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Взгляд Юэ Фэна на историю православия

Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена одному из самых известных исследователей православия в Китае после 1949 года, переводчику и историку-религиоведу Юэ Фэну (сентябрь 1928 – 22 февраля 2017). Его труд «История православия» стал первым наиболее авторитетным исследованием истории православной церкви, опубликованным в Китае с начала периода реформ и открытости (1978 г.). В данной статье предметом исследования выступает понимание Юэ Фэном истории православной церкви и выделенные им присущие православия особенности вероучения. Актуальность предлагаемого исследования определяется тем фактом, что и по сей день сохраняется значительный интерес к изучению православия в самом Китае: публикуются новые исследовательские статьи, защищаются диссертации. К сожалению, и на сегодняшний день научные труды Юэ Фэна, широко известные в китаеязычной среде, в российском научном сообществе знакомы лишь узкому кругу синологов и религиоведов-исследователей истории православия в Китае. Одна из возможных причин этого связана с тем, что по настоящее время, несмотря на многочисленные цитирования произведений Юэ Фэна в китайской, российской и англоязычной научной литературе, не существует, за исключением нескольких коротких рецензий, отдельных исследований, посвящённых жизненному пути и творчеству крупнейшего китайского исследователя истории православной церкви, труды которого, без преувеличения, повлияли на несколько поколений ученых. Авторы настоящей статьи поставили перед собой цель попытаться заполнить эту лауну и познакомить широкую академическую аудиторию России с классикой «православоведения» Поднебесной. Для реализации этой цели авторы, во-первых, осветили основные вехи жизненного пути китайского исследователя, закрывая белые пятна на российской карте китайских исследований православия, и, во-вторых, проанализировали научные публикации Юэ Фэна, в которых исследуются вопросы истории православной церкви, и эксплицировали его взгляды на исторический путь и природу православной церкви. Авторы приходят к выводу о том, что без подробного знакомства с жизненным путём и трудами Юэ Фэна, которые и по сей день сохраняют свою актуальность и авторитетность, невозможно понять специфику институционализированного религиоведения как такового и особенностей религиоведческих подходов к изучению православия в Китае.

Ключевые слова: Юэ Фэн, православие, история православной церкви, Китай, история православной церкви в Китае, особенности православия в Китае

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Yue Feng's View on the History of the Orthodox Church

Abstract. The essay focuses on the life and works of one of the most famous Chinese researchers of Orthodoxy after 1949, the translator and historian Yue Feng (September 1928–February 22, 2017). His “A History of the Orthodox Church” was the first authoritative study of the history of the Orthodox Church, published in China since the beginning of the “reform and openness” period (Gǎigé kāifàng; 1978–present days). The article

focuses on Yue Feng's understanding of the history of the Orthodox Church and the features of the doctrine inherent in Orthodoxy which he chose to highlight. The relevance of the research is determined by the fact that to this day there is a significant interest in the study of Orthodoxy in China itself: new research articles are published, dissertations are defended. Unfortunately, even today Yue Feng's works, widely known in the Chinese-speaking academia, are known only to a small group of sinologists and students of the history of Orthodoxy in China in the Russian academic community. One possible reason for this is that, even to this day, despite numerous citations of Yue Feng's works in Chinese, Russian, and English academic literature there are no separate studies, except for a few short reviews, dealing with the life and work of the eminent Chinese researcher of the history of the Orthodox Church, whose works, without exaggeration, have influenced several generations of scholars. The authors of this article have set for themselves the aim of trying to fill this gap and introduce a wide Russian academic audience to the classics of "Orthodox Studies" in the Middle Country. To achieve this goal, the authors, firstly, highlight the major milestones of Yue Feng's life, closing the white spots on the Russian map of Chinese studies of Orthodoxy, and, secondly, analyze Yue Feng's academic publications, exploring the history of the Orthodox Church, and explicate his views on the historical path and nature of Orthodoxy. The authors conclude that without a detailed acquaintance with the life and works of Yue Feng, which still retain their relevance and authority, it is impossible to understand the specific features of institutionalized religious studies as such and the features of academic approaches to the study of Orthodoxy in China.

Key words: Yue Feng, Orthodox Church, history of the Orthodox Church, China, history of the Orthodox Church in China, specific features of the Orthodox Church in China

Introduction. The Chinese Church historian Yue Feng is one of the most important researchers of the history of Orthodoxy in China. As the author of numerous articles and a fundamental monograph on various aspects of the history of the Orthodox Church, he can rightly be considered one of the "founding fathers" of the modern Chinese academic tradition of Orthodox Studies. Yue Feng's work "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" had a huge impact on the development of ideas about Orthodoxy in China. Despite this fact, he and his work have not yet become the subject of a separate in-depth study either in Russia or abroad (including China). This study is the first attempt by the authors to fill this gap.

