

Dr. Kim-Kwong Chan

# Struggling Survival:

The Catholic Church  
in China from  
1949-1970





# **STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL:**

**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN CHINA FROM 1949 TO 1970**

by

**KIM-KWONG CHAN**

**Christian Study Centre on  
Chinese Religion and Culture  
Hong Kong, 1992**

**Kim-Kwong Chan, Hong Kong, 1992.**

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6/F Kiu Kin Mansion  
No. 566 Nathan Road  
Kowloon, Hong Kong

Cover design by Ms. Vivian Hau

Printed by Authentic Advertising & Printing Company, Hong Kong.

First Published July 1992

ISBN: 962-7706-01-9

REV. DR. CHAN KIM-KWONG

**Dedicated to**

**the suffering servants of the church in China**

Rev. Dr. Chan Kim-kwong



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AAS *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Rome.
- AIF *Bulletin De L'Agenzia Internazionale Fides*, Rome
- AP *Annuario Pontificio*, City of Vatican.
- (c) The publication is in Chinese.
- CMBA *Composite abbreviation for China Missionary (1948-1949), China Missionary Bulletin (1949-1953), Missionary Bulletin (1953-1959), and Asia, (1960) Hong Kong.*
- CCB Catholic Central Bureau, Shanghai
- CCP Chinese Communist Party
- CFJP *Chieh Fang Jih pao* (Liberation Daily), Shanghai.
- CKFCC *Chung-Kuo T'ien-Chu-Chiao* (The Catholic Church in China), Peking.
- CPCA Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association.
- CPPCC Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
- CUP *China Update*, Belgium.
- CWME Commission of World Mission and Evangelism
- DTTSM *Documents of the Three-Self Movement*. Jones, F., W.C. Mevin. New York: NCC, 1963.
- ET English translation.
- GAC Government Administrative Council.
- ICI *Informations catholiques internationales*, Paris.
- JMJP *Jen Min Jih Pao* (People's Daily), Peking.
- KMJP *Kuang Min Jih Pao* (Bright Daily), Peking.
- NCNA *New China News Agency News Bulletin*, Peking.
- NFJP *Nan Fan Jih Pao* (Southern Daily), Kwangtung.
- PRC People's Republic of China.
- RAB Religious Affairs Bureau.
- SCMP *Surveys of China Mainland Press*, Hong Kong U.S. Consulate Office.

TKP	<i>Ta Kung Pao</i> (Impartial Daily), Hong Kong.
UFWD	United Front Works Department.
UN	United Nations.
URIA	Union Research Institute Archives.
WCC	World Council of Churches.

The transliteration of Chinese words follows the Wade-Giles System. Chinese personal names follow the conventional system of placing the family name before the given name, e.g., Chan Kim-kwong, not Kim-Kwong Chan. If that Chinese person possesses a Christian name, the Christian name appears before the family name, e.g., Matthias Wong Leung-tso, or Ignace Kung Pin-mei.

The numerous sources from various newspapers are recorded only in the Notes; they are not repeated in the Bibliography.

## FOREWORD

When Dr. Chan Kim-kwong showed me the manuscript of *Struggling for Survival: The Experience of the Catholic Church in China from 1949 to 1970*, I was impressed by the great care he took to assess an enormous amount of research material from divergent sources. The result of his research is a sensitive appraisal of the painful dilemma in which the Catholic Church found itself during this period: On one hand there was political pressure on religious bodies from the government of the People's Republic of China; on the other hand there was the insensitivity of the Rome-centered hierarchy of the Catholic Church, often oblivious to the demands of secular and political forces for change and adaptation. Under such circumstances the Catholic Church made a heroic struggle to survive.

The author has convinced me of the importance of this period in the Church's history for an understanding and appreciation not only of the historical aspects of this struggle to survive in a hostile environment, but also of the lessons that can be drawn for missiology and which would be relevant even for today.

It is surely amazing that an evangelically minded Protestant clergyman such as Dr. Chan could have such a vast knowledge of the Catholic situation, both in China and in the Vatican. Perhaps it is precisely because of his non-Catholic background that he is able to maintain a high degree of objectivity in his judgment.

Dr. Chan is passionate in his plea for understanding of the difficulties faced by Catholic church people in China. At the same time, he appeals for a change in ecclesiological policy on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, not least for the sake of the long-suffering people.

The Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture takes pleasure in publishing this small but well-researched volume. Acknowledgment is given to Fr. Brian Lawless for his part in editing the manuscript and the layout of the book, and to Ms. Christina Chan for typing the manuscript and preparing the copy for print.

Peter K. H. Lee  
Director  
Christian Study Centre  
on Chinese Religion & Culture



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Following the end of World War II, there was a political trend to promote political independence among the Third World countries. These nations shared many common characteristics. They were mainly either former colonial nations ruled by the West, or nations heavily influenced by the Western powers. They gained their independence mostly after the Second World War. But Independence was achieved not without a fierce struggle. To add to the complication, communist ideology was a factor in a number of countries.

As these formerly colonial-ruled nations became independent, they began to search for their national identity which included their culture, history and religion. This search usually generated negative feelings towards their colonial past, especially their past rulers, the Western powers. Anything that was associated with the past ruler was rejected. Anti-Westernism was a common phenomenon.

In many of the newly independent countries missionaries from the West were no longer warmly welcome unless they were indispensable for certain social contributions, e.g. medical missionaries. Where socialism was adopted as the state ideology, the government would exercise central control over religion. This control limited the activity of the missionaries. The combination of these two trends – anti-Western mentality and socialist ideology – resulted in increased hostility toward missionaries.

China is a typical example. Immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, China was caught in a civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists. This civil strife lasted more than four years before the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China in 1949. At that time, the Catholic Church in China had a membership of more than three million, with almost six thousand priests serving in more than a hundred dioceses. However, as the Chinese Communist Government tightened its control over religion, the Catholic Church was thrown into a situation where it had to struggle for its survival.

This study attempts to draw lessons from the experience of a Church which went through a bitter struggle with a religion-suppress-

ing state—a state that was once the largest missionary-receiving nation in Church history. The case in question is that of the Catholic Church in China from 1949 to 1970.

China, with one fourth of the world's population, had been the largest foreign mission field of the Christian Church.<sup>1</sup> In 1949, there were more than twenty-eight Catholic mission orders operating in China, such as the Maryknoll Fathers and the Scarborough Foreign Mission<sup>2</sup> from North America, and the Jesuits and *Missionne etrangere de Paris* from Europe.<sup>3</sup> Out of 5,588 priests in 1948, more than 3,000 were foreign missionaries;<sup>4</sup> of the 140 ordinaries,<sup>5</sup> only 26 were Chinese; only 4 out of the 20 archbishops were Chinese. Although the Episcopal Hierarchy was established in 1946,<sup>6</sup> the Catholic Church in China was still a missionary-controlled Church.

In 1948, there were more than three million Catholics in China along with more than six thousand foreign missionaries and five thousand local clergy or religious. The Catholic Church in China also operated many schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Ten years later, virtually all missionaries were expelled, all church-operated institutions were nationalized, and all church activities were tightly controlled by the Government. Twenty-two years later, in 1970, all public Catholic activities were banned; the Catholic Church in China ceased to exist openly.

This study intends to examine the painful experience of the Catholic Church in China from 1949 to 1970. The year 1949 marked the beginning of the struggle of the Catholic Church in China for its survival, and 1970 was the year when the Chinese Government released the last foreign missionary (Bishop Walsh of U.S.A.) and closed virtually all Catholic churches in China. This book will examine this case from a historical perspective and reflect on it from a missiological point of view. The ultimate aim is to uncover issues in this case which might be relevant to today's missionaries in the Third World, especially those nations that are presently missionary-receiving countries but which may change as China did in 1949. The diminishing of the Catholic Church in China can be attributed to many factors: the government's communist ideology, the rigid pre-Vatican II ecclesiology, international politics, etc. For our purpose, we concentrate the missiological dimension: indigenization of the mission church,<sup>7</sup> or, the building of an indigenous church. Our hypothesis is that since the

Chinese Catholic Church was not controlled by Chinese clergy but by missionaries, and since the latter group did not comprehend the social reality as well as did the Chinese clergy, the Chinese Church was not in a position to respond to the social challenges in a contextual and flexible manner. This caused bitter confrontation between the Church and the Chinese Government, and eventually, the diminishing of the Church in China. Our thesis is that the inability to transfer power to the local clergy makes it difficult for the Church in the mission field to respond to social challenges and changes.

There have been many studies done on the Catholic Church in China. Hanson views the Chinese Catholic Church as a victim of the traditional religious policy of the Chinese government.<sup>8</sup> Ladany, Hang, and Pollio put the blame on the harsh religious suppression implemented by the Chinese Communist Government.<sup>9</sup> Wei sees the Vatican's China policy as the main cause of the tragic fate of the Chinese Church.<sup>10</sup> A recent Chinese historian, C. S. Gu, did some studies on the indigenization of the Catholic Church in China; however, he limited the study from the 1920's to 1950.<sup>11</sup> All of the above-mentioned works made significant contributions toward a fuller understanding of the Chinese Church; yet, none has analyzed the Chinese Church from the perspective of our missiological theme: indigenization of the mission church.

Chapter Two consists of two parts: the Chinese Government's religious policy and the history of indigenization in the Chinese Church. The former topic illustrates the difficult political situation in which the Chinese Church found itself; the latter provides the historical background on the difficulties concerning indigenization in the Chinese Church.

From Chapters Three to Five, we will study the three different phases of confrontation between the Chinese Church and the Chinese Government as well as their respective implications on the indigenization of a local church: Chapter Three, The Deforeignization of the Chinese Church (1949–1951); Chapter Four, The Isolation of The Chinese Church (1952–1956); and Chapter Five, The Nationalization of the Chinese Church (1957–1970).<sup>12</sup>

Chapter Six will look at missiological implications for the current discussions on the importance of indigenization in the mission field.

## NOTES

1. L. M. Outerbridge, *The Last Churches of China* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), p.9.
2. These two orders were originally established specifically for the mission in China.
3. The first Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci, arrived in China in the late 15th Century; the French missionaries started their China mission early in the 18th Century.
4. Agenzia Internazionale "Fides," *Le missioni cattoliche dipendenti dalla Congregazione 'De propaganda fide'* (Rome: P. Opera della propagazione della feda, 1950), p.288. The figures of 1948 were 2,542 local priest versus 3,046 foreign priests.
5. See AP 1949.
6. "Quotidie nos" papal decree on 11 April 1946, AAS 38 (1946): 301–313.
7. The term 'Indigenization' here has the specific meaning of building of the local church.
8. E.O. Hanson, *The Catholic Policy in China and Korea* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980), p.42.
9. L. Ladany, *the Catholic Church in China: Yesterday, To-day, Tomorrow* (Hong Kong: CNA, 1975), pp.12–20. L. Ladang *The Catholic Church in China* (New York: Freedom House, 1987), pp.1–28. See also G. Pollio, *Le Calvaire de l'Eglise dans la Chine Nouvelle* (Paris: P. Teque, 1962), pp.179–183. T. Hang, *Die Katholische Kirche im Chinesischen Raum: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Münich: Pustet, 1963).
10. L.T.S. Wei, *Le Saint-Siège et la Chine de Pie XI à nos jours* (Paris: Edition A. Allais, 1971).
11. C.S. Gu, *Missionaries and Modern China* (Shanghai: People's press, 1981). (c)
12. Mr. Li Wei-han, the Director of the UFWD, was the alleged author of a Spanish booklet entitled: *La Iglesia Catolica y Cuba: Progamma de Accion* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1959). This booklet describes the Chinese government's program on transforming the Chinese Catholic Church from a foreign-dominated church into an Independent Patriotic Church. However, after careful examinations of four different versions (two French, two English) and enquiries made to both Peking and Havana, this author has serious reservation on the authenticity of this booklet. Hence the division used here is the author's own interpretation of the historical events which occurred in the Catholic Church in China. For more details on this document, please see Kim-Kwong Chan, *Towards a contextual Ecclesiology. The Catholic Church in The People's Republic of China (1979–1983): Its Life and Theological Implications* (Hong Kong: Phototech System Ltd., 1987), p.11, note 24.



## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following two sections of background information – the history of indigenization in the Chinese Church and the religious policy of the Chinese Government – although seemingly non-related, provide the historical and the social-political context in which the Chinese Church is situated. This information will help us understand both the basis of anti-Western feelings and xenophobic attitudes among the Chinese population (including the Chinese Catholics) and the rationale behind the Chinese Government's anti-religion ideology and their rigid policy of controlling religious affairs.

#### Section One

##### **The Historical Experience of Indigenization (From the 15th Century to 1949)**

The first Christian missionaries to arrive in China were the Nestorians; they arrived in the 7th Century. Their activities lasted for three centuries until they were banned by the emperor. The second wave of missionaries to China began with the Franciscan John of Monte Corvino in 1294.<sup>1</sup> The mission work was terminated a century later with the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty. All through that time there were no Chinese clergy at all.

In the late 16th Century, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci led the third wave of missionaries to China.<sup>2</sup> In 1589, five years after his arrival in China, there were at least four Chinese seminarians and two were ready to be ordained. Many missionaries urged Rome to grant permission to ordain local (Chinese) clergy.<sup>3</sup> However, the Jesuit's mission policy was to train locals as assistants to the missionary priests but not to ordain locals so that the local religious could not be equal in status to the missionaries.

The Jesuit Superior General of the Asian Province, Alessandro Valignano, even required the Chinese Jesuits to sign a statement indicating that they had no desire to receive priesthoods as a condition to enter the Order.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the Jesuits were ordaining Japanese but not Chinese, even though many Jesuit missionaries recommended

that the Chinese seminarians were in no way inferior to their Japanese counterparts.<sup>5</sup>

The issue of ordaining Chinese clergy centered on the question of whether the local candidate knew Latin or not. The German Jesuit representative in Rome, Charles de Noyelle, recommended to Propaganda Fides that all local priests must know Latin; otherwise it would be harmful to the Church.<sup>6</sup> Some missionaries indicated that the Chinese had difficulty in learning Latin. In 1660, the Prefect of Propaganda, Cardinal Barberini ordered an investigation. The reply by Prospero Intorcetta in 1677 stated that the Chinese could not learn Latin, and that their difficulty to pronounce Latin properly would affect the efficacy of the Sacraments. Even though there were many vocations among the Chinese and Chinese priests were greatly needed because of the anti-foreignism in China, yet unfortunately, there was to be no ordination for the Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

The first Chinese priest was Mons. Gregory Lopéz (he adopted this Spanish name when he entered the Dominican Order); he was not ordained in China, but in the Philippines in 1656. He returned to China and had a good record of ministerial activities. He was recommended by the Vicars Apostolic of Siam (now Thailand), Co-Chin (now Indo-China), and Tokyo to be the Vicar Apostolic of China. Pope Clement X granted him the titular title Bishop of Basel and the post of Vicar Apostolic of five provinces of China and Korea. This order was issued in 1674 and arrived in Manila in 1681. There was much opposition, especially among the foreign missionaries, to Lopéz's promotion. The Dominican Provincial General threatened Lopéz that if he dared to receive the consecration, he would be expelled from the order. They even tried to prevent his consecration by transferring him to a remote island.

With help from his sympathizers, Lopéz managed to return to China and to receive consecration from Bishop Bernardina della Chiesa in 1685.<sup>8</sup> Immediately after his consecration, these two bishops wrote to Rome to plead for the ordination of Chinese; the Holy See replied negatively along with a harsh warning.<sup>9</sup> In spite of the disapproval from Rome, Lopéz ordained the first three Chinese Jesuit priests in 1688. Concurrently, many missionaries also pleaded for the need of Chinese priests; instead of listening to these requests, Rome issued orders to reaffirm its former position of not ordaining Chinese.<sup>10</sup> A few

years later (1720), because of the Rites Controversy, the Emperor banned all Catholic activities. The foreign missionaries were expelled or executed. There were only a handful of Chinese priests left to take care of the few hundred thousand Chinese Catholics.

