

Zhi-Mian Theological Thinking

Understanding "A Collection of K.H.Ting's Essays" from the perspective of "Zhi-mian Psychotherapy"

By Wang Xuefu

This article intends to explore the theological thinking of "zhi-mian psychotherapy". First and foremost, I would like to give you a brief introduction of "zhi-mian psychotherapy".

Zhi-mian psychotherapy originated in my previous practice of psychological counseling and therapy. It has its roots in my faith and my life experience as well as in the rich resources of those in the past who have explored and discovered a variety of theories and methods in psychological counseling, therapy and other cultural spheres.

The basic characteristics of "zhi-mian" are the ability to resist and ability to relate. The ability to resist stands for an individual's resistance to various kinds of negative and destructive forces in the course of his life and growth. The ability to relate reflects one's inner source of feelings in his relationship with God and others. The integration of ability to resist and ability to relate in a person reveals a mature zhi-mian personality character. The essence of this character can be summarized as being bold enough to face the real situation, while being humble and loving toward people.

While reading "A Collection of K.H.Ting's Essays", what has inspired and enlightened me most is the fact that Bishop Ting has been attempting to establish a "zhi-mian theology" all along (I would love to address it this way). His theology is not only well based in the Biblical truth, but is profoundly rooted in reality. In the foreword of "A Collection of K.H.Ting's Essays", Chen Zemin refers to his understanding of Bishop Ting's theological thinking when he says, "I knew him as a man who did theology not by fleeing reality for some theological ivory tower, ignoring the world while pursuing his own academic and moral conviction." It is my belief that these words have made very clear the keynote of Bishop Ting's theology, namely, facing reality in boldness and not with evasion. There are many approaches to zhi-mian theology, and one of them is "seeking ways in which Christian faith and teaching could be combined with the cause of national salvation and social transformation." Therefore, zhi-mian requires us to boldly face the social reality from the perspective of our faith. "A Collection of K.H.Ting's Essays" has manifested multi-fold aspects of zhi-mian. In the following I will present some results of my analytical study of this work.

My first impression after reading "A Collection of K.H. Ting's Essays" was that Bishop Ting has been a mentor to encourage life to grow and reach its fulfillment. His theological thinking is not abstract, but is deeply rooted in the stories of real life, which is particularly in harmony with the principle of psychological counseling and therapy. This rootedness was obvious in my reading from the viewpoint of "zhi-mian psychotherapy."

"zhi-mian psychotherapy" is closely connected with the practical side of life's growth and self-fulfillment. A person, once borne into the world, is entering a strange and horrible environment foreign to him. As a result his first reaction tends to be a desire to return to his

mother's womb. However, this is something entirely impossible. From then on, he has to study zhi-Mian and face the real world around him, letting himself grow and become more mature. According to "zhi-mian psychotherapy", stories will not only affect the growth of a child, but will also cultivate his life. A person's life is actually his own story. The manner in which he tells a story is related to his way of life, and thus the story he tells becomes his life. The nature of "story therapy" is this : the mentor helps his disciple to discover new ways by which he tells his story. As a result, his new way of story telling becomes his new way of life. A renewal is taking place and being realized in this very process as the new story is becoming his new life.

A story carries unbelievable and marvelous power in it. Sometimes, a story can change a person's whole life. This is a secret and those who can penetrate this secret are great figures in human history. Jesus was a most wonderful storyteller. His life became a story of paramount importance to his followers and generations to come. During his preaching ministry, Jesus used many stories and parables to expound the truth of God's Kingdom. His stories healed numerous broken-hearted people and brought hope for their lives. Like our Lord Jesus, Bishop Ting told a story, which was like a seed to be planted in my heart. It has accompanied me throughout the years and enabled me to find in it profound meaning and significance.

Once upon a time, a mother was conceiving twins in her womb. As time went by, the twins gradually grew up and had little heads. They had sense and consciousness. They discovered their environment, their twinship and their selfhood. They happily lived in mother's womb and remarked, "How blissful we are! What a wonderful world we have now!" "Our mother is so good. She loves us so deeply and is willing to share with us whatever she has."

A few months later, they came to realize that they could no longer stay in mother's womb. They became scared. They were so afraid that their life would come to an end and what was waiting for them was but destruction. One of them said, "I wish our life could continue." The other one wept, "We are all done for. Don't be so whimsical." Feeling that life was hopeless, he sighed, "The formation of fetus and growth for us eventually leads to death. Life is full of absurdities. How meaningless life is!" He even went so far as to extrapolate that the invisible mother was in fact non-existent and her existence had been a mere product of hallucination. They were overwhelmed in fear. One of them was totally disenchanted and hopeless, waiting for his doom; the other maintained his faith in mother, but had no idea of what was going to happen after birth.

When the time of birth arrived, they were crying while entering a bright world. When they first opened their eyes, they found themselves in the bosom of mother and the beauty of warmest love and tenderness in it far exceeded what they could have imagined before.

