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A Personal Vision of China and the West in Broad Historical Context

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Abstract: This paper daringly attempts a review of the whole of European and Chinese history and, based upon it, seeks to provide an answer to the perturbing question of what it that has caused the deep, and at times agonizing, revolution of Chinese culture in modern times. The author sees the source of this revolution in a new self-awareness of the individual person that is rooted ultimately in Christianity, though more in its secularized than in its religious form. It argues that China must search for the roots of Christianity in order to find its new identity. The West, in danger of losing its Christian identity, may have to learn from China, to balance its strongly conceptual religious tradition with greater stress on life and personal experience. The author, a Catholic missionary who lived, studied and taught philosophy and culture for forty years in Taiwan, introduces his own spiritual and intellectual development as part of the basis for his interpretation of history.

Keywords: China's modern revolution, Western cultural history, Chinese cultural history, Christianity, China and Western culture.

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Introduction

We live today in a world of change and unrest. We are experiencing a process of evolution which began fifty or more years ago and seems to grow faster and faster. Many different factors influence this process and drive it on. They may be political and economic, social and psychological, spiritual and religious. Never before has mankind reached such numbers in the world, nor felt itself to such an extent as an interconnected unit. Today we not only hear of distant places with different human ideas and beliefs, customs and values; in many places we experience these differences personally. It may be as residents, tourists, workers or students in large cities, or in smaller groups, even living together in villages or among families. This cultural variety makes life colorful and rich, but can also be challenging, especially once you are forced to change some of your own ideas and ways of behaving, or simply to accept the change of your environment. Slowly but surely most things and values appear to be undergoing change, and many areas of life seem to be ruled by what is perceived to be fashionable.

Never before has Man felt so much to be the ruler of the world, but then suddenly news of natural catastrophes of unexpected proportions may frighten him, or environmental questions could create much concern. At other times we may hear of social unrest, or even uprisings, in countries in which tradition or a strong government seemed to be in full control. At yet another moment an economic crisis throws millions of people into panic. We experience how ideologies are shaken or break down, and how religion in many societies increasingly retreats from public life and becomes a private matter.

There is still another dimension which can influence our awareness: The growing knowledge

about the unimaginably large size of the universe. Since our own experience of time and space is in no comparable proportion with the entire universe, in reality this knowledge hardly influences our immediate awareness; yet from time to time the minuteness of our Earth or of the planetary system may still touch our consciousness.

One important factor of our times is the rapid development of the technical communication network, which can cause both amazement and bewilderment. The amount and variety of information can be overwhelming. Every day we hear of new things. Little wonder that the media influence or control the minds of many people.

All these various factors result in people living more than before in their own world. They do not want to be ruled according to traditional patterns. At the same time the distance between people in the public realm is increasing, and mutual trust is weakening. They have not learned how to communicate in this situation. Many families break up; parents, teachers as well as political and religious leaders are increasingly losing authority. People and entire cultures are in danger of losing their identity. In some societies the political system is open to change, but generally lacks consistency and broader, lasting goals; in others the government tries to remain in control by setting narrow goals, to keep the people united and at the same time to protect its own power.

In spite of all these changes human nature has remained the same. The surroundings seem to be in continuous flux, yet Man still has the same basic needs. Many proven things are still valid today, though some forms may have changed.

In this paper I would like, from a certain distance, to describe the situation of two influential cultures and societies, the Western and the Chinese. In regard to the former I limit myself mainly to European culture, since I am convinced that in the long run intellectual and cultural factors are more formative and influential than political, economic or military ones. Out of the same consideration I regard it as important to consider historical developments. This is the reason why, in the first part, I attempt to present my view of European and Chinese history. Only the second part tries to provide an interpretation of our present situation.

The title of this paper speaks of a personal vision. Does this suggest that it is mainly the sharing of a personal opinion, without any scientific basis? The topic is too broad, and the distance from some events too short, to permit a convincing, scientific analysis. Nonetheless the paper aspires to be more than a private opinion. The weight of crucial judgments depends on the amount and the quality of the underlying information, as well as on the dimensionality of the point of view. This is why I choose to begin with a short overview of my personal history, to explain the basis of my assessments.

1. Historical background

1.1 Background of the author.

I was born and grew up in traditional Western settings in a village in the Austrian Alps. Touched by Jesus' love, I wanted to become a priest, and so had to go through classical high school training in Salzburg, a city of music and art. Increasingly I felt a call to help in less developed countries and to participate in mission work. This led me finally to enter the Society of the Divine Word, just when the era of the Second Vatican Council began.

My basic spiritual, philosophical and theological training in our congregation occurred exactly at a time of genuine opening and serious dialogue of the part of the Catholic Church with our modern times and world. I experienced both an atmosphere of hope and of unrest, of loving concern and of being challenged, of gaining new insights and of painful searching and questioning. It was for me

both a time of rocking turmoil in the depths of my heart and finally one of finding peace and new confidence.

