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Shen Zhou (1427-1509), Poet on a Mountain Top, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Album leaf mounted as a hand scroll, ink and water colour on paper, silk mount, image 15 ¼ x 23 ¾ inches (38.74 x 60.33cm). © The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust, 46-51/2. Photograph by Robert Newcombe.

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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

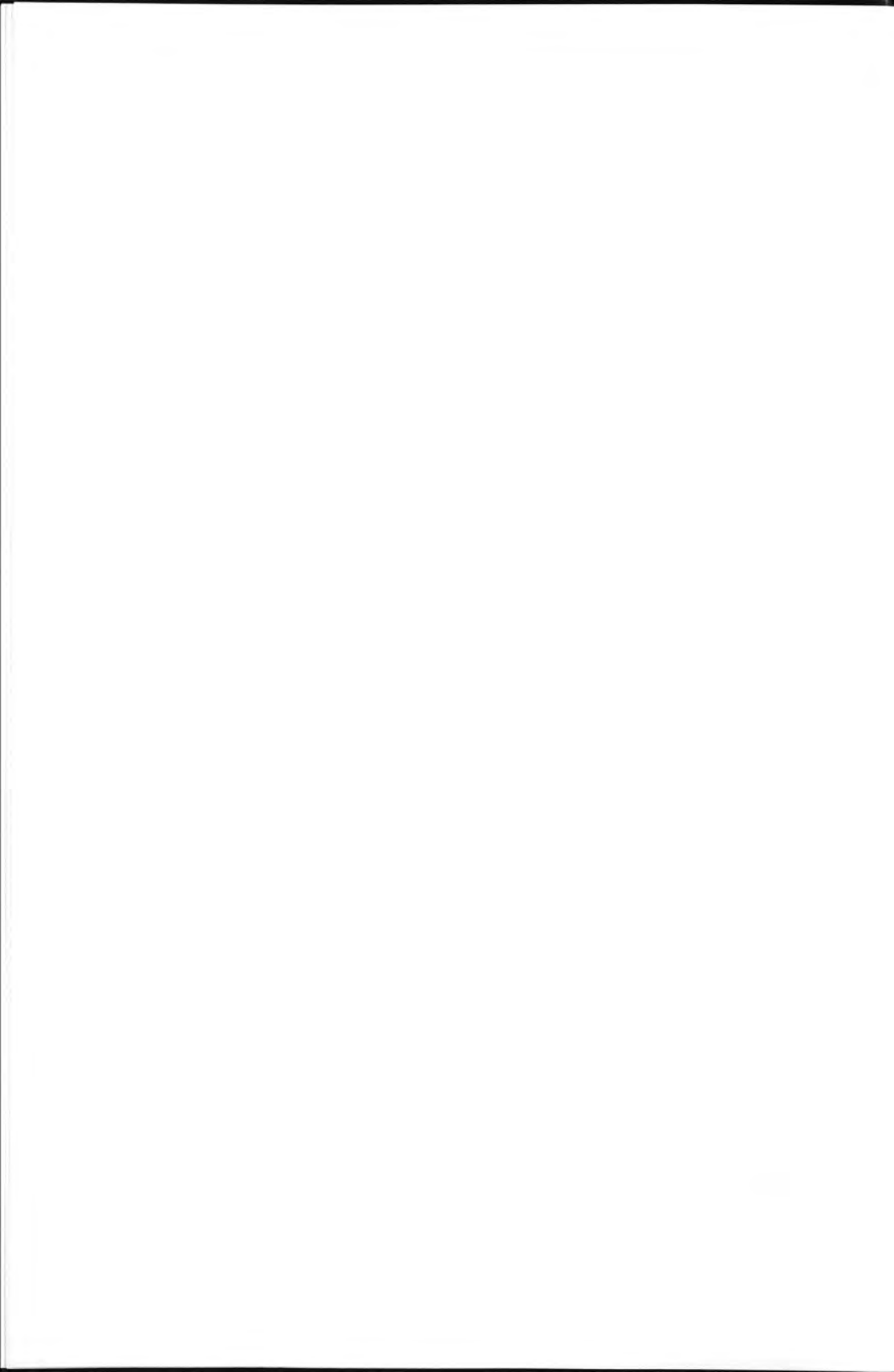
ZGDJ : *China Taoism* (Journal)

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



Report on an in-house Survey of Chinese Christianity¹

By a task group at the Institute for World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social
Sciences.

中国社会科学院世界宗教研究所课题组

(Translated by Lawrence Braschi)

During the years 2008 and 2009, a study group at the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), has investigated the number and religious situation of Christians in China (that is Protestant Christians, not including Roman Catholics or Eastern Orthodox Christians). The national investigation included all 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities (but did not include Hong Kong, Macao or Taiwan). It was conducted through a nationwide sampling. The object of this investigation was to survey all members in households within a sample frame which encompassed all mainland provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities; a sample arrived at through sophisticated statistical techniques (namely total population Probability Proportional to Size Sampling, PPS, 总人口规模成比例的抽样方法). This sample was divided into three phases. The first was to select counties and towns from all over China, the second was to select from within this frame eight to ten administrative village units for each county, and thirdly to select from within this frame 20 individual household units to investigate. The sample scheme and its operational phases can be seen in Appendix 1. Inquiries were made at each of these households as to whether anyone professed a religion, and if not they filled in a single questionnaire. If there were believers, then each member who professed a religious belief was asked to fill in a questionnaire. This investigative sample comprised 321 county units, 2718 (residential) administrative village units, 54360 household units and 211750 people were visited in total. Visits were carried out in two phases (see Appendix 1), closing on 30 April, 2009. The investigation returned 63680 completed questionnaires (with a return rate of 100%). These calculations give figures for the overall Christian

¹ Translator's note: the original Chinese report was published in the *Annual Report on China's Religions* 中国宗教报告 (China's Blue Book of Religions, 2010) (Social Science Academic Press, Beijing), pp. 190-212.

population with a confidence factor of 95%, and with a statistical error of no more than 3.2%.

The questionnaire consisted of 19 questions, of which the first seven naturally inquired about the overall circumstances of the subject: the number of family members, their gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, level of education, and occupation. There were 12 questions which concerned religious aspects: which religion did they profess, what age were they when they started to believe, in which year, what individual reasons led them to begin professing a religion, what method had brought them into contact with the religion, whether they regularly attended religious activities, the location of the activities they did attend, their attitude toward believers of other religions, their attitude toward the grave-sweeping festival 清明扫墓, whether or not believers could form friendships with non-believers, and whether the family contained other believers.

The original survey data were given weighted calculation to arrive at a figure for the overall scale of the Christian community (shown in the accompanying table). This report barely summarises the data for the overall situation and composition of the Chinese Christian community (by region, period, gender, age, educational level, etc.).

1. Overall Situation

1.1 The proportion of Christians to the total population is 1.8%.

From this rough calculation, the number of China's Christians stands at 1.8% of the total population, or 23.05m people.² Of these, 15.56m or 67.5% are baptised, while 7.49m or 32.5% are not.

China's women Christians evidently exceed male believers. Within the Christian community nearly seven out of every ten are women (69.9%), while only 3 out of every ten are men (30.1%).

The educational attainment for over half of all Chinese Christians was only the completion of primary school or below. Those who have only primary education or lower make up 54.6% of the total, junior middle school education make up 32.7%, completed secondary schooling make up 10.1% and the university educated make up only 2.6%.

2 The questionnaire focuses on the investigation of religious information. But the survey was not specifically limited to religious groups or specific sites for religious activities, so the questionnaires had to take into account that the majority of the respondents may not be believers. The guidelines for our investigation were that: If the respondent and their family were not religious, then only they would answer a questionnaire; however if the respondent or someone in their family were religious, then each of those who were religious were to answer a questionnaire. Such households were coded separately to make a clear distinction in the records in order to avoid confusion in the calculations. Thus, we will not only understand the overall situation of believers and non believers, but also have a greater understanding of religious information among both groups.

The proportion of China's Christians aged between 35 and 64 is 60% or higher. In the Christian community, those aged 14 *sui* or under make up 0.6%, aged 15-24 make up 3.7%, aged 25-34 make up 5.9%, aged 35-44 make up 16.1%, aged 45-54 make up 23.4%, aged 55-64 make up 24.6% and those aged 65 or over make up 25.7%.

1.2 The quantitative growth in Christianity in recent years has been rapid.

In the present Chinese Christian community, the number who were believers in 1965 make up only 3%, those who came to believe between 1966-1981 make up 5.7%, those who professed religion between 1982 and 1992 are 17.9%, those who believed between 1993 and 2002 make up 42.4% and those who came to believe between 2003 and 2009 make up 31.0%.

Within the broad scope of the whole country, the number of Christians who have come to believe since 1993 represent 73.4% of the total; apart from South China where the figure is 52.9%, all other regions have figures of 60% or higher; in the three provinces of Northeast China the figure reaches 90.5%.

1.3 The proportion of Christians who credit their own illness or the illness of a family member for their coming to faith is 60% or higher.

The investigation shows that among the reasons for coming to profess in Christianity, the response "Because I or a family member fell ill" represented 68.8% of believers; traditional family influence makes up 15.0% of responses. The important methods through which believers came into contact with Christianity included through the influence of family or relatives (44.0%), or through other believers' and friends' influence (46.5%).

1.4 Chinese Christians are relatively energetic in their participation in religious activities.

The survey shows comparatively high rates of Christian attendance in religious activities; Christians who reported that they "regularly attended" religious activities made up 57.8%, those who "sometimes attended" made up 38.2%, which added together totals 96%. Those who "never attend" made up only 3.9%.

Among the Christians, 67.9% exercised their faith at legally registered sites, 20.2% participated at unregistered sites, while 26.7% met in friends' homes and 22.4% conducted religious activities in their own homes.

Approximately half of Christians consider that their religion is better than any other religion, and nearly half expressed disapproval of other religions.

1.5 Chinese Christians are particularly concentrated in East [China] and in the Yangtze River basin.

The proportion of Christians to the total population reveals clear regional divergences. In successive order from the highest proportion the regions are as follows: East China, 3.1%; Northeast China, 3.0%; Central China, 2.4%; Northwest China, 0.8%, North China, 0.8%, Southwest China, 0.7%, South China, 0.2%. Thus the majority of Chinese Christians are concentrated in the Eastern region and the Yangtze River areas.³

2. Dividing the data on the current situation of Chinese Christians into groups.

When we look at the ages in which Christians began to believe, many did not come to believe until they were in their older years. The survey data show that nearly half (44.4% of the total number of Christians) were aged between 35 and 54 years of age when they came to faith. But the initial age of religious belief does vary from region to region. In the Northeast, more than half (or 54% of the total number of Christians) were aged between 35 and 54 years. In Southern China the same figure is about ¼ (or 22.7%), while Christians who came to faith aged 14 or younger also account for about ¼ (or 24.4% of the total). This shows that in southern China the faith of the family is relatively important (see figure 1).

According to the survey estimates, the number of Christians aged 14 years and below is 1.349 million (5.9%), those aged between 15 and 24 are 2.180 million (9.5%), those aged 25 to 34 are 3.805 million (16.5%), those aged between 35 and 44 are 5.188 million (22.5%), those aged between 45 and 54 make up 5.046 million (21.9%), those aged between 55 and 65 make up 3.908m (17.0%) and those aged 65 and above make up 1.567 million (6.8%). (See figure 1)

Those Christians who came to faith under 24 years of age (the combined age segments of 14 and below and 15-24 years old) are greater in the East region (21.1%) and Western Region (20.6%) than in the Central region (11.0%) and Northeast region (6.6%).

3 The overall target for the Chinese population in this situation can be found in the 2007 Ministry of Public Security registration of China's population as 1.31 billion (see *The People's Republic of China National population statistics (2007)*, [《中华人民共和国全国分县市人口统计资料(2007年)》]). The national figure for the overall population of 1.298 billion people projected from this report sample is based on the sample of survey households reported number of household members, i.e. the aggregated total of the weighted, extrapolated projected figure for the overall population. The survey data did not include special populations (such as military police, etc.). Owing to the sampling process, the weighted, extrapolated figure for the overall population (1.298 billion) is slightly lower than the actual number of the general population (1.31 billion). The extrapolated figure of 23.05 million Christians is, 1.8 percent of the projected overall population (1.298 billion).

In comparison with other regions, the age of the Southwest Christians is relatively young, those aged 14 and under and 15-25 are 14% and 20.1% respectively. (See figure 1).

In terms of north and south⁴, those Christians who came to faith aged 14 years and under are comparatively high in the South (7.3%) as compared with the north (4.1%). Those who believed in the 35 to 44 age group is higher in the north (26.1%) than the south (19.6%), with other phases roughly the same.

