

CHINESE PUBLIC THEOLOGY

# Chinese Public Theology

*Generational Shifts and Confucian  
Imagination in Chinese Christianity*

ALEXANDER CHOW

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*To Edmond and Maryvonne Tang*

## *Acknowledgements*

Every book goes through a journey to be produced. This one began as I was nearing the completion of my PhD and was planning to travel to China. My PhD supervisor at the time, Edmond Tang, recommended I meet with a scholar whom he saw as being part of the next generation of Chinese 'cultural Christians'. That offered me a glimpse into a part of Chinese Christianity I had not really explored through my PhD thesis. After completing my PhD studies, I moved my wife and nine-month-old son (our *kaixinguo*) to Beijing, where I began my postdoctoral fellowship at Renmin University. My colleagues helped me understand the conditions which brought forth the unique Chinese phenomenon of cultural Christianity. It also left an impression that, for many, to be an intellectual was not enough—there is more at stake than the pursuit of knowledge. It was only at the end of my time there and as I was transiting to take up a lectureship in the University of Edinburgh that the overall shape of this book became clear.

This book has gone through a journey with me—from Birmingham to Beijing, and finally to Edinburgh. It has pushed me in many ways, forcing me to read into areas I previously knew little about. I am therefore so indebted to those friendships which have helped this project come to this point. Many friends and colleagues in China have offered immense help, just for being true to themselves and to be willing to bear with this *laowai* ('foreigner'), such as Yang Huilin, Ding Dagang, Gao Zhiqiang, He Guanghu, Li Tiangang, Liu Ping, Shi Xiao, Sun Yi, Wang Hai, and Zhang Jing. Many have been so gracious in reading significant portions of my drafts (Naomi Haynes, Jeremy Kidwell, Carl Kilcourse, Aristotle Papanikolaou, Joshua Ralston, Shi Xiao, Chloë F. Starr, Justin K. H. Tse, and Gerda Wielander), including those who have read and commented on the manuscript as a whole (James Eglinton, Fredrik Fällman, Andrew T. Kaiser, Yen-yi Lee, Mark McLeister, and Edmond Tang). All of this has made the text clearer and the argument far more robust. I am also thankful for the editorial team at OUP and the two anonymous peer reviewers, as well as the continued encouragements I have received during coffee breaks and hallway conversations with other colleagues in Edinburgh,

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I started my work in the University of Edinburgh the same week that my PhD supervisor, Edmond Tang, had his retirement party. Yet, I have pulled him out of retirement to ask for feedback—all for which I am very grateful. Professor Tang, I have learned much from you about Chinese Christianity and academic writing, and both you and Maryvonne have taught me about many beauties of life. I dedicate this book to the two of you.

Alexander Chow

*New College, Edinburgh*  
*May 2017*

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## *Note on Romanization*

In most cases throughout the main text of this book, Chinese characters are transliterated based on *hanyu pinyin*, the main romanization system used in scholarly writing related to mainland China. Exceptions have been made for individuals and institutions which are better known in Anglophone literature using a different romanization system, with *pinyin* followed in parentheses. In two instances, Chinese characters are offered alongside *pinyin* to help distinguish differences between homophones.

Reading a book of this nature often requires specialist knowledge. To make this book easier to follow, I have produced two short resources. The Appendix offers biographical briefs of the main individuals discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, whereas the Glossary contains a list of key Chinese terms and phrases used throughout this book. Both these resources include traditional Chinese characters. Whilst footnotes follow the convention of romanization as stated herein, the bibliography will also include traditional Chinese characters.

## Introduction

A state official once asked Confucius (551–479 BCE) about whether to kill all the wicked people in his domain. The sage replied, 'Just desire the good yourself and the common people will be good. By nature the gentleman [*junzi*] is like wind and the small man [*xiaoren*] like grass. Let the wind sweep over the grass and it is sure to bend.'<sup>1</sup> Confucius believed that morality is not limited to the private life but also has public implications. In context, he was teaching that the cultivation of a ruler's moral character would result in a good and harmonious society. Yet it was not only rulers who were to transform themselves and the society around them. Confucius also believed that everybody could pursue perfection and ultimately become a superior person (*junzi*).

When we consider Christianity, we know that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love one's neighbour. But are these commands limited to 'spiritual' matters? In Western contexts, many debate whether Christianity should be considered a private religion or whether it could have a public voice, engaging issues of common interest to the wider society. In China, this becomes even more complex given that Christianity is often seen as a minor foreign religion in a socialist state. Moreover, the public face of Chinese Christianity can be seen to be at odds with the interests of Chinese governing authorities.

In fact, neither Christianity nor Confucianism can be fully constrained by rigid modern categories such as 'public' or 'private' realms. The multiplicity of the practices, beliefs, and experiences associated with any tradition tend to blur the boundaries and assume natural encroachments into each realm. It is often the case that

<sup>1</sup> *Analects* 12: 19. Translated in D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), 115.

various internal and external forces affect the level of public or private engagement.<sup>2</sup>

Early Christianity was a persecuted Jewish sectarian faith and rivalled gnosticism, mystery religions, and other religious realities of the broader Graeco-Roman context—not to mention the imperial cult. Though some of the teachings of Jesus and his disciples expressed concerns related to the society and the state, the emphasis was largely limited to what we would today call a private religion. However, Christianity's negotiated existence in this religious ecosystem would dramatically change after the eventual conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine and the 313 Edict of Milan was signed to protect Christianity. The Christian faith was now thrust into the public space. Or was it the other way around? Could it be that Christianity received state support because of its potential for bringing unity to an ideologically diverse empire? Whatever the reason, this shift in political and religious realities enabled Christianity to develop a stronger public voice. Though this would be challenged at many points, a number of Christians throughout history have since articulated theological formulations for engagement in the public space.

Within the ancient Chinese context, a similar struggle existed amongst the Hundred Schools of Thought (*zhuzi baijia*). Many of these so-called 'schools', including the School of Scholars (*rujia* or Confucianism), the School of the Way (*daojia* or Daoism), the School of Law (*fajia* or Legalism), the School of Mozi (*Moja* or Moism), etc., spanned both sociopolitical and religiophilosophical concerns.<sup>3</sup> However, by the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), through the influence of thinkers like Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), Confucianism became

<sup>2</sup> See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 40–66.

<sup>3</sup> My use of the term 'religiophilosophical' suggests the challenge of clearly defining many of these traditions as 'religions' or 'philosophies' in the contemporary understandings of these labels. For instance, there is a fair bit of debate on whether Confucianism is a religion or a philosophy. Whilst recognizing the complexity and importance of these debates, this current study will attempt to stay neutral on this matter.

For some discussion on this debate, see Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Marknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 1–9; Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, 'Introduction', in *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*, ed. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 11–34; Jason Ananda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1–17.

the state orthodoxy and was seen as having the potential to bring order to a diverse empire. Moreover, Confucianism was reformed to offer an even stronger understanding of its role in the public space. Competing ideological systems were sometimes tolerated and managed under the imperial-era Ministry of Ceremonies (*taichang si*) or Ministry of Rites (*li bu*)—ministries which some may see as having some parallels with today's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA).<sup>4</sup> This tended to encourage a privatization of these alternative beliefs and practices. Like Christianity in the Holy Roman Empire, for two millennia, Confucianism had a preferred public voice in imperial China. This was particularly underscored by the imperial civil examination system, through which individuals who aspired to govern the society were educated in the Confucian classics to become scholar-officials.

This book takes these two realities of Christianity and Confucianism together when looking at Chinese Christianity. The religiophilosophical legacy and sociopolitical context of China have been making a recognizable mark on the formation of Chinese Christianity. This rightly reflects the complexities of what is often termed contextual theology, whereby Christian thought is built on the resources of the bible, Christian tradition, and a particular context.<sup>5</sup> In this study, I present the case that the recent history of Chinese Christianity has been developing a public faith that uses resources from both 'foreign' Christianity and 'indigenous' Confucianism for public engagement.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of their Historical Factors* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 180–217; Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 17–23; Daniel H. Bays, 'A Tradition of State Dominance', in *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, eds Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 25–39.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. edn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3–4.

<sup>6</sup> Christianity is often described as a 'foreign religion' or 'foreign teaching' (*yangjiao*) in China. This common label seems to contradict Christianity's long history in China, reaching back to the 7th century, and the deeply embedded Chinese cultural priorities which shape Chinese Christianity as a Chinese religion. It was not until the 1850s that Christianity in China came under strong attack as a foreign religion—largely because of its association with imperialism during the Opium Wars. Since then, this characterization has stuck.

Conversely, Confucianism is often described as a distinctive part of Chinese (or East Asian) culture. However, Arif Dirlik asks whether something as 'Chinese' as Confucianism can even be fully owned by those who see themselves as culturally Chinese. He writes, 'It is interesting to contemplate when Confucius became Chinese,



This integration of seemingly unrelated ideas to form a Chinese Christian public consciousness is not always explicit, but its influence is undeniable. Moreover, this book attempts to move beyond facile binary oppositions of public-private, sacred-secular, and thisworldly-otherworldly. These are artificial constructs imposed on any religiophilosophical tradition and it is important to acknowledge the tension that exists between these antitheses. Ultimately, this book argues that Chinese Christianity needs an integrative theology which pursues a Divine-human unity as the foundation for the theologian and the church to engage the state and the society.

#### THE GROWING PUBLIC NATURE OF CHINESE CHRISTIANITY

Discussions about the public nature of religion inevitably lead into discussions about the 'public sphere' or the 'public square'. The former term originates in the writings of the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas,<sup>7</sup> whilst the latter term has been promoted by the American Lutheran-turned-Catholic scholar Richard John Neuhaus.<sup>8</sup> Both formulations are products of the times and the contexts of their authors.<sup>9</sup> The 'public sphere' was conceived in 1950s Germany when Habermas believed discursive spaces had been threatened; he wished to restore a voice to the bourgeoisie.<sup>10</sup> In

when he was rendered from a Zhou dynasty sage into one of the points of departure for a civilization conceived in national terms. When the Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese adopted Confucianism for their own purposes, all the time claiming their own separate identity, did they do so to become part of the Sung or Yuan or Ming, whom they resisted strenuously . . . ?' Arif Dirlik, 'Timespace, Social Space, and the Question of Chinese Culture', *boundary 2* 35, no. 1 (2008): 20.

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1962] 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> See Nicholas Adams, 'Interreligious Engagement in the Public Sphere', in *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, eds David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 281–9.

<sup>10</sup> Much of the criticisms of this formulation are due to Habermas' focus on a patriarchal bourgeoisie. See Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*

contrast, the 'public square' was birthed out of the United States in the 1980s, reflecting American democratic sensibilities; it involved the relationship between the church and the state, and the growing reality of secularism.

Both of these formulations have their unique contextual idiosyncrasies that have been challenged from time to time; yet, neither of these terms were very important in discussions about China until the 1990s. Prior to this, Deng Xiaoping initiated a series of reforms to move beyond the Maoist dogmatism of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). This included a 'Movement to Liberate Thinking' (*sixiang jiefang yundong*), which many have seen as paving the way towards a New or Second Chinese Enlightenment—the first being the May Fourth Movement or May Fourth Enlightenment of the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> The intellectual ferment of the Second Chinese Enlightenment was complicated due to events leading to the 4 June 1989 clash in Tiananmen Square between military troops and student democracy protesters. Hence, the climate at the end of the 1980s was one that lent itself towards a reconsideration of the public voice of intellectuals.

The year 1989 is important for more than one reason. In that year, Habermas's monograph on the public sphere was translated into English.<sup>12</sup> A number of Western scholars in Chinese history began to argue for the relevance of the term in the mainland Chinese context. For instance, William T. Rowe and Mary B. Rankin believe that, during late imperial and early Republican China, there was a growing use of the term 'public' (*gong*) in Chinese literature which suggested the emerging concept of the Chinese citizen.<sup>13</sup> This public

(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts, eds, *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> I discuss these two 'enlightenments' and their implications on Christianity in China in detail in Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21–40.

<sup>12</sup> An earlier article on the subject was first translated into English in 1964, but did not seem to have much impact. Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article', trans. Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, *New German Critique* no. 3 (Autumn 1974): 49–55.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986);

sphere, they argue, can 'be distinguished from the state (*guan*) sphere of court and bureaucracy . . . [and] was also distinct from a private (*si*) realm of family, business, and property interests'.<sup>14</sup> Writings like this would result in a growing debate about a Chinese 'public sphere', and the closely related notion of a Chinese 'civil society', in both Anglophone and Sinophone literature.<sup>15</sup> Literature using the term 'public square' is much more sparse—but this is perhaps because of the Christian vantage point that Neuhaus was writing from.<sup>16</sup>

Like any other theory born in one context and translated into another, there can be significant challenges with the wholesale application of the formulations of Habermas or Neuhaus into the Chinese situation. As such, this book will employ the alternative term of 'public space', which has been suggested by Edward Gu and Merle Goldman to denote the fluid arena between the state and the family in China in which intellectuals and others attempt to engage.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of the term used, the debates around the usefulness of

William T. Rowe, *Hankow, Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796–1895* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); William T. Rowe, 'The Public Sphere in Modern China', *Modern China* 16, no. 3 (July 1990): 309–29; Mary Backus Rankin, 'The Origins of a Chinese Public Sphere: Local Elites and Community Affairs in the Late Imperial Period', *Études chinoises* 9, no. 2 (Autumn 1990): 13–60.

For a contrasting approach, see Philip C. C. Huang, "Public Sphere"/"Civil Society" in China? The Third Realm Between State and Society', *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (April 1993): 216–40.

<sup>14</sup> Rankin, 'The Origins of a Chinese Public Sphere', 20.

<sup>15</sup> See the special issue *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (April 1993). See also Chen Ruoshui, 'Zhongguo lishi shang "gong" de guannian ji qi xiandai bianxing' [Conceptions of Gong: A Typological and Holistic Approach to the Chinese Version of 'Public'], in *Gonggong xing yu gongmin guan* [The Concept of 'Public' and Citizenship in Comparative Perspectives], ed. Xu Jilin (Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing, 2006), 3–39; Cao Weidong, 'The Historical Effect of Habermas in the Chinese Context: A Case Study of the Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no. 1 (January 2006): 41–50.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps one of the notable exceptions to this is the 2014 publication of the Hong Kong theologian Lai Pan-chiu (Lai Pinchao), *Guangchang shang de hanyu shenxue: Cong shenxue dao Jiduzongjiao yanjiu* [Sino-Christian Theology in the Public Square: From Theology to Christian Studies] (Hong Kong: Dao Feng Shushe [Logos and Pneuma Press], 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Edward Gu and Merle Goldman, 'Introduction', in *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*, eds Merle Goldman and Edward Gu (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 9–10. See Merle Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen: The Struggle for Political Rights in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 16–17.

This is also the practice of the editors of the special issue of the journal *Logos and Pneuma: Chinese Journal of Theology* no. 32 (Spring 2010), which was themed as 'Hanyu shenxue yu gonggong kongjian' [Sino-Christian Theology and Public Space].

categories such as the public sphere, public square, or public space in China highlight the importance of this period in which Chinese intellectuals see the possibility of a stronger public voice—their stronger public voice in Chinese society. Hence, this book will attempt to highlight the public nature of Chinese Christianity as expressed by Christian intellectuals since the end of the Cultural Revolution.

In Europe and North America, there has been a growing debate in the last few decades about the role of Christian intellectuals in the public space. The development of 'public theology' as a field of enquiry has resulted in a rapid growth of literature on the subject coming from a variety of Christian traditions—Catholic, Reformed, Anglican, Anabaptist, and many others. Some have suggested that a particular expression of public theology can have global currency.<sup>18</sup> However, is this goal perhaps too ambitious? Like in the case of the formulations of the public sphere and the public square, the growing discourse about public theology needs to be contextually sensitive as well. Hence, through such initiatives as the 'Global Network for Public Theology' and the *International Journal of Public Theology*, there is a growing awareness of more regionally specific understandings of Christianity's public engagement.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, a seminal figure such as Max Stackhouse has tried to distinguish 'public theology' from 'political theology', suggesting that the former focuses on the civil society and the latter focuses on the power of the state.<sup>20</sup> But this is a limited view which preferences Western discourse.<sup>21</sup> The

Contrastingly, Timothy Cheek's recent study on Chinese intellectuals unashamedly uses the language of the public sphere. See Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Deirdre K. Hainsworth and Scott R. Paeth, eds, *Public Theology for a Global Society: Essays in Honor of Max Stackhouse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Other examples include Felix Wilfred, *Asian Public Theology: Critical Concerns in Challenging Times* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010); Sebastian Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (London: SCM Press, 2011), esp. Parts 2 and 3; Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Christology and Evil in Ghana: Towards a Pentecostal Public Theology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), esp. ch. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, 'Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?' *Political Theology* 5, no. 3 (2004): 275–93. See Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 20–5.

<sup>21</sup> See Kwok Wai Luen, 'Reconsidering Public Theology: Involvement of Hong Kong Protestant Christianity in the Occupy Central Movement', *Journal of Dharma* 40, no. 2 (2015): 169–88.

Chinese legal system, for instance, only offers 'freedom of religious belief' (*zongjiao xinyang ziyou*)—a private matter—as opposed to 'freedom of religion' (*zongjiao ziyou*).<sup>22</sup> Hence, religious engagement with the civil society necessarily means religious engagement with political powers. Whilst my preference is to use the term 'public theology', both public theology and political theology are closely related fields of enquiry and are, in many ways, beneficial for the Chinese public discourse.

This current study examines a specific regional expression of public theology, situated in mainland China following the death of Mao Zedong (1893–1976) and the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). During the late 1970s, though many commentators believed Christianity in China was nearing its imminent death, Deng Xiaoping's agenda to move beyond Maoist orthodoxy encouraged an openness that resulted in a 'Christianity fever' (*Jidujiao re*) prevailing across all sectors of Chinese society. In particular, this would have significant implications for the intellectual fervour associated with the Second Chinese Enlightenment. As already suggested, the events of 1989 did not bring an end to either dimension (that is, the Christianity fever or the Second Chinese Enlightenment) but allowed them to enter a new phase.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the conditions of the three decades since the 1980s have enabled a growing sense of a Christian public voice. Partnered with this is the growing theological reflection on how Christians are able to engage with the society and the state. It would perhaps be an overstatement to describe all of this as an explicit attempt to craft a 'public theology'.<sup>24</sup> It would moreover be incorrect to characterize all Chinese Christians as developing a stronger public voice, given the tendency of the vast majority of Chinese Christians to still focus on personal piety and on an explicitly

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to Mark McLeister for pointing out this important distinction to me.

<sup>23</sup> This point about the Second Chinese Enlightenment has also been made by the historian and political liberal Xu Jilin, but contested by the new leftist Wang Hui. See Xu Jilin, 'The Fate of an Enlightenment: Twenty Years in the Chinese Intellectual Sphere (1978–1998)', in *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*, 183–203; Wang Hui, 'Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity', trans. Rebecca E. Karl, *Social Text* 16, no. 2 ([1997] Summer 1998): 9–44.

<sup>24</sup> The term itself is fairly new when referring to Christianity in China. In North America, Martin Marty first coined the term in 1974 in an attempt to distinguish it from Robert Bellah's 'civil religion'. Martin Marty, 'Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience', *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 4 (October 1974): 332–59.

disengaged relationship with the sociopolitical context. Rather, the Chinese Christian intellectuals examined in this study are part of this growing fervour in a Chinese public theology.

## GENERATIONAL SHIFTS

This book looks at the public nature of mainland Chinese Christianity both historically and constructively. With regards to the first aspect, by no means do I attempt an exhaustive history. Instead, this study examines the growing public voice of Christianity in China since the late 1970s. There are earlier examples of how Chinese Christians have had strong public consciousnesses, which we will briefly explore in Chapter 1. But, for reasons we have discussed, Chinese intellectuals in various periods after the Cultural Revolution have had a growing interest in exercising their public voice. It is therefore worthwhile to focus on key Chinese Christian intellectuals living and writing during this critical period to gain a better sense of the major themes expressed in the emerging Chinese public theology.

Methodologically, a question can be raised about periodization. Some scholars have attempted to organize changes in intellectual history with the notion of paradigms and paradigm shifts. Related to the study of missions and world Christianity, David Bosch has written an influential text entitled *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*.<sup>25</sup> Bosch builds his understanding upon Hans Küng's work on the history of Christian thought,<sup>26</sup> and both base their approaches on the foundational work of Thomas Kuhn's history of science.<sup>27</sup> For each of these discussions, a crisis often results in a paradigmatic shift from an established mode of thinking to a new mode of thinking. In his work on the history of science, Kuhn explains that 'the solution to each [crisis] had been at least partially anticipated

<sup>25</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> Hans Küng, 'Paradigm Change in Theology: A Proposal for Discussion', in *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future*, eds Hans Küng and David Tracy, trans. Margaret Köhl (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 3–33. See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 181–3.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 50th anniversary edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

during a period when there was no crisis in the corresponding science; and in the absence of crisis those anticipations had been ignored.<sup>28</sup> Simply put, history repeats itself. For instance, this can be seen in the ways that the public voice of Chinese intellectuals today are partially anticipated by the traditional Confucian scholar-officials.

Whilst this is a useful periodization tool for many reasons, it would perhaps be problematic to think of post-Cultural Revolution China in terms of paradigms. Each of the above studies, for example, uses paradigms to show how one mode of thinking is affected by a crisis moment which results in a new mode of thinking that is mutually exclusive to its predecessor. In conversation with Paul Feyerabend, Thomas Kuhn develops his theory utilizing the notion of 'incommensurability' to explain what he sees as the fundamental incomprehensibility across various paradigms.<sup>29</sup> In astronomy, for example, Kuhn speaks about the paradigm shift from the Ptolemaic system to the Copernican system, whereby the earth is no longer seen as the orbital centre of all celestial bodies.<sup>30</sup> Küng and Bosch make similar remarks about the crisis of the Protestant Reformation in the historical trajectory of Western Christianity, whereby approaches to theology and missions necessarily shifted from a medieval Roman Catholic paradigm to a new Reformation-era paradigm.<sup>31</sup>

The shifts that occur across paradigms are seemingly quite dramatic and the incommensurability of different paradigms can be questioned.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, paradigms can perhaps only be spotted with a bird's-eye view of a macro-level historical narrative. However, when we are dealing with a matter of a few decades, as in the current study, shifts in intellectual understandings do occur—but they are by no means 'Copernican revolutions', so to speak. Shifts have occurred during this era, but there is also a cumulative effect that is common across different periods. Moreover, individuals with the same shared experiences may interpret and react to those events quite differently.

<sup>28</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> See Ian Hacking, 'Introductory Essay', in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, xxx–xxxiii.

<sup>30</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 68–70.

<sup>31</sup> Küng, 'Paradigm Change in Theology', 17–18; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 239.

<sup>32</sup> Much later, Kuhn responded to the many concerns levied against his use of the term 'paradigm' and called for a nuancing of the understanding. See Thomas S. Kuhn, 'Second Thoughts on Paradigms', in *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 293–319.

In this study, instead of paradigms and paradigm shifts, I employ the language of generations and generational shifts. A number of regional specialists have attempted to use a generational approach to their subject, but they have not developed much in terms of a theoretical framework.<sup>33</sup> My interest, to a certain extent, is informed by the sociological theory of generations, which is often traced back to Karl Mannheim's seminal work 'The Problem of Generations'.<sup>34</sup> For Mannheim, generations are not understood in terms of kinship relationships, in which a parent and a child are necessarily of two generations. Instead, individuals are related to one another within a generational unit due to certain shared experiences of historical events, what he calls a 'social location'.<sup>35</sup> This develops into a common generational consciousness which stratifies the experiences of one generation as opposed to another generation. Some sociologists, including Mannheim, speak about generations in terms of an age cohort<sup>36</sup>—that is, individuals born within a certain time frame and who came of age together, such as the 'Baby Boom generation' or 'Generation X'. Others define a generational unit more loosely, including people of varying ages who have had a collective response to historical events which are often traumatic, such as the two

<sup>33</sup> For some examples, see Yasuo Furuya, ed., *A History of Japanese Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); He Guanghu, 'Three Generations of Chinese Christianity Researchers: From the 1950s to 2007', in *China and Christianity: A New Phase of Encounter?*, eds Felix Wilfred, Edmond Tang, and Georg Evers (London: SCM Press, 2008), 58–70; Volter Küster, *A Protestant Theology of Passion: Korean Minjung Theology Revisited* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 131–49; Paul Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities: Past, Present, and Future: Part One', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40, no. 1 (March 2010): 3–32; Paul Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities, Part Two: The Anthropology of Christianity and Generations of African Christians', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40, no. 2 (May 2010): 118–48.

<sup>34</sup> Karl Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), 276–322. For a good history on the sociology of generations, see June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, 'Introduction', in *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*, eds June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 1–7.

<sup>35</sup> Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', 288–90, 297–9.

<sup>36</sup> See Norman B. Ryder, 'Notes on the Concept of a Population', *American Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 5 (Mar. 1964): 447–63; Norman B. Ryder, 'The Cohort as a Concept in Social Change', *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 6 (Dec. 1965): 843–61; Larry J. Griffin, "'Generations and Collective Memory' Revisited: Race, Region, and Memory of Civil Rights', *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 4 (Aug. 2004): 544–57.

World Wars or 9/11. These events distinguish one generation from another.<sup>37</sup>

A theory of generations understood in this second sense is a useful heuristic device in organizing discussions about China—a country which, over the last century, has been shaped by a number of significant events: two World Wars, a civil war, two enlightenments, the Cultural Revolution, the military clash with student protesters in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989, and the country's ascent in the global economy. This present study, focused on the period following the Cultural Revolution, shows that various individuals have arisen as prominent spokespersons of Christianity in the Chinese public space. These decades have not witnessed a continuous flow of prominent individuals, but several distinct groups have formed—generations which have arisen at and as a result of *kairos* moments such as the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 clash in Tiananmen Square. Different generations may have an overlap in experiences, but each generation has its own nuanced relationships with these historical events which tend to transcend regional differences (between Beijing and Shanghai and Chengdu) because of their common generational consciousness. These contextual factors of China's complex history have shaped the growing public nature of Chinese Christianity as seen through different theological and identity formulations.

### CONFUCIAN IMAGINATION

A second methodological concern deals with the encounters between religiophilosophical traditions which result in multiple levels of conflict, conquest, and collaboration. Generally speaking, countries in Asia have tended to maintain a strong sense of religiosity. However, there are not many regions of Asia that enjoy a Christian majority population. The Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris explains this in what he calls *homo religiosus*—the idea that humans are fundamentally religious. This psychological posture is often seen in terms of “cosmic religion” . . . the species of religion that is found in Africa, Asia, and Oceania, and has been pejoratively referred to as “animism”

<sup>37</sup> Edmunds and Turner, ‘Introduction’, 6–7.

by certain Western authors’.<sup>38</sup> However, due to sociopolitical change and technocratic advancements, new ‘cosmic religions’ such as Marxism and democracy have found prominence in the cosmic order.<sup>39</sup> Yet Pieris explains that, in Asia, cosmic religions have ‘practically been domesticated and integrated into one or the other of the three metacosmic soteriologies—namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, and to some extent Taoism’.<sup>40</sup> In other words, religions that are transcendent and soteriological have been built upon and taken over religions that are immanent and naturalistic. In Africa and Oceania, the metacosmic soteriologies of Christianity and Islam have found many converts. Contrastingly, in much of Asia, where other metacosmic religions have been dominant, Christianity has been unable to compete or to make much headway.

This explanation of the conflicts that exist between various Asian metacosmic religions makes sense in Pieris's native Sri Lanka in which Christianity is strongly opposed by the dominant and, sometimes, violent forms of Sinhalese Buddhism. When Pieris speaks about China, he rightly describes Confucianism as a cosmic religion. However, his more generic explanation of the prevalence of metacosmic religions is highly contestable within the Chinese context. Whilst he offers a useful categorization of the Asian context as having cosmic and metacosmic religions, his explanation of the tensions that exist between various religions is perhaps more appropriate for South Asia than East Asia.

The Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako, taking Pieris's views as a starting point, suggests that this relationship between cosmic and metacosmic religions in Asia confirms ‘the historical connections between Christianity and primal religion’ found more globally.<sup>41</sup> Bediako does not engage Pieris's discussion of metacosmic soteriologies or insistence on their historical absence in Africa and Oceania. But this is undoubtedly because, in contrast with Pieris, Bediako is less concerned with the competition of metacosmic soteriologies as he is interested in Christianity's dominance in sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>38</sup> Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 71.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 73–4.      <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>41</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 174.

Instead of 'cosmic religions', Bediako prefers to speak of 'primal religions'—a term coined by Harold Turner and Andrew Walls as an alternative to the older term 'primitive religions'. Turner and Walls believe that 'primal religions' offers a less pejorative alternative in order to more usefully understand religious expressions of indigenous peoples alongside 'world religions' such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. However, some scholars of religious studies have not been so receptive. James Cox, a former student of Walls, has criticized 'primal religions' as 'a non-empirical term that had proved extremely useful for inserting Christian assumptions into the study of Indigenous Religions'.<sup>42</sup> Cox sees 'indigenous religions' as offering greater clarity in classifying religions, without imposing any sense of a *preparatio evangelica*.<sup>43</sup> Yet, Walls explains:

Suffice it to say that the word 'primal' is not a euphemism for 'primitive', nor are any evolutionary undertones intended. The word helpfully underlines two features of the religions of the peoples indicated: their historical anteriority and their basic, elemental status in human experience. All other faiths are subsequent, and represent, as it were, second thoughts; all other believers, and for that matter non-believers, are primalists underneath.<sup>44</sup>

Contrary to Cox's claims about him, Walls does not wish to speak of an evolutionary process of primal religions being fulfilled by the Christian gospel. Instead, he hopes to find a term which helpfully shows how individuals and communities respond to encounters with different religions by grafting onto pre-existing dispositions. This is why he describes primal religions as having a 'historical anteriority'. In some ways, this highlights parallels with Pieris's approach which sees cosmic religions as being a foundation for metacosmic soteriologies. However, as Walls clarifies later in the same essay, primal religions respond to such encounters in different ways—such as restatement, adjustment, and revitalization.<sup>45</sup> Hence, it perhaps would

<sup>42</sup> James L. Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 28. See James L. Cox, 'The Classification "Primal Religions" as a Non-Empirical Christian Theological Construct', *Studies in World Christianity* 2, no. 1 (April 1996): 55–76.

<sup>43</sup> Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous*, 25–6.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew F. Walls, 'Primal Religious Traditions in Today's World', in *Religion in Today's World: The Religious Situation of the World from 1945 to the Present Day*, ed. Frank Whaling (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 252.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 267–78.

have been better nuanced if Walls described primal religions as having both anterior *and* posterior possibilities.

Walls's concern, which indeed is quite different from Cox's, is to speak about the result of encounters between different religions rather than to speak about a taxonomy—that is, a scheme for classifying different religions. Indeed, both Walls's term 'primal' and Cox's term 'indigenous' are imperfect. Both are meant to represent religions which are contrasted with 'world religions'—those religions which some might depict as being more civilized, more developed, and more universal.<sup>46</sup>

Despite these concerns, Kwame Bediako finds 'primal religions' as a useful motif to understand African Christianity and in the rediscovery of the 'primal imagination' found deep within.<sup>47</sup> This makes sense in the development of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa, in which there is sufficient evidence of developments from African primal religions, as anterior, to African Christianity, as posterior. Likewise, Aloysius Pieris's context offers sufficient evidence of developments from Asian cosmic religions, as anterior, to Asian metacosmic soteriologies, as posterior.

China differs from both Africa and Sri Lanka. That which one may term as a cosmic religion or a primal religion quite readily serves more than an anterior role. This is undoubtedly true throughout the history of religions in China. For instance, we may consider the developments of the so-called 'three teachings' (*sanjiao*) of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Whilst these teachings were in many ways rivals, there was also a burgeoning discourse around the harmonization of the three teachings (*sanjiao heyi*) beginning as early as the fourth century CE.<sup>48</sup> Each tradition was seen as offering a different route towards the same destination (*shutu tonggui*)—or, to put it idiomatically, all roads lead to Rome. There was therefore a significant amount of borrowing and transformation of ideas—in

<sup>46</sup> A number of works have spent much more time dealing with the academic discourse related to what constitutes a 'world religions' and its relationship with other 'religions'. See Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous*, 33–52; Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions; or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 91–108.

<sup>48</sup> Joachim Gentz, 'Religious Diversity in Three Teachings Discourses', in *Religious Diversity in Chinese Thought*, eds Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Joachim Gentz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 123–39.

anterior, posterior, or even medial positions—across the porous borders which identify each school of thought.<sup>49</sup>

My concern here is how Chinese religiosity and its possible modes of existence affect the Chinese Christian framework of thinking.<sup>50</sup> For instance, it has become common to speak of a Pentecostalization of Chinese Christianity since the end of the Cultural Revolution. However, some scholars dispute this idea and see it more as a folk religionization of Chinese Christianity which emphasizes an immediate and practical modality of religious experience.<sup>51</sup> In terms of this book's main focus, it is worth focusing on how Confucian understandings have influenced Chinese Christian intellectuals. This is noticeable in a discursive modality of religious experience, which 'requires a high level of literacy and a penchant for philosophical and "theological" thinking'.<sup>52</sup> Undoubtedly, many Chinese Christians would deny these connections. But it seems apparent that aspects of Confucianism are interwoven with manifold layers, forming a stratified whole representing some of what we may call Chinese Christianity<sup>53</sup> and, moreover, some of what we may call Chinese public theology.

<sup>49</sup> This does suggest some ambiguity in terms of the identity of a particular school of thought. For instance, one scholar has queried whether we should consider the great New Confucian figure Liang Shuming as, in fact, a Buddhist. See John J. Hanafin, 'The "Last Buddhist": The Philosophy of Liang Shuming', in *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*, ed. John Makeham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 187–218.

<sup>50</sup> See Adam Y. Chau, 'Modalities of Doing Religion', in *Chinese Religious Life*, eds David A. Palmer, Glenn Shive, and Philip L. Wickeri (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 67–84; Adam Y. Chau, 'A Different Kind of Religious Diversity: Ritual Service Providers and Consumers in China', in *Religious Diversity in Chinese Thought*, 141–54.

<sup>51</sup> Gao Shining, 'Twenty-first Century Chinese Christianity and Chinese Social Process', *China Study Journal* 15, no. 2/3 (December 2000): 14–18; Edmond Tang, 'Yellers' and Healers: Pentecostalism and the Study of Grassroots Christianity in China', in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 2nd edn, eds Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 391, 393–4.

Pentecostalism's indebtedness to indigenous religiosities around the world has long been argued within Pentecostal studies. See Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997); Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> Chau, 'Modalities of Doing Religion', 68.

<sup>53</sup> This may find echoes in Wilfred Smith's description of 'cumulative traditions'. However, theologically, Christianity should be understood as having a transcendent constant which cannot be as malleable as Smith suggests. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 154–69.

To adapt Bediako, a 'Confucian imagination' can be noticed in certain aspects of Chinese Christianity.<sup>54</sup> Whilst other 'imaginings' can be identified with Daoism and Buddhism and Maoism, the emphasis in this book will be on the Confucian imagination. My interest is less on what Confucianism is, as such,<sup>55</sup> but the direct or indirect influence of figures and writings which are generally associated with this tradition. This focus is due to the dominant role that Confucianism has historically played in the Chinese public space—particularly as the state orthodoxy—which has offered various dynamics for the historical development of Chinese public theology. Methodologically, this book hopes to uncover some of these qualities and to offer a constructive theological engagement with the Confucian imagination.

## STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study has two main parts. The first part, encompassing four chapters, will focus on the growing public voice of Christianity in China. Chapter 1 will begin by situating this conversation in a Chinese tradition of public intellectualism. Like other things, the Chinese rendering of 'public intellectual' (*gonggong zhishifenzi*) is a recent invention. However, this chapter follows Tu Weiming's (b. 1940) argument that China has had a long history of what can be described as public intellectualism—pre-dating the coinage of the term and the Western debates around the subject.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, China has long engendered a Confucian tradition in which one is educated—not merely for intellectual gain, but also to be a scholar-official who would shape the running of the state and the society. This chapter will briefly look at that theme in imperial China, but also the shifts afforded after the end of the imperial civil examination system in 1905 and the various events of the twentieth century. It will explore early examples of how Chinese Christian intellectuals can be perceived as public intellectuals

<sup>54</sup> I am thankful for a conversation with my colleague Joshua Ralston for this term.

<sup>55</sup> See Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> Tu Weiming, 'Intellectuals in a World Made of Knowledge', *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 219–26.

and it will discuss the different courses that Protestants in China took in contrast to Catholic or Orthodox Christians, thereby providing them with greater opportunities in the post-Cultural Revolution era to exercise a public voice. To guide some of this and later discussions, I will employ the approach of David Tracy who has argued that Christian thinkers have historically addressed three distinct but related 'publics': the society, the academy, and the church.<sup>57</sup>

Chapters 2 to 4 will explore the growing public voice of Chinese Christianity since the 1980s. Each of these chapters will focus on one of three major generations and how they engaged the various publics in their own respective ways. Chapter 2 will discuss the leaders of the reinstated Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the newly formed China Christian Council (CCC), known together as the *lianghui* ('two associations'), and their initiatives as Christian intellectuals since the early 1980s.<sup>58</sup> During this period, the state-sanctioned TSPM and CCC are seen as the only means in which Protestantism could viably engage the state and the society. Such an opportunity was not wasted by leaders of the *lianghui*. This chapter will focus much attention on the writings and the actions of Bishop K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012), the pre-eminent leader of state-sanctioned Protestantism during this time. Whilst Ting is often considered a theological liberal and a stooge for the communist government, this chapter will show that much of his theological engagement has a strong basis in his background in Anglican social theology. This chapter will also briefly look at the views of like-minded individuals such as Chen Zemin (b. 1917) and Shen Yifan (1928–94), before spending a bit more time with the evangelical Wang Weifan (1927–2015), the latter of whom was labelled a 'rightist' during the 1950s and, in the 1990s, attacked by Ting himself. These individuals are part of a generation of Christian leaders who were affiliated with the newly formed TSPM in the 1950s and 1960s, lived

<sup>57</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 3–46.

<sup>58</sup> It may also be useful to examine the thoughts of Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian (1916–2013) and others of the state-sanctioned Catholic church. However, the situation for Chinese Catholics is much more complex compared with Chinese Protestants, due to the enduring tensions involved in Sino-Vatican relations. Whilst Chapter 1 will speak a bit about Chinese Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Chapter 2 will limit its focus to the state-sanctioned Protestant organizations.

through the Cultural Revolution, and became some of the key leadership of the reinstated TSPM and the newly formed CCC in the 1980s.

Chapter 3 will focus on a younger generation of Christian intellectuals born in the 1950s and having spent their formative years experiencing the Cultural Revolution firsthand. This chapter will examine the unique development beginning in the late 1980s when a number of Chinese academics looked towards Christian theology as a way to facilitate the search for modern China—many of whom found no value in being part of a local faith community. This chapter draws on the rise of Sino-Christian theology or Sino-Christian studies and focuses on two of the most important 'cultural Christians' (*wen-hua Jidutu*),<sup>59</sup> Liu Xiaofeng (b. 1956) and He Guanghu (b. 1950). Liu was initially drawn to the theology of Karl Barth, but later turns towards the political philosophy of Leo Strauss and attacks political liberalism whilst embracing new leftism. In contrast, He Guanghu's thinking has been informed by the writings of Paul Tillich and John Hick. He Guanghu would later be one of the signatories of the human rights manifesto Charter 08 and the Oxford Consensus in 2013. This chapter will also look at other cultural Christians who have focused on questions around the Second Chinese Enlightenment's relationship with Christian culture, modernity, and secularization. Some have questioned whether these individuals can be considered 'Christian' or if their writings can be considered 'theology', since they are not known to actively participate in the life of any local Chinese church. However, this chapter will discuss the ways this ambivalent relationship with the church highlights one of the dimensions of how cultural Christians have seen themselves and the place of religion in shaping the future of Chinese society.

Chapter 4 will focus on the development in the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century of intellectuals in the study of Christianity with a stronger faith commitment than their predecessors discussed in Chapter 3. Whilst many of these individuals would initially see themselves as being cultural Christians, they would later shift and see

<sup>59</sup> There is a long-standing debate as to the accuracy of this term, which will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 3. But as the term has been embraced by a number of these individuals and highlights a key dimension of their enquiry, namely the exploration of Christian culture, it will be maintained throughout this study.



themselves as Christian scholars (*Jidutu xueren*)<sup>60</sup> who serve as elders and pastors of local urban intellectual churches and develop their theological engagements based on the Calvinist tradition. Moreover, in contrast to the cultural Christians who spent most of their more formative years during the Cultural Revolution, this new generation of Christian intellectuals was born towards the end of the Cultural Revolution and was often more shaped by—and may even have been part of—the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. They would be affected by the changes that have come out of China's rise in the global market and the rapid urbanization experienced throughout the country. This chapter will first focus on Christian human rights activists such as Wang Yi (b. 1973) and Yu Jie (b. 1973) who argue for a stronger understanding of constitutionalism based on covenantal theology, each of whom would self-identify as political liberals. The chapter will secondly discuss other Christian intellectuals, Sun Yi (b. 1961) and Jin Tianming (b. 1968), who employ the teachings of John Calvin and Dutch Neo-Calvinists to develop a theology of constructive dialogue with the state and the society.<sup>61</sup> This chapter will highlight the latest phase in the growing public voice of Chinese Christian intellectuals.

After looking at the historical shape of Chinese Christianity's growing public consciousness, we will turn to the second part of the book in which I will offer suggestions for possible routes in the development of a Chinese public theology. Chapter 5 will look at how these Christian public theologians compare with other public intellectuals of this period. Because of its significance for our period, this chapter will also try to tease out some of the details of the different intellectual factions that have formed since the late 1990s, paying particular attention to the two major political groupings of 'new left' (*xin zuo pai*) and 'liberalism' (*ziyou zhuyi*).<sup>62</sup> Whilst the revived interests in Confucianism

<sup>60</sup> See Chen Yaqian, 'Xueyuan yu jiaohui: Jidutu xueren jiqi kunhuo' [The Academy and the Church: Christian Scholars and Their Perplexities], *Jidujiao sixiang pinglun* [Regent Review of Christian Thoughts] 5 (2007): 215–26.

<sup>61</sup> As we will discuss in Chapter 4, there is a significant difference between 'Neo-Calvinism' (which begins in the Netherlands in the late nineteenth century) and 'New Calvinism' (a late twentieth-century American phenomenon).

<sup>62</sup> The Chinese and English terms for 'liberalism' (*ziyou zhuyi*) are generic and can apply to political liberalism or theological liberalism. I have endeavoured to clarify which form of liberalism is being discussed, at times with an added adjective of 'political' or 'theological'.

and Christianity are sometimes considered two other factions during this time, this chapter will show how the four schools have much more porous boundaries than is often recognized. The chapter will further show how a 'Confucian imagination' shapes various developments in contemporary China, whether this be public intellectualism, generally, or Chinese Christianity, specifically.

