

A Christian Contextual Theology for China in the 3rd Millennium

I am wondering: Is not China much older than Europe with all its nations? Are not the religions of China much older than the leading religions of modern Europe, Christianity and Islam, maybe even Judaism? Why should the Chinese population show any interest in Christianity? Besides, Christianity is not new to China. In various attempts in post-Christian history Christians approached the huge country in the middle of Asia, but Christianity remained a foreign religion. However, can a foreign religion become a serious contribution to modern China?

These are questions I like to deal with in my deliberations under the title “A Christian Contextual Theology for China in the 3rd Millennium”. We ask, first, what it means to be “a foreign religion”, second, how a religion coming from an outside position can pass over to other peoples, nations or cultures, third, what the preconditions are for entering another field different from its home-ground. We then turn directly to Christianity and ask what in fact it can offer to the modern world; vice versa we shall check whether China is really missing what Christianity likes to bring.

Of course, I deal with all the questions as a foreigner myself, being a Christian, but also a person who feels deep sympathy for the Chinese people. I am definitely not in the position to answer all the questions posed; many of them should be rather answered by the Chinese themselves. But what I can do is to introduce some ideas which I gathered from various encounters with peoples from different nations and language groups, believers and unbelievers, cultures and religions. I spent many years of my life outside of Europe, learnt different languages like Japanese and became aware of what it means to observe my own continent from the outside, with the eyes of non-Europeans and non-westerners.

A foreign religion

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* begins with the words,

“Christ is the light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church. Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the union of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission.”

By phrasing things like this the Church approaches also parts of the world where it does not exist, from the outside, as a stranger enters a country which he has never entered before. A stranger enters a strange country. A foreign religion enters a foreign country. And in fact, modern China with an atheist government skeptical against religion in general must be doubtful towards a religion which possesses not only its spiritual religious center outside in a far-distant country but a center which claims to possess political sovereignty, too.

Actually Christianity is not the first religion which entered China from the outside. Buddhism crossed the mountains from India, Islam came to China. Even Christianity met with the Chinese at various times beginning with the Syrian Christians who travelled on the Silk Road and for a long time in a rather unjust manner were identified with Nestorians and thus considered heretics. In all these earlier cases politics was less involved. Politics began to play a role as soon as at the beginning of modern times western colonialism and religion contracted a rather unsaintly marriage. It started in the period of discoveries when in 1493 Pope Alexander VI divided the world into two halves entrusting the western hemisphere to Spain and the eastern hemisphere to Portugal¹. Under the title of *padroado*, i.e. patronage, both governments were entitled to settle not only economic and political, but also religious affairs. They were permitted to dispose over the Church organizations in their colonies, to nominate bishops etc. A certain change took place when in 1622 in Rome the Congregation of the Propagation of Faith was established. Although on the long run the separation of political and economic activities on the one side, missionary activities on the other side was a blessing to the peoples, it hardly can be denied that the Holy See itself remained a political power, too. Although the Papal State was abolished in 1870, the political sovereignty was reconfirmed in the Lateran Treaty of 1929.

In a world of growing secularism it becomes increasingly difficult to estimate the twofold authority of the Holy See, spiritual-religious and secular-political, in a just and appropriate way. That is valid for western countries, all the more for a State like China. I personally think that it is high time to reconsider the overall situation of the various States not only from the rather limited point of view of one's own culture and

¹ For the text of the Bull *Inter Cetera* see K. Koschorke / F. Ludwig / M. Delgado (ed.), A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America 1450-1990. A Documentary Sourcebook. Grand Rapids / Cambridge 2007, document 223a. ,

weltanschauung, but to see and judge things with the eyes of other people and to understand their fears and worries.

