



Memorandum of Antoine Cotta, C.M. (Apostolic Missionary) concerning the mission situation in China addressed to Cardinal Serafini, Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, 6 February 1917

John E. Rybolt

(Translator and Editor)

De Paul University, Chicago, USA

jerybolt@gmail.com

Abstract:

Antoine Cotta entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1891. His memorandum, addressed to Cardinal Serafini in 1917, advocates for the inclusion of Chinese clergy in the episcopate to address the dependency of the Church in China on European missionaries. This memorandum was designed to promote the access of Chinese clergy to the episcopacy, bolstered by reasons drawn from popes, bishops, and others. He believed that the practice at his time opposed such access. He critiques the “spiritual colonialism” within Chinese missions, highlighting a disconnect between papal directives and the practices of foreign-led missions, which often treat Chinese clergy as auxiliaries rather than leaders. Cotta argues that Chinese Christians must develop a self-sufficient Church to thrive, emphasizing that reliance on European resources and leadership hinders the growth and authenticity of Chinese Catholicism. He references various papal documents supporting the formation of an independent native clergy, and urges the Church to empower Chinese priests to take on full ecclesiastical roles. This memorandum is significant for its role in inspiring Pope Pius XI’s decision to ordain the first Chinese bishops in 1926, marking a turning point for the Catholic Church in China.

Antoine Cotta est entré dans la Congrégation de la Mission en 1891. Son mémorandum, adressé au cardinal Serafini en 1917, plaide pour l'inclusion du clergé chinois dans l'épiscopat afin de remédier à la dépendance de l'Église en Chine à l'égard des missionnaires européens. Ce mémorandum a été conçu pour promouvoir l'accès du clergé chinois à l'épiscopat, en s'appuyant sur des raisons tirées de papes, d'évêques et d'autres personnes. Il estime que la pratique de son époque s'oppose à cet accès. Il critique le « colonialisme spirituel » au sein des missions chinoises, soulignant le décalage entre les directives papales et les pratiques des missions dirigées par des étrangers, qui traitent souvent le clergé chinois comme des auxiliaires plutôt que comme des dirigeants. Cotta affirme que les chrétiens chinois doivent développer une Église autosuffisante pour prospérer, soulignant que la dépendance aux ressources et aux dirigeants européens entrave la croissance et l'authenticité du catholicisme chinois. Il fait référence à divers documents papaux soutenant la formation d'un clergé autochtone indépendant et exhorte l'Église à donner aux prêtres chinois les moyens d'assumer pleinement leur rôle ecclésiastique. Ce mémorandum est important car il a inspiré la décision du pape Pie XI d'ordonner les premiers évêques chinois en 1926, marquant ainsi un tournant pour l'Église catholique en Chine.



Antoine Cotta ingresó en la Congregación de la Misión en 1891. Su memorándum, dirigido al cardenal Serafini en 1917, aboga por la inclusión del clero chino en el episcopado para hacer frente a la dependencia de la Iglesia en China de los misioneros europeos. Este memorándum pretendía promover el acceso del clero chino al episcopado, apoyándose en razones extraídas de papas, obispos y otros. En su opinión, la práctica de su época se oponía a dicho acceso. Cotta critica el «colonialismo espiritual» de las misiones chinas y subraya la desconexión entre las directrices papales y las prácticas de las misiones dirigidas por extranjeros, que a menudo tratan al clero chino como auxiliares y no como líderes. Cotta sostiene que los cristianos chinos deben desarrollar una Iglesia autosuficiente para prosperar, subrayando que la dependencia de los recursos y el liderazgo europeos obstaculiza el crecimiento y la autenticidad del catolicismo chino. Hace referencia a varios documentos papales que apoyan la formación de un clero nativo independiente, e insta a la Iglesia a capacitar a los sacerdotes chinos para que asuman funciones eclesiológicas plenas. Este memorándum es importante porque inspiró la decisión del Papa Pío XI de ordenar los primeros obispos chinos en 1926, lo que marcó un punto de inflexión para la Iglesia católica en China.

Keywords: China, Cotta, Lebbe, Chinese clergy

Editorial Introduction

Antoine Cotta, born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1872, entered the Congregation of the Mission in Paris in 1891. He made his vows two years later and after completing his studies was ordained a priest in 1898. He was sent first to Madagascar and in 1906 was transferred to the northern district of China. While a student, he became a life-long friend of Vincent Lebbe, in China from 1901. Cotta remained in the northern district until his return to Europe after the end of the First World War, 1919. He soon went to the United States, serving in the Eastern Province of the Vincentians but left the Congregation in 1923 to enter the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, known commonly as the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, founded in 1911.

His important “Memorandum” or “Memoir” speaks for itself in the sense that his purpose was to promote the access of Chinese clergy, including Vincentians, to the episcopacy. He cited several reasons drawn from popes, bishops, and others. Addressed to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, Propaganda Fide (“for the propagation of the faith”), his hope was that his voice would be heard. It is presumed that his work did serve as one of the major sources of inspiration to Pius XI, pope from 1922 to 1939. In the jubilee year of 1926, Pius concentrated on the propagation of the Catholic faith throughout the world, and one element of this was his ordination of six Chinese bishops, the first Chinese to become bishops for two centuries.

The translator has, besides producing an English translation from the original French, decided to translate the extensive Latin citations (set in italics below) that Cotta cited for his work. Some editorial additions have been made to the original text, such as proper names of most individuals and the full titles of the works that the author cited. Numbers in square brackets refer to the pages of the original text. The standards of American punctuation and capitalization have been followed.

It is hoped that this text, long neglected, will be studied and appreciated for its role in the evangelization of China. The original French text can be requested from the author for those who are interested: jrybolt@depaul.edu.

Memorandum

Sienchoeikou, 29 December [1916]

Most Reverend Eminence,

In presenting this memoir to you, we feel torn between two opposing feelings: on the one hand, the fear and a certain dread of judging our natural judges, of setting ourselves up as champions of the Church and the law, when we have neither the authority to do so, nor the sanctity of Saint Bernard to assume this role. On the other hand, it is the confidence that our ideas are not our own, but that they are those of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiffs and the Sacred Congregation ... that, were we Saint Bernard, we would feel even more keenly the sense of our unworthiness; but also more strongly the contrast, so obvious and so inexplicable at first sight, between the directions of Rome and the prevailing ideas in these dear and distant Missions.

The same is true for the result: we seem to be heading for mountains of difficulties, in trying to bring to fruition the age-old wish of the Sovereign Pontiffs, the realization of which has run up against seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and at the same time, the question seems to us susceptible of a simple, satisfactory and, we dare say, immediate solution.

God, who sees the depths of hearts, knows that we have no ulterior motive, that our most vehement desire is to inform the legitimate authority, to beg it to cast a compassionate eye on this Far East, which comprises half the sons of Adam called to become children of God.

Statement of the Question.

What strikes and saddens us is the perpetual contrast between the pontifical directions and the tendencies of the missions in China. The Holy See wants these Christian communities to live a full and fruitful life of their own, and yet they are still minors, like spiritual colonists.

The contrast is no less striking and painful if we examine the results: like any incomplete organism that is not sufficient to sustain itself, but must live on borrowings, the Church in China lives off foreigners and depends on foreigners for leadership, recruitment and material resources. This situation, which at the origin of all present-day Christian countries was a necessary but transitory stage, has been the norm for the Church in China for centuries. Let 's first take note of the fact, before examining its causes.

If foreigners suddenly disappeared, all Christianity would be in disarray. This is precisely what is said to prove the incapacity of the Chinese and their inability to be self-sufficient. We shall see if this conclusion is legitimate.

In the meantime, the fact remains that the Church of China is an incomplete organism, and for so many centuries has been unable to develop. Yet God wills the salvation of this good, moral but misunderstood people. The era of bloody persecution has been succeeded by tolerance, but not, on the whole, by sympathy: nowhere do we see a large group following the Law of Jesus Christ. From this fact, Europeans draw the conclusion that the Chinese are a material people. Examination of the causes will tell us what to think. For the moment, the fact remains: there is one Catholic in nearly three hundred inhabitants.

The Europeans say: We cannot imitate the apostles and, following their example, set up complete Churches, because this people is difficult to convert and govern. Would the truth not be that the conduct of Europeans, this reluctance to follow the path so often laid out by sovereign authority, and which the Church shows us on every page of her history, is cause and not effect? For one of the essential conditions for the conversion of a people is that Religion becomes acclimatized there, that its ministers do not regard the children of this people as half-foreigners in the Church, on pain of seeing the Church itself regarded as a foreigner.

A comparison with the most widespread religions in China makes this fact all the more striking: Buddhism holds pride of place. The hundreds of millions of Buddhists in China know full well that their deity is Indian, and even today, the idols before which they prostrate themselves have no Chinese features ... and Buddhism flourishes, alas! and the contributions of its followers suffice to build and maintain countless pagodas, often grandiose: this is because neither the monks nor the resources come from India: the link is purely spiritual.

The Muslims are in the same situation, and with infinitely less proselytizing, not to mention divine grace, they outnumber us twenty or thirty to one. Even more, a few decades ago, the Muslims as such revolted against the Empire. It was a veritable civil war, long and cruel. And the bloodshed left no trace: once again, Muslims are citizens like any others, while Catholics are in a class of their own, even though they never fought a revolution. Chinese Muslims, while answerable to foreign rulers, understand this only in terms of doctrine, and claim neither the gold nor the sword of the Grand Turk [the Sultan].

Pontifical directives.

Over the centuries, the Supreme Pontiffs have never ceased to remind us of the Church's doctrine and discipline on this point:

their directions are clear, their exhortations pressing. Foreign missionaries in China must aim to render themselves useless, through the constitution of a complete native clergy, including the episcopate: such is the rule repeatedly recalled, sometimes under threat of disciplinary penalties, as by Pope Innocent XI ... and these directions are regarded as *verba volantia* [fleeting words]: a missionary, in a work published in 1911, was of this opinion: *Méthode de l'Apostolat moderne [en Chine]*, by Father [Louis] Kervyn (Imprimerie de Nazareth. Hongkong, 1911).

On 7 April 1678, the S[acred] C[ongregation] of Propaganda Fide determined the extent and limits of the rights and privileges of indigenous bishops. Since then, Rome has never been silent on this vital question, and the fact that there has so far been only one Chinese bishop, Louo wen tsao ([Grégoire] Lopez/Wenzao), has not discouraged her in her zeal to point the way.

One of the most explicit documents is the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation, dated 23 November 1845: "The Holy See has always taken to heart the propagation of the Faith. The example of the apostles, and the constant practice of the Church, demonstrate the importance of two points: the mission of bishops, "whom the Holy Spirit sent to rule the Church of God," and the necessity of a native clergy: "Long ago, bishops were ordained in all provinces and individual cities (Saint Cyprian) and so it was insisted for clergy to be made from indigenous people for the stability and increase of the Christian religion, and bishops were very strongly urged that the clergy be indigenous." Hence the abundant

alms sent to bishops for the work of indigenous seminaries, and hence the numerous national colleges established at great expense either in Rome or elsewhere.

