

The Green Paper

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“The practical ways in which the political community structures itself and regulates public authority can vary according to the particular character of a people and its historical development. But these ways should always serve to mould men who shall be civilized, peace-loving and well disposed towards all - to the advantage of the whole human family.”

“It is in full accord with human nature that juridical-political structures should, with ever better success and without any discrimination, afford all their citizens the chance to participate freely and actively in establishing the constitutional bases of a political community, governing the state, determining the scope and purpose of various institutions, and choosing leaders.”

I am quoting here from Section 74 and 75 of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, issued by Vatican Council II in December 1965, and not, as you may have been inclined to think, from the Green Paper: the 1987 Review of Developments in

Representative Government, issued by the Government of Hong Kong in May this year. It is, however, true to say that the Green Paper says implicitly what the Council said explicitly.

“The purpose of the 1987 Review is”, the Green Paper tells us, “to consider whether the systems of representative government in Hong Kong should be further developed in 1988 and, if so, in what manner ... Following publication of the Green Paper, there will be a period of consultation extending to 30 September 1987. During this time, the public are invited to send their views in writing to the Survey Office which has been established for the purpose of receiving and recording public opinion on the 1987 Review”.

The Government wants to know what we think. More clearly than every before, it is treating us as adult members of the community. We have an opportunity for speaking our minds on how the community should structure itself. We should make use of that opportunity. That is part of our duty towards the people among whom we live.

The Green Paper indicates areas of possible change in representative government in Hong Kong and sets out

the arguments for and against change, briefly and with evident eagerness to be impartial. Here I would like to remind you that “Christians should recognize that various legitimate, though conflicting, views can be held concerning the regulation of temporal affairs. They should respect their fellow citizens when they promote such views honourably.” (Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 75)

So, it is not my purpose to guide anyone to this or that answer to any of the questions put to us in the Green Paper. It is, however, my purpose to encourage you to read the Green Paper, to ponder the questions it asks, and to submit your views in due time and in due order. Perhaps you have never yet done anything of this kind. Begin now.

God bless you all!

+ John Baptist Wu
The Bishop of Hong Kong
The Birth of St. John the Baptist 1987