

The Evangelization of Culture and the Inculturation of the Faith in the Context of a Humanistic Society in Contemporary China: An Opportunity or a Challenge?¹

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1. The Gospel, Evangelization, Culture and the Inculturation of the Faith

1.1 Evangelization and the Inculturation of the Faith

Evangelization is a mission that every Christian should carry out, and is rooted in the very nature of our Christian identity. The early Christians had a very clear and strong sense of evangelization as their own mission. This happened when Christians, bearing this noble mission in their hearts, began to spread the Gospel out of the Jewish world and made their first contact with the Greco-Roman world. The first issue they came across was a problem of heterogeneous cultures, namely of Greek and Roman ones, and the challenges accompanying the encounters with them. Thereafter, the question of how Christianity can take root in non-Jewish cultures has been an issue faced and studied by the Catholic Church continually, even up to the present day. That is the problem of the inculturation of the faith. Right from the beginning of the Church, the question of faith was never merely a pure, isolated and abstract one. Rather, it always appeared as a living way of life and became immersed in people's cultures and blood, making them closely integrated with one another.

In other words, when an evangelizer speaks about the content of the faith he/she professes, the faith is always to be understood, narrated, recorded, inherited and lived through culture, and it will further be re-understood, re-interpreted, re-articulated, and so on, through the culture of the listener. The Gospel and culture will constantly be mutually interwoven. This process of cyclical progression in theological development in various

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1 In this article, the term "culture" especially points to "language" and "scholarship"; but at the same time, it has a broader meaning, referring to people's lives, their way of thinking, and all the elements contained in them.

phases of Church history and in the transformation of an individual or a community's spiritual life is documented very clearly.

Pope John Paul II emphasized: "A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not faithfully lived out."² From the Second Vatican Council's rethinking of the issue of "inculturation" to Pope John Paul II's first use of the concept of "inculturation" in an official Church document,³ and from the repeated narration and examination of the concept in subsequent official Church documents to the universal Church's continued deep reflection and practice, all point to the contemporary Church's investigation into evangelization and the new evangelization. They show the persistence and dedication of the Church to its mission of evangelization.

1.2 The Question of Interculturality in Evangelization

When the Gospel of Christ spreads from one culture to the realm of the other, it is not so much a collision of the Gospel and the local culture at the onset, but rather of a coursing in the veins of the missionaries, consisting of a proclamation of the Gospel from a foreign culture to a local culture, in which they "mutually examine" each other and "exchange greetings," too. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger brought up the question of "inter-culturality" at a conference in Hong Kong in 1993. He supplemented the concept of "inculturation," by saying that Christianity and the Gospel, not something abstract or isolated, are transmitted from one culture to the other. The message of the Gospel in fact exists in the evangelizer's culture; and in the process of the evangelization, the Gospel reaches two cultures: the evangelizer's culture and the listener's culture.⁴ Therefore, the Gospel of Christ always exists in the evangelizer's culture (the first culture); and through the listener's culture (the second culture), it is understood and accepted by the listener. Obviously, in this process, the two cultures will inevitably meet, collide and fuse. This integration process must be taken seriously. Otherwise, the course of evangelization will be impeded, leaving the Gospel to hover on the edge of both society and culture.

1.3 The Question of Contextualization in Evangelization

In the process of evangelization, besides culture, we have to consider the question of contextualization in an age of humanistic societies. On the one hand, we advisedly use an approach that people of the time can comprehend so that we can convey Christ's message to those who are influenced by the epoch and to those who are influencing the epoch. On the other hand, we must note that the Gospel is never an abstract theory devoid of life. The Church's theological reflection of the Gospel will be helpful to a humanistic society of the epoch to help it to solve problems in their context; to provide the culture of the times with

2 This is a citation from Pope John Paul II's *Letter to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli establishing the Pontifical Council of Culture*, 20 May 1982; *ORE*, 28 June 1982, p. 7, and gives emphasis to the importance of the inculturation of the faith.

3 This is a quotation from Pope John Paul II's speech delivered to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, titled *Inculturation of Faith in the Light of Scripture*, on April 29, 1979.