The Sovereign Pontiffs' thinking is clear, their will formal. His Holiness Innocent X wrote: *In this way, progress was made that through its legates, they should even establish apostolic vicars, and, struck with canonical penalties, they were urged to establish and ordain clerics and true priests, and thus even little by little there would be the institution of indigenous bishops.*

The indigenous levites should be formed to all knowledge and piety, and be exercised in the sacred ministry, so that what the apostolic see has desired, that they would be empowered for the clerical life and become correctly prepared for their mission, and become worthy even of the episcopal character.

Consequently, they should agree on the most outstanding among the indigenous clergy of the mission, that he would gradually be formed to fulfill the more important works, and they should not, when opportunity summons, deny appointing them.

Hence, the custom will be rejected and completely abrogated that indigenous priests be deprived of the help of the clergy, and rightly suffer from this.

17 June 1853 – *The Sacred Congregation came to an agreement that those who formerly were destined nearly to a condition of servants, abjection and contempt, should be raised up and gradually and evidently become suitable through an accurate [6] and diligent education in all knowledge and piety, for undertaking the leading duties of the Mission, by which they could at last take up the Missions themselves, instructed sufficiently by a flourishing native clergy, and not with external help, that is, by needing the work and broader ministry of European missionaries, rectors, moderators and pastors, and also, thanks to these native priests, they might be placed in leadership without regularly needing the help of workers from Europe.”*

12 June 1858 – *A native clergy should be cared for and developed so that, with the time comes, as the mentioned Instruction recommended, and have likewise recommended the suggested rules of the seminary, they should be strong enough to undertake any offices in the Church, without needing the direction of European workers.*

19 March 1893 – *Indeed, the bishops should agree on this, as decided, that they could advance together with European missionaries, as it should be, and at least be able to establish Christianity among the [unbaptized] peoples.*

Each time that this Sacred Congregation has renewed the repeated invitations and again ordered this for Bishops of that region, that it should be done at even greater price, they should study how to form indigenous clergy, and numerous ones, instructed in sacerdotal virtues.

Besides, when Christ founded his Church that all nations should be embraced in its outreach, there should be no doubt that the greatest gifts of the charisms should flourish in nearly all nations, by the outpouring of his spirit, which breathes where it wills, it has built it the weak strengths of nature that they should rise to the difficulties.

It should rather be worked on so that [7] what God has granted to human industry, we should faithfully follow this ... so that with native clergy formed in all knowledge and piety, with equal attention to education, it may be conferred on future priests to be able properly to undertake any sacerdotal offices.

Encyclical [*Ad Extremas*] of Leo XIII, 24 June 1893 - *We will do whatever will be fruitful there for salvation and for the increase of faith and piety. The preservation of the Christian faith among the Hindus will be precarious and its propagation uncertain as long as there is not a native clergy properly trained for priestly duties, not only to be of assistance to foreign priests, but also to be in rightful charge of the administration of the Christian Church in their cities.*

The Holy Father cites the testimony of Saint Francis Xavier and gives a few reasons: knowledge of the language, acclimatization, native mistrust of foreigners: *Indians among Indians should be formed without any suspicion, that it could scarcely be said or greatly feared....* If there is an insufficient number of Europeans, possible unrest will result.

Finally, there must be respect for antiquity; whatever we see advantageously established in times past must be religiously preserved. Now, it was the practice of the Apostles first to instruct the multitude in Christian precepts, then to select several from the people and initiate them into the sacred mysteries and even elevate them to the episcopacy.

Hence, there are hardly any seminaries where candidates are able to complete a prescribed course of studies-and this is at a time when the civil government and Protestants, in large numbers, are sparing no expense nor effort to offer young men a judicious and refined education.

Current situation.

Alas! What must we now think of the holy Pontiffs who showed us the way? And of the apostles and the great missionaries who were proposed to us for imitation, and who conquered the Faith in entire provinces? The Martins, the Augustinians, the Bonifaces, the Cyrils and the Methodius? What must the countless virgins, confessors, apostles and martyrs of the Church of China think?

How is it that what has made the holy Church great everywhere, and revealed its divine origin: its universality and its same love for all men, is lacking here? How is it that Peter, who cast his nets so widely in other lands, still seems, as far as this immense country is concerned, to be working in a night without dawn? Why, after his solemn warnings, are the faithful of China and the eight hundred native priests regarded as second-class Christians, and priests like the children of Hagar?

There are many reasons why Europeans still keep China's Christianity as a spiritual colony. We do not deny the orders of the pope and the Sacred Congregation: but, we argue, we distinguish: it is the old question of law and fact.

Reason number one: Chinese incapacity.

And first of all, the Europeans say that the Chinese are incapable of [9] making good bishops: it is therefore in vain that Rome urges us: we do not have the necessary elements. And as the remark: that such a general judgment, even if true - we shall see that this is not the case - to a certain extent cannot be applied to each and every one of the native priests as this remark naturally presents itself to the mind, we ran across a priest who summarized all the possible accusations to overwhelm the Chinese with them, and to conclude in his book (*Méthode de l'Apostolat moderne* Kervyn) : "The Chinese are of an inferior nature - they have an additional original sin." One need only glance at the Table of Contents to see the author's style, and leaf through the book to judge from his

references that the discourses of European moralists on the vices of their own countries are applied to each and every Chinese. Nothing found favor with Father Kervyn; and the constancy and heroism of the martyrs of 1900, who "surpassed the expectations of their fathers in the Faith," (words of Fr. Wieger, S. J., *Sermons*), are passed over in silence. And the author is unafraid, when speaking of certain disorders, to describe the mysteries of brothels (pp. 744-745).

And not a single authorized voice has condemned this book, except that of Father Ricci¹ because this book is unfortunately representative, and it has been welcomed by the majority of Europeans. Also, the author, after saying that the European clergy alone are "*virtuous, learned, apostolic,*" goes so far as to write of the holy Pope Innocent XI: "Surely, if he had known the real value of the native clergy of this country, Pope Innocent XI would have been careful not to say to Bishop Pallu: '*I would rather learn of the ordination of a single native priest than the conversion of fifty thousand pagans.*'" These words come from a soul too enthusiastic and infatuated with ideals to stop a serious observer who learns above all from the school of experience" (page 598).

This work, approved by the regular superiors and the Apostolic Vicar, and recommended by the Catholic Missions of Lyon, has not been denounced by any authorized voice. This is because the ideas that the author has pushed to the point of excess and blasphemy are more or less those of our superiors as a whole. The *Vae* [Woe!] of the Gospel have not stigmatized this pharisaism. The hearts of our bishops have not been stirred by outrage against their priests. Thousands of native priests, where the saints, the apostles, the martyrs, often true bishops while lacking only the title, confessors of the Faith, a sacred phalanx that our common Father raised up to fulfill the wish of the holy Pope ... are dishonored, and their fathers and pastors have not protested, because it really seems that Rome, Leo XIII, the Propaganda, gives Instructions proceeding from enthusiasm and are not serious observers.

Is it the idea of the essential inferiority of the Chinese that always keeps them in a diminished position, "they deserve the trouble"? Or is this obliviousness of Roman decisions a justification for age-old conduct? We do not know: but this is the fact. Saint Paul could say of the Cretans: "always liars, vicious beasts, ... lazy gluttons," but he consecrated a Cretan bishop, with the mission of perpetuating the sacred hierarchy among this people so severely judged. The words of Saint Augustine are still true: *Ama et fac quod vis*: [Love, and do what you wish] and on the other hand, the Chinese priests, our brothers, who on the whole are better than we are, are not Titus and Timothy to Paul's successors.

Here is a hypothesis that has already been put forward: if we disappeared overnight, what would become of the Church in China?

Precisely, the answer condemns us, far from justifying us. This is one of the reasons given by Rome for us to prepare all the elements of a complete clergy on the spot, including the episcopate: that we aim to make ourselves useless, after having been auxiliaries. But the Europeans feel and make themselves necessary. And Rome is disarmed.

A comparison will obviate the need for any further elaboration. A leader in industry usually retires within two or three years. After that, he has to hand over the direction of his work to others. He has two ways of dealing with his eventual successor:

¹ By insulting all the indigenous clergy, by repeating, that is, in his filthy book, many evils that authors have written about this. *Biografia di Antonio Maria Sacconi*, by Padre Giovanni Ricci, O.F.M., Roma. Tip. pontificia, 1913, page 1 and passim.

1) He can treat him as if he were his own son, and focus solely on the work itself. He will employ these three years to initiate and prepare this beloved son; and when the time comes, he will say to him: From now on, everything rests on you: my [12] happiness and honor will be to see our company prosper: *I have shown you everything... Nihil subtraxi utilium* [I have left aside nothing useful].... But I myself, though retired from business, will be at heart with you. If I can be of help, do not be afraid to call on my experience and affectionate devotion.

2) On the contrary, he may say to himself: Up to now I have made the company prosper, and now that it is yielding more profits than losses, I must retire. We will see if my successor knows his trade. And he initiates him only imperfectly, if at all. When it is time to retire, he will hand over the accounts faithfully and give him his instructions, thinking: I may go bankrupt in a few years' time, but I will wash my hands of it. And bankruptcy would prove both the accuracy of his predictions and the iniquity of his calculation. His constituents would be faced with a painful dilemma: either uncertainty or bankruptcy, or the preservation of this industry leader.

Apart from this immoral calculation, isn't this exactly our situation? For centuries, Rome has been insisting that the Chinese "should become prepared for the government of the missions and should also be of the episcopal character." And they are still needed.

One of the reasons, not the main one, but sufficient nonetheless to make us accept the secular wish of the Sovereign Pontiffs, to bring us back at last to the Apostolic Tradition, recalled by Leo XIII in his Encyclical of 24 June 1893, is the eventuality of the retreat of the Europeans. This is no pipe dream and has already been partly realized by the mobilization of missionaries [13] and the voids caused by the European conflagration. If, by chance, China had become involved in the world war, on the side of the central powers, dozens of vicariates would have been disorganized overnight, and the falseness of the situation in which the Christians of these vicariates would have found themselves more often flying the tricolor flag [of France] than the Pope's, and more or less giving themselves up as subjects of France; this would have been obvious to all eyes.

Even before the current crisis, the Paris Foreign Mission Society had difficulty recruiting. The war has left even more gaps. If the Society has to cede a few vicariates to others, will it ever occur to it to entrust the direction of a few churches to the native priests trained by it, to this secular clergy, the object of the Pope's wishes, always treated as a second-class clergy, although the primary object of the said Society? - Alas! Alas!

What are we to make of this inability?

Is this alleged inability, assumed to be true for now, in the sense in which it is understood in practice, i.e., also distributive, if it is not an end of non-receipt, not accidental, and would it be incurable? In other words, who is responsible, the Chinese or the Europeans?

The Chinese are an intelligent, moral people, who have nothing in common with Europeans in terms of open-mindedness, balance and maturity of judgment. Yet our priests are a moral elite chosen by God, and capable of general and [14] complete training. If the talents He has placed in their souls do not develop perfectly, it is not because they are radically incapable, but because their preparation is inadequate.

You only have to look around to see that the Chinese who spend a few years in Europe and America assimilate the languages, sciences and procedures of Europe very well. Even more, in their own country, under either foreign or native professors, they acquire the

knowledge they need to become officers, doctors, lawyers, etc. And the English Government admits Chinese graduates from Hong Kong to the practice of law and medicine in England.

