

FORMS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY LIVING IN ASIA**I. THE PROBLEM**

It should be said from the very beginning that, for a discussion of forms of Christian community living in Asia to be of profit or even to make sense at all, it should be conducted at the level of each local Church. For it is there that the life of the Church is lived in all its fullness, in all its complexity, and the problems of that same life met or unmet. The cultural — not to speak of the social, the economic, the political, etc. — situation of each Church is different, and approaches will vary according to a people's cultural conditioning. Again, it is at the local level that decisions for approaches or modes of approach to the problems of the Church's life will have to be taken.

Be that as it may, there are a few points that may be of a more general, and hence possibly common, nature that should be applicable anywhere. It is these points that we will be addressing ourselves to in this paper. The experience of particular experiments (in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and other parts of Asia) with new forms of Christian community life is quite rich, and, it is hoped, the points that will be made here will find resonance with that experience and its richness.

Right off, from the wording of the discussion subject of the workshop, three points of common concern — *problems*, that is — come readily to mind. They are not specific to this particular workshop (they are explicitly treated in some other discussion groups in this plenary assembly), but it would be good to have them in mind anyway from the

This discussion guide has been prepared for the workshop sessions of the Third Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), held at the Lux Mundi, Regional Seminary, in Sampran, Thailand, near Bangkok, 20th-27th October, 1982. The theme of the Plenary Assembly is: "The Church — A Community of Faith in Asia."

special purview of our subject, even as we try going deeper into it since they have much to do with the substance of our discussion. These three problems are: 1) the Church as community; 2) the Church as Christian and Asian; and 3) the pastoral action that flows from a Church's response to the two preceding problems. The issues underlying these problems can be briefly stated under three headings.

1. The Church as Community

Before we can even talk of forms of Christian community, we will have first to clarify our notion of Church. This is not as academic and abstract an exercise as it seems. Nor is it innocuous. For it does make a whole world of difference what model of the Church is operative or dominant in any given country, diocese, parish. And the truth is the diversity of models in the minds of Church administrators and, for that matter, of the people themselves, especially if unexamined and unarticulated, can work havoc on the apostolate, or at the least lead to a great many practical difficulties in the definition of ends and choice of means, in the proper use of personnel and resources, in the very manner of defining and approaching the task of evangelization. What is the Church? If it is going to be a community, the kind of community it will be depends on the model of the Church people have in mind.

2. The Church as Christian and Asian

The Church cannot be looked at only as community. It is always a local Church, the universal Church incarnated in time and place, in and by the people. Hence the crucial question: To what extent is the Church truly local, not only *in* but *of* a place and people? This is the problematic of inculturation, a continuing issue in the Churches of Asia. The Church must be Christian, faithful to Christ and his saving mission. But it must also be thoroughly Asian — and Asian in all the particularities of the word: Burmese, Malaysian, Chinese, Japanese, Pakistani, Thai, Bangladeshi, etc. All too often, Christian has meant Western, and the offshoot of this is that in many an Asian nation, Christianity is a foreign religion. And where efforts are made to give Christianity an Asian identity, often the apparent emphasis is on external forms of religion — rituals, gestures, festivals — a phenomenon that turns people off precisely because of its superficiality. The further questions to ask, then, it seems obvious, are the primordial ones about what faith is, what culture is. These are questions that must be assigned not only to theologians and social scientists but to all believers, however unsophisticated they may be theologically or sociologically.

3. The Church's Pastoral

If the first problematic we have seriously to take into account is one of clarifying and understanding models of the Church, and the second is that of blending faith and culture into a harmonious, integrated whole without destroying the identity of either component, the third is a pastoral one: How to do the task of blending faith and culture within the context of building up people into real ecclesial communities? Meeting this problematic goes to the heart of our discussion. And thus we can, at this stage of our questioning, make this generalized observation: According to how a Church faces up to the question of models of the Church and faith inculturation will its pastoral action be; and from this it should follow that the forms of Christian community living that will be elaborated will be according to how the Church's pastoral adequately answers the two questions — or at least attempts to answer them.

If these are indeed the problems that underlie the subject of our discussion, they must be attended to or, at the least, kept in the background of all our thinking on forms of Christian community living in Asia.

