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"K.H. Ting - Christianity and The Three- Self Church in China"

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In the last two lectures, we have focused on the prophetic voices of Timothy Richard and David Paton. I reported that Richard was prophetic in the sense that he had enlightened us with a broadened understanding of Christian mission- he was a missionary with an open and learning heart. Rather than 'seeking the lost', he went out to 'seek the worthy'. And in approaching

Chinese culture and Chinese religions, he did not condemn them as pagan or false religions, but affirming that 'all are good'. It was the Chinese belief that all religions taught us to be good and Richard had learnt and practised so in China. So he went about seeking 'the good, the better and the best' in all religions. David Paton was prophetic in the sense that he had called the church to repent, having proclaimed that the end of the missionary era in China in the early 1950s was the judgement of God. Paton did not say much regarding how the Chinese Protestant Church should encounter Communism after the withdrawal of the missionaries from China. Now we shall come to the life and work of Bishop K.H. Ting ^[1] and address to this issue more directly. The first time I came close to Bishop K.H. Ting- was not in Hong Kong, nor in China but in England. It was in 1982 when Bishop Ting first revisited United Kingdom after the re-opening of China. I was at that time a research student at University of London Institute of Education. I joined in the delegates of Chinese churches in England to welcome the Bishop in London. To all of us living in the 'free' world, as it was said, the Bishop was a great hero who could survive all the hardships under the Communist rule during the 1950s to 1970s. That is why I admired his work and have chosen Ting as the third prophetic voice in this lecture series. Bishop Ting succeeded Y.T. Wu (Wu Yao Zong, 1893-1979) as the second leader of the Protestant Three-Self Movement since Wu's death in 1979. He was a controversial figure and the subject of widely varying assessments by both the Chinese and Western Christians. The development of Christian Churches in China in the last fifty years has been a mystery and a 'miracle' to many scholars. According to the official statistics, there were ten million Protestants and four million Catholics in 1999, and in the year 2003, the Protestant population rose up to 15 million. Yet, we understand that these government figures which include only officially registered believers are normally regarded as very conservative. We know that there are also house churches or unregistered churches in China which are far more than the official figures. Some scholars would even say that there are possibly up to 80 or 100 millions Protestants in China, but the more accurate estimate would range from two to five times the official figures. ^[2] If

we estimate three times the official figures, it will be approaching 40-45 millions. More significantly is the fact that there were only 700,000 Protestants in China in 1949, shortly before China became a communist state. Hence, the growth of Christian population is more than 50 (or 60) times in 50 years. What had happened in China in these significant years? As Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury remarked while paying a two-week visit to China last October (2006), saying that China is a country which will have messages to give to the rest of the world. ^[3] In this lecture, I shall look into the life and work of Bishop Ting and see in what ways he had contributed to the development of Christian churches in China, especially the way he worked with Communism and Chinese Christians in the country.

KH Ting- the Person

Bishop Ting was born in Shanghai on September 20, 1915. A grandson of an Anglican priest, he received his education and gained a Bachelor degree in Arts in 1937 from St. John's University, Shanghai which was run by the American Episcopal Church. He worked at YMCA for some years. After completed his theological training at St. John's in 1942, he was ordained priest by the *Zhonghua Sheng Kung Hui* (Anglican Church of China) and worked as an Anglican priest at the Saviour's Church and International Community Church in Shanghai. In 1946, he went to serve as the Mission Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in Canada and in the next year he studied a Master Degree in Theology at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, New York. He had worked also as the Secretary of World Student Christian Federation in Geneva, Switzerland. Ting returned to China in 1951 and hence joined the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China. By 1952, he became the President of *Jinling Xiehe Shengxueyuan* (Union Theological Seminary) in Nanjing and was consecrated as Bishop of the Diocese of Zhejiang, his native province south of Shanghai in 1955. His being ordained as an Anglican priest and bishop signified his total commitment to the Christian Church. Yet as a Chinese and as a bishop in China, Ting had to serve the Church as a whole and all the Christians in China. He had to work

out some ways to keep alive his Christian faith even in the Communist state of China. [4]

In 1980, Ting became the President of both the National Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China, hence playing a major role as the key Protestant church leader in China. In 1989, he was elected the Vice-President of the Chinese People Political Consultative Committee. Bishop Ting's contribution, if there was any, was that he had led the Three-Self Movement of the Protestant Churches continued to survive and grow under the Communist regime in China. He had also re-connected Chinese Christianity to the outside, global Christian world, especially since the early 1980's to the end of the century. Of course, we should note with some caution that there are great limitations in the development of Christianity in China. As a leader of the Protestant churches in China, Bishop Ting had to face great difficulties in confronting big problems such as 'the existence of unregistered house churches (or underground churches)', 'the growing demand for trained pastors' and 'the future of ecclesiastical structure in post-denominational Chinese Christianity' etc. etc. These are controversial issues and in whatever direction Bishop Ting attempted to lead the Protestant churches, he is bound to become a controversial figure. It is this fact of his being a controversial figure that makes him more like a prophet of his time. I shall attempt to bring some more insights into our academic discussion on the life and work of Bishop Ting in China. He was controversial because he was not on either side of the conservative or liberal camps in the Christian mainstream. It is necessary neither to adopt any theology nor to take any political line in order to understand better the work of Bishop Ting today. And it would be extremely dangerous for people from outside to judge him with a different lens. Ting had indeed helped greatly in developing a functional working relationship between Marxism and Chinese Christianity, and if we can adopt Philip Wickeri's methodology, we should apply the Chinese lens and look at the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China as a bi-characteristic movement, namely 'the Three-Self as both a Chinese as well as a Christian movement'. [5] The Three-