So here is the first answer: We do not have the same will as Protestants, as Leo XIII said on 24 June 1893: *Scarcely or almost so is a seminary some place in which the education of the students should be regarded as finished and completed, and that in this time when the governors of civil life and Protestants in no small number spare nothing, neither burdens nor labors, so that everything should be taught with finesse to youth.*”

If we proceeded with the determined idea of preparing successors for ourselves, the establishment of seminaries would serve this purpose. But there is something here that the Propaganda Instructions as well as the Pontifical Encyclicals are powerless to control: It is an imponderable, it is in the atmosphere, and the newcomers from Europe, at first full of holy zeal and "Catholic" charity, rarely resist this influence, and soon find it quite natural to be, at twenty-five, the superiors of venerable Chinese priests aged sixty-five and seventy. They even end up [15] theoretically admitting that Chinese priests are eternal auxiliaries.

One statement among a thousand: Bishop X wrote in 1911, after forty-three years of missionary work: Native priests are of great service.... They are almost indispensable, as they know the language, customs, mentalities, etc., of their fellow citizens better than Europeans.... To try to do without their help *would for us to become unable to do good.* And this praise is crowned by the statement: "Chinese priests are always valuable auxiliaries...." (Msgr. [Joseph] Fréri, *Native Clergy [for mission countries]*, New York, 1917).

As for the pontifical directions on this point, there are some who, after ten or fifteen years of residence, ignore them absolutely; such as Bishop Y, a holy missionary nevertheless, and enlightened, and who was for many years director of the major seminary of Z.

Having arrived in China in 1901, he did not find out about this until 1916. At least we could have recourse to Europe, sending clerics or young priests to Rome to complete their clerical training. The solution is simple. Cardinal [Girolamo Maria] Gotti suggested it to Bishop Jarlin some ten years before, to no avail! The record of our provincial assembly in Chala, near Peking, in April 1914, will seem unbelievable, but it is absolutely accurate. We can affirm, on our priestly honor, that everything was faithfully reported: it is like a [16] terror, a dread of the thought of Rome. Is there any country in the world as far from the center of Catholicism as China? No one is there to represent a million and a half Catholics and eight hundred native priests; and no one is here to see, hear and inform the Holy Father: *“They face the word with one and the same mind, and from the most distant ends of the earth they have been seen to raise their hands to the See of Peter.”* (Instr. Prop. Fide, 1845) And before these four hundred million infidels, it seems to us that the heart of the Sovereign Pontiff is moved with compassion like that of St. Paul in Athens: “his spirit was being provoked within him as he observed that the city was full of idols.”

The simple act of addressing Rome is “sometimes regarded as a crime. Ten years ago, the Christians of Peking addressed a petition to His Holiness, asking him to support the creation of a large Catholic school in their capital. To translate this letter into French, they turned to M. X, a very pious and zealous missionary. For this reason Bishop Y told me that he had been on the point of forbidding it at Father Fiat's request. In recalling this detail, I wonder if I will not be judged to be hallucinating, and yet it is the truth: ‘God know that I am not lying.’”

Here, then, is the painful fact: we would deliberately like to eternalize the contradictions, the insufficiency of means in relation to the end willed by God and his representative, that we would not act any other way: “what we have seen and heard.”

We read in the Journal of André Ly (edited by [17] Père Launay, published by Picard, Paris [1906]) a letter dated 1752, recounting an event that took place in 1709: *Both the Most Eminent Legate (De Tournon), and our Father de la Baluère experienced great difficulty concerning our ordination, as you can understand from this. For when this Eminent Lord, by apostolic authority, had authorized the approach to Holy Orders opened for the Chinese nation, and when it seemed to us that they could read and write Latin, and be able to speak it, we invited all those missionaries of various nations and religious communities established in Macao for their advice and meet with us, and we sought their agreement. Everyone unanimously opposed this proposition, and they explained it in this opinion of theirs: The Chinese are proud, unreliable and ungrateful, and they are likewise unworthy of being advanced to Holy Orders. Then De la Baluère spoke in favor of the Chinese to the legate: Not a few are found in Europe involved in these and similar vices, and so all Europeans are regarded as devoted the same vices. For, how wicked is the man given over to some vice; but how good if it is given by the grace of God. Our own France, suggests M. De la Baluère, speaking to the nuncio: Your Eminence knew well that after their conversion to God after two centuries, that the clergy, who lacked their own native priests, had to seek out what was done by the Romans and by the people of France who were enslaved by games, frivolities and hunting. Nonetheless, by God’s grace, the same lord continued, our entire French church, about a thousand years ago, profited from its clerical ministries and needed nothing else from outside.*

The same Most Eminent legate of the Holy See, moved by these and other very solid reasons, most willingly gave the clerical [18] tonsure to all the available missionaries in the year 1709 (page 221).

Two centuries pass. The year is 1909. A letter from a venerable apostolic vicar dated 26 November echoed the thoughts of the Macao missionaries. The idea was to send a priest to help an overworked Chinese priest. The apostolic vicar gives the district director his line of action: “You would work to help N. You could not, however (underlined in the text) send a European to help a Chinese priest. It has never been done, and it would not do to start with a confrere.”

Thus, not only has Rome, which ultimately decides on the appointment of bishops, up to now enshrined the traditional practice of taking Europeans, as expressed in 1920 by the *Echo de Chine*, the newspaper of the Shanghai foreign missions, but the first step in the institution of the native episcopate, namely a beginning of equality between Europeans and Chinese, is contrary to tradition!

The same reasons, the same reluctance to enter into the Church's views, still remain. But we have no legate, alas!

**There have been, and there are now,
Chinese capable of becoming excellent bishops.**

Bishop Louo (Lopez) left behind a reputation as a good and holy bishop. Notes preserved in Fokien, written by Spanish missionaries, attribute several miracles to him. [19]

The virtues and knowledge of Father Lopez, who studied at Saint Thomas University in Manila, shone brightly. *Les Nouvelles Religieuses* (15 July 1921) devoted a fine article to him. They quote Fr. Launay, recounting how Bishop Pallu, on his visit to Madagascar, met Father Lopez through Father Navarette, whose zeal, talents and virtues were much admired. We regret to find the following passage in an article in *Les Études*: "As for the pious and reserved Bishop Lopez, he was guilty of humility and ignorance. His confreres in Manila exclaimed when the idea of making him a bishop was mooted: he could scarcely have explained the canon of the Mass!" (5-20 March 1920).

M. André Ly, the author of the Journal quoted above, a large volume of 700 pages, which he wrote out of obedience, as head of the Mission during this period, was an admirable priest. His European confreres proposed him for the episcopate, and Père Launay said of him: "This priest, stripped of all authority except that given him by his talents, virtues and work, had almost no resources in men or money; and if his perseverance, energy, zeal and piety shine out more brightly in the solitude and the deprivation in which he lived, his skill in handling men and in governing affairs did not have many opportunities to assert itself. We can, however, glimpse, through the advice he gives to one or two native priests, to catechists, to Christians, through the cases of conscience he raises and those he directs, the general direction he could have given to an entire mission. What we would say of him could not give an exact idea of his character and his work, as recorded [20] in this Diary, written in elegant Latin, and which covers the years when he was in charge of the entire mission, 1746-1763.

Here is a Chinese appointed archbishop of Setch'oan by Benedict XIV himself, and who had never been an archbishop or vicar apostolic: Our friend, Fr. Pius Liou, a disciple of the late Illustrious and Most Reverend *Bishop Johannes Mullener, bishop of Myriophytus, apostolic vicar of this province of Setch'oan, sent him ten or more years ago to the college in Naples, where he completed his course of studies and was ordained to the priesthood with seven other Chinese students.* He was kept in the same college, and on 13 November 1751 wrote his letter and spoke to me in the following terms:

"Our superior, Fr. Gennaro Fatigato, burning with love for God's glory and zeal for the salvation of souls redeemed through the precious blood of the Lamb, on 1 March 1750 went to Rome, and spoke in these words to His Holiness about the status of the China mission: Most Holy Father, It is nearly extinct because of the lengthy and furious persecution. Hearing this, the pope rose a little from his throne, and said the following words to the abovementioned priest: What should I do? In response, he said: In Naples at present there are eight Chinese men recently ordained. They are already well instructed, and they are ready to undertake the Gospel ministry. When he heard this, he said that the Supreme Pontiff gathered us all in Rome and brought us before four of the Most Eminent Cardinals, on the appointed day, in his presence. When the examination was completed, besides the benevolent gifts that His Holiness gave to us in the presence of everyone, sitting and standing around, he several times repeated [21] in these words: You have answered excellently. Your teaching is correct and solid, and therefore I follow it. This college, dedicated to the Holy Family, certainly deserves you. When this was complete, the Sacred Congregation consulted with His Holiness, Benedict, XIV and they agreed that four of us (that is, Vitalis Kouo, from Shansi, Dominic Tchao, from Shantung, Simon Tchao, from Houkoan, and Paul Tchay, Tchanchoun, a village, would be sent this year to the missions, but he chose also D. Vitalis Kouo, as the most apt for the episcopal dignity and burden, as the best one to be the next archbishop in the province of Setch'oan" (Diary, pp. 249–250).

This archbishop, whom Benedict XIV appointed in person, and whom M. André Ly calls "*generosissimus Christi athleta*" [a most generous athlete of Christ] (page 39), worked in the province of Chensi, of which he was provicar (p. 546), while Setch'oan, which the Holy Father had assigned to him, was practically deprived of apostolic vicars for some twenty years: In 1760, ten years after Benedict XIV's decision, M. Ly wrote this to Propaganda Fide: That "an apostolic vicar and bishop, so long desired by the Christians, should have been sent to this desolate mission some twenty years ago by its Shepherd; therefore let him be appointed and sent as soon as possible."

Like Father Ly, Mr. Mathieu Sué, a Lazarist, was entrusted with an entire mission at a difficult time. Like him, he maintained and extended the Kingdom of God in the absence of European missionaries: In 1820, M. Lamiot, forced to leave the capital of China, left M. Sué in a difficult position, establishing him as superior of [22] the French Mission. Mr. Sué fulfilled his duties to general satisfaction: "He was always a model of apostolic zeal.... This confrere combined more than ordinary virtue with a talent for spiritual and temporal administration." according to Bishop Mouly (*Mémoire de Chine*, III. 68). Later, Bishop Anouilh painted this portrait of him: "In our Mother House in Paris, I had the good fortune to see several holy old men. I had no idea that I would find an even more venerable old man in China. I had only seen portraits of Saint Vincent, and I thought I saw our Blessed Father alive and well in the person of M. Sué. Do you not remember, Monseigneur (Mouly), that gentle and always affable physiognomy, that white face full of candor, those lips always painted with a gentle smile? Do not you remember that snow-white hair and beard, that broad, wrinkle-free, serene forehead? Seeing him, I also seemed to see his ever-pure soul and the beloved of the good Lord." (*Mém. Chine*, III. 363).