4 Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "Non esiste Fede che non sia Cultura," in: *Mondo e Missione* 1993, No. 10, pp. 657-665.

love and fidelity, and with the Gospel's spirit and core values. This will help people to take a more positive approach when faced with the challenges of nihilism. It is the cause of the emergence of contextual theology in contemporary times. However, the understanding and correct reading of the times still belong to the realm of culture in a humanistic society. To a certain extent, we can place contextual theology under the scope of an inculturation encompassing a spatial-temporal meaning to analyze the question.

1.4 Inculturation of the Faith in the West

Without a doubt, people living in any epoch will come across problems different from other times; people shaped by a specific culture may meet challenges uncommon to other cultural systems. People of different epochs, cultures or cultural regions will be looking at problems from different perspectives, or adopting different models to cope with the same challenge. From the perspective of theology, the Catholic tradition is the revelation of Christ in the historical development of Western human societies. Such a theological system is based on Western cultural resources, the Westerners' individual or societal experiences in history, and the life experience of God-human encounters. Its outcome shows that theology not only provides Christians living in a specific spatial-temporal epoch with concrete and appropriate guidance for a spiritual life (therefore, theology and spiritual studies were created and developed), but it also gives clear, firm and powerful responses to the challenges facing the Church from the spirit and ideology of those living in humanistic societies in specific spatial-temporal times (therefore, apologetics emerged and developed). In short, it can be said that the emergence and development of the Church's traditional theological thinking was, first, a result occasioned by the Western Christians' reflections on their own individual or community life experiences and their specific practice of the faith.

1.5 The Question of Interculturality in Evangelization Work in China

Regarding the Church's inculturation of the faith, what kinds of problems will appear if theological thoughts and faith traditions, tinged with Western cultural colors, meet with the Chinese culture and its traditional thinking? Or, how should we prepare for this sense of awareness of the problem? In fact, what is implied in the interaction is the same as the question of the inculturation of the faith, and of "interculturality" in the process of evangelization. Not only does it involve a relationship between faith and culture, but it also involves a collision and dialogue between the two cultural traditions. On the first question, the faith in theory and by nature has qualities beyond culture, but in the actual practice of evangelization, faith and culture are inseparable. If evangelization enters from a cultural aspect, the Gospel always seems easier to be understood, accepted and lived. Likewise, the Pontifical Biblical Commission says in its document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993):

Inculturation of the Bible has been carried out from the first centuries, both in the Christian East and in the Christian West, and it has proved very fruitful. However, one can never consider it a task achieved. It must be taken up again and

*again, in relationship to the way in which cultures continue to evolve. In countries of more recent evangelization, the problem arises in somewhat different terms. Missionaries, in fact, cannot help but bring the word of God in the form in which it has been inculturated in their country of origin. New local churches have to make every effort to convert this foreign form of biblical inculturation into another form more closely corresponding to the culture of their own land.*⁵

The Commission's analysis manifests the problem of interculturality in the process of the transmission of Christ's Gospel. In the case of China, we do understand that it is important for Chinese Christians to understand, examine, comprehend and precisely take into account the Chinese culture. Any neglect of a dialogue between a local culture and a foreign culture, which is immersed in the Bible and directed at preaching, will only result in "sowing seeds among thorns," or of obtaining only half the result, but using twice the effort.

The relationship between the Gospel, evangelization and culture can be summarized as: the process of evangelization is actually a process of inculturation of the faith and a contextualization of the faith; and the process of inculturation of the faith is indeed a process of absorbing a local culture, targeting people of that culture and fostering the Gospel to take root and grow in the process of "the evangelization of that culture." If the dimension of culture is ignored in the process, the depth and breadth of the evangelization work, at both the personal and social level, will be hindered, and the Word of Christ will find it hard to live as flesh and blood, or become "incarnate" and "grow" in the context of the local humanistic society.⁶

2. The Evangelization of Culture or the Culture of Evangelization

On the question of the evangelization of culture, Pope John Paul II made an insightful analysis:

*Cultural context permeates the living of Christian faith, which contributes in turn little by little to shaping that context. To every culture Christians bring the unchanging truth of God, which he reveals in the history and culture of a people ... This in no way creates division, because the community of the baptized is marked by a universality which can embrace every culture and help to foster whatever is implicit in them to the point where it will be fully explicit in the light of truth.*⁷

The significance of the cultural dimension of the evangelization work is vivid. Faith and culture are mutually influenced. The culture enables the Gospel to be "incarnated" in the lives of the people in a certain locality, and it adopts a flesh-and-blood approach to deeply penetrate into the veins of the local people. The evangelization of culture means the constant proclamation of the message of Christ to the local people through their culture.⁸ In

5 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1993.