This story contains rich meaning in theology and psychology. My understanding is that the mother here represents God for us. The fetus in mother's womb is symbolic of the original fellowship between humankind and God. In the very beginning, humans only had a vague sense of this type of fellowship as if they lived in a warm, intimate and secure environment. This is the first stage of the story. The second stage of the story tells us about the phobia and anxiety of humanity prior to its separation from God. Some still keep their primordial trust in

God and this primitive memory becomes the foundation of their faith. But to some others, the primordial trust has been lost in their consciousness and disappeared in the real world. They have fallen into nihilism, believing that death is the result of everything. At the third stage, humankind reestablishes their faith in love. Their primordial trust, namely, God is love, is finally reconfirmed as they have experienced God's love. This fact vividly reflects Bishop Ting's theological view of cyclic consummation which was expressed in his quotation of one of Elliot's poems, to the effect that "...All the results of our explorations will eventually lead to the point where we first started out, yet it also seems the very first time for us to find the place."

This world looks like a place to which we are both afraid to come and are reluctant to leave. Life is full of factors that may cause fear and insecurity for us. The newborn babies come to realize, in the midst of noisy chaos, that they have entered a cold world where they suffer from starvation. According to William James, humans were born with four basic emotional elements: (1) phobia (one's separation from mother); (2) anger and the evoked protest (one's coming into the world is not his own choice and there is no way for him to return to his original state); (3) love (possibly one's longing to be loved and satisfied); and (4) hatred (possibly when one's demands cannot be satisfied). Many psychologists have discovered that the primordial anxiety of a person comes from his separation from mother's body. By the time when a person has developed his own self-consciousness, anxiety for death starts to surface and this feeling will probably continue through his entire life. However, faith makes it possible for us to see that death is by no means the end result of everything. One's soul can enable him to discover that originally he was in "mother's bosom and the beauty of warmest love and tenderness in it far exceeded what they could have imagined before. "

Interestingly enough, some psychologists tried to find the prototypes of symbolism with psychological significance from the Bible. For example, Ernest Jones held that Genesis reminded us of the memory of the birth experience of humanity. If viewed from this way of thinking the stories after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden should be regarded as a symbolic presentation of the process of human growth. From Adam and Eve's perspective, what appeared in front of them was a strange world, precarious and unpredictable. They were extremely scared. In retrospect, the gates of the Garden of Eden had been closed on them and they could never ever return. They prayed again and again, begging to return to the original harmonious fellowship with God (longing to be loved), but their prayers were flatly refused. They became angry, but angry against what? Only their memory of being loved while in the Garden of Eden brought them a temporary feeling of warmth. The way of human growth was now getting started. Humans were moving farther and farther away from the Garden of Eden. Their primal memory of God became weaker and weaker. The meaning of the Tree of life only occasionally emerged in their dreams, but they did not have the slightest idea where it had come from.

Everyone has to leave his own Garden of Eden. He must face reality (zhi-mian) and grow up. Walking out of the Garden of Eden seems like a fall on the side of humanity, yet it is at the same time the starting point of a process for self-recovery and reconstruction. The destination is where they first started. The life of faith is a long way of personal growth with its aim to recover and reconstruct the relationship of trust between humanity and God. God is not only

waiting, he is also creating. We are growing up during the course of his creation. "God spares no effort in his work. His purpose is bringing out the potentiality of what he has created. God is love and he longs for the emergence of a human race in the universe who can have fellowship with him." When human beings grow into maturity and have learned how to make right choices with God's granted freedom, they would return to the fellowship with God. The primordial fellowship was given unconditionally, whereas the realization of fellowship, which is to come eventually, is dependent upon self-growth and development.

In terms of zhi-mian psychotherapy, human psychological barriers and problems are rooted in their excessive evasion of reality out of fear and insecurity. Thus, the aim of "zhi-mian psychotherapy" is to help one form a zhi-mian attitude, take zhi-mian actions and achieve Zhi-mian personality. We can take notice of the inclination of humanity to evade reality in the depths of their minds, being too naïve to make correct decisions. Yet, this was not the essence of the problem. The fundamental problem (referring back to Adam and Eve) was that they dared not face the responsibilities of the choices they had made and so hid themselves in the woods. God called upon them to come out to face reality: "Adam, where are you?" These words also serve as a reminder and encouragement, admonishing humanity to reexamine our situation, urging us to walk out of our hiding place in a bid to boldly face reality and love one another in faith and honesty.

