of the circles in late-medieval China.[53]

Von Brück and Lai advocate the view that sinicized Mahāyāna Buddhism originated during the Sui dynasty (589–618). Independent Chinese Buddhist traditions came into being, which were indeed based on Sanskrit sūtras, but had no direct Indian examples or correspondences. T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen are two of these famous schools that received the harmonism of the Han period and developed a Mahāyāna teaching of totality.[54] T'ien-t'ai is a teaching of epistemological totality and Hua-yen is a teach-

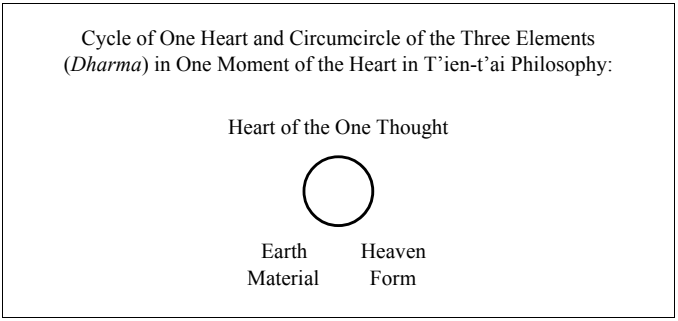
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[52] Lao-tzu, *The Tao Te Ching*, par. 18.

[53] Von Brück and Lai, *Buddhismus und Christentum*, 622.

[54] Ibid., 624.

ing of ontological totality and both explain the circularity in different ways. The triunity in T'ien-t'ai has a more epistemological than ontological form and maintains a triadic dialectic between the consciousness (subject) and the absolute (object). In Hua-yen Buddhism (especially in the writings of Fa-tsang 法藏, 643–712), an *ontological teaching of totality*, a "circularity," the fusion of the one and the all, of the consciousness and the absolute, is consistently thought.[55] For example: Hua-yen philosophy explains the perfect revolving of thing and reality around one another in its theory of the four meditations of the *dharma-dātu*. Absolute knowledge is an absolute identity, which is the perfect revolving of thing and reality around one another. Absolute knowledge in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism is a triadic structure of the three views. In the theory of the three meditations in T'ien-t'ai, the absolute is already seen "face to face." But this teaching of totality still has a connection to the finitude of everyday reality. In the teaching "heart of the one thought, of ignorance and of dharma-nature" (*i-nien wu-ming fa-hsing hsin* 一念無明法性心), it considers the "dark" element of reality (ignorance) to be real and acknowledges the effectiveness of fundamental evil as such.




Hua-yen totality, however, means to see Vairocana "face to face," where there is no longer any "darkness" or ignorance, as in T'ien-t'ai philosophy. Everything here is pure consciousness and ignorance is only a passing (non-essential) evil.[56] T'ien-t'ai philosophy is a philosophy of the finite consciousness, because ignorance is still a part of the One Heart, of the triadic cycle of the One Heart. This theory of the finite consciousness in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism does not presuppose a dualistic understanding of finite consciousness and absolute being, but an understanding of the cy-

[55] Ibid., 628.
[56] Ibid., 629.

clical absolute. In T'ien-t'ai philosophy the consciousness is indeed finite, because ignorance is a necessary element of it. Nevertheless, it also opens itself in an infinite horizon of the realization of the Buddha nature and of the One Heart. This opening of the consciousness in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism is an infinite and dynamic opening of the vertical and horizontal triadic cycle of the absolute. It is dynamic, because ignorance is a motivating force of it. It is infinite, because it is an absolute, non-vertical and non-horizontal cycle. On the other hand, Hua-yen's absolute knowledge is an absolute identity between things and reality, between the relative and the absolute, and ignorance thus occupies no space in such an absolute identity, because ignorance is already given up and transformed before this realization of absolute knowledge.[57]

### *3.6. Religious Time*

As Mahāyāna Buddhism reached China, Chinese Buddhists occupied themselves with the positive and dynamic dimension of the Buddhist experience of salvation. Then they asked: If one follows the theory of emptiness, what is the ontological status of things in the world, and what is the basis of knowledge of things in the world? In answer to this question, the Ti-lun School explained the *ontological and diachronic* relationship between dharma-nature and the existence of all things and the She-lun School explained the *epistemological and synchronic* relationship between conscious beings and the representation of things. Chih-i pointed out the difficulties of these schools and in opposition to them explained the *non-vertical and non-horizontal* triadic structure of Buddhist ontology. With the explanations of Mādhyamika philosophy, there is not only the model of the Two Truths, which is sometimes interpreted as a dualism of the relative and the absolute, but also a model of the Threefold Truth, which exists in a dynamic cycle and overcomes this dualism. With the dualistic explanation of the Two Truths, the relationship between the sacred and the profane is a *regressive* relationship and thus the sacred is the earliest position of religious time. Mircea Eliade has formulated a theory of religious time in order to explain the sacred. For Eliade:

(1) The distinction between the profane and the sacred is a necessary one for the description of religious phenomena.

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[57] Ibid., 624.

(2) The sacred is the earliest position in the series of regressive time.[58]

Furthermore, there is another cyclical model for understanding religious time and the sacred with Chih-i:

(1) With the dynamic cycle of the Threefold Truth, each of them is an absolute position, instead of a dualistic position as in Eliade's religious phenomenology. The theory of the dynamic cycle describes religious truth as an absolute triunity in the cycle.

(2) The three positions in the triunity stand in a non-vertical and non-horizontal structure. "Non-vertical and non-horizontal" represents the negative dialectic in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism.

(3) The relationship between the sacred and the profane is no longer regressive, but one of revolving around one another. Absolute knowledge is not only an absolute nothing, but the dialectical absolute. It is a dynamic cycle of the absolute.

## 4. FROM THE ONTO-DYNAMICS OF THE TRIUNITY IN THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AND TAOISM TO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The paradigm shift of religious truth in Chinese Buddhism (i.e., the development of the theory of the triunity) and the cyclical model of the understanding of religious time and the sacred in Chih-i's T'ien-t'ai philosophy require additional explanations, in order to be able to represent the foundation of the development of East-Asian Buddhism and its significance for religious studies. The understanding of religious time in Eliade's phenomenology of religion presupposes a dualism of the profane and the sacred and a regressive model of sacred time. This understanding is interpreted one-sidedly and is unsuitable for the interpretation of the religious phenomena of East-Asian Buddhism. We can find another interpretation in the model of the triunity which is based on the theory of Threefold Truth of T'ien-t'ai and Chinese, triadic Universism. On the basis of this reinterpretation, we can lead inter-cultural/religious dia-

[58] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 388–409 and other works of Eliade.

logue ahead.

The position of Buddhism within Chinese spiritual life has been assessed in quite different ways. After all, Buddhism, so its influence also has changed in different periods, has entered into an organic relationship with Chinese triadic Universism.[59] Asian Universism offers an understanding of reality different from that of Semitic religion: Buddhists, Confucians, and Taoists accept together a natural and moral law of the world that controls the beginning and continuous cosmic process. Parsiism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, however, believe in a personal God who created the world out of nothing and leads it to an ultimate goal of the creation by his providential guidance.[60]

It is, however, not difficult to see that a triadic, dialectic basic structure in Taoism and Confucianism. Above all, East-Asian Buddhism provides a remote analogy to the Christian mystery of the triunity. Beck writes:

> Also these three "religions" [viz. Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism] are based on a dialectic-triadic concept of reality which stresses—contrarily to African spirituality—the emergence of the third ternary member (not from the first but) from the second, and does this in a specific "East-Asian," "horizontal-pragmatic" manner. Along the tradition of natural philosophy there, the expanding force (virtually bringing forth the "antithesis" from the "thesis") of the heavenly Yang-principle and the uniting, receiving (receptive "synthetic") power of earthly Yin-principle unite fruitfully, virtually like a "male" and a "female" pole, in order to bestow the integral completeness of man and human culture. The "goal" of this cosmic-human process is an ethical-cultural behaviour which is affected and carried "from above"; the practical way of living emanates as harmony and "synthesis" from "heaven" and "earth," however with an emphasis less on the immediate groundedness in nature—the "thesis"—but rather on the "heavenly" dissociation and the (superior) opposition—the "antithesis"—of wisdom related to logos and befitting the situation (Taoism) or abstract-general norms (Confucianism).
>
> Even Buddhism shows a triadic-dialectical basic structure: The Buddha-figure is an expression of existence in infinite bliss, being infinitely at rest with itself. It, however, *is* not that, but just an expression of it. It is in a sense its "message," its "logos." Thus the relation of the figure towards the form of existence as its origin is that of a completely

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[59] Von Glasenapp, *Die fünf Weltreligionen*, 177 (1996 paperback edition, p. 203).

[60] Ibid., 182 (1996 paperback edition, p. 209).

> empty antithesis, pure receptiveness, which constantly "lets come" and receives "being at rest within itself"—this is the essence of his enlightedness. He also does not hold on to it (this would contradict its infinite forbearance), but "leaves" it and gives it back to itself, to the origin—this is the essence of his "spiritual love" and the harmony, which comprehends everybody who opens up and bequeaths himself to the fundamental principle embodied by Buddha.
>
> It is plain to see that Taoism and Confucianism indicate a distant analogy (or aboriginal disposition?) towards the Christian enigma of trinity, which as yet has been scrutinised in occidental theology. ...[61]

In his theory of onto-dynamics, Beck explains the dialectical-triadic understanding of reality in an "East-Asian, horizontal-pragmatic manner" and above all finds in East-Asian Buddhism a "distant analogy (or aboriginal disposition) towards the Christian enigma of trinity." The onto-dynamics of the triunity is the basis of the inter-cultural conversation between T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, Chinese Universism, and Christianity.

Chih-i's theory of the triunity, as the common basis of East-Asian Buddhism, is a cyclical model for understanding religious time and the sacred. This implies a new possibility for interreligious dialogue in the global thought of religious conversation and an inter-cultural philosophy, because (1) the triunity and the themes related to it are also the core concepts of Western theology and philosophy, and (2) the theory of the triunity presupposes a methodology of the pluralism of religious theology.

## 5. ONTO-DYNAMIC AND THREE ESSENTIAL THEMES IN THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

In conclusion, three essential themes for the interreligious conversation between Buddhism and Christianity will be presented. Buddhism understands that which exists as existing under the rubric of "dependent origination" (*pratītya-samutpāda*). In Indian Buddhism the understanding of dependent origination is the prerequisite of the understanding of emptiness.[62] Chinese Buddhism thus emphasizes that the non-empty (Chinese:

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[61] Heinrich Beck, "World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Contrarieties," 44–45.

[62] Gadjin M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies*,

*pu-k'ung* 不空) precedes the empty, explains this positive dimension, and grounds the theory of the Buddha-nature on it. The theory of the Buddha-nature of the T'ien-t'ai School presents three elements in the theory of the Buddha nature:[63]

(1) triadic structures of the ontology of the Buddha nature and circular dynamics of the triunity;
(2) trans-ontology (Heidegger: *Metontologie*) of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism: non-horizontal and non-vertical, radical emptying (absolute nothing);
(3) the actuality of religious and ethical existence, or, conversion: "One thought contains three thousand worlds" (Chinese: *i-nien san-ch'ien*; Japanese: *ichinen sanzen*).

According to this model, the triunity is the principle of the active, triadic world order (first element: triunity), a world order to which we may not cling as an objective substance (second element: emptying), although it can and must effect our actuality of religious and ethical existence (third element: conversion). The T'ien-t'ai theory of the Buddha-nature is not only East-Asia's first Buddhist system, but also the basis of later development in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. Therefore, an understanding of the empty (i.e., absolute nothing and trans-ontology) presupposes an understanding of the other two positive elements (i.e., the triunity and the actuality of religious and ethical existence).

Michael von Brück and Whalen Lai, Johannes Laube, and I explain this answer in different ways. In their opinion, the meanings connected to it are always still open for dialectical theology, so that new possibilities for interreligious dialogue and global ethic can be created. There are in my opinion three essential themes within the conversation between Buddhism and Christianity:

(1) Triad and Triunity: the circular dynamic of the triad in Buddhism and the Trinity in Christianity;[64]

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trans. and ed. L. S. Kawamura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 54: "In later Chinese Buddhism, however, one encounters the saying, 'Truly empty (hence) unfathomable existence,' which is to be understood as the identity of non-being and being, negation and affirmation, or as the recovery of existence from nonexistence."

[63] Lai Shen-chon, *Fo-chiao ch'üan-shih hsüeh* 佛教詮釋學 [Buddhist hermeneutics] (Taipei: Hsin-wen-feng, 2003), part II.

[64] Von Brück and Lai, *Buddhismus und Christentum*, 625: "In T'ien-t'ai (Japanese *tendai*) the triadic schema (Chinese: *san-i*, literally "three-one") is found in different contexts. … Also for Christian theology, the Trinity is fundamental as the starting point for non-dualistic structures of thought. …" For the circular dynamic of the triad in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Trinity in Christianity, see also Johannes Laube, *Dialektik der absoluten*

(2) Emptying and *kenosis*: emptying in Buddhism and *kenosis* in Christianity;[65]

(3) Conversion and *metanoia*: the actuality of religious and ethical existence and conversion (Chinese: *hui-hsiang*; Japanese: *ekō* 廻向) in Buddhism and *metanoia* (turning back; Chinese: *kai-hsin* 改心 or *ch'an-hui* 懺悔) in Christianity.[66]

*Vermittlung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1984), 124–42, 224.

[65] See von Brück and Lai, *Buddhismus und Christentum*, 450–61. See also John B. Cobb and Christopher Ives, eds., *The Emptying God: A Buddhist–Jewish–Christian Conversation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990); Christopher Ives, ed., *Divine Emptiness and Historical Fullness: A Buddhist–Jewish–Christian Conversation with Masao Abe* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), I. Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata (Masao Abe).

[66] See von Brück and Lai, *Buddhismus und Christentum*, 468–72. For *Hinweg* (*ōsō* 往相) and *Rückweg* (*gensō* 還相), see Laube, *Dialektik der absoluten Vermittlung*, 156–57; for *metanoia*, see ibid., 162, 190, 248.

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# The Dialogic Encounter between Christian and Buddhist Thought in Late Ming and Early Qing China*

ANDREW K. CHUNG

## 1. PREFACE

Since the late Ming dynasty, Christian thought not only has become one of the most important trends among Chinese intellectuals, it also constituted a significant part of East–West cultural exchange in the early modern era. Throughout the history of Christian mission to China in the late Ming and early Qing, Catholic missionaries—notably among them several Jesuits—made significant contributions. To show that the Word of God and Chinese culture correspond to each other, Western missionaries

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* The Chinese original has been published as "Ming mo Qing chu jiduzongjiao he fojiao duihua de jingshen" 明末清初基督宗教和佛教對話的精神, *Zhexuemen* 哲學門 [Beida Journal of Philosophy] 3, no. 2 (November 2003): 103–33. An English version was published as "The Spirit of Dialogue between Christian Thought and Buddhist Philosophy in Ming-Qing China," in *The Challenges in East Asia and the Role of Christianity in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Kim Do Il (Seoul: Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, 2003), 81–105. The present revised version was produced by the editorial assistant of *Ching Feng* on the basis of the Chinese version presented at the Xi'an International Conference on the Dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity.—Ed.

and Chinese converts undertook meaningful and creative investigations, consequently leaving valuable experiences and lessons in the history of Christian mission.

In the late Ming and early Qing, Christianity was brought to China on an unprecedented scale. At those times Buddhism had become an indigenous religious philosophy in China. A series of profound dialogues between the two religions, since their encounter in the late Ming dynasty, lasted about half a century. The encounter probably began with a debate between Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), the most famous missionary in late-Ming China, and Sanhuai 三槐 (1545–1608; secular name: Huang Hongen 黃洪恩), a famous master at Baoen Monastery, in Nanjing.[1] The controversy between the two religions culminated with the publication of such anti-Christian writings or collections of treatises as *Poxie ji* 破邪集 (comp. Xu Changzhi 徐昌治 [1582–1672]), *Pixie ji* 闢邪集 (comp. Zhong Shisheng 鍾始聲 [1599–1665]) and "Yuandao pixie shuo" 原道闢邪說 by Feiyin Tongrong 費隱通容 (1593–1661).

During this dialogue, what kinds of questions were debated, and what were the standpoints and viewpoints of each side of the dialogue? The agenda of this paper is to discuss the dialogic encounter between Christian and Buddhist thought in late Ming and early Qing China, with the aim of answering those questions in the following three parts:

(a) The central philosophical question at issue; that is, the Christian doctrine of the absolute, generic distinction between God as creator, humans and other cosmic phenomena vs. the Buddhist doctrine of one and the same substance underlying all cosmic phenomena.

(b) The major strategies of the dialogists, that is, to complement and rectify Confucianism with Christianity vs. to bring Buddhism into closer alignment with Confucianism.

(c) Motivations and purposes of the dialogists, which are explained under the theme of evangelization of China vs. the theme of preservation of the transmission of the Dao (*daotong* 道統).

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[1] See Matteo Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane: Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579–1615)*, ed. Pasquale M. D'Elia (Rome: Libreria del Stato, 1942–49), 2:75–79; cf. Louis J. Gallagher, trans., *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583–1610* (New York: Random House, 1953), 339–43.

## 2. ABSOLUTE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOD, HUMANS AND CREATURES VS. ONE AND THE SAME SUBSTANCE UNDERLYING ALL COSMIC PHENOMENA

On the basis of the extant historical documents pertaining to this Christian-Buddhist controversy, we may view it from three aspects: ontology, cosmology and theology. The ontological dialogue touches on the doctrine of God and includes discussions on various issues such as the Chinese rendition of the Latin name *Deus*,[2] the existence of God, God as trinity, God's attributes and the Incarnation. The cosmological dialogue mainly concerns the essence and genesis of *wanwu* 萬物, that is, the myriad cosmic phenomena. The theological dialogue touches on such subjects as religious ethics, salvation and the ultimate abode of humans.

It will become clear that the emphasis of this controversy, at least at the earliest stage, rests on ontological issues such as cosmogony and the essence of *wanwu*. We shall therefore deal with the issues of the ontological debates first.

### (a) *God, Humanity and Things Created "according to Their Kinds"*

There had appeared by the beginning of the Qing dynasty (1644) an anti-Christian tract titled "Fei-Yang pian" 非楊篇 (Against Yang), which was composed by an anonymous Buddhist. Criticizing Yang Tingyun's 楊廷筠 (1562–1627) Christian interpretation of the Buddha's avowal of his sole superiority, this author says: "[In Yang's view] the nature of things (*wuxing* 物性) is different from that of human beings, and the latter is different from that of the Lord of Heaven (*Tianzhu* 天主). What a deficient understanding of [the Buddha's avowal of] sole superiority!"[3] Thus he summarizes quite correctly the Christian teaching about the strict

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[2] *Deus* (or its Greek equivalent, Θεός) was rendered or transliterated into Chinese as *Dousi* 陡斯; see Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* [hereafter cited as *TMLH*], ed. E. J. Malatesta, trans. D. Lancashire and P. Hu Kuo-chen (St. Louis, Miss.: Institute of Jesuit Sources; Taipei: Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 1985), 70–71.

[3] 物性不同人性，人性不同天主性，唯我獨尊之義未徹也; *Ming mo qing chu Tianzhujiao shi wenxian congbian* 明末清初天主教史文獻叢編 [hereafter cited as *TSWC*], ed. Zhou Erfang (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2001), 273. See subsection 2, b, ii below.

distinction between human and non-human creatures, which is explained by their respective geneses. The Lord of Heaven (God) created human beings and other creatures—to use an expression in the first chapter of the book of Genesis—"according to their kinds."[4] Standing in contrast to this doctrine was a Buddhist anthropocentric, ontological equalitarianism. Buddhist apologists engaged in the controversy with Christianity showed a strong tendency towards the philosophical tenet that all things are (of) one and the same substance or essential being (*wanwu yi ti* 萬物一體).

### (i) *The Lord of the Great Origin is Different from Things*

In his masterpiece, *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義, Matteo Ricci wants to put across to his Chinese audience/readers the tenet that the Lord of Heaven is different from the things. He argues that the corporeal blue sky, which has nine layers, and the earth, trodden by all kinds of creatures, ought to be absolutely distinguished from the incorporeal Lord of Heaven, who is the Lord of the Great Fundament and the Great Origin (*daben dayuan zhi zhu* 大本大原之主).[5] Here Ricci's key point is that neither heaven nor the earth, which are both "corporeal," is to be identified as God.

In the fourth chapter of *Tianzhu shiyi*, Ricci produces a philosophically significant taxonomic diagram titled "Wu zonglei tu" 物宗類圖 (see the appendix).[6] *Wu* refers to all things in heaven and on earth, created by the Lord of Heaven. There are three kinds of *wu*: natural phenomena, human beings and pure spirits.[7] The "Wu zonglei tu" distinguishes be-

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[4] The Protestant Chinese Union Version (Heheben 和合本) has consistently rendered this expression in Genesis as "ge cong qi lei" 各從其類. This Chinese phrase, to be sure, does not seem to have been found in any late-Ming or early-Qing documents. Yet, analogous expressions relating to the genesis of different kinds of creatures are found in Catholic and anti-Christian documents pertaining to the Catholic-Buddhist dialogue in the late Ming and early Qing. They include: "chuang sheng ge zao" 創生各造, "ge an qi lei" 各安其類, "ge fen qi lei" 各分其類, "ge you ben xing" 各有本性, "ge lei ge xing" 各類各性, "ge jin ben zhi" 各盡本質, "ge wu xing li" 各物性理, "ge de qi suo" 各得其所, "ge chuan qi lei" 各傳其類 and "ge xun qi gui" 各循其軌.

[5] *TMLH*, 126–27.

[6] See *Ming mo Qing chu Yesuhui sixiang wenxian huibian* 明末清初耶穌會思想文獻匯編 [hereafter cited as *YSWH*], ed. Zheng Ande [Andrew Chung] (Beijing: Beijing daxue zongjiao yanjiusuo, 2002–), 2:118.