The final two constructive chapters will explore how the Confucian imagination also offers a unique tendency in Chinese public theology to prioritize questions related to transcendence and ecclesiology. Building on my previous work on the Eastern Orthodox understanding of *theosis* and the Chinese understanding of the unity of Heaven and humanity (*Tian ren heyi*),<sup>63</sup> Chapter 6 will engage Aristotle Papanikolaou's recent work on political theology and argue the case for Chinese Christianity to have an integrative theology which pursues a Divine-human unity as the foundation for the theologian and the church to engage the state and the society.<sup>64</sup> Chapter 7 will underscore the important place of ecclesiology in the formation of a Chinese public theology. I argue that the contemporary Chinese church has become a surrogate for the Chinese family. As such, this offers unique strengths and challenges for Chinese public theology, which can be further developed with a reconsideration of certain aspects of Confucianism and Christianity—mindful of the theological understandings of personhood, the Trinity, and ecclesiology, as offered by the seminal thinking of John Zizioulas.<sup>65</sup>

By way of conclusion, Chapter 8 will step back and tease out the broader significance of Chinese public theology to the growing discourse of public theology inside and outside China.

## PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND MAINLAND CHINA

This is the first major study of its kind on Chinese public theology. Scholars have begun to explore the public nature of religion in

<sup>63</sup> Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*.

<sup>64</sup> Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical As Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

<sup>65</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

China<sup>66</sup> and the public nature of the narrow field of Sino-Christian theology.<sup>67</sup> However, most studies do not address the role of state-sanctioned Protestant Christianity in the 1980s and the early 1990s alongside the developments of Sino-Christian theology and urban intellectual Christianity today. This is understandable given the amount of academic output produced by the enterprise of Sino-Christian theology and the recent international news media coverage of urban Christianity. There is perhaps also a tendency for certain individuals to downplay or disregard the value and the significance of the TSPM and the CCC. I attempt to correct this oversight and show the important contributions made by leaders of state-sanctioned Protestant Christianity that, in many ways, prepared the way for later generations. Moreover, I portray a bigger picture of the trajectory of Chinese public theology, which is shaped by the various currents of Chinese Christian intellectuals and the overall tradition of Chinese public theology.

From a very different perspective, this is also a study about Chinese intellectual history. Much of the literature in this space tends to focus on non-religious sources of intellectual history. Just as Hu Shih has described the May Fourth period as the Chinese Renaissance,<sup>68</sup> Samuel Ling has attempted to highlight the Christian voices of that movement in his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese "Christian Renaissance", 1919–1937".<sup>69</sup> For the Second Chinese Enlightenment, scholars such as Merle Goldman and Timothy Cheek have written important studies on the developments of Chinese intellectualism, whilst tending to downplay the

<sup>66</sup> Xie Zhibin, *Religious Diversity and Public Religion in China* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Joel A. Carpenter and Kevin R. den Dulk, eds, *Christianity in Chinese Public Life: Religion, Society, and the Rule of Law* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>67</sup> Milton Wai-Yiu Wan (Wen Weiyao), 'Hanyu shenxue de gonggong xing: Lun shenxue yanjiu yu Jiduzongjiao jingyan' [The Public Nature of Sino-Christian Theology: On Theological Studies and Christian Experience], *Jiduzongjiao yanjiu* [Study of Christianity] 11 (2008): 45–73; Timothy Lee-Yii Lau, "A Chinese Fish Thinks About Chinese Water": The Cultural Engagement of Christian Theology in the Emerging Sino-Christian Context' (Ph.D. thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2008); Lai, *Guangchang shang de hanyu shenxue*; Yang Huilin, *Yiyi: Dangdai shenxue de gonggong xing wenti* [Meaning: Issues with the Public Nature of Contemporary Theology] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe [Peking University Press], 2013).

<sup>68</sup> Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance: The Haskell Lectures, 1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

<sup>69</sup> Samuel D. Ling, "The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese "Christian Renaissance", 1919–1937" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1980).

Confucian voices and largely ignoring the Christian voices of this period.<sup>70</sup> This book attempts to address this significant oversight.

This study employs two new methodological approaches. Whilst the notion of paradigm shifts has been useful in many situations, this book itself is a case study which highlights the benefits of a generational approach to periodization which takes into account factors that influence multiple generational units across different historical events. It will highlight the continuities and discontinuities in the Christian public voice and provide a means to identify key themes that arise from and are shared across each generation. Secondly, this book argues a case for the Confucian imagination in Chinese public theology. This suggests that other 'imaginings' may exist—in China or elsewhere—which help to bring shape to contextual theologies.

In fact, this book underscores the fluidity of any contextual expression of public theology and, in this case, the negotiations between Christian and Chinese ideological resources. It also demonstrates how this region, with perhaps the fastest growing Christian population in the world today, negotiates its existence and attempts to create its own public faith within the complex and tense sociopolitical context of contemporary China.

Finally, this book develops from my earlier work on the Eastern Orthodox theme of *theosis* and the Chinese traditional theme of the unity of Heaven and humanity, in so much as it draws out the public religious implications of a Divine–human unity.

<sup>70</sup> Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*; Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*.

Part I

The Growing Public Voice of  
Christianity in China

## A Tradition of Public Theology

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, a term that has received growing importance in Chinese intellectual circles has been 'public intellectual' (*gonggong zhishifenzi*). The Chinese neologism was coined in the 2002 Chinese translation of Richard A. Posner's study on the decline of public intellectuals, but became much more popular in 2004 when the Chinese periodical *Southern People's Weekly* (*Nanfang renwu zhoukan*) produced a list of China's fifty most influential public intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> The periodical's bias towards political liberalism was somewhat reflected in the list, which became hotly debated within intellectual circles. This debate would not go unnoticed by the Chinese government. The periodical *South Reviews* (*Nanfeng chuang*), a mouthpiece for the communist party, would critique this term, claiming that these Chinese public intellectuals placed their own interests above and before the interests of the Chinese people.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the *South Reviews's* article would call for the voice of 'citizen intellectuals' (*gongmin zhishifenzi*) to truly speak on behalf of Chinese citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Like the rise of the term 'public sphere' in academic discourse about China, debates about the 'public intellectual' have been stimulated by

<sup>1</sup> 'Yingxiang Zhongguo gonggong zhishifenzi 50 ren' [The Influence of China's 50 Public Intellectuals], *Nanfang renwu zhoukan* [Southern People's Weekly], September 2004, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://business.sohu.com/s2004/zhishifenzi50.shtml>>.

<sup>2</sup> 'Gonggong zhishifenzi yu gongmin zhishifenzi' [Public intellectuals and citizen intellectuals], *Nanfeng chuang* [South Reviews], October 2004, accessed 4 February 2017, <<http://media.people.com.cn/GB/4917716.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> See Fredrik Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of Faith Among Chinese Intellectuals', in *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, ed. Francis Khok Gee Lim (London: Routledge, 2013), 165.

the translation of works which provide intellectuals with a vocabulary to wrestle with and, at times, identify with. The sociopolitical context has provided the fodder for such conversations to spark much wider debates. As mentioned in the Introduction, scholars like William T. Rowe and Mary B. Rankin have tried to argue that a form of 'public sphere' developed through linguistic shifts in late imperial and early Republican China that indicated a growing understanding of the Chinese citizen. Contrastingly, the notion of a 'public intellectual' has for millennia been embedded in the Chinese traditional understanding of Confucian literati—scholar-officials (*shidafu*) who were trained and examined in Chinese classical thought for the imperial bureaucratic system.

The Confucian scholar Tu Weiming argues that early antecedents of an intellectual or a public intellectual can hardly be found in Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Greek, Christian, or Islamic traditions.<sup>4</sup> This is mainly because these streams of thought have historically focused on a spiritual realm that is different from, and sometimes diametrically opposed to, this world. To put it simply,

The minimum requirement for an intellectual—politically concerned, socially engaged, and culturally sensitive—is fundamentally at odds with a person passionately devoted to the service of a higher reality beyond the mundane concerns of the secular world. . . . In all of the aforementioned religions the rupture of the chain of being by privileging the 'Pure Land' or the 'Kingdom of God' outside of the daily routine of human existence is undeniable.<sup>5</sup>

Tu Weiming continues to claim that the Confucian spiritual tradition<sup>6</sup> is an exception to this kind of outlook as 'Confucian followers were primarily action intellectuals, deeply immersed in "managing

<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of the history of the Chinese word for 'intellectual' (*zhishi-fenzi*), which can imply someone who seeks knowledge in order to serve the people, see Fang Weigui, "The Chinese Version of "Intellectual", *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 3, no. 3 (2009): 321–47.

<sup>5</sup> Tu Weiming, 'Intellectuals in a World Made of Knowledge', *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 219–20.

<sup>6</sup> Tu Weiming has been a major proponent of understanding Confucianism as a spiritual or religious tradition. See Robert Cummings Neville, *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World* (New York: SUNY, 2000), 83–105; Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds, *Confucian Spirituality*, 2 vols (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003–4).

the world" (*jingshi*) of economics, politics, and society.<sup>7</sup> In contrast with leaders of other traditions, the Confucian scholar-official had a sociopolitical responsibility, committed to the improvement of the human condition, rather than a reality outside or beyond this world.

This has compelling implications for understanding those whom we would today call public intellectuals. The notion of the Confucian scholar-official has been embedded into Chinese traditional culture for thousands of years. In many senses, this has been encapsulated in the dual Chinese ideal of 'inward sageliness, outward kingliness' (*neisheng, waiwang*). The phrase was originally coined in Chapter 33 (*Tianxia*) of the Daoist text *Zhuangzi* to emphasize the unfortunate reality of those who seek to change the world (outward kingliness), but inevitably forget the true beauty of Heaven and Earth (inward sageliness).<sup>8</sup> Later, this expression would have growing currency amongst Confucian thinkers. For instance, the Ming dynasty Neo-Confucian Wang Yangming (1472–1529) would appropriate it as emphasizing the process whereby self-cultivation overflows into the fulfilment of responsibility towards the family, the state, and the world.<sup>9</sup> Early twentieth-century New Confucian thinkers,<sup>10</sup> responding to a context in which Confucianism was attacked as feudalistic and hindering human and societal progress, would see this as the combined pursuit for individual morality and active sociopolitical participation.<sup>11</sup>

Mindful of this impulse, Confucianism, exalted as state orthodoxy for two millennia, had engendered a view in which one was educated not merely for intellectual gain, but also to be a scholar-official who

<sup>7</sup> Tu, 'Intellectuals in a World Made of Knowledge', 220.

<sup>8</sup> Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard John Lufrano, eds, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999–2000), 1: 266.

<sup>9</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yangming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 191, 216–17.

<sup>10</sup> 'Neo-Confucian' and 'New Confucian' refer to two distinct periods. The former refers to a development mainly during the Song and Ming dynasties whereas the latter refers to a movement that began in the twentieth century. See Umberto Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism: The New Confucian Movement* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 2001); John Makeham, ed., *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Feng Youlan describes the two ideals of 'inner sage' and 'outer king' as distinguishable emphases between Confucius and Mencius, respectively. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2 vols., trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952–3), 1: 120.

would shape the running of the state and the society. Yet the imperial civil examination system came to a close in 1905, shortly before the fall of the Qing dynasty and the formation of the Republic of China. However, as Tu Weiming argues, this classical understanding continues to resonate in the contemporary understanding of a Chinese intellectual. In the encounter between Christianity and China, this chapter will explore a series of vignettes of how this Chinese ideal of a Confucian scholar-official has translated into the roles and the responsibilities of a Chinese Christian intellectual, giving particular shape to a tradition of Chinese public theology.

#### EARLY CATHOLIC SCHOLAR-OFFICIALS

Perhaps the most obvious place to start discussing Chinese Christian intellectuals is to briefly look at some of the early Christian converts, mainly due to the Catholic and Protestant missionary enterprises during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Earlier missions from the Church of the East (often erroneously described as 'Nestorians')<sup>12</sup> and from the Roman Catholic Church during the Tang and Yuan dynasties have left various archaeological records, but little is known about their Chinese converts.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the landscape of Chinese converts would be very different through the later Roman Catholic mission during the late Ming dynasty, which was inaugurated in 1583 by the Italian Jesuits Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). After 1633, Chinese missions were opened to various Catholic groups such as the Dominican and Franciscan mendicant orders. As these latter groups had been comparably less trained and less interested in the humanities and the natural sciences, it would be the Jesuit mission which would result in more converts amongst the intellectual elite.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 177, fn.1.

<sup>13</sup> See Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1–111; Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 4–16.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China: AD 600 to 2000*, trans. M. N. L. Couve de Murville (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 213–45.

The Jesuits were operating under the auspices of the Portuguese Padroado which were given foundational guidelines that would determine their mission policy for this early period. It can be summarized under four major themes:<sup>15</sup>

1. A policy of accommodation or adaptation to Chinese culture.
2. Evangelism from the top down, focusing first on the literate elite, and ultimately hoping to reach the Emperor and his court.
3. Indirect evangelism using European science and technology to convince the educated Chinese of the high level of European civilization.
4. An openness and tolerance of Chinese moral values and civil rituals.

Despite these efforts, in statistics from 1636, the elite would represent only about 1 per cent of the Chinese Catholic population and, by the end of the Kangxi Emperor's reign in 1722, a mere 68 imperial degree holders have been identified. Chinese Catholicism was hardly a church of the elite as converts would eventually include all sectors of Chinese society. In fact, aside from the Jesuits working in the royal court and elsewhere in major political centres like Beijing and Nanjing, most Roman Catholic missionaries worked amongst commoners and helped to establish or maintain rural Christian communities.<sup>16</sup>

For our purposes, however, it would be instructive to briefly consider some of the most well-known early converts from the Jesuit mission—the so-called pillars of the Chinese Catholic Church: Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), Li Zhizao (1565–1630), Yang Tingyun (1562–1627), and Wang Zheng (1571–1644).<sup>17</sup> These four were all intellectual elites, each obtaining the *jinshi* qualification, the highest level of the imperial civil examinations. Like their Jesuit counterparts, they were all involved in studies of the humanities and the natural sciences and produced numerous works in the field of Heavenly

<sup>15</sup> Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China*, 309–11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 386–91, 399–403; Charbonnier, *Christians in China*, 213–315.

<sup>17</sup> The term 'pillar' was originally used by Matteo Ricci to describe Xu Guangqi. However, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Li Zhizao and Yang Tingyun were often mentioned besides Xu Guangqi as the 'three pillars' of the Chinese church. Nicolas Standaert has suggested that Wang Zheng should be considered a fourth pillar. See Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China*, 404–20.

Studies (*Tianxue*), the Catholic Chinese term coined to describe the study of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> All of them were civil servants at different levels of the imperial bureaucracy and Xu Guangqi, at the end of his life, was even elevated to the prestigious role of Grand Secretary (*daxueshi*) and served in the highest agency in the imperial government.

Significantly, these four early converts were all involved in the Donglin movement—a reformist group which sought to critique corrupt government officials, even the Emperor if need be, and re-emphasize the importance of moral effort.<sup>19</sup> Some scholars have even argued that it was Matteo ‘Ricci’s ideas [that] had directly effected a major change in Chinese philosophical culture due to dissemination of Catholic concepts within the Donglin school’.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, as Chinese Catholic literati in the late Ming period, not only were they interested in political and moral reform, they also had a strong spirit of social concern, creating their own benevolent societies (*renhui*)—an early form of a civil society, if you will—built upon Christian values.<sup>21</sup> Yang Tingyun, for instance, established a benevolent society to collect donations for charitable virtues that were modelled after the Seven Corporal Works of Charity of medieval Catholicism taught by the Jesuits.<sup>22</sup> Wang Zheng, in his important ‘The Statutes of the Charitable Society’ (*Renhui yue*),<sup>23</sup> also refers to

<sup>18</sup> R. Po-chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci 1552–1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 245–67; Willard Peterson, ‘Learning from Heaven: The Introduction of Christianity and Other Western Ideas into Late Ming China’, in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8*, eds Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 810–18.

<sup>19</sup> John Dardess makes the interesting comparison between the Donglin movement and its repression with the Tiananmen Square democracy movement and its repression. John W. Dardess, *Blood and History in China: The Donglin Faction and Its Repression, 1620–1627* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Gregory Blue, ‘Xu Guangqi in the West: Early Jesuit Sources and the Construction of an Identity’, in *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-Cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562–1633)*, eds Catherine Jami, Peter Engelfriet, and Gregory Blue (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 61–3.

<sup>21</sup> Benevolent societies were a common feature in the late Ming period, often built upon Confucian or Buddhist teachings on charity. See Joanna Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Nicolas Standaert, *Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China: His Life and Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 62; see *ibid.* 32, 62–9, 89–91.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Zürcher has translated the main body of the statute and excerpts from the statute’s preface. See Erik Zürcher, ‘Christian Social Action in Late Ming Times: Wang Zheng and his “Humanitarian Society”’, in *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions*

these charitable virtues. However, Wang believed that, amongst the seven corporal works, three are considered more urgent and needing higher priority: feeding the hungry, attending the sick, and burying the dead.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, in the preface to this text, Wang Zheng sets out a rationale for expressing charity that is informed by both Christianity and Confucianism:

This *ren* is manifested (*yong*, ‘operationalized’) as love (*ai*), in two ways: (1) by loving the one Lord of Heaven above all, and (2) by loving others as one loves oneself. If one truly knows how to stand in awe of the Mandate of Heaven, one will thereby naturally love the Lord of Heaven, and if one is truly able to do so, one will thereby naturally be able to love others.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly, Wang is building his discussion off the first and the second greatest commandments, as offered by Jesus in the gospels: love God and love others. He also explains this in Confucian terms. The Confucian virtue of *ren* (‘benevolence’ or ‘humanness’) is manifested or realized through the expression of love, whilst the Confucian *Tianming* (‘Heavenly mandate’ or ‘Heavenly will’) is effectively equated to God’s will.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, like the general ethos of the Donglin movement, Wang Zheng’s discussion of social engagement has political significance. As Eric Zürcher explains, *tianming* is, after all, an ideological concept closely related to the idea of *zhengtong*, “legitimate rule”, and this is indeed one of his conclusions’.<sup>27</sup>

What we find in these great early pillars of the church in China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is an intermingling of the virtues found in both Confucianism and Catholicism. From the Christian vantage point, this informs a theology of public engagement which begins with the moral transformation of the self, often through intellectual learning, before working itself out in social and political dimensions.

and *Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*, eds Jan A. M. De Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 269–86.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, 278–9, 282. <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>26</sup> See Chloë F. Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 15–16.

<sup>27</sup> Zürcher, ‘Christian Social Action in Late Ming Times’, 275.

### INTELLECTUALS AT THE END OF THE IMPERIAL AGE

When we consider the period of growing Christian missions in the late nineteenth century, we see a number of sociopolitical challenges to the more conventional understanding of the Chinese scholar-official. Much of this has to do with the two Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–60) and the unequal treaties levied against China which raised doubt against the efficacy of the Confucian ruling elite. Is Confucianism outdated and in need of reform, or should the whole imperial system be overturned entirely? Despite efforts by Confucian reformers to 'self-strengthen' the country through economic and military modernization, the Japanese empire, which pursued its own reform through the Meiji restoration period (1868–1912), would eventually become another imperial power to defeat China in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–5). Japan, once a tributary state of China, was now imposing its own unequal treaty upon the weakening Qing empire. Further attempts to modernize through the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898 and the end of the imperial civil examination system in 1905 would find little success. This last dynasty would fall by 1911.

Hence, whilst the Chinese theology of public engagement in the late Ming period would have reverberations in the late Qing period, it would also have different textures due to the weakening of the imperial state and its Confucian scholar-officials. For better or worse, Christian missions would benefit from the unequal treaties which allowed Protestant, Catholic, and Russian Orthodox churches to send workers into the now-opened China. Many of the converts during this time were characterized as 'rice Christians' who were criticized as turning to Christianity for food rather than for faith. But there was also a small number of Christians who can be seen as intellectuals who were trained in the Confucian classics from a young age.

For instance, we may consider Hong Xiuquan (1814–64), the founder of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (*Taiping Tianguo*).<sup>28</sup> Hong Xiuquan

<sup>28</sup> A number of scholarly studies have been produced on Hong Xiuquan and the Taipings. For some of the most accessible, see Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014);

passed the imperial civil examinations based on the Chinese classics at the local and county levels very easily. However, he would fail the prefecture-level examination in Guangzhou—four times. Of course, his lack of success at that level does not reflect a lack in intellect. After all, in those days, the pass rate for Guangdong province was shy of 1 per cent out of the 7,500 candidates who took the exam.<sup>29</sup> After he failed his third attempt in 1836, he had a mental breakdown and experienced a series of uninterpreted visions. However, after failing his fourth attempt in 1843, he reviewed a Christian tract he received many years earlier from the Chinese Protestant preacher Liang Fa (1789–1855) and now saw the true meaning of his earlier visions: Hong Xiuquan was the younger brother of Jesus and the son of God. Moreover, he was called to restore China to the worship of the true God, *Shangdi*.<sup>30</sup>

Whilst much of Hong Xiuquan's mission can be understood as seeking spiritual and moral transformation in China, he would also seek political transformation. As is well documented, Hong would lead a rebellion state known as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1851 which opposed and attempted to overthrow the Qing dynasty.<sup>31</sup> It is curious that Hong would first recognize his mission in 1843—the year after the end of the First Opium War and the signing Treaty of Nanking (1842) which opened up Guangzhou (then romanized as Canton) as one of five treaty ports. Hence, taking his fourth and final imperial civil examination in Guangzhou that year, Hong could see some of the direct effects of a weak Chinese empire. This would provide a significant impetus for his political vision.

Carl S. Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology: The Localization of Christianity in China, 1843–64* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 664. See Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology*, 46–9.

<sup>30</sup> Many debated whether Hong Xiuquan should be considered a 'Christian'. However, this can (and has) likewise be said of a number of individuals who have held more radical views of Christianity, such as K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012) discussed in Chapter 2. I believe my use of Hong here is justifiable given that he saw himself as restoring in China the worship of the God of the bible and of ancient China—a mission which was likewise held by many Protestant missionaries of his day.

<sup>31</sup> Hong Xiuquan was furious that the Chinese emperor had appropriated God's name (*Di* or *Shangdi*) into his own title (*huangdi*). According to Reilly, this was a blasphemous violation of the third commandment and, for Hong, reason to launch his rebellion. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, 91–100.



Ultimately, the Taiping rebellion would end in 1864 with more than twenty million dead. Whilst this can be seen as a failure in itself, like Hong's fourth failed attempt to pass the prefecture-level examination, it would provide inspiration to a number of later movements. The Taiping rebellion is still often recalled today in mainland China as a peasant revolution that foreshadowed the communist revolution. It was also the basis for the political thought of Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan, 1866–1925) and his rebellion which toppled the Qing dynasty in 1911.<sup>32</sup> Sun Yat-sen, like Hong Xiuquan, recognized the military and political weakness of the imperial state. Moreover, both Hong and Sun saw Christianity as a major intellectual basis for revolution. Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom offered inspiration to both the Republic and the People's Republic of China. Perhaps from another perspective, the Heavenly will (*Tianming*) was destined to be removed from the Qing rulers and placed onto a new dynasty—and possibly one built on Christian values.

Other Chinese Christian intellectuals during the late imperial period were not as intent on leading a political rebellion, but political reform was always a major theme. This can be seen in a figure like Ma Xiangbo (1840–1939),<sup>33</sup> who was born into a Catholic family that traced its conversion back to the time of Matteo Ricci. Ma Xiangbo's century-long life could in some ways be seen as one that ebbed back and forth between two intellectual worlds that were shaped by Confucianism and Christianity.<sup>34</sup> His early life was steeped in the Confucian classics, as his father was a Confucian teacher and Ma Xiangbo was sent to traditional private education for seven years. Yet at the age of 11, Ma left for Shanghai to study in the Jesuit college St Ignace, eventually being ordained a Jesuit priest in 1870. He later gave up the priesthood in 1876 in protest against the arrogance of

<sup>32</sup> Audrey Wells has made an interesting argument about the Taiping influences on Sun Yat-sen, especially given the Sun's family connections with the Taipings and his overall positive view of their revolutionary nature. Audrey Wells, *The Political Thought of Sun Yat-Sen: Development and Impact* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 102–12.

<sup>33</sup> See Jean-Paul Wiest, 'Ma Xiangbo: Pioneer of Educational Reform', in *Salt and Light 2: More Lives of Faith that Shaped Modern China*, eds Carol Lee Hamrin with Stacey Bieler (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2010), 41–60; Ruth Hayhoe and Lu Yongling, eds, *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China, 1840–1939* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> See Li Tiangang, 'Christianity and Cultural Conflict in the Life of Ma Xiangbo', in *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China*, eds Hayhoe and Lu, 89–142.

French priests towards China, established a family, and engaged in political life. But after the deaths of his wife in 1894 and his mother in 1895, and the failed Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, he put his children in Catholic schools and returned to religious life. In his later life, Ma is remembered as an educator who worked to establish educational institutions such as Aurora Academy (1902) and Fudan University (1912), both in Shanghai, and Furen University (1925) in Beijing. Due to his mastery of Western and Chinese educational approaches, he would influence a number of key reformers of his day who also had sought to reform China's education such as Liang Qichao (1873–1929) and Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940).

Like the late Ming pillars of the Catholic Church and their public engagement, we see in Hong Xiuquan and Ma Xiangbo desires to 'manage the world' (*jingshi*) around them. Yet these latter figures were living in times when the Qing dynasty was increasingly seen as weak. Politically, this meant the imperial state needed to change or be changed. Socially, as seen most poignantly in Ma Xiangbo, educating the mind was also key to lifting China from its dire state.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND THE MAY FOURTH ENLIGHTENMENT

Many of China's reformers recognized a significant victory when the Qing dynasty ultimately fell and the Republic of China was established. However, for some, China may have been able to overturn the feudal system but her people still were in a feudal mindset—China would need an 'enlightenment'.<sup>35</sup> During what is commonly called

<sup>35</sup> The academic discourse around the May Fourth period is vast. I base my interpretation on this period around the motif of 'enlightenment', as promoted by He Ganzhi and Vera Schwarcz. Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 21–40. See He Ganzhi, *Jindai Zhongguo qimeng yundong shi* [The History of the Chinese Enlightenment Movement] (Shanghai: Life Books, 1937); Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

Another dominant motif is around 'renaissance', echoing the fifteenth-century revival of art and literature in Europe. See Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance: The Haskell Lectures, 1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934); Samuel D. Ling, 'The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese "Christian Renaissance", 1919–1937'

the May Fourth movement, the early twentieth century witnessed a significant reconsideration of the intellectual underpinnings of China. Moreover, this was a key period for the reinvention of the Chinese 'intellectual' and his or her engagement with China's public space.<sup>36</sup>

Confucianism was often seen as a major hindrance to China's progress. With the end of the imperial civil examination system in 1905, the official status of the Confucian scholar-official and the traditional means of education were lost. Yet not all of China's reformers during the May Fourth period would allow Confucianism to completely fade away. For instance, New Confucians such as Liang Shuming (1893–1988) and Xiong Shili (1885–1968) would seek ways to modernize Confucianism. But perhaps even more significant for our discussion is that many Christian intellectuals such as Wu Leichuan (1870–1944), who obtained the highest qualification of *jinshi* under the old imperial system before being baptized into Christianity in 1915,<sup>37</sup> and T. C. Chao (Zhao Zichen, 1888–1979), often considered the greatest theologian of twentieth-century China,<sup>38</sup> continued to seek to indigenize Christianity by engaging Confucianism as still being a fundamental aspect of 'Chinese culture'. This was not to say that these Christian intellectuals simply wanted to hold onto Confucianism's past glory. Instead, they wanted to also show how Christianity could be a means to critique and correct certain aspects of Chinese culture—especially as found in Confucianism.<sup>39</sup>

Echoing again the spirit of Ming and Qing Christians we have already discussed in this chapter, May Fourth Christian intellectuals would likewise reflect on their sociopolitical contexts in their public

(Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1980); Li Tiangang, 'Chinese Renaissance: The Role of Early Jesuits in China', in *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*, eds Stephen Uhalley Jr and Wu Xiaoxin (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 117–26.

<sup>36</sup> For recent treatments of this evolution, see Edward S. K. Fung, *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> See Chu Sin-Jan, *Wu Leichuan: A Confucian Christian in Republican China* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> See Winfried Glüer (Gu Aihua), *Zhao Zichen de Shenxue sixiang* [The Theological Thought of T. C. Chao], trans. Joe Dunn (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1979).

<sup>39</sup> See Chu, *Wu Leichuan*, 107–18; Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 146; Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 65–87.

engagement. But during the early twentieth century, the American social gospel would have an increasing influence on Chinese Protestantism. This was in part due to the American missionaries who brought these theological views with them to China. In addition, a growing number of Chinese Christian intellectuals would receive training in American institutions that were deeply shaped by the social gospel, like Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University.<sup>40</sup> These Chinese Christians would return to their homeland, invigorated with a gospel to bring social reconstruction to China. They would become key Christian voices in organizations like Yenching (Yanjing) University and the closely affiliated Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).<sup>41</sup>

As we have already seen with Ma Xiangbo, education was recognized as essential for modernizing China. For Protestants, an institution such as Yenching University was key in bringing together some of China's most significant Christian thinkers, such as Wu Leichuan (the first Chinese chancellor of Yenching University), T. C. Chao, Timothy T. Lew (Liu Tingfang, 1892–1947), and P. C. Hsu (Xu Baoqian, 1892–1944). This group, first known as the 'Peking Apologetic Group' (*Zhengdao tuan*) but later as the 'Life Fellowship' (*Shengming she*), sought to defend Christianity as being useful for the social reconstruction of China, often leaning on thinking coming from the social gospel. Moreover, the Life Fellowship also established a periodical in 1919 known as *Life* (*Shengming*) which, in 1926, merged with another periodical known as *Truth* (*Zhenli*) and was renamed *Truth and Life* (*Zhenli yu shengming*). Through this publication, the Life Fellowship was utilizing a growing mechanism used by many May Fourth thinkers to offer a voice in the public space:

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Bays calls this the Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment. Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 99–104. See Christopher D. Sneller, 'Let the World Come to Union and Union Go into the World: Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York and the Quest for Indigenous Christianity in Twentieth Century China' (Ph.D. thesis, King's College London, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> See Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916–1952* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum, ed., *New Perspectives on Yenching University, 1916–1952: A Liberal Education for a New China* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Jun Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919–1937* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1996).

print capitalism.<sup>42</sup> *Truth and Life* would therefore become one of the key platforms for Christian intellectuals to publicly engage matters of common interest, between Christians and non-Christians alike.<sup>43</sup>

In many ways, what was happening in an institution like Yenching University was focused on an academic level of public engagement; however, a number of staff and students from Yenching took their concerns for social reconstruction into rural China. Much of this was due to connections that Yenching's longtime president John Leighton Stuart (1876–1962) had with Y. C. James Yen (Yan Yangchu, 1890–1990), the latter of whom was affiliated with the YMCA and was an important pioneer of the rural reconstruction movement.<sup>44</sup> P. C. Hsu, dean of Yenching University's School of Religion, would in 1935 be asked to lead one of these major rural reconstruction projects: the 'Lichuan Project'. There were significant challenges to this work because Hsu believed Christian higher education had not properly trained Christian students to work in rural living conditions or collaborate with those of differing demographic backgrounds.<sup>45</sup> Yet he found even more problematic the insistence of 'conservative churchmen' that rural reconstruction was mainly a means for evangelism. Hsu explained:

<sup>42</sup> For studies on print capitalism more broadly, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006); Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004).

For a general discussion about May Fourth reformers and the use of print capitalism in the Chinese public space, see Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 35–9.

<sup>43</sup> See John Barwick, 'Liu Tingfang: Christian Minister and Activist Intellectual', in *Salt and Light 3: More Lives of Faith That Shaped Modern China*, ed. Carol Lee Hamrin with Stacey Bieler (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2011), 70.

A good example of a Catholic intellectual engaged in print capitalism during this time would be P. Joseph Zi (Xu Zongze, 1886–1947). See Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 100–27.

<sup>44</sup> See Charles W. Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 78, 176–8. See West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations*, 155–60; Yang Nianqun, "'Shehui fuyin pai" yu Zhongguo Jidujiao xiangcun jianshe yundong de lilun yu zuzhi jichu' [Social Gospel and the Movement of Rural Society's Construction], *Logos & Pneuma* no. 8 (Spring 1998), 253–302.

The New Confucian Liang Shuming would later work with James Yen in the rural reconstruction movement. In Liang's case, it would not be Christianity but Confucianism that gave him cause for working in rural China. See Guy Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 192–225.

<sup>45</sup> P. C. Hsu, 'Can the Church Help in Rural Reconstruction?', *The Chinese Recorder* 68, no. 1 (January 1937): 19–20.

While preaching has an undisputed importance, its aim is not necessarily confined to conversion and bringing people into the church; its method is not limited to verbal preaching and the use of language. The most important thing is to convince others of the value of the Christian spirit in daily living and doing. In a nutshell, science and religion should cooperate in the arduous task of reconstructing rural life as a whole.<sup>46</sup>

To put it simply, Christianity needs to be preached in word and in deed. Whilst evangelism was important, it was more important to underscore an engagement with the material concerns of rural Chinese.

Others spoke more broadly about Jesus's social teachings and its implication for social reconstruction in China, in contrast to the more conservative and pietistic forms of Christianity at the time. For instance, T. C. Chao argued that since individuals are part of wider societies, 'individual salvation carries with it the larger task of social reconstruction'.<sup>47</sup> Y. T. Wu (Wu Yaozong, 1893–1979), a YMCA leader who had close relations with Yenching University's Life Fellowship and who would later be one of the key leaders of the new Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), would further argue that Christianity, since its beginnings, has been a social religion. In a January 1937 article, Wu attacks forms of Christianity which advocate for "the evangelization of the world in this generation", rather than "Christianising the Social Order", as the prophets of the Social Gospel would have it.<sup>48</sup> Wu predicted that China's growing social problems would inevitably force Christians to reconsider the important role Christianity has in China's social reconstruction.

By the middle of the same year as that article, Wu's prediction of a growing social crisis began to unveil itself as China and Japan engaged in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). This would be followed by a civil war and the eventual establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, under communist rule. The call for 'social reconstruction' would now take on a new meaning. In 1950, Y. T. Wu, T. C. Chao, and others travelled to Beijing to meet with the

<sup>46</sup> P. C. Hsu, 'Lessons from the Lichuan Experiment', *The Chinese Recorder* 68, no. 11 (November 1937): 679.

<sup>47</sup> T. C. Chao, 'Can Christianity be the Basis of Social Reconstruction in China?' *The Chinese Recorder* 53, no. 5 (May 1922): 312.

<sup>48</sup> Y. T. Wu, 'Should Christianity Concern itself in Social Reconstruction', *The Chinese Recorder* 68, no. 1 (January 1937): 21.

new Premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) in formulating the ‘Christian Manifesto’ and eventually establishing the TSPM.<sup>49</sup> In a way, these Christian leaders placed themselves before the new government’s court as scholar-officials, akin to the Confucian literati of the past, hopeful that the communist party would be a key ally in bringing about social reconstruction to ‘New China’. Undoubtedly, these hopes would be dashed by the time of the Cultural Revolution when all public religious practice was put to an end.

### A TRADITION WHICH LIVES ON

This chapter has attempted to trace the history of Chinese Christian thought and a dimension of what can be termed Chinese ‘public theology’ in its nascent forms. As suggested at the outset of this chapter, part of this comes from the Confucian priority to ‘manage the world’ (*jingshi*), in which an intellectual was traditionally one who cultivated him- or herself as a step towards cultivating the broader world. At the same time, one cannot deny the clear Christian influences on the understanding of public engagement, such as the Seven Corporal Works of Charity or the social gospel. The Confucian and Christian sources do not stand apart but encounter one another—competing, coalescing, and complementing.

The focus in this chapter has tended to be on individuals whom we would readily call ‘intellectuals’—the educated elite who had a strong impulse for public engagement. Yet we could have also considered other examples. Firstly, we must recognize the more grassroots approach to public engagement when Christian communities gather together in response to the perceived wrongs around them. We may consider the Catholic leaders and lay people who were imprisoned in September 1955 alongside Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei (Gong Pinmei, 1901–2000), who refused to renounce the pope but rejected

<sup>49</sup> Wallace C. Merwin and Francis P. Jones, eds, ‘The Christian Manifesto’, in *Documents of the Three-Self Movement: Source Materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, [1950] 1963), 19–20. See Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China’s United Front* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 120–33.

the newly formed Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.<sup>50</sup> We may perhaps also consider the more recent cases in Zhejiang province in 2014 and 2015 when congregants placed their own bodies in front of demolition teams determined to de-cross or demolish their church buildings.<sup>51</sup> We also must not forget the more tragic stories of Chinese Christians—Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox—who gave their lives for the faith, especially during the Boxer Uprising of 1900.<sup>52</sup> These are forms of public engagement, in the sense that the Christian faith could not remain merely a ‘private’ matter, because various conditions compelled it to enter the public space. These examples represent engagements which urgently responded to immediate events around them but were not afforded the luxury of time needed for theological reflection.

Secondly, we can consider how May Fourth produced another form of public theology. Already, we have discussed Protestants who held to a more liberal theological approach which was informed by the social gospel. A second major strand can be found in the growth of a more conservative approach which was informed by fundamentalism. As I have argued elsewhere, it is not as though this latter group of Christian leaders failed to engage in the socio-political context at all; instead, they tended to maintain a more counter-cultural approach to their context.<sup>53</sup> Much can be recognized of these more theologically conservative individuals as representing a different strand of public theology when compared with those coming from Yenching University and the YMCA.<sup>54</sup> For instance, figures

<sup>50</sup> Paul P. Mariani, *Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> See Ying Fuk-tsang (Xing Fuzang), ‘Chai shizijia de zhengzhi: Zhejiang sheng “Sangai yichai” yundong de zongjiao-zhengzhi fenxi’ [The Politics of Cross Demolition: A Religio-Political Analysis of the ‘Three Transformations and One Demolition’ Campaign in Zhejiang Province] *Logos and Pneuma* no. 44 (January 2016): 25–61; Cao Nanlai, ‘Spatial Modernity, Party Building, and Local Governance: Putting the Christian Cross-Removal Campaign in Context’, *The China Review* 17, no. 1 (February 2017): 29–52.

<sup>52</sup> A well-researched study on Catholic martyrdom can be found in Anthony E. Clark, *China’s Saints: Catholic Martyrdom During the Qing (1644–1911)* (Lanham, MD: Lehigh University Press, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 41–4, 60–3. See Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. edn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 117–37.

<sup>54</sup> See Daniel H. Bays, ‘The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900–1937’, in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 307–16.

such as Wang Mingdao (1900–91) and Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng, 1903–72) would also produce periodicals and books as forms of print capitalism to engage those beyond their normal reach. Contrary to how some may describe them, these individuals can also be considered intellectuals. They were well-educated individuals—sometimes by traditional Confucian education and, in most cases, by Christian institutions. In contrast with the more liberal figures we looked at in this chapter who focused on the publics of the academy and the society, these conservatives focused their engagement on the public of the church.<sup>55</sup>

This latter form of public theology finds some parallels in a figure such as the American theologian Stanley Hauerwas (b. 1940) who speaks of the church as an alternative community which pursues holiness as an act of public witness to this world.<sup>56</sup> In China, self-identified fundamentalists such as Wang Mingdao saw the TSPM as compromising Christian truth. He called the organization a 'party of unbelievers' (*buxin pai*) because he believed it had modernists in their membership who forsook the true gospel for a liberal theology shaped by the social gospel. Wang thought it would be better to not associate with this party of unbelievers, but to focus on reinforcing the true Christian community, built upon the fundamentals of the faith as taught in the bible.<sup>57</sup>

For Hauerwas, his attack is not only on liberal Christianity but also fundamentalism as well. In his view, the fatal flaw in American Protestantism is its unequivocal support for American democracy—a flaw which he traces back to the founders of the social gospel movement and into more recent and divergent figures such as Max Stackhouse and Jerry Falwell.<sup>58</sup> In many ways, this is consistent with Hauerwas's Anabaptist orientation which, in contrast with the

<sup>55</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, I am using here David Tracy's description of the three publics of the wider society, the academy, and the church. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 5.

<sup>56</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). See Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989).

<sup>57</sup> Wang Mingdao, 'We, Because of Faith', in *Documents of the Three-Self Movement* (1955), 99–106.

<sup>58</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), 173–7.

magisterial Reformation, is uneasy with close connections between the church and the state. Whilst Wang Mingdao does not develop his thinking in the same way, he would undoubtedly agree with Hauerwas on this point. The early TSPM, as an entity that brings a close cooperation between the church and the state, included figures on various points of the theology spectrum—from more liberal figures such as Y. T. Wu and T. C. Chao to more conservative figures such as Jia Yuming (1880–1964) and Marcus Cheng (Chen Chonggui, 1884–1963)—all with aspirations to offer a Christian democratic voice for their day.<sup>59</sup> Yet Wang saw little value in the ideals of upholding patriotism and opposing imperialism. He believed Christians should not bind these political agendas to those 'who would preserve the purity of the faith and resolutely refuse to cooperate with unbelievers'.<sup>60</sup>

These two overlapping forms of public engagement—the grassroots approach and the Hauerwasian approach—are undeniably two important dimensions of the broader conversation about Chinese public theology. Indeed, elements of both can be seen today amongst many Protestants and Catholics associated with what has been termed 'house churches' (*jiating jiaohui*) or the 'underground church' (*dixia jiaohui*).<sup>61</sup> Yet neither the grassroots approach nor the Hauerwasian approach have tended to offer significant constructive engagement with the theological questions arising from China's changing sociopolitical context. Overall, this chapter and the chapters to come focus on Chinese Christians who have wrestled with these pressing concerns and attempted to formulate theological arguments for how to be actively engaged in the public space.

Another dimension which has not really been discussed has been the place of women in this overall story. Whilst it is true that the role of imperial-era Confucian scholar-officials was primarily one occupied by men, it is inaccurate to say that there were no female

<sup>59</sup> Marcus Cheng, for instance, used his position in the TSPM to forthrightly critique the harsh approach of the communist government against religious believers during the infamous Hundred Flowers Movement. His words would later be used to denounce him during the Anti-Rightist Movement. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 167–8.

<sup>60</sup> Wang, 'We, Because of Faith', 106–8.

