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Abbreviations

ANS : Amity News Service (HK)

CASS : Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing)

CCBC : Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference

CCC : China Christian Council

CCPA : Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association

CM : *China Muslim* (Journal)

CPPCC : Chinese People's Consultative Conference

FY : *Fa Yin* (Journal of the Chinese Buddhist Assoc.)

SCMP : South China Morning Post(HK)

SE : Sunday Examiner (HK)

TF : *Tian Feng* (Journal of the China Christian Council)

TSPM : Three-Self Patriotic Movement

UCAN : Union of Catholic Asian News

ZENIT : Catholic News Agency

ZGDJ : *China Taoism* (Journal)

ZGTZJ : *Catholic Church in China* (Journal of Chinese Catholic Church)

Note: the term *lianghui* is used in this journal to refer to the joint committees of the TSPM and CCC.

Section I

Articles



Understanding Religion

Zhuo Xinping, 卓新平

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Following China's reform and opening to the world, understanding of religion's situation in Chinese society has undergone a similarly important improvement. Yet understanding of religion's existence has not altogether turned for the better owing to its complex relations with Chinese society and government and its continuing susceptibility to ideological constraints. Transparent solutions to many fundamental theoretical and cognitive questions have yet to be found. In other words, religion continues to be a sensitive subject even in today's age of social development. If religion cannot be 'desensitised' this will directly impact the present efforts toward a harmonious society.

Issues in Understanding Religion in China

1. 'China is a-religious.'

The assertion by early Twentieth Century reformers like Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) that China is an 'a-religious nation' 非宗教的国家 and that the Chinese people are an 'a-religious people' 非宗教的民族, has been expanded upon repeatedly ever since, even though it ignores religions like Buddhism etc. This viewpoint conceals within it a negation, a negative connotation, suggesting that the Chinese people are somehow above other religious cultural systems. Liang thought that whereas religion values faith, philosophy values doubt, and therefore he categorically asserted the philosophical character of Chinese culture. His assertion gave shape to Chinese intellectuals' habit of slighting religion, even to the point that several scholars of Confucianism 儒教 have declared that it is not a religion. They emphasise the 'this-worldly' enlightenment in Confucianism, brought about through the inculcation of a social ethic, rather than the 'otherworldly method' of religions. They play down or negate the finding of previous Chinese academics who have stressed that Confucianism is indeed a religion. Confucianism has come to symbolise a

reified traditional Chinese culture, thereby avoiding difficulties over its emphasis on the 'rectification of names' 正名 or criticisms over the statues of Confucius or the overall effect of Confucianism. These all make present-day advocates of a Confucianism revival uncomfortable.

Such people also tend to look down on or set little store by other religions which have, to a certain extent, met the spiritual requirements of lower social strata. Many people regard religion's place in society as 'problematic'. So the assertion 'China is without religion' rests on a value judgment that religion is somehow 'not good'. Resolution of other religious issues keeps returning to these value judgments about religion's essence and its worth. Society in today's China has already undergone huge change, and those who pass a neutral judgment on religion are steadily increasing, but the view of society as a whole toward religion has not substantively changed. There is still a lack of recognition that religion is a normal and ordinary part of life. As a result, the accumulation of more positive attitudes toward religion is not yet sufficient to have produced a significant breakthrough.

2. Religion is a 'backward culture'

The discussion of whether religion is 'cultural' marks a watershed in mainland Chinese attitudes toward the question of religion. The move from a mentality in which religion is 'opium' to one in which it represents culture represents a breakthrough or leap in the understanding of late twentieth century China. The 'opium theory' essentially holds to the negative view of religion, while the 'cultural theory' is at least neutral in its appraisal of religion and can be more objective, even approving. One cannot simply negate culture [in the same way as opium]. Of course, within culture, there is the cream and the dross; one must pick and choose what will be regarded as positive. In this way, religion may be judged approvingly, leading to recognition of its social function. Even where religion is recognised as a constituent of human culture, religious culture is sometimes thought only to be backward and conservative. The argument suggests that its conservative nature, purely a recollection of past tradition, should not be put on the same terms as progressive culture. Therefore, in the movement toward social reconstruction initiated in today's China, an advance toward cultural development and flourishing, the role of religious culture can be somewhat vague, its social function somewhat sketchy.

Many who maintain neither religion's cultural nature nor its social function, insist instead that it is an illusory, idealistic form of belief. They argue that religious culture finds it difficult to keep pace with the advance of social progress because it is a form of 'idealism'. Religious culture, like all forms of backwardness, will be eliminated by progress, particularly since religious culture has turned toward secularisation. According to this pattern of thought, religion cannot possibly be classified alongside cultural progress; it is not destined to play a part in social development or revolutionary reform.

3. Religion is 'politicised'.

There is no question that the relationship between religion and politics is intimate and complex. Yet religion, when all is said and done, is not politics, nor should it be classed as a form of politics. China today regards politics as more important than religion and stresses that religion must be viewed with political vigilance. The pity of it remains that the politicisation of religion to such a degree is not because of religion's positive significance, but because of a political consciousness which emphasises vigilance rather than the provision of vigorous leadership. The need to overturn the religious exploiting classes remains a prevalent view; not only that the religious are members of the exploiting class but politically serve the exploiting class. Religion's political function is to placate the lower classes and dispel their revolutionary consciousness thereby safeguarding the control and interests of the ruling class. This political appraisal of religion is appropriate to a time when a revolutionary Party was overthrowing the old political system. But it has remained even after the revolution succeeded in winning power. Within the ruling Party there are many who still hold to such a view, and who maintain that the inevitable connections between religion and politics mean that religion will always be opposed to the mainstream of Chinese political life. They contend that today's leaders must continue to be alert to opposition and contradictions, that they cannot trust in religious support nor utilise its power. Religion, in their view, has failed to acclimatise itself to today's politics; it is suited only to being 'guided' 引导 by politics and not to taking an active lead 积极引导.

Such a negative orientation within politics toward religion is reinforced by a view that religious faith and political belief are fundamentally similar, but that their mutual opposition mean one or other must be chosen. Many people in politics today feel that religion cannot be 'used' by mainstream society for political reasons, nor should there be regulations or policies which aid religion or smooth its development. Such views on the relationship between state and religion make it very difficult to rationalise the political supervision of religion, but instead strengthen estrangement and contradiction between the two.

4. The belittlement of 'theistic' 有神 religion.

Modern Chinese society has viewed religion essentially as a form of theism 有神论; religion requires a belief in ghosts 鬼, spirits 神, the existence of the transcendent 超然 or a world beyond 彼岸世界. Inter-religious dialogue, as well as dialogue between the religions and other ideological and political systems has gone on since the beginnings of modern human society, but especially since the later years of the twentieth century. In recent times, the dialogue between theism and atheism has been most emphasised. For many, the dispute between atheism and theism will never be resolved, with each side unable to converse with the other. Some argue that even inquiries into religious knowledge, which describe, introduce or study religious understanding should be censured as attempts to proselytise through learning. Religious theism is seemingly left with no alternative but to fight this

atheist negation and criticism, anything else is unnecessary or dubious. Objective, neutral, or scholarly investigation into religion is, according to such a view, also within the scope of 'propagating religion' and comes under suspicion as the work of 'cultural missionaries'. Critics of religion and those who censure proselytism suggest that one day, perhaps, all religions and belief systems will encounter a truly 'radiant teaching' and come to their senses.

Classical Marxism teaches that material existence determines consciousness, that the economic base determines the [ideological] superstructure. Yet all of the religious adherents in today's China have 'dwelt long in a new society, lived long under the Red Flag'. Indeed, this is the era of the 'socialist system'. Religious adherents are seen as 'relics of the old order', reflections of the '*ancien régime*'. Socialist ideological education has long insisted that believers separate themselves from the worldview or epistemology of [philosophical] idealism.

5. Correlation between Religion and Hostile Powers.

Some Chinese people still view religion within the mindset of a 'war footing' 敌情. For them, the connection between religion and anti-Chinese powers is an undisputed fact. The Cold War between East and West is ongoing, and countries are using the form of religion to infiltrate their ways of thought. In religious terms, the battle in today's China is frequently portrayed as a battle by Chinese society and culture against a Western consciousness represented by Christianity. David Aikman, author of *Jesus in Beijing*, speaks of 'Jesus the Lamb' defeating the 'Chinese dragon'; that kind of talk sets alarm bells reverberating inside the minds of contemporary Chinese. Evidently, religion is an unreliable influence on public opinion and the mind of the masses; psychological defences are called for. Religion is seen to touch upon various integrated demands of national security: stability, the safeguarding of defences and the countering of separatism.

Hopes for the Understanding of Religion

1. Understanding religion's place in Chinese history.

The Reform and Opening period has allowed people to recognise afresh the role of religion in traditional China. The religions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism all had a place in traditional China and shaped its religious spirit. The 'three teachings' have had a significance in civilisation 教化 much greater than the connotation of religion 宗教, would normally allow. Their presence in the religious nature of today's China has been reserved and continuous. Apart from Buddhism, which initially expanded outward from an Indic culture, both Confucianism and Daoism are correlated with popular Chinese religiosity and are entirely home-grown. All three were institutions in the 'Chinese system'. Buddhism, which in its Indian essentials was very different from characteristically Chinese

[religion], became Sincised by Chinese religions. As a result, while traditional Chinese culture was not destined to become religious, the two are too close to be separated. Religion played an important part in traditional Chinese culture, even a critical one in supporting meaning in traditional society. Without Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism traditional Chinese spiritual and moral life would be devoid of any substance, and such a picture would be unreliable. These religions were characteristic of Chinese experience and shaped Chinese religious existence. They constituted the kernel of traditional indigenous culture. Religions from overseas, like Islam and Christianity, came from very early on into Chinese culture, and for the past thousand years or more have contributed to the Chinese character to a certain degree and to its modernisation. In characterising the existence of religion in ancient and modern Chinese society we cannot say that society was anywhere close to being non-religious nor should we adopt a nihilistic attitude toward history.

2. Understanding the Religious nature of Traditional Chinese Culture.

Is the traditional Chinese cultural 'way' religious or not, even if it contained religious elements? This was the question that the 20th Century 'New Culture Movement' 新文化运动 answered in the negative. On the basis of this answer, it becomes difficult to separate out the connections between religion and Chinese culture, as it does in the larger context of world culture. Some people affirm that religion is culture, pointing out that 'in the domains of mankind's cultural and intellectual movements, religion plays a vital part'. (See Luo Zhufeng 罗竹风 and Huang Xinchuan 黄心川's entry 'Religion' 宗教 in the *Chinese Encyclopedia* 《中国大百科全书》). But, in the early period of Reform and Opening, public opinion in China still held to the view that 'religion was opium'. The proposition that 'religion was culture' attempted to bring order out of the prevailing chaos by 'liberating the functionality' of religion. Admitting that culture contains an important religious component, especially that 'the religion of a people constitutes an important component of their cultural content', changes our view of the linkages between religion and culture in China. The 'construction of a socialist intellectual civilization', therefore, 'has to include religion' (maintained Qian Xuesen 钱学森¹). Although the controversy over the status and function of religious culture remains, society itself is already affirming the hope of religious culture.

3. Cooperation between religion and politics.

Many commentators have paid attention to the close relationship between religion and politics at all times and in all countries. Different kinds of politics have different aims and 'uses' for integrating religion. Proper forms of politics seek to extend their circle of allies, while reducing those antagonistic to the 'united front'. This is exactly what the current United Front Work Department intends: 'faiths are based on mutual respect, politics

¹ Editor's note: Qian Xuesen 钱学森 (1911-2009) was one of modern China's foremost scientists and engineers, working extensively on China's atomic and missile programmes. He is widely known as the father of China's space industry.

is based on united cooperation.' Religion can, in a certain way, become a barometer of modern Chinese politics. It can function as a factor in social unrest or turmoil but, equally, it can be useful in social stability and consolidation. In this way it acts as a test for the ability and competence of the ruling authorities. Religion should play a 'centripetal' rather than a 'centrifugal' role in a harmonious society. The actions of authorities to command and govern can require religious 'assistance' and 'safeguards'.

4. Religions' social consciousness.

Religion is not purely 'theistic', requiring a belief in spirits or purely concerned with the other world and the next life. It is also concerned about the fullness of this life. A long accumulation of tradition informs our current livelihood as well as our present experience. Society in today's China has been under the governance of the Communist Party for more than sixty years now. The development and changes in society and politics since the establishment of the People's Republic tells us that the time for criticising religion has ended. The classical Marxist criticism of religion was at its heart a criticism of society at that time and a repudiation of its politics, and not a criticism of religion of itself. Religion at that time was a reflection of society itself, and Marxism recognised its foothold in social consciousness. But religion in today's China is a reflection of today's society and its ideology reflects our social consciousness. It is our 'superstructure', not that of the 'exploiting class' of sixty years ago, even less a reflection of a Western capitalist society of a century ago. The values of today's religion, including its ideological and political values, both bless and support today's efforts to build a harmonious society. Our ruling Party should be seeking as many allies as possible and not seeking to manufacture dissension or instigate contradictions which put society into turmoil. Our individual places in society should each be to promote social harmony, political stability and clear up ideological tensions.

5. Continue Reform and Opening

The continued opening of our society to the international world and the cooperation with people from all walks of life and all countries requires us to recognise the present condition of international religion. This means making contact, indeed making friendships, with believers from all different countries. Chinese society, consequently, cannot boycott outside religious influence but must enter international society and seek to expand its own influence. It will not be able to block off the traffic of all foreign religious influence, but should seek to go global and build bridges to international society. In the majority of countries worldwide, religions are well integrated and coordinated with different cultures, value systems and ideologies. China needs to recognise that its social harmony, and that of the world, has to develop in this direction. It has to 'desensitise' the phenomenon of religion and regularise its development.

At the same time, given the complexity of circumstances around the world, China certainly needs to sharpen its vigilance. The world situation is not optimistic, but China should devote itself to promoting harmony. In reality, of course, it is impossible to remain on good terms with everyone, particularly as various interest groups vie with each other and aggravate conflicts. The political-economies, cultures and societies of different regions, countries, peoples and communities are entering a phase of increased fluctuations of strength and weakness. The 'Cold War' in international relations makes it impossible to maintain the illusion of remaining on good terms with everyone. China should seek first to improve its own strength and consolidate its own territory in this complex and severe situation so as to become strong and cohesive. If we are to expect against internal strife and chaos, our attitude toward religion will be crucial. If we are to take a harmonious look at religion we will prioritise methods of dialogue and communication. Of course there are factors within religion which are disharmonious, where religions conflict and dispute among themselves. There are also countless religious ties with regions outside China. These should not be repudiated but they do present challenges through the permeation of beliefs and practices. We should not manage them in such a way as to increase contradictions or aggravate disputes. Instead we should take the opposite approach of ameliorating contradictions, resolving disputes and quietening conflicts. Such smooth relations will enable religious groups to help preserve the safety of the masses and strengthen the body of our nation.

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Viewing the Church in today's China through the characteristics of three groups of Christians.

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Abstract: The Christian community in China has stabilised in recent years and the vitality of local Christians remains active. Sociologists, anthropologists and other specialists have been researching the religious field, conducting interviews with those entering registered places of worship, investigating the actual number of Chinese Christians and forecasting what will emerge as the next hot issue. At the same time the pluralisation of Chinese Christianity at all sorts of levels cannot be ignored. This plural character lends Chinese Christianity a vitality as well as adding a whole series of challenges. This essay will take three groups, not so much as to reveal the complete picture of Chinese Christianity, but as particular objects in its development. These are, namely, university students as proxies for the group of intellectual Christians, the so-called 'boss Christians' and professional Christians, and rural Christian farmers and migrant workers.

Keywords: Christian university students; boss Christians; Christian migrant workers; the situation of Chinese Christianity.

In the past few years, the whole situation of Chinese Christianity has stabilised, and the vitality of local Christianity has been dynamic. An investigation by the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) conducted during November and December 2008 in 11 counties in the provinces of Jiangxi, Hunan and Yunnan revealed several obvious trends. The number of believers was large, the strength of its folk traditions comparatively strong. For example, JP village in YG county in Jiangxi Province held 11,981 Christians, or 33.6% of the village population. In the FG county of Nujiang 怒江 prefecture in Yunnan province, Christians had spread to each village, or 57.52% of the county's population. Data from several other investigations, including from other

provinces like Henan, Anhui and Zhejiang, all reveal the brisk growth of Christianity and the existence of similarly large numbers of Christians.

Anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists investigating the field of religion have all have used various points of view to investigate the phenomenon of the Chinese house churches. Calculations of the number of Chinese Christians in these various groups remain one of the hot topics of Chinese religion. The investigation mentioned above, used a sampling method to investigate the number of Christians in Yunnan, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. In October 2008 a symposium was held at Peking University entitled 'Chinese Religion and Society' 中国宗教与社会高峰论坛. In May, 2007, the head of Horizon Research Consultancy 零点研究咨询集团, Mr Yuan Yue 袁岳 published 'A Research Project into Chinese Residents Spiritual Culture' which also touched upon the number of Chinese Christians. This study used a random sampling method in 20 major cities, 16 smaller cities, 20 rural villages, in order to select home interviews with 7,021 individuals aged between 16 and 75. In fact, the first major study on popular Chinese religiosity was conducted as early as 2005 by East China Normal University 华东师范大学 under professors Tong Shijun 童世骏 and Liu Zhongyu 刘仲宇 via interviews with 4,500 ordinary Chinese over the age of 16. Their findings demonstrated that 31.4% of Chinese professed themselves to be religious. Extrapolating their results would mean that at least 300 million Chinese are followers of one kind of religion or another. Among these, perhaps 200 million are adherents of Buddhism, Daoism or Chinese folk religion and the number of Christians would be around 40 million. The results of this sample were reported by the [English language] *China Daily* as 'Religious believers thrice the estimate' on the 7th February, 2007 and gave rise to much comment at home and abroad. Compared with figures obtained by Yu Jianrong 于建嵘, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute for Rural Development 农村发展研究所, this number [of Christians] is manifestly on the low side. Between October and December 2010, Professor Yu gave two addresses to Peking University's students and staff at which he gave estimates for the number of 'Three Self Christians as somewhere between 18 million and 30 million, the number of house church Christians as somewhere between 45 million and 60 million; together the figure is around 60 to 70 million.' Although this figure is a rough calculation, it is based on the professor's own travels throughout China over a space of two years, and detailed analyses of the grass roots. Given the figures in these two studies, the figures approved by the government of 16 million Chinese Christians and of 20 million given by Elder Fu Xianwei 傅先伟, chair of the Three Self Patriotic Committee 基督教三自爱国运动委员会, are underestimates.

There are many guesses of the number of Chinese Christians from researchers inside and outside of China. The English scholar Tony Lambert 林保德 in his book *China's Christian Millions* suggests that the number of evangelicals in China is between 30 and 50 million. The analysis of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary provides a figure of around 70 million. The former *Time Magazine* correspondent David Aikman claimed as early as 2003 that the combined number of

Protestants and Catholics was over 80 million. There is no doubt that such guesses exceed the more scientifically arrived at statistics and are not worth giving too much credence.

The number of Christians has a much wider significance than simple statistical fact. Missionaries have long hoped for the 'conversion of China' and the banner of 'religious rights' is proclaimed by many foreign powers, heightening the intensity and import of these numbers and speculations. Furthermore, the statistics help to demarcate boundaries in the question of Chinese Christianity. So-called 'Christmas Christians' probably make up not a small number, while in rural areas there are 'folk believers'. Their labels are different, their quality also different. Rural believers make up more than 70% of all Chinese Christians. There is also the question of the 'religious ecological' balance. If the number of believers in Buddhism, Daoism and other religions has grown as quickly or even more quickly than the number of Christians, on what grounds can we say that Christianity is growing too quickly? Then there is additional sensitivity of Christianity. In 2003, some scholars investigated the religious circumstances in Wenzhou 温州 city. They found that the number of Christians was 530,000, or 7% of the city's population of 7.5 million, which is certainly a high figure. Yet the investigation also found that the number of Buddhist and Daoist believers, clergy and religious sites exceeded that of the Christians. The space open to Christianity in the 'religious market' is comparatively limited. The related questions are numerous: the social effect of Christian believers and fellowships, the tense relations between Christianity and traditional Chinese culture, and so forth. In the face of these questions, the issue of the number of Chinese Christians has more than just a statistical significance.

Apart from the sensitive question of the number of Chinese Christians, there are a number of other topics related to the pluralisation of Chinese Christianity which should not be ignored. One aspect is the pluralisation of different church organisations. Some people use the labels 'Three Self', house church or independent church to differentiate them. Others have suggested using analogies like the red religious market, black religious market, and grey religious market. Still others have differentiate churches according to whether they are local *lianghui* meeting points, semi-denominational churches, unregistered churches, or village churches. At another level, the pluralisation of Chinese Christians also reveals the different characteristics of the various layers and fellowships of Chinese Christianity. For example we can speak of intellectual Christians, rural believers, urban believers, business meeting points, ethnic minority believers, etc. These different groups of believers all display the distinctive characteristics of their background. The pluralisation of Chinese Christianity also reveals differing interpretations of the Bible, different cultural viewpoints and so forth. This variety lends a vitality to Chinese Christian existence and growth while also adding to its multiple challenges.

The rest of this essay will examine the circumstances of three different groups of Chinese Christian believers, restricting its view to the trends of development in Chinese Christianity since 2008. Although these three groups cannot offer a comprehensive view of Chinese Christianity, yet they represent hot issues in its growth over recent years. They are divided

into university students (representing the intellectual class of Christians), 'boss Christians' and professional believers, and rural believers and their cousins who have become migrant workers.

1. Christian College and University Students

In 2008, the heat of 'Christianity fever' was still at its height among the university and college campuses. Many were paying close attention to this phenomenon. At the beginning of 2008, a group of researchers in Shanghai used random sampling to investigate the proportion of Christians among students at six universities and colleges. They found the proportion of Christian university students to be 4.7%, a far higher proportion than the 1.07% in the city as a whole. The situation in Beijing's universities and colleges appears to be similar. In 2004, Zuo Peng 左鹏 published an investigative report in the journal *Youth Research* 青年研究. He inferred that the proportion of Christians among the various college and university students in Beijing was 1.8%, far higher than the overall proportion in the city of 0.23%. And this figure from Zuo's research was significantly lower than the majority of correlating research. In 2002, an investigation carried out by scholars at the People's University 人民大学 [in Beijing] on the 'The characteristics of Chinese university students' attitudes toward Christianity' found that 3.6% of respondents were Christians. Further, in 2008, when the topic was investigated within People's University itself, the proportion was 2.8%. In September, 2008, when the research team repeated their 'investigation into the attitudes of Chinese college and university students towards [religious] belief', the investigators found the proportion of People's University students who were Christians to be 3.8%.

On the basis of these studies, it appears that there are more students leaving university as Christians than among those who enter. In 2004, of the 82 Christian university students in Zuo Peng's study, there were nineteen in their freshman year. Of these nine had become Christians at university, or 47%. In the sophomore year the proportion was 67%, in the junior and senior years it was 63.4% and 70.6% respectively. A study in 2008 found that 11.8% of Christian university students came to faith in their first year, 41.2% in the second year, seemingly confirming these findings.

Why is it that this time at university has become a key phase in young people entering the faith? People have suggested that it is the particular characteristics of university living which makes it more likely for students to come into contact with Christianity and similar forms of knowledge. According to scholarly studies, the principle channels by which university students come into contact with Christianity are the influence of family, influence of friends, the influence of clergy and the influence of literature. In Zuo Peng's study in Beijing in 2004 and the investigation into the Shanghai universities' students of 2008, we see the influence of friends, family and classmates as the most important factors. The influence of clergy and literature cannot be ignored, of course, and play an

important role. We have to say that these are only the external conditions affecting Chinese students, which are not essentially different from those affecting ordinary Christians of other groups as well (with the possible exception of the influence of literature). In a study of Beijing's Christians by Gao Shining 高师宁, during which she received back 452 valid questionnaires, 56.6% said that the influence of other Christians was most important on their own faith. In a different study of Christians in a southern Gansu village, fully 81.4% had come to faith through the evangelisation of locals or outsiders. The present author conducted investigations into village churches in Henan at the beginning of 2009. Among the 144 valid questionnaires, 73 people (50.6%) responded that it was the witness of friends or surrounding Christians which led them to Christianity. Those who mentioned family or kin as leading them to Christ were 61 (or 42.3%). Only two mentioned literature or other influences, two more said it was through self-exploration, three said it was the influence of the atmosphere at religious sites, while three more did not respond. From this we can begin to answer the question of why the period of university life is so influential on many young people, but we should also begin to investigate the internal factors leading young people to believe in Christianity.

According to the conventional logic applied to rural Christians, some have suggested that these Christian students belong to disadvantaged groups. However, as the following chart makes clear, analysing more than 300 Christian students' responses according to their family background, economic circumstances and physical health, there is little evidence for such a claim.

The basic circumstances of Chinese Christian university students:

Family situation

harmonious 70.6%	ordinary, 29.4%	unharmonious, 0%
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Family economic situation

extremely wealthy, 5.9%	wealthy, 23.5%	middle-income, 17.6%
standard income, 52.9%	poor, 0%	

Physical health

healthy, 70.6%	average, 23.5%	sickly, 5.9%
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People are also used to looking for weaknesses in students' employment pressure, study pressures, emotional setbacks or educational achievements. I feel this train of thought will always have suspicions about the value of belief, in particular religious belief. It seems it will always be seen as troublesome. It seems that at the front of these many problems is Christianity. So, when it comes to university students, pressures are faced by them all and they need to face them as a part of entering wider society. Why, then, is Christianity on university campuses given such magnified attention? I would suggest that there is a close connection in the increasing plurality of backgrounds on university campuses and the

plurality of pursuits of Chinese university students. Hua Hua's research in March 2008 showed that a significant initial motivation for many coming to Christianity, apart from the influence of family tradition, was 'seeking truth and wisdom'. A third of university students chose this option in the study. This number exceeded those seeking 'a spiritual hope', which is a more typical Christian answer. Even those university students who are not seeking after a characteristically Christian faith cannot but be influenced by widespread pursuits of the diverse culture of university life, which is in all likelihood going to increase. In other words, we should not base our conclusions on first impressions.

In whichever way the faith of university students was aroused, their expression of that faith shows certain characteristics which distinguish it from that of average people. The most important dissimilarity is the short time in which they come to express the goals and motivations for their faith. Their responses to the object and significance of their faith are often completely different. When posed the question, 'For a true Christian, what is of the deepest significance?', students give the following responses: 'glorifying God' (76.5%), 'loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself' (70.6%). 'Receiving blessing', 'going to heaven', 'moral cultivation' were of little interest to any of them. Their relatively non-utilitarian responses express something of the idealism and piety of university students after they have come to faith. The published report of Zuo Peng's 2004 study reinforces these findings. When asked which weekly religious activities students normally participated, 84.1% said small 'home meetings' 家庭聚会, 65.6% said 'church services', and 35.1% said 'both'. Similarly, Hua Hua's study in 2008 found that 88.2% of Christian university students attended weekly fellowship activities, 82.3% said they read the Bible daily or even more frequently, and 100% said they prayed 'every day' or 'frequently'.

Given the increasingly relaxed attitude of university students toward the prevailing cultural values, the author finds the growth in the number of Christian students perfectly rational. Their number may well continue to increase. The 2008 'investigation into the attitudes of Chinese college and university students towards [religious] belief' clearly stated that the number of 'students who were non-Christians but who expressed an interest in Christianity and its culture' stood at 46.4%, suggesting a huge latent potential for the growth in the number of Christian students. It is also worth noting that at some colleges the proportion of Christian faculty and staff is higher than that among the students and their general attitude toward religious belief is more positive than among students. Such findings are also a major cause in the continued growth in the number of Christian university students. On the other hand, we continue to find that these developments are limited in scope. This is due, in part, to the continue ecology of university culture. It is also due to the inhibiting factor of other religious beliefs. For example, an investigation into non-Christian students found that 42.5% expressed an interest in Buddhism, 36% expressed an interest in Christianity, 16.6% expressed an interest in Daoism, while 8.9% showed an interest in Islam. 20.9% said they had no interest in any religion whatsoever. The results of the People's University investigation into the attitudes of university and college students to religion found that 38.5% not only did not believe in Christianity, but 'had no interest

in Christianity and its culture.' They also found that this proportion was 'higher than the finding among People's University students in 2002 ... in which the data showed 31%.' This is not a random finding.

Fellowships of Chinese Christian students correlate well to fellowships of Christian intellectuals. They impinge upon the phenomenon of 'cultural Christians' 文化基督徒 which has developed over recent years and also the very recent formation of 'returned [from abroad] student fellowships' 海归派基督徒聚会. Many returned students meet in their own gatherings. Some of these 'household meetings' for returned students, graduate students and university faculty and staff have developed church-like proportions. They have their own names, some have approximately one thousand members. In the Sincisation of Christianity, Chinese church liturgies have been reformed and social service has been emphasised. These developments need to be closely explored in the years ahead.

2. 'Boss Christians' and professional believers.

A lot of Christians oppose personal wealth to personal spiritual life believing that riches display the weakening of Christian spirituality. Yet such attitudes can barely be heard in Christian communities in China's rapidly developing coastal regions. Instead they celebrate the maxim of the famous English churchman John Wesley: 'make as much money as you can, save as much money as you can, give as much money as you can'. An investigation of 734 Christians from four churches in the Pingyang 平阳 area found that none opposed the idea of Christians running businesses. Most felt it was good for Christians to be involved in business, or that it had no connection with faith, or were indifferent to the question. When asked about whether it was alright for Christians to be business bosses, only one expressed opposition to the idea, the majority felt it if Christian bosses 'did not break the law, glorified God and benefited the people, then it was good.' This local Christian attitude toward wealth and the prevailing economic development, have hastened the arrival of the 'boss Christian' phenomenon.

Professor Chen Cunfu 陈村富 of Zhejiang University 浙江大学 is the most recent mainland researcher on the boss Christians. He has published an article in the *American Review of Religious Research* entitled 'The Emergence of a New Type of Christian in China Today'.² In it he notes the sudden appearance of Christian entrepreneurs, businessmen, financial officers, directors, commonly called 'boss Christians' 老板基督徒. This group of boss Christians is a phenomenon of the reform and opening of China's economic system, found particularly in the coastal regions, of which the churches in the Wenzhou district can function as a case study. These boss Christians fall largely into two groups. First, those Christians who started off as migrant workers or rural farmers became entrepreneurs through struggle and effort. Second, those entrepreneurs who were introduced to Christianity, subsequently become believers, and try to fit their business management with

2 Chen Cunfu, 'The Emergence of a New Type of Christians in China Today', *Review of Religious Research*, 46.2 (Dec. 2004): 183-200

the demands of their new faith, and eventually receive baptism. No matter which group they fall into, Christian entrepreneurs are enthusiastic donors to the church, some take on responsibility in the eldership of the church and work in church committees. They have widespread social contacts, have a solid financial foundation, and are able to influence the development of the church in their locality. In 2007, I conducted investigation into the church in the Wenzhou county of Cangnan 苍南. Everywhere there were imposing church buildings, each costing several million RMB, and even the churches in the villages weren't bad. Some of the churches were built with the gift of only a few donors. The churches had sound amplification and video technology, some had installed central air-conditioning. In informal discussions with church members, church pastors and elders, such experienced and knowledgeable Christian entrepreneurs were frequently invited to participate. The energy of Wenzhou's boss Christians can be seen in the following example. The Wellspring Church 水井头教会 is built in the centre of Xiaojiang 萧江 town in the Wenzhou area. The church was originally founded on a different site by missionaries of the China Inland Mission 内地会. However, a group of Christian businessmen felt that that site would be difficult to develop and proposed that the church be relocated, and so a new church came to be built. Despite opposition, eighteen people (including three self-identified entrepreneurs) persisted in developing a new location and constructing a new building which is today's Zion Church 锡安堂. The church is four storeys tall, has three storeys of meeting rooms covering several thousand square metres, with the remaining storey a car park. Its imposing style is the crown of the local community and it is well known in the Wenzhou area. An elder of the church told me unabashedly, 'I am certain that we won't have to worry in twenty years' time whether the church is big enough.'