6 Cf. Jing Baolu, "Catholicism and Chinese Culture: A Rethinking of the Catholic Theology of Inculturation," in: *Catholic Thought and Culture* 1 (2012), pp. 21-60.

7 Pope John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, 1988, No. 71.

8 *Hebrews*, 1:1-2.

the process of the Gospel proclamation, individual conversions are certainly important (because the individual experience of Christ is the premise and foundation of the theology of inculturation), but the entire process of the inculturation of the faith is even more critical. This is because the Gospel, through its continuous penetration into the culture, enters into the very blood of the nation. With its self-initiated, widely-used, profound and enduring approaches, the Gospel will affect all the peoples of the place. Pope John Paul II said the process of bringing the faith into a culture is to have the Gospel truly be accepted, lived and experienced by the local people.⁹

The importance of the evangelization of culture is vividly manifest. Its ultimate goals are to be beneficial to all mankind, to go beyond all cultures and to bring about the salvation of Christ upon each person. However, the immediate goal of evangelization is, after all, to nourish a “culture of evangelization,” that is, to attain a competence in evangelizing. It is a kind of inspiration that flows in the blood of individuals and society, spontaneously spreading love, and influencing society to build a culture of love. In short, the evangelization of culture is the revelation of the Gospel through the love of Christ, and through fostering a culture of love, honesty and harmony. This “culture of evangelization” constantly emanates the positive energy of love, and can create an effect of evangelization on its own.

Then, we will see how the Church in China, in the context of a specific humanistic society, evangelizes in the Chinese culture and enables the Gospel to become truly “incarnated” in the minds and souls of the Chinese people and in their spiritual world. This “incarnated” way of life can adapt to the context of a specific humanistic society as the Chinese people’s spiritual guidance and approach to evangelization is affected. In other words, an inculturated theology develops.

3. Challenges faced by the Church in China in the Process of Evangelization

Before discussing evangelization work in China, let us first examine a series of challenges faced by the present-day Church in China, its responses and how it accomplishes the mission of evangelization. The problems of the Church in China can be discussed from both internal and external aspects.

3.1 The external problems can be identified as: the impact brought about by globalization and secularization; the challenge proposed to the Church by the context of today’s humanistic society in China; a demand for dialogue by Chinese intellectuals; and a “new cultural shaping” taking place in contemporary China, and so on. These problems are faced by all Chinese, and are most certainly shared by the Christians. Noting that the mission of evangelization is part of the very nature of the Church, Christians must possess a spirit of openness and commitment, a drive to go out of the churches, to venture into

⁹ Cf. Pope John Paul II’s letter to the Pontifical Council for Culture on its inauguration, May 20, 1982, which stresses the importance of an inculturation of the faith.

society, to build and serve society with love. (This spirit of commitment is like Christ on the Cross, who sacrificed Himself for the whole world).

Now, the question is: does the Church in China have the capacity to know, comprehend and cope with such external challenges? If yes, then it has to map out concrete strategies and proposals for evangelization. If it cannot function like the model of a “bishops’ conference” in the Western Church, and initiate a unified operation, it can at least use the model of a diocese, like the relatively successful Hong Kong Diocese. Currently in China, only a few dioceses are equipped with the capacity to implement forward-looking, concrete plans. The Church in China has to cultivate and empower itself by studying more (both spiritual and intellectual knowledge, but not just one alone). Whatever improvement is to be made, a sense of awareness of the problems must come first. If the Chinese people in China cannot recognize the severity of the problems, the gravity of the problems just might destroy them.

