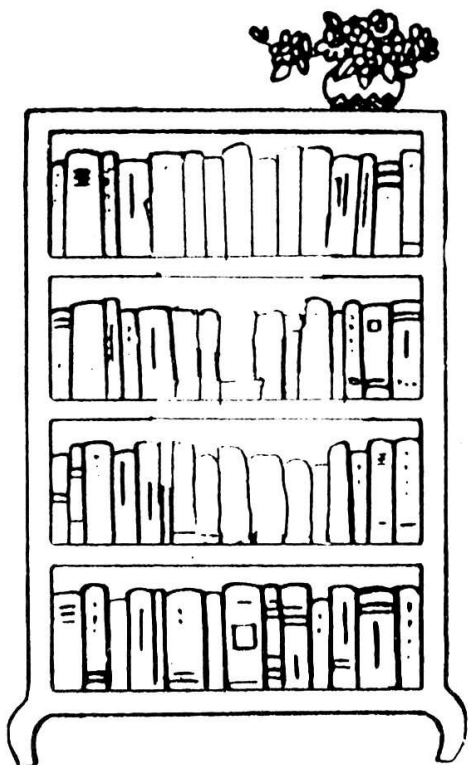


# A COMPILATION OF CATHOLIC

## RESEARCH MATERIALS



### **A REVIEW**

by Peter Barry

The first edition of a new religious journal published under the auspices of the Shanghai Catholic Diocese came off the press in December, 1985. Named A Compilation of Catholic Research Materials, it has as its stated purpose the updating of religious knowledge among both clergy and laity. The editor expresses the "urgent need for renewal in religious thought in order that Catholics might be better able to adjust to the current situation. The initial issue, which runs to 146 pages, offers a variety of articles from local and foreign sources on a wide range of religious subjects along with the editor's promise of a steady flow of such material in the future "in order that Catholic thought may be renewed and built up as a service to all."

Compilation is dedicated to the illustrious Chinese Catholic scholar of the 17th century, Xu Guangqi, who also serves as a model for a spirit of patriotism that the journal hopes to emulate. Accordingly, the first two offerings are reprints of addresses given by Bishops Zhang Jiashu and Jin Luxian on the occasion of the 350th anniversary

of Xu's death, which was celebrated in November of 1983. The rest of the issue is made up of articles that might be broken down into three basic categories: those dealing with the life and times of Jesus, those relating to recent theological trends, and some statistical reports on the church outside China. Also included are reports on the visits of Shanghai Catholics to Hong Kong and the Philippines.

The majority of the articles are reprints and translations from reviews, journals, magazines, and newspapers printed outside the China mainland. Chinese language publications include Hong Kong's Kung Kao Po and Tripod, and Taiwan's Witness and Voice of the Clergy. Among the non-Chinese language sources, there is quite a wide representation: Herder Correspondence, The Ecumenist, IDOC, America, Observatore Romano and Time. There is even an excerpt from John L. McKenzie's book The New Testament Without Illusions. Original Chinese materials include such topics as "The Homeland of Jesus" by Liang Yaming, "The Church in Nan Qiao" by Zhou Xinyi, a two page introduction to Canon Law by An Cai, and a brief summary by Peng Enhua of the first seven ecumenical councils. While the local contributions make for interesting reading, the burden of the task of updating and renewing Catholic thought is borne in this issue by articles originating from outside China.

Tripod's translation of Hans Kung's address to China's Academy of Social Sciences in 1979 on the relation between science and religion is reprinted here, as is a report on the disturbances and controversies in the church of Holland, which originally appeared last spring in Hong Kong's weekly Catholic newspaper Kung Kao Po. More ambitious and of greater length are three major offerings making up the centre of this first issue. The reprint from Herder Correspondence is on theological trends in the First and Third Worlds. It points to the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), established in Dar Es Salaam in 1976, as part of a campaign by theologians and bishops from Asia, Africa and South America to contextualize and indigenize the gospel, accommodating it to local cultures and the needs of local churches. The second of these three articles is by an American bishop who points out the dangers of a too literal interpretation of papal authority as defined by

Vatican I, lest the false impression be given that the world is just one large diocese with the Pope over all. The author points out that "the Pope's authority is for the sake of unity in the church and not to absorb the spiritual and practical authority of local bishops." The third excerpt is from the aforementioned book by John McKenzie, a chapter entitled "The Rock". McKenzie notes that nowhere in the gospels does it say that anyone should succeed to Peter's place, nor has Jesus left us any instruction on how to administer his church.

The three articles noted above have a common concern, namely the relationship of local churches to the papal primacy. Their inclusion here indicates how much that concern is shared by the church in China at this point in her history. It will be interesting to see how the topic is developed in future issues of Compilation.

For the moment, however, it seems to this reviewer that the random selection of material from outside indicates a basic problem in approach. Nowhere among the articles selected is there to be found editorial comment or remarks that might provide the reader with some background. As a result the material is presented without any effort to add perspective or balance, context or direction. For instance, it seems to this reviewer that ordinary Catholics would not have the scriptural or theological background to handle the arguments presented in the excerpt from Fr. McKenzie's book. What seems to be lacking, then, is the pastoral dimension, which might not be necessary for a journal that seeks no more than to compile theological materials at random, but which is vital when the announced aim is church renewal, not only of the clergy but of the laity as well. One of the lessons learned from the renewal begun by Vatican II has been the need to off-set further confusion and misunderstanding on the part of Catholics by a strong commitment to the pastoral side of renewal. For a true and lasting renewal the theological and the pastoral content and context must go hand in hand.

Secondly, regarding the question of the relationship between local bishops and the Holy Father brought up in the American bishop's article, it must be pointed out that Vatican Council II (1962-65) reaffirmed papal primacy as defined by the war-interrupted Vatican Council I (1869-70). At the same time, Vatican II developed and completed

the Vatican I definition by spelling out the role of the episcopal college:

"The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head...(and) together with their head, and never apart from him, they (the college of bishops) have supreme and full authority over the universal church." (Lumen Gentium, para. 22)

The most recent world-wide synod of bishops (November, 1985) likewise reiterated Vatican II's position on the relationship of the episcopal college to the Supreme Pontiff. (Final Report, section. C, para.H)

The above criticism and reservations, however, must be balanced by the sincere welcome extended to Compilation. This effort to update and renew Catholics in the diocese of Shanghai can only be encouraged, for Compilation promises to be a vehicle for increased knowledge and better understanding of the faith, and of the church that bears witness to it.



*Bishop Jin's three member delegation stopped in H.K. on their way to West Germany (12th-15th April, 1986)*

*(L-R) Fr. John Tong (HSSC), Fr. Shen Baozhi, (Secretary of Shanghai Diocese), Fr. Dominic Chan (Kowloon vicar), Bishop Jin, Fr. Elmer Wurth (HSSC), and Sheshan student Fu Jianrong*