Encounter

It was the merit of Matteo Ricci at whose birth-place we are gratefully invited to convene, that he called for a radical change of attitude wherever people of different background, different races, nations and religions meet. More than the patron saint of Catholic mission activities, St. Francis Xavier, he explored into the soul of the Chinese people. By taking off the clerical vestments and putting on the garments of Chinese intellectuals he tried to follow the steps of St. Paul and to become a Chinese with the Chinese. He tried to learn the foreign language. He got interested in their interests, in astronomy, mathematics and other natural sciences. He investigated into their world-view and religious background and compared it with his own Christian convictions, his idea of God the creator, actually starting from the common understanding of the world, where it comes from, where it is heading for. In his studies he came to the conclusion²:

“In no other heathen people that we Europeans know of have there existed so few misconceptions about the true nature of religion than in ancient Chia. Indeed I find in their books [the Confucian classic writings] that they have always revered the highest deity, which they call King of Heaven or Heaven and Earth (heaven and earth seem perhaps to be considered like a living being, like a live body with the highest deity as its soul)... They never accepted such improper teachings about the King of Heaven and his servants, the other spirits, as our Romans, the Greek, the Egyptians and other foreign peoples did. We may therefore have hope that many of their ancestors were saved through the natural law – the special help which God customarily grants to those who strive for it to the best of their abilities.”

In a period where dialogue is strongly advertised in the various parts of daily life, the approach of Ricci and his companions becomes a lecture for those who still do not admit that the time of European hegemony has passed. Asian and the young African States are making up in economy, in political power, in scholarship; they meet with the western world in growing self-confidence, insisting on independence, autonomy and less interference. The fundamental change in self-assurance reaches even into the field of religion. The controversies between the various levels of Chinese politics and the various Christian communities, not only the Catholic Church, should be examined more thoroughly in their complex motivations and causes.

² Cited from *K. Koschorke* (note 1) 35.

Samuel P. Huntington's plead against *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York 1996) is at once a strong demand of an encounter at eye-level. However, what does it mean? As you know, since his time of being a Cardinal, the Pope meets every year with his former students, and he did so this year again in Castel Gandolfo. One of the lectures given in front of the Pope on August 27 has been published by different news-agencies. Otto Neubauer, a Viennese member of the international community Emmanuel founded in Paris in 1998 reflected about *An Ever New Evangelization*³. He stated that we ourselves have to learn again to listen. Only if we are able to listen to our audience, people of today are enabled to understand *our* words and *our* narrations. In fact, they will not understand us, unless we get before a certain understanding of them. Therefore, the members of Emmanuel are going out to people who live in distance to the Church, to the poor, the marginalized, those who generally are despised and overlooked, and try to discover Christ's face in the face of the poor.

Preconditions

We like to talk about a Christian contextual theology for China. So far we did not mention theology at all. There are good reasons for it. We have to prepare first the ground for sharing our message with people who are not prepared to listen to us. We have to find out what people are interested in today, what kind of language they are speaking, what they are worrying about. Do we actually speak their language? Are they able and ready to understand what we are saying?

The first precondition we have to reflect upon is the question of language⁴. It is the privilege of human beings that we can change perspectives. We are able to observe the same thing or event from our own point of view as well as from other standpoints; we can see others with our own eyes and with the eyes of other persons. In other words, humans can leave their own place and move to the place of someone else. They can even leave their own language behind and change to the language of another person. We can learn foreign languages.

³ See e.g. ZENIT August 29, 2011.

⁴ I dealt with the problem of languages in more detail in the Dharma Endowment Lectures 2011/12 in Bangalore; see *H. Waldenfels, In-Between. Essays in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue*. Bangalore 2011, 71-92; also id., *Jesus Christ and the Religions. An Essay in Theology of Religions*. Milwaukee 2009, 85-91..

Presumably the implications of this possible change and process of learning are still often enough neglected. For as soon as we really change the language, we change our thought patterns and imaginations, too. Different languages imply different ways of thinking. Dictionaries are helpful, and we use them in order to find the proper equivalent for a specific single word. However, a simple word-by-word translation often enough misses the point and leads to misunderstanding, because quite a few words have their own hidden background, as each text possesses its context. However, it is one of the qualities of contexts that to a great extent they are many times hidden and difficult to perceive.