My concern as a future missionary had slowly turned from social and economic needs to intellectual and spiritual ones. Sent to Taiwan, a long process of learning and study began for me. I was prepared, slowly, to grow into Chinese culture. Starting with language and trying to understand life, I hoped, step by step, from the present to go back into history, from daily concerns to thoughts of wisdom, from Earth to reach Heaven. I had many helpers, teachers and friends, from simple folk, young and old, to leading intellectuals of the day.

In this process, undoubtedly my meeting with the modern legal scholar John C. H. Wu played an important role. This highly gifted man had grown up in traditional Chinese settings, but soon got also to know Western knowledge and thought. As a young man he experienced his first love for Jesus. While studying law in America and Europe, delving deep into modern intellectual history, he felt a strong call to reform and modernize his own culture and country. Yet at the same time his religious faith was shaken and he landed in agnosticism. Back home he set out to enlighten and to educate, yet soon experienced the frightening force of political struggles and upheavals. From where could he get the strength not to give up? Finally, in the midst of war he unexpectedly came to know the story and writings of the young French nun, Saint Therese of Lisieux, and felt so deeply touched by her that he decided to become a Catholic.

From then on, a thorough study of the intellectual and spiritual journey of John C. H. Wu deepened my own intellectual dialogue with Chinese culture. Not only did my faith in the mission of Christianity for China become strengthened; in recent times even my understanding of the development of modern Western culture and the complex relationship of China with the West took on increasingly clearer features. Some results of this I wish to share in this paper.

1.2 My understanding of European culture and its history.

Western culture during the last 2000 years has mainly been shaped and nourished by three forces. One is the Roman, practical, down-to-earth and legal attitude, the second is the Greek, speculative, artistic, conceptual mind with its strong humanistic tendency. Both include a clear transcendental dimension. For the Romans it was the simple religiosity of the farmer, full of respect for the ancestors and gods; for the Greeks it was at first faith in the widely humanized world of the Olympic gods, but increasingly it took the form of abstract, metaphysical speculation and contemplation or of participation in mystical experience.

The third form of inspiration and motivation of Western culture is Christianity. It seems to have started as a force to unite people of different nations, tribes, classes and languages into a new community, rooted in the love of Christ. The power of this love found its deepest expression in the death and resurrection of Jesus, celebrated in the sacrament of unity, the Eucharist. In spite of repeated persecutions and repressions Christianity increasingly spread within the Roman Empire. Once it was legally recognized and soon thereafter become the official religion, the Greek mind demanded clear answers to some challenging questions: Who, after all, was Jesus, the Christ? How did his early followers experience him? Was he only of human nature like all other people? How could he, in the Greek context, soon be described as "being in the form of God" (Phil. 2,6) and even as the "Word become flesh" (John 1,14)? In spite of considerable opposition, visible in the wide spread of Arianism, the early Councils, the authoritative meetings of the leaders of the Church, decided to recognize also the "divine nature" in Jesus. Based on this the Trinitarian dogmas soon followed.

During the next centuries it was not primarily conceptual questions which were the main concern, but rather the effects of the great movements of the Germanic tribes, which lead to the break-

down of the western part of the Roman Empire. The Church now proved to be the only stabilizing force during these challenging years. Her influence steadily grew and spread slowly to the north, to all the Germanic and Slavic peoples. During the High Middle Ages, in the 12th and 13th centuries, almost all of Europe had already become Christian. During this time, on the one hand a rather high degree of integration of the three sources of Western culture had been reached; on the other, structures of authority still played a major role.

In the following centuries this new Christian, European culture, which had reached a certain maturity, encountered many new inner and outer challenges. Wars, but especially the plague, killed millions of people. It was difficult to find meaning in all this. How could God allow so much suffering? In theology the focus turned from reason to God's will. At the same time new contacts with the East Roman and the Arab world, as well as a growing self-awareness of the individual, brought with them an opening up to traditional Greek culture, which ushered in first the humanist movement and finally in the Renaissance. Even the leaders of the Church were in danger of becoming mired in secular interests or esthetics. The cry for reform within the Church finally lead to the religious Reformation, protesting on the one hand a too conceptualized and legalized faith, on the other Rome's demonstration of secular power without spiritual strength. Only the tragic split of the Church led also to the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church.

The time of the Renaissance and Reformation was also the time of discovery and scientific development. Already during the Middle Ages questioning and searching minds had been trained, formally shaped by Aristotelian logic and systematic thought, yet more encouraged to see the world as the creation of God which man was to rule. During the 15th and 16th centuries, not only were new continents discovered, but the world as a globe had become an experience. Slowly the universe revealed itself in totally new dimensions. As the conflict of Galilei proved, reason, in the form of natural sciences, though grown within the framework of Christian education and training, became partly a challenge to traditional Church teachings and Church authority.

