

A Mahāyāna Reading of Chalcedon Christology: A Chinese Response to John Keenan

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INTRODUCTION

The Christological formula of Chalcedon, especially its use of the substantialist concepts such as *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and so on, has long been a target of criticism in the history of Western Christian theology.¹ Recently, Kwok Pui-lan, an Asian feminist theologian, has queried not only the language or way of thinking of traditional Western Christology, but also its anthropocentric tendency. According to Kwok, “the majority of Asian people find it difficult to accept a savior in human form because of their cosmological sensibility.”² Kwok also thinks that the Chalcedonian expressions such as “fully God and fully man” or “two natures in one substance” are quite beyond the understanding of the majority of the Asian people. The lengthy debate on the difference between *homoousia* and *homoiousia* is also irrelevant to the average Chinese, because there are no immediate Chinese equivalents to the terms such as “being” or “essence.” According to Kwok, Buddhism, in contrast, characterizes the world as transient and impermanent without using the philosophical language such as “being” and “nonbeing.”³ Kwok further notes that “The Buddhist tradition asserts that there is not one Buddha, but many Buddhas, and that everyone has the potential to attain Buddhahood. If we get away from the framework defined by a language of substance, we will not be fixated on a one-time incarnation.”⁴ Kwok concludes that the anthropocentric perspective and the substantialist language of the Chalcedonian Creed represent a burden or obstacle that needs to be put aside. She even laments that “the church worldwide is still much under the yoke of the Chalcedonian captivity and Eurocentric theological formulations based on Western heritages.”⁵ Kwok’s comment seems to imply that the Buddhist way of thinking may offer a better alternative or a remedy to Chalcedonian Christology.

In the contemporary Buddhist-Christian dialogue, John P. Keenan, when proposing a Mahāyāna theology, also offers a critique of Chalcedonian Christology.⁶

Through a response to Keenan's discussion, this paper will examine these critiques and will attempt to reinterpret the Chalcedonian Christology from a Mahāyāna perspective.

THE MAHĀYĀNA THEOLOGY OF JOHN KEENAN

In proposing a Mahāyāna theology, Keenan assumes a Christian standpoint and tries to make use of Mahāyāna Buddhism for the service of Christianity. As Keenan himself frankly admits, his basic approach is to adopt "Mahāyāna Thought as *Theologiae Ancilla*," which is the heading for the second part of his *The Meaning of Christ*. Keenan's strategy of arguing for a Mahāyāna theology is to identify the need of Christianity first, and then to argue in what way Mahāyāna Buddhism can help Christian theology to solve its own problems. According to Keenan's diagnosis, a fundamental problem of the Western Christian tradition is the detrimental separation of mysticism from doctrine. In his own words,

It is argued here that, to date, the Christian West has been unable organically to relate its own mystic thinkers to its doctrinal, theoretical thinking. The reason for this inability was not simply, as Adolf von Harnack thought, the adoption and superimposition of Greek patterns of ontology upon the gospel. Rather it is an inability to differentiate that realm of Greek, logos-centered theory from the more primal realm of mystic awareness, an ability to understand the mind of faith in its polyvalent realms of meaning.⁷

In the first part of the book (ch. 1–5), based on his review of the historical development of the Christian understanding of Christ, Keenan highlights the tremendous tension between the primal experience of "being in Christ" and the theoretical understanding of Christ.⁸ Keenan believes that the school of wisdom literature in the Old Testament has prepared the New Testament for an understanding of the meaning of Christ as God's wisdom. This wisdom comprises essentially God as Father (*Abba*) as well as the theology of the cross and resurrection. He further points out that early Christians, following the example of Jesus Christ, had direct experience of God as Father. Owing to the need to expound Christianity in words, however, early theologians were compelled to employ languages available in their times. The result was the hellenization of theology. Keenan asserts that Greek philosophy is but one of many philosophical traditions and has no exclusive right to the interpretation of the Christian faith or other matters, no matter how brilliant Greek philosophies might have been.⁹ Keenan further suggests that the Hellenistic way of thinking may be neither the best nor an adequate tool for the theoretical expression of Christian faith. He says, "The concepts of nature, substance, essence, and person that determined the structure of this thinking are not present in all cultural contexts and when they are, they are often negated as philosophical errors. A naïve claim for the universal validity of such philosophical notions ill serves either clear thinking or theological understanding."¹⁰ Keenan does not reject the traditional doctrines entirely.

He merely attempts to point out the limitation of the dogmas expressed in such a philosophical framework. Keenan suggests that they may well be valid in cultures under Greek influence, but their validity for the contemporary Western world is doubtful.¹¹

According to Keenan, there are two main types of mysticism in early Christianity, namely mysticism of light and mysticism of darkness. The mysticism of light, having been inspired by Platonic philosophy and championed by Origen (c. 185–254) and others, is a form of rationalized mysticism assuming that the ability of contemplating/perceiving God is intrinsic to human nature. Through exercises of purification and gradual ascent, one can attain contemplative knowledge of God, which represents the supreme expression of human reason and the purification as well as elevation of theoretical knowledge. However, the confrontational or dualistic relationship between the subject and the object of knowing still prevails in this contemplative knowledge.¹² Unlike the mysticism of light, mysticism of darkness, best represented by Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–c. 395) and Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500), holds that God is ultimately an unknowable and unspeakable mystery, which is not accessible through knowledge or language that presumes an empirically subject-versus-object confrontation or duality. According to this mystical tradition, the supreme state of union with God is attained in a noncognitive and speechless darkness, in which there is no more duality, confrontation, or separation between humanity and God. Many champions of this mystical tradition, being themselves dogmatic theologians, had no intention of denying the value of the theoretical or doctrinal construction. They merely tried to differentiate between the theoretical and the mystical realm and to maintain a critical understanding of the limitations of theological discourses.¹³ However, the mysticism of darkness has largely been marginalized in the Christian tradition, in comparison to the dominance of the mysticism of light. Given the imbalance between the two streams, Christian mystical experience has been often regarded as merely giving empirical evidence in support of the religious truth expressed in theology and dogmas, rather than the source and origin of theology and dogmas. As Christian mystical experience is always unilaterally looking for its verification from canonical doctrines, it has never been organically integrated with theology.¹⁴

After diagnosing the disease, Keenan attempts to propose in part 2 (ch. 6–11) how Mahāyāna Buddhism can contribute to the therapy. Keenan suggests, “It is the argument of this book that Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy, especially the Mādhyamika thought of Nāgārjuna and the Yogācāra thought of Asaṅga, can assist Christian theology both in reclaiming the centrality of its own mystic tradition and in maintaining a valid place for theoretical systematics.”¹⁵ Keenan hopes in particular that Mahāyāna philosophy may help the mysticism of darkness to regain a central position in Christianity.¹⁶