China's economy has continued to develop and so it is certain that the 'boss Christian' phenomenon will soon be found in China's internal cities and even in the [underdeveloped] western provinces. The boss Christians are not only Christians but are also senior managers in their companies, meaning that their managerial style and culture will increasingly permeate their companies and enterprises. Using their own words, 'A spirit of business 商业精神, the ability to manage companies or enterprises, requires a corporate spirit or an entrepreneurial culture which strengthens the ability to independently manage affairs.' As a result, many of these individual boss Christians maintain that their Christian faith has to be 'brought into their business and enterprises, even becoming the most important concepts in their management culture.' Some enterprises even make it clear that showing the faith is the most important principle when recruiting new employees. A boss Christian from Lanzhou 兰州 puts it this way: 'I can choose so and so [pointing at a Christian], because Christians ultimately share a common consciousness. Our connection 关系 is that much closer. Of course I will choose that person.' In this kind of company, Christians make up about one in three of the work force. In other, family business these Christian principles are even more visible. In many business departments banners or calligraphy with Christian connections are hung in prominent places. In the finance office you might find 'God is the Way', 'The Heavenly Way Rewards Diligence', 'If you put all your trust in Jehovah, do not lean on your own understand, in all your ways acknowledge Him,

then He will direct your paths.' In the Personnel Department's meeting room you will find, 'Adore the Way in silence', 'Stillness is bestowed by Heaven', 'Entrust all that you do to Jehovah and all your plans will be accomplished.' In the director's office you will find banners which say, 'The Heavenly Way shuns the greedy', 'Emmanuel' and similar phrases. Some enterprises and business take on directly Christian names like 'The Will of Heaven' 天心, 'God's Power' 神力, 'God's harmony' 神和, 'God's faithfulness' 神信, 'Canaan' 迦南, etc. The enterprises also have numerous rules and regulations related to Christianity and the Bible.

Christian entrepreneurs not only implement a corporate culture and management pattern connected with their Christian faith, recruit other Christians as employees, they also have authority and influence. Companies form an integrated community, and the possibility of creating a Christian enterprise becomes a distinct possibility. Professor Li Xiangping 李向平 at Shanghai University has suggested that the organisational authority possessed by boss Christians, together with their own faith, mean that they undoubtedly function as a foundation for their believing communities and affect the patterns of fellowship. Professor Li's paper also provides a detailed record of the fellowships that happen every Monday morning in a well-known private company:

'First, songs are sung, with titles like 'A gift' 《一件礼物》, or 'The Holy Lamb who sits on the Throne' 《坐宝座的圣洁羔羊》. This is followed by watching a short devotional film clip, entitled 'Have you heard the voice of God?' 《你听到上帝的声音了吗?》. After this there is a reading from the Bible, in this case Psalm 119:111 on the laws of God. Finally, the company's CEO gives a personal testimony. ... The content of the boss's speech is not only about managerial requirements and targets but also serves to strengthen faith and confidence. He says, "Faith and profit are not connected, no matter whether you are an individual or a company. Faith is the concern of the individual, the family, social harmony and stability." At the end of the morning meeting, the boss suggests that all read together a verse from the Bible: do not worry.'

As the number of boss Christians and Christian enterprises increases, regional associations or business fellowships have also been established, some with more than one hundred boss Christians participating. One of them, Wang Shi 王石, among the elite of China's industrial leaders, used his blog to relate how he happened across one of these meetings:

'At the beginning of 2008 I accepted the invitation of a friend to attend an entrepreneur's meeting in Fujian to mark the beginning of Spring. I realised once I got there that it was a meeting of Christian entrepreneurs. Some had returned after time overseas, others only had a junior school education; some were famous local business leaders, but most were running only small businesses or were white-collar workers. Activities began on the second day, so most of us stayed up chatting until 3am, with the main topic being trying to persuade Old Wang [i.e. himself] to accept the glory of God. Carelessly, it was suggested that the Bible prophesied that Christianity was going to flourish in the East, and couldn't

the East mean China? I was not converted 开化, but during the festivities of the next day, singing songs to Christ, I was moved.'

In addition to these Christian communities flourishing among privately-run businesses, fellowships based in foreign-funded enterprises 外资企业 are a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. These are particularly prominent in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities, and are most typically Korean financed businesses. Many foreign business leaders have a devout personal faith and some strongly spread their faith. Some even come to China mainly for this purpose. In the process some have created company-wide [Christian] fellowships, while others hold Christian meetings in their homes.

In some companies, although the bosses are not Christians, employees have themselves formed business fellowships. For example, the Kunming Iron and Steel Company 昆明钢铁公司. In the early 1980s there were only a few Christians in the Company, but by the late 1990s their number had reached over 1000. The following survey was published on Faith Christian Forum 坚信基督论坛 and one can see the potential strength of these Christian employees:

Poll: If you discovered several other Christians in your company, what would you do?

Establish a prayer group so that we could witness together for God in our company.

(9 votes)

Treat them the same way as I would treat any other believer.

(2 votes)

Take no form of action.

(0 votes)

The entry of entrepreneurs into churches, in short, resolves many of their self-financing issues. In some cases they even have surpluses. Some churches in the region of Wenzhou even forego asking their congregants for regular tithes. Their church buildings are already sufficiently grand to not need expansion for many years and their congregants show enough financial concern to keep activities ticking over. Some pastors say they do not want surplus assets, hoping to avoid disasters in financial management. These are unusual circumstances when surveyed from the national level, yet they highlight difficult problems which urgently need some resolution: how the churches manage finances, how they make their investments and participate in society, how they help the establishment of churches in the Chinese interior, and how they prevent the interference of those who have ulterior motives for church money. At the same time, proselytism within private enterprises and their use in holding [church] gatherings raises further questions. On the other hand, systematic restrictions on open Christian communities within Christian enterprises may restrict their contribution to social service activities. It behoves Christian enterprises and social policy makers to make common efforts toward resolution of these difficulties.

3. The Christian communities among rural farmers and migrant workers

We have already spoken of university students representing a wider group of intellectuals and the social stratum of 'boss Christians' representing a 'religious fever' in business circles. There also exists in China completely a unrelated community of rural Christians, indeed they represent the principal strength of Chinese Christianity. At the beginning of the Opening and Reform era, the 'Christianity fever' phenomenon occurred mainly among rural Christians, and the majority of academic studies concerning Chinese Christianity concentrate on this group. Up until now most of these studies have concentrated on the circumstances of Chinese Christians, in particularly using a range of case studies. Since 2008, several years of national studies of rural Chinese Christianity have revealed the following characteristics:

i) The principal constituents of rural Christianity can be found among disadvantaged groups.

Ten years ago, an investigation by the Hong Kong Seminary professor Leung Ka-lun 梁家麟, found that over 60% of Christians in rural areas had come to faith after experiencing health difficulties. Well, what about today's situation? An investigation into Shanxi's Zhangdian township 张店镇 found that fully 52.8% of Christians had come to faith after personal or familial illness, 46.3% had come to faith after some family calamity or difficulties in making ends meet, while only 2.4% said it was as a result of a spiritual quest. At the same time, data from an investigation into village A in southern Shanxi show that many believe Christianity has the power to ward off illness 消灾除病 and to provide peace in the family and that the number of Christians was 182 (or so 85% of respondents reported). These results confirm the findings of my own research in recent years. In Zhejiang's XJ village, part of Qianku township 钱库镇, one Christians answered questions about the origins of their faith in this way: 'My own daughter was sick and I had prayed to the Buddha and burned incense without success. Injections had also not helped at all, but after believing in Jesus her condition gradually got better and better, and so I believe.' In Inner Mongolia's S village, part of the Ongniud 翁牛特旗 banner, many of the Christians came to faith because of illnesses that had not been healed over many years, for example migraines, cancers and others. I have recently been to Tiaohe 条河 township in Shuicheng 永城市 city, Henan province, and the data from there show 48.6% of believers came to faith because of personal or familial illnesses. This confirms that seeking healing remains a principal element among rural Christians believers.

In addition, the proportion of the elderly, women and those with a low educational attainment remains disproportionately high. In the northwestern region of Guizhou province a scholarly investigation begun in March 2002 found that 58.03% (48,352 people) of the total number of Christians in Bijie 毕节 district were illiterate, 31.31%

(25,984 people), meaning that those with a primary schooling or less made up 89.34% of the total. In T County in Shandong, a certain Mr Wang is the one who reads and expounds the Bible because he studied for one year at junior-high school and is therefore considered to be 'well-educated' 有文化. In the villages in northwest Guizhou, the chauvinism and misogyny of the area make it simpler for women to join the local church. The 2003 investigation found that 59.03% of the local Christians were women (48,988 in total). Toward the end of 2008, I went to the southern Yunnanese city of Qujing 曲靖市 to investigate the circumstances of local Christians. In the Qilin 麒麟 district of the city, the proportion of Christians aged 50 and over was more than 60%, those aged between 30 and 50 was 30%, while those aged between 18 and 30 was 10%. Women made up between 80% and 90% of the total. They were principally retired members of state-run enterprises, others had temporary jobs or were self-employed. In the same way, my investigation of Christians in more than ten villages in the Yongcheng 永城 city area found that 85% of those who responded to my questionnaire were women.

Without doubt, then, many weaker elements in society have turned to God, perhaps hoping that this will strengthen their weak status, even if such hopes may prove to be purely illusory.

ii) Christians in some villages play a rich role in cultural and moral restraint.

Apart from seeking help, Christians from weak social groups also enter the church because of the devastation of [traditional] culture in many rural areas and the fact that they have little to do apart from the seasonal cycles of planting and harvesting. Local Chinese government has found it very difficult to satisfy the diverse spiritual requirements of rural communities. Rural churches and their activities offer villagers an alternate forum for social interaction, recreation and personal formation. 'In South Village 南村 as well as several other villages and hamlets, the main form of entertainment apart from watching television is playing cards and mah-jong', but '[Christian] believers conduct their own activities in their own home as well as meeting every Sunday at the South Village church. They sing hymns, read the Bible and pray together. At Christmas and Easter they watch films, learn dances and perform plays.' During the Lantern Festival 元宵节 in 2008, the village Christians put together a small orchestra of around 15 believers to perform a programme of songs from the Bible and *Canaan Hymns* 《迦南诗选》, which also included dances and stand-up routines 快板. At that time, 'the snow was melting and the roads were mired in mud, yet Christian villagers came from all around to watch the performance and the atmosphere was buzzing. There were many with limps, many who were white-haired 80-year olds, some young women cradling infants and young men, as well as several of the local village Party Secretaries, village heads and section chiefs.' These 'group activities' are also appealing to the villages' younger people. A report in 2008 from an investigation into Anhui's Si county 泗县 found that 'the Chengguanzhen 城关镇 church has a choir which gathers together every afternoon to practice and conduct a Bible Study 读经活动. The local YMCA and YWCA also host daily Bible Studies, which enriches the spiritual life of the young people.'

Such common activities undoubtedly enlarge the scope of social interaction and enrich the life of villagers.

Christian teaching also forbids damaging habits like excessive drinking, gambling, etc. Christian doctrines also do not permit believers to steal, hit or curse others, etc, requiring them instead to be honest, not to covet, to honour their parents and to love their children and to treat other Christians as sisters and brothers. This all helps to curtail the personal behaviour of Christian believers, and the 'fear of punishment' also helps promote morality. While I was in Yunnan's Xuanwei 宣威 district in 2008 I came across the following situation. A believer named Liu told me about a small example which confirms the image of Christians as excellent citizens. One day he invited a business acquaintance out for a meal, and afterwards his friend wanted to go out and 'wash his feet' 洗脚. Mr Liu knew that these 'leisure activities' 休闲活动 would go against his beliefs, and so gave the man 400RMB to go and pursue them by himself. Even so, another Christian friend surnamed Dan, who also happened to be with them, disapproved of what Mr Liu had done as it was encouraging the other man to break Biblical commandments. Mr Dan felt Mr Liu should not have given the money. Mr Dan gave the following testimony: not long before he had fallen ill with a fever and severe cough. Medicine did not help and praying to God had not helped at first. After suffering for several days, Mr Dan felt that the cause of his illness had been the consequence of playing mah-jong several days earlier. A friend of Mr Dan's had invited him to play after discovering that they were one player short, and he had only joined them in order to spare his friend's feelings. From that time on, Mr Dan had become increasingly convinced not to do anything which violated Biblical principles even if they were things which had general approval. He even felt that 'God' wanted him to be disrespectful to the man 'sitting with his legs crossed' and change his bad habits.

iii) The formation of Christian communities among socially disadvantaged groups is materially advantageous, but is unstable and blind.

The disadvantaged status of rural Christians determines their embrace of the church and their desire to extricate themselves from their hopelessness. For instance, they hope that their sick body can be cured, that after death there will be paradise, that their undertakings will be successful, even that the road to wealth is open to them. Of course this does not eliminate those who desire peace for their soul or spiritual salvation. The research does indicate, however, that the latter are relatively few in number. It is little wonder that some Christians grumble, 'There are some people who believe the church is a hospital and that Jesus is just a doctor. The sick find Jesus but when they're well, they forget him.' A scholar has summed it up in the following way: 'the religious life of [village] Christians is systematised to a certain extent, but the form which it has taken originates largely from the spiritual impetus of its believers. Some might say it "works only for those who sincerely believe" 心诚则灵. It does not originate in believers' deep comprehension of the doctrines of the Christian faith.' It is also this efficacy which directly leads to rural Christian's instability. If they participate in several meetings but to no avail, or the busy farming season begins, they

often leave the church. During my investigations in Inner Mongolia's S village I learned of a believer whose donkey had been healed from paralysis due to prayer and was now able to stand. However, after the donkey collapsed with paralysis again the day after, and subsequent prayers were unavailing, the believer no longer attended church meetings.

This one-sidedness, blindness, of rural Christians' faith is obvious. Perhaps it is related to the scarcity of church pastors in these regions. According to one academic's statistics in 2008, 'there are currently in Biye district [Guizhou province] 85,338 Christians but only 364 church workers, of whom 22 are pastors, 120 are elders and 222 evangelists. In the four western counties of Biye alone there are 73,883 Christians and only 208 church workers, of whom 21 are pastors, 71 are elders and the majority are evangelists. Taking Biye district as a whole, the ratio between church personnel and Christian believers is 1:203, the ratio between church pastors and Christians is 1:3356.' The deficiency of trained personnel in rural areas has led to many self-styled evangelists and a vogue for incorrect doctrines. For example, the thistles and thorns choking the seeds in the Scriptural parable of the Sower are interpreted by some evangelists as the economy, or economic development, and people's faith is thereby hindered. Christians in some regions believe that a person's spirit is born in heaven, and as a result evangelists give children physiognomical investigations to determine whether they can become a mouthpiece for the Spirit of God. In some areas, people believe that even watching television can be a hindrance to faith, that it is being 'unfaithful toward God'. In a rural county in Anhui province, a self-styled evangelist in 2006 alleged that a female Christian had become possessed by a demon and that she must be imbued with saintly energy 仙气 before the demon could be exorcised. As a result, her nose and mouth were covered while air was blown into her and she suffocated. It is worth noting that many rural Christians do not usually differentiate from traditional folk customs. For example, many Christians choose to change their names, with many taking names [involving characters] for dragon 龙, tiger 虎 and such like. Some choose to restore destroyed family [ritual] utensils or buildings which had images of animals on them. In other areas, believers think it is wrong to let off firecrackers asserting that this attracts the attention of demons.

iv) The decline and transformation of rural Chinese Christianity

Although Chinese Christianity remains predominantly rural, it is this community which is facing the biggest challenges. These challenges have three aspects: the tide of migrants leaving to find work, urbanisation and rationalisation.

I'll use my investigations in 2008 into the church in Xuanwei district, Yunnan. According to statistics from the local China Christian Council at that time there were 10,046 Christians; local Christians now report that their number is less than 9000. The most important reason for this is the exodus of Christian workers seeking work. According to the person responsible for a local meeting point, the number of Christian labourers who have left Xuanwei County itself is more than 1700 people, or nearly a ¼ of the total.