<sup>61</sup> The term 'house church' is normally associated with unregistered Protestant congregations whereas the term 'underground church' is normally associated with unregistered Catholic congregations.

intellectuals. A growing amount of scholarship has highlighted how, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, there were changes in female literacy rates and female economic roles which resulted in the growth of learned and influential women.<sup>62</sup> This would be accelerated by the May Fourth movement which witnessed growing efforts to advocate for women's rights.<sup>63</sup> Along with these broader developments, Chinese Christian women in the early twentieth century would likewise join in these debates about the public role of women. Many—such as Ding Shujing (1890–1936) and Wang Liming (Frances Willard Wong Liu, 1896–1970)—were often part of organizations which emphasized the significant contribution of women, like the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).<sup>64</sup> It is important to recognize that many of these events developed against the extreme patriarchy that Confucianism was understood as legitimizing.<sup>65</sup> However, it is primarily the Confucian scholar-official who has shaped understandings of Chinese public intellectualism and, in turn, Chinese public theology—the most prominent examples of which have come from men.

As we turn to Chapters 2 to 4, we will look into the growing developments of Chinese public theology in the decades following the end of the Cultural Revolution across three generations. What we will find is that the years between 1949 and 1979 would leave an indelible mark on all the figures we discuss, but produce different

<sup>62</sup> See Susan Mann, 'Learned Women in the Eighteenth Century', in *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*, eds Christina K. Gilmartin, Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel, and Tyrene White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 27–46; Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, eds, *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>63</sup> See Ono Kazuko, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850–1950*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>64</sup> See Kwok Pui-Lan, *Chinese Women and Christianity, 1860–1927* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 147–85; Elizabeth A. Little-Lamb, 'Going Public: The YWCA, "New" Women, and Social Feminism in Republican China' (Ph.D. diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2002); John Barwick, 'Wang Liming: Promoting a Protestant Vision of Modern Chinese Women', in *Salt and Light* 3, 136–57.

<sup>65</sup> Why Confucianism is perceived in this way will be discussed and challenged in Chapter 7.

generational consciousnesses depending on the specific generational cohort. Yet these future generations do not stand alone. They continue to build on a tradition of Chinese public theology which reflects the encounter between Confucian and Christian sensibilities, and which can be traced back to some of the earliest Chinese Christians.

## State-Sanctioned Protestantism

On 18 January 2016, it was announced that Reverend Joseph Gu (Gu Yuese) was being removed as the senior pastor of Chongyi church in Hangzhou, often considered one of China's largest Protestant congregations. By the end of the month, Gu was under investigation by authorities for suspicion of embezzling funds. According to the government-run news outlet *Global Times*, this should not be confused with Gu's vocal disagreement with the government's 'Three Rectifications, One Demolition' (*sangai yichai*) campaign, which since 2014 has been involved in the removal of church crosses and the demolition of church buildings throughout Zhejiang province.<sup>1</sup> Government officials have claimed that these churches have violated building ordinances. The article, entitled 'Religious activities not immune from regulation', would continue by saying,

Such a high-profile figure can hardly be dismissed and put into custody merely for objecting to the cross removal campaign. Overseas media have been vigorously and closely following the demolition of churches and crosses in Zhejiang. . . .

Many overseas media seek to see China's social governance challenged by some forces bred during the development of religion. While

<sup>1</sup> Su Tan, 'Religious activities not immune from regulation', *Global Times*, 1 February 2016, accessed 14 March 2016, <<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/966651.shtml>>.

According to some estimates, 1,500 to 1,800 churches have been affected by these actions. See Ying Fuk-tsang (Xing Fuzang), 'Chai shizijia de zhengzhi: Zhejiang sheng "Sangai yichai" yundong de zongjiao-zhengzhi fenxi' [The Politics of Cross Demolition: A Religio-Political Analysis of the "Three Transformations and One Demolition" Campaign in Zhejiang Province] *Logos and Pneuma* no. 44 (January 2016): 25-61; Cao Nanlai, 'Spatial Modernity, Party Building, and Local Governance: Putting the Christian Cross-Removal Campaign in Context', *The China Review* 17, no. 1 (February 2017): 29-52.

beating the drum for those who stand up to the Chinese authorities, these media outlets have their eye on other targets than justice. Their speculation has to be highly guarded against, pending the unfinished investigation into Gu.<sup>2</sup>

The events surrounding the removal and the detention of Joseph Gu are particularly interesting, considering the prominence of both Gu and the church he has led. Chongyi church traces its history to the China Inland Mission founder J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) and is now a church registered with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and with a seating capacity for approximately 6,000 attendees. Both Gu and Chongyi have been used on various occasions to showcase the freedom religions have in China. The national *lianghui* (the two bodies of the TSPM and the China Christian Council [CCC]), in conjunction with the US-based non-profit organization ECF International, has produced a documentary about the church,<sup>3</sup> and its pulpit has welcomed a number of internationally renowned evangelists such as Franklin Graham in 2008 and Luis Palau in 2010. Joseph Gu has also been an active member of the *lianghui*, serving as senior pastor for this TSPM church for eleven years and recently as president of the provincial Zhejiang Christian Council. However, in this latter role, Gu was also behind an open letter in July 2015 from the Zhejiang Christian Council denouncing the government's 'Three Rectifications, One Demolition' campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Four decades earlier, such a vocal public statement from a religious person against government actions could not have been made, let alone considered. What has changed? This chapter will look at a number of key TSPM and CCC thinkers who, coming out of the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s and the 1980s, lay the early groundwork for later Christians like Gu to have a public voice.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Su, 'Religious activities not immune from regulation'.

<sup>3</sup> *Heaven on Earth: Chongyi Church in Hang Zhou*, directed by John Qu (Monterey Park, CA: ECF International, 2006), DVD.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Ceng fandui guifan shijia jianzhu: Hangzhou Chongyi Tang Gu Yuese Mushi bei mianzhi' [Having Critiqued Regulations for Erecting Crosses: Hangzhou Chongyi Church Pastor Joseph Gu Dismissed], *Jidujiao shidai luntan* [Christian Times], 21 January 2016, accessed 14 March 2016, <<http://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=92801&Pid=5&Cid=220>>.

<sup>5</sup> For Catholic leaders of the CCPA, Sino-Vatican tensions and internal disputes between Chinese Catholics have muted their ability to exercise a strong voice. Hence, this chapter will focus on Protestant leaders of the re-established TSPM and the newly formed CCC. See Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China: AD 600 to 2000*,

The chapter will begin with an examination of the *lianghui's* best-known figure, Bishop K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012), before moving on to look at the thoughts and practices of other key figures.

### RELIGIOUS POLICY AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

One of the most important and controversial figures of the Chinese Protestant church since the late 1970s has been K. H. Ting. Not only was he the head of the two main national organizations of state-sanctioned Protestant Christianity, the reinstated TSPM and the newly formed CCC,<sup>6</sup> he was also a member of the standing committees of both the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the National People's Congress (NPC).<sup>7</sup> These latter two organizations provided Ting with very significant public roles in engaging the operations of the Chinese state.

In his various capacities, Ting worked both as a churchman and a statesman. As much of today's Chinese Protestantism traces its history through a more conservative and fundamentalist-evangelical tradition, informed by a free church orientation, Ting's work with the state is often seen at odds with his work in the church. However, this is not as problematic when considered from the vantage point of his broad church Anglican-Episcopal background.<sup>8</sup> Many of the institutions that nurtured Ting in his earlier years, such as St Peter's

trans. M. N. L. Couve de Murville (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 503–6; Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 192–3.

<sup>6</sup> After the death of Y. T. Wu (Wu Yaozong, 1893–1979), Ting would become the most prominent Christian leader and public figure associated with the TSPM.

<sup>7</sup> The CPPCC is a government advisory body and the NPC is a parliamentary body.

<sup>8</sup> The Anglican-Episcopal tradition in China finds its origins in Anglican and Episcopal missionaries from England and America. These groups often worked independently of one another in China, but occasionally had disputes over diocesan boundaries and episcopal jurisdiction. A unified national church, known as the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (Zhonghua Shenggong Hui), would not be formed until 1912.

For a historical summary of the Anglican-Episcopal tradition in China, see G. F. S. Gray, *Anglicans in China: A History of the Zhonghua Shenggong Hui* (New Haven, CT: Episcopal China Mission History Project, 1996). For a more recent study of select themes of the Anglican-Episcopal tradition in China, see Philip L. Wickeri, ed.,

Church and St John's University,<sup>9</sup> were part of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century missionary enterprise which was influenced by the growing social conscience in English and North American Anglican-Episcopal theology.<sup>10</sup> The *lianghui* is not an established church like the Church of England. Regardless of this, as an Anglican bishop consecrated in 1955, Ting's roles in the CPPCC and the NPC echo the roles of Church of England bishops as Lords Spiritual in the British Parliament. As such, it would come as little surprise that K. H. Ting would—like other Anglican bishops such as William Temple and Rowan Williams—see it as his right and his duty as a bishop to address public issues as they pertain to secular and religious matters. For Ting, this public engagement is necessary to provide the societal and legal basis for the Chinese church to grow and flourish in a new era.

In the years following the end of the Cultural Revolution, religious life began to be revived, but the implementation of religious policy was arguably a bit slow. K. H. Ting and Zhao Puchu (1907–2000), president of the reinstated Buddhist Association of China, exercised considerable influence in the government policy changes related to the reintroduction of freedom of religious belief.<sup>11</sup> To be clear, government documents never speak about 'freedom of religion' (*zongjiao ziyou*), but instead speak of 'freedom of religious belief' (*zongjiao*

*Christian Encounters with Chinese Culture: Essays on Anglican and Episcopal History in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015).

For a fuller treatment of how K. H. Ting's Anglican-Episcopal background shapes his public witness, see Alexander Chow, 'Revisit Asian Christian Public Witness: K. H. Ting', in *Resurgent Asia: Renewal and Christian Public Witness in Asia*, eds Jooseup Keum and Atola Longkumer (New Delhi: ISPCK, forthcoming).

One recent study has attempted to argue that Ting is shaped by high church Anglicanism, rather than broad church Anglicanism. See Li Jieren, 'In Search of the *Via Media* Between Christ and Marx: A Study of Bishop Ding Guangxun's Contextual Theology' (Ph.D. thesis, Lund University, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> See Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K. H. Ting and the Chinese Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 23–33; Duan Qi, 'Christianity and Chinese Nationalism: St. Peter's Church in Shanghai during the War against Japan', in *Christian Encounters with Chinese Culture*, 119–34.

<sup>10</sup> See Arthur Michael Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology Between Lux Mundi and the Second World War* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1960); Bernard Kent Markwell, *The Anglican Left: Radical Social Reformers in the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1846–1954* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1991); Wendy Dackson, 'Anglicanism and Social Theology', *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 4 (2014): 615–37.

<sup>11</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 205–15.



*xinyang ziyou*). Freedom of religious belief does not imply that one has freedom to openly practise one's religion. Rather, the government policies encourage a limited and privatized understanding of religion.<sup>12</sup>

In 1980, both Ting and Zhao used their roles as members of the CPPCC to address needed shifts in the government's outlook on religious practice, and their statements would be published in the state-run periodical *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*).<sup>13</sup> Zhao Puchu spoke out against the chaotic situation that was introduced during the Cultural Revolution by the Gang of Four and the need to restore the running of Buddhist temples, rightfully, to Buddhist monks. Ting spoke about the complexities of Chinese Christianity, particularly defending house churches—or 'house gatherings' (*jiating juhui*) as he preferred to term them—that developed during the Cultural Revolution. He states:

All Christian places of worship were closed during the 'Cultural Revolution'. Now there are only a few open churches and the vast majority of believers are gatherings in homes. As the TSPM, our task is to unite all the country's Christians and we must not treat house gathering Christians as disreputable. As a TSPM leader, I cannot say they are illegal. In interpreting the constitution, one must not say that those within the church have freedom of [religious] belief and that those within the homes do not have freedom of [religious] belief.<sup>14</sup>

For Ting, the government needed to expand its understanding of acceptable religious activities. He wanted to underscore that Christians outside the TSPM are to be regarded as part of the Christian family and not deemed illegal. In a number of instances, including immediately following the June 1989 clash in Tiananmen Square, K. H. Ting and Zhao Puchu used their positions in the CPPCC and the NPC to argue for greater awareness and reform in the government's religious policies.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Liu Peng, 'Church and State Relations in China: Characteristics and Trends', *Journal of Contemporary China* 5, no. 11 (1996): 72.

<sup>13</sup> Zhao Puchu and K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun), 'Tan Luoshi zongjiao zhengci wenti' [On the Implementation of Religious Policy], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], 9 September 1980, 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Translation mine. This quote is translated by Philip Wickeri, but he renders *xinyang ziyou* ('freedom of belief') as 'religious freedom'. See Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 210.

<sup>15</sup> K. H. Ting, 'Bishop K. H. Ting Spoke at the CPPCC', *Bridge: Church Life in China Today* 35 (May–June 1989): 3–4; Zhao Puchu, 'Religious Freedom and Dignity of the Legal System', *Bridge: Church Life in China Today* 35 (May–June 1989): 5–6;

Behind Ting's engagements with the government was a desire to address the common public interests of Chinese Christians of all backgrounds. His concern was not limited to those within state-sanctioned Protestantism, of which he was at the helm, but included Christian individuals and groups which were outside the TSPM and, often, opposed his theology and his actions. One important case involved Samuel Lamb (Lin Xiangao, 1924–2013), the pastor of an unregistered house church in Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province, which reportedly had over 4,000 attendees each week. Lamb and his church were repeatedly harassed by local and provincial government officials and, despite his unwillingness to join the TSPM, Ting petitioned the Religious Affairs Bureau on his behalf:

It is said that Guangdong authorities now have to deal with Lin Xiangao. My opinion is that so long as Lin is not anti-Party, anti-socialist, does not carry on any illegal activities, does not operate with the infiltration of anti-China elements from overseas, he is entitled to continue his home meeting. The existence of his home gathering is evidence of the freedom of religion in China and at the same time spurs [the TSPM and the CCC] to improve the quality of their ministry.<sup>16</sup>

In many ways, Ting's approach to Lamb echoes the Anglican *via media* outlook on diversity within the Chinese church, regardless of one's relationship with the TSPM and the CCC. However, some may point out that Ting's project in the late 1990s of theological reconstruction (*shenxue sixiang jianshe*) was contrary to this spirit. After all, it both encouraged closer cooperation with socialists and attempted to push fundamentalists and evangelicals out of the *lianghui*, including his long-term evangelical friend and colleague Wang

Zhao Puchu, 'Call for a New Look at an Outdated Policy', in *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice*, ed. Donald E. MacInnis (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 71–6; K. H. Ting, 'Religious Work Should Also Have Chinese Characteristics: K. H. Ting's Address to the Fifth Session of the Seventh CPPCC', *Bridge: Church Life in China Today* 54 (July–August 1992): 3–6.

See also Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 93–104; Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 288–95.

<sup>16</sup> As this is quoted in an interview which is recorded in English, it is unclear whether the phrase 'freedom of religion' here is *zongjiao ziyou* or *zongjiao xinyang ziyou*. Quoted in Charles Kwok, 'Bishop K. H. Ting's View of the Present Situation of Christianity in China', *Bridge: Church Life in China Today* 33 (Jan.–Feb. 1989): 4.

Weifan (1927–2015).<sup>17</sup> Ting's biographer Philip Wickeri believes that Ting needed to work for church unity in the 1980s and early 1990s; but after his retirement as the head of the TSPM and the CCC in 1997, the 'church was still growing and on a firmer footing' and so Ting could now 'address the theological issues facing the churches more directly'.<sup>18</sup> Yet, in a tribute to the late leader, Wang Weifan writes that Ting, towards the end of his life, expressed remorse over his past actions, particularly against Wang.<sup>19</sup>

When looked at from the vantage point of Ting's overall public ministry, it is clear that Ting had a strong desire to provide routes for the multifaceted Chinese church to work together. This can be seen even as early as the mid-1950s when Ting had a well-publicized conflict with the fundamentalist Wang Mingdao (1900–91). In a pamphlet published in 1955, Wang Mingdao argued that supporters of the newly formed TSPM were modernists and part of the 'party of unbelievers'; 'true' Christians therefore, should not participate with the TSPM.<sup>20</sup> In response, Ting argued against dividing between different kinds of Christians but working together for the patriotic cause:

On the foundation of anti-imperialism and patriotism let us unite, neither obliterating nor exaggerating our differences in belief, and thankfully accepting all that is held in common. As for where we differ we will not enforce uniformity but respect each other, so that no one feels wronged in matters of faith. . . .

If we are all in favor of anti-imperialism and patriotism, why can we not unite?<sup>21</sup>

Evidently, a number of other conservatives like Jia Yuming (1880–1964), Marcus Cheng (Chen Chonggui, 1884–1963), and Watchman Nee

<sup>17</sup> See Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 333–69; Chen Lu, 'Ding Guangxun's Critique of Fundamentalist Theology in Contemporary China and his Theological Construction', *Transformation* 27, no. 2 (2010): 98–104.

<sup>18</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 340.

<sup>19</sup> Wang Weifan, 'Remembering Bishop K. H. Ting', *Chinese Theological Review* 25 (2013): 135–7.

<sup>20</sup> Wang Mingdao, 'We, Because of Faith', in *Documents of the Three-Self Movement: Source Materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China*, eds Wallace C. Merwin and Francis P. Jones (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, [1955] 1963), 99–106.

<sup>21</sup> K. H. Ting, 'Truth and Slander', in *No Longer Strangers: Selected Writings of K. H. Ting*, ed. Raymond L. Whitehead (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, [1955] 1989), 145.

(Ni Tuosheng, 1903–72) agreed with Ting, at least to a certain extent, because they too would choose to support and participate in the efforts of the early TSPM.

K. H. Ting's dual roles as a churchman and a statesman are important to understand his contributions to Chinese Christianity's public voice in the decades immediately following the Cultural Revolution. Addressing the state, he would speak on behalf of all religious believers and participate in drafting the directive entitled 'The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period', more commonly known as 'Document 19',<sup>22</sup> and the clauses of religion in the 1982 revision to the Constitution. Addressing the church, he sought a *via media* position in a divided Christian body, including those within and outside the organizations he led. Ting would be amongst the most important Chinese intellectuals of his generation to engage and shape the growing Chinese public space.

#### CHRISTOLOGY AS A BASIS FOR ENGAGEMENT

For the leadership of the TSPM and the CCC, it was not enough to try to bring together divided groups, the church needed to underscore the theological rationale for working with others. One of the major themes used in the 1980s–90s was that of the 'cosmic Christ'.<sup>23</sup> The significance of this language in Asia can be traced to ecumenical conversations in the 1961 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, in which two important speeches were delivered introducing the subject of the 'cosmic Christ'. Whilst the American Joseph Sittler spoke about a cosmic Christology in terms of the need for humans to care for nature, reflecting concerns that developed as a result of the American use of nuclear warfare, the Indian Paul D. Devanandan would argue about the importance of the

<sup>22</sup> 'Document No. 19: The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period', *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice*, trans. Donald MacInnis (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 8–26.

<sup>23</sup> See Chen Zemin, 'Christ and Culture in China: A Sino-American Dialogue', *Chinese Theological Review* 8 (1993): 83–6; Duan Qi, 'The Reconstruction of Chinese Christian Theology', in *Christianity*, ed. Zhuo Xiping, trans. Chi Zhen and Caroline Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 47–51.

understanding for dialoguing with other religions.<sup>24</sup> By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, South Asian Christians such as M. M. Thomas from India and D. T. Niles of Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka) would continue discussions around how a cosmic Christology enabled adherents of Christianity and of other religions to work together for social change.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst this debate continued to grow in South Asian ecumenical circles, mainland China was in the midst of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese Christians were isolated from the broader international community and unable to enter these theological debates. Only after the Cultural Revolution was there now an opportunity for Protestant church leaders of the TSPM and the CCC to reflect on their theology, speaking about a cosmic Christology as a way of understanding why Christians must work with others. They would, however, never state any explicit connections to their South Asian antecedents.

The best-known Chinese Protestant figure to speak about a cosmic Christology, and perhaps most strongly in terms of relating to the state, is K. H. Ting.<sup>26</sup> We can see this coming to the foreground for Ting as early as 1979, when he took his first visit to North America in almost thirty years.<sup>27</sup> In a sermon he preached in Toronto, Ting declares:

The incarnation of the Son of God has surely made more of an impact on humanity than the Fall of Adam. Human solidarity with Christ is more universal, more powerful, than human solidarity with Adam through sin. We believe in a universality of divine grace... What human beings do to promote community, to make love more possible

<sup>24</sup> Joseph A. Sittler, 'Called to Unity', *The Ecumenical Review* 14, no. 2 (January 1962): 177-87; Paul D. Devanandan, 'Called to Witness', *The Ecumenical Review* 14, no. 2 (January 1962): 154-63.

<sup>25</sup> See Douglas J. Elwood, ed., *What Asian Christians are Thinking* (Manila: New Day Publishers, 1976), 335-8.

Jürgen Moltmann sees these developments as a distraction from the real meaning of a cosmic Christology around ecological considerations, as argued by Sittler. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1990), 274-80.

<sup>26</sup> See Edmond Tang, 'The Cosmic Christ: The Search for a Chinese Theology', *Studies in World Christianity* 1, no. 2 (October 1995): 131-42; Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 89-111.

<sup>27</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 233-7.

and more available to the masses of our people, is in consonance with God's work of creation and redemption and sanctification, because God himself, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, has the image of the loving community and humanity that was created in that image, and is moving in the direction of recovering that image.<sup>28</sup>

Here, we see two hallmarks of Ting's theology which would later be synthesized in terms of a cosmic Christ. First, he places a priority on the doctrine of incarnation as opposed to the doctrine of sin. In two other North American addresses delivered that same year, Ting would argue that an overemphasis on the doctrine of sin would result in an overemphasis on the doctrine of redemption, thereby leading to a type of antinomianism because many would believe that 'If you profess faith in Christ, everything is permitted.'<sup>29</sup> Instead, Chinese Christians must not dismiss all atheists too quickly, but learn to appreciate that some atheists are morally upright. Ting notes that both the Christian and the non-Christian must be recognized as 'not only the sinner, but also the sinned against'.<sup>30</sup> If sin is only understood in terms of one's personal sinfulness, the primary concern Christians should have is on those who have been redeemed from this depraved state. However, for Ting, the shift towards *structural* sinfulness provides a mechanism to find a common ground with non-Christians.

This carries into the second major hallmark of Ting's theology highlighted in the quote above, which is the priority placed on a Trinitarian understanding of God's work. As he further explains elsewhere, God is both the Lord of creation and the Lord of redemption.<sup>31</sup> He ridicules those whom he believes have created two gods:

<sup>28</sup> K. H. Ting, 'Give Ye Them to Eat', in *Love Never Ends: Papers by K. H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, [1979] 2000), 34.

<sup>29</sup> K. H. Ting, 'A Chinese Christian's Appreciation of the Atheist', in *Love Never Ends* (1979), 37; see K. H. Ting, 'Human Collectives as Vehicles of God's Grace', in *Love Never Ends* (1979), 43-5.

<sup>30</sup> Ting continues by explaining that both Chinese Christians and communist revolutionaries have been sinned against by the common enemies of imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, and feudalism. As I point out elsewhere, this is a direct allusion to Mao Zedong's description of three mountains which have unjustly persecuted the Chinese people. K. H. Ting, 'Human Collectives as Vehicles of God's Grace', 44. See Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 102-3.

<sup>31</sup> For example, see K. H. Ting, 'Creation and Redemption', in *Love Never Ends* (1995), 477-83.

one god, the Father who created the world which was subsequently captured by Satan and, another god, the Son who has slipped in behind enemy lines to save the elect few. Instead, Ting believes that if God is both the Lord of creation and the Lord of redemption, he beckons all of humanity to participate in God's creative work—not just an elect few. He writes, 'The whole creation, the whole world is the object of Christ's work of redemption. . . . Creation contains redemption; the purpose of redemption is to fulfill God's creation.'<sup>32</sup>

Though these theological ideas would continue to develop throughout the 1980s–90s, a critical moment would occur in 1989 as students throughout China were organizing demonstrations which rallied for democracy and the freedom of press. In May 1989, Ting issued public statements in support of the student protests and to encourage seminary students and other Christians who participated in the demonstrations.<sup>33</sup> Ting used his public positions to express what he felt the church and the state needed to do. Within a month, on 4 June 1989, the student democracy movement was violently crushed by military troops in Tiananmen Square. The climate for the rest of 1989 was tense for many in China who were supportive of the democracy movement, including Ting himself.

Like the period immediately following the end of the Cultural Revolution, the period immediately following June Fourth would be very important. Ting's first public statement within China was in September 1989, when he praised the founder of the earlier TSPM, Y. T. Wu (Wu Yaozong, 1893–1979), for being an exemplar of Christian social concern. Wu, Ting claimed, gave validation to the TSPM's support for the earlier social movement and the communist party.<sup>34</sup> Then, in one of his first public appearances outside China, Ting would give his most comprehensive theological speech in England in 1991 entitled 'The Cosmic Christ'.<sup>35</sup> Chinese Christians, he states, are moving more and more towards a view of the cosmic nature of Christ: firstly, it speaks of the universal extent of Christ's domain and care and, secondly, it speaks of a Christlike love which is

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 480.

<sup>33</sup> See William Morris (pseudonym of Philip L. Wickeri), 'Between Sadness and Hope: A Reflection on Recent Events in China', *Bridge: Church Life in China Today* 36 (July–August 1989): 6.

<sup>34</sup> K. H. Ting, 'What Can We Learn from Y. T. Wu Today?' in *Love Never Ends* (1989), 333.

<sup>35</sup> K. H. Ting, 'The Cosmic Christ', in *Love Never Ends* (1991), 408–18.

the greatest of God's attributes. Ting explains, 'In this direct encounter people, including Christians, were greatly impressed by the moral goodness which the new acquaintances, the revolutionaries, manifested and the goodness they could inspire in others.'<sup>36</sup> He continues to describe the moral goodness of many Chinese communists which challenged the outlook and the theology of all Chinese Christians, both the fundamentalist and the liberal alike.

As Edmond Tang explains, 'It was not so much an effort to extend a friendly arm to Marxist atheists but a reflection of the fidelity of God even in the darkest moments of personal and social despairs.'<sup>37</sup> For Ting, the key events of the Cultural Revolution and the June Fourth Tiananmen Square incident would solidify the need for a constructive theology. Ting's cosmic Christology provides for him theological resources to engage both the church and the state.

The motif of a cosmic Christology would captivate the minds of a number of other key figures of state-sanctioned Protestantism. Chen Zemin (b. 1917), a systematic theologian at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary,<sup>38</sup> has been known as a great supporter of Ting's theology, especially of his Christology. As others have pointed out, this is partly because Chen's own theology is quite similar to Ting's.<sup>39</sup> Another person who has gravitated towards a cosmic Christology has been Bishop Shen Yifan (1928–94), a fellow Anglican who was controversially consecrated by Ting as one of two new 'postdenominational' bishops in 1988.<sup>40</sup> Shen would place an emphasis on the incarnation, in a way which we may see as akin to the Chinese traditional teaching of the unity of Heaven and humanity (*Tian ren heyi*). He argues that the incarnation shatters the false dualism between the sacred and the profane, God and humanity, and Christian and non-Christian, thereby enabling all to work for God's purposes.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 408. <sup>37</sup> Tang, 'The Cosmic Christ', 141.

<sup>38</sup> Nanjing Union Theological Seminary is the flagship seminary of the officially recognized Protestant church of China. It was formed in 1952 by consolidating eleven seminaries together, with a twelfth one added in 1961.

<sup>39</sup> See Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 229–30; Duan Qi, 'Preface to *Qiusuo yu jianzheng: Chen Zemin wenxuan* [Quest and Witness: Selected Writings of Chen Zemin]', by Chen Zemin (Shanghai: TSPM/CCC, 2007), 5–6.

<sup>40</sup> See Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 267–8.

<sup>41</sup> Shen Yifan, 'Chinese Christianity in Theological Reflections', *Chinese Theological Review* 1 (1985): 54–5; Shen Yifan, 'Theological Reflection in the Chinese Church', *Chinese Theological Review* 4 (1988): 22–31. See Chen Qirui, 'Christ the

Quite different from these more liberally minded thinkers, but also advocating a kind of cosmic Christology, has been the evangelical Wang Weifan.<sup>42</sup> In his most explicit statement about a cosmic Christology, Wang explains in 1985 that through the changes in Chinese society, Chinese Christians now believe that Jesus Christ is not only the Lord of Christian believers, but even more, he is 'the Lord of the cosmos and the Lord of history' (*yuzhou zhi zhu he lishi zhi zhu*).<sup>43</sup> Whilst some may consider this as speaking about the specific 'liberal' trends within the Chinese church connected to some of the earlier figures we have discussed, nearly three decades later, Wang would explain that this article was meant to elaborate on the trajectory of Chinese evangelicalism.<sup>44</sup> He still saw himself as an evangelical who upholds Jesus Christ as the Lord of Christian believers. But his statement of these two *additional* Christological dimensions is quite significant, given that the South Asian discussion in the 1960s–70s grew into a debate about the relationship between the cosmic Christ and the historical Jesus.<sup>45</sup> Was the cosmic Christ an unknown mystery behind other religiophilosophical traditions or should Christ be understood as concerned with the historical struggles of equality, justice, and peace, that all peoples of all faith commitments could fight for?

Everlasting Lord: Bishop Shen Yifan's 'Thinking on Incarnation', *Chinese Theological Review* 25 (2013): 31–78.

<sup>42</sup> I discuss Wang's Christology more fully in the article Alexander Chow, 'Wang Weifan's Cosmic Christ', *Modern Theology* 32, no. 3 (July 2016): 384–96. For a discussion of Wang as an evangelical, see Kevin Xiyi Yao, 'Wang Wei-fan's Evangelical Theology: Its Significance for the Church in China Today', in *Yearbook of Chinese Theology* 2016, ed. Paulos Z. Huang (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 3–16.

<sup>43</sup> Wang Weifan, 'Zhongguo jiaohui de mouzhong shenxue bianqian' [Changes in Theological Thinking in the Church in China], in *Nian zai cang mang: Wang Weifan wenji* (1979–1998) [In the Wilderness for Two Decades: Selected Works of Wang Weifan (1979–1998)] (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, [1985] 2011), 9, translation mine.

This article has been translated into English by Philip L. Wickeri as Wang Weifan, 'Changes in Theological Thinking in the Church in China', *Chinese Theological Review* 2 (1986): 30–7. Whilst I generally agree with the translations of Philip Wickeri (and Janice Wickeri), I have given my own in this case as I think it is more accurate than his rendering 'the Cosmic Christ and the Lord of History'.

<sup>44</sup> Wang Weifan, 'Remembering Bishop K. H. Ting', *Chinese Theological Review* 25 (2013): 123.

<sup>45</sup> See John R. Levison and Priscilla Pope-Levison, 'Towards an Ecumenical Christology for Asia', *Missiology: An International Review* 22, no. 1 (January 1994): 4–6, 9.

From the perspective of Wang Weifan, such a division is not necessary and Christ should be understood as both. With regards to the first, this is perhaps best encapsulated in Wang's view of the ever-generating God (*shengsheng Shen*).<sup>46</sup> He shows how the earliest Christian encounters with Chinese metaphysics in texts such as the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*) resulted in a generative understanding of God. The ever-generating God is, therefore, involved in the dynamic of creation, recreation, and new creation. But there is also a mystical dimension whereby the redemptive work of Christ on the cross brings Christians into the arms of Christ, to join in the ever-generating process.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of his understanding of Christ as the Lord of history, Wang Weifan states that the interpretation of the biblical scriptures must be rooted in the present Chinese situation. For instance, Wang explains that the Chinese mindset has historically had many challenges reconciling with the Christian understanding of God.<sup>48</sup> Firstly, the Chinese reject any dualistic thinking which separates a transcendent God from the immanent realm. Secondly, 'For the Chinese, an object of worship must always be an idol from on high to whom homage is paid' rather than a suffering servant.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, Wang believes the Chinese context has changed. Through three decades of social, political, and economic distress, Chinese society has suffered as a result of human sin and, in this time, the image of Christ as a suffering servant is very important in Chinese society. For Wang Weifan, Jesus Christ is the Lord of Christian believers, the Lord of the cosmos, and the Lord of history.

Whilst K. H. Ting and Shen Yifan draw on their Anglican sacramental background to speak of a cosmic Christology,<sup>50</sup> Wang Weifan

<sup>46</sup> Wang Weifan, *Zhongguo shenxue ji qi wenhua yuanyuan* [Chinese Theology and Its Cultural Origins] (Nanjing: Nanjing Theological Seminary, 1997), 12–24; Wang Weifan, 'Chinese Traditional Culture and Its Influences on Chinese Theological Reflection', *Chinese Theological Review* 13 (1999): 9–11. See Archie Chi Chung Lee, 'Contextual Theology in East Asia', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, 3rd edn, eds David F. Ford with Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 527.

<sup>47</sup> Wang Weifan, 'Zhongguo jiaohui de mouzhong shenxue bianqian', 3–9.

<sup>48</sup> Wang Weifan, 'The Lord of Sorrows', *Chinese Theological Review* 5 (1989): 149.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> The priority placed on the incarnation can be traced to earlier Anglicans, such as F. D. Maurice and William Temple. See William J. Wolf, 'Frederick Denison Maurice', in *The Spirit of Anglicanism: Hooker, Maurice, Temple*, ed. William J. Wolf (Edinburgh:

draws on his Chinese evangelical background and the mystical theology reminiscent of individuals such as Jia Yuming and Watchman Nee. This Christological motif has not caught on with the average Chinese Christian who, since the 1980s, has tended towards an exclusivistic orientation which underscores individual salvation. Yet, the vast majority of the Chinese society is made up of non-Christians. *Lianghui* intellectuals, as the first main generation of Christians to have a public voice, have gravitated towards a cosmic Christology as a theological resource for practical engagement with the other—whether this be atheists or other religionists.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINESE SOCIETY

The 1980s and 1990s saw a number of major shifts in Chinese society which provided new challenges for the Chinese church. In contrast with house church Christianity which tended to operate primarily as a private religion, *lianghui* leaders were engaging these immediate societal changes.

For instance, in the 1980s, as there was a state-sponsored opportunity to develop the Chinese civil society, K. H. Ting jumped at the opportunity to establish the first faith-based Chinese non-governmental organization (NGO), the Amity Foundation (*Aide jijinhui*). Ting would be at the head of the board of directors and Han Wenzao (1923–2006), a lay Christian leader of the CCC, was its first general secretary from 1985 to 2003. Prior to the Cultural Revolution, many *lianghui* leaders had a background in social service, especially through organizations such as the YMCA. In the mid-1980s, there was once again an opportunity for Chinese Christians to express Christian love through Chinese society. It was Ting himself who came up with the Chinese name of the organization, *Aide jijinhui*, based on the Chinese characters for 'love' (*ai*) and 'virtue' (*de*). The name was meant to convey the 'sense of love as God's primary attribute and the dimension of Christian practice in society'.<sup>51</sup>

T & T Clark, 1982), 79–81; Wendy Dackson, 'Archbishop William Temple and Public Theology in a Post-Christian Context', *Journal of Anglican Studies* 4, no. 2 (5 January 2009): 239–51.

<sup>51</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 275.

From an early stage, Chinese Christians had insufficient resources for such an initiative, and Amity tended to draw from international funds and human resources for its social welfare programmes, language training courses, and the production of bibles.<sup>52</sup> Many criticized the lack of indigenous support. Some *lianghui* leaders have even accused Amity of not being a Christian organization as it has exhibited few perceivably 'Christian' characteristics and has had many non-Christian staff and volunteers.<sup>53</sup> However, in recent years, Amity has progressively been regaining and re-emphasizing its heritage as a Christian NGO and one led by domestic Chinese. It has begun to develop a Christian social service network built around the notion of a *diakonia* ministry, borrowing from ecumenical understandings of social service.<sup>54</sup> Amity has therefore encouraged local TSPM congregations to be involved in domestic communities through rural development programmes, HIV/AIDS prevention clinics, and care for orphans and the elderly.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in 2012, 43 per cent of funds donated to Amity came from Mainland China and another 18 per cent came from Hong Kong SAR, resulting in nearly two-thirds of Amity's funds coming from domestic sources.<sup>56</sup>

Into the 21st century, Christians in state-sanctioned Protestantism would have a growing participation in the civil society. The China Christian Council established a Social Service Department in 2002, and many local TSPM churches and provincial councils established their own Christian social service ministries. Until recently, many Chinese fundamentalists and evangelicals have viewed humanitarian aid as a secondary priority—if even that—to the conversion of the lost.<sup>57</sup> However, Ting believed organizations like Amity would serve

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 273; Philip Wickeri, 'Development Service and China's Modernization: The Amity Foundation in Theological Perspective', *The Ecumenical Review* 41, no. 1 (January 1989): 78–87.

<sup>53</sup> Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 71–4.

<sup>54</sup> See Teresa Joan White, 'Diakonia', in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn, eds Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 307–10.

<sup>55</sup> Birgitta Larsson, 'Amity and Civil Society', in *Growing in Partnership: The Amity Foundation 1985–2005*, eds Katrin Fiedler and Zhang Liwei (Hong Kong: The Amity Foundation, 2005), 218–20; Amity Foundation, 'Church and Social Service', *Annual Report 2012*, 3–6.

<sup>56</sup> Amity Foundation, 'Statistics', *Annual Report 2012*, 59.

<sup>57</sup> By the late 1990s and into the early twenty-first century, a growing number of Chinese evangelicals would have a greater interest in the civil society. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

an important role as a *preparatio evangelica*—a preparation for the gospel message.<sup>58</sup> A testament to the success of Amity can be seen in the impression it has had on the government, particularly through the State Administration for Religious Affairs which, in 2012, publicly encouraged religious groups to form more faith-based NGOs.

Another important change to happen in Chinese society in the 1980s and 1990s is in what has generally been termed a 'Christianity fever' (*Jidujiao re*) or, more broadly, a 'religious fever' (*zongjiao re*). Coming out of a period of Maoist dogmatism that restricted any public religious activity, changes came in the form of religious policy where religious believers were now allowed to worship publicly. This was particularly demonstrated in the famous 1982 directive, Document 19, which provided a basic protection for freedom of religious belief, but also gave a preferential treatment to atheism. Overall, the loosening of restraints in the 1980s resulted in a phenomenal growth of religious adherence.<sup>59</sup> We have already seen how Ting was intentional in working with other religious leaders, like Zhao Puchu of the Buddhist Association of China, in developing a stronger public space for all religions. Ting would also make one of the most controversial theological statements of his career, challenging Protestant understandings of justification by faith alone, in a speech before an audience of an All Religions Meeting.<sup>60</sup> In a very different vein, Wang Weifan's theological approach similarly offers a positive gesture to other religious traditions. But unlike Ting, Wang grew up in a

<sup>58</sup> Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China*, 276.

<sup>59</sup> For various attempts to explain this growth, see Li Liang, 'Researches into the Present Circumstances of Protestant Christianity in China: A Sociological Analysis of Christianity in the Nanyang District of Henan Province', *China Study Journal* 9, no. 2 (August 1994): 9–10; Merle Goldman, 'Religion in Post-Mao China', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (January 1986): 156; Xu Jilin, 'Spiritual Crisis and Renaissance of Religions', in *China and Christianity: A New Phase of Encounter?* eds Felix Wilfred, Edmond Tang, and Georg Evers (London: SCM Press, 2008), 45.

<sup>60</sup> K. H. Ting, 'On a Profound Christian Question', in *Love Never Ends* (1996), 507.

Some have accused Ting of replacing the historic doctrine of 'justification by faith alone' with a new view of 'justification by love'. However, Ting has denied such accusations claiming he is not clear on what such an idea may mean. See Thomas Wang, foreword to *Theological Construction—or Destruction? An Analysis of the Theology of Bishop K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun)*, by Li Xinyuan (Streamwood, IL: Christian Life Press, Inc., 2003), 7; K. H. Ting, *God is Love: Collected Writings of Bishop K. H. Ting* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries International, 2004), 621; Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 106–9.

Buddhist home and was nurtured in the Chinese classical tradition from birth, before becoming a Christian later in his life. As can be seen in his cosmic Christology, Wang Weifan's theological approach reflects this background in a willingness to engage and integrate traditional Chinese religiophilosophical understandings into his Christian thinking. *Lianghui* intellectuals like Ting and Wang would champion an inclusivistic approach to other religions during this period of growing religious fervour, albeit with very different approaches and emphases.

In the mid-1980s, when internal government documents began to speak about this religious fever occurring throughout China, they often spoke about conversions amongst the so-called 'four manys' (*si duo*)—many old, many women, many illiterate, and many ill. This idea of the 'four manys' has also been propagated by some individuals who are part of state-sanctioned Protestant organizations, like Bao Zhimin. Whilst he was still a student of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, Bao wrote in 1989 that there was a systemic problem amongst Chinese Christians who possessed 'backward feudalistic thinking, even ignorance' making them susceptible to heretical teachings 'which they follow blindly, unable to make distinctions'.<sup>61</sup> These opinions, however, were somewhat laden with a Marxist understanding that religion was a source of feudalism amongst the uneducated masses who have turned to religion out of their positions of utter desperation—'rice Christians'.<sup>62</sup>

However, the religious fever has not been limited to the marginalized; there has also been a growing interest in religiosity amongst China's elite intellectuals. Since the late 1980s, academics in China's leading universities and think tanks have had a growing interest in the study of religion, especially Christianity, developing into a burgeoning academic field generally termed Sino-Christian theology (*hanyu shenxue*). As many of these academics would distance themselves from any local Christian congregations, *lianghui* figures would call these academics 'cultural Christians' (*wenhua Jidutu*) or 'unbaptized Christians' (*wei shouxi Jidutu*), terms coined by K. H. Ting and Wang

<sup>61</sup> Bao Zhimin, 'Facing Reality and Responding to Challenges: On Ten Years of Chinese Church Reconstruction', trans. Francesca Rhys, *Chinese Theological Review* 5 (1989): 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ryan Dunch, 'Chinese Christianity', in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, ed. Randall L. Nadeau (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 272–3.

Weifan, respectively.<sup>63</sup> Though Chapter 3 will more closely discuss this second generation of Chinese intellectuals engaging Christianity, it is worth noting here that *lianghui* leaders have been the first major group of Christians to lend open support to individuals related to this growing phenomenon.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, TSPM and CCC intellectuals like Wang Weifan and Richard X. Y. Zhang (Zhang Xianyong; b. 1959) would work with the most famous cultural Christians, Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu, in editing the first few issues of the important journal, the *Christian Culture Review* (*Jidujiao wenhua pinglun*).

