

A CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE

by Alopen*

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INTRODUCTION

At a Christmas 1975 meeting in Hong Kong, each religious leader was asked to give a brief general review of the social situation in his particular region. When it came to one participant's turn, he painted the situation in Thailand in rather dark colours, mentioning, *inter alia*,

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that the some young Catholic clergymen were supporting Communist programmes. Another participant from the Philippines alluded to the Moslem-Christian fighting in the Southern part of the Philippines, unrest in the Central part of Luzon, and the tension everywhere from the prolonged imposition of martial law. Still another mentioned the student demonstrations and the protestations of certain politicians, intellectuals and churchmen against the restrictive policies of General Park of South Korea. In fact, all, working in their respective areas, had witnessed some social discontent. When people do revolt, their motive is not love of violence for its own sake, but because injustice has driven them to extremes. They had witnessed the wide and intolerable gap that divides the rich from the poor. This unjust situation is caused either by the oppression of the ruling regime or the exploitation of the international corporations. The unrest and violence had already begun; they were developing and growing sometimes very fast. In fact, their house was already on fire. They found themselves in an emergency situation. This being the case, could they then afford to sit back calmly discussing the desired colour tone for wall-papering the various rooms of our home?

The leaders of the revolting groups in some sections of Asia style themselves Marxists, radicals, revolutionaries, yes, and even "Maoists". For since Mao was leading China in a successful revolution, they take Maoist China as a model in their struggle for liberation and for reforming unjust social structures.

Nor is the attraction of the China model a phenomenon peculiar to some countries of the so-called Third World; even in the developed West one finds enthusiasts advocating the "Chinese system" for reforming social structures. In some of these developed countries a considerable segment of the young especially is frustrated and turned off in a social and economic system where money is king, where all kinds of inequalities exist, and where social crimes are increasing. They are longing for a radical social change, a brand new social order that would give their anemic Western societies a vigorous blood transfusion, and, strange as it may seem, they think that the China model would give their tired societies such a health-restoring transfusion.

During these years I have been living in New York, working in close collaboration with members of the Protestant China Programme. During conferences, meetings, panel discussions, in private conversations and in newspaper articles and editorials, how often have I heard and read statements like these: "Here we have a terrible unemployment problem, whereas China has none"; "We have juvenile delinquency, prostitution and drug problems, social evils which China has effectively eliminated"; "Here we have an air pollution problem, whereas China has none". Evidently these professors, speakers and writers regard China as a

model for social reform. In fact, some Christians consider China, not only as a model for social reform, but as a challenge to the Christian Gospel. As these Christians see it, where the Church failed, Communist China succeeded. "The Church preaches the Gospel, but does not practice it; whereas in Communist China, although the 'Good News' is not preached, its message is translated into action." Consider for a moment the following quotation from Professor Joseph Needham (Columbia University), one of the most prestigious foreign names in Sinology: "I think China is the only Christian country in the world today, in spite of its absolute rejection of all religions".¹ Is the Chinese social reform system a model for us?

I. IS CHINA A MODEL FOR US?

A. The Epistemological problem

A priori, on philosophical and theological grounds, most Catholics would reject any social reform based on Marxian materialist principles. But suppose we set these philosophical and theological reservations aside for a moment, and consider the Chinese revolution on its own terms. How successful is it? What criteria has the outside world for judging the successes and failures of Mao's revolution? The question forces us to examine carefully the sources of our knowledge concerning the social, economic and cultural revolution that has been transforming China over the past 25 years. In the case of China, our primary sources of information are the writers and spokesmen who have the official imprimatur of the Chinese Communist Party. Without this imprimatur a writer or speaker risks prison or a worse fate should he speak or write anything that deflects in the least from the Party Line of the hour. This being the case, the question of credibility is crucial. We are up against a serious epistemological problem. How do we get at objective facts, thoughts and feelings in a "closed society" such as China has been since October 1, 1949? Actually the Communist press and radio, especially during the first few years after the Communists had won over the mainland, were very candid on this point. In those days the Ministry for Propaganda made perfectly clear that the primary function of the mass media was not the reporting of 'objective facts' but 'education', and education they translated as Marxian 'ideology'.

1. The Official Language

As a result of this philosophy of 'News' two types of language have been in use in China over the past 25 years. One, the 'Official Language', used by all the media beginning with the *People's Daily* down to the local broadcast and speech at the village level. All newspapers, periodicals, speeches, books, plays, and even operas are

phrased in this official language. Whenever objective facts and phenomena reflect the Party Line of the hour in a favourable light, objective facts and phenomena are reported, but whenever objective facts and phenomena would point an accusing finger at the Party Line, the infallibility of the Party Line takes precedence in all writing, speaking and reporting. Even when a faction within the Communist Party sets out to oppose the doctrine and policies of the Party Line, as happened just prior to the Cultural Revolution, it uses the official language to dress up a historical metaphor or allusion which gives the perceptive reader a key to the intended meaning. Hence the origin of the saying: "Using the Red Flag to fight the Red Flag." So used are the people of China to hearing and reading this official or public language that everyone knows instinctively how and when to use it; even young kids learn very fast how to answer questions in perfect conformity with the Party Line of the hour. So instinctive do some of them parrot the official language that, once outside China, they have difficulty in telling people what they really feel.

This problem of the official language as opposed to the private language expressing what a person really thinks is of capital importance when evaluating the opinions of persons or groups who make tours in China. As one knows, since Nixon's visit, many individuals and groups have been privileged to make guided tours of the mainland. How much objective truth did they extract from their trained guides? How reliable are all the facts and opinions they got from interviews with officials, cadres, professors, students, workers, farmers, housewives and kids? If even members of a family are sometimes afraid to level with one another, what style language do you think they will use when replying to a foreigner who pigeonholes a cautious Chinese in the middle of a Peking or Shanghai street to ask if he is happy to be participating in Mao's continuous revolution? Does anyone in his sane senses imagine that this Chinese would for a moment reveal his private views of life to a foreigner he'll never see again, thereby risking his job and the rice bowls of his family?

2. The Private Language

This is the language a Chinese on the mainland uses when he wants to level with a relative, close friend or companion, when he wants to express to another his or her true thoughts and sentiments. Using such language inside China, outside the family circle, is rather rare, because one must be sure of the loyalty unto death of the person to whom one is confiding. Only after people have left China with no intention of returning, and provided what they reveal will not reach the ears of the Communist authorities on the mainland, will refugees open up and express what they actually saw and experienced under the Communist system.

Luckily, two categories of persons have lived for a considerable period of time in China and have either escaped or got official permission to leave. After such persons had reached Hong Kong or some other non-Communist country, they told in interviews what they experienced and the quality of life in China. The first category is refugees who risked their life in escaping by land and sea to Macau or Hong Kong. The second category is overseas Chinese, mostly from Malaysia, who voluntarily entered China for their education or work, or who, having completed their education, voluntarily settled down to a good job on the mainland. But after some years, their former enthusiasm having cooled, they asked for permission to leave and return to the land of their birth or emigrated to some other country. When the majority of the refugees were asked to mention the motive for risking their lives by land and sea to escape, their typical reply was, "there was no future on the mainland for me". This answer is not simply an egoistic reaction, namely that the young man is thinking of his own career—although such aspiration would be quite normal in any other society. His comment reaches down to a deeper level of human person. There certainly could be no future in a Communist society for a person who has a vision of man and the world other than the Marxist one, either because of one's religious conviction or because he is guided by another ideology. Anyway it proves that Mao has no magic technique for creating an unselfish man, a "New Man", or of "changing human nature". The common motive given by the overseas volunteers for quitting good jobs and seeking another means of livelihood outside China was a feeling of disappointment and disillusionment. The Cultural Revolution was often the conclusive proof that their ideal was an illusion.