This discussion guide intends to approach these basic problems and, for that matter, the subject itself, in a typically Asian manner — indirectly. The approach is dictated by two facts, one internal to the Church, the other external. The internal fact is that within each Church, at all levels, the three issues spoken of above are not being met in a way that would give us confidence in assuming that we are all starting from common premises, from universally admitted presumptions. And if even by some miracle of divine enlightenment we did — and this would be the external fact, already alluded to in the beginning — Asian societies, and hence the Church within those societies, differ to quite an extent in the life conditions of their people, and thus in the problems that they and the Church are confronted with. Necessarily then, our particular solutions will be variant.

II. TOWARDS PASTORAL SOLUTIONS

It is probably best therefore to see first if we can isolate certain principles, in essence and nature sociological but fraught with theological *and* pastoral consequences. These principles, if they are indeed principles, should hold good for any human society. Then we have to examine how these principles translate into realistic and practical terms for the forms of Christian community living we are interested in. The bulk of our discussion will be concerned with these principles and their

implications, in regard especially to the three basic issues we started with. We will end, by way of summary, with a few tentative comments on the forms of Christian community living that the pastoral of the Asian Church *might* promote.

Principles

To arrive at some working principles, we do not have to go far afield — from common sense, that is, and the ordinary experience of people and that of the Church — to the more rarified atmospheres of sociological and theological speculation and theorizing. There are certain seminal ideas contained in recent Church documents, from those of Vatican II in particular, that are simply waiting to be worked out and put into actual practice.

For our purposes, we will dwell only on three: dialogue, participation and coresponsibility. There are others like adaptation, indigenization, social transformation and the like, equally important, equally rich, but we feel there is no need to clutter the scene with too many ideas, compelling though they may be. The three are used here, in any case, as springboards to the deepening of our ideas on community and many of the other ideas not explicitly treated will be contained in them. And since ultimately our focus will be on the pastoral action of the Church vis-à-vis the forming of Asian ecclesial communities, it would be well for us to concentrate on working principles that have proven effective and fruitful. There is a dynamism to the three ideas selected for discussion here — a dynamism almost of an *ex opere operato* nature — that clamors to be released into the life of the Church.

1. Dialogue

The term is much used and abused and we will not waste time scrutinizing the often tortured ways in which it is used. We take dialogue in the ordinary understanding of the term to mean simply a conversation between people, an exchange of ideas, of opinions, of thoughts, a sharing of the fruits of one's mental processes with someone willing to listen and learn and in turn to share his own thinking. If sharing, listening, learning are connoted by the term, even more so is the fundamental truth that human beings are thinking, reasoning *subjects*. And therefore there is or must be a basic equality to partners in a dialogue. The equality we speak of is rooted in their common humanity, and most especially in a specifying aspect of their humanity — their intellectuality.

It seems an insult to that same intellectuality to remind ourselves here of what dialogue means. But the fact is — and it seems we have to consider closely after all our misuse of the term — we often overlook these basic connotations and use the term solely with confrontative or persuasive intents and presuppositions, conceiving of dialogue in terms mainly of bringing others around to and convincing them of *our* way of thinking, forgetting that even prior to persuading and convincing is the human quality of thinking and reasoning in those “others.”

The equality that arises from innate human rationality, it cannot be repeated and emphasized enough, has to be at the roots of any community, of any effort to build community. And the stress is made in view of the Church communities we have generally in Asia in which the teaching role of the hierarchy is excessively, even exclusively, stressed and the net effect on rank-and-file members is passivity — and a passivity that borders on apathy. People are afraid to think and reflect on, much less to speak of, their faith lest they go astray from the narrow (narrowed?) road of doctrinal orthodoxy. Or at least they are not encouraged to do so for themselves. Yet this ability of people to think and reflect, to speak and act, on the faith for themselves, by themselves, is something the Church, tacitly at least, accepts in its honoring of such a thing as the *sensus fidei fidelium*. That *sensus* cannot be created except in honest-to-goodness dialogue.

The levels and kind of dialogue are many, and, to bring the subject to bear on the Church as community, we could well inquire into what dialogue, if any, takes place between the teaching Church and the learning Church (hierarchy and laity), between Christians and non-Christians (ecumenism), between faith and culture (inculturation), between our faith-life and the life of our people (the “dialogue of life” that the FABC seeks). All this is worthwhile. But the dialogue that takes place at the grassroots level, between ordinary believers whose task it is mutually to build one another up into living communities of faith, this is the dialogue that must become commonplace and widespread. The need for this kind of dialogue is of utmost importance for the Church of Asia, and in some mysterious way it encapsulates and grounds all the other dialogues mentioned in passing above.

