



漢言

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Essay

The Confucian Rite and the Orthodox Ritual

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On the attitude towards rite, Confucius and the Confucianists after him are actually different. "Rite" was a core concept for Confucius, but has been marginalized by Confucianists from the very beginning, as it was politicized and eventually lost in Chinese tradition.



During the Zhou Dynasty, the concept of rite was attractive to Confucius. Confucius himself lived in a time of "ritual collapse" (禮崩樂壞); thus he saw as his responsibility the restoration of the traditional etiquette of the Zhou Dynasty. He took every effort to stress the importance of rite to his students, considering rite as the cornerstone of a person's life. In the *Analects* he said more than once "no rite, no life" (不學禮，無以立。《季氏》；不知禮，無以立也。《陽貨》)。According to Confucius, an important pathway toward "ren" is through "restraining oneself and restoring rite" (克己復禮), i.e. abiding by the rites through personal moral cultivation and restraint. "Do not look, or listen, or speak, or act in a way that does not conform to the rites" (非禮勿視，非禮勿聽，非禮勿言，非禮勿動。《顏淵》)。This is very similar to the religious taboos regulating human behavior through denials and prohibitions. Just as with religious taboos, the "taboos" that Confucius proposed are all about people's behavior, rather than people's thoughts. In addition, rite, according to Confucius, is also of great importance in people's social and political life.

There are not as many arguments about rite by Confucius

in the *Analects*. In my opinion, the *Analects* of Confucius do not truly reflect Confucius' attitude towards rite, because his disciples did not fully understand and agree with his ideas about rite. A typical example is that of Zi Gong (子貢), one of Confucius' most famous followers, who once proposed to reform and simplify the rituals, a proposal which Confucius resolutely opposed: "Zi Gong wanted to abolish the rite of sacrificing a sheep on the first day of every month in the Imperial Ancestral Temple, but Confucius said: 'You cherish the sheep, while I worry about the rite.'" (子貢欲去告朔之餼羊。子曰：賜也，爾愛其羊，我愛其禮。《八佾》)

What Confucius worried about was still to come. According to Confucius, the "mind and nature" theory by Mencius lacked the dimension of rite. Dong Zhongshu related Confucianism to politics, offering an extended political reading of Confucianism. Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism tried to explore the connotation of Confucianism, but it focused only on theories and ignored the rite that Confucius insisted on attending to. Neo-Confucianism of Hong Kong and Taiwan also focuses on theories, attempting to reconstruct Confucianism through modern Western rationalist interpretation, in which the Confucian rite has been marginalized again. Marginalization of the rite is a common motif of the later generations of Confucianists, including contemporary Neo-Confucianists. In this way, they generally deviated from Confucius himself. He once dreamed of a formation of a ritual tradition, the continuation of the traditions of those dynasties before him. (殷因與夏禮，所損益，可知也。周因於殷禮，所損益，可知也。其或繼周者，雖百世，可知也。《為政》) In China, the so-called "nation of rites", however, such ritual tradition has not formed as Confucius envisioned it. In the Qing dynasty, even at the level of the national government, the traditional Confucian rites also began to decline. Finally, in contemporary China, the Chinese people barely hold to any outward expression of traditional Confucian rites.

Orthodoxy is one of the three main branches of Christianity. Its major differences from the other two main branches (Catholicism and Protestantism) lay not in theological theories, but in practices, more specifically, in rituals. The Orthodox Church pays special attention to the liturgy. The orthodoxy and purity of the faith are presented in the precision and consistency of the liturgy. The rituals of the Orthodox Church exist in all aspects of the life of the believers. A devout Orthodox Christian always lives in and with a keen awareness of ritual. Nothing can be simply and casually done; everything must be accompanied by some kind of ritual. The Orthodox Church obviously has a strong ritual tradition.

To Orthodox believers, worship is a kind of spiritual life, with the ultimate goal of experiencing unity with God. God is not in “this world”. Therefore, spiritual life in this world is basically impossible. Life in this world does not have the characteristics of spiritual life. Orthodox believers, however, strive to live a spiritual life in this world by performing rituals. Worship is not a natural way of life, but a supernatural life, the sign of which should be a reserved attitude toward this world. This attitude of denial is neither negative nor an end in itself, but a means for Orthodox believers of pursuing a spiritual life in this world. The main content of the Orthodox spiritual life is reflected in its spiritual practice, rather than in its theology. It is the spiritual practice that plays the crucial role in Orthodox spirituality.

As the traditional national religion of Russia, the Orthodox faith has experienced a renaissance in a very short time after over 70 years of being suppressed. The key reason lies in its relatively stable and comprehensive ritual traditions. With the return of the deprived church buildings to the Orthodox Church and the emergence of a large number of new churches, the rituals experienced a quick recovery. Of course, we cannot say that all Russians have returned to Orthodox faith, but the traditional Orthodox rituals have been fully restored.

