

SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH DEFEND PRIVATE PROPERTY ?

by

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In all quarters of the world, we witness today the open or concealed distrust of our fellowmen in the ability of Christians to contribute in a real sense to the shaping of a spiritually healthy society. We find this general dissatisfaction with the social significance of present-day Christianity not only among those church members who may be frustrated or disappointed by sociologically irrelevant sermons of Christian ministers. Rather, a good deal of criticism today is lodged against the way of theological thinking in general and theological education in particular as it is customary at our universities and seminaries. Are the statements of Christian ethics, issued by professors of theology, still relevant to the generality of mankind, or are they only of interest to those who specialize for their own sake in this particular field of learning? Behind the widely ranged discontent with present-day Christianity, which has even taken hold of theological students (preferredly first year students!), the teacher of theology cannot but sense the disquieting question as to whether or not Christian faith is still able to contribute genuinely to the solution of social problems in modern industrialized societies.¹⁾ In view of this question, we should not prematurely insist on the relevance of the Christian faith. Rather, with respect to the pressing issues of modern society, we should try to account for our faith accurately and responsibly, and then leave it up to the members of society to judge as to whether our evaluation of present-day social problems has been helpful to them. In the pages which follow, we endeavour to reflect on one particular problem that among Christians in the past has received less attention than it actually deserves: the problem of property. In so doing, we wish to express our

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deep appreciation to professor Dr. Tadao Aiura, whose profound scholarship and wisdom have created an atmosphere of fellowship and harmony in our department unforgettable to those who had the privilege of co-operating with him.

It goes without saying that the issue of property is one of the crucial problems that harasses modern society. An agricultural society can probably still shelve this issue for the time being. An industrial society is forced to tackle it in the broadest possible sense. Today, the issue of property presses both on theologians and sociologists so perceptibly that even the dilettante must feel it incumbent on him to try his hand at this important social problem. What significance does personal property have for man's personality? What protection should, through its legislative bodies, the state confer upon it? Is it true that, as Pope John XXIII put it, "in the right of property the exercise of liberty finds both a safeguard and a stimulus"?²⁾ In which sense is this true? In view of man's responsibility to society, what are the limits of the right of individuals in using their own property?

It should not be surprising that in responding to these questions the theologian is unable to disavow his relationship to the traditional documents of the Church. After all, in evolving a possible solution to the questions raised above, he is certainly not intent on merely imitating the methodology of the sociologists. It suffices the theologian that in the realm of property he deals basically with the same phenomena that, from his particular angle, the sociologist tries to view also. If the theologian takes up a social issue such as property, his view is bound to show that the Church has a message of its own and that, in enduring the tension this creates, it is well able to stand between Eastern and Western ideologies. Who would wish it otherwise?

But now, the perennial delay of the Second Coming of Jesus in the past twenty centuries ineluctably incurs the conclusion that, from the outset, the expectation of Jesus' return was nothing more than a belief based on mythological presuppositions. In view of this, modern man must do more justice to worldly issues than the New Testament writers, on

account of their eschatological outlook, were able to do. Today, a good many Christians find Augustine's assessment of man's property, for instance, as "paltry goods and evils of this transitory world"³⁾ somewhat lacking. True, in days of political destruction and devastation man again and again felt tempted to subscribe to such a view. Hence, it is certainly more than accidental that, as Ch. N. Cochrane points out, "Augustine was born into a world the perplexities of which have probably never been exceeded by any period, before or since, in human history."⁴⁾ For all its importance, and regardless the fact that Cochrane has written this before the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945, we must still stress that in our day, like it or not, we have to come to grips with property in a different way. To Augustine life was so full of great ills that it "bears witness to the fact that, from its very start, the race of mortal men has been a race of condemned."⁵⁾ This explains why to him the idea of a "neutral zone where the men of our day hope to construct a third city"⁶⁾ never occurred; he could not ascribe importance to the question of property as a genuine issue of Christian concern. In an age, however, in which Catholics and Protestants begin to pay increasing attention to the overriding issues of social justice in a continuing and changing world, the necessity for a close look at the significance of property can no longer be shelved. Dodging the issue at this point would be tantamount to disobedience to the Lord whom the Church professes as Lord of history. For the sake of evolving a theological view on property, we now turn our attention to the way in which the Bible deals with that issue.