Self Movement signified both the political and religious natures and as we shall see more clearly, the former was more dominant than the latter. Succeeding Y.T. Wu (Wu Yao Zong) as the leader of Three-Self Movement, Ting realized so well that the Church needed to seek the official recognition in order to survive in mainland China. Although the new constitution has already granted religious freedom to all, it was still a Communist government. And the Communist Party had made clear that no religions could make any contradictions against the interest of the Party, they were obliged to be patriotic. This was the most fundamental guiding principle in Communist China. Hence, Christianity in China had to strive hard for a balance between the political and the religious demands - to develop a sense of self-respect under the Communist rule, and at the same time to work out as much space as possible for the Christian churches to attain the goals of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagation. In the Third National Christian Conference held in October 1980, Ting gave an opening address on: "What should the Chinese Church be doing in the days to come?" His speech was soon translated into English and published in the *International Review of Mission* in the following year.^[6] I shall follow closely what he had said in this article and re-visit the work of Ting under the following three topics: (a) Church-State Relationship; (b) Issue of Church Registration and (c) Theological Reconstruction.

1. Church-State Relationship

Since he became the leader of Three-Self Patriotic Movement in 1979, Ting had already attempted to seek recognition from Chinese Christians of all sectors, by inviting leaders of family churches as well as representatives of the three-self churches to Nanjing and listening to their views. In the opening address at National Christian Conference in Nanjing, Ting re-affirmed the work of Three-Self Patriotic Movement by declaring that the movement had succeeded in doing three things in the past decades, namely: (a) it had made Chinese Christians more patriotic; (b) it had made Christianity more Chinese; and (c) it had helped changed people's attitudes towards Chinese Christians

and Christianity. ^[7] Besides demonstrating the nation-wide unity of Chinese churches in support of the new government, Three-Self Patriotic Movement has realized its political role to legitimate the existence of Protestant churches in the Communist regime. Ting then moved on to say that the mission of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was not over, and the Church must not only be 'self-run', but also 'well-run' (i.e. managing the church well- 'well-govern', 'well-support' and 'well-propagate'). ^[8] So, on the top of the work done by Three-Self Patriotic Movement, Ting began to set up another National Christian Council, which commonly known as 'China Christian Council' for the better management of church business. As Ting explained it,

"One (i.e. the Three-Self Patriotic Movement) is the people's organization made up of Chinese Christians as Chinese, the other (i.e. the China Christian Council) is a Christian organization made up of Chinese Christians as Christians. If the Three-Self Movement is a patriotic movement on the part of Chinese Christians, then the church affairs organization will represent a Three-Self Patriotic Chinese Church Christian movement on the part of Christians who uphold patriotism and the Three-Self principle. Both organizations cherish the church and the motherland." ^[9]

This was a significant move in the history of Three-Self Movement in China. The setting up of China Christian Council was a clever move of Ting. Though some may not agree that the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was a government creation, ^[10] no one would deny that Three-Self Patriotic Movement had in its constitution clearly stated its political agenda to bridge between the government and the Protestant churches, so that the Church could be under the leadership of the Chinese government and upholding the 'Three-self' principles in the country. ^[11] The political significance of the Three Self Movement was that it was a 'Chinese' movement and was primarily concerned with patriotism- 'Loving the country'. On the other hand, China Christian Council was a religious organization which intended to be a church organization to handle the internal, religious business among the Protestant churches. Its primary concern was 'religious' in which it called for 'Loving the church'. It was clearly stated in its constitution that China Christian Council would help building up the Chinese churches with better services, such as the

provision of theological education, the wider publication of Bible, hymns and other Christian literatures and the cultivation of wider contacts with other Christian churches overseas; hence, to provide more space for the ecclesiastical renewal of Chinese Protestantism. ^[12] With the setting up of this new organization, Bishop Ting also managed to start a new movement from 'Three-selves' to 'Three-goods', or the 'Three-wells', namely: to build up the churches towards 'well-government, well-support and well-propagation'. Being the president of both, Ting could now shift his two heads more freely when dealing with religious affairs as internal matters. The Three-Self Movement & China Christian Council exhibited perfectly the bi-characteristics of Chinese Christianity, one serving the political while the other serving the religious needs of the Chinese churches. As Wickeri once remarked, the Three-Self Movement has sought to develop 'a functional working relationship between Marxism and Chinese Christianity', which is essential for the unity and stability of the Chinese nation. ^[13]

