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Unity of Will is an Impregnable Stronghold

Since 2004, for the sake of uniting Chinese academics in and out of China, ISCS set up the academic committee to map out new direction and strategy for the construction of Sino-Christian studies/ theology. The first committee consists of 7 members, 4 from Mainland China and 3 from Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas. Members from Mainland China include Prof. GAO Shining of Chinese Academy of Social Science, Prof. WANG Xiaochao of Tsinghua University, Prof. YANG Huilin of Renmin University of China and Prof. ZHANG Qingxiong of Fudan University. Members from Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas include Prof. Pan-chiu LAI (chairperson) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Prof. Stephan CHAN of University of Seattle and Prof. Edmond TANG of University of Birmingham. This committee will invite other relevant scholars when discussing specific agendas. The director office and full-time academic staffs of ISCS work together with the committee to form a cooperative and interactive fellowship.

In 2006 we held the third annual meeting. Members reviewed the work of ISCS and discussed future issues. Therefore we also invited other scholars to join the discussion: Prof. ZHAO lin of Wuhan University, Prof. HE Guanghu and Prof. LI Qiuling of Renmin University of China, Prof. ZHOU Xiping of Chinese Academy of Social Science and ISCS distinguished professor Dr. Milton WAN. We are grateful to Dr. XIE Zhibin for helping us with the meeting record.

Since these future issues may shape the working strategy of ISCS in the coming years, part of the contents are listed below. In doing so we hope that we may find more and more companions in the path of constructing Sino-Christian theology.

Future issues: the role of ISCS in promoting Sino-Christian studies/theology in the coming five years -

- *Daniel Yeung reviewed the transformation of Christian studies in the*

humanities in three periods: before 1989, between 1989-2000 and after 2000. He highlighted the phenomenon of the emergence of "public intellectuals" and the need of communication between Christian theology in the humanities and the church. He hoped that the committee might suggest new paths for Sino-Christian theology under this situation.

- *Some members emphasized that Sino-Christian theology does not only belong to the church but should be in close touch with the general academia. The dialogue partner and the space for development also belong to this realm. Sino-Christian theology is polyphonic and creative. For example, patristic studies scholars may also develop political theology.*
- *A few members suggested that Sino-Christian theology should also engage in dialogue with different church communities. But dialogue partners should respect each other and avoid imposing one's own idea upon others.*
- *Certain members shared from experiences that a serious scholar could also be a committed believer. They are not conflicting identities. The key is the wisdom to use appropriate language in different contexts and situations. But the task of Sino-Christian theology is still to explore a way of making Christian studies a constituent of the Chinese academia.*
- *Several members thought that the direction and theoretical framework in the coming five years should remain the public realm of the Chinese society. Therefore a good understanding of the present academia of Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong is very important and essential.*
- *Some members suggested that in the future Sino-Christian theology should strengthen its publicity, which is inherent in theology itself.*
- *Others felt that the substance of Sino-Christian theology should be committed in continuous breakthrough and development. Therefore there is no need to define Sino-Christian theology too rigidly or prematurely.*
- *Most members agreed with the conclusion of Prof. LI Qiuling in "The Identity and Justification of Sino-Christian Theology":*
 1. *The term "Sino-Christian theology" is used to embrace all forms of Christian theology expressed in Chinese in the past, present and future.*
 2. *"Sino-Christian theology" is an ideal, whose initiators and promoters have added to it some "oughts" from their own theories and praxis. Since it is not yet accepted widely, it has great potential to be developed.*
 3. *"Sino-Christian theology" is a movement. Its initiators & promoters, supporters and partners have exerted great effort in bringing it forth.*
 4. *Christian studies in Mainland China are not a kind of "theology" that has been preconceived or predetermined, and it has no intention to construct a new theology per se. Nonetheless Christian studies in Mainland China have undoubtedly become an inseparable partner of "Sino-Christian*

theology".

The chairperson Prof. Pan-chiu LAI concluded that:

- *The work of promoting Sino-Christian theology in the academia of Mainland China should be affirmed to be effective and valuable;*
- *Dialogue with an open mind with different ecclesial communities is to be encouraged in the Chinese theological circles;*
- *Effort should be made to strengthen the publicity of Sino-Christian theology;*
- *It is affirmed that Sino-Christian theology has referential and,*
- *complementary role in relation to ecclesial theology.*

From my perspective as the director, I agreed to the four concluding points raised by Prof. LI Qiuling. In clarity and simplicity he has succeeded in outlining and highlighting the origin, development and present situation of Sino-Christian theology. The first point gives a definition to Sino-Christian theology in the broadest sense, and the next three points centre round the special sense of Sino-Christian theology. The second and the third point are brief summaries of the interaction between ISCS, scholars doing Christian studies in Mainland China and Sino-Christian theology. The implication of the fourth point is that since the religious situation in the Mainland is unique and the academia is ideologically dominated by atheism, most Chinese scholars participated in Christian studies tend to do it for the sake of widening the horizon of their disciples and academic resources. In spite of that their research results (regardless of their relationship with the core issues of theology) have already become integral parts of Sino-Christian theology. Moreover, I am confident that Sino-Christian theology is making a significant contribution to both the theology of the local churches and ecumenical theology.

This is my prayer, and my vision.

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