Slowly a whole movement began to form, attempting to build up a world view by relying only on reason. Initially it was not conceived as opposition against faith and the Church, but rather as an exercise of a strongly self-conscious mind. But a growing awareness of individuality and a high interest in practical matters of life deepened the tension with Church authority and its theological foundation: revelation. The Enlightenment, starting from the late 17th and extending to the early 19th century, saw in reason the "light of the world" and openly refused any higher authority. The French Revolution, a democratic movement, also protested against traditional political structures and authorities. During the 19th and early 20th centuries developments grew even more extreme. Political and social tensions increased. The new class of workers, born from the growth of industry and suffering exploitation, fought for their rights in revolutionary movements. Ideologically they found a strong, supportive voice in Marxism. Culturally, extreme rationalism turned into the Romantic movement, yet philosophically it led to a radical, social materialism as in Marx's teaching, or an atheistic, self-centered existentialism like in Nietzsche's dream of the superman. Positivism became more and more the attitude of science, and in the form of agnosticism or even nihilism it also threw its shadow on general intellectual culture. The Catholic Church, the broadest and most organized international organization, answered these challenges with an even stronger stress on its "divine authority", by declaring the highest, authoritative statements of its leader, the pope, as infallible.

The weakening of cultural unity and stress on economic interests led to a strong increase in nationalism. On the other hand the search for natural resources, in line with industrial developments, provided new strength to colonial policies. Had the age of discovery already brought about a new beginning of Christian missionary work, so the late 19th century saw fresh enthusiasm to spread the

Gospel, this time also shared by the Protestant churches. All these political, economic and ideological tensions finally led to two alarmingly destructive world wars, which cost tens of millions of human lives, and finally to the breakdown of the colonial system. The cold war between the capitalist or liberal-socialist world, with its stress on individual rights and freedom, and the Marxist-communist world, with its focus on collectivism and power of the state or the party, ended only with the fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of political and intellectual control and suppression.

Has European culture, after all these struggles in recent centuries, lost its identity? Are we living in a new age? If so, when did it begin? What are its characteristics? In face of modernism the Catholic Church had, at the beginning of the 20th century, once more responded with a stress on reason, discipline and authority, precisely those values which were challenged by this modernism. It is characteristic that during the second half of the 19th century, when the limits of reason had already become obvious, Catholic philosophy took the shape of Neo-Scholasticism, and religious architecture expressed itself in Neo-Gothic and Neo- Romanesque style. Only after World War II did a new breakthrough become obvious.

During the sixties the Church experienced a new spring. This time it was not by stressing authority, but rather, as pointed out earlier, by a willingness to face the modern world and to enter into dialogue with this world. One important feature was a new focus on the role of lay-people within the Church. They were the bridge between the secular and the sacred. Another important feature was a clearly expressed respect for other religions. Possibly Israel's slow growth in the belief in the one God, and therefore the fight of the prophets against all gods which were not really God, not only deeply influenced the early Church but generally the attitude of the Church toward other religions. A deeper understanding of other religions, and a clearer distinction of the concepts and practices involved, was growing only slowly. Of course, by now the world was no longer restricted to Europe with its colonial appendages; rather it was a new, multi-cultural, participatory, global structure.

However, in Europe and other Western countries this spring did not last long. The explosion of information, along with the growing influence of the media, spread the urban, global culture over all of society. Those sectors which earlier were mainly bound by traditional Church authority now experienced a growing process of "de-churching". Traditional Church leadership by clerics had not changed much, but less and less young people felt the call to clerical and life and dared to invest their entire life in the service of the community of faith.

1.3 China: the Eastern giant's culture and its history.

In this part I would like to draw a sketch of China's rich cultural heritage, its historical development, and its modern struggles as I envisage it. Reflecting on China's history it appears reasonable to do it in two parts: first, to look at traditional China, and then to see what has happened during the last hundred or hundred and fifty years.

1.3.1 My understanding of traditional Chinese culture and history.

Some of the deepest roots of this culture, clearly visible 4,500 years ago, is the faith in Heaven as the ruler of the universe and the belief in a great variety of gods and spirits, primarily the ancestors, who must be respected as protectors and providers of blessings. To disregard them can lead to calamity. Beside these spiritual beings there are also a whole range of cosmic laws and energies, which need Man's attention if he wants to live in harmony with nature. The human world again has its own laws. Clear structures of authority and ways of disciplined, gentle behavior seem to belong to the oldest tradition, at least of the ruling class.

Three thousand years ago, during the Western Zhou dynasty, a kind of secularist and humanist

movement can slowly be discerned, which reached its peak from the 6th to the 4th century B. C., more or less parallel to the peak of Greek culture, as well as to the biggest crisis and new integration of Israel's tradition. In India it was the era of the Buddha, whose thoughts later began to influence China deeply. Confucius, living in this time of political division and instability, did not deny the existence of spirits and the influence of cosmic laws, but based on the tradition of the sages he wanted to point out the way of virtue, of sound human relationships and wise government. The one who is called to rule the world in the name of Heaven is the man of virtue whom people will willingly obey. In the family too there will be order and harmony, by rule of authority and virtue. Trust in the way of Heaven, respect for the ancestors, and striving for a virtuous life form the spiritual basis of Confucius' school of thought.