These interactions would pose some interesting considerations for *lianghui* Christians. Wang Weifan argued that cultural Christians challenge Chinese clergy and church workers to raise their own cultural levels (*wenhua suyang*) in order to dialogue and bring these academics into the Christian fold.<sup>65</sup> Chen Zemin would suggest something similar and argue that the theological language of the cosmic Christ may be a good basis for such engagement.<sup>66</sup> Richard Zhang would praise the liberating and promising theological discourse possible within the academy in contrast with the limiting and elementary theological developments within the church and the seminary.<sup>67</sup> Differing from his colleagues who hoped to draw cultural Christians into the Chinese church (or, at least, state-sanctioned Chinese Christianity), Zhang would eventually leave the seminary for the academy. From 2000 to 2004, he would become a researcher at the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies in Hong Kong, before moving back to the mainland to Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong province to become a professor in the department of Philosophy and the director of the Centre for Christian Studies.

<sup>63</sup> See Chen Zemin, foreword to *Love Never Ends*, 8; Zhuo Xinping, 'Discussion on "Cultural Christians" in China', in *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*, eds Stephen Shaley Jr and Wu Xiaoxin (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 283; Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China*, rev. edn (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 25–8.

<sup>64</sup> See K. H. Ting and Wang Weifan, 'Recent Developments in the Study of Religion', *Chinese Theological Review* 4 (1988), 69–83.

<sup>65</sup> Wang Weifan, 'The Word was Here Made Flesh', *Chinese Theological Review* 8 (1993), 98.

<sup>66</sup> Chen Zemin, 'Youguan Zhongguo jiaohui shenxue jianshe de wenti' [Concerning the Question of the Chinese Church's Theological Reconstruction], in *Qiusuo yu jianzheng* (1992), 25–6.

<sup>67</sup> Richard X. Y. Zhang, 'Doing Theology in Chinese', *Chinese Theological Review* 11, no. 2 (1997): 137–9.

## A FIRST GENERATION OF PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Since the 1980s and 1990s, some commentators have made a distinction between house churches and the TSPM: one has maintained the true and pure faith and endured persecution whereas the other has perverted the gospel message by accommodating to the communist regime.<sup>68</sup> Undoubtedly, there is some truth to both these claims. But the decisions of each individual are never that simple. Every Christian must balance his or her choices with the potential results of those choices. Whilst a Christian who practises his or her religion in a house church does not have the same risks in terms of allegiance to 'two masters', such activity is generally considered illegal and open to considerable scrutiny by government officials. Moreover, until recently, house churches have been largely characterized as upholding a 'Christ against culture' theology which encourages Christianity's existence as a private religion.

From the perspective of David Tracy, the public of the society includes a presumption that religious voices have a freedom to engage in public discourse about the nature of a democratic polity.<sup>69</sup> However, in millennia of Chinese history, religions have never experienced the kind of 'freedom of religion' as understood in Western governments like the United States, which has constitutionally forbidden the creation of any established church.<sup>70</sup> Democracy was one of the main dreams of Chinese protesters during both May Fourth and June Fourth. Whilst this kind of public discourse is generally seen as difficult to attain in China, it is beyond a doubt that *lianghui* leaders like K. H. Ting have chosen to engage the state both out of theological conviction and out of practical necessity to build stronger church-state relations. This has informed and guided the *lianghui* approach to the public of society, both as citizens of the polis and those engaged

<sup>68</sup> For instance, see Jonathan Chao, *Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves: Christians in China Tell Their Story* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1988); Tony Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991); David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, rev. edn (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 9–11.

<sup>70</sup> See Daniel H. Bays, 'A Tradition of State Dominance', in *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, eds Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 25–39.



in the civil society, and the public of the church, in its theology and approach to church unity.

In certain ways, some may see the more Anglican approach of K. H. Ting continued a few decades later by another Anglican, Archbishop Paul Kwong of Hong Kong. Responding to the social unrest in Hong Kong in 2014, the Archbishop made controversial comments against protesters who opposed the Beijing government in a sermon that spoke of how Jesus remained silent in the face of crucifixion.<sup>71</sup> Whilst this led many to consider the Hong Kong Anglican church as a whole as being more supportive of Beijing than the interests of the local Hong Kongese, such generalizations about Hong Kong Anglicans cannot so easily be made.<sup>72</sup> Anglicanism, which has historically been an established religion, has offered a particular approach for engaging the state and the society. As a consequence, these Chinese Christians who have been influenced by Anglicanism are critiqued as unquestionably biased towards the government establishment.

Contrastingly, there are very few figures comparable to the evangelical Wang Weifan. Chinese evangelicals of later generations have not been as well-versed with Chinese traditional thought, inside or outside China.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Chinese evangelicals in the mainland and in the diaspora have not been as readily willing and able to engage the public of the society.<sup>74</sup> This is quite different from the trend of global evangelicalism, which, since the Lausanne conference of 1974, has seen a growing shift away from a primary focus on soul saving to an 'integral mission' which upholds evangelism alongside social

<sup>71</sup> Tony Cheung and Lai Ying-kit, 'Reverend Paul Kwong Tells Congregation that Pro-Democracy Advocates Should Keep Quiet', *South China Morning Post*, 8 July 2014, accessed 10 May 2017, <<http://www.scmp.com/article/1549485/archbishop-paul-kwong-urges-pro-democracy-advocates-stop-speaking-out>>.

<sup>72</sup> There were many Anglican clergy and laity in Hong Kong who disagreed with their Archbishop.

<sup>73</sup> Perhaps a contemporary of Wang's in Taiwan who can usefully be compared is the Chinese Baptist minister and educator Chow Lien-hwa (Zhou Lianhua; 1920–2016). See Johnson Lim, ed., *Take Root Downward, Bear Fruit Upward: A Festschrift Presented to Lien-Hwa Chow on the Occasion of his Eighty Eighth Birthday* (Hong Kong: Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> Again, the 2014 context of Hong Kong has produced a growing debate about how Christians of all backgrounds—including evangelicals—need to engage with the public of the society. For a good introduction, see Justin K. H. Tse and Jonathan Y. Tan, eds, *Theological Reflections on the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

justice.<sup>75</sup> Hence, figures like Wang Weifan are quite exceptional within Chinese evangelicalism.

When we consider the academic public, we must remember that the Cultural Revolution had closed down educational institutions at all levels and many educators and intellectuals were sent to rural labour camps. Key intellectuals in the *lianghui* like K. H. Ting, Chen Zemin, Shen Yifan, and Wang Weifan were all educated prior to the Cultural Revolution in various Christian institutions like St John's University and seminaries which would later be united to form Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1952. Other intellectuals in the early 1980s who studied religion generally came from an orientation that was steeped in Marxist theory and suspicious of the positive value of Christianity. So it was not until after the advent of cultural Christianity that TSPM and CCC thinkers would be able to constructively engage the public of the academy. *Lianghui* leaders tended to engage the public of the academy in incidental ways. In Chapter 3, we will discuss how cultural Christians, the next generation of Chinese intellectuals to address various publics with Christian thought, have had a far more intentional engagement with the public of the academy. As we will see, cultural Christians provide the resources for a new and unique dimension to the growing understanding of Chinese public theology.

<sup>75</sup> See Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 151–79.

## Cultural Christianity

The focus of this chapter will be on a small number of academics working with Christianity and often described as ‘cultural Christians’ (*wenhua Jidutu*). Many within the church have argued that these intellectuals are not ‘true’ Christians and are therefore irrelevant to the broader understanding of Chinese Christianity. As we will see, I believe the picture is much more complicated than this. My argument is that these cultural Christians, coming from a generation that grew up in the spiritual and moral vacuum of the Cultural Revolution, have become public intellectuals who have brought Christianity into public discourse, starting within the academy but going beyond it, engaging common public concerns of the Chinese society. On the one hand, their approach is one of an elite class of intellectuals who have attempted to work at a level of discourse which had not yet been attainable by their more senior contemporaries in state-sanctioned churches and seminaries. Their usefulness and applicability to a Chinese church which crosses many social strata are, hence, called into question. On the other hand, as many of them were born in the 1950s, their methodological use of theology is placed in dialogue with the Marxist humanism they had known from a young age. As a result, cultural Christians have enabled Christianity and other religions to have a stronger voice in China’s public space.

Perhaps an important terminological question to begin with is what is meant by the phrase ‘cultural Christians’. In English parlance, cultural Christians are individuals who identify themselves with the Christian culture, largely due to their upbringing in a so-called ‘Christian nation’ but do not see themselves as religious adherents. The British New Atheist Richard Dawkins, for example, stated in 2007, ‘[The UK] is historically a Christian country. I’m a cultural

Christian in the same way many of my friends call themselves cultural Jews or cultural Muslims.’<sup>1</sup>

However, the phrase ‘cultural Christian’ in China was initially used to identify Chinese intellectuals who were not part of local Christian churches but who were translating and writing books on Christian history, culture, and theology.<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, the coinage of the term in the 1980s is attributed to Bishop K. H. Ting, the head of the state-sanctioned TSPM and CCC, and used to identify scholars who are outside the church but interested in addressing the cultural sphere of Chinese society. Other Christians in mainland China and in Hong Kong have likewise used other terms to describe these individuals, such as ‘unbaptized Christians’, ‘China’s Nicodemuses’, and ‘China’s Apollos’. These terms were framed by those who want to distinguish these intellectuals as not being ‘true’ Christians. Defining the bounds of who is a true Christian is always problematic, particularly when these definitions are based on what somebody is not, rather than what somebody is. In Western contexts, there are also other expressions of religiosity such as Christian humanism and Deism which may have greater affinity to some of these individuals who have been described as cultural Christians. Finally, a context like China has had historically different modalities of religious practice, including what one anthropologist has termed a ‘discursive’ or ‘scriptural’ modality of doing religion—one that emphasizes the composition and the use of texts.<sup>3</sup> Similar kinds of Christianity may be found in other East Asian contexts like Japan and South Korea in a group like the Non-Church Movement (*Mukyōkai*), founded by the Japanese Christian intellectual Uchimura Kanzō.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Dawkins: I’m a cultural Christian’, BBC, 10 December 2007, accessed 7 February 2017, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7136682.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7136682.stm)>.

<sup>2</sup> Zhuo Xiping, ‘Discussion on “Cultural Christians” in China’, in *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*, eds Stephen Uhalley, Jr and Wu Xiaoxin (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 283–300.

<sup>3</sup> Adam Y. Chau, ‘Modalities of Doing Religion’, in *Chinese Religious Life*, eds David A. Palmer, Glenn Shive, and Philip L. Wickeri (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 67–84; Adam Y. Chau, ‘A Different Kind of Religious Diversity: Ritual Service Providers and Consumers in China’, in *Religious Diversity in Chinese Thought*, eds Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Joachim Gentz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 141–54.

<sup>4</sup> John F. Howes, *Japan’s Modern Prophet: Uchimura Kanzō, 1861–1930* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2005). See Lai Pan-chiu, ‘Sino-Theology as a Non-Church Movement: Historical and Comparative Perspectives’, in *Christian Presence and*

A more precise but verbose label has been alternatively proposed by Chen Cunfu, a now retired professor of philosophy from Zhejiang University: Scholars in Mainland China Studying Christianity (SMSC).<sup>5</sup> A scholar who researches Christianity himself, but with a decidedly distanced approach, Chen Cunfu sees SMSC as more broadly encompassing all scholars in China who engage the academic study of Christianity. He explains that cultural Christians are a subset of SMSCs who, through their study of Christianity, have come to identify with and trust Jesus Christ, but still choose to be separate from any local church. The Chinese University of Hong Kong theologian Lai Pan-chiu has suggested something similar, distinguishing a broad sense from a narrow sense of the term 'cultural Christian'.<sup>6</sup>

The approach of this chapter is informed by these latter approaches of a narrow understanding of cultural Christianity, focused on the key figures of Liu Xiaofeng (b. 1956) and He Guanghu (b. 1950), but also including others within this generational cohort who have strong sympathies for Christianity.<sup>7</sup> My view is a bit more ambiguous than Chen and Lai, in that I do not think it is appropriate (or perhaps even possible) to label individuals entirely based on their public faith commitments. Firstly, any open discussion of one's faith is risky. After all, this generational cohort has a shared consciousness of the Cultural Revolution and at a very early stage has learnt to self-censor.

*Progress in North-East Asia: Historical and Comparative Studies*, eds Jan A. B. Jongeneel et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 87–103.

<sup>5</sup> The label is so cumbersome that, in the Chinese version of this article, Chen Cunfu always uses the English acronym and never actually coins a Chinese phrase for SMSC. Chen Cunfu, 'SMSC xian xiang xingcheng di lishi: Wenhua beijing' [The History of the Emergence of the SMSC Phenomena: Cultural Background], *Weizhen xuekan* [Regent Journal] 4, no. 1 (1996): 14–23. Translated into English as Chen Cunfu, 'The Historical and Cultural Background to the Emergence of "Scholars in Mainland China Studying Christianity" (SMSCs)', in *Chinese Intellectuals and the Gospel*, trans. Samuel Ling, eds Samuel Ling and Stacy Bieler (San Gabriel, CA: China Horizon, 1999), 83–108.

<sup>6</sup> Lai Pan-chiu, 'Typology and Prospect of Sino-Christian Theology', *Ching Feng*, n. s. 6, no. 2 (2005): 211–30.

<sup>7</sup> Some have recently spoken of the rise of urban Christian intellectuals since the late 1990s as a newer form of cultural Christianity. I discuss this latter phenomenon in Chapter 4 as the third generational cohort in Chinese Christianity's growing public voice. See Lian Xi, "'Cultural Christians' and the Search for Civil Society in Contemporary China", *The Chinese Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (May 2013): 70–87; Fredrik Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of Faith Among Chinese Intellectuals', in *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, ed. Francis Khok Gee Lim (London: Routledge, 2013), 153–5.

Secondly, whilst cultural Christians are not known to regularly attend local churches in mainland China, some have visited churches when in other countries and have, at times, taken part in Christian sacraments such as communion and baptism.<sup>8</sup> Thirdly, many do not see supposed markers of the faith as entirely necessary. After all, the pervasive modality of doing religion for elite Chinese intellectuals is much more discursive than confessional. Finally, as non-established individuals, academics who are sympathetic to Christianity are able to speak into various publics of contemporary China in ways that conventional Christian theologians would otherwise not be able to.<sup>9</sup> Mindful of this final point, this chapter will show how cultural Christianity has played a significant role in the second phase of Christianity's growing public voice in mainland China.

#### A CASE FOR CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY

As early as 1990, whilst church leaders began to debate how best to call this group, one of the most famous cultural Christians, Liu Xiaofeng, using a pseudonym, gave his rationale for this new phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Recognizing that this label of 'cultural Christian' has been applied to individuals like himself by church leaders, he asks, 'Can this label signify the emergence in mainland China of a type of "cultured" (*wenhua de*) Christianity?'<sup>11</sup> Liu Xiaofeng reinterprets the term 'cultural Christian' as giving possibility to a 'cultured Christianity'—not a movement of the masses, but something arising

<sup>8</sup> One of the better-known cases is of Liu Xiaofeng who asked to be baptized into the 'church of God' rather than any particular earthly church or denomination. Edmond Tang, 'The Second Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and Christianity Today', in *Identity and Marginality: Rethinking Christianity in North East Asia*, eds Werner Ustorf and Toshiko Murayama (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 64.

<sup>9</sup> See Milton Wai-Yiu Wan (Wen Weiyao), 'Hanyu shenxue de gonggong xing: Lun shenxue yanjiu yu Jiduzongjiao jingyan' [The Public Nature of Sino-Christian Theology: On Theological Studies and Christian Experience], *Jiduzongjiao yanjiu* [Study of Christianity] 11 (2008): 45–73, esp. 70–2.

<sup>10</sup> Tan Xing (pseudonym of Liu Xiaofeng), 'Guanyu dangdai Zhongguo dalu "wenhua" Jidutu de shenxue pingzhu' [Theological Commentary about 'Cultural' Christians in Contemporary Mainland China], *Tripod* no. 6 (1990): 5–9; Tan Xing (pseudonym of Liu Xiaofeng), 'Culture-Christians on the China Mainland', trans. Norman R. Walling, *Tripod* no. 6 (1990): 46–55.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. Translation mine.

amongst elite intellectuals. Both in Chinese and in English, to be 'cultured' often denotes an elite, educated status. In fact, in Chinese vernacular, to 'have culture' (*you wenhua*) conveys a meaning that one is educated. This has many parallels with European thought and understandings of the cultured person and the cultured society, traced back to a Latin agricultural understanding of caring for crops and animals.<sup>12</sup> But for Liu, his understanding is arguably based on a Confucian understanding of the value of education for the cultivation of an individual and a society. He therefore reinterprets the label given to himself to explain that cultural Christians are learned or educated Christians.

Borrowing from Ernst Troeltsch's typology, Liu believes China has three different types of Christian churches: the church-type (*da jiaohui*), the sect-type (*xiao jiaopai*), and mysticism (*shenmi zhuyi*).<sup>13</sup> Troeltsch describes the Roman Catholic church and the magisterial churches—that is, Lutheran and Calvinist churches—as being the church-type (in German, *Kirche*). As Liu asserts, the church-type considers itself as the Kingdom of God on earth and has alliances with secular authorities; the sect-type (in German, *Sekte*) emphasizes a personal experience of rebirth, rejects the present world, is made up primarily of the lower strata of society, and does not have a sophisticated theology. Liu Xiaofeng believes that the first type of church roughly corresponds to the state-sanctioned 'patriotic' organizations—that is, the Three-Self and the Catholic Patriotic churches. Whilst he identifies Protestant house churches as representing the sect-type, he is not completely sure where to situate Catholic underground churches. Liu explains that the third type, mysticism (in German, *Mystik*), is characterized by an individualistic personal experience which, therefore, pushes against the need for ecclesial communities. Most adherents of this type of church come from educated classes and have a stronger inclination towards scientific and reflective theology, which is acceptable within the atheistic scientific worldview of contemporary China. This third type is what he perceives as the place of cultural Christians.

<sup>12</sup> See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 29–39; Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 3–24.

<sup>13</sup> Tan Xing, 'Guanyu dangdai Zhongguo dalu "wenhua" Jidutu de shenxue pingzhu', 7. See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols, trans. Olive Wyon (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

Clearly, Liu Xiaofeng sees himself, a cultural Christian, as an elite Christian intellectual who places little value for himself to participate in the local church communities. In his view, TSPM churches have allied with the state and lost their fervour, whilst house churches are for the uneducated. What other option is there for Christian intellectuals? Cultural Christians, he explains, are charting the future theological trajectory for Chinese Christianity. Though cultural Christians find little value in the local church, they can make an enormous contribution to Christianity in China, more broadly understood.<sup>14</sup>

In a much later paper, He Guanghu reflects on the development of Christian studies in China since the end of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>15</sup> The first phase was steeped in Marxist understandings of religion and still shaped by a strong political climate. The second phase, in which He Guanghu locates himself, found the emergence of cultural Christians. He describes cultural Christians as true Christians who have converted to the faith under the remarkable, atheistic situation coming out of the Cultural Revolution. Each cultural Christian has his or her own individual experiences, but also with a shared reality of growing up during a time when churches and bibles were both absent, and so were denominational differences. A third phase, which we will discuss in Chapter 4, has arisen with more resources and a stronger ability to contribute to Christian studies.

Whilst formulated in a very different way from Liu Xiaofeng, He Guanghu likewise has a high regard for the intellectual journeys and personal faiths of cultural Christians. He does make a few minimal comments about the role of *lianghui* church leaders who began the Institute of Religious Studies in Nanjing University, a secular institution, however the strongest voices in Christian studies at the time came from post-Cultural Revolution, Marxist understandings. Nevertheless, cultural Christians like He Guanghu see themselves as part of a larger history of Chinese Christianity, coming to faith in a tragic

<sup>14</sup> Today, it is unclear whether Liu Xiaofeng or others would continue to self-identify as cultural Christians.

<sup>15</sup> He Guanghu, 'Three Generations of Chinese Christianity Researchers: From the 1950s to 2007', in *China and Christianity: A New Phase of Encounter?*, ed. Felix Wilfred, Edmond Tang, and Georg Evers (London: SCM Press, 2008), 58–70. Although he uses the language of 'generations' here, this should not be confused with the methodological vocabulary of generational cohorts and generational shifts that I am employing in this book.

period, creating Christian academic research *ex nihilo*—out of nothing, and being a foundation for future possibilities in Christianity.

With regards to the public space, the intention of cultural Christians like Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu has been to give Christianity a stronger voice in contemporary China.<sup>16</sup> By no means is this meant to be the 'Christianization' of China or 'national salvation', as suggested by others. Rather, China needs Christianity to have a strong voice in the public space in order to more capably address the existential experiences of Chinese people. As He Guanghu explains, China needs more works in 'religious sociology, public theology, and political theology' in order for Chinese Christian scholars to 'explore the reality of the Chinese people and probe into those areas'.<sup>17</sup> Whilst He Guanghu's wife, Gao Shining, can be regarded as one of the leading Chinese scholars in sociology of religion, it appears as though He Guanghu sees himself as contributing to China's need in 'public theology' and 'political theology'.

Now that we have a better sense of the goals of cultural Christians, what about the work they have done? One of the major approaches of cultural Christians is 'Sino-theology' or 'Sino-Christian theology', as termed by Liu Xiaofeng,<sup>18</sup> or the notion of 'mother-tongue theology', as described by He Guanghu.<sup>19</sup> Though the English does not make this clear, in Chinese, the term 'Sino-Christian theology' (*hanyu shenxue*, *hanyu Jidu shenxue*, or *hanyu Jidujiao shenxue*)<sup>20</sup> is

<sup>16</sup> As I argue in this chapter, Liu Xiaofeng sees Christianity as an underrepresented voice in China that needs more focus whereas He Guanghu would like to promote the importance of all forms of religiosity.

<sup>17</sup> He Guanghu, 'Three Generations of Chinese Christianity Researchers', 68–9.

<sup>18</sup> Liu Xiaofeng, 'Sino-Christian Theology in the Modern Context', in *Sino-Christian Studies in China*, eds Yang Huilin and Daniel H. N. Yeung (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 52–89. The Chinese version of this article can be found online at <<http://www.iscs.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=73&Pid=3&Version=0&Cid=191>>.

<sup>19</sup> He Guanghu, 'Hanyu shenxue de genju he yiyi' [The Ground and Significance of the Chinese Language Theology] and "'Bentu shenxue", "chujing shenxue" yu "muyu shenxue" guankui: Cong du Song Quansheng de shu shuo qi', [On 'Indigenous Theology', 'Contextual Theology', and 'Mother-Tongue Theology'], in *He Guanghu zixuanji* [He Guanghu's Self-selected Writings] (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1999), 85–97, 239–51.

<sup>20</sup> Different authors use these three terms in different ways and they are almost always rendered 'Sino-Christian theology' or 'Sino-theology', but have also been rendered 'Chinese language theology'.

The addition of *Jidu* ('Christ') or *Jidujiao* ('Christianity') is used by some authors to underscore the Christian nature of the theology. Liu Xiaofeng, in 'Sino-Christian

analogous to 'mother-tongue theology' (*muyu shenxue*) because it can perhaps more literally be translated as 'theology in the Han language'—that is, the Han ethnic majority of China. Hence, when speaking about the Chinese context, these terms are rough synonyms which focus on the cultural-linguistic context of the theologian. Yet, some may debate whether cultural Christians are properly theologians, as it is debated whether they are properly Christians because they operate *extra ecclesiam*—outside the church.<sup>21</sup> But the term 'theologian', as used in the Western academy, includes a wide range of individuals who engage in the theological task, regardless of their faith commitment and even of their religious affiliation—whether it be Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc.

For Liu Xiaofeng, He Guanghu, and other proponents of Sino-Christian theology such as Yang Huilin (b. 1954),<sup>22</sup> this approach to theology provides a corrective beyond all previous approaches. In particular, this understanding of theology is supposed to be a paradigmatic shift from the understandings of indigenization, inculturation, and contextualization.<sup>23</sup> Liu sees Sino-Christian theology as coming from a particular geographical-historical linguistic experience of the Christ-event, borrowing the vocabulary of Karl Barth, which is comparable to Greek theology, Latin theology, Russian theology, or Anglophone, Francophone, or Germophone theologies.<sup>24</sup> However, he believes this differs from the approaches of indigenization (*bensehua*) or sinicization (*Zhongguohua*) in that it does not maintain a thesis that Christian theology is 'Western' and needs to somehow be

Theology in the Modern Context', explains that *hanyu shenxue* can be a generic term to speak about Chinese religious theology (Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist doctrines), Chinese philosophical-humanistic theology, or Chinese Christian theology (*hanyu Jidu shenxue* or *hanyu Jidujiao shenxue*).

<sup>21</sup> See Choong Chee Pang, 'Studying Christianity and Doing Theology *extra ecclesiam* in China', in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89–108.

<sup>22</sup> Yang Huilin, 'Inculturation or Contextualization: Interpretation of Christianity in the Context of Chinese Culture', in *Sino-Christian Studies in China*, 150–72.

<sup>23</sup> The terms 'indigenization' and 'inculturation' are often rendered from the Chinese *bensehua* and *bentuhua*, respectively. However, there is some debate as to how best to communicate things in Chinese. In particular, He Guanghu argues that *bensehua* should refer to original forms of Christianity and that the best translation for indigenization is *bentuhua*. See He, 'Hanyu shenxue de genju he yiyi', 89–90; or, in English, He Guanghu, 'The Basis and Significance of Sino-Christian Theology', in *Sino-Christian Studies in China*, 123–4.

<sup>24</sup> Liu, 'Sino-Christian Theology in the Modern Context', 74–9.

translated from Western Christianity to Chinese Christianity. It further differs from contextual theology which, whilst highlighting the importance of the local context, Liu believes has had the major failing of syncretism with Chinese traditional thought.

Liu Xiaofeng concedes that there are two possible approaches to Christian theology: the ontological model and the ontic model. The ontological model develops Christian theology with existing systems of thought in a syncretistic manner. Western theology moved in this direction through a Hellenization of theology, whereas Chinese theology has likewise mixed with the intellectual systems of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. The ontic model, which he prefers, is 'an encounter with the original individual life experiences in the ethno-geographical linguistic fabric'.<sup>25</sup> But, as we have already seen, Liu believes such a theology needs to be scientific and reflective, offering a 'neutral' theology that can engage the broader atheistic worldview of China's historical location. Liu's emphasis is on being faithful to the transcendent character of the Christ event and to pursue its implications for the Chinese public space.<sup>26</sup>

This is further argued by Yang Huilin, who believes that Christian theology will never exist as an isolated discipline in the Chinese academy as it has historically been understood in the West; the study of Christian thought should primarily be an interdisciplinary activity in the humanities.<sup>27</sup> It is for this reason that Yang believes *hanyu shenxue* is best translated into English as 'Sino-Christian studies' rather than 'Sino-Christian theology'. To take this even further, Zhuo Xinping (b. 1955), from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argues that Sino-Christian theology is fundamentally still based on an existential experience of the Christ-event; therefore, he wants to promote what he simply calls 'academic theology' (*xueshu shenxue*)—that is, an inquiring theology that has a general neutral attitude towards faith and endeavours to find new possibilities for

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> See Timothy Lee-Yii Lau, "A Chinese Fish Thinks About Chinese Water": The Cultural Engagement of Christian Theology in the Emerging Sino-Christian Context' (Ph.D. thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2008), 65–8.

<sup>27</sup> See Yang Huilin, 'The Value of Theology in Humanities: Possible Approaches to Sino-Christian Theology', in *Sino-Christian Theology: A Theological Qua Cultural Movement in Contemporary China*, eds Lai Pan-chiu and Jason T. S. Lam (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 101–22.

promoting theological inquiry in the context of mainland Chinese society and culture.<sup>28</sup> All these scholars claim that they are attempting to approach Christian thought in a neutral manner. Yet it is arguable whether any absolute neutrality is possible. However, every one of them wants to begin from this pure and unadulterated starting point, in order to see how Christianity, Christian thought, and the Christian mode of thinking can contribute to the Chinese public space.

Liu Xiaofeng believes that Chinese Christianity needs cultural Christians and the activity of Sino-Christian theology. Without them and their work, Liu contends that Christianity will continue to be perceived by the wider Chinese population as a 'foreign religion'. He explains that the historical development of Chinese Christianity pales in comparison with the historical development of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, there is a severe lack in the translation of Christian classical writings into the Chinese vernacular in comparison to the availability of Buddhist texts. The absence of a complete and systematic translation of Christian classical texts into the Chinese language hinders the deep, theological reflection of Chinese Christian thinkers.

Secondly, with the arrival of Buddhism in China, there was eventually the flourishing of a multiplicity of Buddhist doctrines. Liu Xiaofeng explains that at one end of the spectrum, the Pureland school of Buddhism attracted a large following amongst uneducated Chinese masses, whilst at the other end were more learned traditions, like the Chan and the Yogācāra schools of Buddhism. In Liu's assessment, until recently, Christianity in China has followed the pattern of Pureland Buddhism in catering to the popular, uneducated masses, as a type of popular religion. This form of Christianity does not take into consideration the importance of a strong theological basis which is necessary for addressing the challenges of modern Chinese society.

For both of these endeavours, cultural Christians have played important roles. With regards to the Chinese translation of Christian classics, the publishing arm of the Hong Kong-based Institute of Sino-Christian Studies has been instrumental in the translation of

<sup>28</sup> Zhuo Xinping also identifies a third type of theology, which he calls 'Chinese theology' (*Zhongguo shenxue*)—namely, the theology constructed by the Chinese church. Zhuo Xinping, 'The Status of Christian Theology in China Today', in *Christianity*, ed. Zhuo Xinping, trans. Chi Zhen and Caroline Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 5–29.

<sup>29</sup> Tan, 'Guanyu dangdai Zhongguo dalu "wenhua" jidutu de shenxue pingzhu', 9.

ancient writings from Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, and Peter Abelard, to the modern writings of Jürgen Moltmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and T. F. Torrance. Cultural Christians like Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu have had important roles in the large-scale translation projects of the Institute.

Today, this first dream of Liu Xiaofeng's has been attained to a certain extent and continues to develop, as many other new translations continue to be produced each year. Not only do the translations of Christian classics provide access to references for Chinese academics, they also provide Chinese Christian leaders and non-Christian intellectuals with resources for a more informed engagement with the history of Christian thought. Christianity cannot simply be regarded as a faith of the marginalized or, as Marx put it, an opiate to the masses, but the Christian religion is also an intellectual tradition that has spanned two millennia.

With regards to the second goal, cultural Christians have begun to produce their own constructive engagements. As can be seen with other intellectuals of Chinese history, from May Fourth journals such as *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*) and the *Life Journal* (*Shengming*), the latter published by Christians, print capitalism has historically been a major medium for public discourse.<sup>30</sup> Liu Xiaofeng, He Guanghu, and others have been instrumental in the creation of key journals such as *Christian Culture Review* (*Jidujiao wenhua pinglun*) and *Logos and Pneuma* (*Dao feng*), and in the editing of a number of book series, which has provided an important space for the development of Sino-Christian theology.<sup>31</sup> In so doing, cultural Christians have enabled the growth of a learned Christianity, similar to the patterns of Chan and Yogācāra Buddhism, which can address the concerns of a modern Chinese society.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 35–9, 322–3; Chow Tse-Tsung, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 41–83; Samuel D. Ling, "The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese 'Christian Renaissance', 1919–1937" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1981), 60–100. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006); Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> See Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China*, rev. edn (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 23–5.

## IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

Much of the constructive work of cultural Christians has focused on the intellectual underpinnings of premodern Chinese society. Whilst this has tended to focus on Confucianism, there would also be a large emphasis on other Chinese religiophilosophical teachings. This would be understandable given the broader religious revival of the 1980s–90s. But even more importantly, these religions and philosophies inform the values of Chinese culture, Chinese society, and China's pursuit of modernity.

One of the major points of debate has been around different understandings of transcendence. The conversation about transcendence is nothing new to the interaction between Chinese and Western cultures. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci saw, in the Chinese classical works, teachings of transcendence on par with that of the Christian God. In a Thomistic manner, Ricci argued that these Chinese writings provided evidence for the Christian God, whereas the Daoists, Buddhists, and Neo-Confucians of his day had insufficient understandings of metaphysics.<sup>32</sup> When we look to New Confucian scholars of the twentieth century, figures such as Mou Zongsan and Tu Weiming have underscored the Chinese notion of the 'unity between Heaven and humanity' (*Tian ren heyi*) to argue that Heaven is both transcendent and immanent, and so is humanity.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to the 'outer transcendence' (*waizai chaoyue*) of the Christian God, the Confucian emphasis on an 'inner transcendence' (*neizai chaoyue*) provides a basis for human morality.

This is also one of the key areas of contention of Liu Xiaofeng's most famous theological work, *Delivering and Dallying* (*Zhengjiu yu xiaoyao*), a collection of essays previously published in 1988 and 1989.<sup>34</sup> This work is strongly critical of Chinese culture, which Liu

<sup>32</sup> See Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, "Translators' Introduction", in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (*T'ien-chu Shih-i*), by Matteo Ricci (Taipei: Ricci Institute, 1985), 23–4, 47–8.

<sup>33</sup> David Hall and Roger Ames critique this, stating that the Confucian understanding of 'Heaven' should not be understood as a 'strict transcendence'. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 12–13, 204–5.

<sup>34</sup> Though the translation of the title is a bit odd, I have chosen to use the English rendering which Liu Xiaofeng offers in later editions of his book. The first edition of the book, cited here, does not offer any English rendering for its title. Fredrik Fällman translates this title as *Salvation and Easy Wandering*. Liu Xiaofeng, *Zhengjiu yu*

believes can be summarized by the term *xiaoyao*—a leisurely attitude to the things of this world, as found in the Daoist text *Zhuangzi*.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Liu believes that this *xiaoyao* can be said of Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism, both of which emphasize a view of human self-sufficiency. Chinese culture is contrasted with Western culture, as shaped by Christianity, which underscores human insufficiency and the need for divine deliverance (*zhengjiu*).

At the outset of *Delivering and Dallying*, Liu explores the notion of transcendence by way of comparing the Chinese notion of 'Heaven' (*Tian*) with the Christian notion of 'God'.<sup>36</sup> His focus is on the famous Chinese poet, the state official Qu Yuan (c.339–278 BCE), and on the poet's enigmatic poem *Heavenly Questions* (*Tian wen*).<sup>37</sup> Generally speaking, Qu Yuan was like any other Chinese literati trained in Confucian thinking. He pursued knowledge for the sake of moral excellence and social order, and most of his poetry generally reflected this concern for the mundane things of the natural world.<sup>38</sup> *Heavenly Questions* is different. In it, Qu Yuan asks Heaven metaphysical questions dealing with human existence and the nature of the cosmos. Liu explains that, in despair, Qu Yuan questions Heaven—like Abraham or Jeremiah, Job or Jesus, who question God.<sup>39</sup> But the destiny of the Chinese poet is quite different. Qu Yuan receives no reply from Heaven and commits suicide.

Liu Xiaofeng takes Qu Yuan's poem as a basis to speak of the limits of the Confucian and Daoist understandings of transcendence. Liu recognizes that the dispositions of Confucianism and Daoism are quite different: the former underscores a process whereby individuals pursue self-cultivation in the hope of contributing to an ever-increasing social morality, whereas the latter emphasizes a

*xiaoyao*: *Zhongxifang shiren dui shijie de butong taidu* [Delivering and Dallying: Different Attitudes of the World by Chinese and Western Poets] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1988). See Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity*, 49–51.

<sup>35</sup> The term is found in the title of the first chapter of *Zhuangzi* and is key to understanding the spirit of the rest of the work. Although I use Liu's translation 'dallying', it should be noted that most translations of *Zhuangzi* prefer to translate *xiaoyao* with notions like 'untroubled ease' (James Legge) and 'free and easy wandering' (Burton Watson).

<sup>36</sup> See Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity*, 63–6.

<sup>37</sup> For an English translation of this poem, see Ch'ü Yuan, 'Heavenly Questions', in *The Shorter Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 192–208.

<sup>38</sup> Liu, *Zhengjiu yu xiaoyao*, 90–100. <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 135–9.

withdrawal from social morality in order to return to a natural state of individual moral life. Both, he reasons, see their goals as possible because they emphasize the self-sufficient possibilities for the human pursuit in this life. Both reject any real understanding of transcendence because they perceive a one-dimensional world which collapses together Heaven and earth and humanity. Liu writes:

True transcendence is a divine pattern which surpasses nature, surpasses the cosmos, surpasses life, and surpasses history. True transcendence offers an outside cause for nature, the cosmos, life, and history. This pattern of transcendence is only possible in another world when it is beyond this world and the nature of life.<sup>40</sup>

Liu argues that the poet's thirst for answers from Heaven can never be quenched because Chinese traditional thinking operates in a one-dimensional world. This differs from the true transcendence found outside of China, in Christianity, which speaks of a Wholly Other God. As a consequence, Liu concludes that Qu Yuan commits a truly nihilistic act: suicide out of frustration and futility.<sup>41</sup>

For He Guanghu, instead of focusing on the contradistinctions between Chinese religiophilosophical thought with Christian thought like Liu Xiaofeng, a more important priority is focusing on the commonality between all religious traditions. Whilst traces of this can be found in a large number of his writings, this is most systematically argued in his book *All Rivers Return to the Ocean* (*Baichuan guihai*).<sup>42</sup> Looking at Chinese traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, and other religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam, He Guanghu argues across five chapters that a common ground can be found in all religions, namely in epistemology, ontology, divinity, worldview, and outlook on life. Here we see traces of some of the thinkers influential in He Guanghu's thinking, John Hick and Paul Tillich.

It is worth noting that in his discussion on divinity, He Guanghu also speaks about transcendence.<sup>43</sup> Yet, he does not want to focus on 'transcendence' in terms of God's objective attributes. Rather,

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 129. Translation mine.

<sup>41</sup> See Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity*, 67–9.

<sup>42</sup> He Guanghu, *Baichuan guihai: Zouxiang quanqiu zongjiao zhexue* [All Rivers Return to the Ocean: Towards a Global Religious Philosophy] (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing, 2008).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 137–42.



transcendence is best recognized in the religious experience of various religions. This can be seen in He Guanghu's choice of words. Whereas Liu Xiaofeng uses the conventional Chinese term for transcendence (*chaoyue*), He Guanghu describes all religions as speaking of transcendence in terms of something beyond humanity (*chaoren*). This clearly departs from Liu Xiaofeng's use of Barth's language of the 'Wholly Other' to speak of a God Who is completely beyond this world. Instead, He Guanghu is informed by Tillich's understanding of 'ultimate concern' to speak of transcendence as a common concern of Christianity and Chinese religiosity.<sup>44</sup> He Guanghu explains that, in Christianity, this is the idea that God is immeasurably beyond this world. In Chinese religions, this is seen in the ritual practices of sacrifice: for Confucianism, it includes Heaven, Earth, ancestors, and various deities, whilst for Daoism and Buddhism, it is their own pantheons of gods. These are things that transcend human nature and are therefore objects of religious worship. Hence, the Christian and Chinese religions all have compatible understandings of transcendence in terms of having an object of faith.

As we have seen in the approaches of Neo-Confucian and New Confucian thinkers, the notion of transcendence has only been a point of discussion through the encounter with Christianity. This is what postcolonial theorists would describe as 'mimicry'. For cultural Christians, religion—especially Christianity—needs to have a voice in the public space. Whereas Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu have different approaches to how one must understand questions of transcendence in China, both of them accept the notion of transcendence as a given. This is partly due to the fact that they have Christian starting points. But a further reason is perhaps that transcendence is a prerequisite to speak of what religiosity has to offer. As Zhuo Xinping explains, the Christian view of transcendence provides a basis for Western values on matters such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc.<sup>45</sup> Such an understanding of transcendence is helpful during a time when China, historically shaped by a thisworldly

<sup>44</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1957).

<sup>45</sup> Zhuo Xinping, 'Jidujiao dui Zhongguo shehui xiandaihua de yiyi' [Christianity's Significance for the Modernization of Chinese Society], in *Jiduzongjiao lun* [Discourse on Christianity] (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, [1995] 2000), 212–14. See Zhuo Xinping, 'Spiritual Accomplishment in Confucianism and Spiritual Transcendence in Christianity', in *Confucianism and Spiritual Traditions in Modern China and Beyond*, eds Yang Fenggang and Joseph Tamney (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 277–92;

mindset, pursues modernization—a matter we shall take up in 'Religion and Modernity'.

## RELIGION AND MODERNITY

Whilst cultural Christians tend to steer clear of terminology like 'contextual theology', it is obvious that this religious ferment amongst intellectuals has been shaped by the very particular sociopolitical context of the Second Chinese Enlightenment. Like the May Fourth Enlightenment at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Second Chinese Enlightenment has been a moment of deep questioning with regards to Chinese culture and nationhood. During May Fourth, the main culprit of ideological feudalism was Confucianism as it—akin to Christianity during the French Enlightenment—was seen as justifying the divine right of the monarch through the Heavenly will (*Tianming*) and imposing itself as the rationale for an authoritarian hierarchy. However, the communist revolution that separated these two Chinese enlightenments would add a new dimension to these conversations. Deng Xiaoping's post-Cultural Revolution policies would open up limited possibilities to challenge the Maoist dogmatism of the 1960s–70s. Moreover, the religious fever at all levels of society provided a platform for religiophilosophical traditions—including those previously known as feudalistic such as Confucianism and Christianity—to once again be debated in terms of their relationships with China's pursuit for modernity.<sup>46</sup>

For Liu Xiaofeng, the earlier discussion about transcendence would dovetail with a conversation about the spiritual foundations of culture. Here, Liu builds on a 1980s–90s debate about culture and national identity amongst Chinese intellectuals introduced by thinkers like Li Zehou (b. 1930) who distinguishes China's 'culture of joy' (*le gan wenhua*) from the West's 'culture of guilt' (*zui gan wenhua*).<sup>47</sup> Liu

Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 130–50.

<sup>46</sup> See Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity*, 86–91.

<sup>47</sup> This distinction was first made by Ruth Benedict between the Japanese 'culture of shame' and the Western 'culture of guilt', before the same view was adopted by Herbert Fingarette to speak about Confucian culture as opposed to Western culture. Li Zehou would disagree with his Western antecedents and argue that the Confucian

explains that Qu Yuan and other Chinese poets are shaped by a spiritual attitude of joy.<sup>48</sup> He cites various Confucian and Daoist texts to show how individuals are instructed to hold fast to a self-satisfied sense of joy despite the struggles and the lesser prizes offered in life. Contrastingly, the Judaeo-Christian culture is shaped by a spiritual attitude of guilt as a consequence of original sin. Whereas the Confucian-Daoist teachings speak of an orientation of joy which pursues its goal in perfected joy through self-cultivation, the Judaeo-Christian teachings speak of an orientation of guilt which pursues its goal by way of overcoming the sinful state through a renewed life. Liu concludes that one results in prideful humans who think they can achieve moral greatness by themselves, whereas the other reminds humans of their need to rely on God, the Wholly Other, for redemption.

