

## BREAKING THE IMPASSE (PART I I)

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### THE POPE SPEAKS TO CHINESE CHRISTIANS<sup>14</sup>

On June 16, 1981, the Holy Father appointed Mgr Deng Yiming as Archbishop of Guangzhou (Canton). Since that time, the relations between China and the Catholic Church have deteriorated still more. The Catholic Patriotic Association has vigorously protested against this "gross interference" in the internal affairs of the Church on the Mainland. The terms used to criticize the papal gesture reveal the strong resentment and extreme suspicion towards the authority of the Holy See. One month later, five bishops were elected and ordained (24-7-81) to restate the firm position of the Church of China towards the Vatican. Has the deadlock not become worse than it was previously?

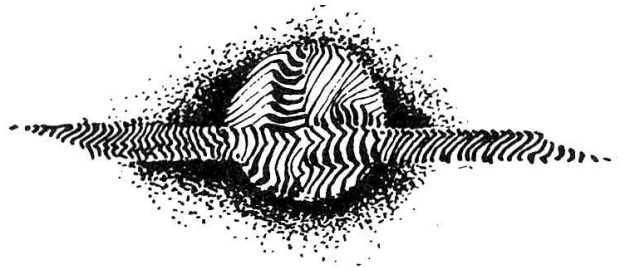
We sincerely regret those unfortunate events and hope that an atmosphere of dialogue and good will will prevail in the Church-China relationship. Nevertheless, no matter how badly matters appear to us, they must not hide another event of great importance and of an altogether different nature which occurred also in 1981. On February 18, in Manila, Pope John-Paul II gave a message to the Chinese Catholics. On that day the Holy Father touched upon several burning issues in the present day Church in China. While the conflict caused by the nomination of Mgr Deng Yiming is slowly diminishing, the words of the bishop of Rome still ring out in the hearts of many Catholics who are sincerely searching for a practical presence in that atheistic society. The well-known patriotism of John-Paul II, his transparent faith and his long experience within a Marxist system give additional weight to his words. On the surface there was apparently nothing new in the content, but actually a deeper reality can be detected.

In a warm and welcoming delivery, the Pope said: "For many years...very little was known about you, your joys, your hopes and also your sufferings.... During these long years you have undoubtedly lived through other experiences which are still unknown...." The Pope then alludes to those who may have taken the wrong road, not to condemn them, but to reassure them that he can well understand the problems of conscience they often have to face: "At times you will have wondered in your consciences what was the right thing for you to do. For those who have never had such experiences it is difficult to appreciate fully such situations."<sup>23</sup>

John Paul II acknowledges that discernment in these thorny situations was difficult and some Catholics might have strayed. Such statements are far from the harsh judgement of Pius XII. It is a fact that for many Chinese Catholics this entirely new situation made it very perplexing for them to know which way to choose and which attitude they should adopt. Some Christians facing these same realities made an analysis and chose other options. It was legitimate as long as the essential elements of faith were maintained. Certain people are more sensitive in their fidelity to the Church and its origin. Others perceive calls from the Holy Spirit which reach out to the People of God in privileged ways throughout the history of the Church. It is within the tension between these two poles that the destiny so specific to the Church is played out, and that gradually, new ways are manifested. Fundamentally however, all experience runs the risk of errors. The steps taken by those who have strayed are not by that fact to be considered as purely negative; they may become lessons for all of us.<sup>24</sup> Searching in different directions is always a difficult and groping process; the example of the French Catholics given in part one of this article proves this. Progress is never regular or harmonious, but always moves in crooked lines. Our limitations and our sinfulness are all causes of errors. Nevertheless, with John-Paul II, we believe that the Lord will guide and open the way to all those who listen to his Spirit.

After this, the Pope attempts to discuss certain delicate questions pointed out previously in part one of this article, to

clarify them through the teachings of the Gospel and the Vatican Council, in order to enlighten the believers. He favours co-existence between the political power and groups of Christians, in situations when the Catholics have closed in on themselves, with the hope that the faithful will transcend the dealock.