The fourth wave of Catholic missionaries came to China following the Sino-Franco Treaty (Treaty of Whampoa, 1844) which granted free propagation of Catholicism in China.<sup>11</sup> China was forced, under the threats of powerful Western gunboats and superior Western weapons, to open her cities to both the Western merchants who tried to seek profits and the missionaries who attempted to propagate their faith. China also lost her sovereignty because all foreigners (missionaries included) were granted the right of extraterritoriality.<sup>12</sup>

With backing from the unequal treaties and protection from the Western powers, the missionaries began their triumphal entry into China. While the merchants and colonialists built their sphere of influence and furthered their national interests in China, the missionaries built up the Church in China under the sphere of influence created by merchants and colonialists. These two enterprises—the building of the Church and the establishing of Western interests—were often intermixed; Church and politics went hand-in-hand. Very often the Western nations would use disputes between the missionaries and the local Chinese as an excuse to advance their political gain; the Church, in return, used the Western powers to advance her mission frontier. For example, the French Government, capitalizing on the death of a French Missionary in 1856, dispatched a task force to force China into signing a humiliating treaty to the benefit of the foreign a power.<sup>13</sup> Later on, the Church was often accused by the Chinese of being a tool of imperialistic invasion and political interest; this accusation was not without some truth.

The sense of superiority was very strong among the missionaries in China. In 1851, the Shanghai Synod recommended that Chinese priests, too, should be allowed to be elected as ordinaries; however, this recommendation had certain conditions attached to the election: when a foreign priest was elected, he only needed 2/3 majority from all the clergy of the Vicariate; but if a Chinese was elected, in addition to the 2/3 majority he also needed approval from all the foreign missionaries belonging to that district.<sup>14</sup> One could not question the motive and the rationale behind this ruling on the election as being other

than the of the foreignness superiority complex their insecurity towards having and local clergy on par with the missionaries. Even with this discriminatory condition, Rome still did not agree to allow Chinese ordinaries.<sup>15</sup>

There were also many foreign influences and interests in the Chinese Church; sometimes even Rome had difficulty interfering. In 1918, China wanted to establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican; yet France protested violently.<sup>16</sup> France argued that the right to protect the Catholics in China (hence the right to control the Catholic Church in China) should belong to France,<sup>17</sup> and the Vatican had no right in China. The Vatican eventually had to drop this matter. One would wonder who actually ruled the Chinese Church; not the Vatican, and definitely not the Chinese Catholics. It was the foreign missionaries, motivated by their national interests, who controlled the Chinese Church.

In 1919, Benedict XV issued the encyclical *Maximum illud* which emphasized the need to transfer power to the native clergy in mission fields.<sup>18</sup> However, until 1922, there was not a single Chinese ordinary. Pius XI followed the mission policy of Benedict XV, namely, to establish local hierarchies as soon as possible. He secretly issued an order on January 15, 1922, to set up an Apostolic Delegation to China. This order was made public in December, 1922,<sup>19</sup> after the first Apostolic Delegate to China, Bishop Celso Constantini (who had left Venice Secretly)<sup>20</sup> had already arrived in China. The secrecy of his mission was to avoid opposition from other Western nations which might have political interests in China through missionaries of their nationality. As it was, Pius XI's order abolished the French protectorate over the Catholic mission in China.

One of Constantini's first tasks was to push for the consecration of Chinese bishops.<sup>21</sup> He faced much resistance from the missionaries; they were reluctant to allow Chinese to be in leadership positions. In 1923, Constantini nominated the first Chinese ordinary (almost three hundred years after Lopéz); the Holy Father even personally created the Apostolic Prefecture Pouli—a tiny and obscure place in the province of Hupei; the Catholic population was so small that even in 1947, there were only five thousand Catholics<sup>22</sup>—for the first Chinese Apostolic Prefect. On April 15, 1924, Pius XI appointed another Chinese Apostolic Prefect and created the second special

Chinese Apostolic Prefecture Lihsien<sup>23</sup> (again, a tiny and remote area, this time in the Province of Hopei), just one month before the convening of the first Chinese Church Council, so that there would be two Chinese among the forty-five ordinaries taking part in this Council. Without the intervention from the Holy Father, there might not have been a single Chinese present in the first Synod of the Chinese Church, even though forty percent of all the priests in China were Chinese.<sup>24</sup>

In 1926, Pius XI issued the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*<sup>25</sup> which reaffirmed the mission policy stated in the encyclical *Maximum illud*; it especially emphasized the importance and the urgency of developing local leadership in the mission field. On June 11, 1926,<sup>26</sup> Pius XI issued an encyclical letter to all ordinaries in China (mostly foreigners) to urge them to transfer their posts to the Chinese clergy as soon as possible. This letter reflected the unwillingness of the missionaries to indigenize the Church in terms of personnel, especially in the role of leadership. In the same year, Pius XI personally consecrated six Chinese bishops in Rome; afterwards he said, "the Church in China is born."<sup>27</sup>

In 1946, the Hierarchy was established; this action supposedly marked the end of the missionary era and the beginning of an independent church run by local clergy. However, in 1949, out of the twenty archbishops only four were Chinese (only two were in China);<sup>28</sup> out of the one hundred and forty-five dioceses/prefectures, only twenty-seven were assigned to Chinese clergy.<sup>29</sup> There were even Sees which should belong to Chinese clergy but which were still ruled by foreign ordinaries.<sup>30</sup> For example, the Chinese priests in the Chinese diocese of Chenan out-numbered the foreign priests by two to one, yet that particular ordinary, Noffl Gubbels, was there since 1942 with no sign of handing over this see to the Chinese clergy.

Catholicism had been introduced into China a number of times during previous centuries. The Franciscan missionaries in the 13th Century did not train any Chinese clergy. The missionaries in the 16th and 17th Centuries wanted to build up an indigenous clergy but met with much opposition. From mid-19th Century to 1949 the number of Chinese priests was growing,<sup>31</sup> yet the Church was still under heavy foreign domination. The leadership of the Church was almost entirely foreign; the Chinese clergy played a secondary role as assistants. The

Catholic Church, in spite of her long history in China and her numerous dedicated Chinese clergy, was still a colonial church—a church ruled by foreigners as an extension of the Western Church.

## Section Two

### Religious Policy in China (1949–1970)

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a nation with a social structure radically different from the West; it has its own distinct social values, political structures, cultural mentality, and historical background. Everything in the PRC, therefore, needs to be viewed from its unique perspective. This section attempts to illustrate the most important social-political context which affects the Chinese Church: the religious policy of the Chinese government.

A totalitarian government is defined by *Webster's Dictionary* as: "a political regime which is based on subordination of the individual to the state and strict control of all aspects of the life and productive capacity of the nation, especially by coercive measures."<sup>32</sup> In a more functional and elaborated manner a totalitarian government may be defined as a state which has an official ideological orthodoxy, a one-party political system, a system of controlling its citizens, a total control on mass media, economy, and military forces.<sup>33</sup> The government of PRC resembles closely this category of political system. Even if the PRC may not fit into this category literally, it suggests one convenient perspective for viewing the governing political structure of the PRC.<sup>34</sup>

We have to bear in mind that, unlike Western society where religious freedom is often taken for granted, in the PRC, religion is tightly controlled by the government. Religious freedom has a different meaning from that of the West. It is only through this perspective that we can comprehend the situation of the Church in China.

Although many sinologists disagree on how the PRC is actually governed, they all agree that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) governs China.<sup>35</sup> The CCP has a hierarchical structure parallel to the State Government:<sup>36</sup> the former formulates the policy, the latter implements it all the way down to the grass-root level. Every state policy, every aspect of livelihood, every accepted cultural form, every social organization, every political move, every shift in ideology, every change in leadership, is controlled by politics—the politics which

reflects the policy set by the Party (CCP) leaders during a particular period of time. Nothing in China can exist if it does not follow the Party's policy. Religion in China is, of course, no exception and it too is under the CCP's policy.

The CCP, besides being a political party providing a structure to govern the country, is also an organization with a distinct ideology based on the Marxist-Leninist world-view. The ideology has an ultimate goal: proletarianization of the Chinese people,<sup>37</sup> if not of the whole of humankind. Therefore, the policy of the CCP is not just a set of principles to stabilize or to govern the nation, but also a program of continuous reformation (revolution-struggle) leading toward the final actualization of the total proletarianization of China, and eventually the world.

With the above-mentioned characteristics of the Chinese government in mind, we can see the importance of the government's religious policy for the church. The CCP provides the overall political and ideological leadership which includes religious policy; the state government attends to administration; the various religious organizations of the Party policy on religion are organized by the government to mobilize its members to follow the policy. Therefore, there is a direct causal relationship between the CCP's religious policy and the fate of the Church in China not only because of the nature of the Chinese Government, but also due to the anti-Communist stand taken by the missionary-controlled Church.<sup>38</sup> We will examine three interrelated aspects of this religious policy: the Chinese Communist's view on religion, the formulation of religious policy, and the administration of religious affairs.

#### **i) Chinese communist's view on religion.**

The CCP, like all communist parties, adopts atheism as the party orthodoxy. Their view on religion is based on Marx, Lenin, and Engel's teachings. Engels, in his famous article *Anti Dühring*, wrote, "All religion, however, is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's mind of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces."<sup>39</sup> In Engels' thought, religion is nothing more than a projection of mind from the ignorance of the uneducated mass. Marx wrote, "Religious

distress is not at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people."<sup>40</sup> Marx stressed the nature and essence of religion by referring to it as opium.

In Marx and Engels' combined work, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, they wrote, "When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th Century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie."<sup>41</sup> For them, religion – Christianity in particular – was an ideological superstructure existing for the protection of the ruling class' *status quo*.

Lenin, following Marx-Engels' theory, wrote *Socialism and Religion* with the following remarks on religion: "Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. . . Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze. . ." <sup>42</sup> By saying 'opium for the people,' Lenin emphasized the functional nature of religion which retarded the revolutionary spirit of the oppressed.

Based upon the communist interpretation of religion as a distorted world-view, Mao Tse-tung, the chief theoretician of the CCP, thought that this 'distorted world-view' was backward, superstitious, unscientific, and was used to exploit the masses.<sup>43</sup> The CCP also believes that religion can be, and should be, removed through education, increase of scientific knowledge, revolution, and persuasion; it is also the duty of the CCP – who possesses the truth – to liberate the believers from their religious bondage to the freedom of atheism.<sup>44</sup> Only when the Chinese society successfully eliminates the factors (superstition, lack of scientific knowledge. . .etc.) which provide the breeding ground for religion, can Chinese society free itself from the slavery of capitalism and feudalism,<sup>45</sup> and become a true communist state.

In the eyes of the CCP, religion is a product of ignorance. Religion is a hindrance to the realization of the total proletarianization of China because it retards the people's revolutionary spirit by putting a false expectation on God (or, putting an expectation on a false reality – God). Hence, in order to construct a true communist state, the Party has to eliminate religion. In fact, the eventual elimination of



religion has been consistently propounded in all Chinese Communist literature since the 1920's.<sup>46</sup> The CCP's general view on religion is that it is a distorted world-view ultimately needing to be eliminated from China.<sup>47</sup>

## ii) Formulation of religious policy.

Ideologically, the CCP accepts the orthodox communist view of religion; the members are avowed atheists.<sup>48</sup> On the one hand, they will never accept any religion; yet, on the other hand, the Chinese government tolerated the existence of religion at least from 1949 to 1966. In the first Constitution, the *Common Program*, Article 4 and 5 granted religious freedom to all citizens.<sup>49</sup> The later version – Article 88 of the PRC Constitution, adopted in 1958 – reads as follows: "Every citizen of the PRC shall have freedom of religious belief."<sup>50</sup> How can communism and theism co-exist?

This seemingly contradictory action, allowing religion in an atheistic state, is the result of Mao's United Front Theory<sup>51</sup> and his Theory on Contradiction.<sup>52</sup> The United Front Theory allows communists to form a coalition with even ideologically anti-communists groups when there exists a common enemy to both parties. For example, the Chinese Communists were willing to unite with the Nationalists (dead enemy of Communists) to fight against the Japanese when Japan posed a threat to the existence of China during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). The Theory of Contradiction was a world-view proposed by Mao to establish the priority of conflicts needed to be dealt with in a given situation. In the example of the Sino-Japanese War, the Communists' major enemy during that period was the Japanese; after the defeat of Japan, the major enemy of the Chinese Communists became the Nationalists – their former ally. In essence, the Theory of Contradiction determines the priority of action; the United Front Theory provides a basis for joint efforts to confront major challenges. These two theories of Mao's thought explain the many seemingly paradoxical phenomena in Communist China.

In 1949, the United Front Work Department (UFWD)<sup>53</sup> of the CCP aimed to form an alliance with non-communist groups (religious, minority tribes, overseas Chinese, capitalists, etc.) and to mobilize them to support the new regime. The main enemy or contradiction

then was not the non-communist fractions in China, but the international anti-China forces such as America and Taiwan. The non-communist factions, therefore, were united with the Communists to fight against China's common enemy. It was in this situation that religion was allowed to exist even though religion was incompatible with communist ideology.<sup>54</sup>

From the mid-50's to mid-60's, there was a heated debate between two schools of communist theoreticians on religion.<sup>55</sup> They both agreed on the nature and origin of religion: religion is idealism and it has to be eliminated for the realization of communism. They differed on the practical implementation of religious policy. The moderate group stated that through proper education and propaganda about atheism, people would abandon their faith and religion would disappear naturally. The radical group argued that since religion is an obstacle to the construction of a socialist state, the government should use force to eliminate religion. The radical policy was implemented from 1958 to 1962 and from 1966 to 1977.<sup>56</sup>

The religious freedom stated in the Constitution was interpreted by Western scholars as the religious policy of China.<sup>57</sup> However, this alleged religious freedom legally granted by the Government is but one of the many facets of the Government's attitude toward religion. The government believed that religion would eventually die away; the temporary granting of religious freedom was a method taken by the government to handle religious affairs in the transitional period—when certain support or benefits from the existence of religious bodies are still needed—towards the total proletarianization of China.

### **iii) Administration of religious affairs.**

From 1949 to 1950, the management of religious affairs in China was under the Government's Administrative Council (GAC)<sup>58</sup> which was headed by Chou En-lai. The first major government order concerning religious organizations was issued on December 29, 1950 by the Cultural and Educational Affairs Committee of the GAC.<sup>59</sup> In different regions of China, religious affairs were handled by different government agencies. For example, the formation of the Catholic Three-Self Reform Committee in the Province of Suiyuan (now Inner Mongolia) in January, 1951, was 'sponsored' by the Provincial Cultural and

Education Division.<sup>60</sup> However, in the city of Canton, it was the director of the Propaganda Department of the Municipal Communist Party who addressed the religious conference.<sup>61</sup>

As the government formulated some concrete policies on religion, a separate administrative organ was needed to deal directly with religious affairs. The Religious Affairs Division was formed in January 12, 1951.<sup>62</sup> This division was under the GAC's Cultural and Education Committee; its debut was on the 17th of January in a conference between the Chinese Catholic leaders in Northern China and the government.<sup>63</sup> Later on, this Division acted independently to deal with religious matters.<sup>64</sup> By the end of 1951, it began to develop provincial and municipal branches in areas where there was a high level of religious activities.<sup>65</sup> The centralized structure of religious control in China began to take shape with headquarters in Beijing and branches all over the country. In 1954, the Religious Affairs Division was promoted to Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), an independent organ directly under the newly-formed State Council.

Although the RAB was officially under the government's control, be it in the former GAC or the newly-formed State Council, it received its order not from the government but from the Central Committee of the CCP.<sup>66</sup> It is significant to note that the first director of the RAB, Mr. Ho Cheng-hsing was the former deputy director of the UFWD.<sup>67</sup> On the regional level, the local RAB (actually then called Division, not Bureau), though carrying the label of a government unit, was actually under the direct control of the local UFWD as part of the Propaganda Department of the local CCP branch.<sup>68</sup> The RAB and its local branches are actually a CCP organ under the guise of a government department.

After 1956, when the RAB had more control over the Catholic Church, every major Catholic meeting was presided over by not only the head of the local (or national, if it was a national meeting) RAB, but also by the director of the UFWD.<sup>69</sup> Leaders from the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) — a front organization of the UFWD<sup>70</sup> — were present with the absence of members from the RAB.<sup>71</sup> The UFWD — a CCP organ — seemed to be the one who formulated religious policy with direction from the Central Committee of the CCP; the RAB carried out the policy. In essence, the

CCP, through the UFWD and the RAB, controlled all religious activities in China.

