Forum for Chinese Theology Sixth Annual Symposium
“Christian Faith & Ideological Trends in Contemporary China,”
20-25 August 2013, Oxford England


Host Institutions: OCMS & Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford

Sponsors: Templeton Foundation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Areopagus Foundation, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Delegates: 104 delegates from Asia, North America & Europe.

China delegation: 46 Christian, Liberal, New Left & New Confucian scholars & institutional leaders.

Asian, North American, European Delegates: 58 Scholars & Institutional Representatives.

Research Institutions Represented: Oxford Centre for Mission Studies; China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS); Areopagus Foundation; Programme for International Ecumenical Theological Education; World Council of Churches; Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, Hong Kong; Institute of Religion & Culture Tzu Chi University; Institute of Chinese Thought & Humanities, Tongji University Taiwan; Christianity & China Research Centre (USA); Globethics, Basel.
**Universities, Colleges & Seminaries Represented:** Beijing University; Shandong University; Tsinghua University; Renmin University; Fudan University; Wuhan University; East China Normal University; Capital Normal Beijing University; University of Aeronautical & Astronautical Engineering, Beijing; Hong Kong Baptist University; China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong; Chinese University Hong Kong; Chung Yuan Christian University, Taiwan; Taiwan Theological College; Taipei; Pyongyang University of Science & Technology (North Korea); Yanbian University of Science & Technology; University of Oxford; University of Aberdeen; Edinburgh University, Glasgow University; Birmingham University; University of Leeds; University of Helsinki; University of Basel; University of Göthenberg; Fuller Theological Seminary; Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Southern Methodist University; GETS Theological Seminary; Malaysia Bible Seminary.

**NGO, Ministry & Mission Representatives:** Entrepreneurial Leadership Initiative, University of Oxford; CMS; Overseas Council International; World Council of Churches; Chinese Overseas Christian Mission; World Evangelical Alliance; Chinese Church of London; Bishop of Oxford; Tearfund; CMI; Friends of China UK; Ambassadors for Christ; Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

**Attendees of Note:** Key contributors included Zhuo Xinping, Director of the China Academy of Social Sciences, Liu Peng (CASS), Dr Richard Mouw, President Fuller Theological Seminary; Dennis Hollinger, President Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Iain Torrance, Pro-Chancellor University of Aberdeen.
Schedule of Events

Opening Banquet: Merton College, University of Oxford

145 honoured guests gathered at Merton College for the official opening of the 6th Annual Symposium of Chinese Theology. Delegates from China met up with their counterparts from Asia, Europe & North America in the Sundial Garden & then proceeded to the banquet in Merton Hall. Welcome was extended to the guests by Wang Wenfeng, Founder & General Secretary of the Forum of Chinese Theology, Wonsuk Ma, Executive Director of OCMS & Michael Lloyd, Principal Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford.

Of Note: Thomas Harvey, Academic Dean OCMS, officially announced OCMS’s endeavour to develop a dedicated research centre in Oxford on Global Christianity & Civil Society. This independent research centre will be situated in Oxford in partnership with leading international academic institutions.
Conference Sessions

Presentations were arranged according to the three main secular ideologies of China in relation to Christianity in China.

Day 1: Christianity & Liberal Ideology in China
Professor He Guanghu framed liberalism in terms of modern pluralism, democracy and the rule of law. Speakers addressed the relationship of liberalism to modernisation, markets & national progress. Delegates discussed and analysed the relationship between Liberalism, nationalism, human rights, the growing gap between rich & poor & what many regard as a decline in moral standards.

Day 2: Christianity & New Left Ideology in China
Professor Zhuo Xinping introduced the history, ideology and rise of the New Left in China. Presenters analysed the relationship between ideology, national loyalty and religion. Does religious emphasis upon transcendence conflict with emphases upon science and development? Questions were raised by delegates in regards to Christianity's relationship to Western ideology and influence and how it may contribute to cultural development.

Day 3: Christianity & New Confucianism in China
Presenters on New Confucianism questioned whether Confucianism is a religion or a political philosophy & ideology. If it is the latter, then Confucianism should be compatible with religious belief in general & not hostile to Christianity. It was noted that hostility to Christianity in China had much to do with the unequal political, economic & military influence of the West upon China in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus, some noted that China’s emerging international reputation as a Global leader should ease tension in regards to Christian faith in China. Further, it was noted that Christianity shares with New Confucianism concern with moral decline and relativism. Thus some advised that Christianity should affirm concern for morality in civil society in solidarity with New Confucianism.
Summary: Christianity among the “Big Three” Ideologies of China

The Symposium allowed Chinese and Western Scholars to present alternative perspectives on the relationship between Christianity and the three ideological perspectives presented at the conference. Of critical importance was the recognition of historical factors that led to tension between Christianity and the perspectives presented. This allowed discussion to move forward to discuss changing perceptions of Christianity within China given the rising stature of the nation economically and what role Christianity might play in the development of society and in its relationship with different ideological perspectives in China.

