

Incarnation – The Word of God and the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China

道成肉身—上帝之道与基督教中国化

Chen yong tao 陈永涛

According to Belgian sinologist Nicholas Standaert, in the spread of religion, there are two possible phenomena that may occur once the proclaimed religion comes into contact with the local culture: one is that “the incoming new religion may gradually alter the system, modes of thinking or expressions of the original culture, resulting in a deep cultural alienation or ceding; the other is that “the incoming foreign religion, undergoes some changes, taking on a new look in the culture that accepts it.”¹ Standaert believes that Buddhism in Southeast Asia belongs to the first phenomenon, while that in China and Japan belongs to the second phenomenon.

Undoubtedly, after more than 70 years of effort by the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), Christianity in China has long since become a religious undertaking independently run by Chinese people. However, due to certain historical and theological reasons, there still exists a certain degree of cultural alienation or ceding in Chinese Christianity today. It is because of this kind of cultural alienation or ceding that the contextualization of Christianity in China is not just a slogan or an expedient measure but a process that requires the Chinese Church to imbue it with substantive content through positive and active thinking.

1 N. Standaert, *Localization*, Taipei: Guangqi Press, 1993, pp. 30-31

Introduction

There is a story that in the ancient east, there is an unknown small country, and at the border of this small country, there is a poor village. A beautiful young woman named Xiuhui lived in that poor village. It is said that the Lord was so kind to her that He appeared to her in a dream calling on her to dedicate her life to translating His Word into the language of her own country and spread it throughout the land. At that time, printing technology was not widespread, and in the east, the texts of those classical ancient books of God's Word were those classical manuscripts belonging to the sovereign state. To make things worse, those manuscripts were locked in the treasury of the Hanlin Academy in the capital of the sovereign state. Needless to say, God's mission for Xiuhui was very difficult and it was close to hopeless to complete this test.

In addition to the astronomical cost of translation and printing, it was also a challenge for Xiuhui to find and hire those wise men who were proficient in ancient literature. However, none of this held her back. On accepting this mission, she sold her few possessions, left her hometown, and went to the city alone, sleeping on the streets and begging for a living. She would do anything to raise money to complete that mission. She was willing to undertake any kind of hard work just to earn a little money. The road seemed endless, and it was difficult to explain how painful and burdensome it was to raise money. Nevertheless, as the old saying goes, where there is a will, there is a way. After fifteen years of hardship, Xiuhui finally accumulated a considerable sum of money. With this, the plan to translate God's Word was ready to begin, but just at that very moment, her hometown was hit by a 'once-in-a-century' flood wherein many people died.

Faced with this crisis, Xiuhui donated, without hesitation, all the money she had accumulated over fifteen years. When her hometown finally recovered from that disaster, Xiuhui returned to the city to refinance the translation project. She never forgot her original intention and never abandoned her original aspiration. The mission entrusted by God was always in Xiuhui's heart and mind. Although time flew and she became no longer young and beautiful, stories of her selfless love and steadfast determination spread throughout the land and touched the hearts of countless people. Nine years passed unnoticed and again, people, rich and poor, all donated enthusiastically to Xiuhui's mission. Again, when the funds were enough and translation was about to begin, a plague struck unexpectedly, killing thousands and leaving many broken families. Despite being wornout, the exhausted Xiuhui again donated all the money she had raised over the past nine years without any hesitation. Again, when the disaster relief ended, she returned to the city to raise money and start all over again. Time passed, and in the last few months of her life, Xiuhui finally saw the first fruits of her labor: the first batch of classics in her own language, ready for publication. After her death, her story was eagerly shared. Everyone agreed that Xiuhui had actually completed the translation and preaching work three times over during her lifetime, and the last time could not compare with the brilliance of the first two times.

