

Dear Friends and Fellow Christians,

I am sorry I cannot be with you on this to celebrate the life of Bishop Ting and critically assess his significance for the life of the Chinese Church. The most important thing I want to say is the need to consider his life as a whole. Consider the following examples:

1. The importance of St. Peter's Church for his early formation;
2. Ting's contribution to the SCM and the WSCF in the 1930s and 40s. He was the only Chinese Christian to serve as WSCF staff. His English writings during this period are worth looking into.
3. His relationship with Zhou Enlai and other CPC leaders he got to know in the 40s and 50s. I plan a short essay on this subject when I am able to.
4. His essay published at the start of the Anti-Rightist Movement 談談基督教有神論 was the most important theological essay published during this time. He was criticized for this at least twice over the next few years, because of his bold defense of theism. It is not included in 文集, however, for reasons I can explain at a future time.
5. His importance in the renewal of international relationships from 1972 onward. This needs more detailed study.
6. The 1980s was the decade where he laid the foundation for the future of Christian institutions in China. This was also the decade when he did most of his important theological work. I should add here that the essays in 文集 were edited by Bishop. Ting so it is necessary to consult the original versions, the same as it is for the collected writings of any author.
7. His life in retirement after 1996 should be viewed in light of both his earlier work and its impact on the Chinese Church today. This is needed to keep things in perspective.
8. Bishop Ting was always most proud of his position as Principal of NJTS, a position he held for more than 50 years. As such, he was the longest serving seminary principal anywhere. He made an enormous contribution to theological education in China, often under very difficult circumstances.
9. I believe that Bishop Ting was one of the most important Church leaders of the late 20th century. Were I with you, I could develop my reasoning more thoroughly, but these few points will have to suffice for now.

My prayers are with you. And I can't wait to read a report on your important gathering. I extend my thanks to all who made this possible.

Philip L. Wickeri

12 December 2012