In the first half of part 2 (ch. 6–8), through a survey of the origins and development of Buddhism, Keenan argues that although the demarcation between the mystical and the theoretical can also be found in Buddhism, the Mahāyāna, especially the Yogācāra, is able to have a critical understanding of understanding itself. It can

affirm the primacy of mysticism while affirming a limited but effective role for theoretical discourse.¹⁷ Of course, this is not to say that Buddhism can always maintain a perfect balance between academic theory and the practice of mystical insights.¹⁸ What Keenan attempts to argue is that the Yogācāra School represents an effective and insightful approach to philosophizing.¹⁹ According to Keenan,

The themes of emptiness and dependent co-arising, the two truths, and the theory of conscious construction-only mark a step back from essentialist thinking towards an understanding of religious and theological consciousness. The deconstructive thrust of emptiness and ultimate meaning offers some assurance against a naïve theology that would mistake its ideas for descriptive accounts of divine ontological affairs. The constructive direction of consciousness-only in its understanding of the structure and functioning of consciousness, both defiled and awakened, insists that one must evolve theologies in the context of emptiness.²⁰

In Keenan's opinion, "The particular value of using a Mahāyāna model for Christian theology lies in its ability to insist on the priority of mystic meaning, while engaged in constructing theologies."²¹

Keenan clarifies that "the use of Mahāyāna as a model for Christian theology entails the rejection of the metaphysical basis of Western theology,"²² but this is not tantamount to replacing one metaphysical system with another. It is because, Keenan believes, Mahāyāna thought is deconstructive of all forms of metaphysics or ontology; and it will be its deconstructive themes that aid in deepening Christian insight into the gospel.²³ Keenan also points out that what matters most in Mahāyāna theology is the spirit, not the language or the concept.

Mahāyāna theology is not focused on the content to be understood, the Greek *noēta*, but on the mind that understands, for wisdom is a mode of conscious awareness and the wisdom of theology issues from minds familiar with the emptiness and ineffability of all doctrines in their co-arising articulation. Mahāyāna theology argues that all theological modes (even a Mahāyāna mode) are valid only within their contextuality in terms of the particular conditions in virtue of which they arise. In the words of Maximus Confessor, "the doctrines of the Church are transcended by their own content."²⁴

In fact, Keenan is aware of the fact that Mahāyāna philosophy, just as all other schools of philosophy, is also subject to certain constraints, among them a tendency to diminish faith awareness. But the advantage of adopting Mahāyāna philosophy is precisely because it works in awareness of its own limitations.²⁵

Before proposing his Mahāyāna Christology as an alternative, Keenan pays tribute to the achievement of Chalcedon. Keenan holds that the Christological affirmation of understanding Christ as both God and human is in tandem with the primary experience of Jesus opening himself to God and to humanity.²⁶ Furthermore, the Chalcedonian formula is appropriate to the particular cultural and linguistic

contexts under which it was formed. A proper understanding of the import of Chalcedon is prerequisite to any attempts at formulating new theologies with new concepts.²⁷ However, Keenan also suggests that even though the early church fathers had tried their best to convey its original insight as far as possible with the language available to them, some of the expressions, such as the Father and the Son being “consubstantial,” still have to be rejected from a Mahāyāna standpoint.²⁸ He comments, “The Chalcedonian doctrine does today tend to encourage a naïve conceptualism about the person of Jesus Christ and hence to preclude direct awareness of meaning in Christ by engaging one in the fabrication of views. It reflects a confidence in words as meaning units that many modern philosophers and Christians from other cultures do not share.”²⁹ For Keenan, the doctrinal formula is not merely philosophically unsatisfactory, but also soteriologically inadequate. In his own words, “The role of Jesus as mediating and bringing faith to speech is often overlooked in a metaphysical disquisition on his dual nature. The mediating of an essentially conceived Christ is not the mediation of the word of the Father from silence, but a mediation between two entities, one human one divine. Christ becomes a kind of ombudsman pleading the human cause before a divine, managerial presence.”³⁰ Keenan thinks that the major problem with Chalcedon lies in the conceptual framework, which tends to assume the opposition between humanity and divinity.³¹

Keenan proposes that Mahāyāna philosophy is well positioned to correct the “overconfident” attempts in Christian theology precisely because of its emphasis on religious experience and senses.³² Mahāyāna thought can serve as a reminder that we are not necessarily restrained by the ontology adopted by Chalcedon, and that we should beware of the tendency in the language of Greek philosophy toward essentialist categories.³³

Based on the Mahāyāna concepts of “emptiness,” “dependent co-arising,” and the “Two Truths,” Keenan’s Mahāyāna Christology is articulated in three main points. First of all, the notion of “Jesus as empty” refers to the fact that Jesus does not have a definable nature. He does not have a selfhood or *ātman* apart from words and deeds that dependently co-arise.³⁴ “The center of the ‘being’ of Christ is his subtle sense of the presence of the Father and his dedication to God’s sovereignty in the world.”³⁵ In his transparency toward God, Jesus is comparable to the finger pointing at the moon described in Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism.³⁶ To describe Jesus Christ as “empty” is not to deny his finality but rather to acknowledge it. All prepositional statements about Jesus himself are basically irrelevant, as the experience of the meaning of Christ is a direct mystical experience of God who acted in Jesus and an experience of Jesus as alive and exalted beyond death.³⁷ In Mahāyāna Christology, the deepest understanding of the meaning of Christ is constructed upon the idea of emptiness and co-arising. Under this particular philosophical context, imposing the concept of essence on the being of Christ is tantamount to contaminating the meaning of Christ and is perceived as an illusory fabrication.³⁸

Second, the notion of Jesus as dependently co-arisen suggests that Jesus as an event took place in a human context and reflects the culture in which it was set. As a human being Jesus was subject to the contingency of human history and was even not

immune to the influence of karma. Some Christian thinkers tried to interpret the Christ event from a teleological perspective, regarding the life of Christ as divinely predetermined. Such interpretation would not only deny the humanity of Jesus and perceive it as transcendent over the flux of human experience and the contingency of human life, but would also bring a false sense of security. Instead of regarding Jesus' death as merely the result of a certain predetermined plan, a Mahāyāna Christology understands Jesus as a victim of prejudice for some imagined religious truth held by those who regarded Jesus as a dangerous prophet that would upset the social and political order and balances.³⁹