## NOTES

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19. Papal Letter to China by Pius XI, 9 August 1922, AAS 14 (1922): 635.
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26. "Ab Ipsis" AAS (1926): 303-307.
27. M.S. Bates, "The Church in China in the Twentieth Century," in *China and Christian Responsibility* ed. by W.J. Richardson (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1968), p.67.
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29. Wei, pp.195-198.
30. Noffl Gubbels, Bishop of I-Chang, Apostolic Administrator of Chenan; Bishop André Defebvre of Ningpo, also Apostolic Administrator of Yongkia, see AP 1949, *loc.cit.*
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47. T. M. Ko, *Christianity Under Communism: The History of Protestantism in Mainland China Since 1949*, unpublished M.C.S. thesis, Vancouver, Regent College, 1978, pp.34–36. Also see Yang, p.387.
48. "A True Realization of the Question of the Catholic and Protestant Church," *JMJP* 20 November 1950. ET see *SCMP* 23 (23 Nov. 1950).
49. D. McInnis, *Religious Policy and Practice in Communist China* (New York: Collin-MacMillan, 1972), p.21.
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53. There is a United Front Work Department which operates under the auspice of the Central Committee of the CCP.
54. Mao's "On new Democracy," in *Selected. . .*, II: 623–670.
55. Ko, pp.47–53.
56. J. Chao, ed. *Chinese Communist Policy Towards Christianity* (Hong Kong: Chinese Church Research Center, 1983), pp.97–130. (c)
57. R. C. Bush, *Religion in Communist China* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), pp.15–22.
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  64. The Hunan RAB started in 1st June 1951, see H.H. Welch, *Buddhism under Mao* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), p.31; the Canton municipal RAB was established in January 1952 see G. Patterson, *Christianity in Communist China* (Waco, Texas: Word Book, 1969), p.3.
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  69. In Fukien's CPCA preparatory committee, both the provincial UFWD director and the RAB director were present *Fukien Jib Pao* (Fukien Daily) 27 Nov. 1957. (c)
  70. In the Shangtung provincial Catholic conference, both the vice-chairman of provincial CPPCC and the vice-director of the RAB were presented, *Ta Chung Jib Pao* (The Mass Daily, Shangtung) 3 Nov. 1957. (c)
  71. Only the CCPPC personel was presented, *Shansi Jib Pao* (Shansi Daily) 13 Dec. 1957; only the UFWD cadre was presented, *Amoy Jib Pao* (Amoy Daily) 13 Dec. 1957.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DE-FOREIGNIZATION OF THE CHINESE CHURCH (1949–1951)

In China, 1949 to 1951 was a period of chaos which was marked by the growing establishment of a socialist regime, active involvement in the Korean War and deliberate isolation from the Western world. For the Chinese Church, it was a period of trial characterized by the expulsion of missionaries, the limitation of religious activity, the nationalization of many Church-operated institutions, and the persecution of the Catholic leaders. We will examine this period by looking at the inimical relationship between the Church and the government; and then we will reflect on this relationship from the perspective of the indigenous nature of the Church.

#### **i) Confrontation between the Church and the Chinese Communists before 1949.**

In the 30's, the Chinese Communists were not friendly with the Catholic Church because the Chinese Church, under the leadership of missionaries who followed Rome's anti-Communist stand,<sup>1</sup> was hostile toward the communists. The Chinese Church regarded the communists as devils; the Chinese communists interpreted the Church as an imperialistic agent.

In the proto-Chinese communist regime—the Kiangsi Soviet Republic established in the early 30's—the Communist Government confiscated all church property and deprived the clergy of all citizen's rights.<sup>2</sup> In 1935, when the Communist Red Army entered the city of Yen-an after their famous Long March, the small Spanish Franciscan mission (with about seven thousand Catholics) was forced to close because the Chinese communists began to convert Yen-an into their revolutionary base.<sup>3</sup>

The missionaries in Chinese communist-held areas were often arrested and accused of being spies working for the Chinese Nationalist (enemy of Communist) Government or for the Japanese. They were often harassed and tortured: as many as forty Catholic missionaries' deaths could be attributed to the communists in the pre-1949 period.<sup>4</sup> Some deaths might be due to the arrogant and superior attitude of



foreign missionaries which generated hatred and resentment among the masses; others might be due to a close association with the Nationalist Government.

One of the most famous conflicts between the communists and the Catholic missionaries was the capture of Fr. Vincent Lebbe in southern Shansi in 1940 by the communists Eighth Route Army. This Belgian priest organized a Catholic stretcher carrier brigade serving under the Nationalist Army. According to communist sources, he had organized various anti-communist militia.<sup>5</sup> He was captured while he was on one of his espionage missions inside the communist-held area. During his six-week imprisonment, he witnessed the execution of his Chinese brothers of his order. He died just two months after he was released; his death was generally attributed to the terrible experience that he went through during his confinement.<sup>6</sup> One of his last words prior to his death could characterize the general feelings of the foreign missionaries towards the Chinese communists: "The Chinese Communists are not Chinese; the Chinese Communists are not men; the Chinese Communists are living devils."<sup>7</sup>

From the communists' perspective, the Catholic Church — under the control of the anti-communist foreign missionaries — was working for the interests of the Western powers in supporting the Nationalist government. The foreign missionaries were, therefore, agents of the communist's enemy. The communists were more against the close associations between the Church and the foreign imperialist power and the Nationalist Government than the Church as a religious institution. Actually, few communists knew what the Catholic doctrine was, nor did they care for it unless it related to anti-communism. The clash between the communists and the Church from the 30's to the 40's was more a political than an ideological conflict.

## **ii) The Church under the Internuncio Mons. Riberi (1946–1951).**

In 1946, the first internuncio Archbishop Riberi arrived in China. After he had heard the bitter experiences that the missionaries had suffered in the communist-held area, he began to prepare the Church (hereafter this word refers to the Catholic Church in China unless indicated otherwise) in order to survive under the eventual and

imminent communist rule.<sup>8</sup> In his first pastoral letter (Jan. 6, 1947) to the Catholics in China, he openly supported the anti-communist Nationalist Government; he even urged the Catholics to follow the anti-communist policy as part of the Catholic faith.<sup>9</sup>

In December 1947, he founded the Catholic Central Bureau (CCB) in Shanghai; this Bureau became the headquarters of the Church in China. Through the CCB, Riberi centralized the control of the Church by issuing orders to various ordinaries.<sup>10</sup>

In 1948, he called upon the Columban missionary Rev. W.A. McGrath from Ireland to organize the Legion of Mary in China.<sup>11</sup> Riberi believed that the Legion of Mary could strengthen the resistance of the Church to the communists. The most trustworthy and intelligent Catholic youths were recruited to defend and to protect the Church. This Legion had a quasi-military structure and its members were referred to as "the shock troops" of the Catholic laity.<sup>12</sup> By 1951, there were more than one thousand praesidia (chapters) in China. Many praesidia were established just prior to the arrival of the communists; when the communists began governing, the Legion went underground and operated clandestinely.<sup>13</sup>

One of Riberi's first orders to missionaries was to urge them to stay even though they might face persecution. The missionaries might leave only if they were expelled by the government or were ordered by their superior; otherwise, he wrote, "the rule for priests and brothers and nuns and even seminarians is to 'stay,'"<sup>14</sup>

Riberi issued many orders to the Church forbidding the Catholics in joining any communist organization. In 1947, following the instruction from Rome, Riberi issued a decree to forbid any Chinese Catholic to join the International Women's Democratic Association, the World Labor Federation, and the World Youth Democratic Association, for these organizations, according to Rome, were part of the communists' plan of infiltration to spread evil.<sup>15</sup>

In July, 1949, three months before the formation of the PRC, Rome issued an order to all Catholics to oppose and to boycott any communist influence.<sup>16</sup> Riberi passed this order on to the ordinaries in China through the publications of the CCB. This order forbade any Catholic to join or to sympathize with CCP, to publish, to read, to write, or to propagate any communist literature; violation of this order would lead to the termination of receiving the Sacraments and even

excommunication. Various dioceses implemented this order with operative guidelines; for example, the Bishop Jean de Vienne of Tientsin issued an order with specific regulations to prohibit the Catholics in his diocese from attending any government-operated schools and colleges.<sup>17</sup>

In preparing the Chinese Catholics to continue the struggle with the communists, Riberi issued a special order in 1950; this order asked the bishops to appoint two priests as successors to carry on the episcopal function in the event that it was not possible to elect a vicar capitular; so that when the bishop is arrested, his orders could still be carried out by the bishop's faithful appointees.<sup>18</sup> The control of the Church could still remain in the hands of those who were loyal to Rome. The clergy and laity, if they were not in favor of Rome's policy, could, in fact, be precluded from the leadership position.

In July 28, 1951, Riberi conveyed the order from Rome which extended the ecclesial punishment even to the parents or guardians of those who had violated the decree issued on July 1949; this new order also broadened the scope for excommunication.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, the CCB published many booklets to strengthen the faith of the Catholic, to encourage them in following the teaching of the Church, to attack the communist ideology, and to equip them to fight against the communists.<sup>20</sup>

Not all Catholics were against the new regime as Riberi had aimed. In Nov. 30, 1950, a few hundred Catholics in Kwongyuan of northern Szechwan issued a declaration to sponsor a movement of "self-support and reform" of the Church which called for the self-administration of the Church by the Chinese.<sup>21</sup> This was the first statement by Catholics to support the new government. The Protestants had issued theirs in July; their manifesto was sponsored by prominent leaders of the Protestant Church.<sup>22</sup> In responding to the Kwongyuan declaration, Riberi issued a pastoral letter to all bishops and priests in China denouncing the autonomous movement.<sup>23</sup>

On March 31, 1951, The Vicar General of Nanking, Li Weikuong, issued a statement calling for the autonomy of the Chinese Church and the termination of the foreign (Vatican) intervention of China's internal affairs. On the same day, Riberi, also in Nanking, issued another pastoral letter to denounce the statement by Li.<sup>24</sup> One month later, Riberi issued a third pastoral letter to further denounce

the “autonomous movement” (hereafter referred to simply as “autonomous movement” although it bears different names varying from place to place) and to threaten all those who join this movement with excommunication.<sup>25</sup> The Holy Office had issued a decree in 1950 to excommunicate all those who directly or indirectly planned to overthrow the ecclesial authority.<sup>26</sup>

Rome effectively ruled the Church in China through Riberi by centralizing all controls at the CCB until Riberi was expelled in late 1951.<sup>27</sup> The Church was tightly controlled by Rome through Riberi, the CCB, the foreign bishops, and the Chinese ordinaries who were loyal to Rome. Any dissent was successfully suppressed at least until 1951. The Church in China was, in effect, an extension of the foreign (Rome) control in the newly established PRC. With the height tide of nationalism, and the first taste of national sovereignty, the Chinese Communist Government naturally regarded the antagonistic attitude of the Catholic Church as hostile to the Chinese nation. The Chinese government then launched a powerful campaign to capture the control of the Church from the hands of the foreigners.

### **iii) De-foreignization of the Church 1949–1951**

During the first two years of the new Chinese regime, the government focused on important crises such as the Korean War, and the War against the Nationalist Government; religious affairs were a minor issue. The RAB, as we noted earlier, was established as late as 1951. The government’s general policy on the Catholic Church was published in a small article titled “A true realization of the questions of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in November, 1950.”<sup>28</sup> The following paragraphs with \* are a summary of this article.

\*The Catholic Church was historically connected with the imperialist power; the imperialists often used the church to exploit the Chinese people. The church is operated and controlled by foreign missionaries who have close connections with the imperialist power. Since the church has many followers, their influence cannot be ignored.

\*The government thinks that the church need not be banned, but the imperialistic elements have to be removed. What the government is against is not the religious belief, but the possibility that exposure to imperialist influence will sabotage the Chinese nation. The

principles of religious policy are, first, to eliminate any imperialistic element within the Church; second, to free the Church from any foreign domination; and third, to build a Church which supports the government. The implementation of the first two principles involves the civil authority since imperialism is a political crime; the last principle is an internal matter of the Church and has to be dealt with by the Catholics themselves.

\*The government urges the patriotic Catholics to expose the anti-revolutionary elements hidden in the Church, and to inform the civil authority about them. The government also forbids any anti-government literature published by the Church. In order to protect religious freedom for all citizens, the government forbids any propagation of atheism in the Church; vice versa, the government forbids any propagation of theism (e.g. any form of Christian faith) outside of the church building.

The government's religious policy is very clear: the government feared that the Church might be used by foreign powers against the Chinese government. The government, therefore, wanted to sever all foreign ties of the Church, especially when the Western nations—from which most of the missionaries came—became the enemy of China through the U.N.'s involvement in the Korean War. There is also the xenophobic attitude among the Chinese due to historical circumstances. The simple solution for the Chinese government was to deport all foreign missionaries. Furthermore, the government wanted to see to it that the Church would become a social organization supporting the government. By expelling the foreign missionary, the government hoped that the Chinese leaders of the church would be more politically sympathetic to the new government than the missionaries.

Some foreign missionaries highly respected Chinese culture; but many missionaries, those who possess a white superiority complex, did not establish a good relationship with the Chinese. The image of the foreign missionary, especially by the non-Catholic Chinese, was bad because they often strove more for their national or cultural interest than for the spreading of Gospel. No wonder the editor of the *China Mission Bulletin* lamented in 1950:

How very different is the picture of the Church in China today?  
The distinction of French or Spanish or German or Dutch or

American Catholic missionary weights heavily on us. Petty pride of an order or congregation often blinds us to the real purpose of our ministry. We carry the petty jealousies of our nationality or religious order into the sanctuary of the Church. . . .<sup>29</sup>

The animosity between the missionary and the Chinese, Catholics or otherwise, was high. The first attack on the missionaries began with a certain Mr. Liu who wrote a letter to the *New China Daily* (*Hsin Hua Jih Pao*) to describe the "circumstances" in the missionary-operated orphanage Sacred Heart Home which led to the death of his child. The letter accused the foreign nuns of maltreating the children; this Home was described as a "vile hell." His letter triggered an avalanche of accusations to this orphanage. Numerous "testimonies" of how foreign nuns abused Chinese babies were told.<sup>30</sup> The civil authority took the step to exhume the dead babies; and more than one hundred bodies were found. Very often the death of the babies was due to the plagues of cholera or other contagious diseases. It was also very common that when the babies were sent to orphanages. They were already very sick and close to death; these was little left for the nuns to do besides baptizing them and eventually burying them.

Later, an accusation meeting was held to demand the murderers (the foreign nuns) to be punished; the foreign nuns were then arrested; some were deported; others were jailed and subsequently expelled.<sup>31</sup> The orphanage was handed back to the civil authority.<sup>32</sup>

Other orphanages run by missionaries encountered a similar fate as the Sacred Heart Home had. Just to name a few examples, Wuchang's St. Joseph Convent's orphanage, operated by American missionaries, was accused;<sup>33</sup> the missionaries were later expelled. The Canadian missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception's Canton crèche were accused of having killed two thousand one hundred and sixteen children;<sup>34</sup> the Canadian nuns were tried, jailed, and expelled in 1952. The French missionaries who operated orphanages in Pakhoi faced the same ordeal.<sup>35</sup>

Individual missionaries, especially foreign bishops, were all arrested, accused, jailed, and eventually expelled. We would just mention a few of them: The Archbishop of Kaifeng, Mons. G. Pollio, along with a few Italian priests, were accused of committing counter-revolutionary activities such as organizing the Legion of Mary, preventing Catholics from joining the Army to fight the Korean War, sabotaging

the Catholic “autonomous movement”, etc.<sup>36</sup> They were tried and expelled. Fr. Crocco Francesco and Fr. Luigi Biagini and others were arrested as spies in Sian, and were subsequently deported.<sup>37</sup> Bishop de Vienne was deported in May 1951 because he was helping the “reactionaries.”<sup>38</sup> Bishop Martina was found guilty of “endangering the PRC” and was expelled.<sup>39</sup> This list can extend for thousands of names.<sup>40</sup> Some were charged as spies, others were charged with cruelty to the Chinese.<sup>41</sup> Each of them had committed either civil or political crimes; therefore, according to the Chinese government, their punishment and expulsion were well justified; more importantly, that would not be considered religious persecution but a case of civil justice.