Christianity, Liberalism & the New Left

Christian Scholars noted both their agreements & disagreements with Liberalism & the New Left. There was a general affirmation of the benefits of political & economic liberalism & fear of the totalitarian impulses of some on the Left. Nonetheless, there was resonance with New Left concerns with the negative effects of increasing liberalisation of markets & mores – e.g., the rise of "Western" vices such as prostitution, gambling, & pornography. The relationships between Christianity, national loyalty and Western influence were discussed. Further, discussion opened up to consider the relationship between New Confucianism, Liberalism and the New Left and where Christianity fit into this larger debate.

Christianity & Confucianism:

Unlike last year’s Symposium, there were few sharp disagreements between Christian Scholars & New Confucian Scholars. This was in large measure due to New Confucian emphasis upon Confucianism as a philosophy/ideology & not a religion. Nonetheless, concerns were raised in regard to the growing influence of a form of Christianity overly dependent upon Western Culture & inattentive to China’s roots in Confucianism.
Heritage Tour of Cambridge
Visit to Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford
On Saturday, 24 August, OCMS hosted the China delegation for a tour of Cambridge & Cambridge University. On Sunday, 25 August the delegation attended Sung Eucharist at Christ Church Cathedral Oxford & was given a tour of the Cathedral by Canon Angela Tilby.

Why was the 6th Symposium Significant?

The Venue – Chinese & Western Scholars agreed that holding this conference in Oxford allowed for a full discussion and analysis of the relationship of Christian faith to current ideological trends in China. Oxford’s academic reputation served as a magnet that attracted leading scholars from China, Asia, Europe and North America eager to address Christianity and ideological trends in China from a variety of perspectives.

The Interlocutors – This conference was as much about the contenders as it was the content. Bringing together leading liberal, New Left & New Confucian scholars produced a fecund mix of ideas, intellectual engagement & remarkable openness that infused the entire conference. Those familiar with current ideological developments in China were pleasantly surprised by the tenor of the dialogue, the rigour of the analysis & the willingness of the Presenters, Responders and delegates
to speak, listen & carefully assess the positions expressed. 17 scholars from China & 10 scholars from wider Asia, Europe & North America presented papers. Further, panellists from Liberal, New Left and New Confucian perspectives were allowed to query the presenters at each session. The result was a informative & fruitful engagement throughout the conference.

The Subject Matter – The growth of Christianity in China and the importance of ideology are crucial to understanding modern Chinese society & the various pressures it faces. Given the subject matter, at times intense debate & disagreement arose. Rather than dividing the delegates, it rather served as a framework to work through differences and to produce the Oxford Consensus. This ground-breaking accord was forged by representative scholars from Christian, Liberal, New Left & New Confucian representatives and represents an important step going forward for constructive academic analysis, discussion and concord between persons of different academic and ideological perspectives.

The subject matter proved a breakthrough for Oxford & the West as well. Holding an academic conference that brought Christian faith into dialogue with current ideological trends revealed the relevance of religious belief to important matters influencing civil society.
What was accomplished?

The Oxford Consensus 2013

One of outcomes of the conference was “The Oxford Consensus” (Document & Translation Appended). This document was forged by representative scholars from Christian, Liberal, New Left & New Confucian perspectives & in many ways this concord summed up the spirit of the conference. The Oxford Consensus reflects the willingness of scholars to engage each other with mutual respect and shared concern for the nation & people of China. It expressed an abiding appreciation of the rich traditions & heritage of China, solidarity in facing the various challenges ahead and the recognition that no single school of thought has all the answers for the various challenges facing China & the world today. In sum, the Consensus echoed the considered view of those present at the Symposium that a deeper understanding & appreciation of the various issues raised during the three days of the Symposium. The Consensus has already received favourable press coverage in China from a spectrum of ideological perspectives.
New Partnerships in Oxford

The conference represented several firsts:

- OCMS & Wycliffe Hall co-hosted the 6th Symposium of Chinese Theology in Oxford. This bodes well for these two important institutions as they examine ways they can work together with regard to China & Global Christianity.
- OCMS now has significant connections in China with leading academics, institutional leaders & leading Christians in China. OCMS is now in working relationship with the Forum for Chinese Theology & this should open a path for research scholars from China to study at the centre
- The conference built and strengthened OCMS’s ties to academic & mission institutions. In particular, the contributions of Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Seminary & the Areopagus Foundation are deeply appreciated.
A Dedicated Research Centre: Global Christianity & Civil Society

At the opening banquet, OCMS announced its endeavour to develop a new research centre in Oxford devoted to research on global Christianity & its impact on civil society. This independent research centre will be situated in Oxford in partnership with leading international academic institutions.

