

Patristic Studies in Contemporary China: A Survey with Appended Bibliography*

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One Chinese scholar recently wrote an article entitled "How Many Readers Can Plato Have in China?!"¹. The same scholar is also one of the few Chinese intellectuals who are doing research in patristics in Mainland China's universities. To him we would like to put a similar question: how many readers may Origen and the ancient church fathers have in China today?

My paper tries to answer this and other related questions, by reviewing the publications that have appeared in China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, and partially Taiwan) mostly in the last twenty-five years and offering a bibliography on patristic research in contemporary China. The main purpose is to inform the scholars about what is going on in China in this field,

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1. Wang, Xiaochao 王晓朝, "Bolatu zai Zhongguo neng you duoshao du-zhe?" 柏拉圖在中國能有多少讀者? (How Many Readers Can Plato Have in China?), *Bolan qunshu* 博覽群書 (*Extensive Readings*) 8 (2003) pp. 77-78.

hoping that this may contribute to a better and deeper cooperation between Western and Chinese scholars in the future.

This article deals mainly with contemporary China, particularly with the renewal of Christian studies in Chinese universities after the so-called Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Deeper research in the future should consider also the antecedents of present-day research, which may be classified at least under three heads: direct and indirect quotations of the church fathers inside the Chinese works written by Jesuits in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties (seventeenth century); references to patristics in Protestant publications during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; references to patristics in Catholic textbooks published by missionary schools and institutes mostly in the first half of the twentieth century for students in Chinese seminaries.

This report would not have been possible without the kind sharing of information and materials by the members of the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies (*Hanyu jidujiao wenhua yanjiusuo* 漢語基督教文化研究所) in Hong Kong, in particular Jason T.S. Lam 林子淳 and Daniel H.N. Yeung 楊熙楠, and by Nathan K.K. Ng 吳國傑 of the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary. They have also introduced me to some of the scholars who are doing research in the field of patristic studies in Mainland China; without personal communication with them I could not have collected many bibliographical data. The newsletter published twice a year in Chinese and English by the same Institute of Sino-Christian Studies allows interested per-

sons in Europe to follow the development of Christian studies in Chinese universities².

Patrology as a branch of Christian studies in contemporary China's academic research

Since patrology is a branch of the broader field of Christian studies, it is impossible to speak about patrology (*jiaofuxue* 教父學 in Chinese) in today's China without first introducing briefly the particular situation of Christian studies, and religious

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2. The newsletter *Institute of Sino-Christian Studies News* and other information can be found on ISCS's website: <http://iscs.org.hk>. Throughout the article I use the following abbreviations:
- CALCT = Chinese Academic Library of Christian Thought.
- DF = *Dao Feng. Hanyu shenxue xuekan* 道風：漢語神學學刊 (*Logos and Pneuma. Chinese Journal of Theology*), Hong Kong: Dao Feng shushe (Logos and Pneuma Press).
- FDSL = *Furen daxue shenxue lunji* 輔仁大學神學論集 (*Collectanea Theologica Universitatis Fujen*), Taipei: Guangqi wenhua shiye.
- ISCS = Institute of Sino-Christian Studies.
- ILMJ/CCL = *Jidujiao lidai mingzhu jicheng* 基督教歷代名著集成 / Christian Classics Library.
- JSP = *Jidujiao sixiang pinglun* 基督教思想評論 (*Regent Review of Christian Thoughts*), Shanghai: Shiji chuban jituan, Shanghai renmin chubanshe.
- JZY = *Jidu zongjiao yanjiu* 基督宗教研究 (*Study of Christianity*), Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe.
- SN = *Shenxue niankan* 神學年刊 (*Theology Annual*), Hong Kong: Shenxue niankan bianji weiyuanhui.
- SQ = *Shandao qikan* 山道期刊 (*Hill Road*), Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary.
- XZ = *Xiandai zhexue* 現代哲學 (*Modern Philosophy*), Guangzhou: Xiandai zhexue zazhishe.
- ZW = *Zongjiao yu wenhua* 宗教與文化 (*Religion and Culture*), Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe.
- ZX = *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江學刊 (*Zhejiang Academic Journal*), Hangzhou: Zhejiang xuekan zazhishe.

studies in general, in the People's Republic of China (PRC), whose government is, at least in principle, still communist, based on the atheistic ideologies of Marxism and Leninism together with Mao Zedong's and Deng Xiaoping's thought.

Research in Christianity by Chinese scholars began already in the late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. But its status as an independent discipline in the humanities and social sciences and in the interdisciplinary field of modern religious studies is only a twentieth century development. In the first half of the twentieth century the different Christian churches and denominations in China and their seminaries initiated some basic theological research and inquiries.