Because the 'quality' 素质 of the Christians is not high this also affects the reputation of Christianity as a whole, and so many people are unwilling to join [the church]. The frequent activity of local cult organisations 邪教组织, in particular Eastern Lightning 东方闪电 and The Disciples 门徒会 (also known as the Erliangliang 二两粮) results in many misunderstanding Christianity and pulls many out of the churches. One church member did not mince words, saying that the growth of the churches was faster in the 1990s than in the 2000s because 'in the 1990s we did not have any cults, now we have Eastern Lightning which specialises in destroying churches, and many people have walked out.'

Chinese urbanisation has also had a huge impact on rural Chinese Christianity. In 2007, I conducted research into the situation of Christians in Cangnan 苍南 County, Zhejiang Province. The permanent residents in one of the villages at that time was more than 4000, yet some of the older inhabitants said that once the village had around 10,000 residents. Many had moved to the nearby towns of QK and LG, or were residing in Wenzhou city, and many of these were Christians. Even long-term villagers now had business connections which meant they now came and went, adding them to the floating population between villages and the towns. Unsurprisingly, the number of villagers regularly attending worship services had dropped as a result.

In addition, as the common cultural [and economic] level of the country has increased, so medical treatment, culture, hygiene and sanitation in the villages has rapidly improved. Rural Christians' understanding of their faith has been increasingly rationalised, irrational motivations and functions in Christian belief have weakened. This has also weakened the place of Christian belief in the village [religious] marketplace.

These several assaults confronting rural Christianity will inevitably transform it in the future. In other words, they may also bring with them the development of rural Chinese Christianity. The current decline in numerical terms may be offset by the improvement in the 'quality' of rural Christians. The process through which rural workers go to work in the towns and cities brings fluctuations in the number of Christians, but the flow of Christians also gives rise to new interactions in believers' understanding, comprehension and the content of their faith. Living or conducting business outside [one's home environment] brings new knowledge and information, bringing back new comprehension of one's faith to one's home, thereby enriching the content and character of local Christian faith. The general increase in the quality of rural culture will also transform the cultural level of rural Chinese Christianity. Although the cultural level of believers does not necessarily exceed that of non-believers, this general improvement is undoubtedly a factor in Christianity's own development and consummation.

v) The conspicuous community of Christian rural labourers

The reason why the rural church appears to be full of 'old people, women and weaklings'

is partly down to the utilitarian nature of rural believers and the disadvantageous reasons outlined above. But another important reason is that many of the young people, particularly young men in the prime of life, have left the villages for work or to seek out better opportunities. This directly affects the circumstances by which there are few young or middle-aged men in the churches. This phenomenon is not just characteristic of the rural churches, but is more generally typical of rural life in today's China. Among this crowd of migrant labourers, some are already Christians, while others come into contact with Christianity through various channels in the towns and cities in which they work, eventually entering the church. So what is the characteristic of their faith? Questions of Christian faith among migrant workers have already come to the attention of several academics, not least the question of which community they belong to. The large scale of the migrant worker phenomenon makes it difficult to outline any group identity and they are easily marginalised. House churches in the city (for instance the traditional house churches or the new, intellectual house churches) find it difficult to provide a home for these migrants owing to different cultural background and lifestyles. In the end, many migrant rural Christians establish their own meeting points. These meeting points are normally based on 'native place' associations; members possess a shared culture, social background, making it easy to attract temporary workers to join, and so they can grow quite rapidly. Researches suggest that these 'village churches in the city' are partly a result of the demands of rural Christian beliefs and partly on the consciousness of the large rural churches spreading into the cities. The development of these rural churches in the city has led in part to the withering of the number of rural Christians but they also face their own challenges in the form of their existence, the individual nature of their life-style, and the rationalisation of their faith. Given that these questions will be treated in greater detail in the next section of this essay, it is unnecessary to repeat them here.

4. Several questions facing Chinese Christianity

We have taken the examples of Christian university students, 'boss Christians, rural Christians and Christian migrants to examine the condition and development of Chinese Christianity in the last few years since 2008. Through them we have already reflected some of the perplexing questions which the growth of Chinese Christianity is facing. On the 'positive' side, there is the expansion in the numbers of Chinese Christians and the simple growth in the number of Chinese churches. This simple 'positive' does not take into account the swelling influence of the growing number of believers, nor consider the far from simple development and consummation of the social status of Christianity and the churches. In order to gain a positive model for Christianity's future development, set against the background of Chinese society as a whole, we had also better take account of positive function of political, economic and cultural progress. The data also suggest that the main restrictions on the positive development of Chinese Christianity are as follows.

First, there is a deficiency in the number of legally registered pastors and places of worship. There is no need for reticence here: since the Reform and Opening period Chinese

Christianity has increased in size several fold. If the calculations are that the number of Chinese Protestants has now reached 16 million, this is a five-fold increase on the three million recorded in 1985, and a twenty-fold increase on the number of Protestants at the declaration of New China [in 1949]. Given this increase in the number of believers, the number of clergy and legally registered religious sites is completely deficient. When we look at the clergy, data from Shanxi Province in 2008 show that the number of Christians was more than 360,000, there were 634 church buildings and 1206 meeting points, but the number of pastors was only 56. On average, there was one pastor for every eleven churches. From statistics for Hubei province in 2005 there were on average one pastor for every 3500 Christians. In Yangzhou 扬州 city in Jiangsu Province, there were 30,000 Christians but only three pastors and one assistant pastor. In Hebei's Baoding 保定 city there were 50,000 Christians but only nine pastors. When it comes to registered sites of worship, Guiyang 贵阳 city in Guizhou Province has 15,000 Christians but the whole area has only one church, though there are several registered meeting points and others in the process of being registered. But for this number of Christians the provision is utterly inadequate. In Yangzhou city there is only the Cuiyuan Road 翠园路 church which has to hold several services every Sunday. At the Mochou Road 莫愁路 church in Nanjing, the main congregation on Sundays is divided into morning worship, second worship, third worship, fourth worship and so forth, thereby reaching several thousand people every Sunday. These several churches, whose organisational level is very developed all belong to the 'Three Self' or are registered under the 'Three Self', but when we come to Christian situations outside of such areas the situation is even more critical. To take as an example the data uncovered by the working group on the 'Investigation into the Current Situation of Chinese Christianity' 基督教现状专项调研 at the Institute of World Religions at CASS. They found that in XW city in Yunnan Province, the number of Christians at registered Three Self churches exceeded 5000 but there was not a single pastor. However, estimates by local [Christian] teachers and staff suggested that there were around 8000 local Christians. The number of legally registered meeting points in the city could not come close to meeting the need of local Christians, even with a further eighteen which were currently going through the application process. In XX county in Jiangxi province there are 99,468 Christians in total or 10.54% of the total population. Of these, 69,895 attend meeting points registered with the Three Self while 29,573 attend meeting points set up themselves. There are 323 registered sites for Christian activities across the County, while 194 have failed to meet the standards set out by the corresponding department.

The shortage of qualified pastors and legally registered sites for religious activity has direct consequences. Chinese Christianity, especially rural Christianity, is flooded with issues surrounding heterodoxy, cults and feudalistic thinking 封建思想. The shortage of trained clergy directly leads to the appearance of self-styled evangelists, with even some sorcerers 神汉 and sorceresses 巫婆 proclaiming themselves to be evangelists. Some impart extreme, feudal and reactionary teaching to an increasing numbers of believers, and those believers who cannot reach a registered meeting suffer the most harm. The reasons for believers not attending a registered site are numerous: a lack of information, and some are used by other

people, but the fact that many local officials add layer upon layer of regulations to hinder the legal registration of sites for religious activities cannot be ignored. From the Christians' perspective, an increase in the number of sites is a good thing, but from a local official's perspective such an increase may [adversely] influence their career. As a result there are Christian groups who will only eat 100 grams 二两 of grain at each meal, who fall sick and refuse medicine, who collectively go into the mountains to await the Second Coming, or who believe that Jesus is alive [i.e. has already returned]. Apart from this, the theological training and personal quality of many Three Self pastors is not sufficient, leading some believers to drift off from churches where they are unhappy about the pastor's conduct or preaching, eventually leading some into heterodoxy. In some cities, intellectuals find that their intellectual needs are not being met by the content of the preaching and so gradually move away from the church and set up their own meetings.

Second, there is the issue of theological reconstruction 神学思想建设. If we were to use the metaphor of a maturing physiological organism to describe the increase in the number of Chinese Christians, then theological reconstruction would be its growing wisdom and intelligence. In November, 1998, the Sixth Meeting of the national Chinese Christian Three Self Patriotic Committee with the Second Plenary Committee Meeting (Enlarged) of the Fourth China Christian Council jointly passed a 'resolution to strengthen theological (re)construction.' This had already been going on for ten years by 2008. Looking back over the course of this ten year process, the publicisation of theological slogans like 'God is love' 上帝是爱 and the 'Cosmic Christ' 宇宙的基督 was endless in an attempt to raise the quality of individual believers. Churches also strove to reconcile Christianity with Chinese culture, Chinese national essences and the various layers and tensions within the consciousness of the Chinese people. Preliminary results have been achieved. Yet it cannot be denied that in the everyday practice of many Chinese Christians tendencies toward beliefs like 'outside the church there is no salvation' 教会外无拯救, 'heed God, do not heed men' 听从神不听从人, an emphasis spirituality over rationality and on individual salvation over social service are nearly universal. On the one hand, this suggests that a system of Christianity which will be truly attractive to the Chinese has yet to be fully established. On the other it also suggests that a Christian spirituality which accords fully with local Chinese conditions has not reached the heart of each individual Christian. Theological reconstruction is not an overnight task, of course, nor will it be completed in a ten year cycle. Establishing a high Christian ethic and practice will require a logical, transparent and persistent process of reconstruction.

Then again, there is the issue of the composition of believers. There have appeared within the Chinese church over the past few years, and especially in the urban churches, increasing trend of young people, people with high educational attainments, men and professional people. But this does not change the nature of the general body of the Chinese church: many elderly, many uneducated, many women and rural Christians. This is the phenomenon of the 'four many's' 四多. It is not just a description limited to the rural churches. Most urban churches are also predominantly elderly, illiterate and female. In the

investigation by the Institute of World Religions at CASS into the situation of Chinese Christianity they found that in the city of Kunming 昆明, capital of Yunnan province, the vast majority of Christians were from rural districts. Furthermore, while the overall proportion of ethnic minorities in the city was about 1 in 10, they made up more than half of the Christians. The majority of Christians came from lower income professions, many had been laid off or were unemployed, many others were migrant workers. In the city-centre churches of Xuanwei 宣威 City (Yunnan) the ratio of female to male believers was 7:3, the percentage of over 60s was 40%, and that of the 40-60 year age group was also 40%, with young people making up only 20%. Only 7 or 8 of the Christians had an education higher than vocational college 大专, the number with upper-middle school was similar, while those with only lower-middle school made up 30% and those with only primary school education made up 50%. The rest had never even entered a school.

The phenomenon of the 'four manys' partly explains the continuing social weakness of the body of Chinese Christians as a whole. Such weakness is an outstanding feature of Chinese religious believers as a whole, but is particularly apparent for Chinese Christianity. Some years ago, religious researchers made a comparative survey of the constitution of religious believers in the rural areas around Shanghai. They found that the educational attainment of Buddhist believers was highest, with those having a college level certificate or above making up 9.9%, those with upper-middle school making up 21.2% and those who were illiterate only 5.9%. Their economic situation was also pretty well off; those with a monthly income of 1000 RMB or higher was 11.6%. Catholic believers tended to be grouped according to family or clan units, and the disparity between male and female believers was not as marked, with women making up 56.2% of the total. The social status of the rural Christians and Daoists was the lowest. Of the Daoists, 44.3% were elderly, 21.8% were illiterate. Among [Protestant] Christians, women made up 76.1% of the total (the highest among all the religions); those in middle age were 50.4% of the total, with 25.4% being elderly and 24.2% being young people. Their educational attainment corresponded to their ages: those who were illiterate were 11.6% of the total, those with upper-middle school education were 13% and those with college or above made up only 1.4%. In terms of occupation, 36.1% were farmers, a higher proportion than that of other religions, the number of labourers was 20.6%, and those who had retired stood at 12.8%. The percentage of unemployed or waiting for jobs was 6.1%, while office workers stood at 7.3% (the lowest proportion of all). The proportion of Christians who had come to faith because of falling ill was 41.1%, and among the older Christian believers it was almost always the case. For the other religions the primary reason for joining the faith was the influence of family (for Buddhists it was 41.5%, for Daoists 43.3%, and for Catholics 73.9%). The Christians were the poorest of the religious communities, with the proportion having a monthly salary of 300 RMB or less at 43.1%, those earning between 300-600 RMB at 39.1%, and those earning more than 1000 RMB or more at just 3.9%. The researchers final comment was that rural Christianity was predominantly formed of the following groups: middle aged women, labourers, people with illnesses, the impoverished, those caught in difficult life situations; in sum, the weak and socially marginalised.

Fourth, heterodoxy presents a further difficulty for the development of Chinese Christianity. The majority of sects 邪教 in China take on the forms of Christian belief. Such groups include the Shouters 呼喊派, the Disciples 门徒会, Eastern Lightning 东方闪电, the Narrow Gate in the Wilderness 旷野窄门, the Established King 被立王, the Lord God Teaching 主神教, the Three Grades of Servant 三班仆人, the Full-Scope Church 全范围教会, The New Testament Church 新约教会, the Spirit Teaching 灵灵教, the United Teaching 统一教, the Sons and Daughters of the Heavenly Father 天父儿女, and so on.³ Why are these sectarian groups such a widespread problem? Scholars have extensively analysed this issue. Some consider that it is connected with the Chinese churches' doctrinal model of healing and restoration 还原. In many circumstances, it is argued, the authority of Scripture has been altered to the authority of the preacher. This is particularly the case where the Holy Spirit is claimed to directly interpret Scriptural truth through the preacher, and followers are prevented from rationally challenging the 'holy man' 神人. The influence of traditional Chinese religious culture, rural life and unhygienic living conditions all help to uncover the genesis of rural sectarian groups. However, as has been made clear above, the lack of trained clergy and a deficiency in the implementation of a contextual theology are undoubtedly factors in the flood of sectarianism. The investigative group from the Institute of World Religions found that 'sheep stealing' between Three Self churches, house churches and sectarian groups occurred in many areas. For example in HZ county in Qujing 曲靖 city, Yunnan province, the power of Eastern Lightning far exceeded the influence of the Three Self church, and has filled the church in the entire province with fear. It seems that almost all Christians interviewed in the area had experienced efforts by 'Lightning groups' 闪电派 to pull them away from their churches. In Yunnan's FG county two banned groups, the Hengni 恒尼 group (also known as the Jishiji hui 忌食忌讳派 group) and the Silipi 斯利匹, (also known as the Secret Group 悄悄派), have widespread influence. These persist in 'refusing to eat national relief supplies, refusing to drink water from government-provided taps, refusing to use fertiliser, refusing to use electric lights, not watching television, not having their marriages registered, not using birth control, and not participating in censuses or surveys', following a total of 27 such prohibitions. These are not isolated instances. Towards the end of 2008, I had heard that there were many 'Christians' in a certain district of Inner Mongolia and went there to investigate. When I arrived I found that all those I came in contact with believed in the 'Third Redeemer Christ' 三赎基督 and that none of the registered sites for Christian activity in the surrounding W Banner had any clergy whatsoever. The believers said that they believed whatever the itinerant evangelists taught them.

Fifth, churches' skewed social participation represents a further hindrance in the development of Chinese Christianity. In Christianity, divine commands and human service are part of the same continuum: God commands so people serve, without people's service God's commands have no meaning. The most direct way of showing service to God is by serving society. The Chinese church in its theological teaching and in the daily

3 Editors note: the Christian orthodoxy or heterodoxy of several of these groups is widely disputed.

practice of the CCC/TSPM all stress such activity.

