

**After Nietzsche: How Could We Do Sino-Christian Theology Today?
—A Critical Assessment of Liu Xiaofeng’s Proposals of Sino-Christian
Theology in 1994 and in 1999**

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0. Introduction

On May 11, 1978, *Guangming Daily*, one of China’s important newspapers, published an influential editorial “Practice is the Sole Criterion for Testing Truth”, and triggered the wide-ranging and heated “1978 Truth Criterion Controversy”, which is in supportive favor of Deng Xiaoping’s agenda, especially his economic reform and opening policy.¹ On December 13 in the same year, Deng delivered an epoch-making speech “Emancipate the Mind, Seek Truth from Facts, and Unite as One in Looking to the Future”, which set a fundamental tone for the forthcoming Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee Congress of Chinese Communist Party, which has decisively initiated the process of China’s reform and opening in the coming decades (until now). From January to February in 1992, Deng had to deliver deliberately a series of speeches during his historically significant tour in southern China, in order to reassert and revive the nearly stagnant reforming and opening process.² In 1994, Daniel Yeung (b. ?), Liu Xiaofeng (b. 1956), He Guanghu (b. 1950) and other fellow scholars restarted together the *Logos & Pneuma* journal with an high-holding banner of “Sino-Christian Theology” (汉语神学),³ by taking explicitly “Chinese Journal of Theology”

¹ Michael Schoenhals, The 1978 Truth Criterion Controversy, in: *The China Quarterly*, 1991, NO. 126, 243-268.

² Suisheng Zhao, Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour: Elite Politics in Post-Tiananmen China, in: *Asian Survey*, 33 (8), 739-756.

³ 何光沪, “汉语神学的根据与意义”, 载于: 杨熙楠 编, 《汉语神学刍议》, (香港: 汉语基督教文化研究所, 2000), 35. “汉语神学” (han yu shen xue) is usually translated into English as “Sino-Theology” or “Sino-Christian Theology”. It means literally “Theology in Han-Chinese

(汉语神学学刊) as the subtitle,⁴ in order to promote the “Sino-Christian Theological Movement”⁵ among Chinese-speaking academic circles.⁶ It is the birth moment of “Sino-Christian Theological Movement”. He Guanghu advocates a Sino-Christian theology in a general sense, which includes all Chinese-writing Christian scholars from Matteo Ricci to Zhao Zichen.⁷ Regardless of their nationalities and regions, all of the Christian theologies, which take Chinese as their language carrier and use existential experiences and cultural resources expressed in Chinese as the material and mainly serves Chinese-speaking readers, could be called Sino-Christian theology.⁸ In contrast to He’s advocacy, Liu Xiaofeng proposes a Sino-Christian theology in a specific sense, emphasizing the lexpression of believing individual in Chinese language, which is non-churchly, non-denominational, and human-scientifically orientated. In 1995, Liu published the programmatic document of Sino-Christian theology movement “Sino-Christian Theology in Modern Language Context” (现代语境中的汉语基督神学).⁹ In 1999, Liu substantially revised this article, and renamed it as “Sino-Theology and

Language”. It is important to mention that both “Sino-theology” and “Theology in Han-Chinese Language” have has a seemly strong connotation of Han-nationalism and even Han-racism. However I would agree with the pioneers of Sino-theological movement such as He Guanghu and Liu Xiaofeng, namely, the term emphasizes the use of a mother language (Han-Chinese) by making theological expressions based on individual existential experience in a concrete historical context in China and beyond, while admitting and respecting other possibilities to speak und use other [Chinese] languages in another concrete historical context.

⁴ 2000 年第 12 期起改为现名《道风：基督教文化评论》，李跃红，《个体生命的终极吟唱：思想史视域中的汉语神学研究》，（北京：人民出版社，2012），68-69。

⁵ Cf. Pan-chiu Lai and Jason Lam (ed.), *Sino-Christian Theology: A Theological Qua Cultural Movement in Contemporary China*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011.

⁶ 李跃红，《个体生命的终极吟唱》，30-44。

⁷ 刘在 1999 年已融合此说，“汉语神学与历史哲学”，载于：氏著，《汉语神学与历史哲学》，（香港：汉语基督教文化研究所，1999），7。

⁸ 何光沪，“汉语神学的根据与意义”，27；参何光沪，“汉语神学的方法与进路”，载于：《汉语神学刍议》，39-53；何光沪、杨熙楠 编，《汉语神学读本》（两册），（香港：道风书社，2009）；瞿旭彤，“试评何光沪的汉语神学：兼及刘小枫”（1999），载于：李秋零、杨熙楠 主编，《现代性、传统变迁与汉语神学》（上编），上海：华东师范大学出版社，2010，179-185。

⁹ 刘小枫，《现代汉语语境中的汉语基督神学》，载《道风：汉语神学学刊》2（1995），9-48。

the Philosophy of History” (汉语神学与历史神学),¹⁰ which indicates a significant change of his former Sino-Christian theological proposal. In regard to the relationship between Sino-Christian theology and Chinese traditional culture, Liu said:

“Although there was the ‘May Fourth’ New Culture Movement [in 1919], Chinese-language thinking circles are basically still standing outside the gate of the historical-philosophical questions of modernity. The Chinese-language academic circles are still focused on the matter of being enlightened or not enlightened, and they do not know that the thought problems of the twentieth century are no longer post-Enlightenment [problems], but post-romantic [problems]; not post-Kantian, but post-Nietzschean. Without an understanding of Christian thought, it is impossible to deeply understand post-Nietzschean [thought] in Western thought, let alone be able to enter the deeper layer of the historical-philosophical questions of modernity.” (65) ¹¹

This paragraph not only suggests the change of the thought situation of Sino-Christian Theology and Chinese traditional culture, but also indicated the change of Liu’s own thought position. Taking this paragraph as a guiding reference and being based on a text-analytical case study of Liu’s change from Barthianism to Nietzscheanism in his two Sino-Christian theological proposals, this paper wants to analyze and examine the complex relationship between Sino-Christian theology and modern thought trends (2.) from the viewpoint of the tension between the theological subject matter (Sache) and a concrete historical situation (1.), and then to explore preliminarily future possibilities of Sino-Christian theology’s further development (3.).

1. Theological Subject Matter (Sache) and Concrete Historical Context (Lage)

Before entering into the specific case study of Liu’s proposals, this paper wants to firstly explain some basic premises of its theological methodology and preliminary observations on the concrete historical context of Sino-Christian Theology. While talking about a specific theological proposal, we should take into account the tension between the theological subject matter and a concrete historical context, and then

¹⁰ 刘小枫, 《汉语神学与历史哲学》, 载于: 氏著, 《汉语神学与历史哲学》, (香港: 汉语基督教文化研究所, 1999), 3-96。For the English translation, see Liu Xiaofeng, *Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History: A Collection of Essays by Liu Xiaofeng*, translated with commentary by Leopold Leeb, Brill: Leiden, 2015, 27-132.

