

Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News

The Vatican-China Accord Betrays Chinese Roman Catholics

Shaun Willcock

In September 2018, after a long period of contact between the two, came the news that the Vatican and Red China had signed an agreement which would permit the Chinese Communist government to have the final say in the appointment of Roman Catholic bishops in China.

Expressing what millions of Roman Catholics felt, the signing was described as “a shocking development to many” by a Roman Catholic source.¹ An understatement of note.

Just what was going on?

For many decades, the Chinese Communist government has claimed the right to control all religious activity in China, and has brutally clamped down on all who dissent: Protestants, Papists and others. This approach to religion is of course in accordance with old-style Communist principles, to which China subscribes wholeheartedly. The State must be all-powerful, according to Communist ideology; and in Communist countries like China and Russia (the old USSR), not to mention many others, the only religions permitted by the State to exist are State-sanctioned, State-controlled ones. In this way the Reds give the appearance of permitting religious freedom while simultaneously controlling religions with an iron fist.

Following its anti-religious policy, China claimed the right to appoint Chinese Roman Catholic bishops, as well as Protestant ministers and all other religious leaders. The Vatican strongly opposed the State appointment of bishops for all these years. As a consequence, *two* “Catholic Churches” existed in China: the official, State-controlled one, known as the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the priests and bishops of which were not in subjection to the Vatican and were in fact Communist agents; and an underground, illegal one, the priests and bishops of which remained loyal to the Vatican. The latter, being orthodox Roman Catholics, suffered persecution at the hands of the Chinese government for many years.

But with the signing of this agreement, all future bishops of the Chinese Roman Catholic “Church” would first be approved by the Chinese government – with the blessing and co-operation of the Vatican!

The reason this could now be done was that, ever since the end of the pontificate of Pius XII in 1958, the Vatican has been pro-Communist, believing that as Communism was taking over the world it was better to work hand in hand with it than to continue opposing it. Popes John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II were all committed to the Communist cause, and the present pope, the Jesuit Francis I, is a very committed Communist, who has done everything in his power to swing the Roman Catholic institution ever more to the left. And with such a pro-Communist pope at the helm of the so-called “Church”, it became possible, after decades of conflict, for Communist China and the Vatican to begin to seek tentative rapprochement – just as the Vatican had done previously with various other Communist countries, often with spectacular results.

For Rome it is always about power. It seeks world domination. So does Communism. So does Russian Communism, and Chinese Communism. From Rome’s perspective, then, better to harness the political and military might of Communist countries like China, so as to advance its own agenda in the

world. This has always been Rome's way. It used the Holy Roman Empire for the same purpose. It did the same with Nazism and Fascism. And these are just some examples.

But when news of the imminent signing of this agreement started to leak out, the Vatican came under intense criticism from many within its own ranks. Rome therefore had to tread very carefully if it did not want to alienate millions of its own people. This was why, when he was asked to confirm whether the deal would in fact be signed at the end of September 2018, Greg Burke, director of the Vatican press office, was decidedly cagey. "The dialogue between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China continues," was his non-committal reply.²

And then suddenly, it was a done deal. The signing took place.

But why was there such intense opposition to the accord from so many Roman Catholics?

The reason is this. This accord means that the Vatican has sacrificed its own Chinese people, and its own absolute control over its bishops, for the massive political gain of now having leverage over Red China itself. China, be it noted, has not agreed to stop the persecution of Chinese Roman Catholics! In fact now, those Roman Catholics who remain loyal to the Vatican and opposed to Communism will be sacrificed "for the greater (political) good." This has happened many times before in history. For example, in World War Two, many priests who remained opposed to Nazism were sacrificed by the Vatican to the Nazis, for the Vatican was fully supporting Nazism, with many priests, especially Jesuits, holding top Nazi positions.