In the 1950s and 1960s scholarly circles in the PRC passed through the turmoil of the Great Cultural Revolution and suffered heavy political pressures, so it was only at the end of the 1970s that specialized research institutes of religious studies could be established and could start their programs. The study of Christianity in China has been carried on by, roughly, four types of institutions: 1) specialized research institutes engaged in the study of Christianity, the most important of which are the research institutes under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and their counterparts at provincial and municipal levels; 2) Christian Studies bodies of government departments, mainly the Centre for Religious Studies at the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council; 3) departments at tertiary educational institutions, mainly universities, and the institutes for religious studies and centres for the study of Christianity that they found-

ed; 4) schools and research institutes of the Chinese Christian churches.

At the end of the 1980s the Chinese scholarly community's interest in Christianity began to increase markedly, and a growing number of scholars have entered in the field of religious studies, in particular Christian studies. In the 1990s the number of universities and research organizations opening religious studies courses and religious research centres and independent Christian research centres rose to more than thirty. The new interest of academics in religious studies suffered from political restrictions at the beginning, but due to the major drive toward reforms, from the 1990s on academics have been given increasingly greater freedom; and whether in terms of exchanges with overseas academics or in writing and publication within China, their pursuits were not greatly limited.

Generally speaking, the past twenty years have seen the opening of various fields of research in Christian studies, a first stage of systematic academic foundation³. This is reflected also in the nature of the publications, for the great majority are

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3. Reports in English about the organization and contemporary state of Christian studies in PRC can be found in: He, Guanghu, "Religious Studies in China 1978-1999 and Their Connection with Political and Social Circumstances," *China Study Journal* 15-1 (2000) pp. 5-13, repr., with the title "Religious Studies in China and Their Connection with Political and Social Circumstances," in Sørensen, J.S. (ed.), *Christian Theology and Intellectuals in China* = Occasional Papers 5. Aarhus: Centre for Multireligious Studies University of Aarhus, 2003, pp. 26-40; He, Guichun, "A Summary of Research in the Last Ten Years into the History of Christianity in China," *China Study Journal* 8-1 (1993) pp. 23-35; Zhuo,

systematic or introductory works, concerning basic aspects of Christianity, such as general introductions to Christian history, theology, philosophy, spirituality, ethics, art. A Chinese professor of the Department of Christianity at the Institute of World Religions (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing) sums it up thus:

We have to admit that a large number of writings produced by Chinese scholars in these years are by nature introductory. They tend to be more general than specific, more detached from than engaged in their object of study, more descriptive than analytical, and more introductory than creative. Moreover, what has characterized the Christian studies of these years is the absence of significant study of Christian theology, or the core elements of Christian thought and inner dynamics. Instead, Christianity is studied mostly from a philosophical, historical, social and cultural

Xinping, "The Study of Christianity in China Today," *Chinese Theological Review* 15 (2001) pp. 4-13, Chinese original version: Zhuo, Xinping 卓新平, "Dangdai Zhongguo jidu zongjiao yanjiu" 當代中國基督宗教研究, *JZY* 1 (1999) pp. 1-14; Id., "The Study of Christianity by Chinese Scholars in the Twentieth Century and Its Significance for the Future," *Quest* 2-1 (2003) pp. 49-61; Lam, J.T.S., "The Emergence of Scholars Studying Christianity in Mainland China," *Religion, State & Society* 32-2 (2004) pp. 177-186; Zhao, Dunhua, "Recent Progress of Christian Studies Made by Chinese Academics in the Last Twenty Years," in Yang, Huilin and Yeung, D.H.N. (eds.), *Sino-Christian Studies in China*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006, pp. 246-251. In Chinese, see the section "Yanjiu jigou" 研究機構 (Research Organizations) of *JZY* 1 (1999) pp. 15-88, reviewing and briefly presenting fourteen Mainland China's institutions for the study of Christianity.

perspective⁴.

The great effort in translating Christian classics and basic works written by American and European scholars into Chinese is another feature which characterizes this first stage of studies.

In this sense, it is true that “compared to the study of Christianity overseas, especially in the West, that one in twentieth-century China is on the level of a second-year course in religious studies,⁵” as a Chinese scholar has underlined. Actually, because twentieth-century Chinese study of Christianity began late, it met with a lot of difficulties, and there is still a big gap between it and foreign research in Christianity in terms of overall strength and achievements. Chinese scholarship in Christian studies, however, is undoubtedly proceeding rapidly toward a fruitful future; it is undergoing a rapid transition from its first stage to the next one.