¹¹ 正文页码出自刘小枫, 《汉语神学与历史哲学》, 下同。Cf. Liu Xiaofeng, *Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History: A Collection of Essays by Liu Xiaofeng*, 98-99.

examine and assess the relationship between theology and contemporary thought trends, in order to explore how we could do theology further in this concrete historical context. The so-called theological subject matter, according to Karl Barth, is God's [self-]revelation in Jesus Christ for and towards human being, which is witnessed by the Bible, preached by church and pointed to by theology; in other words, the divine-human relationship, which is essentially related to Jesus Christ, is revealed in God's Word.¹² By doing theology and dealing with specific theological questions, Barth tries firstly to explicitly and emphatically understand, interpret, express and witness the theological subject matter in a concrete historical context ("Wort zur Sache"). From this core principle and starting point, Barth then proceeds to express about the concrete historical context ("Wort zur Lage"). As a concrete example of Barth's own theological thinking and specific expression, the Barmen Theological Declaration, which was mainly drafted by him in 1934, clearly shows his fundamental insistence on the theological subject matter (Jesus Christ is the only word of God) and his contemporary concerns in his concrete historical context (for example, the nazifying attempts of the German Christian Church).

Different from Barth's historical context, we are now still living in the context of the "great change not seen in three thousand years" (三千年未有之大变局)¹³ since the late Qing Dynasty, and the "minor change not seen in 40 years" (四十年未有之大变局) since Deng's reforming and opening policy in the late 1970s. The so-called "great change not seen in three thousand years" refers to the most serious challenges since the Chinese-British Opium War in 1840, with which China's intellectual-cultural-political system had to be confronted. Together with modern Western powers, Christian Protestantism entered into China at this time. However, the current situation has not been changed much. Western and Christian thoughts have not been so well absorbed, assimilated, and integrated into the intellectual-cultural-political system of China, that the grounding tone and the guiding direction of the future development of Chinese thought and culture are still to be waited for.¹⁴ Related to this, Christian language and

¹² Thomas Xutong Qu, *Barth und Goethe: Die Goethe-Rezeption Karl Barths 1906-1921*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2014, 242f.

¹³ 语出李鸿章，参梁启超 著，雾满拦江 译，《李鸿章传》，（桂林：广西师范大学出版社，2009），67；另参袁伟时，《晚清大变局》，（北京：线装书局，2014）。

¹⁴ 刘称之为“中国问题”，即“中国的社会制度和人心秩序的正当性均需要重新论证。这种论证需求是由西方现代性逼出来的”，《现代性社会理论绪论：现代性与现代中国》，（上海：

thought have not yet become constructive factors of Chinese language and thought; Christian faith and theology have not yet enjoyed due recognition and respect in China's intellectual-cultural-political system, even more, they are still suspected, rejected and opposed to a great extent at the social-political and intellectual-cultural level.

The "minor change not seen in 40 years" refers firstly to China's rapid economic development and its increasing intellectual and cultural self-awareness since Deng's reform and opening. Correspondently, among Chinese intellectual and cultural circles, it is no longer a mainstream to learn ardently from modern Western civilization and Christian civilization; self-centered cultural conservatism and national localism, which emphasize the departmentalizing subjectivity of Chinese culture, have become prevailing and even denominating. Related to this, the current mainstream attitude towards Western thought, especially Christianity and modernity, has become increasingly conservative, reactionary and even hostile.¹⁵ This attitude has arisen not only from the opposing mentality against the West since "the great change not seen in three thousand years", but also from the increasing self-confident consciousness of "[everything] under the heaven" (天下) since the "minor change not seen in 40 years". Only few relatively open-minded conservatives would speak for the discernment and integration of China and West, ancient and modern, while still explicitly emphasizing the tension between China and West, between ancient and modern.¹⁶

At the global level, the event of 911 in 2001 and the financial crisis of 2008 are key points in understanding "the minor change not seen in 40 years". The 911 event has revealed the fundamental diastasis and the absolute difference between the East and the West (especially between Christian world and Islamic world, and then between the West represented by Christian civilization and China represented by Confucian civilization) in terms of ideal values, cultural and educational system, and underlying views on divine-human relationship.¹⁷ The financial crisis of 2008 has once again

上海三联书店, 1998), 195。参唐文明(《隐秘的颠覆: 牟宗三、康德与原始儒家》, [北京: 三联书店, 2012], 240-241)从原始儒家和现代性相结合角度给出的论述。

¹⁵ 西方现代性也有内在冲突, 对现代性的反思和批判也是中国知识界态度有所变化的原因。

¹⁶ 张祥龙着重强调的并非吸纳、消化和融合西方思想, 而是中国古代思想的避难: "中华古文化的求生存意识一定要被唤醒, 争取华夏的文艺复兴。简言之, 现在和未来都特别需要思想与文化上的夷夏之辨、夷夏之防和良性的夷夏之交", 氏著, 《思想避难: 全球化中的中国古代哲理》, (北京: 北京大学出版社, 2007), 3, 5。

¹⁷ Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

exposed the limitation, shortcoming and even crisis of Western economic-political system. Today, more than one decade later, our entire world is still in the aftershock and turmoil of these two black-swan events. The current increasing tension between China and the United States has arisen not only from a predicament brought about by the so-called “Thucydides Trap”, but also from the consequences of such a turmoil and the related agitated complexes of seeking for change. In the Western world, which is confronted with many difficult problems such as terrorism and refugee flows, (disregarding the current war in Ukraine), there has been another significant intellectual and spiritual crisis since the Enlightenment. The pursuit for universal ideal values such as freedom, equality and fraternity have been seriously challenged. Whether it is socialism since the collapse of the Soviet Union or capitalism (and even liberal democracy) since 9/11 and the financial crisis, once relatively determined intellectual and cultural ways and political-institutional choices have become ambiguous and even full of crises. Localizing response and conservative programs with strong departmentalizing nationalistic sentiments are emerging more and more all over the world. This is another moment of crisis and a time of transition in the global human history, similar with the moment of crisis and the time of transition in the Weimar Republic in Germany history after the First World War.

Concerning the situation in China today, 2008 is a watershed year for understanding the current intellectual and cultural sentiments of conservatism and nationalism in China. Before and after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, the Tibet issue and many other events have led to continuous confrontations and conflicts between China and West in terms of ideal values, cultural ways and political systems. Against the background of 9/11 and the financial crisis, the self-confidence in Chinese culture, way and system has been rising and booming. In this concrete historical context, coupled with the history of Christianity in China and its historical entanglements with western imperialistic powers, many Chinese intellectuals are still full of nationalistic sentiments since the May Fourth New Culture Movement. They begin to re-estimate highly Chinese traditional culture on the one hand. On another hand, they hold strong suspicion and even resistance against Christianity, which has been fervently criticized (like Confucianism) since the May Fourth New Cultural Movement.

