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## ***The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao*** **An Artistic Interpretation of the Liturgy of the Mass in an Interreligious Perspective**

### **Abstract**

The artwork, *The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao* made by the author (2006-08), deals with religion and culture, spirituality and food. It represents a religious-based resistance to moral conflation and environmental destruction.

This artwork is apologetic; it aims at contributing to an interpretation and discussion of Christianity as ideology and practice that may be relevant to challenges in our time. The intended recipients of the work are practicing Christians, culturally Christians, and non-Christian Chinese.

*The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao* consists of two series of eight pieces and a 17<sup>th</sup> shared piece. Conceptually, the work deals with communicating the meaning of the Western Christian Mass means. The liturgy of the Mass is interpreted into a sequence of eight parts that is then juxtaposed to eight Chinese concepts:

- |                    |      |  |
|--------------------|------|--|
| 1. Confession      | – 我  | – Wo (I)                                 |
| 2. Prayer of mercy | – 我们 | – Women (we)                             |
| 3. Gospel reading  | – 道  | – Dao (the Way)                          |
| 4. Creed I         | – 无名 | – Wuming (nameless, no thing, uncreated) |
| 5. Creed II        | – 有名 | – Youming (named, all things created)    |
| 6. Peace           | – 德  | – De (virtue)                            |
| 7. Gifts           | – 水  | – Shui (water, simplicity)               |
| 8. Eucharist       | – 无为 | – Wúwéi (non-action, freedom)            |

The Golden Rule completes the work.

Formally, each piece is a square, 50 x 50 cm, which frames a circle, 30 cm in diameter. The two series or “ways” are complementary in composition. In the Western series, the circle is an ornament around which its representative meaning is written in Latin. In the Eastern series, the Chinese characters are written inside the circle that is framed by an ornament.

Materially, the work is made by eatables and food related objects, reflecting the Mass as a meal. The pieces are constructively held together by metal-thread, bound by hand. Associating to familiar objects and methods of everyday life, the artwork may communicate beyond language boundaries.

## Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the complex intersections of religion, culture and nature through an art producing process. It is a retrospective analysis of an artistic development project that was carried out by the author in 2006-08.<sup>1</sup> The work was initiated in Norway and Denmark, while the art production started in China and was finalized in Norway. The project explores Western, Christian thinking in relation to Eastern, Chinese, or non-Christian terminology. The project aims at contributing to an interpretation of Christian thinking that may open for inter-religious understanding and dialogue.

The interest in traditional Christian religious practices has dropped dramatically in within Western cultures during the last century. In the same period, however, various Eastern religious practices have been adopted in the West.<sup>2</sup> Wordless, Buddhist meditative practices have held great attraction, particularly among intellectual religious people (Watts 1957, Suzuki 1973, Thelle 1991, Kennedy 1999 and 2000). Similarly, various forms of yoga and martial arts are becoming increasingly popular as sport activities that combine relaxation and aesthetics with the obligation to keep fit. According to my personal experience of meditation, yoga and taiji practice, Western culture, on the one side, has something to learn from Asian cultures that combine spirituality and collective bodily practices, often worked out in nature. On the other side, Eastern cultures may have something valuable to learn from Western Christian cultures in which individual freedom and personal development are central. This project explores possible meeting points between Western Christian and Eastern, Chinese theological and philosophical thinking.

The paper, firstly, refers to theological literature, placing the project in a theoretical context. Secondly, it deals with the project development: research questions, presuppositions, restrictions and methodology. Thirdly, the paper analyzes liturgy in order to illuminate basic Western Christian concepts. Fourthly, it discusses liturgical concepts in relation to Chinese religious or philosophical concepts. Conclusively, the paper suggests a meeting point between West and East – broadly speaking – in the phrase that is called *The Golden Rule*. The material outcome, the artwork, is a double series of eight images titled *The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao* that is bridged by a 17<sup>th</sup> shared image.

## Theoretical Context

Contemporary secular and religious thinking can be combined more easily than traditionalist theists or atheists may admit. Current theology offers interpretations of most aspects of the Christian tradition that may suit contemporary needs. Bold voices are for instance, the American Episcopal theologian John Shelby Spong, who interprets the Gospel in accordance with secular thinking (Spong 2002), and the German Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng, who propagates inter-religious dialogues based on a common understanding of ethical principles (Küng 1990). Theology in context (liberation theology) takes its point of departure in the individual's experience of everyday life (Rowland 2003), one of its branches being feminist theology (Johnson 1992). It is a global theology, committed to the struggle for justice for women, ecological stability and the transformation of society (Parson 2002). Eco-theology seeks to tell new stories about human living on earth (Berry 1990). A liberation theology for nature is presented (Bergmann 2005), and eco-feminist theologians share in formulating how the new perspectives can motivate change in a troubled world (Grey 2003, Ruether 2005). The problem, in my opinion, is that this lively ongoing theological development scarcely reaches outside academia.

In order to contribute to a peaceful world, religious leaders worldwide regularly meet for inter-religious talks. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church recognized the

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<sup>1</sup> Such a reflective practice may be defined *artistic research*.