As theoretical thinking is advancing, and a new generation of scholars is arising, Chinese academia seems to feel that it is urgent and necessary to move forward to deeper and more comprehensive studies based on the solid foundation that has been laid down for the discipline in the past two decades. In these circumstances not a small number of scholars are endeavouring to spearhead the transition toward a new

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4. Dong, Jiang-Yang, “The New Trends among Chinese Christian-Studies Academics,” *Quest* 4-2 (2005) p. 5.
 5. Zhuo, Xiping, “The Study of Christianity in China Today,” p. 8.

stage of study with their sophisticated research⁶.

Chinese centres and scholars involved in patristic research

As far as I know, at the moment no Chinese academic institution in the PRC, apart the seminaries belonging to the Catholic and Protestant Churches, offers specific courses in patrology and patristic studies. In Hong Kong the two universities which have a department of religious studies, namely the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Department of Religion and Philosophy of the Hong Kong Baptist University, periodically offer courses on church history and historical theology, which may cover patristic studies. In Taiwan, at the Fu Jen Catholic University, the Department of Philosophy offers optional courses in Western philosophy, including patristic philosophy; the Department of History and that of Religious Studies may occasionally cover also patristic studies.

General introductions or in-depth presentations of the church fathers in Mainland China's universities are to be found within the courses on Christian thought (Western philosophy and theology), or sometimes within courses in ancient Christian history. This is because "patrology, being considered in Mainland China's academic research in the humanities as belonging to the history of Western philosophy, has become an object of

6. Dong, Jiang-Yang, "The New Trends among Chinese Christian-Studies Academics," p. 5.

this branch of research.”⁷

Here we can mention at least the following academic institutions that have such courses. At Beijing (Peking), the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan, Shijie zongjiao yanjiusuo* 中國社會科學院世界宗教研究所) offers general courses on Christianity, including also ancient Christian history, theology and philosophy. The Philosophy Departments of Peking University (*Beijing daxue* 北京大學), People's University of China (*Zhongguo renmin daxue* 中國人民大學), and Tsinghua University (*Qinghua daxue* 清華大學) all offer courses on Christian philosophy and selected readings of Christian classics. The same is true of the Department of Philosophy of Fudan University (*Fudan daxue* 復旦大學) in Shanghai. Shaanxi Normal University (*Shaanxi shifan daxue* 陝西師範大學) in Xi'an offers courses on ancient history of Christianity. In these institutions occasionally some student is encouraged to obtain a master's or doctor's degree in patristics⁸.

A special mention among Mainland China's academic institutions should be made of Zhejiang University (*Zhejiang daxue* 浙江大學), formerly Hangzhou University (*Hangzhou daxue* 杭州大學), in Hangzhou, where the Department of Philoso-

7. Wang, Xiaochao, "Jiaofuxue yanjiu de ruogan fangfalun wenti" 教父學研究的若干方法論問題 (Some Methodological Problems of the Study of Church Fathers), *ZW* 4 (2001) p. 147.

8. Here I mention only the recent Ph.D. Dissertation presented by Luo Yuejun 羅躍軍 at Peking University entitled *Nisa de Geliegaoli yanjiu* 尼撒的格列高利研究 (*Research on Gregory of Nyssa*).

phy and the Research Centre for Religious Cultures (*Zongjiao wenhua yanjiu zhongxin* 宗教文化研究中心), formerly Christian Research Centre (*Jidujiao yanjiu zhongxin* 基督教研究中心), offer courses in Greek philosophy and early Christianity. Zhejiang University has a long tradition in research in Western philosophy, particularly Greek philosophy, and due to this tradition there arose a deep interest in late Hellenistic philosophy and early Christian thought⁹.

Professor Chen Cunfu 陳村富, the founder of the Christian Research Centre in 1991 and its director, is the person who has been most active in founding, developing, and consolidating this field. He has prepared the young scholars who are now working in this area, such as Wang Xiaochao 王曉朝, who taught for some years at the same Zhejiang University and now is Professor at the Department of Philosophy at Tsinghua University (Peking), Zhang Xuefu 章雪富, Shi Minmin 石敏敏, and Zhang Xinzhong 張新樟.

These are the few scholars who are carrying on studies on ancient Christianity and the church fathers in Mainland China, and who have already published some of the results of their research. Some of them were able to obtain funds from universities and even from the government for their research. Zhang Xuefu (Zhejiang University), for example, obtained support from the Dong Humanistic Fund of Zhejiang University for his research on "The Nicene Creed and Trinitarian theology," from

9. Cf. "Christianity Study Center of Hangzhou University," *Regent Chinese Journal* 3 (1997) pp. 60-64.

the Shu Guang Fund of Zhejiang University for his research on “Greek education and Christian humanistic ideals,” and he has joined the Zhejiang Province Social Science Fund Project with his research on “The idea of being in Greek philosophy and early Christian ideas of God;” Zhang Xinzhang (Zhejiang University), joined the National Social Science Fund Project with his research on “The translation of Gnostic Scriptures and their contemporary commentaries.”

