

GLOBALIZATION AS A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES

Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

Introduction

China is experiencing tremendous change today on a number of fronts. Perhaps most significantly, its economy has expanded dramatically in the past ten years, making it among the fastest growing economies in the world today. A recent study by David Dollar and Aart Kraay gives us a picture of what has been happening.¹ In 1980, China and India together accounted for one-third of the world's population and more than 60 percent of the world's extreme poor. In the twenty years 1978-1998, China's gross domestic product grew at an nearly unbelievable annual average of 9 percent. (Since that time, because of world economic conditions, that figure has dropped somewhat). In that same period poverty nationwide was reduced on an average of 8.4 percent. Because of the massive population of China, this has contributed to the fact that, on average, average global income inequality has actually been reduced, despite popular belief otherwise. Global income inequality in 1995 was roughly that of 1950 (7.7 percent versus 7.5 percent), after having been higher in the intervening years.

The economic success story of China has been an extraordinary one. It is having social repercussions which we are only beginning to see. United States universities attract the largest number of foreign students of any country in the world. The single largest national group studying in the U.S. comes from China. It is estimated that--again, because of the size of China's population--that Chinese will become the most used language on the Internet within a decade.

At the same time, there is a shadow side to all of this bright light as well. The economic growth in China has not been evenly distributed. It has been concentrated largely in the economic zone of the eastern part of the country. Although average income levels have risen, inequality in income levels in the country is also greater now than it was prior to 1978. Significant parts of China, mainly in the rural areas, remain mired in extreme poverty. If such inequality persists, income disparity can become a major factor in future social unrest.

A second factor is the rapid pace of change which comes in the wake of such strong economic growth. Rapid social change, especially for the generation coming of age, can result in a feeling of rootlessness or even anomie in society. As the forces of change become too strong for any single group to steer or guide, fears of social upheaval are likely to grow. A hallmark of the political leadership in China has been precisely fear of such upheavals. Those fears have been warranted, given China's history. Upheaval in a country of such large population will have implications for the whole world, not just for the nation itself.

All the possible implications of economic growth and social change are clearly on the minds of those preparing for the upcoming Congress of the Communist Party, along with the changes in political leadership which will likely ensue. How can all this change be guided and directed?

¹David Dollar and Aart Kraay, "Spreading the Wealth" *Foreign Affairs* 81(January/February, 2002)120-133.

Alongside the positive and potentially negative dimensions of economic growth and social change, the fact that this is happening in the world's most populous country means that China will increasingly play a major role on the world stage. Any student of Chinese history knows that, over the centuries, the relation of the Middle Kingdom to the rest of the world has been an alternation of turning outward and withdrawing to an inward stance. One wonders, for instance, what would have happened had the emperor not banned the building of ocean-going ships in 1436. Since the thirteenth century, Chinese ships had sailed the southern ocean as far as Africa. China, rather than Europe, could have been the rising colonial power in that period.² But internal unrest within China caused a withdrawal from the world scene.

At this point, China appears very much poised to take its place on the world stage. If all things are able to be held in balance, China's role is likely to be a very significant one.

But our concern here is not so much for the geopolitical implications of social change in China. It was necessary to sketch this larger picture in order to situate what is the topic of this conference. And that is the impact of this change on the Chinese people themselves, and what this might mean for religious believers among them, especially Christians. How might Christians respond to social change in a posture of service to society, and how might the resources of the Gospel help them in that response?

To try to get at this issue, I will proceed in four steps. The first step will be a short description of globalization, and how it is the framework in which to understand social change today. The second will be an examination of what the churches might do in response to globalization at the local level. There are three areas in which they need to be working. The third step will look more closely at the strains that burgeoning social change subjects a nation to, and what possibilities are arising out of those same strains. The fourth and final step will look at three areas in which the churches might be of service to China out of the resources which the Gospel provide.

I must issue a disclaimer at the outset. I am by no stretch of the imagination an expert on China. Nor would I claim even to be a specialist of any sort in this area. I am certainly interested in China and in the role of service which Christianity might play in the further development of China at this point in history. There are others who know the inside situation of a reality as vast and complex as China far better than I.³ So I beg forbearance for the mistakes and misreadings that I will make. My intent is to provide a lens through which to read the contemporary Chinese situation, and hope that the response and discussion will refine the perspective which emerges.