<sup>2</sup> The concept West and East are, in this context, used to denote Christian versus Asian, non-Christian cultures.

need for respect of non-Christian beliefs (Flannery 1981).<sup>3</sup> These intentions were followed up by the late Pope John Paul II (pontificate 1978-2005).<sup>4</sup> With an immense population, the coming religious awakening in China is important.<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XVI (pontificate 2005-) has recently initiated dialogues with the Communist officials and the Roman Catholic Church in China (Benedict XVI 2007).<sup>6</sup>

There is a close relationship between a religion and its material culture. Theology provides narratives and concepts that artists may reflect in material form (Bergmann 2003: 65).<sup>7</sup> The new images in turn, may influence the way one thinks theologically (Mathews 1995: 141). Thus, artists partake in the development of religious thinking. In our time, generally speaking, religious iconography has lost contact with contemporary art. Thereby, the potential contribution by artists regarding iconographical development is lost.<sup>8</sup> This project aims at contributing to the current cultural and religious discourse by providing new images that allow new ideas to emerge.

### Project Development

According to the late Scottish philosopher of religion John Macmurray (1891-1976), humans have three principal modes of reflection: scientific, artistic and religious reflection.<sup>9</sup> Following Macmurray, religious reflection has to be communal and ritual. Turned around, one may say that the very celebration within a group constitutes a certain kind of religious reflection (Macmurray 1961: 54-55). The most important Christian religious reflection takes place in the ritual of the service or mass.<sup>10</sup> A service or mass consists of a set sequence of components: prayers, readings and actions that may be varied; taken together this sequence is called the liturgy.<sup>11</sup>

As an artist, I work in a milieu and among colleagues that mostly are self defined non-religious. My artistic topic, however, is religion. At a certain stage, I have felt the need to apology and defend my position against what is projected onto me by secular acquaintances. I wish to try to “translate” and explain my stand to them and beyond. Since the liturgy in Christian contexts is the supreme example of religious reflection, the question emerged of how Western Christian liturgy might be expressed in a theologically contemporary way that can communicate beyond the Christian faithful to a non-Christian or secular audience.

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<sup>3</sup> *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)*, Vatican II, 1965, § 3: 740.

<sup>4</sup> He stressed the importance of justice and freedom to all people and gave primacy to prayer in the meetings with non-Christians (John Paul II 2002, § 6). The latter has been important in the development of my artistic concepts.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning religion and ethics in China, the following three main stands are currently distinguishable: 1) official atheism, 2) traditionalists who advocates for a renaissance of Chinese traditional thinking, and 3) Western oriented people, secular capitalists and Christians. Source: China Daily March-July 2006, read in my fieldwork.

<sup>6</sup> These relations were cut off in the 1950s when Chinese authorities demanded national control of the Churches (Wiest 2002).

<sup>7</sup> In an ecclesial context (church related), art and artists are broad terms covering the aesthetic and creative fields, including art and design.

<sup>8</sup> The late Pope John Paul II strongly encouraged artists to work for the Church (John Paul II 2008). In local Chinese churches, the embellishments were relicts from the missionary priests of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To state it bluntly: Christ was a European male with blond hair. I was told that in order to please Rome, the official churches (that were excommunicated by the Vatican in the 1950s) did not dare to start a Chinese iconographical inculturation, but tried in their own way to stay loyal.

<sup>9</sup> As a philosopher of religion, MacMurray's thinking deviates from that of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his co-author, psycho-analyst Felix Guattari, that In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* from 1991, regards philosophy as the third reflective mode (Norwegian translation in: Bale and Bø-Rygg 2008: 491-518).

<sup>10</sup> A mass is a service that includes the eucharist.

<sup>11</sup> Etymologically liturgy stems from Greek *leitourgia*, which is a combination of *leitós*, an adjective meaning pertaining to the people, and *érgon*, work (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* 2003, vol. 8: 727). Liturgy is the term for the official worship of God by the Western Churches for centuries.