Yue Feng in contemporary historiography. Among the works that mention Yue Feng and his writings the monograph "*Chinese Religious Studies on Orthodoxy in Modern China*" should be noted. The authors of the study emphasise that Russian researchers consider Yue Feng's work "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" to be one of the most popular in academic circles not only in China but also in Russia itself. Moreover, the authors claim that Yue Feng is one of the leading Chinese specialists in the history of the Orthodox Church and that his "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" is a conceptual presentation of the Chinese methodology for the study of Orthodoxy in the Middle Country [Zhang, Fomina, 2015, 9, 34].

Similarly, Zhang Xi, in her article "The Study of Orthodoxy in China in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries" speaks of "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" as one of the "most popular not only in the Chinese but also in the Russian academic communities" [Zhang Xi, 2016, 160].

The well-known Russian sinologist A. Lomanov, in his review of the first edition of "*A History of the Orthodox Church*", notes that "...Professor Yue Feng is one of the authoritative Chinese experts on Orthodoxy." He believes that Yue Feng's monograph "...deserves attention as one of the first attempts at a systematic study of Orthodoxy in modern academic circles of the People's Republic of China... an attempt at a comprehensive study of Orthodoxy". A. Lomanov, highlighting certain shortcomings of the monograph (in particular, "...heightened interest in socio-political problems" and an insufficiently deep and systematic review of "...Russian literature of the 90s"), also draws attention to the fact that "...the underlying emphasis, assessments, and methodological approaches... are very important... for expanding... the understanding of the attitude of modern Chinese scholars to the topic of the Orthodox Church..." [Lomanov, 1999].

Latvian scholar Aleksandrs Dmitrenko, despite his criticism of Yue Feng's views on the history of Orthodoxy, the activities of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China, and the Marxist approach to religion, recognises that "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" is an important source of information about autocephalous Orthodox churches for the Chinese-speaking reader [Dmitrenko, 2018, 18].

In the dissertation of Liang Zhe, successfully defended at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, the data from Y. Feng's "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" is used to describe the religious life of Russian emigrants in Xinjiang [Liang Zhe, 2016, 106–108, 110].

The Russian student of Chinese Orthodoxy V. Datsyshen in his work "*A History of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China*" writes about the "breadth and depth" of "*A History of the Orthodox Church*", emphasising that several of the monograph's chapters are of interest to Russian researchers of Orthodoxy in the *Zhongguo* [Datsyshen, 2010, 36–37].

The English-language collective work "*Handbook of Christianity in China*", edited by Professor R.G. Tiedemann, also contains some references to Yue Feng's works, in particular, it makes use of "*A History of the Orthodox Church*" to clarify the list of places in China where religious life was resumed in the early 1990s [Tiedemann, 2010, 833]. "*The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*" mentions Yue Feng's works as additional reading material for those who wish to continue studying the history of Eastern Christianity in China [Parry, 2007, 290].

Thus, it could be noted that these works – which are part of a huge body of academic literature on the history of Orthodoxy in general, and the history of the Orthodox Church in China in particular, and which contain numerous references to Yue Feng and works penned by him – indicate that his research has not only become a "classic" but also retains its academic relevance to this day.

The major milestones of Yue Feng's academic life. Yue Feng was born in September 1928 in the village of Dushu, Hongtong County, Shanxi Province. In 1948, after completing his studies at North China University [With sorrow, 2017, 2], he successfully graduated from the Faculty of Russian Language, Beijing Foreign Studies Institute, and was assigned to the Faculty of Philosophy, Peking University. There he worked for five years as a translator, responsible in particular for translating the lectures given by an academic group, specializing in philosophical disciplines, which was sent to China by the Soviet Union.

Working as a translator was a considerable challenge for Yue Feng. A graduate of the Russian Language Faculty, who, due to a lack of qualified teaching staff, was not even taught the basics of philosophy [Yue Feng, 2008b, 6], he had to translate the materials of a course on the history of philosophy, overflowing with specialized terminology. To do his job properly, Yue Feng devoted almost all of his free time to self-education. If he was faced with questions that he could not find a solution to on his own, he asked for advice from the professors of the Faculty of Philosophy – Wang Zisong (1921–2018), a specialist in the history of Greek philosophy, and Huang Nan-sen (1921–2013), a connoisseur of the works of Karl Marx. Professor Wang Taiqing (1922–1999), a translator and specialist in the history of Western philosophy, was also a great help to Yue Feng in his studies. Many days of Yue Feng's work led to a creation of a lecture course on the history of philosophy, edited by T.P. Oizerman, which was published in 1957, and fully translated into Chinese. Yue Feng also participated in the translation of the lectures of the Soviet academic Philip Georgiev (1904–1974), "*Some Questions of Dialectical Materialism*" and "*On the 'Philosophical Notebooks' of Lenin*" [Yue Feng, 2008b, 6–7].

