

Franz Schurmann. The China Reader. vol.2.

Random House, NY 1967.

CHIANG KAI-SHEK *

My Religious Faith

A RADIO BROADCAST, ORIGINALLY ENTITLED
 "WHY I BELIEVE IN JESUS," DELIVERED TO
 CHINESE CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE LAND
 ON EASTER EVE, APRIL 16, 1938

One who wishes to succeed in his work, especially one engaged in a revolutionary task, must be free from superstition and yet he must be a man of faith. Especially today, when the civil passions of men are running riot, do we need a firm faith in the ultimate triumph of right. Our country is now being torn asunder; our fellow countrymen are suffering untold agonies; our men are being massacred, and our women are being ravished. The very existence of our nation is threatened. How can we avert such a terrible calamity and resist the brutal enemy upon our soil except by faith? Therefore, while we must eradicate all superstitions, we must at the same time cultivate a strong and positive faith. For example, if we believe with all our hearts that the *San Min Chu I* (Three Principles of the People) are essentially true and just principles, then we shall have the power to put them into effect, and our enemies will never be able to conquer us, no matter how fierce and cruel they may become. Fearlessness and confidence have their roots in an unshakable faith.

Tomorrow is Easter Sunday. This evening I have been asked by the National Federation of Chinese Christians to speak

* *President Chiang Kai-shek's Selected Speeches and Messages* (Taipei: China Cultural Service), pp. 20-24.

to my fellow-Christians throughout the country. I propose to follow my talk of last year with a further testimony on the subject, "Why I Believe in Jesus."

To my mind the first reason why we should believe in Jesus is that He was the leader of a national revolution. At the time of Jesus' birth the Jewish people were steadily weakening under the heavy oppression of Rome. If we study the history of this period we find that the Jews were treated like slaves and animals at the hands of their enemies. The Romans had power of life and death over them. The Jews had not only failed to resist the aggressors, but they had even lost the will to resist. Then a people's revolutionist was born in the person of Jesus, who courageously took upon Himself the heavy task of regenerating the nation. With sacrificial determination He set out to save His people, the world, and all mankind. He took His disciples on many itineraries, and by means of His preaching and healing, His Heaven-given wisdom and matchless eloquence, and His three ideals of truth, righteousness, and abundant life, He aroused the nation, led the masses, and prepared the way for a people's revolution.

The second reason why we should believe in Jesus is that He was the leader of a social revolution. The causes of a nation's weakness are many. One of the most serious is the inability of the people to improve their living and economy and to put them on a rational foundation. Therefore, one engaged in a people's revolution must begin by ridding society of its darkness and corruption, and then with fresh spirit create a new, expanding, abundant life for all the people, thus setting the nation free. Jesus fully realized that in order to revive His nation and regenerate His people He must launch a social revolution. He sought by the inspiration of His leadership and personality to awaken the perishing masses so that they would give up the ways of darkness, become new citizens, and build the foundations of a new society.

In the third place, Jesus was the leader of a religious revolution. Jesus saw that unless there was a radical reform to sweep away the superstitions and corruption in the organized religion of His day, the real spirit of religion could not shine forth. Hence He often denounced those who prayed on the

streetcorners, and strongly opposed the use of religion to exploit the people. All of His acts were designed to lead the Jewish religion from darkness to light, from decay to health, from chaos to order, from corruption to purity, and to lead society from the blackness of night into the brightness of day. How important and yet how difficult was this task of reforming religion and of cleansing the religious society! Yet Jesus went ahead with utter disregard of personal suffering, in order that He might rescue religion and society from the evils that beset them and awaken the people from their spiritual lethargy. I call Jesus a great religious revolutionist.

I have often sought to study the secret of Jesus' revolutionary passion. It seems to me that it is found in His spirit of love. With His wonderful love Jesus sought to destroy the evil in the hearts of men, to do away with social injustices, and to enable everyone to enjoy his natural rights as a human being and receive the blessings of liberty, equality, and happiness. He believed that all men are brothers and that they should love one another and help one another in need. He believed in peace and justice between nations. Throughout His life He opposed violence and upheld righteousness. He was full of mercy and continually helped the weak. His great love and spirit of revolutionary self-sacrifice were demonstrated in all His words and deeds. His purpose to save the world and humanity was firm and His faith was immovable. He gave Himself in utter love and sacrifice for others. He was absolutely fearless, and He struggled to the end. When He was nailed to the Cross and made to suffer unspeakable pain, He faced the ordeal with calm and fortitude. His loyalty to His cause and to His sense of duty, and His magnanimity to friends and associates were virtues as precious as they are difficult to attain. See Jesus lifted on the cross; He still looks to Heaven and pleads with God to forgive His enemies for their ignorance. What marvelous Love! Jesus' revolutionary spirit came from His great love for humanity.

If we compare the situation in China during the past few centuries when our national life degenerated under Manchu domination, we find that it was very similar to that occurring among the Jews under the rule of Rome. Our late leader, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, with his universal sympathy for all oppressed and

his profound understanding of Jesus' revolutionary spirit of love and sacrifice, carried on his revolutionary work for forty years and brought about at last the liberation of the Chinese people. In 1911 he overthrew the autocratic Manchu Dynasty and established the Republic of China, thereby completing his mission of national revolution.

As I look at the future of our Revolution I am convinced that we cannot truly regenerate our nation unless we have the spirit—the revolutionary spirit—of struggle and sacrifice such as we find in Jesus. I once said, "We will not abandon peace until all hope of peaceful settlement is gone; but when we reach the limit we will consider no sacrifice too costly." This, I believe, reflected Jesus' spirit. During the past few years, in addition to my regular duties, I have promoted several social movements. The best-known movement, and the one which has achieved some measure of success, is the New Life Movement. And yet I feel that this movement is apt to emphasize outward forms to the neglect of the inner substance, and to put more stress upon material than spiritual values. Where is the trouble? The answer is that many people are thinking only of new modes of living and not of a new quality of life. So I wish to give you this thought tonight: If we want to promote new ways of living, we must have not only a new spirit but also the quality of life that is inspired by the love and sacrificial purpose of Jesus.

In conclusion, Jesus' spirit is positive, sacrificial, sure, true, progressive, inspiring, and always revolutionary. We observe Easter this year at a time of grave national peril. Easter testifies to the immortality of Jesus' spirit. We who share the Christian faith should treasure the Easter message of rebirth and resurrection. We should follow Jesus' way of sacrifice. We should take His life as our example, His spirit as our spirit, His life as our life. Let us march together toward the Cross, for the regeneration of our nation and for the realization of everlasting peace on earth.