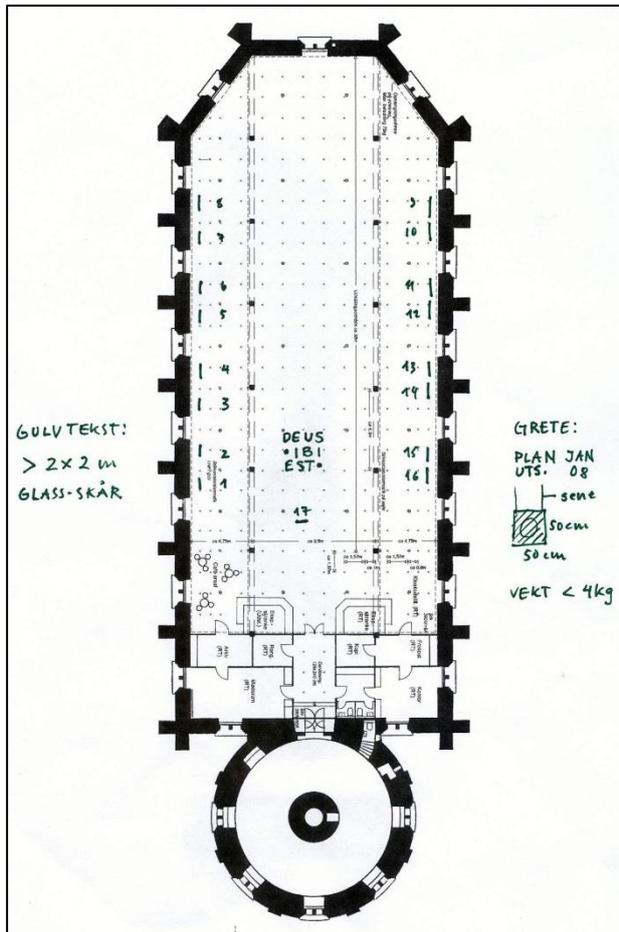


Figure 1. Ground plan of the gallery in The Round Tower, Copenhagen, Denmark

This question is open-ended, generating a hermeneutic project. Any answer will be a suggestion that cannot be falsified or proved; it can only contribute to the ongoing discourse. Besides, it is the privilege of practice-led art/design research to answer their research questions by the production of artefacts in addition to an explanatory text (Mäkela and Routarinne 2006). My presupposition was that by interpreting the foundational principles of the liturgy into images, in this case, material forms, new perspectives on the Christian concepts might arise.<sup>12</sup>

Two circumstances became decisive for the project: an invitation to exhibit in a gallery in The Round Tower of Copenhagen, Denmark,<sup>13</sup> and an invitation to stay as artist in residence in China.<sup>14</sup> The Round Tower was built as a Trinity Complex in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It comprised an observatory, a library and a church; here, science, know-ledge building and theology should develop alongside. Today, the former library is turned into a gallery. Its space lies directly above the church underneath that still is a functioning church. The gallery floor is the upper side of the ceiling of the church.

In this place, I decided to make a site specific work that could reflect the activities taking place in the church room, namely, the liturgy of the mass. The initial plan was to produce a sequence of objects to be placed on the outer walls of the room, letting each piece communicate one part of the liturgy. The onlookers would by walking along the images, visually be brought through the liturgy. This composition would be circular, starting and ending at the entrance/exit. In consequence, the Eucharist piece would be placed in the West, opposite the altar. In short, the plan did not work, figure 1.

However, before starting the work, my residency period in China was due. Then came the idea of producing two paths, one Christian, the other Eastern, since I myself was about to embark on such a journey. I decided to produce a double series of images that could parallel each other, juxtaposing the Western understanding of mass with Chinese concepts. The series would both end in the apsis in the East above the altar. Accordingly, I named the project: "The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao". The title also refers to the sayings of Jesus: "I am the way"<sup>15</sup> and to the Chinese concept *Dao* (道) that means "way".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> It belongs to the Christian tradition to dare act astonishingly: St. John lets Jesus say: "The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear the sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going" (Jn 3.8, NT: 150).

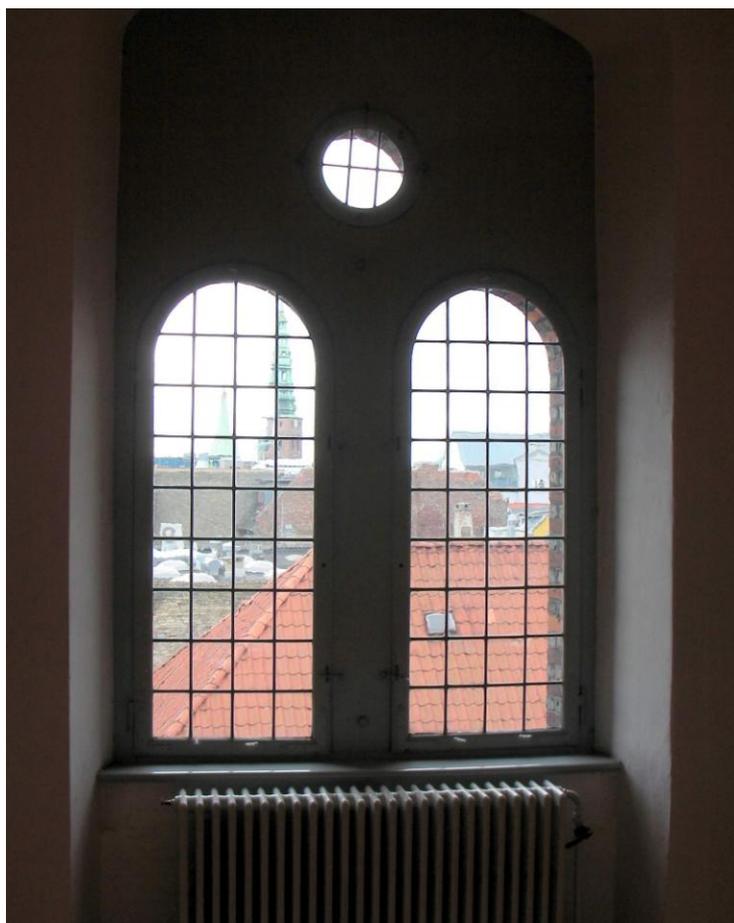
<sup>13</sup> See online: <http://www.rundetaarn.dk/engelsk/frames.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> I stayed at the cultural centre TCG Nordica in Kunming, Yunnan.

<sup>15</sup> "I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (Jn 14.6) (The Jerusalem Bible 1966: NT, 177).

<sup>16</sup> Dao may also mean the way of right living (Henne 1982: 24).