		14 and under	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and above	Total
Total	Total %	13.49	218.0	380.5	518.8	504.6	390.8	156.7	2305.0
		5.9	9.5	16.5	22.5	21.9	17.0	6.8	100.0
East China	Total %	58.3	103.0	163.3	203.7	215.5	163.3	71.8	979.0
		6.0	10.5	16.7	20.8	22.0	16.7	7.3	100
South China	Total %	8.4	3.8	9.0	4.5	5.2	5.3	0.7	36.9
		22.7	10.2	24.4	12.3	14.1	14.3	2.0	100
Central China	Total %	26.8	56.5	116.6	166.6	147.9	114.0	44.8	673.3
		4.0	8.4	17.3	24.7	22.0	16.9	6.7	100
North China	Total %	6.0	10.0	15.0	31.0	21.2	23.4	5.3	111.7
		5.4	8.7	13.5	27.8	18.9	20.9	4.7	100
North-west	Total %	6.0	5.3	13.4	21.0	18.8	17.9	6.0	88.4
		6.8	6.0	15.2	23.7	21.3	20.3	6.8	100
South-west	Total %	21.3	30.5	24.7	20.1	25.6	18.6	11.4	152.2
		14.0	20.1	16.2	13.2	16.8	12.2	7.5	100
North-east	Total %	8.3	9.1	38.5	71.8	70.4	48.4	16.7	263.1
		3.1	3.5	14.6	27.3	26.7	18.4	6.3	100.0

Table 1: Age at Which Christians Came to Faith ('0,000 people, by region)

⁴ The regions are divided as such: eastern region includes Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong, and Hainan; the central region includes Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hebei, Hunan; the Western region includes Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang; the northeast includes Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang

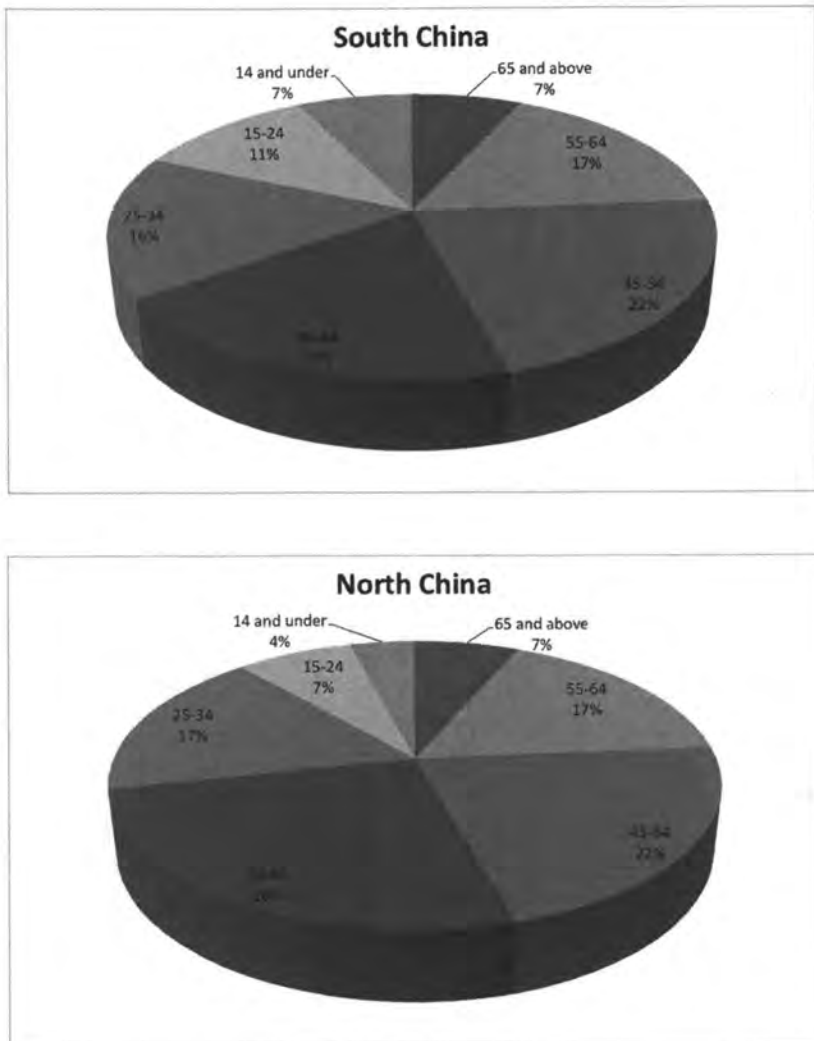


Figure 2: Analysis of the ages at which Chinese Christians came to faith, north and south

In the [ethnic nationality] border regions⁵, the proportion of those who came to faith at age 14 or under was 12%, which is evidently considerably higher than those who come from non-border areas (5.2%).

By sex, a comparison of the number of women Christians (69.9%) is evidently greater than the number of men (30.1%) (See Figure 3).

⁵ The Border regions comprise: Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Guangxi, Tibet, with the rest comprising non-border areas.

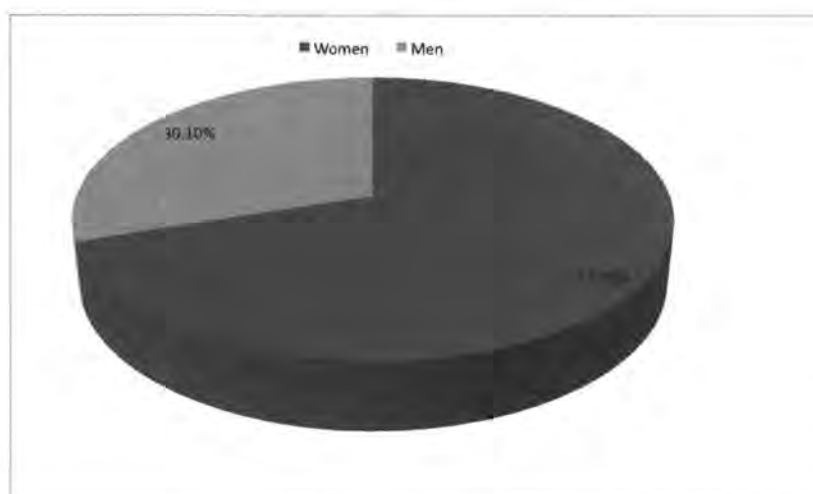


Figure 3: Comparison of Male and Female Christians

The male Christians who came to faith under the age of 24 (22.5%) is considerably greater than female Christians (12.2%). (See Table 3)

		14 and under	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over	Total
Total	Total	134.9	218.0	380.5	518.8	504.6	390.8	156.7	2305.0
	%	5.9	9.5	16.5	22.5	21.9	17.0	6.8	100.0
Men	Total	68.4	87.4	114.9	134.2	138.4	103.5	47.7	694.6
	%	9.9	12.6	16.5	19.3	19.9	14.9	6.9	100.0
Women	Total	66.5	130.7	265.7	384.7	366.3	287.3	109.0	1610.2
	%	4.1	8.1	16.5	23.9	22.7	17.8	6.8	100.0

Table 3: Age at which Christians came to faith ('0,000 people, by sex)

The investigation also found that among those under the age of 25, 77.5% were unmarried, of those who 45 years and above, 76% had divorced or lost a spouse.

The age at which Christians came to faith according to educational level were as follows: those who only had primary education or below were mainly in the 35-64 age group (67.3%), junior high school education were mainly in the 25-44 age group (52.8%) and those with secondary high school education are concentrated in the 15-44 age group (62.5%), the age of Christians with tertiary and higher education found that 85% found faith before the age of 44.. Among educated believers more than half are in the 15-34 age group (52.8%).

2. Christians coming to faith by year

After the Cultural Revolution, the Party and Government brought order out of the prevailing chaos, and implemented a religious policy over the last thirty years. We will look at the history of Chinese Christianity according to the trajectory of religious work and general development, divided into six periods: before 1949, 1949-1965, 1966-81, from 1982 to 1992, 1993-2002 and 2003-2009.

Christians who came to faith between 1982 and 1992 account for 17.9%; while those who came to faith between 1993 and 2002 rise to 42.4%; the most recent church members, those who came to faith between 2003 and 2009 make up 31%.

In the northeast, the proportion of Christians who came to faith between 1982 and 1992 is only 7.2%, far lower than the national proportion (17.9%). This figure surges to 47.9% for those who came to faith between 1993 and 2002. This means the vast proportion of believers in the northeast (90.5%) have come to the church in the last eighteen years.

In fact, the proportion of the Chinese Christian church in general which came to faith in the last eighteen years is over 2/3 in almost all the regions. Only in South China where the figure is only 52.9%.

When it comes to gender, there is the same proportion which came to faith between 1993-2002, that is 42.4%, indicating there is no significant difference between the genders. In terms of each educational level, the proportion of Christians who came to faith between 1993-2002 was as follows: with a primary-level education or below, 42.5%, with junior-high level 41.1%, with senior high level 46.2%, with college, university and Masters level or higher, it was 61.4%. This shows that at the lower level there was no significant difference, but at the university and college level, the proportion is much higher.

Table 4 shows the data from the period 1992-2003 which was a period of rapid growth in the Christian community. In terms of maturity in the faith, the majority of Christians are still quite young.

		1949 or before	1949- 1965	1966- 1981	1982- 1992	1993- 2002	2003- 2009	Total
Total	Total	24.7	44.3	131.5	412	977	715.2	2305.0
	%	1.1	1.9	5.7	17.9	42.4	31.0	100
East China	Total	16.4	27.6	62.6	199.5	400.6	272.4	979
	%	1.7	2.8	6.4	20.4	40.9	27.8	100
South China	Total	1.5	3.8	4.5	7.5	9.0	10.5	36.9
	%	4.1	10.3	12.2	20.4	24.4	28.5	100
Central China	Total	4.8	7.4	37.8	136.0	293.7	193.8	673.3
	%	0.7	1.1	5.6	20.2	43.6	28.8	100

North China	Total	0.7	0.7	6.7	14.3	42.3	46.9	111.7
	%	0.7	0.7	6.0	12.8	37.9	42.0	100
North-West	Total	0.0	2.9	3.0	11.1	39.1	32.3	88.4
	%	0.0	3.3	3.3	12.6	44.2	36.5	100
South-West	Total	0.5	1.0	12.4	24.8	66.2	47.2	152.2
	%	0.4	0.7	8.1	16.3	43.5	31.0	100
North-East	Total	0.7	0.7	4.6	18.9	125.9	112.2	263.1
	%	0.3	0.3	1.7	7.2	47.9	42.6	100

Table 4: Christians by period of coming to faith ('0,000, by region)

3. The Attributes of Individual Christians

In the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked for the individual reasons as to why they had become Christians with multiple-choice answers. Two thirds of the respondents (68.8%) attributed the reason to either themselves or their family becoming ill, while the proportion choosing other reasons for entering the faith was comparatively small. For example, those who selected 'family tradition' account for only 15% indicating that the majority of Christians do not come from a Christian family (see table 5).

The survey also shows that between the different regions of the Christian church shows considerable variation. For example, in the Northeast only 5.2% of Christians chose their own 'family traditions', while the figure in South China is more than five times higher, reaching 33% (See table 5).

		Became ill	Difficult circumstances in work/life	Family didn't	Personal reasons without outside help	Family tradition	To enter heaven	Western Culture	Curiosity and fun	Other
Total	Total	1584.	398.0	119.9	186.6	345.5	588.4	77.4	105.7	81.3
	%	68.8	17.3	5.2	8.1	15.0	25.5	3.4	4.6	3.5
East China	Total	682.1	151.5	38.5	59.6	190.9	232.1	31.6	37.5	17.2
	%	69.7	15.5	3.9	6.1	19.5	23.7	3.2	3.8	1.8
South China	Total	18.7	10.4	2.3	3.7	12.2	6.7	0.7	4.5	2.3
	%	50.6	28.3	6.2	10.1	33.0	18.3	2.1	12.2	6.2
Cent. China	Total	476.3	105.8	35.7	42.5	75.0	160.2	17.1	45.7	37.5
	%	70.7	15.7	5.3	6.3	11.1	23.8	2.5	6.8	5.6
North China	Total	70.4	24.0	8.4	12.7	11.8	30.9	3.8	2.3	9.1
	%	63.0	21.5	7.5	11.4	10.6	27.6	3.4	2.0	8.2
West China	Total	55.5	22.4	5.3	11.3	13.5	2.3	2.2	3.0	5.2
	%	62.7	25.4	6.0	12.7	15.3	2.6	2.5	3.3	5.9
South West	Total	100.4	36.3	20.7	15.9	28.5	61.7	6.1	4.5	4.7
	%	65.9	23.9	13.6	10.4	18.7	40.5	4.0	3.0	3.1
North East	Total	181.5	47.6	9.1	41.0	13.6	94.5	15.9	8.3	5.3
	%	69.0	18.1	3.5	15.6	5.2	35.9	6.0	3.2	2.0

Table 5: Individual Reasons for Becoming a Christian ('0,000 people, multiple choice selection, by region)

When we break this down by age, older people tended to choose "because I or a member of my family fell ill". For the very young, aged 14 and under, this reason was only chosen by 31.5% while for the more senior, aged 65 and over, it was selected by 78.7% (see table 6).

	Became ill	Difficult circumstances in work/life	Family didn't	Personal reasons without outside help	Family tradition	To enter heaven	Western Culture	Curiosity and fun	Other
Total	1584.8	398.0	119.9	186.6	345.5	588.4	77.4	105.7	81.3
%	68.8	17.3	5.2	8.1	15.0	25.5	3.4	4.6	3.5
14 & under	4.3	0.4	1.0	0.0	7.2	2.8	0.0	0.0	1.2
%	31.5	3.0	7.6	0.0	53.0	20.5	0.0	0.0	8.9
15-24	32.4	7.4	3.4	0.1	41.8	15.9	3.2	5.7	1.8
%	37.8	8.7	4.0	0.2	48.8	18.6	3.7	6.6	2.1
25-34	69.4	31.1	6.4	6.5	46.7	33.0	6.8	5.9	2.4
%	50.9	22.8	4.7	4.7	34.3	24.2	5.0	4.3	1.8
35-44	218.1	75.2	25.3	26.9	70.7	93.2	18.2	21.6	13.4
%	58.9	20.3	6.8	7.3	19.1	25.2	4.9	5.8	3.6
45-54	369.8	106.5	29.7	55.5	64.7	119.6	16.6	25.5	24.9
%	68.6	19.9	5.5	10.3	12.0	22.3	3.1	4.8	4.6
55-64	424.0	94.5	27.3	39.2	64.6	152.8	12.7	21.9	15.2
%	74.7	16.7	4.8	6.9	11.4	26.9	2.2	3.9	2.7
65 & over	466.9	82.9	26.8	58.4	49.7	171.0	19.9	25.2	22.3
%	78.7	14.0	4.5	9.8	8.4	28.8	3.3	4.3	3.8

Table 6: Individual Reasons for Coming to Faith ('0,000, multiple choice selection, according to age)

4. Modes of Contact with the Christian Faith

From the survey data, the main mode of contact with the Christian faith was not through clergy or pastors (the proportion is only 4%) but through family and relatives⁶ (which made up 44%) or other Christians or friends (which made up 46.5%). (See Table 7). The proportions in the Northeast and Northwest who had contact with religious Christians was highest (54.3%) and (46.5%). (See Table 7)

From a gender perspective, men said that Christian family and relatives were their main mode of contact more frequently than women (52.3% compared with 40.5%), while other Christians and friends were important to women (50.3%) than to men (37.7%). (See Table 8)

Divorced or widowed Christians said that family and relatives were a less important mode (28.7%) than the overall average (44.0%), but the proportion who were influenced by other believers and friends (59.6%) was much higher than the overall average (46.5%).

In terms of educational level, Christians who have only a primary education or below and those who have a Masters level or above are similarly affected by family and kinship connections (38.6% and 33.4%) which is lower than the overall proportion (44%). They are subject to the influence of other believers and friends (51.2% and 57.7%) higher than the average (46.5%).

As regards age, the lower the age group the greater the relative influence of family and relatives. In reverse, the older groups are less influenced by the contact with friends and relatives as compared with the influence of friends and other believers (see Table 10)

5. Frequency of Participation in Religious Activities

Those Christians who participated 'regularly' in religious activities accounted for 60.8%, those who 'sometimes' participated for 28.2% and those who 'never' participated, 3.9%. (See figure 11)

	Regularly Participate		Sometimes Participate		Never Participate	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
East	596.9	61.0	357.4	36.5	24.8	2.5
South	14.3	38.8	21.8	59.1	0.7	2.1
Central	382.7	56.8	256.0	38.0	34.7	5.2
North	40.8	36.5	61.8	55.3	9.1	8.2
West	44.9	50.8	36.8	41.6	6.7	7.6

6 When conducting the survey, all adult Christians were asked to choose from a selection of options, and of these 'Family or Relatives' and 'other Christians or friends' were the two most widely selected.

