

Confucian thought. This is one of the factors that has led up to the transformation of Chinese culture through modernisation. While the second and third positions may well be substantiated empirically by historical facts, they need to answer two essential questions in the first place. (1) During the Sung-Ming period, were there any real needs and historical necessity for the essential transformation of the Chinese culture? (2) Can cultural transformation succeed with critiques by intellectual elites only without a change in the values of the popular culture? Concerning the first question, Chinese culture was at its peak during the Sung-Ming period, and thus there was no desperate need for transformation as in the West during the time of the Reformation. As for the second question, it is impossible for critiques by intellectual elites to change the essential features of a culture successfully. Only a universal change of values, as in the Reformation, will bring forth an essential transformation in culture.

Unquestionably, one can discover many elements of the modern culture, like commodity economy, democracy, and the scientific spirit, at their germinal states in the Sung-Ming period. However, these modern elements at their germinal states did not grow into a strong, real power in the Chinese culture before the arrival and the impact of the modern Western culture. In the Sung-Ming period, although several intellectuals - whether they appreciated or rejected Confucian thought - had proposed

some new, enlightening thoughts, these thoughts, owing to the absence of a historical opportunity, did not enter into the society and bring forth substantial impact, and remained within the academic circles only. In other words, there was only inspiration among the elites in China during the Sung-Ming period. There was no revolutionary movement in the popular culture. This is why the modernisation of Chinese culture could not have taken place.

Nevertheless, the theory of "Western Initiation" does not mean that the course of the modernisation of Chinese culture must take place under the shadow of Western culture. Be it in the West or in the East, a genuine enlightenment will always take place in two steps, the first being the enlightenment of one's own culture by foreign cultures, the second being the elimination of all darkness and ignorance in the worship of authorities and idols by the independent use of one's own reason. In this sense, the insights of the Reformation and the resultant cultural transformation in the West consist mainly in the reflection on the logical and historical beginnings of modernisation, not in a simple analogy between the modernisation of the East and that of the West. Its significance for us consists in our understanding of the diversity between the Eastern and Western cultures, not in imitation without any regard to real differences.



Academic Programs

Conference

Contemporary Religion and the Methodology of Empirical Research

- Date : 9-10 October 2003
 Venue : Dajue Temple, Beijing
 Organized by : Institute for the Study of Christian Culture, Renmin University of China, Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco, The Henry Luce Foundation, U.S.A.
 Attendants : more than 20 scholars from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and the U.S.A., with ISCS as observer.

Some of Conference reports touched on the theoretical problems of empirical research on religion in China. Professor LI Xiangping from Shanghai University pointed out in his *Empirical Research in Religious Studies Today in China and its Main Concern* that there had been a shift from the cultural and ethical study of religion to the structural aspect of religion in religious studies in China. He also analysed the inner dynamics between the empirical research and the structural studies of religion, emphasising the academic and social significance of integrating theoretical studies with empirical research in religious studies.

Based on the empirical research project "The Cultural



Function of Christianity in the Period of Social Transformation in China", a sociologist of religion from Purdue University, Dr. YANG Fenggang's paper, *A Few Thoughts about Empirical Research on Religion in China Today*, provided a systematic description of empirical research method with particular attention to its "objectivity." He also acknowledged the limitations in collecting and evaluating relevant literature in the project. As for "objectivity" in religious fieldwork, Professor GAO Shining from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was concerned with the issue of "reliability and validity" in empirical research on religion, that is, the reliability of data and the validity of conclusions arrived at. She expressed the difficulty in collecting data and the limitations of some survey methods. Scholars also discussed on the neutrality of understanding religion on the part of surveyors.

Professor LUO Weihong (Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) stressed the importance of studying the present conditions of religion in China on the basis of realistic approaches. She introduced some sociological survey methods in her four visits to "Shixianggong Temple" in Shanghai. Professor FAN Lizhu (Fudan University), Dr. James D. Whitehead and Dr. Evelyn E. Whitehead (Ricci Institute,



University of San Francisco) presented reports on the empirical research on the believers of folk religions in Shenzhen, in an attempt to understand individual pursuit of "meaning" and its relevance to religious beliefs from cross-cultural and inter-discipline perspectives.

In addition to the two case studies on folk religion in China, other scholars focussed on Christianity. GAO Shining's paper entitled "A Study of the Faith of Chinese Urban Christians from the Experiences in Beijing" described the role of the faith of urban Christians in China, and examined the major changes in urban Christianity in the last few decades and the factors that affected the formation of urban Christians in China.

On the other hand, there are two reports on rural Christianity in China. HAN Juexue, a research fellow at the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences gave an overview of the condition of Christianity among the ethnic minority, including the influences of Christianity on communal life, through the investigations of two villages of the Lahuzo tribe in Lancang county, Yunnan Province. KANG Zhijue (Hubei University), integrating her historical studies and fieldwork, tried to understand the influences exerted by the Migrant Christians influenced on current economic, cultural, and moral life in Mopanshan and the change in Christian life and Christians' adjustment to modern society.

It is worth noting that two scholars presented papers on empirical research on the Roman Catholic church in China. One was reported by Dr. YANG Xiaoting from the Theological and Philosophical Seminary of Xi'an. His research project covers the spirituality of Roman Catholics, the organizations, rituals, and seminary's management of the Roman Catholic Church in China today. The Centre for the Study of Religious Culture at Zhejiang University and the Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture at Maryknoll University have worked together on a project to study the challenges to the Chinese Catholic Church posed by modernization and secularization in China, in order to find out how Catholicism responds to the new situation and problems arising from the environment of market economy. In the Conference Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest provided some basic findings in this project.