3. The Ambivalent Language

After the official language and private language, I should mention the ambivalent function of the "wall-paper". In theory at least all wall-papers are written in the official language. This was the case of Wu Han's "Hai Jui Dismissed from Office", a play written by Wu Han about a good "Mandarin" (Hai Jui) who sided with the "People" against the "Emperor" and which was published shortly before the Cultural Revolution. In this play the "good mandarin Hai Jui" was a historical symbol for P'eng Te-huai who was sacked by Mao because P'eng had criticized the policies of the Great Leap Forward and the Commune system. The character of the "Emperor" in Wu Han's play was none other than Mao. In similar fashion, a famous wall-paper was posted in Canton in a number of instalments, beginning in November 1974. Since all wall-papers are signed by the authors, this one was signed by Lee I-che. Using the official language, the author hewed to the official Party Line: "that bad man Lin Piao had betrayed the revolution". But how did he betray it? In a twenty-three

thousand character wall-paper under the heading "Concerning a Democratic and Juridical System in a Socialist Society", Lee execrated the policies of Lin Piao, but even a ten-year old grammar school boy could understand that, while ostensibly pointing to Lin Piao, in reality Mr. Lee was indicting the policies of Mao.

Once again, as in the period prior to the Cultural Revolution, some men have the courage to "wave the Red Flag in order to attack the Red Flag". In his twenty-three thousand character wall-paper Mr. Lee underscored these points: the Cultural Revolution was a failure; a new privileged class, holding a tight rein on Party and government, manipulate the people; he challenges the 4th People's Congress to restore to the people the rights usurped from them during the Cultural Revolution. Actually the tone of the wall-paper is one of defiance. "We are the so-called young generation", continues Mr. Lee, "which is not afraid of the tiger, for we have been bitten by those tigers already, but they could not devour us. We are the survivors". Evidently Mr. Lee wields a very courageous pen.

4. The Open Language: Action

Lastly, we must never forget the saying that "action speaks louder than words". That is, the hundred percent consensus of the propaganda organs of China is periodically contradicted by violent outbreaks in factory and street demonstrations. In the summer of 1975, for instance, the armed forces were ordered to replace striking workers in 21 factories of the Hangchou region. More dramatic still was the rioting and burning of cars that erupted suddenly in front of Tien-An-men in Peking on April 5th, 1976. Evidently some people are discontented with the quality of life in Communist China.

Therefore, to counterbalance the data and information which come to us through the media of the official language and the favourable impressions of visitors to China, we should give a sympathetic hearing to the experiences of refugees and to those overseas Chinese, most of whom were well educated, who chose to go to China from patriotic motives but who eventually left the country, disappointed that their dream could not be realized. In a word, we should not a priori shut out any source of information about China, no matter what source it comes from. We should sift it with an open but critical mind. For instance, what such and such a visitor witnessed with his own eyes is objectively true. He actually did talk to those two bare-footed doctors who told him they were dedicating their lives to "service for the people"; he did see those smiling and singing children in that kindergarten. But we must also know that this enthusiastic report of the visitor is only one side of the Chinese coin. His was a guided tour. The other side of the coin is the reports of the refugees and the

disillusionment of the overseas Chinese. We need to exercise prudence, discernment and balance in our effort to acquire a more or less accurate evaluation of the quality of life in China.

B. What does China really look like?

1. One side of the coin

Judging by all the information we have, in many respects present-day China is a very fascinating, attractive, and even admirable land. So much so, that the outsider looking for a model social system that would eliminate social injustice is fascinated by the social changes effected by the Chinese revolution.

a. Achievement in engineering and technology

The bridge across the Yangtse, the modern steel mills, electricity dams and irrigation dikes, water conservancy projects, railway building, and, more recently, the development of the Ta Ching and other oil wells.

b. The basic needs of the people are guaranteed

China has succeeded in solving its most frustrating problem, which was never solved in the past, namely, feeding its 800 million. Thanks to its modern irrigation systems and water conservancy and its system of forecasting earthquakes, the death of millions due to natural disasters will not occur anymore. In addition, the government guarantees sufficient food, clothes, housing, education, jobs, health care, retirement pension and a decent burial. How many countries in the world can boast of a similar record in social services?

c. Economic stability

In a period of world inflation, the Chinese economy continues to be very stable, with prices of basic necessities kept within the reach of each family's income, and unemployment unheard of.

d. Social equality

Bureaucratism has been abolished. There is no class distinction, and everybody, even university professors, engage in manual labour to help them to acquire a genuine proletarian spirit, and cast off the former elitist outlook. As far as material rewards for any occupation is concerned, the ultimate aim is "to each according to need, not according to merit".

e. Simplicity of life and personal morality

Living a frugal life, all the people work hard. There is no waste on the one hand or overproduction on the other. Both sexes dress plainly and alike for the most part. The girls do not use makeup, nor is time wasted on such useless pastimes as dancing and parties. Such bourgeois aspirations as greed, ambition to get ahead, competitiveness, overtime pay, and the ambition "that my children have a higher status in life than I had" are discouraged, limited and even punished very severely.

In the area of sexual morality, the Chinese code is rather puritanical.² Pornographic literature and movies are proscribed. So is prostitution. In a word, sexual activity is permitted only to married couples. On the other hand, however, both sexes, mingle and converge freely at work, but as friends and companions, never as sex partners.

Stealing, mugging and juvenile delinquency are unheard of. "It was generally conceded that if any of our group had deposited a camera on a park bench, it would remain there indefinitely unless someone would refer the matter to the authorities."³

f. No corruption

Like the people they govern, Chinese leaders lead simple, frugal lives. Who ever heard of a Communist leader who had a bank account in a Swiss bank?

g. China is an united country

In the most remote village of the country the authority of the central government is respected. For the first time in two centuries the country is united.

h. National autonomy

China has stood up after a century of humiliation. She is independent and respected around the world. As a result, the Chinese people have recovered a sense of dignity and national pride. They are proud to declare themselves Chinese. The country is highly motivated to continue its policy of self-reliance. China prefers to have less, to develop its resources at a moderate pace rather than embark on crash programmes by borrowing abroad. For this reason, too, she limits her importation of foreign technology to the necessary minimum. In fact she limits her purchasing from foreign firms to two annual fairs held in the city of Canton, a practice first instituted under the Ch'ing dynasty.

2. The other side of coin

Under the above eight headings I have listed a very positive series of social and economic reforms which one rather popular view of present-day China would have people outside China accept as an accomplished fact. But is it an accomplished fact? How objective is this rosy picture?

For instance, in a series of articles published a few months ago by two conscientious researchers on the problem of hunger during the "three bitter years" (1959-1962) we read some terrible statements and statistics, certainly giving the lie to the boast that "there is no longer and death due to natural disasters". Here is one quotation from one of the researched monographs: "Some ventured a 'realistic estimate' of 50 million deaths from starvation and deficiency diseases within the years 1960-62. Many peasants became 'non-professional beggars'. They were driven from a region devastated by flood, drought, and insect plague, and forced temporarily to roam the land begging for their daily food".⁴

Some who had lived many years under the Communist system, and who eventually left, said that they had witnessed instances of stealing, burglary, prostitution, gambling and juvenile delinquency. Others considered the statement that "there is no unemployment problem in China" as 'ambiguous'. For can one compare two totally different economic systems? In a country like China, where there is little choice about work and place of work, can we speak about 'unemployment' as we do in Western countries? He suggested that the work 'under-employment' is more adequate than the word 'unemployment' in the case of China.