Another branch of philosophy, whose spokesman was Lao-zi, mentioned the spirits, gods and religious rituals even less than Confucius. It even hesitated to stress human rules of behavior. Its followers were touched by the cosmic Tao, or Way, which mysteriously rules the entire world. Man should not take himself too seriously. This world view encourages one to be natural, to act in a self-forgetting, humble, soft manner, without ado. This is the real Way, also the way of Heaven, which is beneficent for man and all beings born of the Way.

For some time Mo Zi's teaching was also attracting many followers. He stressed the kindness and all-embracing love of Heaven, which was to be imitated by people. Everyone should live in this spirit of self-sacrifice, in order to establish peace in the world. Mo Zi saw his ideal in the ascetic spirit of the soldier who sacrificed himself for the good of the people. He somehow distanced himself from the musical, esthetic and formal side of life.

During this time of intellectual plurality and political tensions and conflicts, one group of peo ple thought that the best way to bring peace and order to the world was by enforcing a strict legal system of punishment and reward, binding everyone equally without exception. Qin Shi Huang relied on their theory. This actually resulted in the establishment of the Chinese empire. His dynasty was short because too harsh and unbearable for the people. Yet in a milder form, combined with Confucian ideals of human relationships and moral virtues, it remained the political basis of all future dynasties.

During the first and second century A. D., the time of the Eastern Han dynasty, a new religion slowly began to spread in China: Buddhism. We can see it in relationship to the "secularizing" tendencies in Confucius', Lao Zi's and the Legalist's teaching. By "secularizing" I mean a certain distance from traditional animistic-shamanistic, popular religiosity and ritual. On the one hand the teaching of the Buddha somehow relieved the burden and suffering of life, providing a possible answer for the fate of the individual; on the other hand, in the figure of the Buddha and the Bodhisatvas, one can feel a deep spirituality, not centering on the ordinary concerns of the human world, even not on nature, but on the inner being. Their way is that of discipline, concentration and virtue, and as fruit of enlightenment a deep compassion for the suffering people and a concern for their spiritual life. In this way the new religion could satisfy many religious needs of the people, broadening and deepening their outlook on life, and provide the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as spiritual models for life, objects of veneration, and sources of help.

But in one point Buddhism differed essentially from Chinese tradition: in seeing life as a sea of suffering. Chinese tradition always conceived the world as something great and mysterious, in spite of its undeniable challenges, limitations and sufferings, ending in death. This inner conflict became tangible in the appearance of a new Chinese movement, the Taoist religion. Recapturing traditional animist and shamanist traditions with all their gods and spirits, it includes a strong link to the mys terious cosmic law, represented in the spirit of the Yijing, but even more so in the teaching of Lao-

zi, who now himself became one of the leading gods. A common point with Buddhism is to not stress human action so much, but rather, in times of unrest, to retreat from the world. Unlike Buddhism, however, the goal is not to empty oneself and leave the life of this world behind, but rather to already now strive for a fuller life, in this manner somehow entering eternal life already in this world.

Buddhism spread rapidly in China and during the Tang dynasty it seemed to be the leading spiritual force, even among the intellectuals who were most touched by the wisdom, simplicity and beauty of Zen. This school had inherited the deep compassion of Buddhism for all living beings, yet it included, like Taoism, a strong, transcendental sense of the mystery of the world and universe. The enlightened experienced the mystery of life, not only in meditation and in seclusion from the struggles of human life, but instead exactly in the work and dealings of ordinary life or in nature.

Yet it was also at the peak time of Buddhism when its basic conflict with traditional Chinese appreciation of life and the world was strongly brought forward. Triggered by the overwhelming power and influence of monasteries and similar institutions, the reaction was soon directed against fundamental Buddhist concepts and attitudes. Political power, in the form of the Emperor, turned against Buddhism, and hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns were sent home, an affliction from which Buddhism never fully recovered.

In spite of this rejection of Buddhism toward the end of the Tang dynasty in the name of Confucianism, it seems that the establishment of Neo-Confucianism during the Sung dynasty, especially its form of thinking and reasoning, was influenced by highly abstract forms of thinking in some Buddhist schools. In modern times this somehow rigorous, "scholastic" system of Confucian thought was blamed for China's backwardness, because of the difficulties this system experienced in adapting to new challenges. Actually it existed in two branches, one laying more stress on reason, the other more on will.

1.3.2 My understanding of the more recent history of China

During the high period of the Tang dynasty China had its first contact with Christian Nestorianism. Later, together with the suppression of Buddhism all other foreign religions were forbidden as well, so nothing remained of Christianity. During the Mongol Empire the first official contacts with the Pope in Rome were established. With the fall of this foreign dynasty, again hardly any remaining influence could be perceived among the Chinese.

