



漢言吾

基督教文化研究所
INSTITUTE OF SINO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

News

Spring 2018

33 To Fung Shan Road, N.T., Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2694-6868

Fax: (852) 2601-6977

Website: <http://www.iscs.org.hk>

E-mail: info@iscs.org.hk

Essay

Christian Theology as an Interdisciplinary Inquiry

XIE Zhibin Professor,
Department of Philosophy, Tongji University
ISCS Visiting Scholar 2017-2018

In current academia, treating a specific topic with interdisciplinary studies has become a trend. The objective of interdisciplinary studies is to integrate the wisdom of different disciplines to obtain a fuller understanding and new knowledge on certain issues. Its methodology emphasizes the process of interaction and integration of various information, ideas, and theory without reliance on theory and method from any particular discipline. Interdisciplinary studies usually examine a topic of common interest to different disciplines, which could hardly be dealt with by one discipline in the traditional sense¹. In many cases, Christian elements are involved in interdisciplinary studies, and correspondingly Christian theology is being shaped in due process.

In conducting an interdisciplinary program in which a Christian perspective is involved, the selection of research topic, participating disciplines and scholars are crucial factors. First of all, regarding the research topic, the common issues and ideas studied by different disciplines on a global scale should be taken into account. It may highlight some underlining big questions such as human nature, social justice and common good, which may be the focus of Christian theology as well.

Secondly, the selection of participating disciplines, intellectual

resources and scholars is another important factor. It would be helpful to look for cross-disciplinary resources from particular disciplines to contribute to the common topic in an interdisciplinary program. Besides the traditional disciplines from the human and social sciences, the interdisciplinary program has to pay attention to the research achievements by some other disciplines such as psychology, biology, and astronomy, and so on, which may pose new challenges to reflection on human nature, human behavior, etc. In this sense, it would be better to include some scholars who already have a certain sense of interdisciplinary studies in a program, i.e. who have already noticed and integrated related resources from other disciplines to develop their own research within a particular discipline. This openness to other disciplines will facilitate other scholars' participation and collaboration in the program.

Information and ideas from different disciplines in an interdisciplinary program may enrich and enhance the understanding of public issues. For example, in the interdisciplinary studies of certain social and political issues, through the interaction and integration between historical, political and legal experiences and practices and norms/values, we may discover some profound issues in human nature and ethics. They may contribute to our understanding of human integrity and the socio-political structure. During this process, the Christian perspective may deepen our thinking on the issues of human dignity and human sacredness.

We may also encounter some difficulties in interdisciplinary studies. As there are boundaries between disciplines in academia, "thinking across the borders" becomes challenging for the scholars involved in interdisciplinary studies. Even though scholars are willing to use resources from other disciplines for a common topic, they may not be familiar with some ideas from those disciplines



because of the limits of their intellectual background. In the Chinese academia, some scholars are not acquainted with Christian thought, although they are aware of the significance of Christian tradition and ideas in their own research and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The impact of interdisciplinary studies on Christian theology is twofold. On the one hand, it is often necessary to include Christian resources when studying some big questions. On the other hand, interdisciplinary studies embody the essence of Christian theology itself. In order to participate in interdisciplinary studies effectively, Christian scholars are expected to be sensitive to other disciplines, as other disciplines examine some issues (such as freedom and rights) differently from Christianity, those issues becoming public issues at the same time. It thus demonstrates the relatedness of Christian studies to public life and its fundamental issues. Christian studies may take part in public discourse and show its theological relevance and distinctiveness. To some extent, Christian theology can be regarded as a “reflection on all things in relation to God”. And those things can be studied by other disciplines and “interpreted in non-theological terms” as well. Thus there exists “a more collaborative manner of envisioning God, the world, and ourselves.”² To that end, we may call “Christian Theology an Interdisciplinary Inquiry”.■

1 Regarding the theory and method of interdisciplinary studies, see Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1990), and Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2011).

2 Douglas F. Ottati, “A Collaborative Manner of Theological Reflection,” in Robin W. Lovin & Joshua Mauldin, eds., *Theology as Interdisciplinary Inquiry: Learning from the Natural and Human Sciences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), pp. 136-137.

Jesus Through the Centuries in China

CHU Xiaobai Professor,

Department of Chinese Language and Literature,

East China Normal University

ISCS Visiting Scholar 2018

Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture is the work of Jaroslav Pelikan, late professor of historical theology at the University of Yale. Through the interweaving of a large number of religious, art, historical, economic, legal, and other related materials, the book traces the rich and varied presentation of the image of Jesus in different times and places. In the preface to the Chinese version, Liu Xiaofeng calls it “a creative cultural history masterpiece”, He notes, “it can be called a cultural history of Christology. It focuses not on the Christology in theological thinking, but on the cultural forms of the West”.



