

The Spirit of Loyal-Piety, the Spirit of Humanism, and the Spirit of Ultimate Finality – The Faith Paradigm Shift in the Transforming Chinese Society

Written in 2006

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The scope of the topic on Science and Faith is extensive. At the beginning this theme certainly touches on religious faith and natural science. Moreover, since the rapid development of modern natural science, the highlight has become the impact which it causes on religious faith. Of course, natural science does not affect only religious faith, it also affects certain non-religious spiritual values that base themselves on the quest for spiritual values. Under the strong influence of natural science, all sorts of spiritual values, including religious faith, have been relegated to secondary position. People even predict that the more science progresses, the more religious faith backtracks.¹ Science is crowned with the laurel of the Omnipotent, enthroned as the sole Emperor of human knowledge. Under the radiating beams of this laureate crown, science seems to have become the mighty key to solving all problems of mankind. Men worship this Emperor with utmost respect. The balance of human axiological pursuit is totally skewed to the side of empirical, scientific methodology. The idolization of empirical science happens to have overlooked the quest for spiritual values which empirical methods cannot bespeak. In tracing the cause of retrogression in religious faith, it would be better to attribute it to the result of a tension between empiricism (reason) and the spirit (faith), rather than say it is a conflict between science and theology. An extreme bias towards empirical values would definitely lead to a certain downgrading of non-empirical spiritual values. Unfortunately, much of the source of modern problems in Chinese society relates to this imbalance.

The foundation of traditional Chinese society is the *Family* or *Clan*.² *Loyal-Piety* is the highest spiritual quest for this *Family*. “The teachings of the ancient kings are gloriously manifested in Piety and in Loyalty. Loyal-Piety is the most desired virtue for all rulers and kin of man.”³ This spiritual value has sustained traditional Chinese society for thousands of years. Although it basically keeps a respectful distance from concerns for ultimate things, the spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety* is still able to maintain the fundamental stability and development of Chinese society. For many centuries, all the rhythms of life in feudal Chinese society evolve around this spiritual quest, which has become the non-religious spiritual faith of traditional Chinese society. Nevertheless, this non-religious spiritual faith communicates in some way with religious faith. The non-religious, non-creedal spiritual sentiment of *Loyalty to the Emperor* receives confirmation in religious faith that involves worship and sacrifices to heaven. The *Emperor* has become the spokesman for *Heaven*. “The appointed Emperor is the one whom Heaven adorns.”⁴ Worship-sacrifice to heaven becomes the prerogative of the *Emperor*. “The Son of Heaven sacrifices to Heaven and Earth; the feudal barons sacrifice to the gods of earth and crops; the senior officials sacrifice to the five spirits of the elements and household.”⁵ Anyone making sacrifices beyond his due is considered committing tremendous offence of disrespect. The spiritual

¹ C.f., [Spain] Unamuno, “From the Most Sapiential God to the Most Loving God” in *Selection of Western Religious-Philosophical Works of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Liu Xiao-feng, Shanghai Joint Publishers, 1988, p. 746.

² Cf. Wang Li-xiong, “The Dismantling and Fate of Chinese Cultural Structure (中国文化结构的解体与劫数)”, see Liu Zhi-feng (ed.), *Ethics-China* (道德中国), China Social Sciences Press, 1999, pp. 10-17.

³ Master Lu’s Spring and Autumn Annals, Chapter *Meng Xia*. (吕氏春秋·孟夏)

⁴ Dong Zhong-shu, “Rich Dew of Spring and Autumn”, Vol. I, Emperor Zhuang of Chu, I. (董仲舒,《春秋繁露》,卷一,楚庄王第一)