Like Liu, Zhuo Xinping builds on these distinctions between Confucian-Daoist culture and Christian culture. Whilst firstly arguing that the Christian notion of sin is difficult to understand in Chinese traditional culture, Zhuo remarks:

The collapse of the relation between God and humankind is reflected in the individual's feeling of being lost; it manifests itself in the abnormal existence of whole societies, the absence of absolute values and standards, where confusion, uncertainty and disorder reign. This is the state of 'original sin'.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, one can see the reality of original sin in the social ills of society. For both Liu and Zhuo, China has been shaped by a humanistic culture which is unable to address the existential needs of its people. Both are critiquing the problems that are in the traditional teachings of Confucianism and Daoism. But even more significantly, it can be said that both are critiquing the humanistic orientation of

culture was a 'culture of joy' rather than a 'culture of shame'. See Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946); Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Li Zehou, 'Shitan Zhongguo de zhihui' [On Chinese Wisdom], in *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shi lun* [On Ancient Chinese Intellectual History] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing, [1985] 2008), 323–33.

<sup>48</sup> Liu, *Zhengjiu yu xiaoyao*, 148–58.

<sup>49</sup> Zhuo Xinping, 'Original Sin in the East–West Dialogue: A Chinese View', *Studies in World Christianity* 1, no. 1 (1995): 84.

communism from the Cultural Revolution forward—yet neither have explicitly stated this.

In a similar vein, You Xilin (b. 1947), a professor of literature and the director of the Institute of Christian Culture Research Institute at Shaanxi Normal University, explains that Chinese thinkers should not so quickly divorce religiosity from the pursuit of modernity.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Christianity has both offered the spiritual preconditions for modernity (e.g. rationality, individuality, operational consciousness, etc.) but also a reflective consciousness which critiques modernity. Yet since the 1980s, China's modernity has been pursued without a deeper consideration into religiosity. You Xilin explains that the socialist market economy has been built on calculated opportunism instead of the Protestant ethic behind the Weberian 'spirit of capitalism'. Moreover, widespread corruption can be found throughout China's structures of power. He believes this is because China's authoritarian traditions assumed the morality of the ruling class (the Confucian 'superior person' or *junzi*) was to be a model for the ethics of the rest of society (the Confucian 'petty person' or *xiaoren*). Hence, a Chinese society led by corrupt officials results in the loss of moral standards at every level. Contrastingly, 'faith in God, and the perfect example of Jesus' self-sacrifice, mean that the individual Christian, even placed in a situation where everyone in the world is doing wrong, can still maintain the ethical belief in striving for virtue'.<sup>51</sup>

Whereas most of the aforementioned thinkers have emphasized the role of Christianity in correcting the trajectory of China's pursuit for modernity, He Guanghu has suggested the same in terms of religiosity more generally. As a self-identified Christian, He believes a global religious philosophy provides a means of putting the religions of the world in dialogue with one another and the broader public space of today's Chinese society. As he once retorted:

It has been very clear that the *key* to a better future of China is some thorough political reform, whereas the *foundation* for a better future of China is some spiritual improvement. For only some constitutional politics is able to bring about a relatively just and responsibly free

<sup>50</sup> You Xilin, 'Modernity and Secularity: The Dual Significance of Christianity for China's Modernisation', *China Study Journal* 18, nos 1–2 (August 2003): 5–13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

society, whereas only a people with exalted or inspired morale is able to bring about or promote a more thorough political reform.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps in less subtle ways than Liu Xiaofeng and Zhuo Xinping, He Guanghu disputes the purely humanistic orientation of contemporary Chinese society. Political reform can only enable China to progress so far; there is an even greater need for China to pursue spiritual improvement, which is a prerequisite for true reform.

Cultural Christians have argued for the important role of religiosity, especially Christianity, in providing a moral foundation for China's pursuit of modernity. Yet cultural Christians have offered these contributions, largely as separate from conventional ecclesiological bodies such as those we discussed in Chapter 2. Theology is never taught as a distinct discipline in China's universities. It is only taught in departments of religion or philosophy or literature. In contrast to the traditional approaches to Christian studies in many Western theological institutions, Sino-Christian theology (or Sino-Christian studies, as suggested by Yang Huilin) is necessarily interdisciplinary. In so doing, it offers the possibility of Christian thought to be formulated and critiqued at the upper echelons of Chinese society, employing very unique methodological approaches. As You Xilin explains:

The Christian church generally criticises 'cultural Christians' as not being proper Christians, but this is to overlook an important point: it is the above activities of 'cultural Christians' which have given Christianity an unprecedented influence on the Chinese intellectual world and on educated youth, through the effect of the spread of culture, and thus to have a profound effect on the core of Chinese society. It should be said that what 'cultural Christians' are doing is to unite Christianity with the humanities, the social sciences and other modern academic sciences.<sup>53</sup>

#### A SECOND GENERATION OF PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Generally speaking, most of the earlier work of cultural Christians has not been strongly political, as they had focused most of their energy

<sup>52</sup> He Guanghu, 'Religion and Hope: A Perspective from Today's China', *China Study Journal* 13, no. 2 (August 1998): 5. Emphasis in original.

<sup>53</sup> You, 'Modernity and Secularity', 13.

on the public of the academy. This, however, does not mean they were apolitical. Like we just saw with He Guanghu, Liu Xiaofeng also sees a tension between personal change and political change. Fredrik Fällman explains that, for Liu, whilst 'faith is indeed a private matter and it should not be used for or lead to any compulsory political participation', we must remember that 'faith should also have a "prophetic" effect in that the believer should point to evils and injustice appearing in society, whether politically connected or not.'<sup>54</sup> Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu echo the sentiments of a much earlier Chinese Christian intellectual. Writing during the May Fourth Enlightenment of the 1920s, T. C. Chao (Zhao Zichen, 1888–1979) explains:

To [an increasing number of Christians] social reconstruction is as necessary as individual salvation—necessary both because of the appalling need and because of their conception of the Kingdom of God. . . . The truth is that the individual cannot be separated from society, for individual salvation carries with it the larger task of social reconstruction.<sup>55</sup>

For all these Chinese Christian intellectuals, the gospel compels Christians to be concerned with redemptive work in both the individual and the society. Whilst one can find biblical passages which point to this idea, this is perhaps also reflecting the Chinese ideal of 'inward sageliness, outward kingliness' (*neisheng waiwang*)—that is, that there is an integral relationship between individual change and social change.

When we consider the climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s, this was a period which offered possibilities to 'dare to know'—to borrow Immanuel Kant's Enlightenment mantra—mixed with the reality that many academics who were too publicly or politically engaged ended up in prison or in exile. However, as the growing fruits of the socialist market economy were witnessed alongside the growing ills of a rapidly changing society, this would reshape the intellectual discourse in the late 1990s, leading many intellectuals to ally themselves with the various camps of political liberalism, new leftism, and new Confucianism.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity*, 123.

<sup>55</sup> T. C. Chao, 'Can Christianity be the Basis of Social Reconstruction in China?', *The Chinese Recorder* 53, no. 5 (May 1922): 312.

<sup>56</sup> See discussion in Chapter 5.

Since their initial rise to stardom in the 1990s, it is valuable to briefly see how cultural Christians like Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu now operate in the Chinese public space. In more recent years, Liu Xiaofeng would be identified as a new leftist, critical of political liberalism, and shift his intellectual focus from Christianity to the political philosophy of Leo Strauss.<sup>57</sup> Whilst Strauss would emphasize a classical approach to political philosophy, turning primarily to early Greek texts, Liu Xiaofeng would now focus his energy on developing his own political philosophy based on Greek and Chinese classical texts.<sup>58</sup> This is not to say he has completely forsaken his Christian experiences.<sup>59</sup> Rather, Liu finds the need to go farther back to even more original sources to frame a stronger understanding for the future of Chinese political philosophy. He Guanghu continues to develop his works engaging Christian theology and philosophy of religion, but he has also been involved in various public debates. For instance, he was one of the signatories of Charter 08, a human rights manifesto and key document amongst Chinese political liberals that resulted in the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo, its main author.<sup>60</sup> He was also involved in the 2013 Oxford Consensus that brought together an agreement between intellectuals of Christian, New Confucian, new left, and political liberal persuasions.<sup>61</sup> Hence, whilst cultural Christianity was initially focused on the public of the academy, by the turn of the 21st century, these same individuals would begin to more fully engage the public of the society.

<sup>57</sup> Liu Xiaofeng, *Shitelaosi de lubiao* [Strauss as a Roadsign] (Beijing: Huaxia Publishing, 2011); Liu Xiaofeng, 'Leo Strauss and the Rebirth of Classics in China', *Interpretation* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2016): 171–89.

<sup>58</sup> See Wang Leihua, 'Plato in Modern China: A Study of Contemporary Chinese Platonists' (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2010).

<sup>59</sup> See Liu Xiaofeng, *Chongqi gudian shixue* [Restarting Classical Poetics] (Beijing: Huaxia Publishing, 2011), 320–41.

<sup>60</sup> Liu Xiaobo would later be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. The Chinese government would raise travel restrictions on a number of Chinese intellectuals, including He Guanghu, since their names were on the list of invitees to the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony honouring Liu Xiaobo.

For more details on Charter 08, see Liu Xiaobo, *No Enemies, No Hatred: Selected Essays and Poems*, eds Perry Link, Tinechi Martin-Liao, and Liu Xia (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 300–12.

<sup>61</sup> See 'Full Text of the Oxford Consensus 2013', *New York Times*, 18 October 2013, accessed 7 February 2017, <<http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/full-text-of-the-oxford-consensus-2013/>>. See also discussion in Chapter 5.

Cultural Christians emerged in the Chinese Christian scene shortly after the spiritual and moral vacuum of the Cultural Revolution. Though they would form the second generation of Chinese Christian intellectuals engaged in China's public space, they would sit at the margins of both the church and the academy—rejected by Christian leaders as not being 'true Christians' and disregarded by non-Christian academics as not being 'true scholars', as they were researchers of Christian studies who were not neutral towards the Christian religion. It is impossible to know how history would have been different in the 1990s without the advent of cultural Christianity. What is clear is that these individuals have made a significant contribution in expanding Christianity's place in China's public space, especially in the academy. For cultural Christians, the academy is one of the major vehicles to rethink the foundation of Chinese culture—indeed, to rethink the foundation of Chinese civilization. Hence, the academic field of Sino-Christian theology has increasingly produced literature which engages matters of public concern. Part of this can be seen through the Hong Kong-based Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, of which Liu Xiaofeng once served as its academic director. This institute has even begun a new 'Public Theology Project' to translate many Western works on public theology by figures such as Max L. Stackhouse and Robin W. Lovin into the Chinese language. Moreover, this second generation of Chinese Christian intellectuals would also form the foundation for the third generation, discussed in Chapter 4, who would bring the public of the church back into their theological discourse.

## Urban Intellectual Christianity

In March 2010, the English-language newspaper the *China Daily* ran a curious article entitled 'House churches thrive in Beijing'.<sup>1</sup> The casual reader may overlook two simple facts that the *China Daily* is an official mouthpiece of the Chinese government and that 'house churches' (*jiating jiaohui*) are generally considered illegal in China since all Protestant Christian activities are intended to register under the government-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). It is quite significant that this media outlet, which rarely reports on sensitive domestic issues, published an article explaining and justifying the existence of illegal activities in China.

But what is additionally peculiar is the lead into this article: 'Churchgoers drawn by smaller congregations and more relaxed approach of authorities'.<sup>2</sup> The main church discussed in this article is the Beijing Shouwang church (*Shouwang jiaohui*). Whilst it is described as having a 'small congregation', the Shouwang church at the time had nearly 1,000 members. Moreover, whilst the *China Daily* article speaks about the 'more relaxed approach of government authorities', about one year after such a statement, this same church made headlines again—but this time, not in the *China Daily*. In April 2011, through international media outlets like CNN,<sup>3</sup> the *New York*

<sup>1</sup> Wu Yiyao and Cui Xiaohuo, 'House churches thrive in Beijing', *China Daily*, 17 March 2010, accessed 25 September 2013, <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/17/content\\_9600333.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/17/content_9600333.htm)>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Jo Ling Kent, 'Church Officials: Chinese Authorities Block Easter Service in Beijing', CNN, 25 April 2011, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/04/24/china.easter.crackdown/index.html>>.

*Times*,<sup>4</sup> the BBC,<sup>5</sup> the *Guardian*,<sup>6</sup> and the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*,<sup>7</sup> reports were coming out that Chinese authorities had clamped down on this church, blocking them from accessing their property, placing its pastor and elders under house arrest, and detaining any would-be church attenders.

Amongst the various news reports on this church, what became increasingly apparent is that the members and leaders of Shouwang include very well-educated individuals—graduates and professors from Beijing's top universities. This is significant since Christianity in China has often been characterized as growing primarily amongst the poor, uneducated, and underprivileged of society. Shouwang is perhaps internationally the best known of a number of newer so-called 'urban intellectual churches' in China, a great number of which have gravitated towards the theological tradition coming from the teachings of John Calvin. Whilst some scholars have regarded this new type of Christianity as insignificant in the Chinese landscape both numerically and in overall influence, this chapter will show that urban intellectual churches are in fact a very significant voice—one that necessitated China's state-run mouthpiece to publish a news article downplaying their importance. Moreover, many of the leaders of these churches can best be understood as the third generation of Chinese intellectuals since the end of the Cultural Revolution to work towards a public voice for Chinese Christianity. Building on the earlier two generations, the urban intellectual Christians form the most recent developments of Chinese public theology.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Jacobs, 'Illicit Church, Evicted, Tries to Buck Beijing', *New York Times*, 18 April 2011, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/18/world/asia/18beijing.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> 'China Detains Protestants Shouwang Devotees', BBC, 24 April 2011, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13180842>>.

<sup>6</sup> Reuters in Beijing, 'Chinese Christians Arrested for Trying to Hold Open-Air Service', *Guardian*, 10 April 2011, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/10/shouwang-church-arrests-beijing-china>> (no longer accessible).

<sup>7</sup> Verna Yu, 'Fears of More Pressure on Underground Churches', *South China Morning Post*, 1 April 2011, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://www.scmp.com/article/963840/fears-more-pressure-underground-churches>>.

## THE CHANGING PROFILE OF CHINESE CHRISTIANITY

In the years immediately following the end of the Cultural Revolution, the status of Chinese Christianity looked incredibly bleak. In an interview in 1977, K. H. Ting, the future head of the reinstated TSPM and the new China Christian Council (CCC), was asked about the situation of Protestant Christianity in China. He explained:

There is a constant decrease in the number of Christians. The Chinese have never been very religious. In the past, people went into religion mainly because of suffering. They wanted to get medical help, education, support. This drew them into the churches. Another reason for people to be religious in those days was the disharmony among families. In the new China the life of the people has improved a great deal. No one needs to worry about starvation, medical help, etc. That part of the Christian church's attraction no longer exists.<sup>8</sup>

In the very tense sociopolitical climate immediately following the Cultural Revolution, Ting spoke highly about what was offered by the communist party's implementation of 'New China'. But more importantly, he points to what he sees as a *decrease* in the number of Christians due to the decline of the need for so-called 'rice Christianity'. Later in the interview, responding to a question about whether Christianity would die out, Ting believed that Protestant Christianity would soon meet its demise, as it was a faith which he estimated to total merely 0.1 per cent of the Chinese population.

As we have discussed, by the mid-1980s, internal government documents began to speak about a 'Christianity fever' (*Jidujiao re*) occurring throughout China due to a surge in the number of converts to Protestant Christianity. Ting's projections were beginning to be defied. Despite this growth, these government documents and, later, individuals of the state-registered church would describe such growth as mainly amongst the so-called 'four manys' (*si duo*)—many old, many women, many illiterate, and many ill.<sup>9</sup> Cultural Christians in the late 1980s and early 1990s would also uphold such a negative view

<sup>8</sup> Eugene L. Stockwell, 'The Life of Christianity in China: An Interview with Dr. and Mrs. K. H. Ting', *Christian Century* 94, no. 6 (February 1977): 169.

<sup>9</sup> Bao Zhimin, 'Facing Reality and Responding to Challenges: On Ten Years of Chinese Church Reconstruction', trans. Francesca Rhys, *Chinese Theological Review* 5 (1989): 3.

of the demographics of the Chinese church. As we saw in Chapter 3, individuals like Liu Xiaofeng believed that he and his cohort of cultural Christians were amongst a cultural elite who emphasized individualism, scientific and reflective theology, and belonged to a 'mystical' church. They were not part of the four manys of the local church.

One of the realities not often discussed is that Chinese society in the 1980s and 1990s in general could have been described as the four manys. This was largely due to prior events, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which had devastating results on the Chinese economy and the Chinese education system. But more importantly, what K. H. Ting could not predict in 1977 and Liu Xiaofeng could not see in 1990, was that the demographics of Chinese Christianity were shifting. For example, one study analysed data in five TSPM churches in Shanghai—a prosperous urban centre with a population that is generally more educated and with better living standards,<sup>10</sup> showing that by the 1990s, 42 per cent of Shanghai's Protestants had middle school education or higher.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the number of newly baptized believers under the age of 40 steadily increased from 15 per cent in 1980 to 27 per cent in 1990. This profile has continued to change and, today, anybody sitting in a TSPM church in Shanghai or Beijing will notice the overwhelming number of young church attenders, often coming from local universities and businesses. So whilst Chinese Christianity in the early 1980s was conceivably dominated by the marginalized of rural China, going into the 1990s and beyond, the Christianity fever was caught by younger and more educated urbanites.

Perhaps the most significant shift in the demographics of Chinese Christianity begins to emerge in the 1990s after which sociologists of religion identified emerging forms of urban Christianity. Chen Cunfu of Zhejiang University described two new types of urban Christians which he terms 'boss Christians' (*laoban Jidutu*) and 'intellectual elite Christians' (*zhishi jingying Jidutu*), both of which he ties to the socialist market economy reforms of the 1990s. The former describes

<sup>10</sup> Luo Weihong et al., 'Religion in Shanghai since the Period of Reform and Opening', trans. W. Y. Poon, *China Study Journal* 12, no. 3 (December 1997): 8–9.

<sup>11</sup> Middle school in China is divided into junior middle school and senior middle school, comparable to junior high school and high school in countries such as Canada and the United States.

private business owners, business executives, and other well-paid white-collar workers who have found both economic success and Christian faith. With regards to the latter group, he explains:

[T]here are the 'intellectual elite' Christians from major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou. They are no longer like the past urban [Christians] who were 'petty bourgeois' housewives, depending on the support of husbands and children, uncultured, and chiefly engaged with housework. These 'intellectual elite' Christians today, though small in number, are primarily in universities and secondarily in hospitals, research institutes, and Sino-foreign joint enterprises.<sup>12</sup>

In this article, Chen echoes Marxist undertones when he speaks of the earlier urban Christians as 'petty bourgeois housewives' who were uneducated and a burden on society. In contrast, these intellectual elite Christians are a growing alternative who bring something quite different to China's urban centres. One may say that these groups are beginning to form the *new* 'four manys' of Chinese Christianity—many young, many urbanites, many educated, and many prosperous. Yet, whilst Chen Cunfu is one of the first academics to speak about these shifting developments, he would also state that these intellectual elites are an insignificant minority of the overall Christian landscape of China and are not as important as the 'boss Christians'<sup>13</sup>—one of the main subjects of the rest of his book.

It is important to note that Chen Cunfu's study, with its focus on the 1990s economic reforms and the rise of the 'boss Christians', makes no mention of a very significant event in recent Chinese history: the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy movement. After all, this event accelerated many of the economic reforms which gave rise to boss Christianity. In one sense, this omission makes sense since Chen Cunfu is a communist party member and is publishing his work through a Chinese press whose censors would hardly allow such content to be discussed. But this obscures the broader view of the developments of urban Christianity. When we look more closely at the newer urban intellectual churches, we find a good number of their leaders were actually involved in the 1989 protests. As one commentator describes, due to the military clampdown on June Fourth, these

<sup>12</sup> Chen Cunfu, *Zhuanxingqi de Zhongguo Jidujiao: Zhejiang Jidujiao ge'an yanjiu* [Chinese Christianity in Transition: A Case Study of Zhejiang Christianity] (Beijing: Oriental Press, 2005), 51. Translation mine.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

young intellectuals became disillusioned by their pursuits. They would later find existential resolve in Christianity, yet still maintained the earlier fervour to transform Chinese society—but now, from within the church.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, China in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century would face a new situation with China entering the global economy and the push for urbanization, infusing Chinese society with both prosperity and new struggles.<sup>15</sup> These conditions would bring a surprising renewed interest in a particular theological expression: Calvinism.

## RESURRECTING CALVIN IN CHINA

Calvinism is not new to China. Protestant missions to Chinese lands were initiated by missionaries coming from a Calvinist background—first, in the seventeenth century by Dutch Reformed missionaries to what was called Formosa (present day Taiwan)<sup>16</sup> and, second, in the early nineteenth century by the Anglo-Scottish Congregationalist Robert Morrison to the Chinese mainland, arriving in Canton (Guangzhou).<sup>17</sup> The nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries would witness a growing wave of Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Reformed missionaries coming from Europe and North America. By the early 1900s, these missions would work towards uniting to form a single indigenous church, the Presbyterian Church of China

<sup>14</sup> Sun Mingyi, 'Renshi Zhongguo chengshi jiating jiaohui' [Urban House Church in China], *Jumu* [Behold] 26 (May 2007): 12–17. See Yang Fenggang, 'Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 4 (2005): 435–7.

<sup>15</sup> See Yang, 'Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's', 437–9.

<sup>16</sup> Dutch missionaries entered Formosa when it was under Dutch colonial rule from 1624 to 1662. The island would be under Chinese rule from the 1680s until the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and again after 1945 (though its status after 1949 is highly debated). Whilst some may dispute my description of the island as being a part of 'Chinese lands', my discussion here is about the influence of Calvinism in China—which includes traces of Dutch Calvinism on the island in the 1700s and possibly beyond. See Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 376–7; William M. Campbell, *Formosa Under the Dutch Described from Contemporary Records* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1903).

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

(*Zhonghua Jidujiao zhanglaohui zonghui*), but later included a number of Baptist, Brethren, Methodist, and independent churches, and held its first General Assembly in 1927 as the Church of Christ in China (*Zhonghua Jidujiao hui*).<sup>18</sup> The new organization would be the largest Protestant denomination operating in China and represented a variety of theological traditions, though it was largely shaped by Presbyterian theology and polity. All PCUSA and PCUS-related presbyteries would join the union except for five conservative presbyteries. In many ways, this was one of the results of the fundamentalist-modernist schism that divided Presbyterians in America and which would result in the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Westminster Theological Seminary.

Shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, the Church of Christ in China would be closed down. It survives today mainly through the Guangdong Synod which was reconstituted as the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China. Foreign missionaries were ejected from mainland China and Chinese Christians would have to clarify their allegiance to New China. By 1958, the new state instigated unified worship services, forcing all Protestant churches in a given region to unite and worship together under the same roof, before ultimately being brought to an end by the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>19</sup> When churches were allowed to reopen in the 1980s, they were only permitted to do so under the auspices of the TSPM. Therefore, the past three decades have severely obfuscated denominational differences. Since the 1980s, the officially sanctioned Protestant church has described itself as having entered into a post-denominational era.

The theology of John Calvin and his followers has had mixed reviews within the officially sanctioned Protestant church. For example, K. H. Ting was highly critical of many Calvinist teachings on human depravity and the atonement, as well as hallmarks of the Protestant Reformation like justification by faith alone.<sup>20</sup> His

<sup>18</sup> Wallace C. Merwin, *Adventure in Unity: The Church of Christ in China* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974); R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 532–5.

<sup>19</sup> Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 219–27.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 100–9.

critiques were perhaps due to the close association Calvinism has had in China with fundamentalism—a theological orientation that Ting has often challenged. Some TSPM churches and CCC seminaries which trace their legacy back to Presbyterian missions, such as in the northeast of China, continue to maintain their Calvinist roots. Others within the government-sanctioned church like Wang Aiming, the former Vice President of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary who completed a Ph.D. in Reformation theology from the University of Basel, have tried to highlight the importance of Calvin and Calvinism for the Chinese church.<sup>21</sup> However, broadly speaking, there has been an overall lack of embrace of Calvinism within state-sanctioned Protestantism.

Within the house churches, the story is somewhat different. As China would be reopened to the outside world in the 1980s and 1990s, there would be the growth of clandestine missionaries traveling to China.<sup>22</sup> Amongst the earliest were significant Calvinist voices coming from the Chinese diaspora, like Jonathan Chao (Zhao Tianen, 1938–2004), Stephen Tong (Tang Chongrong, b. 1940), and Samuel Ling (Lin Cixin, b. 1951), as well as from South Korean and Korean American missionaries. However, the rapid growth of Christianity in the 1980s and early 1990s was largely in terms of fundamentalist, pietistic, and Pentecostal-like<sup>23</sup> forms of Protestantism, all of which lent themselves towards a more privatized understanding of religion. Yet this growth in Christianity also resulted in a clamping down by the government against 'evil cults' (*xiejiao*), including Christianity-inspired new religious groups such as the Shouters (*Huhan pai*) in 1983 and the Three Grades of Servants (*Sanban puren*) and the Church of Almighty God (*Quanneng shen*

<sup>21</sup> Wang Aiming, *Church in China: Faith, Ethics, Structure. The Heritage of the Reformation for the Future of the Church in China* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that there was also a large amount of domestic evangelism as well. See Xin Yalin, *Inside China's House Church Network: The Word of Life Movement and Its Renewing Dynamic* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Whilst it is quite common to describe Chinese Christianity as 'Pentecostal', the use of the term is debated in academic literature. See Gotthard Oblau, 'Pentecostal by Default? Contemporary Christianity in China', Edmond Tang, "'Yellers" and Healers: Pentecostalism and the Study of Grassroots Christianity in China', and Simon Chan, 'Wither Pentecostalism?', in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 2nd edn, eds Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 333–53, 379–94, 467–80.



*jiaohui*) in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup> House church Christians quickly recognized the need to distinguish themselves from these groups. Jonathan Chao was instrumental in trying to address this, travelling to China in the 1980s and bringing Chinese bibles and translations of Reformed literature. He would also provide needed theological training to house church leaders and, in 1998, brought together house church Christians to establish united statements of faith to underscore their orthodoxy, denouncing 'evil cults', and explaining why they chose not to join the TSPM.<sup>25</sup> Though Chao was an ardent Calvinist, he tended to be sympathetic to the theological variety of the Protestantism he encountered in China, and Calvinism was not widely embraced in house churches until the mid-1990s.

In contrast with the TSPM churches and the house churches, John Calvin's teachings became a subject of growing interest in the Chinese academy since the 1980s. Particularly after the initiation of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening up policy, many scholars began debating Max Weber's thesis about the role Calvinism (and, more broadly, Protestantism) has played in the shaping of capitalism and modernity in the West, and therefore its value for China. But the academic interest in Calvin has been shifting to include other aspects of his thought and impact. According to a Chinese database for academic journals, there have been approximately 4,300 articles published between 1956 and 2010 mentioning Calvin or Calvinism. However, only 8 per cent of them were published before 1990 and nearly 20 per cent of them were published in 2009 or 2010.<sup>26</sup> This growing academic interest can be partly attributed to the growing urban intellectual churches, since many of their pastors and elders come from within the academy and see themselves as Christian scholars (*Jidutu xueren*).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The latter group is more popularly known as Eastern Lightning (*Dongfang shandian*). See Emily Dunn, *Lightning from the East: Heterodoxy and Christianity in Contemporary China* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, rev. edn (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2006), 311–25.

<sup>26</sup> Fredrik Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of Faith Among Chinese Intellectuals', in *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, ed. Francis Khek Gee Lim (London: Routledge, 2013), 156.

<sup>27</sup> Chen Yaqian, 'Xueyuan yu jiaohui: Jidutu xueren jiqi kunhuo' [The Academy and the Church: Christian Scholars and Their Perplexities], *Jidujiao sixiang pinglun* [Regent Review of Christian Thoughts] 5 (2007): 215–26.

The growing economic prosperity, rapid urbanization, and political plurality of the 1990s provided the right conditions for urban intellectual Christianity to flourish and have a growing interest in the theologies of John Calvin and the Reformed tradition. In this chapter, we will see how urban intellectual Christians have developed two different approaches to Calvinism in this context.

### RIGHTS DEFENCE AND CALVINIST POLITICAL THEOLOGY

One of the major approaches to Calvinism amongst urban intellectuals comes in the form of rights defence (*weiquan*), which includes lawyers and law scholars who advocate for the rights of individuals who have been oppressed by the government. In general, the rights defence movement (*weiquan yundong*) includes both Christian and non-Christian lawyers and law scholars. Perhaps one of the most well-known non-Christians in this movement is Chen Guangcheng, the blind, self-taught lawyer who escaped house arrest and fled to the US Embassy in Beijing in April 2012, before relocating to the United States for study. But the number of Christians in rights defence is quite prevalent and they tend to draw from Calvinist theology.<sup>28</sup> (This should come as little surprise, given that even John Calvin himself was trained as a lawyer.) One prominent Christian example of this approach can perhaps be found in Wang Yi (b. 1973), a pastor of an urban church in Chengdu, located in Sichuan province. Wang was a law professor at Chengdu University from 1996 until 2008, after which he resigned to take up a full-time pastorate in the Chengdu Early Rain Reformed church (*Qiuyu zhi fu guizheng jiaohui*)—a congregation which began as a fellowship in his home in 2005. He is also a very active blogger and author of a number of articles that have become very popular on the Internet.

One of the intellectual debates Wang Yi has been deeply involved in has revolved around the notion of constitutionalism. The Chinese legal system has often been accused of operating as a rule by law

<sup>28</sup> Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (London: Routledge, 2013), 108–29.

system (*fazhi* 法制) rather than a rule of law system (*fazhi* 法治)—homophones and a pun in the Chinese language.<sup>29</sup> This distinction is meant to convey that government officials rule by law, wielding the law to oppress the people, rather than are constrained by the law like other citizens as is often understood in Western theories of the rule of law. To address this and other discrepancies, Wang believes that the Chinese government needs to implement a stronger sense of constitutionalism. This, by itself, is not unique to Wang Yi, as constitutionalism is a key component of the political liberalism embraced by many intellectuals during this time. As we will see in Chapter 5, others like Jiang Qing have argued for forms of Confucian constitutionalism. Whilst Wang Yi acknowledges these forms, he believes the Chinese legal system can learn best from Western constitutionalism which was built upon Christian values.

The law scholar turned Reformed pastor writes, 'We can see a basic fact in the historical relationship between constitutionalism and Christianity, and that is, this kind of constitutionalist system with which we identify was birthed from the Puritan faith tradition.'<sup>30</sup> Wang Yi argues that the Puritan development of Calvin's theology articulated the notion of a covenantal community that extended to Christians and non-Christians.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it has formed the basis for Anglo-American constitutionalism.<sup>32</sup> He points out that this is very much seen when the Puritan notion of covenant was later carried to North America with the creation of the Mayflower Compact of 1620, the first governing document of the Plymouth Colony.<sup>33</sup> Wang is not saying constitutionalism must be built upon Christian theology

<sup>29</sup> Randall Peerenboom, *China's Long March Towards Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002), 63–71.

<sup>30</sup> Wang Yi, 'The Possibility of Political Theology: Christianity and Liberalism', *Chinese Law and Religion Monitor* 8, no. 1 (2012): 113–14.

<sup>31</sup> Although Wang Yi does not seem dependent on Abraham Kuyper on this point, there are definitely some resonances to a speech delivered by the Dutchman. Abraham Kuyper, 'Calvinism: Source and Stronghold of Our Constitutional Liberties', in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, [1873] 1998), 279–322.

<sup>32</sup> Wang, 'The Possibility of Political Theology', 106. See John Witte, 'Blest Be the Ties That Bind: Covenant and Community in Puritan Thought', *Emory Law Journal* 36 (1987): 584 fn. 11, 590–8; John Witte, *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 277–319.

<sup>33</sup> Wang Yi, 'Shengyue yu xianzhengzhuyi' [The Covenant and Constitutionalism], *Fangzhou* 2 (April 2006): 100–1.

and not upon new interpretations of Confucianism, humanist values like the French Enlightenment, or a return to foundations articulated in the Magna Carta of 1215. Instead, he wants to assert the superiority of the perspective of Puritan Calvinism in its simultaneous pursuit of a constitutional polity and a transcendent power, which thereby provides a stronger basis for the separation of church and state.<sup>34</sup>

Along with Wang Yi, a number of other well-known Christian intellectuals like Yu Jie (b. 1973), Bei Cun (b. 1965), and Fan Yafeng (b. 1969) have emphasized a connection between Calvinism and political engagement. Yu Jie and Bei Cun, both famous writers and social critics, have even argued that the best way to do this is for Chinese Christians to 'evangelize culture' (*wenhua fuyin hua*) by using artistic expressions as vehicles for communicating and bringing about spiritual and political change in Chinese society.<sup>35</sup> This is clearly informed by the teaching of Jonathan Chao, mentioned in the section 'Resurrecting Calvin in China', who was known for his threefold vision for China: the evangelization of China (*Zhongguo fuyin hua*), the kingdomization of the Church (*jiaohui guodu hua*), and the Christianization of culture (*wenhua jidu hua*).<sup>36</sup> To some observers, the approach to evangelizing culture may seem uncharacteristic of John Calvin and the iconoclasm often associated with him; but this would not be a fair assessment of Calvinism as a larger tradition.<sup>37</sup> In fact, these Calvinist thinkers see evangelizing culture as part of a greater vision of creating a Chinese 'Geneva' that can radically change China and Chinese society.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast with the cultural Christians discussed in Chapter 3, some of these urban intellectual Christians have a decidedly strong political agenda. Hence, when the politically liberal-leaning periodical *Southern People's Weekly* (*Nanfang renwu zhoukan*) produced a list of China's fifty most influential public intellectuals

<sup>34</sup> Wang, 'The Possibility of Political Theology', 115.

<sup>35</sup> Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ', 154.

<sup>36</sup> See Jonathan Chao (Zhao Tianen), *Fu wo qian xing: Zhongguo fuyin hua yixiang* [Leading Me to go Forward: Vision of the Evangelization of China] (Taipei: China Ministries International, 1993); Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ', 166, fn. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Jeremy Begbie, for instance, argues that this is quite contrary to many Dutch Neo-Calvinist thinkers who believed there was a very strong connection between Christian theology and the arts. Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 81–163.

<sup>38</sup> Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ', 161–2.

in 2004,<sup>39</sup> it included the soon-to-be Reformed pastor Wang Yi as part of this elite, yet notorious group.

What then is the relationship between Calvinism and political liberalism? Yu Jie (who has been in exile in the United States since 2012) explains that after 1989, three main intellectual trends have developed: new leftists who have advocated fascism, New New Confucians (*xin xin rujia*)<sup>40</sup> who have embraced imperial power, and political liberals who have converted to Christianity.<sup>41</sup> Like others, he divides intellectuals into three groups, but the first two are targets of ridicule. New leftists embrace fascism, whereas the New New Confucians have embraced the Chinese empire. In contrast, the true heroes are the Christian political liberals. Yu Jie sees the height of political liberalism only coming about after the discovery of Christianity as a transcendent basis for political liberalism.<sup>42</sup> Later citing with appreciation Liu Xiaofeng's *Delivering and Dallying*,<sup>43</sup> Yu Jie explains that Christian intellectuals today have a cultural mandate to bring forward the cultural resources of Christianity embraced by Western intellectuals and useful for Chinese society.

In many ways, Wang Yi, as a political liberal who later became a Reformed pastor, epitomizes the views extolled by his good friend Yu Jie. Hence, in his article discussed above, entitled 'The Possibility of Political Theology: Christianity and [Political] Liberalism', Wang Yi speaks about the legacy of political liberalism that owes much to its spiritual legacy in covenantal theology. For Yu Jie and Wang Yi, like He Guanghu discussed in Chapter 3, the prerequisite for political reform in China is spiritual reform. However, in contrast with He

<sup>39</sup> 'Yingxiang Zhongguo gonggong zhishifenzi 50 ren' [The Influence of China's 50 Public Intellectuals], *Nanfang renwu zhouban* [Southern People's Weekly], September 2004, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://business.sohu.com/s2004/zhishifenzi50.shtml>>.

<sup>40</sup> His phrase 'New New' is supposedly to differentiate it from the earlier twentieth-century developments of New Confucianism that emphasized cultural renewal. See discussion in Chapter 5.

<sup>41</sup> Yu Jie, 'Women shi yizuo qiaoliang: Lun Zhongguo Jidutu zhishifenzi de wenhua shiming' [We are a Bridge: On the Cultural Mandate of Chinese Christian Intellectuals], *Yu Jie Wenji* [Yu Jie Collected Works], January 2008, accessed 2 May 2016, <[http://blog.boxun.com/hero/200802/yujie/1\\_1.shtml](http://blog.boxun.com/hero/200802/yujie/1_1.shtml)>.

<sup>42</sup> See Lian Xi, "'Cultural Christians' and the Search for Civil Society in Contemporary China", *The Chinese Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (May 2013): 78–9; Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 130–50.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapter 3.

Guanghu, for this younger generation of intellectuals, spiritual reform is found in an embrace of political liberalism informed by Calvinist political theology.

Clearly, we see direct and indirect influences of the earlier generation of cultural Christians on this generation of Christian intellectuals. Secondly, we see figures like Yu Jie using language of the 'cultural mandate', which originates from Dutch Neo-Calvinism. This perhaps comes from Jonathan Chao (who was previously trained at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and studied under Dutch Neo-Calvinists such as Cornelius Van Til),<sup>44</sup> of whom Yu Jie has spoken as offering significant influence to Chinese Christian intellectuals in China.<sup>45</sup> Thirdly, we see how the figures we have looked at thus far have brought together political liberalism and Christian theology. As we move onto the section 'Constructive Dialogue and Calvinist Ecclesiology', we will see the development of a different strand of Christian intellectuals during this time who, whilst they can likewise be said to be shaped by the earlier generation of cultural Christians and Dutch Neo-Calvinism, are perhaps much less influenced by political liberalism.

## CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AND CALVINIST ECCLESIOLOGY

In contrast with the approach of rights defence, a second group of urban intellectuals who leverage the theological tradition of John Calvin is perhaps best represented by the Shouwang church highlighted at the outset of this chapter. This approach views the church as a vehicle for constructive dialogue (*duihua*) with the government, by existing as autonomous from the state but insisting on directly registering with the government—without the intermediary of the

<sup>44</sup> Chao would even write his masters dissertation on Van Til's understanding of common grace, posthumously translated and published in Chinese. Jonathan Chao (Zhao Tianen), *Pubian endian jian lun* [Commentary on Common Grace], trans. Wang Zhiyong (Taipei: Reformed Translation Fellowship Publishing Company, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> Yu Jie, 'Zhao Tianen mushi dui Zhongguo zhi fenzi de yingxiang' [The Influence of Pastor Jonathan Chao on Chinese Intellectuals], *China Ministry Report*, nos 200–12 (October 2009–October 2010): 22–5.

TSPM.<sup>46</sup> The possibility for this type of registration was opened up by a change in the regulations on religious affairs that came into effect in 2005.<sup>47</sup> In 2008, Shouwang's Pastor Jin Tianming (b. 1968), a graduate of the prestigious Tsinghua University, explained that his church's approach of dialogue with registration has hoped to move beyond the deadlock within the Chinese church between the 'illegal' house churches and the 'adulteress' TSPM.<sup>48</sup> The traditional house church model is akin to the separatist approach of the Anabaptists during John Calvin's day. However, Jin Tianming, informed by the legacy of Calvin,<sup>49</sup> was promoting a view that the church must have a more positive relationship with the civil government without compromising the gospel as the TSPM has done. If Shouwang church can successfully register with the government, it would provide a lawful means of church existence.

Moreover, Jin Tianming believes that registration enables the Chinese church to move beyond a merely spiritual focus, towards an embrace of mission to society. This is particularly underscored in several special issues of Shouwang church's own online and print periodical, *Almond Flowers (Xinghua)*. The Autumn 2008 issue, for example, had the theme of 'Social Concern'. This special issue focused on the disastrous May 2008 earthquake in Sichuan province, spoke about the aid given through the church, and emphasized the need for the church to be a non-governmental organization (NGO) that participates in serving the civil society. This was followed by the Winter 2008 special issue on 'The Cultural Mandate', focusing on the theological notion developed in Dutch Neo-Calvinism. One article in this issue challenges the Chinese church to think beyond its historical foci of making converts and emphasizing spiritual sanctification. The author

<sup>46</sup> See Sun, 'Urban House Church in China'.

<sup>47</sup> Despite the change in policy, this reality has hardly been realized in the last few years and continues to encourage the ambivalent legal status of non-registered religious communities in China. Lauren B. Homer, 'Registration of Chinese Protestant House Churches Under China's 2005 Regulation on Religious Affairs: Resolving the Implementation Impasse', *Journal of Church and State* 52, no. 1 (2010): 50-73. The policy would change again in 2016, resulting in greater restrictions to the operation and the funding of religious organizations.

<sup>48</sup> Jin Tianming, 'Tuidong jiaohui dengji dao jintian' [The Promotion of Church Registration], *Xinghua* [Almond Flowers] (Spring 2008): 40-1.

<sup>49</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.20. Translated in John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 2: 1485-521.

concludes, 'God's word or biblical truth must enter into a culture and, expressing itself in every domain of this culture, become God's common grace in human society. This is the church's cultural mandate.'<sup>50</sup>

Oddly enough, Fan Yafeng, a Christian lawyer who writes a great deal about covenantal theology and constitutionalism, has attacked Shouwang's approach of dialogue saying that it is not a mature theology and does not have a basis in evangelicalism or Reformed theology.<sup>51</sup> Shouwang church unsuccessfully tried to register with the government in 2005 and 2006, and was subsequently evicted from its rented premises. They raised funds to purchase an office space, but due to pressures from the government, the property manager refused to give them the keys to the premises. As a result, church members assembled for worship outdoors. Fan asserts that Shouwang had navigated the two extremes of 'registration application and struggle in the street. There is no middle road for [human] rights defense in accordance with the law.'<sup>52</sup> He believes the Shouwang church has since abandoned her approach of constructive dialogue by initiating public worship services, and its members now must be described as rights defence activists. But, Fan concludes, this is a step in the right direction since rights defence is based on Reformed theology and Calvinist political theology, which prefers an open and legal status over the clandestine and illegal approach of older house churches.<sup>53</sup>

However, Shouwang leaders see the practice of constructive dialogue to be a bit more nuanced than how Fan Yafeng has portrayed it. A good example of this would be Sun Yi (b. 1961), an elder of Shouwang and a professor of philosophy at Beijing's Renmin University of China. Sun Yi wrote his Ph.D. on the theology of Søren Kierkegaard, but has since published a number of articles on Calvinism, was involved in a new translation of Calvin's *Institutes* into Chinese, and was one of the two editors of a recent book engaging the significance of Calvin's thought in China.<sup>54</sup> In an article

<sup>50</sup> Sun Mingyi, 'Zhongguo jiaohui chengsheng guan ji wenhua shiming lianxiang' [The Relationship Between Sanctification and the Cultural Mandate in the Chinese Church], *Xinghua* [Almond Flowers] (Winter 2008): 31. Translation mine.