Among all of the missionaries, one needs to be mentioned in particular: Internuncio Archbishop Riberi. It did not take long for the government to realize the importance of the CCB in relation to the Catholic resistance to the government. In order to paralyze the resistance of the church, the government had to sever the head (CCB), the brain (Riberi), and the arms (Legion of Mary and the foreign bishops) of the “reactionary” element in the church. A series of actions against the church took place beginning in the summer of 1951.

On June 17, the Shanghai City Government closed the CCB.<sup>42</sup> Concurrently, there was a massive media attack on the CCB to expose the “imperialistic” nature of this organization;<sup>43</sup> the attacks slowly changed the focus to the boss of CCB—Riberi.<sup>44</sup> He was eventually under house arrest. Even before his arrest, there was already a mass media campaign representing the “Catholic” to demand his deportation.<sup>45</sup> The civil authority, following the “will” of the “Catholic,” deported Riberi in September, 1951.<sup>46</sup>

After the deportation of Riberi, the government began to deal with the foreign leaders of the Legion of Mary. The Legion was banned in October,<sup>47</sup> followed by a massive arrest of the leaders, such as W.A. McGrath, G. Prevost, and E.G. Quint.<sup>48</sup> A mass media attack on the Legion was launched as early as June;<sup>49</sup> it climaxed in October to coincide with the arrests. These media attacks portrayed the Legion as a secret Facist reactionary organization directed by foreign spies (missionaries) under the cloak of religion to sabotage China; it was associated with U.S. spies;<sup>50</sup> weapons were even discovered in its office.<sup>51</sup>

Just how massive the exodus of Catholic missionaries was may be shown by statistics. In 1948, there were 5,500 missionaries in

China; 3,222 in January 1951, and 1,848 in January 1952.<sup>52</sup> Two-thirds of all missionaries were expelled before 1952; 60% of those who remained were deported before 1953. We have to keep in mind that of those who remained, many were already in jail pending deportation; few could function freely. The Chinese government was successful in achieving its first objective: to sever the foreign link of the church in China by expelling the foreign missionaries.

As for the second objective of the government – to transform the church into a pro-government organization – the government was not very successful in spite of the departure of the missionaries. We mentioned earlier that a Kwongyuan declaration was issued by a group of Catholics in a remote parish in November, 1950. Shortly afterwards, many Catholics issued declarations similar in content: first, they denounced the imperialistic powers such as the Legion and the Vatican; second, they demanded the self-administration, self-support and the self-propagation of the Chinese Church (commonly referred to as the “Three-Self” principle); finally, they called for the separation of the Church from the imperialistic powers. None of them denounced the Pope nor called for separation from Rome. However, these declarations did not gain any significant support from the Catholics.

The alleged leader of the Kwongyuan declaration, Fr. Mathias Wang Leung-tso, denied that he had anything to do with it; he claimed that his name was added without his knowledge or permission.<sup>53</sup> He was arrested by the government and was even reported dead,<sup>54</sup> but actually he is still alive.<sup>55</sup> In the Chungking declaration, only 717 Catholics out of 4,000 Catholics signed the statement. In Tientsin, only ‘more than one hundred’ out of 50,000 signed the declaration.<sup>56</sup> In Suiyuan, although the newspaper headline read, “120,000 Catholics in Suiyuan reorganized their Church,” the small print showed that less than 2,000 Catholics signed the declaration for the “autonomous movement.”<sup>57</sup> In Kaifeng (Bishop Pollio’s See), the newspaper headline read that 95% of the Catholics in the city (1,033) had signed, yet that see actually had close to 20,000 Catholics.<sup>58</sup> Not only did the “autonomous movement” fail to get support from the grass-root Catholics, but also it did not gain substantial endorsement from the Chinese clergy. Those who signed these declarations were almost all laity; very seldom do we spot the name of a priest; even if there is a name of a priest, we still have reservations about the credibility of the



signature as we recall the aforementioned case of Fr. Mathias Wang. Furthermore, no Chinese ordinary had signed any of these declarations, at least not before 1952 (with the possible exception of two Chinese Vicars General).

The government learned that the Catholic Church cannot be changed from below the way that communists started their revolution. These declarations initiated from below (laity) would not be accepted by the Catholics because it lacked authority in a traditional hierarchical structure. Anyone who tried to rebel against church authority from below would be rejected in spite of the cause. The Chinese government later launched a different campaign to change the church from above; we will examine it later in detail.

#### iv) The Response of the Church

Facing the government's deforeignization policy, the Catholic Church did not bend to the government's pressure; instead she vigorously defended the foreign missionaries. In January 1952, Pius XII issued the encyclical *Cupimus imprimis*<sup>59</sup> to defend the missionaries' presence in China. In this encyclical, the Pope argued that the Church had no political interest; the mission was purely a spiritual one; the missionaries were motivated by heavenly interests, not temporal ambition; and the missionaries were there to help the building up of the Chinese Church. The encyclical ended by urging the Chinese Catholics to endure the persecution.

As for the "autonomous movement", the encyclical explicitly condemned such deeds because the Catholic Church cannot tolerate any form of particular or local church; it would be a violation of Catholic doctrine. It is interesting to note that the encyclical was addressed to Chinese clergy, ordinaries, and laity who were "in peace and communion" (*pax et communio*) with the Apostolic See, not to those who disobey Rome's instructions.

Concerning the need of missionaries in China, the encyclical argued that there were not enough, both in quality and in quantity, of Chinese clergy to run the Church in China; therefore foreign missionaries were indispensable. The encyclical failed to explain that, in 1949, there were only twenty-six Chinese ordinaries to more than a hundred foreign ordinaries while more than 40% of the priests were Chinese; it

failed to acknowledge the various boycotting of foreign bishops by the Chinese Catholics;<sup>60</sup> it also did not explain the discriminatory appointment of a Chinese ordinary only as an Apostolic Administrator to an Archdiocese but not as the residential Archbishop<sup>61</sup> even though the former foreign Archbishop had resigned long ago from the post.<sup>62</sup>

The encyclical stated that the church “does not aspire to such (political power)”; and the Church “neither despises nor rejects the characteristic genius of various peoples or their particular culture. . . .”; the Church accepts “any institutes of either public or private life which are founded in justice, liberty, and charity. . . .” However, the Vatican’s anti-communist stand was well known. The Vatican established diplomatic relation with the Nationalist Chinese Government (Taiwan),<sup>63</sup> which implied that the Vatican rejected the PRC as the legitimate government of China. The Vatican supported the UN’s intervention in the Korean War which, in effect, condemned the presence of the Chinese Voluntary Army in Korea. The Holy Office also issued various decrees through the CCB to the Catholics in China to hinder their participating in the government’s socialist program. These actions were interpreted by the Chinese government as political intervention in China’s internal affairs. It was not convincing for the Chinese to believe that the Catholic Church was apolitical; rather, the apolitical stand claimed by Rome, along with the decrees from the Holy Office, further affirmed the Chinese Government’s belief that the Catholic Church was a political enemy of China.<sup>64</sup>

The encyclical also wrote: “Nor likewise can she be expected to countenance that particular churches be set up in each nation, this destroying that unity established by the Divine founder. . . .” The policy of the Chinese government toward the Catholic church from 1949 to 1951 was the elimination of the foreign elements in the church; the government did not want to interdict the Church but to support a ‘Chinese Church’ ruled by the Chinese. The government did not ask for the separation of the Chinese Church from Rome, but objected to the political intervention of Rome. Ironically, the ‘autonomous movement’ sponsored by the government was in harmony with the concept of the local church (staffed by native clergy) proposed by Pius XI in the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*.

There seemed to be a double-standard conducted by Rome. On the one hand, Cardinal Casaroli drew up the *Ostpolitik* to foster rela-

tionships with the Eastern Bloc,<sup>65</sup> yet, on the other hand, the Chinese Church did not receive the same privilege as did the Catholics in the Eastern Bloc even though the right of autonomous governing of the Chinese Church was well propagated by the former Popes. It suggested that Rome regarded the Chinese clergy and the Chinese Church as an inferior ecclesial structure; foreign leadership was vital for the operation of the Chinese Church.

The encyclical also attacked those Chinese clergy who favored the “autonomous movement” and those who tried to negotiate a solution with the government. Rome did not consider the difficulties which the Chinese clergy faced; Rome treated the Chinese clergy as if they were too immature to make sound decisions for the Chinese Church. Rome believed that the best way for the church was to follow Rome’s orders regardless of the effectiveness of these orders. Rome dismayed many Chinese clergy who, out of a pious intention, tried to search for a *modus vivendi* for the church; it also created division and animosity among the Chinese clergy by separating them into two groups: pro-Rome and pro-government.

The encyclical reflected the attitude of Catholics in the West in the early 50’s toward the situation in China. The tone was defensive, condemnatory, self-righteous, and patronizing. It also illustrated the lack of sympathy for those clergy who were trapped in a dilemma, the lack of appreciation of political systems other than the Western model, and the lack of willingness to accept native clergy as equal partners with the missionaries.

#### v) Reflection on Indigenization

The main event in the Church during this period was the departure of foreign missionaries; it was indigenization in terms of personnel. We saw that under the foreign leadership, the Church went through a bitter struggle with the government; the Chinese Catholics ultimately were those who suffered the most. There appeared to be three major reasons that led to the tragic consequence of the Church; these reasons can be attributed to the foreign or the non-indigenized nature of the Church.

First, the dereliction of nationalism. Nationalism was highly praised by the missionaries even to the point of excelling ecclesial

interest; yet the Chinese Catholics were instructed to act against their own national interest; the Chinese Catholics were denied their own nationalism.

A Chinese Catholic is a Chinese as well as a Catholic; the racial element and national sentiment cannot be detached from their faith. From 1949 to 1951, the Chinese in general were proud to be Chinese citizens because it was the first time that China was free from any foreign domination. A Chinese Catholic could not avoid this social trend. Under the leadership of the foreign missionaries – who often propagated their own nationalism (there was a case that the French missionaries in Peking cheated money from that diocese in order to send it to France for the celebration of the French National Day)<sup>66</sup> – the Chinese Church was denied her right to share the national aspirations of the Chinese. The Catholic Church in China even fought against the Chinese people. In the eyes of the Chinese government, the Church was a symbol of foreign colonial power, an unpatriotic organization, and an anti-people, anti-revolutionary institution.

It was a catastrophic mistake for the foreign missionaries to confuse the issues of communism and nationalism. The missionaries intended to lead the Church in the fight against communism; it turned out to be a fight against the Chinese nation. The missionaries recognized the ideology of the Chinese Communist Government; yet they failed to realize the underlying force of the Chinese communist revolution – Chinese nationalism. The missionaries' national (or cultural) superiority complex de-sensitized their awareness of Chinese nationalism: their arrogance heightened the xenophobia of the Chinese Government; their paternalistic attitude alienated them from their Chinese Brothers.

Second, insensitivity to the political context. After China entered the Korean War, all the major Western powers became the enemies of China. The Church took the side of the West by supporting both the US's involvement in Korea and US's backing of Chang's regime in Taiwan. The Church even defended these political stands as part of the uncompromised Catholic faith. All foreign missionaries supported these political stands; none showed any sympathy or support for the cause of the Chinese government.

It seemed that there was intermingling of politics and faith. Catholicism was Western democracy; socialism was apostasy. This

mentality originated in the Western World, was carried to the East by the missionaries, and implemented in the Chinese Church. The Church in China naturally became an extension of Western political influence which was not tolerated by the Chinese government in the context of socialist China. The Church was dragged into a dilemma by the missionaries who sustained a political view not compatible with the political reality of China.

Third, refusal to promote the local clergy in leadership positions. There was only a few Chinese ordinaries in 1949. Even after the expulsion of the foreign ordinaries, many new appointments to the vacant sees were still given to the foreigners who remained in China even though many Chinese clergy were available and were qualified for the posts.<sup>67</sup> Eventually, some Chinese were appointed only because it was absolutely impossible for a foreigner to assume some posts.

The main control or power was still in the hands of missionaries. Before they were expelled, they urged the Chinese Catholics to be martyred for their faith and to uphold the Catholic teaching by action (e.g. fight against the government). These heroic and zealous instructions did not take into consideration the long-term welfare of the Church in China. They left behind their policy for the Chinese Catholics to live but did not grant any power for the Chinese Catholics to alter it. Even some thoughtful Chinese clergy, who wanted to search for a better alternative for the Church, were condemned by their foreign superiors who did not experience the same difficulty as their Chinese subordinates. This unwillingness to transfer power to the Chinese clergy to guide the future of the Chinese Church made rigid the response of the Church in facing the challenges presented by the Chinese society.

The dereliction of nationalism, the insensitivity to the political context, and the reluctance to transfer leadership power to the Chinese clergy, all these factors shaped the foreign missionaries' Church policy—a rigid policy for the Church to fight against the government. Much damage was done physically. Many Catholics were jailed or 'martyred' because they took an anti-government stand as told by the Church; politically, the Church was labeled as unpatriotic and was rejected by society; ecclesially, the already gossamer Chinese Church was further weakened by the division among the Chinese clergy into pro-Rome and pro-government factions; and missiologically, the mis-

sionaries failed to establish an ecclesial community pertinent to its context (e.g. local leadership in an anti-foreign atmosphere). From 1949–1951, because of the non-indigenous nature (foreign control) of the Church in China, the Church was led into a calamitous situation.

## NOTES

1. For example, see "Divini redemptorisi," encyclical by Pius XI, AAS 29 (1937): 65–106.
2. Chao, *Chinese Communist Policy*. . . , pp.69–71.
3. G. Palmer, *God's Underground in Asia* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), pp.9–10.
4. Bush, p.50 nt. 35; also Palmer pp.7–40. Palmer's accounts are not very accurate; i.e. in pp.136–137 Palmer wrote that Mons. P'i of Mukden was martyred on August, 1951; in fact, Bishop P'i was alive: he was the president of the CPCA and died in 1978, see *JMJP* 25 May 1978. (c) see also the moving account on the martyrdom of more than 30 Trappists in 1947–8 in S. Jen *The History of Our Lady of Consolation Yang Kia Ping* (Hong Kong: Our Lady of Joy, Lantao, 1978): 94–122.
5. Gu, p.398.
6. Bush, p.49.
7. Palmer, p.7.
8. Bush, p.102.
9. *CFJP*, 6 July 1951.
10. Wei, p.147.
11. J. Monsterleet, *Les martyrs de Chine parlent* (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1955), p.149.
12. Palmer, p.64.
13. *Ibid.*, pp.63–67.
14. *Ibid.*, p.241.
15. "The Crimes of Riberi," in *TKP* 6 Sept. 1951. (c)
16. Decree from the Holy Office, dated 1 July 1949, AAS 41 (1949): 334.
17. "Tientsin City Public Security Office discusses the crimes of the Imperialist Bishop Jeande Vienne," in *JMJP* 29 Oct. 1951. (c)
18. The title of his letter was "Instruction for the governing of the diocese and for the continuation of the ruling in consideration of the particular circumstance"; see *Le Siège Apostolique et les missions* (Paris: Union Missionnaire de clergé, 1956–) III:328.
19. This is a *monitum*, not a *decretum*; it was issued to confront the Italian Communist Party; see AAS 42 (1950): 553.
20. Hang, pp.114–118.
21. NCNA dispatch, 13, Dec. 1950. ET see CMBA Vol. III (IV) No. 2. (Feb. 1951), pp.149–150. Palmer, p.147. Fr. Wang denied his involvement; see note 146.