[7] About a century after Ricci died, the French Jesuit Emeric de Chavagnac (1670–1717; Chinese name: Sha Shouxin 沙守信) wrote a systematic theological treatise titled *Zhendao zizheng* 真道自證 (*YSWH*, 20:35–36). In this work, he has divided all created beings or phenomena into three main categories: pure spirits or *chunshenzhe* 純神者 (viz. angels and demons), physical bodies or *chunxingzhe* 純形者 (viz. nonspiritual beings) and spiritual-physical beings or *shenxingzhe* 神形者 (viz. humans). Chavagnac's taxonomy is

tween different kinds of *wu* and between human beings and other *wu*, by using conceptual opposites including accident (*yilaizhe* 依賴者)/substance (*zilizhe* 自立者),[8] bodily (*youxing* 有形)/bodiless (*wuxing* 無形), intelligent/unintelligent and good/evil. One fundamental assumption informing this diagram is that all natural phenomena or creatures, supposedly exhaustively subsumed under the category of *wu*, are typologically distinguished from the Lord of Heaven, the utterly transcendent creator.[9]

### (ii) *Is Śākyamuni Inferior to the Christian God?*

There are significant differences between Christian thought and Buddhist philosophy in respect of their cosmologies and their respective notions of God and the Buddha. Ricci's Chinese dialogist in *Tianzhu shiyi* says that Śākyamuni is not inferior to the Sovereign-on-High (*Shangdi* 上帝). Without denying the existence of the Sovereign-on-High, he insists that the Buddha is not inferior to him.[10] He moreover says, as much as the virtues of the Sovereign-on-High are great intrinsically and he has innumerable powers intrinsically, the human heart/mind "has supreme virtues" and "can deal with everything accordingly."[11] He also adds that this "high" view of the human heart/mind does not mean irreverence to the Sovereign-on-High. Furthermore, he puts forward this proposition: "In the heart are this body and all the things in the heavens and on the earth contained."[12] Indeed, according to Buddhism, the entire being of the world, including one's body and all cosmic phenomena, is contained in the human heart/mind, which is absolutely unencumbered or unlimited. In other words, all phenomenal existence is seen as derived from, or generated in, the heart/mind (*wan fa wei xin* 萬法唯心).[13]

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commensurable with Ricci's, but is far more lucid and precise than it. Cf. another contemporary Catholic classification scheme found in Moyriac de Mailla's (1669–1748; Chinese name: Feng Bingzheng 馮秉正) *Shengshi churao* 盛世芻蕘 (*YSWH*, 22:39–40), which has divided all created beings into five main kinds: nonliving beings, plants, animals, humans and spiritual beings.

[8] For Ricci's explication of the notion of accident/substance, see *TMLH*, 108–11.

[9] Also, Ricci argues: "If, however, you assert that things are like bodies and that the Lord of Heaven makes use of them as a craftsman makes use of tools and mechanical appliances, then the Lord of Heaven is even less to be equated with all things. A stone mason is not the chisel he uses, and a fisherman is not his net or his boat" (ibid., 218–19).

[10] 佛氏無遜于上帝也 (*TMLH*, 206–7).

[11] 上帝之德固厚，而吾人亦具有至德；上帝固具無量能，而吾人亦能應萬事 (ibid.).

[12] 是身也，與天地萬物咸蘊乎心 (ibid.).

[13] Epitomized in sayings such as 應觀法界性，一切惟心造 (*Zimen jingxun* 緇門警訓; *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 [hereafter abbreviated as T] 2023, 48:1065b5) and 三界虛妄，唯一心作 (*Huayan yicheng shixuanmen* 華嚴一乘十玄門; T 1868, 45:518b21)

Ricci points out that what the Chinese scholar says is totally wrong. According to Ricci, "sages, Buddhas, and immortals are all born of man and none can be said to be without a first cause."[14] Thus, as created beings not comparable in status to the Lord of Heaven, they must not be confused with the divine. Yet, there are many resemblances between humans and heaven (or the divine) in terms of their capabilities. For example, humans can make things come into existence (*caicheng shuwu* 裁成庶物) and assist in the movements of things in heavens and on the earth. Nevertheless, Ricci hastens to point out a fundamental difference between the capabilities of human beings and of the Lord of Heaven to create. "Anything manufactured by man," says Ricci, "is achieved through things already created by the Lord of Heaven. They are made out of ready-made material and are not created out of what was originally nonexistent."[15] In other words, whereas God can create things from nothing, humans can make things come into existence only out of something he has already created or formed.

The theory that a wise person's heart/mind "contains both heaven and earth and all myriad things," advocated by Chinese *literati*, in fact points to a cognitive capability of human beings: the human heart/mind does not so much contain as reflect things. Not unlike a seal, a mirror or still water, it can be seen as capable of reflecting certain phenomena, but never as capable of creating them.[16] Thus, Ricci argues that the human heart/mind as understood in the idealist thought of Buddhism falls short of understanding itself (*zhi ji* 知己) or human existence because it wrongly elevates humans to a position worthy of divine honour (*Tianzhu zhi zun* 天主之尊). Hence he concludes that the Buddhist theory of the heart/mind, which seems to have a "high" view of humanity and human

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is one of the most traditional and original philosophical tenets of Chinese Buddhism, that is, its idealistic doctrine of the cosmic origin, which teaches that all cosmic phenomenal existence is in fact derived from the human heart/mind alone, and that no reality exists independently of it.

Buddhist apologists, in their disputes with Catholics in China during the late Ming and early Qing, variously iterated this tenet. See, e.g., Xingji 行璣, "Zun zheng shuo" 尊正說: 瑪竇既不悟法法唯心，心心本具，而務外計度，故別執有天主可尊可附，能生能造，以至趨妄逐物，起種種差殊之見 (*TSWC*, 263); Miyun Yuanwu 密雲圓悟, "Bian tian san shuo" 辨天三說: 以無所得故無所求，非無求也，求自本心而已；非無得也，得自本性而已 (*TSWC*, 219); Fusong's 撫松 "San jiao zhenglun" 三教正論, quoted in Liu Ning 劉凝 *et al.*, *Juesi lu* 覺斯錄: 故經云：應見法界性，一切惟心造；萬境雖多，惟心所見 (*YSWH*, 33:42). See also Pu Renjie's 普仁藏 words, quoted in "Pilüeshuo tiaobo" 闢略說條駁: 地獄不可以有無論，以唯心具造故……若理若事，若具若造，若有若無，總由一心 (*YSWH*, 36:18).

[14] 聖也、佛也、仙也，均由人生，不可謂無始元者也 (*TMLH*, 442).

[15] 至於裁成庶物，蓋因天主已形之物而順材以成之，非先自無物而能創之也 (ibid., 210–11).

[16] Ibid., 210.

virtues or values, will only "depreciate humans and cause them to lose their virtue."[17]

Ricci's cosmology was informed by a Christian doctrine of ontological distinction between human beings, *wanwu* and the divine creator. Accordingly, humans and *wanwu* are both to be distinguished from the cosmic origin; for they are not of one and the same substance (*ti* 體).

### (b) *All Things of One and the Same Substance*

Some Buddhist *literati* in the late Ming and early Qing argued that the doctrine of all things having one and the same substance had already been an integral part of the Confucian heritage for thousands of generations.[18] On the basis of Confucian resources, they endeavoured to set the above discussed Christian worldview over against what they believed to be the Chinese conception of the pristine organic unity of humanity and things as of "one spirit" (*tong ling* 同靈).[19] They explicated the relationship of mutual indwelling (*xiangji* 相即) between the cosmic origin and all things in the world, and theorized that heaven and humanity are on a par with each other. One scholar asserts that "there exists no heaven beyond human nature; for it is heaven."[20] Their theorization led to the conclusion that human nature, which is innately endowed with spiritually perceptive consciousness (*lingming zhi xing* 靈明之性), is the cosmic origin.[21]

Buddhist and Confucian *literati* were joined together under the common apologetic aim to counter the threats Christianity posed to their cultural tradition. While there were Confucian *literati* who often used Buddhist terminology for apologetic purposes, Buddhist apologetic writings were full of Confucian language and thought. To determine which docu-

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[17] Ibid., 208–9.

[18] Huang Zhen 黃貞, "Qing Yan Zhuangqi xiansheng pi tianzhujiao shu" 請顏壯其先生闢天主教書: 天地也，天主也，人也，分為三物，不許合體，以吾中國萬物一體之說為不是，以王陽明先生良知生天生地生萬物皆非也。此其壞亂天下萬世學脈者，一也 (*TSWC*, 148).

[19] Jiji 寂基, "Zhao jian" 昭奸: 此不能盡自性以盡人物之性，故不知人物同靈，原為一體，至錯謬乃爾 (*TSWC*, 268–69).

[20] See Xu Dashou 許大受, *Shengchao zuopi* 聖朝佐闢; *TSWC*, 164–65.

[21] According to the Buddhist monk cum scholar Zhong Shisheng, in the Confucian tradition "heaven" can be understood in three ways. Firstly, it refers to the physical, visible sky. Secondly, it has been understood as the divine lord that rules, but did not create, the world. Thirdly, it has been understood as the innate human nature endowed with spiritually perceptive consciousness (*lingming zhi xing* 靈明之性) and identified as the origin of all things in the cosmos ("Tianxue zai zheng" 天學再徵; *TSWC*, 254).

ments are relevant or useful for analysing the Catholic-Buddhist controversy therefore presents a difficulty for us, especially in regard to the philosophical dispute over the doctrine of all things having one and the same substance. However, insofar as the doctrine of all things with neither beginning nor end and the doctrine of sole superiority are concerned, the Buddhist argumentation is consistently informed by the uniquely Buddhist doctrine of all things having the same substance.

### (i) *Equality and No Distinction among All Things*

The Catholic side of the controversy maintained that one of the absolute distinctions between the Lord of Heaven and all creatures is that he alone has neither beginning nor end. The Buddhist monk Feiyin Tongrong attempts a systematic critique on this doctrine in his "Yuandao pixie shuo." Over against the doctrine of eternity as an attribute only the supreme deity possesses and which Ricci explicates in his *Tianzhu shiyi*, Feiyin expounds his doctrine of eternity through the metaphysical notion of the body or being of the Great Dao (*dadao zhi ti* 大道之體). "It is noticeable," says he, "that the Great Dao in its original form (*dadao zhi yuan* 大道之元) gave no distinctions between things and that neither beginning nor end has existed in the body/being of complete perfection (*quanzhen zhi ti* 全真之體). Thus, all beings are of equal standing with each other under the one Dao, coalescing into an overwhelmingly great evenness."[22]

The summarizing statement just cited encapsulates Feiyin's two main arguments in support of his equalitarian doctrine of eternity.[23] First, the notion of the original form of the Great Dao points to the epistemologically appropriate method of grasping truth, namely, to abandon insistence on any real distinctions among the myriad cosmic phenomena, rather than clinging to the concept of a transcendent deity as the sole timeless cosmic origin. It is characteristic of this argument that the proof corrobo-

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[22] 顯見大道之元，無彼無此；全真之體，無始無終；一道平等，而浩然大均矣 ("Yuandao pixie shuo" 原道闢邪說, in *Dazangjing bubian* 大藏經補編, ed. Lan Jifu [Taipei: Huayu chubanshe, 1984–86], 24:161). Here *Dadao* may refer to the Confucian Dao or the way of sages. *Quanzhen* was derived from religious Daoism and means, in this context, preserving the state of complete perfection or becoming as completely perfect as the Dao. Feiyin thus links the notion of the Dao in the Three Religions/Teachings (viz. Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism) to the Buddhist doctrine of all things with neither beginning nor end.

[23] Feiyin uses Buddhist logic (*yinming* 因明; Sanskrit: *hetu-vidyā*) to construct his arguments.

rative of the timelessness of all cosmic phenomena rests on human perception (*yin ren qizheng* 因人契證). The human consciousness, that is, the continuum of momentary thoughts, has neither beginning nor end in the sense that, when intuitively tracing the past back to the origin of cosmic phenomena and human existence (*fan zhao qiong yuan* 返照窮元), it realizes that the past consciousness does not exist, that the future consciousness has not arisen yet and that the present flow of consciousness is not fastened anywhere. Unbounded by the past, the present and the future, the human consciousness is seen as timeless. The human body can then be freed in that with one's temporally unrestrained consciousness, one's body is no longer bounded by birth or death. Moreover, when one realizes the timelessness of one's existence, one is freed from both *rūpa-kāya* (*seshen* 色身) and the five skandhas; both the Great Dao and the state of complete perfection will then be there in one's self. The intuitive journey of the human consciousness back to the cosmic origin will thus remove epistemological constraints that have previously prevented one from realizing that all cosmic phenomena have neither beginning nor end.[24]

Second, the body of complete perfection refers to truth or the being which has neither beginning nor end and under which all things are subsumed. The myriad cosmic phenomena too therefore have neither beginning nor end. The theoretical distinction between things that have beginning and things that have no beginning is to be seen as nonexistent. By thus abolishing the ontological differences among all things and devising an epistemologically appropriate method of grasping truth, Feiyin contributed to constructing a Buddhist equalitarian cosmology in which all beings stand equal ontologically under the "one Dao." The idea of a transcendent divine creator cannot fit in, for no being whatsoever can stand above the "overwhelmingly great evenness."[25]

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[24] 一者，因人契證，以顯人物天地及其鬼神，俱是無始無終底意。就當人心念上，返照窮元，則過去心念無有，而未來心念無起，現在心念無住。三際既無，則心念全無始，而亦全無終矣。若心念既無始而又無終，則身體脫然無繫，亦無前後三際。了無生死去來，直下披露，無始無終，即色身五蘊，完全解脫，而大道全真，備在我矣。既人人返照窮元，契無始終，則艸木鳥獸天地鬼神，當前廓爾，邈無形跡，便是艸木等類，全無始終，而顯大同之旨也; "Yuandao pixie shuo," 161–62. See the discussion of Zheng Ande [Andrew Chung], "'Wu shi wu zhong': Ming mo Qing chu tian fo er jiao guanyu benyuan wenti de duihua"「無始無終」: 明末清初天、佛二教關於本原問題的對話, in *Zhexue, zongjiao yu renwen* 哲學、宗教與人文, ed. Li Silong and Zhou Xuenong (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004), 239–40.

[25] The Catholic convert Liu Ning (ca. 1625–ca. 1715; see note 13 above) contended that this Buddhist equalitarian view of cosmic phenomena, which was in his view conceived in epistemological ignorance and derived via dubious awakening, was erroneous. Liu writes: "Even if their awakening had been so, their awakening would still be less than commendable. For they had no idea that, as in the case of Yi Yin 伊尹 [*Mencius* V.A.7],

### (ii) *Sole Superiority and Essential Equality of All Humans and Things*

What does Śākyamuni mean when he says, pointing at heaven and the earth just after his birth in Lumbini, "above and below heaven I alone am superior"?[26] What can "I" and sole superiority mean here? Can the notion of sole superiority be seen as a Buddhist equivalent of the Christian idea of a supreme deity that is generically distinct from all cosmic phenomena?

"Fei-Yang pian" differentiates between these two notions of sole superiority to the point of rendering them antipodal to each other.[27] Its author points out that one is bound to misconstrue the Buddha's saying in question as did Yang Tingyun, if it is taken to mean sole superiority in the Christian sense, that is, superiority possessed by God alone over all be-

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it is Heaven itself who first awakens people who are to awaken those who are slow to awaken. And even if what they were awakened to had not been erroneous, would their awakening deserve to be called the Universal Dao (*datong zhi dao* 大通之道) or the One Dao under which all things are equal and coalesce into an overwhelmingly great evenness?" (*Juesi lu*; *YSWH*, 33:26).

[26] E.g., 夫人攀樹枝，便從右脅生墮地。行七步，舉手而言：天上天下，唯我為尊；三界皆苦，吾當安之 (*Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經; T 184, 3:463c13–15). In "Fei-Yang pian" Śākyamuni is quoted as saying: 天上天下，唯我獨尊 (*TSWC*, 273).

[27] On the Catholic side of the debate, an apologetic work titled *Tian ru tong yi kao* 天儒同異考 (see subsections 3, a, i–iii below) also draws a strict distinction between the notion of a solely supreme divine lord and the Buddhist notion of the solely superior self, arguing that the former is completely congruous with the Confucian teaching on serving Heaven. The author, Zhang Xingyao 張星曜, writes: "Humans owe their lives in the world to the spiritual endowments (*lingxing* 靈性) and nurture the Lord of Heaven gives to me. Treading the earth under Heaven and partaking of Heaven's food and drink, I also owe every breath of mine to the Lord of Heaven, who thus sustains my physical life. How could I have failed to have it in mind to serve Heaven, by loving it with reverence? Similarly, how could an empire's subjects, who have owed their well-being to the governance and tutelage of the imperial court, fail to pay tax or tribute to it? Avowing that 'I alone am superior,' the Buddha has indeed shown himself to be the proud devil of heaven and earth (*tianrang zhi da aomo* 天壤之大傲魔) worthy of denouncement. Daoists worship sundry superior deities (*Laoshi zhi tianzun za chu* 老氏之天尊雜出) but are ignorant of the existence of the most unique and supreme Lord. Only Confucianists have got it right. 'When you have offended against Heaven,' says Confucius, 'there is nowhere you can turn to in your prayers' [*Analects* III.13]; it is poignantly clear that here the word 'Heaven' refers to the Sovereign-on-High. Also, what Mencius says in this regard—'by retaining his heart and nurturing his nature he is serving Heaven' [*Mencius* VII.A.1]—is most clear and intelligible. But the Incarnation took place after Confucius' and Mencius' times; the lore of serving Heaven (*shi tian zhi xue* 事天之學) therefore had remained obscure and unexpounded" (*YSWH*, 37:78). Translations of the two Confucian passages taken from D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1983) and D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1984) respectively.

ings. Rather, he explains that the saying encapsulates the Buddhist equalitarian view of sole superiority. For "I" refers to the metaphysical being (*benti* 本體) possessed by all humans, which indiscriminately enables every human being to be "solely superior" above and below heaven. That metaphysical being is not limited to humans alone, however, but pertains to "all things regardless of their myriad kinds and their generic distinctions."[28] Since all myriad things can thus exist superiorly on their own, "it is rightly said that, whether in the past or present, there is no division between things and humans; there is no difference between the mind/heart, the Buddha and [all] sentient beings."[29] Thus, the doctrines of sole superiority and essential equality of all things are two different yet noncontradictory expressions of the same doctrine, a doctrine giving a uniquely Buddhist expression of the philosophical tenet that all things have the same substance.

## 3. RECTIFYING CONFUCIANISM BY FILLING ITS LACKS VS. BRINGING ONESELF INTO CLOSER ALIGNMENT WITH CONFUCIANISM

We have outlined some basic tenets of the Catholic and Buddhist dialogists in respect of ontological and cosmogonical doctrines. Another key aspect of this interreligious dialogue concerns the mainstream indigenous cultural tradition of imperial China: Confucianism. The missionary or apologetic strategies Catholics and Buddhists employed were to a large extent and in their respective ways oriented towards the intellectual heritage of Confucianism. The third part of the present paper will investigate the respective ways Catholic and Buddhist dialogists took up the Confucian tradition as part of their apologetic strategies.

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[28] 夫此蓋當陽指示吾人之本體，各稟夫惟我獨尊之旨。乃至一切物彙，萬種千差，莫不皆然 (*TSWC*, 273). In other words, the fact that the myriad cosmic phenomena have different forms or appearances by no means contradicts the tenet that all cosmic phenomena have one and the same substance. Cf. an argument put forward by Ricci's Chinese dialogist in *Tianzhu shiyi*: "It is like fish in water; the water outside the fish is the same as the water in the fish's stomach; the water in the stomach of a mandarin fish is the same as the water in the stomach of a carp. It is only the appearances of the fish which persist in being different, so that the fish fall into separate categories" (*TMLH*, 198–99).

[29] 所謂今古常如，物我靡間，心、佛及眾生三無差別也 (*TSWC*, 273); note that the third sentence is quoted from the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (*Dafangguangfo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經); T 278, 9:465c29.

### (a) *From Bringing Confucianism and Christianity into Accord to Transcending Confucianism*

How Ricci expounded and appropriated the notion of serving Heaven (*shi tian* 事天) or paying homage to it (*jing tian* 敬天) as found in Confucian classics has long caught the interest of modern scholars, not least because it is indicative of one of the key missionary methods the Catholic Church in China adopted since Ricci's times: to bring Christianity into accord with Confucianism. When asked about his opinion on where in particular Christianity (*lex Christiana*) might find its basis or situate itself, Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633) was said to have defined the entire matter as "*ciue fo pu giu*" 祛佛補儒 (modern standard Chinese: *qu fo bu ru*). Xu's definition was translated thus: "it abates idols and fills up the lacks of the law of the *literati*" (*idola resecat, litteratorum legem supplet*).[30]

Why did Ricci and some other Catholics choose to adopt this position on Confucianism—to supplement it with Christianity? What did "filling up the lacks of Confucianism" mean? In point of fact, to entrench itself in China, the Catholic Church could not have made Confucianism its enemy or adversary; for it was the still regnant intellectual tradition of the country. To bring Christianity into accord with it can thus be seen as a survival tactic of the Church in such a socio-cultural setting.

Several years after the centennial of Ricci's death, a Catholic convert published an apologetic work titled *Tian ru tong yi kao* 天儒同異考 (Congruities and disparities between Christianity and Confucianism) in 1715. It can be regarded as a key to precisely understanding how the notion of complementing Confucianism was understood by Chinese Catholics in the early Qing. The author Zhang Xingyao 張星曜 (b. 1632–after 1715) recounted how he discovered that the authentic meaning of the Confucian classics could be truly understood only in and through the Teaching (*jiao* 教) of (the Lord of) Heaven:

> My friend Zhu Ji'nan 諸際南 once handed to me some Christian books [lit. books of the Teaching of Heaven]. Since then, all the doubts in my bosom had been cleared even before I finished reading them. Only then did I come to realize that truths were already there in heaven and earth and that the Confucian Teaching already contains them. And yet the

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[30] Nicolaus Trigautius [Nicolas Trigault], *De Christiana expeditione apud Sina suscepta ab Societate Jesu ex P. Matthaei Ricij eiusdem societatis commentarijs libri V* (Augsburg: Augustae Vindelicorum, 1615), 489; cf. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 448.