This story invites us to ponder about the meaning of "God's Word." Whenever we mention God's Word, we usually refer to Scriptural texts or propositional doctrines. It is true that for Christians, the Bible is God's Word. But does God's Word merely refer to the written script? Does not the Bible also tell us that God's Word "shall not return unto the void?" (Isa 55:11, KJV) The Word of God is unheard by deaf ears, but to those who hear wholeheartedly, it is a deafening sound. Therefore, the Word of God is powerful. However, the

Word needs to manifest its power in the process of becoming flesh. Without becoming flesh, the Word cannot be as powerful as it should be. There is only one way that humans can attain God's Word: through the Word becoming flesh. For example, if the commandment of "love thy neighbor" is merely regarded as a golden rule, it is only a paper exercise; only when these three words are practiced in daily life, that is when the Word "love thy neighbor" is put into action and becomes flesh, will this Word of God manifest its power. In other words, the Word of God not only needs to be proclaimed but also to be "lived out." It is impossible for one to identify with God's Word without putting it into practice. The core truth about Christ is that the Word of God is the "Word" that becomes flesh. Lao Tzu says at the beginning of his *Tao Te Ching*: "Truth can be known, but it may not be the well-known truth."² Whenever we try to describe this truth, we always end up catching the wind. For like "love", "Word" (or truth) does not exist between the words and lines, but in action. The Word of God will continue to become flesh only if it is put into practice. In other words, the Word of God must become flesh and blood and live fully on earth—only then, can it truly be with us. This is what the truth of the incarnation is about.

The Dao of God and the Chinese Cultural Context

Therefore, what is God's Word? When we talk about God's Word, we tend to say that the Bible is God's Word that has been written down. The neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) was one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century and he developed a much broader concept of God's Word which was accepted by many involved in Protestant theology.

2 This is based on Yuanchong Xu's translation. The word "道" (Dao or Tao) in this line can be translated both as "Word" and "Truth."

According to Karl Barth, there is a threefold form of God's Word: (1) the revealed Word of God, which is the Word of the person, Logos, that is incarnated in Christ; (2) the written Word of God, which is the testimony of prophets and apostles to the revealed Word of God, that is the Bible; (3) the proclaimed Word of God, which is the actual proclamation of the Church, that is the concrete proclamation and realization of the revealed and written Word of God, that is the Bible.³

The threefold form of God's Word exists in a cyclical form: (1) the basis of everything is God's self-revelation in the incarnated Christ; (2) the Apostles' lives and witness were authentically and authoritatively preserved in the New Testament texts; initially, they were orally transmitted (that is the proclamation of the Apostles), later on, they were also written down; (3) This apostolic witness repeatedly 'wants' to be an actual 'living voice,' or to be the proclaimed Word of God, so that the incarnated Logos might be understood, and be presented to its fullest extent. Actually, all these three forms of God's Word contain the one and common Word: the incarnated Logos (John 1:14). Thus, according to Karl Barth, the concept of God's Word is larger than the Bible. The Bible is God's Word, but God's Word does not merely refer to the Bible.

First of all, Jesus Christ is the revealed Word of God. For Chinese Christians, Jesus Christ, the revealed Word of God, is not so much an object of theoretical thinking as an example to be followed and emulated. Chinese culture is ethically-oriented, not theoretically-oriented. It does not uphold speculative thinking but focuses on moral teachings. In this respect, it is closer to the Bible and Hebraic thought than to Hellenized and Latinized Christian thought. Therefore, if Christianity is to become Chinese Christianity in the true sense, and to be an integral part of new era Chinese culture,

3 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I /1, Second edition, Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1975, 88-124.

the further contextualization of Christianity in China is the only path. Is it possible to Sinicize the Word of God? What is the significance of Sinicizing the Word of God? How to Sinicize the Word of God? To these questions, faith in the “Incarnation” offers a referential solution.

The Word once incarnated in a particular historical culture and society, became flesh in first century Judea, thus, it could also become flesh in every specific culture and society. Every unique culture could be the bearer of the Incarnation. Faith in the Incarnation enables us to see not only the possibility of the Word of God becoming flesh in contemporary Chinese culture and society but also the necessity of the Word of God becoming flesh in Chinese culture.