Similarly, the revival of Confucian tradition will begin after the revival of its rites. The renaissance of Confucianism will surely be accompanied by a set of rites that can meet the demand of modern society. Some say that we can never fully restore the rites initiated by Confucius. However, ignoring the reconstruction of the traditional rites can never lead to the revival of Confucianism.

Here, the Orthodox spiritual practice offers some inspiration: First, the spiritual life is in fact a life of rituals. The foundation of the spiritual life is rite, without which the spiritual life is meaningless. Restoration of the national spirit must begin with the restoration of rituals, without which the national spirit has no solid foundation. Second, the nature of the spiritual life is a negative attitude toward the material world. Spiritual life has this prominent sign of contradicting material life. So, to construct the national spirit

is to construct a way of life that competes with materialism. Third, the ritual tradition is not only an environment that a personal spirit has its entrustment, but also a guarantee for the building and passing-on of the national spirit. Personal spiritual life needs soil to grow, and the national spirit should also be rooted in practice and reflected in people's behavior. Only in the rituals can national culture exist, revive, improve, continue, and be inherited.

For an extremely “pragmatic” person (e.g., Zi Gong), the spiritual life and the rituals are too “ideal”. For an extremely “pragmatic” nation, the spiritual life is illusory and can only be dreamed of. That is why until today we still live in an age of “ritual collapse”, and a “nation of rites” is still a dream.

Cum nobilitate: A Note on Paul Tillich and Us

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In everyday language, “snob” (勢利) is a purely negative word. To call someone a snob assumes that he admires people of a higher social class, or people who are excessively wealthy, and at the same time intentionally keeps away from those he feels are of a lower social class or of modest means. It is said that the word snob comes from a Latin phrase *s. nob.*, an abbreviation for *sine nobilitate*, i.e., without nobility. In other words, it is not noble for a man to judge someone else by his power or wealth rather than by his personality.



Power in itself is not a bad thing. A lot of good things can be done by a powerful man, a powerful machine or even a powerful state. But it should be kept in mind that great harm, too, can be done when and wherever powerful entities are at work. Perhaps we can coin a new phrase: “*cum nobilitate*” in order to define a man who judges a thing not only by its positive effects but also by its potentially negative effects.

For Tillich, God as the supreme Power cannot cause any negative effect. God is omnipotent (all-powerful) and omnibenevolent (all-good). Yet Tillich also points out that calling God the “God above” can unexpectedly produce negative effects. Tillich prefers to speak of the “God beneath”, by which not the height of God but the depth of God is manifest.¹ He even says that the “above” of God is no more than a symbol of the “depth” of God.² It is clear that Tillich argues this in apprehension of the danger that God, if He is considered the Power above rather than beneath, would be alienated from

all things here and now, for example a man seeking Him from here.

Tillich comments that the earthly church is one that can become “demonic”. A powerful church is good for Christianity, but it is not immune to acting unjustly in the name of its power, as has been proved in history. In his time, Tillich is especially astonished and irritated by the fact that the Protestant churches in Germany keep silent in the face of violent National Socialism. In response, he issues sharp criticism in his *Zehn Thesen (Ten Assertions)*: “A Protestantism which is open to National Socialism and even submits itself to it, is ready to break its allegiance with the world”³ Just as the powerful church runs the danger of turning demonic, so does the powerful nation or state. For this reason he considers some significant movements that maintain the uniqueness of the nation to be pseudo-religious, yet no more than that. Tillich believes that the powerful nation cannot correct mistakes made in the name of the nation, for there is not, as in Christianity, an all-good being that provides a just standard for judgment.

Tillich even criticizes theology. If theology limits itself to a theology of “kerygma” (i.e. preaching), then it will unwittingly close the door to the secular. Certainly, the theology of preaching is the most important within theological discourse. The truth of Christianity should be told in its special language. Yet it would be a mistake to regard the theology of preaching as the single true theological discourse to the exclusion of other theological discourses. A theologian clearly understands the limitations of philosophy. Philosophy is no more than radical questioning, and it cannot give a true answer sufficient to read the riddles of human life. But with the help of philosophy as well as the philosophical language, the meanings contained in Christian theological expressions of preaching will be seen and more readily accepted by modern people. That is to say, for Tillich, a theology of preaching must not become a suppressing, malevolent power among theological discourses.

Back to the definition of “cum nobilitate”: we have reason to say that a person cum nobilitate (with nobility) is just what Tillich hopes for in his theology. A person cum nobilitate would not call God the “God above”, trust the church without reserve, or make theology a theology of preaching and no other, for he knows that God alone is all-powerful and at the same time all-good.