Southwest	89.7	58.9	59.1	38.9	3.4	2.2
Northeast	163.2	62.0	88.5	33.6	11.4	4.3
Total	1332.4	57.8	881.4	38.2	90.9	3.9

Table 11: Frequency of participation in religious activities ('0,000 people, by region)

Among female Christians, those who regularly participated in religious activities made up 60.8%, while among males the figure was 51.0%. The proportion of Male believers who never participated was 1.8% higher than females.

Unmarried Christians also made up a higher proportion of those who 'never participate in religious activities', accounting for 10.4%, which was 6.5 percentage points higher than the overall proportion (3.9%).

In terms of education, of those who had primary education or less, 62% regularly participated, those with middle school education 40.2% regularly participated, and 43.5% of those with high school education regularly participated. Of those with a university degree or higher 56.6% regularly participated.

When looking at age profile, of those who 'regularly participated' in religious activities, those who were aged 44 and under made up only 20%, while those who were 45 and above made up 80%. (See Figure 4)

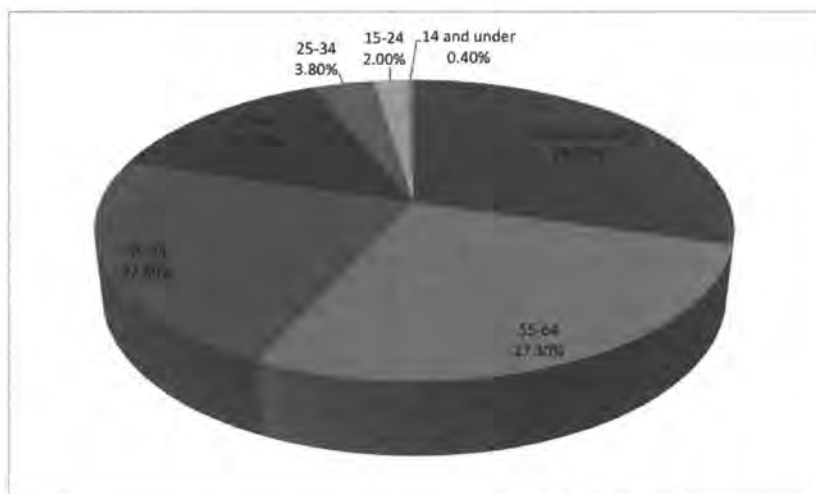


Figure 4: Christians who 'regularly participate in religious activities', by age

The data also show that among 15-24 year olds, the percentage who never participated in religious activities was 14.9%, or 11.0 percentage points higher than the overall (3.9%)

6. The Sites for Participation in Christian Religious activities

'Registered sites' was the main location for Christian participation in religious activity. Of the questionnaire's five listed options, 67.9% of Christians gave 'registered site' as the location for their religious activity. 20.2% gave 'unregistered site' as their location, while 'a friend's house' was given by 26.7%. Those who said their 'own home' was the location for religious activity accounted for 22.4%. (See Table 12)

	Registered Site		Unregistered Site		Friend's house		Own home		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
East	727.5	74.3	211.5	21.6	244.9	25.0	186.6	19.1	13.4	1.4
South	29.4	79.5	4.5	12.2	9.1	24.5	4.6	12.4	1.5	4.1
Central	449.5	66.8	148.3	22.0	133.5	19.8	135.7	20.2	13.1	1.9
North	32.3	28.9	21.8	19.5	51.2	45.9	48.9	43.2	3.8	3.4
Northwest	57.7	63.5	10.6	12.0	25.7	29.0	22.5	25.4	5.2	5.9
Southwest	109.3	71.8	25.8	16.9	47.1	30.9	45.6	30.0	2.1	1.4
Northeast	158.97	60.4	42.1	16.0	105.1	39.9	73.2	27.8	1.5	0.6
Total	1564.7	67.9	464.6	20.2	616.4	26.7	516.4	22.4	40.7	1.8

Table 12: Christian religious activity by location ('0,000 people, by region)

	Registered Site		Unregistered Site		Friend's house		Own home		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	460.5	66.3	133.5	19.2	167.2	24.1	187.0	26.9	16.8	2.4
Female	1104.2	68.6	331.1	20.6	449.2	27.9	329.4	20.5	23.8	1.5

Table 13: Christian religious activity by location ('0,000, by gender)

The data show that there is an increase in probability for participation at registered sites with the higher education of the believer. For Christians with university degrees and above, 70.3% participated in religious activities at registered sites. Among Christians with high school education, 84.5% participated at registered sites. Among those who Christians who took part in religious activities at unregistered sites, those with primary education and below made up 29.1% while those with high school education and above made up only 2.7%. (See table 14)

The data show that for Christians under the age of 25 a lower proportion (12.6%) participate in religious activities at unregistered sites. (See table 15)

	Registered Site		Unregistered Site		Friend's house		Own home		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary or below	928.7	67.1	301.3	21.8	390.3	28.2	305.4	22.1	19.3	1.4
Lower-middle	485.7	68.0	137.3	19.2	182.5	25.6	171.3	24.0	11.3	1.6
High school	114.8	70.0	23.4	14.3	37.3	22.8	36.3	22.1	5.4	3.3
Undergraduate	31.9	84.5	1.0	2.7	4.7	12.5	22.5	6.6	3.2	8.4
Postgraduate	3.6	70.36	1.5	29.1	1.5	29.1	0.8	16.9	1.5	29.1

Table 14: Christian religious activity by location, ('0,000 people, by education)

	Registered Site		Unregistered Site		Friend's house		Own home		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
14 and under	9.6	70.4	0.4	3.0	1.4	10.3	4.1	30.4	1.0	7.6
15-24	60.7	70.8	8.3	9.6	18.8	21.9	21.1	24.6	6.0	7.0
25-34	98.9	72.5	22.1	16.2	26.2	19.2	30.6	22.4	3.8	2.8
35-44	256.0	69.2	70.4	19.0	92.9	25.1	72.3	19.5	9.1	2.5
45-54	364.4	67.6	103.6	19.2	154.9	28.7	116.6	21.6	7.5	1.4
55-64	389.7	68.7	120.3	21.2	162.7	28.7	141.5	25.0	5.6	1.0
65 and over	385.6	65.0	139.5	23.5	159.4	26.9	130.2	21.9	7.5	1.3

Table 15: Christian religious activity by location ('0,000 people, by age)

7. Christians' views towards other religions

Among the Chinese Christian community, those that thought that other religions were 'as good as mine' made up 17.8%. Those who thought that other religions were 'not as good as mine' were 47.5%. Those who thought that there was 'some good' in other religions made up 8%, while those that thought other religions were 'altogether bad' made up 2.3, while those who responded that they had 'never considered' the matter made up 24.3%. (See table 16)

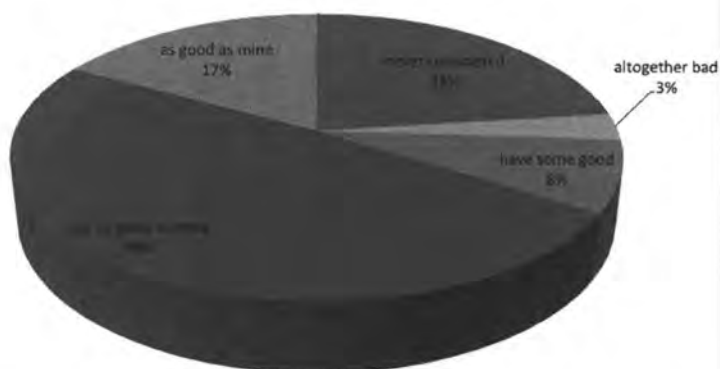
The data show no significant difference between the views of male and female Christians toward other religions. (See chart 5)

The data also show that there were no Christians with MA degrees and above who thought that other religions were 'as good as mine', while those who thought that other religions were 'not as good as mine', and 'altogether bad' made up 23.8% and 29.1% respectively. Those who had 'never considered', made up 47.1% (See table 17)

Other religions are ...	... as good as mine		... not as good as mine		... somewhat good		... altogether bad		I have never considered the question.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
East	222.1	22.6	406.4	41.5	83.2	8.5	19.6	2.0	248.8	25.4
South	11.3	30.6	16.7	45.1	0.7	2.1	0.0	0.0	8.2	22.2
Central	83.6	12.4	372.6	55.3	49.9	7.4	15.2	2.3	152.0	22.6
North	13.5	12.4	52.0	46.6	10.5	9.4	3.0	2.7	32.6	29.2
Northwest	9.8	11.1	40.4	45.7	5.3	6.0	0.7	0.9	32.2	36.4
Southwest	21.3	14.0	73.4	48.2	17.7	11.6	6.9	4.5	32.9	21.6
Northeast	49.9	19.0	133.8	50.8	16.7	6.4	8.3	3.2	54.4	20.7
Total	410.5	17.8	1095.3	47.5	184.0	8.0	53.8	2.3	561.1	24.3

Table 16: Christians' views towards other religions (0,000 people, by region)

Other religions are ... ? (Male)



Other religions are ... ? (Female)

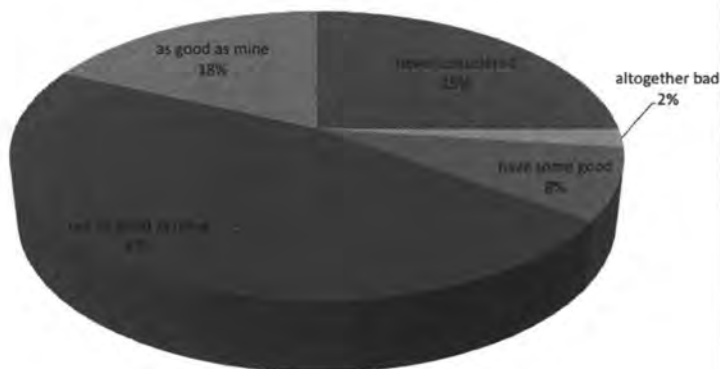


Chart 5: Male and Female Christian views on other religions

Other religions are ...	... as good as mine		... not as good as mine		... somewhat good		... altogether bad		I have never considered the question.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary or below	237.1	17.1	687.3	49.7	106.7	7.7	22.8	1.7	330.1	23.9
Lower-middle	131.7	18.4	325.1	45.5	64.9	9.1	21.1	3.0	171.0	24.0
High school	33.9	20.7	67.9	41.4	10.1	6.1	6.8	4.2	45.3	27.6
Undergraduate	7.8	20.8	13.8	36.5	2.4	6.4	1.5	4.0	12.2	32.3
Postgraduate	0.0	0.0	1.2	23.8	0.0	0.0	1.5	29.1	2.4	47.1

Table 18: Christians' views on other religions ('0,000 people, by education)

8. Christians' views toward the 'tomb sweeping festival'.

The questionnaire include a multiple-choice question on a respondent's attitudes toward the tomb-sweeping festival as a way of inspecting Christians' views toward traditional Chinese cultural practices. Christians who answered that this was either a 'traditional custom' or a 'memorial for departed friends' made up between 52.9% and 57.0% of the whole, indicating a widespread sympathy with this traditional custom.

Those who thought that tomb sweeping was a way of 'protecting the family' made up 18.1%, while others who thought that it was 'a superstition' made up 15.8%.

Among Chinese Christians, those with a higher educational achievement tended not to see the tomb-sweeping festival as a superstition. Of those with a university degree only 6.1% felt this way, while those with a postgraduate qualification accounted for only 2.6%. (See Table 21).

Those Christians with a higher level of education tended to see the tomb-sweeping festival as a 'memorial for departed friends', among those with a university degree this was the response of 80.6% of people, while 42.3% of those with a Masters and above chose this answer. (See Table 21)

The Grave Sweeping Festival ... ?	... is a memorial for departed friends.		... protects the family.		... is a superstition.		... is a traditional custom.		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
East	596.9	61.0	165.5	16.9	150.1	15.3	577.2	59.0	40.1	4.1
South	31.6	85.7	9.8	26.4	0.0	0.0	19.4	52.7	0.0	0.0
Central	341.0	50.6	116.2	17.3	134.2	19.9	325.2	48.3	59.4	8.8
North	70.1	65.8	21	18.8	17.3	15.5	50.3	45.1	4.5	4.0

Northwest	53.2	60.2	12.2	13.7	9.6	10.9	45.6	51.6	9.1	10.2
Southwest	63.5	41.7	44.7	29.4	16.0	10.5	69.8	45.8	38.2	25.1
Northeast	156.7	59.5	47.7	18.1	37.2	14.1	132.0	50.2	19.8	7.5
Total	1313.0	57.0	417.0	18.1	364.6	15.8	1219.6	52.9	171.1	7.4

Table 19: Christian attitudes toward the grave-sweeping festival ('0,000 people, by region)

The Grave Sweeping Festival ... ?	... is a memorial for departed friends.		... protects the family.		... is a superstition.		... is a traditional custom.		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	417.9	60.2	133.2	19.2	100.6	14.5	377.8	54.4	52.8	7.6
Female	895.1	55.6	283.8	17.6	264.0	16.4	841.7	52.3	118.3	7.3

Table 20: Christian attitudes toward the grave sweeping festival ('0,000 people, by gender)

The Grave Sweeping Festival ... ?	... is a memorial for departed friends.		... protects the family.		... is a superstition.		... is a traditional custom.		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary or below	749.4	54.2	258.6	18.7	240.9	17.4	736.8	53.2	124.3	9.0
Lower-middle	424.4	59.4	130.6	18.3	104.2	14.6	375.3	52.6	38.1	5.3
High school	106.7	65.0	25.6	15.6	17.1	10.5	91.6	55.9	5.3	3.2
Undergraduate	30.4	80.6	1.96	5.2	2.3	6.1	13.8	36.5	1.3	3.4
Postgraduate	2.2	42.3	0.3	6.3	0.1	2.6	2.0	39.7	2.2	42.8