Third, the notion of Christ as embodying the two truths means that Christ communicates specifically the invisible and unspeakable God to human beings. The ultimate truth can be only experienced directly but not interpreted in words, while the conventional truth co-arises in specific circumstances to enlighten people so that they become able to experience the ultimate truth. These two truths are not directly related to each other. As the conventional truth is contextual and may prevent some from partaking in the experience, it is possible to say that the conventional truth "covers"—obscures as well as manifests—the ultimate truth.⁴⁰ Recognizing the inadequacy of such an interpretation of Christ as the wisdom of God, Keenan further proposes to complement it with the view advanced in Asaṅga's *Summary of the Great Vehicle* that pure doctrines are not just dependently co-arising, but also flowing directly from the ultimate realm of purity. Accordingly, "The significance of Christ is not then merely conventional or culture-bound, for the experience of meaning in Christ flows from the wisdom of nondiscrimination."⁴¹

As Keenan admits, Mahāyāna Christology does have its limitations. First of all, it cannot be considered an adequate Christology given the absence of any account for Christ's finality and otherness.⁴² Moreover, there is a tendency toward Docetism in Mahāyāna Christology that needs to be overcome.⁴³ Having said that, Keenan does not believe that Mahāyāna Christology is necessarily a "Low Christology" that plays down or denies Christ's divinity. Keenan maintains that the Church has always emphasized Christ's divinity, to the extent that his humanity is sometimes subdued. In the Mahāyāna perspective, however, the finality of Christ is underscored by his being empty. Because he is empty, he is capable of being filled by the Holy Spirit and passing this experience to others. As emptiness is in dependently co-arising, Christ's finality is in his historical life and death rather than in contradiction with his historicity. Accordingly, the meaning of Christ does not lie in Jesus' being conceived as a holy figure confronting or above believers, which represents nothing but a worship of an illusory divine hero figure. Rather, the meaning of Christ should be internally realized through encounter with God the Father.⁴⁴ What such an understanding of the meaning of Christ implies is that "There is no need to define the specific difference between Jesus and other human beings. That would entail once again a metaphysics of essence. Rather, all human beings, including Jesus, are empty of essence."⁴⁵ Something similar can be said of the relationship between Jesus and God the Father: "Rather than being defined as 'consubstantial' with the Father, Jesus may better be described as 'nonsubstantial' with the Father."⁴⁶

KEENAN'S MAHĀYĀNA THEOLOGY IN A CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

In his response to critics, Keenan further clarifies that he has no intention of denying traditional theology, nor does he think that the Mādhyamika School is a universally valid approach. He believes that validity is always subject to contextuality. One can expect that in certain contexts, the Mahāyāna language would at best be “co-opted” or “unserviceable.”⁴⁷ Keenan even concurs with one of his critics that it might well be a smart choice not to discard the metaphysical foundations of Western theology.⁴⁸ It is also important to note that the primary aim of Keenan’s study is not to offer a comprehensive exposition of the significance of Mahāyāna Buddhism for Christian theology, particularly Western Christianity. What he actually attempts is to illustrate the significance of Mahāyāna Buddhism in connection with a particular *Problematik* faced by Christianity, namely the way in which mystical experience might be integrated organically with theological discourse. In other words, Keenan’s approach is by no means the only possible way to developing Mahāyāna theology.

In Keenan’s *The Meaning of Christ*, the discussion is based mainly on the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra Schools, while the Thatāhatagarbha (the Buddha-nature) is rather brief and rare.⁴⁹ However, given the centrality of the Thatāhatagarbha tradition in Chinese Buddhism, one has to consider the possibility of developing a Mahāyāna theology in the Chinese context with special reference to Thatāhatagarbha thought. In fact, during the first half of the twentieth century, some Chinese intellectuals attempted to interpret Christian theology from a Buddhist perspective. Among them, Zhang Chun-yi (1871–1955), especially after his conversion from Christianity to Buddhism, adopted a Mahāyāna Buddhist position and employed Christian theology as a handmaiden to Buddhism.⁵⁰ Zhang uses in particular the concept of Buddha-nature, a key concept of the Thatāhatagarbha tradition, to develop a Buddhist-Christian pneumatology.⁵¹

In the following discussion, this paper attempts to argue that the Thatāhatagarbha thought of Mahāyāna Buddhism may be a more valuable source for developing Mahāyāna theology, especially a Mahāyāna Christology, in the Chinese context.

A Reappraisal of the Thatāhatagarbha Tradition

According to Keenan, the Thatāhatagarbha School was surpassed by the Yogācāra. The fundamental weakness of the Thatāhatagarbha tradition, he suggests, has been its failure to understand the empirical defilement in consciousness.⁵² Keenan suggests, “The Tathāhatagarbha thinkers simply ignored theory altogether in favour of a commonsense affirmation of the ultimate reality and validity of the Buddha-nature.”⁵³ Keenan’s criticism of the Tathāhatagarbha tradition is questionable. Apparently, his conclusions are based on Tathāhatagarbha sutras as interpreted by the Yogācāra School, but such conclusions are not necessarily fair to the Tathāhatagarbha system of thought.

As some scholars attempt to argue, the pure heart (*qing jing xin*) advocated by the Tathāhatagarbha is not the same from an empirical point of view as the “white

purity” (*bai jing*) or “thorough purity” (*bian jing*) affirmed by primitive Buddhism. The primitive Buddhist view is comparable to John Locke’s *tabula rasa* that the pure heart’s purity is due to its being not yet contaminated, whereas the Tathāhatagarbha makes a transcendental affirmation on the pure heart’s proactive ability to purify itself.⁵⁴ Keenan himself also points out that in the Yogācāra texts, the original meaning of the terms used by the Tathāhatagarbha School shifted. The originally pure mind is no longer the originally pure mind of the *garbha*, which has its innate ability to bring about its own awakening. Rather, it becomes the originally present consciousness, which has no innate ability to bring about its own awakening and has to rely on external forces to achieve perfection.⁵⁵

In the development of Thatāhatagarbha thought in Chinese Buddhism, it is affirmed that even plants and grasses have Buddha-nature and can attain Buddhahood. In Japanese Zen Buddhism, Dōgen affirms that all beings universally possess Buddha-nature and that according to the concept of the nothingness of the Buddha-nature, the phenomenal world and absolute emptiness are identical.⁵⁶ These affirmations of the Buddha-nature are far from being commonsense.

In fact, Keenan himself notes, “In the Thatāhatagarbha tradition the world is indeed illusory, but the Buddha-nature is really real behind the changing appearance of everyday living.”⁵⁷ He also suggests, “In asserting the original purity of the mind, the Thatāhatagarbha tradition tended to drift into a non-verifiable and non-experiential monistic theory of the one, ineffable reality behind all appearances.”⁵⁸ Keenan’s comments are questionable in at least a few aspects. In Chinese Buddhism at least, the theory of the Buddha-nature does not necessarily imply that the world is illusory. Rather the world can be affirmed as empty or dependently co-arising, nothing more and nothing less, in just the same way as primitive Buddhism affirms. It may be too static to describe the Buddha-nature as a nonverifiable, nonexperiential, and ineffable reality behind all appearances. It overlooks the point that Buddha-nature is not entirely detached from actual life. According to Ch’an Buddhism, especially the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng, the self-nature pure heart advocated by Thatāhatagarbha can be realized in experience, including meditation and ordinary daily life.