A fundamental characteristic of my own theological teaching is my strong insistence on the contexts of a text⁵ Theology elaborates mainly on texts. We are dealing e.g. with the words of Christ. We presume that he spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew; whether he spoke also in Greek, we do not know. When we communicate his teaching, we do it in form of translations, usually in our mother tongue. And preachers know well enough that many parts of Christ's doctrine, e.g. many parables, need to be explained for modern understanding because they originally reflect a different culture, different economics, and different ways of societal life. In preparation of a sermon, therefore, preachers, first, have to consider the circumstances of Jesus' own life; then they have to ask whether the audience will get an immediate understanding e.g. of Christ's message about the coming Reign of God. "Reign of God", "*basileia tou theou*" - what did it mean at his time, what does it mean in our days? For an increasing number of people even "God" has become a stranger in their life and in their daily conversation.

The problem increases when we become aware of the fact that God is ineffable and incomprehensible. How can human languages in their limitedness give expression to the ineffable? Does it not become more and more difficult to talk about God in a proper way? However, is it not one of the problems that we speak more *about* him and make him an "object" which we like to handle like any other object in our life, than to speak *with* him? Is it not our obligation and duty to introduce people into the mystery of God, to be mystagogic? Fortunately St. Paul gave us an answer in his Letter to the Romans where he wrote,

⁵ See H. Waldenfels, Kontextuelle Fundamentaltheologie. Paderborn ⁴2005; it. Teologia fondamentale nel contesto del mondo contemporaneo. Cinisello Balsamo 1988..

“The Spirit helps our weaknesses, for we don’t know how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which can’t be uttered.” (8,26)

Twofold Theological Movement

It is the fundamental message of Christian theology that God is Logos. According to the creation narrative God spoke, and it was so (cf. Gen 1). And the prologue of St. John’s Gospel begins with the words,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1.1)

Theos and *Logos* belong together. In its deepest sense it is the duty of *theology* to take care that God “becomes word” today. That is to say, a theologian does not dispose of God like an object; he only can prepare the road that people become listeners of the Word and be aware of the fact that God is the Lord and the subject of their life.

Actually we can distinguish between two movements in scholarly theology. I call them the theo-logical movement and the myst-agogic movement. As a teacher of fundamental theology I describe my own position as standing at the threshold of a door coming from inside and looking outside⁶. By coming from inside I understand myself as someone who has encountered the mystery of God and feels impelled to give witness of the encounter with God in words and deeds, in my whole life. By looking outside I am engaged to invite and lead people in their search and yearning to an understanding of the innermost mystery of life and to open their mind and their heart for their own encounter with the mystery which we call “God”. As mentioned before, it is the special profession of a theologian to prepare and invite people to open themselves for the Word and Spirit of God abiding in us. .

The Indian theologian Francis Vineeth is convinced that to a large extent westerners have lost the sense for the abiding presence of God’s Spirit in us. They are rather engaged in analytical thinking and looking for arguments to prove the existence of God, but are not aware of the fact which St. Augustine expressed with the words that God is “intimior intimo meo” (*Conf. 1,3,6,11*).

In his book *The Asian Vision of God* Vineeth reminds us that Martin Heidegger made a distinction between meditative and calculative thinking. Vineeth writes⁷,

⁶ See op.cit. 98; it. 101sq.

⁷ V.F. Vineeth, *The Asian Vision of God*. Bangalore 2004, 168sq. the following quotation: 168.

Heidegger “deplores that the West has given up the meditative thinking and thus has lost the serenity of mind. People are after calculative thinking because it brings immediate results, though in the long run it also brings strain and disharmony”.

And he adds,

“The rational approach to reality is an approach of ‘grasping’ and ‘abstracting’. It reduces reality to our pattern of understanding and develops an ‘idea’ about it. This is a wonderful process and we all need this. But the ultimate reality can never be known in this manner because it never becomes a proper object of our mind and really transcends all our attempts at grasping it.”

