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Mahāyāna Interpretation of Christianity: A Case Study of Zhang Chunyi (1871–1955)

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Mahāyāna Buddhism is one of the most popular religions in East Asia. It reflects the characteristics of the culture of East Asia and has had a tremendous impact on the culture(s) of the region. When Christianity was introduced into East Asia, it did not enter a religious vacuum. Because the people of East Asia have their own culture, including their worldviews, values, and preunderstandings of religion, it is expected that they may interpret the Christian religion in a way significantly different from the Western interpretation of Christianity. One of these possible ways of reinterpreting Christianity is facilitated by the Mahāyāna Buddhist framework.

This paper consists of an analysis of the Mahāyāna interpretation of Christianity made by Zhang Chunyi (1871–1955).¹ Zhang was a rather well-known Sinologist who published several commentaries on Chinese classics, including *Mozi*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*. Though he had been well trained in Chinese classics, he was attracted to Christianity, with the hope that Christianity might contribute to the social reform of China. He even received baptism in an Anglican church in 1905. However, because of his in-depth study of Buddhism and his disappointment with the actual practices of the Christian churches at that time, he eventually converted to Buddhism during the 1920s. From that point, he formally promoted the slogan “Buddhicizing Christianity” (*Fobua Jidujiao*). His proposal for Buddhicizing Christianity includes a severe criticism of the “foreign” form of Christianity being “imported” to China mainly by the Western Protestant missionaries who, according to Zhang, preached a simplistic and even distorted “gospel” for they lacked the spiritual training (*nei xue*, lit., “inner learning”) as well as the intellectual ability to understand sophisticated Chinese philosophy and genuine Christianity. Partially under his influence, some of his contemporary Chinese Christians were converted to Buddhism. In fact, he published at least eight books on interpreting and reforming Christian doctrines from the perspectives of Buddhism, Confucianism, and so on.² He was probably the most prolific writer on the subject of his generation and one of the pioneers

in what is now called Mahāyāna theology. This brief outline of his rather unusual religious journey might have indicated the importance of the study of his Buddhist interpretation of Christianity. However, owing to mainly sociopolitical turmoil as well as the religious atmosphere at that time and in the subsequent decades, his Buddhist interpretation of Christianity has not been formally studied for decades.

In recent years, more and more studies of Buddhist-Christian dialogue take place in the Chinese context.³ It is important to study previous cases of Buddhist-Christian dialogue, Mahāyāna theology, and so on. Some of these cases, including Zhang's, have been studied.⁴ This paper aims to examine Zhang's thought critically and to show that although Zhang advocated a Mahāyāna interpretation of Christianity before and after his conversion to Buddhism, his interpretations before and after his conversion to Buddhism are significantly different. It is proposed that whereas his interpretation before his conversion aimed at the indigenization of Christianity and thus, the evangelization of the Chinese, his interpretation after conversion was made with a view to converting the Christians to Buddhism, even though both aimed at the reformulation, or even reform, of Christianity.

ZHANG'S PROPOSAL OF "BUDDHICIZING CHRISTIANITY"

Zhang was a scholar of classical Chinese literature, active during the Republican era. He was knowledgeable in Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Moism. His study of Moism remains highly regarded.⁵ Zhang became a Christian and worked for the Christian Literature Society for China (*Guan xue hui*) in Shanghai for some years. He published several books with a view to indigenizing Christian theology by interpreting it through Chinese philosophical and religious concepts. Zhang's attempt aimed at reinterpreting Christian doctrines within the Buddhist framework in order to make Christianity more acceptable to the Chinese. However, in the 1920s, he himself converted to Buddhism and began to promote his proposal of "Buddhizing Christianity" (*Fobua Jidujiao*),⁶ aiming to convert Christians to Buddhism.

Because Zhang had in-depth knowledge and first-hand experience of both Buddhism and Christianity, his lifelong commitment to a Mahāyāna Buddhist interpretation of Christianity particularly deserves to be studied. Furthermore, Zhang's "Buddhizing" of Christianity is very distinctive, because, unlike many other comparative studies of a particular doctrine, it endeavors to use Mahāyāna Buddhism as the hermeneutical framework to construct a rather comprehensive Christian systematic theology with Buddhist characteristics.

During the earliest years of the Republican era, Zhang had already advanced his proposal for "Buddhizing Christianity," proposing the use of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the New Testament to expound the Christian Gospel and doctrine. Underlying Zhang's proposal was his assumption that authentic Christianity (*zhen Jidujiao*) was not different from Buddhism, and that without studying

Buddhism, one could not understand the Christian mystery. Zhang also criticized the Western missionaries in China at that time for being poor in cultural cultivation and greedy for money. However, the most serious problem, according to Zhang, remained their entire misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Gospel of Jesus. Furthermore, they believed that the Gospel and Chinese culture were contradictory and conflicting, failing to understand that without knowledge of Chinese culture, including Mahāyāna Buddhism, it was utterly impossible to have a proper understanding or interpretation of the profound and esoteric meaning of the Gospel.

Although Zhang's slogan "Buddhicizing Christianity" was formulated only after his conversion to Buddhism, his Buddhist reinterpretation of Christianity was scattered in his earlier writings. As early as 1915, Zhang had already found that Christianity was in need of the teaching proclaimed by Christ, but that the Christian truth had been frozen for nearly two millennia after St. Paul the Apostle. Largely owing to this reason, Christianity had been present in China for nearly three centuries without being widely accepted by the intellectuals. Given the fact that Buddhism was even more well received and developed in China than in India, should Christians be able to make use of the wisdom of Chinese culture, one would hope that a reformulated Christianity could be equally integrated into the Chinese culture.⁷ Zhang's aim was to use Mahāyāna Buddhism as a hermeneutical framework, complemented by other Chinese religious philosophy, to expound the content of the Gospel of the New Testament, with a view to promoting both Buddhism and Christianity.

After his conversion to Buddhism, Zhang insisted that, upon closer scrutiny, the Christian truth was not different from Buddhism. However, his attitude toward Christianity became increasingly critical. Occasionally, he argued that Christianity, in its dim history of two millennia, had not only failed to manifest its doctrine, but also produced an extremely harmful "foreign religion" (*yang jiao*), by which Zhang referred primarily to Western Christianity. Zhang thus proposed, "Should one fail to study Buddhism, one definitely cannot profoundly understand Christianity, not to say reforming the misinterpreted pseudo-Christianity (*wei Jidujiao*) into the authentic Christianity."⁸

It is little wonder that Zhang blamed the preacher-training seminaries for "the lack of comprehensive knowledge, the acceptance of customary as right, the indispensable dependence on the church for living, and the students' loss of moral character."⁹ He encouraged theology students to study more Chinese classical literature, to work on one of the Chinese religious traditions first and the other religions later, so as to become an indigenous Chinese preacher. Zhang also stated in concrete terms the criteria for being a Chinese preacher: (1) a university degree; (2) readiness to forsake all secular affairs; (3) willingness to select and diligently study a number of Confucian, Taoist, and Moist writings; (4) willingness to select and study the literature of the Nature school of Buddhism (the school of Emptiness), a school bearing a close resemblance to Christianity; (5) readiness to study the literature of the Fa-xiang school of Buddhism (the

Yogācāra/Consciousness-Only school); (6) the desire to continue the study for up to ten years, or at least five to six years.¹⁰ It is worthy of note that Zhang did not ask the preachers to study at the theological seminary, nor did he recommend any Christian literature to them. He even suggested that the learning of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Chinese religious philosophy would be more than sufficient for the training of Chinese Christian preachers, while formal training in Christian theology was not necessary.

