

# *The Gospel with Chinese Characteristics: A Feminine Church*

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*Translated from the French by Betty Ann Maheu, MM*

**F**or the non-Christian Chinese, Nature is the spouse of Heaven, and it is also Mother. For all Christians, the Church is also mother, and it is the sign of the reconciliation, redemption and God's espousal with humanity and nature. The Church is feminine. China is feminine. We Westerners have overdeveloped our masculine side. We like swords, cannons, guns, bombs, sky scrapers, the sun, well-tanned bodies, obelisks, pointed bell towers, straight lines and straight crosses, dogmas, and laws. We like to build with marble, concrete, and cement. China also likes these things, but China's soul has always preferred curves, bows, rounded things, the depths of valleys, grottos, clouds, thick bushy forests, wooden temples and palaces, roofs with turned up corners, gardens full of zigzags, secret corners, hiding places, and surprises. China likes clear colors, loves the moon, and is mad about firecrackers. It makes laws but pays little attention to them. Schools of dogmatism have never quite managed to pull it off in China, and Marxism, the most recent of them, is in complete disarray, and it is a pure Western import.

The Church in China must deepen its feminine identity, round off its corners, lose itself more within the landscape, let itself be more desired, abandon its Gothic arches and its pointed bell towers, and its well setup parishes, its Roman legalism, and find a style which is the fruit of the union of the masculine and the

feminine, rather than an almost exclusive expression of imperial and Western masculinity.

The Church in China must permit our great transcendent God to rest a bit. God is very good, we all know it, but God comes from above, from outside and implants himself in the human, something that the Chinese find very hard to imagine. For the Chinese, if there is a God, he is up there, surely, but God must, above all, be here below. Here below from eternity. God cannot be above reality, for God is reality and the heart of all reality. God is the center, at the source, at the root of the world. God is in the womb of nature and humanity.

That God should be born a human being of a woman is all right. That may be surprising, no doubt, but rather moral, even natural when we think of it. What seems truly absurd, however, is what we give people to understand. On the one hand, we maintain that the world cannot exist outside of God, and on the other hand, we maintain that in order to save the world, God enters the world as though coming from outside.

For the Chinese that does not make sense. Because from what the Chinese see, life always comes from below and from within: from within the earth, from within the flower, from within the fruit, from within the woman, from within the man and from within humanity.

Therefore, if we say to the Chinese that they are full of God, that the earth is overflowing with God from all eternity, that the Church herself is filled with God, that's all right. If we assure the Chinese that the Kingdom is already in the world like a child is in the bosom of his/her mother, they might find that interesting, even fascinating. And if we tell them that they must enter into that sacred space where God is, they would not feel uprooted from the great spiritual traditions of their people. If we make them understand that basically the task is to clear the way, to give birth to life, that the Kingdom and God is already present within us, it is just possible that we are not leading them far astray, and they just might want to give Christianity a try.