#### THE NATURE AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

"The Church has no political or economic goals, she has no worldly mission. She wants to be, in China as in any other country, the herald of the Kingdom of God."<sup>25</sup>

The nature and the mission of the Church - the People of God - are absolutely original. She is unlike associations, trade unions, political parties and financial companies. She has no ambition, no politics, no economics. She is not only a human society, an organization or a hierarchy, but a "visible assembly and a spiritual community"<sup>26</sup> who walks along with humanity and shares the burdens of this earthly life. Born of the love of the Father, founded by the Son, continually assembled by the Holy Spirit, the Church is willed by God to be that "Sign of salvation in the midst of the World."<sup>27</sup>

It is within her that Christ is recognized, welcomed, celebrated and proclaimed. It is the place where the world to come, the Kingdom, already manifests itself in a privileged manner. The political and economic realities of this world are not laid aside but must be evaluated from the perspective of the One Absolute. The Church looks first of all for the Kingdom of God.<sup>28</sup>

She is not an end in herself, nor does she live for herself. She has no earthly ambitions. She has no desire to con-

quer territories, to acquire material goods, power or prestige, - but simply to bring a witness to the heart of the world. At all times the Church listens to the questions of various groups, and is being challenged by different modes of thought. She allows herself to be stimulated by the reflections of people of good will, searching to enlighten their way by the Word she has received from her Master.

The anxiety of the Chinese Communists towards this vast body which is the Church is fully comprehensible. They have fears that by taking advantage of the present liberal policy, the Church will become a counter-power, and will gain ground by undermining the authority of the government through numerous conversions. The words of the Pope seek to alleviate those worries.

The Church and the political community are surely intermingled, but in no way are they in rivalry. There is no confusion whatsoever in the functions to be carried out nor in the competence of each.<sup>29</sup> The authority, the Truth and the Mission of the Church stand on an altogether different ground.<sup>30</sup>

"The Church encourages her members to be good Christians and exemplary citizens dedicated to the common good and to the service of their fellow-citizens, and collaborating through their personal efforts to the progress of their country."

The above statement may seem contradictory to the claim that the Church has no political goal. For example, if the Christians were committed to the 'Four Modernizations' such enthusiasm would have unquestionable political and economic repercussions. But in fact there is no such conflict. In order to understand the words of John-Paul II, we must read them in the light of the teachings of the Church, and then two very distinct commitments will be observable.

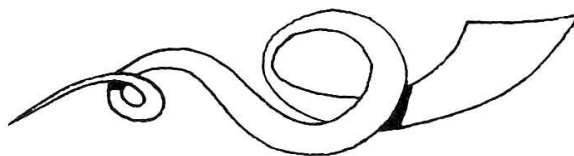
Politics in the strict sense means direct participation in the policy formation of a given party together with a strong commitment to promote a pre-determined social structure. Politics in this sense also implies efforts to assure that a group or party sympathetic to the political principles assumes power. Not least, a political party will use diverse means to gain the support of other members of a given society. The Church is reserved about participating in politics at this level. This is what John-Paul II asserts when he says...



But the word 'Politics' may be understood in a broad way, in the organization of social life. From that point of view it constitutes for all citizens, particularly for Christians, a duty of responsible and active participation. The Christians who love their neighbour and their country cannot be disinterested in the common good. On the contrary, they must be fully committed and work for the well-being of the society in which they live.<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere, John-Paul II insists again that Christians must: "... consecrate their talents and skills to the common good. A good Chinese Catholic works loyally for the progress of his nation..." Social responsibilities are clearly defined.

The Pope invites the Catholics to collaborate with the Chinese authorities. It is no longer a question of non-cooperation, which was demanded by Pope Pius XI and Pius XII. Now the faithful are asked to play a positive role in the development of modern China. Pope John-Paul II encourages Catholics to break out of social passivity and to be gradually reintegrated into the life of the nation.

Has the Beijing government perceived the full implications of these words of John-Paul II? Have the Chinese leaders realized the shift of attitude on the part of the Pope? Have the Catholics had access to these words? If so, have they understood the new approach of language addressed to them? It is too early to say whether both sides have fully grasped the message. But already we can assert that this date will remain significant in the history of the relations between China and the Catholic Church. (It should be noted that not all approved of this speech in Manila).<sup>32</sup>



## THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHINA

Edmond Tang of Pro Mundi Vita, in a research work on the Church of China,<sup>33</sup> brings up certain important points:

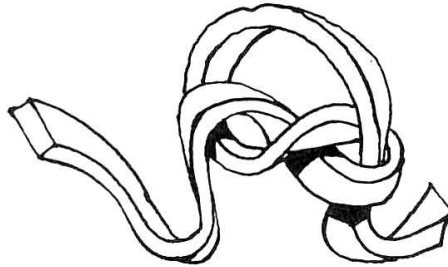
Conversions are numerous on the Mainland but what kind of conversions are they? Following in the wake of the Cultural Revolution which left the country in a moral and ideological crisis,<sup>34</sup> are they merely an escape into the religious domain? Are they a way out of the present situation, a search for solitary happiness? Could the Church not be filling in some ideological gap rather than becoming a worthwhile partner in the reconstruction of the country?<sup>35</sup>