I

We are not advocating here the view that the biblical passages concerning property should be regarded as appropriate means for solving our present social issues. We know that all forms of property-holding in the days of the Old and New Testament were historically conditioned forms and thus certainly not timeless pattern worthy of imitation in each coming historical age. What is worth mentioning, however, is the

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fact that in the Bible the TERMS "property" and "possession" point to more than sociological phenomena. These are terms indicative of highly theological significance. For the biblical writers, property signifies not primarily things. It is, first of all, Israel, the people of God, that is called God's Segulah, God's property.⁷⁾

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth. (Dtn. 7, 6; RSV)⁸⁾

The New Testament reinforces this concept by emphasizing that to Jesus Christ the world is not a foreign or alienated realm deserving little or no attention. In the New Testament the Church as the New Israel is called God's possession (Rom. 14, 8), and the world is, in the Gospel according to John, distinctly designated as Jesus' legitimate heritage: he came into his own! (John 1, 11). This shows that the narrow time-bound and mutable concept of human property as signifying material goods is thoroughly determined and enveloped by the overriding theological concept of the world as being the inalienable possession of Jesus Christ. As servants (*duloi*) of this Lord, Israel and the Church are in every new age called upon to keep alive the challenging insight of God's ultimate ownership over the world. In both Testaments, this emphasis contained enough power for ever and again encouraging people to look over the edges of their particular society and to anticipate a future that would antiquate even the noblest of their present forms of property-holding.

Mention must be made here that the biblical writers neither indulged in fantasies nor, on account of them, did they ignore the present. It is sobering to see how much emphasis they actually laid on justice and welfare in the particular status quo of their society. In the Old Testament, property signifies herdsman, cattle, tents, silver and gold (Gen. 13, 2), vineyards, fields and vegetable gardens (1. Kings 21, 1). All this is understood as a distinct blessing of the Lord: "The blessing of the Lord makes rich" (Prov. 10, 22). The biblical writers unanimously stress that no Israelite ought

to use his property as an instrument of oppression or exploitation. "Cursed be he who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow" (Dtn. 27, 19). Jeremiah exhorts his people: "Do not wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow" (Jer. 22, 3). All this demonstrates the concern of the Old Testament witnesses for a healthy and well-ordered society.

The New Testament, too, despite its eschatological orientation, never wearies of being concerned about the preservation and upkeep of an orderly society. Eschatology never carried the New Testament writers to a favourable view of destructiveness (Cf. Luke 23, 50; 9, 54). Whenever destructiveness threatened to prevail, the apostles raised their voice and objected strongly to any form of unhealthy enthusiasm (Rom. 13, 2; 1 Thess. 4, 11). We become here aware of the fact that the faith of the biblical writers as faith shared by a historical community, despite its own expectation of God's imminent Kingdom, had always a vested interest in the healthy continuation of the social institutions of our world. Even if it was only its by-product, faith tended always to improve the precarious condition of social justice.

In saying this, we ought not to stretch the spring beyond its tensile strength. Notwithstanding its undeniable interest in a well-regulated status quo, the biblical writers consistently kept alive a prophetic emphasis that the Christian churches in the past have unfortunately quite often lost sight of. Consequently, this prophetic outlook seems to have emigrated from the churches. We find this prophetic view-point emphasized in the Old Testament tradition concerning the sabbatical and jubilee year: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev. 25, 10). The observation that, in actuality, these years were never implemented but were, as G. v. Rad put it, mere acts "of confession by means of which Jahwe's original right of ownership of the soil was to be demonstrated"⁹⁾ does not at all shake the importance of these traditions. For even as confessions of faith these traditions invariably served the purpose of widening the horizon of the status quo in a way that definitely prevented quietistic

tendencies of self-complacency and self-assertion from rising. Besides, the existence of the Levites testifies *par excellence* that the confession of the sabbatical year forcibly invaded the present. As is well known, the Levites were supposed to have no fixed property. God decrees that they should have no inheritance in the Israelites' land, neither should they have any portion among them. God assures them: "I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel" (Num. 19, 20 f.). Their property-less existence is a reminder that the status quo of tribal or individual property should never be regarded as the final form of property-holding. The Old Testament writers, even at the risk of tedium we have to repeat, were greatly concerned for the status quo of their society. Their hope, however, definitely transcended it and, in this sense, salutarily called the status quo in question by simultaneously protecting it against calcification.