Mahāyāna Buddhism and Chinese Culture

Before considering the possibility of a Mahāyāna theology, we have to understand first and foremost the meaning of “Mahāyāna” (literally, “great vehicle”) vis-à-vis the so-called “Hinayana” (a prerogative term literally meaning “small vehicle”). The distinction essentially involves the divergent positions between Theravada and Mahāsamghika on various philosophical perceptions, worldviews, ethics, relationship between laity and sangha, other religions and cultures, traditions, universal salvation, and the holy and the profane.⁵⁹ An important question for Keenan’s proposition is whether the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra Schools can adequately represent the Mahāyāna tradition. As Joseph S. O’Leary points out, a major debate that features the study of the history of Buddhist thought is whether the Yogācāra School

represents a logocentric regression from the radicalism of the Mādhyamika School.⁶⁰ There are genuine doubts whether the essence of Buddhism is most aptly represented by the Yogācāra School.

Historically speaking, the Yogācāra School has not won the favor of too many followers beyond India. Despite the tremendous effort made by Hsüan-chang (Xuan Zang, c. 596–664) in the translation of the texts and the dissemination of the doctrines, the influence of the Yogācāra or Vijñaptimatra School in China was incomparable to the indigenous Chinese schools of Buddhism, such as Tien-tai, Hua-yen, Pure Land, and Ch’an. In contrast, the Tathāhatagarbha tradition, though overshadowed by the Yogācāra School in India, enjoyed far more extensive development in China than the Yogācāra. Concepts such as “all beings universally possess Buddha-nature” and “even icchantia could attain Buddhahood” had been established long before Hsüan-chang. In fact, these beliefs had been vigorously affirmed by Tao-sheng (c. 360–434), in contrast to most of his contemporaries, even before the particular version of the Mahāpariṇirvanā Sutra that explicitly advocates this theory was translated. The doctrine of the Buddha’s nature was further elaborated in Chinese Buddhism to suggest that even plants and grasses are capable of becoming Buddha. The influence of Thatāhatagarbha was also evident in Ch’an Buddhism.⁶¹

Keenan understands that the concept of Buddha-nature and Thatāhatagarbha thought were merely marginal ideas in Indian Buddhism used for the convenience of interpretation, but they became core doctrines in Chinese Buddhism following the introduction of the religion to China. An important factor contributing to this development, according to Keenan, was the translation of Buddhist sutras into Chinese. Parāmartha, the major translator, owing to his lack of proficiency in the ancient Chinese language, had to rely on Hui-kai, his Chinese assistant, to translate the sutras. The process of translation was thus influenced by particularly the Chinese philosophical concepts of nature (*xing*) and self-nature (*ben xing*). An unintended result was a decisive shift from a noncentrist to a centrist conceptuality, which marked the influence of indigenous Chinese philosophy on the translation and thus the subsequent development of Buddhist thought.⁶² If we give credit to Keenan’s analysis, it is very probable that the Thatāhatagarbha tradition, especially its development in China, is far more tuned in to the Chinese mind than the Yogācāra.

Apart from the linguistic or conceptual aspect, the Thatāhatagarbha doctrine of Buddha-nature, which provides an ontological basis for universal Buddhahood as a genuine reality inherent in all living creatures, might be more in line with traditional Chinese culture. In terms of salvation, the Thatāhatagarbha emphasizes the human role and believes that sudden enlightenment is possible, unlike the Vijñaptimatra, which emphasizes the reliance of salvation upon external forces and upon a gradual process of “proper learning and cultivation.” Whereas the Thatāhatagarbha affirms that all forms of life are equally blessed with the possibility of attaining Buddhahood, the Vijñaptimatra rejects the doctrine of universal Buddhahood and upholds the doctrine that there are five distinct and separate species of being and one of them (*icchantika*) can never attain Buddhahood.⁶³ Given the Confucian belief that every human

being has good consciousness (*liang zhi*) and the potential to become a sage,⁶⁴ it is rather natural for the Chinese to favor the idea of universal Buddhahood of the Thatāhatagarbha tradition, rather than the Vijñaptimatra.

Keenan favors Yogācāra instead of Thatāhatagarbha because the Thatāhatagarbha affirmation of the intrinsic existence of the Buddha seed might ignore the problem of the conscious mind, and thus fail to confirm the importance of theoretical discourse, which is precisely the aspect in which Yogācāra is much more proficient.⁶⁵ Keenan suggests that in Mahāyāna Buddhism the primal experience is ineffable. Sākyamuni did not want to speak out at first and it was only out of compassion for the multitude that he spoke to them. What he gave was not a straightforward account of his mystical experience. Rather, he explained the Buddhist teaching through finite images and concepts available in the cultural context of his time.⁶⁶ Keenan further points out that “Doctrine gains its validity by being skillfully articulated by an awakened bodhisattva or Buddha in the light of particular circumstances and based on particular contexts to lead others toward awakening and peace.”⁶⁷ In fact this is akin to the idea of skilful means (*upāya*) articulated in the chapter on *upāya* of the Lotus Sutra, which suggests that the Buddha appeared in the world for an important reason, namely to help all living creatures to attain Buddhahood. Ultimately there will be only One Vehicle of Buddhahood and the ultimate truth is ineffable. However, since each individual has a different propensity or capacity for learning the truth, the Buddha has to use different methods, including verbal and nonverbal means, to help the multitude to gain enlightenment. Therefore all verbal teachings could be effective within a specific scope or context—for a particular audience at a particular stage. According to the spirit of the Lotus Sutra, any method of awakening could be used. In Ch’an Buddhism, both verbal forms, such as koan, and nonverbal forms, such as sitting meditation, stick beating, shouting, killing cat, axing serpent, a gesture of fiddling with flowers, or even a smile, are possible as long as it can help one to achieve awakening and see one’s true nature. Apparently, Chinese Chan has inherited and developed the Lotus Sutra tradition in believing that any method can be used, so long as it is appropriate to a particular context. It is not so necessary to insist either on the use of nonsubstantialist concepts or the absence of them. If one can use it skillfully, even substantialist language can be used in the service of the transmission of the Dharma from one heart to another. Given the concept of skilful means in the Lotus Sutra, one has to wonder whether the Yogācāra approach is the only possible way to maintain a creative tension between theoretical doctrines and mystical experience.