> Confucian Teaching stops short of having fully clarified them. What's more, the truths contained therein cannot be thus clarified without the aid of the Teaching of Heaven.[31]

Zhang thus states the main thesis of *Tian ru tong yi kao*. The treatise consists of three main parts, titled "Tianjiao he ru" 天教合儒 (Christianity in accord with Confucianism), "Tianjiao bu ru" 天教補儒 (Christianity fills the lacks of Confucianism) and "Tianjiao chao ru" 天教超儒 (Christianity transcends Confucianism) respectively.

(i) *Confucianism in Accord with Christianity*

Zhang's idea of bringing the Christian religion into accord with Confucianism is based on the common cosmogonical belief that in the design of the divine creator, there is a "single basis" (*yi ben* 一本) on which all cosmic phenomena come into existence. Zhang outlines this idea in the preface to "Tianjiao he ru":

> Mencius said, "When Heaven produced things, it gives them a single basis, yet Yizi tries to give them a dual one" (*Tian zhi sheng wu, shi zhi yi ben, er Yizi er ben gu ye* 天之生物，使之一本，而夷子二本故也).[32] In view of this, Mencius would have dismissed any other contrary theories. … But how can it be that the primordial state of the cosmos, when the Lord Creator created (*sheng* 生) heaven, earth and the origin of human beings and things, was as disparate as [what is taught in Daoism and Buddhism]? … Western *literati* are devoted to serving Heaven alone. In this respect their doctrine coincides with that of our *literati* in that both have been informed by their respective knowledge concerning the basis [of diverse cosmic phenomena] (*zhi suo ben ye* 知所本也).[33]

(ii) *Christianity Fills the Lacks of Confucianism*

In the preface to the second part of *Tian ru tong yi kao*, Zhang quotes his friend Ji Jiongfan 計迥凡 as posing this question: "There was Confucius in our own country, whose Teaching is also most refined and com-

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[31] *Tian ru tong yi kao*; *YSWH*, 37:15.

[32] *Mencius* III.A.5; Lau, *Mencius*, 1:111.

[33] *YSWH*, 37:16.

prehensive. Why, then, shall we follow the Christian Teaching instead?"[34] Zhang answers,

> It is not that Confucius was not the sage of the sages. But even sages owed their earthly existence to Heaven. They possessed no power over the fortunes of human beings. Thus Confucius' teachings are bound to be marred by imprecisions and omissions, and require Christianity to rectify them.[35]

Consisting of twenty-one sections (each ending with the words: "This is the *n*th way in which the Christian Teaching supplements the Confucian Teaching"), "Tianjiao bu ru" deals with selected theological topics of the same number. Zhang wanted thereby to demonstrate that Christianity can serve to fill the lacks of Confucianism, in twenty-one ways. For example, Confucius and his disciples, albeit rightly revering Heaven, did not know there existed an omnipresent and omniscient Lord of Heaven; they had inadequate or inaccurate understanding of such notions as the rational, human soul (*linghun* 靈魂), demons and spirits, afterlife, etc.[36] Also, Confucianists are bound to fail to put into practice their well elaborated moral teachings, whereas the Christian religion does possess the means to empower the morally powerless to become wholly sincere practitioners serving God conscientiously day and night.[37]

Thus in the light of a Catholic theological system, Zhang illuminates, comprehensively if not exhaustively, the insufficiencies of the teachings of Confucius, which can only be remedied by corresponding Christian doctrines.

### (iii) *Christianity Transcends Confucianism*

It is observable that Zhang's attempt to bring Christianity and Confucianism into accord, as well as his attempt to overcome the latter's insufficiencies with the former's aid, were intended to clarify their commonalities rather than seeking ways in which Christianity might be ad-

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[34] *YSWH*, 37:39. A similar question is found in *Da ke wen* 答客問, an apologetic work by the Catholic convert Zhu Zongyuan 朱宗元 (ca. 1616–60): 天學既與儒者合轍，則行孔子之道足矣，何必更益之以西教？(*YSWH*, 31:31).

[35] *YSWH*, 37:39.

[36] *YSWH*, 37:40–41 (§ 1); 38:48 (§ 8); 37:42 (§ 2); 37:45–46 (§ 6)

[37] 但吾儒之理流為文字敷演，未能身體力行；而天教真切修行，昕夕惟嚴昭事，故有天教而孔子之教愈明; *YSWH*, 37:62.

justed so as to assimilate to Confucian thought. For the fundamental Christian beliefs cannot and need not change in any cultural settings. It was for that reason that early Catholic *literati* in China unambiguously defended any immutable dogmas found to conflict with Confucianism. Hence the third and last main part of Zhang's apologetic treatise.

In the preface to "Tianjiao chao ru," Zhang stresses that, while Confucianism was instituted by mortals (*ren li zhi jiao* 人立之教), Christianity was instituted by the Lord of Heaven himself (*Tianzhu qin li zhi jiao* 天主親立之教); they are not therefore comparable as though they were of the same kind and on a par with each other.[38] In other words, the divine origin of Christianity is the grounds that it immeasurably transcends Confucianism. Zhang then explains how Christianity transcends it in fourteen ways.[39] They concern institutional continuity or uninterrupted transmission of the founder's teachings (§ 1); universal, nondiscriminatory availability of salvation or the means of religious practice regardless of geographical location, race, sex, class, literacy and intellectual abilities (§§ 2, 3, 12);[40] the doctrine of demons (*gui* 鬼) and angels (*tianshen* 天神) (§ 4); the power to overcome infirmities and death (§ 5) and to create things, including food (§ 6); the founder's postmortem soteriological power (§ 7); moral influence of local Confucian edificatory personnel vs. pastoral authority of Catholic priests (§ 8); the doctrine of hell (§ 9); positive moral impact of the doctrine of divine surveillance (§ 10); comprehensiveness of teaching of serving Heaven (§ 11); the commandment to love the enemies as a more efficient means of fostering peace (§ 13); availability of divine forgiveness obtained via contrition, even to those condemned to death under secular law (§ 14).[41] Zhang puts forth these fourteen arguments to support the thesis that, in terms of both soteriological efficacy at the individual level and moral ramifications religious doctrines may have in respect of the larger society, Christianity far transcends Confucianism.

From Ricci's time to the beginning of the eighteenth century, the first century of the early Catholic Church in China witnessed a major shift in its apologetic strategy vis-à-vis Confucianism—from putting greater emphasis on the cosmological compatibility between the two Teachings to further amplifying Christianity's superiority over Confucianism. Zhang's

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[38] *YSWH*, 37:69.

[39] Each of the fourteen sections (excepting the first) ends with the words: "This is one other way in which Christianity transcends Confucianism."

[40] In § 12, Zhang prizes the Teaching of Heaven over Confucianism by characterizing the former as teaching of grace (*chongjiao* 寵教) and the latter as teaching for the literate (*shujiao* 書教); *YSWH*, 37:79.

[41] *YSWH*, 37:70–81.

tripartite treatise epitomizes this shift in that its three-stage composition mirrors the development of his theorization about the relationship between Christianity and Confucianism.[42]

It must be noted that there could not have all of a sudden been such a shift, because the two religious traditions are so essentially different that it took time for those engaged in the interreligious encounter to grasp the true essence of each other's teaching. It must also be noted that the ultimate purpose of Catholics engaged in this dialogue with Confucianism was neither to bring Christianity into accord with it nor to fill its lacks with the help of Christianity—these must be regarded as culturally accommodative strategies first and foremost motivated by evangelistic consideration. Rather, their ultimate purpose was to demonstrate that Christianity, the Teaching of Heaven, does transcend Confucianism.

### (b) *Buddhist-Confucian Relations in China: From Transcendence over to Attachment to Confucianism*

While the attitude of the early Catholic Church in China towards Confucianism became less and less accommodative in the sense that it laid more emphasis on the superiority of Christianity over it, the history of Chinese Buddhism until the seventeenth century witnessed a by and large reverse direction of development. In the face of post-Tang political, intellectual and religious climates, Chinese Buddhist thinkers over the centuries no longer upheld the insistence on the superiority of Buddhism over Confucianism as did Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416) and other early Chinese Buddhists.

#### (i) *Early Chinese Buddhists on Their Religion's Transcendence over Confucianism*

Not unlike Christianity, Buddhism had to face and come to terms with Confucianism as the mainstream cultural heritage in imperial China. The sixth-century analects *Mouzi li huo lun* 牟子理惑論 (Mouzi's clarification of doubts)[43] describe how the late Eastern Han lay Buddhist Mou Rong 牟融 (known as Mouzi) responds to a series of challenges contemporary

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[42] The first preface was written in 1702 and the second in 1705. Apparently the third could not have been written earlier than they.

[43] It constitutes the first volume of a series of apologetic writings titled *Hong ming ji* 弘明集 (T 2102), which was composed by the monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518).

Confucian *literati* posed to Buddhist believers, the most controversial of which concerns the hair-cutting rite, the vow of abjuring secular, familial life and the prohibition on honouring one's parents and sovereigns on one's knees.[44] Drawing on ancient authorities like Confucius and Laozi, Mouzi attempts to prove the propriety of the Buddhist teachings in question. Nevertheless, he asks the Confucian despisers in his time to go beyond the limit of their familiar cultural habitus (*suo xi* 所習) so that they may more perceptively understand this unfamiliar religion.[45] One of his well-known sayings emblematic of his belief reads:

> Readers need not limit their choice to Confucius. Prescribing treatment physicians need not limit themselves to Bianque's prescriptions. Whatever conforms to reason is to be followed. That which can cure an illness is a well given prescription. A *junzi* seeks to acquire whatever is good for his self-cultivation.[46]

Huiyuan, a leading monk in the Eastern Jin, displayed a similar attitude towards Buddhism's relationship to indigenous Chinese thought at least in two of his treatises, "Shamen bu jing wangzhe lun" 沙門不敬王者論 (The śramaṇa does not pay homage to the ruler) and "Shamen tanfu lun" 沙門袒服論 (The śramaṇa's dress which leaves [the left shoulder] bare).[47] He underscores therein Buddhism's implicit compatibility with Confucianism with regard to unconventional, otherworldly aspects of the Buddhist rites, lifestyle and beliefs.[48] More importantly, he distinguishes between practitioners burdened with familial duties (*zaijia* 在家) and others abjuring familial life (*chujia* 出家). He dubs the former "conformers to phenomenal changes" (*shunhua zhi min* 順化之民), who ought to outwardly conform to the secular (viz. Confucian) mores; the latter he dubs as "foreign guests" (*fangwai zhi bin* 方外之賓), who conform to the different mores that befit their alien identity.[49] Although Huiyuan affirmed the otherworldly, transcendent character of the Buddhist religion with some qualifications, his elaboration of the ideal Buddhist existence of

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[44] *Hong ming ji*, *juan* 1; T 2102, 52:1–8.

[45] 不可以所習為重，所希為輕 (T 2102, 52:2a22).

[46] 書不必孔丘之言，藥不必扁鵲之方；合義者從，愈病者良。君子博取眾善，以輔其身 (T 2102, 52:2b29–c2).

[47] T 2102, 52:29c19–31b11 and 52:32b12–33n8 respectively.

[48] "Despite their differences as to doctrinal tenets, [the Teaching of] Śākyamuni and [that of] the Duke of Zhou and Confucius inconspicuously influenced each other (*qian xiang yingxiang* 潛相影響). Although they have different provenances, they have the same telos (*zhongqi* 終期)"; "Shamen tanfu lun"; T 2102, 52:31a19.

[49] "Shamen bu jing wangzhe lun"; T 2102, 52:30b6.

clerics as foreign guests to the secular society is still suggestive of the belief of early Chinese Buddhists that their religion transcends Confucianism.

### (ii) *From Transcending Confucianism to Amalgamating with Confucianism*

The founder of the Tang dynasty, Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618–26), issued a decree to drastically reduce the Buddhist monasteries in the entire empire to a minimum. Shortly afterwards, his abdication came in time to abort this anti-Buddhist attempt. Tang Buddhists attributed the decree to the fact that there were too many unruly monks during the last years of his reign. For them, moreover, the decree was meant not so much to wipe out the Buddhist religion as to prune it down and purge it.[50] However, it remains certain that Buddhists did not on the whole enjoy imperial favour throughout the dynasty. Aware of the deleterious impact misguided imperial policies on religion could have on the state, Gaozu's son and successor, Taizong 太宗 (r. 627–49), opted for Confucianism over both Daoism and Buddhism, stoutly declaring to his courtiers early in his reign that he was "now only in favour of the Way of Yao and Shun and the Teaching of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius."[51]

After centuries of turbulence, which was brought to a halt by a stable, unified empire, Chinese imperial heads came to realize, in retrospect, that Confucianism bore enormous political significance. After a lapse of over half a millennium, the Confucian heritage was thus reinstated in the Tang. As a result, not a few *literati* and courtiers during the Tang, laying claim to "the Way of Yao and Shun and the Teaching of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius" as their major indigenous heritage, engaged in agitations for purging the empire of Buddhism. The Confucian revival forced Chinese Buddhists to readjust their relationship with it. Henceforth their emphasis on Buddhism's transcendence over Confucian thought receded. The readjustment paved the way for Buddhist-Confucian amalgamation in post-Tang Buddhism.

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[50] 帝以武德末年僧徒多僻，下詔澄簡肅清遺法，非謂除滅; *Guang hong ming ji* 廣弘明集 (T 2103, 52:126a19–20).

[51] 朕今所好者惟在堯舜之道、周孔之教，以為如鳥有翼，如魚依水，失之必死，不可暫無耳; *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要, *juan* 6 (*Sibucongkan xubian* 四部叢刊續編, vol. 133 [Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1966], 13); Fang Litian 方立天, *Zhongguo fojiao yu chuantong wenhua* 中國佛教與傳統文化 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), 268.

A trend of interreligious fusion or syncretism was prevalent in Tang–Song Buddhism. Qisong 契嵩 (1007–72), a renowned Buddhist monk in the Northern Song, for example, tries to illustrate the congruity between Buddhism and Confucianism with regard to moral thought, by matching the *pañca-veramaṇi* or the five precepts to the Confucian five constant virtues (*wuchang* 五常).[52] Ming Buddhist thinkers, not least the so-called four masters of the late Ming, contributed to further amalgamation with Confucianism. Zhuhong 袾宏 (1535–1603) asserts that the two religions do not undermine but rather benefit each other.[53] Zhenke 真可 (1543–1603) invokes the five Tathāgatas as manifesting the five constant virtues respectively in his hymn "Wuchang ji" 五常偈 (The five-constant-virtues gāthā).[54] Deqing 德清 (1546–1623) makes clear that the *pañca-veramaṇi* taught in the Buddhist morality are equivalent to the five constant virtues of Confucianism.[55] Zhixu 智旭 (1599–1655) even goes as far as saying, "one understands Confucianism only after studying Buddhism, and only the true Confucianist can study Buddhism."[56] These are examples of the fact that Buddhist thinkers during the Song and the Ming tended to bring

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[52] "The first of the *pañca-veramaṇi* forbids homicide, the second larceny, the third sexual misbehaviour, the fourth unseemly speech, the fifth inebriation. Not committing homicide is benevolence (*ren* 仁), not committing larceny is righteousness (*yi* 義), abstaining from sexual misbehaviour, inebriation and unseemly speech are propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智) and faith (*xin* 信) respectively"; *Tanjin wenji* 鐔津文集, *juan* 3 (T 2115, 52:661b21–24). Later in the same work Qisong remarks that he is fond of Confucianism because he can therefrom draw on doctrines that match Buddhist ones: "the Confucian virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith are nominally different from the virtues of compassion (*cibei* 慈悲), charity (*bushi* 布施), deference (*gongjing* 恭敬), pridelessness (*wu woman* 無我慢), discernment (*zhihui* 智慧) and shunning indecent/inane speech (*bu wang yan qiyu* 不妄言綺語), as are called in Buddhism. Yet, are they not congruous with each other as to the acquisition of sincerity and the practice of self-cultivation (*li cheng xiu xing* 立誠修行) and as to the betterment of the world and the edification of men and women (*shan shi jiao ren* 善世教人)?"; *Tanjin wenji*, *juan* 8 (T 2115, 52:686a17–21).

[53] 故嚮實而論，則儒與佛不相病而相資; in *Zhuchuang er bi* 竹窗二筆, leaf 25; *Lianchi dashi quanji* 蓮池大師全集, vol. 4, *Yunqi fahui* 雲棲法彙 (Taipei: Zhonghua fojiao wenhua guan, 1973); Guo Peng 郭朋, *Ming–Qing fojiao* 明清佛教 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1982), 186.

[54] *Zibo zunzhe quanji* 紫柏尊者全集, *juan* 20; *Wanzi xuzangjing* 卍續藏經 [hereafter abbreviated as *XZJ*] (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1968–70), 126:978b11–979a1). The first five strophes of the hymn open with the names *Namo Renci Fo* 南無仁慈佛, *Namo Yiqi Fo* 南無義氣佛, *Namo Lijie Fo* 南無禮節佛, *Namo Zhihui Fo* 南無智慧佛 and *Namo Xinxin Fo* 南無信心佛 respectively.

[55] 且佛制五戒，即儒之五常; *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji* 憨山老人夢遊集, *juan* 5; *XZJ*, 127:269b1.

[56] 惟學佛然後知儒，亦惟真儒乃能學佛; Ouyi dashi 藕益大師 [Zhixu], *Lingfeng zonglun* 靈峰宗論 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005), 461; Guo, *Ming–Qing fojiao*, 287.

their religion into closer alignment with Confucianism, perhaps even at the expense of compromising the transcendent status of the former over against the latter.

In their continuing controversy with Christianity, Chinese Buddhists in the late Ming employed the strategy of developing stronger doctrinal attachment to Confucianism. Their representative thinkers, on the one hand, made remarkable efforts to bring Buddhist and Confucian thought into accord. On the other hand, some of them, not least those actively engaged in the controversy, espoused and developed the theory about the congeniality or unity of the Three Religions/Teachings (viz. Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism).[57] Bringing to light the glaring disparities between Confucian and Christian doctrines, moreover, they argued that the latter were nothing less than heretical for any genuine Confucianists; they hoped thereby to hamper the intellectual efforts of Catholic scholars to bring Christian and Confucian thought into alignment. In the preface to his anti-Christian treatise *Shengchao zuopi* 聖朝佐闢 (published in 1623), Xu Dashou 許大受 writes:

> I was also asked: "Why didn't you only extol Confucianism in your censure [of Christianity], but rather defending Buddhism too at the same time?" My answer is that since the barbarians [viz. Western missionaries like Ricci] teach that humans have an afterlife, it doesn't suffice to counter the heresy without also linking Confucian and Buddhist thought to each other (*guantong ru–fo* 貫通儒佛). The barbarians slyly intend to covertly deprecate Confucianism while overtly censuring Buddhism (*yang pi fo er yin bian ru* 陽闢佛而陰貶儒). In the name of rebutting Buddhism, they have been trying to entice those who do

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[57] In his rebuttal of what Ricci said in the second chapter of *Tianzhu shiyi*, Feiyin Tongrong speaks of the congeniality of the Three Religions/Teachings as to their common teaching of (human) self-power: 夫明其心，盡其性，不假于外，則人道備，而釋氏同，老氏契，而孔氏貫。且此三者，一猶三，三猶一，如寶鼎之三足、摩醯之三目，不期然而自然，能復天下之心，無有遺逸 ("Yuandao pixie shuo," 167). Zhuhong, however, stresses that although the Three Religions/Teachings do show "familial" commonness, there are still irreducible, hierarchical differences among them: 人有恆言曰：「三教一家，遂至漫無分別」，此訛也。三教則誠一家矣，一家之中，寧無長幼、尊卑、親疏耶？……佛證一切眾生本來自己，最親也，而儒道事乎外，是知理無二致，而深淺歷然；深淺雖殊，而同歸一理。此所以為三教一家也，非漫無分別之謂也 (in *Zheng'e ji* 正訛集, leaf 15; *Lianchi dashi quanji*, vol. 4, *Yunqi fahui*). See also his "Ti sanjiao tu" 題三教圖 (*Lianchi dashi quanji*, vol. 4, *Shanfang zalu er* 山房雜錄二, 58). For some other Buddhist remarks on the Three Religions/Teachings, see, e.g., Zhenke's "Ti sanjiao tu" (*Zibo zunzhe bieji* 紫柏尊者別集; *XZJ*, 127:100b2–b7) and "Shi Pishefufo ji" 釋毗舍浮佛偈 (*Zibo zunzhe quanji*; *XZJ*, 126:840b12–841a5); Deqing's "Guan Lao–Zhuang yingxiang lun" 觀老莊影響論 (*Hanshan laoren mengyou ji*, *juan* 45; *XZJ*, 127:817–837); and Zhixu's "Shi Pan Gongchen" 示潘拱宸 (*Lingfeng zonglun*, 94–95).

> not have a profound understanding of Confucianism. I have therefore put my mind to exposing to the world the wretchedness of what the barbarians propagate, which is far inferior to Buddhism and Daoism, let alone Confucianism. It will then realize that [Christianity] should never be allowed to augment the Three Religions/Teachings as the fourth (*sanjiao jue bu rong si* 三教決不容四). To preserve both the legitimate transmission of rulership (*zhitong* 治統) and the transmission of the Dao, no perversion should ever be tolerated. The Dao of the sages will then be incessantly held in reverence for myriad ages.[58]

Both sides of the Catholic-Buddhist controversy in the late Ming and early Qing aligned themselves with Confucianism, with an eye to isolating the other in the mainstream intellectual scene. The apologetic or defensive strategy they adopted could time and again obscure what they uniquely believed and preached. Yet, the long-standing tradition of bringing Buddhist and Confucian thought into alignment facilitated efforts of Chinese Buddhists to meet the Catholic challenge; whereas early Chinese Catholics, who continued to insist on the transcendent status of Christianity over against Confucianism, would ineluctably come into conflict with contemporary Confucian *literati*.

## 4. EVANGELIZING CHINA VS. PRESERVING THE TRANSMISSION OF THE DAO

### (a) *Evangelizing China*

The ultimate purpose of the Catholic mission in China, without question, was to missionize Chinese and to evangelize China. How did it accomplish this purpose? We may categorize their evangelistic methods into two types: the "Riccian method" and the "Longobardian method."

