



OVERVIEW OF
THE APPOINTMENT OF
ARCHBISHOP DENG YIMING
TO THE SEE OF GUANGZHOU

THE VATICAN'S APPROACH AND THE FEELING OF THE CHINESE

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A. THE APPOINTMENT CONTROVERSY : BEFORE AND AFTER

On 6th June of this year the Holy Father announced the appointment of Bishop Deng Yiming as the Archbishop of Guangzhou. At that time Bishop Deng, together with Bishops from all parts of the world, was attending a special celebration in Rome.

Even while the press and public opinion were thinking that the announcement signified an improvement in relations between China and the Vatican, the *Wenhui Bao* of Shanghai quoted the *GLOBE* magazine to say that the Vatican, through its millions of priests, nuns and laymen throughout the world, "could always obtain first-class intelligence through their daily contacts with local people." The newspaper also alleged that the Catholic Church runs an intelligence service that is more efficient than either the US or Soviet Intelligence Agencies. (Reuter, Beijing,

9th June). On 11th June, the pro-Beijing *Hong Kong New Evening Post* headlined an article of over 1,000 words: "The Worldwide Intelligence Service of the Vatican." The next day, 12th June, both Hong Kong *Wen Wei Po* and Hong Kong *Ta Kung Bao* carried front-page articles quoting the statement of Bishop Michael Yang Gaojian, spokesman for the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the National Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church and the China Catholic Bishops Conference. On 11th June in Beijing, Bishop Yang had issued a statement rejecting the Vatican's appointment of Archbishop Deng Yiming. Bishop Yang stated that the Vatican's action was a rude and illegal interference in the sovereign affairs of the Chinese Church. He also said that Bishop Deng in visiting Rome after he had requested permission to visit Hong Kong for medical treatment and to visit relatives showed a lack of self-esteem. On 12th June China's Religious Affairs Bureau also issued a statement that the Vatican's appointment was a "rude interference in the sovereign affairs of the Chinese Church." (UPI, Beijing, 12th June). On the same day the Catholic Patriotic Association of Guangdong Province and Guangzhou held a meeting during which those assembled voted to support Bishop Yang Gaojian's statement. They strongly protested against the Vatican's "interference" in the sovereign affairs of the Chinese Church and severely censured Bishop Deng's acceptance of the appointment, saying it betrayed the people. (Nan Feng Daily, 14th-15th June).

At a second meeting on 22nd June they voted to remove Bishop Deng as Bishop of the Guangzhou diocese and Vice-chairman of the Guangzhou Catholic Patriotic Association. (*Wen Wei Po*, 23rd June). It was not until 17th June that a spokesman for the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Department of State made a statement indicating complete support for Bishop Yang Gaojian's statement of rejection (*People's Daily*, 17th June). The Catholic Patriotic Association of Shanghai called a meeting on 17th June and passed a resolution of support for Bishop Yang Gaojian's statement of opposition (*Nan Feng Daily*, 18th June). Lastly, from 30th June to 4th July the Jiangsu provincial Catholic Patriotic Association and the Church Affairs Committee held a meeting during which they elected two bishops for the sees of Nanjing and Suchou, and at the same time they repeated similar rejection (NCNA Nanjing, 4th July).

During this time the Vatican and Bishop Deng himself kept complete silence, and issued no refutation. But when Bishop Deng returned to Hong Kong on 22nd June he immediately called a press conference on the next day. At the press conference, held at 11:00 a.m. on 23rd June, Bishop Deng made the following statement: "On Pentecost of this year I was invited to attend a special celebration at Rome, together with more than 50 Cardinals and some 300 Bishops coming from all over the world. The Catholic Church has absolutely no political objectives anywhere in the world and in fact only wishes to encourage every citizen to love his religion and country, and to promote the virtues of his own cultural heritage. Thus, as a gesture of honour and encouragement to my country and my brothers and sister in the Church, the Pope named me the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Guangzhou. Hoping this action would improve relations between China and the Vatican, I, though keenly aware of my limitations, accepted this little." For almost an hour following this, Bishop Deng willingly, pleasantly and fully answered the many questions of the assembled journalists. His emphasis was mainly on explaining the good intentions of the appointment and his own acceptance. He made absolutely no recriminatory comments about the accusations that had been laid against him.