Besides fulfilling the pastoral and ecclesiastical needs of Chinese churches, Bishop Ting has done much to bring the Church to a new horizon by the creation of China Christian Council. Most significant of all were the renewal of fellowship with other Christian churches overseas, thus reaffirming the global characteristics of Christianity in China. As Ting also mentioned in his opening address in the Third National Christian Conference, saying:

"Chinese Christianity cherishes its own special path, but this does not exclude beneficial international contacts, which we prize. We are willing, insofar as it is within our ability, to develop mutual friendship and give-and-take relationships as within the Body of Christ with foreign churches and Christians that treat us as equals and respect our principled stand on independence and self-determination." ^[14]

Since the setting up of China Christian Council, Ting began contacts with Bishop R.O. Hall of the Hong Kong Anglican Diocese, the Right Honourable Arthur Michael Ramsey, the then Archbishop of Canterbury in England, and other Christian friends from Canada, United States and Australia. He paid visits in the following years to various countries including the United Kingdom (1982), Switzerland (1983), Australia (1984), Japan (1984), India (1985),

Canada (1985), and Hungary (1986). In re-establishing international fellowship with other Christian churches overseas, Bishop Ting gained back their recognition and respect of the legitimate status of Chinese Churches under the his leadership and the China Christian Council. As a result, the worldwide Christian community began to recognise again and respect the work of the Three Self Movement in China in the past thirty years. This was definitely a great achievement of Bishop Ting as in his own capacity he could help not only the Chinese Church but also the Communist government to restore their recognition and friendship from the countries he visited. This was a very valuable gift to the Chinese government and in return the Chinese Church was duly respected by the government too.

2. Issue of Church Registration

One crucial problem encountering the Three-Self Movement was the existence of 'house churches' or 'family churches' throughout the country. House churches are those who did not want to be under the supervision of the government and so instead of being registered as the Three-Self churches, the Christians met in their own families or houses. House churches had been growing rapidly during the time of increasing political and social pressure against religious belief. ^[15] The Chinese churches had become 'post-denominational' when they joined in the Three-self Movement, what about the house churches? Were they recognised as part of Chinese churches? What would be their status in China if they are not registered with the National Committee of the Three-Self Movement? How would Bishop Ting look at these unregistered house churches?

Why did the House Church Christians not join the Three-Self churches? Ting suggested the following reasons: (a) Some Christians may be living too far from the Three-Self church and they could not afford going to the church for worship, so they worship at homes; (b) They may not like the sermons or the liturgy of the church there; (c) They may want to have more religious activities other than Sunday worship, that's why they had bible study groups at homes during the week; (d) They may not like the pastors; (e) The church may have

been too leftist; (f) They may not trust the Three-Self or the government; or, (g) There may be some who were supported by anti-Three-Self organizations overseas. ^[16] Nevertheless, Bishop Ting affirmed that 'House Churches' are part of Protestant churches in China, claiming that "all those who honour Jesus as Christ and Lord are our brothers and sisters in Christ". ^[17] And when Ting was preparing for the Third National Christian Council in Nanjing in 1980, he invited the leaders from House Churches and listened to their views. ^[18] In one of the Nanjing regional meeting of the People's Political Consultative Committee, Ting made clear to the members that it was the task of Three-Self Movement to unite all Protestant Christians in the country including the House Churches members. Ting defended that it was not proper to say that House Churches were illegal. ^[19] He went even further to affirm that the China Christian Council would help to unite members of the House Churches and serve them as brothers and sisters. ^[20]

I may cite one report from an American Chinese pastor who had interviewed Bishop Ting in 1988. Rev. Guo Jing Wei (???), the pastor of American Baptist Calvary Church at New Haven, interviewed the Bishop in Nanjing in October 1988. ^[21] In that year, the Chinese government had issued three important documents: (1) Regulation to Govern the Administration of Places for Religious Activities in Guangdong Province; (2) Regulation to Govern the Administration of Religious Affairs in the City of Guangzhou; and (3) Suggestions Regarding How to Ensure Proper Registration of Places for Religious Activities in Guangzhou. The main ideas were to enforce stricter measures to especially those from the House Church Christians. Rev. Guo knew that Bishop Ting had written a letter to the State Religious Affairs Bureau and he wanted to know directly Ting's opinion on these issues. Surprisingly, Ting allowed Guo to look at his original handwritten manuscripts (his letters to the government officials) which had four pages in total. From Guo's summary report, there are a few points worth noting here:

- (a) Ting was convicted that most of the House Church Christians were good members;
- (b) Ting affirmed that all Christians should enjoy religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution, whether they worshipped in a church or at

homes. He also affirmed that the majority of House Church Christians did not constitute any threat to the government. "So far if they are not doing any illegal business or being detrimental to the well-being of other Christians or to the public order, their activities should not be interfered".^[22]