These are important questions which demand a profound analysis that can be provided only by fully aware Christians living in China. But we can already assert two facts:

- From the very beginning, the reasons why a person becomes a convert are seldom absolutely pure ones. Certain outside elements do come in. Discernment is really necessary. The purpose of the catechumenate is to help the candidates for baptism to clarify and to purify their motivations. In the present situation, how can the ones responsible for formation in the Church be able to guide catechumens, since their liberty is restricted and they have no pedagogical material available?
- The authorities of the Church in China have not been able to follow the recent evolution of theological reflection: e.g., the social doctrine of the Church, the commitment of Christians in modern society and the theology of liberation. Certain elements of reflection are lacking, such as information which could facilitate their comprehensive view of the present situation of the country and the contribution that the Church could make in this direction. In what manner could they become committed to this new way of life, so as to become worthwhile partners in the building up of the nation? Yet, Vatican II and John-Paul II in his address to the Chinese Christians, both encourage this spirit of participation very strongly.

Apparently it is better for the Communists to allow the Catholic faith to subsist in the form of an outdated and introverted religion with few possibilities to renew itself. For one reason, many of these religious practices comprise a cult which is

difficult to understand; therefore they are not threatening to the future of an atheistic country. Moreover, this supports the Marxist thesis of the natural withering of all religions.

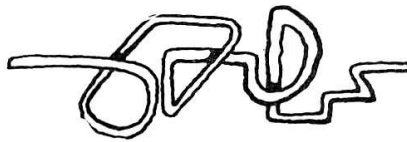


In fact upon deeper analysis, the flaws in the reasoning become apparent. This state of affairs proves first of all, that even within its own cult the Church is not free in its internal decisions. Then the question comes up regarding the immediate future of Faith in China. These converts who have received Baptism with such a limited preparation are going to be increasingly influential in the life of the Church of tomorrow. There is the danger that they will live out their faith in a very individualistic way and might not ever discover the communitarian implications of Christianity, thus depriving the nation and the Church of a building force. An enlightened faith in Christ brings forth responsible believers, capable of participating actively in the life of the country and its development. The latter is for all far parties more preferable than a doubtful religiosity incapable of reasoning.

Even though there would be a risk involved, it would be an intelligent and audacious step to the benefit of the Beijing Government to allow the Church of China to implement the spirit of Vatican II. Chinese Communists have already confronted many challenges. This one should not frighten them. They can presume that the Catholics are both patriotic and loyal. If the last Council permeated the Christian communities, the outcome would be beneficial to the entire national community as well as to the Chinese Church.

The Catholics comprise only a small minority in China. However their influence extends far beyond the number of baptized

people. Because they were subjected to many confrontations over the past 30 years, a genuine coexistence between the government and the faithful would have a symbolic value throughout the country. The fact that people from such diverse backgrounds could attain a modicum of mutual acceptance would strike many who were previously wary. Trust engenders trust. The Chinese government at present is searching for a much wider base of popular support.<sup>36</sup> A real peace with religious bodies would enhance human relations at all levels. The Christians can contribute to this.



For example, the Catholics could very well and without hesitation or mistrust, follow the teachings of their bishops, free from all pressure. These pastors, unfettered in their role of living out and interpreting the Word of God, would guide the Church within the precise context of the new China. Among other teachings, here are some recently developed thoughts in the mind of the Church that the Catholic leaders would communicate to their brothers and sisters in the faith:

- The Church encourages Christians to participate in an active way in the development of their country.<sup>37</sup> "Citizens...should remember that they have the right and the duty...to contribute according to their ability to the true progress of their own community."<sup>38</sup> They must work for the common good and promote whatever is "true, good and just in the institution which the human race has established for itself..."<sup>39</sup> Their contributions must go beyond an individualistic ethic.<sup>40</sup>
- Christians must be present to the world, attentive to the needs of their fellow citizens, listening to their aspirations. The Church of the Mainland shares the joys, the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the Chinese people.<sup>41</sup> Christians must sincerely love their country, and may never, even if they are far from it,

