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After being virtually annihilated during the course of the ten-year Cultural Revolution, religions in China have once again recovered their right to exist. The government, in accordance with Marxist principles, has always considered religious faith to be a private matter, and as having a negative effect on the work of economic development. At the same time, however, it has accorded religion an official status. The State has financed, at least in part, the restoration of temples and churches. The religious press greets each new opening of a place of worship in the same tone one might use to announce a fresh military victory. From 1979 to 1985 tens of thousands of mosques, nearly two thousand Protestant and about 700 Catholic churches have been reopened. Believers are even encouraged to attend them. It is only those who meet clandestinely that have become the objects of legal action.

Moreover, believers are constantly encouraged to show what good citizens they are, and while the communist authori-

ties would not go so far as to say that religious faith is a requirement for good citizenship, they do admit that it does make a significant cultural contribution. The Assistant Secretary General of the Academy of Social Sciences, Zhao Fushan, in an address to the delegates of the Chinese Peoples Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in April of 1985 stated plainly:

"The point of view which holds that religion is an opiate of the spirit is unscientific and incomplete. Religion is part of the spiritual culture of the people."

The present treatment of religion is, without doubt, a product of the pragmatism of modernization and one aspect of "socialism Chinese style." When speaking of the latter, it is best to speak precisely. At a time when the Marxist doctrine imported from the West is gradually being digested and assimilated by the traditional Chinese power structure, at least three questions can be posed:

- Will the religions of China return to the same status they had in the past?
- Will the official virulence of the Marxist critique of religion be retained?
- Do present claims of independence for religions represent an actual breakthrough?

Answers to these questions should throw some light on the destiny of religion in China's future. For the present, however, let us direct our attention to Christianity and the Catholic Church. In the West, Christianity has had much experience in Church-State relations. It might prove to be of some use to examine these experiences in the context of present day China.

The Present Political-Religious Situation

We turn first to a consideration of China's situation in the 1980's. The integration of religion into public life follows the constitutional principles laid down by the National People's Congress and sanctioned by the Communist Party. The effective implementation of those principles is supervised by both government and religious structures.

Constitutional Right

In December 1982, the 5th National Peoples Congress passed article 36 of the revised Constitution. This article guarantees freedom of religion in the following terms:

Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.(1)

The final text represents a slight modification of the provisional version of article 35, which was the object of much discussion throughout the country during 1982. The expression "counter-revolutionary activities" has been suppressed in favor of "activities that disrupt the public order." The reference to "religious bodies" has been added to the last sentence, no doubt to underline the duty of the Chinese Catholic Church to be self-governing and independent of the Vatican. The expression "normal religious activities" refers to those activities which respect public order and morality; it condemns superstitious practices such as divination, sorcery, magic and charlatanism.

An important modification of the preceding constitution of 1978 has been introduced. The clause recommending the propagation of atheism has disappeared. Propagandists of atheism, however, can make use of the present text by playing on the formula that no one can "force citizens to believe." Every effort at propagating the faith can thus be overcome by counter-propaganda.

Communist Directives

Article 36 of the Constitution corresponds to basic policy of the CCP during the period of socialism. The actual direction of the Party has been spelled out clearly in docu-

ment 19 of the Central Committee, dated March 31, 1982. (2) It is based on a Marxist analysis of the phenomenon of religion as found in the particular context of Chinese society. With the establishment of socialism, it is claimed, the conditions of exploitation which gave birth to religious belief have been torn out by the roots. As for social reality itself, it must be acknowledged that it is still marked by suffering. Thus a prolonged struggle will be necessary in order to develop a scientifically and technologically advanced civilization. During this period of socialist reconstruction, which will perhaps be quite lengthy, religion will continue to exercise its influence on the people (para. 1,2).

The Party goes on to review its religious policy since its inception and notes that it has followed a "twisting course". Measures taken during the 1950's are fully justified in light of the struggle then taking place against imperialism and feudalism, when religious activities had been wisely rallied to the cause of patriotism and national independence. It is also claimed that these efforts were subsequently ruined by the violent excesses of the Cultural Revolution (para. 3).

The policy of the United Front in the cause of modernization demands the unifying of all vital forces in the country. Ideological differences should be relegated to secondary levels (para. 4) in an effort to regain the support of active believers, who are also to be furnished with a scientific and socialistic education (para. 5). Religious practice must be normalized through re-opening places of worship in the major cities and the larger towns (para. 6). Religious activity should follow a patriotic direction (para. 7) and particular attention should be given to the formation of youth:

"The task of seminaries is to form a contingent of professional religious young people who, on the political level, will be fervent patriots, supporting the Party's leadership and the socialist system, and who, at the same time, will have sufficient competence on the religious level" (para. 8).

Freedom of religious belief does not apply to Party

members, who, unlike the average citizen, are atheists. But their Marxist convictions should present no obstacles in their dealing with believers; prudence is required, particularly when dealing with the national minorities (para.9). They should, however, be forceful in their suppression of superstition (para. 10).

