Four years ago, during a trip to Germany, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian of Shanghai gave a lecture in several cities, presenting an historical survey of the history of Christianity in China since the Tang dynasty (618-907). One emphasis of his presentation was the activity of the Italian Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci (1562-1610), at the beginning of the modern period. Ricci approached the ancient, four thousand year old non-Christian culture of China with great respect. He quickly grasped the importance of the inculturation of the Christian message and took great care to study Chinese language and literature and the manners and customs of the Chinese people. He dressed like a Chinese scholar and was educated in the traditional Confucian way. In speaking and writing he often quoted the maxims of the Chinese sages, which he referred to in his preaching of the Christian message in order to make himself better understood by his listeners. Many Chinese respected his erudition and paid approving tribute to his profound knowledge of Chinese culture. Thanks to this methodical approach, Christianity was able to gain a footing in China not only among the elite of Chinese society but also among broad sections of the ordinary people. However, as a result of the unfortunate Rites Controversy, which was caused by rivalry among missionaries and by a lack of understanding for a correctly understood and theologically defensible inculturation, this promising development soon came to an end. Emperor K'ang-hsi (1655-1723), who was open to everything new and was favorably disposed to Christianity, expelled the missionaries because of these quarrels and forbade the propagation of the faith. Due to clumsy papal intervention, Christianity in China fell into ruin and Chinese Catholics became second-class citizens. As the bishop remarked with sharp criticism in his lecture, 'How can a religion that requires its adherents to renounce their own culture and their own customs take root and develop in any country?'

Another major point of the bishop's lecture dealt with the problem of the relationship between colonialism or imperialism and Christian missions since the middle of the nineteenth century. The glaring differ-
ences between the missionary methods practiced by Matteo Ricci and the conduct of the missionaries of the nineteenth century are quite obvious. According to Bishop Jin Luxian, in the eyes of many Chinese, these nineteenth-century missionaries were merely looking out for the interests of their home countries. They had forgotten Christ’s teaching about love and the equality of all people; they wanted to Christianize other countries by having them colonized. The foreign powers, for their part, had only used Christianity to extend their influence. The Roman Curia was in league with these powers and apportioned the Chinese Church out to them. Anti-Christian and anti-foreign tendencies, provoked essentially by the machinations and conduct of the foreigners, including many missionaries, assumed increasingly threatening proportions in the course of the nineteenth century and ultimately led to the Boxer Uprising and to war between China and eight foreign nations. After the bloody suppression of the uprising, an indemnity of 400 million Chinese dollars was imposed on China. These events caused further problems in China’s relations with the West and, according to Bishop Jin Luxian, evoked even stronger hatred against foreigners and the Christian religion.

Although hypothetical questions are taboo in historical scholarship, one could still speculate on how the history of Christianity in China would have developed if the Vatican had accepted Ricci’s methods, if these methods had become the basis for evangelization, and if the missionaries in the nineteenth century had avoided that excessively close, symbiotic relationship and any form of cooperation with the foreign powers.

The present paper will discuss the inner connection between the Christian missions and the Boxer Movement, which escalated into the Boxer Uprising precisely ninety years ago.

I. Evangelization under the Protection of the "Unequal" Treaties Imposed on China

1. The French Protectorate over Catholic Missionaries

When the British imposed the Treaty of Nanking in August 1844, forcing China open to the West, this was rightfully experienced by the Chinese as a provocation and a shocking humiliation. At the same time the experience shaped the subsequent development of relations to the