According to Zhang, the Christian emphasis on faith instead of elaboration of the doctrines, similar to that of the Pure Land school of Buddhism, enabled Christianity to be widely accepted by those with a lower capacity for truth. However, the Gospel preached was usually imperfect and would easily lead to the attachments of self and dharma. In contrast, the Buddhist teaching expounded all the truths and utterly eradicated attachments to self and dharma. The fundamental Buddhist doctrines, such as the causality of the past, present, and future, as well as the six destinies of transmigration, were unknown in Christianity. The Buddhist doctrines, therefore, were urgently needed as a remedy for the deficiencies of Christianity. Besides, the New Testament was poorly organized and full of obscure expressions, and needed urgently to be revised by the learned. In contrast, in the Buddhist sūtras, not a single word was without significance. Furthermore, Zhang also criticized the theological indigenization made by his contemporaries who attempted to explicate Christian theology solely through Confucian classics. According to Zhang, because they lost sight of the writings of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi, and the Buddhist canonical scriptures, Christians would be regarded as poorly read and ignorant.¹¹

Zhang's proposal of "Buddhizing Christianity" has two main goals: first, to reform the "foreign religion" into "authentic Christianity" by eliminating its absurdities, and, second, to reform the expedient teaching of Christianity to reveal the true meaning of Christian doctrines, to supplement the deficiencies of the Christian doctrines with the Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings, and finally, to assist the evolution of Christianity into Mahāyāna Buddhism, by supplementing it with the Confucian, Taoist, and Moist classics.¹² In practice, both goals could be carried out simultaneously. Perhaps we may analyze and summarize the contents of Zhang's Buddhizing Christianity into three aspects:

1. To rectify the errors generated by Western Christianity. This is shown in Zhang's classification of doctrines and differentiation of the "foreign religion" and "authentic Christianity."
2. To unearth the hidden truths in the New Testament, and to eliminate or revise the erroneous and contradictory views in the New Testament. While studying the New Testament, he always evaluated the validity of the verses according to the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Once, when Zhang attempted to encourage a woman to read the Buddhist scriptures, he said, "After you have read more Buddhist scriptures, you

will be able to distinguish clearly the virtues, drawbacks, and falsities in the text, as well as the absurdity of the missionaries.”¹³ He further expressed his intention to write a Biblical commentary, in order to expound the unknown, but profound, truths in the Bible—an intention possibly fulfilled in his book *Fuyin miyi* (The Esoteric Meaning of the Gospel), published in 1927.

3. To integrate the points of view of Chinese religious philosophy, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, into Christian theology. For example, Zhang identified Christian prayer with Buddhist meditation, compared the notion of rebirth in Christ with the Ch’an Buddhist concept of “Great Death,” explained the prophetic role of Jesus through the Buddhist perspectives of the mundane and the transcendent dharmas, and explained the origin of sin/evil in terms of the Yogācāra Buddhist doctrine of the storehouse of consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), grasping the thought-center consciousness (*manasvijñāna*).¹⁴ Most remarkably, Zhang tried to employ Mahāyāna Buddhism as an interpretive framework to explain Christology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and soteriology with a view to developing a unique “Buddhistic Christianity” with Chinese philosophical characteristics distinct from the Western Christian tradition.

The entire proposal of Buddhicizing Christianity comprised three aspects. Zhang did not build up a theological system for Buddhicizing Christianity, but on the basis of the discussions in his various writings, we are still able to recognize the essential features of his “Buddhistic Christian theology.”

Zhang’s Buddhicizing of Christianity is a rather comprehensive program, encompassing Christology, soteriology, the doctrine of God, pneumatology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and biblical hermeneutics.¹⁵ Because Zhang’s pneumatology has been discussed elsewhere,¹⁶ this paper will focus on Zhang’s Buddhist biblical hermeneutics and Christology. While the former can be understood as part of the methodology of Zhang’s Buddhicizing Christianity, the latter can be perceived as its fruit. A discussion of these two foci may demonstrate how Christianity and East Asian culture(s) interacted in his thought.

A BUDDHIST EXEGESIS OF THE BIBLE

Zhang’s Buddhicizing of Christianity was based on two elements: Chinese religious philosophy, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the Christian Bible. Before his conversion, Zhang had often used biblical verses as the pivot for proving the similarity between the Bible and Mahāyāna Buddhism, asserting that Mahāyāna Buddhism was the best annotation of the Bible. He also believed that the revelations recorded in the Old and New Testaments, especially those about the Son of God (Jesus), were written by human beings under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ Although Zhang continued to quote biblical verses after

his conversion to Buddhism, he became much more critical. In his words, the Bible available at the time was full of misrepresentations of Jesus's teachings, and those misrepresentations had to be rectified by Mahāyāna Buddhism.¹⁸

Most of Zhang's quotations from the Bible were taken from the New Testament. After his conversion, he seldom used the Old Testament, except for the purpose of criticizing Judaism. In comparison with the New Testament, he considered the elaboration of Christian doctrines in the Old Testament (e.g., the Holy Spirit) less comprehensible and regarded the Old Testament as being "the history of the Jews in the savage state with the superstition that the devil is the only God. The whole book is full of sexual promiscuity, mutual annihilation, and absolutely preposterous scenes."¹⁹ What the Old Testament recorded was principally acts of revenge, murder, and fights. The tragedy was that, because there were no other books available, the Jews did not realize that their souls were already bound by it. Zhang proposed that the Old Testament "should be abandoned. If not, most of it should be edited out. As in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, it is not unusual to abolish the corrupt texts."²⁰

Zhang was particularly discontent with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3–17), which, according to him, were "the source of delusion and confusion in the 'foreign' religion."²¹ The first four commandments were the greatest hindrance to the truth, while the other six represented the lowest level of mundane truth, in which only affairs related to the physical body were mentioned. Although it was feasible to retain the last six commandments, they would not contribute to eternal life.²² Zhang pointed out that Jesus abolished the first four commandments in his teachings. Only the last six were preserved, as they were the minimum standards for preserving humanity.