lose interest in its welfare.<sup>42</sup>

- The Church is convinced she has much to receive from men and women of our times. Therefore she encourages dialogue with people of varying opinions; Christians of other denominations,<sup>43</sup> members of non-Christian religions,<sup>44</sup> most particularly Muslims and Jews,<sup>45</sup> non-believers<sup>46</sup> and all people of good will.<sup>47</sup>
- Private property is never absolute to the point of ignoring the most elementary needs of others.<sup>48</sup> The intended purpose of all goods of this world is that they be shared universally.<sup>49</sup>
- The role of the local Churches is an important one among the People of God; to assimilate the Gospel Message, to translate it into a language that people of today understand, then to announce the Good News.<sup>50</sup> Many of the decisions which directly concern the local communities are within the hands of their own leaders. The Church of China has received an important mission which is to witness to the people with whom she lives. She has the primary responsibility to fulfill this task.
- Missionary work is not propagandizing the Gospel as certain over-zealous apostles seem to believe.<sup>51</sup> This task takes on various forms according to the situation within the country and the local circumstances. Paul VI said for example that "the witness of an authentic Christian life...is the first means of evangelization."<sup>52</sup> This method is within everyone's means and it is one that respects the liberty of others. The Pope also asserted that the fight against "famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices between nations" is a work of liberation which is an integral part of Evangelization.<sup>53</sup> At a time when so many reports from China speak of social misery, unemployment, criminality among the youth and corruption, the efforts of the Christians to fight these evils could not but benefit the whole society.





## PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS POLICY IN CHINA

With respect to all religions, the Chinese Communist Party has no need to come out of a deadlock since it is in control of the whole nation. It has the reins of power and can enforce any policy or action that it determines. Nevertheless, these last few years, China has experienced some fluctuations between rather liberal and inflexible governmental policies. This indicates hesitation and strong tensions on the part of those high officials regarding the attitude vis-a-vis the religious phenomena. In this aspect, it is a fact that the authorities are facing a very delicate situation.

On the one hand, the Party cannot deny itself, so in theory it falls in line with the most orthodox thought of Marxism. In the third issue of "TRIPOD" Mr. Leo Goodstadt<sup>54</sup> showed us clearly that the Party maintains the same position as before: "Religions present a distorted and illusory picture of the actual world; it is an opium which poisons people and, naturally, it is falsehood. Marxism is scientific truth."<sup>55</sup> Religions will die out by themselves, even though it will take a protracted period of time. "Their slow death meanders along a winding historical road. When the proper social conditions have evolved religions will disappear."<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, in practice the authorities must remember other important factors in order to form their line of conduct. Their task is much more delicate than appears on the surface.

- Believers constitute important groups in China. In a period when the country is thrusting itself into the "Four Modernizations", it is important to unify the nation and not to deprive it of any of its impetus.<sup>57</sup>
- The abuses of the Cultural Revolution are still very much alive in the minds of the people. The Party leaders wish to be disassociated from the activities of this period. They also want to isolate and discredit the Maoist extremists and in this way clear their own record.
- It is urgent to re-establish the reputation of the Communist Party responsible for the diffusion of official thought. There is on the Mainland today, and most

particularly among the youth, a certain "decline in credibility of Communism" or "a crisis of Marxist faith".<sup>58</sup> According to a survey conducted and published in the People's Daily, one third of the youth are not convinced of the superiority of Socialism.<sup>59</sup>

- Superstitions are a perduring problem in China. It is impossible to record the number of official press statements denouncing them.<sup>60</sup> A survey conducted in a Shanghai University last year revealed that a majority of students believe in "destiny", a vague expression encompassing many practices, some of them being quite respectable, such as cult of ancestors. Some others are of a more suspicious nature, such as reading the palm and the forehead, reliance on fortune tellers and consultations regarding one's fate.<sup>61</sup> The authorities consider all religions to be a "drag" in history but they regard the various superstitions as even more detrimental. Therefore the present freedom enjoyed by the major religions in China is only a concession with a deeper objective of channeling more acceptable cults into the main religious bodies while culling away the undesirable superstitious activities.<sup>62</sup> The religious authorities also equally disapprove of these practices



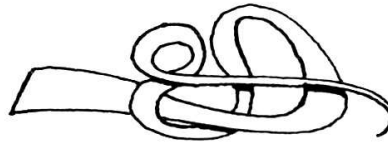
and would like to curtail them by giving their followers a better formation, but the present situation does not allow them to accomplish this task. One can really wonder whether this type of "remedy", this policy of reduced religious freedom, cures the Chinese of their "obscurantism", and even question whether, on the contrary, it does not encourage superstitions. Because of the ignorance of the masses, including many believers, these suspicious beliefs tend to become more widespread. They are totally unorganized, coming in unpredictable waves, and ultimately are all the more difficult to

control.

