

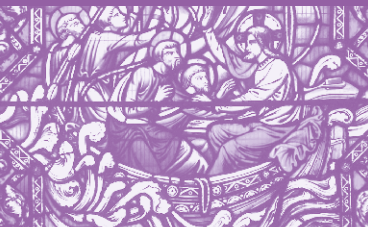
From Myanmar to the World, from the World to Myanmar

Page 10



Inaugural Service of Professor Francis Ching-wah Yip as Director of DSCC

Page 12



Director's Message

Page 15



Online Orientation Day

Page 16



Online Term Commencement Camp

Page 17

CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE — LOSING FAITH?

Tobias Brandner
Associate Director

A few years ago, with a group of Hong Kong students on a study tour through Europe, we passed by a church in Berlin that had been turned into a center for the unemployed to find rest and counseling. The students' immediate reaction was: "Oh, what a pity that this beautiful church stands empty." Indeed, when Chinese Christians talk about Christianity in Europe, or in the West in general, one of the most common reactions is "It's so sad how people in Europe have lost faith."

In such expressions, one finds a mix of feelings and attitudes: genuine sadness about an apparently obvious decline; thinly veiled criticism, of Europeans in general for their lack of faith, and of European Christians in particular for their lack of evangelistic vigor; a sense of calling, i.e., that it has fallen to 'the East' to take up the baton of evangelization and global leadership in the spiritual realm, similar to what is claimed to be happening in the political and economic realms; and even sorrowful foresight, that what has taken place in Europe may also come to Hong Kong, with local Christianity already showing signs of what is often called 'secularization', and that even Christianity in mainland China, which for the past 30 years has shown such fabulous growth, may not be immune.

The following article discusses the so-called decline of Christianity in the West. First, it provides a short description of this shift in the religious landscape. Next, it discusses sociological and historical theories about the reasons and origins of this process. Finally, it offers an assessment of this development: how to view it, and how to cope with it.

TOWARDS A POST-CHRISTIAN EUROPE

That the numbers of practicing Christians in Europe are shrinking is uncontested. The typical Sunday morning congregation — a large church building in the center of a rural or urban community — consists of a few white-haired elderly people whose fragile voices are drowned by a booming pipe organ. Statistics from the World Christian Database (WCD) illustrate this dramatic decline. In Germany, Christianity has declined from 98.56% to 67.29% between 1900 and 2015, in the UK from 97.44% to 69.40%. The authors predict a further decline for these two countries by 2050, to 58.79% and 56.76% respectively. The reality is even worse than these numbers suggest: the WCD's numbers are based not on worship attendance but on church membership. Furthermore, many people maintain membership simply out of nostalgia; out of solidarity with an organization seen as serving some social purpose; or for access to the main provider of core life rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

However, membership does not mean participation. The famous dictum of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The church is the church only when it exists for others" (Bonhoeffer 1971: 382), has assumed a new, sadly ironic meaning: not existing for *the benefit of* others, but existing merely for others (i.e., "not me") to participate.

Indeed, the Church of England saw only 4.3 percent of people living within its dioceses participate in one of its Christmas services in 2014 – and Christmas is the service that draws the largest numbers of worshippers each year (Peterson 2018: 3; for more examples of this decline, see McLeod 2003: 2-5). Rowan Williams, the former archbishop of the Church of England, described England as a post-Christian country (Peterson 2018: 2-3), and the same could be said of most parts of Europe. There is decreasing interest in those traditional Christian rituals, a decrease in biblical knowledge, and — interesting for theological educators — decreasing interest in theological studies.

There are, of course, bright spots in this bleak picture. In some cities, one may find revivalist churches, where the presence of younger people contrasts with the predominance of elderly people in the traditional churches. However, while the decline may be affecting revivalist churches less urgently, there is no evidence of such churches growing significantly enough to compensate for the decline in established Christianity. The only churches clearly flourishing are migrant congregations of African, Asian, or Latin American Christians. Yet, they remain limited ethnically and struggle to reach the social majority.

Old church buildings have become a heavy burden for financially stretched churches. Leaders use various strategies to deal with the burden of their architectural heritage: some churches are demolished; others are sold or converted into community centers; still others are turned into commercial venues such as restaurants, hotels, bookstores; some maintain a basic religious use that is complemented by cultural programs; and some simply share their space with other religious groups.

The traditionally close links between church and state are gradually decaying. Traditional denominational churches (Anglicans in England, Lutherans in Germany and Scandinavia, Reformed in Switzerland, Scotland, or Netherlands, Catholics in Southern Europe and across central Europe) still maintain a vision of a broad church that includes all of society. Yet, the reality on the ground is increasingly converting these churches into voluntary organizations – in other words, not much different from the revivalist 'free' churches.

Parallel to the decline in individual religiosity (what sociologists call 'subjective secularization'), churches are losing their traditional hegemony in society and culture ('objective secularization'), perhaps most obviously their declining influence on sexual ethics and marriage. Religious worldviews stand next to alternative worldviews, compete with them and are subject to the same market forces that dominate other parts of human

life. Religious faith has become something that is not taken for granted anymore but must be actively chosen. This inevitability of choosing from among multiple options (including the claim of 'no faith') naturally leads to what Peter Berger, a sociologist of religion, calls a 'heretical imperative', 'a movement from fate to choice' (Berger 1979: 11): since there is no overarching and authoritative worldview, one necessarily chooses between faiths, each of which claims a kind of ultimate authority even while professing tolerance and inclusivity. Secularity is thus a "move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, [...]" (Taylor 2007: 3).

SOCIAL REASONS FOR THE DECLINE: THE SECULARIZATION THEORY

The discussion about why Christian faith in Europe (and in the West overall) is declining is first played out in the field of sociology. Durkheim explained that the industrial revolution brought social and cultural diversity, where people of different faiths lived side by side and no single faith could claim exclusive truth. The reality of religious pluralism led to a privatization of faith and to individualization. At the same time, as more and more areas of life organized themselves without recourse to religious authority, the sphere of religion was diminished (Durkheim 1984: 119-20). Max Weber suggested that the rise of modern science led to what he calls a 'disenchantment' of the world: A magic world view, in which everything is caused by what are supposed to be non-human powers, is replaced by a scientific world view that sees only natural laws at work. Ironically, these Enlightenment forces have their roots in Protestantism. According to Weber, Protestant Christianity is the victim of its own success, undermined by the rationalizing and disenchanting forces that it brought into being. The modern world thus brought a demystification of the world, reflecting 'man's increasing rationality' (Wilson 1966: 78), and a differentiation of society, with specialized sub-systems such as

politics, economy, law, education, religion, none of which could claim authority over the others.