The New Testament Church, too, was not satisfied with a vaguely defined apocalyptic view on the future of the Lord but rather in the form of (notorious? promising?) testimonies ever and again attempted to break the status quo open. The letter of Paul to Philemon is doubtless a marked witness of the way of how the hope in the coming Lord effectively influenced the present. Of equal importance is a passage that partly because of traditional Christian antipathy to Marxism in the past had prematurely been dismissed from careful examination. According to Acts, the new converts of the Christian faith tried to implement a new form of property-holding which was closely related to their faith. They "had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (Acts 2, 44; 4, 32). This attempt at implementing in the realm of property a concrete form of anticipated eschatology unfortunately failed. In this case, however, failure is the characteristic hallmark of genuineness. For our modern churches have quite one-sidedly adhered to the realism of the Bible towards the respective status quo of society. Yet, have they been equally able to keep alive through marked and concrete testimonies and examples the biblical jubilee hope in the liberation of

man from all limited property forms that fall short of putting all property back in to the hands of all?

II

It is one of the ironies of history that despite the Protestant emphasis on the Bible as the one binding criterion of the Church, Thomas Aquinas is, so far as I can see, the only theologian of the past who proved capable of sensing the subtle vibrations inherent in the biblical concept on property. Notwithstanding his distinct expectation of the "lieben jüngsten Tag" (Beloved Last Day), Luther, for instance, never seemed to have perceived that the Bible persistently refused to sanction the institution of private property as the one ultimate form. This explains why he so outspokenly disfavoured any change concerning the particular order of property-holding of his day. It is not difficult to show that all through his life Luther loathed the imminent transformation of his society from an agrarian to a monetary system. It has even been suggested that to Luther the emergence of the monetary economy as such was a marked token for the imminence of the Last Day. Hence, Luther's emphasis on eschatology certainly did not encompass an affirmative attitude toward social change and improvement.

In contrast to Luther, Calvin's stress on the Holy Spirit beyond doubt contained the seed of a positive attitude toward a continuing history. As M. Weber has shown, Calvin certainly promoted significant developments, although he himself was definitely not aware of it. Calvin accepted the money market, bestowed dignity on the mercantile calling and never resented the existence of trade and commerce as Luther has done. Moreover, to Calvin, the problem of property is always more than a private affair. It is closely related to the life of the Church. Nevertheless, while his emphasis is invariably on both the abnegatio sui of the Christian in relating to his property and the mutual interdependence of the poor and the rich as members of the Body of Christ, there is no vision of the artificiality of the distribution of goods as it prevailed in his day. To him, the rich and the poor represent society;

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both are called upon *ad frugalem temporalium bonorum usum*. The very existence of the poor and the rich, however, is unsiftedly accepted as the unalterable decree of the Lord. Should Christians today be satisfied with this?

Profound consideration should be given to the fact that in his deliberations concerning property St. Thomas, although earlier than the Reformers, goes a decisive step beyond both Luther and Calvin. It deserves attention that in his treatment of property he wittingly refrains from an apotheosis of personal property. To be sure, he discusses all sides of human property in considerable detail but, significantly it seems, he does not deal with this subject by means of direct and positive reference. It deemed him most expedient to treat earthly possessions in the context of those forces that actually negate human property, i. e. theft and robbery. It should be noted that external things, so far as their nature is concerned (*ad naturam*), are not subject to man but are only given him for use (*ad usum*). This is to say that while, as to their nature, external goods remain inalienably subject to God only, man is merely permitted the use of those same things. To St. Thomas, the right of man to material things can thus only become subject of theological discussion when this use, for one reason or another, is unjustifiably denied. To St. Thomas, then, the use of external things must be guaranteed; the theological justification of the right of private property, however, can never be achieved.