The same person who, after making a trip to China had praised the high morality of the Chinese in his report, also asked three pertinent questions: (1) "To what extent is Chinese morality freely chosen? (2) What are the implications of 'total socialization'? What will happen to the Chinese as human beings after several generations within a system in which individual freedom is so narrowly circumscribed? (3) How shall we evaluate the human cost of the revolution, the liquidation of the landowners, the stifling of intellectuals, the closing of churches, the politicization of art and literature, the elimination of all forms of opposition? These are questions of one who feels compelled, on the one hand, to praise the Chinese achievement, but who, on the other, as one looking at China from the perspective of Christian theology, within which freedom to choose between good and evil is considered essential for full humanity, is compelled to ponder whether man as such could be destroyed by enforced goodness?"⁵

Now if we consider the reports of refugees, China has become a very tightly controlled country, where not only specific political and

economic aspects of life are planned, but also every facet of the so-called 'superstructure' of society and culture, including literature, history, music, drama, family life and religious values—no sphere of life excluded—is tightly conditioned and controlled as dictated by Marxist ideology. In fact, every aspect of life falls under the rubric of the 'political'. "Politics must take command" is a universal and reiterated slogan.

The Party Line, the orthodox interpretation of Marxist ideology, is, at any given time, the whole truth and the only truth for deciding every detail of personal, familial, social, national and international life. This Party Line is an absolute, i.e. non-negotiable. An individual must accept without making any distinction or reservation the ideological dogmas of any given time. Since ideology cannot compromise, the least modification of its prescriptions is ruled out. Ideology does not tolerate any dialogue. Examples of this peremptory nature of ideology are numerous. Liu Shao-ch'i, Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Lin Piao, chosen heir-apparent by Mao, and, more recently, Teng Hsiao-p'ing were pilloried and cast aside because they allegedly deviated from ideological orthodoxy.

In fact, ideology is infallible not only for the future and present, but also for the past. The entire long sweep of Chinese history has been reinterpreted and rewritten according to the dictates of the materialist dialectic and the Communist Party's self-interest. Even the most renowned sage of the land, Confucius, could not escape the critical eye of ideology. Furthermore, its logic is strictly existential, for tomorrow it can pronounce as false what it defined as absolute truth today.

In the above paragraphs I have set before the reader another image of China, a China that is complex, full of contrasts and even contradictions. Just as the positive and optimistic first image fascinated us, this second, sombre image terrifies us. Right here one may raise a very important question. Have the sacrifices the people of China have had to make to win their present material gains been worth making? This question was asked by Richard Clutterbuck in his report entitled: "Mao Wrestles with Original Sin". The article was written the summer of 1976 after he had returned to England, having made a few weeks tour of China. Here is how he states his question: "The Chinese themselves make no secret of the price they believe must be paid: total political control of every activity—of every factory, commune, village precinct, university and school—total indoctrination of the new generation from crèche to grave; and selection for any kind of advancement based primarily on proof of absorption of that indoctrination, that is, on the 'candidate's political attitude' . . . My starting point, in discussions with Communist cadres, was that no revolution in history had gone the way its founders intended, and to ask how the

Chinese proposed to avoid this? 'By tight political control, and total indoctrination', they said, 'It will be a continuing struggle, but we are confident that the new generation born since 1950—our people—will prevail'. I am not so sure. Can they really change human nature so radically in 50 years? Thus far their methods may have solved problems that no other methods could have solved, to the people's benefit. But after another 25 years, I fear that the lack of incentives will breed apathy, and that frustrated aspirations may lead to grumbling, and even explosive dissent... I am convinced that, if Marxism is to be made to work at all, this can be done only at the price of personal liberty".⁶

May I repeat the question again: "Is China a model for us?" I leave it to the reader to answer that question. But before giving your answer, you must ponder carefully if your people are willing to pay the price of personal liberty for material achievement? Will you be 'satisfied' when only the material needs of your people are 'satisfied'? If your answer be no, then China is a good 'negative example' for us. How can we lend a hand in liberating our people from one 'oppressive regime' only to help yoke them to a second 'oppressive regime'? What then? Can we devise a Christian alternative?

* * *

II. THE CHRISTIAN WAY

Since the light of our Christian faith guides us through life, including our political life, we should first of all turn to the sources of revelation, seeking inspiration for formulating Christian principles of social reform. Lucky for us, the Church has had the building of a just social and economic order as a top priority since the pontificate of Leo XIII and since his time the Holy See has time and again promulgated sound Christian principles and guidelines for undertaking effective social and economic reform.

A. Neither Communism nor Capitalism

1. Not Communism

Men devise social structures according to the vision they have of man and the world they live in. In our time only two philosophical systems have a vision of the whole man and his universe: Christianity and Communism. Just as Christianity has its doctrine about man's origin, mission on earth and his final destiny, so has Communism its philosophy about man's origin, his function in society and the

final evolution of that society. Communism, in fact, is more than an economic and social philosophy. It is a faith.

a. Marx-Lenin-Maoist Vision

Here allow me to outline, briefly, the Marx-Lenin-Maoist vision of man and his universe, and next the Church's critique, inspired by revelation, of the Communist vision.

In the philosophy of Marx, man himself is an absolute. Thus atheism is an essential constituent of the Marx-Lenin-Maoist vision, because God, conceived as infinite and perfect, is the antithesis to man, alienating man completely. In fact, 'religious alienation' is the foremost and most pernicious of all the alienations enslaving man. In this view, Marx followed Feurbach.⁷

Without explicitly denying the existence of God, Mao doesn't see any need for him. Man himself is a God for man, '*homo homini Deus*'. Man doesn't need the existence of God, "because man, like all other living organisms, evolved from the transformation of inanimate matter".⁸ Neither did God create a world for man, "because there never has been any supreme saviour, nor can we rely on gods or emperors. We must rely entirely on ourselves for our salvation. Who has created the world of man? We the labouring masses".⁹

According to Mao, all historical movements are essentially dialectical. All change and progress of human society derive from the development of contradictions within society itself. Among these contradictions, the most important, that is, the one which explains the whole of human history is class struggle. Without class struggle man can never liberate himself. "Classes struggle, and while some classes triumph, others are eliminated. Such is the history of civilizations for thousands of years".¹⁰

Thus the notion of class struggle is essential to Mao's thought. There is no possibility of any rapprochement or reconciliation. He rejects the notion of a universal and general 'human nature' in the abstract, shared by all mankind, exploiter and exploited alike.¹¹

By the same token, there cannot be a 'universal love', only class love, which, of necessity, demands a hatred of class enemies. I quote: "There is absolutely no such thing in the world as love or hatred without reason or cause. As for the so-called love of humanity, there never has been such an all-inclusive love since humanity was divided into classes. There will be a genuine love of humanity once classes have been eliminated all over the world. We cannot love enemies".¹²

'Human rights' are likewise viewed in relation with class struggle. Human rights do not derive from human nature, but are conquered through class struggle only. And these conquered human rights should

not be shared with class enemies.¹³ For Mao, affirming that the same human nature, human rights and the sentiment of universal love can possibly exist in a class society is simply an illusion, and those who affirm this do so in order to maintain the status quo where man is exploited by man.

b. The Church denounces Marxism

The Marxist vision of God, man and the relationship between men living in society is the very opposite to that derived from Christian Revelation. It is quite understandable then that the Church has consistently repudiated, denounced and condemned Marxist ideology, and continues to do so. Beginning in 1846 up to the present day different Popes have issued quite a few Encyclical Letters on this theme.¹⁴ They used various epithets, sometimes very pejorative, to describe the movement. Thus Pius IX called it 'the infamous doctrine of so-called Communism'; Leo XIII 'the fatal plague'; Pius XI 'a false messianic idea', 'a pseudo-ideal of justice, of equality and fraternity in labour', 'a deceptive mysticism', and a 'new gospel, full of errors and sophisms'.

