

## “伦理化”的汉语基督教与 基督教的伦理意义

——基督教伦理在中国文化语境中的可能性及其难题<sup>①</sup>

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### [英文提要]

The dissemination of Christianity in the Chinese cultural context began with “the analysis of Christianity through the eyes of Buddhism and Taoism”. This approach left China with a three-fold paradigm for understanding Western thought. Firstly, any foreign culture should be introduced and understood through China’s native interpretative schema. Secondly, the metaphysical dimension should be emphasized in the study of the “form” of Western thought. And thirdly, foreign thought should be harnessed for practical “use” to enrich China’s secular ethics.

The Sino-Nestorian Documents presented the Christian doctrine as the virtue of “taking no unnatural actions”, which became the foundation for the “ethicization” of Sino-Christianity. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, by “adapting Christianity to Confucianism”, the Chinese translated religious ethics into the realm of secular morals. The indigenization (or inculturation) movement blend-

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<sup>①</sup> 本文系1999年8月为加拿大维真学院“基督教的中国化”学术研讨会撰写的论文,蒙会议主办者许志伟博士和赵敦华教授同意转发于本刊,谨此致谢。

ing Sino-Christianity and Confucian moral norms has been strengthened since 1919, and the process of ethicization remains a major trend into the 1980s and 1990s.

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism traditionally interpret their beliefs in ethical terms, thus producing works of goodness or virtue. But a secular ethical system has no internal authority by which to establish its legitimacy, justify its innate paradoxes, or exert an effective binding influence. Theoretically, Chinese culture could benefit from the theological dimension of Christian ethics as a reference. But it is unfortunate that the theological dimension is precisely what has been discarded in the ethicization of Sino-Christianity.

While it is being interpreted in the indigenized interpretative schema, Sino-Christianity should stimulate the most challenging ideas in the inter-interpretation of disparate perspectives instead of merely seek for common ground. In this case, the most important ethical resource Christianity can offer is not in reestablishing a similar set of moral norms, but in providing an ultimate explanation for an ideal morality.

In recent times, China and the West are being confronted with an increasingly similar set of cultural, political and economic problems. A new interpretative schema for Christianity in the contemporary Chinese cultural context may no longer be constructed from Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism; it may simply come out of the existential experiment of modern man. With this change of interpretative schema, Karl Barth's distinction between "Christian spirituality" and "Christian churches", Dietrich Bonhoeffer's notion

of the “unreligious interpretaton of Christianity”, and Reinhold Niebuhr’s theological and ethical argument on the basis of “tension” may prove to be very inspiring and effective in helping the Chinese of our day understand Christianity on a deeper level.

“伦理”或“道德”之谓(Ethics or Morality),在中文与西文中均可作两个层面上的解释,即:内在的价值理想或者外在的行为规范。而在基督教与中国文化的实际碰撞中,由于“至简、至圆”、“阴助教化”的本土传统之引导,这两个层面的发展是极不平衡的。就其总体情况而言,行为规范意义上的“伦理化”或者“道德化”始终是汉语基督教的主要路向。这种“单向度”的阐释框架,使“伦理化”的汉语基督教与基督教所应当包含的伦理资源之间,常常存有一定程度的错位。不解决这一问题,基督教伦理便无法在中国文化语境中实现其潜在的可能性。

## 一、汉语基督教的“伦理化”过程

基督教初入中土之时,景教文典首先是日益见出“撮原典大部之要,引中土佛道之俗”的倾向,即所谓“以佛老释耶”。<sup>①</sup>立于公元781年的“大秦景教流行中国碑”和译述于初唐的《一神论》,已开始借用佛老的“妙有”、“无为”、“法界”等,并有“神识”、“五荫”、“四色”之谓,被研究者对应于佛家的“识蕴”、“五蕴”、“四大”。中唐以后的《宣元至本经》更有“无元”、“无言”、“无道”、“无缘”、“非有”等道家语。其中“妙道能包含万物之奥道者,虚通之妙理,群生之正性;奥,深秘也”等等,被认为是老子《道德经》“道者万物之奥”的注

<sup>①</sup> 请参阅翁绍军:《汉语景教文典诠释》,29~37页,香港,香港汉语基督教文化研究所,1995年。以下关于景教文典的引文,亦见该书。