Formally, I wished to relate to the small circular windows above the main windows in the gallery, figure 2. Due to the number of windows in the gallery space, and thereby walls in between them, each series would consist of eight pieces.<sup>17</sup>



Methodologically, the project comprises several approaches that are mixed during the process: literature studies, fieldwork and artistic competences that involve broad perception, intuition and skills.<sup>18</sup> As a research paper, the text is a retrospective reflection on the artistic process set in context<sup>19</sup> (Schön 1983; Jarvis 1999), with traits of a personal narrative (Ellis and Bochner 2000).<sup>20</sup> The project was restricted to the Western Christian traditions: Roman Catholic and Protestant.<sup>21</sup> The mass chosen for analysis is the after-conciliar Roman Catholic rite<sup>22</sup> in its Latin form because this is an international language.<sup>23</sup> The analysis is based on my lifelong Christian practice, literature and discussions with theologians.<sup>24</sup> The understanding of Chinese thinking is based on my stay in China, literature, qigong and taiji training.

Figure 2. Window in the gallery of The Round Tower, Copenhagen

<sup>17</sup> The series arrangement structurally resembles the Way of the Cross. Personally, I always felt the need for some other contemplative images within a church room than the sufferings of Christ, solely. In 1997, I did the Station in St. Laurentius Roman Catholic parish church in Drammen, Norway, in which I focus on the original meaning of the stations: the pilgrimage and the change of life that it offers the pilgrim (see <http://www.refsum.no/gallery/#22.0>).

<sup>18</sup> Artistic competence includes what may be denoted sensuous knowledge (see Kjörup 2006).

<sup>19</sup> In this paper, the context treated is related to the religious field, not to an art context that is usually in artistic research. The reason is simple; this work does not relate itself to other contemporary artworks or artists, it relates to the ecclesial tradition, iconography and catechesis. Otherwise, my artistic influences are rather distant to this particular work and I regard them to fall outside the scope of this paper.

<sup>20</sup> This method adds to the knowledge of practical understanding, *techne*. See Refsum 2007: *Personal Theory; Towards a Model of Knowledge Development for Design*.

<sup>21</sup> I personally know these Churches: being raised in the first and married in the latter.

<sup>22</sup> Structurally and from the lay perspective, the liturgies of the mass in the Evangelical Lutheran and the Roman Catholic Church are almost similar since they stem from the same root.

<sup>23</sup> This is not in opposition to the use of the vernacular language, as encouraged by The Second Vatican Council (Flannery 1981, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* § 36: 13) but in this context, Danish is the language in Copenhagen, which represents another language than my own tongue: Norwegian.

<sup>24</sup> This is a huge field; sufficient sources for this project are: Chupungco 1997, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 2003, and *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century version is available online at: <http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia>.

The problems to solve in this artistic research project<sup>25</sup> were: 1) to find a set of eight concepts within liturgy that accounts for its underlying ideas, and 2) to suggest a parallel series of eight Chinese concepts that may reflect the Western ones, but on its own premises rather than a mere translation, and 3) to find a material form in which to tell this tale.

### Western Concepts: Analysis of Liturgy

The selection of eight components to represent the Mass was done in accordance with the underlying theoretical perspective of the project and in consideration of three factors: 1) what is theologically essential, 2) what I personally find most meaningful as a lay participant, and 3) how I think the liturgical contents may be best communicated to “post”- and non-Christians.<sup>26</sup>

The mass consists of two principal parts: a) *The liturgy of the Word* and b) *The liturgy of the Eucharist*.<sup>27</sup> I have included moments from both parts and decided upon the following:<sup>28</sup>

1) *Confession* is a personal prayer of introspection. The individuals are invited to look critically at their actions toward others. The obligation is to understand the consequences of what we have done, or failed to do. Everyone has to accept personal failure in doing what is right – what we call sin – by saying *mea culpa* (Latin: “by my fault”).<sup>29</sup> In today’s world – let alone in China – I consider the idea of confession to be of great importance.

2) *Kyrie eleison* (Greek: “Lord have mercy”) is one of the oldest Christian prayers. The congregation prays together for mercy, thereby indicating a communal hope that it is possible to be given mercy.<sup>30</sup>

3) *Readings* from the Gospel are essential in the mass. I decided to let the hymn used in Easter liturgy *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est* (Where charity and love are, God is there) condense the Christian readings, although it is not a Gospel quote.<sup>31</sup>

4) *Credo* (“I believe”) is a statement and renewal of the Church’s faith. Christians believe in one God that is contemplated in three forms: Father (*Pater*), caring and creating beyond our understanding; son (*fili*), Jesus, a Palestinian man living in Nazareth 2000 years ago; and Holy Spirit (*Sancto Spiritu*) that upholds the Church, and acts in the lives of the faithful.<sup>32</sup>

5) *Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas* (“on the third day he rose again in fulfilment of the Scripture”) is part of the Creed.<sup>33</sup> This saying indicates that the Church simply confirms what the Scripture records; She (the Church) through the creed does, in fact, not proclaim an irrational stance concerning the resurrection.

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<sup>25</sup> Problems in an artistic research process are equivalent to research questions.

<sup>26</sup> Post-Christians denote secular, culturally Christians.

<sup>27</sup> All the Latin citations are taken from *Mass of the 1970 Missal. Ordo Missae*. March 26, 1970 [cited 22.02 2008]. Available online at: <http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/FuseAction/TextContents/Index/4/SubIndex/67/TextIndex/9>, and: <http://www.katolsk.no/liturgi/messen/lat-alm.htm>. The English version: <http://www.katolsk.no/liturgi/messen/eng-alm.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> The listed moments are the outcome of thinking before and during the production process. Thus, it constitutes part of the research findings within the project.