A comprehensive look at all the statements and reports about this controversy prompts us to raise the following questions: Why was the Vatican so intent upon selecting this particular time to appoint Deng Yiming Archbishop? Was the announcement made with full knowledge of the situation? On the other hand, why did China and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association oppose it? Was their rejection made too hastily? To answer these questions, the author thinks one first must speak about recent changes in ecclesiology and also about the historical chain of actions on the part of the Vatican towards China.

B. FROM CHANGING ECCLESIOLOGY TO THE VATICAN'S CHAIN OF HISTORICAL ACTIONS TOWARDS CHINA

From the time of the Church Fathers, traditional theology has been influenced greatly by the Roman political system.

Thus, emphasis was on the Church as an "institution." Moreover, following the direction which arose from the spread of Greek culture, theology emphasized the explanation of abstract concepts. This has not only made it difficult for modern Catholics to comprehend, but also has little relationship to the challenges of actual life.

Many elements have influenced the development of theology in the past thirty years. Among these, the influence of Existentialism has been of significant importance. Moreover, the influence of the book I AND THOU, written by the Jewish philosopher and theologian, Martin Buber, has moved present day theology forward considerably. In his book Buber points out that there are two kinds of human relations - "impersonal relationships" and "personal relationships." The former looks upon the other as an object which exists for one's own use, in terminology dismissed as an "IT." In the later, both parties, while retaining their individuality, open themselves out in a gift of self to the other, respecting the other as "THOU." Buber believed that God's revelation belongs to the second category. Revelation does not mean that God reveals a set of rational concepts; rather, through revelation God has come in contact with us in order to actually establish a relationship between God and man.

Spurred on by Buber's reminder and by theologians' continuous reflection and promotion, Vatican II, in the Constitution on the Liturgy promulgated on 4th December, 1963, expanded the concept of Church from "institution" to "process of a relationship between God and man." In theology today this view of a personal relationship is termed "EVENT." It reflects a mutual dialogue between God and His people. Just as in days of old God revealed His will to the ISRAELITES THROUGH THEIR WORSHIP, and the entire Israelite community replied to Him through their promise, so today, when the Church listens to the Word of God and even more so, when she celebrates the Eucharist, she promises to respond faithfully to the call of God. Such a concept emphasizes not just "abstract concepts" but "life." Later when it promulgated the Constitution on the Church (21st November, 1964), Vatican II proceeded a step further, and termed the

Church a "mystery", emphasizing unity in diversity and harmonious co-existence. As in the Trinity there is unity of nature but distinction of persons, so in the Church we should preserve the unity of the universal Church and at the same time the uniqueness of each local church. And because each local church is a living community complete in itself and not just an incomplete part of the universal Church, so in its unity with other local churches, it not only need not be sacrificed or dissolved, but in a spirit of mutual respect each must cooperate with the others, proceeding through the ages in which it lives. Thus all members more effectively carry out the Church's mission of evangelization.

Besides this, during the past ten or more years, theology has not only been influenced by Existentialism, but has also been affected by the "Secularization". The present and past meaning of the word "Secularization" are different. Formerly, when one spoke of a people being "secular," one meant that their actions did not correspond to the Church's expectations and tended to evil. Today when we say a someone is "secular," we may mean that this Christian, through their preaching and service, can enter into their own society and improve it, thus hastening the coming of God's Kingdom. In other words, in the past this term had a negative and somewhat corrupt meaning. Today we mean something very positive and good which affirms the value of the material world and urges the Christian to be socially responsible.

Influenced by the "Secularization" Vatican II went forward another step in forming its concept of the Church. From "Event" and "Mystery" it broadened the concept of the Church to "servant of the world." Therefore in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7th December, 1965), the Council stated that the development of society is proper and fitting. The Church must not only esteem the accomplishments of society but must also look upon itself as an integral part of society. Through mutual dialogue each must learn from the other. Together with all of mankind the Church must share its resources and be concerned about the common needs and destiny of all. Just as Christ served others throughout his whole life so too the Church must serve mankind, and through this loving service give witness to Christ

Together with all people of good will, therefore, the Church should make every effort to seek a true and lasting peace for all of mankind, abolish both the phenomenon and the cause of poverty, while seeking to establish a good and just society.

