

Modernity and Secularity: the dual significance of Christianity for China's modernisation

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Abstract:

'Secularity' in Christianity implies a dual standpoint, both positive and negative, towards the journey through the constant vicissitudes of this world towards the next. Modernity both supports and reflects on the intrinsic dual inter-relationship between the duality of modernisation and secularity. Thus on the one hand Christianity forms a series of belief preconditions and systemic foundations for modernisation, while on the other hand it has gradually transformed itself into a resource for the humanist spirit's critique of modernisation. The legitimacy and historical inevitability of Christianity's entry into China is basically connected not to the exchange or integration between Chinese and Western cultures as such, but to the historical destiny of modernisation facing both Christianity and China; this is the common basis for both the 'Adattamento' (adaptation, *shiyi*) of the Jesuits from the late Ming onwards and the indigenous 'context' (*chujing*) of China.

Keywords: modernity, modernisation, secularity, Chinese Christianity.

I

One of the major results of the Enlightenment for later times was to bring about a widespread sense of the opposition between modernisation and Christianity. Modernisation was therefore seen as 'secularisation' (*shisuhua*) by contrast with the age of religious belief. From the late Ming [16th-17th century] onwards, China was already facing 'secularisation', and at the end of the twentieth century entered upon unprecedentedly deep and wide-ranging modernisation; rapidly advancing humanism

therefore used the language of Christianity to call this change by the pejorative term of 'secularisation'. Rapidly advancing modernism, on the other hand, took the opposite stance, proudly identifying itself with this secularisation. But is this popularly accepted oppositional structure merely a matter of superficial appearances?

Modernisation and modernity are not mere products of ratiocination, but are first and foremost the most important and basic actuality for humanity over the last few hundred years. Modernisation (*xiandaihua*) and its modernity (*xiandaixing*), which have become the main structure of production, exchange and daily life for the whole human race, are also the pivot and foundation directing the whole of social life and its spiritual movements for China over the last hundred-plus years. Whatever attacks may be made on modernisation in terms of value systems, there is no longer any possibility of the human race abandoning such fundamental aspects of modern culture as democratic freedoms, scientific manufacturing (from electric light and the telephone to the motor car), and interchange with the rest of the world. Therefore, whether one likes it or not, modernisation is a destiny which must be accepted by contemporary humanity.

To accept the destiny of modernisation does not imply abandoning the spiritual initiative and resigning oneself to fate, although it is not a case of a Don-Quixote-like subjectivity existing apart from the destiny of modernisation. As the modernity of contemporary human nature and structure, it has a dual nature, both oppositional and unificatory: it is not merely an outcome of the progress of modernisation or a matter of technical function – rationality, individuality, operational consciousness etc. – but also a reflective consciousness which can examine and criticise modernisation, and a standpoint on values. Both aspects of this dual nature of modernity have a functional significance in relation to modernisation, although the two corresponding functions are completely different: the former supports and encourages modernisation, while the latter criticises and restrains it. Christianity thus has an important connection with both aspects of this dual nature of modernity. Especially in its role as a faith culture, Christianity participated historically in forming the deep-rooted spiritual preconditions for modernisation/modernity. Therefore, the legality and legitimacy of Christianity in modern society ultimately derives from the

above-mentioned functional relationship of Christianity to modernisation/modernity. The legitimacy and historical inevitability of Christianity's arrival in China is also ultimately tied to the legitimacy and historical inevitability of China's entry upon modernisation/modernity. The so-called indigenisation of Christianity in China, or 'Chinese-language theology', becomes a real issue only within the historical framework of China's modernisation and modernity. Apart from the historical foundation of modernisation/modernity, statically and metaphysically to compare traditional Chinese culture and Christian culture with a view to explaining the destiny of Christianity in China is not only abstract but misses the point.