3.2 The internal problems: First of all, the Church’s own structure is imperfect. Since the Church organizations are not sound, its evangelization work can hardly be systematically launched or carried out in a normal way. Let us study the situation closely. How many dioceses in China have established their own “curia” or “council of priests,” in accord with normal procedures? This is not even to mention a “liturgy commission,” a “pastoral council,” a “procurator” (and/or finance committee) or a “marriage and family committee.” However, if dioceses do not have such structures, it does not mean that they have no problems in those fields. Actually, those positions should preferably be filled by professionals who know precisely how to tackle problems, and how to formulate plans for evangelization. Many dioceses in China are now in a relatively chaotic state. Positions of leadership are taken by non-professionals, or professionals on a temporary basis, or even by someone acting impromptu. This is a major reason why the internal affairs of some dioceses are in a mess. A phenomenon of helplessness and inadequacy to make progress results from the difficulties experienced in the past history of the Church in China, a poorly managed structure of the present-day Church and the challenges caused by external problems in the context of specific humanistic societies in China.

Meanwhile, the above-mentioned problems can be examined from the following aspects:

- i. A lack of awareness of the problems: the Church in China lives in the midst of its problems without having a sense of awareness of the problems and without a sense of urgency to tackle them.
- ii. The Church leadership is faced with numerous problems, but cannot always find a way out; and even when facing a question of faith, it still treats such matters with an attitude of psychological speculation.¹⁰
- iii. Faced with the future of the Church, Church leadership finds it hard to make a macro future directed, structural plan, implying that it has a weak, or no “sense of the future.”

10 Cf. “In Cina è il tempo di scelte chiare” (l’intervista di Gianni Cardinale con l’arcivescovo Savio Hon), *Avvenire*, April 1, 2011, p. 19.

- iv. Being insensitive to the need of the Church to be integrated into society, the Church lacks a sense of commitment and social responsibility (which is related to the spirit and mission of evangelization), leading to a narrow understanding of the Christians' mission to evangelize.
- v. The formation system for Church clergy in China may have imperfections, and the direction of formation is not in focus. A cause of this ambiguity lies in the lack of a precise understanding of the spirit of the times in the specific situation of a humanistic society, and the absence of a clear knowledge of the future mission of the Church.

4. The Response the Church in China Should Have

I do not intend to respond to all the questions mentioned above, but rather to aptly propose several suggestions from a macro perspective and from several fundamental aspects.

4.1 Facing the World

The Church in China should be clearly conscious of itself as a part of the world. All kinds of things happening in the contemporary world, big or small, and any trend of thought will draw the Church of China into it through globalization. The concepts of secularization, modernization and post-modernism are no longer mere abstract concepts for us, but rather, are real and concrete ways affecting the life events of all individuals and communities. Today, we can no longer behave as in the past, thinking things happening in the Western world and in the universal Church are very far away from us. In the near future, even today or tomorrow, in this age of the Internet and of the rapid development of science and technology, their problems will become the ones we, too, must face.

Therefore, the Church in China must be equipped with the competence and the knowledge of the humanistic and social thinking of the world. In this respect, the growth of the Church in Poland, with its rich experience, is worth our special study. In 2002, I attended a gathering of mainland Chinese Catholic students in Europe held in Poland. In a dialogue with an official of the Polish Bishops' Conference (most likely the secretary-general), we asked: "Why did the number of Christian churchgoers in Poland decline sharply after 1989?" I recall the official's reply, which was: "After 1989, all trends of thought from Western Europe swarmed into Poland. The Church in Poland had little time to reflect upon them, and offer effective measures to cope with them. Then the challenges faced by the Church in Western Europe soon became ours (Poland's) too." Today, 13 years after that conversation, the pace of globalization is increasing more swiftly, as one would expect in the Internet age. Faced with the overwhelmingly influential trends of globalization, secularization, pure-rationalism, positivism and absolute relativism in Western thought, we have seen that the Church in China faces the same problems and challenges faced by the Church in the West. Actively or passively, the Church in China must face and respond to all those problems! Under these conditions, all human beings have the obligation to make good use of their God-given rationality! Seeing Church communities in China be-

ing trapped and stifled by these problems, makes them feel helpless and unresponsive. Such should not be the attitude of a person of faith.