Take the Beijing church as an example. After the horrendous floods of the Yangzi River plain in 1998, the city's TSPM committee and local churches donated over 10,000 items of bedding and gave 280,000 RMB to aid the relief effort. In 2003, the Beijing churches offered 130,000 RMB to those affected by typhoon Feidian. In the month of May 2003, during that same period, the Beijing churches were donating property and funds to aid students' tuition fees, to help the poor and support those affected by disasters, with donations totalling 1.1m RMB. In 2008, after the great earthquake in Wenchuan 汶川 on 12 May, incomplete statistics from the national CCC/TSPM suggested that churches and local CCC/TSPM committees had donated in excess of 150m RMB to aid those affected by the disaster. This represents the largest philanthropic effort to date by the Chinese church. According to a report in *Tianfeng* 《天风》 in 2008 it is now commonplace for churches to be setting up elderly people's homes, medical clinics, centres for children with special needs, shelters for the poor, centres for people with disabilities. Even so, most churches do not have a special committee for social service and in many cases the service provision is just for Christian 'brothers and sisters' and not for the whole of local society. Whatever limited social provision is provided is usually at the behest of CCC/TSPM committees or the local Ministry for Civil Affairs and it is rarely planned or budgeted for. Below are the headline accounts for the city-centre church in Xuanwei City, Yunnan from November 2007 through to July 2008 as represented in their financial report. It clearly represents the fervent response in terms of donations to those affected by the [Wenchuan] disaster, but this was at the organisation of the provincial CCC/TSPM and Ministry for Civil Affairs. Furthermore there was no other form of social service apart from these donations even though this was the largest church in the city.

Income (RMB):

November 2007:	6205
December:	14,919
January, 2008	3074
February	10,896
March	35,925
April	4989
May	16,613
June	12,779
July	9344

Funds transferred from previous period:	20,000
Special holiday offerings:	8,870
Interest:	69
Total Income:	143,684

[The church had already paid 64,000 toward audio-visual equipment, with 15,600 still owing.]

Disbursements:

Pentecost, Easter and Christmas food expenses:	4698
Donations to the Sichuan Earthquake fund (MCA):	12,200
Donations to the Sichuan Earthquake fund (CCC/TSPM):	6000
Renovation of the church's stage area:	7232
Subscription to the Christian Council (for 2007):	13,136
Living allowance subsidy for Person A:	7200
Living allowance subsidy for Person B:	1800
Church insecticide	380
Lacquered Chalk Board for Scripture Verses:	550
Revolving Fund for Church Bibles:	2000
Subsidy for occupying the third floor of the Church:	3889
Church survey:	800
Contribution to the Special Building Fund	7744
Church building maintenance	8460
Gift to Huashan 花山 church opening celebration	500
Charge for water and electricity	1203
Taxi fares	105
Other maintenance costs (water pipes, locks etc.)	255
Total Disbursements:	142,152
Balance	1532
Debt	15,600

It is obvious that without the major catastrophe the church would not have budgeted for any social service work. On this point, a church leader in Wenzhou made the following point, 'Our Christian contribution to the public good is no that great but rather much too small. We should be saving money to prepare for disasters, not making plans at the last minute like we did with the Wenchuan disaster where we were not properly prepared. ...'

Of course this reflects a wider social deficit and the responsibility does not just lie with the churches. On the one hand it requires greater theological support, making it impossible to stress individual salvation at the expense of social responsibility. On the other hand, there needs to be adequate financial back-up. For most churches which can barely support themselves supporting others is extremely difficult. Aside from this, the country could provide further political support creating a climate encouraging Christians to make social contributions.

Sixth, the attitudes of those cadres supervising Chinese religion and the wider non-Christian community's understanding and comprehension of Christianity have to improve. Although the organisational form of Christianity determines to some extent how outsiders perceive it, yet people's historical and cultural viewpoints affect the way in which they see any particular community. Such viewpoints affect whether Christians are seen as 'trustworthy' in the political, cultural, social and personal spheres. This background also determines the way in which Christian belief is made manifest.

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On the Necessity, Rationality and Significance of the Chinese Christian Three Self Patriotic Movement

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Summary: On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the indomitable life of its undertakings have the following three characteristics: first its necessity, second its rationality and, third, its significance. While these attributes were obvious when the TSPM was initiated in the 1950s, the TSPM's suitability for Chinese Christianity is also evident from the Biblical and doctrinal points of view. The reality of today's Chinese Protestant Church shows the significance of deepening the Three Self principles. With the swift passage of time, the TSPM has reached its first sixty years. As we reflect on this history and the road taken by the TSPM, we recognise the constant bounteous grace of our Heavenly Father. In the building of the Chinese Church we must not be short of essential instruments and the accomplishments of the TSPM are expressed in several ways. First, it transformed the foreign religious aspect of Chinese Christianity, removing obstructions in the way of [Chinese] people receiving Christianity. Second, it stimulated Chinese believers to love their country and love their religion, 爱国爱教, calling them to be good Christians and good citizens, making contributions to the State and to the People. Third, it has assisted the government in carrying out the policy of freedom of religious belief, enabling Christianity to gain a positive external environment. Fourth, it has enable China to cast off the old denominational wrangles and so Chinese Christianity has entered, united, into a 'post-denominational phase' 后宗派时期. Fifth, it has pushed forward various church activities, putting in place 'Three Self' foundations. Sixth, it has enlarged the friendly association between Chinese Christianity and the universal Church, raising the status of the Chinese Church. These are massive achievements, but there are still Three Self members and others who have a confused conception of the spirituality of the Three Self, its principles and organisation. They cannot properly appreciate or celebrate the achievements of the last sixty years, perhaps even ignoring the Three Self's historical contributions and its importance. Some choose to defame the Three Self, even describing it as demonic, which prevents many brothers and sisters from seeing the truth, and so we must convince them that

the origins of the Three Self are not dirty, and that the spirit of the Three Self accords with Holy Scripture. The Three Self principles are applicable to Christianity in today's China and in the future. The Three Self organisation is an important instrument for today's church. This essay will attempt to take these three characteristics of necessity, rationality and significance and explain the continuing course of the Three Self Patriotic Movement.

1. The necessity of the Three Self Patriotic Movement from the perspective of our country's history.

At the end of the [First] Opium War in 1840, Chinese society could be described as 'semi-feudal' and 'semi-colonial'. It had let itself be trampled upon, almost to the point of national subjugation. This could not be tolerated [by the Chinese people], and so began the 'Self Strengthening' movement. Christianity, which was supposedly about 'not being served, but serving others', nevertheless was used as a tool by colonialism and imperialism to invade China; its introduction accompanied the suffering of the Chinese people. As Wu Yaozong 吴耀宗 (Y.T. Wu) put it, this was also the tragedy of Christianity.⁴ Many Protestant missionaries participated in and even engineered the events of the First and Second Opium Wars, the Eight Power Allied Invasion (1900), and the process of concluding and signing the 'Nanking Treaty' (1842), 'Wanghsia Treaty' (1844), 'Tien-tsin Treaty' (1858) and the other unequal treaties. These were missionaries like John Robert Morrison 马儒翰 (1814-1843), Karl Gutzlaff 郭实腊 (1803-1851), Peter Parker 伯驾 (1804-1888), Elijah Coleman Bridgman 裨治文 (1801-1861) and W.A.P. Martin 丁韪良 (1827-1916), who helped their own governments seize interests in China and, at the same time, imposed clauses in the treaties to protect their own dogmas. Such invasive activities were endorsed and commended by all the mission societies of the various Western nations. Yet history testifies that this immoral channel for spreading the gospel was only a deceptive shadow in the development of Chinese Christianity. In old China, the organisation, personnel, finances and activities of the churches were all controlled by the foreign mission societies, and such a 'foreign religion' could not be welcomed by the Chinese people. The expression 'one more Christian, one less Chinese' portrays the real situation at that period; by the end of the century or more from 1840 to 1949, the number of Chinese Christians did not exceed 700,000.⁵

The first Protestant missionary to arrive in China was Robert Morrison 马礼逊 (1782-1834) in 1807. He could never fully untie the knot to the opium trade, as he worked from his second year in China for the East India Company (EIC) and the Opium traders. The EIC encouraged farmers to plant opium, purchasing their product, refining it and shipping it to China. Morrison became the EIC's Chinese Secretary thereby coming into

⁴ An address given to the national lianghui by Ye Xiaowen 叶小文, 'Drawing lessons from the past, consolidating present achievements, opening up the future', 《以史为鉴, 巩固成果, 开拓未来》, on 23 September, 2000. [Editor's note: Ye Xiaowen was director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs from 1995 to 2009.]

⁵ 'Patriotism and religion: marching toward the new century in one heart', 《爱国爱教, 同心迈向新世纪》, a speech given to the national lianghui, 23 September, 2000.

contact with large amounts of official correspondence and must have been abundantly clear about the role of the Company.⁶ In November 1825, he wrote a letter to the London offices of the EIC addressed to the Board of Directors. 'In the fifteen years that I have continually been here [*viz.* in China] as a functionary, often facing personal danger and suffering, I have loyally served the interests of your Company, as all here in Canton can testify.' When the shooting started in the Opium War, several missionaries served the invading forces or moved with the foreign armies. Robert Morrison's son, John Robert Morrison served extensively in the British forces providing information to officers and acting as interpreter. When the British forces arrived on the Yangzi River, Morrison was on the boat with the British commander Henry Pottinger when the brave resistance of the residents of Zhenjiang 镇江 made them cowardly withdraw. Morrison made every effort to persuade Pottinger to continue the attack to Nanjing, to which Pottinger eventually agreed, and the Qing officials were forced to surrender. Karl Gützlaff, during the same war, went around in a military uniform, conscripting military provisions from various villages, receiving orders from the invading armies and in some places assuming official rank for a short period. In 1840 he was county magistrate of Dinghai 定海, in 1841 magistrate for Ningbo 宁波, while in 1842 he was acting magistrate for Zhenjiang 镇江. During the war, the British missionary Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857) 麦都思, though opposed to the opium trade, vigorously continued to support a war caused by that very trade, helping to translate for the British headquarters at Zhoushan 舟山. The British missionary William Lockhart 魏林 (1811-1896) accompanied a British army contingent to Dinghai 定海, and together with William Milne Jr., 米威怜 who had arrived subsequently in Dinghai, and the American missionaries William Abeel 雅裨理 (1804-1846) and William Jones Boone 文惠廉 (1811-1864) accompanied the British forces at Xiamen 厦门.⁷

In October, 1856, British forces initiated the Second Opium War using as their *casus belli* the 'Arrow Incident'. Before long the French added themselves to the war, using as their pretext the 'Chapelaine Incident' in Xilin 西林 county, Guangxi province. In December, 1856, the allied Anglo-French forces stormed and captured Guangzhou (Canton) and proceeded to head northwards. In May, 1857, they landed at Gukou 沽口 before occupying Tianjin. Here the Tianjin missionary Frederick Brown 宝复礼 led them directly to Beijing, and eventually on to the imperial Summer Palace, which was forcibly looted and laid waste. What could not be taken with them was smashed, and then its incomparable beauty was destroyed in flames. Its broken walls remain a desolate scene to this day. China's modern history provides evidence of a small number of missionaries who participated in the selling (or transport) of opium, collected intelligence, some who agitated for and participated in military aggression, seized economic interests, participated in the forceful coercion of Chinese officials to sign unequal treaties, and subsequently relied upon the privileges that these treaties stipulated. They rampaged through villages, cruelly oppressed the common people, intruded on family economic enterprises, took over

⁶ An address given to the national *lianghui* by Ye Xiaowen 叶小文, 'Drawing lessons from the past, consolidating present achievements, opening up the future', 《以史为鉴, 巩固成果, 开拓未来》, on 23 September, 2000. [Editor's note: Ye Xiaowen was director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs from 1995 to 2009.]

⁷ *ibid.*

farmland. Their mission agencies from all manner of countries established mission stations throughout China, carving out spheres of missionary expansion and imperialist influence. These various spheres of influence led in turn to the appearance of the anti-missionary phenomenon of the Boxer Movement and the various 'missionary cases' 教案 of which there were 1998 or more throughout the country. The principal causes of the 'missionary cases' can be divided into three main areas. The first was the historical link between the missionary enterprise and the colonial invasion of China. Second, was the violation of local communities' political and economic rights by the missionaries, the clergy and converts acting as the fuse leading to the 'missionary cases'. Third was the conflict between Christian culture and traditional Chinese culture.⁸

Owing to the national consciousness of many Chinese Christian leaders, many sought to advocate the independence of the Chinese church. For example, the Shanghai pastor Yu Guozhen 俞国桢 (1852-1932) established the China Christian Independent Church 中国耶稣教自立会 in 1907. They demanded the repatriation of educational rights, the abolition of the unequal treaties, and proposed church autonomy, self-support and self-propagation. Churches across the nation responded to the call to return to scripture and to national enlightenment, but they suffered from our nation's perilous position as a semi-colonial country and they lacked the capability of transforming the status quo. A New China was established in October, 1949, and Chinese Christians were at last able to implement their aspiration to manage the church themselves. During these developments, five patriotic Christian leaders – namely Wu Yaozong 吴耀宗 (Y.T. Wu, 1893-1979), Deng Yuzhi 邓裕志 (Cora Deng, 1900-1996), Zhao Zichen 赵紫宸 (T.C. Chao), Zhang Xueyan 张雪岩 (1901-1951), Liu Liangmo 刘良模, (1909-1988) – were able to attend the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) as religious representatives. They helped map out the *Common Programme* 《共同纲领》, which affirmed that Chinese people have the right to freedom of religious belief. Following this, Wu Yaozong travelled the length of the country, witnessing the situation of local churches and sharing the vision of the CPPCC. In April 1950, the five had also met with the Premier of the State Council, Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1898-1976). Premier Zhou, despite this being an especially busy period, had three long meetings with these Christian leaders, and indicated that religion would continue to exist for a long period, affirmed the progressive nature of many Christians and their positive contribution to China's revolutionary New Man. At the same time, he pointed out the origins of Christianity's continuing difficulties. The most important was the long period during which Christianity had been used by the imperialist powers and its continued 'foreign religion' form. This aroused the opposition of the Chinese people, giving rise to the Boxer Uprising and other anti-Christian movements, but these had not removed the influence of the malignant tumours. As such the long-term survival of Christianity in China would be beset by difficulties, and so Christianity had to remove the powerful influence of imperialism from within and return Christianity to its true nature.

8 Luo Weihong, 罗伟虹, Wan-Qing Jidujiao jiao'an fasheng de yuanyin fenxi, 《晚清基督教教案发生的原因分析》 [An analysis of the causes behind the late Qing Dynasty missionary cases], (Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2008)

With the stimulus of these talks with Zhou Enlai, Wu Yaozong and the others began repeated consultations with the various mission agencies and denominational leaders. On 28 July, 1950, the 'Direction of Endeavour for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China' 《中国基督教在新中国建设中努力的途径》, (sometimes known as the 'Three Self Manifesto' 《三自宣言》). This document spelled out that the 'imperialist use of Christianity' was a fact, that Christian organisations were fully supportive of the political stance and revolutionary position of New China, and demanded the implementation of the Three Self principles (self-government, self-support, and self-propagation) in the Chinese church. This document was then sent out to Christians throughout the nation to seek their endorsement, marking a milestone in the development of Chinese Christianity. The 'Three-Self Manifesto' quickly drew an enthusiastic response from the vast majority of Christians and the ardent support of the masses. On 23 September, 1950, it was published as a leader on the front page of the *Renmin Ribao* 《人民日报》 (The People's Daily) together with the signatures of 1527 Christians. By September, 1953, three years after its publication, the number of signatories had risen to more than 400,000, leading to a commemorative editorial of the *Renmin Ribao* entitled 'The Patriotic Movement of Chinese Christians' 《基督教人士的爱国运动》. From then on, the 23 September has been commemorated as the anniversary day of the Three Self Patriotic Movement anniversary. In the past sixty years, our country's Christians have persisted with the TSPM, persisted with the organisation of the church according to Three Self principles, persisted with the slogan of 'love country and love religion' and have moved forward united. By safeguarding social stability, promoting economic and social development through generous contributions, Chinese Christians have obtained substantial rewards. The features of Chinese Christianity have been transformed into their proper shape. The Christian enterprise is now run by Chinese and has assumed Chinese characteristics.