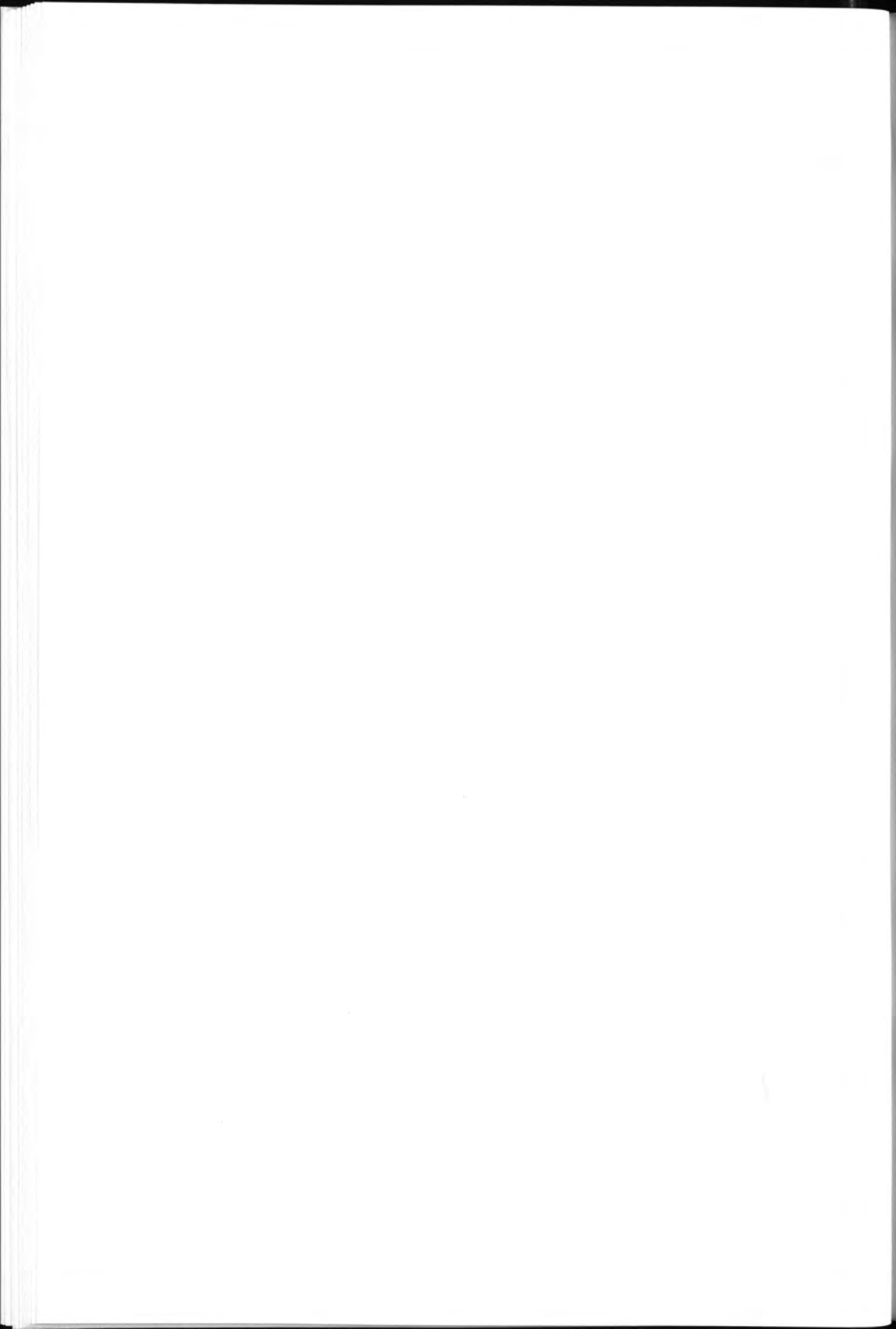
Table 21: Christian attitudes toward the grave-sweeping festival ('0,000 people, by education)

The Grave Sweeping Festival ... ?	... is a memorial for departed friends.		... protects the family.		... is a superstition.		... is a traditional custom.		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
14 and under	3.3	24.6	0.1	1.0	0.3	2.4	5.7	42.2	5.1	37.2
15-24	47.3	55.3	8.0	9.3	12.1	14.1	42.3	49.3	10.4	12.1
25-34	87.0	63.8	17.7	13.0	14.4	10.5	67.8	49.7	15.1	11.1

35-44	226.1	61.1	57.5	15.5	64.1	17.3	190.1	51.4	23.3	6.3
45-54	311.6	57.8	107.4	19.9	70.6	13.1	285.8	53.1	32.9	6.1
55-64	302.6	53.3	100.1	17.6	110.4	19.5	288.8	50.9	44.7	7.9
65 and over	335.2	56.5	126.2	21.3	92.7	15.6	339.0	57.2	39.5	6.7

Table 22: Christian attitudes toward the grave-sweeping festival ('0,000 people, by age)

The investigators wish to thank the cooperation of the State Administration for Religions Affairs, the National Bureau of Statistics, the strong support of religious associations at all levels, statistical departments and local religious figures.



Meeting social need through charity: religious contributions in China⁷

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Introduction

Economic and social changes have brought widespread upheaval to the lives of Chinese citizens over the past two decades. Although many sectors of society have enjoyed unprecedented economic prosperity, this new-found wealth has not been equally shared, and economic disparity between urban China and the rural hinterlands is now among the most pronounced in the world (Ravallion and Chen, 2004). The socialist ideal of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' has long gone, leaving little welfare provision, or infrastructure, for those left vulnerable to social changes.

This situation has been exacerbated by massive internal migration, resulting in a floating population with few roots. Recently there has been a weakening of migration flows but the pace of development continues to be environmentally unsustainable, with grave consequences already becoming evident within the fabric of Chinese society.

Social inequalities as a result of economic policies should come as no surprise: indeed they were predicted from the start of the reform process with Deng Xiaoping himself saying 'Let some get rich first'. But the growing gap between the rich and the poor now poses a serious threat to social stability, something which the Party fears could eventually jeopardise its own position of leadership.

In addition to the social problems that accompany China's modernization, a variety of new opportunities for citizen participation has also materialized. Some critics have argued that

⁷ Names of organisations and people have been changed for this paper

no critical sphere has genuinely emerged in China due to the fact that the balance of power is firmly held in the hands of the Party-state (Pei, 2008). This line of reasoning contends that the dual registration system, which is applied rigorously to all non-governmental organisations (NGOs), is evidence of this unrelenting control (Kang, 1999). But this view denies the reality of what is happening on the ground. Civic spaces are emerging and NGOs are actively carving out areas of work to engage in. The NGO sector is itself evolving, with faith-based organizations (FBOs) emerging as a distinct segment within the field.

This paper is a work-in-progress and seeks to draw on examples of religious and faith-based contributions to give shape to the charitable 'renaissance' currently sweeping through Chinese society. This article will briefly outline some of the factors which have contributed to the (re)emergence of the FBO sector, and then go on to detail the changing nature of charity in Chinese society today. This is followed by some concrete examples taken from the field highlighting the nature of the involvement of religious and faith-based organisations in the charitable arena.

Religious context in China

Despite the fact that religious groups are playing an increasingly large role in the public sphere, outside of Chinese religious circles – and arguably even within them – there is a very limited understanding of the current religious landscape in China.

In recent years there has been a significant change of mindset within the Party acknowledging the enduring nature of religion, and shifting the focus of religious policy from that of being a tool of ideological struggle to a policy of accommodation and unity. This has coincided with official debate within China on the nature and function of religion, which has evolved from the traditional standpoint of religion being seen as 'the opium of the people' to a more liberal understanding, which suggests that religion is more of an 'aspirin' to help people withstand the pains of alienation and exploitation (Yang, 2005a). This repositioning has led to the active encouragement of religious organisations to contribute to the building of a 'harmonious society' (Li, 2009) particularly through the delivery of social services.

Although some Chinese citizens remain wary of religion, in part due to the lack of clarity about what constitutes a religion in China (MacInnis, 1989; Fielder, 2007) alongside official fears of churches and mosques turning into hotbeds of foreign infiltration (Bays, 2004), society at large has also begun to modify its view on religion, making Chinese citizens more receptive to the concept of religion being used for social good. This has resulted in increasing numbers of Chinese people are themselves turning to religion as an answer to the spiritual and moral void they feel in their lives (Xu, 2008). Professor Gao Shining has remarked that 'with the rapid development of Chinese society over the last thirty years there has been a speedy revival and remarkable flourishing of all religions' (Gao, 2002). This view is supported by a landmark study undertaken by the East China

Normal University in Shanghai, which found that 34.1% of Chinese aged sixteen and above profess to have a religious faith (Xu, 2008).

As religion continues to grow in importance in the lives of Chinese citizens, religious organisations and faith-based organisations are (re-)emerging in Chinese society and are being seen as increasingly important social organisations.

Religious vs. faith-based organisations

It is important to make a distinction between religious and faith-based organisations, as they differ in a variety of ways. Officially in China five religious traditions have been formally authorised (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism). These 'more visible organized religious groups promote the traditional activities of worship and prayer, religious sacraments, the teaching of the laity and training of clergy, proselytizing and publication of sacred texts and other religious materials' (Hamrin, 2003:1).

The 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs, which manage religion in the public sphere, were the first regulations to legally authorise religious organisations to participate in social welfare work, codifying unofficial practice which had already begun some years earlier. While some religious organisations were already engaged in social service work, in many cases newer, (semi-) autonomous faith-based organisations were set up to undertake the work. These FBOs are, by and large, 'non-profit associations that have faith-based motivations, hiring policies, and funding sources, but that do not do "religious work" as narrowly defined' (Hamrin, 2003:1).

This distinction is important as it points to one reason why so much of the work that FBOs are currently engaged in remains hidden. Whilst formally encouraged at the highest echelons of the party,⁸ no operational guidelines have been issued to administer and regulate either the work, or the organisations, leading to confusion around who organisations should register with. In many cases FBOs fall between the Ministry of Civil Affairs, responsible for registering and monitoring secular NGOs and other civil service organisations (CSOs), and the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), responsible for registering 'religious' organisations. Many FBOs have little choice but to operate as appendages to religious organisations with little independence or to work as independent organisations. The latter are either unregistered, and therefore officially operating outside the law, or registered as a business, although they have no intention of turning a profit.

Despite their registration problems, Chinese FBOs across the spectrum comprise a growing percentage of the thousands of civic-minded associations that have re-emerged in Chinese

8 Jia Qinglin said "China has engaged itself in building a harmonious society, and religion can play an important role" (Personal notes taken at meeting with Jia Qinglin and Archbishop of Canterbury, Beijing, November 2006). President Hu Jintao also called on religious communities to actively participate in social projects (see speech given to the Politburo, December 2008, which can be accessed from <http://www.mzzjw.gd.gov.cn/zwxxw/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=1967527>).

society in the last two decades.

Professor Yang Fenggang has distinguished between four different types of FBOs currently operating in China. These are:

1. Faith-based social service organisations
2. Faith-based social service organisations established by religiously motivated individuals
3. Grassroots faith-based organisations
4. Informal associations. (Yang, 2005b)

Some of these organisations existed pre-1949, such as the YMCA and YWCA, which date back to the 1890s and which once again have a strong presence in many cities in China, and numerous temple associations also enjoying a resurgence and which boast even longer histories. But these older organisations are vastly outnumbered by newly emerging organisation sprouting up in both urban and rural settings.

Of these newer organisations some have gained a national footprint and reputation. Others are very newly-established and work with small teams of experts coordinating the work of volunteers on a provincial basis. Yet others are distinctly local programmes, with no expansionist ambitions, such as urban conservation efforts centred on urban Buddhist temples. And then there are groups operating in new ways. These groups are often managed by a skeleton team and limited funding but are creating a strong online presence and sense of community amongst their volunteers and supporters through the use of social media.

Yang's typology is important because it includes all FBOs from the formal NGO-type organisations to the more informal groupings, but as the sector grows subdivisions are already emerging. Whilst major funding is often channelled to the first group in his typology, the other groups also play an important role in delivering services, meeting local needs and in mobilizing resources. As such examining a range of organisations can add to our understanding of how civic space is both navigated and understood in China. This is particularly important as China transitions itself from a communist state heavily involved in both the market and society into a 'socialist capitalist' state that advocates a 'small state – big society' approach to governance, potentially opening up the civic sphere further.

There has been little formal research done on any of these FBO groups. In part, this has to do with their religious nature. The study of religion in China is complex and initial academic study of religion within China has been 'fragmentary rather than comprehensive research' (Leung, 2003:29) with Chinese researchers focusing on philosophical and theological aspects of religion to the detriment of its historical and practical aspects.

Although more sociological studies are now emerging from China as a result of an increasingly open attitude to the study of religion, on-the-ground research of FBOs remains scant. FBOs are a growing and vibrant segment within the NGO sector, and have the potential to provide China '... with new sources of social capital – ideas, values and networks that help people work together on a voluntary basis for mutual assistance or public benefits' (Hamrin, 2003:1). This paper seeks to make a contribution to the literature in this field, by drawing on examples of both religious and faith-based organisations operating in various locations throughout China. This is especially pertinent given that in the face of increasing social tensions, Chinese policy makers are themselves starting to recognize the significance and latent potential of these local initiatives in which Chinese faith communities are engaged, and the potential synergy between the aims and practices of indigenous FBOs and their own policy objectives relating to development, social inclusion and the building of a 'harmonious society'.⁹

Changing nature of charity in China

Charity is not a new concept in China; indeed it has enjoyed a rich and extensive history.¹⁰ Charity has often been associated traditionally with Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, and as such was offered along strict lineage and kinship lines, emphasizing mutual help and relationships. Christian missions introduced a different form of charity, which drew on the Christian notion of 'helping the stranger', a hitherto unfamiliar concept in charity work in China. This form of charity took root in the early 20th century and enjoyed a heyday in the Republican era when charitable work became instrumental in the building and running of hospitals, schools and orphanages and in the provision of relief for the poor.

1949 saw a reversal in policy towards charity and most charitable institutions in China were dismantled. Christian organisations became associated with foreign imperialism and China's humiliation during the Opium Wars, alongside the ongoing corruption within the nationalist party. Buddhist and Confucian traditions were quickly linked to feudal society, another legacy the communist party sought to eliminate.

Since 1949 the communists transferred the responsibility of social welfare to the state, establishing a socialist welfare system which provided social services through a centrally planned economy. As a result charitable giving theoretically became a redundant concept and was formally discouraged. Instead charity became viewed as an element of a corrupt capitalist system and an instrument of the ruling class' subjugation of the poor. During the Cultural Revolution charity became condoned as 'a decoration of the ruling class used

⁹ In May 2005, the government launched a nationwide campaign to promote the concept of public welfare. More recently the focus has been on the construction of the "Harmonious Society" (*hexie shehui*). Dr Li of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has described the current Chinese vision of a harmonious society as being a society which is relatively wealthy, but one where wealth and social development is shared fairly across all sectors of society. For this there needs to be stability with clear rules and laws and a sense of order.

¹⁰ See for example Handlin Smith, Joanna, *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China*, University of California Press, 2009

to cheat the people'. This view persisted well into the mid-1980s resulting in a significant diminishing of the traditional system of 'relational charity' (Zhou, 2006).

Today, with the breakdown of the *danwei* (work unit) system, and a move towards a 'small state – big society', the concept of charity is once again being reintroduced into Chinese society. In 1994, the People's Daily published an article entitled, 'Rehabilitating Charity'. By 2007 the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs was widely promoting the concept through its slogan 'everyone can do charity'. In 2008 the publication of the first 'Blue Book of Philanthropy' detailed the recent history of charity in China, and outlined relevant policy changes of interest to those engaged in the sector.¹¹

This new environment was put to the test in 2008 during the calamitous Sichuan earthquake, which saw an unprecedented outpouring of charitable giving, in terms of money, goods and time. The earthquake saw a number of firsts including some of the earliest international relief groups given permission to enter the emergency zone being FBOs. Their work gained immediate publicity, both through national TV and through online postings, paving the way for faith-based organisations from various religious backgrounds across China, to respond in kind.