How should the Church in China cope with this situation? Among the many needs of the Church in China is the need to establish and to train a team of Christians who are equipped with a professional knowledge of philosophy, sociology, religious studies and canon law. This team would then help Church communities and their responsible persons to reflect profoundly on current issues, and to make suggestions on timely and effective measures to deal with them. This could be one of the most important means to solve present-day problems.

4.2 Facing Chinese Society

Since the late Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China in 1911, the consciousness among Chinese intellectuals of a crisis in traditional Chinese culture has grown. After the Cultural Revolution's (1966–1976) looting of traditional culture and values, this crisis emerged in concrete aspects of people's social life and deeply affected their bodies, minds and souls. This gave rise to different kinds of "social ills," which appeared in the national society as a moral crisis. Professor Zhang Xianglong, in his article "The Crisis in China's Traditional Culture," noted: "The Yellow River flushes away the Chinese people's life blood, whereas the trends of the modern age cleansed our spirit and blood vessels of our nationalism." This description shows that the Chinese traditional culture and the spirit of a humanistic society are in a severe crisis. This is not an alarmist report,¹¹ but is indeed a clear living picture of Chinese culture of today.

In my view, the above-mentioned crisis of the culture and the spirit of humanistic society has caused a most fundamental "crisis of humanity": a poverty of humanity (non-ontological meaning) and a spiritual vacuum. This is the root of all social crises and social ills. The decadence of traditional spiritual beliefs causes a lack of metaphysical stability and of a force of constraint. The system of traditional moral values was unfortunately looted, and a new system of spiritual values has not yet been formed. What can people depend on to live their spiritual lives? If the whole of society, from top to bottom, has lost the moral principles to which everyone should adhere, and which are the bases for transcendental values of external and internal forces of constraints, then what foundations of moral obligation can be upheld? This explains why social ills in China, like the shrewdness of corruption, are said to be smart, violence and fraud are considered virtuous, and unscrupulous means can even earn someone a name. Meanwhile the basic necessities of life – food, clothing, housing and transportation – are all fake. This social phenomenon is like Thomas Hobbes' description, "man is a wolf to man." The assumption of this saying seems to be coming true,¹² and it will shake the basis of the entire moral system of a humanistic society.

11 Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙, "Zhongguo chuantong wenhua de weiji 中国传统文化的危机 (The Crisis in China's Traditional Culture)," in: *Guoxue luntan wencui* 国学论坛文萃 2004, No. 2.

12 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*, Book 1, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1957, Chapter 13.

Faced with this series of problems, Chinese intellectuals and people of insight are yearning to “shape a new culture” or “transform the traditional culture into a modern culture”. This would enable people to inject a new spirit and new blood into Chinese society in order to shape a new culture, which would be more dynamic and adaptable to the times. Then, what is the relationship between this call for shaping a new culture and the mission of evangelization of the Catholic Church? The Catholic Church is definitely not an abstract religion, nor as a religion does it merely talk about abstractions, neglecting people’s lives in society. Faced with a series of grievous social problems, especially a crisis of the spiritual life, the Church in China must respond to this phenomenon. The social teachings of the Church, expressed at the Second Vatican Council, can be applied here. Each local Church community has to act according to the needs of its local humanistic society and offer people in society constructive guidance on how to lead a spiritual life.

From the perspective of the inculturation of the Christian faith, an inculturated theology not only should contain the essence of traditional cultural values, but also a consciousness of problems in contemporary times (social, humanistic, economic and political) and an accurate reading of and response to these. Also, a living experience of faith in a specific time and space can be expressed in a way understood by the epoch. In other words, an inculturated theology must involve an investigation into contemporary people’s consciousness of problems, with a response to the people’s physical, mental and spiritual needs in a present-day specific “temporal-spatial” context.