II

The Enlightenment attitude does indeed have a factual basis in history. Some subjective conditions for the initial impetus to and development of modernisation – an independent consciousness of the experience of nature, rationality based on internal logic, the expansion of human desires in the pursuit of happiness – are all in one sense divorced from Christianity. However, since the 19th century, Christianity's characteristic of forming the deep precondition for modernisation has gradually come to be pointed out. This does not refer simply to Max Weber's famous conclusions on the important relationship between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, but particularly to how the 'modern' (Modernus) which originates in the longing for the Messiah, through the change of direction from historical theology to historical philosophy, has provided the modern consciousness with its most basic attitude to time as a straight line towards the future and the progressivist belief in unlimited possibilities. The centrality of the human race upheld by Christian belief supported the modernising progress of the conquest of nature by Man, the Christian belief in salvation by grace and the goal of a 'new world' gave rise to Columbus' search for the New World, which was not merely a quest for gold, as is popularly thought, but rather a search for the holy city of Zion, and even to the founding spirit of the USA, which saw itself as a Christian 'New World'. The characteristically Christian belief in proselytising anywhere and everywhere became the internal spiritual corollary to the globalising tendency of modernisation. The monastic

way of life and the monastic system within Christianity not only provided modern science with the necessary belief conditions for the scientific spirit of pursuing truth over and above practical technology, but also became the matrix for modern scholarship and the modern university. The direct relationship between the individual and God which arose from the Lutheran Reformation became the foundation of modern individuality, and Christianity, in which everyone is equal in the sight of God, formed the spiritual support for modern democracy. Modern capitalist work practices have also been traced back to the formula of work and prayer beginning in the sixth century in Western European monasteries.

However, the function of Christianity in relation to modernisation which is more important and more significant for the future is as the origin of that wing of modern humanism which is critical of modernity.

To set up humanism in opposition to Christianity is another popularly accepted view which is plausible but inaccurate. However, not only does a thorough-going humanist standpoint inevitably invoke belief (a classic example being Kant when he laid the foundations of modern humanism), but also, from the divisions in 18th century Enlightenment rationality and the emergence of modern dialectical relations, to the formal birth of the humanities in the 19th century, early-modern and modern humanism has itself undergone major changes. The wing of humanism which reflects on and restrains modernisation split off from the secularist consciousness which encouraged modernisation; from the end of the 19th century onwards, that wing developed into the modern mainstream of humanism. The highest objective of this neo-humanism is its concern with ultimate values; it must inevitably draw support from a reinterpretation of the traditional beliefs represented by Christianity. Early-modern and modern developments in Christianity correspond at a deep level to the above-mentioned developments in humanism. Christian humanism at the time of the Renaissance was the outcome of the education provided by the medieval monasteries, and corresponding to the formation of the humanities since the 19th century, modern Christianity – from the liberal theologian Ernst Troeltsch who takes Christian theology fully into all fields of

neo-Kantian humanism, to the neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain who responds to the problems of contemporary humanism with a Catholic ‘full humanism’ – is now increasingly forming a dimension of faith which is a modernist critique of the modern humanist spirit.

Fundamentally, the Latin word *saecularis* which is the root of the word ‘secularisation’ represents a basic concept which has been emphasised since New Testament times, namely that apart from Christ, no sacred eternity or absoluteness is recognised in any worldly object (or indeed religious ceremony). As a temporary process, worldly objects are described as ‘secular’ (*saecularis*). This word originally had the specific meaning of church property which was confiscated by the state and used for worldly ends, but it is a judgement of the kingdoms of this world from the viewpoint of the kingdom of God, and thus it gave rise to a series of ‘secular’ concepts: secularisation (*shisuhua*), secularity (*shisuxing*), and secularism (*shisuzhuyi*) do not belong to the modern social sciences of what Weber called neutral values. Even though ‘secularisation’ is a description of the fact of becoming secular, it is not neutral; it resembles the referent of ‘modernisation’, but its implications are not the same, any more than a ‘weapon’ is the same as a ‘sword’. However, one sign of the advance of Christianity is that the passivity of ‘*saecularis*’ gradually matured into the ‘secularity’ which looks at and copes with the fact of ‘secularisation’; it incorporates the idea that Christianity has entered into the everyday world and cast aside its dialectical relationship with the everyday world. ‘Secularity’ not only accepts secularisation, but regards it as a historically inevitable stage in Christian salvation; but from the viewpoint of the kingdom of God it emphasises the temporary nature of the kingdoms of this world, and denies that the secular world possesses any absolute truth of its own; thus it both forms an ultimate limit which human values cannot overstep, and conversely becomes the highest defence of the humanist spirit’s restraint on and elevation of modernisation. This dialectical nature of ‘secularity’ actually has its doctrinal origins in Christianity itself: the presence of Jesus, the Word made flesh, not only continued the Old Testament view of the world as God’s creation, but regarded the Fall as a stage in the history of salvation, and thus endowed secularity with significance as part of the divine plan. Christianity thus has a dual relation, both transcendent and