Christianity East and West

Without doubt, Keenan is quite right in identifying the separation of mystical experience from doctrines as an important issue for the Christian tradition, but his proposal to restore the mysticism of darkness to a central position may need further investigation.⁶⁸ As Andrew Louth points out, Christian mysticism has been pro-

foundly influenced by Plato, especially in the form of Middle Platonism. Further, mysticism is common to most religions rather than being a unique feature of Christianity, and whether it is an essential element of Christianity remains debatable.⁶⁹ Even Pseudo-Dionysius, a master of the mysticism of darkness that Keenan frequently cites, employs both the approaches of *via negativa* and *via affirmativa/positiva*, suggesting that mystical experience/truth is both “apophatic” and “cataphatic.”⁷⁰ Keenan himself also admits that the influence of the Yogācāra School hardly reaches beyond the philosophical Buddhist community.⁷¹ In East Asia, a stronghold of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the most popular Mahāyāna traditions are the Pure Land and Ch’an Buddhism and not the Mādhyamika or Yogācāra. As Keenan concedes, the language of the Yogācāra School is rather ancient.⁷² For contemporary Western Christianity, the organic integration of theology and mystical experience could be achieved through a more straightforward approach, namely the rediscovery of the tradition of the mysticism of darkness in the Eastern Fathers, with whom Western Christians are more familiar. There is no compelling need to divert to Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is rather alien to the Christian tradition. All these call into question the necessity of adopting Keenan’s proposal of Mahāyāna theology for Western Christianity.

Keenan’s proposal may be more meaningful to Chinese Christianity than to Western Christianity.⁷³ However, the language of the Yogācāra School may not be any more comprehensible than the Christian theological terminology for contemporary Chinese either. It all comes down to the question: Is it necessary to develop a Mahāyāna Chinese theology focused on Yogācāra thought? Perhaps the Thatāhatagarbha School may deserve to be considered as a more viable alternative.

From a broader perspective, the heart of Mahāyāna Buddhism lies not in any particular doctrine but in a spectacular spirit or approach that enables fresh perspectives on the variety of Buddhist traditions. This spirit is highlighted by the concept of skilful means, universal salvation, and so on expressed in the Lotus Sutra rather than the philosophical approach of the Mādhyamika School.⁷⁴ For the development of Mahāyāna theology, the study of the Lotus and Mahāpariṇirvanā sutras, especially the motifs such as Buddha-nature, universal salvation, skilful means, great compassion toward all life, and so on, should deserve more attention. There are some contemporary scholars debating whether the Thatāhatagarbha should be regarded as a teaching of ultimate meaning or conventional meaning or not a Buddhist doctrine at all.⁷⁵ From the standpoint of the Chinese Buddhist tradition, the doctrine of Buddha-nature is an irreplaceable constituent of Buddhist thought and represents the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Given the rising interest in ecological ethics, the concept of Buddha-nature in Chinese Buddhism, particularly with the development of their ideas of Buddha-nature in all living creatures, including grass and trees and so on, may appear to be more relevant to the contemporary context.⁷⁶ Moreover, the doctrine of universal Buddhahood, asserting that every life can attain Buddhahood, is very much in line with the Neo-Confucian idea that every human has the potential of becoming a sage. A Mahāyāna theology focused on Thatāhatagarbha thought

may be more able to tune in to traditional Chinese culture and also more relevant to the contemporary Chinese context. In short, for the development of Mahāyāna theology in the Chinese context, Thatāhatagarbha and the idea of Buddha-nature seem to be more valuable and relevant than other schools of Buddhism, particularly the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra.

REVISITING CHALCEDON FROM A MAHĀYĀNA PERSPECTIVE

Following the above discussion of Keenan's Mahāyāna theology, we shall attempt to reconsider the Chalcedonian Creed in the light of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Whereas Keenan emphasizes that it is primarily the deconstructive themes of the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra of the Mahāyāna thought that may aid in deepening Christian insight into the gospel, the following rereading of Chalcedonian Christology will be based mainly on the constructive aspect of Mahāyāna Buddhism, particularly the Thatāhatagarbha tradition. Perhaps we may start with the text of the Chalcedonian Creed:

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bear (*Theotokos*); one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person (*prosopon*) and subsistence (*hypostasis*)—not as parted or separated into two persons (*prosopa*), but one and the same Son, Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.⁷⁷

The Creed is reminiscent of Romans 1:3–4: “. . . his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (RSV).⁷⁸ Apparently, the Creed has followed the approach of the Epistle to the Romans, attempting to describe Jesus Christ from two seemingly contrary perspectives or models. But it should be noted that the Epistle to the Romans does not contain words such as *physis*, nor concepts in Greek philosophy used in the Creed such as *homoousios*, *hypostasis*, *persona*, and so on. The detailed description of the two natures in the Creed is not to be found in the Epistle to the Romans. The Creed's affirmation of the hypostatic union of the two natures, instead of perceiving the notions of the divine nature and the human nature as an expedient model, indicates that the

Creed appears to be more inclined toward a realistic view of language and reflects the influence of Greek philosophy.

Christology and Substantialist Language and Conceptuality

The use of terms such as “hypostatic union” clearly assumes a realistic or substantialist tendency. However, the problem remains whether the adoption of these terms is simply the result of the lack of a better formula or whether there are also some theological reasons. According to the creed, the “hypostatic union” is “for our salvation.” The “hypostatic union” is particularly required given the soteriological principle that there will be no healing without assumption (*Quod non assumptum non sanatum*).⁷⁹ The view of Christ as an ombudsman pleading for human beings in the face of God’s managerial presence, as suggested by Keenan, is hardly the only possible soteriology that the creed could imply. The soteriological theory of deification (*theosis*), which requires the notion of “hypostatic union” and assumes an ontological compatibility between humanity and divinity, may be even more compatible with the Creed. Precisely because Jesus shares a common human nature with human beings (*homoousion*), other human beings can participate in the divinity, which is united with humanity in Jesus Christ. The substantialist terms seem to be quite capable of explaining how the work of the person of Jesus Christ can have universal salvific effect. Furthermore, these concepts, especially the notions of “hypostatic union” and “truly God and truly man,” can offer a sure way of overcoming the Docetist tendency, which Keenan’s Mahāyāna Christology also attempts to avoid. So, the adoption of the substantialist terms may have its own theological merits and reasons.