This event was significant. Firstly, it repositioned charity in a positive light, encouraging both corporate and individual giving. Secondly, it linked the concept of charity with the religious realm once again. Thirdly, the contribution of FBOs to the earthquake relief efforts has fed into the debate of what charity actually means in China today. Is charity simply thought of in terms of *juan kuan* (the sending of funds to emergency relief), or does the more traditional term *cishan* (compassionate good, a term used historically by Buddhist, Taoist and Christian groups) better encompass the current understanding of the concept? And what of the term *gong yi* (public benefit, public good)? What is the significance of that as an emerging term?

Religious contributions to charitable work in China

The government is now happy to encourage donations by the general public and is keen to instil a sense of compassion in the public consciousness, but it is this notion of *gong yi* (public benefit), encouraging private initiatives for public good and focusing on improving the quality of life, that the government is pushing FBOs to focus on. *Gong yi* encourages a sense of altruism – providing benefit for others rather than oneself, or one's own community – thereby distinguishing it from both government action (with its public initiatives for public good) and business interventions (with its private initiatives or private good). But it also lifts charity into the organisational realm, subtly moving it out of the

11 The Blue Book provides a detailed report on key charity related landmarks taking place in China from 1981 to 2008. Included in this is a report on the publication of 19 charity and NGO-related regulations; the holding of 41 charity events; and the background and achievements of 33 philanthropic case studies.

private and into the public domain, making charity potentially more sustainable, but also more controllable.

For all of the official religious traditions in China, engaging in this kind of charitable work enables them to fulfil demands put on them by their respective traditions and scriptures. In Buddhism, the giving of alms, or of philanthropy, is the beginning of one's journey to nirvana and can lead to faith. Alms, particularly those given in secret, can nurture virtue, merit and blessing in the lay community, and ensure monastic continuity. Temples often return these donations back to society in the form of free clinics or places in a home for the elderly.

Similar traditions can be found in the Taoist tradition, with *yin gong* (hidden merit) being attributed where good is done but where nothing is sought in return. Taoist teachings, which uphold prudence, and encourage moderation¹² also encourage spiritual equilibrium combined with an environmental concern derived from the sense of *tian ren he yi* (harmonious oneness of the universe and man). Taoist teachings also brings with it moral obligations for the rich to help the poor, nurturing an individual and corporate sense of philanthropy.

In Islamic teaching charity is also a key belief and is one of the five pillars of faith. Charity is a sacred duty of all Muslims and comes in two forms. The first of these is *zakat*, which is a compulsory donation of 2.5% savings and/or business revenue plus 5-10% harvest payable during lunar new year and used towards public welfare. The second form is *sadaqa* a voluntary contribution, which is usually paid by the rich to the poor. In China rich Muslims contribute to education programmes or distribute food to the poor during religious festivals, while mosques are increasingly provide a community response by opening schools, soup kitchens, clinics and lodgings for travellers.

Christian churches in China offer similar services and increasingly use tithes of up to 10% income for the use of the community at large. The Christian notion of charity has often focused on the stranger, with a sense of uplifting the poor and vulnerable and raising standards of living, 'loving one's neighbour as oneself'. Christian charity in China not only seeks to collect from those that have and redistribute to those that don't have, but also adopts a social justice approach, looking at the issues (of poverty, social exclusion etc) and seeking to bring about changes in the conditions that lead to this situation.

In many cases there is an overlapping in approaches between the religions, but there is also a sense of distinctiveness in the various approaches and projects adopted by different religious organisations and FBOs, more often than not formed as a result of their religious traditions and backgrounds.

12 See for example Tao Te Ching chapter 19 where it says "It is more important to see simplicity, to realise one's true nature, to cast off selfishness and to temper desire" and chapter 21 which says we should "avoid extremes, excesses and complacency".

Benevolence for the poor

After 30 years of steady, and rapid, economic growth poverty has not only failed to be eliminated, but has, in many cases, actually worsened in China. In January 2009, China issued revised data to show that its economy had surpassed Germany to become the world's third-largest behind the US and Japan. Although this data reflected explosive economic growth of 13%, the fastest growth rate since 1994, it hid the fact that many of China's 1.3 billion citizens are, on average, among some of the world's poorest (The Straits Times, 14 January 2009).

Rapid economic growth and the free market economy have stretched the fabric which makes up Chinese society resulting in extensive change and increasing strain. Over the last three decades this has contributed to rapid urbanization accompanied by growing social inequality and new-found forms of poverty. Relative poverty, non-material deprivation, marginalization and social exclusion – all potential sources of social unrest – have become mounting grounds for concern within Chinese government circles and have also become a major focus of the charitable work of FBOs.

The large faith-based social service organisations (group 1 in Yang's typology) have sought to address this issue through the provision of disaster relief alongside longer-term interventions such as healthcare and education.

Emergency disaster relief

Natural disasters such as droughts, floods and earthquakes have plagued Chinese society for years, and have been identified as a major threat to sustainable development and ongoing poverty alleviation. For many years the Chinese government has dealt with disaster response through the army, but, as the frequency and intensity of disasters increase due to the effects of climate change and increasing population pressure, the government is increasingly seeking help from civil society, both in the immediate response, but more especially in the ongoing rehabilitation of communities.

Working through large faith-based social service organisations allows funding to be channelled through from international partners, whilst also allowing the relief efforts to tap into rich networks of local grassroots partner organisations – in this case local churches and Christian communities. This has a number of advantages. Firstly, these local communities may lack the resources and funds necessary to meet their own needs immediately following a disaster, but they are usually best placed at understanding their local context, environment, culture, and people. FBOs can tap into these networks, enabling 'outside' teams to access local knowledge getting the best out of their relief efforts. Secondly, lessons learnt from one disaster can be put into practice in subsequent relief efforts. Working with a coordinating FBO on a national or provincial level has particular advantages as it allows for the 'scaling-up' of efforts, allowing for the on-going monitoring and evaluation of efforts and the

replication of good practice in subsequent relief efforts. Thirdly, it allows lessons to be fed into the next stage of work with local communities (i.e. rehabilitation and sustainable development), ensuring that people's lives and livelihoods are made increasingly resilient to disaster.

Healthcare

The involvement of religious groups in the areas of healthcare and education are controversial. Senior Tibetan Communist Party leader Yangling Dorje (Chin: Yangling Duoji) has aired fundamental criticisms of the government's approach, "These days, the government promotes a policy of 'three separations', separating religion from politics, religion from education and religion from healthcare. ... but I think this is a serious mistake" (Tibetinfonet, 12 January 2010).

His is not alone in his criticism. A healthy society is the basic foundation of community's subsistence and development, and is one of China's main economic and social development goals. For the Chinese government essential health care in the form of prioritised public health measures and curative services aimed at treating and preventing common diseases is a basic necessity to ensure a healthy population (WHO, 2003). But the state increasingly realises that while this is its goal, it does not have the resources to achieve this alone, and many now agree with sentiments that the policy of 'three separations' needs to be revised to ensure adequate care can be provided.

Increasingly FBOs are edging into the area of healthcare and education provision. In the case of healthcare, provision ranges from the rudimentary, in the form of free or cheap basic medical provision, through clinics run out of churches, mosques and temples, to the more specialised areas such as counselling. Many of the basic clinics are merely dispensaries, but the services are often provided free and in poor areas can provide an important element of the treatment provision that the government wants to offer. In some places FBOs are able to take on a more significant role in the provision of healthcare, partnering with local government agencies in the process. One such example is a hospital in a medium sized coastal city, opened by a charitable federation affiliated to a local temple.

The charitable federation was one of the first Chinese Buddhist charities to open since the reform and opening up era began. A grassroots FBO, rooted firmly in a local temple, it is funded primarily through donations and through proceeds made from sales of Buddhist art work in a temple-run shop. One of the major focuses of its work is the provision of healthcare, initially through a small dispensary and clinic based out of the temple, and latterly through a city hospital. The hospital is certified as an official 'medical institution' by the Municipal Health Bureau, in accordance with national medical and health clinic regulations. It has an excellent reputation, with modern facilities and a range of specialist departments (including paediatrics and gynaecology) offering both traditional Chinese and western medicine approaches. The hospital is run professionally, and is open to all,

with charges levied for medication and treatment which are based on pricing structures advised by the Ministry of Health. But it also offers its services free of charge (or at a highly subsidised rate) for special cases within the most vulnerable in society, including orphans, disabled and elderly who have no family or means to provide for the level of care and support that they need. During religious festivals special rates of treatment have also been offered.

Education

The 'Three Separations' policy makes education an equally contentious arena for FBOs to be involved in. Officially regulations exist to say that religious organisations cannot provide instruction to those under the age of eighteen, but the level of applicability of those regulations varies hugely from province to province. FBOs provide support for education in China in a number of ways. Many provide funds for the bricks and mortar of a school building, particularly in rural areas where there are little funds available locally, and where current facilities are inadequate or dangerous. The school then goes on to be run by the state, with little further input from the FBO.

Other ways of supporting education include more direct interventions into the education process such as train-the-trainer programmes, and the support of in-house training for teachers particularly in the west of China, where standards are lower than in the coastal areas. Scholarships have been another popular way of providing support for the education system, and are provided through scholarship schemes administered by churches and temples and through individual schemes, which link donors directly to the individual student in need, such as on-line sponsorship programmes and projects centred on local school dropouts.

Increasingly however, religious groups are venturing into the running of private schools. Muslim charitable efforts around the world have often been aimed at the field of education, and China is no exception. In the 1980s Muslim involvement in education was restricted to that provided by the mosque schools. A number of studies undertaken in 2000 and 2002 have observed extraordinary change and growth within the Muslim education sector (Allès, 2003).¹³ In Xinjiang the over 18 rule is still rigorously applied to Muslim education, and means that most official Muslim education continues to be carried out through the mosque for those aged 18 and over. In other provinces Muslim individuals and religious organisations are involved in the funding and running of private education in the form of *sili xuexiao* (private school) and *zhuanke* (or *zhuanke*) *xuexiao* (professional or specialist school or college) and on rare occasions in the setting up of *minban* (village schools), which are under the control of the local education authority. Some, but not all, of these are run in collaboration with the local mosque.

13 The research took place in Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia, Henan, Yunnan and Hainan provinces.

Many of the specialist schools are simply named *a-yu xuexiao* (Arabic language school) or *zhong-a xuexiao* (Sino-Arabic school), reflecting the nature of their status as a language based school. Others emphasise the cultural aspect of the school, be it ethnic culture, such as the *huizu wenhua xuexiao* (Hui culture school). Given that the Islamic community in China includes 10 ethnic minority groups,¹⁴ in addition to converts from other ethnic groupings, tensions can emerge between various ethnic groupings and so some schools chose to focus on the religious identity as opposed to the ethnic identity of its students and schools such as the *muslim wenhuaxuexiao* (Muslim culture school) are established.

One focus of religious education in China has been to promote the education of women. One of the women's schools I visited was established by Muslim business men from Lanzhou. Like many similar religiously-inspired schools it provides free education to women and focuses on basic general education, but also provides religious teaching in this case from one of the female imams who focuses on Arabic language to help in reading the Qur'an. Other schools and colleges began as private institutions set up to provide local women with an education. The principle underpinning the college was that being a teacher to her own children means that a Muslim mother should be intelligent, upright and sensible. These colleges have grown substantially over the years and have often been successful in gaining official registration with the local government. This means that the college can now provide a four-year diploma course for women from the local area. Many of these women are from rural counties in the surrounding area, and so the college provides dormitory accommodation for the majority of its pupils. Their reputations are good, and the accredited diplomas are valuable asset for both the graduates and the local community to have. The schools have for the most part remained women only and, while the ethos remains grounded in Muslim values, in an attempt to keep to official policy and maintain the segregation of religion and education, distinctly religious practices, such as the use of the prayer room, have had to go now that the college is part of the 'official' state sector.

Building cultural identity

Cultural identity is seen in many places to be a victim of the process of globalisation, with the general 'opening up' of societies blurring religious, linguistic, ethnic and even national identities (Tomlinson, 2003). Formation of cultural identity has, as a result, become a component, and even a desired output, of a wide range of FBO projects in China, not just educational programmes.

The 'Buddhist Candle' is a grassroots HIV/AIDS programme based out of a major temple in southwest China. The centre provides both HIV prevention and aftercare help but the programme has also been a way of connecting monks and lay workers from Thailand, Laos and Myanmar to those in China, alongside being a vehicle to reinforce and invigorate local minority culture.

¹⁴ In China Islam includes 10 ethnic groups – Uygur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, bao'an, Dongxiang, Tatar, Ouzbek, Salur (all based in Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai); the Tadjik (Xinjiang) and the Hui (spread throughout China).

The 'Buddhist Candle' is not an explicitly cultural programme – it was set up as a local response to the growing epidemic of HIV/AIDS. The potential of the programme caught the imagination of its founders when they saw a similar programme in Thailand. This coincided with death of a senior monk's brother from AIDS, an incident which shocked the local community and sparked a new understanding of HIV being seen as a potentially local problem. This event in turn coincided with a training programme from UNICEF at which funds were committed to start a Chinese run programme.

Headed up by one layman and a team of volunteers the programme has benefitted from being so strongly linked to the temple and its network of over 570 temples. With a third of local population in being Buddhist (Xi, 2003) the programme has been able to use the network and structures of the Buddhist community as a way of disseminating its information.

The Buddhist school, which provides education for boys from the age of eight, has proved to be an important vehicle through which the 'Buddhist Candle' can work. Being based out of the temple has also meant that HIV awareness and prevention activities can be included in the curriculum for Buddhist novices, who then return to their home temple once their studies are complete. This approach means that the 'Buddhist Candle' now has a network of contacts throughout over 570 temples within the local prefecture, which makes village outreach work much easier.

As with most places in China, local culture in the prefecture has been changing. Minority cultures have seen a revival in recent years, with local villages benefitting from a new wave of 'cultural tourism'. Cultural tourism has been described as 'a genre of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological' (Stebbins, 1996: 948). There have been many benefits of this development – the most significant being that emigration has slowed down, with young people in particular finding opportunities to work in their home villages.

But there has also been considerable criticism levied at this kind of tourism not least around questions of cultural authenticity as a result of commoditisation. Daniel has argued that cultural practices are no longer undertaken for their original purposes but instead are framed as being an 'exotic other', with tradition being packaged in such a way that significant profit is generated (Daniel, 1996:781). Boniface has argued that tourism 'has produced a special and distinguishing culture consisting of the behaviour not only of tourists but also those offering them hospitality services' (Boniface, 1998:747).