In order to become zhi-mian, a very important thing is not to evade one's imperfection, but to confess his radical limitation in existence. Due to this limitation, he is prone to make mistakes. In spite of all this, he ought to boldly take responsibility for his possible mistakes. If one is afraid to make mistakes, then he will lose the chance to grow; if he is afraid to take responsibilities, he will refrain from making choices and lose the ability to select. God's creation and human growth are not mutually exclusive. We see human growth into maturity as a way to collaborate with God. Setbacks are inevitable in the course of human growth, but it is in the midst of setbacks that we are growing and developing. We should not evade reality because of our setbacks. If one shuns reality and withdraws into his inner self, then a black hole is formed there to block his whole being. Human growth means that one cannot forever make correct choices. If this so, then he no longer needs to grow. Bishop Ting said, "If to avoid making mistakes is everything for a person, then those who stand idle and do nothing will be counted as one with the highest moral standard, whereas learning, exploring and seeking improvements will be seen as superfluous."

Albert Allis observed that there was a tendency in a person to "evade growth." This tendency can also reside in our faith life. If one dares to not face himself, he will find it difficult to face God. Moreover, this self-evasion from reality tends to make one use God as an excuse for his shunning of reality and personal limitations. Bishop Ting once quoted the words of one of his colleagues in describing his faith journey in the past, "About thirty years ago, to many Christians, Christ was but someone always to fill the gaps of an individual during his time of lacking, suffering and getting disenchanted or when he was caught in a spiritual void. Christ was either listed as one of his self-possessed properties or as something which he used to possess but had got lost." Under such circumstances, a person always uses Christ as an excuse for his deliberate evasion of reality, which has inhibited his needed growth. Thus he

remains a baby in his spiritual life that has to depend on the milk, and Christ has become the feeding bottle for him. However, in our faith journey, Christ is our Teacher who supports us as we face reality and grow up.

Faith, in order to grow, needs to encounter reality, and reality includes self. St. Paul said, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate to do." (Rom.7:15) What Paul indicated here refers to the real situation of one's inner conflicts. Bishop Ting asserted, based upon his analysis, "The various conflicts in our inner being and our impure motivations in doing good things has made itself felt that we human beings are in need of forgiveness, correction, healing and spiritual support from God." Only when a Christian dares to face his inner conflicts, will he be able to see his own limitation, to understand his real needs, to accept God's creation and to grow up in the process of God's creation.

Self-growth is a very difficult process, for which both God and humanity will have to pay many prices. The prices to be paid by God involve his respect to humankind, limitation of his own power and allowance of people to enjoy adequate freedom in his creation. Freedom is associated with one's possible choosing of good or evil. If one chooses evil, then God will have to pay a price for it. Bishop Ting explained, "God is love and only a fellowship can satisfy God's love. Yet, this fellowship hinges upon freedom out of which one is in a position to choose good or evil. This is considered genuine freedom. Nevertheless, God offers to limit his own omnipotence and omniscience by doing so."

To assert the cosmic dimension of Christ's role and to ascertain God as the Cosmic Lover does not mean that everything that happens in nature and history is God's work and design. Many things are happening that contradicts God's loving kindness and are harmful to the welfare of the world. Creation is a long process yet incomplete and, as Paul insists, imperfect and subject to frustration, especially as it involves the making of free human beings who are not slaves but children of God. A world in the making must be done in which ugliness and devilry have their place. Events all over the world are telling us how tortuous the way is towards the perfect community of free, loving children of God, and how dear in suffering God and human beings have to pay for every inch of progress towards that goal.

Nevertheless, whatever price we are going to pay, we will never be evasive because our faith is deeply rooted in the ultimate Truth of God. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." (Ps.23) The foundation of our faith is also that of zhi-mian, namely, "you are with me". Christianity is a zhi-mian religion. It has perceived a truth: "for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Gen.3: 19) However, the zhi-mian character of Christianity does not limit itself to the outward environment because it also transcends our immediate reality. It has enabled us to see the fact that, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body." (2 Cor.4: 8-11) Bishop Ting remarked:

God being love, I have always believed that a life filled with love and care for others, or a life filled with prayer and praise, cannot end in death and obliteration. Christ's resurrection from the dead assures us that annihilation is not the end of life. Annihilation does not await a life lived in Christ. Christ will take this small and weak life into his hands, bless it, enlarge it and make it useful to humankind. God being love, we cannot imagine good and evil, truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness alike returning to nothingness.

When a person truly faces himself, he will encounter God through his spiritual needs. Bishop Ting's reference to Y.T. Wu's personal witness of turning to Christ has testified to this.

Zhi-mian also has to do with the way we should face God. God is love, but his love could not be expressed only in a single manner. Jacob dreamed of a ladder at Bethel and he wrestled with God at Peniel (face of God). Wrestling became a channel through which God taught humans how to grow. Yet we are not willing to face the God "who comes to wrestle with us.... To wound our self-assurance or conceit." But from Jacob's experience at Peniel, we can see that wrestling can have the profound effect of self-renewal. Hence, Bishop Ting urged us; "True Christians today cannot spend their lives with their heads stuck in the sand. All mature Christians, who love the truth, must not fear the inevitable mental and spiritual wrestling they will meet with. Only through such wrestling can we come to know the Lord and ourselves better. We will come to know the truth better and understand better the interconnectedness of Christian love of God and of others, and love for the country and for the church, and have a better knowledge of the future of the church. Without Peniel, we will still be Jacob and we cannot truly know Bethel."