As regards their use,...man has a natural dominium over external things, because, by his reason and will, he is able to use them for his own benefit, as they were made on his account.¹⁰⁾

At first sight, the distinction between the nature and the use of things seems subtle and sophisticated. Without doubt, it certainly contains problems which we cannot discuss here. Still, this distinction not only enabled St. Thomas to see that the prodigal son, for instance, (Luk 15, 11 f.) had indeed a slight edge over the rich man (Luke 12, 15)¹¹⁾ but also made him sensitive to the very problem of how arbitrarily things are distributed on earth. Isn't it indeed unnatural that some

have plenty while others live at the starvation point? St. Thomas not only saw this problem but also reacted to it theologically by declaring that "According to natural law all things are common property,"¹²⁾ He insisted that "the division of possessions is not according to the natural law but rather arose from human agreement which belongs to positive law."¹³⁾ The institution of private property is hence to him not a foregone conclusion which ought to be accepted by all Christians without scruple; it is rather merely the most reasonable form prevailing in his day. According to St. Thomas, man should therefore not only ask himself ever and again as to whether it is lawful to appropriate to himself what intrinsically belongs to the community, but he ought also to recognize that private property is virtually an appropriation of things that legitimately belong to the community as a whole. It is thus clear beyond all shadow of doubt that for St. Thomas the permission of using personal property included from the start a social responsibility of unlimited scope. Are we going too far if we state that under certain circumstances his insistence on the common nature of property even calls the institution of private property crucially in question?

St. Thomas did not go so far. He rather defends the view that although the division of property is not according to the natural law, private appropriation of property is certainly not contrary to the natural law either. To him, private property is an addition to natural law devised by human reason.¹⁴⁾ How does he account for this? Since all this is well-known, we do not need go into the details here. The doctor angelicus assumes that (1) man labours more genuinely if he can hope to acquire material things which he, then, is privileged to call his own. He (2) believes that human affairs are conducted in more orderly fashion if every individual is not held responsible for all the things entrusted to the whole community on a common basis. And he (3) thinks that man's state of mind is more at ease if the law protects those belongings of his which, in the limits of positive law, he is entitled to call his own.

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The interest St. Thomas obviously shows here in the maintenance of the social order of his day conspicuously resembles, or even reflects, the concern of the biblical writers in a healthy condition of society. Yet, as these authors never took for granted the institution of individual property as an immutable absolute, but rather relativized it by prophetically speaking of a return to the initial position of economic equality (jubilee year), so St. Thomas, too, challenges the present well-accepted institution of property-holding by reminding his contemporaries of an order greater than this institution: according to natural law all things are common! If natural law is, as J. Fellermeier put it, "an ideal order according to which the respective relations of property have to be adjusted or, if necessary, corrected,"¹⁵⁾ then we have in St. Thomas' way of treating private property a promising token for developing a flexible theology of social justice adequate for our stage of history. St. Thomas certainly prevents the Church from prematurely dismissing the values inherent in the institution of private property. But he also encourages the Christian community to open this institution toward the future, to free it from its traditional narrowness, and thus he conveys a hope to all who are somewhat embarrassed by the individualistically tinged property-concept of many Christians.¹⁶⁾ St. Thomas kept alive the biblical hope for a new day in which community property might prevail. To this writer it is beyond doubt that, specifically for all future dialogues between Christians and Marxists, St. Thomas' classic way of treatment should not fail to make a fruitful contribution.¹⁷⁾

III

It is not immediately understandable why, despite St. Thomas' prophetic insight into the nature of private property, contemporary Catholic theology so extensively could lose sight of his remarkable challenge of the institution of private property. It is well understandable, however, that on account of its particular heritage Protestantism found it rather difficult to re-discover the biblical profundity concerning external possessions. Strangely enough, in the 19th and 20th century

both churches maneuvered themselves in a position in which they more or less became the champions of the institution of private property. Although the Catholic Church, to be sure, at the turn of the century still kept emphases alive that the Protestant Church as a whole had then not even begun to sense,¹⁸⁾ it is a fact that even the greatest documents of the Catholic Church promote the institution of private property in a way that St. Thomas, in our opinion, could never have afforded to do. In his treatment of the matter, Fellermeier, for instance, goes so far as to assert that "by nature the individual is endowed with private property,"¹⁹⁾ By nature? Did he learn that from St. Thomas?