With regard to the New Testament, Zhang maintained that only the four Gospels, as books describing the life and teachings of Jesus, could be regarded as the "New Testament" and Christian "scriptures" (*jing*, *sūtra*). Other books, including the letters of Paul, in which events occurring after Jesus's ascension were recorded, could only be called Christian "treatises" (*lun*, *Abhidharma*), not "scriptures." They are useful for explaining the meaning of the *sūtras* and thus should be kept within the canon, but they remain of lower status than the Gospels. In this fashion, the "New Testament," in the strictest senses of the word, should not include the letters of Paul, but only the Gospels. As argued by Zhang, the contents of the Gospels, in comparison with the Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist classics, constituted an insignificant amount.²³ Besides, the written Gospels could not be equated with the authentic Gospel preached by Jesus. At best, they might be regarded as the superficial and secondary New Testament. The supreme New Testament, which had no written record, comprised the original teachings of Jesus on self-denial, altruism, and the shedding of one's blood for others.²⁴ For that reason, Zhang further elaborated that "the New Testament" should not be referred to as "the Gospels." To claim that the Gospels could be equated with the New Testament was only to demonstrate one's ignorance about the true meaning of the New Testament, for Jesus founded the New

Testament without relying on written text. The records in the Gospels, containing expedient, biased, confused, foreign, and unclear contents, were nothing more than the dregs of the Gospel truth.²⁵ Moreover, Zhang claimed that the Gospels were incapable of fully illustrating the truth, since their accounts of Jesus's works covered a span of three years only. Also, because the authors were not well educated, the esoteric meanings of the Gospel truth had not been expounded properly. What Zhang attempted to argue was that if the "New Testament"—that is, the true Gospel of Jesus—were really included in the Bible, it should comprise the four Gospels only. The other books could only be treated as "treatises" illustrating and interpreting the teachings of Jesus. Yet, the problem remained that even in the Gospels, the actual contents related to the true Gospel of Jesus were very limited, and the full picture of the Gospel was not presented. For Zhang, the true Gospel of Jesus was embraced in the doctrines of Confucianism, Taoism, Moism, and Buddhism in China.²⁶

Among the four Gospels, Zhang argued that the Gospel According to John was the closest to the doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Encompassing the height of the Hua Yan school and the width of the Pure Land school, the Gospel According to John was concise in wording, yet rich in meaning, and was comprehensible to sentient beings of all ability. In contrast, the three remaining Gospels were hollow, expedient teachings. For instance, Zhang quoted John 10:30, 10:34, 14:10, and 17:21 many times in order to demonstrate that the Bible had already established the doctrine of the unity of human being and God in the beginning, the ontological unity of human being and God. For this reason, Zhang called the Gospel According to John the foundation of Christianity (*jing jiao*).²⁷ Also highly recommended by Zhang were the Letters of Paul, especially Ephesians and Colossians. Zhang claimed that the Buddhist notions such as wonderful reality and true emptiness, universal inclusion, the mutuality of one and many, and unlimited manifoldness were evident in those books. Zhang commented that the Synoptic Gospels were not able to express the true Gospel exhaustively, whereas the Gospel According to John was more precise. However, not until the Letters of Paul was the mystery of the Gospel more clearly illustrated.²⁸ The verse most frequently quoted by Zhang was Ephesians 4:6, regarded as the finest illustration of the assumption that God is the human being's own heart-mind, as well as the One True Realm of Dharma permeating the whole universe.

It is obvious that Zhang placed more emphasis on the study of principle (*li xue*) than on the study of scriptures (*jing xue*). For Zhang, whether the Bible was "holy" depended totally on its compatibility with Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially its doctrine of salvation. Zhang pointed out that Paul had the most thorough understanding of the Gospel, because he concentrated on conveying of the spirit instead of the external form of teachings. The founder of Buddhism, Śākyamuni, preached for forty-nine years without writing down anything or clinging to fixed formulas in order to prevent the misunderstanding of his teachings through their being limited by letters. Hence, the key to Biblical exegesis was

“not to emphasize the words, but to focus on the principle only.”²⁹ Whoever confines the New Testament (as a principle) to the written words of the New Testament confines the New Testament, as well as the Way of Christ. For instance, if one holds that “the Lord’s Prayer” is already absolutely perfect, one is defying the fundamental teaching of Christ, for he or she has lost sight of the fact that the prayer stresses only confession, thanksgiving, the seeking of help from the Holy Spirit, self-help, and the helping of others.³⁰

Zhang proposed that when reading the writings of the sages (including the Bible), one must unite one’s own heart with that of the sages, the effect of which would be tantamount to restoring the sages to life and thus benefiting future generations. The failure of the people in America and Europe was due to their inaccessibility to the Confucian, Taoist, Moist, and Buddhist classics. Despite the fact that Christianity has existed for two thousand years, the true light of Christ was not discerned after Paul. Unfortunately, the missionaries were so stubborn that they misinterpreted and provided only a partial understanding of the New Testament by confining themselves to literal representation, causing the precious, inexhaustible, and living New Testament to become a piece of dead writing. For this reason, their proclamations were far from the teachings of authentic Christianity.³¹ Zhang urged that in order to learn the truth, one could not be confined to the written word. On the contrary, through what was written, one should penetrate into the unspoken meaning. As in the New Testament, the Mahāyāna sūtras in themselves were also merely pieces of writing incapable of saving the world. One who really understood the Buddhist sūtras or the Bible would correlate his or her inner Buddha or Christ with the meanings of the text to realize it through them.³² No matter whether it was the Buddhist sūtras or the Bible, the true meanings had to be united with one’s own heart-mind. The New Testament set by Jesus Christ transcended both written and spoken language. Therefore, to consummate Christianity—that is, to realize the Buddhicizing of Christianity—it was necessary to break through the confinement of language and to search for the verses compatible with the school of Mind of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As described by Zhang, “to search for the truth transcending the words, you will find the truth in the language; to search for the truth confined in the words, you will not find the truth in the language.”³³

In the final analysis, although Zhang’s Buddhicizing of Christianity was based on two elements, Mahāyāna Buddhism was always given top priority. Further, his use of the Bible was selective as the Buddhicizing of Christianity accepted only those verses compatible with Mahāyāna Buddhism.

BUDDHICIZED CHRISTOLOGY

Differing significantly from classical Christology, Zhang’s Buddhicized Christology seldom touched upon the traditional issue of whether and how the divine and human natures are united in Christ. This may be due to the fact that, for him, the concepts of divinity and humanity were merely theoretical constructs

that had no independent existence in themselves. Because Zhang did not consider divinity and humanity from an essentialist point of view, the issue of Jesus Christ's possession of a perfect human nature and a perfect divine nature did not suggest a serious contradiction. In addition, Zhang believed that even an ordinary human being could also become God, so much so that Jesus Christ could simultaneously be fully human and fully God.