As a Chinese Christian, I appreciate very much the fact that in the Chinese Bible, the Chinese character *Tao* 道 is used to translate ‘Word.’ When we say *Tao*, multiple meanings of this word will immediately come to mind: principle, word, way, method, reason, truth, path, and practice, and so on. Jesus Christ is the *Tao* of God, and this *Tao* is to be incarnated in Chinese culture. This is the Christology of the *Tao*, which focuses on demonstrating our unique understanding of Christology. This Christology of the *Tao* will extend our understanding of God’s Word to the practical and ethical realms where religious faith and ethical life could be integrated as necessary. As the Word of God, this Christ is not a ‘theoretical’ Christ; he did not come to cause doctrinal controversies. He is the Lord of life, and He is intimately close to our daily lives. He chose and called us to ‘follow’ Him closely, practice His teachings, and live out His life. He is the Christ who becomes flesh as God’s Word, dwells among us, is with us, and shares our joys and sorrows. As the Word of God in flesh, He lives in our daily lives. As Christians, our new life with Christ is the manifestation of the Word of God in us.

God's Action in History and the Inclusive Character of the Kingdom

Secondly, the Bible is the written Word of God. As the written Word of God, the events of Exodus and Easter are the two focal points of biblical faith on which the development of Christian theology should be based. Exodus is the event whereby God is "acting in history." God is perceived as the God who frees people from all kinds of bondage and slavery and provides them with a new value system, a new identity. While, the event of Easter implies that the history of Exodus continues to take place today, it also implies that the same Almighty Jehovah is at work wherever this kind of liberating event takes place.

The events of Exodus and Easter also symbolize the inclusive character of God's Kingdom and the realization of God's liberating rule. The proclamation of God's Kingdom by the Church requires the Church to assume its responsibility to the world and to society. Therefore, social care and humanistic care are undoubtedly not excluded from the mission of the Church. Not only that, the social care extended by the Church also goes beyond mere social services such as helping the poor and needy. As Mr. Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao) believed, the Church should play a leading role in the process of social and cultural reconstruction.⁴ The Church, as a spiritual community, is neither to reform society directly, nor to promote political revolutions, but to influence society through proclaiming and witnessing to the spirit of the gospel. Jesus' own teaching and mission have denied the possibility of the Church attempting to reform society directly or participating in a political revolution. As the Word of God, Jesus Christ is not a social reformer, much less a political revolutionary.

4 T. C. Chao, "Can Christianity Be the Basis of Social Reconstruction in China?" *Chinese Recorder* 53, May 1922, 316.

The event of Easter is inseparable from the Incarnation. Without the Incarnation, the meaning of Easter would be lost. On one hand, the Incarnation is God's Word becoming flesh. God's Word becoming flesh is not only God Himself entering the world, but also God Himself entering a particular society and culture. Jesus Christ, as the incarnated Word of God, lived in a specific Jewish society. The mission of Jesus on earth was to bring about God's Kingdom, which is a spiritual Kingdom. Jesus did not run away from the society he lived in, but actively involved Himself in it. In particular, He identified with those who were marginalized and vulnerable and wanted them to live better. Theologically, the Incarnation affirms the social dimension of the Gospel. On the other hand, the event of Easter makes the Incarnation a repeatedly emerging event, not just past history. Because of the faith in Easter, Jesus Christ becomes a visible entity in various cultural and historical contexts.

According to the Gospels, there are three points worth emphasizing about the life and teaching of Jesus: First of all, He saw His daily life as a service to God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church interestingly emphasizes that Jesus is a model of ordinary family life, that regards everyday life as a service to God. "By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us the example of holiness in the daily life of family and work."⁵ This implies that the secular work and responsibilities of Christians are "bounden duties" given by God. In other words, the divine and the secular cannot be completely separated. Second, Jesus was with the poor. Just like almost all contemporary systematic theology, the Catechism of the Catholic Church emphasizes that Jesus of Nazareth was on the side of those who were socially marginalized in his own lifetime: that is on the side of the poor, the socially inferior, the sinners, the women, and children. Jesus came from a poor family; most of Jesus's disciples were poor; although God's

5 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vol. 1), Shijiazhuang: Hebei Catholic Xinde Newsroom, 1997, p. 138.