<sup>29</sup> If nothing else is said, the words in italics and brackets are Latin. For *Credo* (I believe) it is contrary since it is the name of the prayer, like *Kyrie*.

<sup>30</sup> *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy), *Christe eleison* (Christ, have mercy) first appeared in the mass of Antioch-Jerusalem after the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* 2003, vol. 8: 259).

<sup>31</sup> See online: <<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/UbiCaritas.html>>.

<sup>32</sup> *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 2003, vol. 4: 349.

<sup>33</sup> The excerpt is from the Constantinopolitan Creed used in ordinary Sunday masses, credited to the Council of Constantinople 381 BCE (ibid: 353-54).

6) *Peace (pax)* is ritually granted the congregation by the celebrating priest, in words and gesture: “Peace be with you” (*pax vobiscum*). The congregation then greets each other by saying: “Peace be with you” (*pax tecum*) in reconciliation and mutual respect.<sup>34</sup> This component is a symbol of the right condition between people: in relation to God, poor and rich are equal, and everyone is dependent on and part of the group.

7) *Gifts* are given by the congregation, and put symbolically on the altar table as bread and wine.<sup>35</sup> The priest consecrates the gifts, starting the prayers by saying: “Fruits of the earth [...] and the work of the human hand” (*Fructum terræ [...] et operis manum*). This prayer is essential as it explicitly demonstrates that the outcome of the earth and our human efforts constitute the holy meal.

8) *Eucharist* (Greek: “thanksgiving”) is the sacrament of the body of Christ. A sacrament is defined as a religious ceremony or act that is regarded as imparting spiritual grace to the participants or having spiritual benefits.<sup>36</sup> The Eucharist is a commemoration of the Last Supper<sup>37</sup> when Jesus said: “do this in memory of me” (*hoc facite in meam commemorationem*). It takes the form of a symbolic meal of bread and wine, in which Christ is conceived as present.<sup>38</sup> Through the sacrament the congregation is nourished by God. The meaning is in effect to strengthen the individual to go – into the world – and act well.<sup>39</sup>

### Eastern Concepts, Reflecting Liturgical Concepts in Chinese

Missionaries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century did much to communicate Christian ideas to the Chinese, the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1522-1610) being the most prominent (Rouleau 2003).<sup>40</sup>

Two ancient books are fundamental in the Chinese religious, philosophical heritage: *The Analects* (論語) by Kongfuzi (孔夫子),<sup>41</sup> and *The book on the way and the virtues of right living, Daodejing*, (道德經) by Laozi (老子).<sup>42</sup> The Norwegian Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877-1952) was a modern pioneer who spent 45 years in China.<sup>43</sup> He considered that *Daodejing* holds a holy quality; he says, “I have no doubt that this text, even with all its shortcomings and absurdities, has a mission in the West” (Reichelt 1948: 5).<sup>44</sup>

This project is one of suggesting parallels of existential concepts, rather than verbally translating them.<sup>45</sup> As part of understanding Chinese attitudes, I stayed 18 weeks in China. Like Ricci (Spence 1985) and contemporary ethnographers (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez

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<sup>34</sup> The Latin text means peace be with you in plural (*vobiscum*) and singular (*tecum*).

<sup>35</sup> Today, the gifts normally are given symbolically as money, but historically, and occasionally in our time, it was food, or the bread and wine to be consecrated.

<sup>36</sup> The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1993, vol. 2: 2662.

<sup>37</sup> Last Supper refers to the New Testament texts, denoting the last meal Jesus ate with his disciples before he died, in which he established the *Euhcarist* as the supreme ritual to follow. Its historicity has been doubted (Crossan 1991: 361).

<sup>38</sup> A discussion of the notion of *real presence* in the Eucharist in the Western Christian tradition falls outside the scope of this project; see New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, vol. 5: 410.

<sup>39</sup> This may be regarded the third major part of the liturgy as a whole: the sending.

<sup>40</sup> See online: <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13034a.htm>>.

<sup>41</sup> Confucius or Kongfuzi lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, see online: <<http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm>>.

<sup>42</sup> The work is accredited to the legendary author Laozi (also written Lao Tzu or Lao Tse), living in the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and being the elder contemporary of Kongfuzi (Henne 1982 and Lau 1967).

<sup>43</sup> See online: <[http://www.mhs.no/article\\_380.shtml](http://www.mhs.no/article_380.shtml)>.

<sup>44</sup> My translation from Norwegian: “Jeg er heller ikke i tvil om at skriftet, med alle sine mangler og absurditeter, har en gjerning å gjøre også i vesterlandene”.

<sup>45</sup> The Bible and the liturgy are of course translated into Chinese in numerous versions and dialects. I sung mass in Chinese at the end of my stay. However, verbal translations are not enough to communicate widely differences in attitudes (see Young 1994).