Many sociologists were convinced that modernity would inevitably lead to secularization (Bruce 2001: 250) and to the disappearance of religion. In complex societies, where people of different religious or secular faiths live side by side and compete, the mere presence of alternative claims of truth naturally means that the previously taken-for-granted claim(s) of absolute truth will face re-examination. These sociologists thought that such a relativization, together with the parallel dynamics of marketization, individualization, and subjectivization, would ultimately undermine religious belief overall. Yet, in the 1970s, these views began to change as, to many sociologists' surprise, religions were showing great tenacity. Peter Berger revised his theory that took the demise of religion for granted, admitting that it "has turned out to be wrong" (Berger 1999: 3). Although modernity did have a secularizing effect, there were also movements of *counter-secularization* and processes of *re-enchantment*. More particularly, conservative and traditionalist religious groups who did not compromise with modernity 'are on the rise almost everywhere' (Berger 1999:6). Examples of this are the rise of Pentecostal Christianity since the 1980s and the rise of fundamentalism both in Christianity and in Islam.

Other sociologists argue that religion has not so much disappeared but has simply shifted into non-institutional and more subjective forms. Typical expressions of such non-institutional religiosity are the popular belief in New Age religiosity and the commonly heard distinction between religion and spirituality. Many people nowadays are maybe less religious and surely less interested in institutional religiosity, but they are not less spiritual. While all these scholars have moved away from the traditional secularization thesis (that modernity naturally leads to a decline in religious beliefs), their theories have *modified* the theory rather than completely replacing it. The shift in

religiosity still signifies a clear loss of authority for traditional religion or, more simply, a clear decline of Christianity.

SECULARIZATION IN EUROPE AS A SPECIAL CASE

David Martin, another famous sociologist of religion, supported the secularization theory in principle but did not see it as a universal and necessary course in the evolution of modernity (Martin 1990: 295). He pointed out how secularization in Europe and North America have followed different trajectories and argued that the European form of secularization stems from Europe's specific historical experiences. Indeed, historical studies have contributed significantly to an understanding of the decline of Christianity in Europe.

Several events and intellectual shifts in European history contributed to a decline in Christian faith, or at least to a decline of attachment to the Christian church as an institution. The following summary mentions only major elements of this process.

The church started in the 1st century as a small alternative community standing in radical opposition to the Roman Empire. This changed when Constantine adopted Christianity in the 4th century as his preferred religion and, subsequently, Christianity became the empire's official religion. With this, virtually every member of society automatically became a Christian.

The first crack in this marriage between church and society appeared in the famous *investiture controversy* of the 11th century, when church and state clashed over the question of who held ultimate authority in a politically and religiously unified Europe: After King Henry IV had claimed for himself the right to appoint bishops, Pope Gregory VII excommunicated him and compelled him to do penance (before the pope himself) before being readmitted to the church. Excommunication from the church would have

made Henry's continuous rule impossible. While the church emerged victorious from this conflict (at Canossa in 1077), the confrontation signified the beginning of the end of the Catholic church's domination of European society. Ever since, political leaders have been suspicious of a church that could even bring a king to his knees. Thus, the event sowed the seeds of a division between religious and social belonging.

The next step in the separation of church and state and towards a secularized society happened during the *Reformation*. Although the Reformation was intended as a revival and purification of Christianity, the theological, cultural, and social shifts of the time had the long-term impact of indirectly contributing to a decline in religiosity. The magisterial reformers rejected the medieval concept of church-state relations, which regarded the church as superior to the state. Instead, they argued that political leaders equally perform the work of God and do so directly, without the church as mediator. This new understanding of the political realm reflected a deeper social and cultural shift, with a more positive view of the world. Traditionally, a life dedicated to God meant *withdrawing from* the world; now, the reformers emphasized that a Christian should rather *serve God within* the world. Whether as carpenter or cook, as fisherman or farmer, each Christian is called to worship God through his whole life, including his professional work. Of course, this shift on the level of ideas reflected more fundamental changes in people's lives: the rise of an independent-minded urban population; and people's growing confidence about mastering their own lives, not being passively subject to dark fate. The long-term result of this delimitation and diffusion of a "God-pleasing life" was that it became unnecessary to serve God in the church if one could serve God through one's work.

The next historical experience that contributed to a decline in people's religiosity was the devastating experience of the *Thirty Years' War* (1618-48). This war caused unprecedented destruction across

large parts of central Europe, with an estimated death toll of 8 million. In present-day Germany, around half the male population died from war and war-related diseases. Although the war had strong political roots, it was generally perceived as a confessional war between Catholics and Protestants.

The destruction of the war brought a negative perception of Christianity, a fundamental disillusionment regarding religious faith's ability to bring peace, and deeply influenced the ensuing *Enlightenment* period and its critical attitude towards religion. Since then, religion has been perceived as a source not of peace but of war. The criticism of Christianity and its potential to cause division was perhaps best expressed in Voltaire's famous dictum, "There are no sects in geometry!" In other words, a peace-loving person should look at the harmony of reason and science rather than the disharmony of warring religious factions. As churches failed to bring peace, people looked at political authorities to assume this function. A strong state appeared to be the best way to protect society from religion's potential for conflict.

In the *French Revolution*, the cultural and ideological changes brought by the Enlightenment found expression in a social and political revolution aimed at establishing a more egalitarian society. Enlightenment forces stood in opposition to the church and its hierarchy, which, throughout the 18th century, had supported and legitimized the oppressive 'old regime'. Not surprisingly, the French Revolution turned not only against the king but with equal vehemence against the church as the king's ally. Nowhere was the Enlightenment more critical of Christianity than in France (Byrne 1996: 34-37). In England, on the other hand, the Methodist movement was a bloodless popular revolution (Elie Halévy, see Maddox 1998: 34) that mitigated social contradictions. Social change across the Channel thus was less revolutionary and less anti-Christian.

With the restoration of monarchic rule and the dominance of the Catholic church in the early 19th century, a fundamental opposition between modernists and conservative Catholic Christianity remained a dominant feature of European societies up to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65): all those who sought political liberalization would oppose the church and see it as a necessary enemy of social progress. The peak of *Roman-Catholic anti-modernism* was the second half of the 19th century, with Pope Pius IX's 1864 proclamation of the Encyclical 'Quanta Cura' and its attachment, the Syllabus of Errors, which listed all the modernist doctrines the church condemned: freedom of the press, political liberalism, religious tolerance, democracy and socialism. The Catholic church presented these social movements as incompatible with Christian faith. People thus had to choose between two mutually exclusive options, the way of modernity or the way of the Catholic church.

Although Protestant churches were more willing to adopt modernity, the Roman Catholic church's all-out rejection of all liberal ideas had an impact on society at large, leading to an overall alienation from institutional Christianity. Protestant churches also failed to keep up, both with the social impacts of modernization such as urbanization and industrialization, and with the social problems that these changes brought. Mainline churches remained sociologically stuck in a pre-modern structure that had long been overtaken by social realities (see McLeod 1997:118-131).