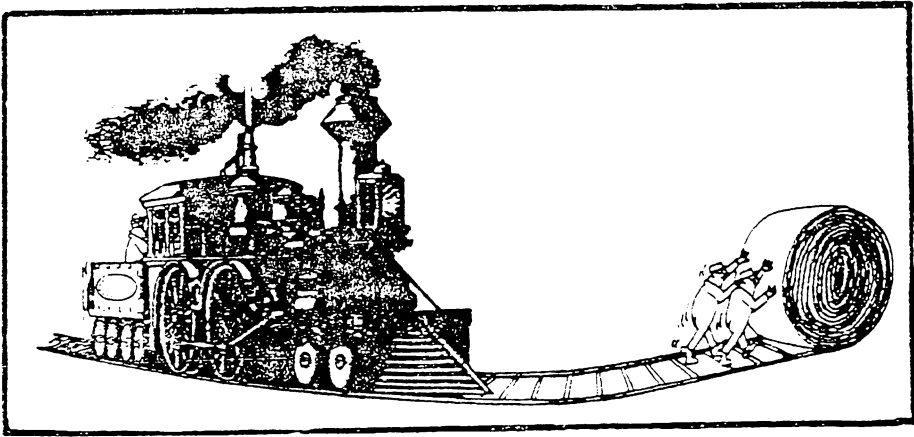
The international character of the great religions could be looked upon as a valuable asset for extending China's political influence, but it can also be seen as an obstacle, e.g. when "adverse reactionary forces, especially imperialistic forces such as the Vatican and some Protestant missionary societies", seek to penetrate Chinese society (para. 11).

These directives for implementing the religious policy require an improvement in the Marxist formation of Party members with regard to religious matters (para. 12).

These same opinions were repeated in the June 1982 issue of Red Flag, of which the following is an extract:

True, we communists are atheists and we advocate and will propagate atheism among the masses of the people. However, we, at the same time, understand that it is not only ineffective but also very harmful to use simple and forceful methods to handle the ideological problems of the people and problems concerning the spiritual world, especially problems of religious belief. We also understand that in the present stage, if we one-sidedly stress the disparity of ideological awareness between religious believers and nonbelievers among the masses of the people... discriminate against and attack religious believers... and forget that the party's basic task is to unite all the people... to strive jointly for the construction of a modern powerful socialist country, we will only widen the gap between the believers and nonbelievers among the masses of the people, stir up and aggravate religious fanaticism and seriously harm the socialist cause.

This strategy of the United Front explains recent deve-



lopments regarding "religious freedom" in the country. It is a policy of extending the hand of friendship and co-operation to the masses of the people. By contrast, positions remain very firm concerning the "patriotic" education of religious leaders. Although the policy of religious freedom is more liberal now than it was in the 50's, arising from a concern to correct the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, it still follows the same basic principles, and no effort has yet been made to examine more closely the so-called "scientific truths" of Marxism.

Governmental and Religious Structures

To understand better the effectiveness of the Party's policy and the reality of the present religious renewal, it is important to become more aware of the civil and religious organizations involved, and to study how they function.

a) Governmental organizations

The basic religious organization of the Chinese government is the Bureau of Religious Affairs, which belongs to the state council. The Bureau is somewhat equivalent to the Ministry of Rites as found in ancient China. The national office is located on Xian Gate Street in Beijing and its director is Ren Wuzhi. Similar offices are located in other municipalities and in all provincial capitals. At the local level, the offices of religious affairs follow the directives

of the national office. The bureau's functions are as follows:

1) In accordance with the work of the United Front, to strengthen the national organizations of religious work and to revive the existing religious groups that they might organize, direct, and plan the development of religious activities.

2) To rectify the injustices, untruths, and errors committed at the time of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four.

3) To promote the principle of freedom of belief and unbelief according to government policy as contained in the Constitution.

4) To renovate and reopen temples and churches.

5) To protect world peace and oppose hegemonism; to encourage religious people to co-operation in accomplishing the Four Modernizations.

The Bureau of Religious Affairs has carried out its duties well in the last few years. It has financed, at least in part, the renovation of reopened Churches under the aegis of the Catholic Patriotic Association. Another source of financial help has been the restoration of church property, especially the buildings which have now been returned to the church. If these church properties are occupied by other groups, they must pay rent to the church and the rent is retroactive to 30 years ago. In dioceses which were formerly administered by foreign missionary societies, it seems that property belonging to those missionary societies is being distributed among the local bishops.

Parallel to the administrative organization of the Bureau of Religious Affairs is a democratic organization called the Chinese Peoples Political Consultative Conference. The CPPCC represents the interests and aspirations of the Chinese people, and is known among the Chinese as "Zhengxie". At the national level, the CPPCC is comprised of more than 2,000 delegates from non-communist political parties, professions, associations of women and youth, ethnic minorities and the various religions.