At a symposium entitled “Religion and the construction of a moral system in Chinese society” at Zhejiang University on June 4, 2011, Professor Zhuo Xinping, in his paper “A Dialogue between Religion and Civilization,” said that while urging people to “eliminate poverty” in an economic sense, one has to adopt a “de-sensitized” attitude toward religion at a spiritual level. Chinese society, in a state of chaotic transformation, needs to establish a feasible moral system, with an inner pledge and a discipline of constraint. This moral system requires a firm and solid spiritual foundation, and needs a “dimension of sacredness” or a “dimension of ultimateness” to construct a system of spirit and values, with a powerful inner force of discipline and constraint. This has to seek help from religion. Professor Zhuo’s call hit the key issue of the present-day social problems in China. In this realm, the Catholic Church, with 2,000 years of religious experience, has a relatively complete system of moral values. Therefore, it can serve as a reference point for present-day Chinese society. In response to the pervasive materialistic culture and the withering spiritual culture in contemporary China, the poverty of humanity and the creation of a spiritual vacuum, the content of the rich eschatological dimension of the Catholic faith and its spiritual life can make a great contribution. It can help Chinese society to overcome the embarrassment of its present-day poverty of humanity, and can help to define and position culture in society. Also, Christian values can shape a healthy culture of love and fidelity in China, and provide a basis for morality to build upon. This can work because it is based on the very attributes of life of the Christian faith.

From the perspective of culture, the process of participating in the construction of a humanistic society with spiritual values coincides, at the same time, with efforts of evangelization and the inculturation of the faith. This is because the pursuit of the inculturation

of the faith allows the truth of the Christian faith, which is above and beyond all cultural systems, to enter into the culture, to be “incarnated” in the culture, to become sublime in the culture, and to transform the culture into a spiritual force helping the nation to be more humane in life and in development. It manifests to the people a culture of hope for the future. At the same time, the inculturation of the Christian faith will help shape a new culture in China, providing new blood for the spirit, and reinforcing and strengthening the source of spiritual beliefs in Chinese society.¹³

Now the problem is: does the Church in China have such a consciousness of the problems around her and a sense of commitment to society? Furthermore, does the Church in China have the capacity for participating in and shaping a culture for the age? This may require the elders or the higher leadership of the Church to respond and to determine whether this demand is a “sign” of the “direction of where the breezes of the Holy Spirit” are blowing, and whether it is a mission for Chinese Christians to undertake.

4.3 Facing the Internal State of the Church in China

To a certain extent, the Church in China is at a point of facing challenges from all sides and at different levels, as well as being in a helpless and “chaotic” state. What is the origin of the “chaos?” What share of this “chaos” in an epoch of the special historical development of the Church should be attributed to unavoidable “historically-inevitable” factors? Which of these factors can be improved if the necessary remedial work could have been done?

a. A model of Church management (or service model): The Church in China is an entity living in the Chinese cultural tradition and in the spiritual context of a humanistic society in China. Nowadays, the question of China’s economic and political reforms is frequently discussed. In my opinion, Christians have to really think about “a political reform inside the Church.” Currently, all the clergy of the Church in China are Chinese, who naturally accept the influence of the Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, the Chinese “model of management” or “model of service” is naturally “a model with Chinese characteristics.” Over the past 2,000 years of the universal Church’s evangelization work, a “model with Catholic Church characteristics” has been developed, as she found her way to carry out her mission of evangelization, bearing in mind the spirit of the Gospel, while facing cultural traditions. How did she strike a balance between the two? This is a problem which bishops and priests must now face. Sometimes we hear a clergyman in China say to his fellow clergymen: “Do not tell me what the law of the Church is. My word is the law.” Does that sound familiar?

13 In fact, any kind of culture cannot be perfect. China’s traditional culture is no exception. As the famous contemporary neo-Confucian scholars Mou Tsung-san, Fu Weixun and Liu Shuxian believed, not only are the external elements of the entire Chinese culture essential, but Chinese culture itself should also be open to Christianity in order to bring about a creative transformation of the traditional Confucian culture. See Mou Tsung-san 牟宗三, *Zhengdao yu zhidao* 政道与治道 (Political Road and Governance), Changchun: Jilin Publishing Group Ltd., 2010, p. 8; and Lai Pan-chiu 赖品超, *Chuancheng yu zhuanhua: jidujiao shenxue yu zhu wenhua chuantong* 傳承與轉化: 基督教神學與諸文化傳統 (Transmission and Transformation: Christian Theology and Cultural Traditions), Hong Kong: Christian Literature Publishing House 2006, p. 157.