Finally, it is to be mentioned in particular: The May Fourth New Culture Movement is one of fundamental starting points of shaping the intellectual, cultural and political system in today’s China, and also one of the crucial keys to understanding “the great change not seen in three thousand years” and “the minor change not seen in the

past 40 years”. On the one hand, in terms of the relationship between China and the West, contemporary intellectual and cultural circles are still deeply influenced by the traditions of the Enlightenment such as modern democratic spirit and scientific consciousness, which are inherited by the May Fourth New Cultural Movement. Related to this, Christianity is not only regarded as a feudal superstition which has been successfully criticized by modern scientism, but also as an accomplice or even a running dog of Western imperialism and capitalism by invading China politically, economically and culturally. On the other hand, in terms of the tension between China’s ancient and modern, the May Fourth New Cultural Movement put forward slogans such as “overthrowing Confucianism”, while opposing traditional cultures and criticizing religious superstitions. The concrete attitudes towards these two aspects of the May Fourth New Cultural Movement reveal the fundamental position of a specific thinker or movement of thought. In terms of the attitudes towards Christianity, it is either admired and respected by the liberal minds as the ally of the modernity and Western liberal democracy, which could help China as a good mentor or a good friend to “get out of the middle ages”, or suspected and opposed by conservative minds as a hostile foreign force, which could endanger traditional political and cultural-educational system in China, and could contain the renaissance of Chinese culture and thought. It is exactly under such intellectual, cultural and political circumstances to understand both indigenous theological programs since the May Fourth New Cultural Movement and the current new program of “Sinicization of Christianity”, which has been originally proposed by some scholars in the research field of religious and especially Christian studies and later adapted by the central government as an important religious policy. Both of the two programs have to either demonstrate their loyalty to nationalistic mainstream of saving the nation and reforming the society in the past or obey docily the traditional system of “religion under politics”, while seeking a cautious integration with traditional Chinese cultures in the present.¹⁸

2. From Barthianism to Nietzscheanism: A Significant Change of Liu's Sino-Christian Theological Proposal

In this second part, I will argue: by advocating his Sino-Christian theological proposal, Liu has deviated from his original Barthian emphasis on the Christ-event and individual faith, while giving up his former focus on Christian faith and its theological subject

¹⁸ 民国时期基督教社会主义者吴雷川是典型代表，参“汉语神学与历史哲学”，41。

matter, and then taken a Nietzschean position, which stresses the natural order and human spiritual types, while going towards Leo Strauss's political philosophy, in order to provide an ideological foundation, a plan of cultural-educational system, and an elite reserve for the intellectual, cultural and political system, which is entering into the so-called "new era". Through Nietzsche's "hub" (Habermas),¹⁹ Liu has turned to Strauss. It is, in the language of Liu's own Strauss-evaluation, Liu's cautious and docile philosophical response to "the great change not seen in three thousand years", specially to "the minor change not seen" in last decades.²⁰ This response is also understood as one of the fundamental reasons why Liu advocates Strauss's political philosophy among Chinese academic circles,²¹ makes great efforts to promote classical studies, and has successfully attracted a large group of young and middle-aged excellent brains to follow and imitate him. To elaborate this viewpoint, I will in the following compare and analyze a change of thought in Liu's two proposals: "Sino-Christian Theology in Modern Language Context" (1995) and "Sino-Theology and The Philosophy of History" (1999), by focusing on his respective mentions of Barth and Nietzsche, and demonstrate how Liu has moved from Barthianism to Nietzscheanism. In this elaboration, I will pay little attention to Barthian or Nietzschean influence on Liu, but concentrate myself on the text-analytical investigation of Liu's appropriation of Barth or Nietzsche.

Concerning its foundational position, Liu's paper on "Sino-Christian Theology in Modern Language Context" in 1995 has a distinctive Barthian tendency. Liu thinks, "Christian theology is faithful, rational reflections and language expressions about the Christ-event as God's Word; it has a symbiotic relationship with regional-historical language experience (thought experience), which is to say, the expressions of Christian thought are determined by the givenness of the historical language experiences used by them"(41).²² On the one hand, The Christ-event is "God's individual historical revelation", which took place "after the religious systems of various nations and ancient empires" (40). God is "the most historically concrete existence (Jesus Christ) (40), and his revelation in Jesus Christ is vertical, which is the origin and ground of all Christian theologies. On the other hand, due to his confessing belief on the Christ-vent, an

¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, „Eintritt in die Postmoderne: Nietzsche als Drehscheibe“, in: ders., *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, 104-129.

²⁰ 2001年，刘将“温顺的刺猬”施特劳斯理解为尼采的化身，氏著，《施特劳斯的路标》，（北京：华夏出版社，2011年），85。

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²² From now on, the relevant page numbers in the text are from *Sino-Christian Theology in Modern Language Context*.

existential individual responds to and express about concretely this event with the help of, and only with the help of, his language experience of existing thoughts. In addressing the former aspect, Liu quotes Barth's second commentary on *Romans*: "Since the Christ-event took place after the formation of various national-imperial religions, as a post-religious event, according to K. Barth, is a critique of all religions; the Christ-event reveals the crisis of all religions" (41).²³

Simon Shui-Ma Kwan is probably the first one to notice this significant Barth-citation. Kwan takes a hermeneutic approach learned from Gadamer to assess Liu's paper. By paying a particular attention to Liu's possible hermeneutic prejudice, Kwan has founded that "Liu Xiaofeng's theology [...] was stained with Barth's theology."²⁴ In Kwan's opinion, the reason why Liu proposes his theological program is closely related to his "historical context". Liu claimed himself to belong to the generation of "April Fifth Tiananmen Incident", which was a massive gathering and protest and a significant event shortly before the end of Cultural Revolution (1966-1977). Liu and his generation have suffered painfully during the Cultural Revolution. With a strong self-awareness of a cultural crisis, they are alert to the possible confusion between human words and divine word. Therefore, they are willing to accept and follow Barth's theological assertion that the gap between human words and divine word is absolute and unbridgeable. Therefore, Kwan believes that Liu's understanding of Sino-Christian theology is historical, contextual, and therefore very suitable for "Chinese people who cherish the spirit of "April Fifth Tiananmen Incident".²⁵

²³ 类似说法之前出现过至少三次。1991年，刘在“关于‘道’与‘言’的神学和文化社会学评注”（《这一代人的怕和爱》，香港：卓越书楼，1993，125）一文中并未提及具有强烈政治意味的“帝国”，强调“任何民族性文化与基督文化之间都有一种张力关系，不唯华夏文化独然”。此文在1992年略经修订，成为《道与言：华夏文化与基督文化相遇》（上海：上海三联书店，1995）的编者序，其中帕特相关部分未有变化。刘在1991年和1992年强调上帝之言，在1995年则强调基督事件，刘在此借用布尔特曼的概念，在帕特强调上帝之言的辩证神学上又附着了布尔特曼生存神学的色调。再往前追溯，此说其实来自刘八十年代末发表于《读书》的文章（“上帝就是上帝”，《走向十字架上的真》，上海：上海三联书店，1995，54）。较之1991年和1992年，刘此时主要是在介绍和借用巴特的宗教批判，批判人言对神言的冒充（55）。