The Church repudiates Marxist ideology, not because she wants to defend her rights to any material holdings or benefits, but because she is keenly conscious of her God-given mission to preach the Gospel of salvation to all mankind. She denounces Marxism as a whole because it contradicts reason and the common experience of all mankind, and would deny man the opportunity of reaching his native excellence.¹⁵ Communism stands condemned not only by divine revelation but also by human reason.¹⁶ "The Christian who wishes to live his faith in the arena of political activity serving his fellow man cannot, without contradicting himself, adhere to an ideological concept of man. The Christian cannot approve Marxist ideology, with its dialectic of violence and atheistic materialism, forcing him to sacrifice all individual freedom in the name of the collectivity, while at the same time denying all transcendence to man and to his personal and collective history".¹⁷

Marxists hold that God alienates man, and that religion, by arousing man's hope for an illusory future life, diverts his attention from constructing the earthly city. This thesis, of course, the Church denies. "The Church holds that the recognition of God is in no way hostile to man's dignity, since this dignity is rooted and perfected in God... She further teaches that a hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties, but rather undergirds the acquittal of them with fresh incentive..."¹⁸

God also is the foundation of all human relations, because men are not transformed individually from inanimate matter, but were created

by God, their common Father, as brothers. They share a common human nature before being assigned to any class, and they should love one another with a brotherly love.¹⁹ Besides, God is the foundation of human society as a whole. Men cannot maintain their humanity unaided. "Separated from God, man becomes a monster to himself and others".²⁰ "Man can organize the world apart from God, but an isolated humanism is an inhuman humanism".²¹

2. Not Capitalism

In the same spirit of carrying out her God-given mission to mankind, the Magisterium of the Church raised its voice to denounce the ideology of laissez-faire Capitalism which is the source of all the errors of the individualistic school,²² and which prepares the soil for the seeds of Communism.²³ The Church's main reason for condemning Capitalism is that, according to the principles of liberal Capitalism, "profit is the key factor in all economic enterprise, competition is a sacred law in economics, and private ownership of the means of production is an absolute right that has no limits, and carries no obligation to society... One cannot condemn such abuses too strongly".²⁴

'Economic domination' results from such unlimited competition. "The whole economic life thus becomes hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly way".²⁵ In fact, as early as the age of Leo XIII, the Church already raised her voice against such economic domination, under which the workingmen are 'surrendered, isolated and defenseless to the callousness of employers, and the greed of unrestrained competition'.

B. Some Principles

A just social order in which human dignity and human rights are respected, and in which there is a just distribution of economic wealth, cannot be structured according to the principles of either Marxism or Capitalism. Therefore, it is up to us Christians to devise a more human and just one. Should the Church as an institution engage in direct political activity in order to build a just society based on the principles of God's vision of man and the world as reflected in the Gospel?

1. The Gospel is not an ideology

Although the mission and competence of the Church is in the spiritual order, leaving the social, economic and political organization of the earthly city to the competence of Caesar, urged by a keen sense of distributive and social justice, she has always urged, inspired and guided Christians to work for the common good by engaging in

direct political action, though the Church as such holds aloof from partisan politics. "In virtue of her mission, the Church is bound to no particular form of human culture, nor to any political, economic or social system".²⁶ The Gospel cannot be identified with any ideology, and by the same token, no political party can monopolize or exhaust it. Having said this, however, we must candidly admit that in certain places and times the Church identified herself with one or other political regime with unfortunate results. At one time she identified her own welfare with the preservation of a monarchical form of government, being highly suspicious and critical of all democratic movements. At other times she identified her own welfare with a Capitalistic economic system, being critical of all socialistic movements. While the Church should encourage Christians to become actively engaged in non-Marxian social movements, she would be repeating mistaken policies of past ages should she become identified with socialist regimes. Ever since Vatican II a slogan heard on all sides has been the motto 'aggiornamento', but in 'updating' our thinking and planning, we should avoid sailing with every current of the popular tide. We should avoid acquiring an opportunist image.

It is the task of each country's citizens to choose their own political system. The Church should accommodate herself to any given system and carry out her mission. Inspired by the Spirit, her task is to encourage and guide Christians in their political activities, defending human dignity and human rights no matter from what quarter these spiritual values are under attack. If she can't do everything, she will choose to help the little ones, the voiceless poor, following the example of Our Lord. Conscious that her mission is not the drawing up of a certain specific socio-economic-political blueprint, but rather that "...of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to man to turn away from sin to a love of the heavenly Father and the universal brotherhood of man, and a consequent demand for justice in the world...".²⁷

A society organized with an eye for justice alone is not sufficient. For the struggle for organizing a just society system has to rely on the virtues of forgiveness and charity in order to succeed. Our Lord gave men his new commandment of mutual love which replaced the old law of retributive justice: "an eye for an eye". This does not mean, however that charity is a substitute for the virtue of justice. On the contrary, charity presupposes justice and complements it. For unless charity informs the struggle for justice, men will never be able to effectively organize a just society, because "social charity is the soul of the social order".²⁸

The Church's mission is to vivify all social systems by recalling to everybody, Christian and non-Christian alike, man's 'universal brotherhood' and 'justice in charity'.

2. The responsibility of Christians

Even though the Church as such should not formally engage in direct political movements, individual Christians, on the contrary, should feel duty bound "to fulfil their temporal obligations with fidelity and competence. They should act as a leaven in the world, in their families, professions, in their social, cultural and political life".²⁹ In virtue of their gift of faith, Christians are obliged more than others to measure up to their social duties.³⁰

Our Lord insisted that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. This is the second half of the first commandment: "Love the Lord your God". In observing these two commandments, he insisted, "depend all the Law and the Prophets".³¹ Then he asked us to "love one another as he loved us", he called this his new commandment.³² In the last judgment Our Lord will judge us on how well we practiced his new commandment in this life. Even the most trifling act of charity to one of his most insignificant brothers, such as giving a glass of cold water to a stranger in his name, will be rewarded. St. John insists that our love of God must be proved in this life by effective love for our neighbour, otherwise we will be branded as liars.³³

When will we take seriously this 'radical imperative' of the Gospel? For only then will we give up our 'individualistic Christianity' and agree to carry out our common responsibility. A Christian enveloped in his own cocoon is no Christian, for no Christian is an island, but a living, cooperating cell in the one mystical body. A Christian worthy of the name should not tolerate seeing one of his little brothers suffering unjustly without taking remedial action. How much more deeply should we not be moved, then, to reform oppressive social structures!