With regard to the prospect of evangelizing China, Ricci remarked that the conversion of souls to the Catholic faith was the work of God.[59] Yet

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[58] *Shengchao zuopi zixu* 聖朝佐闢自敘; *TSWC*, 162. Cf. what Xu Changzhi, in his foreword to *Poxie ji*, writes: 偶於中秋，偕費隱禪師，連舟詣禾，見其案前所列闢邪諸書，若痛斥天主教之以似亂真，貶佛毀道；且援儒攻儒，有不昭其罪，洞其奸，彰灼其中，禍於人流，害於世胥，天下而膺之懲之不已者。……至於雲棲有《說》，密老有《辯》，費師有《揭》，邪之不容擿正也；纚纚數千言，佛與儒同一衛道之心矣 ("Pixie tici" 闢邪題詞; *TSWC*, 112).

[59] "Per esser questa, opera di ridurre e convertire anime alla Fede catholica, non si deve

if the success or failure of any evangelistic endeavours in China was according to Ricci divinely determined, how then did he assess the bearing political and cultural factors might have on the ongoing evangelistic endeavours of the Catholic Church in China?

As Ricci observed, distrust or suspicion characterized the Chinese society. In this mission field, which was under a despotic, autocratic state, the emperor distrusted his subjects, including his courtiers and members of the imperial clan; many of his subjects likewise felt deep-seated distrust and fear of—or even hostility against—foreigners.[60] In this climate, Ricci adopted a cautious policy, with the aim of obtaining freedom of proselytization; thus he was striving to come to terms or conciliate with political authorities whenever possible. He reasoned this out by contrasting his missionary policy with that which aims at direct evangelization or proselytization even without imperial sanction. Under such a highly centralized autocracy as the Ming empire, the latter policy could sometime lead to disastrous consequences for the Catholic mission in China, even though it could possibly achieve, in the short term, a considerable increase in new converts.[61] It was therefore critically essential for the foreign missionaries to gain the imperially granted right to missionize in China and to proselytize Chinese. Ricci's attempt to gain residence in the capital city, and thus to get closer to the throne, was primarily motivated by his politically conciliatory evangelistic policy.

No less notable was Ricci's culturally accommodative policy. He astutely positioned and defined Christianity vis-à-vis each of the Three Religions/Teachings. Affirming the "orthodox" status of Confucianism in its earliest, "uncorrupted" form, which is evidenced by its propagation of the veneration of a supreme numen (*un suppremo nume*) called the "King of Heaven" (*Re del cielo*), he attached most importance to this indigenous heritage.[62] His early realization that Buddhist monks were generally

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dubitare esser tutta opera d' Iddio" (Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane*, 1:5; cf. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 4).

[60] Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane*, 1:102; cf. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 88–89.

[61] In his letter to Claudio Acquaviva dated 13 October 1596, Ricci writes: "Habbiamo concluso tra di noi due cose per aver di ciò segni manifesti; l'una è che, avendosi in queste terre licentia libera per predicare il sancto Evangelio, in brieve tempo si farebbono milioni di christiani; l'altra è che, senza tal licentia, subito havressimo da perdere quel puoco che habbiamo, se ci diamo di proposito a voler far christiani, per la grande suspitione che vi è in questo regno di forastieri e in speciale di noi, che già ci tengono per uomini di ingegno, spirito e potere per cominciare ogni grande opera" (Matteo Ricci, *Lettere (1580–1609)*, ed. Francesco D'Arelli [Macerata: Quodlibet, 2001], 336).

[62] Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane*, 1:108–9, 115; cf. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 93–94.

seen as socially ignoble played a decisive role in the formulation of his future evangelistic strategy.[63]

Ricci's cautious missionary policy seems to stand in contrast to that of another Jesuit father, Niccolò Longobardo (1565–1655; Chinese name: Long Huamin 龍華民), who arrived in the missionary base in Shaozhou 韶州 two years after Ricci left for Beijing. Longobardo expressed great evangelistic ambition and optimism in a letter to João Álvares (Giovanni Alvarez; 1548–1623/25), saying he would preach the gospel to both high officials and rustics if only he could speak fluent Chinese.[64] While his predecessor's circumspect strategy was oriented towards the future prospect of unhindered missionization throughout the empire, Longobardo did not seem to have allowed his missionary zeal to be deterred by too much prudence. Even though it was rudimentary that the Christian gospel must be brought to all Chinese souls, people in the upper social echelons remained Ricci's primary missionary targets; whereas all Chinese, regardless of social statuses or classes, were targeted in Longobardo's direct evangelistic method. Ricci's designation of Longobardo as superior general of the Jesuit mission in China seems to suggest that the "Longobardian method," which has been viewed by some as standing for intra-Catholic resistance to bringing Christianity and Confucianism into accord even at the risk of compromising theological integrity, had thus far notched up considerable success.[65]

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[63] Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane*, 1:125, 335–37; cf. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 100, 258–59.

[64] The letter (dated 4 November 1598), translated from Pietro Tacchi Venturi, ed., *Opere storiche del P. M. Ricci*, vol. 2 (Macerata: F. Giorgetti, 1913) into Chinese, is in *Li Madou shuxin ji* 利瑪竇書信集, trans. Luo Yu, vols. 3 and 4 of *Li Madou quan ji* 利瑪竇全集 (Taipei: Guangqi chubanshe, 1986), 515–22.

[65] Longobardo was seen by Daniello Bartoli (1608–85), a contemporary Jesuit priest, as antagonistic towards the Riccian policy on the doctrinal relationship between the Catholic faith and Confucianism. Bartoli even described him as the first person to bring up the "question of the Chinese rites": "Il convient de rappeler ici, que le P. Longobardi fut le premier qui souleva la question des rites chinois. Tant qu'il ne fut que simple missionnaire, sans accepter toutes les idées et les méthodes du P. Matth. Ricci son supérieur, par respect pour lui, il avait suspendu son jugement et fait taire ses scrupules. Mais une fois qu'il se vit à la tête de la mission, il crut sa conscience engagée, se mit à étudier, et arriva en théorie et en pratique à des conclusions dont plusieurs étaient diamétralement opposées à celles de son prédécesseur"; cited in Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine 1552–1773* (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Mission catholique, 1932–34; repr., San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1976), 61.

### (b) *Chinese Intellectuals Reacted to the Catholic Mission: Preserving the Transmission of the Dao*

The general intention behind the participation of Chinese intellectuals in the controversy was to preserve the transmission of the Dao, however this notion might be understood. The apologetic stance they adopted precluded them from sympathetically and open-mindedly understanding—let alone learning from—the foreign cultural tradition they strained to withstand. Moreover, they explained the intention behind the Western missionaries in a sinocentric and culturally parochial manner; some of them even accused the Catholic Church of posing an insidious political threat to China.

Since ancient times, the distinction between *xia* 夏 (the most civilized Chinese people) and *yi* 夷 (the barbarians) had been deeply embedded in Chinese culture—not least in the Confucian discourse of Chinese identity.[66] An implication of this discursive distinction is the belief that Chinese culture is in principle superior to the barbarian ones in all aspects. Thus, the idea of converting China to barbarian ways would sound scandalous for any educated Chinese as transmitters and defenders of Chinese culture or values.[67] Anti-Christian Chinese *literati* in the late Ming and early Qing, capitalizing on the *xia–yi* distinction, deemed Christianity to be a barbarian teaching (*yijiao* 夷教); they castigated missionaries like Ricci for jeopardizing Chinese culture by converting Chinese to the "barbarian ways" (*yi yi bian xia* 以夷變夏).[68] Moreover, what is most

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[66] Since ancient times Chinese have referred to their country as *zhongxia* 中夏 or collectively as *zhuxia* 諸夏, and have referred to the less civilized tribes or peoples lying outside the scope of Chinese civilization collectively as *yidi* 夷狄. "'Barbarian tribes (*yidi*) with their rulers,' said Confucius, 'are inferior to Chinese states (*zhuxia*) without them'" (*Analects* III.5; Lau, *Analects*, 18–19). Anti-Christian scholars capitalized on this deep-rooted sinocentric conception of Chinese culture as essentially superior to "barbarian" ones, and denied Western culture—Christianity being an integral part of it—parity with that of China. For example, Xu Dashou cast into doubt the originality and practical values of Western science and technology, including the scientific contributions of Euclid's *Elements*, which was translated by Xu Guangqi and Matteo Ricci into Chinese as *Jihe yuanben* 幾何原本; *Shengchao zuopi*; *TSWC*, 178–79.

[67] See *Mencius* III.A.4: "I have heard of the Chinese converting barbarians to their ways [*yong xia bian yi* 用夏變夷], but not of their being converted to barbarian ways [*bian yu yi zhe* 變於夷者]" (Lau, *Mencius*, 1:106–7).

[68] A late Ming Buddhist scholar writes: "Recently there have been barbarians coming from outside, who have called themselves [adherents of] the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven (*jing you waiyi zi cheng tianzhujiao zhe* 近有外夷自稱天主教者) … Without being summoned they sneaked into our country, wanting to flagrantly displace our Chinese folkways by a depraved religion belonging to their country; this is how they have

dreadful about the "barbarian intrusion," a Buddhist monk contributing to *Pixie ji* remarks, is the fact that the propagators of the Christian religion have indolently attempted to perturb the Chinese intellectual tradition transmitted and preserved since the country was founded (*gan luan wu guo kaipi yilai zhi xuemai* 敢亂吾國開闢以來之學脈).[69] A lay Buddhist contributing to *Poxie ji* portrays the Catholic Church then spreading in China as a grave "barbarian" threat against Chinese religious mores:

> Christian converts are all obliged to extend their cultic practice to their families; they have broken a precept of the Lord of Heaven whenever they worship at another temple or adore another deity. They also must have razed the temples of Confucius and altars to mountains, rivers and local deities, and must annihilate together with them the shrines erected in the past under imperial decrees and dedicated to those venerated for their fidelity, filial piety, integrity or rectitude. To follow barbarian instructions, moreover, they must seize their images and cast them into latrines. They shall then requisition establishment of a church in every administrative district of all levels (*xiling sheng jun zhou xian ge jian yi tianzhutang* 檄令省郡州縣各建一天主堂), wherein a crucifix (lit. "the culprit affixed upon a stake") can be funereally honoured (*yi feng'an bi xingjia zhi zuifu* 以奉安彼刑架之罪夫). Alas, what wicked barbarians, who dare perturb our country's Exemplary Teacher of Myriad Generations (*luan wo guo wandai zhi shibiao* 亂我國萬代之師表) with their country's barbarian practice of worshipping one deity alone (*bi guo dusi zhi yi feng* 彼國獨祀之夷風)![70]

In the face of the looming threat of Christianity viewed as a foreign superstition now encroaching on China, late Ming Buddhist scholars urged Buddhists and Confucianists to jointly resist and condemn its heretical doctrines,[71] in the name of safeguarding what they believed to be their country's cultural heritage and preserving the transmission of the Dao.[72] Moreover, they condemned the Christian mission as part of a lurking foreign threat to the Chinese state,[73] which must be extirpated before it is

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indolently attempted to convert China to barbarian ways (*yi yi bian xia* 以夷變夏)"; Zhang Guangtian 張廣湉, "Pixie zhaiyao lüeyi" 闢邪摘要略議; *TSWC*, 193.

[69] Jiji, "Zhao jian"; *TSWC*, 267.

[70] Zhang Guangtian, "Pixie zhaiyao lüeyi"; *TSWC*, 193.

[71] See note 57 above.

[72] In his foreword to *Poxie ji*, Huang Zhen describes its publication as a well conceived project aiming to "preserve Chinese civilization (*cun hua* 存華) and illuminate the Dao (*ming dao* 明道)": 此國夷眾，生生世世，奪人國土，亂人學脈，不可使其半人半日在我邦內也。此破邪之集，良存華明道之至計，諸聖人之授靈於人子者，其尤當世世流行而不可廢也夫 ("Poxie ji zixu" 破邪集自序; *TSWC*, 155).

[73] Zhang Guangtian accused the Catholic Church of posing a serious threat to the "legiti-

too late.[74] By then the dialogic encounter between the two religions had by and large been overpowered by political strife, which led to anti-Christian persecution consequently.

## 5. CONCLUSION

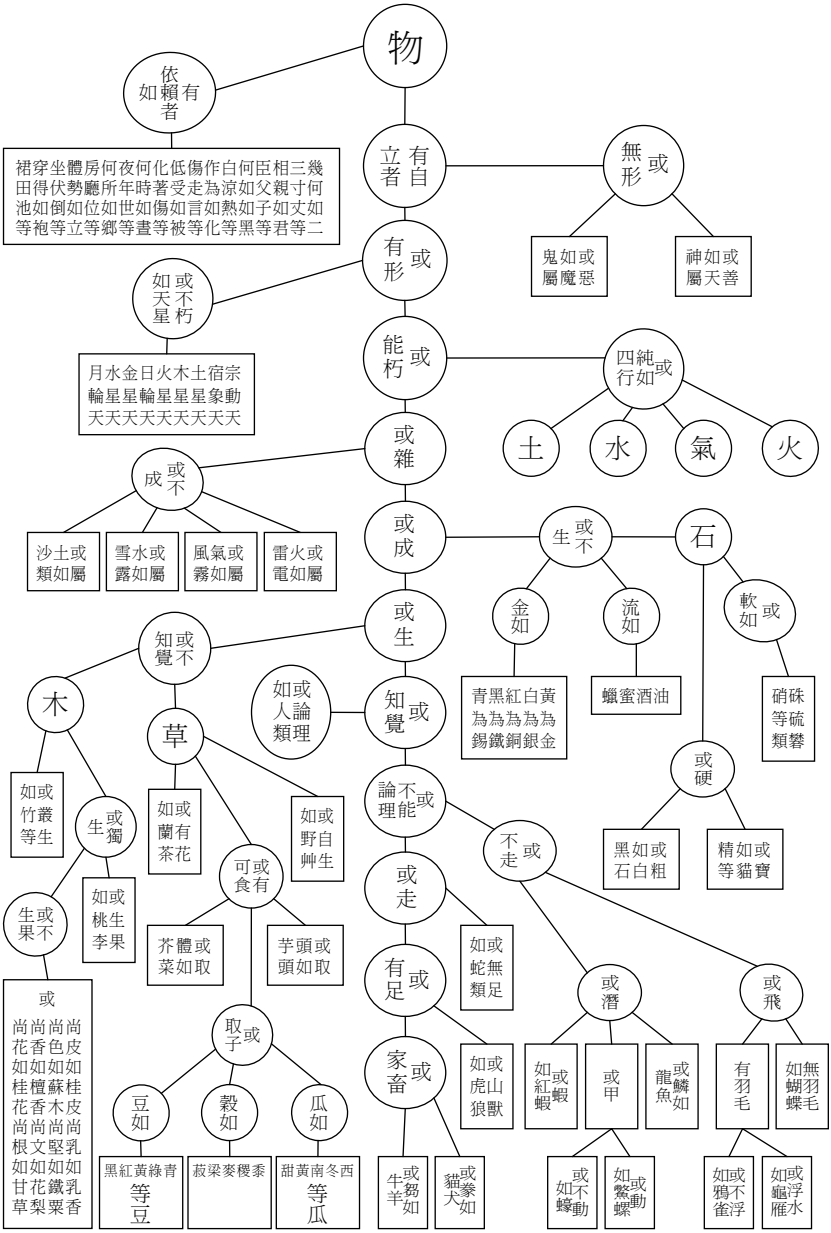
This paper has given a concise analysis of a historical instance of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China, that is, the dialogic encounter between the two religious traditions in the late Ming and early Qing. Focus has been placed on the central philosophical arguments the dialogists offered, in the first part of this paper. In the second part, the discussion about the apologetic strategies that the two religions pursued has been set in a context of how they defined both their own and each other's relationship with Confucianism. An attempt has been made, in the third and last part, to clarify the principal motivations and purposes of the Catholic and Buddhist dialogists respectively. It is hoped that this paper has provided part of the historical and philosophical backgrounds of the ongoing Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China, which may yield useful insights as to how interreligious dialogue of our times can be furthered.

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mate transmission of rulership" (*zhitong* 治統) by introducing the "barbarian," dual political system to China, which replaces the monarchical state with one that is simultaneously ruled by the "secular emperor" (*zhishi huangdi* 治世皇帝) and the "religious/edificatory emperor" (*jiaohua huangdi* 教化皇帝), that is, by the Chinese emperor and the pope as co-rulers; "Pixie zhaiyao lüeyi"; *TSWC*, 193. Some anti-Christian intellectuals accused the Western missionaries of undermining one of the foundations of Chinese political order and imperial power by introducing calendrical reforms. Moreover, the instigator of the Nanjing persecution (1616), Shen Que 沈潅 (1565–1624), remarked in his memorial to the Wanli 萬曆 emperor (r. 1573–1620) that the name of the state to which the Westerners belonged, Da Xi 大西, represented a tacit challenge to the sole, world-illumining lordship of the Chinese emperor, the name of whose empire was Da Ming 大明: 夫普天之下，薄海內外，惟皇上為覆載照臨之主，是以國號曰「大明」。何彼夷亦曰「大西」。且既稱歸化，豈可為兩大之辭以相抗乎？("Can yuanyi shu" 參遠夷疏; *TSWC*, 115).

[74] 至於嚴不軌之防，芟除殄滅，無俾易種，則當事之責 (Zhou Zhikui 周之夔, "Poxie ji xu" 破邪集序; *TSWC*, 147).

# Appendix: The "Wu zonglei tu"



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# A Case Study of Interreligious Relations in Contemporary China: Buddhist-Christian Interaction in Four Southeast Cities*

LI XIANGPING

In most recent times, my research brought me to conferences on Christian and Buddhist studies respectively. In those conferences, I observed an inclination in both religions to make general moral impact on contemporary society. This observation has led me to ponder the following questions: Despite the specific place allotted to religion in modern society, how could religious values or ethics still have moral impact on the wider society? In what spheres could they have such general impact, without the repercussions of a unifying ideology disguised in religious form? Furthermore, how would different religions interact with each other, if it happens that they are simultaneously extending their moral impact to the same society? It is in the scenario in the last question that the social meanings and problems pertaining to interreligious interaction and dialogue emerge.

Generally speaking, in addition to intra- and interreligious dialogue, religious dialogue may also refer to one between religion and society. It may take the form of doctrinal or intellectual interchange, personal meeting between religious leaders or believers in general, or joint efforts in public affairs or in building a better society. Religious believers engaged

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* Translated with abridgements by the editorial assistant of *Ching Feng*.

in these forms of dialogue thereby express their theological ideas, cultural identities and their subscription to public reason. Religious dialogue can thus operate with reference to theological or religious positions, from a social or sociological perspective, or through a pluralistic combination of different dialogical methods.[1]

However, this paper concerns neither theological interchange nor conscious intercommunication between religious organizations. Rather than limiting myself to the intellectual dimension of interreligious dialogue, I focus on social interactions between Christians and Buddhists and consider whether there has been any possibility basis or social space for a real dialogue between them. If there exists such a possibility basis or social space, then what form does it take and what are its characteristics? If such a basis or social space does not exist, then how are we to explain it? With these questions in view, this paper attempts to study the social and public character of Christian-Buddhist interaction and dialogue in a contemporary Chinese context so as to contribute to constructing a social-experiential model of religious dialogue.[2]

This paper resulted from a field survey on Buddhist-Christian interactions in two southeastern coastal provinces of the People's Republic of China, namely Zhejiang 浙江 and Fujian 福建.[3] Only part of the findings

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[1] In regard to Confucian-Christian dialogue in recent years, Lai Pinchao [Lai Pan-chiu] 賴品超 ("Zhongguo de ye–fo yanjiu: Huigu yu qianzhan" 中國的耶佛研究：回顧與前瞻, in vol. 2 of *Zhongguo chanxue* 中國禪學 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003], 318–27) observes a shift of focus from more traditional, spiritual concerns to contemporary problems to which both religious traditions may provide useful clues. Moreover, international Confucian-Christian dialogue also has focused its attention on global ecology and related economic issues. Hence, there is a prospect that Christian-Buddhist dialogue in China may be furthered by likewise addressing various issues of common concern.

[2] In regard to contemporary discussion of interreligious dialogue, at least two dialogical models have been found applicable, namely the experiential-expressive model and the cultural-linguistic model. The most apparent difference between them lies in the place of religious experience in our theoretical understanding of religion. In the experiential-expressive model, the fundamental religious experience is the heart of religion; the importance of such religious elements as myths/narratives, rituals, dogma, etc. lies in their function to give expression to that experience. In contrast, the cultural-linguistic model considers myths/narratives, rituals and dogma to be at the heart of religion, and does not ascribe priority to religious experience; it views religions primarily as interpretive media or categorical frameworks through which humans may have certain religious experience. The experiential-expressive model however still has wide appeal, not least because it seems more suitable for the religious needs in modernity and the development of interreligious relationship; it accommodates a soteriologically pluralistic view of religions. See Wang Zhicheng 王志成, *Heping de kewang: Dangdai zongjiao duihua lilun* 和平的渴望：當代宗教對話理論 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2003), 183, 189, 193, 204.

[3] The field survey was based on a research project (titled *Dangdai Zhongguo dongnan yanhai diqu fojiao–jidujiao jiaoshe guanxi yanjiu* 當代中國東南沿海地區佛教基督教交涉關係研究), conducted under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.

will be given in this paper. Since the samples were not selected on a random basis, the findings can serve to represent the subjects' general situation only. At any rate, this paper provides a case of case study method in regard to Christian-Buddhist interactions in contemporary Chinese society.

Data were obtained from a sample of 321 persons, who were geographically located in two cities in each of the above mentioned provinces, namely: Hangzhou 杭州 (72 [22.4%]) and Ningbo 寧波 (66 [20.6%]) in Zhejiang Province; Putian 莆田 (123 [38.3%]) and Xiamen 廈門 (60 [18.7%]) in Fujian Province. These two provinces were chosen because they are located in the southeastern coastal region, which has a relatively high proportion of both Christian and Buddhist populations.

