

World Conference on Church and Society  
Geneva, 12th - 26th July, 1966

Conference Address No. 6a

THESES ON CHURCH AND REVOLUTION

Heinz-Dietrich Wendland (Münster. Univ. Westphalia)

1. In contrast with the restricted political or social revolution, the present revolution is total in character, and is penetrating into every sphere of life. It is a world-wide revolution, in the strict sense.
2. A distinction must be drawn between this concept of revolution and the following:
  - a) evolutionism and reformism
  - b) absolute revolution in the Marxist sense
  - c) conservatism
  - d) reaction
3. The world-wide revolution of today is caused by the technological-scientific civilization, whose effects are transforming everything rationally.
4. The world-wide revolution manifests itself mainly in the form of rapid social change in Africa, Asia and South America.
5. The main forces and tendencies of the world-wide revolution include changes in:
  - a) the tribe
  - b) agriculture
  - c) the formation of new States
  - d) nationalism
  - e) the desire for a new, world-wide order of society which expresses itself in different ways as the expectation of a collective salvation in this world, on the lines of a secular eschatology.
6. The original revolutionary element in the Christian Gospel consists in the world-transforming power of the Kingdom of God, and the dynamic-active expectation of it.
7. This makes the Christian Church and all Christians into active doers of love, transformers of society, State and the economy for the sake of the public good (salus publica) and for the sake of the human dignity of every individual life.
8. This revolutionary Christian humanism is an ethic of dynamic co-responsible action.

9. This ethic is an ethic of non-conformist critical solidarity, based on the principle of openness to all the problems, tasks and crucial situations of modern society.
10. The pattern for Christian revolutionary action is the responsible society of the future in which human dignity will be safeguarded. With the help of this pattern, Christians can show up all injustice, oppression and de-humanisation, and can combat them. This pattern is a definite historical aim; at the same time it rejects the Utopia of a Christian society.
11. All separate reforms must derive their meaning and their local value from the universal aims for the world-wide society. It is not the use of force, but this relation to the general aim which is ultimately decisive for the revolutionary action of Christians.
12. Revolution, in the Christian sense, does not aim at anarchic freedom, nor at subjecting man to the collectivity. It aims at a society of people who are free and equal, who serve one another in justice, peace and mutual responsibility.
13. The Christian community therefore translates its action-of-love into daily acts of practical humanity.
14. The historical discontinuity between 20th-century Christians and the ethics of the New Testament is bridged by the spiritual continuity of the Body of Christ, which remains unchanged throughout all ages of history, living, active and effective. 20th-century Christians take revolutionary action for the sake of man, based on the eschatological-spiritual freedom of the children of God, because they are servants of the coming Kingdom of Christ, which is already present here and now.