



漢言

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Essay

Karl Reichelt and Sino-Christian Theology

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Tao Fong Shan was established in Shatin, Hong Kong, in the 1920s. While the Norwegian missionary founder Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1977-1952) in the beginning aimed at the indigenization of Christianity through Christian-Buddhist dialogue, Mr. Daniel Yeung and LIU Xiaofeng went on to promote “Sino-Christian theology” in the 1990s. Operating in different situations, Reichelt and Sino-Christian theology dealt with the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture in different ways. The present essay addresses the features of their respective approaches.



Reichelt came to China at the beginning of the 20th century. He opposed the exclusivist mainstream which saw the Chinese as gentiles and instead openly welcomed Mahayana Buddhism as a dialogue partner. Reichelt believed that God's light shone in all human hearts. Thus all religious believers are pilgrims seeking truth under the guidance of religious piety. Reichelt's appreciation of Mahayana Buddhism instigated his turn from an external religious conqueror to a man intent on extracting the internal similarities between the two religions.

Reichelt ventured that Christianity could complete Buddhism and consequently established a missionary centre that was geared to the encounter with Buddhists. He tried to interpret Christianity in view of Buddhism, combining the essential elements of the two religions. The traces of this Christian-Buddhist confluence still linger in the missionary centre like the echoes of its sacred music in the skies above; it's like a giant historical scroll featuring the Eastern Bodhisattva pouring down mercy on the suffering Christ of Western tradition. At this intersection of space and time, the meeting between East and West developed from a simple encounter into

deep dialogue, from simple assimilation to a clear presentation of the truth of Christ. The entire process resembles a Buddhist lotus flower gradually committing itself to raising the Christian cross and steadily guiding the Buddhist disciple toward the “temple” of Christian truth.

In the propagation of Christian doctrine, the missionary centre aimed at Buddhist-Christian dialogue and to some degree achieved a fusion of Buddhist and Christian teachings. Specifically, the content of this inter-religious dialogue was evident in the centre's architecture, in the terminology employed and in the ceremonies that were introduced. First, in its architecture Tao Fong Shan's Christ Temple resembles a Buddhist temple in form and construction, while also featuring a cross and other Christian symbolism; the interior is adorned with the lotus flower, an ornamental pagoda, an incense burner and other symbolism of ancient Chinese culture, as well as the cross, a baptismal font, candle holders, biblical inscriptions and other Christian symbolism. Secondly, similar or interrelated Christian-Buddhist terminology reveals doctrinal parallels between Buddhism and Christianity. Examples include nirvana and heaven; the Bodhisattva of Compassion and Christ; *Pudu* (普度) and Salvation; Enlightenment and Revelation; the Evil Creature and Sin; Pure Land and the Kingdom of Heaven; mercy and love. These and similar terms used in Christian and Buddhist teachings were juxtaposed or used interchangeably in inscriptions and ceremonies at the missionary centre. In addition, some elements within Buddhist doctrine that lent themselves to Christian interpretations were used in Reichelt's Christian-Buddhist dialogue: for example Pure Land Buddhism's belief in calling on the merciful Buddha and the Christian doctrine of “justification by faith”; the work of Mahayana Buddhism's Bodhisattva and the redemptive work of Christ; the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, Buddhism's “Three Precious Treasures,” and the “Holy Trinity” of Christian teaching, all points of connection in Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Thirdly, the missionary centre's Christian-Buddhist dialogue featured ceremonies adapted in both form and content from Buddhist rituals. In other words, Christian ceremonies wore a kind of Buddhist cloak, such that dialogue started from a kind of resemblance in “appearance”.

The three approaches to Christian-Buddhist interaction outlined above reflect Reichelt's deep commitment and the

painstaking efforts he took to establish authentic Christian-Buddhist dialogue and exchange; the strategy of seeking consensus had the advantage of granting believers of different religions a sense of shared identity, averting elements that were potential sources of alienation and conflict. However, the appearance of a shared purpose could not withstand the attack of intrinsic inter-religious tensions and was incapable of achieving genuine acceptance and approval. The greatest barrier in Reichelt's preaching to Mahayana Buddhists was how to deal with the different views on the "uniqueness" of ultimate reality. To address this problem, he advocated a theory of "seeking consensus in the Dao" (以道求同) that used the Dao as the unifying ultimate reality present in all religions. In doing so, Reichelt played down the unique features of Christianity. This no doubt gave rise to the consequent criticism from the Norwegian Church as it directly challenged Christianity's monotheism, which made Reichelt susceptible to charges of syncretism and liberalism. To Buddhists, Reichelt's tactics of vaguely treating the issue of ultimate reality in turn raised suspicions of hypocrisy, as though they merely constituted a calculated trap to effectively entice Buddhist followers to change their religion. Reichelt's preaching as he tried to convert Buddhists seemed to distort the originally amiable dialogue relationship, which led to the perception of Reichelt as a devil who forcibly converted Buddhist believers, a view taken by some monks in the Chinese Buddhist world.