Towards the end of the Ming dynasty the Jesuits came to China, most famous among them was Matteo Ricci. For the West it was the Age of Discovery, the time of development of the natural sciences, but also, after the Protestant Reformation, a time of Catholic renewal and great religious fervor. Ricci and the Jesuits at his side were aware of the inner strength and richness of Chinese culture, expressed in a natural pride and feeling of superiority, and they were willing to study this culture and to grow in it. It is worth mentioning that, as representatives of a religion, they attempted first to be associated with Buddhism. Treated with disrespect by the class of scholars, they turned to Confucianism. Actually Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism coexisted in Chinese society, in spite of certain inner tensions and conflicts, though without direct communication or dialogue.

The Jesuits impressed people at the emperor's court as scholars of Western learning, especially in the field of natural sciences, particularly in astronomy. At the same time they gained the confidence and trust of people of highest standing through their personal honesty and integrity. Even the change of dynasty from the Ming to the Qing did not affect their position. Some people even accepted Christianity and were baptized. The belief in a personal God, so central to Christianity, must have reminded them of one of the oldest roots of Chinese religiosity. The person of Christ and his

teaching of love certainly also impressed some. Yet it must have appeared more of an invitation to a new personal lifestyle than the blueprint for an entire new social order. Most difficult to accept and to understand must have been the cross, and the theology of salvation.

The court slowly allowed more and more Catholic religious congregations of priests to work among the people and to preach the gospel. These men soon discovered the strong belief of the common people in the influence of the spirits and gods on their life, their own ancestors included. People prayed and sacrificed to receive blessings; at the same time they were much afraid of harmful influences. For the common people religion was primarily an emotional experience, while the scholars had their own intellectual interpretation of veneration of the ancestors and sages, and of the influences of cosmic forces and laws. Out of this tension there grew among the missionaries the painful conflict of rites, which slowly became such a great hindrance for the spreading of the gospel of Christ. Both interpretations of the popular and Confucian rituals were reported to Rome, asking for a clear and binding decision. Yet Rome could only rely on the understanding of the people in the field. When Rome finally sided with the missionaries of the common people and decided against the interpretation of the scholars, by stressing the need of the purification of the faith of the people, the Emperor Kangxi, originally very sympathetic to the cause of Christianity, became so annoyed that he angrily forbade Christianity. For about one hundred years Christianity once again nearly disappeared from society. Only in some places did it survive, though experiencing repeated persecution and suppression.

A totally new situation developed during the middle of the 19th century. China had little interest in Western goods. When the English, buying silk and porcelain, experienced a growing imbalance in trade, they started to sell opium to China, which was produced in India. Soon the harmful results became obvious and the Court forbade the import of the drug. At this England declared war. Soon the western canons and warships proved to be superior to the Chinese ones. China had to accept defeat. But this was not the end. One humiliation followed the other. China was forced to open more and more ports to the Westerners for purposes of trade and banking, and once more had to allow missionaries to spread their religious teaching among the people. Unlike the defeat by the Mongols and Manchus, who even took over the ruling power yet hardly changed the way of government and the life of the people, also unlike the Jesuits who showed great respect for Chinese traditional culture, these new "western barbarians" on the surface appeared to respect the sovereignty of the old empire but in reality regarded its culture and way of life as backward and outdated. Thus began one of the most complex and contradicting processes in known human history, which to this day has really not yet come to an end.

With time young people were invited to study in the West, or they went by themselves. Scholars discovered the great progress of Western knowledge of nature and of technology, but also that life in Western society is in many regards different from life in China. A theory soon developed that China should in the essentials, such as general world view, government, ethics and human relationships, keep its own traditions, but in daily practical matters and in technology it must absorb Western expertise.

Soon another humiliation followed. China was defeated in its first war with Japan. The conflict had begun in Korea but soon extended to China proper. Japan only dared to challenge China because it had opened up earlier to modern Western knowledge. At this time Yan Fu, a scholar who had studied technology in England and was deeply impressed by Western thinking, above all by the Western scientific spirit, took the opportunity to introduce Darwin's theory of evolution and of survival of the fittest. At the same time he applied it to the situation of China by declaring: If China does not open up to modern Western ways of thinking, it cannot survive in the struggle of life.

From then on more and more Western ideas and practices freely began to flow into China. Beside knowledge of natural sciences, technology and medicine, scholars became interested in legal and political ideas, as well as in literature and art, philosophy, sociology and psychology. New schools of higher, modern learning were founded, and soon the traditional Confucian examination system proved to be obsolete and was dropped. Since at the imperial Court traditional powers were too strong and opposed more rapid reform, the Manchu dynasty was finally overthrown. For the May Fourth Movement, occasioned as a result of political interference by Japan after World War I, the main thrust soon became to be cultural. Students and their scholarly supporters proclaimed cultural and political reform through science and democracy as the most urgent need of the country. As a necessary step in this direction they demanded that in scholarly writing the poetic style of classical Chinese be replaced by the more prosaic, down-to-earth, spoken language. This allowed greater accuracy and left less room for personal interpretation. In this way the common people also had easier access to modern ideas.

