CHAPTER 5

The Doctrine of Justification – Contextualized to New Confucianism

5.1 Introductory Matters

5.1.1 Initial Remarks
Having examined and presented the doctrine of justification in Chapter 3, and relevant elements of New Confucianism in Chapter 4, I now proceed to contextualizing the doctrine as specified in the method developed in Chapter 2. Before proceeding to the concrete contextualization of each of the elements of the doctrine, there are two things that must be pointed out.

First, it is necessary to say something about the disposition I have chosen to follow, which emphases and preferences I make, and which delimitations I have chosen for which reasons. The comments on delimitations include my use of the Chinese language and Chinese characters, expressions, and concepts, as these are used in Christian Chinese vocabulary.

Second, I find it useful to present a short examination of some fundamental similarities and differences between Christianity and New Confucianism which particularly influence the specific elements of the doctrine of justification. Such underlying issues are easily ignored when dealing with specific topics. However, in attentiveness to basic ideas and concepts, one may discover that similarities and correspondence on the surface may hide basic differences deeper down. The other way round, differences at the level of the specific topics, may appear to be of less importance when similarities at the basic structure are considered.

When I use the term “Confucianism” I refer to Confucianism in general, at all times. When I refer to New Confucianism, Classic Confucianism, or Neo Confucianism I specify this by applying these terms.

5.1.2 Disposition, Emphases, and Delimitations
5.1.2.1 Disposition
In the concrete contextualization in 5.2, I will follow the ordering of elements of the doctrine of justification applied in Chapter 3, which is roughly the one found in the JD. There are, of course, details in the presentation in Chapter 3 which are not necessary to deal with for the purpose of contextualization here in Chapter 5, simply because they do not raise any
problems to be faced. Therefore, in Subchapter 5.2, I may frequently skip details dealt with in Chapter 3.

For each element dealt with, the examination will follow the steps of the method of contextualization presented in 2.2.3.2. In accordance with this method, I will as a final point under each doctrinal element look for elements in New Confucianism which Christianity may employ for a better understanding and explication of itself, both in the target contexts of the present contextualization, and in general. In all points I have to be aware of the context-relatedness of the CA and the Apology, and even the JD, as developed in Chapter 3.

5.1.2.2 Elements to be Emphasized, and Delimitations

In the subsections on linguistic considerations I will focus on some Christian terms and expressions central to the doctrine of justification as these are translated in the Chinese translation of the Bible, the Chinese Union Version (CUV) of 1919, also called the Union Mandarin Version. Although there are several newer translations available, this is still the most widely used translation among Protestants.¹ I will examine how well the translations of these central terms may function in New Confucian contexts – to which degree the semantic fields of the biblical concepts are covered, and to which degree irrelevant and disturbing associations may be linked to the translations. Christian concepts seldom cover all of the semantic fields of their most equivalent Confucian counterparts, and vice versa. This makes rendering of Christian terms into Chinese a difficult matter, as the so-called “term controversies” demonstrated. Almost every character applied to translate main Christian concepts needs some specification of the Christian meaning it is supposed to carry.

As mentioned in 1.3.3.3, some insight into the Chinese language is a great advantage for a study such as the present one. On the one hand, Confucianism today is an inter-cultural faith, consciously meant to be exported to the West by its adherents. In the Confucian camp, particularly Cheng Chung-yiing has been engaged in translating Confucian and Chinese terms into English philosophical language. Of my four main sources on New Confucianism, only Liu has spent the major part of his working days in a Chinese society, at the CUHK. On the other hand, almost all of the source literature I make use of introduces and interprets the main Confucian concepts as expressed in their original

¹ See Thor Strandenaes, Principles of Chinese Bible Translation (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 76. The CUV must be distinguished from the more literary styled Union Wenli Version.