The Church, ever faithful to her Master's command and teaching, has been reminding us, day in and day out, about the imperative of this commandment of the Lord: love of and service to our neighbour. The Popes of the last century issued numerous and important Encyclicals on the theme of social justice. On no other theme did they voice so consistent and urgent recommendations to the Church.³⁴ The Church considers as her most important duty the formation of Christians as 'liberators'.³⁵

We often complain that the world is becoming more and more secularized; but isn't this tragedy, surely, partly our own fault! Is not the vast majority of Christians too selfish and individualistic in its style of life to get involved in the struggle for social justice? With the tragic result that the organization of social and economic structures falls by default to those who don't recognize God in

theory or practice. One of the consequences of this secularization of society is that the nation is considered the sole agent of salvation, and the state as the Church. The secularization of society has opened the way for the sacralization of the civil community.

3. We have no ready-made solutions

There is no ready-made master plan or blueprint for organizing just social structures for any given society. Each Christian community should work out its own solutions, always mindful of its particular economic, social, political and cultural traditions.³⁶ This is especially true of the cultural communities of Asia, which are so diversified.

At the same time, however, we must be keenly conscious that the Gospel leaven has the power of elevating and enriching every culture. Although preached and committed to writing in very different social and culture traditions from those we have inherited, the "Good News" (Gospel) is never out-of-date. "Its inspiration, enriched by the living experience of Christian tradition over the centuries, remains ever new for converting men and for advancing the life of society".³⁷ In the struggle for justice, we need to turn back constantly to the Gospel in order to draw from its 'radical imperative' of charity and justice the necessary strength to overcome our egoism and immobilism, and endeavour always to reach beyond every system and ideology, to the ideal model of human society, which is the mystery of the Holy Trinity itself. In this godlike human society, everyone is considered a brother and served as such.³⁸

Since the social teaching of the Church is inspired by Sacred Scripture, in struggling for social justice we should follow the directives of the Social Encyclicals of the Popes, which contain the main body of the Church's social doctrine. In this area of social justice, the Church, far from siding with the policies of established regimes, or ignoring the conditions of the working class, as some may imagine, has consistently raised her voice denouncing the injustices of the times. If the Church in our day can point to only very modest results despite her rhetoric advocating social reform, the cause of the failure cannot be laid at the feet of Popes during the past hundred years, but at the feet of the local churches, which paid little attention to the Church's social doctrine.

If I remember correctly, I never had one course on social questions during all the years of my formation, from primary school until I finished my theological education. In the catechism I used, in the Sunday sermons I heard, in the weekly meetings of our Lady's Sodality which I attended, in numerous exhortations and annual retreats which I heard and made, how often was the social doctrine of the Church ever mentioned? Very seldom. The spiritual ideal set before me was

to insure my own personal sanctification and salvation, and save as many other souls as possible.

Now that we have moved from 'the student's bench' to the 'teacher's chair', how many among us teach our students and parishioners the social doctrine of the Church? A famous churchman admitted that the teachers he knew best did not educate their students in the cause of justice. He emphasized that today the prime educational objective must be to form men-for-others. "Men cannot even conceive of a love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbours. Men are completely convinced that a love of God which does not issue in justice for men is a farce".³⁹ We should diffuse the social teaching of the Church, not only in our schools, but also "in our parishes and associations and journals, whether they be daily papers or periodicals. . . by radio and television".⁴⁰

The method of teaching justice is somewhat different from that used in teaching other subjects. For in the area of justice, only knowledge acquired through participation is valid. True knowledge can be obtained only through concern and in solidarity with the people who are poor, marginal and isolated, for, unless we have concern for, and are in solidarity with such people, we cannot even speak effectively about their problems. Isn't it true that we get angry at injustice only when it hurts us or our family personally? Seeing Dachau is different from just reading about it. It is one thing to talk about the poor and their housing, quite another to see the roaches and rats. This is the beginning of Christian social wisdom, because compassion is the beginning of passion; and passion is what our Christians need the most. A passion that will shake them and wake them up. This passion is the source of any true responsibility. Therefore, too, it is the source of social responsibility. The passion we are speaking of is fueled by the 'radical imperative' of the Gospel, that intense love of God and men, that 'consuming fire' in the cause of justice. *Caritas urget nos*. "The dynamism of Christian faith here triumphs over the narrow calculations of egoism. Animated by the power of the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, and upheld by hope, the Christian involves himself in the building of the human city, one that is to be peaceful, just and fraternal, and acceptable as an offering to God".⁴¹

C. Clarity Of Goals

A Christian needs to have a delicate sense of discernment if he is to avoid pitfalls in his struggle for justice. Any mistake can delay and harm his efforts in organizing a more just society. I would like to mention three areas where we should exercise particular caution.

1. Human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ

First of all, he should distinguish carefully between human liberation and salvation through Jesus Christ. While expending all the energy he can in promoting the cause of social justice, he is always conscious that his concern for his brothers has to reach beyond economic, social, political and cultural life. In other words, his concern "must envisage the whole man, in all his aspects, right up to, and including, his openness to the absolute, even the divine Absolute".⁴² A Christian may link human liberation with salvation through Jesus Christ, but he should never identify the two, because he should realize from Scripture, experience and by reflecting on the truths of faith that not every notion of liberation is necessarily consistent and compatible with an evangelical vision of man, of phenomena and events. He knows, too, that, in order that the Kingdom of God may 'come', it is not enough to achieve liberation, and help create well-being and development. There is a real danger, especially evident over this past decade, that some Christians may emasculate the Gospel, the 'Good News', to a concern for the material well-being of the poor. We see that some Christians act by a sort of 'poverty ethic', which, in some involuntary but real way, becomes the locus of moral validity for any economic or political enterprise, especially when the 'poor' are extended to include the 'exploited'.

Some Christians even assume that the message of Christ is not basically different from that of Marx.⁴³ Examples of persons holding such ideas are too numerous to be quoted in this paper at any length. I'll just quote one whom I know personally. The now well-known editor of the *Holy Cross Quarterly*. Fr. William Van Etten Casey, S.J. published a year ago a special China edition of the *Quarterly*. The basic theme running through most of the articles is this: that judging by the manner in which Mao had reorganized China, Mao is, in fact, a 'Christian'; furthermore, there is nothing much that Christians can add to his stupendous success.⁴⁴

2. There is no perfect society in this world

In the second place, a Christian working in the cause of social justice must view the human condition realistically, that is, he must always be conscious that man has inherited the wounds of original sin. Therefore, although motivated by the highest ideals, he realizes that there never was or ever will be a perfectly just society in this world. Every human society has embedded within itself germs of corruption and imperfection, simply because it is a 'human' society. For very often while combating old injustices, behold, new ones spring up. Since the source of all evils is our own heart, social reform should begin with a 'conversion of heart'. But this battle between good and

evil—a battle we'll win only through the aid of grace—will be waged every day of our lives, and must be waged by future ages until the end of the world.⁴⁵

One practical conclusion we should draw from this truth is the wisdom of the old proverb that Rome wasn't built in a day. Patience is necessary for effective social renewal. The most dangerous temptation that the enthusiastic Christian social activist is exposed to is that by fomenting a violent revolution he will be instrumental in ushering in an 'instant utopia'. By smashing 'the four olds' of the corrupt society, the new will automatically take shape and will last forever. In practice, however, what happens? Party labels and slogans have changed, but the oppressive reality continues to gall as before the 'revolution'. The 'liberators' become in turn 'oppressors', yoking the poor to a burden harder to bear than their former one.