⁵ Book of Rites – Imperial Protocols

quest of the non-religious faith in *piety towards one's father* receives certain religious, creedal approbation in the rites of ancestral worship. The classical twenty-four models of piety (二十四孝) are deemed the exemplars of this virtue. In sum, the “sacrifice to heaven and earth, and the observances of the ancestral temples” are considered “the way (Dao) of father and son, and the righteousness of the emperor and subjects.”⁶ *Loyal-Piety* becomes the acclaimed spiritual faith in traditional Chinese society. This forms a drastic contrast with the first commandment of the Decalogue in the Biblical tradition: “Thou shalt not have other gods before Me.”⁷ The supreme spiritual value in the Biblical tradition is *God*, whereas that of the Chinese is *Loyal-Piety*. Of course, such contrast does not indicate that there is not religious faith towards *God* in Chinese tradition. As mentioned above, the non-religious faith of *Loyal-Piety* approximates the religious faith towards *God* or *Heaven*. This intercourse between such non-religious and religious faith in Chinese tradition is aptly pointed out by Guo Mo-ruo (郭沫若), who opines that “there entailed a double meaning when the ancient Yin (殷) people acclaimed their Lord or Emperor: there was both the meaning of a supreme God as well as of an ancestral clan God.”⁸

Moreover, in Chinese tradition, “disloyalty” is placed top among the *ten unpardonable vices*. On the contrary, the ramification of one who “offends against Heaven” is that he merely “has none to whom he can pray.”⁹ And the most severe *penalty from Heaven* for an Emperor who goes against Heaven is no more than dethronement or disasters to *the people below* only, never attaining to the level of an *unpardonable* crime. But the punishment for *disloyalty* and *impiety* is absolute. It shows that the spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety* obviously ranks higher than that of *Respect for Heaven*. And this kind of spiritual value radically differs from that of western culture which is based on the Biblical tradition. The primary spiritual value in the Biblical tradition is *God*. The spiritual quest is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”¹⁰ The punishment for sinning against God is that “the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you.”¹¹ The pursuit of the highest spiritual value and its consequential punishments reflect the differences between the spiritual faith value of Chinese tradition and the Biblical tradition. *Loyal-Piety* remains the pre-eminent spiritual value in Chinese tradition.

At the same time, what evolve around the faith of *Loyal-Piety* in Chinese tradition are the so called *Five Constancies* or *Five Constant Moral Virtues* (五常) of *Benevolence*, *Righteousness*, *Propriety*, *Wisdom* and *Fidelity*. The mentioning of the *Five Constancies* naturally touches on the *Three Cardinal Guides* (三纲). The spiritual value defended by the *Three Cardinal Guides* is precisely *Loyal-Piety*. The meanings implied in the first *Two Guides* are obvious (ruler guides subject; father guides son). In essence, the *Third Guide*, “husband guides wife,” is also defending the spiritual value of *Loyalty*. Adages like “a decent girl does not marry two men” and other symbols of fidelity like monuments of chastity promote the *Loyalty* that a wife owes her husband. The spiritual value pursuits

⁶ Book of Rites – Ritual Vessels

⁷ Bible – Deuteronomy 5:7

⁸ Guo Mo-ruo, “The Progression of Early Qin View of the Heavenly Way (先秦天道观之进展)”, see *The Complete Works of Guo Mo-ruo : Historical Writings, Vol. I*, People’s Press, 1982.

⁹ Analects -- Chapter *Ba Yi*

¹⁰ Bible – Deuteronomy 6:5

¹¹ Bible -- Deuteronomy 11:17

of “a loyal subject does not serve two masters” and “a good daughter does not serve two husbands” coincide matchlessly. Some two thousand years ago, Mencius proposed the *Four Virtues* (or *Four Propers*) (四德) of *Benevolence*, *Righteousness*, *Propriety* and *Wisdom*. Then in the fourth year of the establishment of the East Han Dynasty (79 AD), *Benevolence*, *Righteousness*, *Propriety*, *Wisdom* and *Fidelity* were affirmed as the *Five Constancies* of the moral virtue system. In tracing the source of this tradition, the moral norms in the fundamental relationships of ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother and friend vis-à-vis friend, defined by the *Five Constancies*, are spiritual value pursuits deriving from *Loyal-Piety*.