Seen from the perspective of global trends toward the indigenization of missionary work in the first half of the 20th century as well as the Chinese context at the time, Reichelt's religious dialogue was a meaningful indicator of the nature of his role as missionary and religious dialogue interlocutor and of his efforts in attempting to balance the exclusivism of monotheistic Christianity with Chinese culture and different modes of thinking. Although such efforts in themselves were already a partial renunciation of certain fundamental Christian doctrines, they nonetheless still distorted the original idea of religious dialogue. In fact, the actual potential or feasibility of Reichelt's attempts remains a matter of debate. But his efforts in using Buddhism to explain Christianity were necessary due to the circumstances of the time. Further, he exhibited sincerity, generosity, goodness and humility of character in his genuine desire to break down inter-religious factions and to promote open-mindedness.

Reichelt of course had no way of predicting how times would change. Since the 1980s the vibrant introduction of Western learning in the world of Mainland Chinese humanities has given rise to an unexpected upsurge in Christianity research that was unrelated to either Western missionary history or indigenous church movements. In 1994 the journal *Logos and Pneuma* resumed publication designating this movement "Sino-Christian theology" and adding the subtitle "Chinese Journal of Theology". The following year Mr. Daniel Yeung and Mr. LIU Xiaofeng established the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies to carry out the following academic projects: the first was the translation into Chinese of the historical classics of Christian thought. Secondly, it aimed at the cultivation of academic partnerships with scholars researching Christianity at Mainland universities. Third was the effort to encourage contemporary Chinese scholars to advance the re-interpretation of Christian thought in the areas of their sub-disciplines within the humanities, thus developing new Chinese theological resources that employed academic approaches. Fourth was the project of promoting dialogue and collaboration between ecumenical theological workers and Chinese Mainland Christianity researchers to work through their differences and collaboratively develop a Sino-Christian theology with Chinese characteristics. By means of its efforts in these

four areas, the institute has attempted to promote a revived exchange between Christian culture and Chinese culture so as to ultimately realize the dream of bringing together Chinese Christians and scholars in reflecting upon, writing and reading about, as well as discussing, theology in Chinese and also to enable dialogue and exchange between Sino-Christian theology and universal theology. The promotional work of the institute and the unceasing efforts of academics within the Chinese humanities world have fostered this new field of Christianity research, Sino-Christian theology, in contemporary China. Over a period of twenty years, research on Sino-Christian theology has gradually developed from what Mr. Daniel Yeung defined in the narrow sense as a field of research reacting "specifically to the demand for Christian studies that arose as a result of scholarly publications in the Chinese humanities in the mid 1980s" to its current form, covering a broad historical as well as geographical spectrum and seeking to incorporate the many Chinese Christian discourses. Moreover, Sino-Christian theology and the institute, which belong to the academy rather than to the church, have been instrumental in building bridges between the academic world and the church, promoting mutual respect, dialogue and collaboration between the two sides. Sino-Christian theology's drive toward a wider sphere of influence is something its proponents and participants as well as representative researchers have consistently collaborated on: their efforts reflect the growing trend of Chinese research on Christianity led by Sino-Christian theology.

From the development of Sino-Christian theology, it can clearly be seen that the institute has played an important role in the development of contemporary Chinese Christianity. As we stand at the top of Tao Fong Shan, taking a moment to look back upon its history and try to understand its current situation, we are deeply moved: Reichelt as well as the founders of the institute have had to overcome countless obstacles in their work of assimilating Christianity and Chinese culture, which shows the spirit and vigour of their whole-hearted dedication. The relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture they have conceived of highlights many points of connection while also exposing differing points of view.



Response to Dr. WANG Ying

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Dr. Wang's report offers a concise introduction of Reichelt's missionary work and contribution, with particular attention paid to this unique location, Tao Fong Shan. Reichelt was not only a well-known missionary, he was also a religious dialogue advocate who practiced what he preached and whose contributions in both the praxis and theory of promoting and strengthening Christian-Buddhist dialogue were uniquely valuable.



