



Where does theology go?

- Paul Tillich: *A History of Christian Thought*

by Che Gui (Doctorate student at the Department of Philosophy of WuHan University, Visiting Scholar at Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre)

Paul Tillich's *A History of Christian Thought* has been published in Chinese translation, yet another great achievement in the 'Chinese Academic Library of Christian Thought'. As one of the worlds great philosophical authorities, Paul Tillich's theology poses a challenge to the quests for truth in this generation.

The first part of this book discusses the classical Christian theological tradition from its dialogue with the ancient Greek philosophy until the Protestant theology of time of the Reformation. Tillich sees the core of the great dogmatic conflicts on Christology and Trinity which began with the Apostolic Fathers to be ever the same: 'How is salvation possible within a dark and deathbound world?' - which is easily seen to be the very question which 20th century existentialism has brought up again. On the level of theological interpretation, Tillich can rightly be said to be in the great tradition of the Alexandrian school. The logos of the says, that in the theology of Tillich, there is a renewed exposition of the principle of Gods universal self-revelation. And passionately devoted to the old church father Origen, is even more revealing of Tillich's complete mystical theology.

The second part of the book deals with protestant theology of the 19th and 20th centuries. The conflicts of Enlightenment rationalism and traditional faith dumps humankind into a hitherto unseen break up of spirit. The insanity of Nietzsche is an appropriate portrait of the spiritual break up of this age and liberal theology is the life and death struggle of modern philosophy attempting to overcome this spiritual break up. As seen from one perspective, Schleiermacher can be seen as the theologian who rectified the Enlightenment movement, but Schleiermacher saved classical theology by sacrificing the authority of the Bible. Hegel attempted to use philosophical concepts to interpret the 'mythological symbols' of Christian theology establishing a great synthesis in the confrontation of traditional faith and Enlightenment philosophy. But the price Hegel paid for this, was a complete reversal of roles between dialectical metaphysics and revelatory theology. The theological mission of Paul Tillich then is another bold attempt after the collapse of the great syntheses of Schleiermacher and Hegel.

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Tillich clearly states that contemporary theology faces an extremely important choice: either to revert to the orthodox classical tradition or to carry on with a great synthesis of classical theology and Enlightenment philosophy. Tillich's choice is firmly on the side of Schleiermacher and Hegel but everyone must at this crossroads of modern theology necessarily make his/her own conclusion.

Academic Studies



Visiting scholars

In March, in early spring, Dr Cheng GuanMin of the BeiJing HuaFu Publishing House, came to visit our Institute in the capacity of visiting scholar for a period of three months, thus being the first visiting scholar of the new millenium. The object for the studies of Dr.Cheng is this time a comparison of the theories of Hate of Scheler and Nietzsche. Dr.Cheng is a young scholar wearing glasses and the direction of his interests can be gathered from the interview above. Apart from doing research and collecting material related to his topic, Dr.Cheng will also help our Institute in the work of translation and proofreading.

Guest Professors

In April, our Guest Professor, Dr.G.Criveller has been in mainland China to lecture at various universities, as arranged by our Institute, among others, at Chinese People's University, ShanDong University, ShanXi Normal University, FuDan University and ZheJiang University. On these occasions, Dr.Criveller lectured on post-modernism, contemporary theology, the theory of religious dialogue etc.

In April, another Guest Professor, Dr.H.Rowold, made a visit arranged by our institute to FuDan University in Shanghai, where he lectured on topics related to biblical Hebrew.

A new Guest Professor: Dr. Zhang Xian

Dr. Zhang Xian is presently lecturer at the Department for Philosophy at ZhongShan University in GuangZhou. During the years 1990 to 1999 Dr. Zhang took up a post as guest professor at Freiburg University, Switzerland. The special fields of Dr. Zhang are phenomenology and Christian philosophy and he is fluent in English, German, and French. Prof. Zhang is presently mainly occupied with translations and proof-reading at our institute but it is our hope that we can establish a deeper and wider cooperation with Dr.Zhang.