It should never be forgotten the Papal Encyclicals "Rerum Novarum" and "Quadragesimo Anno" valiantly took the side of the workers at a time when other churches were mere instruments of the state. None the less these documents still advocate private property so explicitly that they could not genuinely challenge the ideology against which the Holy See felt compelled to fight. This is why these documents are priceless pieces expressing the pastoral responsibility of the Church for its members. However, they did not contain enough prophetic dynamite capable of dealing a striking blow into the face of that ideology which now had ventured on definitely challenging Christianity. These documents, in all their undeniable strength, are defensive and apologetical. The hope contained in them, though, does not keenly surpass and excel the utopias of Marxism.

The Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" is indeed "rivaled by few in the depth and scope of its reasoning and in the forcefulness of its expression."²⁰⁾ As the later Encyclicals, it insists that ultimately the problem of property is not a social issue. Leo XIII argues in "Rerum Novarum" that society can "in no way...be healed save by a return to Christian life and Christian institutions."²¹⁾ The impression, however, is hard to resist that, according to Leo XIII, this return to Christian faith would entail, or even imply, a sincere and whole-hearted return to the institution of private property. "Every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own,"²¹⁾ the

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Pope claims for the sake of emphasizing “the inviolability of private property.”²²⁾ To him, the institution of private property is even purported to have a redemptive quality for society.

If the working-people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over.²³⁾

Although Pius XI in his Encyclical “*Quadragesimo Anno*” argues in a way that resuscitates St. Thomas’ programmatic statement mentioned above,²⁴⁾ he still basically sanctions the institution of private property as the ultimate form.²⁵⁾ Likewise, Pope John XXIII declares that “the right to private property, even of productive goods, also derives from the nature of man.”²⁶⁾ In his Encyclical “*Mater and Magistra*” he articulates “that the right of private ownership is clearly evident in the Gospels.”²⁷⁾

We need not stress here that especially Pope John XXIII judiciously advocated a very modified view of the institution of private property.²⁸⁾ It is not at all our purpose, therefore, to call in question his wise and salutary statements. Instead, our problem is as to whether the Christian Church should finalize this institution at all by declaring, as Pope John XXIII does, that “the right of private property...is permanently valid.”²⁹⁾

It is undeniable that the Holy See’s vested concern for a well-regulated human society is rooted in both the biblical traditions and in St. Thomas. But why is the corrective order of jubilee hope — an emphasis so markedly kept alive in both Testaments and in St. Thomas! — only so dimly advocated in those unrivaled documents of the Apostolic See? The only response to this question this writer is able to suggest is that both the fear of and the antipathy to Marxism do account for the fact that the Christian Churches so inadvertently broke the neck of the jubilee hope which is the apex of the Christian message concerning property. But should the Marxists, in an age of increasing approach between East and West, really deserve the credit of having first perceived the Vision of a socialized distribution of property? Is this vision not definitely older than Marxism?

IV

In contrast to P. J. Proudhon, Karl Marx did not apply a moral medicine for the cure of the social grievances and abuses prevailing in his day. To him, the law of history itself was turning its wheels in favour of the ultimate abolition of economic injustice. The imminent revolution of the working-class, Marx claimed, is an irresistible event based on the law of history and accelerated by the way of production of the capitalistic economy. We will not detain us here with the interesting divergence of K. Marx's concept of the revolution from that of Fr. Engels. At this point, it should suffice merely to mention that for both men the outcome of the revolution is due to give birth to a new age the characteristic hallmark of which is, as the Communist Manifesto states, not abolition of property as such but abolition of *private* property. No wonder, then, that in view of this Marxist emphasis the Christian Churches so one-sidedly began to champion and countenance institution of private property. Unfortunately, reactionary moves are never judicious ones. What a forceful message would the Christian Churches have had when, instead of fighting Marxism under the questionable title of the so-called inviolability of private property, they had stressed that, as Prof. Raftis put it, private property is of "relative nature," because "material things are ultimately designated for all men"¹⁸⁰) It is sad that only at this late stage of history Catholic and Protestant Christians begin to sense the failure in the pedagogy of their social theology. Tragic must it be called, however, if the churches, despite these salutary voices, were to perpetuate today the fallacy of the one-sided emphasis on 'private' property.