Pelikan wrote about the history of Jesus in the Western Christian region. From the perspective of territory, there is no “non-western world” involved in the broad sense. In terms of the span of history, there is not much about the contemporary phenomena. Thus, the image of Jesus in Chinese culture will not only be a “non-Western” supplement to the “Jesus through the centuries”, but also a continuation of the theme of the study. In a deeper sense, this study examines the presentations of local consciousness in Chinese history. The presentations of Jesus’ image in different periods and the forms in which it has been realized in China are also the layers of the Christian beliefs that have spread from the West to the East (China) after more than a thousand years of dissemination in the Western world.

The study of “the image of Jesus through centuries in China” should focus on the following three levels of connotation: First, the symbolic form of Jesus’ images in Chinese historical paintings, literature, and ceremonies. Secondly, the rhetorical use of this image by the different groups in different time, including Christian communities, those holding other faiths, or the community of humanities. Thirdly, the local consciousness of these communities. In this way, the study is not just about the way art has formed the image of Jesus, but also about how the image has been shaped by the encounter of cultures. The study will attempt to reveal how the parties involved express themselves by imagining the other.

In the encounter between the two cultures, the image has undergone meaningful changes. These various transformations constitute the history of Jesus’ image. But they also present a multidimensional form of local consciousness. It is precisely these various transformations that have led Western missionaries and Chinese believers to seek out what kind of God the Chinese needs. This need does not necessarily conform to the Western Christian traditions. Indeed, it makes the local context and reception the real subject. Meeting Christianity, people interpreted it through the spectacles of their time, place, culture and situation. An analysis of these factors is, therefore, an analysis our own culture and life. Thus, transformation of the image is in itself an image of local consciousness. Of course, local consciousness is not static. On the contrary, local consciousness is in constant flux. This kind of reorientation did not only happen in Chinese society and communities. Encountering Chinese culture, Christian tradition also had to incarnate the image of Christ in the form of Chinese cultural consciousness. Locality, that is the context of time, place, culture, situation, is then not simply consciousness of image but a consciousness that generates image. Here we have entered the field of Christian anthropology. God in history is always living in history. Humanity can only perceive God through the cultural specifics of time and place, through its consciousness. History is then the expressions of His Presence. This paper is a sketch of a

metamorphosis, a history of the changing consciousness of God in Chinese social life.

After all, any consciousness is historical consciousness. Studying the metamorphosis of Jesus' image, we can see that the history of the introduction of Christianity into China is actually the history of the transformation of Chinese local consciousness of God. Admittedly, sometimes the reception of Christianity was negative: the image of Jesus was humiliated, folk beliefs were reactivated or Confucianism strengthened. However, even such negative reactions are a symbol of a new local consciousness of God in China.

For example, Hong Xiuquan produced an image of Jesus Christ as his Heavenly Brother based on his identity as a squire and his memory of some kind of Chinese history. In contrast, anti-religious squires of the late Qing dynasty presented Jesus as a "male pig". Negative as it is, the pig image is their way of dealing with Christ and is shaped by their experiences of Chinese life. For the missionaries the Christ image aroused deeper and positive memories. However, having lived in China for many years during which they had learned to love the Chinese, were willing to abandon the accumulated western historical consciousness

surrounding the image of Jesus in order to reshape it to meet Chinese needs. As a result, they gradually became part of Chinese history. Jesus Christ has become a pain that Chinese history needs to touch, a pain from God and His shared commitment to Chinese history. This is also a local consciousness that occurs in the depths of the faith. This local consciousness is based on the life of Jesus Christ, because the life of Jesus Christ is never outside of people's lives.

The advantage of this interdisciplinary approach, no matter what methods it uses – cultural expression, community construction, or social movement cultural expression – is that it reveals the evolution of Chinese historical consciousness round the image of Christ.

My research focuses on the topic of "Jesus through centuries in China" just in this sense. I have published *The Rhetoric of Icons: Changes in the Image of Jesus Christ in Ming and Qing Folk Society* (winning the Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise 2015) and more than forty articles. Currently, I am working on the study of the image of Jesus in 20th century China. I look forward to more cooperation with the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies.■

Special Report

Seminar on "Christian Art and Spirituality"

From 9 to 13 August, 2017, a seminar on "Christian Literature and Arts and Spirituality" was held at Tao Fong Shan. This seminar was organized by the Centre for Christian Literature and Arts, Beijing Normal University and co-organized by ISCS. Dr. PAN Yijung (Associate Professor, China Graduate School of Theology) was the host of the program and Dr. Milton WAN (ISCS Distinguish Professor) delivered a lecture on "Christian Spirituality and Theology". Fr. Stephen TONG SJ and Ms. Sally LAW, director and Formation Officer from Xavier House, lectured respectively on "The Foundation of Ignatian Spirituality" and "Spirituality Practice". During the seminar, Dr. PAN led participants to study and dialogue between Christian spirituality and humanities such as architecture, painting, calligraphy, literature, rite, mentality, icon, etc.