Other historical experiences in Europe over the past two centuries have contributed to a decline in Christianity. One is the widespread shame of Europeans about the atrocities of colonialism. Rightly or not, Christianity is publicly perceived both as benefitting from colonial expansion and as not sufficiently distancing herself from the injustices of the colonial enterprise. Many people in the West see Christianity and colonialism as two sides of the same coin, both aggressively

reaching out and subjecting the whole world to their own rationale. Furthermore, the tragedies of the two world wars in the 20th century brutally laid bare the moral bankruptcy of the so-called Christian West. Although people in the West show some Eurocentrism in blaming themselves for the worst crimes against humanity in the 20th century — there were equally destructive campaigns by totalitarian rulers in other parts of the world — Christianity remains the religious belief most affected by such negative experiences.

In short, whether the crucial historical developments causing Christianity's decline happened in the 16th century, or in the middle of the 18th century, or only in the middle of the 20th century, it is the combination of all these events and ideological/cultural shifts that has caused Christianity to lose its domination of Western society.

A FIRST ASSESSMENT: SHOULD WE BE SAD?

Some of the (Chinese) voices mourning the decline of Christianity in Europe were introduced at the beginning of this essay. Of course, the decline is bemoaned by Christians not only in Asia but also in Europe. A few impacts of this decline are obvious:

The decline of familiarity with the Christian faith makes people forget basic Christian practices such as sharing, hospitality towards the stranger, and communal togetherness beyond political and ideological orientation. It undermines basic spiritual orientations such as gratitude, openness to transcendent dimensions of life, awareness of our temporality, radical hope against the power of normality, and receptivity to prophetic criticism that constantly disturbs our coziness in an established status quo.

The loss of basic biblical knowledge causes many people to lose touch with the large parts of European culture that are so deeply permeated with Christian stories and symbols. One cannot understand Western cultures and histories without some knowledge of Christianity.

The decline of an inclusive and broad form of Christianity leaves European societies, without integrating and cohesive social actors, at the mercy of radical religious groups unwilling and unable to connect the diverse voices. The vacated religious field is occupied by religious surrogates, tribalist affiliations, and faith expressions that do not creatively engage with the challenges of modernity and that have no concern for social coherence. Instead, conservative and credulous forms of Christianity foster a regressive form of faith, i.e., as a refuge for withdrawal from the modern world.

With the decline of mainstream Christianity in the West, the ecumenical movement, which in the past century contributed significantly to worldwide social transformation, is losing much of its financial backing. Ecumenical Christianity has inspired and supported a variety of progressive groups and movements: locally, the Christian Industrial Committee and the Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Centre (Wong 2019); internationally, the fight against apartheid, as well as peace movements during the Cold War and still now (such as reconciliation between North and South Korea); and many other social justice and liberation movements.

Despite a widespread and understandable melancholy regarding the decline of Christianity in Europe, there are plenty of alternative and often more positive interpretations of this shift. *Some question whether such a decline has in fact happened.* Hamberg (2018) points out that the assumptions of a decline build on exaggerated assessments of the impact of the churches in previous centuries (Hamberg 2018: 76). She questions the common assumption that European people in medieval times adhered so fully to Christian beliefs and practices (75). According to Hamberg, only a particular form of Christianity is in decline, namely the established form of mainline Catholic and Protestant Christianity, while an 'unchurched spirituality' continues to flourish (78). Hamberg's interpretation is echoed by several contributions in McLeod and Ustorf

(eds.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (2003), seeing the changes of the past centuries *not as religious decline* but simply *as religious change* (McLeod 2003: 8) or as a reinterpretation of Christian faith.

Larsen (2018), arguing from an evangelical perspective, agrees that a decline of established Christianity does not mean a decline of faith. People have stopped belonging, not believing. He criticizes that a tendency to think in patterns of progress shapes much of secularization theory, which sees faith as belonging to an earlier age – to be modern as “to abandon it for a secular mentality” (Larsen 2018: 167). What is withering is Christendom, not Christian faith, and this is a reason to rejoice: “The right theological and practical response to the decline of established Christianity in the Western world is to rejoice. I will say it again: Rejoice (Philippians 4:4)!” (Larsen: 165) The new social situation of Christians thus offers new opportunities to evangelize, witness, and live according to the original message. Indeed, evangelical Christians have for a long time been critical of nominal Christianity, preferring a smaller but more vibrant and engaged Christian faith community.

A positive view of the decline of established Christianity is not unique to evangelicals. Many critical-minded Christians understand that the church's place should be not at the center and mainstream of society but rather at the margins. This is where it belongs and, as such, it is necessarily small. A church with the cross at its center is necessarily a countercultural community moving away from the center of society. The decline of Christianity is in fact a *liberation* of Christianity from its captivity to the bourgeois establishment. Concern for a numerically large church reflects modern capitalist society's obsession with growth, efficacy, and power, which stands in contradiction to Christian origins. Some argue that, if God had been concerned with effectiveness and numerical success, God would surely have chosen to send Christ into the

world in the 21st century, where Christ could easily communicate through social media and travel across the globe.

Critical-minded Europeans are sensitive to a powerful church at the center of society for yet other reasons: In the past, the church was large and powerful, yet she failed to prevent world wars and the Holocaust. At the same time, Christians in the majority world recognize that the decline of some form of Christianity in the West offers an opportunity for more mutual relations (Guerra 2018: 199). The demise of Western Christianity, which, despite being local, claimed universality, makes room for the rise of World Christianity, which can be understood as “a process of transition to an age of inter-Christian reciprocity” (ibid.).

Spiritually progressive Christians rejoice over the decline of established Christianity also for deeply theological reasons: In the church's decline, God's kenosis, incarnation and engagement with the world become reality. The deep biblical roots of “secularization” have been widely acknowledged since Max Weber. The understanding that biblical narratives stand at the beginning of the process of secularization has inspired theologians, such as Bonhoeffer, to call for a religion-less Christianity and for a non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts (Bonhoeffer 1971: 280). His incarnational theology criticized religious concepts that tried to preserve some domain for the divine in areas not fully understood by humans, such as illness, death and other misfortune. He equally criticized a ‘deus-ex-machina’-god, i.e., a stop-gap power that intervenes where humans mess up. Inspired by Bonhoeffer, Harvey Cox showed how biblical narratives contribute to secularization: the story of Genesis is a call for a disenchanting view of history that completely separates the world from God: the creation is not divine but has been put in its right place by God; the sun and the moon are creations of Yahweh hung in the sky to give light. Similarly, the Exodus story advocates a desacralized view of politics and rejects any claims

of divine right, a popular way of establishing political legitimacy; the Sinai covenant and the prohibition of images criticizes our attempts to worship what is fashioned by humans, including any absolutizing of human values or ideologies (Cox 1965: 25-37). It is thus a basic movement of faith to leave the religious realm behind and to fully enter and be absorbed into the world. The aim is not to stay in some “religious” realm but to transform the world and its social structures so that they reflect the values of the gospel. Like water poured on the ground to irrigate plants, so also here: the churches may be empty; but the aim of God’s mission is not to fill church buildings with believers but to transform our communities so that the poor, the widow, the stranger, and the downtrodden receive justice and care.