<sup>51</sup> Fan Yafeng, 'On the Transition Mode of the Relationship Between the State and the Church: The Mode from Rights Defense by the Church to Rights Defense in Mean Course', *Chinese Law and Religion Monitor* 6, no. 2 (2010): 22.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 23-4.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Chan (Chen Zuoren) and Sun Yi, eds, *Jia'erwen yu hanyu shenxue* [John Calvin and Sino-Christian Theology] (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2010).

published in 2012, Sun Yi states that urban intellectual churches after the 1990s have broken from the various approaches of earlier generations of house churches and now pursue a goal of 'openness and integrity' (*gongkai zhengti xing*).<sup>55</sup> In general, this means seeking legal status as an NGO to more actively impact the greater society and work towards a civil society. Continuing the themes of Pastor Jin Tianming and other Shouwang members writing in 2008, Sun Yi pens these thoughts in 2012, a year after church leaders like himself were put on house arrest and church members were detained in public worship services. He underscores that there is a public nature to the church and her theology. Quoting from Matthew 5: 14, he reminds his readers that the church is to be a light of the world and a city on a hill which cannot be hidden. Like Abraham Kuyper's teachings on sphere sovereignty, Shouwang leaders see the church and the government as independent, sovereign entities that can and should publicly engage one another in constructive dialogue.

In contrast with either siding with the government by being part of the legally operating TSPM or following the more separatist approach of traditional 'house churches', many urban intellectual churches like Shouwang consider themselves as being part of a 'third church' (*disan jiaohui*)—a new ecclesiology that attempts to engage the state in a new way. But there has also been some pushback against the use of terms like the 'third church', the 'third way' (*disan daolu*), and the 'emerging church' (*xinxing jiaohui*) to describe the changing Christian situation in the urban centres of China. Wang Yi and Liu Tongsu, a pastor in a Chinese diasporic church of Northern California, have argued that such terminology is misleading and oversimplifies the recent changes in the church. Moreover, they believe the use of such categories breaks the continuity between traditional house churches and the growth in urban Christianity outside of the TSPM—ultimately causing a break in church unity.<sup>56</sup> In their view, the main change that has occurred in recent years has been the rapid urbanization of China and, accordingly, the rapid urbanization of Chinese Christianity. On the one hand, they try to highlight the continuity of a

<sup>55</sup> Sun Yi, 'Jidujiao jiuguo qingjie dui jiaohui guan de yingxiang' [The Influence of Christian National Salvation Complex upon Ecclesiology], *Xinghua* [Almond Flowers] (Winter 2012): 37–40.

<sup>56</sup> Liu Tongsu and Wang Yi, *Guankan zhongguo chengshi jiating jiaohui* [Observation on China's House Churches in Cities] (Taipei: Christian Arts Press, 2012), 45.

tradition whose identity is found through its opposition against the state and the state-sanctioned TSPM. Wang Yi has even written an article comparing Jin Tianming with the famous fundamentalist Wang Mingdao who was arrested in the 1950s for his opposition against the early TSPM.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, Liu Tongsu and Wang Yi importantly highlight the multifaceted nature of urban house churches, many of which are based on different socioeconomic groupings. They bring to focus often-overlooked congregations like those predominantly made up of university students or migrant workers.<sup>58</sup> In other words, there is a great degree of unity in the diversity of non-TSPM churches throughout the generations, both in the urban centres and in the rural countryside.

However, for Shouwang, its self-understanding is one of a church which stands in the gap between extremes and has a new approach, informed by a Calvinist understanding of ecclesiology. Sun Yi, for example, has explained that he previously considered himself a cultural Christian during his Ph.D. studies when he focused on the thinking of Søren Kierkegaard and had a distanced relationship with the church.<sup>59</sup> However, as he became more involved in the church and became a church elder, he turned towards the theology of John Calvin and the Calvinist tradition to develop a more concrete 'church theology'.<sup>60</sup>

This is also why it would be incorrect to understand these Calvinists as a form of Chinese 'New Calvinism', as described by the sinologist Fredrik Fällman, borrowing a term used to describe the revival of Calvinist thought in North America amongst individuals like John Piper, Mark Driscoll, and Albert Mohler.<sup>61</sup> Firstly, the voices which are often seen to be promoting Calvinism in China like Jonathan Chao, Stephen Tong, and Samuel Ling can hardly be considered New Calvinists, but 'Old' Calvinists with connections to

<sup>57</sup> This article was first published on Early Rain's website, but has since been taken down. It has been republished several times on the Internet, including this link which is on Shouwang's website. Wang Yi, 'Jin Tianming shi ni shenme ren?' [Who is Jin Tianming to You?], *Meizhou mu han* [Weekly Pastoral Letter] 3 February 2013, accessed 2 May 2016, <<https://t2.shwchurch.org/?p=7646>>.

<sup>58</sup> Liu Tongsu and Wang Yi, *Guankan zhongguo chengshi jiating jiaohui*, 273.

<sup>59</sup> Sun Yi, in discussion with author, April 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Whilst their narratives are different, ecclesiology is also important for Calvinists who emphasize rights defence. For example, Wang Yi believes Reformed theology is a needed basis to build both his church polity and his political theology.

<sup>61</sup> Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ', 153–68.

historically Reformed institutions like Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and Westminster Seminary California. But secondly, in the Western context, 'New Calvinism'—and Calvinism in general—is often associated with soteriology. That is, 'Calvinism' is often a shorthand for salvific categories articulated at the Synod of Dort such as election, predestination, the limits of atonement, etc., summarized in the so-called five points of Calvinism. Moreover, New Calvinists like Piper and Mohler, both of whom are part of Baptist denominations, do not hold to teachings on infant baptism which are vitally important to the covenantal theology of many Reformed thinkers. Hence, Michael S. Horton from Westminster Seminary California has pointed out that the North American phenomenon of New Calvinism focuses on five-point Calvinism and rarely, if ever, involves covenantal theology, the five Reformation *solae*, and other components characteristic of confessional, Reformed Christianity.<sup>62</sup>

In Christian bookstores in China, one can identify a growing popular interest in Chinese translations of American New Calvinist writings. However, like Horton and other Reformed thinkers of the West who differ from New Calvinism, the Chinese urban intellectual interest in the teachings of John Calvin today is shifting away from soteriology and towards an embrace of ecclesiology. This is reinforced by Samuel Ling who, as a Chinese diasporic voice, has argued in the Chinese-language periodical *Church China (Jiaohui)* that Chinese Christianity needs to teach a more comprehensive understanding of Reformed theology rather than merely focusing on soteriology.<sup>63</sup> In an odd way, this is a contextually sensitive shift in Chinese Christianity. TSPM leaders like Chen Zemin and K. H. Ting have lamented that the post-denominational Chinese church does not have a strong ecclesiology.<sup>64</sup> This is reinforced by scholars like Liu Xiaofeng who,

<sup>62</sup> Collin Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 110–13.

<sup>63</sup> Samuel D. Ling (Lin Cixin), 'Cong wujie dao xinshang: Gaigezong xinyang dui Zhongguo jiaohui de baogui jiazhi' [From Misunderstanding to Appreciation: Commending the Treasures of the Reformed Faith in the Chinese Church], *Jiaohui* [Church China] 23 (May 2010): 13–17. See Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ', 157–8.

<sup>64</sup> Duan Qi, 'Contextualization in the Contemporary Chinese Church', in *Christianity and Modernization: A Chinese Debate*, eds Philip L. Wickeri and Lois Cole (Hong Kong: Daga Press, 1995), 42.

after experiencing the institutional debacle of communism during the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, wanted nothing to do with the institutional church and argued for a type of mystical ecclesiology in the early 1990s.

In contrast, these younger urban intellectual Christians have not shied away from institutionalism and have focused on building a strong ecclesiology. This is of course a subject discussed in great depth in the fourth book of John Calvin's *Institutes*. It can be recognized that this revival of interest in Calvin's thought has resulted in a heavier emphasis on the sacraments. For example, some churches like Wang Yi's Early Rain Reformed church have upheld teachings on infant baptism. This makes sense, given that covenantal theology is seen as the basis for both infant baptism and constitutionalism. Moreover, the engagement with Calvinist ecclesiology has resulted in a greater theological engagement with the nature and the polity of the church<sup>65</sup> and the church's relationships with the magistrate, the state, and the civil society. There are even rumblings amongst urban intellectual churches of the development of structures mirroring Congregational and Presbyterian denominations, the latter of which includes the development of regional presbyteries and synods.<sup>66</sup> Overall, in the present context, a strong understanding of the church is necessary for the body of believers to be shaped as an institution that can effect change in the state and in the civil society.

### A THIRD GENERATION OF PUBLIC THEOLOGY

These are two of the major appropriations of Calvinism amongst urban intellectuals in China today. There are others, like the economist Zhao Xiao, who champions Weber's thesis about Puritanism and capitalism. Moreover, Zhao has begun to give training seminars to Christian entrepreneurs in China and makes a point of connection between Chen Cunfu's 'boss Christians' and 'intellectual elite Christians'. By and large, this resurgent interest in Calvinism amongst leaders of urban intellectual churches is addressing public

<sup>65</sup> Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ', 158–64.

<sup>66</sup> Sun Yi, in discussion with author, April 2013.

concerns which are sensitive to the sociopolitical context of Chinese society today.

Indeed, the public voice of these urban intellectuals has been reshaped with the advent of social media.<sup>67</sup> Hence, this third generation of Chinese Christian intellectuals makes ample use of technologies such as blogs and microblogs, as well as online and print magazines to discuss societal problems.<sup>68</sup> Christian intellectuals who wish to use print capitalism for public discourse have found the Internet age offering many new opportunities and new risks.<sup>69</sup> This is especially dangerous business in a country like China where the central government has one of the most sophisticated Internet censorship platforms in the world, commonly known as the 'Great Firewall of China'.<sup>70</sup> Yet there are thinkers like Zhao Xiao who has on Weibo (the Chinese equivalent of Twitter) over 9 million followers and counting. So when he posts ideas about Christianity, there are more individuals in China who get this on their daily newsfeed than there are people living in Scotland—a country with a current population of about 5.2 million and, incidentally, one of the historic origins of Puritan Calvinism so loved in China today. Chen Cunfu is correct in describing the number of intellectual elite Christians as few. But, as evidenced in the outset of this chapter by China's state-run media outlet publishing an article to downplay the importance of groups like the Shouwang church and the Early Rain Reformed church, these Chinese Christian intellectuals are making significant headways that make the Chinese government quite uncomfortable.

Reformed theology is described by Nicholas Wolterstorff as 'world formative'—that is, it serves the role of bringing a new shape to the

<sup>67</sup> See Thérèse F. Tierney, *The Public Space of Social Media: Connected Cultures of the Network Society* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 22–38.

<sup>68</sup> See Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*, 85–107; Carsten Vala and Huang Jianbo, 'Three High-Profile Protestant Microbloggers in Contemporary China: Expanding Public Discourse or Burrowing into Religious Niches on Weibo?', in *Religion and Media in China: Insights and Case Studies from the Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong*, ed. Stefania Travagnin (New York: Routledge, 2016), 167–86; Chloë F. Starr, 'Wang Yi and the 95 Theses of the Chinese Reformed Church', *Religions* 7, no. 12 (December 2016): 1–15.

<sup>69</sup> See Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed, eds, *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 315–81.

<sup>70</sup> Gudrun Wacker, 'Resistance is Futile: Control and Censorship of the Internet in China', in *From Woodblocks to the Internet*, 353–81.

society and the world around it.<sup>71</sup> However, there are a number of places in East Asia (as well as Europe and North America) where Reformed churches, although once strong, have declined despite their public commitments. For example, though the Presbyterian church of Taiwan has had a significant role in introducing a democratic system to Taiwan and, in recent years, Presbyterians still take up 7 per cent of the legislative seats, members of the church make up only 1 per cent of Taiwan's overall population.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, in South Korea, in the twentieth century, Presbyterians (along with other Protestants) played a significant role as a source of nationalism and have become one of the most significant senders of missionaries in the world. However, recent years have witnessed a noticeable decline in the South Korean Protestant population.<sup>73</sup> As with other contextual theologies, Calvinism in the urban intellectual churches of China must continually be sensitive to its rapidly changing context, or suffer obsolescence.

Yet one of the challenges faced by the leaders of urban intellectual churches is the question of relevance for the broader Chinese church and society. In China, the popular interest in Calvinism is more in terms of American New Calvinism than the Dutch Neo-Calvinism or the covenantal theology embraced by these urban intellectual churches. Related to this is the fact that Calvinism is often regarded as a strongly intellectualized theological system. TSPM and CCC leaders have recognized the low theological level of the officially sanctioned church, whilst the more traditional house churches have tended towards a 'primitivist Christianity' which emphasizes conversion and supernatural acts of healing or prophecy.<sup>74</sup> Hence, some of the more philosophical debates within the Calvinist tradition (such as

<sup>71</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 3–22.

<sup>72</sup> See Cheng-Tian Kuo, *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan* (New York: State University of New York, 2008), 44.

<sup>73</sup> Of the overall South Korean population, Protestants grew from 16 per cent in 1985 to 19 per cent in 1995, but shrank back to 17 per cent by 2005. In contrast, South Korean Catholics grew in all demographics from 5 per cent in 1985 to 11 per cent in 2005. See Jibum Kim, Yongmo Lee, Jaesok Son, and Tom W. Smith, 'Trends of Religious Identification in Korea: Changes and Continuities', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 4 (2009): 791, 793.

<sup>74</sup> Daniel H. Bays, 'Chinese Protestant Christianity Today', *China Quarterly* 174 (June 2003): 494.

the insistence on divine monergism)<sup>75</sup> have had difficulty squaring with the Chinese mindset. Moreover, China's push towards rapid urbanization has resulted in a noticeable migrant worker population moving from rural farmlands to urban metropolises, many of whom would likely not have advanced higher education. The risk that arises is that these urban intellectual elite Christians may be a voice mainly to other intellectual elites, and their ability to engage other socio-economic strata of society may not be as strong.<sup>76</sup>

Many of the leaders of these urban intellectual churches like Sun Yi and Wang Yi previously self-identified as 'cultural Christians' and have since become much more interested in the local church than individuals like Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu. Yet at the same time, many of them are still broadly recognized as Chinese intellectuals. Comparatively, the first generation of Christian intellectuals in state-sanctioned Protestantism were focused on the publics of the church and the society, and later grew in their engagement with the public of the academy due to the shifts in the academic world. The second generation of Christian intellectuals, cultural Christians, focused on the publics of the academy and the society and distanced themselves from the church. Contrastingly, for this third generation, all three publics are important and needed in the public nature of Chinese Christianity. Whilst it is unclear what the future holds for the next generation of Chinese Christianity, the significance of this third generation cannot be underestimated.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> See Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 52–4, 120–4.

<sup>76</sup> See Lian, "Cultural Christians" and the Search for Civil Society in Contemporary China', 85–6.

<sup>77</sup> The text in this chapter is a revised and restructured version of an earlier form previously published as Alexander Chow, 'Calvinist Public Theology in Urban China Today', *International Journal of Public Theology* 8, no. 2 (2014), 158–75. Used by permission.

## Part II

# The Development of a Chinese Public Theology



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## A Divided Public Space?

In the summer of 2013, a group of scholars from China and from a number of Western institutions gathered in Oxford for the Sixth Annual Forum of Chinese Theology. On one of the evenings of the conference, the conference's Chinese delegates penned and signed what became known as the Oxford Consensus. After a brief note about China's ascent in the world, the consensus states:

We are a group of Chinese intellectuals with diverse academic and ideological backgrounds in the new liberal [*sic*], new left, new Confucian, and Christian traditions who love the holy land of China and are faithful to our people. We treasure intellectuals' responsibilities as critics and sentinels of society. We hope, in this critically important time of change in China and the rest of the world today, to carry forward the moral character and rational spirit bestowed to intellectuals by our history. We will mobilize the power and resources in culture and ideas to spur our nation and the society on to a higher and better level.<sup>1</sup>

This is a significant piece of recent history for at least two major reasons. Firstly, the various intellectual persuasions mentioned in the Consensus are four groupings which represent quite divided factions. For instance, the new left and the liberals have had significant skirmishes with one another since the 1990s. Yet the conference and the Consensus—happening with scholars *from* China and physically

<sup>1</sup> The English and Chinese texts can be found at 'Full Text of the Oxford Consensus 2013', *New York Times* 18 October 2013, accessed 7 February 2017, <<http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/full-text-of-the-oxford-consensus-2013>>. In this text, the Chinese 'liberal' (*ziyou*) is mistranslated into the English 'new liberal'. Whilst the Chinese liberals are 'new' in the sense that they are a new manifestation of earlier forms of Chinese liberalism, this should not be confused with Western understandings of neoliberalism.

meeting *outside* China—was the first opportunity for representatives from these various factions to come together and debate face to face. The Consensus, therefore, represents a significant combined statement that shared a desire to work together towards the betterment of China.

Secondly, the conference was decidedly Christian. The theme of the conference was 'Christian Faith and Ideological Trends in Contemporary China'. Each of the panels was named after various themes which put Christianity in conversation with another ideological grouping: 'Christianity and Liberalism', 'Christianity and New Left', and 'Christianity and New Confucianism'. The conference was organized and funded by Christians—arguably with hopes that Christians could have a stronger voice in China's public space.<sup>2</sup> If one were to review some of the literature on recent public intellectualism in China, it would quickly become apparent that Christians are rarely listed as a separate faction alongside the other three.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Timothy Cheek, in his discussion about the developments of liberalism, offers only one passing sentence noting that an event like the Consensus added 'Chinese Christians to the intellectual conversation'.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Gerda Wielander, in her recent study of Christian values in China, cites He Guanghu (b. 1950) as explaining that all intellectuals can be identified as being amongst one of these three groups (liberals, new lefts, and New Confucians).<sup>5</sup>

One question that can be raised is why have Chinese Christians been left out of the discussion? Perhaps a different question can be asked about whether Chinese Christian intellectuals represent a different faction entirely, or whether they have tended to slot into one or another of the aforementioned groups. This latter point has been

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that not all of the 'Christians' at the conference would openly identify as Christians by faith. Zhuo Xiping and Zhao Lin, for instance, are both scholars who have studied Christianity since the 1990s and can be considered part of the generation cohort discussed in Chapter 3. Moreover, Zhao Lin's paper predicted the ultimate demise of Christianity in China. I was his respondent.

<sup>3</sup> For a few examples in English, see Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 262–314; Merle Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen: The Struggle for Political Rights in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 95–160; Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 110–13. See also Gan Yang, *Tong san tong* [Synthesizing Three Traditions] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 295.

<sup>5</sup> Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*, 110–13.

suggested in the previous few chapters. Liu Xiaofeng (b. 1956), at one point identified as a prototypical cultural Christian,<sup>6</sup> has since been identified as a new leftist along with Wang Hui (b. 1959) and Gan Yang (b. 1952). He Guanghu, another cultural Christian, was a signatory of the politically liberal clarion call of Charter 08,<sup>7</sup> before he signed the Oxford Consensus five years later. Finally, many of the third generation figures such as Wang Yi (b. 1973) and Yu Jie (b. 1973) are well known as political liberals who have become Christians. Yet, others such as Sun Yi (b. 1961), another signatory of the Oxford Consensus, or Jin Tianming (b. 1968) cannot be so easily identified with any of these factions, though would perhaps gravitate towards political liberalism.

In a sense, a broader question may be asked about whether these labels and underlying typologies are useful at all. Whilst most scholars would recognize the rise of the terms 'liberal' and 'new left' in the 1990s, they reflect revitalizations of intellectual dispositions that existed in earlier points of twentieth-century China. They tend to be labels wielded as a weapon by one's opponents. The 'New Confucians' are another interesting group. They, like the other two, tie their history to forefathers in the early twentieth century. But they are also strongly influenced by scholars of Confucianism who lived outside mainland China but were reintroduced to the mainland in the 1980s, with the support of the Chinese government. Generally speaking, Confucianism has much currency as a historically significant element in Chinese culture, despite the various movements which have attempted to crush it in the twentieth century. New Confucians are a third wheel in the debates between liberals and new leftists, whereas Christians have been a fourth wheel left by the roadside.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Edmond Tang, 'The Second Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and Christianity Today', in *Identity and Marginality: Rethinking Christianity in North East Asia*, ed. Werner Ustorf and Toshiko Murayama (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 63–4; Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China*, rev. edn (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> See Feng Chongyi, 'The Threat of Charter 08', in *Liu Xiaobo, Charter 08 and the Challenges of Political Reform in China*, eds Jean-Philippe Béja, Fu Hualing, and Eva Pils (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 119–39.

<sup>8</sup> Arguably, one may also include additional factions. For instance, it may be useful to compare the developments of Chinese Buddhism in the twentieth century and its growing public voice, or even the long tradition of Christian socialism. However, for our purposes, I will focus on these four groups.

Mindful of these peculiarities, this chapter hopes to put those two spare wheels back into the intellectual conversation to show how both Confucianism and Christianity are indispensable for the Chinese public space. This chapter will begin with a closer look at the two main factions of political liberalism and new leftism, bringing in some of the Christian voices whom we have spoken of in Chapters 3 and 4. Then, we will look at Confucianism—firstly, as a separate faction in the tripartite typology and, secondly, as a source of currents within the broader rivers of the other two factions. This latter point is quite key. Understood differently, the Confucian imagination is often a layer amongst other layers embedded in the intellectual foundations of Chinese society. Furthermore, we will also see how the Confucian imagination is layered into Chinese Christianity—especially in terms of the growing understanding of a Chinese public theology. As such, this chapter will serve as a connecting cog between Chapters 1–4 and Chapters 6 and 7.

#### THE RISE OF NEW LEFTISTS AND POLITICAL LIBERALS

It is worth mentioning at the outset of this discussion that, in the Chinese political scene, 'left' and 'right' refer to almost opposite political positions to that which is often discussed in Western discourse, with regards to progressivism and conservatism. By the middle of the twentieth century, leftist political ideas became associated with Mao Zedong and the communist party, and rightist political ideas tended to be associated with notions which opposed the party line. For a brief period, Mao introduced the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956 to encourage Chinese citizens to be vocal about their opinions on the government and the communist party. He followed it with an Anti-Rightist Movement from 1957 to 1959 which looked to denounce and purge so-called 'rightists'. New leftists, hence, are often considered the intellectual descendants of earlier Maoist ideals, emphasizing a political conservatism which tends to embrace the Chinese socialist political system. Liberals, who are sometimes labelled as 'rightists', can trace their intellectual lineage to the early twentieth-century introduction of Western liberal ideas into

China, propagated by May Fourth figures such as Liang Qichao (1873–1929) and Hu Shi (1891–1962).<sup>9</sup> In contrast to new leftists who tend to emphasize a political conservatism informed by Maoist thinking, contemporary liberals tend to emphasize a political progressivism informed by Western liberal thinkers such as John Rawls and Isaiah Berlin.

By the time of the Cultural Revolution, most voices which differed from the 'leftist' party line were swiftly suppressed. However, the reform and opening-up policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping shifted the climate from a Maoist dogmatism characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s to an openness towards new ideas in the 1980s. Like May Fourth at the beginning of the century, some would describe this growing desire to free the mind as a Chinese 'enlightenment'—a New or Second Chinese Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup> China's pursuit of modernization would raise ideological questions around the foundations of Chinese culture. This 'cultural fever' (*wenhua re*) took 'feudal' traditions like Confucianism and Christianity which were previously attacked—from May Fourth until the end of the Cultural Revolution—and asked if they could be useful in plotting China's future. However, this intellectual ferment and democratic spirit, which in many ways was shaped by a growing resurgence of political liberalism, was short-lived. It came to an abrupt halt by the end of the decade when Chinese military personnel opened fire on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989.

After these events, the international community critiqued the Chinese government for its harsh dealings with protesters. In particular, the United States would block China's bid to join the World Trade Organization and oppose China's desires to host the 2000

<sup>9</sup> See Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 128–58.

<sup>10</sup> Wang Hui, 'Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity', trans. Rebecca E. Karl, *Social Text* 16, no. 2 ([1997] Summer 1998): 9–44; Xu Jilin, 'The Fate of an Enlightenment: Twenty Years in the Chinese Intellectual Sphere (1978–1998)', trans. Geremie R. Barné and Gloria Davies, in *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*, eds Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (London: Routledge-Curzon, [1998] 2004), 183–203; Tang, 'The Second Chinese Enlightenment', 55–70; Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21–40.

Summer Olympic games. In turn, this would be met with an upsurge in Chinese nationalism and conservatism in which new leftism would be born.<sup>11</sup>

In his well-known 1997 essay 'Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity', the new leftist Wang Hui critiqued the political liberalism characteristic of the New Chinese Enlightenment of the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> He explained that Chinese intellectuals were enchanted by a teleological trajectory promised by Western modernity. Yet the modern project failed. Moreover, 'Even the very dictatorial state behavior that was the primary target of New Enlightenment thinking has been constrained by this huge market.'<sup>13</sup> In a way, this appears to be Wang offering homage to Deng Xiaoping who died earlier in February of that year. Deng was the paramount leader of China in 1989 when the order for a violent end to the protests was delivered. Then in the 1990s, Deng would make his famous southern tour to encourage the building of China's 'socialist market economy'. The prime opponent to liberalism was Deng Xiaoping himself. Convinced that liberalism has no more momentum after Deng's death, Wang concludes, 'Thus, at the close of this century, there are those who have already announced an end to history.'<sup>14</sup> Wang believes Chinese intellectuals need to move beyond such binary oppositions as China versus the West, tradition versus modernity. Even more importantly, Chinese intellectuals need to move beyond the *passé* thinking of liberalism if they truly hope to work towards China's future.

Around the same time, Liu Xiaofeng began moving away from Christian studies and turning towards the political philosophy of Leo Strauss. Echoing the views of Wang Hui, Liu—now a new leftist—would explain:

The political philosophy that Strauss advocates emphasizes the classical spirit, which first of all means a fundamental critique of the 'fanatic' modern thought (be it conservative, leftist, or liberal). The main reason

<sup>11</sup> Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*, 95–127.

<sup>12</sup> Wang, 'Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity', 9–44. See Wang Hui, *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Wang, 'Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity', 34.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Undoubtedly, Wang Hui is referring to and critiquing the theories promoted by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

for introducing Strauss to China is to avoid the century-long fanaticism towards all kinds of modern Western discourses.<sup>15</sup>

Strauss's thinking was to inspire Chinese intellectuals to return to the classics—both the Greek classics of Plato and the Chinese classics of Confucianism. Liu believes this would offer intellectuals hope to reinterpret and to reinvigorate the course of modern Chinese history.

New leftists like Wang Hui and Liu Xiaofeng argue that Western liberalism is insufficient in addressing the problems of contemporary China. Furthermore, Liu and others like Gan Yang turn to the Greek and Chinese classics to help highlight the corruptive power of Western liberalism and to provide a new discourse for nationalism amongst Chinese intellectuals.<sup>16</sup> In 2013, Liu would take this to another extreme and controversially describe Mao Zedong as the father of the nation (*guo fu*).<sup>17</sup> Overall, new leftist views reinforce a political and cultural conservatism which lends itself towards an open support of the Chinese government and the communist party.

Whilst the interest in liberalism did come to an abrupt halt in 1989, the late 1990s would see a recovery of liberals advocating for democracy and restraints on political power. Merle Goldman argues that in 1997—the same year of Deng Xiaoping's death and Wang Hui's essay—Jiang Zemin (b. 1926) would elude to the thinking of the once deposed Zhao Ziyang (1919–2005)<sup>18</sup> and offer a renewed potential for political reform.<sup>19</sup> Jiang encouraged grassroots democracy, political and economic reform, and the rule of law to curb corruption. Moreover, in 1998, China would welcome a number of foreign dignitaries such as the US President Bill Clinton and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson. That same year, China would sign the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The

<sup>15</sup> Liu Xiaofeng, 'Leo Strauss and the Rebirth of Classics in China', *Interpretation* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2016): 176.

<sup>16</sup> See Weng Leihua, 'The Straussian Reception of Plato and Nationalism in China', *The Comparatist* 39, no. 1 (2015): 313–34.

<sup>17</sup> For a brief discussion of this event and how another cultural Christian responded, see Fredrik Fällman, 'Public Faith? Five Voices of Chinese Christian Thought', *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 47, no. 4 (January 2016), 224–5.

<sup>18</sup> Zhao Ziyang was the General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1987 until 1989, after which he was deposed for his support of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

<sup>19</sup> Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*, 127–33.

late 1990s would provide a possible opening for liberalism to flourish once again.

One of the best-known Chinese political liberals is Xu Jilin (b. 1957) who, along with the Reformed pastor Wang Yi discussed in Chapter 4, was identified in 2004 by the politically liberal leaning Chinese periodical *Southern People's Weekly* (*Nanfang renwu zhouban*) as amongst China's fifty most influential public intellectuals.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to Wang Hui, Xu has written quite positively about the New Chinese Enlightenment of the 1980s. This was a period of significant public intellectualism which, although halted in 1989, began to be rediscovered in the 1990s. On the one hand, Xu believes public intellectuals need to maintain autonomy of their knowledge in order to truly criticize corrupt power. Conversely, the participation in the public life helps to protect this autonomy.<sup>21</sup> This kind of public intellectualism is quite different from the approach of new leftists who are often 'established intellectuals' with government support.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Xu's ideal in some ways resembles the approach of earlier Confucian literati, epitomized by the Donglin school spoken of in Chapter 1, who were willing and able to critique corrupt government power including the emperor himself. However, it also lends itself to a model of Western liberal democracy which advocates for checks on political power and a greater public voice for citizens.

As we discussed in Chapter 4, the power of political liberalism has likewise been upheld by Christian intellectuals such as Wang Yi and Yu Jie. Both affirm the strength of political liberalism in offering answers to China's problems. Moreover, they believe that China must recognize the significance of Christianity and the Christian cultural legacy which has brought shape to Western political liberalism.

<sup>20</sup> 'Yingxiang Zhongguo gonggong zhishifenzi 50 ren' [The Influence of China's 50 Public Intellectuals], *Nanfang renwu zhouban* [Southern People's Weekly], September 2004, accessed 25 September 2013, <<http://business.sohu.com/s2004/zhishifenzi50.shtml>>.

Incidentally, much discussion about 'public intellectuals' comes from political liberals rather than new leftists.

<sup>21</sup> Xu Jilin, 'What Future for Public Intellectuals?' *China Perspectives*, no. 52 (March–April 2004): 27–8.

<sup>22</sup> Timothy Cheek calls new leftists 'established intellectuals'. Interestingly, Merle Goldman explains that whilst political liberals were established intellectuals in the 1980s, they would lose this status after 1989. Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 286–91; Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*, 132–3.

For them, Christianity reinforces political liberalism for both the West and China.

## CONFUCIANISM IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

In contrast with the developments of liberalism and new leftism in the 1990s, New Confucianism as a third faction in the Chinese intellectual sphere has a somewhat different history. As a movement, New Confucianism often traces its beginnings to May Fourth mainland Chinese reformers and mid-twentieth century developments in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States. After a hiatus from the mainland during the Cultural Revolution, New Confucianism would find favour again in the 1980s cultural fever.<sup>23</sup> Prominent overseas New Confucian scholars Tu Weiming (Du Weiming, b. 1940), then a professor at Harvard University, and Cheng Chung-ying (Cheng Zhongying, b. 1935), a professor at University of Hawai'i at Manoa, would be invited to reintroduce scholars in mainland China to New Confucian thinking. As early as September 1984, the state-sponsored China Confucius Foundation was established in Qufu, the hometown of Confucius. Then, in November 1986, Confucianism was identified and funded as a key research topic under the national five-year plan for social sciences. In October 1989—later in the same year as the June Fourth democracy protests—Jiang Zemin would spend two hours recalling his Confucian upbringing in the celebrations of the 2,540th birthday of Confucius.<sup>24</sup> Undoubtedly, the government patronage for New Confucianism was quite clear.

One of the key figures in the intellectual discourse around Confucianism has been Jiang Qing (b. 1952).<sup>25</sup> Jiang would first become interested in New Confucianism's potential in the mid-1980s when

<sup>23</sup> Song Xianlin, 'Reconstructing the Confucian Ideal in 1980s China: The "Culture Craze" and New Confucianism', in *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*, ed. John Makeham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 81–104.

<sup>24</sup> Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard John Lufrano, eds, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999–2000), 2: 581.

<sup>25</sup> Jiang Qing, *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China's Ancient Past Can Shape Its Political Future*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Fan Ruiping (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). See Fan Ruiping, ed., *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China* (London: Springer, 2011).

he was introduced to the works of Tang Junyi (1909–78) and Liang Shuming (1893–1988). However, the events of 1989 forced him to rethink this and he would later distance himself from the theories that developed amongst these and other New Confucians, seeing them as largely maintaining a liberal democratic political framework. Whilst some would still describe Jiang as a ‘New Confucian’ (*xin rujia*),<sup>26</sup> he would reject this label for himself. Jiang explains,

In fact, the sovereignty of the people is simply the secular equivalent of the sovereignty of God. In contemporary Western politics, the people play the role that God played in the Middle Ages. Precisely for this reason, democratic politics asserts the sole legitimacy of the will of the people and cannot imagine any other form of legitimacy.<sup>27</sup>

Instead of the Western liberal democracy, Jiang advocates for what he calls a Confucian constitutionalism (*rujia xianzheng*), which proposes features such as an Academy which upholds the Confucian way and a constitutional monarch. Like Kang Youwei (1858–1927) a century earlier, Jiang Qing can be considered a contemporary advocate for restoring Confucianism as a state religion.

Whilst political liberalism is often challenged as being too ‘Western’ and new leftism is critiqued for being too ‘nationalistic’, the advantage for advocates of Confucianism like Jiang Qing is that it has strong cultural currency. Yet, it also has a somewhat muted position as a third faction in the Chinese intellectual sphere. Timothy Cheek retorts:

There is an important role for the New Confucian phenomenon in our story of Chinese intellectuals: its absence. By and large, the mainstream intellectuals, including New Left and liberals, do not participate in this movement very much at all. In fact, this is the general orientation that eschews religion generally. Of course, these topics are mentioned, but they are neither central nor frequent in their writings. The New Confucians, even in the academy are generally a world unto themselves.<sup>28</sup>

Cheek’s observation of the absence of New Confucianism in the broader debates offers some truth. Yet his diagnosis of religion is actually problematic given the separate debate that has existed since

<sup>26</sup> As noted in Chapter 4, Yu Jie describes individuals like Jiang Qing as a ‘New Confucian’ (*xin xin rujia*).

<sup>27</sup> Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, 30.

<sup>28</sup> Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 309.

the first Jesuit encounter with China: is Confucianism a religion?<sup>29</sup> Whilst it is not my intention to revisit this debate here,<sup>30</sup> my concern is to push against a rigid conceptualization of Confucianism in terms of the modern category of ‘religion’, as though that makes it (along with Christianity) virtually irrelevant in the contemporary discourse.

In fact, what we find is that Confucianism—or, perhaps, the Confucian imagination—is quite important for many Chinese intellectuals, including those who are associated with liberalism and new leftism. Already, we have noted how many New Confucians can be seen as attempting to modernize Confucianism by engaging Western liberal theories. There are other important figures such as the political liberal Li Zehou (b. 1930) who argued for ‘Western learning as essence, Chinese learning for application’ (*xiti zhongyong*) to bring together the Western (especially Marxist) trajectory of modernity with Confucian aesthetics.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, new leftists such as Liu Xiaofeng and Gan Yang have been strong advocates for restored studies in Confucianism, with the latter even proposing the notion of a Confucian socialism. Indeed, Confucianism can be seen as a strong partner for new leftists, in that there is much in common between nationalism and cultural conservatism.<sup>32</sup>

In recent decades, Confucianism has found success through government patronage of ‘Chinese classical studies’ (*guoxue*) programmes and through a grassroots revival in Chinese society.<sup>33</sup> At

<sup>29</sup> For two recent books which have attempted to tackle this knotty question in the contemporary period, see Anna Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); Chen Yong, *Confucianism as Religion: Controversies and Consequences* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Generally speaking, I tend to see Confucianism as a religiophilosophical tradition which has both ‘religious’ and ‘philosophical’ qualities.

<sup>31</sup> In so doing, Li was revising a late nineteenth century attempt by Zhang Zhidong to reform Confucianism in light of Western thought in the phrase *zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong* (‘Chinese learning as essence, Western learning for application’) or *zhongti xiyong*, as a shorthand. Li Zehou, *Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shi lun* [On Modern Chinese Intellectual History] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing, [1986] 2008), 333–65. See Sylvia Chan, ‘Li Zehou and New Confucianism’, in *New Confucianism*, ed. Makeham, 105–28.

<sup>32</sup> See Zhang Taisu, ‘Why are China’s Leftists embracing Confucius?’ *Huffington Post*, 27 April 2015, accessed 8 February 2017, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/taisu-zhang/china-leftists-confucius\\_b\\_7147498.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/taisu-zhang/china-leftists-confucius_b_7147498.html)>.

<sup>33</sup> See Daniel A. Bell, *China’s New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society*, pbk edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 292–7.

the intellectual level, Confucianism is not merely a separate faction from liberalism and new leftism; it also offers important qualities embraced by both these schools. Timothy Cheek is correct that Confucianism as a discrete 'religion' is not always directly discussed by Chinese intellectuals. However, Confucianism's influence on these intellectuals provides evidence for the presence of a 'Confucian imagination', as discussed in the Introduction of this book, in the substrata of the Chinese public space.

### CONFUCIAN IMAGINATION AND CHINESE CHRISTIANITY

Another area where the Confucian imagination has a strong influence is in certain aspects of Chinese Christianity and one of its key intellectual products: Chinese public theology. Undoubtedly, more recent intellectual streams such as new leftism and political liberalism have also been utilized by Chinese Christian intellectuals. But, in addition, the Confucian imagination offers particular patterns of engagement which are not easily forgotten.

The connections between Christianity and Confucianism were more readily made by Chinese Christians before 1949. In Chapter 1, we already discussed some ways in which earlier Chinese converts had a strong identification with Confucianism. Certainly, all of the major Chinese Christian intellectuals during the Ming and Qing dynasties were learned Confucian scholar-officials. When considering Ming-era figures such as Yang Tingyun (1562–1627) and Wang Zheng (1571–1644), both Christianity and Confucianism offered resources for engaging the Chinese civil society. Confucian education would likewise shape late Qing and early Republican intellectuals, such as Hong Xiuquan (1814–64) and Ma Xiangbo (1840–1939) and, later, Wu Leichuan (1870–1944) and T. C. Chao (Zhao Zichen, 1888–1979). Despite the May Fourth attacks on Confucianism, Wu and Chao would still continue to juxtapose Christian and Confucian thinking as a means for encouraging China's progress.

The farther removed we are historically from the last dynasty, the more tenuous the relationship between Christianity and Confucianism has become. In part, this is due to the various anti-Confucianism attitudes and policies of the early 1900s until the end of the Cultural

Revolution. However, this has also been a result of the fact that few today are able to read classical Chinese writing (*wenyanwen*). The vernacularization movement (*baihua yundong*) of the May Fourth era advocated for a shift towards a modern Chinese writing system. The Chinese script would also be simplified during the Maoist revolution to encourage higher literacy rates. However, this would also result in changing the linguistic medium which gave access to the 'feudal' tradition.<sup>34</sup> A figure like Wang Weifan (1927–2015), discussed in Chapter 2, would therefore be amongst the last generation of Chinese Christians to be fully immersed in the classical Chinese tradition. In Taiwan and Hong Kong today, where the traditional Chinese script is still used, primary and secondary school education still includes exposure to classical literature. Contrastingly, whilst there is a growing revival in mainland China in the reading of the Chinese classics, the average Chinese university student today is unable to have a good grasp of these texts without modern Chinese renderings.

Beyond the explicit engagement with Confucianism, an implicit reliance on the Confucian imagination can likewise be recognized. For instance, Fredrik Fällman, in his discussion of Calvinism amongst the urban Christian intellectuals, sees Confucianism playing a role in shaping a variety of their theological priorities. Confucianism and Calvinism are able to complement one another in many respects: in the articulation of a legal system, in expressing different functions for men and women, and in offering a particular reverence for the written word.<sup>35</sup>

Generally speaking, what has been discussed so far is related to how the Confucian imagination encounters Christianity, resulting in the formation of a Chinese contextual theology. Of course, this also has implications for the shape of Chinese public theology. As has been amply demonstrated in Chapters 1–4, public intellectuals in contemporary China are shaped by a Confucian tradition of the intellectual 'managing the world' (*jingshi*). The Confucian ideal of inward sageliness and outward kingliness (*neisheng waiwang*) prioritizes the cultivation of oneself—intellectually, morally, and spiritually—as a penultimate

<sup>34</sup> See Ci Jiwei, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution: From Utopianism to Hedonism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 68–9.

<sup>35</sup> Fredrik Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of Faith Among Chinese Intellectuals', in *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, ed. Francis Khok Gee Lim (London: Routledge, 2013), 158, 163, 165.

goal to cultivating the broader world—intellectually, morally, and spiritually. The historical course of the decades since the Cultural Revolution have offered growing opportunities for recent generations of Chinese Christians to be more publicly engaged. But the history of Chinese Christianity overall—especially amongst educated converts—shows this to be a longer-term pattern. Where are we today and how does the Chinese case fit into the broader discourse around public theology? These are questions which we will turn to in Chapters 6 and 7.

### A FLUID PUBLIC SPACE

This chapter began with a discussion about the divided public space in today's China, with a particular focus on political liberalism and new leftism. But the chapter also highlighted how these two political schools have influenced and have been influenced by Confucianism and Christianity. This has suggested that the divisions between various factions are perhaps not always as defined as they may seem. Indeed, as the three teachings discourse (*sanjiao heyi*) around Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism suggested the possibility of porous borders across various teachings in the fourth century, so too are there porous borders between the four schools of political liberalism, new leftism, Confucianism, and Christianity in the twenty-first century. These schools have multiple convergences and divergences, resulting in a public space which is not as divided as is often presumed.

Mindful of the fluidity of these categories, this chapter ended by offering a closer examination into how the Confucian imagination has specifically shaped the developments of Chinese Christianity. But this also means that Chinese public theology offers important contributions and challenges to the wider discourse around public theology. In Chapters 6 and 7, we will focus on two of the most prominent topics—transcendence and ecclesiology—and how they relate to Chinese public theology. Moreover, we shall explore ways in which Eastern Orthodox theology can further enrich contemporary developments in Chinese public theology.