Due to the sharp deterioration of the bilateral relations between the USSR and the PRC (1956–1966), in 1959 Soviet specialists were recalled from China. Yue Feng, who "just got a taste" for the study of Marxist philosophy, was transferred to the Department of Oriental Philosophy, where he was assigned to translate works on the history of philosophy in China, Japan, Korea, and India. The study of Eastern philosophy aroused Yue Feng's interest in the history of its development and its influence on human civilisation. In 1964, at the initiative of Mao Zedong, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) decided to create a new division – the Institute of World Religions. Six employees of the Department of Oriental Philosophy of the Faculty of Philosophy, Peking University, including Yue Feng, joined the organisational bureau that was supposed to prepare for the opening of the Institute [Yue Feng, 2008b, 7–8], but due to the events of the "Cultural Revolution" (1966–1976), the Institute opened its doors only in 1976.

It was while working at this Institute that Yue Feng was fully formed as a scholar of religion. His formation as a scholar was greatly influenced by the founder and first

head of the Institute of World Religions of the CASS, Ren Jiyu (1916–2009). While still working as a translator, Yue Feng attended Ren Jiyu's lectures on Buddhology that made a strong impression on him. After starting work at the Institute of World Religions, Yue Feng was advised by Ren Jiyu to study the history of religions including Eastern Christianity, and to pay particular attention to the study of religion in Russia [Yue Feng, 2009, 37–38; Yue Feng, 2008b, 8].

It should be noted that Yue Feng considered perseverance to be a very important quality for a scholar. For example, in the preface to his collection of essays, Yue Feng, reflecting on how to approach academic work, gives readers seven tips, the second of which is dedicated to perseverance. Yue Feng believed that after the scholar had determined the directions and goals of research, he should resolutely pursue them, and when faced with difficulties, he should not back down in any case. A scholar, he stressed, must have exceptional willpower. Only those who persevere can succeed [Yue Feng, 2008b, 10–11]. Choosing Orthodoxy as the object of his academic research, Yue Feng faced animosity from some colleagues in the Institute, but went on carrying out his research, since almost no one in China studied Orthodoxy in those days: it was considered preferable to study either Catholicism or Protestantism, or both. Yue Feng saw the reason for the lack of publications on the Orthodox Church as nothing more than the negative impact of Western Christian cultural centrism on Chinese academia [Yue Feng, 2008b, 8–9]. Therefore, in 1980, to correct the situation, Yue Feng published the article “The Origin of the Russian Orthodox Church”, in the authoritative journal *“World Religions”* [Yuan Yi-bo, 1994, 139].

It should be noted that although most of Yue Feng's intellectual heritage is associated with the study of various aspects of Orthodox Christian history, he wrote on other topics, too. For example, he published articles on Catholic and Protestant theology, as well as the history of missionary activities of representatives of various Christian denominations in China. In some of his works, Yue Feng raised questions about the importance of the existence of religious studies as a separate academic discipline and the relevance of religiological education in China.

The great achievement of Yue Feng's was the publication of his main work – *“A History of the Orthodox Church”* in 1990. It became one of the first monographs on the history of the Orthodox Church, written by a Chinese researcher. The book is based on a course of lectures on Orthodoxy given by Yue Feng to students of the Department of Religious Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy, Peking University, as well as on the texts of his numerous articles and conference papers. The monograph was highly praised by the Chinese academic community. In particular, Li Yingnan, director of the Russian Language Institute, Beijing Foreign Studies Institute, noted in her review that Yue Feng's work had eliminated a long-standing gap in Chinese studies on the history of Orthodoxy [Li Yingnan, 2000, 140]. *“A History of the Orthodox Church”* has long been almost the only reference book for Chinese researchers of Orthodoxy and Russian culture. The publication of this monograph cemented Yue Feng's reputation as a leading Chinese expert on the history of the Orthodox Church. In 2005, the expanded and revised second edition of his book was printed [Yue Feng, 2005].