Globalization as the Framework of Social Change

When the Cold War largely ended at the beginning of the 1990's, there was a brief time in which there seemed to be no overarching way of interpreting the world. Francis Fukuyama famously

²See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and the Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 7.

³One recently published study of such a more knowledgeable student of China is that of Luis Gutheinz, *China im Aufbruch: Kultur und Religionen Chinas und das Christentum* (Frankfurt: IKO Verlag, 2001).

declared that we stood at the “end of history.” However, by mid-decade it was clear that a new framework was emerging: that of globalization.

Just what is globalization? One can describe it as revolving two axes. The first axis is *interconnectedness*. Advances in communications technologies in the last quarter of the twentieth century have made possible the development of a communications network that allows people and institutions to be in contact with one another at a level and a pace that was previously unthinkable. The symbol and reality of this interconnectedness is embodied in the Internet and the World Wide Web. The interconnections already possible make the flow of information and capital quick and easy. It is this interconnectedness that most characterizes the contemporary form of globalization.

But there is another side to this interconnectedness. This is *exclusion*, something which has been reflected upon by those who do not benefit from globalization, but experience being disadvantaged and even oppressed by it. In communications, globalization presumes access to a telephone. While the development of the mobile telephone is changing the picture of exclusion in communications rapidly, large parts of the world still do not have access or cannot afford access. It has been estimated that forty-two percent of the world has never placed a telephone call. In the economic interconnectedness created by globalization, many of the world’s poor have had their livelihoods disrupted by powerful globalized economic forces coming from outside. In some instances, people are actually worse off economically than before. Moreover, they are robbed of whatever little autonomy and control over their own lives which they may have had. In the aforementioned study by Dollar and Kraay, it was noted that a number of poor countries such as China and India have improved their lots (they add to that list countries like Vietnam and Uganda); but there is also a large number (especially in Africa) whose lot has only worsened. Economic globalization, in the form of neo-liberal capitalism, may provide mean growth of gross domestic product, but the internal inequities it creates within countries seem to be even larger.

The other axis around which globalization revolves is *space*. The advances in communications technologies have diminished the importance of time for organizing the world. The only people who have lots of time are the poor and the elderly, the unemployed and those who are made to wait. With globalization, space is, on the one hand compressed. Think, for example, of the amount of information which can be put on a microchip. The counterpart of this micro-compression is the global city. There are now more than four hundred cities in the world with a population of more than a million people. Mexico City has more people than the entire continent of Australia.

On the other hand, space has expanded or been deterritorialized. Political boundaries mean little for the flow of information and capital. The concept of citizenship or belonging is also changing. The wealthy population in a poor country may well identify more with their counterparts in another country than the poor citizens of their own country right next to them. A recent study in Latin America showed that those youth who have access to the Internet are more likely to share values with their peers in North America than with their own parents.

Globalization affects especially four spheres of life. The first is *communications*. Beyond what has already been said about the flow of information across political boundaries, it should also be noted that these communications technologies also democratize communication and access to information. It is increasingly difficult to maintain control of communication and access to information in a hierarchical fashion in the face of the Internet. It is also changing the mobilization of public opinion. The campaign to ban landmines, which led to some 120 nations signing a treaty precise to do that, was put together entirely on the Internet. It is also increasingly used to shame transnational corporation into more ethical and ecologically responsive behavior.

The second sphere is *economics*, perhaps the most visible face of globalization. With the interconnectedness of globalization, the world is increasingly in a single, interlocking economic system: neoliberal capitalism. And has already been noted, one is either inside or excluded from it. At this point in time, it is presented as inevitable and unstoppable, creating a shift in production in society as dramatic as was the Industrial Revolution. But history suggests also that periods of growing interconnectedness can come to a halt. The First World War and the Great Depression represented such an end to the period of greater interconnectedness--marked also by advances in communication and transportation technologies between 1850 and 1914.⁴ The level of antiglobalization protest which has now become routine points to the fact that the economic dimension of globalization cannot continue unchecked. It must be made more human. Moreover, the inconsistencies in the rhetoric about "free trade" have been belied in actions taken by two of the most powerful proponents of it, the European Union and the United States.