Gospel is for all, it is easier for the poor to accept the Gospel preached by Jesus. Jesus came from a poor family; most of Jesus's disciples were poor; although God's Gospel is for all, it is easier for the poor to accept the Gospel preached by Jesus. Not only that, but Jesus also brought them spiritual comfort and the hope of God's Kingdom that is yet to come. Third, teaching about God's Kingdom: At the core of Jesus's teaching is the idea of God's Kingdom. Jesus best expressed the ethics of God's Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6). In addition to proclaiming the eschatological Kingdom that had come, Jesus also made a claim about Himself. The Kingdom of God had come in the ministry of Jesus Christ.⁶

Proclamation and the living Word of God

The Proclamation of the Church is the third form of the Word of God. Through word and deed, the Church proclaims the revealed Word of God and the written Word of God. Because of the Proclamation of the Church, the incarnated Word of God dwells among us, while the written Word of God is no longer "cold text," but the living Word of God, full of power and life. The Proclamation of the Church cannot be separated from the social, cultural, political, and economic context in which the Church exists. Therefore, this Proclamation is both cultural and contemporary. Without this cultural and contemporary character, the Word cannot become flesh in our specific lives, nor can it have any influence, which it should, on society and culture.

6 Cf. Chen Yongtao, "The Christian Church and Social Care – the Necessity and Rationality of the Social Care of the Church in Light of the Nature and Mission of the Church," in Zhuo Xinping and Xu Zhiwei (eds) *Christian Studies*, Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2008, 129-130.

Unlike the Western cultural emphasis on absolute concepts, what Chinese culture emphasizes is the fact that the Word dwells in all things. The complementary teachings of Confucius and Laozi constitute the main thread in Chinese culture. Confucius says “set your aspirations on the *Tao*.” (*The Analects of Confucius: Shu Er*); “If I can hear the *Tao* in the morning, I would be content to die in the evening.” (*The Analects of Confucius: Li Ren*); “It is people to promote the *Tao*, not the *Tao* to promote people.” (*The Analects of Confucius: Wei Ling Gong*). The *Tao* that Confucius is discussing mainly refers to the basic principle of normal development of society and the basic laws governing a country. The concept corresponding to *Tao* is *Qi* 气 that is, life force or material force. The *Tao* is embedded in the *Qi*, which needs to be discovered and discerned. The later neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming Dynasties put forward the core concept of “Heavenly Principle,” which is a combination of “Heavenly *Tao*” and “Human *Tao*,” emphasizing that the “Heavenly Principle is no more than the ways of people”: in other words, the heavenly principle is not an ultimate entity, but a common way of daily life. Although the *Tao* that was proclaimed by Lao Tzu (Laozi) sounds superlative: “*Tao* can be known, but it may not be the well-known *Tao*.”

This *Tao* is not a supreme, absolute and ultimate entity that could be separated from all things, but is the everlasting vitality and energy of the life of the universe, which dwells in all things. It is in this sense that Taoism is regarded as pantheistic. With *Tao*, all things live; without *Tao*, all things die: this *Tao* is not the creator or the master of the universe; therefore, Lao Tzu says that the *Tao* “gives them birth and does not own them, acts and does not appropriate them, is superior, and does not control them” (*Lao Tzu*, 51), “it clothes and feeds a myriad things, yet does not claim them as its own”. On the understanding of ‘*Tao*’, most Chinese people choose to discuss it from two perspectives: naturalism (Taoism) and secular humanism (Confucianism), so it is said that

“*Tao* models itself after nature” (*Lao Tzu*, 25),⁷ and “*Tao* is not far away from people ” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*,13).

Fundamentally, Chinese culture is a moral culture. Confucianism, as the main body of Chinese traditional thought and culture, is essentially about social morality, that is, the principles of moral education, which focus on guiding people to behave and live wisely with virtue and continually promoting civilizational progress. The aspiration of Confucius was to “cultivate oneself for the benefit of others” (*The Analects of Confucius: Xian Wen*): the essence of his doctrine is to take benevolence as the foundation of human nature and advocating, through the principles of loyalty and forgiveness, the extension of one’s love and respect for parents to all people and all things, so as to bring peace in society. In the emergence and growth of Taoism and the introduction and development of Buddhism, both identified with Confucian religious morality. The beliefs in becoming Buddha and bodhisattvas, helped to strengthen the appeal of Chinese traditional morality thereby moderately supplementing Confucianism’s religious morality. For example, Taoism stresses that the pursuit of becoming an immortal should “be based on loyalty, filial piety, harmony, obedience, benevolence and faithfulness” (Ge Hong, *Baopuzi: Dui Su*). Meanwhile, Buddhism also defines itself in terms of “the avoidance of evil, the practice of good deeds, and the purification of one’s self”. By placing “filial piety” as the first of all virtues, both Taoism and Buddhism actually manifest efforts made in the process of their contextualization in China.