For this reason, the Asian theologian pleads for an “experiential and realizational approach” in order to guarantee that we meet with others in the strength and power of a living faith rooted in the union with Christ. Vineeth writes,

“The mind, though a powerful instrument at our disposal, to penetrate into the mystery of God, yet is incapable of understanding the profoundness of divine revelation. Hence, it surrenders itself in obedience to the self-revealing God, disposing itself to be characterized by the divine light. In this sense the first Christians said that every Christian is another Christ. Christ is best known by becoming another Christ, participating in the very consciousness of Christ, which in the course of time, resistlessly flows from him/her to the whole universe.”

On the Way to China

Intentionally I give an Asian theologian my voice, because he calls attention to shortcomings in the development of nowadays’ western theology. In a time of growing secularism and pluralism the need of spirituality is being felt everywhere around the world. Quite a few westerners turn eastward looking for spiritual inspiration. In central Europe we realize that quite a few people in their entire critical attitude toward the Church, nevertheless, yearn for spiritual values. Although the media world is spreading anxieties and concern regarding the Islamic influence in the west, the soft voice of Buddhism and other Asian religions can be heard everywhere. Many westerners recognize in Asian religions solutions for their irreligious way of life, because they discover spiritual ways of life without God and a promise of a life after death in reincarnation. Having this in mind we ask what Christianity will bring to China.

In a certain way modern China shares the same spiritual deficits as the western world. On the one hand, it enjoys a long history and tradition full of profound insights into the mysteries hidden in the cosmic order and in human society. Confucianism

and Daoism, later on Buddhism tried to answer the questions which humans ask as long as humans exist, Wise men like Confucius and Laozi explained the world in its origin and aim, formed human society, gave it governance and ethical rules, and revealed ways of salvation wherever people went astray and ended in wars and conflicts, in distress and calamities. Religions taught the doctrine of *Shangti*, the Lord of Heaven, of *Ti'en* and *Dao*, so that people lived in the expectation of happiness and a life in paradise.

On the other hand, it is partly due to the encounter with the western world that the sense for tradition was wiped out to a large extent and got lost. Since the beginning of the 20th century many intellectuals went to the west and carried home not only western scholarship, natural sciences and technological equipment, but also western ideologies like Darwinism, forms of Liberalism and finally Communism combined with a militant atheism. Teaching systems were remodeled according to western standards. The process of urbanization and industrialization, the spread of modern mass media produced a break-down of traditional moral life, so that in our days China looks for ways of a moral renewal.

In a continent where Christianity suffers under a deep crisis, it might appear astonishing, but it is a matter of fact that Christianity in China is met today with interest, curiosity and even enthusiasm. One of the reasons which date back to the various defeats toward the end of the 19th century can be seen in the presumed superiority of western scholarship and technology which was reduced to its ideological foundations. This, again, was judged in a double way: On the one hand, the cultural roots of Europe and the western world are being rightly connected with its predominant religion, Christianity; we speak today about the Judeo-Christian roots of Europe. On the other hand, as mentioned before, the secularizing processes of modern Europe exercise their influence, too.

The astonishing fact is the first instance. As we know, there exists today a considerable group of intellectuals, the so called "cultural Christians", most of them not baptized, who study Christianity and its history in order to find ways for an ethical renewal of modern China. Notwithstanding the various suppressive actions against Christians and the continuing political interference into ecclesial matters and community life, the interest in Christian studies at many universities is growing. Also the great number of baptisms in the various church communities of China, many of them young people and students, is surprising.

“Fides et ratio”

Here we have to ask: What do the Chinese find and recognize in the Christian Church what Europeans evidently do not see any longer? I visited China for the last time in 2005, shortly after the election of Pope Benedict XVI. The masses even on weekdays, early in the morning, were crowded. The well-known pictures of the Pope which were hanging in our churches at home, we had to pass while entering the churches. Friends who recently visited Beijing relate the same, - in times where many churches in our countries are empty. Evidently many people in China thirst for something beyond daily life.