2. The Rationality of the TSPM from the point of view of Holy Scripture

A vice-president of the China Christian Council (CCC) and senior lecturer at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, professor Chen Zemin 陈泽民 (b. 1917) once put it like this: I want to point out that the Three Self [principles] were not our own invention, nor new patterns that we had thought up. The Three Self principles have a Biblical basis and have been adhered to by the church in two thousand years of history. You could almost say that every religious organisation, to a greater or lesser extent, possess Three Self principles. Otherwise they could not exist over the long-term. The term Three Self is not found in the Bible, but we all know that, even though it is taught throughout the Bible, the term 'Trinity' cannot be found there either. The principles and spirit of the Three Self are similar. They have a biblical basis and a theological rationale. We can see the Three Selves have been a necessary part throughout the history of the church and Christian intellectual history.⁹

9 *Jinling shenxuezhì*, [Nanjing Theological Review], 1992, p. 224

In the early church in Jerusalem it was the apostles who were responsible for evangelism (Acts 6.4): 'we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' They were able to do this because all had gathered together, to support one another: 'All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.' (Acts 2.44-45) And the assembly chose seven elders, initiating a form of self-government: 'Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.' (Acts 6.1-6) Later it is recorded, 'the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.' (Acts 9.31) God's church had been built up in the local vicinity and, from chapter 10, the good news begins to spread into the surrounding area and God calls the great apostle Paul. The churches that Paul establishes in many nations and provinces all reveal the spirit of the Three Self principles in the handling of their affairs, their government and education. The logic of the gospel does not change, but each church begins to express the character of its local environment. Believers in different areas, for example, are called by different names: those in Jerusalem are known as 'disciples' while in Antioch they are called 'Christians' (Acts 15.3). Evangelists are also given different names, one is a prophet, while another is a teacher (Acts 13.1). Church rituals were also different; some accepted circumcision while others did not (Acts 15.3) Paul did not bring the traditions of the Jerusalem church with him as he established new churches and tried his best to prohibit the interference of Jewish synagogues with the life of the gospel, and Peter and James supported him in this (Acts 15). Surely this is the first example in history of a meeting of the self-governing church. From then on Paul, in the various churches he planted, appointed elders, entrusted in the name of God to govern their own churches (Acts 14.23). In particular, he reminded the elders at Ephesus, as he was leaving, that they were to take care of the whole flock, to beware outside interference, and prevent confusion within (Acts 20.28, 32). This is the significance of the spirit of self-government. Paul also clarified the principle of self-support, that each congregation should be willing to contribute to its own needs (1 Cor 9.14), by also providing his own personal model. While preaching the gospel he continued to make tents, thereby providing for his own needs and helping others (Acts 18.3; 22.33, 35)

Thus the early church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, showed the movement and principles of what we now call the Three Self principles. God saw that the spirit of these Three Self principles which were conducive to the spreading of the gospel were put into

Holy Scripture. Its purpose was that successive churches over the year would respect and implement these principles, causing the gospel to spread and the church to be founded secure; the number of those obtaining salvation would grow daily, and they would enter the church. In this regard, we can say clearly that the principles or spirit of the Three Self completely accord with scripture.

In the service of commemoration of thirty years of the TSPM, Bishop K.H. Ting (Ding Guangxun, 丁光训, b. 1915) spoke as follows: 'foreigners sometimes suggest that the Three Self emerged out of the Chinese Communist Party. Such people have not only never studied Scripture, but they are also unclear on their history. Before the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party, a Londoner, one Henry Venn (1796-1873), first proposed the three selves together in 1850. He spoke of how these three selves were the purpose of mission, requiring foreign missionaries to study the example of Paul in the Scriptures. He told them not to expect to continue to stay for long periods in any one place, but to turn themselves as quickly as possible into many men and as quickly as possible to leave that place. After all, the English church broke with the control of the Roman Catholic Church in the Sixteenth Century, and established a self-governing Church of England.' From a Biblical and historical perspective, given the two thousand years of the proclamation of the gospel, one could say that the issue of the 'Three Selves' has continued to this day.¹⁰ The TSPM is not only correct, even required, when viewed from a patriotic perspective; it is also an imperative from an ecclesiological perspective.¹¹

So we must recognise that God has implicitly put the spirit of the Three Self into the Scriptures. From an ecclesiological point of view, the Three Self also accords with scriptural doctrine and the proper nature of the church. At every level of church organisation, we need to bang the drum for the Three Self and make them widely known convinced that justice is on our side. As we protect the achievements of the Three Self, we must also genuinely implement the Three Self principles as we take forward the mission that God has entrusted to us in the Chinese church.

3. The Significance of the Three Self Patriotic Movement from a practical Perspective.

During the 1950s the TSPM effectively transformed Christianity from being a 'foreign religion' to a religion of the Chinese people, a part of the wider whole. Many Christians were selected to serve on Consultative Committees at all levels [of the political system], some becoming members of the CPPCC. Christians were able to participate actively in politics through the bridge provided by the TSPM. So the TSPM is necessary to protect the sovereignty 主权 of us Christians; necessary also for the deepening of theological reflection; necessary also for the holiness and public [ministry] of the church. In sum,

10 *Ding Guangxun wenji*, [The Collected Works of K.H. Ting], (Yisen Chubanshe, 1998), p. 331

11 *ibid.*, p. 321

the TSPM is necessary for the good running of our Chinese church. Thus it is important that Three Self organisations at all levels, including the national TSPM, should redouble efforts so that all Christians, particularly those of a younger generation, will recognise its necessity and fitness-for-purpose. We should study our recent history, the motivations as to why our country should establish the TSPM, whether or not it is consonant with Scripture. It is exactly as the historian, Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936) once put it: if you don't know history you are unable to be patriotic; love corresponds to the depth of knowledge. As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the TSPM, we should refresh our understanding and dissemination of its growth and expansion. Only in this way can we know the determination and confidence to establish our Church according to the Three Self principles.

Yet many people still ask, given that the TSPM is commemorating sixty years is it still necessary to persist in running the church according to the Three Self principles? We must answer in the affirmative. The reason for this is primarily because it is necessary to protect the sovereignty of Chinese Christians. This sovereignty is an important part of the wider citizenship of the People's Republic of China, establishing Chinese Christians as part of a higher consciousness. At the same time, we must be aware of the anti-Chinese attitude in the wider Christian world. Western power is still rampant in many areas, and they want to use Christianity to infiltrate us. They will use the internet, books, finances, travel, schools and so forth, to Westernise us and divide us. They wish to resurrect their control over the Chinese church. In recent years the United States has proposed that 'rights are higher than sovereignty' and so they preach the issue of human rights. An important part of this is the 'protection of the freedom of belief' which enables interference in the sovereign affairs of other nations. In the past few years, the United States has annually submitted an International Religious Freedom Report to the United Nations, attacking China by name as a country which 'persecutes religions'. They aim to ruin China's international reputation and to encourage internal movements in China to break the law and resist the government. Using the religious questions to counter China is one of their most important tactics.¹²

Next, if we are to run the Chinese Church well we must persist in the Three Self principles. Starting with the creation of the TSPM in the 1950s, given the international and internal situation, God has given us the TSPM as a tool to bring about the Chinese features of His Church. The TSPM should be seen as a method, a means to run the Chinese Church well. Its aim, then, is to move from the 'Three Selves' to the 'Three Wells' 三好 (from autonomy 自治 to well-being 自好, from self-support to being well-supported, from self-propagating to extending well 传好). There is the balance of the long road ahead which reveals the utter significance of the TSPM. On the 6 October, 1980, Bishop K.H. Ting convened the third National Christian Representatives Conference by saying that despite the great accomplishments of TSPM its task remained unfinished. He pointed to the early period of the Three Self undertaking, but that its achievements needed to be consolidated,

12 CCC/TSPM ed., *Chuanjiaoshi yu Zhongguo jiaohui*, 《传教运动与中国教会》 [The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church] (Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2007), p. 42.

protected and expanded.¹³

Third, we must deepen our country's theological construction by persisting in the Three Self principles. Many foreign Christians look at the condition of Chinese Christianity and suggest that we do not have our own distinctive or systematic theology. It must be said that many of our older pastors have made diligent efforts to contextualise theological thought in China. Wu Yaozong, Zhao Zichen, K.H. Ting, Han Wenzao 韩文藻 (1923-2006), Chen Zemin and other such elders have made unfailing efforts in this regard. Over the past sixty years the TSPM has indeed given the Chinese church a contextual reflection and rich ground to ponder over. It has provided a wide canvas on which to expound a theological system with Chinese characteristics. In 2 Corinthians 9.22-23 the apostle Paul writes, 'To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.' The TSPM has embodied this scripture in its contextualisation of theological reflection and its declaration of a Christianity adapted to its locality. In order for Christianity actively to adapt into Chinese culture, for it to find the sympathy of the Chinese people, it must make unceasing efforts to adjust and adapt its development. In order to manifest its vitality to the full, today's Chinese church must strengthen and develop the contextualisation and theological construction of the TSPM.

Over the past two thousand years, Christianity has been in the constant process of adjustment and (re)construction. This process has never stopped but it has never lost its fundamental beliefs, but has allowed us to interpret them in new and fairer ways, helping to train up the spirits of the faithful. By engaging in the solid work of theological (re)construction, the TSPM will enable the Chinese church to acquire even more significant success and obtain an even greater future.

10 November, 2010

¹³ *Ding Guangxun wenji*, p. 300

The Three Self Church and House Churches in my Hometown

Gu Yue-se, 顾约瑟

I come from a rural community in China's northeast, where all the villagers basically continue to support themselves by tilling the soil. In the off season after harvest, villagers do odd-jobs in a bid to increase their income. In the last few years, most of the young people from the village have gone to the city in search of better prospects; a small number have gone to study, but the majority are in service industries (hotel staff, waiters, etc.). Although their income is not large, it is sufficient to cover daily expenses and thrifty young folk can save enough by year's end to send back a considerable sum to their family. It is better than staying home where 'every field is thrice divided' 一亩三分地, and parents are able to cultivate the land on their own.

The government has, in recent years, abolished the agricultural tax, restored more land and raised the purchase price for grains and cereals. These policies, designed to safeguard a [rural] existence, have raised the basic standard of living somewhat. The majority of homes now have a colour television (two years ago, the government gave some destitute families in the village a television for free), a telephone and cell phones. Motorbikes can be found in many homes. The previous ploughing oxen are now endangered, replaced by tractors, particularly as the raised purchase price for grain has given people tangible benefits in the last two years. This has increased farmers' enthusiasm and improved their attitudes toward the government.

The level of education of the farmers is generally very low and political consciousness very weak. They have rarely considered [abstract] social questions like the rule of law or democracy. However, farmers do loathe corruption. The believers and leaders of my hometown church are also basically like this. So when I asked a few of the church elders 管理者 what they thought the best form of religious management should be, only a few thought that the law should be used to restrict government intervention. Some of the elders said very straightforwardly, 'I have never thought about this question before.' Such a response is excusable; it is a difficult problem which has perplexed many scholars so to

expect fresh ideas from low-level 水平不高 villagers is difficult. But we must not be biased against the ideas of farmers.

From these elders [I learned] a great deal about the different house churches, Three Self churches and Seventh Day Adventist churches in villages throughout our county (these include another Jesus Family church 耶稣家庭教派 which is not the same as the original Jesus Family, and whose name is somewhat confusing). Of these, the Three Self Church is distributed most widely, with the Jesus Family next. The other two groups are only present in one village each. There are some elders who feel there should be a demarcation between the house churches and the Three Self church. For some of the elders, house meeting points should be separate from the Three Self Church. Their scriptural argument is taken from Romans 16.10: 'Greet Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my greetings to the believers from the household of Aristobulus.' Hence, these house churches suggest, the household is the centre for their religious activity, while the Three Self Church use a church building as the centre for their religious activity. Nowadays, it seems that such a distinction is questionable and an oversimplification.

The gospel came to our area about twenty years ago. The first evangelist and church planter was a man from Shandong and a follower of the [original] Mazhuang Jesus Family 馬裝耶稣家庭. In the course of his spreading the gospel many miraculous events occurred, confirming it as the Way of God 神的道. I was told that in a neighbouring village, a well-known, middle-aged man who was at death's door from cirrhosis of the liver was cured by God after receiving the gospel. He had not had a good appetite and was basically neither eating or drinking, but on the day that he received the gospel he suddenly felt like eating dumplings. His family members, were deeply distressed about him, but went ahead and prepared the dumplings, thinking that this was the last glow before sunset 回光返照. One of the elders there reported that this Christian man ate a huge amount and his family were astonished. In the following few days, his appetite returned, his symptoms eased, and when his illness was next investigated it could no longer be found. As a result, his whole family turned to God. His house became a meeting point and this Christian man naturally became the house church 'leader' 带领者.

In our area, the 'leaders' of the rural house churches largely established themselves out of homes that entertained such guests. When they started out their knowledge of the Bible and the faith was basically the same as an [average] Christian believer. Other villagers also came to the church through miraculous events and you could say that these believers formed the stable foundation for the church. After his recovery from illness, the Christian leader mentioned above began to read the scriptures, pray, and pass on the gospel to all around. This believer had never learned to ride a bike, so he used to walk to neighbouring villages to talk about the gospel – you can see his footprints all over the nearby villages. Everyday there were people coming to believe in Jesus as this man passed on the gospel. The first group of believers in each surrounding village credited this Christian man, and churches sprang up in the region, establishing his status of leadership.

After some time, an event occurred which brought a serious attack against this Christian man in his [home] village. During the summer of that year, his son had been working in the paddy fields when he was struck by lightning and died. Many people began leaving the church, one after another. The church which had had around 50 people was reduced to seven or eight. This Christian man was even thrown out of his own home and had to go round visiting [friends]. Of those that left [the church] not one returned. This state of affairs hardly improved even up to the man's death, and has remained to this day. However, these events do not seem to have affected the churches in neighbouring villages.

Once the church had been established, the Jesus Family in Shandong used to send people every year to this man's house for training 培训 classes. Attending these classes were Christian leaders from all the neighbouring villages, helping to sustain all this man's churches. Once a year, for a period not longer than half a month, these leaders imbibed the theology of the Jesus Family and its views on the Three Self Church and the government.

At the same time as this Christian man was evangelising, there were some Three Self believers who became active in the area. These Three Self Christians were first in a house church, but they soon established a church in our village. They had been meeting together with Christians from a neighbouring village. After our village built a church, they no longer went to neighbouring villages partly because of the distance on the road, and also because they felt that the other Christians had no denominational loyalty 宗派观念.

In the initial stages of the church, several miraculous events again took place in our village. A number of Christians with illnesses and weak health received healing. Many villagers came to the Church to profess the new religion, hoping to make a pile [of money], receive healing or cast out demons. It is said that the church at that time was full of old people, sick people, and women. A few young people came out of curiosity about religion or these miraculous events, but after a while they all left. The number of people in the church was between 50 and 60 (the total population of the village is about 1200).

The house church at that time did not have nearly the same capacity, and the wife of the leader was unwilling to allow that many people to gather in their house because she thought that the children might catch infectious diseases. There were other Christians who would have epileptic fits during their meetings which could frighten the children. These circumstances were known by Christians in the neighbouring village of ethnic Koreans (apart from the Korean autonomous region, China's northeast also has a number of widely dispersed Korean villages). After reflecting for some time they passed on the information to a church in Korea. Very soon after, that Korean church offered a sum of money to allow the [Chinese] church to buy the house of one of the villagers, and from then on the church began to meet there. At one point, a Korean pastor (from the church which had put up the money), came by our village. He thought that the [church] house was too broken down, and presented a further sum of money to build a proper church (in my home village, neighbouring villages, in the county and nearest town, all the churches have been built

with capital from Korea).

At that time the house church in our village was becoming more and more beautiful. It was said that when the county Party Secretary came through the village and caught sight of the church, he said it was more impressive than the production brigade 大队 headquarters (the church is located near the centre of the village on the northwest county road, and on the north side is quite close to the village's production brigade). He demanded that the village headman move the church. However, as the various stages of the church's construction had all been fully legal, this situation was never resolved.

Around the year 1994, the local Religious Affairs Bureau 宗教局 convened a meeting with the *liang hui* and required that all churches in the county be registered. The house churches did not participate. At the meeting the various church leaders were told, 'Once you register, we will pay no mind to matters of faith'. As a result, all of those who took part in the conference agreed to register.