The CPPCC was reactivated in 1978 through the influence

of Deng Xiaoping; and its present chairwoman is Madame Deng Yingchao, the wife of Zhou Enlai. Its activities are in a state of constant development and many intellectuals, such as doctors, artists, writers, and engineers take part in it. The government wants its Party cadres, who are often less competent, to listen more to CPPCC opinion. The CPPCC is a structure of the United Front which means that ultimately it must submit to the Party's will.

When the CPPCC met in February of 1978 on the eve of the 5th National People's Congress, it was noted that there were 16 delegates from the different religions in attendance. Among them there were three Catholics, including Msgr. Pi Shushi, the Archbishop of Shenyang, and the first president of the Catholic Patriotic Association. In 1982, at the time of the 6th National People's Congress, religious delegates to the CPPCC numbered 45, 11 of whom were Catholic.

Besides this national representation, the CPPCC has regional Committees in each province. Representatives of the various religions meet monthly. Buddhist monks, Muslim imams, Protestant pastors and Catholic priests have the opportunity to get to know one another and to work together to implement the government's religious policy. Of particular interest to them is the return of places needed for worship.

Several priests and bishops are today active members of the CPPCC. They seem more content there than in the Catholic Patriotic Association. Since the CPPCC is a governmental organization, their religious faith is not put to the test.

The Bureau of Religious Affairs, like the CPPCC, complies with all directives given by the United Front Department of the Party Central Committee. The present head of this department is Yang Jingren. The role of the United Front is to promote socialism based on the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this new historical period of implementing the Four Modernizations, the United Front promotes all that is positive, unifying all possible forces and changing negative elements into positive elements, with the final purpose of reunifying Taiwan to its Mainland.

From the Marxist point of view, all religions as such

are negative elements. They can only be transformed into positive elements in so far as they become secularized. In each city, United Front cells closely supervise the movements of priests and militant Christians. They multiply obstacles to their strictly religious activities, while facilitating their co-operation in purely secular services. In each situation emphasis is placed on the fact that such and such a service is supported by both believers and non-believers alike. Religious motives are, however, completely ignored. (3)

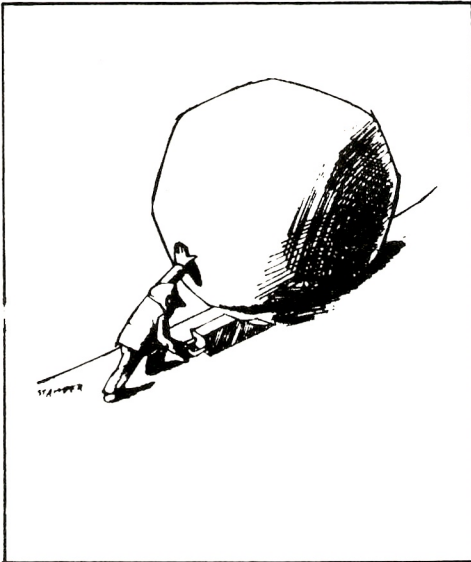
b) Religious Organizations

If the State is content with exercising external control, the Party intends to transform religions from within, and give them a "patriotic" orientation. In the Party's mind "patriotic" is always strictly associated with socialism and communism. Obedience to the country's laws is another way of saying obedience to the directives of the Party. Since religions are considered "feudalistic" (especially Buddhism, Taoism and Islam) or "imperialistic" (as in the case of Christianity), it is imperative to educate believers in a scientific or socialist manner in order to make of them good citizens.

It was for this purpose that, at the beginning of the regime, the great religions of China were organized into patriotic associations. In 1951, the patriotic movement of the three autonomies (of government, finance and propagation) was instituted among the Protestants. In 1953 the Moslem and Buddhist associations were established. The Taoists experienced some difficulties, but their association was officially set up on November 26, 1954. The Catholics resisted longer because of their direct ties to the Pope in Rome. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was finally established in July, 1957. Its first chairman was Pi Shushi, Archbishop of Mukden, who had been in prison and had undergone brainwashing. The consecration of bishops without Rome's approval began in 1958.

Believers from the various religions were pressured into joining these associations by a system of mutual denunciations whereby activists were invited to accuse "the reactionaries." Since the Catholic Patriotic Association had already been denounced by the Pope, a number of bishops,

priests and lay Catholics were sentenced to jail for civil disobedience and for various other crimes. Later the Party's pressure was gradually stepped up through the increased closure of temples, mosques and churches. The Cultural Revolution marked the final point of a series of reprisals, an evaluation of which has yet to be made.