However, there lies a hierarchy in the supreme spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety*. The core spiritual value in *Loyal-Piety* is not *Piety* but *Loyalty*. *Loyalty* and *Piety* cannot be both attained, and to relinquish *Piety* for the sake of *Loyalty* is tremendously praiseworthy. Therefore the giving up of the *small family* for the *large family* became the spiritual value pursuit of the people. Nevertheless, as history progresses, there have been evolutions to the essential meanings of the highest spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety*. The faith of *Loyalty to the Emperor* has gradually been replaced by the faith of *Patriotic Martyrdom*. The Early Qin (先秦) ideal of dying for the Emperor has slowly transformed into the sacrifice for the country in the Ming-Qing period. So the earlier supreme faith value of *Loyalty to the Emperor* has altered into the modern spiritual value of *Patriotic Martyrdom*.

The Opium War of 1840 pounded a fatal psychological blow on this traditional faith of *Loyal-Piety*. The traditional *Loyal-Piety* faith of the Chinese seemed so feeble in face of heavy artillery and formidable warships. Although many a devoted souls volunteered their lives for the country, and as loyal and as pious as they were, the spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety* failed miserably in front of the science of vessels and gunpowder. During that period of history, the spiritual value pursuit of *Patriotic Martyrdom* intensified rapidly in earnest, and it advanced far ahead of the spiritual quest of *Loyalty to the Emperor*. As a result, the Qing Dynasty was overthrown by a cohort of earnest patriotic devotees. The subsequent May Fourth Cultural Movement made a clean sweep and speedily replaced the spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety* with the pioneering Geist of *Sir Democracy* (德先生) and *Sir Science* (赛先生). But as people started to witness how *Sir Democracy* threw the country into utter chaos and widespread disunity, the call for the spiritual value of *Sir Democracy* subsided, while the aspiration for *Sir Science* soared tremendously. Of course, the contributing factors to this preference were those most pragmatic and most beneficial developments that the scientific technology of the three Industrial Revolutions had brought to China. The immense contribution offered by scientific technology to this development made science the crowning object of worship in Chinese culture. Empirical science became the only *faith* of modern men. Spiritual values have been demoted to a dispensable state, where any kinds of pursuit of spiritual values, whether religious or non-religious faith, are all cast aside. Spiritual values such as morality, justice, ideals, honesty and equality alike utterly vanished. Empirical science becomes the sole criterion of judgment for veracity. Man's only target became those non-spiritual, empirical pursuits such as money worship, hedonism, consumerism, relativism, materialistic wealth, power and prestige. The impoverishment of faith-based spiritual values is very much related to the deification of the materialistic values supported by empirical science. As the material wealth brought on by empirical science becomes more substantial, spiritual faith becomes all the more easily disposed of. Each step that empirical science takes towards the altar of the gods represents a step back for spiritual faith. This is definitely related to the way of living existence proper to mankind – man lives in a two-fold world: the spiritual and the material. Excessive pursuit of everything in the material world will surely reduce the desire for the spiritual. All the objects of empirical science belong to the genre of the material world. Thus the inevitable results of this kind of

excessive material pursuit are precisely the demise of ideals, spiritual decay, the decline of religious faith, and the loss of sense of creedal direction.

Spiritual values are being devoured in the material world. People falsely believe that everything is relative, that absolute spiritual values have no need of existence. “We are building a *dictatorship of relativism* that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires.”¹² Therefore, any forms of spiritual absolutes have been cast aside. Of course, the impact of relativism not only surfaces in China, it has also been a fatal problem in modern society. Due to the demise of the spiritual faith of *Loyal-Piety* and the widespread onslaught of *puritanical scientism*, the flames of relativism have fanned ever wilder. The modern Chinese are now facing an era of radical disbelief towards the existence of any absolute spiritual values. Establishment builds on demolition, but when things are destroyed yet not rebuilt, there lies precisely the evil root of the crisis in modern spiritual faith. The spiritual faith of *Loyal-Piety* in Chinese tradition completely collapsed after the May Fourth New Cultural Movement. The non-spiritual value system of empirical science percolates every facet of society. With the supporting influence of relativism, such non-spiritual value system has utterly overthrown the spiritual values based on *Loyal-Piety* in the Chinese tradition. Radical anti-traditional sentiments are expressed in belittling tradition, ridiculing revered sages and despising the ancients. The most direct and effective impact of this anti-traditionalism takes the form of the complete reversal of language usage. E.g. in Chinese, the word comrade, *tong zhi* (同志), is now often used to refer to homosexuals; the word for young lady, *xiao jie* (小姐), has now assumed the secondary meaning of a prostitute. The same words are kept, but the meanings run wild. With no spiritual value, no existence of truth, no ultimate spirit, no tradition, no ideals, no God – everything revolves around the pragmatic material world.