immanent, to the secular world, including the modern world: on the one hand, the secular world as a part of God's creation and plan for salvation is given legitimacy, and Christianity thus not only becomes the basis for the secular world, but also in this sense supports the secular world; on the other hand, while *saecularis* (secular) transience forms modernity's instantaneous flow of time (and here the basis of 'modernity' in Christian 'secularity' is particularly clearly revealed), the outstanding point is its rejection of secular matters; the secular world is only of significance in so far as it is part of the working out of the divine plan. Conversely, it is the deracinated secularism which gives independent value to the transience of this secularity, or even holds it up as an eternal modernity, that is the object of the Christian critique. History has already shown that not only did Protestant Christianity display this dual relationship with secularisation/modernisation right from the start, but that Catholic declarations such as *Gaudium et spes* on the pastoral duty of the church in the modern world issued after Vatican II have also confirmed this dual attitude.

The Christian judgement that the secular world has no absolute truth of its own forms a limit which cannot be overstepped by modern human values, and as a result has conversely become an absolute measure of the critique of human spiritual modernity. The absolute nature of this measure puts the Christian spirit first to last in a transcendent and critical position vis-à-vis the modern world and its modernist nature. This is also Christianity's most far-reaching relation to modern times.

However, it was the functional condition for modernisation supplied by Christianity which allowed Christianity to enter into the modern world, and thus allowed the Christian critique of modernisation to become an intimately related, actual and effectual critique. Therefore, Christianity's dual relationship with modernisation has an indivisible dialectical significance.

III

Only by clarifying in principle this dual relationship between Christianity and modernisation or secularisation can one obtain a fundamental grasp of Christianity's relation with early-modern and modern China. The true significance of 'adattamento' (adaptation, *shiying*) which was the guiding principle of the movement of Christianity into China in early modern and modern times, beginning with Francis Xavier, can only be accurately understood and evaluated against the historical background of modernisation.

If the only content of 'adaptation' was the superficial sinicisation of language – when in China, doing as the Chinese do – this would amount to no more than a missionary strategy of 'reconquista' (reconquest, *zaizhanling*) appropriate to religious colonialism. But the further meaning of 'adaptation' is to explain and interpret Christianity by borrowing concepts from China's traditional indigenous culture, for example by explaining 'God' (*Tianzhu* or *Shangdi*) as the 'great progenitor'. The concept of the 'great progenitor' in China's traditional indigenous culture referred to the 'father and mother officials' from the Emperor down to the local magistrate; it is not only an extension and enlargement of the concept of kinship which lies at the heart of China's traditional culture, but, by acknowledging such social relationships which transcend kinship, can also create a new type of ethical relation which goes beyond the principle of kinship. To elevate and develop the concept of the 'great progenitor' into the God (*Tianzhu*) who is both supreme and universal is a development of the latter aspect. However, at the same time as Chinese culture was being altered in this way by Christian culture, the former aspect of the 'great progenitor', i.e. the enlargement of the principle of kinship, also introduced an alien implication into Christianity. Therefore, as Christianity adapted to propagation through traditional Chinese culture, there was inevitably a mutual alteration and blending of the two cultures.

If one confines oneself to the above analysis, one cannot escape from the bounds of the cultural relativism and globalisation which are common currency today. This analysis does not reveal the inevitability and the profound basis of the mutual blending and

alteration of Christianity and Chinese indigenous culture. The present essay cannot merely cite belief in a 'divine plan', but must turn to the historical background of modernisation.