In the 1980's, with the advent of the new United Front policy directed towards modernization, the various patriotic associations have been revived. The Catholic Patriotic Association had not met since 1962. When they met at the end of May in 1980, two new Catholic organizations were created: the Catholic Church Administrative Committee and the Catholic Bishops Conference. These two organizations work hand-in-hand with the Patriotic Association and their leaders are often the same people. Only the Church Administrative Commission, because of its pastoral orientation, gives promise of breaking

new ground, and more and more bishops and priests are rallying to it. The Catholic Patriotic Association, for its part, has changed very little. It has often been emphasized that the Association is not to be confused with the Church. Its work is being taken over more and more by the laity. The lay people who are being appointed to serve in the Association today are more competent and of higher repute than those in the past, at least in the larger cities. In other places they can be insufferable watch-dogs, but they do allow the local Catholics to organize themselves better, look after the churches to be repaired, and maintain contact with those priests who are in prison. The Catholic Patriotic Association strives to enhance its image by means of the publicity surrounding the implementation of the policy of religious freedom and also through their official contacts with foreign Church leaders when they visit China.

The hidden fact is, however, that the great majority of Catholics are in profound disagreement with them in their advocacy of an independent stance with regard to Rome. This fidelity of China's Christians to Rome is better known today because of the numerous personal and familial visits from the outside which have been taking place during the last few years. Thousands of testimonies have proven the attachment of the faithful, their priests, and not a few bishops to the person of the Pope. Unfortunately, these testimonies cannot be published for fear of reprisals that might take place against those involved and their families.

An analogous movement has also developed among the Protestants. The Three-self Patriotic Movement met for its third national conference on October 6-13, 1980. A new organization, the China Christian Council, was established at this meeting. The Council is more pastoral in its direction. One particular task it has set for itself is to work for the unification of the various Protestant denominations. The movement wants independence for Chinese Christians, and it encourages their secular orientations. As there is no lack in the world at-large of Protestant institutions, or even churches, with similar orientations, international exchanges have grown steadily among Protestants in the last few years. Amity Foundation has been established recently to collect foreign aid and recruit foreign personnel for educational and technical service in China.

The Christian mission more representative of the evangelical spirit of the gospel has, by contrast, been much less integrated into the government system. Chinese evangelists in Hong Kong, America, and even in the interior of China have experienced an increase in house meetings, catechumens and baptisms. Many of these grassroots Christians in China refuse to enter churches opened by the Three-self Movement. Reports say some itinerant preachers have been arrested in the past few years. Moreover, as with Catholics, there exists a whole gamut of intermediary situations. A subtle distinction has been introduced between "official" house meetings and "clandestine" house meetings.

Generally speaking, the Communist Party's pressure on Christianity, be it Catholic or Protestant, seems to have had the opposite result from the effect intended.

The faith spreads among the masses, and intellectuals have learned to make a distinction between external submission and internal conviction. Moreover, all Christians have given proof of their good citizenship, and, frequently, of their efficient service to the modernization programme, to the extent that any charge brought against them of being unpatriotic becomes less and less credible.

Recurrence of the Chinese State Tradition

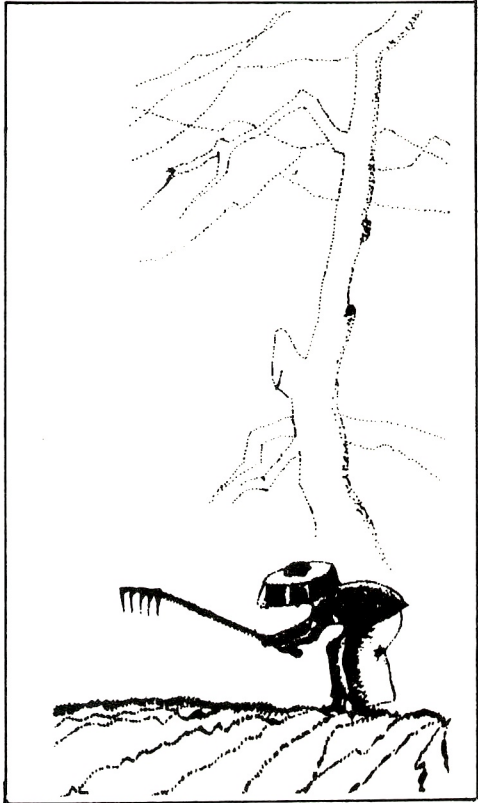
Despite the strategic goals of the United Front, is not the Communist policy of religious freedom making important concessions to the great Chinese tradition of state control of religions? Since the origins of Chinese civilization, religion and the affairs of the state have been closely integrated. In order to better understand the meaning of modernization, we must specify the nature of this integration.

