



## TWO ARTICLES ON COMMUNIST MORALITY

*by JOHN TONG*

The article, "Several Questions About Communist Ethics," was written by Lee Fan Fu and published by Beijing "Ren Min Chu Ban She" publication "Philosophical Research" in the sixth issue, 1980. Altogether there are 8,000 words. It discusses in some detail communist ethical thought. It was quoted in the People's Daily on Nov. 3. Two concepts are discussed throughout the article: "breaking down" and "building up."

"Breaking down" refers to "the old morality." The article states, "Old morality is all that morality which existed in the old society. Its most important aspect was a morality of class oppression. This kind of morality had its foundation in a system of oppression. The most basic content of the morality of class oppression is individualism... The attitude of this morality of individualism is expressed in some phrases people liked to use in our country's feudal society: 'If a man does not look out for himself, heaven and earth will destroy him'. and 'People should sweep the snow from their own front door and not worry about the frost on their neighbor's roofs.'

"Building up" refers to the new morality. The article says, "The new morality is a communist morality..... The communist morality is built on a foundation of a system in which all production is for the masses..... The core of communist morality is collectivism. It asks that a man base his personal moral decisions on the collective good of the whole. The greatest good for the working class and labourers is to destroy the oppressive system and establish a communist society. So, communist morality cannot be separated from the revolutionary struggle or from politics. When we talk about the quality of morality we are first of all referring to a political quality."

When the article speaks of the oppressors, what people are meant? It makes it clear that the concept of morality in Communism is based on the materialistic ethics of Marxism. Without doubt, Marx considered economics to be man's most important problem. He thought of the world as divided into two classes, the rich and the poor - a situation that came about because the rich oppressed the poor. Therefore he thought that workers and labourers should rise up in revolution and wrest from the capitalists their possessions. When private possessions had been distributed to the masses, equality in society would be achieved. Thus, when the article speaks of the "oppressors" it is actually talking about capitalists or wealthy persons.

Another article "Boundless and Awe Inspiring Righteousness" was written by Wu Li Ping. It appeared in the third issue, 1980, of "Philosophical Research", an article of 11,000 words. It narrates the process of publishing Liu Xiao Qi's book, "On the cultivation of the Communist Party Member". The article indicates that Liu's thinking reflects the enlightened thinking of Marx and Lenin and is

also at one with Mao Ze Dung thought. Liu's book does not speak openly about the proletariat dictatorship, but its whole spirit is imbued with this concept. The book quotes phrases from Confucius and Mencius, but this is only borrowing the words of the ancient sages to state clearly that cultivation and self-discipline are difficult processes. The article points out Liu Xiao Qi already wrote the book 40 years ago, sternly criticizing party cadres of that time, who were infected by the mentality of the oppressing class. He asked them to "worry about the nation's problems first; rejoice after the nation has experienced joy." Both within the Party and among the masses, suffering comes first and enjoyment later. Do not argue with others about who has greater pleasure; rather, compare with others how much you have struggled for the revolution, and each one's spirit amidst the difficulties of the struggle. Stand out bravely in time of calamity; in time of difficulties carry out your responsibilities to the utmost. "When you are in prosperity, you will never be corrupted; when in poverty, you never give up; before power you do not surrender."

Unfortunately during the Cultural Revolution, many persons erroneously thought that all morality was "old society morality" or "the morality of the oppressors." Lin Biao and the Gang of Four even more confusedly thought that the more virtuous one was, the more revisionist he was. To cultivate oneself results in revisionism. Righteousness does not prevail; heresy is rampant.

At present China, besides rehabilitating the reputation of Liu through this book, is also using it as a means of education to lead Party members, cadres and youth to raise standards of morality. Thus they hope to lead them to "serve the people", "serve socialism" and "serve four

modernizations".

The foregoing articles give us Christians matter for reflection. There are three areas worthy of further thought:

1. What is our responsibility as Christians who live in a capitalist society towards the ethics of our own society? Is it to nurture an individualistic and spiritual service to God without thought for the instances of injustice and inequality in our society?  
If we neglect social ethics are we not in danger of dividing ourselves into two parts, one spiritual, one material - separating our religion from practical living and in this way, indirectly helping to satisfy the selfish interests of some persons in our society?
2. As for those of our brothers who live in our motherland, in a communist society, what contribution can we Christians from outside make? Can we help them see that a moral sense cannot be equated entirely with socialist and political thought? Can we help them perceive that morality itself has a value, and should not be just the instrument of economics or politics? Does all the wealth of capitalists come from oppressing the poor? Is class struggle the only and most complete way to solve the problem of inequality? Is there any contradiction between this outlook and a sense of Christian morality?

3. In our contacts with our brothers living in communist society in our motherland, what kind of Gospel - ethical concepts can we share with them? How are the Gospel's ethical concepts similar to communist ones? In other words, do we Christians also acknowledge the importance of economics, that economic development can enrich our lives, be a blessing from God? Does the Gospel also ask of us that we love our country and our government, contribute our talents to helping the government in its responsibilities towards its citizens? Starting from those concepts we have in common, how can we transform and more fully develop the "new morality" of Communism?