Of the sample used for the analysis of this paper, males made up 76.5% (241) and females 23.5% (74). People who were 17 years of age or under made up 1.5% (5) of the sample, 18-through-35-year-olds the majority, i.e., 43.9% (145), 36-through-50-year-olds 22.2% (76), 51-through-60-year-olds 12.3% (42), and people who were 61 years old or above 18.1% (62). In terms of occupation, 35.2% of the sample were students (who made up the majority of the sample), 16.4% were industrial workers, 6.6% were farmers, 5.9% were school teachers, 4.9% were government employees, 3.0% were non-government employees,[4] 1.0% were occupants of managerial positions in non-government organizations, 0.7% served in the military, and the rest of the sample (26.3%) belonged to other occupations. In terms of highest educational level attained, the uneducated made up 1.6%, 11.4% had had primary education, 42.2% had had regular secondary education, 30.1% graduated from secondary or post-secondary vocational or technical schools, 9.5% had had undergraduate education and 5.2% had had postgraduate education (the median is secondary education level). In terms of marital status, 65.9% were single, 30.1% were married (but not remarried) and 3.4% were remarried.

Analyses of this paper are mainly based on the above source of data, with its main emphasis on how the Buddhist subjects interacted with Protestant Christians.[5] The perspective of Christian believers on the interreligious interaction under investigation will also be considered vis-à-vis the perspective from the Buddhist side of the dialogue.

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[4] In this paper, the category of "non-government employees" excludes occupants of managerial positions in non-government organizations, as well as industrial workers, farmers and school teachers.

[5] Protestantism (Chinese: *jidujiao* 基督教) and Catholicism (Chinese: *tianzhujiao* 天主教) are officially regarded as two different religions in mainland China. This paper focuses only on the former in its study of Buddhist-Christian interaction.

## 1. CONTACTS BETWEEN PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS AND BUDDHISTS

A religion is a cultural value system with its own absolute claims, which may not be compatible with those of other religions. Such claims may give rise to some degree of conservatism concerning interreligious relations, inhibiting normal contacts between adherents of different faiths and even generating interreligious rivalry. In a social setting where arranged or purposeful interreligious communications are absent, everyday voluntary contacts between people of different religious identities may constitute significant data for us to study how religions interact with each other.

Ever since it was introduced into China, Buddhism underwent centuries of sinicization, clashing and harmonizing with indigenous religions such as Confucianism and Daoism. Aiming to bring salvation to all living beings, Buddhism shows its connate socially open and culturally integrative quality, which has in general enabled Chinese Buddhists to adopt a relatively amiable posture on other religions and to get along with their adherents. Indeed, our survey indicates that Buddhists tend to have relatively frequent contacts with other religious believers.

Our data show that 49.8% of the Buddhist subjects had had contact with non-Buddhist religions and that 50.2% had had no contact at all with any non-Buddhist religion. Of the former, males made up 54.9% and females 31.7%. Male believers are thus more inclined to have contact with non-Buddhist believers. They seem to be more open-minded and tolerant than female believers.

The majority of the Buddhist subjects had had contact with Protestant Christianity (42.6%); others had had contact with believers in religious Daoism (35.2%), Catholicism (14.6%) and Islam (8%). As an indigenous religion in China, Daoism has had a notably close relation to Buddhism. A high frequency of contacts between these two religions is therefore something one would expect. Thus, it is surprising to observe an even higher frequency of contacts between Protestant Christians and Buddhists, at least in this part of China. There are two plausible explanations of this observation. First, in the regions under investigation, Protestant Christianity has been developing rather rapidly. Second, Protestant Christianity has been more socially adaptable and therefore has established intricate social connections with Buddhism, although it is to be noted that such connections are largely confined to everyday contacts between Protestant Christians and Buddhists who are already relatives or friends.

Insofar as those contacts are concerned, 42.2% of the Buddhist subjects indicated that they could make a good impression on non-Buddhist believers when coming into contact with them; of those religious friends Protestants made up 44.1%, Catholics 15.9% and Muslims 12.4%. The proportion of Buddhists having made friends with Protestants is much higher than the latter two religions. In contrast, 49.5% of the Protestants had had contact with people belonging to other religions. Although their contacts may not be regarded as remarkable in terms of frequency, they indicate that new paths to interactive interreligious relations have already been opened up. Most Protestants, making up 76.2% of the sample, had Buddhist friends. This may have something to do with the breadth and depth of the influence Buddhism has made on China. This figure also indicates that Buddhism has made relatively extensive impact on, and is deep-rooted in, the regions our survey focuses on. Next to Buddhism is Catholicism: 11.2% of the Protestants had had contact with Catholics. Protestantism and Catholicism are tied by their historical kinship; insofar as ordinary religious life of lay believers is concerned, the distinctions between them seem less apparent. Since religious Daoism (albeit an indigenous religion) and Islam (a religion introduced from outside China) have had quite limited impact on the regions under investigation, far fewer Protestant Christians there had had contact with their adherents; 8.7% had had contact with religious Daoists and 2.3% had had contact with Muslims.[6]

Our data clearly show that most interreligious contacts were between Protestant Christians and Buddhists. 42.6% of the Buddhists had had

[6] The survey of Protestant Christians adds a comparative dimension of our study of Buddhist-Christian interaction in the same regions (see sec. 5 below). We obtained data from a sample of 342 persons. Of these interviewees, 25 (7.3%) are from the region of Gaoqiao 高橋, Ningpao, 62 (18.1%) from the region of Daliangjie 大梁街, Ningbo, 184 (53.8%) from Putian and 71 (20.8%) from Xiamen. Of the sample, males made up 39.8% (130) and females 57.6% (197). People who were 17 years of age or under made up 1.5% (5) of the sample, 18-through-35-year-olds the majority, i.e., 43.9% (145), 36-through-50-year-olds 13.3% (44), 51-through-60-year olds 12.7% (42), and people who were 61 years old or above 18.2% (60). In terms of occupation, 35.2% of the sample were students (who made up the majority of the sample), 28.2% were industrial workers, 10.0% were school teachers, 8.5% were government employees, 7.5% were farmers and occupants of managerial positions in non-government organizations, 6.9% were non-government employees (see note 4 above), 6.6% were students and the rest of the sample (24.8%) belonged to other occupations. In terms of highest educational level attained, the uneducated made up 1.2%, 14.6% had had primary education, 49.2% had had regular secondary education, 25.1% graduated from secondary or post-secondary vocational or technical schools, 9.0% had had undergraduate education, and 0.6% had had post-graduate education (the median is secondary education level). In terms of marital status, 33.0% were unmarried, 65.9% were married (but not remarried), and 1.0% were remarried.

contact with Protestant Christians and 44.1% of them made friends with Protestant Christians, whereas Protestant Christians who had Buddhist friends made up 76.2% of the sample. According to the responses of the interviewees, the religion with which Protestant Christianity had contact most frequently was Buddhism. Next to it was religious Daoism. In view of these data, which are indicative of the situation up to the present, Protestant Christianity and Buddhism are two major participants in interreligious interaction or dialogue in the regions concerned.

## 2. HOW BUDDHISTS HANDLE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS

Although Christianity entered into China far later than Buddhism, it has had general impact on the country's southeastern coastal regions, including Zhejiang and Fujian Provinces. It is therefore most likely that Christianity is the religion with which Buddhists living there first come into contact, either in their everyday life or even during their normal religious activities.

Regarding their conception of Protestant Christianity, 44.6% of the Buddhist subjects indicated that the Buddha is higher than God (*Fotuo gao yu Shangdi* 佛陀高於上帝). The prevalent view they represented is illustrative of the impact absolute, incompatible claims of a religion tend to have on how its adherents understand other religions, as is usually the case in interreligious dialogue.

Moreover, 18.6% of the Buddhist subjects saw Protestant Christianity as a foreign religion (*yangjiao* 洋教), which indicates that Christianity, despite its general impact, has not successfully un-cultivated its historical image; for many still see it as an imported religion. Other Buddhists contending that the Christian God (*Shangdi* 上帝) and the Buddha are equal made up 11.8% of the sample, which indicates that they had a sense of equality and good understanding of the religious essence of both Christianity and Buddhism. They might have felt the want of some degree of interchange between the two religions.

As a matter of fact, it is observed that there are certain correlations between a Buddhist subject's conception of Christianity and factors such as education level, marital status, identity and occupation. How precisely the two religions interact as far as social conduct is concerned is predicated on the combination of these factors.

Table 1: Education level and conception of Protestant Christianity (N = 267)

| Conception of Protestant Christianity | Education level | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *e* | *f* |
| Christianity is a foreign religion | 0.0 | 4.0 | 19.5 | 17.9 | 14.8 | 33.3 |
| *Shangdi* and the Buddha are equal | 25.0 | 12.0 | 12.7 | 7.7 | 7.4 | 33.3 |
| The Buddha is higher than *Shangdi* | 50.0 | 72.0 | 50.8 | 41.0 | 29.6 | 6.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = uneducated; b = primary education; c = secondary education;*
*d = (post-)secondary vocational/technical education;*
*e = undergraduate education; f = postgraduate education*

The above table shows that the higher the education level attained, the higher the percentage of Buddhist interviewees seeing Protestant Christianity as a foreign religion. It is apparent that their conception of Protestant Christianity as a foreign religion is more or less conditioned by what they learned in schools.

The second proposition—God and the Buddha are equal—tended to receive more affirmative responses from those closer to both ends of the spectrum, namely the least educated and the most educated of the sample. Those in between the uneducated and the most educated might either lack a clear understanding of this issue or be ignorant about it. By contrast, the highly educated interviewees (such as our postgraduate subjects) should be able to make comparisons between the two religions on an equal footing, probably in terms of their respectively cultural values. They would therefore be more equipped than other Buddhist believers to bring different religions into dialogue. Yet the positive responses from the least educated subjects might have resulted from their impetuous guesswork.

The same correlation between education level and religious tolerance applies to the third proposition: the Buddha is higher than God. It is observed that higher education level means a higher proportion of negative responses to this proposition. This observation suggests that there is a close correspondence between one's education level and one's posture on religious beliefs. Highly educated people tend to be more religiously tolerant and less religiously conservative than those who have received less

education, except for those whose fundamentalist beliefs are informed or reinforced by the education they have obtained.

Table 2: Conception of Protestant Christianity and marital status (N = 256)

| Conception of Protestant Christianity | Marital status | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Married (but not remarried)* | *Single* | *Remarried* |
| Christianity is a foreign religion | 9.9 | 23.2 | 12.5 |
| *Shangdi* and the Buddha are equal | 12.7 | 9.6 | 0.0 |
| The Buddha is higher than *Shangdi* | 57.7 | 38.4 | 37.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

According to the above table, Buddhists who were married (but not remarried) show a clearer posture than others on two of the propositions: while 57.7% saw the Buddha as higher than God, 12.7% saw them as equal. Single Buddhists tended to see Protestant Christianity as a foreign religion, in that those who thought so made up 23.2% of the sample. Remarried Buddhists tended to see the Buddha as higher than the Christian God. There is thus a correlation between a Buddhist's marital status and his or her tendency towards (1) a Buddhist-centred approach of interreligious interaction and (2) priding on Buddhism as an indigenous religion. Yet, in comparison to the marital factor, education level is a more useful lens for viewing and analysing interreligious interaction.

One of the indications of Buddhist-Christian interactions in everyday life is the relationship between Buddhists and their Christian relatives and friends. Our survey shows that 29.1% of the interviewed Buddhists had Protestant Christian relatives and that 70% did not have a Protestant Christian relative. The ratio differs from one city to another.

As Table 3 below shows, the proportion of Ningbo's Buddhist interviewees who had Protestant Christian relatives or friends (64.5%) is the highest among the four cities.

Table 3: Regional differences in the proportion of Buddhist interviewees having Christian relatives / friends

| Do you have any relative / friend who is a Protestant Christian? | Location of interviewees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Hangzhou* | *Ningbo* | *Putian* | *Xiamen* |
| Yes | 13.6 | 64.5 | 23.7 | 17.5 |
| No | 86.4 | 35.5 | 76.3 | 82.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 4: Marital status and the proportion of Buddhist interviewees having Protestant Christian relatives / friends

| Do you have any relative / friend who is a Protestant Christian? | Marital status | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Married (but not remarried)* | *Single* | *Remarried* |
| Yes | 32.5 | 27.9 | 60.0 |
| No | 67.5 | 72.1 | 40.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 4 shows that the proportion of remarried Buddhist interviewees who had Protestant Christian relatives or friends is the highest (60%); whereas the proportion of married (but not remarried) Buddhists is higher than the single interviewees. Marriage implies expansion of one's kinship, and expansion of kinship may imply a higher possibility of expansion of interreligious connections. Remarriage rate has been rising in recent years. Buddhist-Christian interactions have at the same time become somewhat more common. Most Buddhist interviewees who had Christian relatives or friends were therefore those who had been divorced or remarried.

Most Buddhists (67.3%) indicated that the policy they had adopted on their relationship with their Christian relatives or friends was not to become mutually interfering but to live in peace with each other. As many as 21.7% of the Buddhists would try to convert their Christian friends or relatives. 6.6% of the Buddhists would communicate Buddhist teachings

to them so as to change their religious beliefs. The policy the Buddhist interviewees felt inclined to adopt differs from city to city.

Table 5: Regional difference in the policy on the relationship with a Protestant Christian friend/relative (N = 272)

| Policy on one's relationship with a Protestant Christian friend/relative | Location of the interviewees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Hangzhou* | *Ningbo* | *Putian* | *Xiamen* |
| Try one's best to convert him or her | 23.9 | 3.3 | 38.9 | 3.8 |
| Communicate to him or her Buddhist teachings | 8.7 | 3.3 | 8.8 | 3.8 |
| Mutual non-interfering and peaceful coexistence | 65.2 | 93.4 | 46.9 | 82.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

As Table 5 shows, Buddhists in Ningbo (93.4%) and Xiamen (82.7%) would more easily adopt a policy of no interference with each other's religion. While Buddhists in Putian (38.9%) and Hangzhou (23.9%) indicated a clearer tendency towards converting their Christian relatives or friends, those in Ningbo and Xiamen were less pushing and some might not even have been minded to convert their relatives or friends. According to this set of data, Buddhists in Ningbo appeared most tolerant as to handling their relationship with Protestant Christians.

Excepting students, Buddhists of all occupations indicated that they would live in peace with Christians without being interfering as to each other's faith (see Table 6 below). 68.3% of the Buddhists who were students inclined to adopt an aggressive policy of converting their Christian friends and relatives; fewer opted for non-interference policy. Buddhists who were farmers tended towards communicating Buddhist teachings to their Christian friends and relatives. Thus, Buddhists of different occupations could more or less accept both Christianity and the divergence between it and Buddhism, except for Buddhist students whose education has afforded them the means to insist on their religious posture and to attempt to change their Christian friends and relatives.

Table 6: Occupational difference in the policy on the relationship with a Protestant Christian friend/relative (N = 299)

| Policy on one's relationship with a Protestant Christian friend/relative | Occupation | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *e* | *f* | *g* | *h* | *i* |
| Try one's best to convert him or her | 33.3 | 23.5 | .0 | 8.3 | 11.1 | .0 | .0 | 68.3 | 30.9 |
| Communicate to him or her Buddhist teachings | .0 | 17.6 | .0 | 8.3 | 11.1 | .0 | .0 | 8.9 | 10.3 |
| Mutual non-interfering and peaceful coexistence | 61.9 | 52.9 | 100.0 | 83.3 | 77.8 | 33.3 | 92.9 | 2.0 | 52.6 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = industrial worker; b = farmer; c = military; d = civil servant;*
*e = non-government employees; f = management of non-government organizations;*
*g = teacher; h = student; i = others*

The overall situation is that there is ample social space for Buddhist-Christian interactions. At the very least, it was plausible for 50% of the Buddhist interviewees to live or to come into contact peacefully or neighbourly with Christians. A situation like this can provide an amicable social ambience in which believers of both religions may interact socially. It may even provide a social context in which they may be engaged in an open dialogue.

## 3. HOW FAR HAVE BUDDHISTS WANTED TO UNDERSTAND CHRISTIANITY?

Religious knowledge, especially knowledge about another religion with which one interacts, is a prerequisite for any serious religious interaction or dialogue; for it can motivate interactive interreligious contacts or dialogue. According to our survey, on average 60.9% of the Buddhist interviewees responded that they had it in mind to understand Christian teachings or to read the Bible. Despite divergences as to their postures on

some related issues, it remains certain that Buddhists were generally willing to understand the Christian religion, or to understand it better.

Table 7: Regional differences in understanding Protestant Christianity (N = 297)

| Do you have it in mind to understand Protestant Christian teachings? | Location of interviewees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Hangzhou* | *Ningbo* | *Putian* | *Xiamen* |
| Yes | 24.6 | 72.3 | 58.3 | 88.3 |
| No | 75.4 | 27.7 | 41.7 | 11.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Regional differences regarding the interviewees' willingness to understand Christian teachings are obvious. A considerably high proportion of Buddhists at Xiamen (88.3%) and Ningbo (72.3%) responded that they had it in mind to understand Christian teachings. It is in accord with the fact that Buddhists in the two cities had the attitude of living by and large harmoniously with Christians. Indeed, only when both religions incline to live harmoniously could it be possible that they are willing to understand what each other's religion teaches.

Table 8: Gender and understanding Protestant Christianity (N = 272)

| Do you have it in mind to understand Protestant Christian teachings? | Gender | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* |
| Yes | 70.3 | 28.8 |
| No | 29.7 | 71.2 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Accordingly, male Buddhists (70.3%) were more willing than female Buddhists (28.8%) to understand Christian teachings or to read the Bible. It is in accord with the fact that male Buddhists are more ready than female Buddhists to come into contact with other religions. In other words, male believers are more ready than female ones to come into contact, or

to make friends, with believers of other religions. Male believers are in this sense more religiously open-minded and tolerant.

Table 9: Age and understanding Protestant Christian teachings (N = 288)

| Do you have it in mind to understand Protestant Christian teachings? | Age | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *17 or below* | *18–35* | *36–50* | *51–60* | *61 or above* |
| Yes | 62.5 | 71.9 | 58.1 | 28.6 | 22.7 |
| No | 37.5 | 28.1 | 41.9 | 71.4 | 77.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The above table shows that interviewees of lower ages tended to be willing to understand Christian teachings. 71.9% of the 18-to-35-year-olds indicated their willingness to understand the Christian religion or to understand it better. Lower proportions of the higher-age groups had it in mind to understand Christian teachings. A plausible explanation is that younger people tend to be mentally active and are hence more curious about a religion they often come into contact with in their everyday life. They are thus more motivated to understand its teachings or to read its holy scriptures.

Table 10: Occupational differences and understanding Protestant Christianity (N = 283)

| Do you have it in mind to understand Protestant Christian teachings? | Occupation | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *E* | *f* | *g* | *h* | *i* |
| Yes | 36.6 | 10.0 | 100.0 | 66.7 | 66.7 | 100.0 | 76.5 | 72.8 | 63.5 |
| No | 63.4 | 90.0 | .0 | 33.3 | 33.3 | .0 | 23.5 | 27.2 | 36.5 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = industrial worker; b = farmer; c = military; d = civil servant;*
*e = non-government employees; f = management of non-government organizations;*
*g = teacher; h = student; i = others*

According to the above table, a higher motivation to understand Christian teachings and to read the Bible is correlated to occupations requiring either higher education level or higher sociality. In contrast, industrial or agricultural labourers tended to be conservative and resistant to Christian teachings. In other words, whereas a Buddhist whose occupation is "traditionalistic" tends towards a more conservative religious attitude, open-mindedness is time and again observable in interviewees whose occupations may afford them more religious dynamism amidst social changes. Thus, there is a correlation between one's occupation and the social character of one's religious faith.

Table 11: Understanding Protestant Christian teachings and differences in education level (N = 284)

| Do you have it in mind to understand Protestant Christian teachings? | Education level | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *e* | *f* |
| Yes | .0 | 40.0 | 53.8 | 71.1 | 75.0 | 81.2 |
| No | 100.0 | 60.0 | 46.2 | 28.9 | 25.0 | 18.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = uneducated; b = primary education;*
*c = secondary education; d = (post-)secondary vocational/technical education;*
*e = undergraduate education; f = postgraduate education*

Higher education level is correlated to a higher proportion of Buddhists who responded that they had it in mind to understand Christian teachings and to read the Bible. Some basic education is requisite for one to understand the teachings of another religion, and further education may be requisite for one to assess other religions rationally and to adopt an increasingly open attitude towards them. Nevertheless, while open-mindedness and good education may facilitate religious dialogue, good education without open-mindedness can have inverse effect.

As to the relationship of marital status to one's willingness to understand Christian teachings and to read the Bible (see below, Table 12), the proportions of Buddhists who were either remarried or single and who shared such willingness is higher than that of Buddhists who were married but not remarried. This divergence might be due to the impact the qualities and marital status of the interviewees might have on their attitudes. As the data discussed above show, married (but not remarried)

Buddhists tend to regard the Buddha as higher than the Christian God and to have less Protestant Christian relatives or friends. Perhaps the same reasons kept them and Christianity at a distance.

Table 12: Marital status and understanding Protestant Christian teachings (N = 272)

| Do you have it in mind to understand Protestant Christian teachings? | Marital status | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Married (but not remarried)* | *Single* | *Remarried* |
| Yes | 39.7 | 71.2 | 70.0 |
| No | 60.3 | 28.8 | 30.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

## 4. BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN INTERACTIONS IN PRACTICE: BUDDHISTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS

The above questions posed in the survey only concern the Buddhist interviewees' basic values as reflected in their attitude towards Christians. Will their practice conform to their values? With the aid of several hypothetical situations, we assess the relationship of the Buddhists to Christians in terms of social interaction between them. The results of the survey show that their attitude towards Protestant Christians is on the whole quite good.

We asked the Buddhist interviewees, "If a Protestant Christian enters a monastery when a Buddhist rite is being carried out, as a participant in the rite, what would you do?" 53.4% of them responded that they would welcome the Christian stranger joining it. 41.9% of them responded that they would not intervene (*shun qi ziran* 順其自然). Those responding that they would feel irritated but would not take any action to kick the Christian stranger out only made up 1.3%. And only 1.7% of them responded that they would take action right away by asking him or her to leave.

The responses of the 53.4% of the Buddhist subjects are representative of the normal social interactive relationship between Buddhists and Protestant Christians, even though there remain divergences in regard to the

Buddhist subjects' geographical locations, age groups, occupations and education level.