"Wrestling" means the in-depth spiritual encounter between God and humanity. For many years, Jacob had always tried to bury his head in the sand of self-centeredness and evasion of God. His self-centeredness turned into a shelter for him to hide away from God. Humans are inclined to evade God and his true self. Thus, the God who came to wrestle with Jacob demanded that the latter face God and himself in order to have his personality renewed. Therefore, he was no longer called Jacob, but Israel who represented his new being in God. J. M. Burns said, "The criterion for a free society is: whether it chooses to face or to evade reality." In terms of zhi-mian psychotherapy, choosing to face or shun reality is the touchstone by which an independent and free personality is determined. The more a person is capable of having a direct encounter with reality, the higher his quality of life will be. At the same time, he is getting nearer to his self-fulfillment and to God in relationship. A self who has fully developed its inner potential and fulfilled its goodness is a "new being" who lives in an intimate fellowship with God.

Zhi-mian psychotherapy believes that evasion of reality and self-insulation (hatred) derives from the instincts of humans, whereas zhi-mian and human relationship (love) encourages human spiritual growth and fulfillment. The latter not only can help the former to find breakthroughs but also to heal its wounds via psychological counseling.

One of the most important characteristics of Bishop Ting's theological thinking is the facing of human sufferings. His theological horizon has not been confined to the Christian Church but

has significantly extended to the whole society and humanity. His concern for the sufferings in society is shown in some of his essays. What has impressed me most is his exposition of the story about Jesus' feeding the five thousand people (cf. Lk.9: 12-17). Bishop Ting's compassion for the suffering people in society had much to do with his own life experience in Shanghai prior to 1949 when he witnessed with his eyes the desperate struggle of the down-trodden people for survival. He came to realize that this reality was not something beyond our faith concern. In fact, to every Christian, suffering in society can be seen by all. The only problem is whether we take a zhi-mian stance or an evasive attitude. Bishop Ting said that there were many countries or regions in the world, which were experimenting with solving the problem of inequitable material distribution. "We Christians should not ignore this but need to show our kind concern."

Bishop Ting gave a brief introduction of Liberation Theology in Latin America. He was in agreement with certain views by Gustavo Gutierrez, a Catholic Priest in Peru. For instance, there are still in the world today the poor, the cast-offs, the alienated, and those trodden underfoot by others. They are not small in number. Those people have been deprived of their dignity and personality. The image of God in them has been eroded and twisted. The center of theological concern should be the human world, how to enable people to live a life of human dignity after birth, not life after death. This theological viewpoint is in perfect harmony with the aim of zhi-mian psychotherapy: To enable people to live a life of dignity, to live out the image of God, in the process of self-growth and fulfillment. Jesus demanded his disciples value the needs of a child, insisting to them that if a child is thirsty, they should give him water to drink; if he is hungry, they should give him bread to eat. Whatever they do to this child is the same as they do to God. Thus, to a Christian, how can the sufferings so commonly existent in society have nothing to do with his faith? How can we overlook the fact that God's image has been trampled and damaged mercilessly in a variety of ways on earth? Having taken all this into consideration, zhi-mian is not solely concerned about the reality of suffering in society, but also about love which is closely related to it. In the above-mentioned case, the love of a child is intimately associated with the love of God.

Zhi-mian takes a courageous and objective attitude. Love is a vital source of inner motivation. If we believe in God who is love, then we can never shun the sufferings in the human world. If we close our eyes to the problem of human suffering, thinking that by doing so we can preserve our faith in God, then this is not true Christian faith with zhi-mian characteristics. Personally, I am of the opinion that the manner in which to believe in a loving and almighty God is a theological issue which requires us to face reality in the world. Of course, pondering over this theological issue does not mean that there is only one choice. It contains another possibility, that is, to deny God. So, to a Christian, zhi-mian involves risks, as it may stand for some kind of experience of difficulty and loss. However, this experience is didactic in deepening his faith and what he may lose is only something preserved out of his evasion of reality and without rootage in life. Thus viewed zhi-mian aims at building up a faith with a deeper and more solid foundation. Human suffering may cause one to deny God for a time. Yet, he needs to grow into maturity and he will eventually see that God is related to suffering. The most profound truth of Christianity is: God was nailed on the Cross! Hence, our faith in the Cross is rooted in the suffering of Christ.