These new trends in Vatican II's ecclesiology have not only become living guidelines for all within the Church since the Council, but also have given a direction to the Vatican in seeking a line of action that would help promote friendly relations with our country. In accordance with this line of action, then, when the occasion was ripe, the Vatican has put into operation a whole chain of historical actions towards our country:

1. On 19th August, 1979, the Pope in receiving a group of pilgrims at Castel Gondolfo, publicly expressed his hope that the Roman Catholic Church could resume direct relations with the Catholic Church in China (*Kung Kao Po*, 24th August).
2. Cardinal Etchagaray, Archbishop of Marseilles, France, and head of the French Bishops Conference, arrived in China on 27th February, 1980, for a 17-day tour, at the invitation of the People's Friendship Association. He held wide-ranging discussions with officials of many different departments in the PRC. According to the report in the 14th March Hong Kong *Ta Kung Bao* "Cardinal Etchagaray was pleased with the realistic attitude the government of the Peoples Republic of China had taken in regard to the policy of religious freedom. He believes that China will in the future accord to religion its rightful place. He feels that both parties, in a spirit of mutual trust, have taken the first step on the road to friendship."
3. Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, Austria, head of the Austrian Bishops Conference and head of the Vatican Secretariat for non-Christian Religions, also visited China for 10 days beginning from 10th March, 1980. He received the same warm welcome as the French Cardinal. On 21st March Hong Kong *Ta Kung Bao* reported, "He has a very friendly feeling for the people of China and will sustain this deep friendship on his return to Austria. He felt he had advanced a step further in understanding China and the Chinese Church. He felt that theists and atheists are united in a similar

desire, to make a common effort to achieve a just and peaceful society and a better world."

4. On the 16th February of this year, the Pope started out on his pastoral visit to the countries of Asia. Speaking to a group of overseas Chinese in Manila on the 18th February, the Pope addressed the Church of China in a speech full of reconciliation and good will. He especially pointed out that "there is absolutely no conflict between being a good Chinese and being a good Christian." He hoped that the past would be past and all would look to the future.
5. On the 28th February the Secretary of State for the Vatican, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, came to Hong Kong as an emissary from the Pope to visit Bishop Deng. That same day he held a press conference. When journalists asked him whether the Vatican was already actively seeking ways of renewing relations with Beijing, the Cardinal answered: "We continually seek means of having contact with China. We welcome every opportunity for communication. We hope to have dialogue with China, just as we hope for dialogue with every country."

Looking at this historical chain of the Vatican's friendly actions towards China, it can be seen that the appointment of Bishop Deng is actually on link in the same chain of events. The purpose of the appointment was to continue a tradition already begun. Through a Bishop accepted both by the Vatican and by China, the Pope hoped to further strengthen relations between the two sides. Therefore he rectified the Bishop's position, in order to show his esteem and respect for China. Unfortunately the Vatican did not make clear all its reasons when announcing the appointment and the Chinese government and Chinese Church did not perceive the good intention. Thus a serious misunderstanding arose.

C. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN CHINA'S OPPOSITION

Besides althorough investigation into the Vatican back-ground in this controversy, it is also necessary to try to understand another side, that is, the historical background and psycho-

logical elements of our Chinese brothers and sisters.

Among all the voices of objection raised in China today, the statement by the spokesmen for the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Department of State was the mildest and most balanced. This office indicated that they supported Bishop Yang Gaojian's statement and opposed the Vatican's interference in China's sovereign affairs. This kind of objection is related closely to China's history of the past hundred or so years and the feeling of cultural self-respect.

We must remember that from the time of the Chun and Han Dynasties, China had a unified form of state. Society structures had developed within a fixed frame. There was very little change. Moreover, geographical isolation resulted in little communication with other countries. Therefore a cultural isolation and conservatism together with psychological self-satisfaction have always been features of traditional Chinese attitudes.

Before the Ming dynasty there had not been much change in Western economic and political organization, so China could continue on peacefully. Except for the interventions of the Northern and Eastern barbarians, there was little cause for concern. After the Ming dynasty, Western society entered the age of the Industrial Revolution, and changes occurred in every area. Production and military prowess increased drastically. When the agrarian society of China met the industrial society of the West, lack of comprehension, reluctance to part with the past, and defeat abounded on all sides. In addition, after the Opium War, China was forced to open its closed doors.