Yue Feng took an active part in writing *“A History of Religions of Russia”*, a collective work of twelve Chinese scholars, published in 2008 under his editorship [Yue Feng, 2008a]. For this collection, Yue Feng prepared the preface and afterword, personally wrote four chapters, and co-authored six more [Yue Feng, 2008a, 1–3, 1–11, 67–94, 95–228, 229–243, 392–433, 485–504, 505–527, 628–642].

“A History of Religions of Russia” received its well-deserved approval from both Chinese and Russian academic circles, and the publication of the collection became a notable event in the field of Chinese religious studies. A. Lomanov in his review noted that Yue Feng managed to gather a strong creative, multigenerational team of leading Chinese religious studies specialists to write a work of encyclopaedic scale [Lomanov, 2010, 179]. A. Lomanov believes that *“A History of Religions of Russia”* makes a significant contribution not only to the development of religious studies in China but also to the promotion of cultural dialogue between Russia and China [Lomanov, 2010, 179]. The well-known Chinese researcher of Russian culture and authoritative translator Gao Mang (known by his pen name Wulanhan) noted that the authors of *“A History of Religions of Russia”* com-

prehensively analyse and explain the influence of religion on politics, economy, culture, and history of art in Russia [Gao Man, 2008, 145].

In addition to his academic activities, Yue Feng was successfully engaged in administrative work. In 1981, the joint efforts of the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Faculty of Philosophy of Peking University helped to establish the Department of Religious Studies at the faculty. In 1983, Yue Feng was appointed head of this Department [With Sorrow, 2017, 2]. He devoted a lot of time and effort to popularising religious studies as an academic discipline in China. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of the knowledge produced by the research in this field for various branches of the Humanities [Yue Feng, 1987, 47–48]. In 1989, Yue Feng, together with Wen Yun, a former researcher at the Faculty of Eastern European Languages at Peking University of Foreign Languages, published the handbook “*One Hundred Questions and Answers about Christianity*” [Yue Feng, Wen Yun, 1989]. In January 1995, they published a more extensive handbook on Christianity, called “*A Thousand Questions about Christianity*” [Yue Feng, Wen Yun, 1995]. Compiled in a question-and-answer format, the book was written in simple and understandable language and was positively received by readers. The second edition of the handbook came out in March of that year.

In the last years of his life, Yue Feng continued to actively carry out his academic work, remaining in his position as a special guest researcher at the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Yue Feng’s view of Orthodoxy and its history. Yue Feng rightly believed that without an in-depth knowledge of the Orthodox Church, it is impossible to understand the politics, economics, history, and art of Russia, Central and Eastern Europe. He also insisted that the study of Orthodoxy was important for such sections of historical knowledge as the history of ideas and the history of Christian thought. According to Yue Feng, without getting acquainted with Orthodoxy, it is impossible to achieve a holistic understanding of Christianity as such [Yue Feng, 1987, 47].

Studying the history of the Orthodox Church, Yue Feng proceeded from the Marxist theory of socioeconomic formations and class struggle, operating in the categories of “the base” and “the superstructure”. For him, Orthodoxy was only a part of the superstructure of the Byzantine (and, for that matter, Russian) society. Yue Feng believed that some of the characteristics of the Orthodox Church might be related to the fact that the economic development (and the political state) of the Eastern Roman Empire was somewhat different from the Western Roman Empire [Yue Feng, 2008b, 21, 34].

For instance, referring to the topic of church-state relations in the Byzantine Empire, Yue Feng emphasised that the emperors were pragmatic about the issue of religious orthodoxy, perceiving Orthodoxy, first of all, as an instrument of unification of the Empire. Therefore, when they intervened in ecclesiastical matters and acted as arbitrators in theological disputes, they would often support the most influential, rather than the most orthodox, party within the Church. Yue Feng believed that the reason for the convocation of the First Ecumenical Council by Emperor Constantine the Great (February 27, 272 – May 22, 337) was the understanding that disputes between the Orthodox and Arian parties threatened the stability of the Empire [Yue Feng, 2008b, 23–25, 27]. During the Iconoclastic Controversy, Emperors Leo III the Isaurian (ca. 685 – June 18, 741) and Constantine VI (January 14, 771 – 797/805) supported the iconoclastic movement to confiscate church lands and incomes that they later distributed among the Byzantine nobility. The first Byzantine Empress regnant Irene (April 19, 797 – October 31, 802), according to Yue Feng, restored the veneration of icons to please the “common folk,” for whom icons were an important part of the religious cult [Yue Feng, 2008b, 29].