A Rigorous Affirmation of the Global Relevance of Christian Faith in the Academy & Civil Society

The conference served to give notice that Christian faith has a significant contribution to make in the academy & civil society. Further, that this is especially true in the majority world. Furthermore, the Symposium demonstrated that productive, insightful dialogue & engagement can take place in cross-disciplinary conferences especially where political, philosophical & religious views intertwine. The import of these cross-disciplinary engagements is revealed in the interest this event has drawn.
关于中国现状与未来的若干共识

在中国崛起的大背景下，中国的世界观与世界的中国观正在改变。与此同时，中国的社会问题也变得日益突出。中国将走向哪里？会给未来的世界带来什么样的变化？已经成为中国和世界上越来越多的人迫切关心的问题。

我们这些具有自由主义、新左翼、新儒家和基督教研究等不同学术或思想背景的中国学人，都热爱中国这片土地，都忠于我们的人民。我们珍视知识分子发挥社会反思与守望的功能，希望在今天中国与世界变化发展的重要关头，发扬这个群体历来所富有的道德情怀和理性精神，以文化和观念的力量推动国家和社会向上向善的演进。

我们承认，面对中国和世界的大变局，任何一家一派的社会思想都是有局限的，一个可爱亦可信的未来社会蓝图需要大家共同努力才能完成，因此，知识分子都应该在尊重不同观点的基础上进行真诚交流、互相砥砺，由此形成关于中国当前和未来发展所亟需的思想共识。

我们通过认真的讨论交流，在几个方面达成如下共识：

1. 我们希望中国坚持“以民为本”的治国理念，即以人民为权力的来源，以人民为权利的基础，以人民为国家的目标。
2. 我们希望中国坚持“公平正义”的社会原则，即在政治、经济、社会、文化、民族与性别各领域，在立法、司法和行政诸环节，在教育、医疗、居住、工作、休息和养老等方面，都以公平对待所有中国公民、实现社会生活正义作为基本原则，使全体人民的生活不仅有物质的保障，而且有精神的尊严。
3. 我们希望中国在传承优秀文化的同时，坚持多元而自由的文化目标，以群己关系的合理平衡为前提，以公平正义的法治为原则，保障各民族、各阶层、各地区、各职业群体、各社会团体以及所有个体多种多样的价值追求、思想旨趣、学术倾向、艺术风格、宗教信仰和言论主张等等，和而不同，都有和平共存的环境，都有自由发展的机会。
4. 我们希望中国致力于建设更公平、正义的国际秩序，以相互依存、互利共赢原则处理涉及政治、经济、文化、军事、环境等方面的国际纠纷，既有利于全体中国人民也有利于全人类，促进世界各国各族的和平共处与和谐发展，最终达致天下太平。

2013年8月22日

签署（按照姓氏拼音排名）：

陈明、干春松、高全喜、高师宁、何光沪
黄保罗、黄纪苏、金雁、刘澎、吕新雨
罗岗、卢敬雄、秦晖、孙尚杨、孙毅
王文锋、许纪霖、邢福增、徐友渔、杨凤岗
杨熙楠、姚西伊、姚中秋、赵林、曾庆豹
郑家栋、郑也夫、朱晓红

2013年8月22日
The Oxford Consensus

22 August 2013

Some Consensus on China’s Current Situation & Future
(English Translation)

Against the background of a rising China, China’s view of the world & the world’s view of China are changing. At the same time China’s social problems are becoming more obvious every day. Which direction should China take? What effect will this have on the world in future? This has already become a matter to which more & more people in China & the rest of the world are paying close attention.

We are a group of Chinese scholars with liberal, new left, new Confucian, & Christian academic or school of thought backgrounds, who love the land of China & are faithful to its people. We greatly value the role of intellectuals in reflecting on & protecting society, & hope that at this important time of change in China & the rest of the world, to promote the rich moral character & rational spirit which this community has possessed for generations. Through the power of culture & opinion we wish to spur the country & the society on to a higher & better level.

Faced with the huge changes in China & the world, we acknowledge that any school of social thought has limitations, & that any acceptable & credible blueprint for the future of society can only be drawn up if everyone works together. Therefore intellectuals must communicate sincerely & hone each other’s views on the basis of respect for our differing viewpoints and, in this way, produce an urgently needed common position on China’s present & future development.

Through a process of sincere discussion & communication we have arrived at several conclusions presented below:

1. We hope that China will hold to a governing philosophy of “the people as fundamental”, & the idea that the consent of the people is the source of power, the sovereignty of the people is the foundation of the political system, & the benefit of the people is the aim of the country.

2. We hope that China will hold to the social principle of “fairness & justice”, & in the domains of politics, economics, society, culture, ethnicity, & gender; in all processes of making & implementing laws & administration; in the areas of education, healthcare, housing, work, recreation, & care for the old; that all Chinese citizens will be treated fairly, & that the foundation of social life will be the principle of justice. By this means all people will not only have guarantees in their material life, but also enjoy dignity of spirit.

3. We hope that along with the heritage of Chinese culture, we will also maintain the aim of a free & pluralistic culture. With reasonable & balanced relationships within society as a starting point, & a fair & just legal system as a basic principle, we wish to guarantee that all ethnic groups, social classes, regions, vocational groups, social groups, & all kind of individuals can enjoy an environment in which their values, ideals, academic interests, creative artistry, religious beliefs, & opinions, while different, can peacefully co-exist & freely develop.

4. We hope that China can seek to establish a fairer & more just international order, & through a principle of mutual reliance & benefit deal with international problems relating to political, economic, military, & environmental matters in a way that benefits the Chinese people as well as the whole of humanity, to promote peaceful co-existence & development for all countries & races, to achieve peace under heaven for all.