To their names we add that of Zhou Weichi 周偉馳 at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, researcher and translator of Augustine, and that of Nathan K.K. Ng, professor of Christian thought at the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary, engaged mainly in research on Athanasius¹⁰, but also an important voice which in recent years has stimulated a fruitful theoretical debate about the translation of the fathers into Chinese¹¹.

The ISCS in Hong Kong is unique on account of its pioneering enterprise of translating ancient Christian classics into Chinese. The “Chinese Academic Library of Christian Thought” was started by the ISCS in 1994, and its “Ancient Series” (Christian literature from the Hellenistic period to the

10. Cf. Ng, N.K.K., *The Spirituality of Athanasius. A Key for Proper Understanding of This Important Church Father*. Bern: P. Lang, 2001.

11. See the two articles by Nathan Ng in reaction to Wang Xiaochao: Wu, Guojie 吳國傑 (Nathan K.K. Ng), “Ping Aolijin *Lun shouyao yuanli de hanyu yiben*” 評奧利金《論首要原理》的漢語譯本 (Review of the Chinese Translation of Origen’s *De Principiis*), *DF* 18 (2003) pp. 297-307; Id., “Yidian chengqing. Dui Wang Xiaochao jiaoshou huiying de huiying” 一點澄清——對王曉朝教授回應的回應 (Some Clarifications. A Response to Prof. Wang Xiaochao’s Response), *DF* 22 (2005) pp. 251-265.

fifteenth century) lists already more than twenty titles. This series carries on the previous mission of the “Christian Classics Library” (CCL). From the 1940s through the 1960s, CCL initiated the enterprise of translating Christian classics into Chinese, and thirty-two volumes of translations were completed; regrettably, CCL came to a premature end before the translation project was finished¹².

The assistance to young scholars from Mainland China in their research, and its role as qualified centre in which the same scholars can share their results is, finally, another work done by the ISCS which is worth to be mentioned. Every year young scholars mainly from the aforementioned academic institutions are granted scholarships by ISCS for their research, and with this financial and academic support they are able to carry on their studies. Thanks to this “Tao Fong scholarship,” in the past few years young Chinese scholars were able to do research on

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12. For a presentation of the Christian publications in China see: “Hanyu shenxue de chuban: guoqu yu xianzai” 漢語神學的出版：過去與現在 (The Publication of Chinese Theology: Past and Present), in Yeung, D.H.N. 楊熙楠 & Rabbe, P. 雷保德 (eds.), *Fanyi yu xina. Dagong shenxue he hanyu shenxue* 翻譯與吸納—大公神學和漢語神學 (*Translation and Adoption. Ecumenical Theology and Christian Theology in Chinese*) = ISCS Monographs Series 14. Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2004, pp. 199-285; He, Guanghu 何光滢, “Zhongguo dalu zhishijie guanyu jidujiao de wenzi chuban” 中國大陸知識界關於基督教的文字出版 (Publications on Christianity by Mainland China’s Intellectuals), *Jidujiao wenhua pinglun* 基督教文化評論 (*Christian Culture Review*) 6 (1997) pp. 302-314. A comprehensive index of Chinese material about Christianity appeared recently: Jin, Yifeng 金以楓 (ed.), *1949 nian yilai jidu zongjiao yanjiu suoyin* 1949年以來基督教研究索引 (English title: *Reference Articles for Research on China’s Policy towards Christianity since 1949*). Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007.

topics like Augustine's theology, Philo's thinking, and ancient Gnosticism.