- The realization of the "Four Modernizations" supposes that experts and foreign business men enter China. Among them are some believers, which fact should not worry the Chinese authorities. Through such contacts the Chinese are exposed to Western literature, foreign thought, religious beliefs and books. They also gain another perspective on world affairs.
- Religions play a very important role in world affairs. One must not displease believers of other nations, such as the Muslims of the Middle East. There is also a need to renew contacts with the Chinese people of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and overseas. China needs their competence and their skills.<sup>63</sup>



This tension between theory and practice explains why, during these last years, so many principles have remained unchanged, and at the same time the daily life of the believers at the grass-root level has improved considerably. A more pragmatic and flexible policy is surfacing. This is a cause for optimism. On the religious scene this happening is in the interest of believers as well as of the whole nation. Different social groups are slowly proceeding harmoniously.



#### TOWARD A MORE GENUINE AND LARGER TYPE OF HARMONY

In fact, the leaders of the People's Republic of China can easily realize that an actual reconciliation of the Chinese cannot be limited to the religious horizon. It must go beyond, and tend to allow the Chinese from various political positions to

live in harmony in a reunified China. The Taiwan problem has been a source of contention which affects the lives of millions of Chinese. This issue tarnishes the pride and honour of China. As of the 1st of January 1979, the United States recognized the People's Republic of China, and the Beijing Government has been taking courageous initiatives to try to establish dialogue with their compatriots in Formosa. On January 30th 1979, Premier Deng Xiaoping during a visit in Washington specified that the liberation of Taiwan by force was out of the question. The hope now is to allow the island to return to her mother-land. He added that this reunification should be done in a peaceful way with all respect due to the Taiwan authorities and also the agreement of the local leaders.

In spite of all the Taiwan refusals, the Beijing government has steadily increased its goodwill gestures towards their island compatriots. The most spectacular of these initiatives was the one of Marshall Ye Jianying, on October 1st 1981.<sup>64</sup> His nine-point proposal was particularly daring and therefore drew international attention. Taiwan cannot always turn a deaf ear to Beijing offers. This spurning would only contribute to strengthen the position of the supporters of Taiwanese autonomy. In fact there are numerous citizens on the island who really love their country and hope for a reunification of China. Eventually, they will be able to exert some pressure on their government. Among them there are many Christians, separated from their fellow-believers against their will. They are living the same faith, but cannot communicate. Could not these believers encourage a rapprochement and work for the unity of their country? Could not the Churches by their mediation promote a real reconciliation between the two sides? We sincerely think so and believe that a true policy of religious freedom on the Mainland could contribute towards an increase in the credibility of the Communist authorities from Taiwan's perspective. Beijing's goodwill must materialize and must be concretized so that the sincerity of its intentions may gain the confidence of more Chinese.

## CONCLUSION

The Chinese authorities wish to win the hearts of more

followers of religions. The method they are using is correct but it must really be developed and continually amplified. Specifically, this implies that believers be granted a greater freedom of cult, that they be permitted the freedom to live out their beliefs, to express them publicly in community and to communicate them to their fellow citizens.<sup>65</sup> In this gesture the government would focus on the loyalty and fidelity of the believers and manifest a degree of trust in their possible adaptation to the new situation. Recently the Chinese press aptly pointed out that the "opposition between religion and atheism was not an essential struggle." The article continues by stating the most important thing "is the common good of the population, both in politics and in economics".<sup>66</sup> At the very moment when the drive for the 'Four Modernizations' is proceeding, it is important to demonstrate the above analysis that the human being, whose value is more and more widely recognized, is the common denominator of China. The problem of the withering away of religions cannot be solved right now. Only the future will confirm or deny this thesis. It also follows that the validity of this hypothesis presupposes the State will not use its power to strangle religions and bring about their early demise. In order to prove the truth of this thesis, the State must remain neutral in the face of religions, give them enough breathing space, and if they have sufficient strength, to renew themselves internally without outside interference. There would be much more credibility, even among skeptical outsiders, in the religious policy of China should such tolerance be manifested.<sup>67</sup>



All believers, most particularly Christians, have here an important responsibility. Let us not forget that the life of the Church consists primarily in humble fidelity to daily work, a hidden dedication to others and persevering efforts to improve human relationships in the local situation. These small, apparently insignificant acts, once multiplied, can produce a considerable amount of energy. Christians will not only actively participate in the building up of their country but will also encourage their



fellow-citizens to do so. They will do this on a voluntary basis if the government can succeed in winning their confidence and if they can perceive the link between their faith and the renewal of their country. A priest from Congo, a country which officially professes Marxism, wrote these lines a few years after the revolution: "Facing the accusations found in the propaganda, that Christians think only of Heaven and do nothing for their country, the Church has answered this not by a theoretical discussion but its own life throughout society. In this way the Church has manifested its participation in regional development, while encouraging people to commit themselves in a disinterested manner. We are just beginning to realize the richness and the real transformation contained in the constitution of the basic communities."<sup>68</sup> If given the same opportunity, the Church in China could react in the same way. Not only would this be a positive contribution to the country, but also enhance the renewal of the nation. Once more, the Christians could leave the impasse. If this could ever come about, as we sincerely hope, in the future the Communists would be impressed by the zeal of the disciples of Christ in modernizing their country. They might write words like those of Tertulian, in his Epistle to Diognete: "Christians obey established laws; through the merit of their lives, they tend to go beyond the laws themselves." Quite spontaneously, they will exceed the expectations of the law and conscientiously follow their legal obligations.