Ritual Order of the Chinese State

At a time when Plato dreamed of a state governed by philosophers, Confucius sought to harmonize the government of the Chinese principalities with the Law of Heaven. But while Platonic thought introduced a marked division in the West between the temporal and the spiritual, Confucius helped join political behaviour and ritual order. The Book of Rites (Li ji) supplied the necessary ceremonial rubrics. The sovereign, in particular, had to offer a sacrifice to Heaven in order to insure order in the empire. This function of linking earth and heaven required moral rectitude on his part. Personal perfection, political order and observation of the rites were thus intimately joined in the foundation of Chinese civilization. In the time of Emperor Han Wudi in the 2nd century B.C., a general metaphysics of the cosmic order and of political order were elaborated by the Confucian philosopher Dong Zhongshu. The emperor appeared in this metaphysics as the son of Heaven, given a celestial mandate to govern and to insure universal order. In this conception of a universal moral order, Heaven did not have the transcendent dimension which permits a personal God, a pure spirit, infinite, and unexplainable. Heaven was rather the equivalent of nature and her laws. On the other hand, the laws of nature had a sacred character close

to the concept of destiny. In addition, this Confucian order made the laws of the Empire sacred. The positive laws spelled out pragmatically by the legalistic school quickly took on a magical-religious meaning.

From a modern point of view, this system, which, at the same time, was political, moral and religious, constituted a governmental "ideology" to which all citizens had to adhere if they were to avoid being regarded as subversive elements and traitors to the nation. Religions other than official Confucianism were tolerated only to the degree that they followed the ritual mold of the Empire, contributed to the moral education of the people, and served order and peace. It is true that in the thought of Mencius, Confucianism permitted a popular democratic intervention. In the case when the sovereign did not fulfill his function as guarantor of the universal order, his celestial mandate was lifted by the voice of the people. This breaking of the mandate, "ge ming," found its modern translation in the term "revolution."



But this type of revolution led to the immediate restoration of a new imperial hierarchical order.

There is another religious tradition which is more radically debatable. Since its origins, the Daoist current has been critical of political and moral order in so far as they complicate existence, favour hypocrisy and repress the free expression of life. The mystical identification of Dao of the universe found in Laozi and Zhuangzi represents the profound inspiration found behind the popular religious sects which developed in a more organized manner beginning in the 2nd century. The decadent Han dynasty

was thus overthrown by the Yellow Turban Revolt in the interior basin of the Yellow River and by the sect of the "Five Bushels of Rice" in Sichuan. The Yellow Turbans organized a counter-power with its own hierarchy, but they were inspired by the egalitarian principles of Taipingjing, the Canon of Peace, and by the sacred text of Laozi, the Dao-dejing.

In its origins, the Buddhist tradition did not constitute a subversive threat, so long as it contented itself with the pursuit of wisdom and asceticism. But retreat from the world can have a critical bearing on the social order. Further, the melding of Buddhism with popular Chinese religion could constitute a destructive mix, as was proven later when several Buddhist sects evolved into secret societies. In the 12th century, poor peasants formed the cult of the White Lotus, dedicated to Buddha Amitabha. Its followers refused to pay taxes or to do forced labour.(4) Millenarian movements developed around Maitreya (Milo fo), the messiah of Buddhism. The Red Turbans brought about the fall of the Sung dynasty in the 13th century.

The imperial administration reacted to all these manifestations of popular religiosity which did not conform to the official rites by labelling them as "heresies" or "Xie jiao," false worship. Repressive measures forced these popular religions to become clandestine and to organize as secret societies.

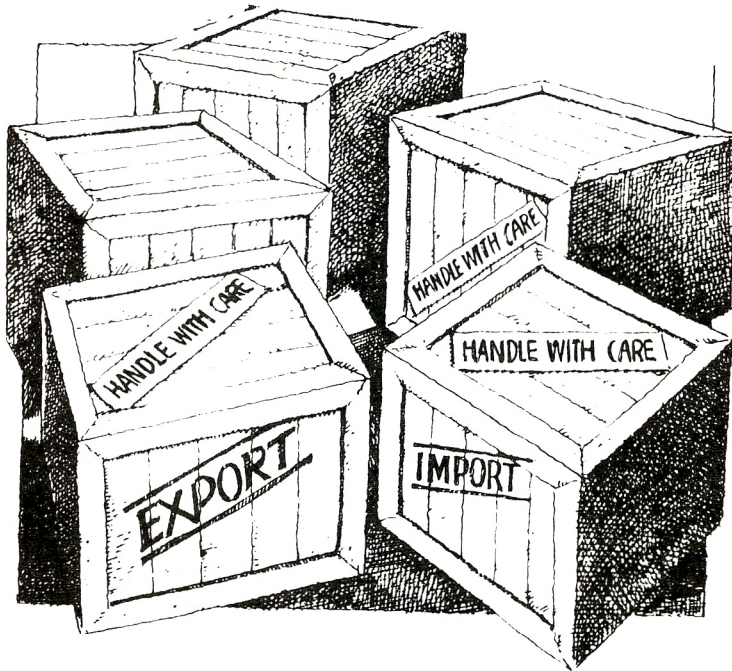
The Political Treatment of Christianity

The history of the Christian penetration of China is grafted on to the above political-religious context. In the 7th century, the Tang Empire welcomed Buddhist monks and their scriptures. At a time when even the Confucianists were interested in esoteric concepts, religions flourishing along the Silk Road found their way in to China.

