The "Yin and Yang" of God (Exo 3:14) and Humanity (Gen 1:26-27)

Nobody can communicate intelligibly in culture-free theological axioms; nor can Christian faith be meaningful in a cultural vacuum. Theological hermeneutics is the art and science of appropriating the eternal will of God (historically revealed in the word of God within the Hebraic and Greco-Roman milieu) to the particular historical cultures of people. Since the task of the theological enterprise essentially is to interpret or to construct the truth in a way intelligible to the people, the crucial need to speak the truth in the language of the people has been practised ever since Creation. As such, every theological revelation and construction is contextual and indigenous. For theology not only addresses the needs of a particular people in a particular situation, it also is conveyed in and through the indigenous language of the people. The Scripture itself gives us the best example.

Since theologizing means interpreting and re-incarnating the truth or the expression of our faith, what is attempted in this paper is the use of the "yin-yang" philosophy as an alternate way of thinking the truth about God and humanity. This is not to suggest that other paradigmatic and philosophical understandings of God and humanity are wrong or inferior. For this paper merely attempts to speak the language with which the Chinese are most comfortable. This indigenous theology is biblical in that we begin with the biblical text as the

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2 Notice how the truth about and of God is revealed in the language of the Hebrews and the common Greeks. There seems not to be such a thing as "a pure holy language" about God which is untainted by the language of people. The incarnation of Christ speaks of the ultimate need for the truth to become flesh. Not only does God's revelation impinge upon the lives of people, but the people's situation also cries out for God's response.
3 Rethinking is crucial for me and my people because most (not all) Western biblical, historical and systematic theology are seen through the Aristotelian, Hellenistic glasses of dualism and absolutism in various forms. There is nothing wrong for Westerners who can understand them, but it constitutes a gulf needing to be bridged for Easterners. Therefore, we are here constructing an indigenous theology which hopefully will bridge the gap between the thinking of the biblical worldview and the Chinese yin-yang worldview.
primary (though not the only) witness to Christian truth. This theology is systematic in that we are imposing a certain principle (the yin-yang understanding) on the text. We shall first set forth the basic tenets concerning the „yin-yang“ understanding of cosmology. Then we will use Exo 3:14 and Gen 1:26-27 to construct a Chinese theology of God and humanity.

I. Basic Understanding of the Yin-yang Philosophy

Let us first turn to the classic Yin-yang paradigm as an overarching framework or underlying principle at work in this paper. Some of the main presuppositions and tenets of Yin-yang philosophy are:

A) Cosmology is more important than anthropology because anthropology is a part of cosmology. Therefore, if one wishes to know anthropology, one has to know the larger context. Furthermore, a true understanding of the self is not sufficient merely by studying oneself, but requires studying of the self in relationship to the larger whole. This approach, therefore, does not assume a hierarchal view of realities but an organic view. In short, you and I are in the purpose of God, who is the larger whole, or who is the Ultimate Reality.

B) Reality is conceived ultimately as change rather than as being

4 Nobody can approach the biblical text without any presuppositions, grids or principles. The very fact that we use language to think and articulate a certain conceptualization indicates that we encounter the texts with certain linguistic and cultural presuppositions. The problem, as I see it, is not that we are unable to come to the biblical text with a blank mind (which is in any case unnecessary), but that we are not concious of the principles we bring to the texts. Therefore, I will be the first to acknowledge that the yin-yang understanding of God and humanity has its limitations and biases.


7 „The Book of Change contains the measure of Heaven and Earth, enabling us to comprehend the all-pervasive Tao and its order.“ (Hsi tz’u chuan, chap. 4).

8 The yin-yang approach is appropriate especially in reference to cosmology, anthropology and the Great Ultimate (God or the divine reality). That is, ultimate matter can be better explained by yin-yang principles, and penultimate matter need not be so.

9 The word „I“ means changes, has pictograms of sun and moon. Technically, yin means the shaded area, and yang means the sunlit slope of a mountain, cf. Jung Young, Lee, The Theology of Change: a Christian Concept of God in an Eastern Perspective (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 3-14. According to the I Ching, it is change, not process, that is the ultimate, non-contingent reality. This is where the I-Ching’s understanding of change differs from Western Process Theology, cf. Lee,