22. DTSM, pp.19–20.
23. Wei, p.153.
24. *Ibid.*, p.155; the latin text was reproduced in *JMJP* 24 May 1951; ET SCMP 107 (23 May 1951):12.
25. Lefeuve, p.57.
26. AAS 42 (1951): 601–602.
27. Bush, p.110.
28. *JMJP* 20 Nov. 1950; ET SCMP 23 (23 Nov. 1950).
29. Bates, p.66.
30. SCMP 83 (18 March 1951).
31. SCMP 110 (4 June 1951):26.
32. SCMP 98 (21 April 1951):18.
33. SCMP 110 (1 June 1951):27.
34. *Monsterleet*, pp.164–165.
35. *Ibid.*, pp.166–168.
36. *Ibid.*, pp.163–165.
37. SCMP 122 (10 Nov. 1951):5.
38. *JMJP* 29 Oct. 1951; see also SCMP 109 (30 May 1951): 19.
39. L. Triviére, *Catholic Church in China: Research Back-grounder* (Hong Kong, 1959), mimeographed, p.31.
40. For more examples, see A. Jany, *Les torurés de la Chine; exposé historique, témoignage missionnaire* (Paris: Mignard, 1958). This book recorded more than one hundred cases of missionary expulsions.
41. SCMP 102 (1 May 1951):28.
42. SCMP 118 (17 June 1951):9.
43. For example, see *CFJP* 8 June 1951. (c)
44. *CFJP* 6 July 1951. (c)
45. SCMP 118 (16 June 1951):10.
46. SCMP 168 (5 Sept. 1951):5.
47. SCMP 192 (10 Oct. 1951):6.
48. Triviére, pp.51–52.
49. *JMJP* 5 July 1951; for those who are interested in more pictorial media, see J. Schütte, *Die Katholische chinamission in der Rotchinesischen Presse* (Müster in Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1957), pp.284– 295.
50. SCMP 196 (13 Oct. 1951):11.
51. SCMP 254 (13 Jan. 1952):10.
52. Bush, p.60.
53. *CMBA* Vol. III (IV) No. 2 (Feb. 1951), p.150, Editor noted that Fr. Wang was known to embrace anti-American sentiment; he speculated that Fr. Wang might have drafted this declaration out of antipathies. However in *CMBA* Vol. III (IV) No. 5 (May, 1951) P.387, The Editor wrote that Fr. Wang did neither support nor sign the declaration.
54. Palmer, p.147 and Ku, p.88, both reported Fr. Wang was executed.

55. Fr. Wang made a declaration as late as in 1983, see CKTCC 7 (1983): 47–48. He has been a member of the CPPCA.
56. Palmer, p.149. CBMA Vol. III (IV) No. 2 (Feb 1951), pp.150–151, the Chungking manifesto was signed by 22 religious and 695 laymen, totalling 717 signatures, not 695 as mentioned by Palmer.
57. See note 82.
58. *Honan Jib Pao* (Honan Daily) 30 Jan. 1951. (c)
59. “*Cupimus imprimis*,” encyclical by Pius XII on 18th Jan. 1952, AAS 44 (1952): 153–158.
60. Local Catholics were against the appointment of foreign bishops in Foochow and Sian, CKTCC 8 (1983):23.
61. In 1950, Rome appointed Mons. Dominic Tang S.J. as the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Canton, AP 1952, p.146.
62. Archbishop Antoine Fourquet resigned from the post in December 1947, Wei, p.147; also AP 1947, p.138.
63. In October, 1952, Mons. Riberi announced the installation of the Internuncio in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan; it was the first European embassy in the Republic of China. See Lo, *The Diplomatic . . .*, p.241.
64. W.C. Tien, *Vatican is the Lackey of the American Imperialism* (Peking: World Knowledge Publisher, 1951); the Chinese Government associated the Vatican with America at the political level.
65. H. Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans, 1919–1975* (Munchen: R. Piper, 1975).
66. The French missionaries (Congrégation de la mission) in Peking illegally altered the document of the Church to transfer money (which belonged to the Peking Archdiocese) to France for the celebration of the French National day. They also altered the receipts so that the church properties were transferred to their Order; Riberi even told the French missionaries to demand U.S. \$100,000 from Card. Tien for the returning of the properties from the Order back to the Peking Archdiocese. See Thomas (Pseud.), “The Prosecution of the Communist to the Catholic Church in China – Three-Self Reform,” *Freedom Pacific* (Viet Nam) 54 (16 June 1961):26. (c)
67. From 1949 to 1955, even though Rome knew that no foreign missionary was allowed to stay in China any more, she still appointed at least eleven foreign ordinaries; Wei, p.204.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ISOLATION OF THE CHINESE CHURCH (1952–1956)

By January, 1952, there were only 1,848 Catholic missionaries left in China. Many of them were under arrest, detention, jailed, or in the process of trial.<sup>1</sup> Since 1952, the Chinese clergy were entrusted with shouldering the responsibility of the Church in China.

We will now examine the relationship between the government and the Church that was in the hands of the Chinese clergy, and reflect on this relationship from the perspective of indigenization especially in terms of indigenous personnel.

#### i) The Government's Campaign on the Church

The media reports on the missionaries began to subside as the number of missionaries in China dropped; the headlines began to focus on the Chinese Catholic leaders. In order to win over the Church to support the government, the government on the one hand actively promoted the Catholic Patriotic Movement, on the other hand the civil authority, started to deal with those non-conforming Chinese Catholics.

The government originally supported the “autonomous movement” which aimed to transform the Church from below. This project was a failure. The concept of “autonomy” was too radical for most grass-root Catholics – instructed as they were to accept and to obey orders from above in order to be good Catholics – even though they faced difficulties in following Rome's orders. The “autonomous movement” did not draw enough support from the Catholics but managed to establish various local Catholic Patriotic Committees or Reform Committees. As the foreign missionaries departed from China and the continuous pressure from the government mounted, starting from 1952, some Chinese ordinaries and clergy eventually joined this movement.

In August 1953, a Nanking Synod composed of only Chinese clergy was held and was chaired by Vicar General (of Nanking) Li Wei-kuang; it was sponsored by the government hoping to persuade the Chinese clergy to formulate a pro-government stand. It was the first attempt by the Chinese clergy to save the Church. Unlike those regional Catholic Reform Committees – which issued various patriotic

and reform manifestoes since late 1950 and were composed mainly of laity—this Synod was composed of only clergy and included some ordinaries. This Synod ended with a “Ten Point Article” (never published). It denounced both the imperialists and the anti-revolutionaries; yet it affirmed loyalty to the Pope. It dropped the terms “autonomous” and “reform” and bore a more conciliatory slogan of “Patriotic and Love the Church.”<sup>2</sup> By stressing patriotism rather than autonomy, the pro-government movement attracted much support even among the clerical ranks. Many Catholics, although not supporting it wholeheartedly, endorsed it passively.

Since 1954, many Catholics were appointed by the government in various political bodies which hitherto had no Catholic representation. In 1954, three Catholic priests were present in the People’s National Assembly; in 1956, eight Catholic priests were at the National Committee of the CPPCC. Catholics were also seen in many local political and legislative bodies.<sup>3</sup> The government began to pay more attention to Catholics and changed the status of the Church from a foreign-controlled enemy to a friendly partner. In spite of the efforts made by the government, most of the Catholics were still deeply faithful to Rome and gave a cold shoulder to the government’s friendly gestures.

The Diocese of Shanghai was the center of the pro-Rome (hence, anti-government) Catholics. It had fifteen thousand Catholics, a Catholic University, and a non-compromising pro-Rome Bishop; this diocese went through a bitter struggle with the government.<sup>4</sup> In 1951, Fr. Beda Chang, a prominent Catholic leader, was arrested; he died later in his prison cell.<sup>5</sup> He was immediately recognized by the Shanghai Catholics as a martyr. In 1952 and 1953, many Chinese priests were arrested.<sup>6</sup> The Shanghai Diocese even disregarded the government’s ban on the Legion of Mary by organizing a “Sodality of Mary” which technically was not the Legion of Mary but had the same function.

Elsewhere in China, the resistance of Catholics was recognized by the civil authorities. The Catholics in Hseinhsin in the Province of Hopei literally went underground. They dug tunnels, underground chambers, caves between the walls, etc. to continue Catholic resistance activities.<sup>7</sup> Almost two hundred of these chambers (some holding two hundred persons) were discovered in two counties alone. In

1955, one government official lamented, "Counter-revolutionary elements are still working under the cloak of religion."<sup>8</sup>

After the expulsion of Mons. Riberi and the closure of the CCB, the Catholics in China were looking for a central leadership. Many turned to the not-so-popular pro-government movement; most followed the anti-government policy of Bishop Ignace Kung Pin-mei of Shanghai. Shanghai was a Catholic strong hold in China; it was also the former home of CCB it had the largest seminary in China; it operated the largest Catholic publication complex; and it has a strong and outspoken leader in Bishop Kung. The Shanghai Catholics were very unified in submitting to Kung's leadership. Shanghai was also the communication center of China—anything that happened there would be known in all parts of China. Naturally, it became the Catholics' pro-Rome (anti-government) center.

Bishop Kung strictly followed orders from Rome. He issued many instructions to Catholics in his diocese: Catholics could not sign petitions to expel Riberi; they could not accuse their superiors; they could not join the Youth League or Pioneer Group; they could not participate in any government social program; they were to reject the government's ban on the Legion of Mary. These strict and firm orders were well received by Catholics all over China especially during this period of chaos and confusion.<sup>9</sup> Kung became not only the symbol of the anti-government Catholic movement, but also the main obstruction to the pro-government patriotic movement.

In July 1955, the government launched a national campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries; the government also decided to use this campaign to remove all non-cooperative Catholics. This campaign also affected all other religious groups such as Protestants and Buddhists. The government started this Anti-Counter Revolutionary program in the Catholic Church by first arresting Bishop Kung. Prior to his arrest, the Shanghai Municipal Government had launched a media attack on the Catholics in Shanghai. It accused the Catholics of improper maintenance of church buildings which might endanger the public.<sup>10</sup> It was meant to arouse public sentiments against the anti-government Catholics and to pave the way for their subsequent arrest.

In the evening of September 8, 1955, more than forty clergy (including Kung) and five hundred laity were rounded up by the police in Shanghai. The following morning, the government published the

arrest and the headline was: "Total destruction to Kung Pin-mei (Bishop Kung)'s anti-revolutionary clique: Clear all the hidden anti-revolutionary elements in the Catholic Church."<sup>11</sup> On the days following the arrest, many readers' letters from the Shanghai Catholics were published justifying the government's action and condemning Kung.<sup>12</sup>

This purge (this term, along with the term "suppression," was used by the government to describe its action of arresting "anti-revolutionary elements") of the church leaders spread from Shanghai to all parts of China. In Anhwei Province, a province just next to Shanghai, an "anti-revolutionary clique" hidden in the Church of Pengpu was exposed by the patriotic Catholics; this clique was arrested by the civil authorities on the 13th of September.<sup>13</sup> The following day, an "anti-revolutionary clique" was discovered in the Church of Wuwo of the same province;<sup>14</sup> their crimes were following Kung's order and sabotaging the Catholic Patriotic movement. The officials found two secret radio stations. On the same day, in the cities of Hanchow and Ningpo (both in close proximity to Shanghai), similar "anti-revolutionary cliques" were found hidden in the churches.<sup>15</sup>

The purge of anti-revolutionary cliques occurred later in places farther away from Shanghai. In October, anti-revolutionary groups were discovered by the government in the Church in the provinces of Hunan,<sup>16</sup> Shansi,<sup>17</sup> and Hupei.<sup>18</sup> In November, this purge moved to the north-eastern part of China; anti-revolutionary groups were found in the churches of Tsingtao<sup>19</sup> and Tsinan.<sup>20</sup> They were, of course, all arrested. For the more remote places such as the provinces of Kwangtung<sup>21</sup> and Kwangsi,<sup>22</sup> the purge did not take place until December. There were reports of the arrest of Catholics in the north-western part of China such as Shensi and Kansu; the purge in these provinces occurred in the spring of 1956.<sup>23</sup>

By 1956 April, most of the influential Catholics who had been openly against the government were arrested. With the removal of the anti-government Catholic leaders, and the fact that hierarchical ecclesial structure cannot function without the ordinary, the Catholics were forced to choose leaders who were acceptable by the government to run the Church. The government had changed its policy from reforming the Church starting from the grass-roots to the present method of making changes in the leadership.

## ii) The Response of the Church

The Nanking Synod in 1953 was the first attempt initiated by the Chinese clergy to seek a *modus vivendi* for the Church, yet the result pleased neither the Church nor the government. The government regarded the “Ten Articles” as too mild; the majority of Catholics rejected the excommunicated<sup>24</sup> leader of this Synod, Vicar General Li Wei-kuang, as their spokesman. In 1953, among the approximately thirty functional Chinese ordinaries,<sup>25</sup> the majority of them still adhered to Bishop Kung's position: they were absolutely faithful to Rome's instruction. Some of them remained silent; none openly supported the Catholic pro-government movement except a few vicars general. In 1954, at least one hundred dioceses were still basically loyal to Rome in spite of some reports of patriotic movement; fourteen dioceses were supporting the government and were regarded as “progressive.”<sup>26</sup> A slow turning of the tide from a pro-Rome to a pro-government position can be noticed.

Pope Pius XII issued a second encyclical *Ad Sinanum Gentes* in December, 1954.<sup>27</sup> The encyclical begins with an exhortation to those who suffer for the cause of the faith; then it goes on to attack those who accuse the Holy See, and it affirms that Catholics are patriotic. The encyclical falls short of specifying whether the “Fatherland,” which the Chinese Catholics are told by the Pope to love, is the communist regime or the nationalist government in Taiwan that the Vatican recognized.

The encyclical has a central theme: a point by point refutation of the Three-self principle – self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation – proposed by the “autonomous movement.”

First, the encyclical argues that all Catholics are subject to the Pope; therefore, there is no such thing as “self-administration” for the Catholics. However, what the autonomous movement demanded was that the Vatican should withdraw from its political interference in China's internal policy and that the Church in China should be run by Chinese, not foreigners; this movement neither asked for, nor mentioned, separation from Rome. The encyclical seems to interpret the idea of “self-administration” proposed by the “autonomous movement” differently from the proposers of this concept.

Second, the encyclical states that since there is always a brotherly alliance shared among Christian communities, "self-support," is, therefore, non-Catholic. The encyclical, again, fails to understand the motive behind this idea of "self-support" i.e., to avoid the negative association with foreign influence in China especially in the early 50's.

Third, as for "self-propagation," the encyclical is clear that there cannot be any "self-propagation" because there is but one interpretation of the Gospel: the interpretation faithfully kept by the Church. Since all clergy are custodians of the truth, not interpreters of the Gospel, "self-propagation" is heresy. Once more, the encyclical misinterprets the meaning of "self-propagation" proposed by the "autonomous movement;" their "self-propagation" was in terms of personnel, not content. Rome probably feared that the meaning of the Gospel might change if it were not preached by foreign missionaries but by Chinese clergy.

Finally, the encyclical threatens those who support the "Three-Self" principle, and it exhorts them to repent and to "return as soon as possible to the way of salvation;" it also congratulates those who, "under severe hardship, distinguish themselves by their loyalty to God and to the Catholic Church."

The encyclical did not stop the spread of the pro-government Catholic movement in China. With the removal of anti-government Catholic leaders, the change of the slogan from "autonomous" to "patriotic," the mounting pressure from the government, and the political reality in China, by 1956 many local Catholic patriotic committees were established. Some of these committees were headed by priests; a few were even led by ordinaries. By the end of 1956, there were more than two hundred of these local associations all over China.<sup>28</sup> Many of these local groups were formerly the "autonomous and reform" committees who now bore a new name.

Since many Chinese ordinaries were arrested during 1955 and 1956 due to their non-cooperative attitude toward the government, and since almost all foreign ordinaries were expelled, many sees were vacant. In many instances, even the vicars general and the appointed successors were arrested. There was a need to elect diocesan administrators to carry on the function of the Church. The Catholics knew that the candidate elected must be accepted by the government other-

wise the ones elected would end up in jail joining their former ordinaries.

On March 20, 1956, the Shanghai diocesan council, following the procedure stated in Canon Law, elected Fr. Chang Shi-lang, the Curator of St Louis of Gonzaga, as the Vicar Capitular of Shanghai to succeed the jailed Bishop Kung.<sup>29</sup> Mons. Chang was an ideal candidate because he found favor in the eyes of the government by issuing a public statement in February to denounce Bishop Kung.<sup>30</sup>

The day following the election, the diocesan council telegraphed Propaganda Fides that since Bishop Kung was in jail for the crime of anti-patriotism, the council elected Fr. Chang as the Vicar Capitular. Card. Fumazzone-Biondi, Prefect of Propaganda Fides, telegraphed back to Shanghai on the 27th of March, stating that Kung was unjustly arrested and Kung was the rightful Bishop of Shanghai. It also stated that the diocesan council should follow the procedure of Canon Law #429 which automatically placed the Vicar General or the appointed successor in the place of Kung.<sup>31</sup> Rome did not ratify Chang's election and protested the incarceration of Kung.