Among the contemporary Chinese intellectuals, there are many who insist that their thinking prioritizes the interests of the nation-state. No one will deny that the interests of the nation-state are a highly important concern. But one can hardly presuppose that the interests of a nation-state have only positive effects and hold no potential to effect harm. If we are not sure about this, then the consequence is that pursuing the positive effects of national interests simultaneously runs the risk of effecting harm. This is certainly a difficult challenge for a person cum nobilitate.

Maple Season: An Academic Journey in Toronto

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With the support of ISCS, we enjoyed a fruitful autumn term as visiting scholars at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto. It was the best season for us to conduct research in Canada.

Emmanuel College and Center for Asian Theology provided an international academic platform to promote studies on Christianity.

Prof. Mark G. Toulouse, the Principle of Emmanuel



College, gave us a warm welcome and was very interested in our research projects. He encouraged scholars from different countries to engage in discussions on Christianity and pluralistic culture. In the seminar “When Confucianism Meets Christianity”, scholars from China, Canada, Korea etc. shared opinions on relations between Confucianism and Christianity. We believe that Chinese scholars will play a more important role in setting up academic networks and connecting those who are interested in Chinese culture with each other.

With the librarian’s kind help, we collected primary resources about Christian groups, women’s work, and publications on Christianity in Modern China from branches of the University Library. Many interesting research topics were found by analyzing these resources. We expect to cooperate with Canadian scholars on more research projects. For example, Canadian medical missionaries contributed much to the development of medicine in modern China. A large number of Chinese doctors and nurses were trained. Closer attention should be paid to the medical records when exploring Christianity in the history of medicine in modern China. Journals and correspondence of medical missionaries indicated a close relationship between Christianity and medical treatment.

We also collected archives and publications about Dr. Norman Bethune, a hero in the People’s Republic of China. He was born in 1890 in Gravenhurst, Ontario, north of Toronto, and completed his Bachelor of Medicine in 1916 at University of Toronto. He gained a reputation in Canada as a gifted surgeon and an early proponent of a universal health care system.

Dr. Bethune is well known in China for his great contribution during the Anti-Japanese War. He gathered together a medical team, the Canadian-American Mobile Medical Unit, to join the Chinese army in the Shaanxi-Hubei border region of China. Dr. Bethune worked long hard days under the most

rudimentary conditions and quickly became known as a skilled surgeon and dedicated teacher. In 1939, Dr. Bethune and his team rushed to the front and worked long hours caring for the wounded. While he was operating on a soldier, Bethune, having cut his finger, contracted septicaemia (blood poisoning) and died of his wounds on 12 Nov, 1939. Dr. Bethune's death shocked the Chinese nation. Chairman Mao Zedong wrote a

tribute titled "In Memory of Norman Bethune" in which he praised the doctor for his selflessness and dedication to the Chinese people.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to ISCS, Emmanuel College and University of Toronto. The pastors, preachers and Christians in Toronto and Hong Kong helped us a lot and made great contributions to this program.

Special Report

9th International Summer Forum on "Theology and Humanities"

From 5-8 Aug 2013, the 9th International Summer Forum on "Theology and Humanities" was held at Shantou University. The event was hosted by the School of Liberal Arts and Institute for the Study of Christian Culture at Renmin University of China with Shantou University-CUHK joint Centre for Christian Studies and the Centre for Christian Studies at Shantou University. ISCS and the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia were the co-organizers. Since 2004 ISCS has been cooperating with this Summer Forum for the sake of promoting the interaction between theology and humanities and dialogue between different disciplines. Director Daniel Yeung was invited to attend the event and chaired parts of the discussion.

The theme of the forum this year was "Theology and Contemporary Philosophy". 10 experts were invited from different places as speakers and more than 60 young scholars from more than 40 institutes of higher education in China attended the event. The speakers and their respective topics were listed as follows:

Speaker	University	Topic
Benjamin MORGAN	University of Oxford	Shared Transformation: Heidegger, Eckhart, Neuroscience
YANG Huilin	Renmin University of China	Why Alain Badiou's Formula of "Meaning" is more Significant
Simon KWAN	Chinese University of Hong Kong	Postcolonial Resistance: Re-reading Y. T. Wu's Doctrine of God
Oliver DAVIES	King's College London	Encountering between China and West: Towards a Universal Theory of the Practice of Being Human
Milton WAN	Chinese University of Hong Kong	God and Human Suffering: A Philo-theological Reflection
Lung-kwong LO	Chinese University of Hong Kong	Theological, Philosophical and Biblical Perspective on Paul the Apostle
Gavin FLOOD	University of Oxford	Individualism or Shared Subjectivity? Pre-modernity and the Human Future
GENG Youzhuang	Renmin University of China	The Rhetoric of Icons: From Image to Voice
Clemens SEDMAK	King's College London	Hannah Arendt and Philosophy after Auschwitz
ZHAO Dunhua	Peking University	Re-evaluating the Theology of Salvation History



As with past forums, this year there were keynote lectures and seminars. Topics discussed included "Christianity and Literature East and West", "Contemporary Philosophy and Aesthetics", "Translation and Interpretation of Classics East and West", and "Christian History and Thought". Young scholars had opportunities for in-depth dialogue with experts.