Peace returned, and brought back the foreign missionaries. In 1835, after fifteen years of fruitful superiority, Mr. Sué was succeeded by a young missionary, aged twenty-eight—he himself was fifty-four—Bishop Mouly recounts the event and notes his impressions: "I arrived happily at Si-Wan around mid-June 1835. It is impossible to describe the warm welcome everyone gave me, especially our good and esteemed M. Sué, who immediately relinquished all his authority. He did not stir a straw, did not deal with the smallest matter without [23] communicating it to me and getting my decision or my feeling on how to act. I never had the slightest reproach, the slightest advice to give him, so accustomed was he to doing things well, with weight and measure. I was very young, eight years old [as a bishop]. But he saw me as his superior, God's representative, and that was enough for his spirit of faith and piety. Of course, for my part, I had every possible respect for him, doing nothing, especially in the early days, without his permission, since he knew all the business better and understood it better than I did. I was truly ashamed to see this venerable old man, so humble and submissive, in front of such a small, newly-arrived young man. By his regularity and good example, Mr. Sué exerted a salutary influence on me which kept me in the right. I do not remember ever noticing anything wrong or reprehensible in him. He left us gently and effortlessly, like a candle that has burned to the end. After his death, his face appeared even more beautiful than when he was alive. Although he had been left in the room for eight days without being buried, his body exhaled no bad odor, and remained absolutely flexible as before. He gave up his beautiful soul to God on 17 December 1860. He died in the odor of sanctity and with the reputation of a saint given to him by the common voice." (*Mém. Chine*, III. 575-577).

In Peking, we met a venerable Chinese priest, Mr. Wang Paul, a talented writer and distinguished orator. His gentle [24] and modest air reminded us of Saint Paul's words exhorting the faithful: *per mansuetudinem Christi* [through the meekness of Christ].

When he died in 1913, a small notice recalled his uniform and irreproachable life: flowers on a grave! a belated tribute to those who have always been in minor orders. This young man is pious," wrote Bishop Mouly in 1860, "educated and gifted with above-average judgment and intelligence. This is how he is portrayed here, and how he will remain for the rest of his life." Bishop Mouly took him to France in 1860 and changed his mind at Shanghai, from where he sent him back to Peking. He was already looking forward to seeing our superiors and confreres in Paris, and especially Pope Pius IX, so our new decision touched him deeply and brought tears to his eyes. Nevertheless, he had enough virtue to resign himself appropriately. Throughout his life, Mr. Wang was a worthy and venerable priest. In Tientsin, Mr. Dillon, consul of France, placed himself under his [spiritual] direction. He was invariably regular, [to] his last days. Thanks to his regularity, his whole life was one of remarkable equality. For fifty years, he always fulfilled his duties with the same irreproachable exactitude. He left his room only for the confessional and vice versa. He was never seen out and about, let alone on vacation. He had a strong sense of the respect and consideration due to the hierarchy.

Mr. Wang was a true scholar. Thanks to his ceaseless labor, never wasting his time: he used his shortest spare time to compose and translate these religious books. The last of his many works is the publication of his sermons, the echo of a 40- [25] year apostolate. The mere enumeration of his works will give an idea of his labor and merits. His works follow. (*Bulletin Catholique de Pékin*. December 1913, pp. 19–23; *Annales de la Cong. de la Mission*, 1914. pp. 268–273).

Some twenty years ago, Bishop [Valentin] Garnier, S.J., of Shanghai, on his way to a synod, was accompanied by Father Laurent Li, also a Jesuit, an accomplished priest of proven knowledge and piety, author and translator of works on religion, asceticism, science and philosophy. Some confreres refused to recognize him as a delegate to the synod. Father Li wanted to slip away, but his superior would not allow it, and finally, to establish his ability, he was required to deliver a speech in French or Latin to the future members of the synod. He acquitted himself with honor, speaking in Latin for an hour on the subject indicated.

What if such an ordeal were imposed on European missionaries, including apostolic vicars! If they had to give a speech, in Chinese, to an average audience! Those of us on the spot doubt very much that two or three percent would emerge victorious from the ordeal.

Just one current example, because it is public: recently an American Catholic magazine, *Good Work*, published a portrait of a Chinese priest, Father Jean-Baptiste Niu, of the Honan Mission, with this sentence: "Monsignor [Giovanni] Menicatti says that this faithful missionary does as much work as six, thanks to his great influence on his fellow citizens." [26]

Although our documentation is limited, we could multiply the examples. These show that the Chinese have not changed since Fathers Li and Kouo, and Bishop Louo: and whatever the proportion of priests of this caliber, it is not zero, thank God. But Europeans have not changed either, and the Macao missionaries' resistance to the Papal Legate conferring minor orders on young men presented by their superiors, and little known or unknown to them, is identical to the general repugnance to the Sovereign Pontiff's words: that *the way should be opened to them of the Episcopacy*.

At the time, the Holy See had been recommending for almost a century that the doors of the sanctuary be opened to the Chinese, and had insisted, under threat of canonical

penalties. Today, the final step has been taken. What a blessing it would be if, two centuries apart, His Holiness Benedict XV were to repeat the gesture of Benedict XIV!

His Holiness can choose from among our eight hundred and thirty Chinese priests, men who are pious, learned, zealous, and whose only defect is that they are from the country, a quality indispensable in Europe and America for governing churches.

Even admitting that, in terms of general culture, this elite is not what it could be—and there are exceptions to this rule—we cannot help remembering that they are not primarily responsible for their training, that moreover they have many of the superiorities over us indicated by Leo XIII, and that finally, just as the European bishops [27] of the tenth century did not have the education of those of the twentieth, so it is permissible for a country less advanced in the human sciences to have bishops less educated than their European colleagues, provided they are sufficiently endowed with priestly knowledge and virtue. And thank God, this is not a rare occurrence today as it was two centuries ago.

Another reason: Fear of Schism

Our Lord said: “It is necessary that there be scandals.”

Saint Paul said the same thing in Miletus: *I know that after I leave, ravenous wolves will arise among you, and they will not spare the flock.*

As with other weaknesses common to all mankind, Europeans—who alone have a say in the matter—attribute to the Chinese in particular what does not concern them in particular. The schismatic tendencies of the Chinese would therefore be an obstacle to the establishment, not yet of a Chinese episcopate, but of two or three bishops from this nation.

Is this serious accusation justified?

1° - In reality, there is perhaps no Christian or clergy in the world who venerate the sovereign pontiff as much as the Chinese faithful and priests. For them, he is truly God on earth: every day, at mass, they pray aloud for him, and especially on Sundays and feast days, at solemn communal prayers. If this immense country has been able to hold together for so many centuries, if revolutions have not succeeded in dividing it further, it is largely due to the strong constitution of the family and respect for hierarchy. Far more [28] than elsewhere, respect for hierarchy is a virtue: it is even the first of the virtues, and precisely the pivot of the morality that has governed China for twenty-five centuries. We pointed this out to our apostolic vicar, who recognized it without hesitation.

2° - The only schisms to have occurred in the Far East so far have not been caused by natives, but by Europeans. The Chinese Rites controversy scandalized even pagans, and resistance to the Sovereign Pontiff lasted a century. The excesses to which the religious opponents resorted are beyond imagination. M. Appiani, Vice-Apostolic Visitor of China, *"judged that the struggle over the Rites was still going on after half a century, and that the seminary—the Chinese seminary—should be established far from the Europeans"* (*Mém. Chine*, I. 61).

The Portuguese schism in Goa was no less deeply afflicting the Church for half a century. A Portuguese bishop in China, [Jerónimo José] de Matta, a Lazarist, acted no differently than his dissident confreres in the Indies. Above all, he was Portuguese: Unhappy to see two Chinese provinces detached from his diocese of Macao, and confided by Propaganda to the priests of the Foreign Missions, he published a Statement (Mandement) in which

he accused the sacred Congregation of "acting towards him with a violence that we could only encounter in infidels and pagans." For the honor of the Chinese clergy, Providence willed that the protagonist of orthodoxy, the advocate of obedience to the Holy See, should be Father Joseph Li, who addressed an admirable letter full of charity and firmness. He reminded him of the duties of the Good Shepherd, which the bishop was neglecting, and of respect for the hierarchy. [29]

His efforts to keep Bishop de Matta on the slope of schism were fruitless. But they respond in advance to the accusation or general presumption of schismatic tendencies applied to our priests. Shortly afterwards: "Bishop de Matta, of Macao, came to Bombay and Ceylon and followed the schism he performed (sacrilegious) ordinations in 1850." (*Mém. Chine*, III, 249-255)

3° - When, in 1865, Bishop [Bernard-Thadée] Petitjean tracked down the descendants of the ancient Christians of Japan, who had remained in the Catholic faith, without priests, for nearly two and a half centuries, he first underwent a meticulous examination: a old woman deputed to make sure that his religion was indeed the Catholic religion for which our ancestors had given their lives, asked him above all two questions, on two points which seemed to her of capital importance: Do you keep celibacy? - Are you in communion with the Pope of Rome?²

This example of fidelity: unique, we believe, in the annals of evangelization, brought tears to Pius IX's eyes, and Leo XIII a little later (1891) gave this testimony to the rejuvenated old church: "More than ten thousand men were found in which was the inheritance of the Catholic Faith found whole and incorrupt by the priests."

This is history: not conjecture. [30]

4° - These conjectures, even if well-founded, would be no more so than the words of Our Lord and Saint Paul quoted above. Admitting that Europeans know with certainty that there would be schisms in China, if they conformed to the pope's views by proposing indigenous bishops, this certainty would only be human. But Our Lord Jesus Christ knew by divine knowledge that after twenty centuries of evangelical preaching, the number of dissident Christians would significantly outnumber Catholics: and he founded the Church. He entrusted it to fallible, fragile men, some of whom betray their mission, others of whom remain faithful, not by racial privilege, but by the One who strengthens them, and who is no respecter of persons.

And so far we in China are wiser than uncreated Wisdom; and, for fear of defects to come, we refuse to be so to the Church of China, for it cannot be said to be and we seem to be saying to our brothers in the Far East: You need angels as bishops, and you are only men! - And some of the angels were schismatic!

On the contrary, we are confident that the Chinese episcopate will bring honor to the Church and, to the fears expressed, we can reply with Saint Paul: *It will stand; for God can make it happen.*

Please excuse our insistence on this point: it is explained by the fact that the reproach of schismatic tendencies is commonly invoked. The Chinese clergy, who know the spirit of the Church and its history, could recall the warning given by the pontiff at the ordination of subdeacons, to anyone who might have an objection to make: "Let him remember his

² In May 1906, Dom Chautard, abbot of la Trappe, who was in Peking, gave us a detailed account of these events, which he had heard from Bishop Petitjean himself. See also: *La Religion de Jésus Ressuscitée au Japon*, by [Francisque] Marnas. 2 Vols, Paris/Lyon, 1896-97.

condition.” From the schisms which, by the thousands, have lacerated and stained the robe of the Church, in the non-Chinese world, he does not think of concluding about the general unworthiness of foreigners. Yet these are all too real facts from which we draw no general and absolute conclusion, whereas the schism of the Chinese bishops, the fear of which makes the conversion of half of humanity so arduous, so problematic, is simply a "futurible", to use the philosophical language of the School, an *ens rationis ratiocinantis* [a creation of the reasoning mind].

And it is such an "antecedent" presumption, that contradictory arguments serve him equally well: knowledge and ignorance are or will be the cause of this Schism, in China, Japan and India: "If they ever see themselves as great theologians, the Japanese, proud as they are and young in the Faith, will crumble the Law of Christ into as many heresies as there are Buddhist sects. (*Études*, Vol. 162, page 607) - "If learned European bishops have erred in the Faith, what will we not fear from uneducated Chinese priests?" (Ibid., p. 609) And the author adds: "That was golden talk."