²⁴ 关瑞文，“评刘小枫的汉语基督神学”，载于：《汉语神学刍议》，104-106。

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

In terms of “the shadow of Barth’s theology”,²⁶ Pan-Chiu Lai pays no attention to Liu’s historical background and his related hermeneutic prejudice, when he discusses the relationship between Liu’s Sino-Christian theological proposal and indigenous theology, but responds directly to Liu’s related text. By a special discussion on Liu’s opposing Christian theology against religion. Lai has found also the influence of Barth’s second commentary on Romans, namely, “Liu Xiaofeng’s emphasis on the opposition between the Christ-event and religion is basically derived from Liu Xiaofeng’s interpretation of early Barth’s theology, but this interpretation does not represent Barth’s overall position.”²⁷ In addition, Lai also elucidates that Liu’s position is in conflict with his own position by citing Ernst Troeltsch to confirm the individuality of theology.²⁸

Kwan’s interpretation deals with the significant influence of the “April Fifth Tiananmen Incident” and its relevant historical context upon Liu’s Sino-Christian theological proposal, and emphasizes therefore that the prejudice brought by this historical situation has influenced Liu’s appropriation of Barth’s theology. And Lai has found that Liu quotes Barth, who has written the second commentary on Romans. This Barth emphasizes the absolute divine-humane difference and advocates a consequent critique of religion. Moreover, what is particularly relevant to the understanding of this paper, is that Kwan’s paper has mentioned specifically Liu’s comparison between the generation of “April Fifth” and the generation of “May Fourth”: The “April Fifth” generation is obviously not the inheritors of the existing ideology. In this regard, this generation has some formal similarities with the “May fourth” generation: they are both destroyers of the existing cultural system and rebels of the existing ‘discourse’ tradition. China’s two cultural crises in this century were provoked by these two generations respectively”.²⁹ Related to Liu’s comparison, this paper argues: in 1995, Liu, as the author of “Sino-Christian Theology in Modern Chinese Language Context”, still holds a firm critical position on Chinese traditional culture since his influential work <Delivering and Dallying> in 1988,³⁰ and criticizes consciously as a successor of May

²⁶ 赖品超, “汉语神学的类型与发展路向”, 《汉语神学刍议》, 15。

²⁷ Ibid., 15-16.

²⁸ Ibid., 17-19.

²⁹ 刘小枫, “关于‘四五’一代的知识社会学思考札记”, 《这一代人的怕和爱》, 93。

³⁰ 刘小枫, 《拯救与逍遥: 中西方诗人对世界的不同态度》, (上海: 上海人民出版社, 1988)。

Fourth Movement Chinese traditional culture.³¹ However, the critical weapon he uses here is not the modern democratic consciousness and the scientific spirit of May Fourth Movement, but Barth's dialectical theology which emphasizes the absolute divine-human difference, and hence criticizes fiercely religion and modernity.³² In 1995, seventeen years after the begin of "the minor change", Liu rejects firmly any indigenous theological tendency, which tries to integrate Christian theology and Chinese traditional culture.³³

Lai opposes Liu's one-sided critical position, because Barth's position on religion is much complicated, and "absolutely not as negative and extreme as Liu's".³⁴ In agreement with Lai's critic, the so-call Barthian position of Liu's Sino-Christian theological proposal in this paper is not the overall position of Barth's theology, but refers especially to Barth's dialectical theological thinking in his second commentary on *Romans*, which is appropriated by Liu, namely, the emphasis of God's revelation, the Christ-event, and their verticality, individuality and historicity, and the emphasis of the absolute divine-human difference and the consequent critique of all human religions and cultures.³⁵ According to Lai, Liu affirmed the individuality of faith through Troeltsch rather than through Barth. I would say, Liu's emphasis of the individuality of faith comes from his emphasis of the historicity of God's revelation and the individuality of the encounter with the Christ-event. This emphasis is a common premise of modern theology shared by Barth and Troeltsch, which cannot exclusively be ascribed to Troeltsch and his liberal theological tradition. Furthermore, I would say that Liu's Barthianism in his Sino-Christian theological proposal is also demonstrated in his emphasis on the expression of individual faith: according to his own existential experience and language experience, a believing individual makes his own response and expression to the Christ-event in a concrete historical situation. This emphasis on the expression of existential individual and their faith-expression is also corresponding

³¹ 不过，1998年《拯救与逍遥》（修订本）（上海：华东师范大学出版社，2011，6）中的说法略有不同：刘小枫所拥抱的并非中国或西方的精神，而是走向西方文化中蕴含的绝对精神。这样的强调与其当时的巴特主义立场相一致。

³² 在写作《拯救与逍遥》时，刘并未“读到过巴特”（同上，7），参“上帝就是上帝”，45，51。

³³ 赖品超，“汉语神学的类型与发展路向”，17。

³⁴ 同上。

³⁵ 在“上帝就是上帝”一文中，刘提到他的“巴特路线”（73）。

to Liu's appropriation of Bultmann's existential theology.³⁶ Therefore, On the one hand, Liu pays attention to the adherence to the theological subject matter (God's revelation and the Christ-event), on the other hand, he emphasizes individual existential experience and language experience, and then considers individual's concrete historical situation. It is in this tension of the theological subject matter and a historical context that Liu's paper in 1995 pays attention primarily to the questions concerning China and the West in modern language context since "the great change not seen in three thousand years", especially since May Fourth Movement, including "the genesis of and conflicts between nation-states in the process of modernization", and "the tension between the whole Christianity and modern China as a nation-state" (16). Whether in terms of political nationalism trying to establish a powerful nation-state (13) or in terms of cultural nationalism trying to express a nation's unique and superior cultural value-ideas (14), Christianity has been involved in the conflict between China and the West, and thus encountered with vehement resistance (16). In Liu's view, "the conflict between Christianity and Chinese social customs [...] or the conflict of cultural value-ideas are not unique experiences of Christianity in China" (16). Christianity and the West are also in conflict in relevant dimensions. Therefore, Liu is very suspicious of "indigenous" or "inculturation" theological programs, which have dominated Chinese theological circles for a long time, because these programs consider wrongly the conflict between Christianity and Chinese society/culture as a conflict between China and the West (17), and do not realize that it is actually a horizontal religious or cultural crisis caused by the vertical Christ-event. In correspondence with this mistaking viewpoint, Chinese Christian circles since May Fourth have focused on the political, ideological and cultural conflicts between Christian countries and China as a nation state, and started from this focus to construct theological thoughts (17). Moreover, in Liu's view, following the problems since May Fourth, the coming Sino-Christian theology will face three possible conflicts: the conflict between Christianity and Chinese culture (especially Confucianism), the conflict between Christianity and various modern and contemporary antichristian philosophical and humanistic thoughts in Europe and America, the conflict between human-scientific theology and churchly theology. By taking Liu's response to only the first conflict as an example, Liu in 1995, in correspondence with the above-mentioned Barthian position, resolutely refuses to

³⁶ 值得深究的问题有, 刘小枫对布尔特曼生存神学和巴特辩证神学的吸纳, 哪个更为根本。
(the legacy of Wilhelm Herrmann, HUMAN experience of God vs. human experience of GOD)

understand and interpret the Christ-event, and express the Christ-confession by the integrating Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism with Christian theology in western languages, but claims clearly that believing individual should “go out from the thinking framework of indigenization or Sinicization, and confront himself directly with the Christ-event” (42), and develop Sino-Christian theology based on his own existential experience and language expression (45).