In the theological disputes that shook the Byzantine Empire, Yue Feng saw not so much of an attempt to understand the subtleties of Christian dogma but rather a reflection of the social contradictions within the Byzantine society. Yue Feng emphasised that the followers of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius (250/256 – 336), in their arguments with the orthodox party, represented the interests of oppressed Christians. Arianism united representatives of the lower (slaves and the urban paupers) and sections of the middle class of urban society, becoming one of the forms of protest against the union of the official church with the slave system of the Byzantine state [Yue Feng, 2008b, 22].

The participants of the iconoclastic movement opposed the veneration of icons because the cult of icons and relics was one of the ways of exploiting believers and spreading the Church's ideological influence on society. Another important reason for the spread of the iconoclastic movement was the protest of the masses against the Church's seizure of peasant lands and the property of citizens [Yue Feng, 2008b, 22].

According to Yue Feng, the disputes between the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople about the primacy of their respective sees were a natural consequence of the division of the Empire into two parts, each of which had its own First Hierarchy. The Emperors of the East and West, Yue Feng notes, also took an active part in this struggle [Yue Feng, 2008b, 29–32].

Studying the history of the development of the Orthodox Church in Byzantium and analysing the complex relations between Constantinople and Rome, Yue Feng concluded that the Orthodox Church had three features that distinguished it from other branches of Christianity, namely conservatism, polycentrism, and the Church's dependence on secular power (Caesaropapism).

Conservatism, according to Yue Feng, implies that the Orthodox Church carefully preserves the worship and dogmas of early Christianity, adheres to the Nicene Creed and the decrees of the seven Ecumenical Councils, believing that all of the above is infallible and cannot be disputed by anyone. Following the Soviet scholar V. Titov [Titov, 1974, 10], Yue Feng saw the reason for Orthodox conservatism in the fact that the process of feudalisation in the Byzantine Empire was very slow compared to the Western Roman Empire. Stagnation in public life gave rise to conservatism in ideology, which later became part of the Orthodox tradition [Yue Feng, 2008b, 33–35].

Polycentrism suggests that the Orthodox Church (as opposed to the Catholic Church) does not have a single centre and leader. Yue Feng explained this peculiarity by the fact that, after the division of the empire, four centres of church life were formed in the East: Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch. Although the disputes over primacy between these ancient sees resulted in the appropriation of the title of "the Ecumenical Patriarch" by the ruling bishop of Constantinople, the other three Patriarchates retained their independence. Over time, Yue Feng wrote, each of the fourteen local churches became an independent centre for their respective congregations [Yue Feng, 2008b, 33–35].

The dependence of the Church on secular power (Caesaropapism), according to Yue Feng, is connected with the very fact of the formation of the Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire – a country with a strong imperial power, where the Church and the State were as one. The Emperor was appointing the Patriarchs, convening synods and councils of bishops as well as approving their decisions; occasionally, he was even explaining the dogmas [Yue Feng, 2008b, 33–35].

Even though Yue Feng adhered to an atheistic worldview, in his articles he highlighted some positive aspects of the Church's influence on the society and culture of Orthodox countries, in particular, noting that some of the prescriptions of moral theology had a beneficial effect on the daily lives of the Orthodox faithful [Yue Feng, 1997, 75–77; Yue Feng, 1999a, 36].

Yue Feng devoted several of his articles to church-state relations in the Soviet Union. He noted the great changes in the position of the Orthodox Church in the country, the constant increase in the number of believers, as well as the change in the quality of the parishioners. Yue Feng drew attention to the fact that in some areas of the USSR, local authorities gave in to the pressure exerted by believers and reopened previously closed churches [Yue Feng, 1984, 80–81]. Yue Feng's articles, which raised questions related to the history of the Orthodox Church under-examined in Chinese academic circles, brought him certain fame, becoming one of the authoritative sources of information about Orthodoxy for the academic community of the Middle Country. It is not surprising that when *"A History of World Religions from Antiquity to the Present"* was published in the authoritative Chinese publishing house *"Shang Yinshuguan"* under the editorship of Professor Wang Zhongyi of the Hebei Normal Institute, it was Yue Feng who wrote the section on the Orthodox Church for it [Wang Zhongyi, 1991, 267–310].

"A History of the Orthodox Church", as noted above, is Yue Feng's most fundamental work on the history of the Orthodox Church. It was written by the Chinese scholar

after the end of the period of the “Beijing Spring” (1978–1981). It is important to note that the book is not limited to the history of the Orthodox Church, demonstrating the scale of the research conducted by Yue Feng. It introduces the reader to Orthodox philosophy and ethics in pre-revolutionary Russia, Church art, the history of the Orthodox Studies in Russia and China in the 20th century, and even the administrative structure of local autocephalous Orthodox Churches [Yue Feng, 1999b, 216–233]. Besides, some materials on the history and theology of the Orthodox Church were included in the appendix to the monograph [Yue Feng, 1999b, 272–357].