In face of the modern spiritual crisis of faith, myriads of opinions abound and schools of expertise differ as to how to rebuild faith. The multitudinous branches of proposals range from “the conservatives, preservers of traditional Chinese classics, advocates of total westernization, those who would adopt western practices but with Chinese essence, vice versa, or would adopt a complementary use of both Chinese and western arts, those who derive new ways of political rulings from internal self-sanctification, and those who emphasize creative transformation, or creative integration, etc.”¹³ What people are hoping for is to rescue modern man's spiritual faith, and to be able to “redefine a standard Chinese culture and to revive the Chinese ethnic spirit.” No matter what school there is, the crux of the matter is how to construct what kind of a spiritual value system for the modern man. In other words, how to build up the faith of modern man, and what kind of a faith is that going to be. The traditionalist solution is to engage in a modern interpretation of Chinese tradition, and to form modern man's spiritual outlook while not losing the inheritance of traditional Chinese values. This results in the blossoming studies and research in the Chinese classics and the rise of masters resplendent with academic accomplishments. *The Thirteen Classics* (十三经) are once again honored in university lecture halls; primers for pupils like the *Sheng Lu Qi Meng* (声律启蒙 *On the Rules of Sounds and Tones*), *Li Weng Dui Yun* (笠翁对韵 *The Bamboo Rain-hatted Old Man on Rhyming*), and *You Xue Qiong Lin* (幼学琼林 *Fine Collection of Primary Studies*) are also heard and recited anew in elementary schools. People wish to gain new understanding of *Loyal-Piety* and reinterpret the *Five Constant Moral Virtues*. The *Three Cardinal Guides*, however, are not receiving any attention due to their blatant contrariety with modern sentimentality. Regardless of how modern scholars attempt to explain *Loyal-Piety* and *The Five Constancies*, these criteria, alongside with *The Three Cardinal Guides*,

¹² Pope Benedict XVI, Homily given on 18 April 2005

¹³ Yu Dun-kang, “Confucian Ethics and Global Ethics”, see *Dialogue II – Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity*, ed. He Guang-hu and Xu Zhi-wei, Social Science Literature Press, 2001, p. 12.

encapsulate the spiritual values of traditional Chinese society. All other moral ethics, legal and governmental systems, economic models, family structures, protocols, doctrines, justice and beneficence, efforts at self-improvements, governance of others, and the value system of external political rulings from internal self-sanctification, etc. evolve around *Loyal-Piety*, *The Five Constancies* and *The Three Cardinal Guides*. This vast spiritual value system completely collapsed after the dissipation of the core values of *Loyal-Piety*, *The Five Constancies* and *The Three Cardinal Guides*. *The May Fourth Movement* and *The Cultural Revolution* have utterly eradicated this spiritual faith. “Piety has given way to class hierarchy – where familial bond or closeness depends on where you draw the line; Charity has become a synonym for sanctimony; Righteousness for crude fraternal comradeship among the hooligan type. In that era, all kinds of inconsiderate misdemeanors towards oneself or family were branded as virtuous examples. Deeds of those who do not take care of their ill parents for the sake of ‘revolutionary activities’ or those who run to the rescue of ‘national properties’ rather than to that of one’s wife and children were hailed as heroic acts.”¹⁴ At that time, the only thing left was *Loyalty*. And this *Loyalty* was rigidly reserved for one particular person in history on his way to be ranked as a god on the altar. When this altar abruptly disappeared, this *Loyalty* lost its object of worship. The last bit of remnant from traditional spiritual values also vanished. A reinterpretation of tradition must therefore deal honestly with this complete deconstruction of traditional spiritual values. To rebuild spiritual faith on the ruins of a thoroughly knocked down building is no easy business at all.