The missionary activity of the Jesuits, represented by Matteo Ricci, to 'supplement Confucianism and replace Buddhism', was put into actual practice in the form of a Christian humanism which was based on science and ethics. This outcome was not a matter of chance, but was historically inevitable; one could even say that it revealed the 'non-divine plan' of the historical movement of modernisation.

From the point of view of Protestant Christianity, the Reformation unleashed by Martin Luther in 1517 stands as a milestone marking the start of modernity. However, something equally important, but which is often misunderstood, is that the Catholic Counter-Reformation in Southern Europe also formed a beginning of this modern history. One of the historical outcomes of the Counter-Reformation was the Society of Jesus which entered China in the late Ming.

The Society of Jesus, led by Ignatius Loyola, was one of the most notable products of the union of Christianity and humanism since the Renaissance. The Jesuits became the outstanding representatives of the Catholic response to and entry into modernity. Contrary to the prejudice which has belittled the Jesuits' 'Western learning' from the late Qing up to our own time, the Jesuits were the cream of European humanism's traditional and scientific education, and it was precisely their scholarly character, a fine combination of tradition and modernity, rather than their missionary teaching, which attracted the Chinese literati of the late Ming. Consequently, the Jesuits' propagation of science ('Western learning') and ethics was not merely the outcome of a missionary strategy of adaptation, but was the direction in which Christianity itself was moving in response to modernisation/modernity; virtue was thus its own reward. The dedication and urgency with which the 16th century Christian missionaries, including the Jesuits, embarked upon the evangelisation of Asia, also indeed reveals the modernising expansion of horizons consequent upon the great geographical discoveries.

Unlike the Jesuit reliance on 'adaptation', the standpoint of one aspect of traditional Chinese culture was its own socio-cultural 'context' (*chujing*). In the words of Wang Yangming, China's last great Confucian teacher, who lived at the time when the Jesuits were making their way to China: 'The tendency of affairs in the world today resembles a deep-rooted sickness or long-standing paralysis.' This not only refers to the official corruption and exacerbated internal and external social conflicts characteristic of the mid- to late Ming, but also includes the profound changes in traditional social production and way of life in China consequent on the rise of the handicraft commodity economy. But what Wang Yangming is even more acutely aware of is the crisis in China's traditional spiritual belief. He constantly sums up the context of his times in such terms as 'learning is finished and the Way is destroyed', 'Heaven has collapsed and Earth is shattered.' He describes the ultimate crisis of China's traditional spiritual beliefs as follows:

The learning of the Sages grows daily more distant and obscure, and the pursuit of success and profit grows ever more intense. Meanwhile, although people have been hoodwinked by the doctrines of Buddha, Laozi, Buddha, Laozi, these are of no avail in overcoming their lust for success and profit; and although they may compromise with the mass of Confucianists, neither are the teachings of the Confucianists of any avail in putting a stop to their fixation on success and profit. By now, the poison of success and profit has permeated into everyone's heart and marrow; practice has turned into second nature over the last few thousand years....Alas! If a gentleman is born into this present generation, how can he pursue the learning of the Sages! How can he even discuss the learning of the Sages! If a gentleman is born into this present age and wishes to become a scholar, he is just heaping up trouble for himself! He is just putting himself in jeopardy! Alas! What a tragedy!

There are two points worth noting in this passage by Wang Yangming: one is that his examination of the crisis in China's spiritual beliefs is not confined to the mid- to late Ming, but is traced back through several thousand years of China's entire spiritual history, and he expresses his disillusionment with all the main threads forming China's traditional

culture: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The second point is that the main manifestation of the collapse of spiritual belief is the ever more widespread 'poison of success and profit'. These two points both place China's traditional spiritual beliefs at a dividing line: the first point already potentially contains an expectation and a comparative viewpoint which transcend tradition. Although Wang Yangming himself promoted the power of individual conscience as a way of reversing the collapse of traditional spirituality, the mid- to late Ming eventually became the dividing line in the historical decline of the Chinese tradition. The 'poison of success and profit' emphasised in the second point is in fact a fundamental element in the spiritual structure of secularity or modernity. Regarded in the broad light of historical philosophy, Wang Yangming had already embarked upon a critique of modernity.