2000: 678), I wished to understand Chinese culture by taking part in it, rather than observing it from a distance.<sup>46</sup> In addition, I continued to train *taiji*<sup>47</sup> and *qi gong* after having returned home. As an artist, I have taken the liberty of being inspired by the foreign,<sup>48</sup> the concepts in *Daodejing* in particular, thus reflecting on liturgical concepts in Chinese as the following:

1) *Confession* is a personal, individual prayer that concerns me – “I” as a member of society. Here the unique, individual person is central. In a culture defined by the common good on behalf of the individual (Young 1994), I thought that “I”, *wo* (我) in Chinese,<sup>49</sup> would be a challenging starting point.<sup>50</sup>

2) *Lord have mercy* is a prayer that shall induce hope and restore meaning in a broken situation. The prayer is said collectively after the individual confession. It may stand for the group, a “we”, *women* (我们) in Chinese.

3) *Readings* from the Bible find their counterpart in *Daodejing*. In the Western series, God is defined as charity and love. *Daodejing* starts with the impossibility of defining Dao: “The Way that can be told is not the Unvarying Way” (LaoTzu 1997: 2-3).<sup>51</sup> However, the text goes on speaking about and characterizing Dao, therefore, I chose Dao (道) as this third concept.

4) *Credo* defines dogmatically how Christians understand their concept of God. *Daodejing* elaborates likewise on the Dao principle: “The name that can be named is not the constant name. The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth” (LaoTzu 1967: 57). Dao is that which is not yet created, and has no being, no name, *wuming* (无名) in Chinese (LaoTzu 1997: 2-3).

5) *Credo explained* finds a parallel in *Daodejing*. The unspeakable Dao that is outside being is at the same time everywhere, within everything all things created, *yuming* (有名) in Chinese (LaoTzu 1997: 2-3).

6) *Peace* is the underlying goal of *Daodejing*, whose teaching is all about how to create peace in the state. If we follow the principles of Dao, by seeking virtue, *de* (德) in Chinese,<sup>52</sup> we may live peacefully. The concept *de* may well stand for the gesture of peace.

7) *Gifts* to be consecrated and turned into sacraments are hard to be paralleled. However, *Daodejing* repeatedly stresses that the soft is stronger than the hard (Chen 2001). Water, *shui* (水) in Chinese, is the primary example. Water drops hollow out stone in the long run. This term can also mean simplicity. I decided to let *shui* reflect consecration and the gifts.

8) *Eucharist* is the holy sacrament that communicates God and that induces the ability to do God’s will. What might possibly match that?<sup>53</sup> Laozi is persistently concerned about people’s

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<sup>46</sup> I did my *taiji* in the park every morning, biked to my working place, ate my *miche* (noodles), drank green tea with my colleagues, worked in the studio complex alongside Chinese artists, learnt elementary Chinese language and characters, and went to the local, authorized Chinese (Roman) Catholic church, becoming a member of their congregation.

<sup>47</sup> This practice is a kind of spiritual physiology, an inner cultivation of the person to become non-assertive and weak like water (Ching 1993: 86-87).

<sup>48</sup> This is how sensuous knowledge operates, see Kjörup 2006.

<sup>49</sup> The Chinese characters are found in the Chinese Dictionary, see online: <http://dict.threelights.de/index.php>.

<sup>50</sup> *Daodejing* represents a development in a school that advocated egoism as opposed to the moral teachings of Confucius that were solely concerned with the common good of society (Lau 1967: 14).

<sup>51</sup> Chinese: *Dao ke Dao*. Alternatively: The Way that can be told is not the constant Way (LaoTzu 1967: 57).

<sup>52</sup> Explained in Book II of *Daodejing*.

right to live peacefully in accordance with the laws of Dao. He recommends rulers not to interfere, but leave people alone, so that they can follow their own traditions and regulate their societies themselves. The key concept to create harmony is no-action, *wuwei* (无为) in Chinese (Laotse 1982: 85).

Since the Eucharist in effect has to do with how we shall go on living our lives, I suggest *wuwei* as a term that may shed light on the meaning of the Eucharist. *Wuwei* is here understood as the teaching of a positive pedagogy: a belief in the individual's good will,<sup>54</sup> and the qualities within man and the created world to grow positively, regardless of moral rules. The principle of Dao is spontaneity (Watts, 1973: 34). *Daodejing* professes a thinking that advocates freedom to develop in accordance with one's personal needs, and from this attitude, the group to which one belongs, will grow and develop harmoniously. I think this idea is phenomenologically close to the concerns of the Eucharist.

### The Complete Concept

Conceptually, *The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao* consists of the following components:

Confession	– 我	Wo (I)
Prayer of mercy	– 我们	Women (we)
Gospel reading	– 道	Dao (the Way)
Creed I	– 无名	Wuming (formless, nameless, no thing, uncreated)
Creed II	– 有名	Youming (named, all things created)
Peace	– 德	De (virtue)
Gifts	– 水	Shui (water, simplicity)
Eucharist	– 无为	Wúwéi (non-action, freedom)

The 17<sup>th</sup> completing, shared image had to reflect some common truth. I suggest one version of the Golden Rule (Langfeldt 1966: 34).<sup>55</sup> The Golden rule in the Chinese teaching of Mo Tzu says that a man should love others as himself: “love without discrimination” (Lau 1967a: 14).<sup>56</sup> The same principle seems underlying one of the final phrases in *Daodejing* about the sage: “Having given all he has to others, he is richer still” (LaoTzu 1967, § 195: 143). In the *Analects* of Confucius, it is said explicitly: “Do not do to others what you would not like yourself” (己所不欲, 勿施于人)<sup>57</sup> (Confucius 1996, Book XII, §2: 144-45). We find the Golden Rule expressed twice in the Gospels: “So always treat others as you would like them treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 7.12), and “Treat others as you would like them to treat you” (Lk 6.31).<sup>58</sup> The more outspoken form: “You must love your neighbour as yourself”, is found in both the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> In ancient Chinese philosophy there is no concept of a personal, Trinitarian God, in a Christian sense. However, in the thinking of the previous Confucian Mo Tzu (5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE) a close resemblance to God as Father or Creator is found in the conception of heaven, *tian* [天] in Chinese (Lau 1967: 14). There also are current books on Christianity and Daoism, for example, *Christ & the Tao* (Kim 2004).