Bishop Ting quoted from Richard L. Rubinstein, a Jewish rabbi, by saying "When I say we live in the time of death of God, I mean that the thread uniting God and humanity, heaven and earth, has been broken. We stand in cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own resources. After Auschwitz, what else can a Jew say about God?" What is revealed in these words has much to do with zhi-mian attitude, that is, "After Auschwitz, what else can a Jew say about God?" In our theological thinking, we should take the zhi-mian stance and ask this question: "After the Nanjing Massacre, what else can a Chinese say about God?" We need to ask this question and ponder it together with our Chinese compatriots. We must give an honest answer in light of our faith, and not shut our eyes to the reality of human suffering as if God no longer works in this world. This kind of worry not only reveals the weakness and fragility of our faith, but more so our evasiveness in matters of faith.

The book of Job is a record in which we find his boldness in facing individual suffering and his perseverance in searching for an answer grounded in his faith. Job never kept silent about his suffering and was perplexed about what had happened to him. Job did not remain silent during his suffering. In the midst of his perplexity, he argued with his friends and spoke face to face with God. He never lost his faith because of this. On the contrary, he discovered a deep foundation on which his faith was built and established a more intimate fellowship with God. Bishop Ting used his own life experience to witness to the tragedy and disaster brought about by the "Cultural Revolution", and concluded that this did not lead to the alienation of man from God nor God from man. He said that the so-called "Cultural Revolution" was not only against culture, but also abused "revolution". During the Cultural Revolution, injustice, hostility, power aspiration and arbitrary persecution of the innocent ran rampant. Under such circumstances, our loving and gracious God revealed his marvelous splendor, and became the source of comfort and hope for the people. He drew many to him in those difficult days; he talked with those who had broken hearts and spirits; he accepted those who had been excluded by the society; he let the homeless to rest in his bosom. All this is proof of the fact that God has never distanced himself from suffering, but he is always with us in the midst of our difficulties.

According to zhi-mian psychotherapy, psychological problems are derived from a person's excessive evasion of reality. In many cases, this sort of evasion is unconscious. Furthermore, humans tend to find all kinds of excuses for themselves so that their evasion becomes justified, and eventually leads to their self-insulation. The theory of psychological analysis holds the view that there is a sort of defense mechanism in man's sub-consciousness, which is called self-justification. When a person wants to evade reality in thinking and action, he will do whatever he can to justify himself and reinforce his stance, resulting in self-insulation. Like other types of psychological counseling and therapy, the purpose of zhi-mian psychotherapy is to guide people out of the psychological state of self-insulation, and bring them into a horizon of broader perspective both in thinking and in action.

When we zhi-mian the world around us, we show great concern for the people's suffering in society and for our right attitude toward truths on earth. All this can be boiled down to one thing: Is there any truth outside the Church? Bishop Ting has a broader view in dealing with this. He has taken an open attitude toward truth. He said, "In order to continue to grow, I'd

rather open my mind to accept true lights from any direction or any place." I remember the words said by Niels Bohr, "The opposite of a correct statement is an erroneous statement; yet the opposite of a profound truth is very likely another in-depth truth." It is my acknowledgment that, out this very understanding, Bishop Ting has opened his mind to be inclusive to truths of all kinds rather than to be exclusive to others' views. Accepting truths from outside does not mean that one has to lose himself. In fact, this only allows him to gain a deeper or more comprehensive understanding of others, without neglecting or overlooking truths which are from other perspectives or are even opposite to his. The fundamental problem for humanity is this, that groups upon groups of people have formed their own inner circles. They regard their own interests as being superior and exclude people outside their own inner circles. Thus, those inner circles have become prisons for them. Even from the perspective of reality, this phenomenon does not abide by the Christian principle. Having studied the primitive Church history, Engels came to the conclusion, "The successful spread of Christianity to the gentiles had much to do with the Christians' willingness to abandon their national religion with its traditional rituals, with its openness to all people regardless of their races or nationality and became the first world religion." Bishop Ting expressed his view with zhi-mian attitude, "There were hard-liners who engaged themselves in the building up of a Great Wall against the inroads of new realities and new thinking. Their way of keeping themselves unmoved in their faith was to refuse to see any good outside Christian faith. They thought nothing of the difference between justice and injustice, or between good and evil. The only divide they could see was the one between belief and unbelief." Bishop Ting continued to urge us:

We have no reason to be afraid of truth that comes from sources other than Christianity. There is no truth but truth. God lets different people achieve their several provisional unities of truths. We will not know how to synthesize them into one body of truth until the last day. We can only have faith that the world will become intelligible and our knowledge will become one harmonious whole when the divine purpose for history is achieved. Provisional unities of truths we can observe with joy and thanksgiving because they illuminate us and point towards the ultimate unity in Christ, which is the promise of his revelation.