What Rome probably did not know was that at the time of the election the Vicar General and the two appointed successors were in jail with Kung; they had no opportunity to transfer their ordinary power.<sup>32</sup> It was possible that Rome disliked Chang's anti-Kung (hence anti-Rome) position. Moreover, if Rome ratified Chang's election, Rome would be forced to admit that Kung committed anti-patriotic crimes. The incident of Chang's election later became the pivotal point for the Chinese clergy to take an anti-Rome position, as we shall later see.

Similar elections were held at various places. In Swatow, Fr. Sou Ping-cheng was elected in March 1956,<sup>33</sup> after the expulsion of Bishop C. Vogel and the incarceration of pro-Rome bishop Mons. Hwang Hei-jen.<sup>34</sup> In Foochow, after the arrest of pro-Rome bishop Mons. Cheng Chang-cheng, Fr. Lin Tsuan was elected as the administrator of the Archdiocese of Foochow.<sup>35</sup> There was a gradual increase of government-accepted Chinese ordinaries.

There were some bishops who neither followed Bishop Kung's anti-government policy nor accepted the "autonomous movement." They were faithful to Rome in heart yet remained silent. Some had even been jailed.<sup>36</sup> After the arrest of the pro-Rome — hence anti-gov-

ernment — clergy, these bishops began to take a pro-government position more openly. They were invited to join the government's various political organizations representing the Catholics. Some had tried to seek Rome's permission yet received no answer.<sup>37</sup>

In 1956, many Chinese ordinaries had joined the National or Provincial CPPCA. They joined out of mixed motives: a sense of patriotism; citizenship duty; lack of direction and understanding from Rome; fear of hardship in jail; a chance of survival for the Church; and a better, hopefully, church-state relationship. These Catholic leaders often made public statements praising the government; they included prominent Rome-appointed bishops such as Mons. Wang Wen-cheng,<sup>38</sup> Mons. Chao Cheng-sheng,<sup>39</sup> and Mons. Li Po-yu.<sup>40</sup>

By mid-1956, the RAB began to indicate to these ordinaries that they have to plan for the future of the Church in China. These ordinaries would not endorse their jailed colleague's anti-government policy because that would not benefit the Church, nor could they seek help and guidance from Rome because Rome already regarded them as being in apostasy. Furthermore, the instructions from Rome were often impractical because Rome neither really understood the political reality in China nor sympathized with these ordinaries' predicament.

In July, 1956, four bishops, eleven vicars general, vicars capitular or diocesan administrators, and ten laymen held a preparatory meeting for the forthcoming National Catholic Conference. At this meeting, the government admitted its past wrong doings to the Catholics. The Catholics were thus drawn closer to the government. They were even given an audience by Premier Chou En-lai.<sup>41</sup> This meeting drafted a communiqué to call for a national Catholic synod which would start a new stage for the Catholic Church in China, as we shall see in the next Chapter.

From 1952 to 1956 the Catholic Church in China had experienced a drastic change: from a pro-Rome anti-government position to a pro-government position (at least in word). After the arrest of anti-government Catholics, the softening of the pro-government slogan (from autonomous to patriotic), the election of pro-government ordinaries, the invitation of prominent Catholics in Government's political organs, the unsympathetic response from Rome, and the political reality in China, the Catholic leaders began to search for the destiny of the Church by themselves. On the one hand, Rome still



vigorously defended her legitimate control of the Catholic Church in China regardless of the reality; on the other hand, the control of the Church had passed from the hands of pro-Rome clergy to the hands of pro-government ordinaries. Ironically, many Catholics took such a pro-government stand not out of their desire but out of their disappointment over Rome's rigid and unsympathetic policy.

### iii) Reflection on indigenization

During the years from 1952–1956, the control of the Church was basically in the hands of the Chinese clergy. Whether indigenization of personnel would affect the Chinese Church or not is what we will examine here. First, we will look at the indigenization of personnel; second, at the ecclesial structure and indigenous church; finally, at the issues of building an indigenous church which arose from this case.

*First, the indigenization of personnel.* From 1952 to 1955, although the Church was in the hands of the Chinese clergy, the position of the Church toward the government differed little from the policy adopted during the missionary-controlled era. The Church still followed closely the instructions from Rome in spite of the difficult political reality in which she lived. The Chinese clergy did not attempt to alter or question the orders from Rome; loyalty to Rome and obedience to Rome's orders were regarded by them as the highest virtue of the Catholic faith; disloyalty to Rome would be a mortal sin.

The attitude of the Chinese clergy reflected their training under the missionary superiors; the clergy were trained to obey without question. Even though some Chinese were promoted to leadership positions, they were instructed to carry out orders given from above; they were not allowed to make independent decisions in reference to the local situation. They were neither trained nor granted power to lead the Church independently from Rome's policy. Only those who conformed to this mentality – faithful followers and loyal servants of the Holy See – would be appointed to the post of ordinary.

No wonder the Church from 1952 to 1955 differed little from the past in spite of the indigenization of leadership! The Chinese clergy, although they are Chinese, might be more Roman than the foreign missionaries. Even though the Chinese ordinaries might realize the situation better than the missionaries, they were not in a position,

nor would they be willing, to make policy for the Church different from Rome's instructions.

Not all Chinese clergy were die-hard followers of Rome, but most Rome-appointed leaders were. Many tried to seek an alternative for the Church but kept silent (none wanted to be excommunicated) until the pro-Rome clergy were arrested. There were many pro-government clergy who were precluded from a leadership position, but were elected to the post of ordinary after the arrest of the pro-Rome elements under the pretext of anti-revolutionary activities by the civil authority. These two groups of Catholic leaders began reflection based upon the actual situation, and they sought solutions for the destiny of the Church. They were often forced by the situation to make decisions when there was no viable alternative; these clergy, from time to time, still looked to Rome hoping for some answer; they were reluctant to make decisions which might be contrary to Rome's.

These clergy had similar training, came from the same background, experienced identical pressures, and were equally loyal to Rome as their jailed colleagues. However, they often emphasized the importance of national identity; nationalism was probably the main force which tipped them toward a pro-government position. Of course, the unreasonable instructions from Rome also drove them away from a pro-Rome stand.

We have seen two groups of Chinese clergy; both were loyal to Rome. Yet when loyalty to the nation competed with fidelity to Rome, conflict began to surface. Among the die-hard pro-Rome clergy, Church (Rome) loyalty overshadowed nationalism. For the other group, national interest overpowered loyalty to Rome. Of course, there were many grey areas that over-lapped these two groups. The former group ran the Church until 1955; the latter group have been in power since then. In this respect, indigenization of personnel could, at least, provide opportunity for the Church to incorporate nationalism as one of the driving forces for the new direction through the installation of local clergy of the Church, but it may not necessarily change the destiny of the Church if the local clergy are not nationalistic.

*Second, the relationship between ecclesial structure and indigenization.* The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church in the 50's provided no room for any form of indigenization other than with respect to personnel. The hierarchical structure emphasized unifor-

mity, not diversity; centralization, not decentralization; above all, it demanded an absolute central control through a vertical chain of command. It would be a good structure if the Church were situated in a monolithic social milieu; both the leader and his followers would experience similar life situations; the decision of the leader would, therefore, be relevant to the needs or aspirations of the subordinates.

Unfortunately, China was very different from Rome: China emphasized socialism, not capitalism; community responsibility, not individualism; nationalism, not universalism (as claimed by Catholics). Rome was both physically and mentally far away from China; hence the orders from Rome were often out of context with respect to the living reality in China. Rome did not grant autonomy to the Chinese clergy; in fact she even prohibited them from making any decisions for the Chinese Church. Being a hierarchical institute, the Catholic Church was obliged to function in this manner.

The Chinese government was also a hierarchical organization with the CCP as ruler and socialism as the state orthodoxy. When these two hierarchies—Catholic Church and Chinese government—clashed, the Chinese Catholics became the victims. It was not until 1956 that many Catholic leaders began to search for a new course for the Church. By doing so, they ran the risk of breaking away from the Church hierarchy and the danger of being subjected to the government hierarchy: both situations were undesirable. But was there any alternative?

*Finally, the issues of building an indigenous church.* It was poignant to see that only after pressure from the government, incarceration of the clergy, and the issuing of irrelevant orders from Rome, was the Chinese Church willing to confront the concrete social issues, to reflect deeply on the relationship of their faith to society, and to search by themselves for the destiny of the Church in the light of a new social situation. The process of indigenization was hastened by pain.

Indigenization of personnel did not necessarily make the Church more relevant to society since native clergy may be more foreign (mentally) than the missionaries. However, indigenization of personnel is a necessary step toward the building of an indigenous Church because local clergy usually perceive the reality better than foreigners. Also, unlike the missionaries who came from different national backgrounds, local clergy share similar aspirations with their

fellow-Chinese native people and are more sympathetic to the mood of nationalism. Even if indigenization of personnel may not necessarily create an indigenous church relevant to its context, yet without this step indigenization can never start.

Training of indigenous personnel is vital for an indigenous church. By turning out faithful followers or loyalists, the missionaries cannot ensure the development of an independent and mature church; it may only secure the missionary enterprise and at the supremacy of the missionaries; it would generate a need for more foreign missionaries. It requires a lot of humility on the part of the missionaries to train local clergy who may, in the future, threaten the missionaries' position. Is it not true that successful missionary enterprises should work themselves out of a job?

A genuinely indigenous church will eventually be in conflict with the hierarchical structure of the Universal Church. Unless the Universal Church can tolerate a certain degree of diversity, indigenization (apart from the form of personnel) would risk breaking away from the universal fellowship. Indigenization is not just a matter concerning the local church; it is, in its core, an ecclesial issue concerning the very nature of the Universal Church.

## NOTES

1. For example, at the end of 1953, 71 out of the 177 missionaries remaining in China were in jail, *Hunyi Monthly* (Taiwan) 3 #7 (Jan. 1954):28. In Sept. 1955, out of the 42 remaining missionaries, at least 18 were in jail, *Sunday Examiner* (Hong Kong) 30 Sept. 1955.
2. Lefeuve, pp.328-336.
3. *KMJP* 8 Jan. 1956. (c)
4. Hanson, pp.72-79.
5. Bush, p.113.
6. Lefeuve, p.312; Also *Kung Chiao Pao* (Catholic Weekly, Hong Kong) 2 Oct. 1955. For the arrest of Fr. Francis chu, S.J., see R. Wang's *A Witness Behind the Curtain: Biography of Fr. Francis Chu* (Taipei: Kuang-Chi, 1987), pp.32-36. (c)
7. *JMJP* 7 Sept. 1953. (c)
8. *JMJP* 29 July 1955. (c)
9. Thomas (pseud.) "Faithful Bishop Kung who defended the church," *Freedom Pacific* (Viet Nam) 53 (16 May 1961): 263. (c)
10. *Shanghai Hsin Wen Pao* (Shanghai Daily News) 2 Aug. 1955.
11. *Ibid.*, 9 Sept. 1955. (c)
12. *Ibid.*, 10 Sept. 1955. (c)

13. Transcript of radio broadcast, Radio Pengpu, 13 Sept. 1955, *URIA*. (c)
14. Transcript of radio broadcast, Radio Wuwo, 14 Sept. 1955, *URIA* (c)
15. *CFJP* 14 Sept. 1955 (c)
16. Transcript of radio boardcast, radio Chianghsi, 15 Oct. 1955, *URIA*. (c)
17. Transcript of radio boardcast, Radio Shansi, 19 Oct. 1955, *URIA*. (c)
18. *Chang Jiang Jib Pao* (Changjiang Daily, Hupei) 29 Oct. 1955. (c)
19. *Tsingtao Jib Pao* (Tsingtao Daily, Shangtung) 5 Nov. 1955. 9c)
20. *Ta Chung Jib Pao* (The Mass Daily, Tsinnan, Shangtung) 6 Nov. 1955, (c)
21. *NFJP* 2 Dec. 1955. (c) For the arrest of Bishop Tang, see Tang's own memoir *How Inscrutable His Ways! Memoir 1951–1981* (Hong Kong: Aidan Publicities and Printing, 1987), pp.90–95.
22. *Kuangsi Jib Pao* (Kuangsi daily, Kuangsi) 24 Dec. 1955. (c)
23. L. Trivière, *Catholic Church in Mainland China* (Hong Kong: 1959), mimeographed, pp.5–10. For the accounts of these jailed Catholics and their experience in prison and later in camps, see J. Liu [Michael Yeung]'s *Inside China, Experience of a Chinese Catholic: 1948–1980* (Hong Kong: Privately published, 1981); Archbishop Tang's memoir, ref. note 21; also J. Pasqualini's *Prisoner of Mao*. (English edition appearing in 1975, and Chinese edition translated by Wu Wai and privately published in Hong Kong in 1991).
24. The decree for ex-communication was issued on the 1st Feb. 1952; it was made public in 1955, *AAS* 47 (1955): 247.
25. Rome had appointed some Chinese ordinaries from 1950 to 1953; the total number of Chinese ordinaries was about 40; but at least 3 were in jail, 2 were in exile, and 3 had died.
26. Bush, p.121.
27. "Ad Sinarium gentes," encyclical by Pius XII issued on 7 Oct. 1954, *AAS* 47 (1954): 5–14.
28. *ICI* 89 (1 Feb. 1959): 20.
29. Wei, p.163.
30. *KMJP* 7 Feb. 1956.
31. *AIF* 1270 (7 April 1956): 112.
32. Thomas (pseud.), "The Inside Story of the CPCA" part II, *Freedom Pacific* (Viet Nam) 51 (16 March 1961): 142. (c)
33. *ICI* 89 (1 Feb. 1959): 18–19.
34. *NFJP* 8 Dec. 1955. (c)
35. Trivière, *Catholic Church in Mainland*. . . , *loc. cit.*
36. Mons. Pi Shu-chih, Archbishop of Moukden, was in jail from 1951 to 1955.
37. Thomas, "Inside story. . .," part I *Freedom Pacific* 50 (16 Feb. 1961): 84. (c)
38. *KMJP* 8 Jan. 1956. (c)
39. *ICI* 89 (1 Feb. 1959): 24.
40. *Shensi Jib Pao* (Shensi Daily) 6 April 1956. (c)
41. *JMJP* 27 July 1956. (c)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NATIONALIZATION OF THE CHINESE CHURCH (1957–1970)

During the years from 1957 to 1967, the Catholic Church in China underwent an historical change: the consecration of bishops without the approval of Rome; the breaking away from Rome; the total suppression of religion in China; and Rome's strong protest at the "schismatic" nature of the Chinese Church. We will first examine the relationship between Rome and the Chinese Church; then we will reflect on it from the perspective of an indigenous church.

#### i) The Chinese Government 1956–1957

The Moslem and the Buddhist pro-government national bodies were formed in 1953, the Protestant group in 1954, and the Taoist organization in the spring of 1957. The Catholic Church was the last major religious group in China without a national pro-government body. Catholics, therefore, became the major religious group that the government had to deal with.

In 1956, politically, it was a year of liberalism. People were encouraged to speak out even to the extent of criticizing the government. Some pro-government Catholic leaders went as far as to complain about the government's abuse of Catholics. This "Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom" period, declared by Mao, snowballed on a huge scale and became a threat to Communist Party leadership. The Party, in 1957, decided to clamp down with an anti-rightist Campaign.<sup>1</sup> All those who had once openly criticized the government, if they did not renounce their criticism, would be labeled as Rightist—anti-government, anti-people, anti-revolutionary criminals.

Because of the traditional antagonistic attitude of the Catholic Church towards the government and the national anti-rightist program, the government was determined to use this occasion to transform the Church into a politically acceptable organization. On the one hand, the government could no longer tolerate any opposing views; on the other hand, by changing the political attitude of the Catholic Church, the government could eliminate the last symbol of foreign influence in China.