2. Participation

If we accept dialogue as a fundamental principle in the forming of community, we must logically accept its corollary — participation. The idea stems from the fact of equality too, but in its deepest nature, it is

founded on the basis of that equality: human dignity. Every man or woman, no matter how lowly his or her *social* standing, is endowed with this primal dignity. This dignity demands that a person be taken seriously as a member of his society. It also demands that he or she exercise the rights and duties that flow from it.

In its social context, participation implies popular and communal self-help, self-activity, self-organization. It also implies goal-setting and means-towards-ends choice. The participation we speak of thus has its fullest expression in the sharing that occurs between equals in the give-and-take of the process of decision-making aimed at the attainment of the common good. People are not only thinking but also willing and deciding subjects. And as social beings, they must contribute to such communal decisions as are taken by society as a whole for the good of that same society. These are — or should be — axiomatic and taken for granted. But making these ideas operative in the Church as we have it, as we know it, in Asia — not to speak of the wider society of which we are part? This will take some doing. The same problems we noted earlier about dialogue in the Church can be said likewise about participation.

From a specifically faith point of view, it is in the idea of participation, it seems, that the thoroughly Christian ideal of being men and women *for others* comes in most explicit fashion into play. For even if active participation in decisions for the common weal is dictated by “enlightened self-interest,” still, for the Christian, the impelling motive will have to be the Gospel mandate of charity, of love of one’s neighbor—and neighbor as understood precisely as Christ understood it.

To explicitate an obvious and immediate outcome when Christians start participating in the life of their Churches — they cannot, will not, remain for long ghettos, inward-turning and inward-turned communities. Sharing of one’s self with members of the household of the faith will inevitably entail sharing with those not of the faith. This is part of the logic of the principle of participation: A participative Church will necessarily be a community of charity and concern, inwardly looking to its needs, true, but always and at the same time outwardly looking toward those of the “other” too.

3. Coresponsibility

Intimately linked to the two preceding principles of dialogue and participation is that of shared responsibility. People in community must not only share of their thoughts and ideas, their decisions and actions,

but they must all as well take responsibility for whatever consensus of thinking, whatever common decision for action they arrive at for the general well-being of themselves and their communities.

The basis for coresponsibility, it seems, is the social nature of man, a nature that impels him to seek the company of others of his kind and with them build up the societal structures that will enable him and them to live reasonably human lives. And to put the principle within the context of Christian faith, its force comes from the Gospel mandate of service for others but now with the added notion that one shares the burden of "for-otherness" with fellow believers because he and they belong to a community of faith that is explicitly bidden by its Founder to be so responsible. A community of faith in which each member assumes responsibility for every other member will in truth be a community of charity — and a fortiori a community of justice. For prior to the responsibility for others in charity is the responsibility for them in justice.

Today there is much concern for justice and human rights, particularly in the Third World, and the concern springs from the greater awareness that the widespread poverty in Third World countries has its roots in the unjust distribution of wealth — social injustice, therefore — and this injustice in turn comes from the fact that people have become powerless. With this comes the realization that where people become conscious of their dignity as human beings and begin to assert it, defend it, this becomes for them power; and this power cannot be sufficiently activated for good unless they have respect for one another's pride and in concern for one another, organize themselves in common cause for the safeguarding of their rights and dignity. In this asserting of collective dignity and defense of rights, the Church will find a wide and fertile area of evangelization, but it cannot do so *as* community unless its members — and itself — are truly sold to the idea of Christian charity and justice as coresponsibility.

To sum up: Dialogue, participation, coresponsibility — these three principles have one common note: sharing. And this sharing is for the Christian and the Church something they should do as a matter of course. All considerations about the welfare of the Church as an institution, the furthering of what we call its apostolates or works, the conversion of others to the truth of its teachings, even its influence in the shaping of public morality — all this becomes secondary to the one great task of sharing one's self, both the individual and the communal self, for the good of the neighbor and the love of God. It is an overgeneralization,

most probably, to reduce the Gospel to sharing for the sake of the Kingdom. But this sharing is at least *an*, if not *the*, essential note of Christianity. And if the statement is indeed an extreme generalization, the fact still remains that the kind of sharing we speak of has not been too outstanding a characteristic of us as Church in Asia. This, in its turn, sounds like another overglib statement. But the next sections of our discussion should specify the generalized problem a little more fully.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of a dialogic, participative and coresponsible Church are profound and far-reaching. For our purposes, it may be best to focus on the three problem areas noted in the beginning, namely, first, the Church as community; secondly, the Church as Christian and Asian; and thirdly, the Church's pastoral action. It will not be possible to draw out all the implications, but we can make a start by zeroing in on some of them, from them move on to others that cannot be mentioned — nor even imagined — here.