In such a world today, there are many that dare not to face reality and they gradually lose their zhi-mian capacity as a result of their attitude of deliberate evasion. However, there are a number who feel encouraged to face reality and they gradually build up their zhi-mian capacity in the process. One can find for himself numerous reasons to evade reality or face reality. To choose the attitude of zhi-mian or evasion is a lesson for one to learn. This is also part of his spiritual growth as a Christian. To learn this lesson, one must choose to be educated by God. This learning process is at the same time a process of "growth": the relationship between God and humanity is that of education and growth. Bishop Ting was especially insightful in this when he said, "The relationship between God and humans is like that between parents and children, which enables us to be educated and grow. God intends to cultivate a self in the cosmos who can correctly use his freedom to choose. Since he is a self, he ought to have freedom to select for himself. If he does not have this kind of freedom, then he cannot be counted as a true self. As this self has acknowledged God's love, he is not willing to make the erroneous choice. On the contrary, he is more than willing to use God's granted freedom to

make the right choice. Hence he is in the process of becoming a new person in God's eyes."
(5)

Methodologically speaking, zhi-mian psychotherapy is open, receptive and inclusive. Up until the present, many constructive methods in counseling which have been explored and created by humanity are essentially characteristic of zhi-mian. So far as psychological counseling and therapy are concerned, zhi-mian psychotherapy has adopted an all-inclusive and integrative therapy without limiting itself to one school of thought. The Bible is also the fundamental source of zhi-mian psychotherapy and methodology. At the same time, the theological thinking embodied in "A Collection of K.H.Ting's Essays" has enlightened the formation of zhi-mian psychotherapy.

The story of the Prodigal Son in Luke, chapter 15, was taken by Tolstoy as a model of literature. It has also served as a typical and significant case in our psychological counseling and mentoring. Bishop Ting gave a thorough analysis and explanation of "the Heart of God" and "the Way of God" as having been divulged in this story:

What we see of God in Jesus' life and teachings is for the most part not his omnipotence, might or severity, not his power to compel humankind, but his love, sympathy, respect for humans and his patient waiting for human awakening. When the younger son decided to leave home, the father was very unhappy, but he did not impose his will upon his son. God can seem excessively tolerant, almost powerless, for God will not force his son or use high-handed methods against him. He does not long for human obedience under pressure, but for fellowship that comes from the heart. If fellowship is not freely willed and given, then it is fellowship. If there is only one path that can be taken and all others are blocked, if one is not allowed to choose wrongly, then there is no free will involved. Thus, we see that in order to respect humanity, God limits his power. In his dealings with humans, he would rather wait patiently as we act out of our own volition. His methods are reconciliation, creation, redemption, sanctification, education and persuasion.

The principle and method in Bishop Ting's essay are the same as those of zhi-mian psychotherapy, in which the most essential element is that God is love and he never compels us to do anything. In the course of my psychological counseling work, I have noticed that compulsion and imposition from outside cause much psychological perversion and personality impediment. Many cases indicate that among those who have forced and pressured the individuals to suffer from psychological wounds are their loved ones (especially their parents) and teachers. In human society, people always try to compel others to do whatever they want. Usually, the human relationship is not that of "I-Thou" (Martin Buber's term) which encourages a relationship of equality, mutual help and mutual love, but rather an "I-It" relationship characteristic of compulsion and deprivation. More often than not, things are done in the name of "love" under this relationship pattern. In Chinese history and reality, autocracy has penetrated into each family through compulsion. In Lu Xun's book entitled "How Should We Be Fathers", he called upon people to use love to replace compulsion. He said, "We ought to bring up a new generation at the costs of our selfless love." "We must lift up the gate of darkness to let our children enter into a place where they can fully enjoy freedom and truth." Bishop Ting

has perceived in this story the very image of father, the prototype of which is God. God as Father respects humans and radically limits his power and rights. Although he is all-powerful, he never clings to this power, but gently lets his son to choose out of his love. He faced his son's departure from him and the reality of agony in his heart, but he chose to wait patiently for his son's return. "He rather waited for humans' making their own choice; he adopted the way of forgiveness, creation, redemption, sanctification, education and persuasion."

Bishop Ting reiterated, "When humans obey because they have been scolded, this is not the highest virtue they aspire to." In fact, if a person becomes obedient and subservient when scolded, he not only fails to achieve the highest virtue, but there results a vivid demonstration of the consequential twisted personality. If a child grows up in the midst of scolding, his personality is very likely to become, as Eric Fromm said, a "symbiosis of masochism and sadism". Such personality is also like what Lu Xun portrayed "Putting on the image of a lamb in front of a wolf; putting on the image of a wolf in front of a lamb." This is certainly and by no means the zhi-mian personality, but a split personality to evade reality. Psychologists have discovered that the children who are forced, neglected and abused can hardly accept a loving God. The facts in psychological counseling and therapy have told us that parents should follow God as an example so that the image of a loving God can be established in their hearts. In recent years, I have been thinking about writing a book titled "Learning to Do Counseling from God". The basic things we should learn are the Heart of God and the Way of God.

Bishop Ting's comments on the gospel of John (21:15-17) allow us to see the Heart of Jesus and the Way of Jesus:

Christ put before the church the image of the protector, the encourager, and the friend. This is what the church is expected to be. But at the same time, Christ is worried that the church might lose its first love, fail to fulfill the function of the shepherd, leave the sheep uncared for and even give occasion to the wolf to molest the sheep. Out of his high expectation and his uncertainty, he asks repeatedly of Peter, "Do you love me?"