## ii) National Catholic Conference in Peking.

In June 1957, 241 Catholic delegates from 104 dioceses, as well as many government officials from RAB and UFWD, gathered in Peking to attend the preparatory meeting<sup>2</sup> which was meant to set the agenda and the common consensus of the forthcoming National Catholic Conference (held from July 15 to August 2)<sup>3</sup> A Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA) was born from this national conference.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the preparatory meeting, all delegates were told to study Mao's *The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*. This document orientated the delegates towards the current political framework of China. They knew what the government wanted to hear, where the Church stood politically, and what they should say in order not to be labeled as Rightist. Although many opposite views were raised at the meeting, only those which were within the political limit allowed by the government were adopted.

During the preparatory meeting, the clergy were very concerned about the Sino-Vatican relationship; they even proposed to send a delegation to Rome to explain the delicate situation of the Chinese Church. This proposal was defeated because the delegates, after guidance from government officials, agreed that Rome would not understand the political situation in China in spite of the explanation. Some delegates also questioned the validity of the presence of excommunicated priests in the meeting; they demanded the withdrawal of these excommunicated priests. This proposal was defeated because the government interpreted the meeting to be civil (political), not ecclesial, in nature; excommunication was ecclesial, not a civil matter.<sup>5</sup> They also discussed whether it was a sin to join the patriotic movement which Rome explicitly condemned. Again, under the guidance of the officials from the RAB, most of the delegates expressed the opinion that to love one's country was a just and even a meritorious act. They blamed Rome for its unreasonable excommunication of the patriotic clergy. They also considered patriotism as an internal policy of China; therefore, Rome had no right to interfere. Patriotism was not an ecclesial issue but a civil one; finally, the delegates agreed that it was not a sin to join the patriotic movement.<sup>6</sup>

So far, the government officials had persuaded the Catholics to adopt a more pro-government position. However, when the government officials tried to push the issue of consecrating bishops since many sees were vacant, the delegates were reluctant even to discuss this issue because it was related to the authority of the Pope. The government officials asked Archbishop Pi and Bishop Chao if they would consecrate episcopal candidates; both replied that they would do so only with the approval of the Vatican. The government then knew their limit and dropped this matter.

Rome, in a protest and warning to the government-sponsored preparatory meeting, issued a special decree on the 10th of July. It decreed: a) to reject the ordinary power of the Vicar Capitular Chang of Shanghai (the details of whose election was noted earlier); b) to affirm that the jailed Bishop Kung was the most proper and the only rightful Bishop of Shanghai, Soochow, and Nanking (he was also the administrator of the latter two sees); and c) to grant extra special faculty to all priests in these three sees, who were *pax et communio* with the Apostolic See, to perform all ministerial functions without the bishop.<sup>7</sup> On 13th of July, Fides issued an appeal to all Chinese Catholics urging them to resist any patriotic movement even to the point of bleeding and death.<sup>8</sup>

All the delegates studied these documents from Rome; most of them condemned Rome's reaction. Even many formerly pro-Rome clergy were very disappointed at Rome's new order. In the eyes of the delegates, Rome's documents a) created schism and stirred up animosity among the Catholics in Shanghai by undermining the authority of Chang; b) deprived the Shanghai Catholics of the right to elect their leader; c) affirmed an anti-China position by supporting the innocence of the jailed Kung, who was accused as unpatriotic; d) mistrusted the Chinese ordinaries who were elected by their diocesan councils under extremely difficult conditions; e) despised the elected ordinaries as unfit and unqualified for their posts; and f) condemned all the delegates who attended the meeting as possibly in apostasy.

Rome's intention was to warn the clergy, hoping to threaten them and keep them from participating in the patriotic movement. This high-handed paternalistic action caused discontent among the Chinese Catholic leaders. One of the faithful pro-Rome delegates sadly said, "You old folks (referring to Rome) don't know the situation



here. The best thing for them to do would be not to give orders imprudently. We are no children; we know what is right and wrong."<sup>9</sup> Rome's action, ironically, helped the government to promote anti-Rome feelings among the delegates. Rome's orders did not prevent the Chinese clergy from joining the patriotic movement; on the contrary, it forced the Chinese clergy to take a pro-government stand because that was the only rational alternative.<sup>10</sup>

The national conference created the CPCA which was a political body within the Church. It had a mandate to guide the Church in following the government's political policies, but it was not the Church. The Church could still maintain religious (spiritual) links with Rome. In fact, the first communique of the CPCA affirmed that all Catholics should submit to the Pope's doctrinal teaching, but not to his political stand especially when it violated the interests of China.<sup>11</sup>

CPCA began to establish local branches; some were merely a change of name from the already existing patriotic committees. Altogether, more than 111 ordinaries and 1,300 priests had attended meetings of various patriotic associations (local CPCA) and had received instructions from the national CPCA.<sup>12</sup> This number of priests and ordinaries represented all Chinese clergy in China minus those in jail. Meanwhile, the local CPCA carried the national Anti-rightist Campaign into the Church. All those who would not follow the government's policy would be criticized and accused until they repented. For the recalcitrant "rightist" Catholics, the civil authority would step in and would deal with them.

By spring 1958, the Catholic Church in China was politically led by the CPCA with head offices in Peking and branches extending even to the most remote parishes (except in Shanghai, the one stronghold of Rome loyalists, the local CPCA there having been formed in 1960 after the trial and sentencing of Kung). All non-conformists would be eliminated from the Church by the magical all-purpose label of "Rightist." The CPCA dealt only with "political" matters in the Church, but the term "political" in China can mean anything. The government, through the CPCA, finally had firm control over Catholics in China.

### iii) Consecration of Bishops.

From 1957 to 1958 some local CPCAs raised the issue of consecrating bishops while many avoided mentioning it.<sup>13</sup> Many dioceses were still very hesitant to have episcopal elections because it might be in conflict with the traditional ecclesial ruling; some got around it by electing vicars capitular or just diocesan administrators. We have to bear in mind that most of these vacated sees had Rome-appointed bishops who were either expelled or incarcerated. The reluctance to have episcopal elections manifested a strong respect for Rome (or for Church hierarchy) despite the Catholics' open support of the government. The first episcopal election with ordinary power was held in Chengtu on 16th December, 1957.<sup>14</sup> Since then, many places have held similar elections.<sup>15</sup> The government even published a lengthy editorial comment to justify and to endorse these elections.<sup>16</sup>

The first consecration was held in Hankow on 13th April, 1958. The two elected candidates, Bernardin Tung Kuang-ching and Marc Yu Wen-hua, both Franciscans, were elected by their diocesan councils (Hankow, Wuchang) in early March. These two councils telegraphed Rome on 24th and 26th<sup>17</sup> of March on the result of the elections and asked Rome to approve these two episcopal candidates. They did not expect any major problem for the sanction from Rome; they thought that it was the only means to keep the Church living.<sup>18</sup>

Rome's reaction was not within their expectation. Besides calling these elections invalid, Rome warned these two candidates to withdraw from consecration, and cited a decree issued in 1951<sup>19</sup> which stated that the consecrator and consecrate, would be automatically excommunicated if the consecrations were performed without approval from the Pope. These two dioceses were shocked because they had already prepared to hold the consecration on Easter Day. They issued a protest letter on Rome's senseless disapproval; they went ahead with the consecration on the 13th of April; the consecration was presided over by five legitimate (Rome recognized) bishops. Afterwards, they wrote a thirty-page letter in Latin to the Pope to explain and to justify their decision on the consecration as the only alternative for the welfare of the Church.<sup>20</sup> They received no reply.

After the Chinese Catholics ignored Rome's warning of excommunication on the illegal consecrations, Pius XII issued the third

encyclical to the Chinese Church titled *Ad Apostorum Principale*.<sup>21</sup> It was again addressed to those who were *pax et communio* with the Holy See. This letter, was written in June, was smuggled into China, and was made public in September only after copies had been received by the Chinese Catholics.<sup>22</sup>

This encyclical denounced the CPCA as a communist tool to destroy the Catholic faith; it also condemned the independent episcopal election/consecrations as a cunning plot of communists trying to create a schismatic church. It repeated the excommunication warning; it ended with a plea to Chinese Catholics to fight against the apostasy (patriotic movement) with heroic loyalty to Rome.

Many illicit consecrations – theologically valid, yet lacking recognition from Rome – took place after the Hankow consecration. By 1965, there were more than 50 valid yet illicit Chinese bishops.<sup>23</sup> Although they were supposed to be excommunicated along with the consecrators who were legal Rome-appointed bishops yet who participated in the illicit consecrations, none of them were openly excommunicated by name (except the Vicar General Li who was excommunicated in 1952, but the excommunication had nothing to do with consecration). In fact, of all those formerly appointed by Rome or consecrated with approval from Rome as legal Bishops or ordinaries (even after they became involved with the illicit consecrations), none of their names had been removed from the *Annuario Pontificio*. Rome merely disapproved their new post or title, yet recognized their formerly appointed ecclesial status.

#### iv) The Fate of the Church 1958–1970

The formation of CPCA and the consecration of bishops created disharmony within the Chinese Church. Some followed Rome's direction of refusing any compromise with the government; they also rejected the rule of illicitly consecrated bishops; for them, martyrdom was the only expression of fidelity. Others joined the CPCA hoping to bargain for a certain degree of religious liberty and to have the situation regularized in the future by Rome. To obey or disobey the Pope became the measuring criteria to distinguish these two groups. Rome loyalists stopped attending Mass celebrated by patriotic priests; they went underground. This schism gravely weakened the already fragile Catholic community in China. However, beneath the surface of the

seemingly schismatic situation, there was overlapping between these two factions: some might be faithful to Rome (in heart) yet still attached to CPCA; others might just ignore the political conflicts and still participate in various religious activities, if available.

In December 1958, John XXIII used the term "schism" to describe the situation of the Chinese Church.<sup>24</sup> This event marked off the official separation between the Holy See and the Catholics in China. The separation from the Holy See further isolated the Chinese Catholics from the Universal fellowship and forced the Catholics in China to retreat into the CPCA-endorsed Churches.

John XXIII later regretted the use of the term 'schism'; he retracted it and promised never to use this term again to describe the Chinese Church.<sup>25</sup> He even tried to invite the illicit Chinese bishops to the Vatican II Council; but his idea was sadly rejected because of the political situation (the Vatican still retained diplomatic relations with Taiwan).<sup>26</sup> Bishop Kung was released from jail in early 80's and was later allowed to leave China for medical treatment. He is now living in the States. The late Pope Paul VI had sent many good will messages to China hoping to re-establish the severed relationship,<sup>27</sup> there is no public record that he received any reply.

Little is known about the Chinese Catholics from 1959 to 1966. There were some ordinations of priests even as late as 1965.<sup>28</sup> The CPCA held its second national conference in 1962 with some subtle changes of its nature.<sup>29</sup> Bishop Kung and Bishop Walsh (the last missionary in China, besides the few Franciscan sisters who ran a school for the children of diplomatic corps in Peking) were tried and were sentenced for committing the crime of espionage and anti-revolutionary activities. Bishop Walsh was later released in 1970 as a good-will political gesture from the Chinese government to foster relationships with the United States.

With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, all Catholic activities (in fact, all religious activities) were banned. Almost all clergy, regardless of whether they were patriotic or not, were arrested and were jailed, often without trial. Many died in prison or in labor camp. Those who survived the hardship were released in the late 70's. There was virtually no open Catholic activity at all from 1966 to 1977 except for the small chapel in Peking celebrating a Tridentine Mass every Sunday for foreign diplomats.

## v) Reflection on Indigenization

From 1957 to 1966, the Chinese Church changed from a Rome-controlled institution to a government-controlled organization. The consecration of illicit bishops and the formation of CPCA created a new authority antagonistic to Rome. The confrontation between Rome and the Chinese Church—which operated under the auspices of the CPCA—was a struggle for authority; namely, who controls the Church in China? Rome issued various threats to the Chinese clergy; these clergy had the choice of either rebelling against Rome or going to jail. Finally Rome lost the battle and called the Chinese Church schismatic; the Chinese Church rebutted by calling Rome an American Imperialist. The confrontation resulted in the separation of the Chinese Church from the Universal Church as well as and internal divisions among the Chinese Catholics. The tragic consequences from this confrontation lasted even up to now, almost half of a century later.

The first reflection on indigenization is the question of church authority; who has the authority to decide on local issues: Rome or the local-elected church officers? It is a theological tension between the Universal Church and the local churches. From the case of the Chinese Church from 1957 to 1966, we saw that Rome did not comprehend very well the delicate situation of the Chinese Church, yet Rome insisted on intervening in the affairs of the Chinese Church. The Chinese clergy, who understood the situation much better than Rome, had no option but to disobey Rome's preposterous orders, unless, of course, they chose to be with the underground church envisioned by Rome. This case was an example of Rome's insistence on her authority and her control over issues unique to local church. It resulted in tragedy.

The second reflection on indigenization is the inflexibility of ecclesial structure. The ecclesiology of the Universal Church in the late 50's was a hierarchical Rome-centered institution. This ecclesiology was inadequate to deal with the Chinese Church. The decision-maker in Rome was detached from the scene of action in China; Rome was not only unwilling to transfer the authority of decision-making to the Chinese clergy, but also mistrusted the Chinese clergy as if they were incompetent to make sound judgments. The Chinese Church, under the constraint of this ecclesiology, was extremely inflexible in

dealing with the political challenges in China. The Chinese Church had no option but to break away from this rigid institution.

The third reflection on indigenization is the methodology of decision-making. The ecclesial decisions made in Rome seemed to be based on deductions from universal metaphysical principles rather than from lived experience; these principles were meant to be universally applicable. For example, since communism is atheistic, Catholics cannot support any communist governing structure. This type of decision-making ignored the vast grey area not covered by these “universal” principles. There are many real life situations or dilemmas that cannot be solved by abstract theological speculation. As the Universal Church enters into a pluralistic society, the traditional methodology of ecclesial decision followed by Rome was inadequate to meet the needs of the local churches.

The fourth and the most important reflection on indigenization is the ecclesiology of the Universal Church.<sup>30</sup> Judging from the case of the Chinese Church, the Rome-centered hierarchical structure was not fit to handle the Chinese situation. It may be true that we cannot expect the Universal Church in the 50's to have behaved otherwise. Nevertheless, the issue of the indigenous church, in its deepest form, is an integral part of the ecclesiology of the Universal Church. What should be the relationship between the local church and the Universal Church so that on the one hand, the local church can respond appropriately to its social context, yet on the other hand, remain an integral part of the Universal Catholic Church? Indigenization of the local church is meaningless if it is merely the use of more local clergy or the dispensing of more power to local ecclesial authorities; it has to be based on a sound ecclesiology of Universal Church. By over-emphasizing the central (Rome) control, one might still end up with a replica of Rome all over the world; yet, by the same token, if we push too much the primacy of the local church, indigenization will lead to schism.

## NOTES

1. Hsu, p.796.
2. *Hsin Wan Pao* (New Evening News, Hong Kong) 23 June 1957. (c)
3. NCNA 16 July 1957. (c)
4. *JMJP* 3 Aug. 1957. (c)
5. Thomas, “The Inside story. . .,” part I, pp.85–87.