Table 13: Geographical locations and the interviewees' relationship to Protestant Christians (N = 290)

| If a Protestant Christian enters the place where your are conducting religious service, you would … | Location of interviewees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Hangzhou* | *Ningbo* | *Putian* | *Xiamen* |
| welcome him or her joining in. | 65.5 | 24.6 | 62.2 | 55.9 |
| not intervene. | 30.9 | 69.2 | 33.6 | 39.0 |
| feel irritated. | 3.6 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 0.0 |
| ask him or her to leave. | 0.0 | 4.6 | 1.7 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Buddhists in Hangzhou and Putian appeared more tolerant. For higher proportions of interviewees in the two cities (65.5% and 62.2% respectively) responded that they would welcome that stranger to join in. Since a higher proportion of Buddhists in Ningbo had Christian friends or relatives, Buddhists in this city may more frequently come into contact with Christians in everyday life. That can perhaps explain why they tended to feel comfortable with a situation involving Christians. Obviously, some Buddhists in Hangzhou would feel irritated by the "intrusion." Yet only insignificant proportions of Buddhists in Ningbo and Putian would feel so irritated that they would repel the "intruder."

As Table 14 below shows, the 51-to-60-year-olds tended to be more tolerant; 63.0% responded that they would welcome the Christian to join in. Second to them are the age ranges between 18 and 35 (55.7%) and of 17 or below (55.6%). The age ranges of 61 or above (52.4%) and between 36 and 50 (51.7%) most clearly show a tendency towards feeling comfortable with the situation. The highest proportion of Buddhists feeling irritated belongs to the age range between 36 and 50 (10.3%). And most interviewees who were 17 years of age or younger (11.1%) would go to the extreme—by asking the Christian stranger to leave.

Table 14: Age and the interviewees' relationship to Protestant Christians (N = 289)

| If a Protestant Christian enters the place where your are conducting religious service, you would … | Age | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *17 or below* | *18–35* | *36–50* | *51–60* | *61 or above* |
| welcome him or her joining in. | 55.6 | 55.7 | 27.6 | 63.0 | 47.6 |
| not intervene. | 33.3 | 40.9 | 51.7 | 37.0 | 52.4 |
| feel irritated. | .0 | 1.0 | 10.3 | .0 | .0 |
| ask him or her to leave. | 11.1 | 2.0 | 6.9 | .0 | .0 |
| respond in some other way. | .0 | 2.0 | 3.4 | .0 | .0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 15: Occupations and the interviewees' relationship to Protestant Christians (N = 284)

| If a Protestant Christian enters the place where your are conducting religious service, you would … | Occupation | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *e* | *f* | *g* | *h* | *i* |
| welcome him or her joining in. | 41.6 | 45.0 | 0.0 | 35.7 | 12.5 | 66.7 | 41.2 | 65.7 | 58.4 |
| not intervene. | 48.7 | 40.0 | 100.0 | 64.3 | 87.5 | 33.3 | 52.9 | 30.5 | 37.7 |
| feel irritated. | 3.1 | .0 | .0 | .0 | .0 | .0 | 5.9 | .0 | 1.3 |
| ask him or her to leave. | .0 | 15.0 | .0 | .0 | .0 | .0 | .0 | 1.9 | .0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = industrial worker; b = farmer; c = military; d = civil servant;*
*e = non-government employees; f = management of non-government organizations;*
*g = teacher; h = student; i = others*

On the whole, Buddhists of all occupations listed in the table did not tend to be hostile to Protestant Christians. They would by and large treat them cordially and placidly. The attitude of business executives and students towards the Christian stranger appears most cordial; respectively

66.7% and 65.7% of them would welcome him or her to join in. Most non-government employees and members of the military personnel (87.5% and 100% respectively) would feel comfortable with this uninvited guest.

The highest proportion of interviewees feeling irritated belongs to the occupational category of school teachers. Closely correlated to the Buddhist farmers' religious conservatism is the fact that as many as 15.0% of them would ask the "intruder" to leave.

Table 16: Education level and the interviewees' relationship to Protestant Christians (N = 284)

| If a Protestant Christian enters the place where your are conducting religious service, you would … | Education level | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *e* | *f* |
| welcome him or her joining in. | 0.0 | 55.2 | 58.5 | 51.5 | 58.6 | 26.7 |
| not intervene. | 66.7 | 37.9 | 35.6 | 45.6 | 41.4 | 66.7 |
| feel irritated. | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| ask him or her to leave. | 0.0 | 6.9 | 1.7 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = uneducated; b = primary education;*
*c = secondary education; d = (post-)secondary vocational/technical education;*
*e = undergraduate education; f = postgraduate education*

Usually, more highly educated interviewees tended to be more tolerant towards other religions. Nevertheless, while interviewees of postgraduate level responding that they would welcome the guest joining in only made up 26.7%, those of lower education levels responding so made up over 50%. 66.7% of both the postgraduate and the uneducated subjects responded that they would not intervene. Although a fairly high proportion of Buddhist subjects tended towards tolerance, the proportion of those who would go so far as asking the Christian stranger to leave is also quite high (6.9%). Thus, there is still on the whole a considerable distance between the most educated and the least educated insofar as their attitude towards Christians is concerned.

Perhaps increased mutual understanding at the intellectual level does not necessarily help to draw together adherents of different religions in

terms of social conduct. In accord with this is the observation that the majority of the Buddhist subjects who received postgraduate education would only respond passively to the entry of the Christian stranger, although they were those who seemed to be most inclined to understand Christian teachings better. Interestingly, the least educated interviewees too would respond to the stranger passively in the hypothetical situation. Thus, the positive impact education may have on interreligious dialogue is not invariably unequivocal. More crucial to advance in interreligious relations is the existence of a social space in which religions may be engaged in dialogue, a space which is governed by a kind of public reason.

Table 17: Marital status and the interviewees' relationship to Protestant Christians (N = 275)

| If a Protestant Christian enters the place where your are conducting religious service, you would … | Marital status | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Married (but not remarried)* | *Single* | *Remarried* |
| welcome him or her joining in. | 44.9 | 58.5 | 11.1 |
| not intervene. | 48.7 | 37.2 | 88.9 |
| feel irritated. | 3.8 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| ask him or her to leave. | 2.6 | 1.1 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

According to the above data, single Buddhists were relatively tolerant (58.5%): they inclined to invite the Christian stranger to join in. Second to them were married (but not remarried) Buddhists; 44.9% of them would do likewise. An overwhelmingly high proportion of remarried interviewees (88.9%) indicated that they "would not intervene," which is suggestive of the impact marital relationship may have on Buddhists in regard to their behaviour towards Protestant Christians.

As a matter of fact, the above analyses are focused on only one aspect of how Buddhists would behave towards Christians. In addition to that we studied how the Buddhists would respond when a Protestant Christian has some trouble, in order to show how supposable our Buddhist subjects would offer help to Christians. The Buddhist interviewees were asked, "What would you do if a Protestant Christian asks you for help?" An average of 90.1% responded that they would give him or her a hand, and an average of 6.6% responded that they would ask someone to help. Only an

average of 1.7% of the Buddhist interviewees responded that they would not offer any help. Our working hypothesis is thus proven feasible.

Table 18: Whether to give a hand to a Protestant Christian, and the geographical locations of interviewees (N = 303)

| Whether to give a hand to a Protestant Christian | Location of Interviewees | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Hangzhou* | *Ningbo* | *Putian* | *Xiamen* |
| I would give a hand. | 98.3 | 69.2 | 94.2 | 96.7 |
| I would find someone to help. | 0.0 | 26.2 | 2.5 | 0.0 |
| I would not give a hand. | 1.7 | 4.6 | 0.8 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The above table shows that while more Buddhists in Hangzhou and Putian would give a hand (98.3% and 94.2% respectively), most Buddhists in Ningbo (26.2%) would find someone to help.

Table 19: Education level and the interviewees' willingness to help Protestant Christians (N = 290)

| Whether to give a hand to a Protestant Christian | Education level | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *a* | *b* | *c* | *d* | *e* | *f* |
| I would give a hand. | 80.0 | 92.3 | 90.2 | 87.9 | 96.9 | 90.3 |
| I would find someone to help. | .0 | 3.8 | 6.5 | 11.0 | .0 | 6.6 |
| I would not give a hand. | 20.0 | 3.8 | 1.6 | .0 | .0 | 1.4 |
| Other responses | .0 | .0 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 3.4 | 1.7 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*a = uneducated; b = primary education;*
*c = secondary education; d = (post-)secondary vocational/technical education;*
*e = undergraduate education; f = postgraduate education*

The proportions of Buddhist interviewees responding that they would

give a hand to the Christian are generally high for all education levels. Interviewees who received undergraduate, primary and secondary education—in descending order of willingness—tended to be willing to give a hand. Most interviewees responding that they would not help are found among the uneducated (20%). Still we can by no means establish from the data that if *x* is more educated than *y*, then believer *x* is necessarily more willing than believer *y* to offer help in the hypothetical situation. However, it is still observable that in this situation a more educated interviewee is more likely to act generously towards a believer of another religion (such as a Christian). It is also remarkable that while only 26.7% of the postgraduate interviewees would welcome the uninvited Christian to join their religious service (see table 16 above), a rather high proportion of them (90.3%) would give a hand to the Christian asking for help. Thus, the impact of intellectual impediment derived from an individual believer's education is confined to core aspects of his or her faith only. Apart from religious matters, believers tend to be more morally like-minded under common moral standards of civil society, despite their diverse educational background.

Table 20: Marital status and the interviewees' willingness to help Protestant Christians (N = 280)

| Whether to give a hand to a Protestant Christian | Marital status | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Married (but not remarried)* | *Single* | *Remarried* |
| I would give a hand. | 82.5 | 94.2 | 70.0 |
| I would find someone to help. | 11.4 | 3.1 | 30.0 |
| I would not give a hand. | 2.5 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

It seems that unmarried Buddhists would be more willing than married Buddhists to offer help themselves in that hypothetical situation (Table 20). While the proportion of remarried Buddhists who would find someone to help is highest, no remarried interviewee responded that he or she would turn away from the Christian.

Apparently, religions or believers of different religions tend to interact with each other better in terms of social behaviour, especially when their interaction concerns matters governed by a common, public ethic. For

public ethic or public reason fares better than mutual dogmatic understanding in facilitating interreligious interactions.

## 5. PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS BUDDHISTS

To add a comparative dimension to this field survey, which studies interreligious interactions from a social-experiential perspective, we also have taken into consideration how Protestant Christians would perceive Buddhists and how they would interact with them.

Of the Christian interviewees who had established a personal relationship with believers of other religions, 53.5% maintained a good friendship with them. This contrasts strikingly with the past age of religious conflict in China during which Christianity was polemically regarded as foreign or alien. After decades of social development and change, Christianity has now rooted itself in the Chinese soil; an average Chinese would no longer consider Christianity to be a foreign religion. Moreover, the gradual emergence of modern society—in the sociological sense of the word—affords a living space for religion where religious tolerance has overcome moral conservatism and where interactions and understanding between religions could become not only workable, but also more rationally based. It is on the basis of this new social situation in China that Christians can live peacefully, and establish friendships, with non-Christians.

Of the friends of Protestant Christians who were adherents of other religions, the majority (79.2%) were Buddhists, 8.5% Catholics, 5.4% religious Daoists and 1.5% Muslims. Since the friends of the Buddhist interviewees who were adherents of another religion were mostly Protestant Christians, a Buddhist and a Protestant Christian are the likeliest match of interreligious friendship. Buddhism and Christianity are in that sense and in the regions under investigation more likely than other religions to come into direct contact.

Some degree of tension can arise between familial relations and religious faith. However, the responses to the question "If you have a relative who belongs to a religion different from yours, what would you do?" show that quite many Protestant Christian subjects held a relatively tolerant attitude towards this relative, even though 68.5% responded that they would endeavour to "change him or her." Yet 13.1% of the interviewees indicated that they would not persist in converting him or her, while only

9.3% would persist. 5.0% even showed an affirmative attitude towards believing in a religion different from theirs. Few responded that they might not be able to get along with this relative. Familial harmony was so important to most interviewees that few of them would allow religious difference as such to imperil their familial relations.

Moreover, 66.3% of the Christian subjects indicated their willingness to peacefully live together with Buddhists in a familial context. This may reflect the pervasive and penetrating influence of Buddhism in the regions under investigation, which may even compel Christians to come to terms with religions or religious lifestyles different from their own. Since Protestant Christianity underwent a relatively rapid development—hence a process of increased contextualization and socialization—in the recent decade, it has had more frequent contact with Buddhism and other religious traditions.

As a result, most Protestant Christians do not want to appear as pushy proselytizers to their Buddhist relatives, not to say to persist in forcing them to change their faith. 45.3% of the Christian interviewees "often shared the Gospel" with their Buddhist relatives in order that they might someday come to accept the Christian faith. 30.8% responded that they would, in everyday family life, endeavour to "change" them by all possible means. Nevertheless, it can be observed that religious differences do not get in the way of the everyday familial life of Christians as far as the relationship with their Buddhist relatives is concerned. 21.8% of the interviewees indicated that living with a Buddhist relative would not become a cause of serious familial conflict. For them, one's commitment to maintaining familial harmony might have been as important as one's religious obligations. In addition to the commandment of loving each other, which lies at the heart of Christian morality, the ethical priority Confucianism accords to familial relations must have had profound influence on Chinese Christians as well.

Our survey shows how Protestant Christians would behave towards Buddhists not only in a familial context, but also in the sphere of public life. We asked them about this hypothetical situation: "If a Buddhist enters a church or a place where you and your fellow believers have gathered for some religious activities, what would you do?" Of the interviewees 75.0% would welcome the Buddhist stranger joining in, 13.1% would not intervene, 3.5% would feel irritated (albeit without taking any action) and 1.3% would ask him or her to leave. They were also asked what they would do if a Buddhist approaches them for help. 89.9% of the Christian subjects would either give a hand or find someone to help, and only 3.9% answered that they would not give a hand. Religious differences between Christians and Buddhists, at least in view of the former group's behav-

iour in the two hypothetical situations, do not constitute a major obstacle to their everyday cordial interaction in the sphere of public life.

There are still obstacles to building Buddhist-Christian rapport, which is conducive to a fruitful interreligious dialogue. Presumably, the cognitive attitudes of our Christian interviewees towards anything Buddhist were more or less governed by their monotheistic evaluation of Buddhism. To be sure, they tended to have a rather low opinion of the Buddhist religion; yet few of them had a good knowledge of Buddhist doctrines. It seems usual for Protestant Christians to consider Buddhism to be a superstition of the old regime (44.9%) or to be idolatrous (33.7%). Interviewees who saw Buddhism as something of traditional culture were only in the minority (11.2%). Also, the interviewees tended to be apologetically minded and to have a superior attitude towards Buddhism. Only 22.6% of them clearly indicated their willingness to understand Buddhist teachings. In general, only after the Christians have found it unlikely to "change" a Buddhist would they "let it take its course" and seek to live peacefully with him or her for the time being. Although their fairly strong Christian-centred attitude would not in itself give rise to interreligious conflicts, an overemphasis on religious positions or absolute claims can still impede or even suppress normal Buddhist-Christian interactions.[7] Thus, it would be easier for religions such as Buddhism and Christianity to intercommunicate with each other on the social, practical level rather than on the doctrinal level. All in all, both Buddhism and Christianity, in the social context of contemporary China, have in general acquired a social, ethical character that continuously brings interreligious interactions into conformity with socially agreed ethical standards.

## 6. TOWARDS A SOCIAL-EXPERIENTIAL MODEL OF BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Focusing on four cities in southeast China (namely Hangzhou, Ningbo, Putian and Xiamen), we have examined and analysed some aspects of the

[7] According to our survey, 26.6% of the interviewees believed in Christianity because they needed a "peace-yielding faith"; 59.0% became Christians owing to family relationships; and as many as 62.9% of the interviewees, before converting to Christianity, had sought religious liberation through popular cultic practices such as worshipping bodhisattvas and/or divination. Their understanding of the Buddhist religion might have been conditioned by their pre-Christian religious life.

interaction between contemporary Chinese Protestant Christians and Buddhists.

For instance, our survey shows that at least 50% of the Buddhist subjects could get along with Protestant Christians in their everyday social life. As many as 53.4% of them would welcome a Protestant Christian joining their religious activity. The fact that they considered it proper and even desirable thus to interact with Christians in a religious context shows how plausible it is for the two religions to engage in normal social interaction and in direct conversation.

Comparably, as many as 75.0% of the Christian subjects would welcome a Buddhist joining their religious activity. Their hospitable act may to some extent have something to do with their Christian values. Religious disparities between Christians and Buddhists have not become a major obstacle to their everyday cordial interaction in the sphere of public, civic life. For social morals and public reason, which do not depend on views, values or self-interests of any particular religions, have a regulatory role to play in the social interactions between adherents of different religions.

In the context of globalization, different religions may engage in dialogue at a theological-doctrinal, philosophical or social-experiential level, but never at an ideological level. For irresolvable conflicts between religions will arise whenever religions appear as ideologies. In modern society, no single religion can wield public authority and claim to possess absolute truth. Thus, the purpose of interreligious dialogue is neither to assert the cogency and legitimacy of any one religion, nor to homogenize different religious systems and reduce them into one. Interreligious dialogue can serve to make apparent the limitations of a religious system, which will be all the more apparent with the involvement of public reason in interreligious interaction.

Normal interreligious interaction and dialogue are possible only within public social space, in which principles governing social conduct are not based on any religious ethos but must conform to legal and ethical systems from outside any religious ones. Interreligious interaction must neither be bounded by individual religious systems nor by concerns pertaining to doctrinal orthodoxy. Different religious believers must therefore collaborate to forge a new, social-experiential mode of interreligious interaction and public expression of religious commitment, a mode that incorporates institutionalized religious ideas, personal religious experience and public reason.[8]

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[8] For the notion of public reason, see John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,”

"Religion without law," writes the American legal scholar Harold Berman, "loses its social and historical character and becomes a purely personal mystique. … Contemporary religious experience must be incarnated in legal structures and processes, both within religious communities and in the larger society of which they are a part."[9] Rather than accentuating the absoluteness of religious doctrines, the purpose of engaging in interreligious intercommunication or dialogue is to acquire the social character of one's own religion and to build equal, interactive relationships with other religions, which are all bound by the duty of civility as well as values and principles that transcend individual religious systems.[10]

in idem, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 131–80.

[9] Harold J. Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 78, 105. "Law and religion," Berman continues, "are two different dimensions of human experience; but each is also a dimension of the other. They stand or fall together" (ibid., 105).

[10] John Rawls, in his recent exposition of the idea of public reason, writes: "How is it possible for those holding religious doctrines, some based on religious authority, for example, the Church or the Bible, to hold at the same time a reasonable political conception that supports a reasonable constitutional democratic regime? … How is it possible—or is it—for those of faith, as well as the nonreligious (secular), to endorse a constitutional regime even when their comprehensive doctrines may not prosper under it, and indeed may decline? This last question brings out anew the significance of the idea of legitimacy and public reason's role in determining legitimate law" ("The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," 149). The social-experiential mode of interreligious interaction that this paper proposes may enable citizens who adhere to certain "comprehensive doctrines" to peacefully and fruitfully interact with their fellow citizens who adhere to other "comprehensive doctrines."

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# The Role of Hong Kong in the Buddhist-Christian Encounter in China: A Post-Conference Reflection

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In comparison with the Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Japan or America, the Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China can be said to be underdeveloped.[1] However, this does not mean that there is no significant Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China. During the first half of the 20th century, there were many Chinese intellectuals actively engaged in Buddhist-Christian dialogue.[2] However, due to socio-political changes, the dialogue failed to gather momentum in Mainland China after 1949. Since then, Hong Kong has played a rather vital role in the Buddhist-Christian encounter in China.

Through a review of the Buddhist-Christian encounter in Hong Kong, this paper attempts to suggest that the prospect of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China, though remaining rather uncertain, should be viewed more positively. The crystal ball is rather cloudy because there are many

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[1] Whalen Lai and Michael von Brück, *Christianity and Buddhism: A Multi-cultural History of Their Dialogue*, trans. Phyllis Jestice (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001), 81–103.

[2] See Lai Pan-chiu, ed., *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu jiduzongjiao de xiangyu* 近代中國佛教與基督宗教的相遇 (Hong Kong: Logos & Pneuma Press, 2003).

contributory factors and even conflicting signs for the future development of the Buddhist-Christian encounter in China. These factors include not only socio-political developments, but also the attitudes of Buddhists and Christians towards each other. However, based on the most recent developments at both the grassroot and intellectual levels, one can be cautiously optimistic about the prospect of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China. In view of the overall trend in the development of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China, this paper attempts to suggest that the role to be played by Hong Kong should be reconsidered accordingly.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The importance of the role played by Hong Kong in the development of the Buddhist-Christian encounter in China can be seen from different aspects.

In terms of institution, most of the organizations related to the promotion of Buddhist-Christian dialogue are based in Hong Kong. The best known of them remains perhaps Tao Fong Shan (established since the 1930s), which carries on the work and vision of the Norwegian missionary, Karl Ludwig Reichelt (1877–1952), who began his dialogue with Chinese Buddhists in Mainland China.[3] It is interesting to note that when considering the location of a new centre for Buddhist-Christian dialogue in a place politically more stable than Nanjing, Reichelt eventually preferred Hong Kong to Singapore, Taiwan and Japan. He thought that Hong Kong would be an ideal place because it was nearer to China, and the situation would be even better after 1997, when Hong Kong was to return to China. As early as 1929, he predicted that the role of Hong Kong as a British colony would be ended even before its formal return to China.[4] In hindsight, one has to admire Reichelt's farsightedness.