Dr. Wang further gives a brief overview of her understanding and assessment of Sino-Christian theology (particularly in the narrow sense), in which she commends Sino-Christian theology for its academic outlook and understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. In the following I would like to respond with a few questions:

The first question relates to Dr. Wang's reading of the lotus flower rising out of the cross. Dr. Wang sees this as a Buddhist lotus flower gradually committing itself to the Christian cross, steadily leading Buddhist believers toward the "temple" of Christian truth. But according to the explanation found on Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre's homepage, the "lotus flower" in traditional Chinese culture represents the principle of "attaining virtue despite difficult circumstances" and "attaining pure enlightenment. Many people hope to actualize it in their lives, but... more or less fail to do so. But living in the love of Jesus, taking the cross to follow Him, we are able to live up to holy sincerity and clarity." What is stressed here is how the Christian cross symbolizes the attainment or completion of personality represented in the lotus flower. We are inclined to accept Dr. Wang's explanation, but there is an inherent tension: on the one hand, Buddhism is used to explain Christianity, while on the other hand, Christianity represents the completion or fulfilment of Buddhism. How can this tension be explained?

My second question concerns the common ground between Reichelt and Sino-Christian theology. Dr. Wang highlights an approach she calls "points of connection" advocated by Reichelt as well as those engaged in Sino-Christian theology. How can such "points of connection" be explained theologically with regard to the concrete practice supported by this approach?

Thirdly, as I see it, both the relationship between Reichelt's missionary work and religious dialogue and the relationship between the cross and the lotus flower point to a certain tension. On the one hand, in promoting religious dialogue, Reichelt believed that the light of God illuminated all of humanity, as well as all religions, and that every religion thus radiated the light of God: in this sense all religions are equal. On the other hand, as a Christian missionary, Reichelt had to believe that Christianity was far superior to Buddhism and other religions. Christianity, after all, was the foundation and as such seen as being superior to Buddhism. Thus preaching Christianity was necessary. How then did Reichelt deal with this tension in promoting the theory of "seeking consensus in the Dao" (以道求同)? Further, with regard to the concrete practice of religious dialogue, can this sort of notion and practice even be realized?

Fourthly, as I see it, Reichelt's missionary activity was still an attempt to contextualize or indigenize Christian faith and is thus at odds with the efforts of Sino-Christian theology, that is to set out from the foundation of Christian faith to use Chinese language and thought to represent Christian faith and thinking in the Chinese intellectual and academic arenas and to try to establish a theology and faith of the Chinese people. I am interested in knowing what Dr. Wang and the other professors and students present might comment on this point.

More than the Country of Cherry Blossoms: Thoughts from My Stay at Doshisha University in Japan

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About twenty years ago, after I had finished writing my book *The Logic of Japanese History*, I came in contact with Kyoto's Doshisha University and hoped to go there to study



theology. I never expected this hope to become reality earlier this year. From 12 Feb. to 12 May, my wife and I thanks to arrangements made by ISCS took up posts at Doshisha University as visiting scholars. Doshisha's School of Theology focuses on three main areas of research: studies on Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three monotheistic world religions. Researchers employ different angles and approaches, including those of Buddhist studies, in order to open more comprehensive perspectives on the study of Japanese society. By means of studying religion, students gain both a deeper and wider understanding of humanity, history and the world in order to work toward developing cultural symbiosis and peaceful coexistence. To better respond to an age of religious pluralism, Prof. Katsuhiro Kohara in 2003 established the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (CISMOR). In Sept. 2008, CISMOR was chosen by the Japanese Ministry of Education as a "Program to Support the Formation of Strategic Research Bases in Private Universities" with the goal of "creat[ing] world class research centres". CISMOR's Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (JISMOR) is published in English and Japanese.

1. Thoughts on Japanese Academia

Whether assessed in terms of scope or scholarly depth, Japanese biblical studies are currently more advanced than biblical studies in Mainland China but still lag somewhat behind Euro-American biblical studies. The most obvious results of academic collaboration in this area are the publications of *The New Testament* and *The Old Testament* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006/4) with each book translated by a different scholar and annotations and commentary added for explanation where the meaning of the original text is uncertain. The Franciscan Bible Research Institute also published *The Holy Scriptures* (2013), a revised vernacular version based on the original text with a comprehensive glossary appended. A joint committee collaborated on these as well as the *Protestant Revised Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1970), the *Catholic-Protestant New Interconfessional Version* (Tokyo: Japan Bible Society, 1987) and *The Holy Bible* in modern Japanese, establishing a tradition of collaboration in compiling Japanese translations of the Bible. As far as the translations by individual scholars are concerned, the most influential were Tsukamoto Toraji's translation of the New Testament and Masao Sekine's translation of the Old Testament. The former was published by the well-known publishing company Iwanami Shoten. Masao Sekine additionally compiled 20 volumes of biblical research. Finally, Maeda Gorō's translation of the New Testament (Tokyo: Chuokoron-Shinsha, 1983) and Hiroshi Ikeda's translation of the New Testament (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2011) have their own distinguishing characteristics.