13th Summer Institute of "Theology and Humanities"



From 18 to 20 August 2017, the 12th annual meeting of the Chinese Comparative Literature Association was held at Henan University. The School of Liberal Arts of Renmin University of China organized the forum of "Comparative Literature and Religious Studies" and the 13th Summer Institute of "Theology and Humanities", ISCS was the co-organizer, as usual. The theme this year is "Literature, Arts, and Religion in the Post-secular Age". More than 30 participants delivered their speeches in 6 sections and had in-depth dialogue. Speakers included old friends of our institutes such as Prof. CHIN Ken-Pa from Taiwan Fujen Catholic University, Prof. LAI Pan-chiu from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Prof. SONG Xuhong from Minzu University of China, etc. Our research fellow Prof. Jason LAM was also invited to deliver a paper on "Language as the Ground of the Universality of Hermeneutics: Why did Gadamer make use of Theology?" Other participants included Prof. Idit Alphandary and Prof. ZHANG Ping from the University of Tel Aviv, Prof. Roger Ames from the University of Hawaii, and Prof. YANG Huilin from Renmin University of China. They offered excellent comments on the papers and contributed to the discussion.

Interdisciplinary Program and International Symposium on “Dignity, Morality and Rights”

To foster the interdisciplinary orientation of Sino-Christian studies, ISCS conducted a program on “Dignity, Morality and Rights: An Integration of Christian Theology and Interdisciplinary Studies” and related international symposia from September to December 2017. Six scholars in philosophy, theology, political science, law, and sociology from mainland China participated in the program. The program examined the general theory of dignity, morality and rights, its problems in the Chinese context, and problems from the perspective of Sino-Christian theology from different disciplines. Reading groups, seminars, and consultation sections were held during the period. The common issues on that topic were studied through interdisciplinary integration. By ISCS’ invitation, Prof. CI Jiwei from the Department of Philosophy, University of Hong Kong and Prof. LAI Pan-chiu from the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong participated in the consultation sections.

In order to expand the perspective of Christian theology and inter-cultural dialogue for the program, ISCS and the Centre for Christian Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, together with some members of the Global Network of Public Theology (Center for Religion in Society, York St John University; Center for Public and Contextual Theology, Charles Sturt University; Center for Theology and Public Issues, University of Otago; MF Norwegian School of Theology), held an international symposium on the same topic from November 30 to December 1, 2017. Scholars and some public theologians overseas attended the symposium. Through interdisciplinary collaboration in both Chinese and international academia, the program and symposium aimed to throw new light on the theory of dignity and rights and to advance Christian theology’s engagement in and contribution to the discourse on public issues.

Interdisciplinary Program scholars, discipline and research topics

Chinese Philosophy		
Name	University	Research Topic
LI Yong	Wuhan University	Confucianism and Human Rights
Western Philosophy/ Ethics		
Name	University	Research Topic
WANG Fuling	Renmin University of China	Dignity of Life in the Perspective of Ethics as the Moral Ground for the Rights of Life
Politics		
Name	University	Research Topic
LI Quan	Sun Yat-Sen University	Our Right to Take Responsibility: Moral Visions of Karl Barth and Mou Zongsan
Law		
Name	University	Research Topic
ZHOU Ruizhi	China University of Political Science and Law	From Human Right’s Idea to Its Institution: A Research Focus on Human Dignity in the Constitution of PRC

Social Science		
Name	University	Research Topic
YU Zhejun	Fudan University	Co-existential Right: An Approach to Discourse Ethics
Theology		
Name	University	Research Topic
XIE Zhibin	Tongji University	The Teaching of Rights in Calvinism and Rights Practice in Chinese Society