Consequently, behind both the principle of 'adaptation' in the Christian missionary strategy and the 'context' of indigenous Chinese culture in the late Ming, there is the common historical macro-tendency of modernisation and modernity. The 'context' of indigenous Chinese culture to which the Jesuits 'adapted' was basically the issue of how ancient China should cross the threshold into the early-modern and modern period, the turning point of modernisation/modernity. On the one hand, as Liang Qichao was later to say, 'There was a major event at the end of the Ming, which ought to be strongly underlined in China's intellectual history, namely the introduction of European calendrical and mathematical science.' The Christian missionaries were the first to introduce early-modern and modern science and technology into China, and European calendrical and mathematical science as the standard for the modern era were, moreover, directly representative of the modern concept of time and philosophy of history which directly faced the future in Messianic expectation. On the other hand, the more important point is that the Jesuits, through their exceptional Christian humanist education, became a reflection of the ethics of the Incarnation. An exceptional spiritual belief, which had undergone the baptism of the modernist Counter-Reformation, appeared before the eyes of Chinese intellectuals who were mired in spiritual difficulties. As far as traditional Chinese spirituality was concerned, Christianity became something they could draw on to

overcome this crisis. Xu Guangqi described his own motivation and understanding in accepting Christianity as follows:

What use is it that Buddhism came here to the East one thousand eight hundred years ago, when no change has taken place in the way of the world or in people's hearts? Its teachings are specious but untrue. Those who expounded the Chan [Zen] tradition built on the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi, esoteric and impractical; those who practised yoga mixed it up with the use of charms and amulets, erroneous and irrational. If these people want to exalt Buddhism above the supreme [Confucian] ruler, then they are also at variance with the teachings of the ancient emperors, princes, sages and worthies; how could one follow them or trust in them? If one is determined to make people virtuous, then what about the doctrine of serving Heaven which is propagated by these envoys? It can truly supplement the way of the sage kings, add to the teachings of Confucianism, and act as a corrective to the Buddhist dharma. As a strategy for superior government and preservation of peace in our state, there is nothing better than this.

This assertion by Xu Guangqi on the one hand confirms Wang Yangming's judgment on China's spiritual crisis quoted earlier, and on the other hand cites the introduction of the spirit of Catholicism into the context of the indigenous crisis.

The above analysis shows that the modern integration of traditional Chinese culture with Christian culture was not a requirement arising spontaneously from the differences or complementarity between the nature of the two cultures, but was a situation engendered by the enlargement of the scope of the modernised or modernist world; in particular, it was the socio-cultural context created by the historical progression of modernisation/modernity which provided the basis on which traditional Chinese culture was able to absorb Christianity, while the dual dialectical significance formed by the secularity of Christianity in the course of its historical development was the corresponding internal condition. Divorced from this fundamental condition, neither the dedication of the Christian missionaries, nor the exchanges between the cultures

themselves, would have been sufficient to bring about the integration of Christianity with Chinese culture.

IV

At the end of the twentieth century, mainland China began to promote rapid modernisation on the scale of a nation-wide campaign. The concept of modernisation became an authoritative ideology. In accordance with its functional relationship with modernisation, Christianity then obtained an unprecedentedly legitimate space for cultural expansion. In the unprecedented development and prosperity of China at the end of the twentieth century, Christianity, and especially Christian culture, became embedded in the socio-cultural context centred around modernisation/modernity.

As far as the promotion of modernisation was concerned, following on the growing familiarity with the results of research in fields such as the history of science, the eastward spread of 'Western learning', and the history of modern education, especially tertiary education, in China, the true historical face of Christianity was retrieved from beneath the caricatures of the Enlightenment, and Christianity began to be seen as one of the foundations of early-modern and modern civilisation, especially Western civilisation.

The intrinsic link between Christianity and the concepts of natural law and the social contract, which formed the preconditions for the modern democratic system, began to enter the sights of Chinese thinkers. It was particularly the corruption, the anti-corruption movement, and the strong cries for justice resulting from the systemic change [from the planned economy to market economy] which made Chinese thinkers start to pay attention to the fundamental role played by Christianity in the formation of the Western concept of equality. Related to this, Chinese thinkers, stimulated by reflections on the crisis of confidence in economic ethics, also began to pay attention to the functional relationship between religious faith and commercial trust.