1. The Church as Community

The first and most obvious question that comes to mind when we define the Church as basically a sharing community is: What does it share — or can share — that is specific to it as Christian? The kinds of sharing in dialogue, participation and coresponsibility that have already been mentioned above — sharing of ideas, acts, concerns, works of charity and justice, defense of human rights and dignity — these are not the sole prerogatives of Christians. But there is a special way of doing these things, of sharing of one's self in their doing, that we can identify as *Christ's way*. It is this way that we can and must share with one another, with others. It is this way that distinguishes us as Christians.

What is that *way*? Defining it in any given circumstance of Asian life with its welter of cultures and worldviews, values and mind-sets, economic and political conditions, would from the very start, it seems, be an impossible task. It would — if we were looking for a formula that will answer all situations and circumstances. This is where the dialogic nature of the communities we are interested in becomes of great practical value: Let the community come together, reflect, discern together, and from their own cultural way of doing things and in the light of Gospel values as they at the moment understand them, let them come up with their provisional understanding of that all important "way of Christ". (This manner of proceeding is itself part of the way of Christ?)

Dangerous? Simplistic? Certainly, but it is the risk we take when we act on our belief that the dialogue of faith and life is not done without the guidance of the promised Spirit; when we are convinced the faith is truly infused into the believer in the sacrament of baptism, and the strengthening of the faith by confirmation, its nourishing by the Eucharist really do happen; when we define the Christian community as primarily a community of faith-discernment and allow it truly to discern in reflective prayer, from the Gospel, what the Spirit is telling them here and now. The way of Christ, the mind of Christ — this is not going to be learned only from the official teachings of the Church. It has to be learned too from the day-to-day living of the people of *their* faith, from *their* insights into it, from *their* application of it.

2. The Church as Christian and Asian

Forming a Church that is genuinely Christian and Asian at the same time is, as has already been indicated, the problem of faith inculturation. Enough is being said and written about the problem by all sorts of scholars in the Asian Church and elsewhere, there is no need for any further disquisition on it beyond describing it in most general fashion as the synthesis made by a Christian people of faith and culture. Here our interest could well center on how the synthesis is brought about and advanced, more precisely, on what mechanisms to create and foster that would help bring about the synthesis we say is called for.

That mechanism cannot but be the community itself, at the lowermost level in particular: the base community of ordinary Christians. If this community is truly dialogic, participative and coresponsible in the senses we have been taking these terms to mean, we do not have to go searching far for a formula or for a vehicle of inculturation. Such a community is both *the* formula and *the* vehicle. And it is also *the* end of inculturation itself. The reason is easily stated: When people share their ideas, their acts, their concerns, and indeed from a faith perspective, they will do so *as they are*, i.e., as Christians and as Asians, and thus the two poles of the inculturative process, faith and culture, will come into dialogue most naturally; and the mutual sharing and enrichment that are inherent in the idea of inculturation will also take place just as naturally — and, it would seem, automatically. The end result should be a genuine faith community, inculturated and Asian.

One other inevitable result that will follow from such a community is the solution of the problem of models of the Church. In the sharing process, both in word and deed, a vision of what the Church is or should

be, of its task, its ends, will emerge, and it will be a common and communitarian vision, formed by the people themselves, participated in, and most importantly, translated into life, lived or attempted to be lived, by themselves.

At this point the observation should be made that, if there is such a thing as a problem of models in the Church, it is not because a model as such is wrong or faulty in itself but because it is emphasized to such an exaggerated degree as to distort the very concept of Church. Each theological model of the Church is only a partial vision of a totality (a totality which in any case is a mystery). If that partial nature of a model is understood and allowances made for it, and if there is a constant striving for the totality at all times, the problem of Church models would be minimized remarkably. A Church community that is both Asian and Christian will be able to make the synthesis of faith and culture that we say is inculturation, and it will be in a far better position to come up with a vision and model of the Church that will be quite holistic, not partial.

3. Pastoral Action

From the understanding of themselves as both Asian and Christian, from the model or vision of themselves as Church that they will arrive at from that understanding, the people in and as community will be able to evolve with comparative ease a pastoral that will be truly, to use an outworn word, relevant. The shared manner in which their vision and understanding are formed will itself become the manner in which they will erupt into pastoral action: shared and sharing, dialogic and open, discerning and prayerful; and, it is hoped, always imbued with and motivated by faith, led and guided by the Spirit.