The learning process that the Church of China is presently undergoing is far from being a negative experience. Deprived of all power, tested by many difficulties, she is nevertheless very much alive and undergoing a deep experience of the Love of the Lord. In that Chinese society, the Church is obliged to be nothing else than the "Light of the Nations", to be a poor and humble servant. Is this not a grace? During three decades she has learned to live day by day with only the assurance of the Word of God: "Have no fear, little flock; for your Father has chosen to give you the Kingdom."<sup>69</sup> She knows better than before, that she can no longer count on her own strength but only on that of the Lord!

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>14</sup>"The Pope speaks to the Chinese Christians" original English text in Sunday Examiner 27th February 1981; Chinese translation in Kung Kao Po, 27th February 1981. This Chinese version is more reliable than the one printed in Hengyi (no. 357) of Taipei which reads: "Pope John Paul II, during his pastoral visit to Asia, addressed himself to his beloved brothers and sisters of the National Republic of China", thus restricting considerably the significance of the Pope's words.

<sup>23</sup>In the '50's in Poland, the "Peace Movement" was founded by progressive Catholics. It created serious dissensions in the Polish Church. John Paul II knows well of these problems from what he saw in his diocese of Cracow, and perhaps might compare that scene to the present situation of the Church in China. In Vietnam recent reports also tell us about tensions among Bishops on the attitude to adopt towards the new regime. (Le Monde 18-4-81).

<sup>24</sup>The Federation of Catholics Students of Hong-Kong, in an article found in Kung Kao Po 5-9-80, relate this interesting commentary: "The experience of failures of our predecessors must serve to enlighten us and prepare our successes of tomorrow. To do this, one must meditate on the flow of history, to show interest in human development and return to the present Chinese reality so as to reform ourselves for genuine progress."

<sup>25</sup>This sentence of the Pope was taken from a Conciliar text: Gaudium et Spes 3,2 and 4,2. His words can also be understood as a reaffirmation of an ideal often passed over and as an invitation to the Church for a critical reexamination at all levels. Jesus tempted in the desert, vigourously rejected all temptations of the Evil One, who invited Him to rule over the World but at the price of great infidelity to the Mission confided to Him by the Father. (Lk 4, 6-8) The Church, this community of sinners, did not always show the same courage as her founder. Like Israel on the march towards the Promised Land, she often turned her head in the direction of idols. Examples of infidelity are not lacking in her history. Let us cite just a few here: at the higher level, there were the Crusades and the constitution of the Pontifical States. At the level of religious orders, certain congregations still maintain a considerable patrimony, are closed in on themselves and thus lose sight of their religious goal. Not least, certain priests give the impression that they are working for their own ends and wish to organize their introverted activities. Many Christians utilize the Church to attain their own purposes. The list of faults is extensive and from the Vatican down to the smallest community, we must all search our hearts.

<sup>26</sup>Lumen Gentium no. 8.

<sup>27</sup>Lumen Gentium no. 1. The Mission of the Church is, according to the beautiful title of this constitution, to be "the Light of the Nations". This name reveals much because it is taken from the words of Simeon to Jesus, a tiny child incapable of doing anything by himself, without power, prestige and might, but manifesting already around him the Love of God for humanity. (Lk 2, 32)

<sup>28</sup>According to the order of Jesus Himself. He indicated clearly to his apostles that the quest for the Kingdom of God is an absolute priority. (Mt. 6, 33)

<sup>29</sup>This theme is developed at length in *Gaudium et Spes*, especially in article no. 76. Three prominent ideas surface: distinction between Church and political community, independence of the Church and the political community, and finally collaboration between the two. See also *Populorum Progressio* no. 13.

<sup>30</sup>Certain observers have noticed the contradiction between the above quotation of the Pope and the practice of the Vatican to have diplomatic relations with the nationalist government of Taiwan. Their remark is correct but incomplete, because political life cannot be reduced merely to diplomatic ties between States, and furthermore the Vatican is not the entire Church. These relations with Taiwan are often used to point out the obstacle to normalization between the Church and China. This factor should not be over-emphasized. On one side, nearly all the Western countries have diplomatic ties with Beijing and yet keep up their flourishing economic ties with Taipei. On the other hand, in many communist countries where there is no such problem as Taiwan, the relations between Church and State do create many difficulties.