In 1999, in his substantially revised and renamed article “Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History”, Liu pays further his attention to the modern language context of Sino-theology, but his focus has changed from the questions concerning China and the West to the questions concerning antiquity and modernity. Correspondently, his starting point is no longer his former Barthian emphasis on the vertical Christ-event and believing expression of existential individual, and he talks now little about “the sharp awl of revelational theology” (5, in contrast with “the blunt hammer of cultural theology”).³⁷ At this time, Liu began to get close to a Nietzschean position, which emphasizes moral types and noble spiritual values. Liu still seems to inherit Barth's dialectical theological position,³⁸ emphasizing the crisis of the existing national thought and language due to the Christ-event, the impossibility of human being and his religion, and the possibility of God. In relation to this emphasis, he quotes directly from Barth's second commentary on *Romans*: “the last possibility of religion grows in the human soil”, “the limitation of religion is the line of death, which separates clearly human possibility from divine possibility, flesh from spirit, temporary from eternal” (88). However, Liu's thought-position at this time has indeed changed. This change could be exemplarily confirmed by an added footnote, when he talks about human-scientific interest of Sino-theology: “The foundation of Sino-theology's human-scientific interest is not regulated by the doctrines of denominations or traditions, but is denomination-neutral (perhaps even faith-neutral) theology, which style is determined by the academic context of human-scientific and social thought” (59). In 1995, Barth is appropriated by Liu to assert Liu's own theological position; in 1999, Barth becomes for Liu a “conservative churchly theologian”, who is “confronted with the so-called modern academic principles”, and insists upon resisting against the religious-scientific or religious-philosophical tendency of theology advocated by

³⁷ 从此起，相关部分未注明出处的页码均出自“汉语神学与历史哲学”一文。

³⁸ 与旧版相一致，刘在谈及基督神学时，区分了以既有民族性思想体及其言述概念来建立的基督神学、以及在这一思想体系之外寻求认信基督的生存经验的语文表达。他将前者称为“民族大理式的”，将后者称为“在体释义式的”，并把巴特的辩证神学归入后一种（93-94）。

“liberal churchly theologians” such as Troeltsch (59). Such a conservative image of Barth should be understood from Liu’s new view of modern language context. In Liu’s view, “the differentiation of traditional Christian theology into human-scientific theology and churchly theology is precisely the need of Christianity to survive in modern language context (62-63). And the modern language context here is “no longer post-the Enlightenment, but post-Romanticism, not after Kant, but after Nietzsche” (65). “Post-Romanticism” means that Romanticism has broken through the universal ideals of the Enlightenment, and thus raised the questions about cultural diversity. But, Liu does not explain explicitly what he means with “after Nietzsche” in the relevant context. However, from an overall view of his whole paper, his so-called “after Nietzsche” refers to “the depth of the questions concerning modern historical philosophy” (65), and is deeply related to Liu’s change of his whole thought-position.

In 2003, in the editorial preface to *Nietzsche and Christianity: Papers about Nietzsche’s the Antichrist*, Liu makes it explicitly: “Chinese thinkers, who concern about modern fate of Chinese spirit, have an internal and deep relationship with Nietzsche’s thinking; this relationship is their fate of thought, which they cannot have hope to escape”.³⁹ In 1999, when Liu is revising his *Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History*, he has already realized that “after Nietzsche” is the key word to understand modern thinking language context. At this time, he is probably in the process of gradually understanding the fate of his own thinking. In 1995, in the old edition of this article, Liu did not mention Nietzsche’s name even once, but four years later, he begin to have “a internal and deep relationship” with Nietzsche. He quotes Voegelin’s comments of Nietzsche’s *Zur Genealogie der Moral* in the preface of *Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History*, and claims explicitly: “This book seems to talk about moral philosophy, but in fact presupposes the historical philosophical questions concerning European modernity. It hopes to mark the beginning of European new value-transfer: to rebuild the noble spiritual values on the post-Christian basis (beyond good and evil)”.⁴⁰ From this Nietzschean standpoint, which emphasizes

³⁹ (北京：华夏出版社，2014)，1。

⁴⁰ “贵族精神价值”一词在大陆版（《圣灵降临的叙事》，北京：三联书店，2003）的前记中被改成“高贵的精神”（2）。在此，刘说明了源自尼采的历史哲学的命意所在，“历史哲学的问题根本上是伦理价值的重新选择”。而且，他已开始吸纳尼采关于精神高低的思想因素：“如果汉语思想在历史哲学问题面前必须得重新考虑自己的精神抉择，在虚无主义时代走出精神的最低度状态，是不是也该首先直接面对基督事件？”（3）。若是再考虑到刘还引述尼采的观点说，基督教伦理“颠覆了贵族制的价值秩序，以至于欧洲精神在现代时期跌落到精

spiritual order and noble values, Liu therefore tries to “deal with the mission of Sino-theology from the historical philosophical consciousness of questioning”. This is exactly the “intention” of his rewriting of *Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History* (2).

In order to gain a thorough understanding of Liu’s Nietzschean standpoint, we need also to analyze Liu’s at least eleven other references to Nietzsche in the text in turn,⁴¹ in addition to further analysis of the previously quoted relevant texts about “after Nietzsche”. When Nietzsche’s name was mentioned at the first time, Liu points out that, as the beginning of Sino-theology, the arrival of Jesuits in China in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties is actually “the consequence of western modern events”. He quotes Nietzsche’s opinion that the Jesuits are “real pioneers” of criticizing the modernity. Unlike the post-modern radical critiques, the Jesuits have made “the first great attempt to relieve European suffering European souls” from a conservative critical standpoint (9). Why European souls have suffered? It is because “Platonism (for the mass it is Christianity) has made European souls extremely stressed, stressed like a bow for two thousand years” (9).

In the second mention of Nietzsche’s name, Liu explains indirectly the significance of Jesuit’s conservative position. By talking about his understanding of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Weber, Liu points out: “the crux of the historical philosophical questions” lies in: The [modern] capitalistic spirit will lead to the disintegration of the traditional ‘unifying order’, whether in the West or in the East, and the legitimate foundation of secular theocratic rule will no longer be taken for granted” (13). The Jesuits have restarted the tradition of natural law, just in order to restore and rebuild “the deadly endangered theocratic order of politics and culture” in the West. It is exactly the reason why the Jesuits have taken a conservative position to criticize the modernity (8-9). There are three important points that should be especially

神的最低度、进入了虚无主义时代” (2) , 那么, 本文认为, 此时 (2002 年) 的刘其实已放弃对基督事件这一神学实事的坚守, 转而关注尼采所推荐的精神抉择与伦理价值, 而且, 他对施特劳斯的跟随是跟随尼采以后产生的自然后果。更为重要的是, 无论是在 1999 年香港版前记、还是在 2003 年大陆版前记中, 刘均特别提及中国历史上也同样存在“尼采所谓的伦理价值的紧张” (2) , 以前是佛教的平民伦理对儒教的贵族伦理, 现在是与欧洲虚无主义密切相关的、“颠覆了贵族制的价值秩序的” (2) 基督教伦理对儒家的贵族伦理, 并且欣然认同贵族伦理及其精神秩序和伦理价值。此处, 刘关注的是古今之争, 首先是西方内部的古今之争, 然后是中国内部的古今之争, 而且最重要还是要返回到中国内部的古今之争。

