

Mission-Driven Business Education at Catholic Universities in

Asia

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The Asian Context: A Challenge to Catholic Universities

1. The Asian continent is home to nearly two thirds of the world's population with their different cultures, religions, social structures, and political systems. It is a continent of sheer contrasts. While there has been enormous economic and technological progress, there still exist situations of extreme poverty and injustice. Most of the developing countries in Asia are evaluated as least democratic.¹ About 1.9 billion people, or 60 % of developing Asia's population, still live on less than US\$ 2 a day.² Most of the countries in Asia rank low in terms of human development. In terms of the Corruption Perceptions Index score³ compiled by Transparency International for the year 2007 for 180 countries, most of the Asian countries ranked rather "highly corrupt" with the score ranging between 3.5 and 1.4.⁴

2. The Church in Asia is a very tiny minority among the major religions of the world such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism. Catholics constitute a mere 3.1%, or 118 million out of 3.8 billion, whereas non-Christians are 3.5 billion (91.5%).⁵ If we take out the Philippines as an exception, Catholics are a mere 1.3%, or 50 million. 10.8% of Catholics and 82.8% of non-Christians in the world live in Asia.

In all over Asia, except in the Philippines, despite her centuries-long presence and her many apostolic endeavours, the Church is still considered as a foreign religion, and indeed is often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers. While in some countries the Church carries out her mission in peace and freedom, in most other

¹ Cf. World Audit, *World Democracy Table*, March 2008.

² Asian Development Bank, *Key Indicators 2004: Poverty in Asia: Measurement, Estimates, and Prospects*.

³ It relates to the perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt).

⁴ Transparency International, *2007 Corruption Perceptions Index*.

⁵ Of them 870 million (22.8%) are Muslims, 831 million (21.8%) are Hindus, 397 million (10.4%) are Chinese Universists (folk religionists) including Confucians, 367 million (9.6%) are Buddhists, 620 million (16.3%) are nonreligious, and 121 million (3.2%) are atheists. Cf. *2004 Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year*; figures rounded.

countries she is regarded as a danger to be curtailed, sometimes for religious reasons, sometimes for political reasons. Therefore, she is experiencing intense tensions, conflicts and persecutions in the practice of their faith.

3. Quite distinct from the tendency prevailed in the past decades that embraced Western ways unconditionally as the key to material progress, the *Asian Way* is now pursued in every aspect of life in Asia. As Asia is modernizing, the Asian conscience is rising. It is the *Asianization* of Asia. Especially for young people who comprise half the population, it is a rediscovery of Asian roots in their way of life.

Mission of Catholic Universities: An Agent of Dialogue

4. Such state of affairs calls on the Church in Asia to enter into the *saving dialogue*: the dialogue with the cultures, the religions, and the peoples of Asia, especially the poor. For the Church this triple dialogue is “part of her evangelizing mission.”⁶ The Catholic university, as an institution of the Church, is entrusted with a vital task to serve the Church in carrying out such a dialogue.

5. The Catholic university can carry out this task in various ways: (1) first of all, by research and teaching activities; (2) by acting as interlocutor; (3) by bearing witness.

Research and Teaching Activities

Research Activities

6. The Catholic university’s research activities can provide better knowledge of the context for dialogue. A certain amount of knowledge of Catholicism as well as of other religions constitutes a basic condition for fruitful dialogue. Studies of religious traditions in Asia and commitment to one’s own Catholic faith will enable those involved in dialogue to properly understand the meaning of *equality* in dialogue, while encouraging them to be open to the faith of the other in its difference. In Asia it cannot be overemphasized that such equality “refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ — who is God himself made man — in relation to the founders of the other religions.”⁷ A comparative approach turns out to be an effective method in these studies.

7. Along with these studies, research into cultural traditions in Asia on which

⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Jesus*, 22.

⁷ *Loc. cit.*

Catholicism must build is another area in which the Catholic university ought to engage for the sake of a more effective intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue can enrich the teaching on Catholic doctrine and morals, on the one hand, and on the other, it can foster the inculturation of the Gospel in the different cultures of Asia. Inculturation is an urgent necessity to sweep off the mistaken impression of some people that the Church is culturally foreign to Asia, especially in view of the emergence of the Asian way. In this regard, the first task of the Catholic university in Asia is to research into the ways to present Christianity with an Asian face, on the basis of “the Asian roots of Christianity.”⁸

8. The Catholic university’s research activities must be addressed to developing suitable models of dialogue, while constantly searching for new forms of dialogue — evangelization in dialogue and dialogue for evangelization.⁹

9. At the same time the Catholic university must conduct the research into the socio-economic situations of Asia with a view to searching for the adequate ways of dialogue with the peoples, especially the poor, with an emphasis on the preferential option for the poor. Such a research can be more effectively conducted by taking advantage of scholarly exchanges between experts from the various religious traditions. Such contacts, then, can develop into solidarity for specific projects “of a humanitarian, social, economic, or political nature which are directed toward the liberation and advancement”¹⁰ of the peoples in Asia.