- (c) Ting even defended the existence of unregistered House Churches by saying that their existence would produce positive effects, i.e. to encourage the pastors and religious leaders of the Three-Self churches to run their churches well, so that Christians may come back to the official churches.
- (d) If the House Churches had not been registered, Bishop Ting said that he would not force them by any means, but keep waiting for their joining. Ting would not agree to any strict measures or pressures made to the House Churches, or they could only become 'underground churches'.
- (e) Ting even argued that the enforcement of control should be targeted to illegal activities or the reactionary forces from overseas but not normal Christians, including the House Church Christians. "They were not the objects of the enforcement"
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In short, despite of the conflicts and tensions existing between the House Churches and the Three-Self Churches, Bishop Ting committed to protect all Christians in China, regardless of their being Three-Self or House Churches Christians. He would always be ready to speak to the government officials and criticize their transgressions against the rights of religious believers and protect the rights of citizens to believe, no matter they were Three-Self or House Churches Christians. In the celebration of the golden jubilee of the Three-Self Movement in 2000, Bishop Ting has given a speech on "How do I see the past 50 years?".^[24] He divided the 50 years into three stages. The first stage was from 1950-1980. Ting said it was the most difficult time because the Three-Self Churches had to suffer together with all the people in China, plus the fact that the Chinese churches had to go through the process of 'de-Westernization' in order to seek realization of being self-government,

self-support and self-propagation. The second stage was from 1980 to 2000. It was the setting up of China Christian Council and the beginning of a new movement of pastoral renewal, namely from the 'Three-selves' to the 'Three-goods'. In Ting's words, "we must move forward. The Church must be well-governed, well-supported and well-propagated". [25] The 'Three-goods' included the restoration of many churches and worship places, opening of new churches, theological seminaries, ordination of priests and an extensive publication of bibles, hymns and other Christian literatures. [26] Moving toward the third stage was the call for theological reconstruction. The three stages were in a sequence, but the new one did not deny or erase the old one, rather it was to enrich and strengthen the preceding process. [27] As Chinese churches needed to continue the three-self movement, to manage the church better and attaining the 'three-goods', it was necessary for them to move to a higher level by the engagement into the work of theological re-construction. Now we shall move forward to see the development of theological re-construction in China.

3. Theological Reconstruction.

In my lecture yesterday, I recalled one article of T. C. Chao who discussed on the strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese Church. Toward the end of the missionary era in China, Chao made a remark in 1948, saying: "Not many intellectual Chinese Christians think much of theology... This constitutes a great weakness of the Body of Christ in China, which has thus far not produced a real theologian". [28] The theology that Chinese churches had throughout the past centuries was borrowed mostly from the West. Worse still, most of it belonged to the conservative, fundamentalist type. And Chinese Churches did not have the chance to develop their own theologies. It was only by 1980s that Bishop Ting started a new movement of theological construction in China. Some scholars may say that the Theological reconstruction was started in 1998, as it was in the Jinan conference held in that year where a consensus was reached that theological reconstruction of Chinese Christianity must be strengthened. But as the Bishop himself said,

"Theological Reconstruction was a continuation of the 'Three-Self' and Chinese Church needed not only to be 'Three Self' but also doing them well. Ting has already referred to such a movement even at the opening address of the Third National Christian Conference in 1980, saying:

"While affirming the universality of Christianity, we understand that Chinese Christianity cannot talk of making contributions to World Christianity unless it rids itself of its colonial nature, ceases to be a replica of foreign Christianity, does not... dissociate or alienate itself from the cause of the Chinese people, joins them in that cause, plants its roots in Chinese culture, forms a Chinese self, and becomes a Chinese entity" ^[29]

Indeed, Chinese Christianity needed its own theology. Despite the fact that Ting had received resistance from many fundamentalists in and outside China, it should be noted that Ting was not anti-traditional. Ting had reminded the Chinese Churches that 'Theological Reconstruction' was not to start something new in the Chinese Church as though it had never been done before in the Judeo-Christian history. The Chinese Christians' effort to renew their theological thinking was in full accordance with the biblical, theological and historical traditions of the universal Church. However, there were still some who criticized Ting's theology as not Calvinistic or Lutheran enough. To them, Ting would say precisely that we should not be reproducing Western theology in the Chinese soil, nor repeating the liberal-fundamentalist debate in China, but should rather work out their own Chinese theology. What were the Chinese Christians doing? They were constructing an indigenous Chinese theology which could address to the Chinese cultural, social and political context.

Theological reconstruction should help make the church more in tune with the times. The context for Chinese Christianity was such that Christianity had to find its own way of expression in a Communist country. As Bishop Ting often said that, "For the good of the nation, as well as for the survival and witness of the church, it is both natural and proper to adapt ourselves to the socialist society. It is indeed proper for every responsible citizen and responsible

believer to do." [30] Hence, theological reconstruction must aim to promote the adaptation of Christian faith to socialist society.