In essence, as is always the case when Roman Catholicism meets Communism, it is the clash of two massive powers, both of which want to exercise absolute control over millions of people. The Roman Catholic institution wants to exercise absolute control not only over its own people but over the entire world – and so does Communism. The Chinese Communist government wants absolute control over the Chinese Roman Catholic institution – and the Roman Catholic institution wants absolute control over China. And in order to gain this absolute control eventually, the Vatican has agreed to surrender some of its authority over the appointment of Chinese bishops. This was even admitted by Francis I himself to reporters, when he said after the signing that with every "peace treaty" (as he called it) and every negotiation, "both sides lose something", and for the Vatican this was the loss of complete control over the nomination of bishops.³ But as far as Rome was concerned, this was a small sacrifice worth making, for the advantages to be gained by having greater political influence over China.

One of the many Romanists who opposed the accord was a priest named Sergio Ticozzi, a Roman Catholic expert on China. As he put it: "If the Vatican is now ready to recognize bishops with lovers and children, obedient first of all to the [Chinese Communist] Party and its political pawns from their entrance into the seminary, in the future it will pose no resistance to any candidate that the Chinese authorities propose or for the dioceses they set."⁴

He misses the Vatican's own agenda in all this – which is to influence Chinese government policy itself via its own bishops. But he is still correct in understanding how the Chinese will view it – and what they will seek to gain from the accord. Ticozzi assumed that the Roman Catholic religion in China will be under China's absolute control with this accord. This is incorrect. He fails to see that *both* sides are in fact compromising, because *both* want something out of this and both are going to get something out of it.

The Vatican would rather have Chinese bishops who are Communists and supporters of the Chinese government, but at the same time in communion with Rome, than no Roman Catholic influence over the Chinese government at all.

There was an immediate indication of what all this would mean, when, as part of the agreement, seven Chinese bishops of the State-controlled Catholic "Church", who until the signing were regarded as illegitimately appointed as far as the Vatican was concerned because they were Communist agents appointed by the Chinese Communist Party and were not in communion with Rome, were now to be acknowledged and recognised as bishops in full communion with Rome. So would others who had previously been excommunicated by Rome.

From China's side, then, the agreement would mean that the Vatican would recognise bishops who are in fact agents of the Communist State, thereby placing them within the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic institution; and from the Vatican's side, it would mean that the Roman Catholic institution would receive official recognition in China, with its own approved bishops also being recognised by the Chinese authorities. "For Pope Francis and the Vatican, the accord is expected to open up *new spaces of legal action* for the Catholic Church in China".⁵

A win-win situation for both Rome and China.

But *not* for loyal Chinese Roman Catholics. And many Roman Catholics, Chinese as well as others, have clearly seen this.

They can see have been sold down the river by their own pope and his henchmen. They have been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. Having remained loyal to Rome even when persecuted for their stand, Rome has now thrown them under the bus. The Jesuit pope has followed the Jesuit maxim: *the end justifies the means*.

Greg Burke, director of the Vatican press office and who was quoted above, announced after the signing: "This is not the end of a process. It's the beginning. This has been about dialogue, patient listening on both sides even when people come from very different standpoints. The objective of the accord is not political but pastoral, allowing the faithful to have bishops who are in communion with Rome but at the same time recognized by Chinese authorities."⁶ It would be charitable to say that Burke was just ignorant of the real purpose of the accord, but given that he is director of the Vatican press office this is extending a charitable view of his statement beyond all common sense. *The objective of the accord is not political but pastoral?* What do the Communist Chinese authorities care about "pastoral" objectives? *Of course* it was political! Both sides viewed it as a political victory and advance. Yes, Chinese Romanists will now have bishops who are in communion with Rome and also recognised by the Chinese government – but this should bring no joy to any Chinese Romanists! China will only recognise pro-Communist bishops, and Rome will only appoint such bishops – and caught in the middle are millions of Chinese Romanists whose bishops will now put the advancement of China and Chinese Communism above the needs of their own flocks. And all with the Vatican's approval, which is far more interested in advancing Vatican political influence over China than it is in protecting its own people there.