Some Nestorian Christians who were mixed in with the Buddhists also found acceptance. It is true that the governments of that time whose origins were in the northern steppes, exhibited a pluralism which was not purely Chinese. On the other hand, the motives cited for the official welcome of the Christians were truly Chinese: their beliefs were in conformity with the law of the nation. The text of the imperial edict of 638, engraved on a stele in Xian (ancient Chang'an, capital of Tang dynasty) reads:

"Religion does not have an unchangeable name; saints are not uniform in nature. They establish doctrines which conform to the laws of the nation and, mysteriously, they save living beings. The monk Aloben of Bosi (Persia) came from far away with the Scriptures and the doctrine. We find it is excellent, separated from the world, and we acknowledge that it is refreshing for humanity and indispensable. This religion helps the living, it is beneficial...; it is worthy of being spread throughout the entire celestial empire. A monastery will be built by a competent administration in the area of Yiming, and 21 priests will be assigned to it." (5)

The Franciscan penetration in the 13th century took place during the reign of the Mongol invaders and is less interesting from the point of view of integrating Christianity with the Chinese state. The first Nestorian implantation was swept away in the 9th century in the wake of



a general persecution of Buddhism, inspired in part, by the Confucian scholars. Franciscan Christianity disappeared, in turn, with the retreat of the Mongols and the beginnings of the Ming dynasty.

A Moral and Useful Religion

The question of integration became much more significant in the 16th century with the arrival of Matteo Ricci, the "Scholar from the West", who found his way directly into the Confucian milieu itself. His humanist and moral presentation of the Catholic faith received the assent of many enlightened civil servants. His Chinese friends were often reformers who saw in his integrity and his beliefs a way to invigorate official Confucianism and to correct the corruption which was then rampant in the decadent Ming Empire. Confronted with criticism of missionaries, the great scholar Xu Guangqi, baptized with the name of Paul, defended them with the following arguments: everything that they bring is useful to the State, from their discourses on the obligation to "serve Heaven and love mankind" to the calendar, mathematics, and agricultural and hydraulic technology.

Nonetheless, criticism of Catholicism increased during the 17th century. Xenophobic civil servants who were conservative and often envious of the missionaries' authority missed no opportunity to probe the chinks in their armour and to denounce the subversive aspects of Christianity. As has been noted by Jacques Gernet:

In placing itself outside of and beyond the social-political order instead of basing itself on it and reinforcing it like the regular cults, Christianity threatened to destroy this order. Being on the outside and having a different nature, it tended to destroy the actual basis of a society and of a State which was grounded on the respect of a total order which ignored the antithesis of the spiritual and the temporal. (6)

In the ritual order of the Empire, the sacrifice to Heaven was an imperial privilege. Some officials criticized the Christians for inviting all believers to worship the Lord of Heaven (Tian-zhu: Chinese translation for the word

God). Another grievance: the distinction between religious and political powers in the West:

Their realm has two sovereigns. One is a political sovereign; the other, the doctrinal sovereign. The first holds the government of a single kingdom; the other, a power which extends over all the kingdoms of the world. The first reigns by right of succession and transmits his rights to his descendants. Nevertheless, he is dependent on the doctrinal sovereign to whom he must supply gifts and tribute... This is like having two suns in one sky, two masters in the same kingdom. What audacity do these barbarians have that they want to disturb the unity (political and moral) of China by introducing this barbarous custom of two sovereigns! (7)

Despite these accusations, the missionaries of the 17th century finally gained support, thanks to the witness of their submission to the laws of the Empire, to the purity of their morals, and to their scientific contributions, particularly in astronomy. The great emperor Kangxi of the Qing dynasty, signed an edict of tolerance in 1692, which was stated in these terms:

The Europeans who have crossed the seas deserve our esteem and our gratitude for the great service they have given us during civil and foreign wars, for the intelligence with which they have written useful and interesting books, for their integrity and their loyal concern for the public good. Besides the Europeans are men of peace. They cause no troubles in the provinces, do no wrong to anyone, commit no crimes, and their doctrine has nothing in common with the false sects in the Empire. There is nothing in them which leads to sedition... Consequently, we have decided to preserve all the temples dedicated to the Lord of Heaven where they are located, and all who wish to worship this God are authorized to enter the temples, to offer incense, and to carry out the ceremonies according to Christian usage. Henceforth no one is to oppose them. (8)

An Irregular Seditious Sect

This official sanction did not last into the 18th century for various reasons, of which the principal ones were the development of Christianity in popular circles, the relation of Christian churches with a foreign power, and the prohibiting of Chinese Catholics to practise the traditional rites honouring Confucius and the ancestors.