It may be useful to name the scholars who in the past received the "Tao Fong scholarship" from the ISCS for research in the field of patristics: Zhang Xinzhang 張新樟 of Zhejiang University, Philosophy Dept., "Nuositizhuyi yanjiu" 諾斯替主義研究 (Research on Gnosticism, 1999-2000); Id., "Gudai nuositi zongjiao yanjiu" 古代諾斯替宗教研究 (Research on ancient Gnostic religion, 2000-2001); Zhang Xuefu 章雪富 of Zhejiang University, Philosophy Dept., "Jidujiao bolatuzhuyi" 基督教柏拉圖主義 (Christian Platonism, 1999-2000); Hu Longbiao 胡龍彪 of Zhejiang University, Philosophy Dept., "Boaixiusi sixiang yanjiu" 波愛修斯思想研究 (Research on Boethius' thought, 2000-2001); Wen Jin 文靜 of Tsinghua University, Philosophy Dept., "Aogusiding de ziyou yizhi lun yanjiu" 奧古斯丁的自由意志論研究 (Research on Augustine's theory of free will, 2001-2002); Wang Yongsheng 王永生 of Peking University, Dept. of Religious Studies, "Aogusiding de shijian guan" 奧古斯丁的時間觀 (The concept of time in Augustine, 2002-2003); Li Lei 李磊 of Tsinghua University, Philosophy Dept., "Feiluo sixiang yanjiu" 菲洛思想研究 (Research on Philo's thinking, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004); Zhang Zhifeng 張之鋒 of Peking University, Dept. of Religious Studies, "Aogusiding he Kong Meng rujia de hexin lunli jiazhi bijiao" 奧古斯丁和孔孟儒家的核心倫理價值比較 (Comparative study of Augustine's and Confucius-Mencius's ideas of ethics, 2003-2004); Liu Yupeng 劉玉鵬 of Zhejiang University, Philosophy Dept., "Lun Yalishiduode shenxue

jiqi yu jidujiao shenxue zhijian de guanxi” 論亞里士多德神學及其與基督教神學之間的關係 (Aristotle’s theology and its relation to Christian theology, 2003-2004); Id., “Lun Plotinus linghun xueshuo jiqi dui jidujiao shenxue linghun guan de yingxiang” 論普羅提諾靈魂學說及其對基督教神學靈魂觀的影響 (On Plotinus’ doctrine of the soul and its influence on the theological vision of the soul in Christianity, 2004-2005); Yang Hui 楊慧 of People’s University, Institute of Literature, “Gu Xila shenhua zai jidujiao wenhua zhong de chuancheng” 古希臘神話在基督教文化中的傳承 (The reception of myths of ancient Greece into Christian culture, 2005-2006); Zhang Li 張力 of Zhejiang University, Philosophy Dept., “Deertuliang yu siduoyazhuyi guanxi yanjiu” 德爾圖良與斯多亞主義關係研究 (Research on the connections between Tertullian and Stoicism, 2005-2006); Guo Lin 郭琳 of Tsinghua University, Philosophy Dept., “Aogusiding lun liangge chengbang” 奧古斯丁論兩個城邦 (Augustine’s discussion about the two cities, 2005-2006); Xiao Youzhi 肖有志 of Zhongshan University, Philosophy Dept., “Xilaren yu jidutu: Kelaimen Quanmian xilaren de xinyang” 希臘人與基督徒—克萊門《勸勉希臘人》的信仰 (Greeks and Christians: The faith in Clement’s *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 2005-2006); Wang Jia 王佳 of Nankai University, Institute of Literature, “Jianlun Boaixiu de yinyue meixue sixiang” 簡論波埃修的音樂美學思想 (Brief discussion of Boethius’ musical aesthetical thought, 2005-2006).

It is worth mentioning here also Jin Fenglin 靳鳳林’s essay, “Deertuliang shengsi guan xilun” 德爾圖良生死觀析論 (A review of Tertullian’s views on life and death), winner of

the second “Outstanding essay award for graduate students on Christianity” (2003) presented by the ISCS.

Some general considerations about patristic research and publications in the Chinese context

Wang Xiaochao has recently well described the present state of patristic studies in Mainland China.

Compared with research in Western philosophy of any other historical period, patrology or patristic philosophy is the field least explored inside the Chinese academic circles ... We can say that so far the Chinese academic world does not have systematic patristic studies. Starting from the 1990s, the Chinese academic world has recognized the importance of developing Christian studies, but, since research in ancient and mediaeval Christian culture and philosophy is difficult and needs big investments, up to now we do not see the publication of specialized works in the specific field of patristic philosophy. Most of patristic material has not yet been translated into Chinese yet, and most theoretical questions wait to be solved¹³.

The publications listed in the following Bibliography confirm this remark. It is evident that for patristic studies we must apply the same conclusions that we already drew for Chinese Christian studies in general. The number of translations into

13. Wang, Xiaochao, “Jiaofuxue yanjiu de ruogan fangfalun wenti,” pp. 145, 147.

Chinese of ancient Christian classics is still very scanty, even if rapidly improving in the last years. Most of the works are general historical or ideological introductions of early Christianity, and in-depth analysis of particular aspects of the thought of individual fathers is rare. What about Chinese scholars' main interests in this field?