7 Based on the translation of Lin Yutang, *The wisdom of Laotse* [M]. Greenwood Press, 1979.

Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao) was an important Chinese theologian in the first half of the 20th century. He argued that there are several powerful tendencies in traditional Chinese culture. Besides the naturalistic tendency, artistic tendency, and Chinese theological experience, there is another tendency of great importance, and that is the ethical tendency. For the Chinese, since man is a human being, there should always be a rationale for being human. “To be human is to be benevolent” 仁者人也 : this is the basic principle of humanity. As for the interconnection between people, filial piety is the root, loyalty is to fulfill one’s responsibility, and forgiveness is the principle for interacting with others.⁸ It was based on this understanding of Chinese culture that Zhao Zichen stressed the importance of integrating Christianity with Chinese culture when he advocated the idea of indigenization or contextualization of Christianity in China.

For the Chinese church, in the proclamation of God’s Word, it is necessary to draw lessons from the contextualization of Buddhism. As the proclaimer of the Word of God, the Church should proclaim God’s Word not only in its preaching but also in acts of service because God’s Word is not a cold, purely rational Word, but a living, specific, warm, and powerful Word of life. Today’s world is one that is torn apart just as today’s society is also ruptured and traumatized. How the Church proclaims God’s Word in such a ruptured world and wounded society, and whether the Church heals the wound or makes it worse, is the subject that one must reflect upon in the process of proclaiming God’s Word. As the proclaimer of the Word of God, the Church should be a healer, peacemaker, and comforter, promoting the whole healing process with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not the master of the world or society: it is the church’s responsibility to become the servant of all people and the healer of the world.

8 Zhao Zichen, “Christianity and Chinese Culture” (1927), in *Collected Works of Zhao Zichen*: vol.3, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2007, 271-278.

In any case, the mission of the church is to serve, to become the servant of the world or society, and to strive for the integrity and health of the world. This mission of the Church is consistent with the “spirit of harmony” in Chinese culture. In Chinese culture and the contemporary social context, the Chinese church’s proclamation of God’s Word should focus on unity rather than division, harmony rather than conflict, and openness rather than isolation. The Spirit of God is the Spirit that brings about unity, harmony, and embraces the whole universe, not the Spirit that brings about division, conflict, and self-isolation. Therefore, as the proclaimer of God’s Word, the Church needs to open itself to the Spirit of God.

More than just Word, *Tao* denotes action

Xie Fuya, a 20th-century Chinese religious philosopher and theologian, once asserted that the key for “Christianity in China” to become Chinese Christianity is to have a group of saints that follow Christ’s example. He argued that we (Chinese people) should have our own St. Paul, St. John, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas. For Christianity in China to become a true Chinese Christianity, it needs to raise up many “Christian Gentlemen.”⁹

9 Xie Fuya. “The Age of Chinese Classics, the Age of Buddhology, and the Age of Christology,” in *The Collection of Essays on Christian Thought in Xie Fuya’s Later Years*,” Hong Kong: Christian Literature Council Ltd, 1986, 124-125. This article is also included in Liu Xiaofeng (ed) “*Tao*” and “*Word*”: *Encounter between the Chinese Culture and Christianity*, Shanghai: Shanghai SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1995.

Xie Fuya also asserted that the shape and meaning of the Chinese character *Tao* denotes 'action' more than just 'word.' He then boldly imitated the beginning of the first chapter of the Gospel of John, which is John's teaching about the Word, proclaiming, "In the beginning, there was the Cross "✝"¹⁰ the Cross was with God, the Cross was God." According to Xie Fuya, although the essence of God or God Himself is transcendent and unfathomable, the fact that God is in the "historical Jesus" culminated in "action," especially in the ultimate action of Christ's taking up the Cross at Calvary.