Moreover, the western influence in modern spiritual values makes this reconstruction program all the more arduous. We must realize at the same time that this western influence is not authentic; it is rather the pseudo modern spiritual value which arises not from the mainstream. Needless to say, the western traditional spiritual values based on Christian faith are also bombarded by the unprecedented waves of modern spiritual values. In western tradition, “the institutions, laws and modes of thinking and feeling as handed down from previous generations do not always seem to be well adapted to the contemporary state of affairs; hence arises an upheaval in the manner and even the norms of behavior.”¹⁵ Former US President, Jimmy Carter, wrote in his book, *Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis*, “a eulogy mourning the downfall of American values” and cried for America to return to moral ethics.¹⁶ Notice how similar what western tradition is facing compared with the “confusion” we are experiencing. The impact of this assault is first realized in the religious faith of western spiritual values. “[G]rowing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike former days, the denial of God or of religion, or the abandonment of them, are no longer unusual and individual occurrences.”¹⁷ Fortunately, for the western tradition, much of its modern spiritual values are rooted in an ultimate spiritual value existence, which has not been completely snuffed out. This is not the case with our tradition. Modern spiritual values can hardly trace back to our tradition, and our ultimate spiritual existence with its accompanying summit value of *Loyal-Piety* have nearly evaporated. If we are fully aware of the problems of modern spiritual values rampant in the west, we shall find out that complete westernization serves no purpose. So the salutary remedy to the modern crisis is how to take advantage of the waves of modern spiritual values in reviving the spiritual faith of the nation.

Two points are necessary to revive the spiritual faith of the nation. First, to fully grasp the key elements of modern spiritual values and to absorb them into modern Chinese society. Second, to rebuild ultimate spiritual values and conjoin essentially with modern spiritual values.

¹⁴ Wang Li-xiong, “The Dismantling and Fate of Chinese Cultural Structure (中国文化结构的解体与劫数)”, see Liu Zhi-feng (ed.), *Ethics-China* (道德中国), China Social Sciences Press, 2001, p. 12.

¹⁵ Documents of The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *《Gaudium et Spes》* (*Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*), no. 7.

¹⁶ *Can Kao Xiao Xi* (参考消息), 20 December 2006, p. 14.

¹⁷ *《Gaudium et Spes》*, no. 7.

The key elements of modern spiritual values may include the following: human dignity, equality and love, peace and justice, call to fulfill responsibility and joyful gratitude.

The spiritual value of respecting human dignity. “According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown.”

¹⁸ In 2003, article 38 in the amendment to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China clearly states, “The personal dignity of citizens of the People's Republic of China is inviolable.” This is a historical watershed between traditional Chinese cultural values and modern values. The key element of modern spiritual values lies precisely here. This is also the reason why public opinion and numerous people objected to the case of parading a caught prostitute that happened in Shenzhen on 29 November 2006. ¹⁹ Respect for human dignity should be listed the prime spiritual value in all policies and laws, moral ethics, humanistic ideals and social values. Respect for human dignity should become a spiritual faith accepted by everyone in Chinese society. Any research, discovery, production or theoretical development of humanistic sciences should not violate human dignity. Otherwise scientific research will bring about the destruction of mankind, and what is science good for when there is no one left to use it. The spiritual value of *Loyal-Piety* should be replaced by that of human dignity. Lifting high the banner of human dignity would surely build up the spiritual value system for our society. Of course, there are many external expressions of human dignity, such as right of reputation, image, name, appellation, privacy, credit and personal freedom, etc. These are called rights to specific personality in legal terms. But the true essence of human dignity is best manifested when “man's true situation can be portrayed and his defects explained, while at the same time his dignity and destiny are justly acknowledged.” ²⁰ Based on the understanding of this essence, everyone learns to treasure oneself and to respect others. Abstractly speaking, this is a kind of understanding, a kind of attitude, a kind of feeling, a kind of life, a kind of freedom, a kind of truth, a kind of wisdom, a kind of disposition of reason and will, a kind of *infused, self-determinant power*. Human dignity is the core of all the different elements of modern spiritual values. Other spiritual values gradually unfold around this nucleus.