The structural logic of the monograph and the way the research material is presented seem to be entirely justified and determined by the author’s vision. Thus, the first three chapters of the book introduce the reader to the world of Orthodoxy, presenting the history of the development of the Orthodox Church, the main content of the Orthodox tradition, as well as its inherent features. The first chapter briefly describes the influence of Imperial economics and state structure on the Orthodox Church, talks about the dogmatic disputes that shook the Byzantine Empire, and the historical context of the so-called “Great Schism” that split Christendom in two [Yue Feng, 1999b, 1–15]. The second chapter, “The Main Characteristics of Orthodoxy”, deals with the sources of Orthodox doctrine, dogmatic theology, Orthodox liturgical tradition, church hierarchy, and the structure of monasteries [Yue Feng, 1999b, 16–39]. The third chapter is devoted to the peculiarities of the Orthodox Church, highlighted by Yue Feng during his many years of research [Yue Feng, 1999b, 40–53].

The next three chapters (the fourth, fifth, and sixth) were devoted to Orthodox philosophy, ethics, and art [Yue Feng, 1999b, 54–90]. In chapters seven to ten¹, Yue Feng describes the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, reviewing the historical period from the baptism of Rus’ to the 1990s [Yue Feng, 1999b, 91–166]. The eleventh chapter “Orthodoxy and Modernity” describes the new directions of spiritual development in the Orthodox Church, its relations with other Christian churches, as well as its special status in Russia [Yue Feng, 1999b, 167–190]. The twelfth chapter describes the rise and decline of Orthodoxy in China [Yue Feng, 1999b, 191–205], while chapter thirteen briefly deals with the most famous Orthodox churches in the Middle Country [Yue Feng, 1999b, 206–215]. The fourteenth chapter describes the structure of the international Orthodox communion and briefly introduces the reader to the current state of the twelve autocephalous and two autonomous Orthodox churches [Yue Feng, 1999b, 216–232]. In the fifteenth chapter, Yue Feng introduces the reader to the history of the studies on the Orthodox Church undertaken by prominent Russian scholars before the October Coup of 1917 [Yue Feng, 1999b, 233–244]. The final sixteenth and seventeenth chapters are devoted to the history of the Orthodox Studies in the USSR and China in the 20th century [Yue Feng, 1999b, 245–268]. The monograph also included the “Chronicle of the Main Events in the History of Orthodoxy” [Yue Feng, 1999b, 269–271] and appendices consisting of the Apostolic, Nicene, and Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creeds translated into Chinese, a short catechism with questions and answers regarding the essentials of Orthodox faith and doctrine, published in 1936 by the priest Nicholas Li Xunyi in Shanghai, and some other materials [Yue Feng, 1999b, 272–357].

Yue Feng spent a long time trying to identify **the features of the Orthodox Church** that distinguish it from other Christian denominations. If the article “A Brief Essay on the Formation of Orthodoxy” indicates only three of them (polycentrism, conservatism, the Church’s dependence on secular authorities) [Yue Feng, 2008b, 31–35], then in the third chapter of his “*A History of the Orthodox Church*”, Yue Feng identifies six such features, adding another three to the first, i.e. mysticism, differences with Catholicism, on the one hand, and with Protestantism, on the other [Yue Feng, 1999b, 40–53].

Mysticism, according to Yue Feng, is unscientific and irrational. In his opinion, in Orthodoxy, mysticism is manifested in a very broad way: in the teaching of the Orthodox Church concerning itself, the doctrine of God, doctrine of Jesus Christ, in its ecclesiology, the doctrine of prayer, the doctrine of the Sacraments, the theological vision the temple of God, in the Orthodox understanding of history [Yue Feng, 1999b, 42–45].

Identifying its differences from Catholicism, Yue Feng points to such features of the Orthodox Church as, for instance, the Orthodox Church’s commitment not only to

the Holy Scriptures but also to the Sacred Tradition (while the Catholic Church, in his view, is committed to the Holy Scriptures and the Church's Magisterium). Discussing the differences in Orthodox and Catholic dogmatics, Yue Feng writes about the absence in the Orthodox Church of certain dogmatic teachings, such as the Filioque, Purgatory, the Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to Yue Feng, in contrast to Catholic theology, Orthodox theological tradition is more conservative and lacks vitality. The hierarchical structure, the Church Statute (Ustav) and calendar, the Divine Liturgy, the liturgical vestments, and the architecture of the Orthodox Church, as the Chinese scholar writes, also differ significantly from their counterparts in the Catholic tradition [Yue Feng, 1999b, 49–52].