In addition, in the Church in China, the transformation from the practices or systems left by foreign missionaries, or the “Western management model,” into a “Chinese-clergy management model” has not been very successful. At the same time, the transformation from a “pre-Vatican II model” to a “post-Vatican II model” seems to have been even less successful. Due to various constraints, the Chinese Church’s knowledge and practice of the Vatican II spirit may still be at a preliminary stage. The “situation of periodization” (division of generations) among the Chinese clergy after the Cultural Revolution further hindered a smooth transition from old to new traditions in the Church in China. The appearance of “chaos” in the Church in China is indeed somewhat “natural.” A community, like the Church, not mature in a tradition, but growing in the face of a dazzling array of modernity and post-modern issues, coupled with living in a political, economic and humanistic society with fast-changing scenarios, one might say, ironically, that it would be abnormal not to experience chaos!

b. From the perspective of knowledge and culture: Concerning the Church’s relationship with culture and tradition, the Church in China or its leadership does not have an accurate reading of the culture, the spirit of a humanistic society and the trends of development in the country. Even on the level of knowledge of the Church, the generation gap among Chinese clergy gives rise to differences in their understanding and acceptance of Church tradition, Church doctrine and the spirit of Canon Law. Cultural differences are the cause of this problem. Along with these two deficiencies, how can the two spirits or the two service models become regulated? These two deficiencies may lead to a result, such as the fact that both Eastern and Western forms of spiritual formation or models of spirituality have not yet begun to be thoroughly understood from the root and origin of their cultures. Moreover, a lack of knowledge of the faith, originally indispensable, for guiding Christian lives – Church theology, philosophy, liturgy, Canon Law and spirituality and the like – and an insufficient ability to overcome various challenges to the faith and to the spirit are present. So, in what ways can the clergy in China guide or serve the Church communities, in accord with a traditional Chinese mode of acting (for instance, the “patriarchal,” or “resourcefulness theory,” in China’s literature, e.g., in the “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”) or in accordance with the traditional mode of the Church (like Church doctrine, Canon Law and teachings)? Nor may neither method have been followed, but rather a cleverness of reasoning or some superficial thought?

c. Formation of teams of Church intellectuals: Faced with all the problems and challenges of the times, how should the Church in China deal with them? Originally, the Church leadership and intellectual elites should have been able to work with one another. The Church organization that could have enabled them to sit down and develop ideas for the Church could have been “The Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China.” Unfortunately, this entity is still in a state of lacking a mandate, and therefore, it is difficult for them to do anything substantial. Thus, the leadership of the Church in China can only use an independent or isolated way of dealing with the problems they face. These are beyond any one individual’s capacity to deal with. Faced with a situation where it is difficult

at the moment to change the status quo, I think, first of all, the Church in China should be aware of the need to train its own team of Chinese Catholic intellectuals. Such persons must have a sense of commitment and a sacrificial spirit, like Jesus on the Cross, in order to serve society and the Church. They must help the Church to understand the needs of society, to encourage the Church to reach out to society, and to play a constructive role in shaping the spirit of a humanistic society in China.

Since the 1990s, as the number of priests, nuns and laypeople who have studied abroad has increased, more and more Christians at the grassroots level are aware of the importance of the dimension of culture in Church evangelization. This means that among Chinese Christians an awareness of a revival of an “evangelization of culture” has taken place. For both the Church in China and for the universal Church, this is a phenomenon worthy of encouragement and support.