And there is something else. For Francis I himself, there is also much *personal* glory and prestige to be gained by this accord: "the Pope is imagining, observers in Rome have said, that he, a Jesuit, will finally accomplish the long-postponed mission of Father Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the Jesuit who almost 500 years ago went to China and tried to convert China – and failed. Some even go so far as to say that this achievement would be the single thing this Pope would most like to accomplish(!). Hence, his apparent sense of urgency about signing this accord."⁷

According to a statement released by the Vatican, "Pope Francis hopes that, with these decisions, a new process may begin that will allow the wounds of the past to be overcome, leading to the full communion of all Chinese Catholics. The Catholic Community in China is called to live a more fraternal collaboration, in order to promote with renewed commitment the proclamation of the Gospel."⁸ Stripped of its nice-sounding Popish religious jargon, this statement bluntly says: *Chinese Roman Catholics are now required to collaborate with the Chinese Communist government*.

What a betrayal of all those Chinese Roman Catholics who in the past were often brutally persecuted for remaining faithful to the Roman pope and refusing to accept the Communist government's control over their "Church"! Reporters even asked Francis about this. And what was this wily Jesuit's reply? Displaying shocking callousness to their suffering, here it is: "Some Catholics in China 'will suffer' and feel betrayed, he said, 'but they have great faith' and in the end will trust the pope."⁹

Just read that reply of his again. As far as Francis is concerned, it's all about him. In true Jesuitical fashion, the suffering of his own followers is of far less importance than the advancement of the political plans of the Papacy. Essentially he was saying: they'll get over it. Give them time. They'll

suffer, they'll feel as if their pope and "Church" has betrayed them. But in the end they'll come round. They will trust me. I'm their pope.

But as was inevitable, even after the signing of the agreement persecution of Chinese Roman Catholics continued!¹⁰ At least four priests were detained. They were placed under house arrest and were subjected to Communist "indoctrination classes" (which it is well known are brutal in China). In addition, a Roman Catholic "church" building in China's Henan province was sealed up.

The persecution is not only of Roman Catholics, but also of Protestants and Muslims in China. But the point is that Chinese Roman Catholics thought this signed agreement would put an end to such persecution for them. It has done no such thing.

Roman Catholics are taught to believe that they must fully trust and blindly follow their pope and their "Church" at all times. And yet countless times throughout history they are let down. It is always all about advancing Vatican power over the world. China's Roman Catholics are by no means the first, and will not be the last of Rome's duped followers to be betrayed by the very men they trust. They trust them not only for protection in this life but even more tragically, for the salvation of their souls in the next.

The tragedy of it all is that devout Roman Catholics in China have suffered, and will continue to suffer for their faith. They will go to prison, experience torture and even death. And yet – it is all for nothing! Their pope is a lying, false "saviour", their "Church" is a counterfeit of the true Church, and they think they are suffering for the truth when they are suffering for the greatest religious lie that the world has ever known – a lie which damns them (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Their own religious system betrays them. Its only interest in them is what it get out of them. It lies to them about the things of this life (as it is doing with regards to China right now), and it lies to them about the things of the next life. *"In the end they will trust their pope"*: this sums up the immense, heartbreaking tragedy of it all.

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ENDNOTES:

1. *Inside the Vatican Magazine: Letters from the Journal of Robert Moynihan*, 20 September 2018. MoynihanReport@gmail.com.
2. *Inside the Vatican Magazine: Letters from the Journal of Robert Moynihan*, 20 September 2018.
3. *The Southern Cross*, October 3 to 9, 2018. Article: “China, Cover-Ups, Corruption.”
4. *Inside the Vatican Magazine: Letters from the Journal of Robert Moynihan*, 20 September 2018.
5. *Inside the Vatican Magazine: Letters from the Journal of Robert Moynihan*, 20 September 2018.
6. *Zenit.org*, September 23, 2018. Article: “China: Holy See, Republic of China, Reach Provisional Agreement on Appointment of Bishops.”
7. *Inside the Vatican Magazine: Letters from the Journal of Robert Moynihan*, 20 September 2018.
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9. *The Southern Cross*, October 3 to 9, 2018.
10. *The Southern Cross*, November 21 to 27, 2018. Article: “How Officials Undermine Vatican-China Agreement.”