Another issue that should be reconsidered is whether the Chalcedon formula is entirely bound by a Greek philosophical framework. It is interesting to note that the Chalcedonian notion of the hypostatic union between two natures can be seen as a challenge to the Hellenistic philosophical hypothesis that contrary attributes could not possibly coexist within the same subject at the same time. In other words, the Chalcedon formula does not simply presume some sort of naïve realism. On the contrary, it implicitly raises challenges to essentialism and conceptualism. As John McIntyre puts it, the Chalcedon formula adopts a mediating position between the two extreme views. One of the extremes is the view that there is no correspondence whatsoever between the structure of reality and that of language. The other extreme is the view that there is absolute correspondence between the two, and this is tantamount to saying that language expresses a picturesque manifestation of reality. The mediating position is to recognize that language is to be used as a model, which may not stand in a relation of one-to-one correspondence with reality, but can be justifiably understood as one of the legitimate ways to speak about reality.⁸⁰ Perhaps one may say similarly that the philosophical concepts used in the Chalcedon formula are basically metaphors.⁸¹

With regard to the “four negatives” (“without confusion, without change, without division, without separation”) in the Chalcedon formula, it is rather important

to note that there are comparable cases in Mādhyamika Buddhism. For example, there is a “middle path through eight negations” (*ba bu zhong dao*) formulated in the first chapter (“Contemplating the Causes and Conditions”) of the *Mālamadhyamakahārikū* (Treatise on the Middle): “not begotten nor exterminated; not eternal nor discontinuous; not unified nor diversified; not coming nor leaving.” The Heart Sutra also lists “six negatives”: “Śāriputra, all dharmas are empty: not begotten nor exterminated; not contaminated nor purified; not increasing nor diminishing.” This kind of discourse implies a critique of the limitation of language in the expression of ultimate truth. On the one hand, these concepts are inadequate in expressing the ultimate truth, so much so that they have to be negated. On the other hand, a complementary use of these contradictory concepts can help people to overcome the misunderstandings of the truth. In short, these concepts are inadequate but remain useful in communicating the ultimate truth in a paradoxical way. The Chalcedonian formulation of “four negatives” can be understood similarly as a “middle path through four negatives.” It affirms that strictly speaking these concepts are inadequate to express the relationship between Jesus Christ’s humanity and divinity in a positive and unambiguous way, but the complementary use of these concepts remains necessary and useful in refuting erratic or heretical teachings.⁸² Given this interpretation of the Chalcedonian “four negatives,” one has to doubt whether Keenan is right in criticizing the classical doctrine for being “over-confident” in language and concepts. Further, it also indicates that concepts originating from substantialist philosophy can be used to communicate a non-substantialist vision. As Klaas Runia notes in his comment on Chalcedon, “It is generally acknowledged that, even though Hellenistic terms and concepts were used, the resulting Christology was very un-Hellenistic.”⁸³ The ontological framework of the Creed appears to be rather static, if perceived in isolation. But, behind the seemingly static formulations, there is a dynamic conception concerning the Incarnation, which is what the Creed endeavors to safeguard.⁸⁴

The above discussion shows that the Creed does not deliberately try to deny or affirm any particular philosophical framework, such as substantial language and the concepts it presumes. Rather, it tries to express an understanding of Christ and salvation, sometimes by means of substantial language and conceptions, without entirely entrusting them. It employs the language of Greek philosophy, but refuses to be bounded by the straitjacket of the Greek philosophical framework. As McIntyre notes, “although Chalcedon in its variant interpretations, particularly in the fifth and sixth centuries, drew heavily upon the reserves of Aristotelian logic and metaphysics, we may still use it without any similarly deep commitment to its origins.”⁸⁵ From a Mahāyāna perspective, languages and concepts are themselves empty or dependently co-arising. They may be understood and interpreted differently in different contexts by people of different capacities for truth and wisdom. As new meaning can be assigned to existing terms, it is not necessary to abandon the existing formulation or to replace it with new ones from time to time. Through thoughtful consideration and reinterpretation, the Chalcedonian creed may remain useful in some contexts.

This attitude and understanding of the Creed may be also in perfect harmony with the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Christology and Human Nature

With regard to the Chalcedonian Creed, an interesting question is whether the substantial language implies a mutual exclusivity between human nature and the divine nature, which seems to be very much in line with Aristotelian logic. However, as Eric Mascall points out, as far as the Chalcedonian Creed is concerned, ultimate incompatibility between human nature and divine nature is impossible, because human nature is assumable, as it once was when the Logos became flesh. The underlying theory of human nature assumes an openness of humanity to divinity.⁸⁶ Again, this view of humanity is in line with the doctrine of deification, which means that human beings are capable of sharing God's nature (1 Peter 1:4). The concept of deification presumes a dynamic view of human nature as well as the compatibility rather than exclusivity between human nature and divine nature.

Furthermore, as the Creed affirms Jesus Christ's human nature while maintaining that he has not sinned, it is quite logical to infer that sin is not a necessary part of human nature. Having said that, Christianity also affirms that sin is almost universal to all human beings. The question is then, should human nature be defined on the basis of day-to-day experience? Or should we define it Christologically, namely on the basis of Jesus Christ? According to the view of Karl Barth (1886–1968), authentic humanity is to be defined by the humanity revealed in Jesus Christ rather than that of daily experience. Humanity is therefore to be united with divinity rather than to be mutually exclusive. This understanding of humanity is very significant for the Christian-Confucian dialogue.⁸⁷ This idea is in parallel with the thought of *Thātāhatagarbha*, especially the idea that every life possesses Buddha-nature and can become Buddha. Ontologically, there is no ultimate distinction between mind-heart, Buddha and all lives. A Mahāyāna reading of the Creed may follow particularly the *Thātāhatagarbha* thought in affirming that all human beings are in theory capable of being united with Divinity/realizing Buddhahood/becoming Christ as it has been actualized in Jesus Christ. We might further interpret that, as divinity and humanity coexist in Jesus Christ, he can be regarded as the perfect paradigm of deification or the fulfillment of the ideal for forming unity with Heaven. As this interpretation is not only in harmony with the understanding of the early Fathers, but also in tune with Chinese culture, it should be emphasized in a Chinese Mahāyāna theology.

Is It Anthropocentric?

As the Creed had not been formulated for ecological purposes, an ecological critique of the creed may be neither fair nor appropriate. However, it remains interesting to note that some of the Eastern Fathers who stood for the Chalcedonian Creed, especially Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, were also advocates of the doc-

trine of cosmic salvation.⁸⁸ This seems to suggest that the acceptance of the Creed does not necessarily lead to an anthropocentric worldview ignoring or denying the salvation of nonhuman beings.

According to the principle of no redemption without assumption, if salvation covers nonhuman creatures, the Logos should have assumed not just human nature but also the nature of all lives. In line with the Mahāyāna spirit of universal salvation and equality, a Mahāyāna Christology should affirm that Jesus Christ assumes not just humanity, but also creaturehood. This is not to suggest that Jesus Christ is nothing more than a creature, a position that would have been denounced as Arianism. What is proposed is that Jesus Christ is *homoousion* not only with the Father and with humanity, but also with all creatures.