The discernment we speak of is a difficult virtue, and the fascination of comfortable illusions is much more congenial to most of us. Nevertheless, acquire it we must. In fact, the lucidity of mind I speak of is essential not only for Christians but for everyone engaged in any authentic social endeavour. Prudent discernment makes us conscious of our human limitations, and that, as political actions unfold, they produce results of relative value. Despite these convictions, however, a Christian can never be a passive spectator of the social scene, for his faith is constantly urging him to lend a hand in making this imperfect world a more perfect one, even though he realizes that the struggle will continue to the end of time, and that a totally just, fraternal and 'classless' society can never be realised, he knows he has to live with this tension to his grave. The insight of supernatural wisdom tells him that he must allow for the impact of sin and the mystery of evil. But the same wisdom always prevents him from yielding to discouragement. The virtue of Christian hope motivates him to live on and struggle on without indulging in any illusory opiates of simplistic solutions.

3. There should be no monopoly in politics

Thirdly, a Christian activist should have a vision comprehensive enough to hear out sympathetically those with views which differ from his. In other words, he should welcome a 'pluralistic approach' in solving problems. It is a common experience that, even in solving rather simple problems, there are 'as many opinions as persons', a situation that frequently arises in the very sensitive area of politics. Since a very wide spectrum of political views are not dictated by religious faith, two of the same faith can take opposite sides on certain issues. Therefore, it is not surprising that Christians may belong to different, and even opposing, political parties.⁴⁶ But no Christian may seek to influence public opinion to his side of an issue by invoking the

authority of the Church for his stand.⁴⁷ We should rather accommodate ourselves to the fact of pluralism, and cultivate a comprehensive 'pluralistic attitude'.⁴⁸

This pluralistic attitude is a sine qua non for any meaningful dialogue between peers. We must act on the presumption that those who disagree with us are expressing their views in good faith. Therefore we should not ignore one another, much less anathematize one another at the first instant of a differing opinion from our own. In fact, gentlemanly honesty and Christian modesty call for this attitude of tolerance. For underneath all differences of opinion, culture, education and temperament, we are one as human persons, composed of the same flesh and blood, all sons of the same heavenly Father, all called to be one in Jesus Christ, who is the principle and foundation of our pluralism. And since Christ, through grace, is the architect of every personality, "we become all things to all men in order to gain all to Christ."⁴⁹

Since none of us is omniscient, none of us is infallible. The fact that none of us can monopolize the whole truth should help to form a realistic estimate of our limitations, making us more modest and humble, disposing us to admit that those who disagree with us are also bearers of truth. Provided we have patience to hear them out to the end, perhaps their bottom line may give us the insight that will solve our problem.

The Church, being the mystical body of Christ, should be considered a privileged, though not an exclusive, community for dialogue and for discussing the pros and cons of differing points of view among Christians. Among the community of the faithful, in a peaceful and friendly atmosphere, people holding opposing points of view on various questions are helped to understand better the aims, motivations and views of those who differ from themselves. Since they share a common faith, when discerning the relative merits of a given point of view or plan of action in a prayerful environment, they are disposed to correct one another in a fraternal manner. In fact, such Christian gatherings are at times an urgent necessity. Such meetings, of course, may not succeed in soothing strong feelings, or in performing any moral miracle, or may even conclude with an undesirable meeting of minds. Even so, provided such gatherings are approved by all concerned, and are held at fixed times, such a show of good will conveys a penitential signal and a token of forgiveness. Without this spirit of reconciliation all political discussion is self-defeating, never producing the desired result.⁵⁰

D. The problem of violence

In the struggle for social justice, especially in countries where the situation is critical, more and more people, including Christians, take

the short cut of violence to attain their goal. In this paper I haven't the time or competence to discuss the theses of 'Liberation Theology'. Nevertheless, I can hardly avoid mentioning in passing a movement which is its 'embodiment', namely "Christians for Socialism" (CfS). Although this is a very delicate problem, so prominent is the movement in the struggle for social justice in our day I cannot pass it over.

The optimum conditions for organizing the CfS movement exist in those countries where the Church has played a significant social role, and where Christians are already engaged in the work of social reform through 'proletarian organizations' which are seeking to organize socialist structures. At the present time the most fruitful soil for the CfS is South America and Europe.

The CfS movement was formally launched at a meeting in Santiago, Chile, in April, 1972. The date and place are important. It was a meeting of activists. They wanted to lend their support to the Allende regime in Chile, and prevent Christians from sliding into inevitable and total opposition to the Chilean road to socialism. Since the movement was formally launched, two subsequent important congresses have been held, one in Spain in January 1973, and another in Italy in September 1973.

In practice, members of the CfS translate the theses of the Theology of Liberation as a call to man the barricades, having adopted the strategy of "active violence combating structural violence". Already the movement has had its martyrs, whose sincerity, courage and purity of motive is beyond dispute, convinced, as they were, that they were doing God's will. The names of Fr. Camilo Torres, who died in action as a guerilla in 1966, and of Nestor Paz Zamora, the 25 year-old former Redemptorist seminarian who died of starvation and exhaustion during an ill-fated campaign, are known to millions.

No doubt, we are faced here with one form of Christian witness, but the recourse to violence raises enormous problems. To be ready to die from a motive of love is clearly in accord with the teaching of the Gospel. But in taking up the sword and joining a guerilla band a man manifests his readiness to kill. But how can love motivate a man to kill another human being? Can recourse to violence, under any circumstances, be justified today? At what point does the evil done outweigh any possible good. For usually the partisans of the establishment whom the active guerilla is trying to overthrow are more powerful than he is. So success is problematic to say the least. Is one justified in launching an armed struggle when one realizes that failure of the insurrection will mean added hardship to the already oppressed, making their lot more miserable than it has been in the past. In addition, the insurrection is usually suppressed by a military dictatorship, which usually continues to rule the country indefinitely.

And even should the ruling regime be toppled by the insurrection, has the guerilla any guarantee that the vanquished tyranny will not be followed by another? After twenty years of untold suffering and millions of casualties, are the populations of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos better off today than before the revolutions began?

Let us be convinced once and for all that the strategy of "violence to oppose violence", be it 'structural' or otherwise, does not work. We must break this vicious circle. The Church has been consistent and firm in condemning recourse to violence: "We exhort you not to place your trust in violence and revolution which is contrary to the Christian spirit, and which can delay instead of advance that social uplifting to which you lawfully aspire".⁵¹ "We ought to demystify the fetichism of violence".⁵²

Is the principle of Marx, that social history has evolved by means of conflict and class struggle, really 'scientific'? On the contrary, isn't there a psychological principle, a psychological dynamism working at the very heart of society inclining people of any community to club together and share, and isn't such sharing and mutual exchange of ideas the sine qua non for fruitful political and social action? Without this basic dynamism, no struggle could long endure, because, in the final analysis, the struggle is fueled by the psychological thrust to accept and be accepted. "*Ex liberatione perpetua, libera nos, Domine!*"

The Christian is faced with the dilemma that Our Lord made no distinction in the command to love one's neighbour. The command is absolute, embracing all mankind, the poor, the rich, and even one's enemies. In loving the poor, the Christian is motivated to struggle for social justice, but in loving the enemy, the Christian must strive for reconciliation. Actually, if we read the Gospel carefully, we notice that the emphasis is put on love of one's neighbour in the concrete, not on love of humanity in the abstract. The priority is on friendly relations with persons, be they rich or poor, not on changing social structures.