The reconstruction of Christian theology in the Chinese context was not a replica of Western theology in China, but was seeking new ways to live out the Christian faith in the socio-political and cultural contexts in China. Chinese Christians must keep their minds open and let their theological thinking be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As theological reconstruction was a thinking process which helped Christians to better safeguard their basic faith and the church's witness to the times (in China), Ting suggested, the following points need to be taken into serious consideration:

- 1. The process of theological reconstruction should enable Christian believers to gain more confidence and a better understanding of their own faith;
- 2. That the non-believers should become more willing to hear the good news which was found to be really the good news for them;
- 3. Theological reconstruction must aim to promote the adaptation of Christian faith to socialist society, and one of its significant tasks, as Ting saw it, was to "remove theological obstacles to patriotism and socialism". [31]
- 4. Ting affirmed the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and often referred to the call of Jiang Zemin, the former leader of the Chinese government who gave the direction for an active "adaptation of religions with socialist society in China". [32] But he would expound it more clearly that: "Adaptation to socialist society is not just a matter of formal identification, it is also to help Chinese Christianity become a constituent part of the socialist family... hence, it has to raise the level to that of our culture and intellectual circles". [33]

These are especially relevant if we are concerned with the development of Christian theology in Chinese soil, especially in present day China. To help our better understanding, I may cite three examples for illustration here:

Justification by Faith

Bishop Ting had quoted the doctrine of 'justification by faith', which had been one of the key concepts in the theological thinking of the Church since St. Paul. Rather than stressing its importance as the Protestant Christianity had done since the Reformation, Ting wanted to see such theological concepts being "watered down" in the Chinese context, because it would easily create conflicts between believers and non-believers. [34]

"I said this because it (the doctrine of justification by faith alone) has been overemphasized in China, as if it is the all in all of Christian faith. The idea is that anyone who believes will go to heaven after death, and those who do not believe will go to hell. (It was faith that matters- justification by faith alone). This is an idea that denies morality. By extension, Hitler and Mussolini, as Christians, would be in heaven, while Confucius, Laozi, Mozi and Zhou Enlai, non-believers, would be in hell... Such a Christianity may appeal to some, but can we really imagine that most Chinese would be willing to accept it over the long run? Some people say, I really love my parents, but as non-believers they will be in hell while I, as a believer, will enjoy heaven. I really cannot bear such thinking..." [35]

Such simplistic connection with heaven and hell entailed by the doctrine of justification by faith had been prevailing in the mind of most Chinese throughout the century. The "watering down" of theological concepts was not an act against Western theology as many had interpreted, it was rather a step to help Chinese Christians being freed from their fundamentalist mentality. Ting reasoned that in the Chinese context this doctrine has created an unnecessary distance between the ethical actions of Christians and non-Christians and it went against a true Christian humanism, so Ting wanted to "water it down". (If we can understand it so well in Western Christianity, it should not be a problem to understand why the Bishop had to say so in China.) Ting explained so well that 'to play down does not mean to eradicate. Playing down simply means not making this the all in all of Christianity...' [36] In other words, the doctrine of justification by faith needs to be seen alongside with other Christian teachings including God's creation, God's redemptive and loving acts to the world too. Ting would prefer to talk more about the love of God in China Today.

God is Love

The playing down of the idea of justification by faith, Ting suggested, would allow a better understanding of God. It enabled people to know God as a God of love. As if the Christian God were to send people to hell simply because of their unbelief, how could this Christian God be a God of love? The Christian

God is a God of love who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). This was precisely what Jesus had taught about God and he said also, "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you... And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others?... You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:46-48). So Ting was following the steps of Jesus and advocated that Love was the very nature of God which was especially relevant to the socialist country like China. He argued that since Christians are people who understand God's great love, they should take the initiative to love and reconcile with other people, including the non-Christians. 'To love our enemy and loving our neighbour as ourselves' are precisely the Christian gospel we need to preach in China, as well as in other parts of the world, because God is love. ^[37]

Cosmic Christ

Ting also emphasized the concept of Cosmic Christ as a significant basic Christian faith, "in whom all things are created in heaven and on earth" (Colossians 1:15-17). The significance is threefold: (a) Its concern and care were universal; this cosmic dimension would allow an affirmation of the good things in contemporary Chinese culture and experiences, including socialism which worked for freedom and social justice in China; (b) It corresponded to the belief that God is Love, the work in Christ may extend to all things in the whole creation, including social reconstruction in China; and (c) It entailed the Christian attitude of harmony, hence Christians must care and work for the good of the wider world, to build up positive relationships between Christians and non-Christians and between Church and State. Many years ago, I was struck by the book of J.B. Philips who asked a simple question: "How Big is Your God?". Now Bishop Ting was raising the same question about Christ, "Is Christ's love only for the small circle of Christians inside the church? Or is it for the whole of God's creation, the whole cosmos?" ^[38] Christians may look at the gospel in two ways. One aspect of the Christian gospel is centred on personal salvation, emphasizing the distinction between believers and non-

believers, the saved and the unsaved, the spiritual and the worldly. Another aspect of the Christian gospel is centred on God's love and care for the reconciliation brought to all humankind and the whole creation. Bishop Ting's theology emphasized the belief in the love of God and in the cosmic Christ, both reflecting God's care for all humankind and the whole world in the living context of the Churches in China today. The belief in cosmic Christ, as Ting espounded, points also to the basic Christian faith, i.e. the reconciliation of God and humanity in Jesus Christ. ^[39]