One of the basic messages which the late Pope John Paul II and his successor Benedict XVI as well proclaim to the world is the deep connection of faith and reason. Reason is a precious gift which man has received from God, but reason of man is limited, - the reason of a single person and the reason of humankind in general. Faith, therefore, is – in the words of John Paul II - less an imperfect form of knowledge but “a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others” by which “a person finds a fullness of certainty and security” (John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, n. 32). What the Pope explains in philosophical manner can be applied in an even fuller sense to the level of theology and the divine virtue of faith. Recognizing one’s own limitations does not have to end in despair but calls for an attitude of new openness and hope.

Love

Faith in the Christian sense, however, is not fully grasped as long as we do not understand that it is grounded in the love of God. In his inaugural Encyclical *Deus Caritas est* Benedict XVI states,

“God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being, but this universal principle of creation –the *Logos*, primordial reason – is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love.” (n. 10)

Love is the center of Christian faith (in the sense of *fides qua* and *fides quae*), the highest of the commandments (Mt 22, 36-40), the “fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13.10). If we consider “love” – in the sense of the Greek term *agape* – as an act of total self-surrender and selflessness and make this the starting-point of an inquiry, it certainly will provoke a strong echo in the hearts of the Chinese. Of course, “love” in modern understanding has to be purified from any form of egotistic love; *agape* is not simply

identified with *eros*, but in a society in which many people egoistically seek only their own self-satisfaction, watch out for pleasure and live in self-indulgence, the spirit of love and solidarity, of mercy and devotion has to be restored.

In view of God's own self-surrender in the Incarnation of Christ God's love is beautifully described by St. Paul in the Letter to the Philippians 2,5-10,

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in the fashion of man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above all names: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth."

In view of the Greek text "*heauton ekenōsen*" we speak about Christ's *kenosis* and, consequently, about a kenotic theology. The term comes close to the Sanskrit Buddhist term *śūnyatā*, emptiness which is an expression for the total self-surrender which leads man to a total liberation from all constraint and bondage which is the reverse of a radical attitude of selflessness and service.

Service

God is invisible and ineffable. However, Christians confess that the invisible God has made himself visible in the face of Christ: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14,9). The person of Christ cannot be separated from his indissoluble union with God whom he calls his "Father",

"I and my Father are one" (John 10,30)

Encountering Christ means encountering God. Christ in person is the revelation of the essence of God. His own self-understanding, however, he expresses in the words,

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life at ransom for many." (Mk 10,45)

He identifies his life with service. I do not know whether the officials in governments called "ministers" are always aware of the origin of their title and act and live accordingly. Jesus himself gave the most impressive example of a life in service at the eve before he died, when he washed the feet of his disciples; St. John replaced even the narrative of the last supper by the act of washing the feet and gives thus the sacrament of the holy Eucharist an existential interpretation. Jesus explained his doing in the following way,

“Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord; and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Amen, amen, I say unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.”(John 13,12-16)

Service becomes here another term for selfless and universal love which does not exclude anybody and finds its continuation in the love of all creatures. Again there are points of contact with Asian religions. Buddhism e.g. knows about an undifferentiated love, as Christians are taught in the Sermon of the mountain where Jesus explains God’s undifferentiated love:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans so?” (Mt 5,44-46)

Selfless service is a way of changing society and the world. We live in a time when living examples are more inspiring than many words and arguments. Christianity does not bring new arguments, but introduces a vivid human personality who is not of legendary or mythical origin, but has entered human history, - a man who personifies the absolute authority of the universe and the eternal law and gives it a human face. It is the invaluable merit of the German sinologist and theologian Roman Malek to have investigated in *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ*; so far three heavy volumes have been published⁸. The voluminous documentation testifies that Jesus Christ fascinated the Chinese since his message entered the country, although occasionally other interests pushed him back and obscured the true profile of Christian self-understanding.

In a time when many people outside the Church get interested in the figure of Christ it would be a shame if Christians get engaged in all kinds of secondary subject matters and do not demonstrate their own enthusiasm about Christ and their way of following him. One fundamental question, therefore, is: How does Christianity, more precisely: how can Christians become a service to modern China? After all, it is told that in the time of the early Church people noticed and remarked, “Look, how they love each other!”