As far as research on the New Testament is concerned, Kenzo Tagawa's *Survey of Early Christian History* (1968) and *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, which was revised in 1996, can be seen as the definitive works on the Gospel of

Mark. At the same time, Kenzo Tagawa published his five-volume *Annotated New Testament* and has more recently published *Works on the New Testament*, a critical commentary on the merits and drawbacks of New Testament translations into different languages. Further, Sadao Kawashima's *Gospel of Mark: Jesus' Road to the Cross* (1996) and Akira Ogawa's *Theology of the Gospel of Mark* – all constitute works of excellence in the field of New Testament studies. Another point to note is that many of the Japanese biblical commentaries are highly specialized, such as Katsumi Takizawa's three-volume *Reading the Bible: Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew*. In order to better understand the situation of Japanese biblical studies from an insider perspective, I audited courses in the School of Theology at Doshisha on "Biblical Theology" and "The Gospel according to Matthew" held by Professors Ritsu Ishikawa and Moriyoshi Murayama. Overall, both had been influenced by German literary criticism, English historical criticism and similar methodologies. In other words, contemporary Japanese biblical research must digest the academic achievements of Euro-American biblical studies, which is also one of the difficulties confronting Sino-Christian theology.

In contrast to biblical studies, Japanese studies in philosophy of religion have taken shape since World War II in the tradition represented by scholars such as Kitaro Nishida, Seiichi Hatano, Hajime Tanabe and Keiji Nishitani, even giving rise to scholars such as Tatsuo Koike who advocated the integration of Christianity and Buddhism. His Theology of Emptiness deserves the attention of scholars in Sino-Christian theology. Other scholars such as those at Tokyo University's Department of Philosophy and Religion have systematically promoted Eastern aesthetics research.

2. Thoughts on the Japanese Church

Japanese translations of Christian classics have been very successful. Important works, from the Complete Works of Augustine to the 18-volume Collected Works of Karl Barth have already been published. At one point, the distribution of the Bible in Japan took third place worldwide, just after Great Britain and the United States. The fact that so many Japanese are reading the Bible should not go unnoticed by Chinese academics. And yet, the scope and intensity of biblical research does not compare to that of biblical studies in Europe or the USA, one reason being that the Christian population of Japan is relatively small. It constitutes only 0.7% of the total population, not even one million people. Most Christians are elderly, and

the congregations of many churches are shrinking, resulting in an atmosphere of discouragement. Churches will likely have to be consolidated in the future. During my three-month stay, I mostly visited the services of the Kyoto Peace Church. Among the 40 or 50 believers who joined together for prayer, fewer than 10% were young people.

This spiritual condition has a lot to do with the flourishing of the Shinto faith in Japan, in which most festivals of daily life have their origins. Japan is a pantheistic society: most Japanese visit a shrine after birth, marry in a Christian church (non-Christians, too), and are buried in a Buddhist graveyard. The Emptiness of the Hōryū-ji Buddha Temple, the Flower Garden of Nara, the Zen Garden of the Golden Pavilion (Rokuonji) and of the Silver Pavilion... the rich symbolism in the traditional architecture of the Imperial Palace (in the sense of Daoist philosophy), the short-lived bloom of the beautiful cherry blossom; the cheerful industriousness of the Japanese and their passion for Impressionism, the throngs of people buying books in antique shops every evening: all these left a deep impression on me. Japanese society experienced the transformation from modernity to post-modernity beginning in the 1980s. In the digitalization, urbanization and consumerization the transformation to postmodernism is already complete. But other historical processes of individualization, humanism and spiritualization as experienced in the West in Japan developed into individualism, Japanism and spiritualism. This form of spirituality embraces faith in many gods, a true love of art and the pursuit of education.