## 6

### The Public as Transcendent

Chapters 1 to 4 of this book attempted to offer a historical discussion into what can be termed Chinese public theology, at least in its nascent forms, with a particular focus on three major generations of thinkers since the end of the Cultural Revolution. Chapter 5 provided a more focused look at the Chinese public space in the contemporary period, both in terms of the divergence in views and in the convergence in what I have termed a 'Confucian imagination'. I have suggested that this Confucian imagination has offered a particular shape to certain forms of Chinese Christianity and, by extension, Chinese public theology.

Chapter 5 also showed that the Confucian imagination offers both strengths and weaknesses to Christianity. Part of the challenge, I believe, is a tendency to resist the view that Chinese Christianity is influenced by Confucianism. To recognize this influence is to speak of Christianity as more malleable than one may like, especially if a person is coming from a more conservative theological orientation. This is magnified by a tendency in China whereby Western Christian views are quickly translated—both metaphorically and literally, through translated works. Such activity has often happened with little contextual reflection or evaluation. I do not deny the value that Chinese Christians may gain from Dutch Neo-Calvinist understandings of the cultural mandate and common grace or American Christian writings on family life and the urban church. Remarkably, even the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Herman Bavinck once declared:

Calvinism, though laying claim to being the purest religion, and to having most thoroughly purified Christianity of all Romish admixture, has never pretended to be the only true Christian religion. . . . Calvinism is a specific and the richest and most beautiful form of Christianity, but it is not coextensive with Christianity. The Church will not attain to the



full unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God until, as the body of Christ, she shall have reached her fullest growth and all members of her body shall be fully developed.<sup>1</sup>

Christian thought must develop in China—as anywhere else—on its own terms. It can and should borrow from beyond its borders. But greater care can be taken in considering the transferability of ideas divorced from the historical and geographical soil which they were sowed and cultivated in, and subsequently replanted into a new soil with many new and different contextual layers.

In my previous book,<sup>2</sup> I showed that, whilst many Chinese Protestants have been influenced by more monergistic understandings of the relationship between God and humanity coming from Western Christianity, these Chinese have tended to emphasize a synergistic view of causality and a Divine-human unity that has undeniable parallels with the Byzantine doctrine of *theosis* or deification. But this is the result of an *implicit* reinterpretation of the traditional Chinese theme of a Heaven-human unity. In this context, Chinese Christianity draws not from Eastern Orthodoxy, but from Chinese religiosity. I therefore argued for the relevance of Eastern Orthodox theology in the further development of Chinese Christian theology. My overall focus was largely on *theosis* from a soteriological perspective, although my discussion tended to not be limited to that theological locus alone.

My concern in this chapter and Chapter 7 is to offer a constructive and critical dialogue between elements of Eastern Orthodox theology and Confucianism, with hopes that this can offer suggestions for advancing the course of Chinese public theology in the current situation of mainland China today. I agree with the Eastern Orthodox scholar Andrew Louth who argues that *theosis* ‘witnesses to the rooting of theology in the transforming encounter with God, now known most fully in the Incarnation, and approached through the “gates of repentance”’.<sup>3</sup> If I am correct in my assessment, *theosis* is

<sup>1</sup> Herman Bavinck, ‘The Future of Calvinism’, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5, no. 17 (1894): 23–4.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Louth, ‘The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology’, in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian*

not only a useful doctrine to reorient Chinese Christian soteriology, it is also able to help re-envision the course of Chinese public theology. In this chapter, I expand on this in engaging a very fundamental question related to public theology more generally: is Christianity simply a private religion, or should it also have a voice in the public space?

#### TENSION WITHIN THE SECULAR-SACRED DIVIDE

To be clear, the main figures studied in this book would emphatically say ‘YES’—Christians are to have a strong voice in the public space. Yet this cannot be said as a position universally held by Chinese Christians. However, there are many today, especially affiliated with non-registered churches, who focus more on spiritual piety than on exercising a distinctive public voice. But this is not to say they hold to a fully privatized faith. Figures such as Wang Mingdao (1900–91) in the early twentieth century and Allen Yuan (Yuan Xiangchen; 1914–2005) and Samuel Lamb (Lin Xiangao; 1924–2013) in the late twentieth century were all resistant to any form of active public engagement—especially if it involved participating in a group like the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. They were all intellectuals, educated in Christian schools, and produced various forms of print capitalism to spread their Christian thoughts. But, as discussed in Chapter 1, their approach mirrors a type of public theology exhibited by somebody like Stanley Hauerwas who sees the church as an alternative community in pursuit of holiness as an act of public witness to this world.<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not we see Chinese Christians as engaging publicly, directly or indirectly, they are working within the dichotomies often associated with the rise of Western modernity: the secular and the sacred, the thisworldly and the otherworldly, and the public and the private. This explains why the discourse around the cosmic Christ

*Traditions*, eds Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 43.

<sup>4</sup> I should also be careful not to polarize these positions. Many Chinese Christians who have a non-interventionist attitude with the government are increasingly wanting to engage the hurts felt by their neighbours—and beyond, as demonstrated by events such as the Christian response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

was so valuable for Protestants affiliated with the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement, such as K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012), Chen Zemin (b. 1917), Shen Yifan (1928–94), and even the evangelical Wang Weifan (1927–2015). As we saw in Chapter 2, cosmic Christologies have been part of the ecumenical discourse in South Asia since the 1960s and in China since the 1980s. But the cosmic nature of Christ was readily discussed by Chinese Christians much earlier in the twentieth century, such as T. C. Chao and Y. T. Wu (Wu Yaozong, 1893–1979), as Edmond Tang has argued,<sup>5</sup> and even by a self-described fundamentalist such as Jia Yuming (1880–1964). Through the God-man Jesus Christ, the Incarnation offers a collapsing of worlds whereby the Transcendent has entered into history. This therefore offers Christians a reason and a possibility to engage in the public concerns experienced in this same history.

Whereas K. H. Ting and Wang Weifan spoke about transcendence in order to suggest how Christians and non-Christians can work together, later generations would speak about transcendence as a prerequisite for China's overall progress. In Chapter 3, we saw how He Guanghu insisted that all religiophilosophical traditions maintained forms of transcendence which were useful for China. Liu Xiaofeng, in his early writings, and Zhuo Xinping would specifically underscore the unique contribution of the Christian notion of transcendence towards China's search for modernity. In Chapter 4, this would be accentuated in the writings of Wang Yi and Yu Jie who believe the transcendent spirit within Christianity gives Christian political liberalism an edge above all other political theories. Hence, whilst the Chinese legal system preferences 'private' religion through 'freedom of religious belief' (*zongjiao xinyang ziyou*) rather than 'freedom of religion' (*zongjiao ziyou*), the Confucian imagination insists that Chinese Christianity must have a public theology. Otherworldly matters have thisworldly significance.

Undoubtedly, in broader Christian discourse, we find similar pushes against the polarization of 'sacred' and 'secular' realms—and, furthermore, 'public' and 'private' realms. Robert Markus has shown this in his work on Augustine's understanding of the secular,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Edmond Tang, 'The Cosmic Christ: The Search for a Chinese Theology', *Studies in World Christianity* 1, no. 2 (October 1995): 131–42.

<sup>6</sup> Robert A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006).

which has influenced the public and political theologies of figures such as Oliver O'Donovan and Charles Mathewes.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, this has been shown to be a significant theme of Eastern or Greek patristic thought, what Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen calls 'classical panentheism',<sup>8</sup> and expanded in the political theology of Aristotle Papanikolaou.<sup>9</sup> But in the Chinese context, we must also consider how the Confucian imagination shapes these themes in Chinese public theology.

#### HUMANISM IN THE CONFUCIAN IMAGINATION

One of the key challenges in these themes is that it reflects a different tension which we see in the discourse between Christianity and Confucianism: immanence and transcendence. As briefly discussed in Chapter 3, this is a debate that can be traced back to the first Jesuit encounters with Ming dynasty Neo-Confucianism and has continued to develop since the last century in the New Confucian discourse. Indeed, perceiving immanence and transcendence as antithetical does not sit well with Chinese religiosity that is often said to embody a view that 'Heaven and humanity are in unity' (*Tian ren heyi*). This is why Tu Weiming speaks about the 'anthropocosmic' vision of humanity and Thomé Fang (Fang Dongmei, 1899–1977) speaks about humans as 'concreative' agents.<sup>10</sup> The Confucian way is found in the convergence of the Way of Heaven and the Way of humanity. Fung Yu-Lan (Feng Youlan, 1895–1990) explains this quite poignantly in terms of

<sup>7</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Charles T. Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> The term 'classical panentheism' is meant to be distinguished from 'classical theism' and 'contemporary panentheism', the latter of which can be found in the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jürgen Moltmann, and others. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 226–49.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical As Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Tu Weiming, 'An "Anthropocosmic" Perspective on Creativity', in *Dialogues of Philosophies, Religions and Civilizations in the Era of Globalization*, ed. Zhao Dunhua (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), 143–53; Thomé H. Fang, 'The World and the Individual in Chinese Metaphysics', *Philosophy East and West* 14, no. 2 (July 1964): 107–8.

the Mencian phrase *Tianmin* ('citizen of Heaven' or, in D. C. Lau, 'subject of Heaven'):

[A person] is not only a member of society, but at the same time a member of the universe. He is a citizen of the social organization, but at the same time a citizen of Heaven, as Mencius says. Having this understanding, he does everything for the benefit of the universe. . . . This understanding and self-consciousness constitute for him a higher sphere of living which I call the transcendent sphere.<sup>11</sup>

Confucianism is not merely limited to the thisworldly reality of the moral sphere but includes a higher, otherworldly reality of the transcendent sphere.

Mindful of this transcendent quality, it may seem somewhat ironic to describe Confucianism as a humanistic tradition. Yet the eminent Chinese philosopher Wing-tsit Chan introduces his magnum opus declaring:

If one word could characterize the entire history of Chinese philosophy, that word would be humanism—not the humanism that denies or slights a Supreme Power, but one that professes the unity of man and Heaven [*Tian ren heyi*]. In this sense, humanism has dominated Chinese thought from the dawn of its history.

Humanism was an outgrowth, not of speculation, but of historical and social change. . . . Humanism, in gradual ascendance, reached its climax in Confucius.<sup>12</sup>

For Chan, the historical shifts from tribal societies to a feudal society brought with it a way of understanding how Heaven's will (*Tianming*) was now understood as ordering everything under Heaven (*Tianxia*).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy: A Systematic Account of Chinese Thought from its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: The Free Press, 1948), 339. See Mencius 7a: 19. Translated in D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003), 293.

<sup>12</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Vincent Shen offers an alternative narrative, seeing this as a result of a shift from a political theology centred around an ancient high God of *Di* or *Shangdi* towards an embrace of creative humanism, centred around the Great Ultimate (*Taiji*). Vincent Shen, 'The Fading of Political Theology and the Rise of Creative Humanism', in *Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy*, ed. Vincent Shen (London: Springer, 2014), 23–51.

If we were to consider more recent history, it is worthwhile to note that Chinese communism further upholds this humanistic tradition. It is instructive that, today, if you were to stand in the middle of Tiananmen Square and face North, across Chang'an Avenue, you will see before you a massive portrait of Mao Zedong hanging above the main gate to the Forbidden City, the historic walled city in which the emperor lived. The gate is known in Chinese as *Tiananmen*—the Gate of Heavenly Peace. It is the responsibility of the emperor and, by extension, the communist party today, to bring about Heaven's peace on earth.

If the Confucian outlook is humanistic, the Confucian imagination in Chinese public theology is likewise humanistically disposed. This does not mean it is divorced from God or Heaven. As is often stated, 'Heaven engenders and humanity completes' (*Tiansheng rencheng*). Hence, whilst God or Heaven may be plotting the course, it is the human prerogative to bring this into fruition in the world.<sup>14</sup> What this means is that the humanistic management of this world (*jingshi*) is the main goal. We begin with God and end in this world. Indeed, as Christians work with non-Christians towards the common good in society, can we still have aspirations beyond this world? The attention offered to this world has the significant risk of prioritizing the immanent at the expense of the Transcendent—forgetting the source of one's *telos*. Perhaps this is one way of interpreting Liu Xiaofeng's drastic shift from one who once argued for a transcendent source of morality to one who advocates for a political philosophy with no noticeable sign of the Christian God: he has forsaken his first love.

However, it is worth noting that though Confucianism may be humanistic, this does not mean it is anthropocentric—but anthropocosmic, as Tu Weiming describes it. Confucianism in its classical and Neo-Confucian forms has had a strong naturalistic dimension, given that it emphasizes a triadic relationship between Heaven, Earth, and humanity.<sup>15</sup> Even the phrase mentioned above, 'Heaven engenders and humanity completes' (*Tiansheng rencheng*), is meant to be a shorthand for the phrase 'Heaven and Earth create it, the sage perfects

<sup>14</sup> To be clear, this is by no means a strict determinism as understood in the Augustinian-Reformed tradition. See Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*, 137–43.

<sup>15</sup> See Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, eds, *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

it' (*Tiandi sheng zhi, shengren cheng zhi*).<sup>16</sup> Why then has virtually none of the Christian figures we have discussed, apart from perhaps Wang Weifan,<sup>17</sup> had much interest in ecology? In fact, the lacuna is not idiosyncratic of Chinese Christianity but a lacking within China (and elsewhere) more broadly. Perhaps one of the reasons for this neglect is because China has spent much of the last century pursuing nation-building and modernity.<sup>18</sup> Even within New Confucianism, it would only be in the latter part of the twentieth century that there has been an 'ecological turn' in their formulations of humanism.<sup>19</sup> Generally speaking, Chinese public intellectuals have not put much attention to this subject until now—when there are suffocating levels of pollution, of all forms.<sup>20</sup>

As we will see in the section 'The Public as Mystical', Eastern Orthodox theology has the potential to offer suggestions to address both of these shortcomings. In the Western context, the course of secularization necessitates a revisiting of early Latin figures like Augustine. But for both Eastern and Chinese Christianity, a 'classical panentheism' offers a useful basis for public theological discourse. Public theology is therefore not simply a matter of engagement with a 'secular' public, because the public space is understood as a sacred space which God enters and works to reconcile to Himself.

<sup>16</sup> See *Xunzi* 10: 6 and 27: 31. Translated in John Knoblock, trans., *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 3 vols (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988–94), 2: 126, 3: 215.

<sup>17</sup> See Wang Weifan, 'Ren yu dadi' [Humanity and Earth], in *Nian zai cang mang: Wang Weifan wenji (1979–98)* [In the Wilderness for Two Decades: Selected Works of Wang Weifan (1979–98)] (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, [1996] 2011), 84–92.

<sup>18</sup> See Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Tu Weiming, 'The Ecological Turn in New Confucian Humanism: Implications for China and the World', *Daedalus* 130, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 243–64.

Daoism has historically had a consistent interest in nature. However, few Chinese public intellectuals engage Daoism as an intellectual resource for China's ecological problems.

<sup>20</sup> In sinophone literature, perhaps one of the only theologians to write significantly about the ecology is the Hong Kong scholar Lai Pan-chiu. See Lai Pan-chiu (Lai Pinchao) and Lin Hongxing, *Ye Ru duihua yu shengtai guanhuai* [Confucian-Christian Dialogue and Ecological Concern] (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2006); Lai Pan-chiu (Lai Pinchao), *Guangchang shang de hanyu shenxue: Cong shenxue dao jidu zongjiao yanjiu* [Sino-Christian Theology in the Public Square: From Theology to Christian Studies] (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2014), 219–38.

## THE PUBLIC AS MYSTICAL

Historically, perhaps the most significant guiding principle within Eastern Orthodox understandings of the church's public engagement is related to the notion of *symphonia*. Originally articulated by Justinian I, the emperor of East Rome in 527–65, *symphonia* spoke of a harmony between God's two greatest gifts to mortals, the Empire and the priesthood, which offered civil hierarchies to manage human affairs and ecclesial hierarchies to manage divine affairs.<sup>21</sup> This would continue to be the operative approach of Orthodoxy in the Byzantine Empire, until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, as well as the subsequent Russian Empire. However, it also presumes that the state is ruled by an Orthodox emperor, which came to an end in Russia with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Whilst some recent Orthodox thinkers have tried to resurrect the notion of *symphonia*, others such as the Russian Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakov have recognized that the historical alliance between the church and the state must give way to a new reality in the present era: 'The ultimate influence of the Church on life, and especially on the state, will be only increased by separation of Church and state.'<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the theocratic elements of *symphonia* dispose the church to be one which is strongly dependent upon the state, thereby hindering the development of any significant radical or liberative view of Orthodox political theology.<sup>23</sup>

What we see in Bulgakov is a growing interest amongst Orthodox thinkers to consider how their own ideological legacy is able to engage Western understandings of the modern liberal democracy. One of the most creative recent attempts to move beyond *symphonia* and develop an Orthodox political theology has been by the American-born Greek Orthodox scholar Aristotle Papanikolaou.<sup>24</sup> Part of his concern is to address the uneasiness Orthodox theologians have

<sup>21</sup> John Meyendorff, 'Justinian, the Empire and the Church', *Dumbarton Oaks* 22 (1968): 48–9.

<sup>22</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, trans. Elizabeth S. Cram (London: The Centenary Press, 1935), 190.

<sup>23</sup> Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, trans. Gregory Edwards (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012), 65–80. See Olivier Clément, 'Orthodox Reflections on "Liberation Theology"', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (January 1985): 63–72.

<sup>24</sup> Papanikolaou, *The Mystical As Political*.

had with human rights language. For instance, he describes Christos Yannaras as believing that the 'Enlightenment privatization of religion, enshrined in the principle of the church-state separation, is not a rejection of Western Christianity, but the logical outcome of a mode of thinking that separates the material from the divine'.<sup>25</sup> In other words, as Western Christians since Augustine tended to reject the notion of *theosis*, this created a gulf in the relationship between the Creator and the creation which ultimately degenerated into the rejection of the Divine in favour of the material. Whilst Papanikolaou is not in full agreement with Yannaras's critique of Western liberal democracy and an othering of the West, nor is he interested in fully embracing political liberalism, he does believe Orthodox political theology can fruitfully be built upon the Orthodox teachings around *theosis*.

Papanikolaou argues that *theosis*, understood as working out the commands to love God and to love one's neighbour, underscores a mystical theology which is deeply concerned with the material. For many, this may appear as contradictory to the history of Eastern Orthodox asceticism which seems to suggest that one can only achieve a Divine-human union through fleeing this world. However, Papanikolaou argues, '*Theosis* was never meant to institute a Gnostic either/or-ness between the divine and the material creation, but affirms material creation as the arena of the divine presence'.<sup>26</sup> This is true when considering *theosis* from a seminal Orthodox figure such as Maximus the Confessor (580–662), who was 'motivated by his vision of man as the centre of God's creation and a particular object of His providence, man as both microcosm and mediator. Christian spirituality implies for him the restitution of this microcosm and the fulfilment of this mediating function'.<sup>27</sup>

Significantly, this underscores a 'blessed inversion'—what Lars Thunberg describes as a 'reciprocity of natures between God and

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 90. See Christos Yannaras, 'Human Rights and the Orthodox Church', in *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation*, ed. Emmanuel Clapsis (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004), 83–9.

<sup>26</sup> Papanikolaou, *The Mystical As Political*, 196.

<sup>27</sup> Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2nd edn (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1995), 19. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Dale (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 322; Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 2nd edn (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 50.

man'<sup>28</sup>—whereby *theosis* is only made possible because of the Incarnation. Hence, if we were to orient a Chinese public theology around *theosis*, the end goal is not humanistic but theistic. Humans are called to participate as coworkers with God in the public space—not only in terms of a soteriological divinization of humanity but also in reconciling the material to the Divine.

This has further implications for developing an ecotheology.<sup>29</sup> Building from the Maximian relationship between the *Logos* of Christ and the divine *logoi* of created beings,<sup>30</sup> Daniel Munteanu explains:

God's grace indwells all material things and beings, so that everything participates in God. The divine *logoi* have a natural movement which cannot be separated from the providential energies of God. The movement of the world is an expression of an inner aspiration to fulfilment. The divine *logoi* expresses also the efficient power of God who is working in the world from inside.<sup>31</sup>

Dumitru Staniloae, likewise building on Maximus, articulates this even more provocatively:

The economy of God, that is, his plan with regard to the world, consists in the deification of the created world, something which, as a consequence of sin, implies also its salvation. . . . Salvation and deification undoubtedly have humanity directly as their aim but not a humanity separated from nature, rather one that is ontologically united with it.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 53–4.

<sup>29</sup> For a good engagement on the topic of ecotheology which brings together Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox voices, see Willis J. Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> According to Lars Thunberg, in Maximus, the *logoi* of creation 'is deeply integrated into a personal, general vision of the mysterious and deifying presence of Christ the Logos in the world'. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 74. See *ibid.*, 72–9; Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7. Translated in Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 45–74.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Munteanu, 'Cosmic Liturgy: The Theological Dignity of Creation as a Basis of an Orthodox Ecotheology', *International Journal of Public Theology* 4, no. 3 (July 2010): 335.

<sup>32</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. and eds Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 1.

The divine *logoi* exist in all of creation—not limited to humanity—and have a spiritual dimension because the entirety of creation is penetrated by God's energies.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the goal of all of creation is not simply in creation itself, but in participating in the Transcendent's love and grace.

With regards to the inability of humans to achieve these goals, Papanikolaou holds that *theosis* implies human freedom and, as an extension, political communities to reinforce this freedom. He explains:

Political communities are by their very nature deficiently sacramental, put in place because humans have fallen short of relating to each other as God relates to each one of them, but not necessarily completely devoid of God's presence. Christians, thus, should never expect a fully sacramentalized form of political community, one in which the community exists in relations of love and freedom that constitute persons as unique and irreducible. Such an understanding of community becomes the ideal by which to prophetically critique political communities that inevitably fall short of this ideal.<sup>34</sup>

Papanikolaou recognizes that humans and human political communities are never fully 'sacramentalized'. As such, political communities exist to offer restraints in human societies, but ecclesial communities should also be willing to critique the political communities.

Along with correcting the extremes of *symphonia*, Papanikolaou's view has affinities with the Dutch Neo-Calvinist understanding of 'sphere sovereignty' as proposed by Abraham Kuyper and, today, appreciated by many Chinese Calvinists. Kuyper believes each sphere of life—state, church, family, work, education—is to maintain its own sovereignty. Consistent with his Calvinist tradition, Kuyper believes this sovereignty is never absolute in itself—as the only absolute sovereignty is one found in God. Hence, he argues that no sphere can dominate another and that the state is the 'sphere of spheres' that is responsible to manage over all other spheres.<sup>35</sup> At the same time,

<sup>33</sup> Here, 'energy' is understood as God's activity in this world. Following the logic of Gregory Palamas, humans can participate in the divine energies but not in the divine essence. See John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, trans. George Lawrence (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 202–27.

<sup>34</sup> Papanikolaou, *The Mystical As Political*, 125–6.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Kuyper, 'Sphere Sovereignty', in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, [1880] 1998), 472.

Kuyper believes that, 'The sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the Church exist side by side, and they mutually limit each other.'<sup>36</sup> Both Papanikolaou and Kuyper hold an optimism about the role of the state, perhaps as suggested in the biblical claims of Romans 13. But they also presume that the political community and the ecclesial community offer checks and balances for one another. This is perhaps much easier to accept in a Western democracy such as the United States or the Netherlands than a context such as China. But it is also the course that has been taken by a number of Chinese urban churches which have attempted to register with their local government offices, as opposed to operating apart from or in defiance of the law.<sup>37</sup>

Papanikolaou's proposal also resists any attempts at promoting a Christian society or a new Christendom. Provocatively, he argues that Christians should promote a political community and a public space which allows 'for the possibility of rejecting God, and not the more intuitive privileging of the Orthodox Church because of its claim to truth'.<sup>38</sup> This may seem odd, but is key to the Orthodox understanding of human free will. As John Meyendorff explains:

If Maximus the Confessor is right in defining freedom, or self-determination, as the very sign of the image of God in man, it is obvious that this freedom is ultimate and that man cannot be forced into a union with God, even in virtue of such philosophical necessity as God's 'goodness'.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst Christianity has been making great strides in China, it will hardly become a Christian nation in the foreseeable future. This reality is embraced by the state-sanctioned Protestant leaders discussed in Chapter 2 such as K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012) and Wang Weifan (1927–2015), as well as various cultural Christians discussed in Chapter 3 such as He Guanghu (b. 1950) and Zhuo Xinqiing (b. 1955). For them, Christianity in the public space must

<sup>36</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Stone Lectures* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 138. See John Halsey Wood, Jr, *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> See Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (London: Routledge, 2013), 102.

<sup>38</sup> Papanikolaou, *The Mystical As Political*, 128.

<sup>39</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, rev. 2nd edn (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 222.

work side by side with those of other religions or those of no religion at all. In contrast, as we have seen in Chapter 4, some urban Christians are aiming to Christianize Chinese society. Hence, Wang Yi (b. 1973) and Yu Jie (b. 1973) have tried to promote a Christian form of political liberalism and Wang Yi's church has even worked towards establishing a Christian elementary school, seminary, and liberal arts college, echoing the course of American fundamentalism.<sup>40</sup> On one extreme, this parallels the approach of Chinese communism which absolutized allegiance to Maoist dogmas during the Cultural Revolution. On another extreme, it also parallels the approach of Orthodox churches in traditionally 'Orthodox' countries which have perceived their public engagement as 'limited to medieval/pre-modern models of intervention, rather than witness, solidarity, and justice'.<sup>41</sup> If we are to take *theosis* seriously, humans must be allowed to embrace the free will afforded by the image of God—even if that opens up the possibility of rejecting God and Christianity.

#### THE TRANSCENDENT AS PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC AS TRANSCENDENT

I began this chapter with a discussion of why Chinese Christianity places a priority upon public engagement in direct and indirect ways. The historical trajectory of Chinese intellectual thought runs parallel to Eastern Christian thought—both of which have developed largely outside the course of Western modernity until roughly the last century. The Confucian imagination has offered Chinese Christianity a strong desire to bring together tensions between the secular and the sacred, the thisworldly and the otherworldly, and the public and the private. But it has also been disposed towards a humanism which, despite Confucianism's traditional disposition towards an anthropocosmic understanding, has resulted in an anthropocentric

<sup>40</sup> See Joel A. Carpenter, 'Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942', *Church History* 49, no. 1 (March 1980): 62-75.

The phenomenon of Christian schools in China is not idiosyncratic to Wang Yi. There are hundreds of them throughout the country, networked through associations of Christian schools. Many follow a model of home schooling which relies on Calvinist teaching materials.

<sup>41</sup> Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, 85.

orientation. The Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*, then, has been shown to offer corrective suggestions to Chinese public theology. All of creation—human and non-human—is offered the freedom to participate in the love and grace of God. Indeed, Christ is both the author and the perfecter of the Christian faith, working as the source (*arche*) and the goal (*telos*) of Christianity (Hebrews 12: 2). Transcendence is a basis for public engagement; but moreover, Christians are to engage the public space in hopes to bring all of creation into communion with the Transcendent.

## The Christian Family as a Public Body

In Chapter 6 we saw how the Confucian imagination offered Chinese Christianity a tendency to resist common dichotomies such as the secular and the sacred, the thisworldly and the otherworldly, and the public and the private. Whilst part of this was due to the Confucian imagination, I also offered suggestions as to how the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* could be useful in addressing certain concerns within Chinese public theology.

In this chapter, I hope to focus on perhaps one of the most important contributions Chinese public theology has to offer to the broader global church: public theology as a collective enterprise. This clearly draws from the Confucian imagination, resulting in strengths and weaknesses—weaknesses which, we will see, can be addressed by considering the history of Confucianism and the recent Eastern Orthodox discussions around the Trinity, and how the latter relates to personhood and the ecclesial community.

### THE PUBLIC NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Connected with the last chapter, Herbert Fingarette argues that Confucius believed human communities were sacred. He contends:

Yet, in spite of this dedicated and apparently secular prosaic moralism, we also find occasional comments in the *Analects* which seem to reveal a belief in magical powers of profound importance. By 'magic' I mean the power of a specific person to accomplish his will directly and effortlessly through ritual, gesture and incantation. The user of magic . . . simply wills the end in the proper ritual setting and with the proper ritual

gesture and word; without further effort on his part, the deed is accomplished.<sup>1</sup>

He contends that a more Western-influenced reading of the Confucian *Analects* approaches Confucianism as mainly a parallel to Platonic-rationalistic teachings which are focused on the virtue of benevolence (*ren*). As a corrective, Fingarette suggests that we should pay more attention to the 'magical' quality of ritual (*li*) which underscores an aesthetic beauty—a sacredness in the human community.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, what we see in a number of Confucian texts is the underscoring of the moral and the magical relationship between the individual and the broader community. In the *Analects*, Confucius (551–479 BCE) explains, 'When the gentleman [*junzi*] feels profound affection for his parents, the common people will be stirred to benevolence.'<sup>3</sup> Mencius (371–c.289 BCE) offers a similar view when he states, 'If only everyone loved his parents and treated his elders with deference, the Empire would be at peace.'<sup>4</sup> For both Confucius and Mencius, moral transformation is not limited to the individual, but is magically manifested in the outworkings of moral excellence in the family. Moreover, moral excellence is not limited to the individual family, but is magically manifested in the outworkings of moral excellence in the society and, indeed, the empire. Personal moral cultivation has significant ramifications in the public space—*through* the family.

The importance of the human community in the Confucian imagination is not limited to a theoretical matter of ancient philosophers, but is still recognized in contemporary Chinese society. In studying parts of rural China in the twentieth century, the Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong explains collective identity in terms of concentric circles formed by throwing a rock into a lake.<sup>5</sup> Relationships are formed

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 3.

<sup>2</sup> This is a point also offered by Tu Weiming, in his discussion of the Confucian work, the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*). Tu Weiming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 39–66, 107–16.

<sup>3</sup> *Analects* 8: 2. Translated in D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Mencius* 4a: 11. Translated in D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003), 161.

<sup>5</sup> Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, trans. Gary Hamilton and Wang Zheng (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 63–4.



through marriage, having children, and growing outwards towards the broader society. Like what is being taught by Confucius and Mencius, what happens to the individual progressively affects others.

In the twentieth-century and into twenty-first-century China, traditional family structures have tended to break down. Part of this is due to the course of modernity and the shift in gender roles since the 1910s and 1920s. Even Mao Zedong, several decades later, would famously declare that women hold up half the sky. Then, during the Cultural Revolution, children were instructed to report and to denounce 'counter-revolutionary' parents and family members. In the last three decades, changes in the value of the family were accelerated by the controversial one-child policy that was in effect from 1979 until 2015<sup>6</sup> and the pursuit for a socialist market economy. No longer is a single large family living under one roof. No longer is there a sacred space centred around the family home and the ancestral hall (*citang*). There has been rapid urbanization and mass migration. Chinese New Year has now become one of the few occasions when families separated throughout different parts of the country are able to physically meet face to face. The dire reality of this situation has been recognized by the Chinese government which, in 2013, put into effect an amendment to a Chinese law which mandates adult children to regularly visit their ageing parents and care for their physical and spiritual needs.<sup>7</sup> In extreme cases, some have reported that failure to do so risks fines or possible prison time.<sup>8</sup>

What we see happening in Chinese society is not a wiping away of these familial structures but a reorientation of them. Now, concentric circles are drawn around different collective bodies, such as the

<sup>6</sup> Of course, this is not exclusively a problem in mainland China. Other parts of East Asia such as in South Korea and Taiwan have been experiencing similar slowdowns in fertility rates. The point here, though, is that the one-child policy has quite possibly been a significant accelerant in this phenomenon.

<sup>7</sup> 'Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo laonian ren quanyi baozhang fa' [Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly], *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo guo zhongyang renmin zhengfu* [The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China], accessed 3 March 2017, <[http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2005-08/04/content\\_20203.htm](http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2005-08/04/content_20203.htm)>.

<sup>8</sup> Celia Hatton, 'New China law says children "must visit parents"', *BBC News*, 1 July 2013, accessed 3 March 2017, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23124345>>; Edward Wong, 'A Chinese Virtue is now the Law', *The New York Times*, 2 July 2013, accessed 3 March 2017, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/03/world/asia/filial-piety-once-a-virtue-in-china-is-now-the-law.html>>.

university or the workplace or, even, the church. We see this in state-sanctioned Protestantism which, on the one hand, has prized its 'post-denominational era' free of foreign ecclesial imposition whilst, on the other hand, emphasizing ecclesiology as one of the areas needing greater reconsideration.<sup>9</sup> In subtle ways, we also see this in how K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012) and Wang Weifan (1927–2015) commonly invoke the royal 'we' or *pluralis majestatis*, explaining how 'Chinese Christians' have now embraced a cosmic Christology.<sup>10</sup> Whilst this is not entirely obvious amongst the cultural Christians discussed in Chapter 3, indeed even Liu Xiaofeng's formulation of a mystical church should be considered as a kind of ecclesiology—one which mirrors the coffee houses, salons, and table societies of Jürgen Habermas's bourgeois public sphere.<sup>11</sup> Cultural Christians, as a loosely formed intellectual community, have collectively developed various media such as the academic field of Sino-Christian theology and a number of academic periodicals to speak into the Chinese public space.

The reorientation of familial structures is perhaps most vividly seen in urban intellectual churches, which have underscored ecclesiology as their central theological category. In many ways, this seems to be responding to the rise of individualism in China which has made the church attractive to so many. For some of the urban intellectual churches, the connection between covenantal theology and constitutionalism necessitates covenantal understandings of infant baptism and Christian marriage. This seems to be consistent with some Calvinist missionaries of the early twentieth century, who found that covenantal understandings of baptism were quite amenable to a Confucian understanding of the family.<sup>12</sup> For other urban

<sup>9</sup> Duan Qi, 'The Reconstruction of Chinese Christian Theology', in *Christianity*, ed. Zhuo Xiping, trans. Chi Zhen and Caroline Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 57–61.

<sup>10</sup> See K. H. Ting, 'The Cosmic Christ', in *Love Never Ends: Papers by K. H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, [1991] 2000), 408–18; Wang Weifan, 'Zhongguo jiaohui de mouzhong shenxue bianqian' [Changes in Theological Thinking in the Church in China], in *Nian zai cang mang: Wang Weifan wenji (1979–1998)* [In the Wilderness for Two Decades: Selected Works of Wang Weifan (1979–1998)] (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, [1985] 2011), 3–10.

<sup>11</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1962] 1989), 27–56.

<sup>12</sup> See Kurt D. Selles, *A New Way of Belonging: Covenant Theology, China, and the Christian Reformed Church, 1921–1951* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 180.

intellectual churches, the outworkings of the cultural mandate includes understanding the church as a non-governmental organization that is able to engage in the Chinese civil society.

The Chinese church has taken the place of the traditional family as a new surrogate family. This reorientation places extra emphasis on the pastors and the elders as patriarchs who have Christian families under their care. As opposed to the family home or the ancestral hall, the church takes on a new kind of role as a sacred familial space. This dimension of the Confucian imagination highlights the important role the church now has as the new means in which moral and spiritual cultivation spreads through concentric circles: from the individual, to the church, and to the broader society and state.

#### THE CHURCH LEADER AS A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

Another aspect of the Confucian imagination in the Chinese church that is worth considering is the patterning of a church leader after a Confucian scholar-official. We have already seen how this has existed throughout the history of Christianity in China. In many ways, this also echoes a similar view within Western discourse which puts priority on public intellectuals as precisely that: intellectuals. However, the Confucian imagination strongly reinforces this view. In contrast with the Daoist emphasis on a return to one's natural inclination, a *tabula rasa* of sorts, Confucianism underscores the importance of moral self-cultivation and, therefore, the need for education. This is why Neo-Confucian and New Confucian scholars have tended to speak of an 'inward sageliness, outward kingliness' (*neisheng, waiwang*), which emphasizes the need to first be transformed within before one could lead and transform without—bringing together the two key dimensions of the idealized 'sage-ruler' (*sheng wang*). It should be of little surprise that many of the figures we have discussed in the Chapters 1–4 are educators in some form. They are Christian intellectuals who are equipped to lead and to teach the church and the broader society—spiritually, morally, and intellectually.

Negatively, this also tends to underscore an elitist understanding of the church leader. If a church leader is expected to be a key example of moral and spiritual uprightness, any failure in these respects can

result in a failure of the church. This is why when there are disagreements over what is the 'correct' or 'biblical' approach to things, as has been the case in Shouwang, churches readily split.<sup>13</sup> To put it another way, the Heavenly will (*Tianming*) has been removed from one church leader and placed onto a new church leader. This tends to result in a triumphalist understanding of public theology. Whilst Calvinism may traditionally underscore the sovereignty of God's will, some Chinese Calvinists have idealized aspirations about their own abilities to completely reform or revolutionize the Chinese political and legal systems. Certain forms of Chinese Calvinism have also tended to be quite divisive—both in terms of critiquing others who do not have the 'right' theology and in the emphasizing of a strongly Christianized public space. Unfortunately, this has tended to be an elite form of public theology which, mainly, can be understood and engaged by the intellectual and not by the average Chinese—let alone by the migrant worker who has come from the rural countryside.

Finally, this also encourages a growing tendency to have a strongly patriarchal and authoritarian understanding of church leadership. In some respects, this has been the case for a long time as a result of the separation of gender roles in the Christian missionary enterprise.<sup>14</sup> It has also developed linguistically, whereby a pastor may have a 'pastor's wife' (*shimu*),<sup>15</sup> but no such term exists to designate a 'pastor's husband'. Yet, over the course of the twentieth century, one can detect a growing pattern of egalitarianism in Chinese Christian leadership. Part of this is related to the May Fourth priority on the emancipation of women and Mao Zedong's famous proclamation that women

<sup>13</sup> Liu Peng, 'House Churches: A Review of the Beijing Shouwang Church Incident', in *Religious Diversity in Chinese Thought*, eds Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Joachim Gentz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 238–9.

Whilst this emphasis on being 'correct' and 'biblical' is consistent with the broader fundamentalist-evangelical tradition, this may also be reinforced by a Confucian binaries of 'orthodox' (*zheng*) and 'heterodox' (*xie*), the latter of which has resulted in polemics around what is a *xiejiao*—meaning 'heterodox teaching' or, in modern usage, 'evil cult'. See David A. Palmer, 'Heretical Doctrines, Reactionary Secret Societies, Evil Cults: Labeling Heterodoxy in Twentieth-Century China', in *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*, ed. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 113–34.

<sup>14</sup> See Kwok Pui-Lan, *Chinese Women and Christianity, 1860–1927* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> This term has historically been used to mean the wife of one's teacher or master, and has now been adopted by many Chinese Christians.

hold up half the sky. But it has perhaps also been necessitated by sheer statistics: women represent a disproportionate majority of the Chinese Christian population. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, it is common to find female pastors and evangelists preaching and leading local churches—regardless of whether or not they are registered congregations. Now, perhaps due to the bringing together of certain Calvinist and Confucian understandings of male leadership, a growing number of Christian communities are led entirely by male pastors and elders.<sup>16</sup> Women leaders are now increasingly being sidelined.

It should be clarified, however, that whilst Confucianism is often declared as the source of patriarchal and authoritarian structures in East Asian societies, the tradition has not always held to such views. Mencius was known for articulating the so-called 'five relations' (*wulun*) as a summation of all relations in society, between: father and son, ruler and minister, husband and wife, older and younger siblings, and between friends.<sup>17</sup> But he defined them in moral terms and meant them to be reciprocal.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis on hierarchical relationships was articulated in the second century BCE, when the philosopher Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE) integrated *yin-yang* cosmology into the Confucian ethical framework and promoted Confucianism as the state orthodoxy of the Han dynasty.<sup>19</sup> Dong explains:

The relationships between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, are all derived from the principles of the *yin* and the *yang*. The

<sup>16</sup> See Cao Nanlai, *Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 97–125; Fredrik Fällman, 'Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of Faith Among Chinese Intellectuals', in *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, ed. Francis Khok Gee Lim (New York: Routledge, 2013), 163–4.

<sup>17</sup> *Mencius* 3a: 4. Translated in Lau, *Mencius*, 114–17.

<sup>18</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 70. See *Doctrine of the Mean* 20 and *Great Learning* 3.

<sup>19</sup> Prior to this, Confucianism did not have much of a metaphysical understanding, but these innovations would make way for the more metaphysically developed teachings of Neo-Confucianism. Dong Zhongshu chose to use the cosmic *yin-yang* forces to explain the dualities that exist in human relationships.

See Li Chenyang, 'The Confucian Concept of *Jen* and the Feminist Ethics of Care: A Comparative Study', in *The Sage and the Second Sex*, ed. Li Chenyang (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000), 36; Chan Sin Yee, 'The Confucian Conception of Gender in the Twenty-first Century', in *Confucianism for the Modern World*, eds Daniel A. Bell and Hahm Chaibong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 332–3.

ruler is *yang*, the subject is *yin*; the father is *yang*, the son is *yin*; the husband is *yang*, the wife is *yin*.<sup>20</sup>

The human world now reflects the *yin-yang* duality of Heaven and Earth. Yet, this is not one of reciprocity, but about how the ruler, the father, and the husband are each to respectively dominate over the subject, the son, and the wife. Of course, this makes sense when an ideology like Confucianism is promoted by Dong Zhongshu as the state doctrine to justify political authority. This also suggests that Confucianism can be understood as underscoring a reciprocity in relations which can offer some corrective to Chinese ecclesiology and public theology.

Regardless of the reservations raised thus far, it is important to understand the important role that the Christian pastor or elder plays in leading the church in its engagement with the broader public space. After all, the Confucian sage-king is meant to be a moral exemplar who points to a greater ideal of private and public transformation.

#### A THEOLOGY OF RECIPROCITY

Despite the breaking down of family structures, Confucian understandings of filial piety have been taken up by local churches as surrogate families.<sup>21</sup> However, as I have tried to demonstrate, the translation of the Confucian family into the Christian family has also resulted in the translation of systemic problems that permeate family structures. It is therefore of great importance for Chinese Christians to uphold a critical yet integrative theology—both generally in a contextual theology and specifically in a public theology—which engages the family and the church in a way that underscores mutuality and reciprocity.

<sup>20</sup> Dong Zhongshu, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals* 53. Translated in Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2 vols., trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952–3), 2: 42–3.

<sup>21</sup> This has similarly been discussed in the context of cultural assimilation, with regards to immigrant Chinese youth in New York's Chinatown. Cao Nanlai, 'The Church as a Surrogate Family for Working Class Immigrant Chinese Youth: An Ethnography of Segmented Assimilation', *Sociology of Religion* 66, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 183–200.