The third sphere is the *political*. While the nation-state has been weakened by globalization, it is not about to disappear. There is at the moment very little balance of military and political power in the world. The United States exercises the greatest of these kinds of power, but it is evident that, despite its power, it cannot immediately have its way. Arrangements which create better balance are sadly lacking at this time.

Fourth and finally, there is the *sociocultural* sphere. With interconnectedness has come here, too, concentrations of power. Much of this, in terms of news reporting and cultural production of entertainment, is again centered in the United States, although the U.S. hegemony may not be as great as is sometimes popularly claimed.⁵ Nonetheless, the homogenization of cultural goods seems once again to rob local settings of their autonomy.

This, in a nutshell, is a picture of globalization in the beginning of the twenty-first century. All of the features of globalization mentioned are having their impact on China as well--the spread of the Internet, the incursion of neoliberal capitalism, realignment of political forces, and cultural homogenization (the largest McDonald's in the world is in Beijing!). In the long term, this is a matter not only for China, but one of interest to the rest of the world, as China in turn makes its impact through globalization on the rest of the world. But let us move now to the second part of this presentation, and ask about what the churches should be doing in the face of globalization.

⁴See for example Harold James, *The End of Globalization: lessons from the Great Depression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵For a recent analysis of this, see Richard Pells, "American Culture Goes Global, or Does It? *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 12, 2002) B7-9.

The Churches' Task in Meeting Globalization

What should the Christian Churches be doing in the face of globalization today? The Catholic Church has to ask this in a special way, in view of its own transnational or global character. Pope John Paul II addressed the issue of globalization for the first time in an extensive fashion in his World Peace Day Message of 2000.⁶ He notes that globalization is a deeply ambivalent phenomenon, which harbors both risks and possibilities: "Globalization, for all its risks, also offers exceptional and promising opportunities...to become a single family built on the values of justice, equity and solidarity."

Our concern here, however, is not so much Christian churches on the global stage⁷ as how churches address globalization in their immediate context. I would like to suggest that there are at least three ways in which they might do so.

First of all, following the direction of Pope John Paul's vision, they need to work toward achieving a greater communion and solidarity in society. The possibility of interconnectedness which globalization holds out should lead toward creating a greater sense of belonging, of inclusion, of standing together in solidarity not only in the churches, but in society as a whole. The force and speed with which globalization moves is disruptive of local social relations and, as has already been noted, even lead to the feeling of exclusion. Migration to urban areas for economic reasons disrupts family life. Sudden unemployment created by economic shifts suddenly pushes some to the very edge of survival. The speed of social change can create a feeling of anomie, especially among the young, which is assuaged in alcohol, drugs, or sexual promiscuity.

In some places the churches are not able to mount social programs of their own to address these issues. But they can reach out to aid those in their own congregations, and can move to support other initiatives in their vicinity to create these senses of solidarity. Focus on the local community, which is at times threatened with being overwhelmed by these larger forces, is an important part of what can be done by the churches in the face of the social change brought about by globalization.

But an effort to create a greater sense of communion and solidarity is, in itself, not entirely sufficient. To assuage the disruption does not take a step toward addressing the cause of the disruption in the first place. These leads to a second thing which the churches can do. The churches can work toward unmasking the ideological values which drive globalization, and the idolatrous patterns which sustain it. As Roland Robertson has pointed out, globalization really has no vision or goal of its own, other than its own self-replication; that is to say, the goal of globalization is more globalization.⁸ There is no idea of when enough might be enough. The amassing of huge wealth, the deciding of all issues solely on their economic merit, and the

⁶John Paul II, "Peace on Earth to Those Whom God Loves," *Origins* 29(December 23, 1999)449-455.

⁷For an analysis of that level, see Robert Schreiter, "Die Kirche als Global Player," *Diakonia* 3/2002, forthcoming.

⁸Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

measuring of human beings by their capacity to produce and to consume--this will not make for a healthy and equitable world.

As globalization enters China ever more deeply, with all its enticements, one thing the churches can do is to help identify the implicit values the products of globalization carry with them. It is important that this not be done in a xenophobic way, as though this is simply a new foreign invasion from the West. Globalization as a process will also take on distinctively Chinese characteristics as times goes on. But the values globalization does carry with it will confront a very different pattern of values to be found in traditional Chinese society.