Soon after the new Western thinking was introduced to China, people began to ask why China had in so many regards fallen behind the West. At the same time awareness was growing of a tension between modern ideas of freedom, equality, and social responsibility, and traditional role models and structures of authority. The culprit was undoubtedly Confucianism, which for thousands of years had been the backbone of Chinese culture but now began to be severely attacked by many an intellectual.

Centers of modern thinking were primarily new-style Western universities, a good number of which were founded by Protestant missionary organizations. In the countryside missionaries had also opened their schools, in this way broadening the base of educated people and at the same time influ encing their view of the world and of life.

What about religion? This is certainly one of the most intriguing and controversial topics. As mentioned above, China's intellectual and spiritual elite had already in early times gone through a phase of secularization, in the sense of a decreasing faith in religious or supernatural powers, replacing them on the one hand with a stress upon the cosmic order as the basis for human life, and on the other with a rising awareness of moral responsibility, be it as an individual within the family or as an official in political life. Though educated persons may still have believed in the existence of all manner of gods and spirits, these were kept at a distance, and under Buddhist influence even heaven became more and more a kind of cosmic law.

It was quite different with the common people. Heaven was believed in and respected as the source of life and the ruler of the universe. For them the gods and spirits, and above all the ancestors, influenced all aspects of life. These spiritual forces were much closer to the people than to the political administrators. The moral laws, guiding life in the family clan and in the village, were influenced by Confucian teaching, but the protectors of moral laws were again primarily the gods and, as supreme authority, Heaven. In spite of this there was no binding doctrinal, religious authority with influence throughout the country; instead, different schools, monasteries, temples or individual charismatic leaders had their points of attraction, and in this way influenced their followers. The religion of the people in China was based more on feeling and experience than on doctrine and intellectual thought.

In modern times Western thinking was slowly gaining influence among the intellectuals, and the common people began to revolt against the imperialists and the Western, organized religions' claims of exclusivity. Religion became a highly controversial issue. The new Chinese word for religion, "zongjiao", was actually the translation of a Western term, which had been created in Japan. In Western texts it represented primarily Western organized religion, with its clear doctrine and so-

cial organization; in the context of history of religion, it pointed to a primitive and mythological world view, or to a complex doctrinal, social system like Buddhism or Hinduism. In China, educated people regarded veneration of ancestors or sacrifices to gods as the expression of "li", a word generally referring to right, polite behavior. Prior to this the people had no common word for religion; rather they spoke of sacrifice, veneration, fortune-telling, Fengshui, etc. Chinese intellectuals were mainly interested in "modern Western thinking", based on scientific research and tested in practice. Philosophically they were inclined toward enlightened, rational thinking or toward even more radical theories, generally ignoring, if not opposing, religion. This kind of secular Western thought encouraged them to claim that China long ago had already overcome religion. Yet there were others who paid more attention to the life and feeling of the common people and concluded that every aspect of life of the Chinese people was deeply influenced by religious thoughts and feelings. As a response to the new thinking many aspects of traditional popular beliefs and rituals were therefore now declared, in Enlightenment terms, to be superstition.

During the twenties a strong movement against Christianity rose among intellectuals. Even enlightened Buddhist leaders spoke of Christianity as a primitive religion. On the other side they saw for themselves the need to become more involved in society and the secular world if they wanted to survive.

The intellectual and spiritual-moral struggle was soon overshadowed by the pain and suffering of the Chinese-Japanese war. After the war the ideological conflict soon developed into the civil war, resulting in the victory of the Communists.

Yet the victory of the Communist Party did not solve the basic problem; rather it was only a temporal, political military solution. What was it that China needed most in order to become a strong, healthy and modern nation? However, before it could face the outside world it had to solve its inner conflicts, which could not simply be resolved by one-party rule. Materialist, anti-religious, communist ideology was increasingly controlling public life, dismantling so-called traditional, feudal, economic and political structures, once again disgracing Confucianism and traditional thoughts and customs, and suppressing all religious activities. Equality, comradeship, social community in a certain sense became the highest ideals, politically and economically slowly leading to the establishment of the people's communes. Aware of the need of industrialization, the "Great Leap Forward" was to prove the strength of the new system, but had disastrous results. Instead of political-economic reform the tensions led to the Cultural Revolution, showing among other things a deep-seated desire of the people for liberation from the traditional rule of the scholars with their attitude of superiority, liberation also from the authoritarian structure of family life. The peasants now became the dignitaries, and idealistic youth the tool and weapon for destruction, wiping out opposition and preparing the ground for the New Society.