Part of this understanding of reciprocity can be recognized in the New Testament teachings of household codes, particularly as found in Ephesians and Colossians. Household codes were of course not foreign to the ancient world, but found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics, and Jews like Philo and Josephus.<sup>22</sup> The household codes in the bible do not simply copy from these patterns, but provide a paradigmatic shift in the understanding based on reciprocal relationships. Instead of focusing on the superiority of a patriarch as many other household codes did, these bible passages teach that husbands and wives have mutual influence over one another.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, these passages are instructions which allow for the possibility that one of the two partners in a relationship is not a Christian. Hence, the New Testament household codes represent a negotiation between the patriarchal cultural context of the ancient world and the new reality offered by Christ where there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman (Galatians 3: 28).

Perhaps the most vibrant space of theological debate today which would be useful for these dynamics is on Trinitarian theology—ranging from the more patristic and scholastic approach of *vestigia Trinitatis* to the more contemporary developments of what has often been termed ‘social Trinitarianism’. In particular, Christian thinkers throughout the ages from John Chrysostom to Karl Barth and Pope John Paul II have highlighted an analogy that exists between the human family and the Triune Godhead, whereby the Divine relationship between God the Father and God the Son is mirrored in the human relationship of parent and child.<sup>24</sup> For instance, John Chrysostom taught that:

The Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of the Divine Word are founded in love and reciprocity, and the Holy Spirit intends and carries that love toward and between the two... Thus parents who are worshippers of the triune God are called upon to emulate God the Father’s love for his Son, while children should love and obey their

<sup>22</sup> For a good survey, see David L. Balch, ‘Household Codes’, in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. David E. Aune (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 25–50.

<sup>23</sup> Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 217.

<sup>24</sup> For a helpful survey, see Adrian Thatcher, *Theology and Families* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 78–111.

parents as the Son loves and obeys the Father through the Spirit. Together, through love, parents and children participate in the triune Life of God.<sup>25</sup>

Chrysostom’s views have resonance with Jesus’s prayer in John 17 for unity among Christians to mirror the unity in the Godhead. However, in the New Testament household codes and in the Trinitarian analogies of the family are understandings of reciprocity of partners rather than one of domination and subordination.

The contemporary Orthodox scholar John Zizioulas (b. 1931) is quite important for this discussion. Whilst his *Being as Communion* is often recognized for its contribution to contemporary Trinitarian thought,<sup>26</sup> the book’s main discussion is around ecclesiology.<sup>27</sup> Zizioulas divides the early church fathers into academic theologians—including the apologists and the Alexandrian catechetical theologians—and pastoral theologians—such as Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Athanasius. The latter understood God through the ecclesial community, resulting in a view that ‘the being of God could be known only through personal relationships and personal love. Being means life, and life means *communion*.’<sup>28</sup> In other words, the relational experience of the church resulted in a relational formulation of God. The Cappadocian fathers would develop this view further, underscoring the *monarchia* of the Father, Who causes the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit—freely out of love.<sup>29</sup> This is not limited

<sup>25</sup> Vigen Guroian, ‘The Ecclesial Family: John Chrysostom on Parenthood and Children’, in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 64.

<sup>26</sup> Many see this as a work of ‘social Trinitarianism’. However, the term and its application upon Zizioulas’s theology are both quite contentious. I disagree with this label and do not use it for Zizioulas. See Alan Brown, ‘On the Criticism of *Being as Communion* in Anglophone Orthodox Theology’, in *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 41–3, 65–6; Douglas H. Knight, ‘Introduction’, in *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, by John D. Zizioulas (London: T&T Clark, 2008), xii–xiii; Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 113–14.

<sup>27</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 16, emphasis in original.

<sup>29</sup> This view of *monarchia* is built upon Irenaeus’s view that God the Father works in the economy of this world through His ‘two hands’ of the Son and the Spirit. This is contrasted with the Western view of the *filioque* whereby the Father and the Son are both seen as causing the Spirit. *Ibid.*, 39–44.

to the personhood of God, but extends to personhood in creation: 'True being comes only from the free person, from the person who loves freely—that is, who freely affirms his being, his identity, by means of an event of communion with other persons.'<sup>30</sup> Despite some resistance by patristic scholars on Zizioulas's readings of the church fathers,<sup>31</sup> an Orthodox scholar such as Aristotle Papanikolaou extends this contemporary Orthodox development of personhood to speak positively into the discourse around human rights.<sup>32</sup>

Connecting these formulations to our overall discussion of Chinese public theology, two points are worth greater consideration. First, for Zizioulas, whilst such freedoms are afforded to all of humanity, humans have a natural 'passion' towards individualism which can only be conquered through new birth in Christ, through baptism into the church.<sup>33</sup> This is because the hypostatic union that resulted in the Incarnation empowered humanity to be able to transcend the natural passions and, through *theosis*, to be reconciled to one another and to God. But this also means that ultimate freedom is found in the ecclesial community—the church. In many senses, this offers a theological explanation for the experiences of the Chinese Christians, whereby the Christian family becomes a surrogate for the traditional Chinese family. Yet this is not simply a reconstituting of kinship relations, but a fortification of this new reality through participation in the Divine life. Moreover, the church becomes the key vehicle for modelling the relational character of personhood and for being co-workers with God in engaging the public space in the reconciliation of the material to the Divine.

Secondly, Zizioulas has been attacked for developing a theology which reinforces a hierarchical view of the Trinity and of human relationships.<sup>34</sup> Many of his critics are contemporary theologians who

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>31</sup> See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*, 105–14.

<sup>33</sup> Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 49–65.

<sup>34</sup> See Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 290–4; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 78–80, 107–23; Patricia A. Fox, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 76–8.

have tried to develop Trinitarian formulations which underscore an egalitarian and non-hierarchical interpretation. In particular, his view is problematic for those who wish to construct a liberative theology to address the problems in society which arise from various authoritarian structures.<sup>35</sup> Karen Kilby rightly critiques these liberative approaches as projecting onto God a view which is then reflected back into the world and identified as being the significant attributes of that doctrine.<sup>36</sup> Kathryn Tanner, offers a similar critique:

The more trinitarian relations seem close in character to human ones (and therefore relations that human beings could imitate) the less the Trinity tells you anything you did not already know about them. Moreover, it is no longer the fact that the Trinity can be imitated by human beings that offers hope to a world of sin and suffering. Instead, such hope is fueled by the idea that humans will be taken up into trinitarian relations far *different* from anything with which they are familiar as sinful creatures.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, if we use modern human relations as a basis to understand Trinitarian relations, there is nothing redemptive about such a theology. However, Zizioulas's approach is different, starting from Cappadocian understandings of Trinitarian personhood and explicating its implications for human personhood. His approach is one that differs greatly from those Kilby and Tanner are critiquing.

Returning to the question of hierarchy, Miroslav Volf attacks Zizioulas's ecclesiology as *episcopocentric*, seeing the latter as arguing that the 'bishop represents Christ to the congregation and simultaneously embodies in himself the whole congregation'.<sup>38</sup> Zizioulas makes his case based on the historical trajectory of the Orthodox

<sup>35</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1981); Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan-Francisco, 1991); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Karen Kilby, 'Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity', *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (November 2000): 442.

<sup>37</sup> Kathryn Tanner, 'Trinity', in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, eds Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 329, emphasis in original. See Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 220–1.

<sup>38</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 224; see *ibid.*, 113–16.

tradition and on the logical conclusion of his Trinitarian formulation which emphasizes the Father as the cause of the Son and the Spirit.<sup>39</sup> I would contend, however, that the *monarchia* of God would never negate the equality of the Father with the Son and the Spirit, but should also underscore the respective roles and reciprocal relations of one to another.

This discussion is consistent with the Confucian emphasis on the role of a parent being the cause of transformation in his or her family and beyond and, by extension, of a pastor being the cause of transformation in his or her church and beyond. However, as discussed in the section 'The Church Leader as a Public Intellectual', many who see Confucianism as a source of problematic patriarchal and authoritarian structures often overlook Dong Zhongshu's instrumentalizing of the tradition for political purposes. Confucius is recorded in the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing*) as saying:

[T]he father who had a son that would remonstrate with him would not sink into the gulf of unrighteous deeds. Therefore when a case of unrighteous conduct is concerned, a son must by no means keep from remonstrating with his father, nor a minister from remonstrating with his ruler. Hence, since remonstrance is required in the case of unrighteous conduct, how can (simple) obedience to the orders of a father be accounted filial piety?<sup>40</sup>

Whilst a child must show filial piety to his or her parent and a minister to his or her ruler, the parent or the ruler must always uphold all righteousness. Failing to do so, a leader must be humbly willing to be chastised. Confucius and Mencius did not see hierarchies as matters of unquestioned obedience, but as existing with reciprocal responsibilities. Hierarchy is not so much a problem—especially if you need to mobilize 1.3 billion people—but authoritarian hierarchy is. Filiality underscores the bond that exists between reciprocal partners—not for themselves alone, but to bring about righteousness in the family, the society, and the state.

<sup>39</sup> John D. Zizioulas, 'The Bishop in the Theological Doctrine of the Orthodox Church', *Kanon* 7 (1985): 23–35; John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 145–9.

<sup>40</sup> *Classic of Filial Piety* 15. Translated in James Legge, trans., *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), 484. See Mencius 3a: 4.

## THE TRIUNE GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

From the outset of this chapter, I began our discussion by highlighting a shift that has occurred in the Chinese understandings of the family, from the traditional biological family to a surrogate family found in the church. Whilst this is a general shift that has been occurring in Chinese society, the significance this has for our study is in the public nature of the Christian family. Taking into consideration John Zizioulas's contributions to contemporary Trinitarianism and ecclesiology, this can be better understood in terms of the church as a vehicle for reconciling the material to the Divine. Moreover, considering questions of hierarchy in Zizioulas and Confucianism, the pastor or the elder has an esteemed role as a Christian leader and a public theologian—but this is not an absolute power, but one which also has a responsibility which can be restrained by the laity. As such, the Christian family is a public body which expresses and brings forward in the public space true personhood through the church and her participation in the Divine life of the Triune God.

## Conclusion

After being commissioned by their master, the disciples returned from a magnificent experience preaching the good news and casting out evil spirits and healing the sick. Exhilarated yet exhausted, the twelve returned to Jesus and ecstatically boasted of all that had happened. However, a crowd began to form around this tired group. Though the disciples wanted to turn them away, Jesus simply responded, 'You give them something to eat' (Mark 6: 37). Whilst these were weighty words which the disciples did not expect to receive, their weary hands accepted and would continue to feed 5,000 mouths that day.

In many ways, this can be seen as a parable for Christian public engagement. We often focus on the three days of Jesus's death and resurrection, whilst losing focus on the preceding three years of his earthly ministry. Three years speak about the ways in which the Divine worked in the public space. Three days speak about the ways in which humanity is invited to participate in the Divine life and to help restore the material to the Divine. Both the three days and the three years are to be held together.

The feeding of the 5,000 is also a parable for the Chinese church. During the Cultural Revolution, Maoist dogmatism tried to crush feudalistic superstitions, creating a spiritual vacuum that needed to be filled. The climate would change after the Cultural Revolution came to an end in the late 1970s. Christian churches, characterized by fervent evangelical preaching and miraculous healing,<sup>1</sup> would be

<sup>1</sup> According to Edmond Tang, some surveys show that 90 per cent of new Chinese Christians, in both registered and non-registered churches, cite healing as a key reason for their conversions. Edmond Tang, "Yellers" and Healers: Pentecostalism and the Study of Grassroots Christianity in China', in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 2nd edn, eds Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 391.

key beneficiaries of the religious fever in the 1980s and beyond. Exhilarated yet exhausted by these developments, like with the disciples, Jesus has been telling the Chinese church, 'You give them something to eat.'

Jesus's words are weighty for Christians around the globe. However, the conditions which shape one's weariness and the food offered differ from context to context. Public theology looks very different whether we speak of mainland China or the United States or the United Kingdom—let alone Latin America or South Africa or Palestine. Undoubtedly, theological arguments related to the separation of church and state and the freedom of religion, at least in the ways they are conceived in many Western societies, have little relevance to the Chinese political and religious situation. I cannot labour the point that public theology—indeed, Christian theology—must be understood and expressed in unique ways that are attentive to the manifold contexts in which Christians live and congregate.

## GENERATIONAL SHIFTS

The Chinese context has experienced many significant sociopolitical events in the last two centuries. These moments have offered a different generational consciousness for each generational cohort. Generational shifts have resulted in nuanced understandings of the Christian life and of Christian public engagement. Moreover, each generation has offered to subsequent generations important resources and opportunities in the ongoing development of the Chinese public theological discourse. But these generations are not entirely different from one another. A common legacy transcends these generations in what I have described as a 'Confucian imagination'.

As I noted at the outset of the book, the sociological theory of generations has tended to distinguish generational units in one of two ways. The first is related to age cohorts—those who were born and have come to age in a specific time frame. The second has a greater variance in ages based on the collective response to certain historical events. This second approach is most clear in the first generation I examined in Chapter 2 which included a range of individuals—from K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 1915–2012) to Wang Weifan (1927–2015)—born more than a decade apart but still thrown into the 1950s questions

related to allegiance to the state and the church.<sup>2</sup> The cultural Christians discussed in Chapter 3 are perhaps closer to what one would describe as an age cohort. They were born around the 1950s and came to age during the harshest parts of the Cultural Revolution. Contrastingly, the urban intellectual Christians of Chapter 4 were born in the 1960s and 1970s and, whilst experiencing some of the Cultural Revolution, also witnessed the liberating potential of the early 1980s. Arguably, one may even subdivide this generational cohort into two—between those who experienced enough of the Cultural Revolution to have a measured approach of constructive dialogue with the powers that be (e.g. Sun Yi [b. 1961] and Jin Tianming [b. 1968]) compared with those born in the next decade who are willing to advocate for a more radical approach (e.g. Wang Yi [b. 1973] and Yu Jie [b. 1973]). A generational approach to periodization needs some flexibility in identifying what dates and what events differentiate a given cohort from the next.

A further consideration should be around whether one must choose between the language of generational shifts or the language of paradigm shifts. As already mentioned in the Introduction of this book, Thomas Kuhn's initial understanding of the incommensurability of different paradigms is quite problematic. Later, Kuhn himself would pull back from such a strong view of incommensurability and offer greater nuance to his theory, offering some flexibility between paradigms.<sup>3</sup> In China, the language of paradigms may be useful if we speak of two Chinese enlightenments, since there is a level of continuity in the common desire to 'dare to think', but there is also a paradigmatic shift in terms of method in how to think. For instance, May Fourth intellectuals tended to be iconoclastic and emphasized breaking the feudal religiophilosophical fetters in China's pursuit for modernity. In contrast, the Second Chinese Enlightenment underscored a revitalization of the past through various 'fevers'—the religious fever (*zongjiao re*), the Christianity fever (*Jidujiao re*), and the broader cultural fever (*wenhua re*). The old is instrumentalized as

<sup>2</sup> Questions of allegiance were often summarized under the mantra 'love country, love church' (*aiguo aijiao*). It is worth noting that the Chinese phrase for 'love country' (*aiguo*) can likewise be translated as 'patriotic'.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, 'Second Thoughts on Paradigms', in *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 293–319.

a way of bringing about the new. Hence, generations are more useful when looking closely at a more narrow period of time—in our case, after the end of the Cultural Revolution—but when one steps back and has a broader view of history, paradigms can likewise be useful.

## CONFUCIAN IMAGINATION

Whilst I have used generational shifts in order to highlight the differences between each generation, I have also attempted to speak about similarities across generations related to what I have termed the Confucian imagination. My use of this term is meant to highlight the various influences of Confucianism upon Christian intellectuals, producing a distinctive form of Chinese public engagement.

It would perhaps be useful to clarify how one is influenced by Confucianism. For some, Confucianism is understood as compatible with Christianity. In the process of contextualization, some Chinese Christians have looked to Confucianism as a clear resource for deriving one's theology. We see this most readily amongst the intellectuals of imperial China and the early Republican period. For others, especially since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Confucianism is much more a source of inspiration. Of course, the distinction between derivation and inspiration is not simply a matter of which side of 1949 a person is living in. Moreover, it is quite common for individuals to draw from multiple imaginations. For instance, when considering the urban intellectuals of Chapter 4, we see ways in which the Calvinist imagination has inspired a person like Sun Yi and is a basis for deriving the theology of a person like Wang Yi. Furthermore, one may argue that I have used the Eastern Orthodox imagination as an inspiration for developing a Chinese public theology.

From the vantage point of Christian theology, perhaps a greater challenge comes in terms of clarifying how much influence the Confucian imagination should have. Does the Confucian imagination dilute the unique contributions Christianity has to offer China? The short answer, I believe, is: no, it does not have to. It is important that we understand contextualization in terms of how Catholic thinkers, often employing the term inculturation, have argued for 'a double movement: there is at once inculturation of Christianity and



Christianization of culture'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the Confucian imagination (and the Calvinist imagination) must not stand as the gospel by itself, but be critically engaged. As I have argued, this first requires a recognition of the influence of the Confucian imagination. Only after this has been recognized can one critique and suggest improvements vis-à-vis the Christian gospel.<sup>5</sup>

Chapters 6 and 7 have attempted to offer a critical engagement between the Confucian imagination and Christian public theology. Whereas the Confucian imagination helpfully highlights a tension that exists between transcendence and immanence, Chinese public theology is limited in underscoring the immanent significance of the Transcendent. But if it were expanded to embrace the Eastern Orthodox vision of *theosis*, Chinese public theology can likewise underscore the transcendent significance of the immanent. Likewise, Chapter 7 has shown the valuable contribution of Chinese public theology in the view that the Christian family is a public body. We may find examples in the bible, such as in Acts 2, which offers early models of the Christian community becoming a surrogate family. But in the Chinese context, the Christian family is also understood as an epicentre where change begins and radiates beyond through concentric waves. Contrary to the dissatisfaction in many parts of the Western world with institutionalization, Chinese public theology upholds the institution of the church as a key agent for engaging the state and the society. Not only are we to be mindful of the three days and the three years, but we should also be mindful of the three Persons. The ontological revolution found in Triune community is likewise offered to the ecclesial community, in which the pastor or the elder is accountable to the congregation as he or she leads the church as an exemplar of private and public transformation. This offers a corrective against the ways in which the Confucian imagination negatively reinforces a

<sup>4</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 454, emphasis in original. See John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time [Catechesi Tradendae]* 53, available online at <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html)>.

<sup>5</sup> This highlights the tension which exists between what Andrew Walls calls the 'indigenising' principle and the 'pilgrim' principle. Andrew F. Walls, 'The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 3–15.

strongly patriarchal and authoritarian view of the church leader and, therefore, the public theologian.

## PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND MAINLAND CHINA

This is the first major study on the growing Christian public consciousness that can be identified in mainland China since the end of the Cultural Revolution. It addresses gaps in existing literature, in terms of both the global discourse on public theology and studies on Chinese intellectual history. I have tried to be attentive to some of the key themes and contributions offered by each generation and, with historical and geographical distance, have tried to offer a narrative of the broader tradition of Chinese public theology.

I have also tried to show ways in which the Divine-human unity offered by *theosis* provides a path for the Chinese church to recover a healthy model of social and, thus, political engagement. It offers a more constructive way of thinking beyond the sacred-secular divide and shows that a Trinitarian understanding of persons and relations offers a corrective to the tendency towards authoritarianism that often fractures Chinese churches which can be conceived as being surrogate families.

However, the title of this book is a bit ambiguous. For instance, how are we to think about Chinese public theology amongst Chinese communities outside mainland China? Ho Hing-cheong and Lai Pan-chiu, in their work on the Chinese Christian intellectual N. Z. Zia (Xie Fuya; 1892–1991), have argued that a diasporic experience eventually disconnects one's identity from one's original geography and the sociopolitical concerns of that context.<sup>6</sup> For Zia, his Chinese identity and Chinese Christian theology in the 1950s and 1960s was less dependent on the communist revolution in China as it was on the 'cultural' revolution happening in the developments of traditional Chinese culture outside of the mainland.

<sup>6</sup> Ho Hing-cheong (He Qingchang), '1950–1960 niandai lisan Zhonghua ren Jidutu shenfen de jiangou: Yi Xie Fuya (1892–1991) wei ge'an yanjiu' [Constructing Chinese Christian Identity in Diaspora During the 1950s and 1960s: A Case Study of Xie Fuya (1892–1991)] (Ph.D. thesis, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006); Ho Hing-cheong and Lai Pan-chiu, 'A Chinese Christian Intellectual in Diaspora: A Case Study of Xie Fuya', *Monumenta Serica* 56 (2008): 427–58.

This view is confirmed by Tu Weiming, who boldly claims:

[T]he transformative potential of the periphery is so great that it seems inevitable that it will significantly shape the intellectual discourse on cultural China for years to come. It is perhaps premature to announce that 'the center is nothing, whereas the periphery is everything', but undeniably, the fruitful interaction among a variety of economic, political, social, and cultural forces at work along the periphery will activate the dynamics of cultural China.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst the centre must contend with its identity in both sociopolitical and cultural terms, the periphery is uniquely placed to focus on maintaining and developing its cultural distinctiveness through discourses of otherness in new geopolitical locations. It is perhaps of little surprise, then, that New Confucianism would find its greatest developments not within mainland China but outside—in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and North America from the 1950s to the 1980s.

In many ways the Confucian imagination and its effects on Chinese Christianity are stronger in Chinese diasporic communities, but in other ways they have needed to respond to new and very different pressures. Many of the questions discussed in this book, especially related to themes such as the secular–sacred divide and the emphasis on the collective work of the church are still important for public theology within the Chinese diaspora.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the periphery creates new opportunities to adapt and to develop, and has a strong potential to critique and offer suggestions for the centre.<sup>9</sup>

In mainland China, Chinese public theology still remains in its nascent stages. To move forward, it needs a critical and constructive engagement with its Christian and Chinese foundations. In this book, I have tried to offer pointers to a possible route. Taken together, Eastern Orthodoxy and the Confucian imagination offer suggestions for a significant reorientation in Chinese Christian thought, with

<sup>7</sup> Tu Weiming, 'Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center', *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005): 28.

<sup>8</sup> For some recent studies on Chinese Christian public engagement in Hong Kong and North America, see Justin K. H. Tse, 'Religious Politics in Pacific Space: Grounding Cantonese Protestant Theologies in Secular Civil Societies' (Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 2013); Justin K. H. Tse and Jonathan Y. Tan, eds, *Theological Reflections on the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> This is perhaps why I—as a person of Han Chinese decent, born and raised in the United States but now living and working in Scotland—believe I am able to offer an 'outsider's' analysis of a situation in mainland China.

wider implications for the global discourse in public theology. This offers a provocative message whereby Christians and Christian communities are called to reconcile the material to the Divine and to render the public space into a sacred space—for God, with God, and to God—in the Divine–human unity known as *theosis*.

## APPENDIX

### Biographical Briefs

Biographical profiles for significant Chinese Christians are difficult to find and often focus on those who are now deceased.<sup>1</sup> For those who are still alive or have recently passed away, biographical notes are scattered throughout various books, articles, and online sources. To facilitate the reading of this book, I have sought to compile some basic biographical profiles for each of the key theological figures discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

**Chen Zemin** 陳澤民 (b. 1917) is a prominent theologian of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC). Born in Shantou (Guangdong province), he is a third generation Christian, with his grandfather being an evangelist in Chaoshan (Guangdong province). Hearing the preaching of the Chinese evangelist John Song (Song Shangjie, 1901–44), Chen was inspired to go into Christian ministry following his secondary school education. He completed a BA from Shanghai University in 1941 and a BD from Nanjing Theological Seminary (one of the precursors to Nanjing Union Theological Seminary) in 1944. After involvement in social service and hospital chaplancy, Chen joined the staff of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary after it was formed in 1952 and taught systematic theology and church music. He later became dean and vice president of the seminary (1982–2002) and senior pastor of St Paul's Church in Nanjing (1985–95). A theological liberal, Chen has taught a theology of reconciliation, emphasized the need for the contextualization of theology and hymnody, and been a long-time advocate for the church to be involved in social work.

**Ding Guangxun**, see K. H. Ting.

**Jin Tianming** 金天明 (b. 1968) is the senior pastor of Shouwang church of Beijing (*Beijing shouwang jiaohui*). A Korean ethnic minority, he was born in the province of Heilongjiang in northeast China and studied chemical engineering at Tsinghua University in Beijing (1986–91). During his studies,

<sup>1</sup> The Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity is a useful online resource, available at <<http://www.bdconline.net>>. See also James Shih-Chieh Cha (Zha Shijie), *Zhongguo Jidujiao renwu xiaozhuan* [Concise Biographies of Important Chinese Christians] (Taipei: China Evangelical Seminary Press, 1983); John C. England et al., eds, *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Source*, vol. 3 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004); Carol Lee Hamrin and Stacey Bieler, eds, *Salt and Light*, 3 vols (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2009–11).

Jin experienced a crisis as a result of the 1989 military crackdown on student protesters in Tiananmen Square, and he converted to Christianity in 1990. Following his time in Tsinghua, he started the Shouwang church as a fellowship in his apartment in 1993 and was ordained in 2002 by the house church leader Moses Xie (Xie Moshan, 1918–2011). At its peak, the church had a congregation of over 1,000 members attracting many professionals, academics, and university students from the Haidian district of Beijing. In 2005, Shouwang rented a large hall in an office building for Sunday meetings and, in 2006, they were unsuccessful in their attempt to register with the government. In 2011, the Chinese authorities clamped down on the church and blocked them from accessing their property, placing Jin and the elders of the church under house arrest. Shaped by Calvinist theology, Jin Tianming has argued that the church needs to express a public faith, through registration, so that it can engage the state and the society.

Liu Xiaofeng 劉小楓 (b. 1956) is an influential scholar who has promoted the study of Christianity and classical studies in China. He was born in Chongqing (Sichuan province; now, Chongqing municipality) and was sent to the countryside after completing his high school education in 1974 during the Cultural Revolution. He received a BA in German literature in 1982 from the College of Foreign Languages of Sichuan and an MA in aesthetics at Peking University. In 1985, he became a lecturer in Chinese Studies in Shenzhen University before pursuing a Ph.D. in theology at the University of Basel (1989–93). He then relocated to Hong Kong, lecturing at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and becoming the academic director of the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies. He returned to the mainland to become a professor at Sun Yat-sen University and is now a professor in the School of Liberal Arts in Renmin University of China. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Liu was known to be an important cultural Christian (*wenhua jidutu*) who promoted the academic field known as Sino-Christian theology (*hanyu shenxue*). He now works primarily on the political philosophy of Leo Strauss and on promoting Greek and Chinese classical studies.

He Guanghu 何光滙 (b. 1950) is an influential cultural Christian who is known for his work in the philosophy of religion and Christian theology. He was born in Guiyang (Guizhou province) and, after finishing junior high school, was sent to work in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. In 1979, after Deng Xiaoping's educational reforms, He Guanghu became one of the first students pursuing religious studies at the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, eventually completing a Ph.D. in 1989. From 1989 to 2001 he was a researcher in the Institute of World Religions, before becoming a Professor of Religious Studies in the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China in 2001 until his retirement. He Guanghu has been a major proponent of Sino-Christian theology—often speaking about it in terms of mother-tongue theology (*muyu shenxue*)—engaging topics related

to religious pluralism, and been a signatory of significant documents such as the human rights manifesto Charter 08 and the 2013 Oxford Consensus that brought together intellectuals of Christian, New Confucian, new left, and political liberal persuasions.

Shen Yifan 沈以藩 (1928–94) was an important pastor and theologian in the TSPM and the CCC. Born in Shanghai, he was a fifth generation Christian, with both his grandmothers being bible women in the Episcopal diocese of Jiangsu and his father one of the first Anglican bishops of China, Bishop T. K. Shen (Shen Zigao, 1895–1982) of Shaanxi. He completed studies in philosophy in Nanjing University in 1948 and a BD in 1951 from Central Theological Seminary, an Anglican seminary in Shanghai. He served as a pastor for various congregations in the 1950s and the 1960s, but was assigned to work in a factory during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1980s, he became the senior pastor of Community Church in Shanghai, served as general secretary of the China Christian Council and the director of the Theological Education Commission. In 1988, he and Sun Yanli (1914–95) were consecrated as the first and only two post-denominational bishops. Shen gave special emphasis to the doctrine of the Incarnation and has been described as upholding a 'Theology of Life'.

Sun Yi 孫毅 (b. 1961) is a scholar in Christian studies and an elder of the Shouwang church of Beijing. Born in Xi'an (Shaanxi province), he pursued his Ph.D. in the Department of Philosophy at Peking University (1998–2001). Since 2001, he has been teaching in the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China, where he is presently an associate professor and a deputy director of the Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Religious Theory. His main areas of study include modern Christian thought and the New Testament. Sun has also been an elder of the Shouwang church of Beijing and an editor of the church's online and print periodical, *Almond Flowers* (*Xinghua*). During his Ph.D. studies, he considered himself to be a cultural Christian and was drawn to the Christian existential thought of Søren Kierkegaard, the main subject of his Ph.D. and first monograph. However, as he has shifted in his own personal beliefs in Christianity and became involved in church leadership, he found Kierkegaard's thinking to be lacking and has turned towards Calvinism to develop a theology for the church. He was involved in a new translation of John Calvin's *Institutes* into Chinese and has co-edited a collection of essays on Calvin and Sino-Christian theology. Sun Yi is known for his scholarship in Calvinism and for his leadership in the Shouwang church.

K. H. Ting (Ding Guangxun) 丁光訓 (1915–2012) was the pre-eminent leader of state-sanctioned Protestantism in the 1980s and 1990s. He was born into an Anglican-Episcopal home in Shanghai, where he was part of St Peter's church and eventually received his BA and BD from St John's University. He was ordained a priest in 1942 and consecrated as an Anglican

bishop of Zhejiang province in 1955. Ting was active in the ecumenical movement, working with the YMCA, SCM, and WSCF, and completed an MA in religious education from Union Theological Seminary in New York. He returned to China in 1951 and became the first principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary after it was formed in 1952. After a hiatus during the Cultural Revolution, Ting was restored to his position in the seminary and rose to become head of the two national Protestant organizations, the reinstated TSPM (succeeding Y. T. Wu [Wu Yaozong, 1893–1979]) and the newly established CCC. After his retirement in 1996, he initiated and advocated for Chinese Protestants to participate in theological reconstruction (*shenxue sixiang jianshe*). K. H. Ting is known for his reassessment of the doctrines of original sin and justification by faith alone, and for teachings about the sinned against and the cosmic Christ.

**Wang Weifan** 汪維藩 (1927–2015) was an important evangelical in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council. He was born into a devout Buddhist home in Taizhou (Jiangsu province) and nurtured by traditional Chinese texts and upbringing. While studying Chinese literature in the National Central University in Nanjing, Wang became a Christian in 1947 and participated in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and an evangelical church led by the evangelist David Yang (Yang Shaotang, 1900–69). He pursued theological education at China Theological Seminary in Hangzhou, which later joined a number of seminaries to form Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1952, graduating in 1955. Though he would be attacked during the anti-rightist movement in 1958 and sent to work in the countryside, after the Cultural Revolution, Wang joined the faculty of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary teaching New Testament and heading the publications department. He retired in 1999, in the midst of K. H. Ting's programme of theological reconstruction. Wang Weifan is known for being an evangelical preacher, teacher, and devotional writer, who upheld a Christocentric mysticism and spoke of the ever-generating God (*shengsheng Shen*).

**Wang Yi** 王怡 (b. 1973) was formerly a law professor and human rights lawyer and is now the senior pastor of Chengdu Early Rain Reformed church (*Qiuyu zhi fu guizheng jiaohui*). Born in Santai (Sichuan province), Wang was a law professor at Chengdu University from 1996 to 2008 and active in the rights defence movement (*weiquan yundong*). In 2004, he was listed by Southern People's Weekly (*Nanfang renwu zhoukan*) as being one of China's fifty most influential public intellectuals. First brought to church by his good friend and fellow activist Yu Jie, Wang in 2004 began to defend the religious freedom of house churches through the Chinese Christian Rights Lawyers Group (*Zhongguo Jidutu weiquan lishi tuan*). In 2005, he converted to Christianity and was baptized, and started Early Rain as a fellowship in his home. He resigned from the University in 2008, and took

up full-time pastoral work. The church has since started a presbytery, an elementary school, and a seminary, and is working towards establishing a Christian liberal arts college. Wang Yi is known to be a prolific blogger and an outspoken Reformed pastor who advocates for political liberal views (such as the rule of law and constitutionalism) based on covenantal theology.

**Yang Huilin** 楊慧林 (b. 1954) is an important scholar of comparative literature and religious studies who is known for his contribution to Christian studies in China. He was born in Beijing and sent to work in the countryside in 1969, returning only after the end of the Cultural Revolution to begin his studies at Renmin University of China in 1978. Though his studies were interrupted, he eventually completed his MA in literature in 1990, writing a dissertation on Shakespeare and Christianity, in which he sought to explore the cultural impact of Christianity on Western literature. He would continue this line of enquiry in his Ph.D. on theological hermeneutics (1999–2002), also completed at Renmin University of China. He has taught at Renmin University of China since 1990, was one of the vice presidents of the University (2008–14), and is presently still professor of comparative literature and religious studies. Yang Huilin is known for his work in Sino-Christian theology—a field which he prefers to describe in English as Sino-Christian studies—approaching the subject largely from the perspective of literary studies.

**Yu Jie** 余杰 (b. 1973) is a Chinese dissident writer and human rights activist who is living in exile in the United States. A Mongol ethnic minority, he was born in Chengdu (Sichuan province) and completed an MA in Chinese literature from Peking University in 2000. He became a literary sensation after publishing *Fire and Ice* (*Huo yu bing*) in 1998, a collection of essays criticizing Chinese society and politics. He converted to Christianity in 2003 and became one of the elders of the Ark church (*Fangzhou jiaohui*) in Beijing and an editor of the church's periodical known as the *Ark* (*Fangzhou*), but later renamed as *Olive Branch* (*Ganlanzhi*). He has been a signatory of the human rights manifesto Charter 08, authored by his friend Liu Xiaobo, and was imprisoned numerous times before being exiled to the United States in 2012. Yu Jie is known for his writings about Christianity's ability to transform Chinese society and politics, using Dutch Neo-Calvinist ideas such as the cultural mandate to argue for political liberalism.

**Zhuo Xiping** 卓新平 (b. 1955) is an important scholar in the academic study of Christianity and religious studies in China. A Tujia ethnic minority, he was born in Hunan where he studied and later taught English in the 1970s. In 1978, he began his studies in Christianity in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1978, receiving his MA in 1981. He went to Germany to complete his Ph.D. in philosophy at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (1983–7), comparing Western and Chinese theories of religion. He returned to Beijing in 1988 and became a researcher in the Institute

of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, currently serving as director of the Institute of World Religions and the Centre for Christian Studies. Whilst Zhuo has been a major advocate for the academic study of Christianity in China, he has attempted to distinguish his work from Sino-Christian theology calling for a new discipline of 'academic theology' (*xueshu shenxue*) and arguing for the need to study Christian thought with a level of neutrality in terms of a person's faith commitment and acting as a bridge between Christian theology and religious studies.

## Glossary: Chinese Terms and Phrases

Listed herein is a glossary of the Chinese terms and phrases used in this study and the common English renderings, though some terms may have other meanings depending on their contexts (e.g. *lianghui*). The list is ordered by the *pinyin* romanization system, followed by the traditional Chinese characters and English definitions as used in this book. I have also offered some cross-referencing, where appropriate.

- ai* 愛 love  
*baihua yundong* 白話運動 vernacularization movement  
*bensehua* 本色化 indigenization  
*bentuhua* 本土化 inculturation  
*buxin pai* 不信派 party of unbelievers  
*chaoren* 超人 transcending humanity (cf *chaoyue* 超越)  
*chaoyue* 超越 absolute transcendence (cf *chaoren* 超人)  
*citang* 祠堂 ancestral hall  
*da jiaohui* 大教會 church-type (in German, *Kirche*)  
*daoia* 道家 Daoism (School of the Way)  
*daxueshi* 大學士 Grand Secretary  
*de* 德 virtue  
*Di* 帝 high God/emperor  
*disan daolu* 第三道路 third way  
*disan jiaohui* 第三教會 third church (chiefly, Protestant)  
*dixia jiaohui* 地下教會 underground church (chiefly, Catholic)  
*duihua* 對話 constructive dialogue  
*fajia* 法家 Legalism (School of Law)  
*fazhi* 法治 rule of law (cf *fazhi* 法制)  
*fazhi* 法制 rule by law (cf *fazhi* 法治)  
*gong* 公 the public (cf *guan* 官 and *si* 私)  
*gonggong zhishifenzi* 公共知識分子 public intellectual  
*gongmin zhishifenzi* 公民知識分子 citizen intellectuals  
*guan* 官 the state (cf *gong* 公 and *si* 私)  
*guo fu* 國父 father of the nation  
*guoxue* 國學 Chinese classical studies  
*hanyu shenxue* 漢語神學, *hanyu Jidu shenxue* 漢語基督神學, or *hanyu Jidujiao shenxue* 漢語基督教神學 Sino-Christian theology/Sino-Christian studies (generally, Sino-theology)  
*huangdi* 皇帝 emperor

- jiaohui guodu hua* 教會國度化 the kingdomization of the Church  
*jiating jiaohui* 家庭教會 house churches (chiefly, Protestant)  
*jiating juhui* 家庭聚會 house gatherings (chiefly, Protestant; cf *jiating jiaohui* 家庭教會)  
*Jidu* 基督 Christ  
*Jidujiao* 基督教 Christianity (chiefly, Protestant; cf *Jiduzongjiao* 基督宗教)  
*Jidujiao re* 基督教熱 Christianity fever  
*Jidutu xueren* 基督學人 Christian scholar  
*Jiduzongjiao* 基督宗教 Christianity (cf *Jidujiao* 基督教)  
*jingshi* 經世 managing the world/statecraft  
*jinshi* 進士 highest qualification of the imperial civil examination  
*junzi* 君子 superior person (cf *xiaoren* 小人)  
*kaixinguo* 開心果 amusing person (literally, pistachio)  
*laoban Jidutu* 老闆基督徒 boss Christian  
*laowai* 老外 foreigner  
*le gan wenhua* 樂感文化 culture of joy (cf *zui gan wenhua* 罪感文化)  
*lianghui* 兩會 the two bodies of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council (generally, two closely related organizations)  
*li bu* 禮部 Ministry of Rites  
*Mojia* 墨家 Moism (School of Mozi)  
*muyu shenxue* 母語神學 mother-tongue theology  
*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王 inward sageliness, outward kingliness  
*neizai chaoyue* 內在超越 inner transcendence  
*ren* 仁 benevolence/humaneness  
*renhui* 仁會 benevolent society  
*rujia* 儒家 Confucianism (School of Scholars)  
*rujia xianzheng* 儒家憲政 Confucian constitutionalism  
*sangai yichai* 三改一拆 Three Rectifications, One Demolition  
*sanjiao* 三教 three teachings (i.e. Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism)  
*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一 three teachings discourse  
*Shangdi* 上帝 high God/the Christian God  
*shengsheng Shen* 生生神 ever-generating God  
*sheng wang* 聖王 sage-ruler  
*shenmi zhuyi* 神秘主義 mysticism (in German, *Mystik*)  
*shenxue sixiang jianshe* 神學思想建設 theological reconstruction  
*shidafu* 士大夫 scholar-official  
*shimu* 師母 pastor's wife (generally, teacher's wife)  
*shutu tonggui* 殊途同歸 different routes towards the same destination (idiomatically, all roads lead to Rome)  
*si* 私 the private (cf *gong* 公 and *guan* 官)  
*si duo* 四多 four manys (i.e. many old, many women, many illiterate, and many ill)  
*sixiang jiefang yundong* 思想解放運動 Movement to Liberate Thinking  
*taichang si* 太常寺 Ministry of Ceremonies

- Taiji* 太極 Great Ultimate  
*Tian* 天 Heaven  
*Tiananmen* 天安門 Gate of Heavenly Peace  
*Tiandi sheng zhi, shengren cheng zhi* 天地生之, 聖人成之 Heaven and Earth create it, the sage perfects it (cf *Tiansheng rencheng* 天生人成)  
*Tianmin* 天民 citizen of Heaven  
*Tianming* 天命 Heavenly will/Heavenly mandate  
*Tian ren heyi* 天人合一 Heaven and humanity in unity  
*Tiansheng rencheng* 天生人成 Heaven engenders, humanity completes  
*Tianxia* 天下 all under Heaven  
*Tianxue* 天學 Heavenly studies (i.e. Christian studies)  
*Tianzhujiao* 天主教 Catholicism  
*waizai chaoyue* 外在超越 outer transcendence  
*wei shouxi Jidutu* 未受洗基督徒 unbaptized Christian  
*weiquan* 維權 rights defence  
*weiquan yundong* 維權運動 rights defence movement  
*wenhua* 文化 culture  
*wenhua fuyin hua* 文化福音化 evangelize culture  
*wenhua Jidu hua* 文化基督化 the Christianization of culture  
*wenhua Jidutu* 文化基督徒 cultural Christian  
*wenhua re* 文化熱 cultural fever  
*wenhua suyang* 文化素養 cultural attainment  
*wenyanwen* 文言文 classical Chinese writing  
*wulun* 五倫 five relations (i.e. father and son, ruler and minister, husband and wife, older and younger siblings, and between friends)  
*xiao jiaohui* 小教會 sect-type (in German, *Sekte*)  
*xiaoren* 小人 petty person (cf *junzi* 君子)  
*xiaoyao* 逍遙 leisurely attitude  
*xiejiao* 邪教 evil cults  
*xin rujia* 新儒家 New Confucian  
*xinxing jiaohui* 新興教會 emerging church  
*xin zuo pai* 新左派 new left  
*xiti zhongyong* 西體中用 Western learning as essence, Chinese learning for application (cf *zhongti xiyong* 中體西用)  
*xueshu shenxue* 學術神學 academic theology  
*zhengjiu* 拯救 divine deliverance  
*zhengtong* 政統 legitimate authority/political lineage  
*zhishifenzi* 知識分子 intellectual  
*zhishi jingying Jidutu* 知識精英基督徒 intellectual elite Christian  
*Zhongguo fuyin hua* 中國福音化 evangelization of China  
*Zhongguohua* 中國化 sinicization or Chinafication  
*zhongti xiyong* 中體西用 or *zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong* 中學為體, 西學為用 Chinese learning as essence, Western learning for application (cf *xiti zhongyong* 西體中用)

- zhuzi baijia 諸子百家 Hundred Schools of Thought  
 ziyou zhuyi 自由主義 liberalism  
 zongjiao re 宗教熱 religious fever  
 zongjiao xinyang ziyou 宗教信仰自由 freedom of religious belief  
 (cf zongjiao ziyou 宗教自由)  
 zongjiao ziyou 宗教自由 freedom of religion (cf zongjiao xinyang ziyou  
 宗教信仰自由)  
 zui gan wenhua 罪感文化 culture of guilt (cf le gan wenhua 樂感文化)

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