Conference on "Christianity and the Dream of the Revival of the Chinese Nation"

From 29 Nov to 2 Dec 2013 the conference on "Christianity and the Dream of the Revival of the Chinese Nation: the role and function of



Christianity in the construction of Chinese culture" was held at Meizhu Holiday Hotel, Hangzhou. This conference was organized by the Institute of Christianity and Cross-cultural Studies, Zhejiang University while ISCS assisted in the process. Director Daniel Yeung, Prof. Pan-chiu LAI and Prof. Jason Lam attended the conference on behalf of ISCS. There were more than 110 participants coming from 40 universities and institutes, which constituted the largest academic conference on Christianity in China.

This conference made use of different presentation styles. In the first part, 10 keynote speakers were invited to address the theme "The Role and Function of Christianity in the Construction of Chinese Culture". Then there were 4 subsections on "Christianity accommodates to Chinese Culture: history, reality, and future", "Christianity and the Problem of

Social Reality: relationship between religions, governance of the society, political culture”, “Religious Theory and Movement”, and “Interpretation of the Christian Scriptures and Comparative Studies”. The last section was an open forum. Participants were invited to provide suggestions for conducting the future conferences and Prof. LI Xiangping made wonderful concluding remarks.

Academic Activities

Seminar on “Harmony and Integration: the Function of Christianity in Contemporary Chinese Society”

From 10-11 Jul 2013 a seminar for scholars in Hong Kong and Mainland China on



“Harmony and Integration: the Function of Christianity in Contemporary Chinese Society” was co-organized by ISCS and the Institute for the Study of Christian Culture, Renmin University of China. Scholars from the academic, ecclesial and political realms were invited, so as to facilitate discussion on the understanding of the Chinese Catholic Church regarding the state policy of harmony and integration and its possible contribution from different perspectives and experiences. In-depth explorations were presented by scholars on different topics including “the development of the Chinese society and the present religious situation”, “the achievement of the religious sector since the era of Open and Reform”, “the governance of the church and the construction of theology”, “Catholic theological training”, and “the opportunities and challenges faced by Chinese Protestantism”. The Bishop of Hong Kong Catholic Church Cardinal John Tong produced the opening address for the seminar. Director Daniel Yeung and Prof. Jason Lam held the opening ceremony and seminar section respectively. Participants of the event affirmed that the seminar helped to enhance dialogue and exchange between different parties and promoted harmony and integration.

The Visit of the Summer School of Chung Chi Divinity School

On 12 Aug 2013 the summer school for Mainland scholars hosted by the Chung Chi Divinity School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong visited ISCS. For the sake of letting the participants have a better understanding the contemporary situation of Christian studies in China, ISCS visiting scholar Prof. WANG Lixin, dean of the school of literature at Nankai

The participants of this conference were from different disciplines but had a fruitful exchange on a common topic. Some young scholars explored the frontiers of religious studies on the international level. The atmosphere and tone of the conference were reminiscent of the theme “Sino-Christian Theology as an Interdisciplinary Studies”, which ISCS has put forward in recent years.



University, delivered a lecture on “From the Dialogue of Soliloquy to Intersubjectivity: on



several issues of Christian studies in contemporary Chinese culture” and brought about a heated discussion.

Forum on “Christian Faith and Ideological Trends in Contemporary China”

From 20-23 Aug 2013 director Daniel Yeung participated in the 6th forum of Chinese Theology held at Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford. The theme of the



forum this year is “Christian Faith and Ideological Trend in Contemporary China”. Participants came from China, Britain, USA, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Canada, Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. They presented the views of liberalism, neo-leftism, neo-Confucianism and Christianity in relation to contemporary Chinese ideological trends. Some Chinese scholars thought that if the discussion had taken place in China, debates would likely have taken a turn for the radical and abusive. As the event took place at the University of Oxford, which has a long heritage of western humanism, a pluralistic, open and inclusive atmosphere was created and the dialogue was constructive. After a prolonged and profound discussion, the Chinese scholars signed the “Oxford Consensus”, stating that cultural/religious resources including liberalism, neo-leftism, neo-Confucianism and Christianity could provide aids to the Chinese society in encountering the difficulties and challenges due to rapid transformation. Most of the participating Christian studies scholars have been cooperating with ISCS for years, aiming at constructing Sino-Christian theology in Chinese academia.