In other words, the fact that the Word of God became man is manifested in "action." He pointed out that,

*"Chinese Christology will not be interested in dogmatic and doctrinal disputes, or in the parallelism of church denominations. It must transcend the major divisions between Catholicism and Protestantism with all its denominations, and it also must transcend the dispute between the so-called fundamentalists and modernists. Our Christology is a search for Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully human, and a tracing of His life. We will unite Confucius and Jesus to develop a variety of splendid and colorful theologies that are based on this new paradigm...The traditional Chinese scholars had a spirit of 'taking the clarification of the world as their duty;' if they follow Christ's example and get on in the world according to His example, they will throw themselves into the world as countless fireballs, and through the fire of the Holy Spirit, they will cleanse this heinous earthly world of all sins and bring about the coming of God's Kingdom."*¹¹

10 Note by author: "✝" is the ancient form of the Chinese word "action," which is in the form of a cross.

11 Ibid., 125-126.

He also emphasized the moral nature and practice of Christianity. He correctly recognized that the doctrines or schools of Chinese cultural history were not so much a series of theories as actual acts practiced, demonstrated, and exemplified by the masters of these schools. Therefore, unlike in the West, real Chinese Christianity does not emphasize seeking knowledge, but on living in this world and living in peace. Thus, for Chinese Christians, “doing” is much more important and difficult than “knowing.” As a result, Xie Fuya stressed the practice and demonstration of the noble character of Jesus as the way of achieving self-renewal, and influencing society. He said,

*“The pastor of the Church should inspire church members and become a living example for them. In society, and especially in politics, a Christian individual must follow Christ’s example and conduct himself/herself with high moral standards whether in work or in business. As a Christian citizen, he/she should then seek to work together with people of insight to transform world culture, set new ethical standards, counter social decadence, and establish the foundation for genuine world peace and the well-being of all humankind.”*¹²

Consequently, Xie Fuya emphasized the importance of personality education and practice in the life and nurture of believers.¹³ He was of the opinion that laypeople should be role models for non-believers, and pastors should be role models for laypeople. In his view, the actions and behaviour of the Church and Christians are more powerful than the preaching of a thousand words. This is a good reminder for the Christian ministry in China.

¹² Xie Fuya. “A Chinese layman’s view of the Old and New Testaments” in *The Collection of Essays on Christian Thought in Xie Fuya’s Later Years*. Hong Kong: Christian literature Council Ltd., 1986, 23-24.

¹³ According to Xie Fuya, firstly, Chinese tradition is characterized by “people” rather than “God” as in the Jewish tradition. Instead of extolling God’s omniscience and omnipotence, Chinese Christian should stress the noble character of Jesus Christ. Compared to proving faith through knowledge, it is better to manifest faith through action. Secondly, the Chinese ethos of “honoring teachers and esteeming truth” should be preserved. Thus, he believes that Christian education ministry is more important than evangelism and sermons, emphasizing the importance of Christian education and pastoral work. Thirdly, as for the traditional Chinese educational method, it is “by example,” rather than “by words,” the so called “lead by example.

Conclusion

The Word of God does not only refer to the revealed Word of God, the written Word of God, but also the Word of God proclaimed by the Church. That 'Word' is not only God's words, but also God's way. As followers of Jesus Christ, Christians should walk in God's way and proclaim God's Word through their own words and deeds and become living witnesses of the Word of God.

Only a truly contextualized Christianity could really take on 'a new look.' The further contextualization of Chinese Christianity is to make the Word of God become flesh in our own culture, in the society in which we live. This requires not only proclamation through our words but also bearing witness in our lives. For Christians, loving God and loving our neighbors are not two different commandments, but two aspects of the same commandment. Our love for God is manifested through our love for our neighbors. As the Bible

says, if a man does not love his 'brother' whom he can see, it is impossible that he can love God whom he cannot see (1 John 4:16-21). God is love, and the Church should become the vehicle of God's love, bringing the Gospel of God to society and to those in need. In a world of need, the Church must not only proclaim God's will but also practice God's will. This will of God is what God has accomplished in Jesus Christ, what the Holy Scriptures testify to and reveal, and is also the gospel proclaimed by the Church.

Chen Yongtao is Professor of Systematic Theology at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.