Concluding Remarks

In his study of the English Presbyterian Mission in Lingdong (Lingtung), South China, George Hood had made his concluding remarks, saying: "However completely the Church in Lingdong might have achieved self-government, self-support and self-propagation, and however willingly the missionaries present in 1950 might have been to continue working with their Chinese colleagues under the authority of the Chinese Church, it seems today that without experiencing the complex break with the Mission which was made in 1951, the (Chinese) Church would not have been liberated from the past to achieve a new understanding and experience of its selfhood." ^[40] The history of China has shown us that there needed such a break in order that Chinese Christianity could really stand on its own. The leaders of Three-Self Movement, Y.T. Wu and Bishop Ting have done at least their part to help the Chinese Church moving toward this direction.

In the year 2000, when the Three-Self Movement of the Protestant Churches in China was celebrating its 50th anniversary, Ting recalled of 'four high points' in the last fifty years. The first was in the beginning years when the leaders of Three-Self Movement were working to remove Western imperialist thinking in the mind of Chinese Christians. The second high point was the affirmation of Three-Self Movement in China, namely working for "self governing, self supporting and self propagation". The third high point was the movement of 'running the Church well', i.e. to enable Chinese churches to be "well-run, well-supported and well-propagated". Under the rubric of running

the church well, the China Christian Council was established as an independent religious entity. The fourth high point was advocating theological reconstruction. These four high points were, as Ting remarked, are all parts of the development and enrichment of Three-Self Movement of Protestant churches in China. [41]

Is Bishop Ting a prophet of his times? Indeed, he is. Despite of the limitations and great difficulties the Protestants are facing in China, Bishop Ting has wisely given viable directions and has skilfully helped the churches in China to work out some ways to keep their Christian faith alive and grow in a Communist State in China. The setting up of China Christian Council, together with the National Committee of Three-Self Movement worked out perfectly as the "two hands" of the Protestant churches in China, serving both the political and religious needs of the church. Bishop Ting was right when he said that "theological reconstruction is the most fundamental step to run the Church well". For, in order to manage the church well, Chinese Christians needed to develop a new theology which would address to their living context in China.. Theological reconstruction, as Ting proposed, was aimed to keep safeguard the basic Christian faith and to make possible the church's witness to its time, especially in the living context of the Chinese church under the Marxist rule in China. The theology that he was proposing, namely: to water down 'justification by faith', the emphasis on the belief in the Love of God and the Cosmic Christ, were very creative and insightful. Of course, one has to bear in mind that Ting was not writing a scholarly paper on 'indigenous theology' or 'the inculturation of Christian faith in China' so as to please our Western theologians. Rather, he was struggling for the relevance of Christian faith within the context of the Christian church in China, with a humble heart to address to the real issues facing Chinese Christians of his time. In this regard, he is a real prophet of his time.

To conclude, I may also cite some of the remarks contemporary scholars and church leaders have had on Bishop Ting for your references:

Luo Guanzong, a co-worker of Bishop Ting for more than sixty years, had the following remarks, saying:

"(Bishop Ting was) a man who, from start to finish, has been concerned with building up the Church... He deepened his knowledge of three-self and the building up of the Church: he saw that this (Three-Self Patriotic) movement, a Chinese patriotic movement, was essential to building up the Chinese Church;...He has clarified for us the belief that the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has always been under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that it represents a new and living path opened for the Chinese Church by God." [42]

Prof. Raymond Whitehead, a Canadian scholar, had the following remarks, saying:

"Bishop Ting has lived his eighty years in the context of a Chinese Church that for the most part has been small and weak. In that setting, however, he and his co-workers developed a perspective not marked by despair and depression but by faithfulness and commitment to the church's mission of justice and healing and peace. Christians in China hold little power, but the Church... remains grounded in its faith stance and in its theological self-understanding, and maintains Christian integrity in the midst of a changing and complex society." [43]

The Rt. Rev. Peter K.K. Kwong, who has just retired from being Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Hong Kong last December (2006). He had the following remarks on Ting, saying that the Bishop was 'a leader with a charisma':

"He (Bishop Ting) understands God in the context of Chinese culture without forgetting the universal and international dimensions of Christian faith. He has... work(ed) through all the complications of the situation he has been presented with, and come out with a clear vision, a sense of direction, and an acceptable and agreeable course for the Church. It is in this respect that I would call him a bishop with charisma... He has a charisma which commands respect from all who know him." [44]

The World Council of Churches delegation, led by its general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, met Bishop Ting at his residence in Nanjing on November 17, 2006. Dr. Kobia paid tribute to what Ting has meant to Christianity in China and for his contribution to the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement as a whole, saying:

"These are a few, rare individuals in the history of the ecumenical movement to whom we can go, and simply by being with them, begin to discern on a deeper level what ecumenism really means. You are one of these - revered, respected and loved within the wider ecumenical movement... (he also said) You have certainly been the pioneer of ecumenism in China. As theologian, scholar, pastor and leader, you have challenged the thinking of the broader ecumenical family, particularly in the area of ecumenical social thought. We acknowledge you not just as a great leader, but also as 'patriarch of post-denominationalism'." [45]