<sup>31</sup>Examples of very positive contributions of the Church toward society are not lacking. Here are three recent cases:

- Mgr Tessier, Bishop coadjutor of Algiers declared: "In the first period of independence, when a call was given to volunteers, we sincerely tried to discern what was meant by service to the nation, and the commitment of Christians who would accept to participate in this construction of the nation. We are now in a new period, that of the rule of the Algerians themselves, not only of their political independence but also in their economic initiatives." (*La Croix* 3-3-81)
- The Polish Bishops facing their difficult social and economic situation of their country, asked the Catholics to prove their patriotism: "The home-country is like our own common family-home. The Church teaches us that love of country is a duty and a virtue. Jesus-Christ gave the example..." (*Burio Prasowe Sekretariatu Episkopatu Polski* 1-5 December 1980)
- In June 1980, twelve Bishops of Uganda urged the citizens, most particularly the Christians, to participate in the reconstruction of their country. (English text in "Origins").

<sup>32</sup>A newspaper of Hong Kong criticized the words of the Pope as "imprudent". "When the Chinese Communists came to power, the Catholic leaders were the first ones to resist. The fact that the Pope would like to visit a country formerly considered by the Church as an adversary, seems to be a contradiction." *Sing Tao Jih Pao* 24-2-81.

<sup>33</sup>"The Catholic Church in China today," Talk given by Edmond Tang at the C.A.C.C. (Catholics in America concerned with China) meeting, December 8-10-1980 Maryknoll, N.Y. United States.

<sup>34</sup>Here is an example of a crisis of trust in a letter from a Shanghai College girl: "If I want to believe my professor, at the moment when New China was established, it was a zeal consuming them, they were searching and aspiring for revolution, full of vigour and vitality, they were progressing in applying all of their principles to work and study. But today this vigour is hardly perceptible in our lives. The ideal education, the traditional education hardly light any flames in

my heart. We become accustomed to hearing such expressions as "Communism", "Revolution", but at the same time they remain foreign to us. We should study the example of these devoted heroes of humanity, but as far as I am concerned, I can no longer imagine their actions nor their thoughts. They are difficult for me to study and in my environment, I find no trace of their heroic actions nor of their thoughts..." (Wen Hui Bao 20-1-81)

<sup>35</sup>The conclusion of the letter of the same college student refers to the emptiness of this ideology: "As I often examine these problems, I find that this life and this atmosphere stifle me. I can find no way how to conduct myself, I can find no true road in life. I am now hesitating and irresolute. I am walking on a winding road and I can no longer distinguish whatever I should do. Life is hard, and the things in life are forever changing. With courage, I meet all sorts of trials. I know there are certain ways of thinking which are erroneous and even wicked. But I cannot see clearly and I sincerely hope that someone can help me. (Wen Hui Bao Shanghai 20-1-80)

<sup>36</sup>This article of the People's Daily reproduced in the "China Daily" on June 3, 1981 is certainly meant to win the hearts of large masses of peasants. Here is one extract: "Since the Party is now close to the hearts of the peasants, a new relation has evolved between its organ, Remin Ribao, and the peasants. Some have been clipping reports on the new responsibility systems since they were first implemented in Anhui Province.

They pocket these as "Ammunition" to argue with and convince people who misinterpret or refuse to abide by the new policy. Voices of the young educated peasants are especially loud and clear in debates."

<sup>37</sup>This theme has been developed very strongly by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical letter "Populorum Progressio".

<sup>38</sup>Gaudium et Spes 65,3.

<sup>39</sup>Gaudium et Spes 42,5.

<sup>40</sup>Gaudium et Spes 30; Populorum Progressio 16 and 17.

<sup>41</sup>Gaudium et Spes no. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Ad Gentes 15.

<sup>43</sup>Unitatis Redintegratio no. 4.

<sup>44</sup>Nostra aetate no. 2.

<sup>45</sup>Nostra aetate no. 3 and 4.

<sup>46</sup>Gaudium et Spes 21,6.

<sup>47</sup>"Can a Christian be also a good citizen in Communist China" by Joanna Chan and John Tong, Theology Annual no. 4. In this excellent article, Bishop Ding, who is an Anglican, proves that he is open to people he is living with. He tells us about his reflections on atheism in China. Obviously he has experienced profound and fruitful dialogues with his non-believing compatriots.