Globalization carries with it not only a set of values, but a stronger, even idolatrous discourse. Just as some of the great ideological movements of the twentieth century often used Christian and Jewish concepts in a distorted and secularized form (Marxism was a kind of secularized eschatology), so too globalization has not been slow to appropriate religious categories. Latin American analysts such as Franz Hinkelammert in Costa Rica, and Jung Mo Sung and Inázio Neutzling in Brazil have pointed out some of the characteristics of this use of categories: “structural adjustment” as necessary sacrifice, a delayed eschatology in terms of promises to the poor that things will be better in the future, the “Good News” of competition, and so on.⁹ The churches must therefore help identify the new “religious absolutes” of globalization, and uncover their destructive tendencies for social life. The churches can help show how these provide initial enticement, but over time will not satisfy.

Third, the churches can be in service to China by providing a coherent spiritual path for living in a rapidly changing world. People looking for other possibilities, not just in an eclectic manner, but something with continuity and coherence, can find such a message in the Gospel and in the gathered communities of prayer and worship which the churches can offer. China has a very long spiritual history, and has time and again within that history showed a capacity to appropriate new spiritual traditions into the framework of Chinese culture. It is clear, too, that spiritual hunger has not abated in China. More will be said on these possibilities later.

Navigating the Strains of Globalization

Globalization brings with it strains and disruptions in the social fabric, as we have already seen. In looking at those stresses and strains, I would like to identify three areas that play a role in the rapid social change which is experienced, so as to set the stage for looking at what Christianity might do to respond to them.

The first of these is modernization. For some societies, part of that strain and disruption is the rapid entry into modernity. How might modernity be defined, especially in its social ramifications?

⁹I discuss these in *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). See also María Carmelita de Freitas, “The Mission of Religious Men and Women in Latin America Today: A Liberating Message in a Neoliberal World,” in Robert Schreiter (ed.), *Mission in the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 88-116.

Art critic Nestor García Canclini has defined four movements or projects that mark modernity.¹⁰ The first of these is an *emancipatory* movement, which leads societies out of authoritarian hegemonies and result in greater individualism and self-expression, especially in the cities. Second, there is an *expansive* movement, wherein there is an interest in greater production of goods, promotion of scientific discoveries, and general economic development. Third, there is a *renovating* movement, which sees progress and innovation as a constant improvement of society, and the use of ever-changing fashion to dictate social taste. Fourth and finally, there is a *democratizing* movement in politics, but also in education and the arts.

Modernity, then, has all of these characteristics of emancipation, expansion, renovation, and democratization. But two further things need to be pointed out in order to understand the role of modernization in globalization. First of all, societies do not modernize in the same way. There was a time when European thinkers--starting with Max Weber--believed that every modernizing society would end up looking more or less European with its secularization, individualism, and democracy. But particularly in Asia we have seen considerable variation. In Japan and elsewhere, modernization has not brought about a dramatic decline in religion and increased secularization. Rather, new religions have been formed to meet the exigencies of modernization. The evident spiritual hunger in China seems to corroborate this. Individualism has increased in modern, urban Asia, but not to the degree it has in the West. And countries like Singapore have shown a capacity to combine authoritarian government with modernity.

All of this is to say that China is likely to find its own path. With the longest continuous cultural history in the world, it carries within it values and ideals which cannot be dislodged easily. It does exhibit, however, one approach to modernity that has been identified in other societies. Bassam Tibi, a Muslim scholar in Germany, has noted that Muslim societies, in approaching modernity, frequently have made a distinction between structural and cultural modernity. Structural modernity is the modernity of modern science, with its use of empirical experiment and the mathematization of nature. Cultural modernity embraces many of the values described by García above: individualism, the value of self-expression, personal autonomy, the cult of progress. Muslim societies, Tibi asserts, tend to embrace structural modernity quickly, but try to hold cultural modernity at arm's length.¹¹ Could something of the same thing be said for China?

The second thing that needs to be said about modernization as a force within globalization is that one frequently finds, especially in cities, the premodern, the modern, and the postmodern also coexisting, side by side. Sometimes these are experienced coexisting in the lives of single individuals or families. This is especially the case for rural migrants to the cities, especially women, who may live a premodern existence at home with their families, but who find work outside their home in modern and even postmodern, hi-tech settings.

Thus, modernity is not a simple or even single feature within globalization. Yet it represents the site where much of the social strain societies experience is found.