If we regard the attitude of Our Lord, what do we find? Although he was not afraid to speak out against the rich and the powerful as occasion demanded, he never entertained the idea of founding his Kingdom by means of the sword. He first to last refused to play the role of a political revolutionary. While professing the vocation of prophet, he steadfastly declined that of a political messiah. This stance cost him a great deal, leading him eventually to the cross. He died a victim of the injustice and hatred he had denounced. The cross was his answer to the dilemma of two loves: that of the poor and that of his enemies. By his example he gave us our Christian strategy for all future struggles, be it liberation on the one hand, or reconciliation on the other. If we were locked in a vicious circle

of “violence countering violence”, we could never break the circle unaided. We needed that ‘extra’ element to untie this ‘dead knot’. Our Lord’s teaching and death on the cross was this ‘extra’ element. In his contemplation of Christ, dead and risen again, the Christian has the key to the true and total liberation. At the same time, however, our renunciation of violence does not mean that we give up the struggle for justice, and accept passively the status quo of an oppressive society. It means only that we renounce using an ineffective tool, violence, for achieving our goal.

This renunciation of violence is not, as some people may think, a manifestation of weakness. On the contrary, it is a manifestation of strength. Jesus before Pilate demonstrated the power of weakness confronted with the weakness of power. All the non-violent fighters. . . Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Don Helder Camara. . . have contributed more to the cause of justice than the violent revolutionaries. Their most important contribution is that, like Jesus, they relied on that ‘extra element’, a new spirit which the world needs so badly in the building up of a more human and just society.

* * *

CONCLUSIONS

1. Millions of people in our area live in an oppressive society. The economic injustice of these communities is caused primarily by the economic power of laissez-faire Capitalism. Although the Marxist revolutions in China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and North Korea have changed the economic systems in these countries, change of economic-political system did not mean true human liberation for the people of these countries.

While avoiding a mere negative criticism of the Communist system as such, we should manifest our good-will and concern for all the millions living under the Communist regimes, all the time willing to collaborate in a common effort to improve the quality of life in our areas, for we must always cherish the hope that Communism may one day be liberated from its own limitations. In addition, we must strain every nerve to reach beyond the “Capitalism-Marxism” dilemma and try to devise a more just and human organization of society that will answer better the spiritual, economic, social, political and cultural needs of the people we are sent to evangelize.

At the same time, however, we should not labour under any illusion about the difficulty of the task proposed to us. For there is no ready-made solution to our problem, nor have we any general blueprint

for action that would be suitable for every region of Asia. Since the regions in Asia are so different one from another, each region has to work out its own solution, taking into consideration the region's special economic, social and cultural traditions.

2. As an institution, the Church should not involve herself directly in partisan politics. This is not her mission. But since every Christian is a citizen, Christians have the duty to take an active hand in organizing a society that conforms to God's will as much as possible. Christians must rid themselves of any 'ghetto' mentality, and become active agents for change instead. In carrying out this mission, they have to seek inspiration and guidance in the sources of revelation, which, in the concrete, means the Church. Although the Church has no detailed social programme ready for instant implementation at a moment's notice, she does have a rich body of "social doctrine". Directly implementing just social structures is not the Church's mission; her mission is to preach the Gospel, communicating to all her faithful the Spirit of the Lord, who, in turn, imparts to them his seven-fold gift, strengthening and enlightening them to struggle for justice, their ultimate goal being: "Universal Brotherhood" and "Justice in Charity".

3. Since the one and the same faith can inspire different men to choose different political options, and since a true Christian's zeal should embrace all men, every Christian should have a pluralistic approach in seeking to reform the social structures of the earthly city. Imbued with this pluralistic spirit, he will be humble enough to learn from those who disagree with him, realizing that they, too, can have valuable insights to truth. Since the Church is the mystical body of Christ, the Christian community is a privileged group for resolving differences and mitigating the asperity of political confrontations, resulting in mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.

This struggle for justice should be undertaken on all fronts, each Christian being an agent for change wherever he happens to be, in his family, neighbourhood, school, office, factory, social gathering, association, or whatever. Working to bring about social justice is an everlasting task; there will always be tensions in society. Therefore we must always keep working to mitigate those tensions, always striving to iron away injustices wherever we find them. The man who undertakes such a task must be patient and very realistic, never expecting that some magic scheme will usher in an instant utopia. No, he has to learn to live with tension, which is a necessary stimulus for steady progress.

4. This lifetime struggle on all fronts for social justice cannot be undertaken by any single individual. There is need for the concerted effort of the group, with all members of the group imbued with the same social ideals and sharing work as a harmonious team. The

members of such a community should have a frugal life style, their manner of life giving witness to the virtue of evangelical poverty. Such an apostolic community, with its spiritual life focused on the Eucharist and community prayer, working together in brotherly love, sharing everything in common, radiating an aura of joy, hope and peace, would, by itself, be an epiphany of that "New Man" and that "New Society" in Christ.

Such a community was the Church when first launched on its earthly pilgrimage in the days after Pentecost.⁵³ In certain countries today this is the only viable structure of the Church, for the former structure of the institutional Church with its ministers and sacramental system is proscribed. But since the "People of God", not ornate churches or a visibly ministering hierarchy, is the "essence" of the Church, can't we truly say that the Church is very much alive in these "Basic Christian Communities"?

Here is a description of one such Basic Christian Community in present-day China: "... most local Communist cadres are quite friendly to those Christians... The Christians work hard, are conscientious in doing the job assigned them, and lead honest, exemplary lives. Since these good qualities are also Communist ideals, the Christians frequently win the respect of the local authorities". The distinguishing characteristics of Christians in China today are: "They are fervent, faithful and full of love and joy. They really love one another, so much so, that many non-Christians are moved to inquire about the nature of their faith".⁵⁴

I do not intend to suggest that such a "Basic Christian Community" as this one in China is the ideal, one we should take as a model, because its activities are reduced to bare essentials. In addition, its survival is very uncertain, depending as it does on the day to day good will of a totalitarian regime. Still and all, the spirit motivating such a small community ought to make us reflect seriously on the essence of the Church. That essence is more "People-of-God" oriented than to any visible institution. Such, too, were those first Christian communities that drew the reluctant admiration of the pagan world during the first years after the first Pentecost. A pastoral question for your consideration, then, is this: in starting a local church, should we not first concentrate on forming a fervent community of Christians, and try out the experiment in every part of Asia?

5. The spirit, the inspiration and the guidelines for building a more human and just society are there in the social teaching of the Church. What is needed now are people willing to hammer out practical plans for fleshing out those principles and to have the determination of putting them into practice.

The most important and specific contribution the Church can contribute is to find "agents for change", men and women who must be burning with love of God and men, who will have a veritable passion for social justice. Such men and women must be committed, totally involved Christians, who are not afraid to dirty their hands, and are ready to take risks. Our great lack today is that we have so few people who are ready to risk their lives, and so many who are worrying about security—tenure, social security, savings accounts. Our Lord made one absolute guarantee to his followers: I have overcome the world.⁵⁵ Not once did he tell them to provide for tomorrow. No, rather they were asked to give up everything and follow him, for a completely unknown adventure.⁵⁶

Training in social questions should be both theoretical and practical. The theory of the Church's social philosophy should be mastered, while on the empirical side, the firm facts of any given community and situation should be known from first-hand experience. And here the knowledge we speak of can be gained only through concern, solidarity and participation.