That can be another prophetic voice to our Western Christianity too. Christianity not only can survive in a Communist state, but also work well with the Communist government. Chinese Christians can both "love their country and love the Church" at the same time. The rapid growth of Christian population in China confirms that God and the Holy Spirit are still working in China. Besides producing Christians and good citizens for the country, they can also contribute positively to the society and work towards a more harmonious society in China. To the ecumenical church, Ting has confronted us with a new understanding of ecumenism and denominationalism. Dr. Kobia has also affirmed the World Council of Churches' commitment to being in solidarity with the Christian Council of China, saying: "We are here to say that the World Council of Churches is prepared to accompany the continuing process of theological reconstruction that you have already so well begun to articulate in China." [46]

Finally, may I conclude with a statement made by one of my honourable friends I have known in Hong Kong, Rev. Dr. Philip Wickeri who has been the Overseas Co-ordinator of the Amity Foundation in Hong Kong, and after working for fifteen years in Hong Kong and China, he completed his doctoral thesis on 'Bishop Ting and The Three-Self Movement in China'. [47] He had the following remarks on Ting, saying:

"The theology of K.H. Ting has tended to be suggestive rather than definitive. Yet by being suggestive, Ting is in some way able to have something to say to all people. To theological conservatives, he offers the expansive vision of the Cosmic Christ. To political critics at home and abroad, he says that the Church of China has a 'certain amount of space' for religious freedom, and that it should not speak of martyrdom

so easily. To liberal and progressive church men and women he insists that theology should be for people in the pew, and that theologians should neither advance positions which are beyond the average Christian or exaggerate what they as theologians have to contribute. To the extremists of the left and the right, he urges tolerance, 'seeking truth from facts' and working together for the common good. And to people everywhere, his theology embraces a message of God's love which both liberates men and women for creative action and binds them together as part of a common human family... For all these reasons, K.H. Ting is an ecumenical theologian who makes a continuing contribution to Church and world for the times in which we live." ^[48]

I shall stop here. Thank you for your attention, especially those who had followed through all the three lectures we have this week. Thanks all for your support and understanding. Thank you.

Footnotes:

^[1] This is a more popularly known name than the pinyin system, 'Ding Guangxun'. In this paper, I shall use 'K.H. Ting' rather than 'Ding Guangxun' for our general readers.

^[2] For example, "ICRF Report: Religious Freedom in China" estimates to as high as five times the official number. See, for details from <http://www.religiousfreedom.com/wrpt/Chinarpt.htm>; and also my discussion in Ng, Peter Tze Ming. "From Ideological Marxism to Moderate Pragmatism - Religious Policy in China at the Turn of the Century" in Chung Ming Lau & Jianfa Shen eds., China Review 2000, Hong Kong: the Chinese University Press, 2000, pp.405-422.

^[3] For reference, see http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/061010.htm. Philip Wickeri has also said, "all Christian need to gain a better understanding of what China has to say to the world". See Wickeri, Philip. Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, The Three-Self Movement and China's United Front. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988, p.290.

^[4] There is also a brief introduction on Bishop Ting, entitled "The Life and Work of a Chinese Christian" in Raymond Whitehead (ed.) *No Longer Strangers: Selected Writings of Bishop K.H. Ting*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989, pp. 1-23.

^[5] See Philip Wickeri. *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement and China's United Front*. New York: Orbis Books, 1988. Parts Three & Four.

^[6] The address was translated and printed as an article, entitled "Retrospect and Prospect". See K.H. Ting, "Retrospect and Prospect" in *International Review of Mission*. vol. 70, April 1981, pp.25-39.

^[7] See *ibid.*, pp.28-32.

^[8] See *ibid.*, p.26. 'Self-run' refers to the goals of 'three-selves', namely 'self-govern', 'self-support' and 'self-propagation'; whereas 'well-run' refers to the well-management of the church, hence the 'three-goods'. See also the discussion followed.

^[9] See *ibid.*, p.36.

^[10] For example, Leaders of TSM openly declared that TSM was not a government organization. See Bishop Ting's address in Hong Kong on December 23, 1980, "Our Views" in *Ching Feng (Chinese)* vol. 66, 1981-1982, pp.1-7.

^[11] See The Constitution of National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. (January 2, 1997), Article 3.

^[12] See The Constitution of China Christian Council. (January 2, 1997), Articles 2-4.

^[13] See Philip Wickeri, *op.cit.*, p.282.

^[14] See K.H. Ting, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

[15] See e.g. reports from Samuel Chao et al. *Historical Development of Contemporary Chinese Christianity*. Taiwan: China Gospel Press, 1997.

[16] See K.H. Ting. *Collection of Bishop K.H. Ting's Essays- The Spokesman of Contemporary Chinese Christianity*. (Chinese) Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd., 1999, p.373.