Taking a critical perspective on modernisation/modernity, the pursuit of material gain, the money-worship and the secular hedonism which burgeoned in the wake of China's modernisation and systemic change all had their own spontaneous inevitability. China's ancient traditional spiritual beliefs had collapsed as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, and in the second half of the twentieth century the powerful new tradition of Communism, after the blows of the disruption to society in the Cultural Revolution and the soaring greed for gain in the new era, was also in fact in a moribund state. The spiritual crisis in contemporary China to which this led, centred on an ethical vacuum, encouraged thinkers to reflect on the roots of this crisis through a thorough-going examination of comparative Chinese and Western culture. The interest in comparative cultures and in the interpretation of Western scholarship and thought which has arisen since the 1980's is by no means an isolated cultural or academic movement but directly derives from the exploration of ideological questions arising from China's systemic change to modernisation/modernity.

Starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, China's ancient civilisation was forced by modern Western civilisation to participate in the conflicts between the nation states of the modern world, and modernisation became a necessary route for the survival of the nation state. The Chinese people's pursuit of modernisation went through deepening phases of understanding from utilitarian to systemic to cultural. After the Reform Movement of 1898, the understanding of the implications of 'culture' no longer referred merely to the concept of natural sciences or social sciences producing implements or systems, but also incorporated a philosophy of metaphysical principles, and at a higher level the backing of faith. But this tendency towards deeper understanding was interrupted by the urgent movement for national salvation in the twentieth century. It was not until the end of the twentieth century, in the course of a renewed and unprecedentedly thorough modernisation, that a series of knotty problems on the plane of social science led to a more profound reflection on spiritual belief. The most significant are as follows:

1. In the creation and development of China's market economy, the prominence of opportunism, the lack of rationality, and the weakening of trust became cultural and psychological obstacles to the establishment of market order. From the perspective of cultural tradition, the culture of the 'rationale of practicality' in a China weak in religious tradition lacks the back-up of a 'rationale of values', and means that people cannot maintain a pure, formal system, and lack belief in absolutes. By contrast with this, the spirit of capitalism, as described by Max Weber, is based on Protestant ethical beliefs and from within the Christian faith has step by step formed a layered structure of support composed of the rationale of values (Vernunft), that of practicality, and of understanding (Verstand). This indicates that a general economic ethic cannot possibly consist of the expedient deployment of the calculation of material gain, but must contain an absolute belief which cannot be swayed by considerations of material gain. Western Protestant ethics thus demonstrate for Chinese culture the function of Christianity in supporting modernisation.

2. The corruption which continued to spread during the social transformation in China was no longer a phenomenon confined to the structures of power. Because of China's authoritarian traditions, the ethical behaviour of the elite (the gentleman [*junzi*]) was the model for the ethics of the whole society (the petty men [*xiaoren*]), and therefore the decadent morals of the power-holders in contemporary China not only cause the masses at all levels of society to lose their model of and faith in moral standards, but also actually encourage all classes to imitate them as far as possible in grabbing hold of ill-gotten gains. Also, because Chinese ethics are a matter of collective habitual behaviour, the lack of ethical standards in social and professional life as a result of this makes it difficult for the minority of individuals who maintain their moral integrity to stand firm amid the general behaviour of the majority. Many corrupt officials, when disciplined for their greed and illegal actions, mention this point: because everyone around them has been egging each other on to accept overtly or covertly the practice of giving and taking bribes, this weakens their sense of guilt, and they regard any group behaviour or social practice as normal. The fact that no ordinary person dares to stand up against violent crimes such as gang rape, robbery or murder; and it is popularly held that 'It's impossible to be a good