This change in behaviour has serious implications. Many of the volunteers involved in the 'Buddhist Candle' programme have concerns about the long-term effects these tourism villages could have in diluting their heritage and changing the fabric of local society. On the face of things local culture is more visible as a result of the tourism, but

alongside questions of authenticity the influx of tourism has encouraged an expansion of the hospitality industry, including an increase in bars and with that a rise in prostitution. The volunteers and leaders of the 'Buddhist Candle' programme are keen to make sure that their programme is authentically rooted in the local culture to ensure authentic traditions are kept alive and to encourage a strong sense of self is generated in the face of an encroaching tide of materialism. This notion of self that they are trying to develop is evident in a number of ways, in terms of

- gender, with training which empowers women to make informed decisions about safe sex;
- religion, with training and materials reinforcing values through the underpinning of core Buddhist texts; and
- linguistically, with new materials and songs in the traditional style and format being produced in the minority language.

Many of the monks are, for example, now producing their own HIV/AIDS education materials in the local language and using presentations in the local language alongside spiritual counselling to teach not only men, but also women and young people about the dangers of HIV. These materials reinforce the teaching of local language to the population, but also ensure the disease is not thought of as 'foreign' and therefore not of any danger. Many of the monks and young lay people involved in the programme are reinterpreting local myths and traditional Buddhist messages into materials to get their message across. Some of these involve use of comic strips, so young people and children are aware at an early age of the dangers of HIV, but also of the realities of the disease, with the aim of breaking down stigma; other materials include new minority songs which are adapted from folklore and Buddhist scriptures. Sometimes these songs are performed publicly as part of feast days and festivals within minority calendars, and they become part of the local youth culture. These cultural messages are reinforced through a popular blog which is maintained by the project leader and where many of the songs in local language are uploaded and can be downloaded for free.

Buddhist scriptures and teachings underpin the work of the 'Buddhist Candle'. Programme managers believe that by teaching ethical life habits based on the Five Precepts the problem of HIV/AIDS can be limited and local culture can be strengthened. Volunteers stress the importance of the fifth precept, which demands abstention from intoxicants, as the best method to reduce transmission of the disease, restricting the risk of drunkenness (which can lead to promiscuity) and drug addiction, the two major means of transmitting HIV in the province. Already there is evidence that the prefecture has not been as badly affected as other areas in the province. The lay leader believes that a reliance on Buddhist teachings has

allowed them to reverse some of the effects of modernisation and materialism, which has engulfed other parts of the province. This view is reinforced by government AIDS workers who have said "We want to use the monks' impact on the community to educate people, both the secular and the sacred. An effective way is to combine the Buddhist doctrines with scientific information to lay bare the issue's severity to people" (Wen, 2004).

Reducing social exclusion

Marginalisation is a growing issue in China but as it has been commonly seen as 'an inevitable consequence of modernisation' (Morton, 2007: 242) it has often been ignored by society at large. Marginalisation is not a problem which can easily be ignored however, as it often leads to social exclusion 'a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live'. (Power, 2000) In China, rapid economic development has come at a cost, with certain sectors of society becoming marginalised to such an extent that it now potentially threatens the whole notion of a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*).

Civil organisations including FBOs have, in many cases, sought to redress the balance by acting as agents of social justice and development through the provision of 'essential social services by filling the void left by the state; they act as an important conduit for exposing injustices and abuses of political and economic power; and they can improve the lives of marginalised groups by involving them in development activities'.

The 'Homeless Project' based in one of China's largest cities, is a small Christian FBO, which was set up in response to the huge number of homeless people living at the main railway station. The term 'homeless' is a difficult one to define and has been variously described as being

- Rooflessness (i.e. sleeping rough)
- Houselessness (i.e. living in institutional or short term 'guest' accommodation)
- Insecure accommodation, and
- Inferior or substandard housing (Daly, 1994)

Whilst they have no criteria which would limit their client list, in the case of clients for the 'Homeless Project', homelessness would mostly equate to 'rooflessness' (i.e. they are living rough at the train station). The situation of the clients varies hugely. Not all of them are 'homeless' in the sense that some do have homes but they are in rural areas. Homelessness

can imply a loss of ties with family members (Dupont, 1998) and while this is the case for many of the clients, others are in town together with their immediate or extended family, or have come in search of work precisely so they can provide for their family back in their hometown. Some find themselves on the street as a result of poverty, having migrated to the city in search of work. Others moved to the city as a result of family breakdown. Some can't find work as they have little or no education. Yet others suffer from mental health issues. Many are just down on their luck and have no other place to go.

Whatever their background all of the 'Homeless Project's clients are dislocated from mainstream society in that the legacy of the household registration system (*hukou*) results in their children being denied access to city schools, and they themselves are not entitled to any welfare provision while away from their place of registration. For the majority of clients they find themselves further dislocated in that they have lost or had stolen their original *hukou* (registration) or I.D. card and so have no chance of finding legal employment even if they wanted to.

The basic services on offer at the 'Homeless Project' include a hot shower, a clothes exchange and a haircut, with a view to giving clients a better chance of securing work, so that they can get off the street and gradually reintegrate themselves back into mainstream society. In addition to this, one of the major services the 'Homeless Project' offers is help in getting a new *hukou* card re-issued. This ensures that clients are able to take up employment legally if work is found. But as the process involves liaison with the appropriate Public Security Bureau and government offices both locally and in the client's hometown, it is also a means of influencing the institutional structures which uphold the system. The process of re-issuing cards often involves mediation with estranged family members left back at home, and so another important function of the programme is working on reconciliation with family, which can often lead to the homeless person returning home.

The 'Homeless Project' uses its Christian networks as a source for both volunteers and funding, and as a channel to find clients work opportunities, providing a basic mentorship programme to help clients transition into employment once it has been found. Workers at the project are conscious of the psychological transition a client undergoes when leaving homelessness, and can provide support during that period of adjustment. Leaving friends behind and moving into a new circle with new responsibilities can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, an emotion which is exacerbated by the sheer size of the city. In recognition of this, some of the 'successful' clients who have found permanent, paid work and who have moved into accommodation are encouraged to continue their involvement with the project either as volunteers themselves, or in the role of informal 'mentor' to others.

The 'Homeless Project' works closely with the local Public Security Bureau, with whom it has a good reputation, and has been the subject of numerous positive articles in the mainstream press. In spite of its reliable reputation, however, it has as yet been unable to

register as a NGO. The project is keen to register as a non-profit organisation but this is proving hard to achieve. Lack of registration is a serious issue which has implications on the long-term sustainability of the project.

Prophecy and charity – the role of reconciliation

No Chinese FBO that I have come across would openly claim to have a prophetic role in society – to do so would be potentially dangerous, not least because prophecy has a long politicised history in China, often associated with the loss or retention of political power for an emperor. But the sense of prophecy as a means of reconciliation, where insights are drawn from a divine tradition, and spoken into society at large, in order to restore peace or to forge a new beginning, is a role many FBOs see themselves fulfilling. Reverend Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches said that 'There is no true prophecy that does not speak both the critical truth and contribute to the building up of a vision, a dream of the new life in common.'¹⁵ This sense of speaking into a situation with 'critical truth', for the purpose of creating a 'new life in common', is an important component of FBO reconciliation work in China.

Policy debate in China has reflected high-level concerns about increasing societal inequalities (CASS, 2005) most notably the urban–rural divide and interregional inequality. These inequalities centre on income disparities but also relate to access to public goods, such as healthcare and education.

Whilst China is not alone in facing potential social instability as a result of these disparities, specific issues, such as the breakdown of the Maoist social contract, memories of the Cultural Revolution, and repercussions from policies such as the one child policy are leading to rising levels of both personal and interpersonal areas of conflict, some of which are of growing concern to the Chinese government.

Hizkias Assefa has written of the world in general that 'despite the lack of knowledge about how to operationalize reconciliation, there is ... no question about the tremendous need for it. In fact, it could be said that the need in today's world is much greater than at any other time in the past' (Assefa, 2001).

One Catholic FBO has identified reconciliation as being one of the core needs it is seeking to redress in its work. Being based in the Catholic church, the organisation finds its own need to navigate a variety of 'internal' tensions within the specific Catholic context in China, not least the dynamics between the 'official' and the unregistered Catholic communities in its home province. The charity's name is based on characters taken from a late Bishop's name¹⁶ and hints at the importance of reconciliation to the ethos of the organisation.

¹⁵ Said during keynote speech of the 13th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

¹⁶ This bishop was credited with proposing a model of reconciliation between the open and unregistered Catholic Church in China to follow (Lam, 2000).

Navigating relations and establishing oneself positively in both the eyes of the state and society is a familiar theme to all working in FBO sector, and can be a strong force in shaping the work of the charity. An article in the *New York Times* written in 2002, recounts how the organisation often finds itself "...testing the limits of tolerance in ways that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Careful to balance church building with social welfare – from school construction to disaster relief – the charity has in turn won a degree of goodwill from local officials" (Rosenthal, 2002). This goodwill has often been generated as a result of the organisation's desire to reconcile the un-reconciled. This can be seen in obvious ways such as in projects, which have sought to bring together different sectors of society. Some of these projects have however proved controversial – AIDS prevention work for example, has been dismissed by some of the more conservative and elderly members of the congregation as unimportant for the church to focus on, and latterly local government has sought to close down and relocate one project after clients organised themselves into groups demanding compensation and better medical treatment. Small scale anti-trafficking campaigns have met with similar issues but highlight the desire of the charity to persist in its aim to resolve conflict on a variety of levels.

The over-arching categories of reconciliation that the organisation places its work are taken from the social service wing of the church, and focus on four distinct levels of conflict resolution:

1. Intra-personal conflict (reconciling issues within an individual)
2. Interpersonal conflict (between individuals or small groups)
3. Intra-group conflict (within a particular group)
4. Inter-group (between large organised groups)

The organisation's founder once said, 'an old Chinese saying goes "*aizhi yue shen, zeshi yue qie*" (the more deeply I love someone, the stricter I will reprove that person) ... since I love the church and my culture very much I have a duty to call attention to their deficiencies and weaknesses, so that they might develop'. This has not always made life easy for him, but it is clear that this ethos of being a critical friend who tries to look beyond immediate circumstances by pointing to a reality beyond it in order to find peace, has informed the organisation's sense of being an 'enterprise of justice' (Isaiah 32:7) since its inception.

The theme of reconciliation, but this time of man with nature, has also been the driving force behind another faith initiative. In 2006 the Taoist community in China signed the Qinling Declaration, which declared that 'Harmony between heaven, earth and humanity is the crucial guarantee for the sustainability of human activities on earth. It is the highest aim of Taoists. With the environmental crisis getting worse day by day, we have a duty to rethink the role of Taoism in China, and to consider how we can make a better contribution to the environment today.' (Qinling Declaration, 2006). Two years later Daoists in

China issued an eight-year environmental plan. The plan is a comprehensive guide to climate responsibility and environmental stewardship, which looks at responsibilities of the temples themselves to become more environmentally friendly, and offers guidance to Chinese citizens to lessen their carbon footprint and environmental impact.

Olev Kjørven has highlighted the significance of this plan, saying that Taosim has 'more to offer to the environmental cause in today's China, than any other major organised religion. Anyone who has read key Taoist masters...knows to what extent this faith tradition emphasises environmental stewardship as a sacred duty' (Kjørven, 2008). The magnitude of this proposal lies, he believes, in the resilience of Taoist culture, which has permeated and shaped the nation's consciousness for almost 2000 years. It also lies in the fact that the Chinese state is now encouraging the inclusion of religious values and beliefs into mainstream society. This is supported by the fact that the Taoists are leading by example, '... providing comprehensive guidance on all aspects of environmental and climate stewardship: water and land management, protection of biological diversity, energy efficiency of buildings, educational curricula, moral teachings, outreach through media and advocacy to business, etc' (Kjørven, 2008).

From government to governance

Leading by example is an important role for some of the larger organisations within the FBO sector, and the larger faith-based social service organisations are increasingly looked on as 'flagship organisations' as the sector develops.

One of China's most significant FBOs has seen its role evolve in recent years from simple service deliverer, to an increasingly institutionalized and significant part of civil society. Since October 2009 it has been running an 'NGO-incubator', a collaborative initiative between the FBO, the municipal bureau of civil affairs and the local district administration. The centre works along the same lines as business incubators, aiming to foster good working practice amongst small and start-up organizations and providing rent-free office space and equipment for up to a year. During this time it aims to provide practical assistance in understanding legal requirements and relevant government policies; guidance through the official registration process; basic financial training and on-going staff training in areas such as organizational development, project management and fundraising. Field trips to existing projects and a mini-lecture series from Chinese and foreign experts form part of the exposure offered to start-ups.

There are many advantages to the various parties involved in working this way. For the start-up NGOs the benefits are self-explanatory. Each organization receives tailored technical support alongside the opportunity to exchange knowledge and good-practice with other practitioners. They also develop important awareness of national and local regulations, thus ensuring on-going project and programme compliance.

For the state there are also clear advantages not least the means of verification of both quality standards and project outputs. But in a world of stiff competition amongst NGOs and FBOs in terms of funding, project and resource allocation (Edwards and Hulme, 1996) the advantages for the host FBO are arguably the most substantial.

Recognizing that no FBO or NGO in China currently has the capacity to provide social services on a national scale, the host FBO has identified co-operation with the government as key, to both its own development and that of the sector. In many cases this has resulted in pilot programmes being up-scaled and mainstreamed by the most appropriate government agency. This situation and model is by no means unique to China (Myers, 1991) and like their counterparts in other parts of the world there is a danger that FBOs risk becoming a contractor in lieu of partner, when social services are devolved, being used for specific tasks but being discarded once that charge is completed or once conditions alter (Smith and Lipsky, 1993).

Working with the incubator means that the organisation can help to shape the role of religion in society through its mere presence. It can also maintain and even strengthen its own position as 'partner' by working with local government in building capacity, both within government structures and also in local NGOs, increasing organizational capacity to plan and implement change by strengthening technical and project management skills. It can also work on its own sustainability and that of other NGO/FBOs by engaging and strengthening existing social networks, building strong coalitions and supporting on-going growth in the sector. This is further deepened by the research focus given to the incubator project. Research coming out of the process will enable the host FBO to identify patterns in shifting social norms helping it to develop ways to facilitate or mitigate changes in society as and when appropriate. This research can also serve as a focus point to improve interaction between organizations around common goals that emerge as priorities, and methods of good practice, thereby helping to build social capital between and within the various elements of civil society. It can also enable it to keep ahead of 'competitors' in the market.

This approach has given the larger FBOs the opportunity to progress from the role of 'doer' to 'influencer' (Clark, 1991) by 'scaling up' their operations and gaining both provincial and national influence through increased networking opportunities and through the development of new strategic ways of thinking amongst other participating NGOs. It is important to note that this new move came about both as the result of a 'push' from FBOs themselves, carving out a niche area of expertise, identifying a need and pushing for space to move into it, and, in growing recognition of their competence, a significant 'pull' by government agencies at local and provincial level through the offer of real space (both literally and figuratively) and resources to work with.