Another prediction is that without the solicitude of European bishops, the Chinese would not easily submit to a foreigner, the Sovereign Pontiff! - On the other hand, missionaries write in books and newspapers (*Echo de Chine*, May 1920) that their submission to bishops of their own race would be virtually impossible! - How far from the tradition of the Church and from historical truth all this logic, put at the service of a prudence that Our Lord did not have! [32]

The admirable history of the Church of Korea, the spontaneous blossoming of Christianity in this country, the quality of its evangelists - indigenous - and of its faithful, as orthodox and as generous as it is possible to be, do not justify bad omens.

In 1783, two Korean noblemen, reading religious books from China, converted to Catholicism. One of them made it to Peking, where he was baptized. Back in Korea, he became an apostle. Hundreds of pagans converted, and the Korean court became alarmed. Persecution found them constant, albeit without priests or sacraments. The good Christians of Korea naively imagined that they could improvise a priesthood. François-Xavier Kouen stood out from the rest by the firmness of his faith, his knowledge and his zeal: he was appointed bishop. Several others, equally commendable, were appointed priests, and these sincere pastors, in their candid ignorance, immediately began to exercise all the acts of a minister, instructing, baptizing, receiving confessions and giving absolution. They were highly respected. The nobles themselves, whose hearts God had touched, and who ranked among the faithful, obeyed them with childlike docility. The Church of Korea lived like this for a few years, happily growing and opening up to the many pagans who asked to enter. [33]

However, François-Xavier Kouen had some doubts about the validity of this improvised priesthood. Admiring the marvels of grace that had spontaneously brought about the emergence of Christianity in a land hostile to Christianity, moved by the constancy shown by the young Church in the midst of the persecutions that accompanied its birth, touched by all that the heroic messenger had told him, the bishop replied at length and paternally to François-Xavier Kouen. First of all, he enlightened him on the main issue, telling him that the usurpation of episcopal and priestly powers, excusable before God because of the good faith of Korean Christians, must cease immediately. François-Xavier and his priests obeyed the bishop's prescriptions with touching simplicity. They immediately returned to the ranks of the faithful."

"By its lively faith and ardent proselytism, and above all by the generosity of its martyrs, the Church of Korea had earned the arrival of the priest it had been calling for and

requesting with its letters. She had to wait three more years. But then, towards the end of 1794, her four thousand Christians shook with joy. The bishop of Peking, full of admiration and pity for a people always ready to sacrifice themselves to a religion they barely knew, detached from his mission a young Chinese priest of twenty-six, full of zeal and talent, Father Jacques Tsiou, and charged him with keeping the promise so often given." The breath of [34] God passed over the peninsula. Scholars and nobles touched by grace were asking for baptism. The number of Christians, which had stood at four thousand when Father Tsiou arrived at the end of 1704, had risen to ten thousand by 1800. The harvest was coming from all sides in this fertile land. A cruel hand was going to mercilessly reap all these beautiful hopes.

Persecution raged, multiplying the sorrows and glories of the young Church, and Father Tsiou, wandering from one hiding place to another, sure of being arrested, took an initiative which, for the honor of the priesthood, was to have many imitators in this land of martyrs. So as not to compromise the Christians, he went straight to prison, and named himself.

"I too," he told the court staff, "practice the Christian religion. I have heard that it is strictly forbidden by the government, and that innocent people are being killed in large numbers every day. As my life would henceforth be useless, I have come to ask you for death." Loaded with chains, he took advantage of the crowds of onlookers to preach the true religion one last time. He was martyred on 31 May 1801.

Christians boldly risked their lives to pay supreme homage to the venerable remains of Father Jacques Tsiou.

Prodigies and miraculous cures rewarded their filial piety and faith. (Léon Joly, *Le Christianisme et l'Extrême-Orient*, vol. 1, pp. 184-197). Charles Dalet, *Histoire de l'Église de Corée*, vol. 1, p. 143). [35]

So the facts are clear: the submission and faith of Christians in the Far East made no distinction between venerating Bishop de Gouvéa or M. Tsiou, they knew they were obeying God, and was this not good Father Tsiou, giving himself up for his flock, a worthy precursor of Blessed [Laurent-Joseph-Marius] Imbert and Chastan, the heroic bishops of Korea?³

We will not insist on other reasons, stemming from the same lack of dialectic, concluding from the particular to the general. In the field of the father of the family, there are weeds and brambles, but also, in China as elsewhere, the most beautiful virtues flourish: *nec rosae nec lilia desunt* [neither roses nor lilies are lacking]: piety, zeal, integrity of life, heroism in all its forms, nothing has been lacking, nothing is lacking in the fullness of Christian life in the Far East. "As for self-esteem," wrote Fr. Ripa wrote to Bishop [Giuseppe] Maggi, "fourteen years' experience had shown me that Europeans were in the same situation. He knew - and so did the bishop - M. Sou who, though weak in health, always went on foot dressed in coarse linen garments,⁴ acts so humiliating that I have not heard of any [36] European missionary in Peking, Chantong, Nanking, Canton, who had done the same, or who had never administered the sacraments as much in their entire lives as he had in two or three years." (*Mem. I*, 271)

³ Jacques-Honoré Chastan was a priest, not a bishop.

⁴ An order from the visitor of the Northern province (1911) required missionaries to wear silk. Linen was tolerated only for undergarments. The reason for this obligation is given: *propter modestiam* [for modesty's sake]. In the north, barely two people in a thousand usually wear silk. Moreover, the Synod of Setch'oan, which is the law, forbids the missionaries to use silk (pp. 94 & 158).

The same statement can be found a hundred times in the history of the Far East: "*In the twenty-two years I have been in China,*" wrote Bishop Mullener to Bishop de Tournon, "*I have found no more necessary means than to train Chinese youth for the priesthood. They are now the founders of Christianity. It is the same in the missions of the other workers, and I can truthfully say that there are very few pagans who have been converted by Europeans.*" (*Mém. Chine*, I, 251)

Finally, we should note Bishop Fréri's remark about the seminary at Poulo Pinang [Malaysia]: "*It is without doubt the only seminary in the world,*" he says, "*that has had the glory of providing the Church with more than one hundred martyrs.*" (*Native Clergy*, p. 4)

Explanation of current course of action

That no subject should be presented from among the eight hundred Chinese priests, that an elite should be prepared from among the youth of the seminaries, is a line of conduct which has been the subject of a general study by a zealous priest, Canon Joly.

A third author treats the issue with perfect accuracy. We are talking about his thesis, not a few points of detail. He has guessed at certain things of which he had no direct knowledge, in particular the various Propaganda instructions. Long before his book appeared, we had absolutely the same [37] ideas, confirmed by daily experience.

The answers of three Jesuit Fathers: Frs. Brou, de la Servière and Damerval, have a fundamental flaw: they treat as merely historical a current, living question; and the three Reverend Fathers, all three strangers to the Missions, even Father Damerval, who came to China around the age of 60, evade the main single question: Despite the past, do we want to keep forever the leadership of the Churches in China?

The author has responded to Father Brou (several articles in *Les Études*) in a third volume, *Les Tribulations d'un Chanoine*, which complements the previous two (*Le Christianisme et l'Extrême-Orient*,⁵ Lethielleux), albeit with a lively and sometimes personal tone.

We saw Father de la Servière in Peking in 1910. As a professor in England, he had been asked to refute Joly with the documents he was given. He did so - out of a spirit of obedience - (Two articles in the *Revue pratique d'Apologétique*, 1907) because he was a supporter of the canon's ideas, but since then, he added, I have spent a year in China, and I have changed my opinion. No wonder he gave in to the atmosphere, unaware of the language and customs of the country. This is the verification of Leo XIII's words: "Hence, the European clergy is forced to live there as in [any foreign land," (24 June 1893) and Saint Paul's: "Therefore, if I do not understand the nature of the voice, then I shall be like a foreigner to the one with whom I am speaking; and he who is speaking will be like a foreigner to me."

Père (Adolphe) Damerval, in [*La question des missions.*] *Doléances d'un vieux missionnaire* (Casterman, Tournay, 1909), drowns out the question and reaches no conclusion. [38]

His brochure is cleverly written, but so far from the program that should be ours: Yes, we want to follow the apostolic tradition, fulfill the wish of the Sovereign Pontiffs, erase all racial distinctions. The day is coming when our work will receive its crowning glory. None of this! Leo XIII's encyclical is analyzed, except that the main object, the end in

⁵ "Decisive book," writes Georges Goyau (*Autour du catholicisme social*, II, 93).

view, the indigenous episcopate, is passed over in silence! Once again, it is an apology for the past: we see no program for the present or the future.

The fact is all too true: we are there, we see and we hear. Never has a missionary or an apostolic vicar given us a reason legitimizing the conduct of the Europeans, which frustrates the Church and renders futile the instances of apostolic authority. The notes which follow give the explanation of this fact that before God and our conscience we believe to be correct.

Racial distinction.

Saint Paul's beautiful program was: "There neither gentile nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all things in all," which, even humanly speaking, would multiply the joy of the people of God, making us all one family, edifying the pagans as much as the charity of the first Christians of Jerusalem. Consequently, this program would seem an impertinence here.

Here is a recent example that shows how vain any virtue is, how incomplete any sacrifice, without this specifically Catholic spirit. [39]

In 1914, several French missionaries were mobilized in Tientsin. One of them recounted with barely contained indignation that the mobilization of the French priests had delighted their Chinese confreres. We pointed out to him that there must be an explanation for this attitude, that the Chinese priests being the elite of our Christians, themselves the moral elite of the masses, could not without reason regard as a relief the departure of their confreres and benefactors, who, for them and their country, had made every sacrifice. The explanation seemed to us to be this: to give one's time, one's gold, one's life, is nothing if one refuses one's esteem, if, in the equality of the sanctuary, one maintains the inequality of races and colors. It is a fact that we do not treat Chinese priests as we treat others; that, while we give them our very lives, we deny them, in the depths of our hearts, the esteem, the unreserved love, which tends towards equality; that, in a word, we should remember the words of Saint Paul: If I hand my body over to be burned but do not have love, I gain nothing [1 Cor 13:3]. All the more so as we see, albeit all too rarely, examples of the opposite. And Father M. agreed.

A little more, a little less, it is the same racial prejudice everywhere. M. Appiani, who lived in China from 1697 to 1732, relates this fact in *Mém. Chine* (I. 183): "It is said in these countries that once you have rounded the Cape of Good Hope, the Portuguese captain says to the sailors: Gentlemen, I no longer call you such and such. We are all knights of Don Alonzo de Ribeira Fernandez, everyone is Don Pedro González da Mira." [40] Such is generally the state of mind of European missionaries in China: they admit the distinctions of the world into the Church, and have more or less a conqueror's mentality: laughing at - the face - of the Chinese, which is a just sense of decency, of dignity, not necessarily synonymous with - false point of honor, - they claim that European prestige should always be recognized and respected, even against the spirit of the Church and the Instructions of Propaganda. From this point of view, the people of the world are sometimes our masters, for, whether in the spirit of justice or the necessity of the situation, they are often under the orders of Chinese leaders and directors; but this is not seen in our poor Church. As far as precedence is concerned, there are vicariates where seniority alone is the law, but we never see a European priest under the orders of a Chinese priest, however eminent the latter may be.