[17] See *ibid.* When being asked by a delegation of Baptist World Alliance who visited China in 1986 on whether there was any tension in China between the house churches and the Three-self churches, Ting answered, saying: "I should not say tension, because Christians in both places are worshipping the same God, and are faithful to the same Christ, and many Christians who are meeting in homes are also attending (Three-self) church services. Our China Christian Council tries to serve them all." In Denton Lotz (ed.) *Spring Has Returned... Listening to the Church in China*. Virginia: Baptist World Alliance, 1987, p.25.

[18] See Samuel Chao et al. *op.cit.*, p.313.

[19] See *ibid.*, p. 317.

[20] See K.H. Ting. *Collection of Bishop K.H. Ting's Essays- The Spokesman of Contemporary Chinese Christianity*. (Chinese), pp.370-377.

[21] The report was published in *Bridge* (Chinese) vol.33, January-February, 1989, pp.2-6.

[22] See *ibid.*, p.4.

[23] See *ibid.*, p.5.

[24] See Bishop Ting, "How do I see the past 50 years?" in Tian Feng, (Chinese), no.7, 2000, pp.4-5.

[25] See *ibid.* p.5.

[26] While celebrating the 45th anniversary of the TSM in Shanghai in 1995, Bishop Ting added a remarks, saying "Running the Church well implies also that the Church is being loved and supported by all Christians and is being recognized and sympathized by all people of the country". See K.H. Ting. *Collection of Bishop K.H. Ting's Essays- The Spokesman of Contemporary Chinese Christianity*. (Chinese), p.385.

[27] See *ibid*.

[28] See T.C. Chao, "Christian Faith and China's Struggle" in Chester S. Miao (ed.) *Christian Voices in China*, New York: Friendship Press, 1948, p.28.

[29] See K.H. Ting, "Retrospect and Prospect" in *International Review of Mission*. vol. 70, April 1981, pp. 30.

[30] For Bishop Ting, the socialist revolution and socialist construction in China could be in line with the will of God and he would seek the unity of purpose and spirit between Christianity and Socialism. See K.H. Ting. "Adjustments of Theological Thinking is Unavoidable and Inevitable" (Chinese), in Liu Hua Jun (ed.) *Heavenly Wind and Sweet Showers*. Nanjing: University of Nanjing Press, 2001, pp.283-287.

[31] See K.H. Ting. "Development and Enrichment of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement", in *Chinese Theological Review*, vol.17, no.2, 2003, p.134.

[32] See K.H. Ting. "Adjustments in Theology are Necessary and Unavoidable", in *Chinese Theological Review*, vol.17, no.2, 2003, pp.118-122.

[33] Ting also remarked: "If we do not do this, intellectuals will look down on us and pay no attention to us and we will be left behind." See K.H. Ting. "Theology and Context", in *Chinese Theological Review*, vol.17, no.2, 2003, pp.123-130.

[34] See e.g. discussion in K.H. Ting. "Some Thoughts on the Subject of Theological Reconstruction" , in *Chinese Theological Review*, vol.17, no.2,

2003, pp.110-117. This was a typically Chinese way of constructing theology. Even when Chinese Christians are developing their theology, they are concerned with their consequential relationship with others, whether it would create conflicts between believers and non-believers.

[35] See K.H. Ting. "Theology and Context", in Chinese Theological Review, vol.17, no.2, 2003, p.125. Again, the Chinese emphasizes the ethical aspects of Christian faith. This would signify also the kind of Chinese theology which is sprout from the Chinese soil.

[36] See *ibid.*, p. 127.

[37] For reference, see K.H. Ting. "God is Love" and "Understanding the Heart of God" in Love Never Ends: Papers by K.H. Ting. Nanjing: Jiangsu Translation Press, 2000.

[38] See K.H. Ting. "The Cosmic Christ" in Love Never Ends: Papers by K.H. Ting. Nanjing: Jiangsu Translation Press, 2000, pp.90-99.

[39] See *ibid*

[40] See George Hood, *op.cit.*, p.307.

[41] See K.H. Ting. "Development and Enrichment of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement" , in Chinese Theological Review, vol.17, no.2, 2003, pp.131-135.

[42] See Luo Guanzong. "A Man with the Church at Heart" in Chinese Theological Review, vol.10, 1985, pp.68-74

[43] See Raymond Whitehead. "The Love, the Light and the Language of Christian Mission" in Chinese Theological Review, vol.10, 1985, pp.94-99. .

[44] See Peter K.K. Kwong. "A Bishop with Charisma" in Chinese Theological Review, vol.10, 1985, pp.55-58

[45] See "WCC UPDATE: Kobia praises Bishop Ting" at <http://www.wfn.org/2006/11/msg00235.html>. The general secretary also referred to Ting as a "living ecumenical ancestor", borrowing an expression from Ghanaian Methodist theologian Dr Mercy Amba Oduyoye.

[46] *ibid.*

[47] His thesis was published as a book, see Wickeri, Philip. *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, The Three-Self Movement and China's United Front*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

[48] See Philip L. Wickeri. "An Ecumenical Theologian" in *Chinese Theological Review*, vol.10, 1985, pp.107-118.