Generally speaking, one of the topics that most attracts their interest is the relationship and confrontation between Greek-Hellenistic philosophy and early Christian theology. Conflicts and confluences between Christianity and the dominant political, cultural, and philosophical context at the early stage of Christian diffusion in the Greek and Roman worlds are the main scholarly interests of Wang Xiaochao and Zhang Xuefu (see Bibliography, § 2). This interest no doubt arises from the contemporary reflection on the inculturation of Christianity in non-Western cultural contexts: that is to say, Chinese scholars find in the first confrontation between Christianity and the Greek-Latin culture a paradigm that they have to consider in their reflections on the confrontation between Christianity and Chinese culture¹⁴.

Among the various figures of church fathers, Augustine is undoubtedly the favourite object of translation and research (see Bibliography, § 12), because, I think, he is recognized as one of

14. For those without a knowledge of Chinese the following comparative study may be suggested: Wang, Xiaochao, *Christianity & Imperial Culture. Chinese Christian Apologetics in the Seventeenth Century and Their Latin Patristic Equivalent* = Studies in Christian Mission 20. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

the most prominent philosophers and theologians in the history of the Western Christian world. It is significant that Augustine's *Confessions* are the only ancient Christian work that has been the object of three different translations. Augustine's thinking is also acknowledged as a "rich intellectual nourishment" for those in China who seek to enrich the Chinese thought¹⁵. The Cappadocian fathers have recently attracted the interests of several young scholars, eager to present to the Chinese people some of the deep reflections on human life and destiny formulated by them many centuries ago, but relevant also for today¹⁶.

Speaking about limitations and obstacles in this field of research in China, one of the major problems which scholars have to deal with is the lack of resources in Chinese libraries for their research. Christian sources, editions of the texts and their translations into Western languages are few, and there is even less of Christian literature in Chinese translation. This is true not only of public libraries in China, but also of Christian libraries, such as those of seminaries and theological institutes.

When I recently visited the libraries of the Holy Spirit

15. See Zhou Weichi's introduction to the Chinese translation of Augustine's *On Original Sin and Grace* (Augustine of Hippo, *Lun yuanzui yu endian: Bo Peilajiu pai* 論原罪與恩典：駁佩拉糾派, transl. by Zhou, Weichi 周偉馳. Hong Kong: Dao Feng shushe, 2005, pp. XLIX-LVI).

16. See for example what Zhang Xinzhang writes in his introduction to Gregory of Nyssa's *On Soul and Resurrection*, trying to answer the following questions: "Why study Gregory of Nyssa? Why are we interested in Gregory of Nyssa, who wrote in the fourth century?" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Lun linghun yu fuhuo* 論靈魂與復活, transl. by Zhang, Xinzhang. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2006, pp. 22-25).

Seminary College and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong, I saw for myself this shortage of literature in Chinese about ancient Christianity and patristics. The situation in Mainland China seems to be even worse. Anna K.Y. Chan 陳繼容, professor of Patrology and Liturgy at the Holy Spirit Seminary College, and Sr. Maria H.F. Ko 高夏芳, both of whom had taught also in Mainland China's seminaries, confirmed this situation during a talk with me in June 2006. They gave me this example: the only three Catholic institutions in China which have Migne's *Patrologia graeca* and *Patrologia latina* are the Holy Spirit Seminary College, the Hong Kong Franciscan Studium Biblicum, and the Shanghai Catholic Theological Seminary at Sheshan, and the last does not even possess the complete collection.

This is underlined also by Richard X.Y. Zhang 張賢勇 when he speaks about his teaching experience in a Protestant Theological Seminary in Mainland China.

At the end of the '80s I began to teach courses in history of Christian thought at Jinling 金陵¹⁷. When dealing with the ancient church fathers, except for some lecture notes arranged by professor Chen Zemin 陳澤民 and some histories of theology and histories of doctrines in Chinese and in English, I had only the book *A History of Early Christian Literature* by Edgar Goodspeed as reference, which I had brought with me from United States. Jinling's library, being

17. Jinling is the name of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.

the best Christian institution for theological education in Mainland China as far as the number of books is concerned, meets the needs for everyday teaching, and even more than this. But if we speak of deeper research, at least in the field of the history of theology, I have to confess that it lacks even the “basic facilities.”¹⁸

The same view is taken by Sr. Maria Ko, whose teaching experience in Hong Kong and in Mainland China was seriously hampered by a lack of a manual of patrology in Chinese for students of theology in the seminaries, by the inaccurate translation into Chinese of ancient Christian works, and by the problem of different translations of the same Christian terms in the already existing translations of Christian classics¹⁹. Moreover, most of the works on church history used in the seminaries, both Protestant and Catholic, have been written by Protestant scholars, who are more interested in modern and contemporary theological trends than in ancient theological thought.