Among the major differences between Orthodoxy and Protestantism, Yue Feng focused on the recognition by the Orthodox Church of authorities other than the Holy Scriptures (namely, the Sacred Tradition, the Creed, and the patristic writings), the veneration of the Mother of God, and the belief in the sacramental nature of the ordained priesthood. Orthodox theology is more conservative than Protestant theology. Also – unlike Protestantism – in Orthodoxy, strict canonical rules define and govern both the structure of the Church itself and the life of its members. The hierarchical structure, the liturgical system, and the ecclesiastical art of the Orthodox Church also differ significantly from the Protestant ones [Yue Feng, 1999b, 52–53].

The Chinese scholar understood Orthodox religious philosophy as a philosophical explanation and evaluation of Orthodoxy. According to Yue Feng, Orthodox philosophers in their reasoning were rooted in philosophical idealism and theological approach [Yue Feng, 1999b, 54]. In Orthodox philosophy, Yue Feng, following the Soviet specialists in religious studies, distinguished three main traditions: academic philosophy, V. Solovyov's metaphysics of all-unity, and the philosophy of “the new religious consciousness” [Yue Feng, 1999b, 55–63; Novikov, 1987, 223–239].

Comparing Orthodox philosophy with Catholic and Protestant philosophies, the scholar identified its distinctive features. Among them: the unity of God and the world, the union of the divine and human natures, synergistic harmony between God and the human race, bringing together theology and philosophy; resisting reason; preaching mysticism, irrationally assimilating divine wisdom, and focusing on the mystery of the Saviour's Incarnation [Yue Feng, 1999b, 63].

As for Orthodox ethics, Yue Feng insisted that it only emerged after the so-called “Great Schism” of 1054. However, he traced its origins to the moral theology of Christian apologists and ancient Greek Church Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria (pp. 150–215), Basil the Great (c. 330 – January 1/2, 379), John Chrysostom (c. 347 – September 14, 407) and John of Damascus (675/6 – December 4, 749) [Yue Feng, 1999b, 64]. Among the scholars who studied the issues of Orthodox ethics in pre-revolutionary Russia, Yue Feng particularly singles out V. Solovyov (January 16, 1853 – July 31, 1900), Archpriest S. Bulgakov (July 16, 1871 – July 13, 1944), and N. Berdyaev (March 6, 1874 – March 23, 1948). At the same time, he emphasises that in Russia ethics became an independent discipline only after separating from religious philosophy and theology at the beginning of the 20th century [Yue Feng, 1999b, 65–66]. Whether this statement is true is debatable. Considering Orthodox ethics from an atheistic point of view, Yue Feng insisted that it had not only a positive but also a negative influence on believers [Yue Feng, 1999b, 65–66]. Thus, he wrote that the Church, by instilling in its members the ideas of almighty God and heavenly paradise and by teaching them to endure hardships in this life to achieve the bliss of the world to come, offers suffering people only false comfort, i.e., the Church's preaching weakens the believer's will to fight for their happiness [Yue Feng, 1999b, 74–76].

In the sixth chapter of “*A History of the Orthodox Church*” titled “The Ecclesiastical Art of the Orthodox Church”, Yue Feng discusses Orthodox ecclesiastical art, defining it as a combination of architecture, painting, sculpture, monumental art, various forms of music, poetry, and plastic art (dance) [Yue Feng, 1999b, 77]. He believed that in Orthodoxy, there were two main styles of ecclesiastical art, namely Byzantine and Slavic (the main representative of the latter being the Russian style of church art). The Chinese scholar gives a very high assessment of Orthodox art and speaks with regret about

the objects of church art lost in the era of the iconoclasm and during the Soviet persecutions of the Church [Yue Feng, 1999b, 80, 88–89].

Four chapters (from the seventh to the tenth) are devoted to the history of the Orthodox Church in Russia, from the baptism of Rus' to the 1990s. While appreciating the role of the Church in the development of Russian culture and statehood, Yue Feng still criticised it for its alliance with the state authorities, the accumulation of material wealth, and the exploitation of peasants [Yue Feng, 1999b, 95–98, 103–105, 121].

Describing the intolerable situation of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union, Yue Feng noted that after the 1917 Coup the Orthodox Church lost its status of the 'established church' of Russia while its influence in society and the number of practicing believers decreased drastically [Yue Feng, 1999b, 95–98, 103–105]. The Chinese researcher considered Metropolitan Sergius' (Stragorodsky) "Declaration of July 20th 1927", which called on the faithful to be loyal to the current government, the most important milestone in the history of church-state relations. The Orthodox Church successfully confirmed its loyalty to the Soviet regime with its patriotic position during the Great Patriotic War (June 22, 1941 – May 9, 1945) [Yue Feng, 1999b, 137–144].