Jesus: One of the Many Christs

A corollary of Zhang's understandings of humanity and divinity is the view that "Christ" is not the exclusive title of Jesus. Rather, everybody can be called Christ, and Jesus is merely one of those who have acquired the title of "Christ." Although Jesus is a relatively special and significant figure among the numerous Christs, he does not monopolize the status of Christ. After his conversion to Buddhism, Zhang refused to call Jesus the only Son of God, for Zhang believed that all of the people in the world shared the status of God, and Jesus was simply one of them. Further, other animals were also children of God, and all lives were originally God. So, "son of God" could not be a title exclusive to Jesus.³⁴ To claim that Jesus was the only son of the Father and that he alone was in God would be unfair to all human beings. Thus, the belief that Jesus was the Only Son of the Father was nothing but a superstition representing the Christ of the "foreign religion." Initially, Jesus had been an ordinary human being, who, owing to his revolutionary spirit, attempted to reform the old Jewish religion to a new religion and thus became a great revolutionist.³⁵ Moreover, even if Jesus had worked tirelessly and earned recognition as a Buddhist ascetic, he would never have been compared with the greatness of Śākyamuni and Confucius. Therefore, the Christian church's calling Jesus alone the Lord was actually restricting of the lesser and forgetful of the greater.³⁶

Zhang suggested that even though all sentient beings shared the same divine status and that Jesus was not superior to us in an ontological sense, Jesus was still different from us because of moral practice. Whereas Jesus was capable of becoming Christ because of his meditation and cultivation, ordinary people failed to become Christ because they did not have the thorough understanding of the principle of emptiness or serious cultivation.³⁷ Generally speaking, all human beings were identical with God, but they were restrained and blinkered by their bodies and thus unable to be united with Heaven. In contrast, Jesus was admirable, because he was an awakened one, capable of eliminating all defilements (*kleśa*) and seeing the Buddha-nature inside with an enlightened heart. In fact, all human beings had the same capacity as that of Jesus. Consummating God's universal love for the people of the world, Jesus set himself as an example for the people so that they could follow him and realize the Christs in their own hearts.³⁸ The blood of Jesus Christ was shed for the purpose of resurrecting our inner Christs. The task of Jesus was to let people know that they already possessed all "trueness." Only if they exhibited this faithfully would they be united

with God.³⁹ The reason that the cross of Jesus was precious was not due simply to his death, but also to his flawless life before he died, which served as an example as well as a means to restore people's true human nature.⁴⁰

Is Jesus Christ, then, the incarnation of the Logos (Tao)? Zhang's answer was both affirmative and negative. From an ontological perspective, the answer was affirmative. Supported by Ephesians 4:6, Zhang stated that the bodies of all people and all living beings were from the Tao. He pointed out that just as Zhuangzi intended to convey that "The Tao is omnipresent; nothing is not produced by the Tao,"⁴¹ all living creatures could be regarded as "incarnations," and all bodhisattvas and sages were the manifestations of Tao. Jesus was simply one of those. Zhang also stated that the great Tao possessed by Jesus was not the sole property of Jesus; otherwise, the Tao would have left the world at the time of Jesus's Ascension.⁴² From a moral perspective, Zhang's answer was negative. As a revolutionist of Judaism, through his practice of the moral principles, Jesus transformed the personal God in Judaism into an impersonal, inaccessible true Suchness, and one's own heart. In this way, the Tao did not become flesh, but rather the flesh became the Tao.⁴³ Accordingly, from an ontological perspective, all living beings were incarnations of the Tao from a moral point of view only.

The Meaning of the Cross

With regard to Jesus's death on the cross, Zhang opposed the penal substitution theory in favor of the interpretation of setting an example for Christians to follow. Zhang believed that penal substitution was an erroneous teaching of the "foreign religion," rather than the position of authentic Christianity. He stated that "nowadays Christians naively claim that Jesus's blood is the ransom of human sin; without knowing the Heaven's will, one cannot be a noble person." Whereas a noble person makes earnest efforts to stand on one's own feet, the followers of the "foreign religion" always ask for help from others.⁴⁴ Zhang contended that the erroneous teaching of penal substitution reflected the foreign religion's inheritance of the cruelty of the Jewish God in the Old Testament. As he stated, "cruelty is the reason of the Jewish God's determination to let his son's blood be the ransom for human sin. He treated his son inhumanely and would not forgive all human beings. When there is neither propriety nor righteousness, how can there be mercy?"⁴⁵ Jesus came and attempted to rectify the situation by making God merciful. Unfortunately, as the disciples did not understand Jesus's intention, they were bound by their old inheritance.

According to Zhang, the claim made by the "foreign religion" that human being could be redeemed by Jesus alone and thus, become sinless was not only absurd and ridiculous, but also harmful to the true teaching.⁴⁶ The assumption of penal substitution was wrong on two accounts: first, the true God (God in one's own heart-mind) would not appreciate such a brutal sacrifice, and, second, no matter whose blood was shed, a human being could never be redeemed by the blood of another because human sin could not be absolved by blood, but only by

the repentance and good deeds of the sinners. The notion of “forgiveness” was an unreal teaching that attracted people to worship and to serve an unreal God, while the real way to deal with sin was through “repentance.”⁴⁷ Moreover, penal substitution and judgment were two erroneous concepts that could not be upheld simultaneously. First, both concepts were against religious truth, as all fortune and misfortune were the consequence of our moral or immoral deeds. While the outcome was in our own hands, judgment was simply the Buddhist expression of the principle of causality and retribution. Second, why would God wish to judge human beings on the one hand, and provide penal substitution on the other?⁴⁸ As proof that the assumption of penal substitution was fallacious, Zhang quoted Matthew 7:21–23, in which Jesus warned that not everyone who addressed him as “Lord, Lord” would be known by him.⁴⁹

As Jesus’s death on the cross could not redeem sinners, Zhang believed, even the placing of the crosses of the believers themselves would not be able to redeem their own sins, because salvation required repentance and the elimination of craving and desires. This was the intangible cross to be borne by the people of the world throughout their entire lives. To place Jesus on the cross was nothing but a sign of the cruelty and ignorance of the Jews.⁵⁰ If Zhang were right in this respect, then what was the meaning of the cross? Zhang contended that the meaning was threefold. A partial and derivative meaning was the representation of a kind of altruistic act when it was impossible to be nonself. A more profound meaning was the demonstration of the uselessness of the physical body and its presence as the source of suffering. Realization of this will lead to the overcoming of the attachments to the self and to dharmas, and to the understanding that altruistic acts benefit oneself. Another profound meaning was the elimination of the four types of defilements (*kleśa*), namely self-love, self-delusion, view of self, and self-conceit. We notice that among these three meanings there was no implication of penal substitution; instead, the Buddhist doctrine of salvation was assumed. From the viewpoint of the profound meaning of the cross, Zhang highlighted the implication that the Buddha had also borne the cross for forty-nine years, and that Jesus was not the only one to bear it.⁵¹

According to Zhang’s interpretation, the purpose of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was principally the elimination of attachments to self and dharmas. To bear the cross means seeing the emptiness of self and dharmas, and thus being free from the two attachments. Zhang believed that the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was not vicarious satisfaction for humankind, but demonstration of self-sacrifice, comparable to the Buddhist teachings of giving up one’s own body to save sentient beings, eliminating the self of the five *skandha*, and attaining the true self of nonself.⁵² Because all sentient beings are caught in the four errors of clinging to a self (*avasthā*) and the four wrong perceptions of ego mentioned in the *Diamond Sūtra*, they cannot remove the sin-karma (*zui ye*) inherited from previous lives while at the same time adding to the sin-karma of the future. In other words, they are submerged in the sea of birth and death. The most effective resolutions used by Jesus are nonself, the elimination of at-

tachments, and the cleansing and restoration of purity.⁵³ Zhang believed that the primary hindrance of the human being was the physical body, and the solution was to abandon the physical body and to attain the realm of nonexistence of self and the dharma. The cross of Jesus was to exhibit the mystery of self-sacrifice. As long as one is ready to sacrifice oneself, he or she is able to overcome the attachments of self and dharma so as to consummate the work of salvation.