6. Triviére, *The Catholic Church in Mainland* . . . , p.52.
7. Wei, p.104.
8. AIF 1335 (13 July 1957): 234–236.
9. Thomas, “The Inside Story. . .,” Part II, p.140.
10. KMJP 2 Aug. 1957; JMJP 2 Aug. 1957 (the text of the protest letter). (c)
11. Full text of resolution see TKP 4 Aug. 1957; ET Triviére, *The Catholic Church in Mainland* . . . , pp.46–48.
12. JMJP 15 March 1958. (c)
13. *Hupei Jib Pao* (Hupei Daily) 7 Dec. 1957, the Catholics in this province were negative on this issue; *Hsin Hunan Jib Pao* (New Hunan Daily) 8 Dec. 1957, however, the Catholics in this province were positive on the issue of consecrating bishops. (c)
14. *Szechwan Jib Pao* (Szechwan Daily) 18 Dec. 1957. (c)
15. The election in Soochow was held on 2nd Feb., *Changshu Pictorial* 1 March 1958; the election in Nanking was on the 14th march, *Hsin Hua Jib Pao* (New China Daily, Nanking) 14 March 1958; the election in Canton was on the 5th March, *NFJP* 7 March 1958. (c)
16. Triviére, *The Catholic Church in Mainland* . . . , pp.63–65.
17. AIF 1376 (3 May 1958): 151–152.
18. CKTCC 7 (Aug. 1983): 46–47; see also G. Dunne, “Report on Recent Visit to China: 1982,” in *CUP* 4 (Summer 1983): 38.
19. AAS 43 (1951): 217–218.
20. G. Dune, “The Prisoner of Shanghai,” *CUP* 6 (Winter 1983): 53.
21. “An Apostolic *principis*,” encyclical from Pius XII, AAS 50 (1958): 601–614.
22. Bush, p.141.
23. CKTCC 1 (Nov. 1980):56.
24. AAS 50 (1958): 981–994, John XXIII’s speech made to the secret consistory.
25. R. Laurentin, *Chine et Christianisme: après les occasions manquées* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1977), pp.186–192.
26. J. Spae, *La Chine et L’Eglise: reconciliation?* (Paris: Cerf, 1981), p.140.
27. He had sent at least six open messages to China; see E. Tang, *Church and China-After Two Revolutions*, Pro Mundi Vita Asia-Australia Dossiers #20, (Brussel: PMV, 1982), p.5.
28. Fr. Paul Guo was ordained in 1965, in T. Chu, *China Trip 1983* (Toronto: privately circulated mimeograph, 1983), p.5. However, in J. T. Myer’s article “The Catholic Church: An Eyewitness Account,” in *Commonweal* (7 Oct. 1983): 527, he mentioned that the last ordination was in 1967. Both Chu and Myer referred to the same incident—the ordination of Fr. Guo of Inner Mongolia; Chu was probable correct because there was no open Catholic activity in China after 1966.

29. Chan Kim-Kwong, *Towards a Contextual Ecclesiology; The Catholic Church in The People's Republic of China 1979–1983: Its Life and Theological Implications* (Hong Kong: Phototech System Ltd., 1987), pp.213–215.
30. For a more comprehensive treatment on the ecclesiology of the Chinese Catholic Church, see Chan Kim-Kwong, "Tension in the Chinese Catholic Church (1979–1983)," in *Ching Feng* Vol. 33 No. 3 (Sept. 1991): 168–199.



## CHAPTER SIX

### MISSIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

We have seen a series of conflicts which occurred between the Chinese government and the Catholic Church in China, between Rome and the Chinese Church, and between the Vatican and the Chinese government. This historical case occurred from 1949 to 1970 belonged to a different theological era than our present one. However, there are some missiological lessons from which we can draw. These lessons may be helpful especially for the missionaries in the Third World where hostility towards Christianity is mounting. Past experience may become the challenge for the future.

#### **i) We have to use indigenous clergy as soon as possible**

The Chinese Church was controlled by the foreign missionaries until they were expelled. They brought along with them their own national interests, their unique cultural heritages, and their political views. Not unnaturally they often lacked adequate appreciation for China. Consequently the Church, under the leadership of the missionaries, would easily dissociate herself from the current trend of national aspirations. In 1949, when the Chinese communists established a new regime, the Church neither endorsed nor supported this national movement; on the contrary, the Church rejected and fought against it. The missionaries, due to their foreign background, alienated the Church from society. The result of this alienation was obvious. The Church would not suffer so much if the Church was controlled by the Chinese clergy; at least, the Chinese clergy would share similar national aspirations with the Chinese people, and they could probably build a better relationship between the Church and the state. There is a need for all missionaries to transfer their post to the local clergy as soon as possible; failure to do so would place a barrier between the Church and its social context. This need is even more urgent especially in a newly independent Third World nation where nationalism and anti-foreignism are usually high.

**ii) We have to grant power and give trust to local leaders.**

The local clergy are closest to the people; they know the local situation far better than the missionary or the outside church leaders. This is more apparent in areas where communication with the outside world is limited, as in the case of the Chinese Church. When local crises arise, the local clergy will be those who have sufficient data to make decisions. They should have the authority and power to make decisions which affect their ecclesial community.

Unfortunately, Rome, in the case of the Chinese Church, neither granted power for the Chinese clergy to make decisions for their destiny (except for a few Rome loyalists such as Mons. Kung whose decisions were nothing more than the implementation of orders from Rome) nor trusted their decisions. This paternalistic and mistrustful attitude further restricted the response of the Church towards her immediate social challenges; it also hurt the feelings of the Chinese clergy.

Trust is a form of support and the source of encouragement; trust gives the local leaders pride and dignity; trust fosters relationships between the local church and Rome, between local clergy and missionaries. Yet Rome's high-handed policy toward the Chinese Church disappointed many and damaged the already delicate relationship between Rome and the Chinese Church. It is a lesson for the missionaries, as well as for the church authorities, that not only is there a need to place local clergy in positions of leadership, but also there is a necessity to grant them trust and authority to exercise their role of leadership.

We also have to keep in mind that in China, or in all mission fields where Christian faith is being discriminated against or suppressed, anyone who professed the Christian faith is already paying a high cost. In China, those who professed openly to being a Catholic, be it members of CPCA or otherwise, must sacrifice a great deal of their personal advantage. There were numerous accounts of discrimination against religious believers—especially those who associate with foreign religions, such as Christianity—in seeking education, job allocation or promotion. The religious believers were often victims of various abuses especially during political campaigns.<sup>1</sup> Their fidelity to the Catholic faith, proven by the suffering and pressure that they

endured, is beyond doubt; they should have not only our total trust but also our highest respect. They know what is the best for their church; after all it is they who have to bear the consequences.

**iii) We need to train local clergy to be independent.**

The shape of the Church is often determined by the training of their leadership. The training of the Chinese clergy was a replica of their Western counterpart despite the total cultural and social difference. They were trained as followers, not leaders; managers, not directors. They were discouraged from having thoughts or ideas other than the prescribed one. This type of training would produce local clergy who would build the local church as the annex of the mission-sending Church, not the local church relevant to the local context. This type of training also limited any potential local leaders who are gifted with creative ideas.

If the mission goal is to establish a local church pertinent to its context, not an extension of the mother church, the training of creative, initiative-taking, and independent-minded local leaders is needed. This type of local leader would definitely affect the security of the missionary status; yet it is a vital step for the building of a mature local church.

**iv) We have to eliminate the paternalistic mentality of the missionaries.**

In the case of the Chinese Church, the reluctance to transfer authority to the local clergy often stemmed from the missionaries' superiority complex; they thought that they knew better than the locals. The local clergy were treated as inferior personnel; they could never be equal to their missionary bosses. This "I-am-better-than-you" mentality became the easiest excuse for not giving the local clergy leadership posts because there were no "qualified" local candidates.

This superiority mentality was also evident in Rome's orders and encyclicals to the Chinese Church. Rome thought that only Rome could make wise decisions for the Chinese Church. This paternalistic attitude offended the Chinese clergy; it also generated resentment toward anything that is foreign, be it Rome or missionaries. If the missionaries would have the concept of sharing rather than giving and

of serving rather than leading, the local church could mature faster without bitterness or resentment.

**v) We preach the Gospel, not culture or politics.**

The missionaries in China often emphasized their national interest above the Gospel message; they all brought along with them a brand of church life regardless of its suitability in the mission field; they often mixed political and cultural values with the Catholic faith. For example, the missionaries, following orders from Rome, took a strong anti-communist stand; this political view seriously affected the Chinese Church; it made the Church into a vulnerable target to be attacked by the Chinese government.

By endorsing any cultural or political stand, the Church loses the credibility of being a supra-national religious community. By emphasizing any cultural or political view, the Church is limiting herself to a particular group of people. In places such as China or any Third World nations, where the cultural or political values are often radically different from the missionary-sending nations, the missionaries have to be careful to distinguish between faith and culture; otherwise the tragic consequences of the Chinese Church would be re-enacted in other mission fields.

**vi) We need diversity in the Church as the basis of indigenization.**

The Catholic Church in the Eastern bloc has the *Ostpolitik* which grants them special autonomy due to their unique political situation. Their episcopal candidates have to be accepted by both the Church and the civil authorities. The Eastern Rites have their own governing structures due to their historical circumstances. Diversity is already available in the Universal Church for those who lived in a different social or historical context. Why, then, can the Chinese Church not share the same privileges as the Churches in the Eastern bloc, or the Eastern Rite? Is it to limit the independence of the Chinese Church from the influence of Western Catholicism? It is not true that the Church has no precedent for diversity; it is a question of whether Rome wants to allow young churches, especially those in the Third World, to enjoy autonomy as some of the older churches (The Eastern

bloc nations have a long tradition of Christian influence, so do the Eastern Rites). The churches in the Third World mission field need diversity to separate them from a predominately Western influence in their church life. Only by doing so can these churches develop their own unique form of ecclesial existence in accordance with their context.

Diversity demands that the missionary withdraw the imposition of Western culture or values on the mission churches; after all, the so-called “universal principles” treasured by the missionaries may not be very universal in the mission field. Diversity invites missionaries to accept the expression of faith by local Catholics — although it might be different from their own — as “Catholic” as theirs. Diversity also requires autonomy for the local leaders to make decisions for their churches. In a pluralistic society, diversity is badly needed especially among the younger churches. The case of the Chinese Church illustrated the negative outcome when diversity was not permitted.

### **vii) We need an ecclesiology which can embrace the local church.**

The case of the Chinese Church poses an important theological question: How can a church be both Catholic and relevant to a particular society? Because of the theological framework of the 50's, the Chinese Church was forced either to conform to a rigid ecclesial structure regardless of the existing circumstances, or to respond to society in a relevant manner at the risk of separation from the Universal Church.

We need to examine our ecclesiology: What is the Universal Church? What is the relationship between the Universal Church and the local churches? What does a Church in a particular society mean and how does one live in it? The Vatican II — from which the Chinese Church had no opportunity to benefit — provides possibilities for a future ecclesiology. Unless the ecclesiological question is addressed, indigenization would have little meaning; indigenization would lead to a schismatic church if the ecclesiology of the Universal Church is not carefully established.

**viii) We need the realization of indigenization in all churches.**

Indigenization cannot take place in the mission field alone; it has to start with the mission-sending churches (traditionally the Western churches). The mission-sending Catholics, too, have to realize that they are also living in an indigenous church. They are no more "Catholic" than the mission churches; they are no more "advanced" than the young churches in the Third World. Actually, they are merely "indigenous" in their own social, historical, and cultural contexts. This realization would drastically change missiology from the sender-receiver model to a mutual sharing partnership model. Without the universal realization of indigenization, the indigenous church will always be looked upon as a second-class ecclesial community.<sup>2</sup>

**ix) Challenges from the Chinese Church.**

What if, in 1949, the Church in China had been in the hands of the Chinese clergy? Would it change the course of history? We have already seen that indigenization requires more than the replacement of personnel. It demands the acceptance of decentralized authority; the autonomy of local church; the allowance of freedom for local leaders to exercise their leadership diversity in faith expressions; the mutual acceptance of differences between local churches and Rome; the trust and respect of local church leaders; the sharing of essential faith by all local churches; and the realization of indigenization in all churches including the mission-sending ones. And, most importantly, indigenization demands a total re-examination of our ecclesiology and missiology.

We have seen the various missiological and ecclesiological implications drawn from the experience of the Chinese Church. The missionaries to China cannot be blamed for what they did and cannot be judged from hindsight because they belonged to a different era; they, too, were victims caught in the power struggle between Rome and the Chinese government; they were victims of an ecclesiology which was irrelevant to the rapidly changing Chinese society.

The experience of the Chinese Church touched upon the important question of indigenization; it leads to the question of the suitability of traditional Catholic ecclesiology, the traditional Rome-centered, uniformal institution, in a Third World setting. If it could

not survive in China, it would not do so in the Third World nations similar to the political situation of China. The bitter experience of the Chinese Church urges us to formulate ecclesiology and missiology which are relevant to the young churches in the Third World in order that the tragedy of the Chinese Church not be repeated.

## NOTES

1. Discriminations against religion believers in China was very well known not only during the Cultural Revolution but also other periods as well. Because they cannot join the Party, they are often in a disadvantaged position in society. This author personally knows many cases; some of them are the author's own relatives. There are also many published accounts, see the Journal *China and the Church Today* published by Chinese Church Research Center, Hong Kong. Even the government openly acknowledges the abuses and the discrimination inflicted upon religious believers during political campaigns, for example, see *JMJP* 19th March, 1979, or *JMJP* 3rd July, 1979. For a personal account, see J. Liu [Micheal Yeung], *Inside China: Experience of a Chinese Catholic: 1948–1980* (Hong Kong: Privately Published, 1981).
2. V.J. Donovan's *Christianity Rediscovered* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1978) discusses this theme in great details.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EPILOGUE

Based on the case of the Chinese Church (1949–1970), our thesis—the inability to transfer power from the foreign missionary to the local clergy causes difficulties for the Church in responding to radical political changes for the Third World—draws mixed conclusions. On the one hand, it was clear that the Chinese clergy could comprehend and assess the situation in China better than the missionaries; yet on the other hand, even with the total indigenization of personnel, the Chinese Church still could not respond flexibly to the social challenges if the basic ecclesial structure did not permit such a response.

The underlying question seemed to be a theological one: it is not only a missiological question of whether the missionaries are willing to transfer power to the Chinese clergy or not, but an ecclesiological question of whether the Church (Rome) allowed diversity in church policy and autonomy to the local church. In a more concrete manner, it is a question of whether the Church (Rome) allows indigenization of the local church to such an extent that the local church could decide on her own destiny without interference from Rome.

We have seen that the Church in China responded poorly to the social and political challenges. The traditional model of the Church was not suitable to the needs of the changing society. There is a pressing need for building indigenous churches which are relevant to their unique social context. The Church in China had no opportunity to build such a church; she was forced to be subject to Rome's or Peking's domination. If she had a chance to build an indigenous church, the Catholics in China might have had a better chance to survive in the People's Republic of China. At least the Catholic Church would not be attacked harshly by the government as an imperialistic agent; she would not need to follow Rome's suicidal orders; and she would not be forced to separate herself from the Universal Church and to have divisions within herself.

We saw the needs of indigenous churches in the Third World; we also saw that indigenization involves the restructuring of ecclesiology. It is no longer a matter of a theological debate whether we need



indigenous churches or not; it is a challenge to the Church whether she is willing to change her ecclesiological foundation with sincerity, honesty, courage, and wisdom. More and more nations are becoming hostile to Christianity as China did in 1949. If the Church is willing to reform her ecclesiology to allow for genuine indigenization, the Catholics in these Third World nations need not go through an ordeal as the Chinese Catholics did; then, the agony of the Chinese Catholics, after all, would not be in vain.

### Appendix A

Year	Foreign Priest	Foreign Ordinary	Local Priest	Local Ordinary	Total Catholics
1900	1,000		470		741,000
1910			521		1,292,000
1920	1,470 <sup>e</sup>		963		1,994,500
1925 <sup>a</sup>	1,806	50 <sup>f</sup>	1,220	2 <sup>f</sup>	2,200,000
1931	2,079	73	1,688	10	2,532,800
1933 <sup>c</sup>	2,788		1,897	23	3,013,000
1940	3,063		2,091		3,262,000
1947 <sup>b</sup>	3,046		2,542		3,251,000
1948 <sup>c</sup>	3,096	114	2,698	26	3,274,000

notes:

<sup>a</sup> C. Carry-Elews, *China and the Cross* (New York: P.J. Kenedy and son, 1957), p.241.

<sup>b</sup> *Le Missioni cattoliche. . .*, loc. cit.

<sup>c</sup> Ladany, loc. cit.

<sup>d</sup> Gu, p.315.

<sup>e</sup> CKJCC, 8 (1983 December): 23.

<sup>f</sup> D'Elia, *Les missions. . .*, p.62.

All other figures are found in Ku's *Short Chronological. . .*

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## About the Author

Kim-Kowng Chan, B.Sc. (McGill University); M.Div. (China Graduate School of Theology); M.A. & Ph.D. (University of Ottawa); L.Th. & D.Th. (St. Paul University).

He is an ordained Evangelical Minister and presently pastoring in Hong Kong.

He had published **Towards a Contextual Ecclesiology** (Hong Kong: Phototech, 1987); **Life of St. Anthony** (Hong Kong: Amazing Grace, 1990); Co-Author with Dr. A. Hunter, **Prayers and Thoughts of Chinese Christian** (London: Mowbray, 1991); and Co-Author with Dr. A. Hunter, **Protestants in China in the 90's** (Hong Kong: Tian Dao Press, 1992).