In 1877, the Propaganda asked the apostolic vicars the following question: “Should indigenous priests be excluded from every superiorship, out of respect for European missionaries?” Half a century earlier, the brother of the king of Siam asked a missionary: If I became a Christian, could I become a priest or bishop? When the answer was in the affirmative, the prince turned to the audience and said: “You see how generous is this religion which makes no distinction between persons and distributes its dignities only on the basis of merit and virtue!” (*Hist. Gén. des Missions Étrangères*, III, 117)

Unfortunately, the answer is all too clear. This exclusion, which is sometimes formulated as a right, strikes newcomers from Europe, unless they have been duly trained there, and warned that the Chinese are [41] only semi-human, the comment has been heard. In this case, the elders warn them, and we have to believe that the treatment is effective, because very few, very few, resist it.

Sixteen years ago, a cleric from Europe was continuing his studies with the native seminarians, and treating them as his equals, as his brothers, no more, but no less. The director of the Seminary, a pious, kind man with a reputation for liking the Chinese, told him to be careful, not to imagine he was dealing with Europeans, to keep them at a distance, etc., etc. Fortunately, this missionary did not follow this advice, and he has made more conversions than any other.

This “love” of the Chinese, tinged with protection and jealousy of distance, which produces such disconcerting results, is related in the *Life of Father Gonnet, S.J.*, subtitled *Cinquante années de Chine* (first edition, 1900). The good priest advises us not to open our hearts to Chinese priests, not to confide in them, to avoid the formation of two parties, the Chinese party and the European party. As if we should not leave behind our preferences and habits, and be Chinese with the Chinese, as if Our Lord who “wished to be in every way like his brethren,” did not clearly tell us to lay down all superiority, even real, in trade with our brothers! In 1909, an apostolic vicar told us the story of a very valuable Annamite priest, Abbé Six. Decorated as governor of the province, the bishop entrusted the priest in question with all the serious tasks requiring tact and prudence. When he returned from his missions, he sat at the second [42] table, that of the native priests.

At our provincial assembly in Chala, in April 1914, this question was raised, and almost all the delegates felt very uncomfortable during the discussion, but not the least embarrassed to omit it entirely from the minutes. Outside the meeting, Mr. B. reproached us for our attitude:

- M. B. - You're exaggerating when you say that we think less of the Chinese because of their race. I assure you that there are many native priests whom we prefer to European priests.

- All right, then! Let us examine the hypothesis: an estimable European priest, and an even more estimable Chinese priest. Would you prefer the latter?

- M. B. - Yes, certainly.

- Tomorrow, let someone give you a European priest as a bishop: that will be no problem!

- Mr. B. - Of course!

- But if you were given the most esteemed Chinese priest as bishop, would he be accepted without a murmur?

- M. B. smiles. It's true!
- Should this be the case in the Church?

This missionary, who had been in China for thirty years and was well placed to speak, recognized two facts: the capacity of certain Chinese priests, and their exclusion on the grounds of race. Practically speaking, this double observation would not trouble him; and if a simple missionary insisted, that man would be a revolutionary: he would have to keep silent, or be broken. [43]

Europeans Forever.

This is a title missionaries take pride in: patriotism and evangelization are not mutually exclusive, and it quite permissible, while working for God and the Church, to procure the glory and benefit of one's earthly homeland. The Cross and the Flag! Such is the formula that edifies friends and disarms enemies.

Unfortunately, the flag in question is not the right one. Otherwise, the unfortunate mission countries are invaded by the flags of ten different nations, to which the Cross seems no more than a pretext.

Simple honesty cries out to ministers of the Gospel not to work against their adopted country, to be in reality what their beautiful name of apostles implies: "to be all things to all people," and Rome expressly warns us: "What is more absurd than for France, Spain, or Italy, or some other part of Europe to invade China? Do not bring this in, but bring the Faith in." (Instr. Prop. 1659).

The facts that this fine program present are deeply sad: the general, systematic exclusion of the indigenous element in the leadership of our Churches is one of them: the Church in China is European, we have introduced and are maintaining here France, Spain, Italy, etc.

And it is difficult to exaggerate the harm done to our holy religion by this constant assertion of our foreignness, which does not shrink from appealing to the foreign secular arm. In the past, China's opposition to Catholicism was simple, [44] so to speak. Even "in an edict of persecution, it is expressly stated that the Christian religion is not to be regarded as a bad religion; that, on the contrary, it leads men to the practice of virtue. It is reproached only for not being authorized in China by the sovereign, and for being proclaimed by foreigners. (We do not say, being a foreign religion, because this is the case of several religions recognized in China who have sneaked into the empire.) This is the sole reason for the punishments ordered against the ministers who preach it, and the Christians who profess it." (*Mém. Chine*, II, 91). This is indeed what Leo XIII says. "Indians among the Indians, with no suspicion involved."

Today, the opposition is twofold, for in addition to the susceptibilities of a shy patriotism, there is the series of setbacks that the missionaries have caused China: indemnities, territorial concessions, etc. Our Lord did not want legions of angels to defend Him. He did not approve of the two apostles who wanted to call down fire from heaven on a guilty city, etc., etc., etc. The *Annales de la Mission* mention a letter from M. Lacruce, a Lazarist missionary, to a sub-prefect, for the settlement of a question of indemnities. It is noted that this letter was written in "very softened terms, without threats, and above all without mention of warships." (*Annales* 1906. p. 395, the Nanchang Massacres.) Finally, the sub-prefect, in order to call down the fury of the people on the

missionary, committed suicide in the Catholic Mission. We know the rest: the massacre of M. Lacruche and five Marist brothers, an uprising, and compensation.

Simply an occasion for damage to their adopted homeland, missionaries [45] are sometimes positively agents of the foreigner. We do not wish to judge intentions, and leave it to God to scrutinize hearts, but there are many facts which have their cause in a special disposition of mind.

A certain apostolic vicar has his Christians copy the plans of Chinese forts in his episcopal residence, and deliver them to a foreign government: a decoration rewards this service.

Another, in full view of all his priests, helps a consul take over a part of the town where he lives, which is his “spiritual” inheritance, and this unleashes storms!

Another missionary offers himself as a spy in a province over which his native country has designs.

A brochure published twenty-five years ago entitled “La France au Tché-Kiang” (France in Che-Kiang), written by an apostolic vicar who simply signed his name: “un Français” (a Frenchman), ended with this textual conclusion:

If any country were ever to lay claim to the Che-Kiang province, France would have the right to stop them in their tracks and say: Do not disturb the resting place of my dead. Look at all these tombs that bear my name. They are boundaries and guardians, and their stones would lift their voices against the encroachments of a foreigner. There too, lying beneath their slabs, are generous soldiers who are my children, and who would flinch with indignation if they ever heard the footstep of an invader treading on the soil they have watered with their blood and redeemed with their lives. Come on! [46] My rights, which are the right of blood shed and services rendered, are worth more than all the false titles of your ambition and the vain formulas of your spheres of influence!

And then, all we would have to do is reverse the title, so that *La France au Tché-Kiang* naturally becomes *Le Tché-Kiang à la France*.

This statement, in its candor, explains better than long dissertations why the Chinese episcopate would be regarded as a decline, instead of being hailed as the crowning achievement of APOSTOLIC work.

A bishop of China, with a few dozen Chinese priests as collaborators, thousands of Catholics as spiritual sons, and twenty million pagans to bring into the Kingdom of Heaven, publishing the brochure in question, is only remotely reminiscent of Saint Martin, who became a Gaul in Gaul, and whose memory is still blessed.

And these theories and aspirations are no mystery to anyone. China knows what it can fear from the patriotic zeal of many missionaries. Powerless in the face of Europe, it turns to America, which has no territorial ambitions and has given up its Concessions in Tientsin, Shanghai and elsewhere. The ruling classes sometimes think of the only power incapable of harming their homeland, the vicar of Him whose kingdom is not of this world. Unfortunately, they see the Church, here French, there Spanish or German: behind the Cross, the sign of peace, flying the flags of war. [47]

How the agreement between the Holy See and China concerning the establishment of a nunciature in Peking had to be abandoned, provisionally, we hope, and how the missionaries' spokesmen expressed their discontent and opposition, is the sad episode which we note here for the record.

Do the above facts lead us to believe that we would willingly adopt the Chinese language? The wisdom of Rome's directions makes it our duty not to offend the habits of the natives, to identify ourselves as closely as possible with our own people. "Never mistake the usages of those peoples with the usages of Europeans; should we not become accustomed to them with great diligence?" (Instr. Prop., 1659) The answer seems superfluous: language and habits are as European as the heart. As a result, will anyone believe us? There are missionaries, even apostolic vicars, who after twenty-five and thirty years in China, do not know the Credo in Chinese, nor the commandments of God, nor any prayers.

A local custom, accepted and exaggerated by missionaries, is the Koto (kowitz), or prostration, with the forehead touching the ground. As a general rule, the Chinese make the Koto in front of their father and mother, once on New Year's Day, and in other rather rare circumstances. And Christians owe this sign of respect to their missionaries whenever they go to see them, unless they are acquaintances, who content themselves with a simple genuflection. Here are Father Ly's reflections on the subject:

"I resolved that when I was acting in the name of the procurator, Hoa Yang, called Ouang, in a case then which compelled the brothers to admit to being Christians, whenever European priests were present, I would [48] kneel and offer the customary koto reverence before them, with my head lowered to the ground. When he wanted to make this a law, I leave to the prudence and awareness of the benevolent reader. As for the others of our fellow soldiers, whether Chinese or Europeans, if it pleased them, I profess that I would urge that they should never imitate this arrogant and unpleasant way of acting. However, they should endeavor, always and everywhere, to imitate the bishop, the Eminent Lord Cardinal de Tournon, Bishop Mullener, and Fathers Basset and de la Baluère, and above all else the divine humility and meekness of our Lord Jesus himself: "Learn from me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Journal. Year 1754, pages 299-300)

The use of the koto and simple genuflection, *ts'ing nan*, was abolished in 1911, and replaced by deep bowing. And it is maintained in almost all vicariates. We know of a missionary preaching to his faithful, in the middle of the church (in 1919), on the obligation of the koto. "Civil customs may change," he told them, "but not the rules laid down by the Church!"

We could multiply examples of this habit of European missionaries, of believing themselves to be in a world essentially different from Europe, where Our Lord should have modified his Gospel (as one old missionary remarked!), and where the directions of Rome must be taken *cum grano salis* [with a grain of salt], where the *Mitto vos sicut agnos inter lupos* [I am sending you as lambs among wolves] must not mislead us! The result is that Saint John Chrysostom's beautiful paraphrase on this subject does not apply to us either: the victory of weakness over strength. We obtain other advantages, other victories that our vocation did not promise us. [49]

Chinese patriotism.

This is not an indictment, it is a fact that we have to acknowledge: Christian patriotism is suspect to foreign missionaries. In the happy countries of the white race, patriotism is a powerful lever for good. In peace and war, by pen, word and example, the best Catholics preach devotion, sacrifice to the public good, which is a form of charity, and proof that our holy religion, far from weakening or denying the noble sentiments that

God has placed in the hearts of all men, elevates and ennobles them, and does not regard this subject as unworthy of the sacred pulpit itself.