As stated by Zhang, the redemption of Jesus was not penal substitution, but moral example. The main purpose of Jesus's death on the cross was to set an example of nonself and sacrifice. When one was inspired by the work of Jesus (Christ) to follow his example of nonself, the radiance of human nature would be revealed gradually. In this case, the sacrifice of Jesus would guide us to overcome our attachments to our bodies and their desires; in this sense, Jesus removed the source of sin by crucifying his body on the cross.⁵⁴ Further, the resurrection of Jesus tells us that birth and death have no independent self-existence. Birth and death are dependently co-arising, and so human beings should not be attached to them. Zhang said, "Jesus's crucifixion on the cross sets an example of the overcoming of birth and death."⁵⁵ The people of the world fear death and are attached to life without knowing that originally there is neither birth nor death because all things are dependently co-arising; only no-birth, which is also eternal life, is the final resting place of the human being. The resurrection of Jesus is a model of eternal life which is no-birth and no-death, so that human being shall no longer fear death. Therefore, in explaining why Jesus called himself the son of man, Zhang proposed that because all Buddhas were evolved from human beings, whoever fulfilled the human way was a pious child of all Buddhas.⁵⁶ For this reason, the son of man was also the son of the Buddha. Only those who could really put into practice the Way (*Tao*) could be called the son of human being and the true son of all Buddhas. Jesus manifested himself in the world because he wanted to show the way to become a true son of man/son of the Buddha to all human beings.

Jesus Is a Bodhisattva

The other aspect of Zhang's Mahāyāna interpretation of Jesus Christ was the consideration of Jesus as a bodhisattva of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Zhang stated, "Christ is originally a bodhisattva" and called Jesus Christ the bodhisattva saving oneself and others, an awakened bodhisattva, the bodhisattva in the pure land beyond the three realms, and so on, who came to the world to save all living beings according to the bodhisattva path. He taught people to eliminate the three poisons—craving, ill will, and delusion—with all their soul and strength.⁵⁷ A bodhisattva is the ideal moral character of Mahāyāna Buddhism and is essentially the same as a Buddha, the enlightened one. The only difference is that a bodhisattva, having attained enlightenment, prefers to remain in the world instead of retiring from it for the sake of transforming and saving all living beings. Therefore, unlike a Buddha, who is free from all troubles in the

world, a bodhisattva is still troubled by worldly affairs, though without being hindered by them. In fact, a bodhisattva can become a Buddha at any time, but, for the benefit of all living beings, a bodhisattva chooses to remain in the world actively to assist humankind instead of becoming a Buddha immediately. This is why a bodhisattva is honored and occupies an extremely high position in Mahāyāna Buddhism. To call Jesus Christ a bodhisattva is to regard him as an enlightened person who has already attained Buddhahood but for the sake of saving all living beings has chosen to remain in the world to practice the bodhisattva path. Thus, Zhang's account of Jesus as a bodhisattva is actually an endorsement of Jesus's salvation from Buddhist perspective.⁵⁸

Zhang pointed out that Jesus's compassion and manifestation as Christ to teach all living beings was very similar to that of Avalokiteśvara, a bodhisattva widely worshipped by the Chinese as a female goddess by the name of Kuan-yin. The determination of Jesus to save the suffering was no different from that of Avalokiteśvara. "In accordance with the way Avalokiteśvara manifests himself in thirty-two different forms according to the various states of sentient beings, Jesus manifests himself as Christ in order to teach the people of the world."⁵⁹ At this point, we may detect Zhang's appreciation of the work of Jesus. Zhang further explained that the descriptions in the Bible that are incompatible with the bodhisattva image of Jesus (e.g. Mark 3:5) are the result of the mistakes of the authors of the Gospels. They might have misrepresented the events, or were deeply influenced by the Jewish culture, or had no knowledge whatsoever of Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁶⁰

The difference between Jesus and other bodhisattvas in Buddhism, according to Zhang, was his intent to preach and explain the Buddhist teachings in western Europe. Because they had never heard of the Buddhist teachings, nor had they been nourished by Confucian, Taoist, and Moist thought, the Europeans and Americans had only a feeble ground. They knew only the primitive idea of God of Judaism and believed in him, and were then lost in confusion, warfare, and avarice. Therefore, Jesus was born in Judea and prepared to preach in the West.⁶¹ As a bodhisattva, Jesus had mercy on the Westerners and vowed to become manifest in Judea and preach the truth of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In Zhang's own words:

What is the status of Jesus in Buddhism? Out of ignorance, the missionaries falsely called him God and considered him as superior to the sages, including the Buddha Gautama, Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi. What an error! Jesus is basically a human being, whose nature is not different from that of the Buddha, Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi, and all animals. They are all in one being with God. With regard to his original status, it is impossible to know if he is a bodhisattva or an ordinary human being with a noble character. But with regard to his manifestation, he has shown his supernatural power, but this is only a manifestation of bodhisattva, rather than that of the Buddha. Similarly, Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi are all manifestations of the *dharmakāya* but have never shown the outlook of the

Buddha. This is because in one *kalpa* in one land, there cannot be two Buddhas. So after Śākyamuni, Jesus was born in Judea, because he had pity on the people in the Western world who did not have a firm foundation to receive the profound Buddhist teaching, and had never learned the teachings of Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi. Therefore, he manifested as Christ according to the causation of time and place, reformed Judaism, transformed the brutality of God into mercy and prepared for the way to turn the wheel of the dharma two thousand years ago.⁶²

