

Salvation and Modernity

Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China

Academic dissertation

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in at Stockholm University

to be publicly defended on Thursday 4 November 2004 at 13:00

in aulan, hus 4, Kräftriket

by

Fredrik Fällman

Department of Oriental Languages
Stockholm University
106 91 Stockholm



Stockholm 2004
ISBN 91-7265-959-9
ISSN 1650-8513

Abstract

Fredrik Fällman: *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China*

Christianity, as a religion and as an ethical system, is increasingly important in China today. An analysis of intellectuals and faith is vital to understanding the contemporary intellectual climate in China. This analysis is also of importance in regard to the ever-growing interest in religion, ethics and morality in the rapidly developing Chinese society.

This thesis aims at interpreting the phenomenon of Cultural Christians in contemporary Chinese society, with especial focus paid to Liu Xiaofeng. The main themes are faith, salvation and the quest for a modern China. There are at times striking parallels between scholars and cultural encounters in earlier centuries and the situation today. The linking of past and present forms the first part of the thesis, followed by an investigation of the Cultural Christian phenomenon and, as a major part, the beliefs and ideas of Liu Xiaofeng and other scholars. Focus on Christianity implies a criticism of traditional Chinese value systems, in particular Confucianism that is said to be lacking transcendence. The introduction of Christian theology and values into Chinese academia is a way of creating greater understanding for Western culture. Many Cultural Christians argue that this advanced understanding is a prerequisite for establishing a modern China. Issues of personal faith and identity are also central in respect to modernity as well as to personal and national salvation.

Post-Mao China is seeking a new foundation for values, and there is a common recognition of 'a crisis of faith'. In this context, the Cultural Christians have a definite role to play. The choice of Christianity is also an expression of individuality, freedom and criticism of political structures. Despite laying foundations for a 'theology in Chinese', relations between the intellectuals and the Church are strained. The impact of the Cultural Christians is, however, visible among young scholars and students.

Keywords: *China, culture, Christianity, intellectuals, salvation, faith, modernity, identity.*