The second major problem is the lack of training in classical Greek and Latin among students and scholars in Chinese universities and theological seminaries. Due to poor knowledge of Greek and Latin, most of the translations of Christian clas-

18. Zhang, Xianyong 張賢勇 (Richard X.Y. Zhang), “Jiaofuxue shujie erti” 教父學述介二題 (Two Notes on Some Volumes Devoted to Patristic Studies); *DF* 14 (2001) p. 295.

19. Personal communication. For this and other precious information shared with me, I would like to thank Sr. Maria Ko, FMA, who taught for several years an introductory course in patrology at the Holy Spirit Seminary College in Hong Kong.

sics so far have been done from translations already existing in Western languages.

Thirdly, research carried out in Mainland China's academic institutes lacks a foundation in the broader context of the history of Christian theology and spirituality. The results that are published, hence, are often superficial or not sufficiently set in their context.

Finally, the objective difficulty in translating Christian theological terms and concepts into a radically different linguistic, philosophical, and anthropological system such as the Chinese slows down the process of translation of church fathers into Chinese and is an obstacle to the development of Chinese literature on patristics²⁰

Origen and the Alexandrian tradition: what is going on in China?

To push the discussion more in detail, I wish now to outline what is going on in China in the field of research on Origen and the Alexandrian tradition.

The recent translation of Origen's *Peri archon (De principiis)* into Chinese from the old English version by F. Crombie is one example of translations done on the basis of Western translations, due to the limitations of the translator's knowledge of the Western classical languages²¹. A reviewer of this Chinese

20. About this see: *Fanyi yu xina. Dagong shenxue he hanyu shenxue.*

21. Contained in Roberts, A. and Donaldson, J. (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*,

translation has questioned this method of translation at second hand²², while the proof-reader and author of the introduction to the translation has answered him defending the legitimacy of this approach²³. In any case, the same critic considers this translation a good one, although he questions the rendering of some specific terms²⁴.

As far as the translation into Chinese of the Alexandrian fathers' writings is concerned, some valuable work has already been done (see Bibliography, § 7), but more needs to be done in the future.

Among Clement's writings, the following works can be read in Chinese: the *Exhortation to the Greeks* (*Protrepticus*), first translated in 1962 and again in 1995; the exhortation *To the Newly Baptized* (*Ad neophytos de patientia*), first translated in 1962 and again in 1995; the *Pedagogue* (*Paedagogus*) and the *Miscellanies* (*Stromata*), both translated in 1962; the homily *Who Is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved* (*Quis dives salvetur*), translated in 1995. Among Origen's works, *Against Celsus* (*Contra Celsum*) was first translated in 1962; a selection

vol. 4. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885, pp. 237-384.

22. Cf. Wu, Guojie (Nathan K.K. Ng), "Ping Aolijin *Lun shouyao yuanli de hanyu yiben*," in particular pp. 301-302.

23. Wang, Xiaochao, "Xian lijie, hou piping. Dui Wu Guojie jiaoshou shu-ping de huiying" 先理解，後批評—對吳國傑教授書評的回應 (Understanding Prior to Critique. My Response to a Book Review by Prof. Nathan K.K. Ng), *DF* 19 (2003) pp. 249-259, in particular pp. 253-254.

24. Cf. Wu, Guojie (Nathan K.K. Ng), "Ping Aolijin *Lun shouyao yuanli de hanyu yiben*," pp. 306-307.

of Origen's exegetical writings was translated in 1962; *On the First Principles* (*De principiis*) has been published in Chinese only in 2002. Among Athanasius's writings, his *Biography of Antony* (*Vita Antonii*) has been translated into Chinese twice (first in the 1980s, then in 1990), while his work *On Incarnation* (*De incarnatione Verbi*) was published only in 2006.

Short presentations of the Alexandrian school and of each particular Alexandrian father are included in outline histories of Christianity and of Christian philosophy. In general, I can say that what is stressed in these publications is above all the philosophical foundations of the school, mainly middle-Platonism. This is in line with what I have already said about the general interest among Mainland China's scholars studying Christianity: the cultural confrontation of early Christianity with the Hellenistic philosophical tradition and with Gnosticism²⁵.

The thought of these Christian fathers was already briefly presented in 1962 in the volume of the "Christian Classics Library" devoted to the Alexandrian school²⁶, and more recently

25. See in particular Zhang, Xuefu, *Jidujiao de bolatuzhuyi: Yalishandaliya xuepai de luogesi jidulun* 基督教的柏拉圖主義：亞歷山大里亞學派的邏各斯基督論 (*Christian Platonism: The Logos-Christology of the Alexandrian School*) = *Dangdai Zhongguo zhexue congshu* 當代中國哲學叢書. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2001; and also Shi Minmin's Ph.D. dissertation: *Puluotimuo de zhexue he gudai wanqi jidujiao de renlun* 普羅提諾的哲學和古代晚期基督教的人論 (*Plotinus' Philosophy and Christianity in Late Antiquity about Man*). Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue, 2006.