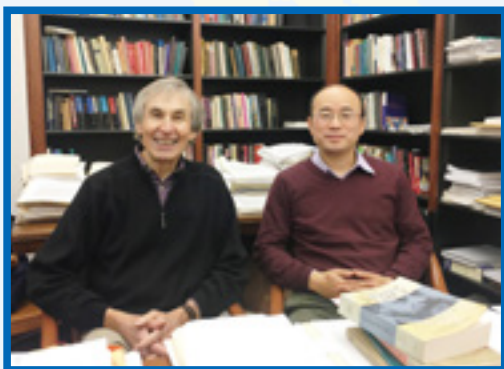
Session 1: Law: Human Dignity and Human Rights	Speakers: Michelle MIAO (Assistant Professor, CUHK) Topic: The Decency of Punishment and Human Dignity in China: Evolving Legal Norms and Social Values Speakers: Pauline Kollontai (Professor, York St John University) Topic: On Human Dignity and Rights: The Dialectics of Religious and Secular Law in Israel
Session 2: Religious Rights, Public Theology, and Political Values	Speakers: ZHONG Zhifeng (Assistant Professor, Renmin University of China) Topic: When Religious Freedom Is Under Attack: A Study of Four Christians’ Response in Modern China Speakers: Joshua Mauldin (Assistant Director, Center of Theological Inquiry) Topic: Theological Origins and Modern Political Norms: Martha Nussbaum, Jeremy Waldron, and Samuel Moyn
Session 3: Dignity, Politics, and Theology	Speakers: KUNG Lap-yan (Associate Professor, CUHK) Topic: Human Dignity as Right and Virtue in Practice: Reflections from and on the Cross Removal Event in China Speakers: David Tombs (Professor, University of Otago) Topic: Atrocity, Dignity and Resurrection
Session 4: Rights Practice: Society and State	Speakers: HU Jieren (Associate Professor, Tongji University) Topic: Flexible Governance: Petition, Disputes and Citizen’s Rights Protection in Contemporary China Speakers: Kjetil Fretheim (Professor, MF Norwegian School of Theology) Topic: Rights and Christianity: Identity and Politics



Session 5: Virtue, Human Rights, and Public Sphere	Speakers: LI Yong (Associate Professor, Wuhan University) Topic: Virtues and Human Dignity: Confucianism and the foundation of Human Rights
	Speakers: Sebastian Kim (Professor, Fuller Theological Seminary) Topic: Reinvigorating the Public Sphere: The Contribution of Religious Communities to Human Dignity, Morality and Rights
Session 6: Responsibility, Justice, and Public Issues	Speakers: LI Quan (Assistant Professor, Sun Yat-sen University) Topic: Our Right to Take Responsibility: The Confucian Moral Vision of Mou Zongsan
	Speakers: Clive Pearson (Research Fellow, Charles Sturt University) Topic: Being Responsible in the Public Domain
Concluding Remarks	Speakers: Robin Lovin (Professor Emeritus, Southern Methodist University) Speakers: LAI Pan-chiu (Professor, CUHK)

Overseas Visiting Scholar: QU Xutong in Princeton

Research Topic: Conversation with American Theologians: Multi-Disciplinary Sino-Christian Theology



In late August, Prof. QU Xutong, our guest research fellow in Mainland and associate professor of the School of Philosophy at Beijing Normal University, visited Princeton in USA for a year as our visiting scholar overseas. On 18 October, Prof. QU visited Eric Gregory, Professor of Department of Religion and Chair of the Council

of the Humanities in Princeton University, and his current project is about global justice. Prof. QU also visited Prof. Martin Kern, the Chair of Department of East Asian Studies in Princeton University. Prof. Kern pointed out that emphasizing nationalism is unavoidable for a great nation like China in reconstructing her self-identity, but she must avoid the ideas and emotions of extreme nationalism as exemplified in Nazi Germany. In mid-November, Prof. QU participated in the annual meeting of American Antiquarian Society and Society of Biblical Literature, he also reported on the current situation of Christian studies in China. Prof. QU discussed with Prof. Günter Thomas, the person in charge of the International Barth Conference and Professor of Ruhr University Bochum, about future cooperation.

Prof. QU also visited Prof. Bruce McCormack, Director of the Center for Barth Studies in Princeton Theological Seminary; Prof. Konrad Schmid, Professor of University of Zurich; Dr. Joshua Mauldin, Assistant Director of Center of Theological Inquiry; and Prof. Gordon Mikoski, editor of Theology Today. Prof. QU then discussed with them about the interaction and cooperation between China and USA on Christian studies and theology.

Overseas Visiting Scholar: HUANG Jianbo and Milton Wan in Cambridge

Research Topic: Anthropological Study of Spiritual Formation as a Learning Process



Our overseas visiting scholar Prof. HUANG Jianbo visited the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge from October to December 2017. The department has always been a strength of Cambridge University. In recent years, the department has launched a number of significant Christian research projects. Here the leading figure is Prof. Joel Robbins - a senior scholar recently introduced from the University of California San Diego, and Prof. James Laidlaw - Head of the Department of Social Anthropology, who is an expert in ethics related to religion/Christianity.