Here we find the image of a shepherd who is the pastoral counselor, the protector, the encourager, and the friend. He had expectations and worries about the church, but he did not want to compel the church. Although he did not resort to compulsion, he asked repeatedly. Asking repeatedly is a method of counseling which normally serves the function of reinforcing the results. Jesus used this method to encourage Peter to have a loving heart. This loving heart will generate a strong sense of responsibility and related actions. Here we see how Jesus directly mentored a pastor in a gradual way.

The basic principle of zhi-mian psychotherapy is preserving the self (resisting any negative forces in the world that would cause self-damage) and the link of love (linking humanity and God). Both require a person's boldness and courage. Moreover, it demands one's greater courage to love. In the movie "Jesus", Peter was extremely courageous when he pulled the sword to resist against the Roman soldiers. However, what impressed me most was Jesus' words to Peter, "Peter, do you have the greater courage to love?" No humans are perfect or flawless in the process of God's creation. Peter, a disciple of Jesus, was a typical example to

teach us how to face reality. Prior to Jesus crucifixion, Peter denied his relationship with the Lord three times. After Jesus was arrested, the disciples were scared off. Although Peter did not escape the scene, he was so afraid of the repeated questioning of the Roman soldiers and that he dared not confess that he had been a disciple of Jesus. It was not until later that he repented and acquired zhi-mian experience. To become a person of zhi-mian character would require one to learn and be fulfilled throughout his life. It was said that during the time when Christians were severely persecuted by the Emperor Nero, Peter managed to escape Rome with the help of other Christians. On his way to escape, he encountered Jesus. He bowed down before the Lord and asked, "My Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Since you have abandoned those who are being persecuted in Rome, I have to go there to be crucified for them a second time." These words encouraged Peter to return to Rome. Eventually, Peter was crucified and his zhi-mian attitude of life and faith was fulfilled.

The greatest people on earth all have had zhi-mian personality; the greatest books also teach us how to face reality. Jesus was a person of zhi-mian character and the Bible is a book full of stories and examples to teach humans how to acquire zhi-mian personality. What the "Cross" accomplished was the highest zhi-mian in Jesus. The zhi-mian personality of Jesus was not only shown in his refusal to take the wine mixed with myrrh (not allowing himself to evade reality by intoxication), but also in his words of forgiveness (even the forgiveness of his enemies) before he was put to death on the cross. The Cross itself mirrored a thorough and perfect zhi-mian personality; it revealed Jesus' firm resistance against the entire destructive forces of the world and showed the bridge to link God and humanity. Bishop Ting thus remarked, "The Son of God became incarnated and entered the world, which means that there is no unbridgeable chasm between God and the world, Grace and nature."

Bishop Ting spoke highly of the zhi-mian personality of Jesus repeatedly in his book. In his essay "Jesus' Protest", he talked about what happened after Jesus' arrest. What Jesus said was an affront to the authorities and an officer struck him. Jesus did not strike back, but did answer. Jesus answered his enemies solemnly and with dignity; his words were an accusation and a protest: "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" His answer was neither obsequious nor haughty. This kind of answer was an answer of zhi-mian characteristics. Jesus never took "love" as an excuse to evade reality. His attitude was clear and distinct. Jesus, with his zhi-mian character, proved to be unconquerable and invincible by the demonic forces on earth. Bishop Ting was right when he said, "Annas, Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate could work hand in glove to have Jesus suppressed, but all the Annases and Caiaphases and Pontius Pilates in history have failed to suppress the growing resonance of Jesus' protest and the response of those who heard it, and followed him." Jesus, with his zhi-mian personality, demonstrated a unique kind of love, which he would not withdraw even when he was suffering excruciating agony and pain on the cross.

Analysis and clarification are tools used by psychological counseling as well as by zhi-mian psychotherapy. Through analysis and clarification, mentors can help those they are mentoring to learn and fulfill zhi-mian. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to evade analysis and clarification among some Christians. Bishop Ting made a very good investigation into this and had the matter further clarified:

Sometimes we hear the view expressed that it is not only futile but also a sign of human pride and self-righteousness to try to analyze facts or clarify issues because, it is said, everybody in the world is one of the unpeaceful ones and harbors within him an evil spirit of cold war. Sometimes, when the cause at the root of some tense situation in the world is about to be ascertained, a voice emerges to incriminate everybody in the "common guilt" and to call everybody indiscriminately to "repentance." Thus, before we are aware of the fact, use is made of our sound Christian teaching to the end that issues vital to the people are glossed over, responsibility for international lawlessness and tension is shifted from where it rightly rests and universally shared by all alike, and injustices to the masses of the people are allowed to stand as something not quite distinguishable from justice.