Once the house church in our village had established its meeting point, people used to come by occasionally and ask questions on matters of faith. The house church felt that the faith in our village church was wrong. Perhaps because both sides' Biblical resources were insufficient neither side could persuade the other to their point of view, and there was no final resolution. Once the village church was registered, however, there was no more coming and going between the two.

The leaders of the Three Self Church emphasise theological training much more than the leaders of the house churches. A proportion of the leaders go regularly to city and county lay training courses. Seven or eight years ago, more than ten leaders of different house churches did go to Beijing to study theology over a period of four years. (The course was conducted by Koreans, the majority of whom were Reformed, some were Pentecostals. Every year the leaders would go four times, for about two weeks each time.) The results of this training varied, as the educational level and age of the leaders involved was very different. Those who studied well and graduated began holding their own local training classes in the slack season [after harvest]. Various people came to these classes including church leaders from other villages who had not had the chance to study and normal Christian folk. The activity of church leaders who had completed the theological training was noticeably different. Previously the sermons had no real theme or content, instead the preacher shared what moved them personally; their explanation of the Word was weak, and many went off-subject; most discussed morality and ethics. Things have changed somewhat. Nowadays some elders of house churches suggest that the preaching of other elders is entirely deficient because they lack theological training. In some churches after the preacher has barely spoken a word, the Christians know what he's going to say. There are other churches where there is no place for a sermon, rather it is replaced by individuals speaking or reading from the Scriptures as the Spirit inspires them, or where ordinary Christians share the blessings of daily life. A few elders say that this phenomenon is only

four years old in their churches, and has not yet improved. This 'loose' state of affairs encourages a warm feeling between Christians, while the style of listening respectfully to a preacher increasingly leaves Christians feeling cold and detached.

Our village church gets together four times a week. On Tuesday evening there is a Bible study, on Friday evening a prayer meeting and a sermon, on the Lord's Day there are two services early in the morning with two sermons, in the afternoon is the main event, and then in the evening there is a worship service with a short sermon. Usually at these meetings there are between thirty and forty Christians, with a larger proportion of women than men. While some of the church's adherents come as married couples, some of the Christian women have said that while their husbands support them going to church their menfolk will only come once or twice a year. In terms of age, the majority are older with relatively few young people. The 'rich and colourful' 丰富多彩 life is more attractive to the young folk and so there are not many young people in the village at all. News from the church does not excite the young folk, which is another reason why they don't want to go. The situation in neighbouring villages is basically similar.

The church's reputation in the village isn't bad. The majority of Christians are hardworking and industrious. Some of the Christians' standard of living is among the richest in the village. In the last two or three years, the children from Christian homes have done pretty well in the school and university entrance examinations, serving as an effective witness to non-believers who think that believing in God will bring personal benefits. Here you can see a sign that many villagers have a very utilitarian outlook on religion. A few people who worship idols 拜偶像 got themselves into trouble (for example, their children were haunted by demons) and came to the church seeking help. The leader of the church and several colleagues went over and cast out the demons. Some people became part of the church in this way. Also because of this, it is said sternly in the village that the Christian's god is a big god 大神.

Up until the present, our county's Three Self Churches and house churches have been clearly distinguished. There has been little communication between the two groups. If a house church leader and a Three Self pastor were to have too much contact or be too intimately involved they would be in danger of facing criticism, scrutiny and perhaps removal from office. This potential 'punishment' functions as a kind of intimidation. For instance, the leader from our village's Three Self Church knows that the leader of a neighbouring village's house church can't keep up with pastoring his flock as, like many of the house church leaders, the man has never studied theology. The Three-Self pastor is studying [part-time] at Beijing and could ask the other leader to join him, but is worried about how this might be received and so refuses to offer the invitation.

Among the many reasons for this situation is the lack of common consensus between the house churches and the Three Self Church regarding registration. Both sides cite numerous Biblical passages to support their own points of view.

The Three Self Churches consider that submitting to the requirement of the Religious Affairs Bureau to register does not conflict with faithfulness [to God]. They cite Romans 13 verse 1: 'Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God.' They say this is the final say in the matter. And they point out that people in the RAB maintain that they will not interfere in matters of faith.

The house churches oppose registration, mainly for the reason that registration means the church loses its autonomy and becomes a puppet 傀儡 of the government. They say that Christ alone is the head of the church. They worry that after registration the government will interfere excessively in the life of the faithful, for example by prohibiting itinerant evangelism. They also feel that the church does not need the government's protection. Taking refuge in Yahweh is better than taking refuge with the king. In point of fact, the RAB must be said to be keeping its promise at the registration meetings; it has shown basically no interest, let alone coercion, in the county and village level churches. They have been allowed to conduct their own training for lay leaders and ordinary Christians (though it would not permit training classes to be held during the Olympic period [in 2008]). They are allowed to invite foreign pastors to conduct training sessions provided that they are approved in advance (otherwise they face a fine of 5000 RMB). In reality, churches often don't follow these regulations when inviting foreign pastors and our village has had several visits from Korean pastors to give training, all organised privately. Although there are regulations regarding locations and times, the RAB seems to show little interest in churches which do not adhere to them. Their attitude toward registered churches is to let things slide, or perhaps consider that the Christians in these churches will have no real influence in the general 'climate'. The government's attitude toward the house churches, however, does not seem to follow the same principal. Controls over the house churches are sometimes light, sometimes strict, depending on the political climate at the time.

The house churches in our county have not had much of a pounding. Several leaders have experienced detention but only for periods of less than two weeks. This reality suggests that the opposition that the house churches feel toward registration is excessive and is inconsistent with circumstances in the local area. Their exclusion of the possibility of registration and their mistrusting attitude toward the government are closely connected with guidance given by the Shandong Jesus Family. They overlook China's vast territory and the variations in which local governments implement the policies of the centre. Perhaps the house churches also like to reiterate that they have complete theological freedom. The local house churches are also unaware of the formulations of the 'hat wearing' house churches. Some of the leaders have recently begun to change their way of thinking from complete opposition to approving registration which would bring rational government oversight.

The attitudes of the house churches toward the Three Self Church have also changed and changed. At first they believed that the Three Self Churches did not possess salvation whereas lately they consider that some within the Three Self Church have been saved. From

first to last, the house churches maintain that the Three Self Church [as a whole] does not belong to the Spirit and that the common people everywhere are not distinguishing the two of them clearly enough. For instance, the house churches do not celebrate the Lantern Festival 元宵节, Spring Festival 春节 or other traditional [Chinese] holidays because the Bible does not record them. Many non-believing family members cannot understand this way of doing things. For the Three Self Church these traditional holidays are acceptable, though they stress that the motivation [of Christians] and those of the common people are not the same. For example many people love firecrackers at Chinese New Year because they believe it drives out ghosts and misfortune for the year ahead, but Christians merely think they add to the festive atmosphere. They understand that the source of all blessings is in God.

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Section II

Documentation

July 2011

Fr Huang Bingzhang has been ordained as the Catholic bishop of Shantou (in Guangdong Province) on 14 July, without the mandate of the Pope. Eight bishops led by Mgr. Johan Fang Xingyao, all in communion with the Vatican, concelebrated the ordination, despite the strongest rebuke so far from the Vatican. Fr Huang was 'democratically elected' as a candidate for bishop on 11 May; he is a deputy of the NPC and one of the vice-chairs of the CCPA. A brief statement put out by the Vatican's Press Office, said that the actions damage 'the unity of the universal church.' This is the third 'independent ordination' within 9 months. On 22 July, Fr Joseph Guo Jincai, vice-chairman of the CCPA, told an interviewer that there were 'at least seven' more bishops lined up to be ordained, but that preparations were 'complicated and involve various parties.' Among the consecrating bishops, several were forcibly escorted away from their dioceses by religious officials to participate. Outside commentators have said that relations between the Vatican and Beijing are now at a very low ebb and some have raised the possibility of the Catholic church being declared schismatic. (See AsiaNews, 13 Jul; AsiaNews, 14 Jul; UCAN, 14 Jul; VIS, 15 Jul; Vatican Insider, 15 Jul; AP, 15 Jul; EDA, 15 Jul; HKSE, 17 Jul; National Catholic Reporter, 21 Jul; Vatican Insider, 22 Jul).

The Vatican has declared in a brief statement that the **ordination of Fr Joseph Huang Bingzhang as bishop of Shantou was 'illicit'**, and pronounced that the bishop has incurred sanctions under canon law, is not recognized by the Holy See, and has no spiritual authority over Catholics in the diocese. Fr Huang has incurred these sanctions under canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law. The Vatican said that Fr Huang had been informed some time ago that he could not be approved by the Vatican for episcopal ordination, and the reasons had been conveyed to Beijing. Despite repeated advice not to pursue the illicit ordination, Fr Huang had proceeded. The statement added that the Diocese of Shantou already has a 'legitimate bishop'. (underground bishop, Peter Zhuang Jianjian), and that priests should not address Fr Huang as bishop nor accept the sacraments from him unless *in extremis*. The statement is seen to be slightly milder than the one issued on 4 July after the Leshan ordination, allowing for the fact that many of the consecrating bishops have been coerced. Italian parliamentarian Alfredo Mantovano has called on the EU to criticize China's detention of Catholic bishops and its treatment of Chinese Catholics. (See AsiaNews, 12 Jul; VIS, 16 Jul; Vatican Insider, 16 Jul, 21 Jul; EDA, 24 Jul; HKSE, 24 Jul; UCAN, 26 Jul; the Tablet, 30 Jul)

In an earlier statement on 4 July, the **Vatican censured the ordination of Paul Lei Shiyin as bishop of Leshan on 29 June.** Officials said that Pope Benedict was deeply saddened. The statement reiterated that under canon 1382 sanctions include excommunication. It concludes that 'if it is desired that the Church in China be Catholic, the Church's doctrine and discipline must be respected.' (See VIS, 4 July; EDA, 4 July; UCAN, 4 July; Vatican Insider, 4 July; NYT, 8 July; UCAN, 11 July)

The **State Administration for Religious Affairs** published a short response to the **Vatican**, calling its statements 'unreasonable' and 'brutal' which 'deeply wound' Chinese Catholics. It condemns the Vatican for saddening Chinese Catholics through unwarranted interference. It concludes that 'the majority of priests and believers will more resolutely choose the path of independently selecting and ordaining its bishops, and the government will continue to support and encourage such practice.' But the Chinese government is willing to improve Sino-Vatican relations through 'constructive dialogue'. (See Xinhua, 25 Jul; AsiaNews, 25 Jul; EDA, 25 Jul)

Reports from Shenyang Diocese (Liaoning Province) suggest that Mgr Paul Pei Junmin had been selected to concelebrate at the ordination, but priests and local Catholic faithful staged a sit-in and prayer vigil at the cathedral to prevent their bishop leaving or being 'kidnapped'. Another bishop reportedly went into hiding to avoid being taken to the ordination. These forms of 'resistance' were praised in the Vatican statement of 16 July. (See AsiaNews, 8 Jul; EDA, 18 Jul; HKSE, 17 Jul)

Another 'independent ordination' is suggested in Harbin, where Fr Joseph Yue Fusheng (a vice-president of the CPA) has been selected for ordination. It is rumoured that the resistance of local priests is delaying his ordination. Cardinal Joseph Zen has said 'rogue officials' are aiding the 'scum of the church' in creating huge wounds on the body of the Chinese church. (See AsiaNews, 18 Jul)

The Beijing Christian Council has overseen a swift increase in the number and size of Protestant churches over recent years, according to a Xinhua report. **Around 5000 people are baptized annually in Beijing's TSPM churches**, and new churches at Yanjing Seminary, Chaoyang, Fengtai, Huairou, Yanqing and Daxing. Two new churches in Miyun and Mengtougou districts are expected to open soon. As a result Beijing has 21 'registered' churches. A nursing home was established by the Christian Council in 2004, and 3m yuan has been donated to disaster relief efforts in recent years. (Xinhua, 27 Jul)

Fr Joseph Sun Jigen, who was briefly detained by police in June ahead of his proposed **ordination as coadjutor bishop of Handan**, has announced that his ordination had in fact already taken place, clandestinely, on 21 June. Fr Sun was elected as candidate for bishop last year, with the approval of the Vatican and religious affairs officials. Preparations to ordain him on 29 June hit an impasse when the presiding bishop, Mgr Yang Xiangtai (aged 89) refused to countenance Joseph Guo Jincai, bishop of Chengde diocese, concelebrating with him, because the latter is deemed by the Vatican to have been ordained illicitly. (See UCAN, 11 Jul; Vatican Insider, 14 Jul)

Pastor Ezra Jin Tingri, of the unregistered Zion Church in Beijing, has said this is a 'critical moment' for the Protestant House churches. Last month he filed a petition at the NPC, signed by over a dozen house church leaders, asking for their right to religious freedom to be preserved. So far he has not had a response. 'We are trying to send a message to remind

the Communist Party leaders not to inflame this incident, nor to tackle it in the way they did Falun Gong.' Thirty-five congregants were detained on 24th July in the sixteenth week of the crackdown on the church. Several of the House Church Alliance pastors have also called for church unity as pressure continues on leading house church figures. Professor He Guanghu and Pastor Zhang Mingxuan have also written open letters to President Hu Jintao this month over the situation. (See CNN, 14 Jul; China Aid, 24 Jul; WSJ, 28 Jul)

A senior figure in the Chinese House Church Alliance has been given two years of reform through labour. **Pastor Shi Enhao** was sentenced on 25 July for organizing 'illegal meetings and illegal organizing of venues for religious meetings.' Pastor Shi is a deputy chairman of the CHCA. (See China Aid, 25 Jul)

Francesco Wei Shizhi, a Franciscan Father, has died at the 95. Hundreds of Catholic faithful from all over China gathered to celebrate a mass for the repose for a man who spent more than twenty years in prison and strictly adhered to the Franciscan ideal of poverty. (See AF, 15 July)

August 2011

Beijing's choice as **Panchen Lama has made a rare excursion outside of Beijing**. Now aged 22, Gyaltzen Norbu has lived most of his life in Beijing as the controversial reincarnation of Tibet's second-most senior lama. He is a vice-president of the Chinese Buddhist Association and a member of the CPPCC. His seven-day stay at Labrang monastery concluded a 13-day tour of important Buddhist monasteries in Gansu province. Commentators suggest it may be an attempt to raise the Panchen's legitimacy through some monastic education and exposure. The Panchen Lama will be an important figure in recognizing the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama. (See NYT, 11 Aug; Economist, 19 Aug; VOA, 23 Aug; ATO, 30 Aug)

Lobsang Sangay, a former member of the Tibetan Youth Congress and senior fellow at Harvard University has assumed his role as **prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile**. Mr Sangay's appointment has already been condemned by Beijing which refuses to meet representatives from the Dalai Lama for several years. (See AsiaNews, 5 Aug; AFP, 8 Aug)

Three Tibetan monks from the Kirti monastery in Sichuan province have been jailed for between 10 and 13 years after being **convicted of helping a fellow monk immolate himself** in March. Months of protests followed Phuntsog's suicide; a lama said to have helped hide the burned monk for several hours prior to his death was sentenced to 11 years. Two other monks were convicted by a court in Aba prefecture of sending photographs of Phuntsog overseas prior to the self-immolation, showing they helped in its premeditation. Phuntsog's age has been variously reported as 16 (Xinhua) and 20 (some Tibetan campaign groups). (See AFP, 31 Aug)

Another Tibetan, Tsewang Norbu, has **killed himself by self-immolation** in neighbouring Daofu (Sichuan province). (See NYT, 15 Aug; AsiaNews, 16 Aug; VOA, 26 Aug)

SARA and the UFWD have organized a **week-long study tour of northeastern cities for over 20 senior clergy and officials of the Catholic church**. Sixteen bishops, including two of those recently illicitly ordained, took part in the visits to Harbin, the surrounding province and Beijing. In the capital they are scheduled to meet the heads of SARA and UFWD. The aim of the regular summer visits is to foster love of country and love of the church among leading members of the patriotic church. It has been anticipated that Fr Joseph Yue Fusheng would be ordained bishop of Harbin in the near future, but his selection has led to strong resistance within the diocese. Organisers have denied that the recent visit to Harbin was part of preparations for Fr Yue's ordination. (See HKSE, 31 Aug; UCAN, 22 Aug)