V

According to Pope John XXIII, it is the lack of a solid Christian education in the Church of today that ultimately accounts for the deplorable cleavage between Christian theory and practice. "Indeed, it happens in many quarters and too

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often," says the Pope, "that there is no proportion between scientific training and religious instruction."³¹⁾ In firmly agreeing with John XXIII, we should like to suggest in addition that Christian education today must without delay venture to place the present forms of property-holding into the wider context of the jubilee hope, as we find it expressed — both in the Bible and St. Thomas. Should the Church fail to do this, we fear that it will not only fall considerably short of fulfilling its educational responsibility but also be outrun by the actual course of history.

It is well known that ever since the French revolution the voice insisting on the inviolability and sacredness of private property has not been silenced and muted. In view of the fact that over long periods of history man's hard-earned property had again and again fallen prey to unlawful expropriation at the hands of emperors, monarchs, landlords, and even ecclesiastical authorities, the insistence on the inviolability of property becomes relevant and understandable. However, in a world in which, as St. Thomas put it, according to natural law all things are common, both private property and private ownership can never be the last word. Man is immersed in history like a fish in water and it would be a grandiose illusion to regard the institution of private property as part and parcel of the eternal rocks beneath the drift-sand of history. Private property is the variable, not the constant; it is with all its undeniable values a relative, not an absolute. The force that has ruthlessly taught this lesson is the swaying power of industrialization with its concomitant de-individualization of man. Today, man's loneliness, which ensued from this process of de-individualization, like a desperate outcry, permeates all kinds of modern literature.³²⁾

Without doubt, industrialization opened an enormous field of new possibilities for the individual; yet, at the same time, it de-prived man of the possibility of acquiring in the brief span of his life an amount of private property that could secure him and his family against illness, untimely disability, old age an untimely death of the bread-winner. Today, private property should be rightly called a luxury because man no

longer is dependent upon it so far as his basic needs are concerned. In a free society, the individual must be free to enjoy the privilege of accumulating 'private' property. Man can only be permitted, however, to enjoy it if he pays his dues for it to the society that enables him to enjoy it. He should only be able to derive pleasure from his 'private' property after sacrificing a substantial portion of it to the overriding principle: *Secundum jus naturale omnia sunt communia* (According to natural law all things are common property).

It is obvious that the overwhelming majority of people living in an industrialized society like Japan is today totally dependent upon the effectiveness of a social security plan that guarantees free education at least at the elementary and middle school level, and thus creates equal opportunities for the younger members of society. It is time for Christians to realize that in addition to free education an effective medical care plan for all citizens, old age insurance and hospital plans are more important than the accumulation of personal property. Our society can only move toward a promising future if the programme of communification of property can more effectively and consequently be carried through than in the past. No other agency than the government in co-operation with the people can guarantee, sponsor and uphold this indispensable service. Yet, it is the people who have to pay for all these privileges which require a large amount of money. The time will come when a man without extensive personal property can still live a moderate life. Had the same man, however, to pay for the education of his children, for his doctor and hospital bills by himself, he would sooner or later be a victim of uncontrollable circumstances. In an industrialized society, a wage earner today pays approximately 20 to 25% out of his monthly income for several kinds of taxes which are necessary for guaranteeing those basic privileges as listed above. In all probability, the amount will be increased even in the near future.

The fact that private property has to be heavily taxed today is only the reverse side of the consoling truth that private property is no longer the chief sustaining factor in a

man's life. In view of this, the regulations of the Japanese Civil Code are due to re-definition. Like most Western Codes, the Japanese law decrees that “所有者は法令の制限内において自由に其の所有物の使用, 収益, 及び処分を為す権利を有す”.³³⁾ For the best of society, we must find ways in the future to restrict the right to personal property much more incisively than in the past. Significantly enough, Pope Paul VI in his recent encyclical “*Populorum Progressio*” states that “private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute right” and upon this he goes on to add that “the common good sometimes demands... expropriation.”³⁴⁾ If the Catholic Church, the instigator and solicitor of private property in the past, is able to reverse its position so totally, the Protestant churches regardless of their geographical location should take a new look at the matter of property and review their own position in the light of the biblical traditions.