In reality, China has always maintained a lively and wide interest in foreign cultures, and has been willing to accept or absorb them. Historically speaking, Indian Buddhism was China's first encounter with foreign cultures. Second were the Persian and Arabic cultures. These contacts can be traced through the Han and Tang dynasties. In the process of these encounters the Chinese naturally maintained a self-confidence and love of their own traditional culture, at the same time they had a liberal and accepting attitude towards cultures from abroad. But after the Ming dynasty the importation of Western culture caused too great a conflict with Chinese culture. The differences were so

great that it was beyond the capability of the Chinese culture to adapt. Therefore, many Chinese people developed attitudes of strong opposition. Moreover, when Western culture came to the East, it came to China riding in merchant ships and supported by military guns. Many Chinese people, then, reacted very negatively. Even today, as China is so forcefully promoting the Four Modernizations and evidencing an indulgent acceptance of Western culture, it is evident that social attitudes still contain contradictory elements of simultaneous acceptance and rejection. This is very closely related to the feeling of cultural self-respect.

Although the early Western missionaries helped China step into modernization - e.g. they introduced new education and technical skills, they improved social customs, they promoted social welfare projects, and they inspired changes in political ideas -, nevertheless these missionaries either arrived in the ships of the East India Company or they translated for government officials and merchants, or they obtained special privileges for the missionaries through the unequal treaties which had been signed. So the missionaries were looked upon as accomplices of the colonizers. This attitude of rejection of the colonizers, then, resulted in many church court cases, which in turn engendered much ill-will towards Christianity among many Chinese people. Within the Catholic Church, moreover, indigenization progressed very slowly, so not a few Chinese bishops and priests felt they were looked upon as second-class clergy. Even today this historical and psychological attitude has not entirely disappeared.

To avoid such mistakes in the future, when looking at the event of the present opposition to the appointment, one must take note not just of the rejection itself but also of the historical and psychological background it reflects.

From this one can see that the Vatican's advisers, and the decision of the Vatican itself, failed to take into consideration the historical background and feeling of the Chinese. Although the motivation for the present appointment was good and had the benign intention of manifesting the communion of the Universal Church, yet the method and timing of the announcement

were evidently premature. This is surely a cause for regret.

Archbishop Deng's acceptance of the appointment on the one hand shows his own high regard for the communion of the Universal Church and on the other hand indicates his desire to resolutely offer his life as a sacrifice for his church and his country. Perhaps the one criticism one can make is that his political awareness was insufficient.

As for gradual crescendo of fierce accusations from the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, it would seem that it has been oversensitive and too hasty. Since in our country today, political thought emphasizes greatly historical trends, how can one's view of this affair of the appointment be separated from the entire historical process? Before the evil actions of the Gang of Four were judged, our country followed the legal process and gave them an opportunity to defend themselves. But this time, even before Bishop Deng had returned to Hong Kong and had had an opportunity to explain the situation, he was blamed, accused of betraying his country, and removed from office. He was not even accorded the legal facilities that were given to the Gang of Four. People who have been to Guangzhou recently to visit relatives have said that before the accusations against Bishop Deng, the Canton Cathedral was filled to capacity for Sunday Mass. After the accusations, however, attendance has fallen greatly. Will not such a change have an effect on the appearance of a clear policy of religious freedom the government has been promoting? Those responsible should look carefully at such a loss.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, we can say that this crisis has arisen because of lack of communication and understanding between China and the Vatican. To break the impasse, what can both sides do? The author puts forth the following suggestions:

1. In Bishop Deng's statement of 22nd June he explained his motivation for accepting the appointment. Would it be possible for the Vatican at the appropriate time to explain clearly its reasons for this appointment? And could China,

after understanding more fully the good intentions, withdraw its former rejection?

2. Since China has welcomed the assistance of foreign countries in helping promote the Four Modernizations, could not the Vatican offer this kind of help in order to initiate mutual communications? On the other hand, since our Protestant brothers and sisters have gone abroad many times for discussions and visits, could not Catholics more quickly follow suit?
3. The controversy raised by this appointment has shown that the Vatican's understanding of China's historical and psychological background is insufficient. In the future, when similar questions arise, is it possible for the Vatican to expand its circle of advisors? On the other hand, in order to avoid any misunderstanding stemming from oversensitivity, can our countrymen investigate the rationale behind an action before judging?

Lastly, "man proposes but God disposes." We should not forget to pray to the Holy Spirit to bless and assist the work of reconciliation.