A SECOND ASSESSMENT: WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

Our last section explained how many Christians, both evangelical and spiritually progressive, are discovering that the decline of Christianity in the West is a blessing in disguise. However, this tremendous social shift also holds important lessons. The most important lesson is, of course, *for Christians in Europe*: to live without the comforts of established Christianity; to adapt to marginal existence; to rediscover the long-neglected basics of Christian witnessing. Western theologians in the past decades have shown an awareness of the decline and a readiness to seek creative new forms of Christian faith expression outside of the traditional, no-longer-convincing frameworks. Yet, significant learning happens only as theology and church practice arrive in the social lowlands, when the high salaries and dependable social safety nets for clerics and theologians are gone. It is thus safe to say that the crucial realizations still lie ahead.

The decline of Christianity holds important practical and spiritual lessons also *for Christians worldwide*, even though we should avoid the mistake of normalizing the Western trajectory

of Christianity. A first lesson is that Christians elsewhere can learn from the experiences of Western Christians that contributed to the decline: Christianity has succumbed most quickly where it allied itself with oppressive forces, where it was too cozy with the establishment, where it was able to dominate and impose its values on society. There is an inherent temptation for Christians worldwide to turn their faith into a socially dominant religion. We see this in ‘dominion theology’, which tries to extend ‘Christian’ values to the whole of society, both Christians and non-Christians. This is not substantially different to Islamic groups who impose sharia law on their tribes, cities and countries. The same domination happens when community leaders and politicians call their nation a ‘Christian nation’, be it in the U.S., in Zambia, or in small ethnic minority groups in northeast India or Myanmar. Claiming to be a Christian nation is fundamentally wrong. Nations have no faith — people have.

A second lesson is that God may be more likely to appear in silence rather than in noise (1Kings 19), hidden under the contrary rather than in powerful manifestations, in brokenness rather than in beauty. Many Christians’ yearning for a large, effective, powerful, and highly visible church simply reflects a traditional logic of strength. The challenge for both growing churches in the majority world and declining churches in Europe is to discover the hidden presence of God in small, fragile, and marginal communities and in the fragmentary communication of the gospel in arts, songs, people’s and liberation movements, and even in popular religiosity.

Finally, as some Christians in the majority world are alarmed about the decline of Christianity in Europe and some even panic about an Islamic conquest of Europe, there is a spiritual lesson: we need not be overly anxious about God; it is not us saving God but God saving us. Looking over the long history of Christianity, one marvels at the ups and downs of the Christian movement and the resilience of its liberating message.

As Christian communities, we are subject to the same movement of death and resurrection; we should not hold on our churches but be ready to die and to be resurrected with Christ. The movement of European Christianity reflects a natural trajectory particularly well: of faith deeply entering the fabric and structures of society to an extent that its specificity gets lost. It is from there, from the point of radical incarnation, that Christianity is resurrected. Or in the words of John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

REFERENCES

Berger, Peter. *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press and Doubleday 1979.

_____. 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview', in P. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Washington D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center 1999, 1-18.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Letters and Papers from Prison. The enlarged edition*, ed. by E. Bethge, London: SCM Press 1971.

Bruce, Steve. 'The Social Process of Secularization.' In R.K. Fenn (ed.). *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell, 249-263.

Byrne, James M. *Religion and the Enlightenment. From Descartes to Kant*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Cox, Harvey. *The Secular City. Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*. New York: Macmillan, 1965

Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labour in Society*. London: Macmillan, 1984.

Guerra, Jorge E. Castillo. 'An opportunity to foster inter-Christian reciprocity. The view from "World Christianity" and "the Next Christendom"', in P.S. Peterson, *The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World: Interpretations and Responses*. London and New York: Routledge 2018, 189-201.

Hamberg, Eva M. 'Analyzing Religious Decline: A Sociological Approach', in P.S. Peterson, *The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World: Interpretations and Responses*. London and New York: Routledge 2018, 75-85.

Larsen, Timothy. 'An evangelical response to the decline of Christendom', in P.S. Peterson, *The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World: Interpretations and Responses*. London and New York: Routledge 2018, 165-173.

Maddox, Graham. *Political Writings of John Wesley. Edited and Introduced by Graham Maddox*. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1998.

Martin, David A. *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

McLeod, Hugh. *Religion and the People of Western Europe, 1789-1989*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997.

McLeod, Hugh, and Werner Ustorf (eds.). *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003.

Peterson, Paul Silas. 'An introduction to the essays and to the phenomenon of established Christianity in the Western World', in P.S. Peterson, *The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World: Interpretations and Responses*. London and New York: Routledge 2018, 1-30.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

Wilson, Bryan R. *Religion in Secular Society*. London: Penguin, 1966.

Wong, Wai-Yin Christina. 'An Ecumenical Experiment in Colonial Hong Kong: The Start of the Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Centre (1973 to 1997) and Its Local Praxis.' *Religions* 2019, 10, 294, 1-14

From Myanmar to the World, from the World to Myanmar

An interview with Khin Maung Yee



From 2007 to 2010, as a recipient of the Methodist Church Hong Kong Scholarship and participant of a leadership training programme, I was granted the opportunity to study in the captivating yet tranquil campus of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, where I pursued a Doctorate in Theology and majored in systematic theology. It was my humble wish that my Doctorate Degree would come in handy in the development of Myanmar Theological College, which was established by the Methodist Church of Great Britain in 1937 and is currently a member of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA).

Myanmarese at Chung Chi

Chung Chi is a college with a rich history. At the college gate stand two upright pillars, and engraved on them is the college couplet:

*"For heaven and earth we set forth, in kindness, we unite;
From East to West we crave knowledge, always with delight.
Noble nature, ye who nurtures, through thee wisdom calls;
Duty be to preach and mentor, with a heart for all."*

The message is crystal clear: love everyone as oneself — "a heart for all" entails not only love for the people around us, but also every creature in the vastness of the world.

Here in Chung Chi, I met people from a diversity of countries, denominations, and personal backgrounds. Over three years, I became friends with several classmates from mainland China, who introduced me to more friends of theirs. Thanks to the Divinity School's generosity and commitment to theological education in Myanmar and mainland China, we were all recipients of financial aid, enabling us to serve the Lord with gladness.

