

Peter K. LEE, ed., *Confucian-Christian Encounters in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*. Religions in Dialogue, vol. 5. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellon Press, 1992. 500 pp. Hardcover, US\$89.95. ISBN 0-88946-521-5.

This volume represents a significant step forward in the dialogue between Confucians and Christians. It emerged from an international conference held in Hong Kong in June 1988, the first of a series of Confucian-Christian dialogues. The second conference took place at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley in 1991, and the third at Boston University School of Theology in 1994. The present writer attended the Berkeley and Boston conferences, which involved lively, stimulating exchanges between Christian theologians, Chinese philosophers, and historians of religion from East Asia, North America, and Europe. A fourth meeting is planned for Vancouver in the summer of 1997. Key organizers for these conferences are John Berthrong of the Boston University School of Theology, and Philip Shen and Peter Lee of the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture in Hong Kong. While the dialogue between Confucians and Christians is on a more modest scale than that between Buddhists and Christians, it is certainly of equal significance in terms of the meeting of world religions.

This volume is the fifth in a series on "Religions in Dialogue" under the general editorship of Leonard Swidler (Temple University). Peter Lee has done an excellent job in compiling these papers, translating five of them from Chinese and contributing three important articles of his own. As the only such volume available on Confucian-Christian dialogue, this is a unique and indispensable volume for libraries and individual scholars.

The first section, "Setting the Stage," outlines the historical background of both the Catholic and Protestant encounter with Confucianism. John Tong describes the Jesuit Matteo Ricci's approach in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the first Christian attempt to accommodate Confucianism. Although this attempt was brought to a halt by the Rites Controversy in the eighteenth century, Ricci's scholarly investigation of Confucianism and his efforts at inculturating Christianity remain an important model for con-

temporary dialogue. Peter Lee notes that, in contrast, the nineteenth century Protestant missionaries had little knowledge of Chinese culture, but that like Ricci they were more drawn to Confucianism than Buddhism. In this spirit James Legge (1815–1897), probably the most significant Protestant missionary of the nineteenth century, began his translations of the Chinese classics. These translations have been invaluable for subsequent generations of students, and earned him the first professorship of Chinese language and literature at Oxford.

As for the twentieth century, Lee cites the efforts to create an indigenous theology by individuals such as T. C. Chao (1888–1978), as well as the work of Hong Kong's "New Confucians" like Chien Mu, Tang Chun-i, Mou Tsung-san, Hsu Fu-kuan, and Chang Chun-mai. The New Confucians have issued a "Manifesto for a Reappraisal of Sinology and the Reconstruction of Chinese Culture." While affirming traditional Chinese culture, the manifesto also acknowledges that China can learn from the West. The New Confucians continue to have influence through the work of Harvard professor Tu Wei-ming in the West and Liu Shu-hsien and others in Hong Kong.

The article by Frank Whaling outlines the "Present World Stage for Confucian-Christian Interchange." He notes that more than half of the world's Christians now live outside the West, in contrast to 17% in 1900. He also observes that rapid political, social, and economic changes—including severe challenges to the natural, human, and spiritual worlds—have created a different context and opportunity for dialogue.

The next section, "Possibilities of Dialogue," contains several excellent articles. The well-known Liu Shu-hsien of the Chinese University of Hong Kong reflects on what contemporary Neo-Confucianists may learn from Christianity and from the West. He suggests that they should appreciate more fully the formal logic and discursive abstract thinking in the Christian tradition that has led to the separation of faith and science, as well as the need for a checks and balances system as developed in democratic societies.

In the section on "Crisis and Opportunities," Peter Lee discusses issues in Asian theological thinking such as indigenization and contextualization, mission and dialogue, uniqueness and pluralism. The section on "God and Religiosity" contains Tang Yijie's essay on transcendence and immanence in Confucianism. Tang raises several critical questions, suggesting that there is a great need for belief in external transcendence to serve as a constraint on political power, and that this is what Chinese philosophy needs to learn and adapt from Western sources. John Berthrong discusses trends in the interpretation of Confucian religiosity, highlighting the work of Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Wei-ming in particular. He discusses de Bary's emphasis on the humane, educational, and liberal aspects of Confucianism along with Tu's articulation of moral metaphysics and anthropocosmic spirituality. His article is a fitting tribute to two of the central interpreters of the Confucian tradition to the West.

In the section on "Ethics and Human Issues," Frank Whaling compares the Confucian virtue of *jen* and the Christian virtue of love, while Robert Neville contrasts the process of individuation in each tradition. In his article Whaling

points to the need for Confucians and Christians to move their work and dialogue towards responding to the ecological, human, and moral crises facing the world. Neville's article, building on a larger body of his own writing, points to the need to combine the Western contract-based sense of individual destiny with the Confucian social-based model as described in the *Doctrine of the Mean*. He suggests that one way of doing this might be to apply the ideal of Confucian propriety to Christian contractual community, and to apply the ideal of Christian contractual individualism to Confucian social participation.

In the final section, "World and Society," Wm. Theodore de Bary draws on his Tanner lectures (later published as *The Trouble with Confucianism*) to discuss the prophetic voice of the Confucian noble person (*chun tzu*). He recognizes that while the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning* emphasize an ideal continuity between self-cultivation and the creation of a fiduciary community, in practice this was often impossible to realize in China owing to lack of public or institutional support for the prophetic voice of the Confucian scholar-officials. Julia Ching likewise recognizes some of the failings of Confucianism both historically and in the twentieth century, especially as it was used for political ideology or for patriarchal control. In a particularly illuminating piece, Chung Chai Sik describes the inadequacies of Confucianism to meet the challenge of modernity from the West, and the important role of Christianity in Korea in filling the resulting vacuum.

This book represents a remarkable collection of essays trying to sort out many significant issues, such as: How can traditional values speak to the modern challenges of liberalization and secularization? What can Christianity offer to Confucian-based societies, and what does Confucianism have to say to the modern West? These will remain key questions well into the next century, as this book so ably demonstrates.

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