If the sharing is genuine, the pastoral that will ensue will not be concerned only with the Church as such, with the internal problems that affect any group of people as a group, but it will necessarily have to be concerned with the problems of the wider society of which it is part, in a word, the life problems of people whether these be political or economic, social or religious or whatever, problems that have to do with the greater or lesser humanization of life.

The practical implications of such a pastoral are quite clear: They require a Church that is deeply involved with people, not only with those of the community of the faith — although we start with them — but with all others. And this involvement will mean entering into their problems, not so much to solve them once and for all as to bring to bear on them

and their solving the full message of Christ — his mind, his way. This is nothing new. For years we have been, as Church, obsessed with total human development, complete liberation, integral evangelization, working for justice as integral to the Church's mission. What is new, perhaps, is that we do not merely reflect on these matters, talk about them in the upper reaches of the Church's hierarchical structure, relegate the acting on them to special elites within the institutional Church. We all — believers at all levels within the Church — begin to act not only as individuals but as whole communities. The reflecting, the speaking, the doing will be brought down to the smallest components of the Church. The pastoral will be truly communitarian and of the whole Church.

III. FORMS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY LIVING

The reflecting, speaking and doing Church — this seems to be as good a description as any of the kind of Church we must be, of the forms of Christian community living we must develop. The descriptive terms chosen are rather arbitrary, but in view of what has already been said about the issues and the principles involved in building Church communities, they may be more appropriate than they seem at first glances. They are used here, at any rate, as a handy way of summing up much of what we have already treated above.

1. The Discerning Church

A Church that is to be dialogic, participative and coresponsible must have inbuilt into its institutional make-up the possibility for the reflective process that must precede and accompany its sharing charism. This means that the community must create structures whereby the process of discernment can take place formally — although, certainly, the process must go on in less formal ways, in the daily give and take of the life of the community, in its interaction with other communities, in the "dialogue of life" that the Asian bishops have proposed. Our worship on Sundays is such a structure, but so far in our heavy stress on the teaching role of the hierarchy and the learning role of the laity, it is not as fit an instrument as it should be for the two-way system of communication that is essential to the process. A working *forum* for the communal formation of what we ordinarily call the *sensus fidelium* — this is what is needed. Vatican II provides for such forum in its insistence on the creating of all kinds of councils and conferences (from the Bishops' Synod all the way down to Parish Councils) but so far these structures have tended to be mainly instruments of Church government and doctrine rather than of something more basic and crucial — faith discernment.

21 211 Objections about “debasing” the Church into a debating club, a study or discussion group in which people can and will be manipulated and majority opinion, right or wrong, will prevail — these are valid fears and must be faced. But at the same time, these other facts must be considered too: We are talking of *ecclesial* communities in which faith is of the essence; if this faith is paramount at every phase of the process, would it be too naive to say that a community discerning from faith, in faith, with faith will always be — cannot but be? — under the guidance of the Spirit? If there is going to be any fear, it could well be that we do not have enough faith in the promised Spirit? From this comes a conclusion of heavy significance: The community’s discernment must be in the context of prayer — always. Again, it may be the height of absurdity to presume that prayer itself cannot be manipulated by interested parties, used politically by them. But we are talking of people of faith, sincere and open in their prayer, always seeking, always trusting, with the simplicity of doves, yes, but also, hopefully, with the acuity of serpents. In other words, faith discernment must be for real. People of faith should be capable of it — or are they?

2. The Speaking Church

Human speech is always culture-bound, even such speech as is sometimes called the “eternal language of God” (or of scholastic philosophy and theology). If the fact were taken seriously and pragmatically with all its implications, there would be no necessity to seek for faith-inculturation, to discuss the need of it, the how of it. People everywhere would as a matter of course express their faith in their own way, in their own language, according to their own mental categories, thereby enriching the faith by their unique expression of it.

201 But even as we speak of the uniqueness of expression of the faith by a people, we do not lose sight of the unity of that same faith. Uniqueness of expression adds up to multiplicity. Again, we have to remind ourselves: It is the same Spirit who speaks the same truth through the many languages of various cultures and peoples. The unity of faith and the multiplicity of its expression are not a contradiction — but they will be if the Spirit is left out. We make much of the speaking Church not because it is a new concept but because, in our practice, in our obsession with verbal orthodoxy, we do force people to express their faith in what are essentially foreign modes of expression. Or, what comes down to the same thing, we force the Spirit to speak in only one human language.