Love was the signature of Christians and their life, their mutual respect, their charity, their commitment for peace and reconciliation, for freedom and justice, the care for

⁸ See R. Malek (ed.), *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ*. St. Augustin vol. 1-3: 2002-2007.

the poor and the sick, for those who are despised and doomed to failure. Pope Benedict XVI repeatedly mentioned, recently again in Berlin, that success is no key-word of Christianity. Again, service and love are the signatures of Christian life because this way we share and participate in the life of Christ our Lord, his life and his passion, his death and his resurrection.

Life-giving Spirit

There is one more characteristic of Christian identity. Jesus died on the cross, but the cross was not his final stage. According to the Gospel of St. Luke his last words sounded like this, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (23,46) Jesus returned to the Father, - the proof of it is his resurrection. It was the incredible experience of his disciples that he met with them again after his death, although they were convinced that everything with him was in vain and useless, all their listening to him, all their communion and community with him. We recall the apostles staying in a house with the doors locked in Jerusalem, the disciples returning to their profession as fishermen to Galilee, the two men leaving Jerusalem for Emmaus, Mary Magdalene's mourning in the garden – all engaged to get settled in their thorough disillusionment after Christ's death. But all of them had their personal encounter with the risen Christ, and they had to learn that Christ's message was not a message of death, but the Gospel of life, of ever-lasting life.

Until today the Church proclaims the message of life. This is all the more important as our time is marked by a culture of death. Against the culture of death the Popes insist on the message of life. It applies to the beginning of life as well as to the end of earthly life. We know about many discussions in the various political bodies around the world, the life preventing discussions and the debate about the right of self-determination about time and way to die. And yet, most people yearn for longevity, and if possible, for a life after death. This is true, although at least in Europe an increasing number of people are doubtful whether a life-beyond exists or not.

It is not my intention to deal more deeply with the problem of life and death. I only wish to call attention to the fact that the Gospel of Life is one of the fundamental messages of the Christian Church. Therefore, the Church feels strongly obliged to bring hope and confidence to mankind by preaching the sermon of the living Christ. I am convinced that such a message exercises a considerable influence on the people because it gives them strong motives to form their daily life and conversation,

too. People who are convinced that they expect a future life assume a more optimistic and positive attitude than people who unhappily live a life which turns out to become a prison of sorrow and uneasiness and finds in death only its release. Believing in God the creator of life, in Christ the witness of life, and the life-giving Spirit is a way of salvation which many people are choosing also today. Their life witnessing becomes an invitation everywhere in the world, also in modern China.

Closing Remarks

I cannot finish my deliberations without extending my deeply felt gratitude, not only for the invitation to Macerata, but all the more for the constitution and founding of the promising Centro Studi Li Madou. I like to thank his Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop of Macerata Mons. Claudio Giuliadori for his generous commitment, as well as the members of the Italian Bishops' Conference which with their far-sightedness and support will definitely underline the high importance of the interest in China and the Chinese Church which belongs to the grave concerns and solitudes of our Holy Father Benedict XVI. We have to express our deep gratitude to all ecclesial, academic and political authorities. If I am not mistaken, Macerata turns out to become a significant center of Sino-Italian, Sino-European encounter by building up several institutions like the center of Confucius studies, the facilities for learning Chinese, the Editioe Fondazione Internazionale P. Matteo Ricci etc.

Upon all those who in the forthcoming time shall develop the new Centro Studi Li Madou, all who will be working with its president Rev. Dr. Giuseppe Jing, I like to call the plenitude of the blessing of our Lord. May He strengthen all of you with His grace, and may the Divine Spirit teach you how to build the bridge between China and other parts of the world. May He let the Chinese people know what the Spirit of love and life is able to grant them, - the Spirit which is not the spirit of fear but the Spirit of true freedom. True freedom is no cause for fear and anxiety. On the contrary, it will lead to new confidence, mutual trust and friendship. We have to leave behind the spirit of suspicion; instead, we have to meet in the Spirit of dialogue and openness by which we learn from each other. Only this enables us to construct a common future for all of us. May the good and merciful Lord be with all of us and watch upon us! .

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