The creation of Christian communities assembled in churches at various points around China represented a new reality. Christianity was no longer simply a moral doctrine and a scientific benefit, but was becoming a network of inter-connected associations growing in a popular milieu in the same manner as some irregular sects which had been rejected as heresies by the government. Certain characteristics suggested a connection between the Christian communities (jiao hui) and the illegal religious societies (xie jiao). Jacques Gernet summarizes these characteristics:

It was a cult which snubbed the cultural hierarchies, since only the emperor had the right to make sacrifices to Heaven; the ties of brotherhood which unified believers; the mystery which surrounded the gatherings; the suspicion of recourse to magic; the meeting in the same place of men and women; the fanaticism of certain converts; a doctrine which preached martyrdom and which promised happiness after death. (9)

From the beginning of the 17th century, certain critics of Christianity likened it to the White Lotus society. Toward the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, the Christians in Sichuan were persecuted as part of the repressions against the White Lotus society (Bailian-jiao).

The ties of these Christians with foreigners in Macao and "the emperor of religion" (jaiohuang) in Rome had attracted the suspicions of hostile scholars from the beginning. This danger of interference in Chinese affairs took a more official turn with the mission of the Legate Charles Maillard de Tournon to the Emperor Kangxi in 1705. He apprised the emperor of the Roman directives prohibiting Christians from practising the rites for honouring Confucius

and the ancestors. The decree of Pope Clement XI, of November 20, 1704, also ordered the churches in China to withdraw use of the inscription "Jing Tian" (Honour Heaven) - a calligraphy that was composed by the emperor himself for the Jesuits. Only the expression "Tian-zhu," (Lord of Heaven) could be used to designate God. The message was clear. The Christian faith commanded its adherents to love and serve God above the emperor himself and this followed on the directives of a spiritual sovereign whose authority exceeded the laws of the Empire.

The Roman decision snubbed diplomatic necessities that called for a compromise with the particular nature of the Chinese political civilization. Nevertheless, it was not an arbitrary decision, and it was one well founded in theology. It underlined the transcendence of God and the Christian vocation. It was not anti-Chinese, as certain people wanted to believe, but it did raise the question of the identification of the temporal and the spiritual which was so rooted in the Chinese state tradition. Only the Chinese revolutionaries of the 20th century would exercise the same audacity in attacking the ritual order of the imperial state.

A Western Asset which is Dangerous and Useful

In modern times, the intervention of foreign powers changed the parameters of the problem. The spread of Christianity in China had escaped imperial administrative control. The treaties signed with France and England contained clauses protecting the missionaries and even their Chinese converts. The entire Chinese population felt these encroachments deeply and blanketed both foreigners and Christians alike with the same hatred. "Christian" was more than ever identified with "foreign," whatever the degree of secularization of the colonial powers.

It would be simplistic, however, to summarize the situation by this collusion between religious interests and colonialists. Christianity made progress in China because certain elements of Chinese society welcomed it on its own merits. It is necessary to distinguish two forms of the Christian movement within China which tended to transform Chinese society: one popular and syncretic - the Taiping

rebellion; the other, the more intellectual movement of certain great reformers.

The use of the Bible by the Taiping rebels was eclectic and full of erroneous interpretations. From it, the revolutionary leaders combined the idea of the worship of God and the struggle for justice with the idea that, in the celestial Kingdom of Great Peace (Taiping tianguo), all human beings were equal because they were sons and daughters of the same celestial Father. They were equally inspired by the Taipingjing, the Daoist text formerly used by the Yellow Turbans. The Taiping rebellion, at the very least, suggested that Christianity in China could have a popular and revolutionary meaning. But here again the Kingdom of God is identified with an earthly kingdom and the transcendental dimension of the Gospel is eliminated.

The reformers at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century were inspired by Christianity in a more enlightened manner. They used Christianity to support their ideals of morality and of progress in modernizing Chinese society. The Protestant missionaries exercised great influence on the Chinese intelligentsia. The scholar Wang Tao worked for missionary presses in Hong Kong, travelled to England and, in his articles, discussed many appropriate ideas for modernizing Chinese society. Reverend Timothy Richard was in constant contact with the principal architects of the reform. His secretary Liang Qichao spread his new ideas by direct political action and through his novels and lectures. His friend and Cantonese compatriot Kang Youwei thought that it was necessary to use Christian inspiration to modernize Confucianism. Sun Yatsen, himself baptized in his youth, drew from Christianity a witness to the practice of charity.

This active charity was effectively put to practice among the Chinese population with the opening of schools (including schools for girls), the establishment of hospitals and clinics, and orphanages that welcomed abandoned children. The Church thus played a significant role in the struggle against harmful superstitions and degrading customs and in promoting education, hygiene, respect for people, and even scientific study in institutes of higher learning.