From the angle of zhi-mian psychotherapy, using one principle to replace another is a compulsive action. It reflects a tendency of inner evasion within a person who is unwilling to develop his ability to discern via analysis and clarification or other methods, but instead hides himself away under a certain major principle. He takes for granted that all problems will be solved by this principle and he will no longer need to make any efforts. If this happens to a Christian, he or she will consciously or unconsciously look upon belief as a refuge. He will box himself in it and gradually become a person with no ability to discern. The more one is unable to discern, the more he is intending to use God and belief to compel others, to demonize other people's right discernment and place a divine halo around his own desires and intentions. He will be sneaky enough to define his own thinking as God's will, and hide himself in an ivory tower of personal "belief", using a major excuse to cover up the poverty of his ability to discern. Bishop Ting questioned this in one of essays, "When the wolf is attacking the sheep, the shepherd's responsibility is to take the side of the sheep and to protect them. What sort of a shepherd would he be if, in the name of fairness, he puts the wolf on a par with the sheep? In the same way, how dare we make ambiguous, equalized judgments between the victim and his victimizer?"

Another basic principle of counseling and therapy in zhi-mian psychotherapy is do not label people. Counselors of zhi-mian psychotherapy carefully listen, reason, analyze and even question people face to face, but would never try to label them. Although labeling things helps us to identify and categorize the objects in our study, on the other hand, it shows disrespect of life in terms of psychological counseling and therapy, because it regards life as being ossified and unchangeable. Traditional psychotherapy was criticized as having produced an ineffective labeling system. Likewise, psychoanalysis and behavior therapy were also criticized for having only seen the "morbidity" of human psychosis or having been inclined to see humans as destined by their past or their environment. Zhi-mian psychotherapy has absorbed the positive elements of counseling methods from various schools, but the principle idea is taken from Carl Rogers in that each patient (regardless of his outlook, knowledge, capability, wealth, social status or power) is highly regarded as a living being who has his own unique thinking, feeling, inner experience and longing for a good life. He or she should be the only living being on earth to be worthy of respect. Zhi-mian psychotherapy is convinced that humans are not determined by their past, changing of life, childhood experience, environment or hereditary factors. Every person has the ability to choose, to accept, develop, and fulfill himself or herself. Such concept is by no means in contradiction with Christian faith. On the contrary, it sees the process of

God's creation and that of human development as a process of working together. Bishop Ting expressed his total agreement with this understanding of humanity:

We should not see human life as unchanging. We are all changing. We are not immobile like a dead, stiff butterfly pinned to a piece of cardboard. We are subjective who come from the past, live in the present and hope for the future. The prodigal and we we are all in the process of changing. We are all beings in process in God's hand and this gives the prodigal and every one of us hope.

In fact, God has not only given humanity freedom to choose, but also inner resources for self-renewal. The preceding inner resources contain the image of God and potentials for humans to work with God. This is like what Bishop Ting said, "Humanity finds itself in the shadow of sin, but at the same time it can never shake off the father's (God's) merciful love." The reason why the prodigal son could have returned home was because he had in himself the merciful love of God. However, humanity tends to lack faith and patience in the prodigal son. They do not want to wait long for the prodigal son to return and they often jump to judgment of him or label him against his own will. They treat a person just like a dead butterfly pinned to a piece of cardboard. Bishop Ting gently persuaded us:

In studying theology we need to guard against labeling other people, saying that one is "spiritual" or "of the spirit" while that one is not; this one is "orthodox" and that one "unorthodox". It is easy to set oneself up as judge, but this is of no benefit to the formation, enrichment or progress of one's own theological thinking. This is the attitude of one who is not open to self-improvement. When you hear something you do not quite understand, do not immediately condemn. You should make an effort to understand why this person raises this argument. What problem does he or she hope to resolve by so doing? Do you have an answer to this question yourself? What is it? That is to say, do not be quick to judge. You must be a listener, you must engage in dialogue. We cannot demand perfection of a new idea. We must be sympathetic, enter into the other's system and see the good intentions behind that system's efforts to answer questions.

The "Three-Self" theology mentioned by Bishop Ting also reflects the fundamental truth in life of personality growth and fulfillment, the essence of which is Zhi-Mian. Henry Venn was the chief executive of the Church Missionary Society in England. Bishop Ting quoted his view of "euthanasia of mission" which is very inspiring and enlightening, "Missionaries were to work in such a way as to make themselves dispensable." These words have revealed another essential principle of counseling and therapy of zhi-mian psychotherapy, which is that the real purpose of psychological counseling and therapy is to achieve self-support for a person who needs help, to enable him to fulfill his zhi-mian personality by self development and growth. Thus, to a counselor of psychological counseling and therapy, his final purpose is to let himself (to those who receive his counseling) become "a dispensable person". A genuine psychological counselor ought to make efforts to enable those who need his help to stand up on their own (zhi-mian), to be self-supporting, and to search for more abundant resources for personal growth and development.