In Zhang's view, Jesus's status was the same as that of the Chinese sages. The characteristics they shared were of bodhisattvas rather than the Buddha. They were all in one being with God and their nature was the same as all living beings. Merely because of the facts that there could not be two Buddhas in one place, and that in the West there was no Confucian, Taoist, Moist, or Buddhist truth preached, Jesus decided to be born in Judea, so as to reform the error of Judaism first, and then to spread the true teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism to the West. Furthermore, Zhang noticed that Jesus's perfect and profound teaching was very close to the teachings of Buddhism, and so it was likely that Jesus might have learned Buddhist wisdom in India between the ages of 12 and 30.⁶³ On the conception of Jesus as bodhisattva, Zhang still held that Jesus was the savior, who lived in the world with great compassion, taking away the craving, ill will, and delusion of the people of the world, saving them from falling and guiding them to eternal life. Nevertheless, the status and work of Jesus as the savior was interpreted in terms of a Buddhicized soteriology.⁶⁴

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

It is rather important to note that Zhang's understanding of Christianity was based mainly on his own reading of the Bible as well as the form of Protestantism he came across in China. Zhang was far from well versed in the history of Christian thought, not to mention his rather biased understanding of Judaism and taking the Old Testament and Judaism as equivalent. However, Zhang's "Buddhicizing" of Christianity, in some aspects, was not completely new in the history of Christian thought. Although Zhang usually did not make reference to any Christian theologian in the West, it remains recognizable that there are some similarities between his ideas and those of some Christian theologians in the past. His criticism of the penal substitution theory of atonement in favor of a moral example theory of salvation sounds very similar to that of Peter Abelard of the Middle Ages and some theologians of the modern time.⁶⁵ His despicement of the Old Testament together with Judaism, although mainly shaped by his study of Chinese Philosophy, especially the Mahāyāna Buddhism in China, is reminiscent of that of Marcion and the bias against Judaism that was widespread in German Protestant theology especially during the first half of the twentieth century.⁶⁶ What renders Zhang's theological position rather unique is his belief

that only Mahāyāna Buddhism and Chinese religious philosophy can solve the problem brought by the “foreign religion.”

From the very beginning, Zhang intended to develop an indigenous Christianity for the Chinese, to transform Western Christian theology through Mahāyāna Buddhism to rediscover the truth in the New Testament. For this reason, the whole proposal of Buddhicizing Christianity was primarily an effort to establish an indigenous Chinese Christian theology with Mahāyāna Buddhist resources. It is Zhang’s assumption that Mahāyāna Buddhism had already successfully indigenized into the Chinese society and became an essential part of Chinese culture. It is also widely shared by many of Zhang’s contemporaries that Buddhism had become a *Chinese* religion, one of the three teachings (*san jiao*) of China, alongside Confucianism and Taoism. For Zhang, this successful example is precisely what Christianity has to learn from in order to indigenize itself into China. As Zhang suggests, “At its early stage Christianity could not be cut off from the Hellenistic and Roman cultures, how can it be separated from the Chinese and Indian cultures today?”⁶⁷ Zhang’s goal was to develop a form of Christianity that would be widely accepted by the Chinese. However, underlying this endeavor was the assumption that the Western expression of the Christian faith was by no means necessary, absolute, or superior, at least, for the Christians in China. This may imply that both the Western and the Chinese ways of interpreting Christianity are equally valid. After Zhang’s conversion to Buddhism, the monopoly, necessity, or superiority of the Western expression of Christianity was rejected outright. With the assumption of the superiority of the Chinese culture and Mahāyāna Buddhism, Zhang’s claim that the Christianity interpreted within the Buddhist framework was the authentic Christianity, whereas the Christianity developed in the West was an inauthentic, distorted, and inferior form of Christianity, became much more radical. In this case, Chinese culture was not merely one of the possible ways to express the Gospel, but the most superior and the only valid way to understand the Gospel. The relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture was no longer the inculturation of Christianity into a Chinese culture understood as a passive recipient. Rather, Chinese culture itself actively reinterpreted Christianity in its own way, which was believed to be the best, or even the only, way for Christianity.

The interaction between Christianity and East Asian culture(s), especially the (re-)action of Chinese culture toward Christianity, can be seen clearly in the two foci discussed above. Zhang’s Biblical hermeneutics reflects the influence of Ch’an Buddhism, a school of Buddhism embodying the influence of Chinese culture on Buddhism, and exercising tremendous influence on the subsequent development of Chinese culture. A famous self-account of Ch’an Buddhism reads:

A special transmission apart from the teachings;
Establishing no words or letters;
Directly pointing to the human heart-mind (*hsin*);
Seeing one’s nature and becoming a Buddha.

Zhang's emphasis on the heart-mind that reads the scriptures, rather than the scriptures themselves, is in line not only with Ch'an Buddhism, but also with the Neo-Confucian approach advocated by the Heart-Mind school championed by Lu Xiang-shan (1139–1193, Lu Jiu-yuan), whose famous motto was "If in our study we know the fundamentals, then all the Six Classics are my footnotes."⁶⁸ According to these traditions, what is to be transmitted is not any fixed written formula, neither a creed nor a scripture; rather, it is a direct transmission from heart-mind to heart-mind.⁶⁹ Apart from this emphasis on the heart-mind over the scriptures, Zhang's theory of doctrinal classification of the Bible, ranking different scriptures according to their theological contents, though not entirely new in the history of Christian thought, bears witness to Zhang's indebtedness to Chinese Buddhism, which has developed many theories and systems of doctrinal classification.⁷⁰

Buddhized Christology is another theological construct in Zhang's "Buddhizing" of Christianity that clearly exhibits the influence of Chinese culture. In his Christology, the question of how the two natures of Christ are united in one Person was seldom discussed. This is because he believed that divinity and humanity were not independent substances in themselves, and that there was no separation between humanity and divinity because, in essence, God was the same as the human heart-mind. Given that all people could become God, Jesus Christ, who was morally superior and willing to save himself and others, could certainly also become God. Given that all people could have both divine and human natures, Jesus Christ could naturally also be fully human and fully God. As a result, we find that Zhang's Buddhized Christology is mainly a functional Christology focusing on Jesus Christ's work and salvation.

Zhang's account of Jesus Christ's saving work has parallels with the theory of recapitulation formulated by Irenaeus.⁷¹ Irenaeus believed that the incarnation of Christ was a new beginning in human history which started from God's creation of human being in the past. Salvation was the extension of creation, while Jesus was the new Adam going through all temptations, but overcoming all evils and living out the true image of God. Whereas the disobedience of Adam led to the fall of humankind, the obedience of Christ saved all the people of the world. The work of Christ did not only destroy the power of Satan, but also restored humanity and facilitated the deification of human beings, allowing people to enjoy the union with God.⁷² However, the differences between the theories of Zhang and Irenaeus should also be noted.