6. Finally, the struggle for justice and the formation of "agents of change" should not be considered a special apostolate assigned in a specialized field to a few selected religious men and women. Rather, concern for social justice should have the highest priority in every field of apostolic activity.

All the more reason, then, why we should mobilize the concerted efforts of all the religious men and women of Asia in promoting the cause of social justice in all the areas where they work. They are in touch with many people from different walks of life in all these areas. If only they were convinced of the importance of this apostolate and were willing to apply their respective talents to promoting the cause!

Therefore I would suggest the setting up of a special social justice committee at the level of each Bishops' Conference whose function would be to plan, coordinate and promote the general mobilization I speak of.

Logically, a similar structure should also be set up at the diocesan level, or at least an appointee of the bishop should be designated as a liaison man between the Conference-level committee and the diocese. Such a diocesan committee or appointee will channel ideas and suggestions from the conference-level committee on the one hand, and coordinate and promote social action throughout the diocese, under the supervision of the bishop, on the other.

NOTES

1. Joseph Needham, "Christian Hope and Social Evolution", the Spring issue 1974, of *China Notes*, a quarterly publication of East Asia Office of National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.
2. Lawrence Burkholder, "The Mystery of Chinese Morality" in *Goshen College Bulletin*, 1975.
3. Ibid.
4. Marian London and Ivan D. London, "The Other China, Hunger, Part I"; "The Three Red Flags of Death: Part II"; "The Case of the Missing Beggars"; *Worldview*, May and June 1976.
5. Burkholder, art. cit.
6. Richard Clutterbuck, "Mao Wrestles With Original Sin" in *Observer*, London, May 9, 1976.
7. Feurbach, *The Essence of Christianity*: "Religion is the disuniting of man from himself, he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is, man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes; God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations. But in religion man contemplates his own latent nature. Hence it must be shown that his antithesis, this differencing of God and man, with which religion begins, is a differencing of man with his own nature".
8. Mao Tse-tung, "Talks at Chengtu" 1958: "All living beings result from the transformation of inanimate matter . . . Monkeys turn into man, mankind arose; in the end, the whole human race will disappear, it may turn into something else, at that time the earth itself will also cease to exist".
9. Mao Tse-tung, "Talks on the Lin Piao Affairs", 1971.
10. Mao Tse-tung, "On contradictions", 1937: "Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society, that is, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between classes and the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that pushed society forward and gives the impetus for the suppression of the old society by the new. . . . Classes struggle, some classes triumph, others are eliminated. Such is history, such is the history of civilization for thousands of year. To interpret history from this viewpoint is historical materialism; standing in opposition to this viewpoint is historical idealism".
11. Mao Tse-tung, "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art", 1942: "Is there such a thing as human nature? Of course there is. But there is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract. In class society there is only human nature of a class character; there is no human nature above classes. We uphold the human nature of the proletariat and of the masses of the people, while the landlord and bourgeois classes uphold the human nature of their own classes, only they do not say so but make it out to be the only human nature in existence".
12. Mao Tse-tung, *op. cit.*
13. Mao Tse-tung, "Talks at Hanchow", 1965.
14. Pius IX's *Qui Pluribus*; Leo XIII's *Quod Apostolici Muneris* 1878 and *Rerum Novarum* 1891; Pius XI's *Miserentissimus Redemptor* 1928, *Quadragesimo Anno* 1931, *Divini Redemptoris* 1937; Pius XII's Radio Broadcast of Pentecost 1941; John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* 1961, *Pacem in Terris* 1963; Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam* 1964; Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* 1961; Paul VI's

Populorum Progressio 1967; his Pastoral Letter to Cardinal Maurice Roy *Octogesima Adveniens* 1971; his Pastoral Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1975.

15. *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) No. 21.

16. *Divini Redemptoris* (DR) No. 14.

17. *Octogesima Adveniens* (OA) No. 26.

18. GS No. 21.

19. *Rerum Novarum* (RN) No. 38 and GS No. 3.

20. *Mater et Magistra* (MM) No. 215: "Separated from God, man becomes monstrous to himself and others. Consequently, mutual relationship between men absolutely require a right ordering of the human conscience in relation to God, the source of all truth, justice and love".

21. *Populorum Progressio* (PP) No. 42: "A humanism closed on itself, and not open to the value of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve only apparent success. True, man can organize the world apart from God, but without God man can organize it in the end only to man's detriment. An isolated humanism is an inhuman humanism".

22. *Quadragesimo Anno* (QA) No. 88.

23. DR No. 16.

24. PP No. 26.

25. QA No. 109.

26. GS No. 42.

27. *Justice in the World* (JW), Bishops' Synod, 1971, No. 36.

28. QA No. 89.

29. JW No. 38.

30. GS No. 43: "They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come, think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities. For they are forgetting that by the faith itself they are more than ever obliged to measure up to these duties".

31. Mt 22:37-40.

32. Jn 12:34-35, 15:12.

33. Mt 25:31-46, 1 Jn 4:20.

34. Cf. Note 14.

35. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) No. 38: "She is trying more and more to encourage large numbers of Christians to devote themselves to the liberation of man. She is providing these Christian 'liberators' with the inspiration of faith, the motivation of fraternal love, a social teaching which the true Christian cannot ignore and which he must make the foundation of his wisdom and of his experience in order to translate it concretely into forms of action, participation and commitment . . .".

36. OA No. 4.

37. OA No. 4: "In this search for the changes which should be promoted, Christians must first of all renew their confidence in the forcefulness and special character of the demands made by the Gospel. The Gospel is not out-of-date because it was proclaimed, written and lived in a different sociocultural context. Its inspiration, enriched by the living experience of Christian tradition over the centuries, remains ever new for converting men and for advancing the life of society".

38. *Pour une pratique chrétienne de la politique*, l'Assemblée plénière de l'Episcopat français, Lourdes, Oct. 1972.

39. "Men for others", address of Pedro Arrupe to the "Tenth International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe", Valencia, Spain, July 31, 1973.
40. MM No. 223.
41. OA No. 37, Heb 12:1-4.
42. EN No. 33.
43. Professor Stromberg, *Western Intellectual History since 1965*, 1975: "As Marxists grew more spiritual and individualistic, Christianity became more worldly and social...Christians sought to give their faith a content in this world; Marxists wanted to leaven their worldly creed with a bit of ethical transcendence. Together, they flattered themselves, Marxists and Christians can provide a total philosophy, a real amalgamation of both worlds, the mundane and the spiritual...a familiar personality of the late years of the decade, was the revolutionary priest who went wholly over to a position not easily distinguishable from radical or political militancy. The message of Christ, he assumed, was not basically different from that of Marx".
44. *The Holy Cross Quarterly*, "The China Issue", Vol. 7, Nos 1-4. Cf. James V. Schall, "The Nonexistence of Christian Political Philosophy" in *Worldview*, Apr. 1976.
45. EN No. 36.
46. OA No. 50.
47. GS No. 43.
48. PP No. 39.
49. OA No. 50: "...a loyal examination of one's behavior and its correctness will suggest to each one an attitude of more profound charity which, while recognizing the differences, believes nonetheless in the possibility of convergence and unity. The bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything which divides them".
50. EN No. 37.
51. Robert Bosc, S.J., *Evangile, Violence et Paix*.
52. EN No. 37.
53. Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37.
54. Jonathan T. Chao, "Christian Community Life in a Chinese Village in Spring 1974", *China Program Report*, Feb. 20, 1975.
55. Jn 16:33.
56. Mt 16:24-28.

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