Yue Feng noted the change in the Russian Orthodox Church's attitude towards other confessions during the Soviet period, its active participation in the ecumenical movement, as well as the improvement of relations with the Old Believers [Yue Feng, 1999b, 146]. Yue Feng considered the adoption of the USSR law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" on October 1, 1990 to be a significant event in the history of state-church relations in the last half of the 20th century: after its promulgation, according to the Chinese religious scholar, the number of believers increased and the construction of new churches began. Believers, wrote Yue Feng, finally got the opportunity to participate in the political life of the country [Yue Feng, 1999b, 147–148]. Yue Feng considered the passage by the USSR government of the law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations" on October 1, 1990, after the promulgation of which, according to the Chinese scholar, the number of believers increased and the construction of new churches began, to be a significant event in the history of state-church relations in Soviet Russia. Believers, wrote Yue Feng, finally got the opportunity to participate in the political life of the country [Yue Feng, 1999b, 147–148].

In the tenth chapter Yue Feng analyses the state of the Orthodox Church in modern Russia. He notes the profound changes in the relationship between the Church and the state authorities, the rapid increase in the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in society, the replacement of Soviet holidays with church holidays, and the beginning of pastoral work in the army. Yue Feng specifically points out that some Russian scholars have publicly recognised the important role of the Church in the history of Russia [Yue Feng, 1999b, 150–157].

Describing the changes in relations between the state and the Church, Yue Feng comes to the following conclusions: the government in Russia will not return to a policy directed against the Church. The latter has entered a period of stable development. However, although the number of parishioners will continue to increase in the future, such a giant leap in the number of believers, which occurred after the collapse of the USSR, could not happen again. According to Yue Feng, there is a possibility that Orthodoxy could once again become the state religion in Russia [Yue Feng, 1999b, 161–162, 164–165].

The author devotes two whole chapters (the twelfth and the thirteenth) to the history of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing (1716–1956). While not denying the Mission's invaluable contribution to the development of Russian-Chinese relations, as well as the considerable input by some members of the Mission (for example, Archimandrites Hyacinth Bichurin [September 9, 1777 – May 23, 1853] and Avvakum Chestnoy [September 30, 1801 – March 22, 1866]) to the development of Russian sinology as an academic discipline, Yue Feng still emphasises that Russian missionaries were using their special status to collect economic, political, and military information on Russia's Far Eastern neighbour [Yue Feng, 1999b, 195–196].

Some additions were made to the new edition of *"A History of the Orthodox Church"* in 2005. Thus, in the sixteenth chapter titled "The Study of Orthodoxy by Russian Scholars", a subsection "The Study of Orthodoxy by Scholars of the period of Tsarist Rus-

sia” was added, in which Yue Feng gave a list of the most famous or, in his opinion, eminent scholars who belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church [Yue Feng, 2005, 278–279].

A new chapter, “Orthodox Theology”, written by Yue Feng in collaboration with Professor Dai Guiju of Peking University of Foreign Languages, was also added (it became the fifth chapter of the monograph), talking about the Orthodox teaching about God the Creator, Christ the Saviour, angels and demons, the first parents Adam and Eve, and the Providence of God [Yue Feng, 2002, 68–93]. The fourteenth chapter “The Place and Role of Orthodoxy in the History of Russia” was also added [Yue Feng, 2002, 243–265]. The content of the appendix was significantly expanded, and new historical materials were added (in particular, “Brief Rules of Christian Life” compiled and translated into Chinese by Archimandrite Flavian Gorodetsky) [Yue Feng, 2002, 337–470].

Conclusion

It is safe to conclude that Yue Feng was a pioneer in the study of the history of Orthodox Christianity in modern China, relying on the works of his colleagues from the USSR, thereby, among other things, popularising Soviet religious studies in friendly China. Yue Feng’s “History of Orthodoxy” turned out to be a window into the world of Orthodoxy for several generations of Chinese researchers. He remains one of the most authoritative and popular Chinese-speaking researchers on this topic to this day. Without getting acquainted with his monograph, it is impossible not only to understand the history of the development of Orthodox Christian studies in China but also to understand the issues of concern to modern Chinese researchers of Orthodoxy.

It is also significant that modern historians of religion, deeper acquainted with the academic biography of Yue Feng, can use the example of his life to gain a more meaningful understanding of the history of the process of institutionalization of Chinese religious studies, and its formation as a popular academic discipline in Chinese humanities.

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