⁴¹ 本文略去对多数提及 (比如, 页 92 的第 12 次) 的考察。

mentioned here. Firstly, Liu is turning his attention to the questions concerning antiquity and modernity within the West. Secondly, trying to re-establish or restore the former “great unifying order”⁴² could be understood as the ultimate concern⁴³ of Liu's way of thinking; moreover, this is perhaps closely related to the above-mentioned Liu's (as a representative of the “April Fourth” generation) experience of the Cultural Revolution and his historical “prejudice” and consciousness of questioning. Thirdly, the questions concerning antiquity and modernity are specifically implemented now as a choice for ancient tradition and order. This ultimate concern and the choice being made at this time could be understood as the fundamental reason why Liu have previously been concerned with Christian thought and favored Barthian theological position, and now emphasizes the Jesuits' conservative critique of modernity and turns to the Nietzschean position.

In the third mention of Nietzsche's name, Liu goes on to say: “The fundamental problem of Sino-theology” lies in: it has not followed Hegel, Nietzsche and Weber “to understand modern historical philosophical questions from the spirit of Christianity”, but has followed the modern tradition of the Enlightenment, by inheriting the “scientific rational spirit” or “the nationalistic state-ethics” since the May Fourth Movement. If Sino-theology would follow the advice of modern Confucian scholars to adopt “the true spirit of Taoism and the old way of Neo-Confucianism”, as Confucianism has integrated Buddhism in the past, in order to integrate the spirit of Christianity with strong modern flavor, “it is standing on the fundamentally wrong side, and pointing to the fundamentally wrong direction” (15). Because the modern historical philosophical question of China is not the conflict between Chinese culture and Western culture, but the conflict between antiquity and modernity, that is to say, “the continuity and discontinuity of political system”, which “has also frustrated the thoughts of [China and] Europe”. (16) Here, Liu continues his standpoint in 1995 on the one hand, namely, criticizing scientism and nationalism, and emphasizing the need for hermeneutic theology and existential theology. On the other hand, he focus on the modernity has

⁴² 另参比如，刘，《拯救与逍遥》修订本前言，6：“绝对精神在中西方的普遍崩溃，人道凌迟、世失其序，才是值得关注的精神的‘事情本身’”。

⁴³ 并非关切的对象是终极的，而是关切者的关切是终极的。参张旭对刘“终极关切”的阐述，氏著，《上帝死了，神学何为？：20世纪基督教神学基本问题》（北京：中国人民大学出版社，2010），2。另参张旭，“基督教神学的汉语之路：走向汉语神学第二期”（载于：《传承与发展：第四届汉语基督教研究圆桌会议论文集》，杨熙楠、林子淳、高莘 编，香港：道风书社，2012）一文，他将刘的终结关切进一步总结为“基本的精神抉择”和“心性-政制问题”。

clearly shifted from the questions concerning China and the West to the questions concerning antiquity and modernity, from the conflict between China and the West to the conflict between antiquity and modernity (first within the West, and then within China), especially with an emphasis on political system and political theology.⁴⁴ This is closely related to the cultural, intellectual and political situation after Nietzsche which he observes from his Nietzschean perspective, especially to Nietzschean critique of the modernity (including modern Christianity) and the consequent nihilism.

In talking about Heidegger's Nietzsche-interpretation (for the sixth time, 19),⁴⁵ Liu emphasizes, the theology or mythology in the sense of Nietzsche is actually a political philosophy "about how people should live", and has its corresponding political conception (19-20). Liu contrasts Nietzsche's attempt to restore "the evil theater-like political system" with Plato's "moral aristocratic political system". Liu's focus is not on the opposition between these two political systems, but on the opposition between the musical spirit of the poets and the rational spirit of the philosophers behind these two political systems. Consequently, it is not hard to understand why Liu puts so much emphasis on Nietzschean rebuilding of "noble spiritual values" (2).

In correspondence with this sixth reference to Nietzsche, while talking about "the spirit of scientific and enlightened rationalism, Liu says that this spirit is "the God-like spirit of the modern secular spirit", and does not become the spiritual value of the new, unified Europe. Against this spirit is not only the imperial theological tradition of Roman Christianity, but also ancient Greek philosophical tradition in the sense of Nietzsche and Heidegger. "Scientism is essentially another kind of Christianity, which has been transformed into a natural religion" (25). Such a statement is actually corresponding to Nietzsche's fierce critique of modern Christianity (especially Protestantism) and less critique of the Roman Catholic tradition and other Christian traditions.⁴⁶ The lack of new and unifying spiritual values and the inability to give a unifying answer to "how people should live" can be understood as the fundamental historical philosophical

⁴⁴ 参，刘小枫，“编者前言”（1999），《当代政治神学文选》，蒋庆等译，长春：吉林人民出版社，2002。

⁴⁵ 在第4和第5次提及时，刘小枫分别提到尼采对启蒙理性主义的攻击、及其用源于古希腊的、而非基督教的神学对柏拉图主义基督教的颠覆（19）。参第7次（20）、第9次（84）、第10次和第11次（85）提及。

⁴⁶ 参尼采思想的封顶之作《敌基督》（载于：吴增定，《〈敌基督〉讲稿》，北京：三联书店，2012）。在2003年为《尼采与基督教：尼采的〈敌基督〉论集》（北京：华夏出版社，2014，4）撰写的编者前言中，刘小枫同样强调尼采基督教批判引发的古今问题。

problem of the modernity in Liu's eyes. And the restoration and establishment of such unifying spiritual values is exactly Liu's above-mentioned ultimate concern.

In dealing with this historical philosophical problem of modernity, with which Western thought in the 20th century is confronted, Liu attaches great importance to the reinterpretation “of the fundamentally shaken legacy about “people should live in this way”, which is advocated by Socrates, Moses, and Jesus, and “the hermeneutics of history of thinking” (68) , especially the “internal interpretation” of the history of thinking carried out by Heidegger and Strauss after Nietzsche.⁴⁷ Heidegger has started from Nietzsche's will to interpret (for the eighth time, 68), and replaced the philosophy with an philosophical historical interpretation, in order to return to the origin of Western thinking (69). And Strauss's hermeneutics has rediscovered “writing in lines” as “the principle of existential politology” and “the key to understanding the questions of European thinking”, so that he has put Heidegger's philosophical action forward, by really cutting into the crucial depth of modern historical philosophy, and reducing the essence of the philosophical history to political philosophy (70).⁴⁸ This mention of Nietzsche's name and the related elaboration of the hermeneutics after Nietzsche (especially Heidegger's interpretation of the philosophical history and Strauss's political philosophy) are crucial to the understanding of Liu's change of his thoughts.⁴⁹ Just as Zhang Xu says, “once he has realized, as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Strauss did, that Greek classics should be re-established as the orthodoxy of Western civilization, his [Liu's] interests were no longer express on Christianity”.⁵⁰ Such an abandonment of Christianity and its theology, let alone his former Barthian theological position, has shown evident traces in his new Sino-theological proposal in 1999.