In Europe, in times of turmoil and general disarray, the patriotism of the bishop, defender of the city, has so often turned the hearts of the people towards the Church and saved Christian civilization. How sad to think that for centuries the Church has been unable to play this role in China! At a time when so many opportunities have arisen for her to show pagans how true, in its noble and lofty sense, the words of Saint Paul are: “promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

In the Roman world, the great bishops adopted the ancient Christianized conception of the intimate union between the greatness of Rome and that of Religion: this note appears in the writings of the first apologists as well as in the speeches and writings of Saints Ambrose and Augustine. Would that we could dream that such proud and beautiful accents, with such fruitfulness, will resound in China! [50]

From this point of view too, Christianity does not appear to pagans as an element of social preservation and prosperity, as a desirable religion.

The above-mentioned case of Bishop F. having Christians copy the plans of Chinese forts, in order to offer them to a foreign government, is significant, and unfortunately not isolated. A little more, a little less, it has been repeated many times, and the epithet of “foreigners from within,” hurled at the head of Catholics, is not absolutely undeserved.

In the T. affair, Mgr. D. said over and over again:

“Christians should be neutral, as I am myself. And our Christians, despite the proofs they gave of their loyalty in this circumstance, and without which the fury of the people would probably have led to murders and fires, have not yet succeeded in clearing themselves of this accusation, because a heavy past weighs on them. And it is a fact that while missionaries have prepared their compatriots for the conquest of Tonkin, Annam and other colonies, large or small, they have been able to do so only with the help of their flocks.

“Thirty-eight thousand Christians were massacred in Annam and Tonkin, during the years 1883–1885, as a result of proclamations like this one: If the French were able to come here, if they were able to get to know our roads, our rivers, all our businesses, it is only thanks to the Christians. So we invite everyone to exterminate the Christians.” (R. P. [Léon] Wieger, S.J. *Textes Historiques*, [*Histoire politique de la Chine*, Hienhien, 1929,] pages 2133–2134).

It is hardly surprising that the same cry of hatred and vengeance [51] should resound in China. In the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising, a leading mandarin collected in one volume a series of articles he had published in 1891, in which this war was already predicted as the inevitable result of evangelization supported and, if necessary, avenged by arms. He added this quotation from the *Journal d'un Interprète en Chine* [*Diary of an Interpreter in China*], by the Comte d'Hérison:

“I would be failing in both justice and charity if I did not recall here the powerful support we found in China in the staff of the Catholic Missions. All the information that reached the general—and the event demonstrated its accuracy, both concerning the resources of the provinces we were going to have to cross, and the number of troops we were going to meet ahead of us—was provided to him through the Jesuits, who had them gathered by Chinese in their devotion. Confidential reports not only demanded a deep knowledge of

men and things, but also showed real courage in their authors; for they could expose them to terrible reprisals from the Chinese once we had left the country. At that time, the Jesuits demonstrated ardent patriotism and the most admirable devotion.”

In conclusion, the author adds: “And now I appeal to every foreigner, whether French, English or German, to ask whether, against a corporation of men capable of this ardent patriotism, the people of China are not morally within their rights, in crying out with all their might, as they are doing today: Crush the infamous thing.” (In French in the text). [52] (*Papers from a Viceroy's Yamen*, p. 50)

Their mobilized priests stand guard in the streets of Tientsin. Their commander is a missionary from Korea, Father C. In the current crisis, which is not yet over, will they not have to shoot their spiritual fathers? or their loved ones?

It is the same difficulties, the same atmosphere of suspicion when it comes to the inner life of Catholics. What is likely to unite them, pool their individual resources and energies, and double their effectiveness, which the higher clergy encourage in Europe and America, is met with great resistance here. Thus the Chinese Catholic Union, created on the model of the Catholic Youth Associations of Europe, is powerless to establish itself in many vicariates. Native Christians and priests want it, but their leaders forbid it.

The aim of the Catholic Union is to create fervent and active Christians. Its first duty, enshrined as the first article of the Regulations, is to be totally dependent on the apostolic vicar, in its creation, organization and operation. No meeting can take place except under the presidency of a priest delegated by the bishop. These guarantees did not seem to be sufficient, and the Union has been widely criticized for tending towards independence ever since it was founded. In a cruel play on words, the expression *dzeli* (active) becomes *touli* (independent). This is the schismatic tendency that the most admirable and faithful Christians are accused of, today and always. [53] It is the possible abuse ruining its legitimate and fruitful use.

Providence had it that the Catholic Union had already been organized for two years when the Confucian campaign began: the then all-powerful President Yuenchekai, the vice-president (now president of the republic), all but two of the provincial governors, and the ruling classes wanted to impose a state religion on China: Confucianism. The struggle seemed pointless, and the game was lost in advance. Nevertheless, the Catholic Union and our fledgling press launched a campaign which, after a few months, was crowned with un hoped-for success! Public opinion was aroused, and non-Confucian sects, less targeted than ourselves and not repulsed by the cult of Confucius, understood the danger that other freedoms would soon run if religious freedom were to be infringed. Against our very hopes, whole countries joined us: Buddhist Mongolia, as well as Tibet, the Muslim West, and, just about everywhere, the four religious denominations: Protestants, Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims. The government abandoned its project and later replaced it with the clause of “the doctrine of Confucius as the basis of moral teaching in schools.” So far, it has been impossible to achieve total success by deleting this harmful clause, which we are still fighting against today.⁶¹

The definitive Constitution has been partly voted on. Catholics, who have spent and are still spending so much energy to save religious liberty, so much time and money,

⁶ The second anti-Confucian campaign, longer and more bitter than the first, has since been a complete success.

encounter [54] opposition which we prefer not to indicate, although we could provide evidence of it, as our exposé would seem unbelievable.

It would be infinite if we were to report the facts, the words, showing this tendency to keep our Christians and our clergy in a diminished situation—*eis merito molesta* [*they are deservedly bothered*]*—*and we think that Rome itself does not realize the exactness of this expression: we should see and hear! In a certain province, Catholics have asked their apostolic vicar to ask Rome for permission to celebrate the feast of several Chinese martyrs (twenty-one), beatified a few years ago. His Excellency refused, for fear, it is said, of arousing Chinese pride. We ourselves made the same request to our apostolic vicar in 1912. There was a simple promise. And we do not know if these Blesseds, raised by the pope to the altars, receive the honors of the altars anywhere in their country. And for our Catholics, this would be such a legitimate consolation, where the love of the Church and that of the fatherland would strengthen each other. But alas!

Religious Congregations.

As a member of a religious society ourselves, we do not think our holy Founder, Saint Vincent, would blame us for pointing out that congregations work for the Church, that they are a means and not an end. Unfortunately, each congregation regards the part of the field entrusted to its zeal as a fiefdom. And it is with dread that we speak of some other society capable [55] of supplanting us. M. Raux, a Lazarist, wrote from Peking more than a century ago: “*You would not believe how much the mixture of different jurisdictions of missionaries from different nations, even if they are all saints, brings obstacles to the true progress of the Faith in these remote regions. Experience clearly demonstrates what I am saying.*” (*Mém. Chine*, II, 128).

Stronger perhaps than racial prejudice is esprit de corps, for there are many cosmopolitan religious societies, in the national sense of the term: there is not one, in China at least, that does not see its neighbor as an emulator or a rival; and the Chinese clergy, both as nationals and even more so as seculars, must not threaten our possession. As an apostolic vicar said in his own words last month: “Vicariates are entrusted to religious congregations; if Chinese congregations were more numerous, we might find a bishop there.”

In 1733, a Chinese priest, Mr. André Ly, whom his superior in Macao sent to Setch'oan, was refused entry to the mission. A little later, M. de Martillat, of the Foreign Missions [of Paris], who later became a bishop, came to see him, and the apostolic vicar, Bishop Mullener, a Lazarist, similarly refused him entry. Mr. Ly complied with the bishop's order and went to stay at an inn, although he deplored the situation. I wrote to him,” adds M. de Martillat, who recounts these events, “to be patient and visit the Christian communities he was allowed to, which he did with great zeal, going to see the poor people who, in the space of more than ten years, had scarcely seen a missionary two or three times, and only [56] for a day or two. The order from Propaganda finally arrived, and Bishop Mullener submitted to it.” (*Journal*. Introduction by Fr. Launey, pp. VIII-X).

Here was a province twice the size of Italy, with only a few priests for its Christians and pagans, and the idea of a fiefdom to be defended was such that a holy bishop refused the help of two brothers from another religious society, one of whom, still young, had left this mission for the seminary in Siam. And it was a bishop whose admirable zeal inspired the same M. Ly to write moving and enthusiastic pages (pp. 426-436). Later, this Chinese priest, burning with zeal and overwhelmed by the immensity of

the task, would address a touching appeal to a priest from Tours, begging him to send French priests to Setch'oan (pp. 365-367).

Clearly, the prospect of handing over the running of the churches to the natives, of instituting a secular clergy to administer Christianity, was not at all envisaged in China. Congregations represent families whose inheritance should be preserved intact or enlarged. Coming for the Chinese, we think of ourselves, our fathers, our brothers: the guardian has taken the place of the heir.

Fas est et ab hoste doceri. [We should also learn from the enemy.]

Following the example of Leo XIII, we shall take a look at our separated brothers. The encyclical of 24 June 1893, recalls the efforts they are making in India for the instruction of youth, and thereby seeks to excite our emulation. Their example is even more striking here, as it concerns more directly [57] religious questions and ideas.

Thanks to Mr. Rockefeller, his important foundation allows the development of medical instruction in China, not secular, nor neutral, but evangelical Christian. The review of the Jesuit priests in Shanghai, *l'École en Chine*, reports on the work of the Protestants applied to this work, and quotes their speeches, whose guiding idea is publicly displayed and exposed with striking insistence and clarity. It is from this review that we borrow all the passages that follow:

From the *Shanghai Times* - 1 November 1915 - "Our intention is not to impose a foreign institution on the Chinese, but to train a corps of Chinese physicians. The sooner they can depend solely on them, the sooner they will have a serious medical literature, the happier we will be with our work. Our ultimate aim is to put the work in the hands of the Chinese themselves, to bring it to the point where we can withdraw, confident of its future. Our measure of success will be how quickly they appropriate the medical sciences, and how quickly our importance diminishes while theirs increases." (*École de Chine*, March 1916, p. 394). "Protestant medical work does not simply consist of sending missionary doctors to China to open hospitals, dispensaries and clinics for the direct treatment of their mission corps. Its aim, as we have said, is to reproduce itself; in other words, to train a large number of Chinese doctors who would do for their country what doctors from other nations do for theirs." The medical work [58] of the missions therefore did not come to China with the idea of establishing a permanent home there. On the contrary, as the authors of the articles from which we have quoted copious extracts repeatedly state, it aims to make itself useless. There must be an increasing number of Chinese doctors in hospitals, and an increasing number of Chinese professors in medical schools (We must decrease, while they must increase - Dr. Shields). Let us begin as soon as possible to add native doctors as they become trained and available, and then let them fly on their own. We will ask," says Dr. Gillison, "Where will we be then? What will become of our work? But this is your work. To arrange things, and bring them to such a degree of development, that we can do without you! Our work consists in making Christianity indigenous to Chinese soil. We want to remove from the Church of China the stigma of "*Foreign Religion*" and we ask that the day will come when the Church of China will have its own churches and doctors, its own dispensaries and hospitals. It will be a day of triumph, and the heart leaps with joy just to think of it." (The article is by Père Jeannière, S.J. quoting *The Chinese Recorder*, October 1913. p. 605).