According to Irenaeus, the work of Christ brought an ontological change to the status of human being, in that humankind was redeemed from sin to the union of God. In contrast, Zhang assumed that the work of Christ had the sole function of providing a moral example and would not lead to any transformation of the status of believers. The status of human being could be transformed only by self-effort through the imitating of Jesus Christ's example, especially through enlightenment, confession, and repentance. In short, Christ's work was not to re-

store broken humanity, but to teach human beings to rediscover their true nature, which was pure and identical with the Buddha-nature. The ultimate goal of salvation, according to Zhang, was to make people aware that they were equal to God, because, in essence, there was no disparity between divinity and humanity. This understanding of unity as identity between humanity and divinity is quite different from the Christian Orthodox understanding of deification championed by Gregory of Nyssa, which maintains the fundamental distinction between the uncreated divinity and created humanity.⁷³ Another noteworthy difference is that although many Western Christians advocated a moral example theory of salvation, all believed that the focus, as well as the center, of Jesus Christ's work was to reveal the love of God.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the neglect or disparagement of the personality of God in Zhang's theology as a whole made his account of the work of Jesus Christ emphasize almost exclusively his moral example or moral teaching, rather than his presence as the incarnation of divine love.

Zhang's theory seems to have similarities with Pelagianism, but in fact it comes even closer to, and was shaped mainly by, the Tathāgatagarbha school of Buddhism, which flourished in India for a relatively short time but was fully developed in East Asia, and significantly shaped by Chinese thought.⁷⁵ According to the Tathāgatagarbha school, there is no difference between the nature of Buddha and that of sentient beings, who can also become Buddhas. Very much in line with this understanding, Zhang stated that Jesus was not the only Christ, for it was possible for all sentient beings to become Christ. Zhang's assumption of Jesus as a moral example, a teacher, and a bodhisattva manifested in the West, together with the elimination of the meaning of penal substitution, played down the supreme status of Jesus Christ in the entire Christian religion. According to him, all living beings also possessed the same nature of Jesus Christ; but lacking in those living beings were the virtues and merits of Jesus Christ. As long as one followed the conduct of Jesus, one could also become another Christ. After all, Jesus was not the only model to follow. The Buddha, Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi, and other Chinese sages could all be regarded as examples. Why, then, was it necessary to follow Jesus Christ? Alternatively, we could ask why it would be essential for China to have one more bodhisattva from the West if China already had different schools of thought, including Confucian, Taoist, Moist, as well as Mahāyāna Buddhist, and if there were so many sages and bodhisattvas. It seems unnecessary for the Chinese to have accepted a bodhisattva who was born in Judaea and was widely received in Europe and America. Accordingly, Zhang's Buddhicized Christology does not only lower the status of Christ, but also renders Christianity redundant in China. If the Chinese already have other "Christs," why do they need a foreign Christianity? In view of this, in the final analysis, Zhang's Buddhicized Christology does not support the indigenization of Christianity in China. On the contrary, it causes Christians to wonder why they should be Christian. For Zhang himself, the project of Buddhicizing

Christianity would be better understood as a vivid demonstration of his intention to affirm his own past and to continue to develop his work after converting to Buddhism.

Zhang's Buddhicizing of Christianity is not only a result of the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity, but also that of the interaction of Christianity and the culture(s) of East Asia. Zhang's proposal for Buddhicizing Christianity represents an interpretation of Christianity based on the East Asian cultural traditions inherited. This interpretation assumes and claims to be more compatible with the original nature or essence of Christianity than the interpretation of Western Christianity. In other words, this is not a form of parallel or inferior Christianity, but a genuine and superior Christianity. Though one may reject some aspects, or even the entirety, of Zhang's Buddhicizing of Christianity from an "orthodox" Christian position, one is compelled to admit that it is still an extremely distinctive and representative product of the interaction between the Christian religion and East Asian cultures that deserves further investigation.⁷⁶

NOTES

1. For a short biography of Zhang, see Lai Pan-chiu and So Yuen-tai, "Zhang Chunyi's Chinese Buddhist-Christian Pneumatology," *Ching Feng*, n.s., 4, no. 1 (2003): 53–56.

2. For a fuller biography of Zhang, especially his religious life and journey, see So Yuen-tai, "Zhang Chunyi de Fohua Jidu jiao sheng xue" (Zhang Chunyi's Buddhist-Christian Theology), unpublished PhD thesis, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002, chap. 3.

3. In November 2003, the first Buddhist-Christian dialogue conference in China was held in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. The conference papers in Chinese were published in Wu Yan-sang, Lai Pan-chiu, and Wang Xiao-chao, eds., *Fo Jiao yu Jidu Jiao dui Hua* (Dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity) (Beijing: Zonghua shuju, 2005). Some of the papers were published in English in *Ching Feng*, n.s., 4, no. 2 (2003) and 5, no. 1 (2004). The second conference, titled "Kingdom of God, Pure Land and the Human World," was held in October 2006 in Hong Kong and the papers will be published by the same publishers in Chinese and English, respectively.

4. In Lai Pan-chiu, ed., *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu Jiduzongjiao de xiangyu* (Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Modern China) (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2003), in addition to the general survey, three cases have been studied in depth, including Xu Dishan (1894–1941), Xu Xongshi (Princeton S. Hsu, 1900–1999), and Zhang Chunyi.

5. Zhang Chunyi, *Mozi jijie* (Collected Explanation of Mozi) (repr. Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1982).

6. Because *fohua* in Chinese may be used a verb or adjective, in this paper it may be translated as "Buddhistic," "Buddhicised," or "Buddhicizing," depending on the context.

7. Zhang Chunyi, "Xinyue zhi guang," (The Light of the New Testament) in Zhang, *Jidujiao neipian* (The Inner Chapters of Christianity), p. 37; compiled and reprinted in Zhang, *Zhongru xiansheng hongdaoshu* (The Preaching Books of Zhang Chunyi) (Shanghai: Xiehe shuju; Beijing: Guo Jiyun shuju, n.d., probably ca. 1920–1921).

8. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun* (Discussion of the Reform of Christian-

ity), pp. 36–37. Reprinted in Zhang, *Zhongguo Jidujiao* (Chinese Christianity) (Shanghai: Fojiao jingjinshe, 1927).

9. Zhang Chunyi, “Zhen Jidujiao wuyi Fojiao yiyu Fojiao ji fei zhen Jidujiao” (Authentic Christianity Is Not Different from Buddhism, Being Different from Buddhist Is Not Authentic Christianity), in Zhang, *Shijie fojiao jushilin linkan* (Journal of International Buddhist Laity) 1 (1923): 4.

10. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 36.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–41.

12. Zhang Chunyi, “Da Bian Runhuan zongjiao zhe yiwen” (Reply to the Religious Question of Bain Runhuan), in Zhang Chunyi, *Fobua Jidujiao* (Buddhicized Christianity) (Shanghai: Shanghai fojiao shuju, n.d., but not earlier than 1926; Taipei: Taiwan yin-jingchu, 1956 repr.), p. 51.

13. Zhang Chunyi, “Da mou nüshi shu,” (Reply to a Lady) in Zhang, *Fobua Jidujiao*, p. 8.

14. Zhang Chunyi, “Zhong gao Jidutu” (Advising Christians), in Zhang, *Fobua Jidujiao*, p. 77.

15. For a more comprehensive discussion of Zhang’s Buddhist interpretation of Christian theology, see So Yuen-tai, “Fohua Jidujiao: Zhang Chunyi de dacheng shengxue” (Buddhicizing Christianity: Zhang Chunyi’s Mahāyāna Theology), in *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao yu Jiduzongjiao de xiangyu* (Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Modern China), ed. Lai Pan-chiu, pp. 147–212.