¹⁰Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 12-13.

¹¹Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 24.

The second strain which the rapid social change of globalization may manifest has to do with the social changes which occur when authoritarian political order comes to an end. Perhaps the more evolutionary, guided style with which the political order in China is changing will avoid this particular kind of strain. As has already been noted, current leadership wants to avoid the kind of conflict which has accompanied social change in China in the past.¹²

A pattern which frequently emerges at the end of authoritarian rule or after the cessation of a civil conflict is that the population, especially the young, will throw themselves into consumerism and even hedonism. It seems as though after a long struggle to achieve social change, a population will try to forget the struggles and traumas of the past by immersing itself in mindless activity with immediate gratification.

Will that happen as a result of rapid social change in China? It is difficult to say. I raise the issue here, because this has happened in other places, and so want to draw attention to its possibility as we think about the service of religious people and the churches to China in a time of social change.

The third and final feature to which I would like to point as a result of the rapid social change comes out of a longitudinal study of some forty-three societies by American sociologist Ronald Inglehart.¹³ In this study, which he has continued to conduct since 1980, he has tracked the values of people in modernized societies which he designates as “post-survival,” that is, people who reach an economic level where their very survival is no longer threatened on a daily basis. He notes that three sets of values begin to emerge rather consistently: (1) a search for meaning, (2) a distrust of social institutions, and (3) a concern for the environment (i.e., ecology).

The first of these concerns, the search for meaning, may reflect the freedom to move beyond being preoccupied with material survival. It may also reflect a dissatisfaction with what material existence is able to offer. At any rate, it is something which appears consistently. The second concern, the distrust of social institutions, represents to my mind the growth of individualism, and perhaps the luxury to be distrustful of institutions in a wealthy, stable society. If the institutional structure of life can be assumed or taken for granted, then one can live as though they are not important. One wonders whether, for example, those in the United States would still feel the same way after the September 11th tragedy. The third, concern for the environment, is no doubt complex. My own reading of it is, on the one hand, a genuine concern for the survival of the planet, given the strain we have put the physical environment under; and, on the other hand, the quest for a sense of metaphysical wholeness in a non-religious, postmetaphysical social setting.

¹²In light of all this, see David Murphy’s recent observation on the role which may be accorded religion in society, at once to help manage change and to be more controlled by the State itself. David Murphy, “Pékin est prêt à reconnaître un plus grand rôle dans la société pur autant que les autorités puissent exercer un meilleur contrôle sur elles,” *Sedos Bulletin* 34(2002)46-48.

¹³Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

China is one of the societies which Inglehart has studied (along with India, Japan, and South Korea in the Asian sphere); his comment on China is that it is “modernizing very rapidly.”¹⁴ There has been some question about the structure of the survey and the sampling, which the Asian Values Study, now underway, is trying to correct. Whatever the eventual outcome, these three sets of values--the quest for meaning, the distrust of social institutions, and concern for the environment--need to be taken into account in discussions of what might most be of service in a time of rapid social change.

How Might the Church Be of Service?

This brings us to the fourth and final part of this presentation. Having looked at the shape of globalization today as the framework within which rapid social change is taking place; having then moved to how the churches might respond to globalization as a phenomenon; and having then examined some of the special social strains and challenges which rapid social change of this type brings--we are ready in this concluding section to make some suggestions of how the churches might be of service in the midst of this rapid social change. I would like to propose three things for our consideration.

It should be said at the outset before proposing these three things that the fact that a significant number of Chinese people are exploring religious traditions of all kinds--both long established traditions and newly founded pathways--serves here as a point of departure. This is not surprising. Rapid change, especially when it is coupled with more mobility and (for some) greater material well-being, often leads to spiritual quests. So this serves as a backdrop to what will be put on the table here.

First of all, the churches can be of service by being hospitable to those who come their doors, and be able to live with the possibility of varying degrees of belonging. Christianity has not always been good at this. The commitment which Christians have sought have often been of an exclusive nature, which involves renunciation of any other kind of affiliation and clear evidence of total commitment to Christian faith. But a number of things argue here otherwise.