To sum up, this paper concludes that in his largely revised article “Sino-Theology and the Philosophy of History” in 1999, Liu's Sino-theological proposal has still explicit Barthian expressions: Sino-theology should rely on the (crisis and the) possibility brought by the Word of God, and pay attention to the vertical relationship

⁴⁷ 刘小枫关于海德格尔和施特劳斯受尼采指引的类似说法，参《尼采与基督教》，1；《施特劳斯的标路》，121-122、119-120、126-127、130、137。

⁴⁸ 参刘小枫，中译本前言，洛维特，《从黑格尔到尼采：19世纪思维中的革命性决裂》，李秋零译，（北京：三联书店，2006），1-14。

⁴⁹ 关于尼采以后施特劳斯和海德格尔的分野、以及刘对两者路径的批判性吸纳，已超出本文范围。

⁵⁰ 氏著，《上帝死了，神学何为？》，2。

between “Chinese thinking itself and the ideal form of Christ-theology, namely, how Chinese thinking and language experience could integrate and express the Christ-event and confess the Christ” (90). However, with a continuous focus on the question of modernity, Liu has started from his ultimate concern about moral types, spiritual order and cultural and educational system, **and then encountered with Nietzsche into an so internal relationship of thinking**, that he has deviated from his former Barthian position, which emphasizes the Christ-event and existential expression of believing individual, and begun gradually to take the position of Straus’s political philosophy with a distinctive Nietzschean flavor, which emphasize the natural order and spiritual types.⁵¹ Concerning Liu’s interpretation of the question of modernity, his focus has changed from the conflict between China and the West, the conflict between the Christ-event and the nation-religion-culture, to the difference between ancient and modern spiritual values or moral order. That is to say, Liu has inherited and appropriated Nietzsche’s critique of modernity (and modern Christianity) and also the critiques after Nietzsche especially such as Heidegger’s and Strauss’s, and begun **to upgrade the past and to downgrade the present**, by advocating the natural order and spiritual system of the ancient tradition.⁵²

3. “To Explore between Heaven and Human”: How Can Sino-Christian Theology Get out of the Cave after Nietzsche?

As mentioned above, when discussing the modern language context of Christianity in China, Liu has changed in 1999 his focus on the question of modernity from the conflict between China and the West to the conflict between antiquity and modernity, specifically to the conflict concerning the question of human being: “the conflict between Christianity and China is essentially the conflict between Confucianism and

⁵¹ 张旭认为, “历史哲学”=“政治哲学”, 并由此指明刘小枫接下来的思想转向: 由尼采主义历史哲学而指引的对施特劳斯政治哲学的推崇与仿效, 参张旭《上帝死了, 神学何为?》自序。

⁵² 受刘小枫指引, 不少学者非常重视尼采以后的思想语境和思想方法: 张旭写有研究 20 世纪基督教神学基本问题的《上帝死了, 神学何为?》; 吴增定(和李猛)翻译与讲解尼采的《敌基督》(《<敌基督>讲稿》, 北京: 三联书店, 2012); 吴飞撰有《心灵秩序与世界历史: 奥古斯丁对西方古典文明的终结》(北京: 三联书店, 2013); 曾庆豹编有“后尼采系列”丛书, 试图引介二十世纪欧洲思想中尼采以后从现象学、诠释学、解构、批判理论和政治哲学这五个方向展开的对宗教或神学的积极看法。此外, 其他很多受海德格尔、施特劳斯和福柯等人影响的学者, 实际上在很大程度上也直接或间接吸纳和挪用了尼采的思想。

Christianity concerning the question of human being (37).” At this time, what Liu emphasizes is no longer the conflict between the vertical, universally significant Christ-event and the horizontal, concrete, human religion-culture, but the difference and even the conflict between different horizontal human religion-cultures. From his Nietzschean standpoint, Liu claims that the language context of future Sino-theological development is primarily no longer the conflict between horizontal individuality and horizontal nationality in the modern language context, which is triggered by the Christ-event,⁵³ but the conflict between antiquity and modernity concerning different horizontal spiritual values and ethical types about “how people should live”.

To such a Sino-theological proposal of Liu, in terms of the tension between the subject matter of Christian theology and the concrete historical context, we would say: on the one hand, theology should always point to and witness the subject matter of theology in the sense of Barth’s theology, and maintain theological critical destruction of all horizontal, human things such as nation, religion and culture; on the other hand, theology should always be contextual and situational, trying to reinterpret and construct horizontal, human dimensions from the vertical revelation of God. If the situation would go above, or even replace the subject matter, theology would never become theology, when theology lose its theological, vertical, critical and constructive features, and become only horizontal, docile rhetoric or cautious political philosophy, only self-adjusting or even compromising to the situation, and is consequently no longer a truth-seeking and ascending theology of pilgrim on the way, which has its vertical dimension.

Therefore, against Liu’s new Sino-theological proposal, which has turned to the focus on the questions concerning antiquity and modernity, we would say, even in the modern context after Nietzsche, Sino-Christian theology should not firstly attempt to point to and return to horizontal, human questions, not to human ways of living, but to the vertical question of God, to the question of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, namely to the vertical Christ-event, and then secondly to human questions and the questions concerning the ways of living. Borrowing a word from Tang Wenming about Mou Zongsan’s philosophy of history⁵⁴, at the same time in full recognition of the importance of Liu’s Nietzschean historical philosophical approach to deal with the questions of Sino-Christian theology, we want to make it explicitly: the subject matter of theology, or the questions concerning divine-human relationship, is the core issue

⁵³ 林子淳, 《存在·历史·神圣: 当代汉语神学-政治论说反思》, (香港: 道风书社, 2016), 24。

⁵⁴ 唐文明, 《隐秘的颠覆》, 244。

and the fundamental point, on which future development of Sino-Christian theology must rely. After Nietzsche, the answer to the questions of modernity involved in Sino-Christian theology, whether it is the questions concerning antiquity-modernity or China-the West, or the question concerning **human nature (心性) and political system (政制)**, can not only stop at the level of horizontal human differences, but should always return to the vertical divine-human relationship. Borrowing the famous word of **ancient Chinese historian Sima Qian (司马迁)**, today's Sino-Christian theology after Nietzsche must firstly "explore between heaven and human" (究天人之际), namely, always point to and return to the vertical divine-human relationship, so that the differences between China and the West could be communicated, **"ancient and present changes" could be "coherently brought together" (通古今之变)**, and **"a own word" could be "consistently expressed" (成一家之言)**.