The way in which, without fatally destructing man's creativity and initiative and without truncating his liberty past repair, in the future a systematic and more effectual programme of communification of property can be worked out is beyond this article. It must suffice here to say that this writer is strongly convinced that the working out of a meaningful programme, which must reflect the common nature of all property, is certainly not beyond the reach of the economic and political leaders of Japan. The disquieting question for the Christian churches of Japan merely is as to whether they will be able still to transcend and continually to de-calcify the property-forms of society by means of the perpetual challenge inherent in the biblical jubilee hope.

Notes

- 1) Cf. Christian Walther, *Theologie und Gesellschaft, Ortsbestimmung der evangelischen Sozialethik*, Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1967, p. 163f.
- 2) Mater et Magistra, Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope John XXIII, Glen Rock, N. J. Paulist Press, 1962, p. 38
- 3) St. Augustine, *City of God*, Tr. by G. G. Walsh et al., Image Book D 59 Book 1, Ch. 8, p. 45

- 4) Charles N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1940, p. 380
- 5) *City of God*, Book 22, Ch. 22, p. 519
- 6) E. Gilson, "Foreword," St. Augustine, *City of God*, p. 32
- 7) Cf. G. Locher, *Der Eigentumsbegriff als Problem evangelischer Theologie*, Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1962
- 8) Dtn. 14, 2; 26, 18; Ps. 135, 4; Mal. 3, 17
- 9) G. v. Rad, *Old Testament Theology* Vol. I, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962, Reprinted 1963, p. 16
- 10) St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol. II, Second Part of the Second Part, New York: Benzinger Broth. 1947, Q. 66, 1, p. 1476
- 11) *Ibid.* Q. 119, 3 p. 1694
- 12) *Ibid.* Q. 66, 2 p. 1476
- 13) *Ibid.* Q. 66, 2 p. 1477
- 14) *Ibid.* Q. 66, 2 p. 1477
- 15) J. Fellermeier, "Eigentum," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. III, Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1959, p. 741
- 16) A good example for this individualistic concept is H. E. Manning, "Property in Civilized Law and the Scriptures," *Toronto Canadian Bar Review*, 1948, p. 19
- 17) Discussions are already under way: W. D. Marsch, "Verständigung zwischen Christen und Marxisten," *Evangelische Ethik*, 1968, p. 36f.
- 18) Cf. the statement in Mater et Magistra, *op. cit.* p. 14
- 19) Fellermeier, *op. cit.* p. 738
- 20) Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," *The Papal Encyclicals in their historical context*, ed. by Anne Fremantle, A Mentor Religious Classic, New York: 2nd pr. 1958, p. 179
- 21) "Rerum Novarum," p. 168
- 22) *Ibid.* p. 172
- 23) *Ibid.* p. 188
- 24) "the goods...which the Creator destined for the entire family of mankind..." (Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno," *The Papal Encyclicals in their historical context*," p. 231
- 25) *Ibid.*
- 26) *Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope XXIII*, "Pacem in Terris" New Jersey, Glen Rock, Paulist Press, 1963, p. 11
- 27) "Mater et Magistra," *op. cit.* p. 42
- 28) One cannot overlook in reading the new connotation John XXIII's emphasis on the institution of private property bears: "It is not enough...to assert that man has from nature the right of privately possessing goods as his own..., unless, at the same time, a

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continuing effort is made to spread the use of this right through all ranks of its citizenry." ("Mater et Magistra," p. 40). One might well ask if this is not an entirely new re-interpretation of the institution of private property; a re-interpretation that envisages a future society of economic equality. By their over-emphasis of 'private' property, the churches have in the past never really defended the feasibility of such a society!

- 29) *Ibid.* p. 38
- 30) J. A. Raftis, *Liberty in Society*, The Social Doctrine of the Church, Theology House, The University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, (unprinted), p. 218
- 31) "Pacem in Terris," p. 52
- 32) "Dark quenching of the fire! The heavy, brutal crushing out that all man must go through, keeping their eyes clear and brave unto the end! Small and of no import, insects though they are!" (John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*).
- 33) 民法, 所有権の内容 第 206 条
- 34) Richard A. Wahl, "Private Property and 'Populorum Progressio,'" *The Basilian Teacher*, Vol. 12, Nr. 3, 1968, p. 131f.