Is this not exactly the idea of the sovereign pontiffs and the Sacred Congregation? But the hearts of Catholic missionaries do not leap with joy at the thought of preparing native pastors for the Church in China. A long and painful experience warns us of this.

Again, we quote from *L'École en Chine*, p. 388:

“Had we the assurance of providing for all necessities by appealing [59] to the metropolitan churches, wisdom would dictate that we should not attempt the enterprise. The medical missionary must, like the evangelist, aim to train native colleagues who are as competent as he is, and who are able to take his place.

“Every year that we are given the opportunity to work in China, we must set ourselves the task of developing our medical work in such a way that our Chinese colleagues can quickly become independent of the foreign doctor, and capable of running the hospitals we have launched and brought to their present state of prosperity.

“This is the aim of all our mission agencies. We see the day approaching when our medical work will have become indigenous to Chinese soil, when we will have achieved our goal of winning the Chinese medical corps to Christ and establishing Chinese Christian hospitals, which will form an integral part of the great Chinese Christian Church. In this way, not only will we have met the immediate needs of the Missions, but we will also have prepared for the day when we must diminish, when the ever-growing Christian force will take its rightful place, and conquer to Christ the great republic (pp. 426-431).”

Reading these lines in China moves us to tears. And if we move on from speeches to results, we will note this positive fact: out of the eight hundred members of the Chinese Parliament, the Protestants have twenty-one senators and deputies. And we Catholics, their elders in China, and six times more numerous, we have a doctrine not floating like theirs and infallible leaders, and the grace of God, we have only one senator not yet in office (a substitute-senator) and not a single deputy. This is no accident: on the whole, it is so. [60] Protestants are not subjugated, but accepted.

They are considered China's friends, and are virtually the sole representatives of Christianity—a truncated Christianity, alas!—in high society, schools and administration.

After the Protestants, the pagans: We will just mention one current fact and one historical statement.

The Japanese founded Buddhist societies in Manchuria to propagate their doctrine; they had the wisdom or skill to put Chinese at the head of their administration, which was nonetheless entirely Japanese.

In 1868, the Shogun of Japan made this admission to Admiral Ohier: “It is not your doctrines that we resent, and which our fathers resented when they proscribed them; it is your missionaries. They are pious, charitable, unselfish ... but they are foreigners.” The Shogun then made the following statement: “I am going to ask all these Christians to choose from among themselves fifty young people who will go to Rome, to the seminary. They will stay there as long as necessary to reach the priesthood. I will ask the pope to choose two or three bishops from among them, and then they will return here; they will exercise their ministry as they wish, with complete freedom. If need be, we will grant them all the privileges and prerogatives enjoyed by our own priests. But then we will no longer tolerate any foreign priest ministering in the country, at least not to our nationals.” So spoke the Shogun. Unfortunately, a few months later he was overthrown, and the

revolution returned the effective empire to the Mikado. (*Le clergé français et le Concordat*, by Edmond de Mandat-Grancey – Joly, I, 323-324). [61]

Summary and conclusion.

In short, the Chinese are people like us, members of the same humanity, called to the same supernatural end, and whom nothing authorizes us to delay as excluded by the divine Will from graces and gifts “*quae dividit singulis, prout vult*” [which he divided to each one, as he willed].

The insistence of the popes and the Sacred Congregation is justified, because there is no such thing as “the Chinese,” but such and such a Chinese person. There is such and such an honest man, such and such a Christian. Higher than the unworthy and the incapable, there are the chosen and the holy: alongside the executioners, the martyrs, just as in Europe. And the historians of the Missions recognize that our clergy and flock have not lacked even one form of heroism and sanctity.

The current conditions of evangelization in this half of humanity are a unique example in the history of the Church and judged by its results. The Catholic episcopate, either in normal times, or in the periods of crisis that China has gone through over the last three centuries, could have played the same role as the apologists and doctors of the first centuries of Christianity, or as the great bishops of all times in Europe. But until now, it has been like a soul alien to the body it was meant to inform. Christian Europe has not returned to the Far East the benefits it received from the Near East.

This unnatural position is aggravated by the fact of our solidarity with secular powers hostile to our adopted homeland. The new obstacle thus created goes far beyond [62] external and highly debatable advantages: ignorance and hatred are short-lived, and normal, apostolic evangelization would long ago have found its way into people's hearts.

The peoples of the Far East are inferior to Europe only in terms of material strength, and this has not been true of Japan for only a few decades. It was admitted to the rank of a great power after its exploits on the battlefields, and its Church, which has proven itself over the centuries, is still under tutelage, like Judea, where Our Lord chose all his Apostles: *Infirma mundi elegit Deus... et ignobilia, et contemptibilia, et ea quae non sunt*. [God has chosen the weak things of the world, both ignoble and contemptible, and whatever is not]. If China does not count in the eyes of Europe, we believe it cannot be the same before God and His Church.

Our Chinese clergy are worthy of their vocation, though maintained in a lesser situation. In the various provinces, its members are like a batch of colonies, dependent on the various religious societies and, to an appreciable extent, on the countries of origin of these congregations. Their admirable silence and self-sacrifice are due, on the one hand, to their distance from the head of the Church, and on the other, to its spirit of faith and respect for hierarchy, an age-old quality in China.

At the same time, because of this dependence and solidarity, they lose a large part of their means with the unbelievers to be converted. The beautiful testimony given by Blessed [Saint Louis Gabriel Taurin] Dufresse to two exiled Chinese priests is still true of the whole: “Because of us, they are like exiles within.” “This money,” he wrote, “will be taken from that sent to us from France for our subsistence. It is a good work and an act

of justice: they have [63] been exiled for having introduced the bishop of Caradre/Corada [Jean-Didier de Saint-Martin] and me into the Empire.” (*Mém. Chine*, II, 115).

The interests of souls, the Church's tradition, the Roman Instructions, the desires of the people, all point to a natural, elementary solution: to acclimate the Church in China, to convert the country through its inhabitants. The lack of will on the part of European missionaries, however, is putting this deadline off indefinitely. It is pride that has so far led to the neglect of the authority of the pope and Propaganda.

The sense of our condition and unworthiness has not prevented us from saying so respectfully but clearly to Your Most Reverend Eminence—to whom then could we have recourse, if not to the apostolic authority—and the history of these same missions answers the reproach of temerity that our approach naturally suggests.

For the current position of these beloved Missions is no more astonishing than it was in the past. For a century, missionaries evaded and debated the sovereign pontiff's instructions. But the question of the rites was dogmatic, and this one is only moral. In the first case, opposition to the pope was positive; here, it is negative. In the past, a large number of missionaries so ardently defended the cause of orthodoxy that the others were at pains to distinguish law from fact. Today, the question does not arise; it is reserved and as if it were non-existent. It is excluded from the deliberations of synods, where the place of native clergy is increasingly reduced. In the first region (Peking), for example, there were three native priests at the synod of 1880, [64] one in 1886, and none in 1892 or the most recent synod in 1906.

We therefore beg Your Eminence not to let the preliminary question stop us: we are no wiser or more zealous than others, but our conviction is lived. No more than we claim to scrutinize the conscience of the former missionaries, stubborn supporters of the rites, do we wish to judge the intimate intentions of the missionaries on whom the fate of the Church in China now depends. But the intentions, the virtues, even the heroism of the first missionaries was compatible with a *de facto* illusion, and that is what matters. In the same way, the virtues and personal merits of the latter can be put beyond question, and are compatible with an error, the possession of which is several centuries old.

We will therefore boldly say to the Mother and Mistress of all Churches: it is time to give the Catholic religion in this half of the world its letters of great naturalization, to constitute an indigenous episcopate, the complete indigenous clergy having been everywhere and always, by the nature of things and by divine will, the condition of existence of a Church, to make our Christian communities complete organisms, not receiving, like mechanisms, their drive from outside, to finally remove from the Church of China the *Stigma of being a foreign religion*.

The only means that seems effective to us is for His Holiness to will it, with a formal and positive will, and, renewing at an interval of two centuries, two centuries of ineffective exhortations, the gesture of his legate Cardinal de Tournon, to use his sovereign authority [65] to accomplish this great work. We would need a priest or bishop after God's own heart, a saint who is free from all prejudices of race or religious society, who sees and judges in the Holy Father's name, and proposes subjects to him. We believe that this is possible today, without any upheaval or revolution. Most ecclesiastical territories are large enough to admit new divisions, and one vicariate has several tens of millions of inhabitants (fifty million) and enough Catholics to form the nucleus of ten vicariates. And the Holy Father would find not a few but dozens of exemplary native priests worthy of the episcopate.

At the same time, the more serious preparation of an elite would be undertaken. On average, it would suffice for each apostolic vicar to send a subject to Rome every two or three years. And the Chinese, who so far seem to be excluded from the great Catholic family, would see their zeal to convert their pagan brothers increase tenfold, and the latter would at last come to know the Church which makes no distinction between the white race and the yellow race, and raises to the same dignities the children of the same father who is in Heaven.

Ah! the beautiful dream, which tomorrow may become a reality! Can we not hope that divine mercy will console her Church in the midst of her sorrows, that she will multiply her joy in proportion to her tribulations; that children whom she did not expect will come to her from the depths of the East, and, by a providential compensation, fill the voids she mourns in Europe! May the words of the prophet be verified in the near future: *Leva in circuitu oculos tuos, et vide omnes isti congregati sunt, venerunt tibi!* [Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you. Isa 60:4]

May Your Most Reverend Eminence, before these countless crowds, pronounce the word of love and pity: *Misereor super turbam*, [I have mercy on the crowd] and beseech His Holiness to crown the work that has been unfinished for so long by giving us the joy of prostrating ourselves before a Chinese bishop.

Your Most Reverend Eminence's most humble servant

Antoine Cotta
apostolic missionary

Sienchoeikou, near Tientsin - China

6 February 1917

Feast of Saint Titus, Bishop.

N.B. This memorandum was sent on the above-mentioned date to His Eminence Cardinal [Domenico] Serafini, Prefect of Propaganda [Fide].

References

- Ferreux, Octave. 2022. *The History of the Congregation of the Mission in China, 1699—1950*, trans. Hippolyte Henk De Cuijper, C.M., Appendix 5: Vincent Lebbe, “The Thunder that Sings in the Distance,” p. 621; Hyde Park, New York.
- Rybolt, John E. 2015. *The Vincentians. A General History of the Congregation of the Mission*, 6A: Internationalization and Aggiornamento (1919-1980), Hyde Park, New York, 2015, pp. 53—55.
- Soetens, Claude. 1997. *L'Église catholique en Chine au XXe siècle*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1997.
- Soetens, Claude. 1982. “Recueil des Archives Vincent Lebbe. Pour l'église Chinoise: I. La Visite apostolique des missions de Chine 1919-1920” *Cahiers de la Revue*

- Theologique de Louvain*, n. 5, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1982. Book review by J. Hong.
- Young, Ernest P. 2013. Chapter 8: Petitioning Rome, in *Ecclesiastical Colony: China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate*, pp. 171–184. Oxford University Press.