To sum up, "to explore between heaven and human" means: Sino-Christian theology after Nietzsche should start from God's revelation in Jesus Christ, especially from the event of the cross, and then express its theological articulation in Chinese language. From this point of view, one might suggest that there may be a kind of natural theology that emphasizes natural order and spiritual types behind Liu's new Nietzschean Sino-theological proposal. I would agree with this suggestion. Liu's natural theology tends to endorse a confirmation of the existing natural orders and spiritual types from the viewpoint of God's creation. However, from the viewpoint of the vertical perspective of the cross, the beautiful world and the good natural order, created by God in the past, have fallen, and been so contained and corrupted by sin, that the original unity of God and human has ceased to exist and cannot be restored. The disorder, nihilism and spiritual crisis after Nietzsche, what we are facing today, cannot be expected to be overcome by restoring the beauty and the goodness of the original creation in the past. From the horizontal perspective of the cross, sin does not prevail, and the fallen world is not only the world created by God in Jesus Christ (namely, the kingdom of nature), but also God's kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ (namely, the kingdom of grace), which is not divided into the world of light and the world of darkness in the Platonic tradition. From the viewpoint of the horizontally-vertically combined perspective of the cross, sin has been overcome through Jesus Christ, the saved world is looking forward to future renewal (namely, the kingdom of glory).

Unlike the restoration that points to the past, renewal points to the new beauty and the new goodness that can be newly created in the future. Such renewal is like “creation newly by returning to the original”, without completely neglecting the beauty and the goodness that is originally created. In the future glory of the coming God’s kingdom, renewal means that the continuity with the original creation is maintained, and at the same time the discontinuity with the original creation takes place in the new creation; sin and fall are no longer possible, and the future world is richer, better and much more beautiful. In the kingdom of God, where Jesus Christ is the ruling king, in this world that is in the present constantly returning to the past and looking forward to the future, the primary question concerning the divine-human relationship is not “who is our enemy and who is our friend” at the horizontal level, but who is our master and whose slaves we are at the horizontal level (cf. Romans 6,16-17). This question should be also the primary question of theology, and naturally Sino-Christian theology.

Under this fundamental premise of “exploring between heaven and human” at such a vertical level, Sino-Christian theology after Nietzsche could then continue to discuss: at a concrete horizontal level, how the differences between China and the West could be communicated, “ancient and present changes” could be “coherently brought together”, and “a own word” could be “consistently expressed”. Regarding the human condition at the horizontal level, the cave metaphor of Plato in his *Republic* is perhaps the most classical and meaningful metaphor in human history. From the viewpoint of the vertical theology of the cross, whether in the ancient natural order, or in the modern world of the will, human being has not gone out of their bounding caves, either due to their cling to ancient natural order of the unity of heaven and human, or due to being intoxicated in modern willing passion of self-expression. The clinging to ancient natural order could probably result from Nietzschean noble will and life strategy. Those people in ancient caves would think themselves in a natural order, which originates from God, and then could act in the name of and on the behalf of heaven or God, by relying on community, faith, religion, culture or even destiny. However, such people see neither the external heavenly Tao nor the inner order. In the modern world of the will, due to the bankruptcy of universal rational ideals after Romanticism, especially after Nietzsche, the perspective of the self and his will has become dominate; numerous selfies seem to sink into a cave of their self-consciousness and tribalism, cannot go out of their present locals and tribes, cannot go back to the ancient natural order in the past, let alone to see possible hope of renewal in the future. One and another self is like a untethered boat drifting in the endless sea: one boat decides to roam against nihility and

absurdity, by bravely embracing the constantly emerging new possibilities in the sea; another boat tries to regain its identity, by returning to blood, family, family affection, family relations, land, culture, faith, nation, religion, ritual system, history and destiny (for example, German Christian's loyalty, love and persistence to blood, land and father-land), but always cannot go back, have to live in the continuous breaking rupture.

To a large extent, the cultural consciousness and self-confidence of a certain way of living, which comes from local blood, family relations, race, nation, religion, faith and ritual system, could may be helpful to the re-establishment of the order and "our" self-identity. However, it is in fact perhaps either another ancient natural order, which derogates human dignity, or another cave of modern willing, which could both "enlighten" and "deceive" ("启蒙", the double connotation of the Chinese translation of the Enlightenment) . If we want to reestablish the renewed order of the nature, if we want to get out of the remolded modern cave, we could find any solution neither in the natural order nor in the original human nature. Like one possible interpretation of Plato's cave metaphor, the reason why the human person has gotten out of the cave, while being liberated and getting dignity, not because of his self-illuminating, while taking the initiative to get rid of the chains and the flames, and bravely using his natural rationality or expressing his own will, but because of the light, which has illuminated him, so that the chains have been broken, the flames have been left behind, and then he could go hopefully towards to the lightness. And this is exactly the first response that theology and Sino-Christian theology will give, when they are further deepened and expanded. The differences and conflicts between China and the West and between antiquity and modernity, the integration of the differences between China and the west, and the convergence of the changes of antiquity and modernity, if it would not be discerned, identified and reconciled in the theological subject matter revealed by God himself and in the kingdom of God brought by God himself, it would always be possible to bring theology and Sino-Christian theology back to a horizontal cave. No matter which rhetoric one cave would have, Sino-Christian theology have to be on guard against the temptation of its justification of a certain cave, and tries always to point to and witness the theological subject matter, so that it could become a theology which speaks Chinese in the Chinese context after Nietzsche today. Such Sino-Christian theology does not point to a natural order in the past, nor is it an self-expression of the will, which clings to the present, but rather provides a new cultural-intellectual-political

imagination about the futural renewal, while becoming a referential witness to the coming kingdom of God.

Keywords: Barth, Nietzsche, Liu Xiaofeng (刘小枫), Sino-[Christian]Theology
(汉语[基督]神学)

Abstract:

From the viewpoint of the tension between the theological subject matter (Sache) and a concrete historical context, this article tries to analyze, investigate, and reflect upon Sino-Christian Theology's reception and appropriation of modern thoughts, based on a text-analytical case study and critical assessment of Liu Xiaofeng's two different versions of his Sino-Christian Theology proposal in 1994 and 1999. This paper demonstrates that Liu Xiaofeng's Sino-Christian Theology proposal in 1994 has a distinctive Barthian tendency, by emphasizing the encounter between the Christ-event and the existential individual, and the questions concerning the relationship between China and the West; but while criticizing indigenous theology, Liu overemphasizes the theological objectivity (Sachlichkeit) and language expression (yuyanbiaoshu, 语言表述) of individual faith, thus neglects the concrete historical language context (yujing, 语境). In 1999, Liu's significantly revised Sino-Christian theology proposal takes a clear Nietzschean position, while focusing on the questions concerning the relationship between ancient and modern ways, and emphasizes the historical contextuality of theology, and ignores the theological objectivity and the critical nature of theology, by turning to Strauss's political philosophy, which ignores the Christ-event and the individual faith, and emphasizes the natural order and spiritual types. In the concluding part, this paper argues that theology, on the one hand, should always point to and become the witness to the theological subject matter, and maintain theology's critique of all horizontal, human things; on the other hand, theology have to always become contextual, by trying to reconstruct horizontal, human dimensions, from the perspective of God's vertical revelation.