Teaching Activities

10. The Catholic university ought to educate and orientate students and other members of the university community towards dialogue and train Catholic specialists who are to engage in dialogue with their partners of other religions in Asia. Dialogue at the level of specialists is necessary “to confront, deepen, and enrich their respective religious heritages or to apply something of their expertise to the problems which must be faced by humanity in the course of its history”¹¹ in Asia. Such a dialogue intends not to create a unity of views, but rather to promote more objective mutual knowledge of and respect for each other, overcoming all prejudices and suspicions. Catholic universities can

⁸ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 4.

⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 31.

¹⁰ Secretariat for Non-Christians, *The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission* (May 10, 1984), 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

contribute to it by organizing a series of colloquia.

As Interlocutor in Dialogue

11. A majority of Catholic university communities in Asia are composed mostly of members of other religions and those who profess no religious belief. Therefore, the university itself serves as an arena of such a dialogue among its members. All the research and teaching activities call for an interdisciplinary approach in which all the related faculties and institutes, both inside and outside the university, are to be involved. And in these activities the Catholic university acts as a significant interlocutor of the academic, cultural and scientific world.

12. The Catholic university can also serve as an adequate and effective structure to ensure continuity in such a dialogue. It can take initiatives in creating a network of organizations for dialogue at diocesan and national levels. These organizations can serve as channels of communication, making it possible for the teachings of the Magisterium on dialogue to reach as large as possible number of people, and at the same time making it possible for these teachings to be verified by daily life at the grassroots level. These organizations can involve new people, mostly the young, so that the dialogue may continue generation after generation. Adequate and effective programs should be designed to promote it in a systematic way.

As Witness in Dialogue

13. The Catholic university itself should bear sincere witness to the Gospel values in its administration, fighting against all forms of injustice and corruption, and at the same time practicing a preferential love of the poor. Unless the Catholic university adopts a lifestyle consonant with the teachings of the Gospel, its identity as a “Catholic” university will be seriously compromised, thereby failing to serve the Church’s mission properly.

Mission-Driven Business Education

14. In such a framework of activities for dialogue business education at Catholic universities is positioned. In carrying out its mission faculties and institutes of business administration and economics are assigned to a primary role. Business education at Catholic universities can be carried out both at curricular and non-curricular programs, including special programs for ongoing education. Business education at Catholic universities, being mission-driven by its nature, ought to address itself to the

evangelization of culture in socio-economic life, and more specifically in the world of business, in Asia. It must therefore aim “to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.”¹² It aims at the integral formation of people who are called to active participation in the life of society and in particular, business leaders, prospective and actual alike, and people in the mass media so that they may have a strong sense of responsibility both at local and global levels. Effective collaboration of people in the mass media is urgently needed to conscientize the public towards the common good, thereby creating a “social ecology” favorable for the mission-driven business education.

15. An indispensable instrument of this education is undoubtedly the Catholic social doctrine. The Catholic social doctrine, therefore, must constitute a basic required course of general education for all students of the university. It must constitute a core course of ongoing education program. Particularly for students majoring in business administration and economics an advanced course must be offered.

What Has Been Done: A Balance Sheet of Responses

16. What Catholic universities in Asia have achieved in this regard fall short of our expectations. It is true that in some countries Catholic universities and institutes have engaged in research and teaching in the social doctrine, mostly through the faculties of social sciences including the faculty of business administration and the related institutes, but this research and teaching has rarely been given a proper attention.

17. To some extent, such a situation may be due to the fact that they are destined to work in adverse conditions caused by religious reasons and that at the same time most of them are subject to a strict state control. They are small in numbers. And they seem to be rather sensitive to their being of a minority group in society except in the Philippines. Even in naming the universities of Catholic inspiration in Asia, they seldom identify themselves as “Catholic”. For example, among nearly three hundred Catholic colleges and institutes in India none has “catholic” in its name.¹³ More often than not, they do not seem to be sensitive enough to their Catholic identity. Their faculties of business administration and economics offer ethics course, but it seems to fail to properly

¹² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_University

incorporate the Catholic social doctrine.

18. Closely related to this is the lack of human resources capable of taking charge of the education in the Catholic social doctrine at the university level. The Church in Asia has failed to dedicate a considerable part of its human and financial resources to education, not to mention the formation of educators in the field of such a crucial importance for her life. The Catholic social doctrine has thus remained as the “*best kept secret*” of the Church.

What Is To Be Done?

19. For mission-driven business education to be effective in the Asia, it is essential to promote by the historical and scientific religious research the knowledge of peoples, cultures and religions in Asia. While promoting the interreligious and intercultural dialogue, Catholic universities need to constantly research into the common values shared by Catholicism and the cultures and religions in Asia as regards the realization of the common good of peoples through economic activities.

20. Catholic social doctrine can better be presented as the “Way” to follow in everyday life. The “Way” is a concept that prevails in many Asian religions as a divine way leading to liberation, harmony, and salvation. It would amount to rediscovering the Asian Way in socio-economic ethics.

21. The values central to the lives and cultures of Asian peoples, such as harmony of all peoples, harmony with the whole universe, and familism, are relevant to promoting the dialogue and collaboration with non-Christians in the formulation of ethical and juridical norms for regulating the free markets and for establishing the moral code of conducts in the business world, thereby realizing the social reform in favor of the common good of peoples in line with the Catholic social doctrine.