<sup>54</sup> One of the prayers in liturgy comprises the element of praying for “people of good will”.

<sup>55</sup> A list of expressions from various cultures is available online: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciprocal.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> Mo Tzu lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, see footnote 47.

<sup>57</sup> The *Analects* are available online: <http://afpc.asso.fr/wengu/wg/wengu.php?l=Lunyu&no=295>.

<sup>58</sup> *The Jerusalem Bible* 1966, NT: 25 and 102. Alternative translations of the same are: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”, and “Do to others as you would have them do to you”, see online: <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%207:12,%20Luke%206:31&version=31.&version=31>.

<sup>59</sup> Old Testament: Lev 19.18 and New Testament: Mt 22.39-40 (*The Jerusalem Bible* 1966, OT: 155 and NT: 51).

### Material Composition

The production of the series of images was based on my previous artistic work, competences and skills. Constructively, I use metal thread, iron and copper to build form. Technically, I bind by hand. It is simple, cheap, non-polluting and universally recognizable, regardless of culture and language. Because of my inter-religious focus, I prefer non-figurative images in geometrical or ornamental patterns.

The basic composition of the pieces takes its point of departure in the form of the small circular windows above the main windows in the gallery. I let a circle with the approximate dimension of the circular windows, be the inner core in a surrounding square. In the Western series, the inner core is filled with materials organized in an ornamental structure, while the square is open, framed by text. The Eastern series is complementary: the Chinese characters are put in the circular core and framed by a material ornament, figure 3.

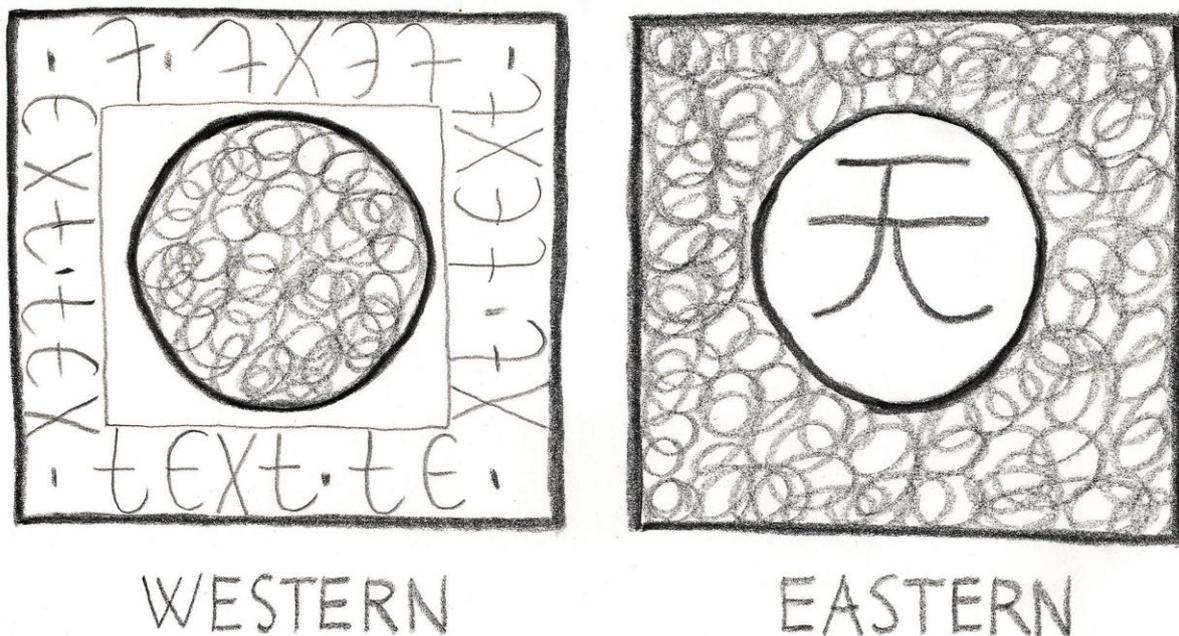


Figure 3. The principal composition in the Western and the Eastern series

The preparation of food and eating together is of most importance in Chinese culture (Wu, 1972: 7). Since the mass is a symbolic meal, I decided that the material to be used in addition to the metal structure, should be food or food-related, figure 4.

### Production

The two series *The Way of Christ* and *The Way of Dao* were produced separately. Arriving in China, I started to work on the Western way with local materials. The walnut ornament was the very first I made, figure 5. At this stage I had no clue what the Chinese concepts might become. It was during my stay that I gradually found the concepts. I am greatly indebted to my colleague and friend the Chinese painter Duan Ji Hai that kept his studio next door to mine. He served me local puer tea and taught me Chinese language and calligraphy. Before leaving Kunming, we had discussed the Chinese characters and how to make them. The Eastern series was produced in Norway, partly with Chinese materials that I had brought with me, and partly local. The shui-piece is made from vine from my own garden, associating to the wine of the Eucharist, figure 6.