In the end the ideologists were defeated by reality and the needs of life. The realists returned to the stage, partly from exile or from prison. Yet a simple return to the traditional past was no longer possible. Slowly new freedom was given to the entrepreneur, and religion too was slowly recognized as a free choice of the individual, though within a very limited framework.

Increasing liberalization brought the recognition of the government by more and more countries and with it a new opening to the outside world. An increasingly liberal economic policy and the low level of salaries brought foreign investments and rapidly growing foreign trade. After the earlier cut-off from Western cultural and political developments, now tens of thousands of young people went abroad to study. China had once again appeared on the international stage. The rapidly growing economy, the impressive modernization of its cities, the speedy build up of its infrastructure, together with an active foreign policy among less developed countries, soon presented the image of a new,

rising superpower.

2. An attempt to interpret the social and cultural processes of change in China and the West

The growth of a human is a highly complex reality. Can one therefore say that nothing can be more complex than the development of a human society? Economic, social, cultural factors can all play an important role at certain times and in certain areas. In the following part I shall try to point out some observations and intuitions, which seem to be worth further consideration.

2.1 The deepest cause of China's modern revolution.

Without doubt, China is playing an increasingly influential role in the modern, globalized world. But has China really already found its new identity? Was the main change in recent history to catch up in scientific knowledge and technology, and as a result obtain an increasingly industrialized society and modern economy? Did the country essentially return to traditional feudal society structures with the party now as the new ruling class? Finally, what had brought about the radical intellectual and social movements in the early years of the last century? Though the Cultural Revolution remains for many a nightmare, were there not also some ideals behind it, similar to the Taiping Revolution? Is there something which prevents China from going back to traditional ways of living and ruling? What are the deepest changes, and where can one find the roots for these changes?

My personal idea and feeling is that the deepest change during the last 150 years occurred, as contradictory as it may sound, in a new assessment of the value of the individual and consequently in a slowly developing new awareness of the person. The driving force behind this I see in Christianity, though mainly in a secularized and not in a religious form. The missionaries and the Christian communities with their charitable institutions doubtlessly were influential, but the influence was broader through basic ideas of Western society with Christian roots. However, in order to find a strong and healthy basis for this new awareness, it must be brought back to its real roots. Only on this basis China can find its new identity.

Traditional Confucian culture was a humanist one, stressing human relationships, based on cosmic ideas and an understanding of human nature. It not only designated different roles to genders and social groups of people, but added value judgments, building in this way a clearly structured society. On the one hand human relationships stressed the formal or outside behavior aspect; on the other they stressed moral virtues, but above all authority. In reality, when virtues were not fully developed, authority could, seen from a modern point of view, become very authoritarian.

In the teaching of the Gospel, announcing the kingdom of God, Jesus put the relationship between God and Man at the center, but immediately connecting it with the love of one's neighbor. Every human being was called to enter the kingdom of God, which was the family of the children of God, not depending on gender, personal talents or social status. This view of the human person, deeply changing traditional structures and values and even the understanding of law, was founded in Jesus' experience of the transcendent love of God, the Father. It was fortified and fully realized in Jesus' life, treating every human as a child of God. It reached its highest value in the death of Jesus, revealing a love which somehow had to face all aspects of the darkness of Earth: rejection, negation, forsakenness, extreme suffering and death; yet still his love did not collapse, but instead one could say it accomplished its goal. The experience and pronouncement of His resurrection as confirmation of His teaching, living and dying, became the foundation of Christianity. Soon this dynamism entered the Roman Empire and step by step built up a new, egalitarian community, until it

was by imperial authority recognized as the new form of social order.

It still took a long time before this new vision of man and society more deeply affected the entire Western culture. A broader influence first originated from individual charismatic leaders and teachers, then from groups of individuals, monks and nuns, who through their spiritual way of praying, working and living inspired others and became the yeast which slowly changed society. During the High Middle Ages Christianity was clearly the core of Western culture and had in many institutions, structures and laws, prepared the way for future developments. What happened afterward we have, at least initially, reflected upon in the first part of this paper.

What is the meaning of all this, if we try to understand modern developments in China? Can China, after the recent, somewhat chaotic period, return to the traditional feudal form of government and social life? Or are the common people no longer willing to be ruled over without participation and sharing of power? Can we speak of a new awareness of the dignity of each person? The decisive question, however, is then this: What is the basis for the dignity of each person? Is only the government its guarantee? Is it the constitution of the state, or the social contract of society? In recent history we have experienced how governments, seemingly out of care for the majority of people, are able not only to disregard and disrespect, but to mistreat, suppress and annihilate other segments of the population. The government and constitution must protect the dignity of the person, but they are not the basis or a sufficient guarantee for the dignity of each person. Historically, only the life and teaching of Jesus, and based on it the Christian faith, can fulfill this. This does not mean that Confucianism or Taoism or Buddhism do not have deep insights into the world and human nature, in this way preparing the way, but the most striking developments in this regard are based on a Christian inspiration.