Human dignity lays the foundation of the value orientation of equality and charity. Equality among all men has become a fundamental social relation in modern society. This equality not only involves the law, but also the entire human being, the holistic way of life. It is a quality on the level of personhood. “True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent.”²¹ This fundamental right, that everyone is born equal, has already been a widely accepted notion by modern society. The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Equality among all men is not realized in human dignity and his rights, but also in various dimensions of life such as gender, education, race, wisdom and learning. Doubtless, everyone has his own different bodily ability, spiritual will and intellectual prowess. This equality is built on the difference between each person, male and female. Differences cannot obliterate equality; equality does not overlook differences. Undue emphasis on equality that ignores differences often causes inequality; the respect for the differences among men is precisely the foundation of human equality. Differences, as does equality, exist on different levels of human living. We see differences between physical and intellectual conditions, while equality obtains in terms of

¹⁸ Ibid., no. 12.

¹⁹ *Fa Zhou Kan (The Law Weekly)*, 15 December 2006, p. 7.

²⁰ 《*Gaudium et Spes*》, no. 12.

²¹ Ibid., no. 29.

human dignity and rights. And the best way to respect differences and maintain equality is charity. Filling the world with love is mankind's everlasting goal. A society without love is never going to find equality. The spirit of charity is also tightly associated with social justice. They can be viewed as the two indispensable blocks in the makeup of a society. Some say that the poor do not need love, but they do need justice. Yet in fact, they need love just as much as they need justice. With the rise of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century, society has ventured into a brand new societal structure. Social justice has become one of the major issues of modern industrialized society. The promotion of social justice, and its continual perfection, must be achieved through the enactment of laws and adjustments to social structure. Nevertheless, love is still a must, even if in a society with a high degree of justice. For "whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable."²² Sure enough, social justice must also be concretely materialized. Augustine is perfectly right, "for kingdoms which are not governed according to justice, would they not just be a bunch of thieves?"²³ Social justice is all the more important for modern society, as it is the foundation of peace in society. A society without justice is a far cry from peace. The Catholic Church's view is that "excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace."²⁴ Thus a society deprived of human dignity would become an inhumane society, lack of love would make it cruel, and without peace and justice, it shall be a society of robbers and thieves. And so here lies the key to the modern spiritual values – with human dignity as a foundation, equality and charity as means, peace and justice the aim.

Although public authorities are to actively promote this spiritual value, each of us is responsible to partake in its pursuit. This responsibility is not some extraneous conditions added to the nation or a society, it is rather a certain obligation, a certain self-awareness, a certain moral duty – the very requirement of human life itself. Man must be responsible for his own life, and the subject of responsibility is his very own self. The principle of responsibility in Christian faith lies in the response to God. This has been named the principle of *the calling and response*.²⁵ Responding to this responsibility is also an element of spiritual values in modern society. Generally speaking, traditional Chinese society is based on the principles of utilitarian ethics. Modern Chinese society has to shift to responsible ethics.²⁶ Self-motivated response to responsibility is a necessary means to realizing the pursuit of spiritual values and constitutes a key element to modern spiritual values. Responsive responsibility here becomes a certain spirit, to be accountable to oneself and to others, but not asking for any moral remuneration in return. Only this spirit can truly realize the pursuit of the modern spiritual values outlined above.

A kind of social ethos marked with joyful gratitude can only appear under the auspice of earnest, responsible and gratuitous spiritual values. Joyful gratitude is a crucial component of Christian faith. And only a grateful heart knows how to be joyful. Gratefulness is a way of living out the faith, an attitude towards life, and a principle of human interaction. Fateful mishaps are no rare occurrences,

²² Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *«Deus Caritas Est»*, Oct. 25, 2005, no. 28b.

²³ "Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?" Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, IV, 4.

²⁴ *«Gaudium et Spes»*, no. 29.

²⁵ Anselm Gunthor names his moral theological writing *The Call and Response* (呼召与回应). Gunthor, (trans. Liu Zhi-ming), *The Call and Response – A New Moral Theology*, Life Meaning Press, 1987.