In addition, since the 1980s, the Church in China, after 30 years of effort, has become equipped with the “hardware” (churches, dioceses, parish offices and equipment), basically sufficient to meet the needs of the faithful. Then, for the subsequent work of evangelization, Church communities and individuals should shift the attention to the nature of the Church’s mission, and encourage clergy and Christians to have a more direct relationship with its “software”: doctrine, Canon Law and the spirit of the entire Church tradition. This requires a deeper understanding of evangelization, and a strengthening of our sense of mission. It also requires a division of labor, institutions of evangelization, a sound mode of management, an inculturated theology of evangelization and an example of spirituality. Who will undertake such a mission? Personally, I think that communities of Catholic intellectuals, under the leadership of the bishops, can help the Church’s upper echelons, through the God-given light of reason, to carry out this work. They can make a huge and indispensable contribution. But if the leadership of the Church (both in China and on the universal level) lacks this awareness, and fails to promote and support the development of such a team, we can only work in a mode of “curing a sore on the foot and an ache in the head, one at a time.” This would cause the Church in China to continue to be a “problem community.” It will exhaust the energy which should be put into the mission of evangelization and continue to burden it with the problems.

4.4 Faced with the Nature of the Church’s Mission: Evangelization

At the present time, the dimensions of evangelization in the Church in China still involve two major aspects: dealing with the Church and dealing with society. Compared to Church groups before 1949, today’s Church communities are mostly engaged in the first aspect of evangelizing activities, and evangelization work dealing with society is not yet in full swing.

The internal dimension of Church evangelization work in China was treated above. Now, we will talk about evangelization activities aimed at society. By nature, the mission of the Church is well defined and is open to the public. In the process of reaching out “to the whole world,” the Church, through her social services and a sense of responsibility and commitment, fulfills its mission. However, this requires the Church community to have a relatively clear understanding of the spirit of contemporary, humanistic society. The

Church can express its own constructive ideas on the problems and challenges Chinese society has to face. At the same time, the Church has to correctly understand the spirit of its own faith, values and ideas, and be self-confident enough to have the ability to express its values and ideas clearly to society.

Some people think that the Church should solve its own internal problems, and strengthen the quality of its spiritual formation first, and then discuss the question of social commitment. Personally, I think that this kind of ordering of the Church's evangelization work unfortunately results from an ignorance of Church history and from a lack of experience. In our Church's history, many of the problems with Church individuals and communities were related to "the nature of the mission" – evangelization – and the Church's commitment to it. But the fire of evangelization burns the problems off, and dispels them. While believing that "the saints enlightened evangelization," we should not forget that "the evangelization work also produced sainthood" – the mission of evangelization has the capacity to make saints and makes possible the reception of grace. The early Church community, led by the Twelve Apostles, is a good example for us. After receiving the mission of evangelization at Pentecost, they did not sit down first to discuss about it in the community. Rather they immediately went out and preached the Gospel.

Today, we have received this mission, no less than the Apostles. But what is missing is a sense of mission, and a sense of commitment to mission. Also missing are an openness of oneself, a sense of self-realization and fulfillment of oneself. These are missing from the community as well. However, for Christian individuals and communities, a closing up of oneself means the death of the Christian spirit! In this regard, many experiences from the history, reality and context of the Western Church are worthy of our attention and study.

Conclusion

Finally, I want to stress that the Church is a community. The Church in China should also, in the name of a Church community, and in a spirit of collaboration and communion, devise its own evangelization plan, train qualified preachers and develop its own theology of evangelization, in order to reflect and create a spiritual guide suitable for the Chinese people. All these demand that the Church has a team of its own, to work with professionals to promote and spread the message. They do this, finally, in order to have a Christianity "incarnate" in the "flesh and blood" and in the daily life and culture of the Chinese people. The "culture of evangelization" is then "incarnated" and "grows" in this process, and becomes a culture with a sense of commitment to society, a culture of promoting love and peace in society, and of fostering integrity, justice, harmony and freedom. Along with these, it should provide a spiritual life and faith for the Chinese people, and a culture of fulfilling the "Dream of Christ" and the "Dream of China!" In this process, the Catholic intellectual communities have to work actively with the intellectual elites of society to build a new culture in China, to reconstruct a system of social and moral values. This is the sacred mission of the Church in China, and all Christians should commit themselves to it. Through this mission of commitment, the nature of the Christian identity will be revealed, and it becomes a "witness" of light and hope in society.

To achieve this goal requires the joint effort of all the faithful in the Church in China, as well as the strong support and encouragement of the universal Church, and of all those who love and care for the mission of evangelization of the Church in China!