Nationalism and the Sinicization of Christianity

Since the Revolution of 1911 and the proclamation of the Chinese Republic, the country has been engaged in a passionate effort (not without many convulsions) for national independence, unity and modernization. The Church has been slow to realize the importance for the Chinese people of a feeling of national honour. The abundance of foreign missionaries and the support of certain Western powers have slowed down the establishment of a Chinese leadership in the Church. However, certain foreigners have understood the merits of Chinese patriotism, to the point of themselves wanting to become Chinese with the Chinese; such a one was Father Vincent Lebbe.

From the 1930s, Chinese nationalism was divided into a cultural nationalism inspired by the great Confucian tradition and a socialist nationalism based on the Marxist concept of a proletarian revolution. The nationalism of Chiang Kaishek and the Kuomintang affirmed itself during the 1930s with the first unification of the country around the government at Nanjing. Before the threat of the Japanese invasion and during the war of resistance, numerous Christians offered proof of their patriotism by fighting for the independence of the country. Having fled to Taiwan in 1949, the Nationalist government showed a particular benevolence to the Christians. Catholics, for their part, worked for a cultural sinicization of the Church in the spirit of Matteo Ricci and Father Vincent Lebbe. They were greatly helped in this task by the Second Vatican Council, allowing Chinese to be used as the liturgical language and encouraging the incorporation in the liturgy of local cultural traditions.

The Communist nationalism of the mainland did not permit an analogous evolution. The Christians were trained to be "patriotic" in a manner which did violence to their faith. Isolated from the life of the Church in the world, they were not able to benefit from the new movements which had animated the Church during the last thirty years: biblical and liturgical renewal, growth of local Churches, episcopal collegiality and the role of the laity in the temporal society. On the other hand, they had been confirmed in their spiritual calling and had not suffered from the se-

cularistic tendencies of the Western Church. They were witnesses to the faith, assiduous in prayer. But their so-called "independence" only reinforced the Western heritage of the previous decades in the minds of the present regime: Mass in Latin, rigorous Church rules, devotions to Mary and to the Sacred Heart inspired by the French spiritual tradition.

It is true that the Chinese cultural heritage itself was abused on the Mainland during the 1960s and 1970s. Criticism of Confucius was particularly violent during the Cultural Revolution. Intellectuals, artists and technicians were grouped with the Confucian scholars of the past and treated as conservative reactionaries. The interest of the Church in Confucianism and in other cultural currents could only be considered as manifestations of anti-communism that supported the reactionary government of the Kuomintang.

The attitude of the Party evolved during the 1980s. Confucius was once again honoured as a great educator. The inhuman excesses of the Cultural Revolution resulted, consequently, in a return to the Chinese humanist tradition. The moral education of youth and of Party members necessitated recourse to Confucian directives regarding personal ethics, order, discipline and service to society. Thanks to the development of this Confucian socialism, the Chinese state rediscovered an ideology of ritual order in which religions can be integrated according to the same criteria as before: moral and social usefulness. In the same way as in the past, popular practices that are more or less clandestine whether they be Christian, Daoist or animist, are still the object of official condemnation. Several times, a distinction has been made between religion and superstition. The great religions such as Christianity and Buddhism have scriptures, commandments and places of worship. They respect public order and morality. Superstitions, such as sorcery, magic, practices of divination, are harmful, anti-hygienic, and the source of much trouble. They are to be condemned and must be repressed.

This recent development seems to invite the conclusion that religions have rediscovered their right to exist, to the degree to which they conform to the ideological-political order of the Chinese state. Certain leaders of

the Patriotic Association, like to repeat that the Church must not revive the mistakes of the past, meaning the prohibition against the Chinese rites, and that it is necessary, on the contrary, to act in the spirit of Matteo Ricci. This is to say that the new Communist ideological-political order has the same nature as the previous ritual Confucian order. Ten years ago, such ideas would have been immediately labelled as scandalous heresy and would have led to those leaders being sent to a work camp for re-education. If they are allowed to express themselves in this way today, we must then believe that the Party's United Front policy leads to interpreting in a new way certain orthodox Marxist beliefs. This is a question which requires further elucidation. (End of Part one)

NOTES

1. Constitution of the Peoples Republic of China. (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xianfa.) Beijing: Popular Press, 1982.
2. Document published in "Selection of Important Documents Since the Third Party Plenum," Vol. 2, Tianjin: People Daily Publications, 1982, p. 1218-1240 (selected texts).
3. Such was the case for a meeting of lay Catholics in Nanjing on September 24-25, 1984, presented in the The Catholic Church in China, No. 11, p.39. Translation and commentary in Zhonglian, No. 16, March 1985.
4. See Jacques Gernet, Le Monde chinois, p. 326.
5. See R. Laurentin, Chine et Christianisme, Descless de Brouwer, 1977, p.104.
6. See Jacques Gernet, Chine et Christianisme, Paris: Galimard, 1982, p.144.
7. Ibid., p.147.
8. Laurentin, ibid., p.129.
9. J. Gernet, ibid, p.157.