²⁶ "Catholicism's Possible Contribution to the Transforming Modern China", see *The Catholic Church in China: Today and Tomorrow, The Book of Friends «朋友之書»*, Editorial Committee, Ferdinand Verbiest Institute of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, 2006, pp. 208-210.

and a grateful way of living does not thereby exempt one from those unwarranted pains and vicissitudes of life. Be thankful to God, be thankful to kin, be thankful to society, and be thankful to the country. A thankful heart is the spring of joy which ought to be forever cherished. The development of scientific technology brings tremendous positive contribution to modern men, “and be ye thankful.”²⁷ “Rejoice in the Lord always, again, I say, rejoice!”²⁸ Faith in the transforming Chinese society must embrace the spiritual element of joyful gratitude. This element is the source of social harmony, peace, stability, development and renewal.

The other important components in the transformation of Chinese society are the rebuilding and association of modern spiritual values together with ultimate spiritual values. As discussed above, *Loyal-Piety* is the highest spiritual value pursuit of traditional Chinese society, and it has certain connectivity with ultimate spiritual values. The emperor to whom *Loyalty* is due stands as the spokesman of *Heaven*, and the father to whom we owe *Piety* is the *Deity* of clan ancestral worship-sacrifice. Thus the spiritual values of *Loyal-Piety* ties in with ultimate spiritual values. The modern spiritual values outlined above would also be essentially conjoined with ultimate spiritual values. Otherwise the former will lose their foundation and be reduced to groundless claims. But the modern spiritual value of human dignity cannot become an ultimate spiritual value, for it fundamentally does not possess supernatural transcendence. And why must ultimate spiritual values require supernatural transcendence? Because this touches on the very nature of spirituality itself. Man after all exists in two worlds, one of the material, the other of the spiritual. And this is what essentially differentiates human from animal living. Spiritual life has a certain transcendence beyond empirical verification, which stands in comparison with the empirical experience of the material life. In fact spiritual essences have varied levels of transcendence. The place in the hierarchy of transcendence determines the importance of spiritual values. In this sense, ultimate spirits can also become ultimate transcendence. Without this ultimate transcendence (or ultimate spirit) as the foundation of spiritual values, other spiritual values cannot be thoroughly built up. Ultimate spirit is veritably the foundation of the entire spiritual value system. It is also the basis for modern spiritual values. So, to enrich and foster man’s spiritual life of faith, one has to thoroughly consolidate this ultimate spiritual value. Otherwise the life of faith will crumble and collapse miserably. There has been a loss of direction in faith and a spiritual demise during the process of modern Chinese social transformation. And this is tightly connected with the breakdown of the highest spiritual value in traditional Chinese society plus the equivocal state of ultimate spiritual values. Therefore the key to reviving modern spiritual values is to rebuild ultimate spiritual values and to establish their internal essential relation.

Christian faith offers a possible model here. As we have seen, Christian faith has very high regard for modern spiritual values. But the crux lies in the fact that the Christian faith creates an essential, inseparable bond between modern spiritual values and ultimate spirituality. Spiritual values of human dignity, equality and charity, peace and justice, responsive duty and joyful gratitude, all invariably relate with God, the ultimate spiritual deity of Christian faith. The root and essential connection of this relationship depends on this fact, that man is God’s image. “Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”²⁹ The final claim of the spiritual value of human dignity is the ultimate transcending God. Thus in Christian faith, modern spiritual values and ultimate spiritual values create and construct an inner tie.

In sum, *Loyal-Piety*, the highest spiritual value of traditional Chinese society, had been upholding

²⁷ Bible – Colossians 3: 15

²⁸ Bible – Philippians 4:4

²⁹ Bible – Genesis 1:26-27

China's stable development for thousands of years – it met complete collapse at the social deconstruction triggered by the Industrial Revolution. The desolation of spiritual faith caused during the Chinese social transformation has much to do with the *deforming* collapse mentioned. Perhaps such collapse is not all together a bad thing if the opportunity is seized aright. Just as we are accustomed to say, nothing is built when nothing is torn. The key is how to build what kind of a spiritual faith. Instead of reinterpreting tradition, it would be better to gather up the broken parcels of tradition and reenact modern spiritual values. Modern spiritual values will most surely revive Chinese culture and contribute much to building up a modern society resplendent with vibrant spiritual faith.

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Translated by Cyril J. Law, Jr.