Developing a moral conscience

The final contribution that I will highlight in this paper is perhaps the most obvious, and potentially the most controversial: that of the FBO sector's contribution to the development of a 'moral conscience' in China. Richard Madsen points out that many models of civil society used to describe China have hitherto ignored the moral element, making no distinction between moral communities and special interest groups within civil society. He contends that this is a mistake especially in light of the moral crisis in today's Chinese society, and suggests that we should pay increasing attention to the development of moral associations (Madsen, 1993).

Carol Hamrin agrees and says that 'with the collapse of the socialist model and the rise of an authoritarian capitalist model, there has been a distinct decline in public morality within China' (Hamrin, 2008). Social critics and scholars have highlighted this crisis in public morality for a number of years now (Gao, 2002) and as Perry Link has argued the Chinese state and public are now 'groping to re-establish some kind of value system that might do for China today what Confucianism used to do' (Link, 2008).

Lu Xun once wrote that 'Chinese culture is deeply rooted in Taoism' and I have already touched on the way ancient Taoist teachings are now being reapplied as China seeks to develop a new environmental consciousness in the public sphere. Chinese Christians, both Catholic and Protestant are increasingly engaging in programmes of social justice, some of which are proving highly controversial. Chinese Buddhist groups are moving towards a new model of 'socially engaged' Buddhism which is heavily influenced by Taiwanese groups such as Tzu Chi (*Ciji gong de hui*) and Buddha's Light Mountain (*Fo Guang Shan*) showing deep concern and accompanying action to alleviate social issues, whilst maintaining a politically neutral stance, in line with *Fo Guang Shan's* position of 'showing concern but do not interfere'.

Conclusion

Relatively little is known about Chinese religious organisations and FBOs and until very recently they have been largely sidelined in the development discourse. Their role is, however, becoming increasingly hard to ignore and initial studies show that the landscape is diverse, with varying influences, *modus operandi*, and capacity issues to consider. Some organisations are, as I have shown, linked with formal religious structures and institutions; others are local, grassroots expressions of faith. Some have tapped into international networks to secure considerable funding and personnel resources; others exist hand to mouth on voluntary contributions. Do religious organisations make a contribution to charitable work in China? The short answer is yes, they do, but as can be seen from this paper it is difficult to talk generically about their work as it is hugely varied and can be influenced by a number of external factors. What then are the implications of the growth of this sector?

Firstly, the sector has the potential of making a significant contribution to civil society in China but this potential is weakened by a weak legal system with fuzzy registration and management guidelines. This results in ambiguity and confusion. Edwards and Hulme believe that 'there is a level at which the absence of accountability begins to make the likelihood of ineffective or illegitimate action by an organisation more probable' (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). As organisations grow issues of professionalism and sustainability become increasingly vital to the health of the sector at large. This is linked to the issue of registration but also to that of long-term governance, funding and accountability.

Secondly, whilst FBOs can play a positive and inspiring role for different sectors of society, working as 'communities of character' (Thomas, 2004) characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity, bridging, bonding and linking individuals (Uslaner, 2002) studies have also shown that there can be a 'dark side' to the social capital generated by such groups, resulting in social exclusion and corruption (Gilbert, 2006). Better understanding of the work of these groups will help to illuminate potential issues in this area, and to highlight potential areas of cooperation.

Finally, the international dimension of FBO work in China is worthy of a paper in its own right. The negative sides are clear – fear of foreign infiltration makes the government sensitive and can hinder the development of any work with international links. Reliance on overseas funding can also subject Chinese FBOs to the potential of taking on donor focused projects, which have little relevance to the local community, alongside subjecting the organisation's future to the volatility of the international financial markets. But there are also huge positive contributions to be made. International links can offer exposure to projects, and access to resources and expertise, all of which are crucial at the initial stage of an organisations life. As China gains a growing presence on the international stage links forged through FBOs and religious organisations could prove to be an important tool in 'soft' diplomacy. There is also the question of China's role in the international development field. FBOs working in China have huge experience to share, and should be helping to shape the international development discourse.

Clarke has written that "The place of religion in society is complex, dense and difficult to pin down precisely. But it is real" (Clarke, 2008). This is never truer than in the Chinese context. The picture is indeed complex, but it is also very real, and it is evolving fast. To ignore it any further would be to miss out on an exciting juncture in China's development.

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A new exploration of religious participation in social services – a project research report on the Liaoning Province Catholic Social Service Center

Report by a State Administration for Religious Affairs research team

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(Translated by Caroline Fielder)

In his report to the 17th National Party Congress President Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 proposed that “the Party’s basic principle of religious work should be fully implemented and religious personnel and believers should be actively engaged in the promotion of economic and social development”; the newly amended party constitution also called for “the full implementation of the Party’s basic principle of religious work, uniting religious believers to contribute to the economic and social development of society”. These reports convey a strong policy direction: establishing and implementing a scientific concept for the development of religious work, alongside the proposal of new demands and goals being made of religious personnel and religious believers in the promotion of economic and social development. That is the bringing together of religious believers as they play their own role in the process. One effective way of achieving this goal is to encourage and support religious groups’ participation in the provision of social services. Since the process of reform and opening up, some groups within China’s religious circles have pioneered work in the provision of social services under the guidance of both the Party and the government and have been active in their exploration of ways that religion can best serve the community. There have been some encouraging results, with certain religious social service agencies emerging as particularly successful. However, on the grand scale of things, China’s level of religious participation in social services is relatively low,

the form of their participation is relatively simple, and the scope of their work is limited. To change this situation, the Party and the government must support and guide religious groups in playing an active role in the economic and social development of the nation and in exploring new ways of working, new methods and new goals. In line with this guidance, Liaoning provincial Religious Affairs Bureau 辽宁省宗教局 took stock of the local religious situation and enthusiastically encouraged the religious circles and believers to play an active role in the economic and social development of society. They have managed to achieve remarkable results, establishing a series of religious service providers.

One such example is the Liaoning Province Catholic Social Service Center 辽宁省天主教社会服务中心. Under the guidance and support of the provincial RAB and the leadership of Father Zhang Kexiang 张克祥 who runs the centre for the Catholic Diocese of Liaoning, they have managed to actively explore creative new ways for the religious community to participate in social services, and new ways to obtain social recognition and praise. From 15-19 September using the theme "Religious participation in social services: a new exploration" as our focus, we went to the Liaoning Province Catholic Social Service Center to carry out an investigation on social service projects. With the help and support of the Liaoning provincial RAB office and numerous local city RAB offices we visited Shenyang 沈阳市, Huludao 葫芦岛 city, Jianchang 建昌 county, and Chaoyang 朝阳 city, Kazuo 喀左 County. In all three places we carried out investigations and organized focus group discussions as part of our research. We visited specific case projects such as "Nazareth House" 纳匝勒之家 in Shenyang city, HIV-infected families in Jianchang 建昌 county, as well as numerous village well and bridge construction projects in Kazuo 喀左 county.

As a result of our discussions and research, we have formed some preliminary views:

1) Background information: Liaoning Province's Catholic Social Service Center's participation in social services

Liaoning Province Catholic Social Service Center is known in Chinese as "Shengjing Caritas" 盛京仁爱, and in English by its initials CSSC (hereafter we will use the initials CSSC when referring to the centre). Approval for the establishment of a Catholic-initiated, non-governmental organization (NGO), affiliated to the Catholic diocese of Liaoning was initially granted by Liaoning provincial RAB. The CSSC was founded by Father Zhang Kexiang in 2004. Currently there are 10 full-time employees and 30 regular volunteers. The centre is administered by an executive governing board composed of 11 members, including the diocesan bishop, priests, nuns, university professors, business leaders and academics. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, and include both Catholics and non-Catholics.

Over the past four years, the CSSC board has promoted on-going organizational development and provided a range of personnel training opportunities. The work has

continuously developed and has grown from the initial focus on HIV/ AIDS to the three areas of work provided today: HIV/AIDS projects, rural development projects and youth projects (this current piece of research does not examine the latter project). Each work area has established its own service traits, supplementing any shortfall in government or social security provision, raising public awareness and instilling a charitable ethos within the public domain, all of which has had a positive influence on the local community.

(1) HIV/AIDS Project

China discovered its first case of HIV in June 1985. Now it has reached epidemic proportions and according to data released by UN agencies in China, China's current figures regarding HIV+ persons stand at about 84 million people, with an annual growth rate of 30%. AIDS is not only a serious public health issue, but has also become one of China's most serious social problems. People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) are a relatively special social group in society. PLWHA are subject to physical illness and suffering, and are also subject to all kinds of social pressures and discrimination. As a result of their gradual loss of ability to work, the gap between the socio-economic conditions of PLWHA and their families and general society is widening. More than 80% PLWHA are rural citizens so the poor grow to be even more marginalized becoming what is known as a "double vulnerable group". This group not only needs careful medical treatment and care, but also needs social care and concern.

Concern about the AIDS situation was the reason why the CSSC was originally set up. In 2003 Father Zhang Kexiang received an invitation to visit "Charity House" a Catholic church project for PLWHA in Bangkok, Thailand. He was inspired to set up a similar project in Liaoning, and with the support of Liaoning RAB and the former bishop of the Catholic diocese Jin Peixian 金沛猷, this dream became reality. Liaoning Province's Catholic Social Service Center was established. A team of seven sisters and lay people, all with medical backgrounds, were sent to Thailand for a month of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment training. The centre's first project was subsequently established – an HIV/AIDS project group, with the name "Nazareth House" 纳匝勒之家.

The project did not initially take off very quickly. One reason for this was that it was highly controversial within the church, with many people believing that AIDS was an issue which was completely unrelated to the church. Many believed that church work should be focused on clergy training and the spread of the gospel. Another reason for its slow uptake was society's attitude towards the problem, which was also ambiguous. The CSSC's Catholic background was also a hindrance to their work.

Given these circumstances, the CSSC recognized that if it was to succeed in doing the work properly then it had to cooperate with the government. So they pro-actively sought a coalition with the Shenyang Center for Disease Control (CDC) (沈阳市疾病预防控制中心), hoping that on the one hand, the CSSC staff would be able to gain professional

knowledge and skills training, and that on the other they would establish cooperative relations between the two sides in order to jointly promote the development of their work. Liaoning provincial RAB gave permission for a nominated staff worker within the CSSC to put together an AIDS referral system. This was formally coordinated by CDC so as to dispel any concerns. The Director of the Hong Kong AIDS Foundation 香港艾滋病基金会, and a Maryknoll doctor who had been engaged in HIV/AIDS prevention and control in Africa were invited to act as consultants to the project.

From the first activities of "House of Nazareth", which worked with 8 CDC-referred PLWHA in August 2008, the CSSC has now provided services to over 141 individuals (66 in Shenyang, 75 from further afield). Current records show that 16 people have since passed away, and 125 continue to be involved in the project. This success rate has been attributed to the tireless efforts of the CSSC staff and the genuine service that they provide.

1. In 2004, in cooperation with China Medical University 中国医科大学 and Shenyang CDC, the CSSC jointly organized training activities on HIV/AIDS awareness. Over the past few years over 40,000 people have attended one of their presentations. In addition to lectures, the CSSC has also organized a number of urban and rural outreach campaigns in order to make more people aware of HIV/AIDS prevention, and to reduce stigma towards PLWHA.
2. PLWHA can be consumed with a prevailing sense of helplessness, loneliness, despair and even revenge. The CSSC established a telephone hotline and arranged for experienced staff to answer the telephone and provide face to face support for those in need. They have now provided in excess of 1,000 sessions to both PLWHA and those who have in some way been affected by HIV/AIDS, thereby increasing their clients' sense of confidence in their lives.

One example was Mr. Wu, a 26 year old PLWHA. In January 2006, he was tested HIV+. Due to complications he had also contracted encephalitis and had become paralyzed down one side of his body. When the sisters from the centre first talked to him, he was emotionally volatile, complaining constantly. His anger drove him to constantly think of ways he could get revenge on society. When he talked with the staff, the nuns encouraged him, saying that although HIV/AIDS was not curable, encephalitis could be treated, and that there was hope. In February, the CSSC linked Mr. Wu up with a specialist hospital in Beijing for treatment and remained in almost daily contact by telephone to comfort and encourage him. In April, his condition had still not improved and Mr. Wu had almost given up hope. He was suicidal and the service center employees went to Beijing to visit him in person, to counsel him and to attempt to keep his hopes alive. After 6 months of treatment, Mr. Wu's encephalitis was cured and he was able to return to his former work unit and resume his responsibilities.

3. The group has established a number of support platforms for those who are HIV+

including a self-help group for patients and another for friends of PLWHA. These support groups have organized other activities such as holding seminars from experts, arranging holiday dinners, organizing visits to the park and other outings etc. In recent years, there have been over 24 activities put on, helping 191 regular participants to improve the self-confidence and self-esteem of PLWHA.

4. Home visits are undertaken on a long-term basis in order to help ease the medical burden of those HIV+ clients living in poverty in poor areas such as Jianchang county. Living assistance and livelihood advice is also given. The CSSC staff regularly make home visits to those who are in a serious way with over 70 affected families being offered rice, flour, oil, coal and other necessities of life in addition to subsidies for their medical expenses. For those who are still capable of working, the CSSC has helped them to become 'self-sufficient', offering funding to help buy rabbits [to sell for their pelts], cattle and other livestock, and providing them with training. 17 families have been helped in this way.

One such example was a family that the research group visited a village in the Jianchang county. In a family of five, four were HIV+ (the parents and two children both of whom were infected through mother-to-child transmission). The only healthy one in the family was a 70 year old grandparent. The whole family lived in extreme poverty and life was unsustainable. The CSSC staff regularly came to visit the family, providing financial subsidies to help with daily necessities, and liaising with the local school to try and ensure that the children were not discriminated against. In conjunction with the CDC, they also provided medical supplies through a local clinic. In addition to this they provided them with rabbits because breeding rabbits could become a regular source of income.

In another village, a family man became infected when he sold his blood in order to raise some cash to pay for some crucial repair work to his house. Since becoming infected he was no longer able to work in the fields. The CSSC staff gave a number of information sessions on HIV/AIDS prevention to other local families. They also provided some basic medical examinations, and provided 2000 yuan subsidies to the family for the purchase of cattle to help them achieve a sustainable livelihood.

The CSSC HIV/AIDS project has generated a great deal of interest and support in the local community. In January 2007, the CSSC successfully held a meeting in Shenyang called the "Christian Forum on HIV/AIDS prevention and control work" 基督宗教艾滋病防治工作交流会议. Meeting participants included the Amity Foundation 爱德基金会, Hebei province's Jinde Charity 河北进德公益 and representatives from 11 other Catholic and Protestant social service agencies, the United Nations China HIV/AIDS Programme representative, a representative from the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, along with representatives from Liaoning Provincial Health Bureau 辽宁省卫生厅 and Liaoning Provincial RAB 辽宁省宗教局. The meeting was organized by religious service organizations and was the first national inter-regional, inter-religious meeting on HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

On 8 February 2007, the Liaoning Province Global Fund AIDS Project 辽宁省全球基金艾滋病项目 teamed up with the CSSC to offer services for target groups with regard to information exchange and to provide a platform for seminar-cum-training courses. The course was designed to better enable the fifth round of the Global Fund to operate in Liaoning Province, to maximize the effectiveness of HIV prevention, treatment and care and to help with the overall control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, ultimately increasing the quality of life of PLWHA provincially and even nationally. Being selected as one of the Global Fund AIDS project partners shows the extent to which the CSSC HIV/AIDS programme has been seen as a success.