Myanmarese at Divinity School

When I first came to the Divinity School, my greatest wish was to learn from the teachers and visiting scholars. As it turned out, theological methodology, or ways and means of doing theology, stands out the most in my educational



Annual teacher visits and walkathon are his favourite activities in divinity school.

attainment. It has subsequently proven to be of much use in the establishment and development of theology in Myanmar. A respectful teacher-student relationship and interactive milieu in classrooms motivated me to study, it also provoked thinking and boosted learning. Looking back, my days in the Divinity School produced fond memories that I would keep revisiting.

The teachers in Chung Chi are all authorities in their respective disciplines. Among them, the one who impacted me the most was my thesis supervisor, Prof. Francis Yip who constantly raised inspiring questions and guided me to think critically. And, my thesis would not have achieved a breakthrough had it not been for Prof. Kung Lap-yan, who was my teacher for

the course "Christ, Church, and Spirit". At the time, the students were mostly locals, and so the lectures were conducted in Cantonese; but thankfully, some of my classmates volunteered to translate for me. Prof. Jason Lam introduced me to Christian thinkers and opened my eyes to the trends in theological research, while Prof. John Yieh, a visiting American scholar, edified us with Johannine literature. Dr. Susanne Scholz, another visiting scholar, exposed me to feminist's approaches to the Hebrew Bible. The way she read and interpreted the Bible truly broadened my horizons. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all my teachers. They taught me how to understand the Bible in the Myanmarese context.

My dissertation topic was: *"Towards a Ludu Theology: A Critical Evaluation of Minjung Theology and its implication for a Theological Response to Dukkha (Suffering) of People in Myanmar (Burma)"*. "Ludu" is a word originated from the Myanmarese phrase *"pri dhee ludu"*, meaning "sons and daughters of the country". It refers to "people who are oppressed, alienated and marginalised".

Myanmarese at Hong Kong

During my first year in Hong Kong, there was plenty to adjust to. My roommate, for one, was an assiduous student who always had late-night study sessions; I, on the other hand, was someone who could not sleep with lights on. As you could probably imagine, having a

nocturnal roommate was a splitting headache for me. To make matters worse, my food adventure in Hong Kong was dolefully obstructed by stomach ulcer — the food in Hong Kong always made my mouth water; regrettably, I could never lay my hands on them unless I desired even more suffering in my stomach. What a painful challenge it was, to be presented with dishes and dishes of scrumptious cuisines, but not being able to taste them.

During my days in Hong Kong, we also mourned the death of a Myanmar sister in Christ, Soe Soe Mar. She was a friendly person who often had to spent days in hospital. She passed away. Devastated at the news, we held a memorial service for her. Her death reminded me of the words of Isaiah the Prophet and Peter the Apostle, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

Another piece of memory is a statue on the campus — in remembrance of a student movement that occurred in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989. CUHK students had worked to bring the statue into the campus. It is a symbol of democracy and freedom; and there it now stands, in the piazza, right outside the University train station. The students’ demand for democracy and human rights was clear as day to me, and this has remained one of my strongest memories about Hong Kong.

Myanmarese at Myanmar

In 1988, I was ordained in Myanmar and became a pastor of Myanmar Methodist Church. My wish is to become a competent pastor, one who serves the Lord and his fellow neighbours, fulfils the Great Commission of the Church, becomes God’s witness, engages in soul-saving and in the liberation of people from misery. For this, I believe, is the true essence of the gospel. I long for a chance to serve the young people in Northern Myanmar (Mizo). I am a firm believer in the relevance of theological education to the liberation of people. Among the 53 ethnic minority tribes in Chin State, many students fail to complete their studies due to financial problems, and seminaries face similar situations. The church has a lot of room for improvement. May God bless all of us.

In Myanmar, Buddhism is the dominant religion, and conflicts often occur between religions. I have channelled my efforts into promoting peace between different religions, attending various religious conventions to create dialogue, promote cultural exchanges and make peace in Myanmar. Recently, I finished a research programme on Buddhist-Christian engagement,

as well as published a book in Myanmarese. I hope that my efforts would promote better understanding between Christians and Buddhists and reduce religious conflicts.

I have been teaching in Myanmar for 14 years by now. I mainly teach systematic theology, pastoral theology, counselling and care, Asian theology, theological methodologies and religious dialogue. In Myanmar, given the vast differences of regions, ethnicities and cultures, teaching is never an easy job. I spend a fair amount of time studying pedagogies, diving into my students’ backgrounds to find out teaching styles that are best suited to them. As it often turns out, anecdotes serve as a good way to attract their attention and arouse their interest. I also talk about how government policies have impacted the ethnic minorities, so that students pay more heed to social issues. When I eventually retire, I plan to develop non-profit schools in Chin State with the aid of the Church, where I would teach English to children in areas of dire poverty.

Myanmarese at USA

In spring 2020, I travelled to Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York as a visiting scholar. I was to stay there for one semester. Yet, due to the development of coronavirus, I was forced to stay in the USA longer than I had expected. I was mainly responsible for two subjects — “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Rereading of Some Parables and Stories in Buddhism and Christianity” and “Asian Theology”, and under the influence of coronavirus, I had to conduct my lessons online. Teaching in this semester was particularly challenging for me — my students were Asians and Americans who had open minds and were able to think critically, however, as I soon discovered, it was rather difficult for my students, who were mainly from developed countries, to imagine the situation in developing countries. As a result, our discussions were quite limited, but I sincerely hope that there would be more opportunities in the future so that we may carry on our dialogue.

Having been stranded in the US for months due to the coronavirus, today, I am finally able to return to my beloved homeland, where I would be with my family and continue my service to my people.

Khin Maung Yee

In the wait for a connecting flight in Korea
July 21, 2020



Khin and his theology classmates are supportive of each other.



In 2018, Khin and Professor Francis C. W. Yip reunited in a conference at Oxford.

*Interviewed and written by Li Kwong-ping
Translated by: Ivy Chan*

Inaugural Service of Professor Francis Ching-wah Yip as Director of DSCCC



The Inaugural Service was held in the afternoon of October 4, 2020 at the Chung Chi College Chapel. As a Covid-19 measure, the service was broadcast online with Putonghua and English interpretations. About 100 people - officials, family, school staff - joined the service in person. Online participants hit 280, with Facebook views reaching 4,500 in the next afternoon.

Rev. Wong Ka-fai served as presider and Dr. Anne C.B. Lam organist. As Rev. Pele K.H. Ko lit the candle, the officiants entered the chapel. After the hymn "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing", the congregation joined in the litany led by Rev. Leung Kam-wa, a member of the Theological Council. This was followed by the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers! Living Still" and scripture reading of Isaiah 61:1-9, Revelation 21:1-7 and Luke 6:20-26 by three official representatives: Mr. Wong Wing-kin, Chairperson of the Student Union of the Divinity School; Dr. Angela W.C. Wong, member of the Board of Trustees of Chung Chi College and Vice-President for Programs, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia; and Rev. Tim C. Lam, Chairperson of the Alumni Association of the Divinity School and member of the Theological Council.

