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Chinese Public Theology

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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.'[1] 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

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

encroachments into each realm. It is often the case that various internal and external forces affect the level of public or private engagement.[2]

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 (*Mojia* or Moism), etc., spanned both sociopolitical and religiophilosophical concerns.[3] However, by the Han dynasty (206 BCE–

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

[3] 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

220 CE), through the influence of thinkers like Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), Confucianism became 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).[4] 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

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 Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1–17.

[4] 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.

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.[5] 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.[6] 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

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

[6] 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, 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.

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,[7] whilst the latter term has been promoted by the American Lutheran-turned-Catholic scholar Richard John Neuhaus.[8] Both formulations are products of the times and the contexts of their authors.[9] 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.[10] In contrast, the 'public square'

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[7] 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).

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

[9] 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.

[10] 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* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA:

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.[11] 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.[12] A number of Western scholars in Chinese history began to argue for the relevance of the term in the mainland Chinese

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Harvard University Press, 1989); Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts, eds, *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[11] 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.

[12] 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.

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.[13] This public 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'.[14] 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

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[13] Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); 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.

[14] Rankin, 'The Origins of a Chinese Public Sphere', 20.

literature.[15] 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.[16]

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.[17] Regardless of the term used, the debates around the usefulness of categories such

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[15] 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.

[16] 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).

[17] 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].

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.[18] 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.[19] Furthermore, a seminal figure such as Max Stackhouse has tried to

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).

[18] 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).

[19] 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-

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.[20] But this is a limited view which preferences Western discourse.[21] The 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*).[22] 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

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Amakye, *Christology and Evil in Ghana: Towards a Pentecostal Public Theology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), esp. ch. 6.

[20] 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.

[21] 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.

[22] I am grateful to Mark McLeister for pointing out this important distinction to me.

them to enter a new phase.[23] 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'.[24] 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 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

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[23] 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.

[24] 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.

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*.[25] Bosch builds his understanding upon Hans Küng's work on the history of Christian thought,[26] and both base their approaches on the foundational work of Thomas Kuhn's history of science.[27] For each of these discussions, a crisis often results in a paradigmatic shift from an established mode of thinking to a new way of thinking. In his work on the history of science, Kuhn explains that 'the solution to each [crisis] had been at least partially anticipated during a period when there was no crisis in the corresponding science; and in the absence of crisis those anticipations had been ignored.'[28] Simply put, history repeats itself. For instance, this can be seen in the ways that the public voice of

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[25] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

[26] 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.

[27] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 50th anniversary edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[28] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 75.

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.[29] 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.[30] 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.[31]

The shifts that occur across paradigms are seemingly quite dramatic and the incommensurability of different paradigms can be questioned.[32] 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

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[29] See Ian Hacking, 'Introductory Essay', in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, xxx–xxxiii.

[30] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 68–70.

[31] Küng, 'Paradigm Change in Theology', 17–18; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 239.

[32] 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 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.

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.[33] 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'.[34] 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

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[33] 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.

[34] 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.

experiences of historical events, what he calls a 'social location'.[35] This develops into

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[36]—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

World Wars or 9/11. These events distinguish one generation from another.[37]

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

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[35] Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', 288–90, 297–9.

[36] 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.

[37] Edmunds and Turner, 'Introduction', 6–7.

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" by certain Western authors'.[38] However, due to sociopolitical change and technocratic advancements, new 'cosmic religions' such as Marxism and democracy have found prominence in the cosmic order.[39] 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'.[40] 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,

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

[39] Ibid., 73–4.

[40] Ibid., 72.

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.[41] 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.

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

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

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'.[42] Cox sees 'indigenous religions' as offering greater clarity in classifying religions, without imposing any sense of a *preparatio evangelica*.[43] 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.[44]

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.

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[42] 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.

[43] Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous*, 25–6.

[44] <IBT>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)</IBT>, 252.

However, as Walls clarifies later in the same essay, primal religions respond to such encounters in different ways—such as restatement, adjustment, and revitalization.[45] Hence, it perhaps would 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.[46]

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.[47] 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.

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[45] Ibid., 267–78.

[46] 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).

[47] Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 91–108.

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.[48] 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 anterior, posterior, or even medial positions—across the porous borders which identify each school of thought.[49]

My concern here is how Chinese religiosity and its possible modes of existence affect the Chinese Christian framework of thinking.[50] For instance, it has become common to speak of a

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[48] 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.

[49] 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.

[50] 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.

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.[51] 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'.[52] 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[53] and, moreover, some of what we may call Chinese public theology. To adapt Bediako, a 'Confucian imagination' can be noticed in certain aspects of Chinese

[51] 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).

[52] Chau, 'Modalities of Doing Religion', 68.

[53] 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.

Christianity.[54] Whilst other 'imaginations' 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,[55] 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.[56] 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

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[54] I am thankful for a conversation with my colleague Joshua Ralston for this term.

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

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

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 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.[57]

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.[58] 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.

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

[58] 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.

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 through the Cultural Revolution, and became some of the key leadership of the reinstituted 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' (*wenhua Jidutu*),[59] 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

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[59] 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.

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 themselves as Christian scholars (*Jidutu xueren*)[60] 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

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[60] 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.

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.[61] 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*).[62] Whilst the revived interests in Confucianism 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.

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[61] 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).

[62] 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'.

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*),[63] 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.[64] 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.[65]

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

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[63] Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment*.

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

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

This is the first major study of its kind on Chinese public theology. Scholars have begun to explore the public nature of religion in China[66] and the public nature of the narrow field of Sino-Christian theology.[67] 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.

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[66] 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).

[67] 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).

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,[68] 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'.[69] 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 Confucian voices and largely ignoring the Christian voices of this period.[70] 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 'imaginations' 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

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[68] Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance: The Haskell Lectures, 1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

[69] Samuel D. Ling, 'The Other May Fourth Movement: The Chinese "Christian Renaissance", 1919–1937' (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1980).

[70] Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*; Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*.

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.