The criticism may be overdrawn. But the practical effects of the fact, in as far as it is a fact, are most evident in the problems we face in Asia about the alien character of Christianity in most countries of the continent and subcontinent. It is an unnecessary problem. True enough, the Gospel has much in it that is alien simply because it does go, in its transcendence of the human, against much of what we consider human. That is what makes it Gospel. But it should not be made more alien unnecessarily by imposing on it other human traditions, other alienities, even as we accept the fact that in its initial preaching it has to be expressed in alien modes of thought and speech. All we ask is that once the message has been given — clumsily, necessarily — it should not be continued to be expressed and preached just as clumsily.

3. The Doing Church

The sharing of the Gospel in community acts must be the inevitable result of a community's discerning and speaking, and these acts must in turn feed the discerning and speaking. It would not be necessary to discourse on "the acts of the Gospel" except that by and large, when we think of the pastoral action of the Church, we do so in terms of the administration of the sacraments, of works of charity, practically always with a view to nurturing the (personal) spiritual life of people or their conversion to the truths of the Gospel, or to giving witness to the values of the Gospel. We are not saying that these are not ends worthy of our purposive action. They are. But prior even to these, it would seem, is the simple doing of what we call Gospel acts — the traditional "works of mercy" but enlarged to their social dimensions — regardless of growth in spiritual life, conversion, witness. Paradoxically, it is the doing of these acts simply because they are Christ's way, Christ's mind, that will bring about growth, conversion, witness. This manner of doing Gospel acts is the most powerful proclamation of the Gospel, especially when it is consciously pursued by a whole community as a community of faith.

Here we touch on a sensitive aspect of the spirituality that underlies the doing we are concerned with — the effectivity of our acts. Whether we like it or not, acknowledge it or not, we have been tinged deeply with the heresy of Pelagius: Our preaching, our living of the Gospel, our pastoral action — they must have tangible, quantifiable effects. The efficacy of the Church's preaching is measurable in the number of conversions made, the sacraments dispensed, the buildings and institutions put up, etc. This is by no means to say that these are not or cannot be indicators of growth and success in the Church's evangelizing efforts. But for some reason, the obverse is not true, to say, that is, that the Gospel is not being preached effectively unless these or similar results

are achieved. A more weighty if less observable criterion for judging whether a people are truly a Gospel community is to look at the sharing acts that they perform, what they do *to* and *for* and *with* the neighbor, regardless of any effect — conversion, witness, even the successful outcome of the act itself. Such a disinterested and total sharing is at the inmost core of what we have been talking of all along as *the way of Christ*.

IV. QUESTIONS

We started our inquiry into our subject by detailing briefly problems about the Church as community, as Christian and Asian, and as architect of its pastoral. We then concentrated on certain principles that seemed of importance to the forming of any ecclesial community, namely, dialogue, participation and coresponsibility. From these three key ideas we asked what their implications were vis-à-vis the basic problems we had started with. And, finally, we summarized our discussion by considering forms of Christian community living under the rubric of the Church as a discerning, speaking and doing community of faith.

These were only jumping-off points, as was stated early on, hence nothing more need be said except to go on from these points — unless, of course, they are rejected altogether. But whether they are accepted or rejected, they — the issues, principles, implications, forms of community — are in the final analysis *questions*. Their stating may at times sound too apodictic, and couched in language that is excessively critical of the Church in Asia as it is now. But they still are questions nonetheless and should be regarded and treated as such. The refining and nuancing of the hard points they sometimes make — like the forms of community themselves — will have to be done at this workshop and assembly, but more importantly at the base level of the Church where people and the Spirit interact to build and create a living Gospel Church.

This brings us to a final observation. When all is said and done, the specific forms that Christian community living in Asia will assume cannot be predicted except in their most general outlines. In a very real sense, the forms themselves are not the end — the creation of genuine communities of faith is. Whatever forms of Christian community life will be thought out and developed, they have to be geared towards that creation — a new creation of our own day and age, of our own peoples and cultures. And if this is so, there are only two real actors in the creation of these communities — the people *as* themselves and the Spirit *as* Himself, not as we, of the institutional Church especially, would like them to be.

But for the people and the Spirit to be able to come up with the forms of Christian community life that will make possible, support and enhance a lived and living faith, we must have faith in both of them. The ultimate responsibility, like salvation itself, is both theirs. The institutional Church's role and responsibility in the whole undertaking are to help bring about the salvific communion between people and the Spirit — like Christ's, a mediating role.

But this too is a question.

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