

# **Reviving the Spirit of Christian Higher Education in China**

**Peter Tze Ming NG**  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

## **Outline**

This is a continuation of the paper I wrote for *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance*, in which I ended with the words of Jesus: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24).<sup>1</sup> I concluded by saying: “The thirteen Christian colleges in China were forced to close down or “die” in the early 1950s, yet the seeds the missionaries had sown in China never “die” and their work could blossom and “bear fruits” even after several decades, as we are now witnessing the revival and blossoming of Christian work in China again in recent years. This was precisely what we can learn from the experiences of Christian higher education in China”.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I shall apply Lesslie Newbigin’s Trinitarian Model of Christian mission and try to explore the work of God and the Holy Spirit in reviving the spirit of Christian higher education in China in the past 30 years. I shall add the words of St. Paul who says: “O how deep is the wealth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! No one is able to make discovery of his decisions, and his ways may not be searched out”. (Romans 11:33)

People often ask: whether Christian Higher Education had totally disappeared from China since 1950s? Yes, since the Korean War, the Chinese government had started a policy of restructuring higher education system in China, and as a result, all Christian colleges and universities were disappeared. However, there were still the remnants- the teachers and students who went to Hong Kong and Taiwan and overseas to continue Christian higher education for the Chinese people outside China Mainland. Since Hong Kong returned to China in 1997, the Christian higher education in Hong Kong had returned altogether and became parts of the Christian presence in the People’s Republic of China today. Scholars may suggest that Christian colleges/ universities in Hong Kong are good signs of the revival of the spirit of Christian higher education in China. However, I will draw your attention today to the situation in Mainland China, and I shall bear witness to the changes and the reviving of the spirit of Christian higher education in the past three decades. There are several events I can recall and they may give us some new hopes for the future of Christian higher education in China. Of course, we need to look at it from a different perspective, in this exciting era of global transformation.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Peter Tze Ming Ng, “Rise and Development of Christian Higher Education in China”, in Joel Carpenter, Perry Glanzer & Nicholas Lantinga (eds.) *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014, pp. 68-89.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 89.

I shall report on the following topics as illustrations:

1. Resurgence of Studies of Christian Higher Education in China Since the 1980s
2. The Case of Huazhong Normal University in Wuhan
3. The Case of Nanjing Normal University in Nanjing
4. The Case of Yenching University in Beijing
5. The Alumni Associations of Christian Higher Education in China
6. The Story of Timothy Richard

I shall conclude by repeating what St. Paul and Christ Jesus had said, namely: “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!” (Romans 11:33); and “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)