

## 22. Report of the Committee on “Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Literature” (2019)

Over the past year, the Research Committee on “Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Literature” has been promoting and fostering the spirit of Scriptural Reasoning by sponsoring the following academic events:

### 1. International Conferences:

- September 26-29, 2018, the SR committee assisted the Fifth Nishan Forum, whose theme was “A Changing World and A Shared Future for All Humanity,” in running a “Roundtable for Intercultural Philosophy.” We invited Professor David Ford of Cambridge University, one of the two founders of the “Scriptural Reasoning” movement, Professor Nicholas Adams from Birmingham University, another active promoter of SR in UK, and Professor Alexander Lomanov from the Russian Academy of Social Sciences, to dialogue with three Chinese scholars on topics such as “Towards a Healthily Plural Shared Future: A Manifesto for Religions and Universities,” “Chinese Philosophy in Russian Intellectual Perspective” and “Religious Traditions: Dialogue and Cooperation in Britain and China”. The two SR scholars later gave lectures at universities in Beijing and organized a session of “Scriptural Reasoning.” The events brought the movement to the attention of many.
- October 8-9, 2018, the SR committee worked with scholars in the field of Chinese ancient textual studies to organize a conference on the theme of “Studying Pre-Qin Masters in the New Era.” The conference honored Professor Yoav Ariel of the University of Tel Aviv, who spent twenty years translating the full text of the ancient Chinese classic *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan*, a work completed in 2017 and published by Renmin University of China Press in 2018. This conference organized scholars with similar interests at home and abroad to honor Professor Ariel’s achievement, celebrate the publication of the book and explore further methodologies and issues in this field.
- November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, the SR committee helped run the fourth “Confucius China Studies Program” PhD Forum. Out of more than 50 applicants, 12 were chosen to present their papers at the forum. The CCSP sponsors scholarships for international PhD students in the humanities and social sciences with research topics related to China to study in China as exchange students or to complete masters or doctorates here. The Forum provides a platform for these students to exchange and learn from each other while they are in China.
- November 3-4, 2018, SR committee helped run the Sixth World Conference on Sinology, whose theme was “Understanding China: Inclusive Sinologies and Diverse Civilizations.” 50 overseas scholars and 50 Chinese scholars attended the conference. This biennial conference provides an open academic platform for scholars of different fields to dialogue and learn from each other. The metaphor used at this conference was “stone”. Participants each come from different cultures, and after gathering at the event, all went home with a stone from different cultures as a memory. The spirit of SR calls for enhancing each other through mutual learning and mutual reflection, which were

embodied in the sinology conference.

- April 11-13, 2019, the SR committee helped the International Center for the Study of Ancient Text Cultures to run its annual international conference, whose theme was “The King’s Speech: The Royal Voice in Antiquity”. 16 scholars from overseas and mainland Chinese higher institutions presented papers. Ancient cultures under discussion included Chinese, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Assyrian, and Egyptian cultures.
- July 20-21, 2019, the SR committee worked with the Department of Archaeology and Museum Studies at the School of History and the Department of Social Anthropology at Cambridge University to hold an international conference on “Theorizing (IM)Materiality of Cultural Heritage in China.” This is the first international conference on this topic in China. Scholars hoped to find a voice for the Chinese way of preserving and passing on cultural heritage by discussing the practices of Chinese government and Chinese people.
- In 2019, the SR committee has also helped run two international workshops for young scholars in ancient textual comparative studies with themes from “Manuscripts and Materiality” (Jan. 5-12, 2019) to “Author and Authority in Ancient World” (June 17-21, 2019). This workshop has run biannually since 2017, and each time four distinguished scholars are invited to give lectures on ancient classical studies and ancient civilizations, with 40 junior faculty members and PhD students invited to participate with their own research proposals. This offers another way to practice and live out the spirit of Scriptural Reasoning because each participant is compelled to compare their own research to similar research interests from other civilizations. The spirit of being open-minded and inclusive is encouraged in such workshops.

2. **Lectures:** In the past year, the SR Research Committee has invited many scholars to lecture at RUC. The spirit of SR can be seen clearly from their topics, as listed:

- May 24, 2018, Professor ZHANG Longxi (Hong Kong City University), “Another Intellectual Choice of Modern Chinese Scholars: A Case Study of Qin Zhongshu.”
- September 27-28, 2018, Professor David Ford (Cambridge University), two lectures on “Scriptural Reasoning”: “Scriptural Reasoning: A Journey of Surprises;” “Scriptural Reasoning: Its Educational Promise.” In addition to lectures, Professor Ford led a Scriptural Reasoning workshop under the title of “SR: Teachers and Learners.” All participants were invited to read a paragraph of similar meaning from the *Book of John* 1:35-39, *Koran* 18: 66-67, *Dirghagama-sutra* vol. 3, T. 1. 001. 16c8-12, *Analects* “Shu Er” 7:22-25. In each reading, one representative from each tradition introduced the background and context of the reading, and then all participants were encouraged to share their insights from reading the text. The practice was an eye-opening experience for many students who were present.
- October 11, 2018, Dr. Alexander Chow (Edinburgh University Divinity School), “Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies.”
- October 15-18, 2018, Professor Jenny Mander (Cambridge University), “Why the World Needs Good Stories?”

- October 23, 2018, Dr. Hong Liang (China Graduate School of Theology), “The Typology Studies of Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century German Scholars’ Reading of Dostoyevsky.”
- January 7-11, 2019, Professor Imre Galambos (Cambridge University), four lectures on “Medieval Chinese Manuscript Culture.”
- March 7, 2019, Professor Ola Sigurdson, “A Turn to Marxism: Studies in Terry Eagleton and Slavoj Zizek.”
- May 22, 2019, Professor Susannah Brietz Monta (Notre Dame University), “Psalms and English Poetry.”
- May 31, 2019, Professor Stephen J. Patterson (Willamette University), “The Lost Way: Early Christian Wisdom Literature.”

### 3. Publication:

The SR Research Committee oversaw the edition and publication of issues 40 (theme: Religious Phenomenology) and 41 (theme: Mit dem Anfang anfangen) of the *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture*. A further project related to *T’oung Pao*, one of the leading academic journals in worldwide sinology, is going well. The purpose of this latter project is to find good translators working in different languages and to present good-quality research materials for Chinese scholars so that Chinese scholars in the humanities may find inspiration from reading about “scriptural reasoning” activities in foreigners’ writings about China.

Drafted by

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