2.2 The problem of Western society

What then can we say about the modern development of Western culture? What about secularization in general? It seems that Man, in his limitation, always tends to simplify complex situations, especially once he has a position of power, or, on the other hand, when he is under pressure. He has difficulties in broadening his vision and in listening to the other side, and in searching jointly for a solution for the problems.

Western culture, under Greek influence, learned to highly value conceptual truth, in contrast to the more holistic, intuitional, feminine way of thinking. In the light of Platonic philosophy, aware of the difference between the eternal world of the ideas and the concrete, limited, human world, it strives for the knowledge of the eternal, true, and in the deeper sense, real world. This leads to the hard work and struggle of observation, distinction, classification, definition and finally to the rules of correct reasoning and inferring. Brought to this level, something cannot be this and that at the same time and under the same aspect; it cannot be true and false.

It was in the context of this kind of thinking that the Christian community developed its theology, partly pressured by the Emperor, to clarify doctrinal decisions. Theology in the Middle Ages was clearly regarded as the first science, based on its source of revelation – clearly a concept of authority, but also as science of the deepest truths about God, the world and Man. In modern times, as the growth of secular science entered into conflict with traditional Church teaching (although not related to central theological truths), science attempted increasingly to build up its world view, based on observation, or philosophically on pure reason. The result was a continuous shrinking of the realm of certain truth and a growing denial of the authority of the Church, of Revelation, of the Bible, and finally of the existence of God. Pure reason, pragmatism and finally positivism became the standards for truth.

But life does not work like this. Neither the dignity of the human person, nor human relationships, nor the meaning of life and the world, rest on arguments of pure reason, pragmatism or positivism. Modern philosophical voluntarism and existentialism have already proved the dead end of an overstressing of reason; at the same time they showed the miserable state and wretchedness of man when he becomes isolated from the Divine, or at least a cosmic, world.

In this postmodern time of pluralism and relativism, neither traditional authority nor pure reason has great influence or power. The Church may be convinced she owns the fount of Truth, and may appreciate the treasure which belongs to her or which she experiences, but she must learn, in this modern environment, to stand on the side of the doubting listener, and to humbly share her insights and experiences, and not to speak with a claim to traditional authority. The West must regain its identity in Christian faith. Nothing has replaced it, or can replace it. Training in Christian spirituality is the crux of Western society and the Church.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, Chinese culture stresses life more than abstract thought; it strives for external harmony more than for conceptual truth. It stresses the common or complimentary aspects more than the causes of tensions and points of difference. Therefore conflicting ideas can, to a certain degree, coexist peacefully, but at times the tension can become too strong and lead to a kind of explosion.

Maybe China and the West must learn from each other. Logical, systematic thinking was one of the preconditions of the development of the modern sciences, and China, deeply impressed by Western science and technology, must also continue to encourage this way of thinking. However, it seems that the deepest challenge for China is not science. It appears that science and technology could have been integrated into traditional Confucian structures of society without causing any revolution. What brought about the deepest, lasting changes seems to be related to a new vision of man. To find its new identity, China must return to its own cultural roots, but more so it must find the real basis of the dignity of each human in Christ, seeing in each person a child of God. Only in this way can it also approach its old idea that all people among the four seas are brothers.

In regard to spirituality and religion the West may have much to learn from China: the importance of personal experience and the relation to real life. It is a fuller life of openness and tolerance, of inner dynamic and motivation, of love and understanding, of communication and dialogue, of insight and vision, of honesty and humility, at once critical and not judging, trusting and cooperating, a life of inner peace and of hope; it is such a life which can draw people together and become a new model and source of authority.

In terms of transcendental truth it may be worthwhile to listen to John C. H. Wu, who said: "The East enters too fast into the realm of the unspeakable, where our concepts can no longer satisfy the desire for truth, while the West lingers too long outside, paying, – so could one interpret, – too much importance to human concepts and distinctions".

中文题目：

以广阔历史视野看中国与西方关系之个人洞见

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内容提要：这篇文章大胆地企图回顾欧洲和中国的历史而在此基础上答复下面令人深感困惑的问题：第一，近代中国文化极深刻的、且有时极为惨痛的革命，其内涵为何？第二，是什么导致这革命？作者看见，最深的革命发生在个人的一种新的自我尊严意识，而其最深的原因或激励乃源自基督信仰，虽然较多是以其俗化形式而非以其宗教形式。因此他认为中国需要探寻基督信仰的根源，才能找到它的新的自我认同。近代的西方面对着失去与基督信仰认同的危机，它也许需要向中国学习，更加着重生活与个人的经验，以平衡其独具概念性的宗教传统。本文作者是一位曾在台湾四十年生活、研习并教授哲学与文化课程的天主教传教士。文中他也简述了自己的思想与精神的发展，因为它是作者诠释历史的部份根据。

关键词：中国近代革命、西方文化史、中国文化史、基督信仰、中国与西方文化