In addition to its reception to Buddhists, Tao Fong Shan housed for many years a research centre, the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Re-

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[3] Eric J. Sharpe, *Karl Ludvig Reichelt: Missionary, Scholar, and Pilgrim* (Hong Kong: Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre, 1984)

[4] Lars Brinth, "Yixiang yu xianshi: Ai Xiangde boshi yu Daofengshan jidujiao chaihui (CMB) zhi lishi yu chuantong" 異象與現實——艾香德博士與道風山基督教差會（CMB）之歷史與傳統, in Chen Guangpei, ed., *Chuancheng yu shiming: Ai Xiangde boshi shishi sishiwu-zhounian xueshu jinian wenji* 傳承與使命——艾香德博士逝世四十五週年學術紀念文集 (Hong Kong: Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, 1998), 18.

ligion and Culture. Established in 1957, it moved out of Tao Fong Shan in 1987 and moved to Theology Building, Chung Chi College in 2000. It aims at scholarly research and publication related to Chinese religions, including Buddhist-Christian dialogue. In 1968, another organization, the Society of Religious Friendship (Zongjiao youyi she 宗教友誼社), was established by Sverre Holth (known also as Huo Min 霍玟 in Chinese), the then director of Tao Fong Shan, which provided a more convenient meeting place in Kowloon for people of different religions. Later on, Holth established another Society of Religious Friendship in Taipei, which, after successfully publishing an anthology commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Reichelt,[5] failed to continue its mission and was disbanded 15 years after its establishment.[6]

In terms of publication, Hong Kong is also the location for several important publications related to Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture has successfully published some articles concerning Buddhist-Christian dialogue in both the Chinese and English versions of *Ching Feng*. The Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre itself published a magazine named *Areopagus* (1987–97), which was principally for the study of new religious movements, but occasionally featured some articles related to Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The Society for the Study of Religion and Culture (Zongjiao wenhua xuehui 宗教文化學會), which is related to the above mentioned Society of Religious Friendship and shares the same address,[7] also succeeded in publishing the book, *Christianity and Buddhism on the Way* by Rev. Chen Daopei 陳道沛,[8] who was responsible for the work of Society of Religious Friendship.

It is rather important to note that these institutions and publications were established by Christians, and that there is no Buddhist organization in Hong Kong whose major or sole aim is to promote the dialogue with other religions, including Christianity.

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[5] Taiwan zongjiao wenhua youyi she 台灣宗教文化友誼社, ed., *Zhenli tanyuan: Ai Xiangde boshi bai sui mingdan jinian zhuanji* 真理探源——艾香德博士百歲冥誕紀念專集 (Taipei: Changqing wenhua shiye, 1976).

[6] Brinth, "Yixiang yu xianshi," 35.

[7] The address is: 6 Homantin Street, Homantin, Kowloon.

[8] Chen Daopei 陳道沛, *Jidujiao yu fojiao* 基督教與佛教 (Hong Kong: Zongjiao wenhua xuehui, 1973).

## 3. SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Hong Kong, a former British colony, is a religiously pluralistic metropolis, where one can find adherents to or organizations of most of the world religions—including most of the branches of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Islam, Baha'ism, Sikhism, Judaism, etc. Although the religious scene in Hong Kong is so diverse, there has been no serious religious conflict. The leaders of the six major religions, i.e., Taoism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Islam, began to meet in the 1970s and formed the Hong Kong Joint Secretariat for the Colloquium of Religious Leaders (Xianggang zongjiao lingxiu zuotanhui lianhe mishuchu 香港宗教領袖座談會聯合秘書處) in 1978. The religious leaders meet two to three times a year to have dialogue on current social issues. Although their dialogue might not be very substantial or penetrating—this being true especially in the early stages of its development—their meeting clearly demonstrates to the public the mutual respect and the peaceful coexistence of the different faiths.[9] Furthermore, in recent years, the Joint Secretariat has successfully issued several declarations on current affairs, e.g., on moral education (October 4, 1980), the future of Hong Kong (November 15, 1984), peace among religions (March 8, 2003), and paying tribute to the health workers against SARS (April 3, 2003).[10]

Among the religions in Hong Kong, Buddhism and Christianity are arguably the two most influential. There are roughly 500,000 Christians (including Catholics and Protestants), constituting about 8 % of the population of Hong Kong. However, the actual influence of Christianity on the society, especially in education and social services, is far stronger than the number of its adherents might imply. For example, Christian churches run approximately 35% of the primary schools and 48% of the secondary schools in Hong Kong. About 70% of the charities are of Christian background. Due partially to these reasons perhaps, Christianity is even de-

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[9] Peter K. H. Lee, "Forty Years in the Wilderness," *Ching Feng* 40, no. 1 (1997), 68.

[10] Concerning the history of the colloquium, see: *Xianggang liu zongjiao lingxiu zuotanhui shi zhounian jinian tekan* 香港六宗教領袖座談會十週年紀念特刊 (Hong Kong: Xianggang liu zongjiao lingxiu zuotanhui shi zhounian jinian tekan bianji weiyuanhui, 1988); *Xianggang liu zongjiao lingxiu zuotanhui ershi zhounian jinian tekan* 香港六宗教領袖座談會二十週年紀念特刊 (Hong Kong: Xianggang liu zongjiao lingxiu zuotanhui ershi zhounian jinian tekan bianji weiyuanhui, 1998); Peter K. H. Lee, "Liuda zongjiao zai zou qian yi bu" 六大宗教再走前一步, *Xinxi* 信息 253 (May 2003): 2–3.

scribed by some observers as the mainstream social and cultural ideology in Hong Kong.[11] With regard to Buddhism, the report furnished by the Government of Hong Kong, without giving the current size of the Buddhist population in Hong Kong, suggests that there are about 600 registered Buddhist and/or Taoist temples in Hong Kong. While some Buddhist leaders have claimed that there are 800,000 Buddhists currently in Hong Kong, some observers suggest that there were actually only about 600,000 Hong Kong Buddhists in 1990. No matter whether the number 800,000 is accurate and its counting method reliable, Buddhism is widely recognized as the largest religion in Hong Kong.[12]

On the eve of Hong Kong's change from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in 1997, there seemed to be some tension between Buddhism and Christianity. Before the transition, leading Hong Kong Buddhists had campaigned hard to make the birthday of the Buddha a public holiday. They urged the Government of the Special Administrative Region to correct the injustice of giving privileges to Christianity and of discriminating against Buddhism.[13] The Buddhist appeal was accepted by the Government of the Special Administrative Region, which made the birthday of the Buddha a public holiday.

The political settlement did not mean settlement of the implicit tension between Christianity and Buddhism. Some occasional tensions remained after the handover. According to the report of a local Protestant newspaper, when the Buddha's birthday was celebrated as a public holiday for the first time in 1999, some evangelical Christians held a training conference for techniques of evangelizing non-Christians on the same day, namely, May 22. Some advertisements, which are presumably directed at Christians, mentioned "spiritual warfare" and "confessing the sin committed by the Chinese in worshipping gods and buddhas." The wording of these advertisements angered some high-ranking Buddhist leaders. In their eyes, this sort of response to the first public holiday to commemorate the Buddha's birthday was a signal of confrontation, if not a declaration of war. Some Buddhist leaders had prepared for a public response,

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[11] Zhao Hongyu 趙紅宇, "Xianggang zongjiao de chuanbo yu fazhan" 香港宗教的傳播與發展, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 68 (1997): 140.

[12] Zhao, ibid., 133–34.

[13] Shi Jueguang 釋覺光, "Gaoseng yunji pu shi fayu, teshou renzheng guang yao huanyu" 高僧雲集普施法雨．特首仁政光耀寰宇, *Xianggang fojiao* 香港佛教 447 (August 1997): 3–5.

but due to the mediating work of a third party, the episode eventually ended peacefully.[14]

The incident indicates that some Christians might not be sensitive enough to the feelings of followers of other religions. It also shows that although the religious leaders show a friendly attitude towards each other—at least in the public domain—believers at the grassroot level may hold a rather different attitude.

## 4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS EACH OTHER

The Hong Kong Buddhists' attitudes towards Christianity have not been adequately studied. As there is neither radical rejection of Christianity, nor enthusiastic dialogue with Christianity, one may assume that the Buddhist attitude towards Christianity is in general lukewarm. Usually, it is the Christian side that takes the initiative for dialogue. However, this does not mean that the majority of Christians in Hong Kong are particularly positive about dialogue with Buddhism. While there are some Christians who are deeply interested in dialogue, many more adopt a rather negative view of Buddhism.

The only survey on the attitudes of Hong Kong Christians towards Buddhism, which questioned 326 Protestants by means of a questionnaire, was conducted in 1991.[15] The overall result clearly indicates that the majority of Protestants take an exclusive view comparable to that of "there is no salvation outside the church."[16] Among the questions put to the Protestants surveyed was: "Who will be saved?" (more than one answer may be given). Interestingly, the answers given were: Protestants (288), Catholics (57), Jews (13), Muslims (3), Buddhists (3), Taoists (3), and other answers (49).[17] It is clear from this that their view of the Buddhist is extremely negative.

The findings of Tord Fornberg's research are rather alarming, given the existence of the institutions and publications related to Buddhist-

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[14] *Shidai luntan* 時代論壇, May 23, 1999.

[15] Tord Fornberg, *The Problem of Christianity in Multi-Religious Societies of Today: The Bible in a World of Many Faiths* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1995), 176–82.

[16] Lai Pan-chiu, "Hong Kong Christians' Attitudes towards Chinese Religions," *Studies in World Christianity* 5, no. 1 (1999): 18–31.

[17] Fornberg, *The Problem of Christianity in Multi-Religious Societies*, 179.

Christian dialogue in Hong Kong. The prominence of this negative attitude towards Buddhism seems to indicate that these scholarly or intellectual activities have made no significant impact at the grassroot level. In contrast with the mushrooming of Chinese theological journals during the late 1970s and early 1980s in Hong Kong, and the continuous publication of the English version of *Ching Feng*, the Chinese version of *Ching Feng* ceased to be published in 1983. Its fate might indirectly reflect the lack of local support from ordinary Hong Kong Christians.

In recent years, there appears to be a renaissance of the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism in Hong Kong. Unlike the case of the Catholic Church in Taiwan, which has among its adherents individuals internationally renowned for their work in interreligious dialogue,[18] no single person from the Catholic Church in Hong Kong is particularly famous for his or her work in Buddhist-Christian dialogue.[19] However, the Catholics in Hong Kong have been rather active in initiating interreligious dialogue. In fact, the Holy Spirit Seminary invited Buddhists to give occasional lectures at the seminary. Some Catholic priests practise meditation with Buddhists. At an even more official level, the *Kung Kao Po* 公教報, the official newspaper of the Catholic diocese of Hong Kong, published several interreligious dialogue forums held by the newspaper, involving representatives from Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Taoism, Islam, etc. The present author took part in two of them,[20] a report on the first of which appeared also in a major newspaper.[21] The *Kung Kao Po* even launched a column called "Religious Internet" (zongjiao hulianwang 宗教互聯網), inviting representatives of various religions to contribute.

At a more grassroot level, the Centre for the Research of Faith (Xinyang tansuo zhongxin 信仰探索中心), a tiny Catholic organization in Hong Kong, held for some years an annual seminar series, usually during September, to engaging other religions in dialogue. Representatives from different religions were invited to give lectures on green issues with re-

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[18] For example, Yves Raguin (1912–96, Chinese name: Gan Yifeng 甘易逢), a Jesuit who worked in Taiwan for years, published: *Wege der Kontemplation in der Begegung mit China* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes, 1972).

[19] Among the Catholic priests in Hong Kong, Dr. Edward Chau 周景勳 is perhaps the most active participant of interreligious dialogue. Apart from his involvement in the work of the Joint Secretariat, he has also published many articles concerning interreli-gious dialogue, e.g., "Siwei shang de tupo: Zongjiao jiaotan" 思維上的突破——宗教交談, *Shenxue niankan* 神學年刊 17 (1996): 105–28.

[20] *Kung Kao Po* 公教報, December 7, 1997; March 15, 1998.

[21] *Ming Pao* 明報, December 6, 1997.

sponses from Catholic priests and/or scholars. This development seems to indicate that issues of common concern, e.g., green issues, can serve as a good starting/talking point for interreligious dialogue.

Recently, due to the war against Iraq, some religious organizations in Hong Kong, including Buddhist, Islamic, Protestant and Catholic institutions, jointly initiated a declaration affirming peace and condemning war. The religious organizations included the International Buddhist Progress Society (Hong Kong) Limited, the United Muslim Association of Hong Kong, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, the Diocesan Youth Commission, the Hong Kong Christian Institute, and the Committee for Ecumenical and Ecclesiastical Relationship of the Hong Kong Christian Council. The declaration was published in several secular and religious newspapers in Hong Kong.[22]

In addition to the religious organizations, the Department of Religion at The Chinese University of Hong Kong launched a project on "Harmony and Diversity" in September 2003 to promote education for peace among different religions and races in Hong Kong.

It is evident that with the official encouragement from Vatican II, the Catholics in Hong Kong can conduct Buddhist-Christian dialogue at both official and grassroot levels, while the involvement of Protestants has been rather restricted to the intellectual circles. As this paper will indicate later, some Chinese Protestants attempted to construct Christian theology using Buddhist resources or studying Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

## 5. PREVIOUS CASES OF DIALOGUE

In the past, many of the Chinese intellectuals actively involved in some sort of Buddhist-Christian dialogue lived and worked in Hong Kong. For example, a recently published book on the Buddhist-Christian encounter in Republican China gives in-depth studies of three Chinese intellectuals recognized as illustrative cases for Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Interestingly, two of them, Xu Dishan 許地山 (1893–1941) and Xu Songshi 徐松石 (c. 1900–99), stayed in Hong Kong—the former from 1935 to 1941 and the latter from 1958 to 1975.[23]

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[22] *Shidai luntan*, February 16, 2003.

[23] See Lai, *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu jiduzongjiao de xiangyu*.

Xu Dishan, being a professed and practising Christian himself, was a famous scholar of Chinese religions and had extensive contact with Buddhists when he was in Mainland China. He was rather well-known as a Christian writer within the Christian circle. At the same time, many of his novels are also regarded as Buddhist literature. After taking up his teaching post at the University of Hong Kong in September 1935, he was invited by several Buddhist organizations to give lectures on Buddhism. In October 1935, he was invited by Tung Lin Kok Yuen (Donglian jueyuan 東蓮覺苑) to give lectures on Sanskrit and Buddhism. In November, he was further invited by Lee Garden Buddhist Studies Association (Liyuan foxue hui 利園佛學會) to lecture on Buddhism and modern culture. In the same month, he took part in a closing ceremony of Amitābha Dharma organized by Hong Kong Lin Association (Xianggang lianshe 香港蓮社).[24]

Xu Songshi was a Baptist minister. He moved to Hong Kong in the early 1960s. In many of his early writings, he advocated harmony between Buddhism and Christianity. He even used the pen name of "Zhaoliu jushi" 照流居士, which suggests his identity as a lay Buddhist.[25] Interestingly enough, after migrating to Hong Kong, his view of Buddhism became less positive.[26] This might have been due to several reasons, including the socio-cultural-political changes in Mainland China and the development of his own theological thought.[27] But even in his late thought, he still believed that although Christianity was the most perfect religion—superior as well as absolute, this did not mean that there was nothing to be learnt from other religions. Christianity could absorb ideas from other religions as long as these ideas did not contradict the revela-

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[24] Lu Weiluan 盧瑋鑾, ed., *Xu Dishan juan* 許地山卷 (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhonghua wenhua cujin zhongxin, 1990), 220–21.

[25] While *jushi* 居士 is a widely used title for a lay Buddhist, the name of "Zhaoliu" 照流 alludes to a poem of Wang Wei 王維 (701–61), who was known as the "Shifo" 詩佛, meaning the "Buddha of poetry," in the history of Chinese literature. In the poem, there are two lines in which the characters constituting the names of Xu are all found. The two lines read: 明月松間照，清泉石上流. While the third characters of both lines constitute the name of "Songshi" 松石, the fifth characters constitute his "Buddhist" pen name, i.e., "Zhaoliu" 照流.

[26] With regard to the contrast between Xu's early and late thought, see So Yuen-tai 蘇遠泰 and Ho Hing-cheong 何慶昌, "Baoshou yu kaifang: Shi lun Xu Songshi zaoqi de zongjiao duihua" 保守與開放——試論徐松石早期的宗教對話, *Jian Dao* 18 (2002): 47–66.

[27] Concerning the possible reasons for Xu Songshi's change of thought, see Lai Pan-chiu and So Yuen-tai, "Migration, Theology and Religious Identity: Christianity and Chinese Culture in the Life and Thought of Xu Songshi," *Asia Journal of Theology* 18, no. 2 (2004): 320–39.

tion of God.[28] Referring to the *Mencius* (VII. A. 45), he suggests that there are three kinds of love in this world: attachment to one's parents, benevolence towards the people, and being sparing with things. He thinks that the meaning of attachment to parents is best expounded in Confucianism, benevolence towards the people in Christianity, and being sparing with things in Buddhism, although each of the three religions includes all three kinds of love and God alone is the ultimate origin of love.[29] Despite his rather positive view of the value of Chinese religions, he shares the exclusive view that believing in Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.[30]

Among the individual scholars of a later generation involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue or the study of it, many are related to Tao Fong Shan or the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, including Ekman Tam 譚沛泉, the present spiritual director of Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre[31] and Peter K. H. Lee 李景雄, a former director of the Study Centre.[32]

A rather ironic fact is that the most outspoken critic, if not opponent, of Chinese Buddhism, Timothy Kung (Gong Tianmin 龔天民), also came from Tao Fong Shan. In his writings, he consistently and vehemently attacked Buddhism. Kung makes a distinction between a Buddhist as a person and Buddhism as a set of false doctrines. He believes that Christians should love their Buddhist neighbours and attempt to save them from the fatal errors of Buddhism.[33] Kung's case, especially its contrast with Tam and Lee, seems to indicate that there can be no correlation between institutional background and personal standpoint.

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[28] Xu Songshi, *Jidujiao yu Zhongguo wenhua* 基督教與中國文化, 2nd ed. (Hong Kong: Jinxinhui chubanbu, 1979), 15–48, esp. 29–34.

[29] Xu Songshi, ibid., 331–41.

[30] Xu Songshi, ibid., 405–7.

[31] Apart from the paper published in this special issue, Dr. Tam has published some articles related to Buddhist-Christian dialogue, including "Silence of God and God of Silence," *Asia Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2002): 152–63; "Message to the Wounded World: Unmask the True Self—Zen and Merton," *Ching Feng* 41, no. 2 (1998): 149–70. In addition to these, he published papers in Chinese concerning Buddhist-Christian Dialogue. For example: "Chanzong de jingmo he jidutu yu shen de jingli" 禪宗的靜默和基督徒與神的經歷, in Chen, *Chuancheng yu shiming*, 131–46.

[32] Peter K. H. Lee and Shih Heng-ching, "A Christian-Buddhist Dialogue on Causality and Good and Evil," *Ching Feng* 30, nos. 1–2 (1987): 39–57; and eidem, "Karma and Christ," *Ching Feng* 31, no. 1 (1988): 24–47.

[33] Kung's criticism of Buddhism can be found in his *Fojiao yanjiu ji pipan* 佛教研究及批判, 2 vols. (Taipei: Gong Aihua, 1998). His view is summarized in his article: "Wo dui fojiao yu fojiaotu de kanfa" 我對佛教與佛教徒的看法, *Jinri huaren jiaohui* 今日華人教會 92, no. 9 (1992): 27–29.

## 6. RECENT DEVELOPMENT

In 2000, an important Buddhist-Christian dialogue took place between the Modern Chan Society (Taiwan), and the Areopagus, a Christian organization based in Scandinavia, which is the successor to the Christian Mission to Buddhists, the missionary organization behind Reichelt and Tao Fong Shan. After that, a further dialogue with teachers of the China Lutheran Seminary (Taiwan), was held in 2002. The details of these Buddhist-Christian dialogues have been published in book form and electronically.[34] The fact that these dialogues took place in Taiwan rather than Hong Kong seems to indicate that in order to make the dialogue fruitful, it is quite necessary to have two parties interested in the dialogue. The development of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Hong Kong seems to be hampered by the lack of response or reinforcement from Buddhist circles in Hong Kong. In comparison with Buddhists in Taiwan, Buddhists in Hong Kong appears to be less active and less interested in intellectual activities, including dialogue with Christianity. Without the response or reinforcement from Buddhists, the initiative for dialogue made by Christians in Hong Kong will be futile.

With the foreseeable increase in interaction among Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland in various respects, it is expected that this will give rise to dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity in the Chinese-speaking world. An illustrative indicator is the Buddhist-Christian dialogue conference held in November 2003. The conference was the first formal conference for Buddhist-Christian dialogue held in China. It was first initiated by Professor Wu Yansheng 吳言生 (representing the Hebei Chanxue Yanjiusuo 河北禪學研究所 and the Shaanxi Normal University) and Professor Wang Xiaochao 王曉朝 (representing the Centre for the Study of Morality and Religion, Tsinghua University, Beijing). While the former is a Buddhist scholar, the latter is a scholar of Christian studies. The present author was invited to join the organizing committee to coordinate the Buddhist and Christian scholars in Hong Kong, Taiwan and abroad. In other words, the conference was co-organized by institutions

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[34] See Xiandaichan jiaoyanbu, ed., *Fojiao yu jidujiao xinyang de jiaohui: Xiandaichan yu Zhonghua xinyi shenxueyuan de duihua* 佛教與基督教信仰的交會：現代禪與中華信義神學院的對話 (Taipei: Xiandaichan chubanshe, 2002); also: http://www.zennow.org.tw. For an analysis of the dialogue, see the paper written by He Jianming, published in the first part of this special issue of *Ching Feng*.

in Mainland China and Hong Kong (Department of Religion of The Chinese University of Hong Kong). This joint venture between Hong Kong and Mainland China was financed mainly by institutions in Mainland China, including a Buddhist organization. This shows the beginning and growth of interest in Buddhist-Christian dialogue in the Mainland. This can be seen also from the fact that the Buddhist Studies section of the Guoxue wangluo 國學網絡 (meaning "network for Chinese learning"), available at www.guoxue.com, which is based in Mainland China, provides a special column dedicated to Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

As the person responsible for the coordination of the participants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and abroad, the present author finds that in comparison with his previous experience of organizing Christian-Confucian dialogue conferences, the responses to the said Buddhist-Christian conference are more enthusiastic. In fact, the conference made further impact on the development of religious studies in Mainland China. During the conference, an opening ceremony was launched for the Institute for Buddhist Studies, Shaanxi Normal University, established just before the conference on November 18, 2003. The first task of the Institute was to host the conference. After the conference, the same university established a Centre for Religious Studies. The then vice-president made the decision immediately after attending the opening ceremony of the conference on the same day and under the inspiration of the conference, which successfully impressed upon him the potential and significance of religious studies. After becoming the president of the university, he received the support of the senate of the university to approve the establishment of the centre on July 13, 2004.[35]

In recent years, the present author personally witnessed the rise of interest in Buddhist-Christian studies in Hong Kong. In addition to the academic articles written by the present author alone[36] as well as some other publications derived from a collaborative research project conducted together with Professor He Jianming 何建明, formerly of the Institute of Historical Studies, Central China Normal University and currently of the Department of Religious Studies, the Renmin (People's) University (Bei-

[35] Source of information: Wu Yansheng's email to the present author received on July 14, 2004.

