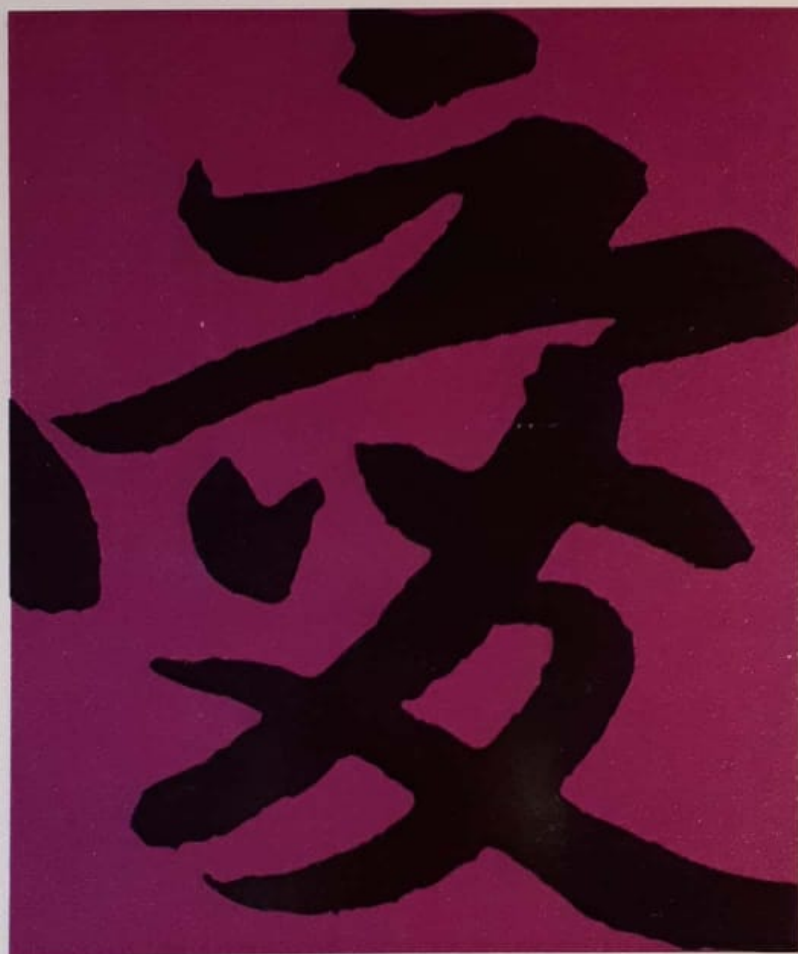


在爱中寻求真理



Seeking Truth in Love

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Straight to the Future

The Visionary Bishop K.H.Ting

[Switzerland] Christoph Stückelberger

He listens carefully. He reflects silently. He answers precisely. This is how I met Bishop K.H. Ting in April 2005 during a visit of the delegation of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches in Bishop Ting's house. In a similar way I met him for the first time twenty years ago, 1985 in Zurich/Switzerland coming from the World Council of Churches in Geneva, when he told us about the new developments in China "where every day a new church is opened".

Why is Bishop Ting an outstanding Church leader? Because he was always and still is ahead of his time. He leads the Church in China in very difficult periods of history; he deepens Christian faith with his visionary mind; He identifies the present and the future challenges; he offers instruments for analysis and solutions and he therefore shows ways to the future.



Why is he such a credible and visionary leader? Because he's deeply rooted in Jesus Christ as his benchmark, deeply rooted in the Chinese culture as his fertile soil and at the same time deeply rooted in the ecumenical world as the home for all Christians and for humanity.

On this foundation he identified three main challenges for Christians in China: Faith, Church and Ethics.

The first challenge is Faith. Bishop Ting's call for the "Reconstruction of the theological thinking" is very fundamental. The theological challenge is the most serious for the Churches in China as well as it is in Europe. To formulate the Christian faith in our time in a credible, understandable and ethical way is basic for the Church, like the water for a tree. Christian unity must be based on clear theological reflection and discussion, based on prayer for God's guiding spirit. The challenge is to reconcile the different theological tendencies and to avoid new denominationalism rooted in different theological traditions. In Europe we face as a main theological challenge to overcome Christian alphabetism because too many people no longer know the basic stories of the Bible. The challenge is to give simple but not simplistic answers and to give biblically well rooted answers to post-Christian Europeans. Our delegation of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches during the visit in China last April was very much impressed and encouraged by the fact that the Bible plays such a central role in the Churches in China.

The second challenge is the Church. Bishop Ting gave the important guidance to further develop the church structure and the ecclesiology as the doctrine of the church which is the living body of Christ. How to organise the church in a way that allows Christian freedom of the believ-



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ers and at the same time guarantees Christian unity in order to be the united body of Christ? How to find a Church order which is rooted in the Chinese (and in my case in the European) culture, that means which is contextualised? And how — at the same time — develop a church order which is part of the global body of Christ and a credible instrument of Christ in society in order to strengthen faith as well as human dignity and justice in society.

The third challenge is Ethics. Bishop Ting's emphasised for many years the importance of Christian ethics for faith, church and society in China. Fifteen years ago he said: "For the church to emphasize service in her works, our theology ought to hold high ethics and morals. ... The starting point for a contextualisation seems to be the restoration of the ethical and moral content of Christianity. Christianity is a religion that emphasizes ethics and morals." (K.H. Ting: *Love Never Ends*, Yilin Press, Nanjing, 2000, p.334). We cannot save our souls with ethical behaviour. God loves us and forgives us only by grace. But ethical behaviour is our thankful response to his grace and an expression of our love to our neighbours, to all human beings and to the non-human creation (see more about it: Christoph Stückelberger: China: Ethical challenges for Church and Society in A Globalized World, Nanjing Theological Review 61, No 4/2004, p.4-17/18-34).

During my various visits to China I identified four main ethical challenges in China as they were told us by Chinese people. These are the same challenges as we have in Europe! We can therefore learn much from each other in order to develop a harmonious society in China and in Europe. The four ethical challenges are:



Family ethics: the fast transition and the fast economic development in the Chinese as well as in the European society lead to instability in family relations. The divorce rate in China is still much, much lower than in Europe. Nevertheless, the number of broken families is growing, and the need to care for family members, for example of migrant workers or old people in the villages, becomes more and more urgent. The dialogue on family ethics between the different religious and non-religious traditions is necessary.

Economic ethics: the open world market, the fast growth of wealth but also the growing number of people in need is a great challenge especially in business ethics. Global business ethical standards are attractive and helpful in order to support basic values in a globalised market.

Environmental ethics: the limits of natural resources, the pollution of air and water, climate change and energy efficiency are ethical challenges for a sustainable world which respects human needs and looks at the same time for a balance between these human needs and environmental protection.

Social ethics: the growing gap between poor and rich in China as well as in Europe must be reduced in order to maintain social peace and stability. The social security system in Europe is under huge pressure and in big difficulties to be financed. It has to be reorganised and rebuilt — in Europe and in China as well.

In all these four areas, Christian ethics can and has to contribute in order to find a moral basis for behaviour and to find common ethical values for individuals, in Church and in society.

Bishop Ting is an outstanding spiritual, ethical, political and first of



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all Church leader. His teaching, preaching, guidance and life is a sign of hope, not only for Christians and Church and society in China but also in Europe and the whole world! His life is a sign of God's overwhelming grace.