person' is also connected with the bonds of mutual influence in Chinese ethics. Traditional Chinese ethics (from the old tradition of Confucianism to the new tradition of communism) are not a matter of simple belief, but are to a great extent dependent on the structure of patriarchal gentry society or the system of state/unit ownership and its tight-knit organisation of personal relationships; if it should happen that this basis of society should be weakened or destroyed, the individual, thrust into the give-and-take of commercialism, has in practice no independent moral resources. This situation has led Chinese thinkers to start paying attention to the faith basis of Western individual ethics, and trace their differences from China back to the ancient 'Axial Period' (*zhouxinqi*). Christianity's thoroughly critical attitude towards the actual world means that even the most outstanding individuals cannot lay claim to absolute virtue; on the contrary, Christianity's negation of man's autonomous ethical status makes impossible any ethical nihilism arising from disillusionment with actual human nature. Consequently, 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. Christian faith therefore demonstrates the intrinsic strength of moral values which transcend the faults of modernisation. The strength of these moral values of Christian belief must be an important source of the modern humanist spirit.

3. One of the great faults of modernisation is the attenuation of personal relationships. China is a country with a tradition of kinship ethics, but the kinship-based ethical group of ancient China and the ideological ethical group of modern (mainland) China (in which the entire population was addressed as 'comrade') have already collapsed in the course of the modern transformation. The extreme problems created by this even threaten the family. The current response is, while criticising the coldness (or even deterioration) of modern personal relations, simply to turn back to the traditional kinship ethics or ethics of revolutionary comradeship. But since modernisation, the former has to be transferred to the standpoint of the independent individual, while the latter has to accomplish the separation of power and spiritual belief. These must be taken as necessary preconditions for the recreation of the modern ethical group.

As far as regions in which the progress of modernisation is already well established are concerned, the newly formed modern ethical groups generally exist on the margins of society. 'Margins' indicates that they are outside the mainstream of political, economic and commercial activity in modern society. Among these groups, those which are formed on the basis of particular social conditions such as environmental activism or a shared experience (such as being demobilised soldiers or former rusticated youth) are certainly pure, but this type of newly formed social group lacks the resources of tradition; they are pluralist and lack an overall binding force. Although groups in the underground world of the secret societies, which have links to the patriarchal tradition, are cohesive and widespread, their harmful nature is not only unethical but also antisocial. Under the particular social conditions of mainland China over the last half-century, religious groups became the truly marginalised groups; Christianity, Buddhism and the other major religions mainly existed in areas and among marginalised groups of people which were ignored by modernised social activities. Those people who were pushed to the lower levels of society by the upheavals of social transformation at the end of the 20th century, having lost their traditional protection, might not only gain spiritual consolation from belonging to a church organisation, but even develop some sort of structure of economic cooperation or mutual assistance. Particularly by means of their faith-based universal love transcending considerations of gain and loss, religious groups have occupied the moral space vacated by the dissolution of traditional power structures. Christianity has already become one of the liveliest formations to rebuild modernised ethical groups in China.

Behind the rapid expansion of Christianity in the wake of China's reform and opening-up process, in addition to the need of people at the lowest levels of society for a sense of security among the upheavals of social transformation, there is also the current of thought which traces our intellectual history under the stimulus of the deepening of modernisation as described above, and the exploration and experience of Christianity by intellectuals in the attempt to reconstruct modern Chinese spiritual values. Representative of the latter two aspects are the so-called 'cultural Christians' who exist in mainland China

independently of the church. Related to these are the establishment of a large number of research organisations on Christianity in mainland Chinese universities, and the flourishing of academic publishing and conferences on Christianity. Christian scholarship to some extent even holds a leading-edge position in humanist philosophy in mainland China. 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. As discussed above, although Christianity has undergone a number of changes in the course of this unification, the transcendent and critical stance of the Christian faith in relation to modernisation/modernity still persists. Considered from a Christian standpoint, this unification has put pressure on Christianity for the last several hundred years of modernisation/modernity, but it would be more accurate to say that it is this which is its true destiny: not only is Christianity’s intrinsic connection (both unificatory and critical) with modernisation a form of destiny, but humanity’s inexorable advance to modernisation is destiny, and China’s encounter with Christianity while entering upon modernisation is also a form of destiny. With regard to this destiny, we ought to accept it rather than judging it arbitrarily. Looking back over history can enable one to understand destiny more correctly, and thus the enlightened attitude can only be not to dread modernisation but to face it confidently.