First of all, the idea is not without precedent. There was already in Judaism at the time of Jesus the tradition of the “God-fearers,” that is, those questing non-Jews who felt attracted to the Jewish tradition and its ethos but did not accept full membership. Particularly in uncertain times, this kind of hospitality can provide a social space for those exploring or fascinated with Christianity who may or may not in the future make a move to embrace fully Christian faith. Second, concepts of religious belonging in East and South Asia have always made it possible to participate or belong in more than one tradition. While this has been widely known among, say, Taoist and Buddhist traditions, Christians have more recently begun to talk of this as well. Among the Chinese, Julia Ching has given some consideration to this.¹⁵ My own experience with

¹⁴ibid., 24.

¹⁵Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); see also Michael Amaladoss, “Double Religious Belonging and Liminality: An Anthro-Theological Reflection,” *Sedos Bulletin* 34(2002)55-61.

many Asian Christians is that they do see themselves a double- or multiple belongers when given the permission to do so. Third, from the side of Christians, allowing varying degrees of belonging may be part of an understanding of evangelization which is appropriate to Asia. Much of the rhetoric about a new evangelization in Asia strikes Asian ears as aggressive and not much of an improvement over the colonialist era. I am not advocating allowing various degrees of belonging as a stratagem to lure people into Christianity. What I intend here is a genuine act of hospitality which leads to what the guest and God might desire.

Edmond Tang and Roman Malek have both written on the intellectuals and “culture Christians” who find themselves attracted to Christianity today.¹⁶ We need a continuing accompaniment of these groups, to understand their intentions and interests in their experience of Christian hospitality.

A second area where Christians may be of service has to do with how Christianity might be inculturated into China. There are two routes to travel here. The first has to do with the present and the immediate past. Christians have been at pains to show that their citizenship within Christian faith does not diminish or contradict their citizenship and loyalty to China. Effective inculturation will be a sign of that double sense of citizenship. Chinese Catholics have done much in the last two decades to renew their citizenship in the worldwide Catholic Church. For a small religious body which has experienced persecution in the past, Catholics have been finding ways to bring about reconciliation among Catholics in China and with the larger society itself. In so doing, they can now provide a service to the larger Chinese society in dealing with the double citizenship incumbent upon all Chinese as China becomes a global player in the world today: citizenship in China and the larger world.

The second strand of that inculturation requires looking at Chinese history. How have religious and ethical traditions brought new insight in times of upheaval (one thinks of the sages in the period of the Warring States)? How did other traditions such as Buddhism come to be inculturated in China?¹⁷ And what of earlier efforts to inculturate Christianity in China, by the Nestorians and especially by the Jesuits?¹⁸ The lessons of history could well be salutary here. Chinese history continues to move on, but finding those continuing elements in Chinese cultural heritage would seem to be important.

Third, the churches can be of service by offering themselves as spiritual guides in uncertain times. They can do this, first of all, at the level of the spiritual mediations Christians make, in their prayer and worship, in their spiritual practices and disciplines. They do this secondly by an ongoing inculturation along the lines just sketched out. They offer yet another possibility in the experience of the ministry of reconciliation which they can undertake. I am not speaking here especially about the sacrament of reconciliation, but the other forms of that ministry which are

¹⁶Edmond Tang, “The Second Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and Christianity Today,” in Werner Ustorf and Toshiko Murayama (eds.), *Identity and Marginality: Rethinking Christianity in North East Asia* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 55-70; Roman Malek, “Die katholische Kirche in der Volksrepublik China,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 208 (Juli 1990)471-481.

¹⁷Judith Berling takes up these questions in her *A Pilgrim in Chinese Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

¹⁸On the Nestorian inculturation, see the recently published book by Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras* (New York: Ballantine, 2000), which published a collection of Nestorian Christian writings on Jesus for the first time.

taking on more and more importance. To live in a reconciling and reconciled community seems to me to provide an image of a life anchored in love and attentive relationships which is particularly attractive in a time of rapid social change.

Conclusion

In this presentation I have tried to sketch out something of the larger framework in which we need to examine the meaning of spiritual growth and social change in China today. We need to understand the dynamics which are propelling that social change. We need to understand the experience of people living in the maelstrom of change and what kinds of yearnings, hopes, and spiritual hungers which that change incites. And, finally, we have to assess what resources Christians can bring to be of service to those seeking spiritual growth in such settings. I look forward to our discussion of where we find ourselves on these questions, and where we might hope to go.