22. In addition, Confucian views of economy and its role in the realization of the ideal society are in line with the Catholic social doctrine which focuses on the realization of the universal common good. The Catholic vision of the business can be supported by the Confucian ethics of social harmony. The Confucian idea of the organic unity of nature, human, and society can be adapted for the business realm, thereby reinforcing the Catholicism in the field of business ethics in the East Asian context. Familism, complemented by the Catholic belief in brotherhood of humankind, can be extended

beyond the boundaries of business into the society at large, and eventually into the global dimension. Thus, Catholicism and Confucianism complement each other in the matter of social concern such as business ethics.

23. The Catholic social doctrine and the cultures and religions in Asia have many elements to complement and enrich each other. These common elements will facilitate the inculturation of Catholic social doctrine in the sphere of the Asian values, on the one hand, and the development of Catholic social doctrine itself, on the other. They will also facilitate dialogue and cooperation among the peoples in Asia so as to implement the business ethics for the sake of the common good of peoples. Mission-driven business education, therefore, must take advantage of the dimension of inculturation and interreligious dialogue as well.

24. Programs of mission-driven business education must include such a dimension. They must promote interdisciplinary researches, religious and cultural encounters, in-depth studies of other religions. Dialogue and collaboration with non-Catholic is to be pursued. These initiatives, fostered also on the basis of social analysis, can thus serve as a valid instrument for explaining and applying the Catholic social doctrine in the Asian way to diversified social realities of Asia.

25. In fact, the social analysis conducted on the basis of reason can propose solutions for grave social problems for which all religions in Asia must agree to work together in solidarity. Thus the social analysis, strengthened on the basis of interdisciplinary approach, can bring forth interreligious collaboration. And this in turn makes it necessary for Catholic universities to engage in in-depth studies of other religions. And these studies will certainly enrich the social doctrine of the Church and make it more relevant to pluralistic societies in Asia.

26. By properly carrying out its task, mission-driven business education will enable the Church to effectively respond to the criticism often raised in Asia to the effect that the formulation of her social doctrine is rather Eurocentric. It can certainly contribute to the Asianization of social doctrine in its adaptation to the Asian realities, thereby convincing the peoples of Asia that the Church is not foreign but was founded in Asia by Jesus Christ, who was an Asian like themselves.

27. Education cannot be seen merely as a transmission of knowledge. Catholic identity

cannot be equated simply with orthodoxy of the course content offered at Catholic universities. Far from being “informative” — just a communication of the Catholic teachings on business and economy, business education must be creative and life-changing — “performative”.¹⁴ For any mission-driven business education to be performative, the educators themselves, the Church leaders, universities themselves must first show *witness of actions*. “The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission.”¹⁵ And it is particularly important in Asia, where “people are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument”.¹⁶

28. The Catholic university, which teaches students about the social doctrine, must first put it into practice within itself. The Catholic university, which speaks to them about justice, must first be seen as just in their eyes. The Catholic university, which teaches them the preferential love of the poor, must first be seen in their eyes as preferentially opting for the poor. Hence, leaders of the Catholic university must undertake a serious examination of the modes of behavior, of the possessions, and of lifestyles found within the university itself.¹⁷

29. The Catholic university should take every measure at its disposal to implement the social doctrine. For example, when letting construction contracts or other supplies contracts, the Catholic university should require that wages and other working conditions be included among criteria for selection. It would be most desirable that when bids are let, the award go, not to the absolutely lowest bidder, but to the lowest bid from a reputable firm which pays decent wages and offers fair working conditions.

30. There is urgent need for the Church in Asia to provide Catholic universities with competent educators, especially in the Catholic social doctrine, who bear witness to a clear Catholic identity, in addition to pursuing the academic excellence on the basis of harmony between faith and reason. At the same time, business leaders who have faithfully realized a Catholic vision of business need to be utilized as educators. They are powerful witnesses who can convince the students that it is possible to fully live the Catholic social teachings in the business.

¹⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, 2.

¹⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 42.

¹⁶ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 42.

¹⁷ Cf. Synod of Bishops, *Iustitia in Mundo*, 40 ff.

31. Equipped with such educators, mission-driven business education at Catholic universities will be able to prepare leaders in business and economy more properly as "co-workers in the truth" (3 *John* 8), the truth about human being, business, economy, and society. And at the same time, it will be able to address all its interlocutors in a more effective way. It can thus contribute greatly to the authentic development of business culture for Asian societies of the new century, thereby establishing the Asian model of Catholic business education. This Asian model will in turn make a significant contribution to the globalization of the Catholic social thought.

32. Catholic universities in Asia should urgently commit themselves with courage and intellectual creativity to the prophetic tasks of business education, while developing a spirituality of minority to "be not afraid" to work as evangelizers in adverse conditions. Leaders in the Church in Asia must be imbued with a common sense of mission with regard to indispensable role of Catholic universities in rendering the Church in Asia to be a Christian leaven in Asian societies.