26. *Yalishantai xuepai xuanji* 亞歷山太學派選集 (*Selected Readings of the Alexandrian School*) = JLMJ/CCL. Hong Kong: Dongnan Ya shenxue jiaoyu jijinhui (The Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast

in some short articles (see Bibliography, § 7), but up to now only Origen (phonetically translated as *Aolijin* 奧利金 or *Eli-gen* 俄利根 in Chinese) has been the object of a comprehensive monograph volume written by a Chinese scholar, which came out only in 2004²⁷.

Even if “Origenian studies in the Chinese academic circles are still in their early stage,²⁸” they are felt as an important research field, not least because they offer a paradigmatic model of assimilation of culture within Christianity. Chinese Christian scholars are eager to see how Origen answered the crucial question of the relationship between Christianity and local culture as a possible source of inspiration for their attempt to develop a Sino-Christian theology, i.e., a Christian theology expressed in the Chinese language²⁹.

Asia), Jidujiao fuqiao chubanshe (The Council on Christian Literature for Overseas Chinese), 1962.

27. Zhang, Xuefu, *Shengjing he xilazhuyi de shuangzhong shiye: Aolijin qiren ji shenxue sixiang* 聖經和希臘主義的雙重視野：奧利金其人及神學思想 (*Twofold Perspectives of the Bible and Hellenism: Origen's Life and Thought*) = Weizhen jidujiao wenhua congshu 維真基督教文化叢書. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2004. As for Clement, in the same year 2004 a biography written by a Western scholar in 1971 has been translated into Chinese (Lilla, S.R.C., *Yalishanda de Keleimang* 亞歷山大的克雷芒 [*Clement of Alexandria*], transl. by Fan, Mingsheng 範明生 = Xifang chuantong: jingdian yu jieshi 西方傳統：經典與解釋/ Hermes: Classic and Interpretation). Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004; translation of Lilla, S.R.C., *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
28. Wang, Xiaochao, Preface to the Chinese translation of Origen's *Peri archon* (*Lun shouyao yuanli* 論首要原理, transl. by Shi, Minmin 石敏敏. Hong Kong: Dao Feng shushe, 2002), p. XXVI.
29. Two reference books for understanding the nature and development of Sino-Christian Theology (*hanyu shenxue* 漢語神學) are: *Sino-Chris-*

How can an appropriate balance between the adoption of national cultural resources and the preservation of the essential characteristics of the Christian faith be attained? How can theoretical thinking inside the national cultural resources be dealt with? Origen's work offers us an ancient model³⁰.

In conclusion, there are still few works in the field of Origenian and patristic studies in general in the academic and religious circles in China, if compared with many other countries. They are, however, of considerable importance if the particular political, social, and religious background in which Chinese universities and Churches exist is considered.

I truly hope that the few seeds sown so far will produce many fruits in the future, also because I agree with an opinion that a Catholic sister from Hong Kong has recently shared with me: the theology of the fathers and in particular the theological language of the oriental fathers of the Alexandrian, Antiochene,

tian Studies in China; Lam, J.T.S. 林子淳, *Duoyuanxing hanyu shenxue quanshi. Dui "hanyu shenxue" de quanshi ji hanyu de "shenxue quanshi"* 多元性漢語神學詮釋—對「漢語神學」的詮釋及漢語的「神學詮釋」(A Polyphonic View on Sino-Christian Theology. An Interpretation of "Sino-Christian Theology" and Chinese "Theological Hermeneutics") = Hanyu jidujiao wenhua yanjiusuo congkan 漢語基督教文化研究所叢刊/ISCS Monographs Series 19. Hong Kong: Hanyu jidujiao wenhua yanjiusuo (ISCS), 2006. In addition, see the articles collected in the section "Hanyu shenxue. Youguan wenzhang" 漢語神學—有關文章 of ISCS's website.

30. Wang, Xiaochao, Preface to the Chinese translation of Origen's *Peri archon*, p. XXIX. Professor Wang Xiaochao is currently doing research on "Patristic theology and Sino-Christian studies."

and Cappadocian schools is meaningful and suited to the Chinese mind, which is more intuitive and open to symbolism than rational. In fact, the Near Eastern lands of Alexandria, Antioch, Cappadocia and the Far Eastern lands of China share the same “Asian ideological context” in a broad sense.

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