Figure 4. Food market in Kunming, Yunnan province



Figure 5. Production process of the Western series in the studio at TCG Nordica, Kunming<sup>60</sup>



Figure 6. Production process of the Eastern Way in my Norwegian studio

<sup>60</sup> Detailed description and analysis of the making process of the *Way of Christ* is available in the book *Theology in Built Environments*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann (Refsum, 2009: 173-200).

## Conclusion

The question of how liturgy can be expressed in a theologically contemporary way that may communicate, if possible, beyond the Christian faithful and to a secular and also Chinese audience, has been answered by the production of a series of images and this reflective text. The images consist of ornaments and lettering, figure 7 and 8.

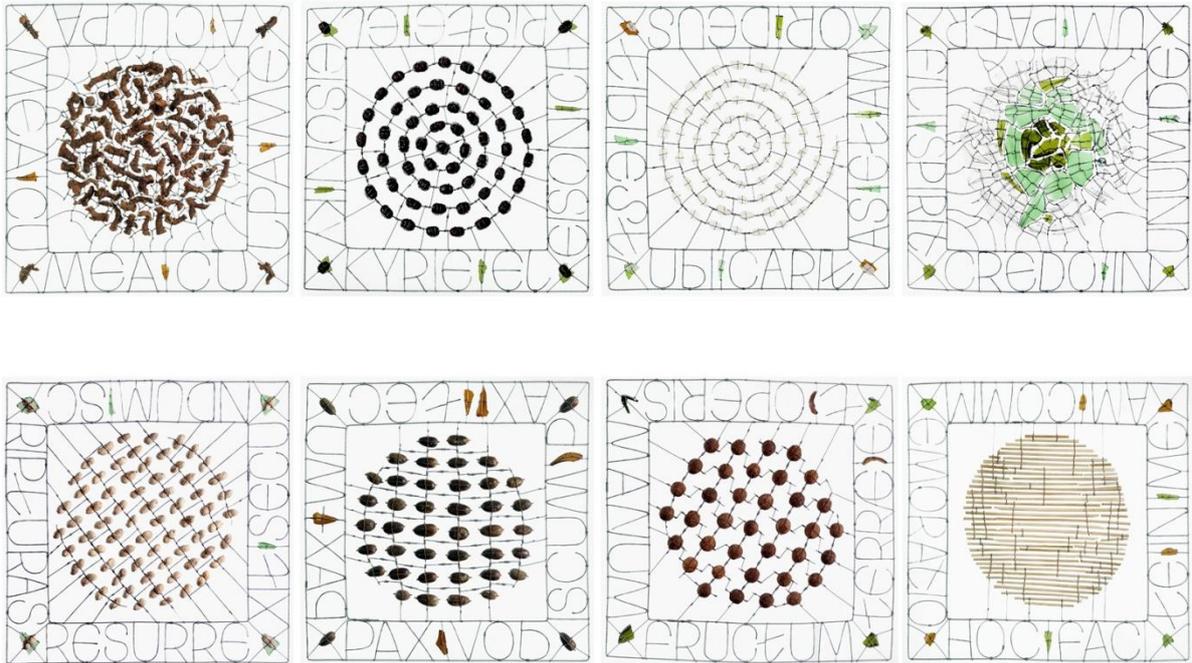


Figure 7. *The Way of Christ* (photo: Mark Cabot)



Figure 8. *The Way of Dao* (photo: Mark Cabot)

Religion is a sensitive field with strong, and by its nature, conservative traditions. Through this project, I suggest similarities and differences between Western and Eastern religious thinking. In accordance with the Golden Rule, in my opinion, many Christian and Chinese principles share similarities. My hope is to contribute to a deepened universal empathy without provoking an offensive reaction, figure 9.

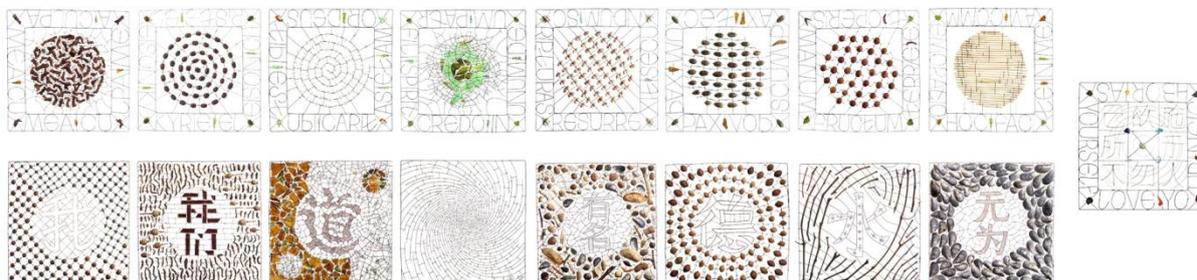


Figure 9. *The Way of Christ – The Way of Dao*; Christian and Chinese concepts are juxtaposed to shed light on each other (photo: Mark Cabot)

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<sup>61</sup> The URL link brings you to the Vatican website; you then have to put the title in the search machine to find it.

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