[36] Lai Pan-chiu, "Cobb's Theory of Inter-religious Dialogue and the Buddhist-Christian Encounter in China," *Ching Feng* 40, nos. 3–4 (1997): 261–90; idem, "Buddhist-Christian Complementarity in the Perspective of Quantum Physics," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (2002): 148–64.

jing),[37] many postgraduates of The Chinese University of Hong Kong wrote their masters or doctoral theses wholly or partially on Buddhist-Christian dialogue. These include a doctoral thesis on Zhang Chunyi 張純一,[38] a doctoral thesis on Xu Dishan,[39] a master's thesis on Xu Songshi,[40] a master's thesis on Timothy Richard's dialogue with Chinese Buddhism,[41] and a master's thesis comparing Yogācāra Buddhism and Paul Tillich's theology.[42] These studies and publications have begun to attract attention from both the Christian and the Buddhist sides. Professor

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[37] He Jianming, "Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Modern China: A Case Study of *Ren Jian Jue Banyuekan*," *Ching Feng*, n.s., 1, no. 2 (2000): 121–42; He Jian-ming and Lai Pan-chiu, "Christianity and the Transformation of Chinese Buddhism," *Dialogue & Alliance* 17, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003/2004): 41–69; and Lai Pan-chiu, "Influence of Chinese Buddhism on the Indigenization of Christianity in Modern China," *Ching Feng*, n.s., 1, no. 2 (2002): 143–60.

[38] So Yuen-tai [Su Yuantai 蘇遠泰], "Zhang Chunyi de fohua jidujiao shenxue" 張純一的佛化基督教神學 (PhD diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002). Before his graduation, So had published several articles concerning Buddhist-Christian dialogue, including: "William Johnston's Contemplation Approach to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue," *Ching Feng* 42, nos. 1–2 (1999): 83–110; "Wo ji hua: Shi shujie jiduzongjiao shenxueren dui fojiao shishiwuai siweimoshi de yihuo" 我即花：試疏解基督宗教神學人對佛教事事無礙思維模式的疑惑, *Furen zongjiao yanjiu* 輔仁宗教研究 4 (December 2001): 87–115 (English abstract at p. 115). Part of So's thesis has been revised and published as "Fohua jidujiao: Zhang Chunyi de dacheng shenxue" 佛化基督教：張純一的大乘神學, in Lai, *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu jiduzongjiao de xiangyu*, 147–212.

[39] Chan Wai-keung [Chen Weiqiang 陳偉強], "Jidujiao yu Zhongguo zongjiao xiangyu: Xu Dishan shan yanjiu" 基督教與中國宗教相遇——許地山研究 (PhD diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002). Part of his thesis has been revised and published as "Yi ai chaoyue ye–fo jian zhi chayi: Xu Dishan de shengping yu wenxue" 以愛超越耶佛間之差異：許地山的生平與文學, in Lai, *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu jiduzongjiao de xiangyu*, 275–312.

[40] Ho Hing-cheong [He Qingchang 何慶昌], "Yi rujia sixiang quanshi jidujiao: Xu Songshi sixiang de yanjiu" 以儒家思想詮釋基督教——徐松石思想的研究 (MPhil thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002). Although the focus of Ho's thesis is on Christianity and Confucianism, his study of Xu Songshi covers also Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The materials concerning Buddhist-Christian dialogue have been revised and published as "Yi fojiao quanshi jidujiao: Xu Songshi de bense shenxue" 以佛教詮釋基督教——徐松石的本色神學, in Lai, *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu jiduzongjiao de xiangyu*, 213–74. Ho is studying a related topic as PhD candidate at the Graduate Division of Religion and Theology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

[41] Lee Chi-ho [Li Zhihao 李智浩], "Jidujiao yu fojiao de xiangyu yu duihua: Li Timotai de gean yanjiu" 基督教與佛教的相遇與對話：李提摩太的個案研究 (MPhil thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2003). Lee is now studying for his PhD on a related topic at the Graduate Division of Religion and Theology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

[42] Wong Che-wai [Wang Cihui 王賜惠], "Tian Like ji weishizong de zuieguan yanjiu: Lun liang zhe de xiangsixing" 田立克及唯識宗的罪惡觀研究——論兩者的相似性 (MPhil thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2003). Wong is now studying for his PhD on a related topic at the Graduate Division of Religion and Theology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Andres S. K. Tang 鄧紹光, a seminary-based theologian, recently published his response to the present author's article on Mahāyāna christology, originally appearing in a journal published in Taiwan.[43] Tang's article attracted three responses, one from So Yuen-tai 蘇遠泰[44] and two from the present author—one clarifying the issue of christological anthropology and the other exploring the possibility of using the conceptions of Huayan (Hua-yen) Buddhism to explain the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the two natures of Christ.[45]

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARK

Based on these recent developments, the present author is cautiously optimistic about the prospect of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China. This is because interest in the dialogue comes from both the Buddhist and the Christian sides, from both the top and the grassroot levels, from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China and abroad. Referring to Peter K. H. Lee's expression of "Forty Years in the Wilderness,"[46] the efforts made by Hong Kong in the last few decades are comparable to a lonely cry from the wilderness, which maintains the vision of promoting Buddhist-Christian dialogue. But the recent developments seem to suggest that there are voices resonating with and echoing the cry from the wilderness (cf. Isa. 40:3). In this new situation, the role to be played by Hong Kong in the future development of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in China is to further stimulate and link up the efforts made by scholars from other parts of the Chinese-speaking world. Furthermore, as the publication of

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[43] Lai Pan-chiu, "Cong dacheng foxue kan Jiakedun jidulun" 從大乘佛學看迦克墩基督論, *Furen zongjiao yanjiu* 輔仁宗教研究 2 (2002): 231–62. For Professor Tang's paper, see Andres S. K. Tang, "Cong tiantaizong foxue kan Bate de jidulun" 從天台宗佛學看巴特的基督論, *Zhongguo shenxue yanjiuyuan qikan* 中國神學研究院期刊 34 (2003): 121–39 (English abstract at pp. 138–39).

[44] So Yuen-tai [Su Yuantai 蘇遠泰], "Dacheng shenxue de zaisi" 大乘神學的再思, *Zhongguo shenxue yanjiuyuan qikan* 中國神學研究院期刊 36 (2004): 215–26 (English abstract at p. 227).

[45] Lai Pan-chiu, "Zuishen, zuixing yu rulaizang: Yi ge jidulunshi renleixue de tantao" 罪身、罪性與如來藏：一個基督論式人類學的探討, *Zhongguo shenxue yanjiuyuan qikan* 中國神學研究院期刊 35 (2003): 209–27 (English abstract at pp. 228–29. See also my article: "Sanyilun, jidulun yu huayan foxue" 三一論、基督論與華嚴佛學, in Fang Litian, ed., *Zongjiao yanjiu* 宗教研究 1 (2003): 133–49.

[46] "Forty Years in the Wilderness," 57–77.

this special issue of *Ching Feng* may imply, Hong Kong can continue to facilitate the communication and exchange among scholars of Buddhist-Christian studies from China and abroad.[47]

[47] An earlier version of this paper was presented for the first time at the "Workshop on Chinese Religion and Traditional Culture," Hong Kong, March 17–19, 2003. The workshop was co-organized by the Department of Religion, The Chinese University of Hong Kong; the Hong Kong Institute for Culture, Commerce and Religion; and the Centre for Anthropological Research, University of Hong Kong. It was co-sponsored by the Institute for the Study of American Religion; Department of Religion, University of California at Santa Barbara; and the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University.

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# A Translated Adoption of *Translation and Adoption*[*]

JASON T. S. LAM

Translation of important literature is a necessary means for the inculturation of a foreign thought. This is already demonstrated by the way Buddhism came to be a major constituent of Chinese thought in the past. In the last few decades the quantity of Christian literature translated into Chinese increased dramatically and aroused extensive discussions in the Chinese academia. It is, therefore, meaningful that in the first winter of the third millennium scholars from around the world gathered in Berlin to participate in the conference named "Translation and Adoption: Encounter of Christianity and Chinese Culture." This essay is a reflection on the reports of the conference, which are now collected and published in the monograph with the same name of the conference (page numbers of all quotes hereafter from this book will be put in brackets).

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[*] Daniel H. N. Yeung and Paul Rabbe, eds., *Fanyi yu xi'na: Dagong shenxue he hanyu shenxue* 翻譯與吸納──大公神學和漢語神學 [Translation and adoption: Ecumenical theology and Christian theology in Chinese], Institute of Sino-Christian Studies Monograph Series 14 (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2004), 330 pp., HK$90.00, ISBN 9628322753. All quotes from the book are the reviewer's own translations from Chinese.

*An Overview of the Book*

The book is divided into three sections. The title of the first section, "Ecumenical Theology and Sino-theology," is the same as the subtitle of the book. It indicates the fact that Sino-theology emerges from ecumenical theology and is also a member of it. From the historical point of view, Sino-theology is a latecomer. Thus all five essays mainly focus on the issue of adoption of Christian discourse in the context of Chinese culture. But Lai Pan-chiu 賴品超 also offers his views on the prospect of Sino-theology (pp. 95–101). The second part, "Translation: Understanding and Techniques," includes nine essays. They discuss the concrete problems and the issues that swelled up in the process of translating Christian literature into Chinese. Some start from theoretical perspectives, and some describe their first-hand translation experiences. In the third section, "The Publication of Sino-theology: Past and Future," people from different Christian denominations and different publishers report on the past and present situation. In addition, the monograph includes a reflection from some scriptural passages and two reports on the conference as an appendix. As the essays in the book are not few and vary in length, and the preface written by He Guanghu 何光滬 has already introduced the essays, in what follows I am not mentioning each of them in detail but will discuss particular important points and themes.

*The Publication of the Translation of Christian Literature*

A noteworthy point of this conference is that there are participants from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, some of whom are representatives of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant publishers. From the historical perspective, most translated Christian literature was produced in Mainland China before the 1950s. Then the bases of Christian publication moved to Hong Kong and Taiwan for the following several decades. During this period most translated works are devotional literature, which were published for pastoral needs and evangelism (see Daniel K. T. Choi's 蔡錦圖 essay). In the last twenty years, however, the number of translated works produced in Mainland China increased dramatically. Moreover, in the beginning they were supplementary items of some series of western works. But now Christian literature form large independent series. And the most significant change is that the translated items are selected by academics and are thus mostly scholarly works (see Richard X. Y. Zhang's 張賢勇 and Zhou Weichi's 周偉馳 essays). However, it is

quite obvious that the number of Protestant writings is more than those of Catholic and Orthodox. The publishers of the two denominations reported their difficulties including the shortage of human and financial resources (see Zhao Jianmin's 趙建敏 and John B. Zhang's 張若翰 essays), and also the difficulties created by the social change in history (see Petr Ivanov's essay). A consolation is that some missing translated works of Orthodox literature were found in different places and the Chinese translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is now available (see Savio Hon Tai Fai's 韓大輝 essay). Another point worth mentioning is that although Lin Hong-Hsin 林鴻信 talks from his Taiwanese experience, his analysis of the present publication trend and his six suggestions are meaningful to Chinese publishers in general. But the most encouraging fact is that there is already cooperation between scholars from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the publication of translated works. And on this basis sometimes a title belonging to a particular denomination is produced through the cooperation of people from different denominations. This is a little contribution of Sino-theology to ecumenical theology.

*Translation as a Hermeneutical Process*

After an overview of the present situation of publication, let us turn to the difficulties translators encountered in the process. In the conference, speakers including Jost Zetzsche, Michael Lackner, Wei Yuqing 魏育青 and Li Qiuling 李秋零 explicated concrete examples in translating Christian literature into Chinese. A problem shared among them is that it is difficult to find the exact corresponding Chinese vocabularies in translating some Christian terms. To solve the problem, they either make use of existing Chinese terms or invent some new terms or use transliteration. But any such way creates new problems. On the one hand, using existing Chinese terms or creating new ones unavoidably invokes the original meaning of the characters or phrases involved. As these terms often bear religious connotation in Chinese culture (the translation of "God," "Logos" and "Spirit" are discussed, pp. 192–97), this approach brings about ambiguity. On the other hand, though transliteration may avoid the above problem, it usually creates unintelligible vocabularies if one tries to understand them by literal inspection. Li Qiuling's saying could best express this difficulty:

> Since Christian faith was formed in a culture system different from that of Chinese thought, it is very difficult to find the exact corresponding

> Chinese words for some essential Christian terms. As creating new Chinese terms unavoidably elicits the original meanings, it is sometimes necessary to create unintelligible terms by transliteration. All these cause problems to the encounter of Christianity and Chinese culture. (p. 192)

On top of the technical problems, by referring to the case of translating the word *Gott*, Zetzsche points out that this kind of problem could affect the style of the entire piece of translated text, and might even lead to different approaches of mission in transmitting the text (pp. 133–34). These concrete examples reaffirm a basic truth: translation is not only a literary event; it implicitly brings about the encounter of two culture systems. In the case of the transmission of Christianity in China, the translation of some literature may at times affect even the life and practice of the faith community.

In fact, this problem does not only exist in the encounter between Christianity and Chinese culture. Yang Huilin 楊慧林 reminds us of an oft-neglected strange fact: the New Testament was not written in the native language of Jesus. Therefore there always exists a tension between the scripture and its exegesis from the very beginning of Christianity, and it calls for a hermeneutical process (p. 178). Yang points out that whether we are aware of this tension and thus seeking for meaning in the acknowledgment of this "foreignness," is the key for understanding the Bible (p. 180). In a similar vein, Theo Sundermeier claims: "the preaching of the Gospel is always a 'translation'" (p. 127). This "translation" emerges with the process of understanding a "foreign" Gospel from the Bible. Sino-theologians are supposed to grasp a thing which is first of all not our own and then to transmit it. Yang's opening words of his report could best express this struggle:

> With regard to the theme "translation and adoption," the ultimate concern should be with adoption (reception). Therefore, what is closely related to it is not only "translation" but also "interpretation." It implies that translation should be taken as a more constructive way of understanding, and the core of discussion should be on the problem of "meaning." (p. 177)

From a glance of the first two sections of the book, it is thus not difficult to find that many of the participants agree to a point: Christianity contains something which is difficult to explain with the resources of Chinese culture. We must try hard to interpret this "foreignness" and search for an adequate hermeneutical process.

*Adoption of a Foreign Thought and Transformation of Culture*

As this hermeneutical process implicitly brings about the encounter between Christianity and Chinese culture, it could be significant for the dialogue between the two systems. From the perspective of intercultural understanding, Zhang Xian 張憲 points out that this process of translation and adoption is a self-understanding itinerary of a "local culture." It is because in the process of translating and understanding a "foreign culture," we experience deeply what is truly different from us; thus the self-consciousness of "local culture" is deepened (pp. 157–58). Nevertheless, if we admit that there exist fundamental differences between two thought systems, and that this hermeneutical process may deepen the sense of uniqueness of the local culture, then is genuine mutual understanding still possible? Zhang points out that although nowadays most Asian philosophers emphasize the incommensurability between Eastern and Western culture, we are not obliged to accept a relativism of culture. We should rather find a way between anthropological universalism and relativism (p. 159). On this basis he raises a thoughtful point:

> I suggest that if translation is possible, some commonality must exist between two cultures and linguistic systems, although there exist also various kinds of difference. (p. 160)

Zhang then suggests a *philosophia perennis* for effectively describing all elements of culture (pp. 163–64). I have reservations about this comprehensive suggestion, but under the space constraint we cannot respond to it in detail. However, the point that there exists a common realm in intercultural understanding is worth considering.

With reference to Wittgenstein's language game theory, Zhang points out that everyone is living and understanding the things in context according to the language game of one's own culture system. Therefore if someone accidentally steps into another culture system, he or she will have a feeling of "foreignness" in understanding things in that context, as the rules of game of each culture are different. I agree to the above explication of Zhang, but I suggest that we should think deeper according to this line of thought. How does the feeling of foreignness occur? Since a person of a particular culture system steps into another "in reality," an intercultural realm forms. Nevertheless, this realm forms accidentally and could be short-lived. Once that person leaves it vanishes. But if the same realm lingers, and if on top of that it occurs within a community, then this

intercultural realm may continue to exist. It may even create new rules of game for the original cultural system and transform it permanently.

Similarly, Wang Xiaochao 王曉朝 perceptively makes his claim from intercultural theory:

> We should regard the result of the interaction, collision, fusion of different cultures as the transformation and renewal of culture. Transformation of culture is a historical process; it is not a simple substitution of the original culture by a foreign one. It is rather a formation of a new type of culture through restructuring the original and foreign cultures in conflict and harmonization. (p. 113)

Therefore Wang thinks that we must transcend the dichotomy between "absolute conflict" and "absolute fusion." Moreover we should cling to the belief that "intercultural dialogue and transmission are the developing dynamics of culture. 'Transmission' used here refers to a community's borrowing of cultural elements from another society and its dissolving them in its own" (p. 109). Wang believes that although there are endless cultural conflicts occurring in history, the fusion of two culture systems could possibly be achieved in the end. But I claim that the "possibility" of fusion does not imply the "actuality" of fusion. It is because the formation of intercultural realm mentioned above is a practical issue, thus it would be in vain if we only pursue the discussion theoretically. It is as Zhang suggests, "the will-to-understand and the will-to-be-understood are the two sides of the same coin. We must have both" (p. 162). Therefore we must make ourselves acquainted with the attitude of the Chinese academia toward the project of translating Christian literature and developing Sino-theology, so as to adjust the future direction and strategy.

### *Chinese Christianity and Chinese Culture*

Some sayings of He Guanghu in the conference seem to have partly summarized the discussion above:

> The transmission and adoption of Christian theology and philosophy in China necessarily "occurred with the Chinese language" (*yi hanyu fasheng* 以漢語發生) … Behind this existential environment and way of thought is the abundant and long-lived Chinese culture. (p. 59)

> Therefore, the translation and adoption of Christian writings in China necessarily involves the way people living in one tradition understand

> another tradition. (p. 60)

In the Chinese academic context, Christianity is of course the object being understood, and Chinese culture as the understanding subject. Therefore the translation of Christian literature does not only help the transmission of Christian thought among Chinese, it is also a chance for Chinese culture to enrich itself. In the same vein the translation and adoption of Christian literature and the development of Sino-theology should not only be the concern of believers, but also that of Chinese academia. It is deeply related to the issue whether Christianity could become a dynamic of the transformation of Chinese culture.

Because of this, Georg Evers and Lai Pan-chiu have reviewed the development of Sino-theology in the Chinese context. Lai perceptively points out:

> The introduction of Western theology into Chinese-language circles through translation is—whether Mainland institutional churches or cultural Christians are concerned—infused with theological concerns over the contemporary situation of China, and has benefited from different western theological trends. (pp. 93–94)

Seen in this way, many of the scholars involved in translating Christian literature and developing Sino-theology intend to introduce Christian thought into Chinese culture and make the former a transforming dynamic of the latter. This may be the practical reason for the persistence of the intercultural realm mentioned above.

As academics generally admit that Chinese culture is in a state of a tremendous transformation for the last hundred or more years, it is difficult to recognize the shape of the "local culture." He Guanghu thinks that in the last two decades there were revivals of all great and small Chinese traditions. But the most influential collective unconsciousness is still the archetypes of Confucianism (p. 63). He even says, "regarding the contemporary climate of Chinese thought, it seems that the clock has been turned back to a century ago when Confucian tradition and rationalism were both significantly influential" (p. 67). In such a situation, it is natural that everyone could have different evaluation of the influence of different traditions of thought. Nevertheless, Wang Xiaochao's view on the future development of the encounter of the Christian religion and Chinese culture is illuminating:

> Every historical, traditional cultural system would not be simply replaced by another. As time goes by, nonetheless, every long-lived his-

> torical traditional cultural system can hardly remain unchanged. Chinese academia generally admits that Chinese society is undergoing a transformation, and its culture is inevitably affected. … Christianity and its culture will remain in the status of subculture in the Chinese culture system, but it could be a constructive force in the transformation and renewal of Chinese culture. (pp. 116–17)

Could Christianity as a foreign cultural resource become another significant constituent of Chinese culture apart from Buddhism? This is a very important issue, and is perhaps one that inspires scholars to participate actively in the projects of translating Christian literature and developing Sino-theology.

*Sino-theology and Ecumenical Theology*

There is a question to be raised at this point: the dynamic which encourages people to translate and adopt Christian literature largely comes from an intention to construct a "Christianized Sino-discourse," which may in turn contribute to the transformation of Chinese culture. Developing "Sino-Christian theology" is only a means to this end. Is this the reason that among plenty of publications on Christian studies in Mainland China, genuine "theological discourse" is scanty in amount? We do not have a definite answer; moreover, the two discourses are not mutually exclusive, and in reality the definitional water between them is muddled. But we may consider the question in another way: even if most people incline to produce a "Christianized Sino-discourse," could this contribute to Sino-theology and even to ecumenical theology?

I believe that the answer is yes. In dealing with the tension between "historicism" and "fundamentalism" Peter Neuner claims:

> Hermeneutics should deal with history seriously. In and through history, it discovers universal value and norm by comparing histories. At the same time when hermeneutics tries to understand the life and faith of others, it clarifies what are the most important things of one's life and existence. (p. 13)

If we could agree with the above discussion, i.e. translating Christian literature and constructing Sino-theology is a hermeneutical process adopting new meaning, then regardless of the nature of the discourse produced, in the process Sino-theologians are clarifying their concerns in the Chinese context. This clarification to an extent helps Sino-theologians to reflect on their approach and direction. It may be as Lai Pan-chiu sug-

gests that Sino-theology does not have much contribution to ecumenical theology at present. But through the investigation of the past experience, the contemporary discussion of Sino-theology is more advanced than the last generation (p. 96). When Sino-theology reaches a more mature stage, the accumulation of the past discussion could become a resource of reflection for later participants, and may be a reference for ecumenical theology.