<sup>48</sup>Populorum Progressio no. 37. This theme has also been taken up by Father Eugene Thalman, on the 23rd October 1977, during a sermon given before Bishop Wu,

more than one hundred priests and 35,000 Christians of Hong Kong.

<sup>49</sup>Populorum Progressio no. 24 to 41.

<sup>50</sup>Evangelii Nuntiandi no. 63.

<sup>51</sup>At the colloquium of Hong Kong (2-10 February 1979) a group of participants protested vigourously against the "risk of a new missionary push toward China". "To repeat the errors of the past, to enter China with a spirit of sectarianism and competition between the Churches, would have a disastrous effect on the Church of China". Fortunately it seems that those who still have this concept of Mission are a small minority. (Echange France-Asie, dossier no. 44 of Jean Charbonnier)

<sup>52</sup>Evangelii Nuntiandi no. 41.

<sup>53</sup>Evangelii Nuntiandi no. 30 and 31.

<sup>54</sup>Tripod no. 3, Atheism and the Chinese Communist Party after Mao Zedong, p. 42 in English p. 10 in Chinese.

<sup>55</sup>Guangming Ribao 24 October 1979, Tao Delin.

<sup>56</sup>"How to strengthen an atheist education system for the youth", Guangming Ribao 25-8-80.

<sup>57</sup>"Why China must practise freedom of religious belief" by Lei Zhenchang, Red Flag no. 5, March 1981.

<sup>58</sup>An article found in the Hong Kong Daily Mingbao "Enthusiasm of the Shanghainese for Religion and television" indicates the depth of the crisis. (1-2-80)

<sup>59</sup>A survey published in the People's Daily (24-2-81) pointed out that over 30% of young Chinese are not convinced of the superiority of Socialism and 40% express doubts over the possibility of China ever reaching the goal of the "Four Modernizations". The youth represent 65% of the population of the Mainland.

<sup>60</sup>Recent articles about superstitions in China:

"Superstition harmed a person", Sichuan 10-3-8

"Destroy superstition, Dazhong" 1-2-81

"Superstitions harm a child", Xinhua 12-2-81

"Discussion of the Fate", Nanfang 16-2-81

"Return of superstition worrying the leaders", Hong Kong Standard 12-5-81

This phenomenon has been studied in detail by Peter Barry in an article in Ching Feng, Volume 23, no. 2, 1980, "Resurgence of Feudal superstitious practices in China."

<sup>61</sup>"Why did they become believers?" In this article from Zheng Ming, the author who claims to be a Communist expresses his indignation over the superstitious practices which he has witnessed in China.

<sup>62</sup>The Communists now establish a distinction between superstitions that are noxious and religions which present positive aspects, such as rich and old tradition, the Holy Books of each faith, rules of life, etc...

<sup>63</sup>Some of the elements of this part are taken from an article by Leo Goodstadt: "Religion in contemporary Chinese politics" Theology Annual no. 3.



<sup>64</sup>Ta Kung Pao 1-10-1981

<sup>65</sup>The Federation of Catholics Students of Hong Kong in an article already cited in note no. 24 expressed to the Chinese authorities its point of view. The request put forth seems to us very reasonable:

- i) The possibility within the country for free circulation of the Bible and religious literature,
- ii) Authorization for Christian people to have religious associations and public practice of liturgy,
- iii) The security and protection of civil rights for the believers,
- iv) The desire that the government would stop interference in the internal matters and policy-making of the Church,
- v) The acceptance by the government of communication between believers in the country with those outside.

<sup>66</sup>"The Freedom of belief is for the Party, in the religious affairs, a fundamental policy" part 4, Guangming Ribao 30-11-80.

<sup>67</sup>"The Catholic Church in Post-Mao China" by Angelo Lazzarato Page 46.

<sup>68</sup>"Eglises et Socialisme" (Churches and Socialism) in Spiritus no. 66, page 21.

<sup>69</sup>Lk 12,32.

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CHINESE MAGAZINES REGARDING RELIGION ON DISPLAY IN OUR LIBRARY

1. "Catholic Church in China (中國天主教), vol. 2 (published by Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Beijing, 10th March, 1981).
2. "Tian Feng" (天風), vol. 4, (published by Chinese Protestant Three Self Movement Association, Shanghai, 30th September, 1981).
3. "Fa Yin" (法音), vol. 3, (published by Chinese Buddhist Association, Beijing, 30th August, 1981).
4. "Resources on World Religion" (世界宗教資料), vol. 3, (published by China Social Science publisher, Beijing, 25th August, 1981).
5. "Research on World Religions" (世界宗教研究), vol. 3, (published by China Social Science Publisher, Beijing, September, 1981).