The diocesan administrator for the underground Catholic community in Heze Diocese (Shandong Province) has been given three years at a re-education through labour camp. Wang Chengli, 48, was said to have received the punishment for refusing to join the CPA. Fr Wang was detained together with three other underground priests on 3 Aug. The others were released after several days. Another 30 underground Catholics, including retired bishop Casmirus Wang Milu, were detained for two days in Tianshui Diocese (Gansu Province). All thirty were released on 25 August, after attempts were made to ensure that they supported the nomination of Fr Zhao Jianzhang to succeed his uncle, Zhao Jinglong (d. 2004), as the registered diocesan bishop. (See AsiaNews, 3 Aug; UCAN 12 Aug; UCAN, 23 Aug; AsiaNews, 24, 26 Aug)

Fr Chen Hailong, an underground priest from Xuanhua, has been released from detention after four months. Fr Chen was detained on 9 April in Beijing, and reports suggest police sought to find out from him the whereabouts of the underground bishop of Xuanhua, Thomas Zhao Kexun. He was also urged to accept the principle of an independent church and a priest registration card. (See UCAN, 4 Aug)

Chinese contractors have been given the deal to build a diocesan centre at the Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi. The Catholic diocese has said the centre will be used for systematic evangelization. (See The Tablet, 13 Aug)

Jinde Charities, the most prominent of the Catholic Social Service Centres in China has been granted foundation status. As a result they are legally tax-exempt. Founded as Beifang Jinde in 1997, the charity received government approval in 1998. It was registered as an independent NGO with Hebei authorities in 2006 as Hebei Jinde Charities Service Centre. Jinde hopes to upgrade its foundation status to allow it to conduct public fund raising. (See UCAN, 9 Aug)

The dissident writer Liao Yiwu has published his new book, *God is Red: the secret story of how Christianity survived and flourished in Communist China*. Liao lived with Christians in China's southwestern provinces to research and write the story, shortly before fleeing via Vietnam to Germany. He is best known for his work *The Corpse-walker* which describes life for those at the bottom of Chinese society. (See AFP, 31 Aug)

Millions of Muslims across China celebrated Eid al-Fitr today, the festival that marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan — a season of fasting and spiritual reflection. Early this morning, Muslims from northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, as well as other Muslim-populated regions, donned festive outfits and swarmed local mosques. About 5,000 Muslims went to the Yanghan Mosque in the regional capital of Urumqi to hear imams preaching. (See Xinhua, 31 Aug)

September 2011

A Catholic nun and priest were reportedly attacked as they tried to get two former church properties returned to Kangding diocese. The former Latin school and boys' school are being used by a private company and Moxi County government. The diocese is run by three priests and two nuns. Sister Xie Yuming is still in hospital after the attack. [See AsiaNews, 7 Sept]

Chinese dissident author Liao Yiwu—the once lauded, later imprisoned, and now celebrated author of *The Corpse Walker*—profiles the extraordinary lives of dozens of Chinese Christians, providing a rare glimpse into the burgeoning underground world of belief that is taking hold within the officially atheistic state of Communist China. A luminous writer, and not a Christian himself, Yiwu offers a uniquely objective and insightful perspective on the position Christians occupy in mainland China. [See San Francisco Chronicle, 6 Sept]

After two years of grueling labor, five house-church leaders were released last week from labor camps in China, reports Voice of the Martyrs. Since September 13, 2009, Fao Fuqin, Zhao Guoai, Yang Caizhen, Yang Hongzhen and Li Shuangpin have experienced physical and psychological torment in a Chinese labor camp. All five men are leaders in the 50,000 member Linfen church, a house church movement in China. The men were arrested in the aftermath of an attack on Linfen, when over 400 local police, government officials, and hired men attacked one of the church branches. In the attack, they demolished a church building and clashed with several hundred members of the church, sending 30 to the hospital. Five church leaders were detained and sentenced to prison terms of up to seven years during a one-day show trial, and five were sentenced to two years of re-education through labor. [See Mission News Network, 14 Sept]

The Christian human-rights lawyer, Jiang Tianyong, who was arrested and detained for two months in February has told his story to the *South China Morning Post*. The 41-year old said he was repeatedly punched and kicked for two days, locked in a dark room where

he had to remain motionless for 15 hours at a time, and had to sign eight pledges of good behaviour before being released. [See SCMP, 14 Sept; AsiaNews, 15 Sept]

One of the most prominent house church leaders in China, **Zhang Rongliang**, has been released from prison nine months before the end of his prison sentence and allowed to return home, ChinaAid has learned. Family members report that he is in good spirits and that, apart from serious diabetes, he is in good health. He is the leader of the Fangcheng Mother Church in central China's Henan province and the leader of the China for Christ Church, one of the largest house church networks. [September 17, 2011, Christian News Wire]

An argument over the dismissal of rector Fr Anthony Chang Tongxi for financial misconduct by Shanxi Major Seminary has led to the suspension of classes there. The rector was fired with immediate effect last June, but the Religious Affairs Bureau have disputed the disciplinary measure and shut the Seminary until the matter is resolved. [See AsiaNews, 19 Sept]

Two young Tibetan monks set themselves on fire to protest against government religious controls in western China on Monday, two exiled Tibetan sources said, the third such protest this year that could spark fresh tension in the unstable region. The 18-year-old monks, Kelsang and Kunchak, belong to the Kirti monastery — a major site of protest against Chinese policies and the scene of a harsh crackdown by security forces in May — one India-based exiled Tibetan activist, told Reuters. The monks' self-immolations could lead to a renewed crackdown in Aba prefecture, a heavily ethnic Tibetan part of Sichuan province that many advocates of self-rule say should form part of a larger homeland under Tibetan control. [See Reuters, Sept. 26]

A month-long **exhibition of China's Bible ministry** kicked off Wednesday in Washington D.C. to tell a China Bible story rarely truthfully described to the outside world. The Bible Ministry Exhibition of the Protestant Church in China made its debut at Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church in the U.S. capital. It will be on display there through Oct. 2 before traveling to other U.S. cities including Chicago, Dallas and Charlotte. Through the Bible's various Chinese versions, ancient or modern, as well as pictures, paintings, calligraphy, art works and historical documents, the exhibition, entitled "The word is the Truth," aimed to give an overall understanding of how Bible was brought into China, how it was translated, published, distributed there, and loved by Chinese brothers and sisters. [See Xinhua, Sept. 29]

October 2011

A young Tibetan **monk set himself on fire** Monday in a remote western town to protest Chinese policies, the fourth monk from Kirti Monastery to self-immolate this year, according to a Tibet advocacy group based in London. [See New York Times, 3 Oct]

More than 2,600 Chinese Muslims from Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region will begin their **annual pilgrimage to Mecca** in Saudi Arabia later this month, local religious officials said Thursday. The number traveling this year is about 200 more than that of last year, said Hei Fuli, vice chairman and secretary-general of the Islamic Association of Ningxia. The Muslims will fly to Saudi Arabia via eight Air China charter flights between October 17 and 22, and will return to Ningxia between November 27 and December 2, Hei said. [See China Daily, 6 Oct]

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Tuesday that religious activities in Southwest China's Sichuan province remain normal, despite the fact that several local monks have set themselves on fire in recent months. "Religious activities in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture and other Tibetan autonomous areas remain normal. The religious demands of local worshippers have been fully satisfied," Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said at a daily press briefing on Tuesday. Several monks have attempted to self-immolate in Sichuan's Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture in recent months. Local police extinguished the fires and sent the monks to local hospitals for treatment, Liu said. An investigation of the incidents is underway, Liu said. [See China Daily, 12 Oct]

A British human rights group says **another Tibetan Buddhist monk has set himself on fire** in a protest against Chinese rule over the Himalayan region in the 10th self-immolation this year. The monk set himself ablaze early Tuesday outside a Tibetan monastery in southwestern Sichuan province's Ganzi prefecture, the London-based Free Tibet group said in a statement. The group said it was unable to confirm the monk's age or name. It was unsure of his condition and whereabouts. [See AP, 26 Oct]

A Tibetan **nun has set herself on fire** near a restive monastery in western China, in the ninth such incident in recent months, reports say. The Free Tibet group said the 20-year-old nun, Tenzin Wangmo, died on Monday in Sichuan province's Aba county. A witness told Radio Free Asia (RFA) that she called for freedom for Tibet before she set herself on fire. Aba County is home to the Kirti monastery, the scene of repeated protests against Beijing's rule. [See BBC, 18 Oct]

November 2011

News circulated in China that the **forthcoming ordination of Fr Paul Lou Xuegang** as coadjutor Catholic bishop of Yibin (Sichuan Province) would involve the participation of 'illicitly' ordained bishop Paul Lei Shiyin. Fr Paul Lou's ordination has been approved by both the Vatican and Beijing, in contrast with the ordination this summer of bishop Paul Lei. The latter was excommunicated by the Vatican but remains the chair of the CPA in Sichuan Province. Paul Lei rejected accusations that the Chinese Church was 'being manipulated' but instead he and others were doing 'what we think is beneficial for the church's development'. Yibin diocese is currently in the hands of 95-year old bishop, John Chen Shizhong, who is recognized by both Beijing and the Vatican. Fr Paul Lou is the

nephew of the former bishop of Leshan, Matthew Luo Duxi. [See Vatican Insider, 25, 28 Nov; UCAN, 24, 28 Nov]

Eighty participants gathered in Shijianzhang, Hebei Province, between 16-18 November for a **conference on liturgy and inculturation** in China. Several bishops, leaders of the ten major seminaries, and several priests who had studied liturgy abroad attended the conference organized by the Hebei Faith Institute. [See AF, 17 Nov]

The editor of Faith Press has estimated that there are **now more than 30 diocesan newspapers in China** and a dozen Catholic magazines. Faith Press Weekly now has around 50,000 subscribers, a slight decline in recent years owing to Sino-Vatican tensions and greater competition. [See UCAN, 25 Nov]

The Shanxi Catholic major seminary in Taiyuan has opened again for studies after a ten-week stand-off over the appointment of a new rector. Board members had refused to approve the continued tenure of the previous rector, Fr Chang Tongxi last November after he was found to be embezzling funds. Fr Chang was dismissed in June, but wrangling over the appointment of his successor has only just been resolved. Fifty seminarians have now returned to study, perhaps twenty others have moved to other seminaries. [See UCAN, 17 Nov]

A well-known China hand, and a founder of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, Fr Angelo Lazzarotto has been denied entry into China for the first time. [See HKSE, 11 Nov]

Tibetan Buddhist leaders have called on Beijing to restart dialogues in the wake of 11 self-immolations in Aba prefecture, Sichuan, this year. The Karmapa Lama, number three in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, has said 'these desperate measures' by Tibetans 'are a cry against injustice and repression'. The UN rapporteur on religious freedom, Heiner Bielefeldt, has criticized the 'intimidation of the lay monastic community' and said that the right 'to practice religion should be fully respected and guaranteed by the Chinese government.' [See ENI, 1 Nov; AP, 9 Nov]

Officials in the Tibetan Region have announced the beginning of **welfare payments to Tibetan Buddhist monks**. Monks will now receive pensions, medical insurance and new allowances in a bid to improve stability in Tibetan areas. [See BBC, 14 Nov]

The Dalai Lama is to attend a four-day celebration of the Buddha's birthday in India. China has pressured New Delhi to prevent the Dalai from participating, and has apparently retaliated by suspending meetings of a boundary commission. [See IANS, 27 Nov]

Official figures cite that there are **now 20,000 Buddhist temples, 3,000 Taoist monasteries, 35,000 mosques, 6000 Catholic and more than 50,000 Protestant churches** open in China. There are more than 100m religious believers in China. More and more Han Chinese are converting to Tibetan Buddhism and going to study at centres

like Larung Gar in Sichuan Province, which now holds over 10,000 students. [See Xinhua, 26 Nov; US Today, 2 Nov]

A portion of a hand-copied, prison Bible was given to former President George W. Bush, by president of China Aid, Bob Fu. The manuscript made by Christian prisoners from Gansu during the 1990s, will now be put on display at President Bush's Freedom Institute in Texas. [See ENI, 6 Nov]

December 2011

A twelfth Tibetan is reported to have committed suicide by self-immolation. Tenzin Phuntsog is said to have died from injuries sustained when he set himself alight after drinking kerosene in the town of Chamdo. While not a monk, he is thought to have been connected with the Karma monastery. Since the spate of self-immolations, monks have needed more and more permissions to travel from their monasteries, while patrols around sensitive sites have increased. (See Washington Post, 2 Dec)

Zhu Weiqun, deputy minister at the UFWD, has **slammed the growing number of Party officials having 'close contacts with religious figures** and some [Party] members even becoming de facto religious believers.' Writing in the Party magazine, *Qiushi*, he said the consequences for the Party would be 'pernicious' and rejected the call by some Party cadres that the ban on religious belief be lifted. A Communist Youth member is reported to have said that the Party should not interfere with personal beliefs, but Mr Zhu cautioned this would 'inevitably result in splits in the Party's ideology and its organization.' A survey in 2006 estimated that 20m Party members had religious affiliations. Mr Zhu is noted for his responsibility for nationalities policy at the UFWD, and recently reiterated Beijing's 'long-term, vigorous, complex and even intense' resistance to the 'Dalai Lama clique'. (See SCMP, 8 Dec; SCMP, 19 Dec; AsiaNews, 20 Dec; The Hindu, 25 Dec)

Fr Peter **Luo Xuegang was ordained coadjutor bishop of Yibin** on 30 November. The ceremony was controversial for the presence and participation of the excommunicated bishop of Leshan, Paul Lei Shiyin. Fr Frederico Lombardi, press officer at the Vatican, said that the standing of Fr Lei had now sunk to an all time low, and that his participation in the service may have canonical consequences on bishop Luo's ordination and the other participating bishops. However, the Vatican was seeking more information. Wang Zuo'an, the director of SARA, commented that diplomatic negotiations with the Vatican would necessarily take a long time, citing the 103 years it took for the United States to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See. 'There were excommunications in the past and there is excommunication now. It makes no sense to use it, because we have been electing and ordaining bishops on our own all along,' he is reported to have said. Official spokesmen are continuing to promote the 'democratic management' of the Chinese church. (See Vatican Insider, 30 Nov; EDA, 30 Nov; UCAN, 30 Nov, 1 Dec; HKSE, 11 Dec; UCAN, 15, 23 Dec)

The Catholic cathedral of Tianjin has celebrated the baptism of 270 catechumens shortly before Christmas. The parish now has 30,000 faithful, and was among the first to open its own website which has repeatedly stressed the importance of evangelization. (See AF 20 Dec)

Jinde Charities' annual Christmas charity event on 17 Dec has raised around 1m yuan (£100,000), with donations split evenly between cash and gifts in kind. The charity event was broadcast on local television. (See AF, 19 Dec)

Followers of a local church in Xintan scuffled with police as they attempted to hold an outdoor gala event in the village square. The unregistered church has put up videos of the dispute on the video-sharing website, youtube. The area is known for its production of Christmas ornaments, exporting nearly 500m yuan in 2011, and Xintan has called itself the 'Christmas Village'. Local police said that the church had refused to compromise, and had had to step in to prevent escalating tensions between local Christians and Buddhists. (See AP, 16 Dec)

Hundreds of Muslims in Hexi town (Ningxia AR) are said to have rioted after plans for the demolition of a local mosque went ahead. The mosque had been newly renovated, but was declared illegal by local police, who moved in a thousand officers to police the demolition. Several casualties were reported as confrontation spread. (See Zeenews, 2 Jan)

The **underground coadjutor bishop of Kaifeng, Zong Changfeng has died** at the age of 79. After studying at seminaries in Fengxiang and Xi'an, he spent many years as a farmer before being ordained a priest in 1979, and working in the diocese of Zhouzhi. He was well known for building churches and his frugal lifestyle. In 1998 he was made coadjutor bishop of Kaifeng diocese (Henan province), but refused cooperation with the CPA. He retired in 2008 in considerable physical pain, living with his nephew. (See UCAN, 1 Dec; AF, 7 Dec)

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