Based on the aforementioned observations of Japanese society, the church and academia, the author, besides writing "Divine Logic" (a chapter of *The Logic of the New Testament Worldview: The Gospel of Mark*), was also able to finish writing some articles, namely "Translation and Theology of the Lord's Prayer", "A Portrait of the Japanese Spirit: From Restlessness to Tranquility", "Three Concerns in Conceptual Art", "The Truth of Fiction", as well as arrange for publication "A Genealogy of English Bible Translations". Thanks to the support of ISCS under its programme for "Overseas Academic Exchanges", not only was I able to test the conclusions I put forward in my *Logic of Japanese History* (1996), I was also greatly encouraged to conduct New Testament studies in Sino-Christian theology. Our three-month research stay was like the short bloom of the cherry blossom in Kyoto in the month of April, but my deep gratitude and appreciation will last a life-time.

(The Essay section is translated by Naomi Thurston)

Special Report

ISCS Research Fellow Visited Prof. Stackhouse

Prof. XIE Zhibin of Tongji University (ISCS research fellow in China) visited Pittsburgh Theological Seminary from Dec. 2013 to Feb. 2014. During his stay in Pittsburgh, he traveled to Massachusetts to visit Prof. Max Stackhouse (Professor Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary, an



eminent contemporary public theologian). Prof. Stackhouse visited ISCS in 2006 when he attended a conference in Hong Kong and offered great support to the academic work of ISCS in various ways. As a member of the academic committee for the "Public Theology Series", Prof. Stackhouse initiated this project and has contributed much. During the meeting they discussed issues on the social and political contexts of Christianity in China and the development of public theology in Chinese academia.

Farewell to Former Director Board Member Prof. Zimmerman

Prof. Theodore Zimmerman was born in China in 1948. In the 1950s, his family moved to Tao Fong Shan, where he



spent his childhood. He studied theology in the USA and worked in Taiwan from 1980 to 1989. After that he pursued

and obtained his doctorate in biblical studies in the USA and has been teaching in the Hong Kong Lutheran Theological Seminary since 1993. Since 2004 Prof. Zimmerman has been a member of the ISCS director board and became the chairperson in 2011. In June 2014 he retired and returned to the USA. ISCS held a farewell banquet for Prof. and Mrs. Zimmerman on 9 May 2014. On behalf of ISCS our associate publishing officer Billy YAN (who was a student of Prof. Zimmerman) presented him a gift – a Hong Kong double-decker bus model. Prof. Zimmerman smiled and said, “The Cantonese pronunciation of ‘the bus is coming’ is just like that of the Greek word ‘βασιλέα’ (the kingdom of God).”

Academic Activities

Conferences hosted by the Koinonia of Chinese Theologians



The Koinonia of Chinese Theologians hosted two conferences in the first half of 2014. The first time was on 6 Jan. 2014 at Hong Kong Bible Seminary on the topic “On Affection and Love”; the second time was on 9 June 2014 at the Applied Theological Education Centre, Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary on the topic “Theological Diversity and Ecclesial Unity”. Our research fellow Prof. Jason Lam participated in the two events and convened parts of the conferences as the secretary of the Koinonia. About 30 participants joined each event, including scholars from academia and within the church.

Conference on the Russian-Chinese Orthodox Lexicon

On 13 Jan. 2014 ISCS hosted a working conference for the Russian-Chinese Orthodox Lexicon. This project started



in the latter half of 2009 with the founding committee including Prof. ZHANG Baichuan of Beijing Normal University, Prof. XU Fenglin of Peking University, Prof. DAI Guiju of Beijing Language and Culture University, Prof. LIN Jinghua of Capital Normal University and ISCS director Daniel Yeung. Prof. Dai later withdrew from the project due to her heavy workload. We established a translation committee with the help of our guest research fellow Fr. Dionisy Pozdnyaev. He invited Sinologists

and theologians from Russia in order to assist in the translation work. The project has lasted for more than four years, and this meeting was the last working conference. The publication of the lexicon is planned for the near future.

Visiting Scholars from Nanzan University

On 18 Feb. 2014 the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture of Nanzan University from Japan visited ISCS. The seven visitors included Prof. KIM Sueng Chul, Dr. Paul Swanson, Dr. Naoko Frances HIOKI; we held a seminar for exchanging ideas. Director Daniel Yeung welcomed the guests, and research fellow Prof. Jason Lam introduced to them the contemporary situation of Christian studies in China and the ministry of ISCS. Dr. Swanson and Prof. Kim also introduced their institute and the contemporary situation of Christian studies in Japan. Both sides expressed hope to strengthen further exchange and cooperation.



Research Fellow visited Universities in East China

During 19-25 Feb. 2014 research fellow Prof. Jason Lam was invited to attend conferences and deliver lectures in Wenzhou, Nanjing and Shanghai. The Centre for Christian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences established a research institute in the newly built Wenzhou