We are pleased to see the above fieldwork conducted by scholars from different perspectives and backgrounds in order to get a real picture of the change and development of religions in contemporary China. Yet, from the discussions in the Conference, some limitations of this empirical research and

room for improvements for further studies have been identified.

First, Many scholars expressed their difficulties in collecting materials especially from church and religious affairs bureau and to conduct interviews with religious believers.

Second, with regard to government's religious policy on the management of religious affairs, one important factor that has influenced the empirical research is the understanding of the "accommodation of religion to a socialist society". Scholars have different interpretations on this principle and try to relate religion to society from the perspective of "modernity".

Third, scholars from the academia, government and church-seminary institutions have some difficulties in communication and dialogue. This might hinder their cooperation in empirical research.

Fourth, it appears that the empirical research on religion in China needs improvement in methodology. The "designs of questionnaire" for interviews or surveys by some scholars have often by questioned. It seems that researchers need more training on the sociology of religion.

Finally, the question of the "relevance of materials" was raised in one of the sessions during the Conference. It shows that some scholars do not have a clear purpose of fieldwork or "the sense of research issue" to carry on with their studies. Therefore, on the one hand, it is significant for these scholars to exercise theological reflections in their empirical research; on the other hand, they do need more theoretical preparations such as on religion and society, religion and morality, religion and politics, religion and Chinese society.

Retreat for Graduate Students from China

Of late, graduate students from China are studying Christian religion in Hong Kong. All of them have made some contributions within their particular research field. However, being affiliated to different institutions and universities, there is not much occasion for them to gather together and share their academic achievement with each other. Hence, ISCS held study retreats for them from 25 to 26 November 2003 and from 12 to 14 March 2004, in order to provide opportunity for the students to communicate with each other on scholarly matters, to share their life experiences, and also to gather the young academic talents together for inspiring communication. Each time, we invited around 20 students from Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong University and ISCS. Their research interests range from Christian philosophy, biblical Studies, Church history, philosophy of religion to oriental and occidental studies. During the retreat, we invited our visiting scholars and guest professors to give seminars on various topics.

First Study Retreat (Date: 25-26/11/2003)

Speakers:

Prof. YANG Hui Lin (Head and Professor at the Department of Chinese Language, Director of the Centre for Christian Studies; Visiting Scholar at ISCS [2003])

Topic : The Publicity of Theology

Prof. LIN Hong Hsin (ThD., University of Tübingen; Visiting Scholar at ISCS [2003])

Topic : An Application of Gadamer's Hermeneutic to "Justification by Faith"

Second Study Retreat (Date: 12 - 14/3/2004)

Speakers:

Dr. ZHAO Lin (Professor, Department of Philosophy, Wuhan University)

Topic : "The Implications of the Modern Transformation of Christian Culture for the Transformation of Chinese Culture"

Prof. ZHANG Xian (Vice Chair and Professor, Department of Philosophy, Sun Yat-Sen University)

Topic : "Rethinking Marx's Critique of Religion from the Perspective of the History of Christian Thoughts"

Dr. Milton WAN (Associate Professor, Department of Religion, Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Topic : "The New Direction of Chinese Christian Dogmatic in the Context of Globalization – Ten Issues, Two Trends"



A Pilgrimage to Truth—A Series of Seminars on Selected Readings of Christian Classics

Organizer : Institute of Sino-Christian Studies

Date : 24/11, 1/12, 8/12, 15/12 /2003 (Every Monday)

Time : 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Venue : Hall, 8/F, Applied Theological Education

Centre, Christian Centre, 56 Bute Street, Mongkok

Co-sponsor : Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary

Seminar 1:

Speaker : **Dr. Carver YU** (Vice-President, China Graduate School of Theology)

Topic : A Verdict on the Rise and Fall of Cultures: A Historical Perspective of Augustine's *City of God*

Seminar 2:

Speaker : **Dr. Milton WAN** (Associate Professor, Department of Religion, CUHK)

Topic : The Critical Point between God and Humanity: an Exposition of Karl Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans*

Seminar 3:

Speaker : **Dr. Andres TANG** (Associate Professor, Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary)

Topic : The Isolation of Humanity and the Transcendence of the other: an Exposition of Bonhoeffer's *First and Second Adams*

Seminar 4:

Speaker : **Dr. KWAN Kai Man** (Associate Professor, Department of Religion & Philosophy, Hong Kong Baptist University)

Topic : The Presence and Absence of God: an Exposition of Hans Küng's *Does God Exist?*



Academic Research

Visiting Scholars

We had seven visiting scholars at our Institute from October 2003 to March 2004.

Prof. HE Guanghu, from the Department of Philosophy and Religion, Renmin University of China, an important Chinese scholar in Christian philosophy and theology, spent two months at ISCS, from December 2003 to February 2004. During his visit, Prof. HE collected materials for his research topic entitled "Re-evaluating the Impact of the Reformation in Europe from the perspective of religious studies". The study covers the social and intellectual backgrounds before and after the Reformation, particularly humanism, and the impact of Reformation on the

history of Europe. It also examines the process of modernization brought about by the movement. Prof. HE also delivered a lecture entitled "A Reflection on the Reformation in Europe – Some Thoughts on the Reform of Churches in China" at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Prof. GAO Shining, a scholar from the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, spent a month here from January to February 2004.