Sermon by Prof. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza

Prof. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, Charles Chauncey Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School and Professor Francis Yip's dissertation advisor, delivered the sermon. Because of the pandemic, the preaching was pre-recorded and delivered with Chinese and English subtitles. With Revelation 21:1-7 as text, Professor Fiorenza explored the responses of Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz to the social, political and economic realities of their times. He urged that, in this our equally challenging era, we carefully navigate the diverse power structures that are always intertwined. We should frequently ask ourselves: Have we compromised the Christian message by reducing its critical edge, thus fitting it nicely into the prevailing culture and mainstream society? To what extent does our theology lead to social and cultural transformation in the light of the gospel of God's Rule? Professor Fiorenza pointed out that theological education should cultivate a new generation of clergy, theologians, and lay leaders who understand the complexity of a given situation, and come up with prudent and relevant responses in light of the Christian message. Professor





主聲問道：「你情願嗎？與我同釘十字架？」



Francis Yip, he believes, will lead the Divinity School towards this direction. He concluded with a quote from a commentary on Revelation written by his wife Elisabeth. It is that the church, in solidarity with those who suffer, would, in word and deed, work for the transformation of the world in the hope for a new heaven and a new earth.

Choral Anthem by Alumni Choir

Amid the pandemic, 40 alumni formed a virtual choir and presented "Are Ye Able". Conducted by Mr. Gary Tong, the choral piece was presented in the inauguration service for the glory of God and as a blessing for the new director.

Inauguration

The inauguration was officiated by Rev. Dr. Eric S.Y. So, Chairperson of the Theological Council with the following serving as assistant officiants: Rev. Dr. Calvin W.S. Chu, Dean of Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong; Rev. Dr. Lam Sung-che, President of Methodist Church, Hong Kong; Rev. Poon Yiu-lun, Assistant Superintendent of Hong Kong Pentecostal Holiness Church (as a substitute for Rev. Donovan S.H. Ng, who was absent due to sickness); Rev. Po Kam-cheong, Associate General Secretary of Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China; Mr. Alfred W.F. Hau, Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Chung Chi College; Prof. Fong Wing-ping, Head of Chung Chi College; Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang, Former Director of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College (2014-2020); and Rev. Dr. Li Ping-kwong, member of the Theological Council.

Rev. So first introduced Prof. Yip to the congregation. Prof. Yip then delivered his testimony.

Prof. Francis Yip's Speech

Looking Backward

Marking the start of his testimony, Prof. Yip first "looked backward". He thanked God, his parents, his church and a variety of groups and communities for granting him opportunities and edifying him; his wife and son, for their support, company and acceptance; his teacher Prof. Philip Shen, for significant encouragement on his theological journey; the teachers in his alma maters, DSCCC and Harvard Divinity School, for their training and teaching; and all his predecessors, for building a firm foundation for DSCCC.

Looking Forward

After looking backward, Prof. Yip "looked forward". He mentioned that the curriculum re-formation of the Divinity School has commenced. For formal education, the school aims at enhancing the inter-actions of theory and practice, of religion and society, of DSCCC and the church, as well as inter-actions among different subject disciplines. Meanwhile, the School seeks to develop a non-formal education emphasis in support of students' multidimensional growth. It is a journey towards becoming humble, confident, self-knowing, reflective, empathetic and critical individuals who have an ecumenical spirit as well as reformation fervor. On the technical front, DSCCC will be





exploring possibilities for virtual/short term courses to cater to the needs of Cantonese, Mandarin and English speakers in Hong Kong, mainland China, Asia and other regions of the world. Hopefully, this would enable people from around the globe to exchange ideas and reflections on contextual theology. Also, the School will be bolstering its research efforts and capabilities and strengthening its support to the church.

Looking Downwards

Professor Yip told us that he also “looks downwards” -- What circumstances are we in, and what challenges are we facing? How should we deliver the Christian message in response to the contemporary world? As Christians, we ought to be sensible and down-to-earth, carrying out our theological duties in the real world and in real situations. Also, we should be responsive to the new generation of young pastors and talented servants of God, living up to the ecumenical spirit of the church and striving to preserve the unity given to us by the Holy Spirit. The DSCCC will not be endorsing one political stance or one theological branch. We encourage teachers and students to witness for justice, peace, and the joy of the Kingdom of God in appropriate ways. We encourage students and teachers to pay heed to poverty, discrimination and oppression, and seek changes in our world.

Looking Upwards

Lastly, Prof. Yip “looked upwards” and ended his speech with two hymns, “Many things about

tomorrow, I don’t seem to understand; but I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand” and “Jesus, Savior, pilot me, over life’s tempestuous sea; unknown waves before me roll, hiding rock and treach’rous shoal; chart and compass come from Thee; Jesus, Savior, pilot me.” Even in ruffling winds and battering rain, God will always pilot us.

Commission and Entrustment

After the oath was taken, Professor Yip was commissioned by Rev. Dr. Calvin W.S. Chu, Rev. Dr. Lam Sung-che, Rev. Poon Yiu-lun, Rev. Po Kam-cheong and Mr. Alfred W.F. Hau with the laying of hands. Prof. Fong Wing-ping then entrusted the Divinity School’s Bible to Professor Yip, while Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang passed on to him the staff of the Divinity School. Rev. Dr. Li Ping-kwong offered a prayer for the director and his family.

Real-time Online Offerings

Rev. Wildred K.H. Chau said an offertory prayer. The offering was held online in real time to enable online participants to make offerings together with the congregation in the chapel.

Photo-taking

As Rev. Canon Dr. Chan Hin-cheong, Vice-Chairperson of the Theological Council, gave the benediction, the inauguration service came to an end. Prof. Francis Yip was greeted with blessings and encouragements from everyone, and took pictures with them.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

on August 1, 2020

Today, I take up the role of Director of Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, with fear and trembling.

There is a tempest and downpour when I am writing this message. The weather is stormy, so is the society.

In such a stormy situation, the church still should carry out Jesus Christ's mission and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God by proclamation and action—comparing to the times with a nice weather, now it becomes all the more important for the church to carry out the mission.

The church exists for others; the divinity school exists for the church. We serve churches by training professional pastoral workers, equipping lay leaders, and fostering theological research, and thereby bringing blessings to the society (through believers as salt and light and doing justice and loving kindness) and contributing to academia (through interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration). Our divinity school will continue to



"Christ Calms the Storm", by Lawrence OP, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullevy/6017120838>, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>



carry out curriculum reformation so that our formal and informal curriculum may actualize the mission of theological education in more efficient and relevant ways. We will look for opportunities so that we will be able to serve Cantonese-, Mandarin- and English-speaking communities far and near. We will also develop research and knowledge transfer that can serve the church and society. Certainly, we need to keep on strengthening our team of faculty and developing our financial resources.