It is true that the Creed only mentions the divine and human natures in Christ without mentioning that Christ also has a third nature. However, it does not exclude the possibility of describing Jesus Christ as a creature according to his flesh. If a human being is also a creature, one cannot deny that as Jesus was fully human, he was also, as regards his creaturehood, fully created. As “being a creature” is already implied in “being a human,” it is not necessary to add “*homoousion* with all creatures” to the creed alongside “*homoousion* with all human beings.” In other words, the creed itself is open to different interpretations. For example, in the perspective of Paul Tillich’s participatory ontology, the incarnation of the Logos in human form does not exclude the salvation for creatures other than human beings. On the contrary, it affirms the full participation of nature in the process of fall and salvation as other dimensions of life already participate in human life.⁸⁹ In a word, the Chalcedonian Creed does not preclude salvation for all creatures and is open to a more ecological reading of it. A Mahāyāna reading of the phrase “for us men and for our salvation” (Bettenson’s translation cited above) should be rendered as “for us and for our salvation”—without the word “men”—in order to avoid an anthropocentric undertone.⁹⁰ When making this proclamation, the church is not only confessing its faith, but also, as a priest to all creation, offering thanksgivings to God on behalf of the whole of humankind as well as the entire creation.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

From a Chinese Mahāyāna perspective, the Chalcedon Creed remains valid and effective, provided that an appropriate interpretation is sought. The Chalcedon Creed is comparable to a wisely articulated koan in Ch’an Buddhism, which is subject to different individuals’ interpretations according to their different conditions and capacities for understanding. Those who do not have adequate wisdom or compassion tend to approach it with naïve realism or a substantialist way of thinking and may thus fail to appreciate the subtle wisdom of the Creed. They may find that the divine and human natures are mutually contradictory or exclusive and that human beings are the only objects of God’s redemption. They may consider salvation merely in terms of justification exclusive for some but not deification available for all. On the other hand, those who share the compassion and wisdom of the Mahāyāna

bodhisattvas may interpret the creed with the wisdom of emptiness and refrain from stubbornly clinging to the terms by regarding them as real substances. They may then be able to see the unity of divinity and humanity and the universality of God's salvation for all creatures.⁹²

NOTES

1. John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), esp. p. 308.

2. Kwok Pui-lan, "Ecology and Christology," *Feminist Theology* 15 (1997): 117–118. Kwok's argument seems to warrant further substantiation because many Asians apparently accept different saviors that have appeared in human forms. Notable examples include Krishna as one of the *avatāras* of Vishnu in Hinduism, Amitābha and Kuan Shih Yin (Guan-yin) in Buddhism, Goddess Mazu in Chinese popular religion, Lu Dongbin in the Daoist religion, etc. The "cosmological sensitivity" of Asians does not seem to prevent them from accepting these deities as saviors.

3. Kwok, "Ecology and Christology," p. 118. Kwok's assertion seems to require further justification. The Thatāhatagarbha School is seen by many as proposing a doctrine of real permanence (*zhen chang zhi jiao*), which assumes the concept of nonempty really real (*zhen you bu kong*). The Mādhyamika School also employs the concept of self-nature (*svabhāva*), which is comparable to "being," "essence," or "substance," to express the doctrines of emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) and co-arising emptiness (*pratītyasamutpāda-sūnyatā*). It uses the realist concept of self-nature in a dialectical way to express the nonrealist doctrine of without self-nature (*asvabhāva*). This method involves the deconstructive step of crossing it when stating it and is in a way quite comparable to the *via negativa* in Christian theology. The Mādhyamika method of employing two seemingly contradictory concepts (e.g., "being" and "non-being") in a dialectical/paradoxical/complementary way is comparable to the complementarity in quantum physics and Christian theology in some respects. See Lai Pan-chiu, "Buddhist-Christian Complementarity in the Perspective of Quantum Physics," *Studies in Inter-religious Dialogue* (forthcoming).

4. Kwok, "Ecology and Christology," p. 123. Again, Kwok's attributing the issue of one incarnation or many to the language or conceptual framework is quite misleading. There is no logical or any other necessary connection between the substantialist framework and the belief concerning the number of incarnations or *avatāras*. For example, in Hindu mythology, one deity can have many *avatāras*, but the Upanishadic understanding of the identity between Brahman and *ātman* assumes a substantialist framework. This framework is bluntly rejected by Buddhism, which in turn also believes that the Buddha can have many incarnations or *avatāras* and that the Buddha has three bodies (Trikāya). In Christianity, *corpus Christi* can be considered in a sense as either one or many, or one in many or many in one. This is because the Body of Christ may refer to the Church and/or the Eucharist. No matter whether the Eucharist is to be explained according to the Roman Catholic theory of transubstantiation or the Lutheran theory of consubstantiation, the concept of substance is assumed.

5. Kwok, "Ecology and Christology," p. 118.

6. Keenan has published other books related to Mahāyāna Theology, e.g. *The Gospel of Mark: A Mahāyāna Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), but the presentation in his *The Meaning of Christ: A Mahāyāna Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989) remains the most systematic and most debated. It was reviewed, with Keenan's response, in *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 15–58.

7. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 2.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Ibid., p. 51; also, "Mahāyāna Theology: A Dialogue with Critics," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 27.

12. For details see: Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, pp. 65–85.

13. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, for example, the Trinitarian God is transcendent over essence (in the Father), deity (in the Son), and goodness (in the Spirit). See *ibid.*, pp. 105–106; for details see pp. 86–119.

14. Ibid., p. 118.

15. Ibid., p. 123.

16. Ibid., p. 64.

17. Ibid., p. 2.

18. Ibid., p. 223.

19. Ibid., p. 153.

20. Ibid., p. 196.

21. Ibid., p. 213.

22. Ibid., p. 224.

23. Ibid., p. 223.

24. Ibid., p. 225.

25. Ibid., p. 196.

26. Ibid., p. 51.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 226.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 227.

31. Ibid., p. 54.

32. Ibid., p. 205.

33. Ibid., p. 226.

34. Ibid., p. 225.

35. Ibid., p. 226.

36. Ibid., pp. 226, 228.

37. Ibid., p. 228.

38. Ibid., p. 229.

39. Ibid., pp. 229–232. Keenan's argument here may need further explanation. Admittedly, it is not adequate to understand the Christ event merely in terms of divine predetermination, but it is not necessary to reject divine predetermination in order to adopt the idea of "being dependently co-arisen." It would be quite difficult to understand the salvific effect of the Christ event as salvation if the divine participation is totally denied. From the perspective of co-arising, at least, it is possible to see God's plan as unfolding through causal relationships in time and space without excluding the impact of other factors on the Christ event. It is also possible to understand divine predetermination and human freedom as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, as it is proposed by Niels Bohr (1885–1962). See John Baillie, *The Sense of the Presence of God* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 217.

40. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, pp. 233–235.

41. Ibid., p. 235.

42. Ibid., p. 225.

43. Ibid., pp. 213, 220.

44. Ibid., pp. 236–238.

45. Ibid., p. 238.

46. Ibid., p. 239.

47. Keenan, "Mahāyāna Theology: A Dialogue With Critics," p. 30.

48. Ibid.

49. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, pp. 146–148.

50. Concerning Zhang's religious thought, see: So Yuen-tai, "Zhang Chun-yi's Buddhist-

Christian Theology” (in Chinese with an abstract in English), Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Graduate Division of Religion and Theology, Chinese University of Hong Kong, June 2002.

51. See Lai Pan-chiu and So Yuen-tai, “Zhang Chun-yi’s Buddhist-Christian Pneumatology” (in Chinese with an abstract in English), in *Pneumatology: Perspectives in the Chinese Context*, ed. Andres S. K. Tang (Hong Kong: Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2002).

52. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 150.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

54. Huo Taohui, *Jue dui yu yuan rong* [Absolute and Harmony] (Taipei: Dong da tu shu, 1994), pp. 256–265.

55. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, pp. 179–180.

56. See Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment: Origins and Meaning*, trans. John C. Maraldo (New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1979), pp. 102–124.

57. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 147.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

59. For a brief description of the difference between the Mahāyāna and the Theravāda Schools, see Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp. 121–127.

60. See Joseph S. O’Leary’s review of Keenan’s *The Meaning of Christ* in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 19, no. 1 (1992): 97.

61. In popular versions of the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, the famous stanza of the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng is often rendered as follows: “The bodhi is originally not tree, nor the mirror the stand; Actually there is nothing exists, where is there room for dust to attack.” This is based on the versions by Huixin, Qisong, and Zongbao, and probably represents some interpolation by Huixin. According to the Tun-huang version, which is the same as the Fa-hai version, Hui-neng composed two stanzas. The first one reads: “The bodhi is originally not tree, nor the mirror the stand; the Buddha-nature is always clean and pure, and where is there room for dust to attack.” The second one reads: “The heart is the bodhi tree; the body is the mirror stand. The mirror is originally clean and pure; where can it be stained by dust?” These two stanzas reflect more clearly the concept of Buddha-nature of the Thatāhatagarbha tradition. For the Yung-huang version, see *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-huang Manuscript*, trans. and annot. Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), IV. For a comparison of the versions, see Guo Peng, *Tanjing dui kan* [Textual Comparison of the Platform Sutras] (Jinan: Qilu Books, 1981), pp. 15–19.

62. John P. Keenan, “The Doctrine of Buddha Nature in Chinese Buddhism—Hui-K’ai on Parāmartha,” in *Buddha Nature: A Festschrift in Honor of Minoru Kiyota*, ed. Paul J. Griffiths and John P. Keenan (Tokyo: Buddhist Book International, 1990), pp. 125–137.

63. See Huo Taohui, *The Absolute and Perfect Harmony*, p. 253.

64. Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, p. 245.

65. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 147.

66. Keenan, “Mahāyāna Theology: A Dialogue With Critics,” p. 24.

67. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 233.

68. In his review of Keenan’s *The Meaning of Christ*, John Cobb also questions from a Protestant perspective whether mysticism should take a central position in the Christian tradition. See *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16 (April 1992): 91–92.

69. See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. xii–xv.

70. See Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), esp. pp. 87–88.

71. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 153.

72. Keenan, “Mahāyāna Theology: A Dialogue with Critics,” pp. 30–31.

73. Huang Kebiao (Joseph P. Wang), a Chinese Catholic, suggests that Chinese theology should properly integrate mystical experience with theoretical construction. See Huang Kebiao, “Gu dian shen xue zhi hui mo shi yu han yu shen xue feng ge” [The Wisdom Model

of Classical Theology and the Style of Chinese Theology], in *Preliminary Studies on Chinese Theology*, ed. Daniel Yeung (Hong Kong: Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, 2000), pp. 293–316.

74. See Michael Pye, “The Lotus Sūtra and the Essence of Mahāyāna,” *Buddhist Spirituality: Indian, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, and Early Chinese*, ed. Takeuchi Yoshinori et al., pp. 171–187.

75. See Takasaki Jikidō, “The Thatāhatagarbha Theory Reconsidered,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, no. 1–2 (2000): 73–83.

76. See Shi Heng-qing, *Fo xing si xiang* [Idea of Buddha-nature] (Taipei: Dong da tu shu gong si, 1997), ch. 6.

77. Cf. Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 51–52.

78. In the light of this scriptural passage, doubtful is Keenan’s statement that “Neither is Jesus’ resurrection to be interpreted as an empirical validation of his divine status.” See Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ*, p. 228.

79. Cf. Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, trans. M. Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 193–201.

80. John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology*, pp. 331–332.

81. Stephen Need, *Human Language and Knowledge in the Light of Chalcedon* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

82. See Lai Pan-chiu, “Buddhist-Christian Complementarity in the Perspective of Quantum Physics,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* (forthcoming).

83. Klaas Runia, *The Present-Day Christological Debate* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), p. 103.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.

85. John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology*, p. 333.

86. For details see Eric Mascall, *Whatever Happened to the Human Mind?* (London: SPCK, 1980).

87. For details see Keith Ka-fu Chan, “Karl Barth’s Christological Anthropology and Christian-Confucian Dialogue,” *Ching Feng* 42, no. 1–2 (March–June 1999): 1–33.

88. See David S. Yeago, “Jesus of Nazareth and Cosmic Redemption: The Relevance of St. Maximus the Confessor,” *Modern Theology* 12, no. 2 (April 1996): 163–193. See also Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Cosmic Man, The Divine Presence: The Theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa* (New York: Paragon House, 1988); and *The Human Presence: Ecological Spirituality and the Age of the Spirit* (Amity, NY: Amity House, 1987).

89. See Pan-chiu Lai, “Paul Tillich and Ecological Theology,” *Journal of Religion* 79, no. 2 (April 1999), pp. 233–249.

90. This is in line with J. N. D. Kelly’s translation, which reads, “because of us and because of our salvation”—without the word “men.” See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: A & C Black, 1977), pp. 339–340.

91. See John Zizioulas, “Preserving God’s Creation, Part 3,” *King’s Theological Review* 13 (Spring 1990): 4–5.

92. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fourth Ecumenical Forum held by the Ecumenical Institute, Heidelberg University, 31 May–1 June 2002. The author would like to thank Prof. Christoph Schwobel, the director of the institute, and other participants of the forum for their comments.