16. Lai Pan-chiu and So Yuen-tai, “Zhang Chunyi’s Chinese Buddhist-Christian Pneumatology,” *Ching Feng*, n.s., 4, no. 1 (2003): 51–77.

17. Zhang Chunyi, “Tiandao qishilun” (On the Revelation of the Heavenly Way), in Zhang, *Jidujiao neipian*, p. 1.

18. Zhang Chunyi, *Keyu jueyu* (Enlightened Words after Class) (n.p., n.d., but later than 1920), p. 8.

19. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 4.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

21. Zhang Chunyi, “Da Bian Runhuan zongjiao zhe yiwen,” p. 49.

22. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 27.

23. Zhang Chunyi, “Yu Jidutu shu” (Epistle to the Christians), in *Fobua Jidujiao*, p. 54.

24. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 5.

25. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Fafu* (Explanation of the Secret Meaning of the Gospel), p. 1; reprinted in Zhang, *Fuyin Miyi* (The Secret Meaning of the Gospel) (Shanghai: Xiehe shuju; Beijing: Guo Jiyun shuju, 1927).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

27. Zhang Chunyi, *Moxue yu Jingjiao* (Moism and Christianity) (Shanghai: Xiehe shuju; Beijing: Guo Jiyun shuju, 1923), p. 51. “Jing jiao” is the name adopted by Christianity in China during the Tang dynasty.

28. Zhang Chunyi, “Xinyue zhi guang,” p. 37.

29. Zhang Chunyi, “Da Zhou Errun” (Reply to Zhou Errun), in Zhang, *Rongtong ge-jiao guiming Jidu tandaoshu* (The Preaching Book of Synthesizing the Religions to the Conversion to Christ) (Shanghai: Xiehe shuju; Beijing: Guo Jiyun shuju, n.d., ca. 1921), p. 26.

30. Zhang Chunyi, *Zhongru xiansheng yanjiangji* (Anthology of the Speeches of Zhang Chunyi), p. 4; reprinted in Zhang, *Zhongru xiansheng hongdaoshu*.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

32. Zhang Chunyi, “Zhen Jidujiao wuyi Fojiao yiyu Fojiao ji fei zhen Jidujiao,” p. 6.

33. Zhang Chunyi, *Zhongru xiansheng yanjiangji*, p. 1.

34. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 15.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
37. Zhang Chunyi, "Zhonggao Jidutu," p. 70.
38. Zhang Chunyi, *Zhongru xiansheng yanjiangji*, p. 3.
39. Zhang Chunyi, *Moxue yu Jingjiao*, p. 36.
40. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 21.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
42. Zhang Chunyi, *Zhongru xiansheng yanjiangji*, p. 26.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
44. Zhang Chunyi, *Keyu jueyu*, p. 48.
45. Zhang Chunyi, "Wu hu yumiu kemin de Jidujiao" (Doomed to the foolish, absurd and pitiful Christianity), in Zhang, *Fobua Jidujiao*, p. 89.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
47. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Fafu*, p. 72.
48. Zhang Chunyi, "Da Yan Qian" (Reply to Yan Qian), in Zhang, *Fobua Jidujiao*, p. 66.
49. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 20.
50. Zhang Chunyi, "Da mou nüshi shu," p. 6. Zhang's assumption is very similar to that of Thomas Chubb, a Western theologian in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Chubb argued that the idea of Christ's death on the cross as a sacrifice is only an inheritance from the Jewish tradition. See Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 413–414.
51. Zhang Chunyi, "Da mou nüshi shu," p. 6.
52. Zhang Chunyi, *Gaizao Jidujiao zhi taolun*, p. 22.
53. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Fafu*, p. 38.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 33.
55. Zhang Chunyi, "Da Xie Yinxue nüshi shu" (Thanks to Madam Xie Yinxue), in Zhang, *Fobua Jidujiao*, p. 20.
56. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Fafu*, p. 18.
57. Zhang Chunyi, *Zhongru xiansheng yanjiangji*, p. 32.
58. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Fafu*, p. 71.
59. Zhang Chunyi, "Da mou nüshi shu," p. 3.
60. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Jiebi* (Rectification of the Secret Meaning of the Gospel), p. 21; reprinted in Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi*.
61. Zhang Chunyi, "Da mou nüshi shu," p. 2.
62. Zhang Chunyi, "Zhonggao Jidutu," p. 70.
63. Zhang Chunyi, "Zhen Jidujiao wuyi Fojiao yiyu Fojiao ji fei zhen Jidujiao," p. 4. For a similar but more recent theory concerning Jesus's learning from the Indian, especially Buddhist, wisdom, during the period without any record in the Bible, see Elmar R. Gruber and Holger Kersten, *The Original Jesus* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1995).
64. Zhang Chunyi, *Fuyin miyi: Jiebi*, pp. 2–3.
65. See Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, pp. 422–423.
66. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed: In the Light of Today's Questions*, tr. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1972), p. viii.
67. Zhang Chunyi, "Yu Jidutu shu," p. 54.
68. Chan Wing-tsit (trans. and comp.), *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 580.
69. Concerning the Ch'an and Neo-Confucian positions, see further Lai Pan-chiu, "Inheriting the Chinese and Christian Traditions in Global Context: A Confucian-Protestant Perspective," *Religion & Theology* 10, no. 1 (March 2003): 10–11.
70. Lai Pan-chiu, "Zhongguo Fojiao de panchiao dui Shengjing shenxue de qifa" (Significance of Doctrinal Classification in Chinese Buddhism for Biblical Theology), in

Wu Jin de zhuixun (Endless Searching), ed. Chen Zuoren (Hong Kong: Religion Society, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1988), pp. 36–62.

71. “Recapitulation” (Latin: *recapitulatio*; Greek: *anakephalaïōsis*) literally means the provision of a new “head” or a new “headship.” In Christian theology, it refers specifically to the idea, particularly expounded in Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies*, that Christ’s new headship superseded the old headship of Adam and undid the sin and fall of Adam. See further Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), p. 258.

72. Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), pp. 165–168.

73. Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 81.

74. Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, pp. 425–426.

75. Some Buddhist scholars even query the orthodoxy of the school: see Matsumoto Shirō, *Engi to kū: nyoraizō biban* (Tōkyō: Daizō Shuppan, 1998). Chinese version: Songben Silang, *Yuanqi yu kung: Rulaizang sixiang pipan* (Dependent Co-arising and Emptiness: A Critique of Tathāgatagarbha Thought), trans. Xiao Ping and Yang Jin-ping (Hong Kong: Jing yao wen hua chu ban you xian gong si, 2002).

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