There are many upcoming challenges, but I am not alone. Today I received a lot of messages with blessings and encouragement. I thank God for all these and thank everyone for the support and prayers. I want to give thanks to God for all the board members of the Theological Council who have been supportive of our school, our teaching and research team which is full of wisdom and knowledge, our administrative and other colleagues who are excellent and passionate, our students who demonstrate various gifts and talents, our alumni who shine for God and serve God faithfully in various capacities, and all our partners and supporters in Hong Kong and all around the world.

In tempests and downpours when seas are rough and waves are roaring, we rely only on God's piloting:

*"Jesus, Savior, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal;
Chart and compass come from Thee;
Jesus, Savior, pilot me."*

(Edward Hopper, "Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me," Hymns of Universal Praise 619)

Francis Ching-Wah Yip
August 1, 2020

Online Orientation Day

A DSCCC online orientation day took place on September 5, 2020. There were three sessions: an introductory talk on the Divinity School by Director Francis C. W. Yip, followed by a presentation on library resources by Mr. Leo Ma, Liaison Librarian of New Asia College Ch'ien Mu Library and of United College Wu Chung Library. The day ended with a briefing session on academic honesty by Prof. Sonia K. Wong.

Introduction of DSCCC

In the morning, Prof. Francis Yip went into the history of DSCCC, elaborating on its structural ties with various partners - the supporting denominations, the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, the Faculty of Arts, Chung Chi College and CUHK. He stressed that the unity of the School lies not only in the religious traditions of each church, but no less in its open-heartedness and willingness to listen, respect and in its practice. Christians will not be divided by politics, economics, culture or gender, nor will Christians look only to history and traditions; rather, Christians live in contemporary society, and pay heed to academic, spiritual and community reality with humility and sincerity.

After Prof. Yip's sharing, Prof. Yip, Rev. Wong Ka-fai, Miss Vicky S. M. Shiu and other staff members answered questions on programme and accommodation.

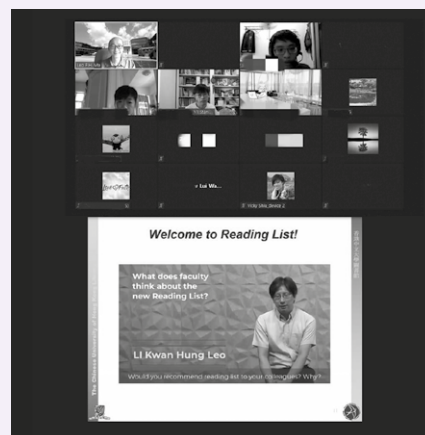
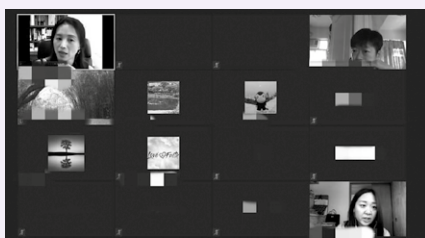
Library Workshop

In the afternoon, Mr. Leo Ma, Liaison Librarian of New Asia College Ch'ien Mu Library and of United College Wu Chung Library, gave a talk on library facilities in CUHK. He talked about collections and services and specifically the locations of books pertaining to religious and divinity studies. Mr. Ma concluded his presentation with remarks on e-resources and inter-branch book delivery services.

Academic Honesty

For this last session, Prof. Sonia K. Wong dwelled on the importance of academic honesty. Then, she moved on to discuss ways of writing a thesis, and listed examples of plagiarism so that students may avoid making similar mistakes. Next, she introduced different citation styles and respective websites and books for reference. Finally, she led students in a prepared quiz in furtherance of their understanding of academic honesty.

On the online orientation day, each session welcomed around 60 participants. Some expressed thanks to the well-prepared speakers for helping them navigate their campus life.



Online Term Commencement Camp

An online term commencement camp was held September 2 to 3, 2020 with the theme “washing off the dust”. It could carry two meanings: a warm welcome to new students, and if you please, ‘come and cleanse your soul.’ Some of us would hope to ‘cleansing some souls’ of new students, who might well be carrying certain aspirations and feelings towards DSCCC. Of course, the School would also like to get teachers and students to know one another.

DAY 1

Term Commencement Camp Service

Nearly 120 participants joined the term commencement camp service online. Prof. Francis Yip welcomed the new students and introduced



the teaching staff, including Prof. Alex H. H. Ip, Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang, Assistant School Chaplain Miss Vicky S. M. Shiu, Prof. Colten C. Y. Yam, Prof. Sonia K. Wong, School Chaplain Rev. Wong Ka-fai, Prof. Christina W. Y. Wong, Prof. Simon S. M. Kwan, Dr. Leo K. H. Li, Prof. Kung Lap-yan, Rev. Tobias Brandner, Dr. Yang Myoung Ho, part-time lecturers Dr. Yam Chi-keung and Dr. Bill Lo, and new teacher, Dr. Naomi Thurston, who is still in the U.S. due to the pandemic.

In his sermon, Prof. Francis Yip stressed that DSCCC places a huge emphasis on community life, and he hopes that students would actively participate in activities and grow as a group. He thanked the organizing committee for making the school commencement service possible.

Prof. Yip took the opportunity to point out that social upheavals and the pandemic offer good opportunities to reflect on the Bible. Online worships help us rethink the meaning of communion and church, while social upheavals raise questions regarding the relationship between church and politics.

Prof. Yip stressed that DSCCC is a community which places a huge emphasis on unity. Despite different political, social and ethical stances, we are still able to respect diversity and learn from each other.

After prayer led by Rev. Wong Ka-fai, students went into small groups to get to know each other. Then, a short break. And teachers introduced themselves.

DAY 2

Day 2 of the camp was held at night-time to cater to the needs of part-time students.

Introduction of Part-time Teachers

Over 120 teachers and students attended day 2 of the online camp. Prof. Francis Yip introduced the part-time teachers, including Dr. Andrea Chen, Dr. Sam Lau, Dr. Bill Lo, Dr. Bryan Mok, Rev. Dr. Andrew Ng, Dr. Angel Wong, Dr. Xie Zhibin, Prof. Yang Myoung Ho and Dr. Yam Chi Keung.

Talk Show

A talk show followed the introduction of teachers. Many Hongkongers are now contemplating the question of whether “to stay or to leave” the city, student hosts interviewed teachers of DSCCC on their views on the question: Should we stay like Dietrich Bonhoeffer or should we leave like Karl Barth?

Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang answered the question with the experiences of two pastors in mainland China,

while Rev. Tobias Brandner referred to the martyrs in the 2nd and 3rd century. Prof. Kung Lap-yan stated that we lack the ability to judge the ethics of leaving or staying, and



that we should not limit ourselves to these two options; he then raised the concept of lifestyle politics and encouraged students to explore more options and possibilities. Lastly, Dr. Yam Chi-keung brought up the story of another German theologian, Paul Tillich, who went in exile to the U.S. and called for resistance against the Nazis every week on the radio.

Despite their being unable to be there in person, the students enjoyed the talk show very much.

Debate on the Importance of Theological Studies and Biblical Studies

Debate topic: "In the training of a pastor, which is more important: theological studies or biblical studies?"

After the talk show, the biblical studies team, consisting of Prof. Sonia Wong, Dr. Leo Li and Prof. Alex Ip, and the theological studies team, consisting of Prof. Christina Wong, Dr. Colten Yam and Dr. Simon Kwan, engaged in a heated debate on the topic: "To train a pastor, which is more important: theological studies or biblical studies?". In the debate, each side had to prove that the opposition's studies were more important in the training of pastors. Hilarious yet serious, the debate not only brought laughter, it also introduced a variety of perspectives on the characteristics of theological and biblical studies. At the end, the winner of the debate was the biblical studies team (who were pro theological studies), and Dr. Colten Yam of the Theological Studies Team, by popular vote, was

awarded the Best Debater and the Most Humorous Debater.

Closing Ceremony

In the closing ceremony, students sang Praises to the Lord.

Sermon: "If it is the Lord's will"

On Jacob 4:13-17, Prof. Yip delivered his sermon. Citing the misery of Hongkongers these days, the car accident he experienced as a journalist trainee years ago, and chapter 4 in Jacob, Prof. Yip illustrated the vulnerabilities of humans and the unpredictability of life. As pointed out by the Bible, our lives and plans are all based on our Lord's will. As such, we must address the fact the Lord is all-powerful and that we are vulnerable; while we devise plans, we must also be reminded that our lives are short, and our plans can come to naught in seconds. We ought to stay humble and be empathetic towards people of different backgrounds, churches, occupations and political stances. Race, denomination and church do not make any difference in heaven.

Life is full of surprises, but that does not deter us from worshipping and relying on our Lord and presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). May we carry the Lord's holy cross and leave our fears behind, so that we may become the salt of the earth that acts justly, loves mercy, avoids corruption and resists darkness.

After the camp, Prof. Yip, once again, expressed his gratitude towards his colleagues and the



organizing committee. He then introduced our new teacher, Dr. Naomi Thurston, and announced the breaking news that Dr. Colten Yam has been appointed Assistant Professor by CUHK. Prof. Yip congratulated Prof. Yam for standing out in a crowd of applicants, and the students, too, cheered for Prof. Yam's appointment. With that, the camp ended in laughter and joy.

OTHER NEWS

2020 Fundraising Walkathon

The fundraising walkathon which originally planned to be held on March 8, 2020 has been postponed to May 31, 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Our students have produced a special online programme "In Dialogue with Teachers" in 12 episodes to be broadcasted on Walkathon YouTube Channel, Facebook Fanpage and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/cuhktheology>) weekly. Teachers were invited to share with students about theological education and the reflections on the current situation of Hong Kong. The viewing rate has reached more than 40K people on social media (as of May 18, 2020). The 2020 Walkathon was webcasted on Walkathon YouTube Channel and Facebook Fanpage. HK\$1,315,528.00 has been raised as of May 31.

Devotional Camp

The camp was cancelled and participants were scheduled to meet teachers related to their field of interest. During the counselling sessions, not only did teachers get to know more about the participants' expectations, but the participants also learned more about the programmes and the characteristics of the Divinity School.

Church Visits

Church visits were originally scheduled on March 29. Yet, due to the pandemic, only teachers responsible for preaching had to attend the visit. Professor Alex H. H. Yip, Professor Sonia K. Wong and Rev. Wong Ka-fai pre-recorded their visits to the churches, including Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong Mong Kok Church, The Church of Christ in China Mongkok Heep Woh Church and The Horizon Christian Church.

News in Office

Prof. Francis C. W. Yip assumed the Directorship of Divinity School of Chung Chi College from August 1, 2020. The Inaugural Service of Prof. Yip as Director of Divinity School of Chung Chi College was held on October 4, 2020 at Chung Chi College Chapel.

Prof. Tobias Brandner was appointed to be the Associate Director (External Affairs) of Divinity School effective from August 1, 2020.

The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia has appointed Prof. Kung Lap Yan as the Dean of IASACT program effective from June 1, 2020.

Dr. Colten C. Y. Cheuk was appointed to be the assistant professor with effective from September 7, 2020.

Professors in News

Prof. Tobias Brandner

Prof. Brandner was invited as guest editor for the journal *Social Sciences and Mission* to edit a special volume on *Prison and Religion in the Global South* (Volume 33 / 1-2, 2020). He wrote a "Guest Editor's Introduction" (ibid 1-8) and an article on volunteer prison visitors in Hong Kong: "Religious Volunteer Visitors in the Penal Context of Hong Kong: Roles, Experiences, Transformation," ibid. 128-156.

He further published an article under the title "'The room is small, but the heart is big' – Religion and community life in prison: a case study from the Philippines" in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 21, August 4, 2020. (1–20).

Between June 22 and 30, 2020, he visited Switzerland to give several talks on Christianity in Hong Kong, China, and Asia overall, and to liaise with Mission 21, Switzerland.

Prof. Ying Fuk Tsang

Prof. Ying was invited to give an online talk on "Youth Talk Series: Politics, Religion and Liberty in China" on April 8, 2020. It attracted more than 940 persons for in-depth discussion via Zoom.

He was invited to give a Zoom talk on "1958: The Great Remold of Chinese Christianity" on April 17, 2020.

He was invited to be a respondent in an online seminar "Today in Retrospect: The Crossroad of Chinese Church" which organized by the Chinese Evangelical Seminary (Taiwan) on April 22, 2020.

He received the General Research Fund from University Grants Committee to carry out his research project on history of Chinese Christianity.

Prof. Christina W. Y. Wong

Commissioned by the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association, its centennial history book entitled, 《百年好事：女青與香港婦女發展史》，which originally planned to be published by the Commercial Press in September 2020 has been postponed to November 2020. It is co-authored by Prof. Christina Wong and Dr. Charis Cheung.

Prof. Wong was invited to present a paper entitled "Situated Women's Leadership: A Historical Revisit of the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association" with Dr. Charis Cheung at the Rapid Religious Cultural Change Conference to be held at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) from April 16 to 18, 2020. The conference was co-organized by the Center for Theologically Engaged Anthropology, University of Georgia, United States, and HKBU. It has been postponed because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