(B) Rural Development Project

Chaoyang City 朝阳市 is located in the western part of Liaoning and is one of the top ten poverty-stricken areas within the province. The climate is temperate, continental and seasonal with risk of extreme drought and water shortfall. For years the average annual rainfall has been less than 500 mm/year. The resulting desertification is very serious, with declining groundwater levels and difficulty in obtaining drinking water becoming an increasingly prominent issue. In part due to harsh climatic conditions, alongside delayed construction of agricultural infrastructure, as well as technological and educational backwardness and other reasons, the region remains poverty stricken. Some villages have suffered successive years of drought, with many households unable to rear livestock. In addition to this, this region also is a mountainous area. Transportation is extremely problematic, with some places being totally impassable for motor vehicles and only accessible on foot.

In September 2005 the CSSC rural development projects began in the Chaoyang region through a range of projects including small-scale infrastructure construction projects, financial aid to impoverished rural students, provision of legal advice and vocational skills training. These have brought tangible benefits to farmers and have promoted the harmonious development of the local rural society.

1. Infrastructure

For counties and cities in the western part of Liaoning province such as Chaoyang, Jianping 建平 and Kazuo, land desertification, drought, and water shortage have become critical issues. The CSSC integrated rural development project team offers a wide range of financial resources and projects as part of its work. For example, three wells were dug in Kazuo, and a bridge was also built. This year there are four drinking water projects underway in Fuxin (阜新), all of which bring enormous social benefits with them.

(1) Kazuo county, Small Poplar Tree Ravine Village 小杨树沟村 deep well project

The village is a small village of 40 households, with roughly 150 inhabitants. The villagers used to have to make a two kilometer journey by donkey cart in order to collect water. The village is an agricultural one, and at the end of a bad harvest, crop yields were so small that

only essential clothing and food could be bought.

Upon arrival at the village you can immediately see that it lives up to its name. The village is located in a ravine and the research group had to transfer from their car into a jeep in order to be able to reach the village. The village was surrounded by half-meter high columns of rock which illustrated the enormous difficulty there was in drilling wells there. The village had tried to dig wells in the past, with one going to a depth of 100 meters, but even that had not reached any water, leaving the villagers to conclude that there was no water to be found below the village. The CSSC invited a well-known water expert from Shandong province to undertake an investigation in the village. Following this expert advice and help, the CSSC persuaded the villagers to dig a 210-meter deep well and water was subsequently found. The government consequently supported the establishment of a pipeline system for the villagers, enabling each household to have clean tap water in their own homes.

Over the past year, the CSSC projects in Kazuo county, have helped raise the government's awareness of the difficulties rural areas face in accessing water. The deep well project in the village was an excellent case study for water authorities and local government.

In subsequent months, the relevant departments for Kazuo county allocated 120 million yuan special funding and requested once more the assistance of experts from Shandong in digging local wells. As a result the issue of access to drinking water for both humans and animals has now largely been resolved in the region.

(2) Kazuo County, Shanwanzi 山湾子 village *manshui* 漫水 bridge project

Shanwanzi village is situated between a high mountain to its east and the Daling river 大凌河 to the west. Transportation links there are very difficult. For a long time, when villagers needed to get into town they relied on either a simple wooden bridge to cross the river, or they simply waded across. When they needed to get their agricultural products to market they needed to make a 12 mile detour to get into town. Shanwanzi village has developed economically in recent years, diversifying its farming into growing a range of greenhouse vegetables and harvesting nearly 500 acres of nearby fruit trees. Inadequate transportation however, has seriously hampered any further development of the village economy, and a bridge has long been on the wish-list of most villagers.

In August 2005, CSSC funded the building of a concrete bridge which measured 30 meters by 4 meters. The bridge has vastly reduced the distance from Shanwanzi village to town, enabling not only the easy transportation of greenhouse vegetables to market, but also meaning that the village residents no longer had to wade across the river, which could be particularly cold from late autumn onwards.

When the research group first visited the site they came into the village by a circuitous route. The route was not only very long, but the road was also muddy, and uneven, resulting in the group having to take a jeep and spending over 20 minutes trying to get into the village.

When we left the village we took the new bridge to reach the main provincial road. The journey only took 5 minutes, demonstrating the importance of the bridge to the village.

2. Donations to schools and skills training

In the rural areas of western Liaoning, there are still many children who cannot afford to go to school because of the level of poverty that their families live in. This CSSC project has worked through and liaised with the local parish, government and schools, in order to financially support over a thousand primary, secondary and university students. The programme has gradually integrated a simple financial aid support system and has also organized youth volunteers to carry out teaching activities in rural areas to help encourage poor students from the countryside to continue with their schooling and to work hard.

The CSSC projects found that most young adults in rural areas have moved away to find work, but many of these young people have no skills or qualifications. Many of the rural poor do not pass the high school entry examination, and so stay at home doing nothing or go into the workforce too young. The CSSC joined forces with several reputable vocational and technical training schools in Shenyang to provide financial support for farmers from 210 families in particular difficulties to enable them to go to vocational schools to improve their skills. Many participants in this skills training have been able to find better employment upon graduation. Others have decided to work for themselves, opening up a bakery in their hometown for example, or doing something similar.

The CSSC held a pioneering symposium in September 2007 in Shenyang called "Experience drawn from rural projects: an exchange between Catholic social service agencies" 天主教社会服务机构农村项目经验交流会. Its purpose was to ensure that rural projects are better delivered, to widen the horizons of those involved in the work and to improve the quality of services provided. Participants included those in charge of rural development projects from Catholic social service agencies across the country, representatives from a number of provinces, water sector experts, officials responsible for rural cooperatives, and other experts who provide advice on rural projects.

2. Experience drawn from CSSC involvement in community service projects and the special characteristics of this work

Examining the various social service projects that the CSSC is involved in, we can use four "new routes of exploration" to summarize both their experience and specific characteristics of this kind of work:

- (i) 'Following the government's lead'. Taking initiatives in line with government encouragement of religious participation in social services

Religious participation in social service work and the setting up of charities has existed

since ancient times. In recent years, China's religious circles have continued this tradition, something which has both a patriotic and a religious spirit to it, helping to serve the community with compassion, taking an active part in disaster relief, making donations to schools and undertaking other activities which aim to make a contribution to economic or social development. Generally speaking however, the participation of religious communities in social service work remains fragmented, and working as lone entities means that it is difficult to play to their strengths. To change this situation, and to ensure that the potential of religious organizations is met in terms of making a positive contribution to society's economic and social development, government guidance, support and co-ordination is an absolute necessity. Religious groups will only be able to work effectively where there is clear government's guidance and coordination. Only then will the various groups within religious circles be able to cooperate fully with other groups in society; only then will there be any certainty that social services delivered by religious organizations will be heading in the right direction and only then will the current weakness and disorder manifest in religious participation in social services be rectified. It would also help to change some religious groups' views that they shouldn't be doing social service work, or that they don't know what to do and would also ultimately help religious groups become more active in society's economic and social development and help them take on a more "comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable" role.

In this light it is worth noting how the Liaoning provincial RAB took the lead in encouraging the participation of religious groups in social service provision.

Firstly, they encouraged open-mindedness, in-depth understanding and supported religious groups to gather best practice experience from other groups both at home and abroad, proactively guiding the religious community in their engagement with social service work. They encouraged the exploration of novel ways of working, alongside investigating new areas of work and new models of working, which would promote participation in social service provision. They wanted to champion existing successes that religious groups had made in social welfare provision and encouraged religious groups to take previous work they had undertaken as their starting point. For example, even though resources were limited Liaoning provincial RAB allocated 30,000 yuan of its own funds to support the CSSC in hosting the "Christian Forum on AIDS prevention and control work" 基督教艾滋病防治工作交流会议. It also sent representatives to attend various meetings, helped the CSSC promote its HIV/AIDS project experience in order to contribute to China's overall AIDS prevention and control work.

Second, is the area of policy implementation, the creation of appropriate conditions and the laying of foundations for religious groups to participate in social service work. Religious organizations in Liaoning province have made a positive contribution to the building of a harmonious society and the promotion of economic and social development of society. Using this as an example, we can see that the various RAB offices at provincial and other levels helped by resolving practical problems for religious groups, supporting the opening

of religious buildings and places of worship, and strengthening religious groups through the provision of financial assistance, team-building opportunities and capacity building. This increased the confidence of religious groups, making them more enthusiastic to devote themselves to the area of social service delivery and to making an active contribution to the wider community.

Third, is the coordination of various social contacts and the integration of government agencies, religious groups, and social resources. On the one hand pulling various social forces together, encourages a sense of 'strength in numbers' leading to even greater social benefits in the delivery of projects, on the other hand it also provides a good social environment to promote the expansion of religious participation in social services. A case in point is the HIV/AIDS project, where the Liaoning Provincial RAB office took the lead in the collaboration between the Shenyang Center for Disease Control and CSSC. Community participation ensured the project was an effective and successful venture. In the Shanwanzi village deep wells project, the RAB also took an active part, liaising with the local water conservancy bureau, the village committee and other relevant bodies in order to ensure smooth coordination of the various relationships involved in the CSSC funded wells project. Collaboration meant that villagers contributed labour and the water conservancy departments supported additional pipe work so that the goal of every family having enough to eat and access to water was met, gaining all those involved wide-ranging praise.

In short, only when the government takes the lead, and opens up this opportunity to participate in social services, can religious groups move things forward in the right direction achieving greater social impact, taking an active role in the effective economic and social development of society.

(ii) Learning from overseas experience – expanding the form of religious participation in social services

Chinese Catholic's have always carried out the noble tradition of charitable work and serving the community, but in the past, social services were mainly carried out through the church. As a result, the church's priority was to first spread the gospel and only then to address social issues, something which proved controversial within the church. The church did come forward to do social service work but it easily became tangled up with missionary activities, resulting in the loss of society's support.

Nowadays foreign countries predominantly rely on faith based non-governmental organizations (FBOs) to undertake the church's social service work. FBOs are relatively autonomous religious groups specializing in social services or charitable work. These organizations are born out of religious groups, but remain independent of these religious groups. In their community service activities, they do not talk religion or preach, so that it is easier to access government and civil society support.

The CSSC is one such FBO. In its early days, Father Zhang Kexiang invited the Beijing office of the world renowned management consulting firm PACT to conduct a two-year capacity-building programme to help them get their organization up and running, to set up their institutional philosophy, to establish an institutional vision and purpose, and to put in place a professional management system. Their goal was to build a system-based, democratic, service-oriented, innovative, learning-oriented and cooperative FBO.

The background of the CSSC's full-time core staff is as follows: two staff members have previously studied abroad, two are nuns with the Shenyang Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart 沈阳圣母圣心修女会 community, one is a lawyer, another is a university graduate (with a non-Catholic background) and others have at a minimum gone through the annual professional training programmes on subjects such as medical care, psychological coaching and management training.

The training programmes surrounding the HIV/AIDS project, for example, have included a wide range of interventions including the initial sending by the CSSC of 7 individuals with medical backgrounds to Thailand to participate in a specialist HIV/AIDS training programme. Staff have also been sent to take part in professional training both within China and overseas. These include amongst other things:

- May 2005, two employees were sent to Thailand for training
- June 2005, staff were sent to Xi'an to take part in an HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment course
- November 2005, staff were sent to Africa to study AIDS-related specialist knowledge
- June 2006, staff went to the Philippines to participate in HIV/AIDS prevention and training

This approach has not only resulted in high-quality staffing and systematic professional training, but has also given the CSSC the ability to take on board the new experiences and practices of foreign religious groups engaged in social service work. This has led them to set up a modern charitable institution, insisting that the focus of their work be serving the community as opposed to evangelism. As a result they are more professional and have ensured a better delivery of social services. For example, the sisters have never evangelized those clients coming for support as part of the HIV/AIDS services they provide. Even if the infected person asked about their personal beliefs, they only offer a little explanation. Of the 151 cases of infection that they have dealt with, only one person has converted to Catholicism and was baptized prior to their death.

(iii) A new exploration based on the domestic situation – the expansion of the field of religious participation in social service provision

After years of exploration and development, China has initiated government-led national education, health and social security systems along with additional social service provisions. The on-going scientific development of society and the gradual establishment of a more service-oriented government alongside increased government revenues mean that the range of social service provided by the government will continue to expand and expenditure devoted to social services will also continue to increase. The capacity and level of social services will also be raised and the social security system will continue to improve and be perfected.

However, as China undergoes rapid economic and social development, profound changes are taking place within both its economic system and social organizations. This transformation is leading to enormous changes in people's interests, ideas and concepts. Recently, as the level of economic development becomes constrained, particularly in areas where regional development is imbalanced, problems have emerged within the education and health care fields, with sub-standard medical services available in remote areas and with juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS on the increase. These and other problems have been emerging for some time now and whilst solving them relies on the strength of the state and the government, it is difficult to keep a handle on all of these issues.

The CSSC chose as its starting point a project which addressed a pressing social need, and took the temporary government 'vacuum' as its entry point ensuring that religious circles make a positive contribution to society. They were willing to be pioneers, doing advocacy work and happily supplementing gaps in government and social welfare provision by providing much needed services.

For example, the CSSC selected an HIV/AIDS project as its first social service project at a time when few people were willing to provide such a 'humble' service, and in an area where there was little interest from other groups in society, and yet where there was a very high demand for services.

Another example is the deep well project in Little Poplar village. The locals were convinced that the village had no water, and the local government was looking into relocating the villagers. As a result of numerous conversations with different villagers who said that a very limited amount of water was available in places, the CSSC staff concluded that there had to be a natural water source in the village, it was just that they were not digging in the right place. Sure enough, under the guidance of specialists from Shandong, deep wells were dug in the village and enough water was found, not only to meet the villagers drinking water needs, but more importantly solving water problems for other farmers in the Kazuo region. The project showed other farmers in the region that wells dug deep enough would not only provide drinking water but would also result in enough water to solve hitherto difficult irrigation. It also showed that sharing could have a role in solving future problems.

With all these issues resolved, the CSSC began thinking of a new problem: what to do next? The CSSC took into consideration the government's reform plans, and the new policy orientation which attempts to break down the urban-rural dichotomy. The changes would lead to large numbers of migrant workers pouring into cities generating yet more problems for society. The status of vulnerable groups of migrant workers, and the reality of the lack of social security provision, was of concern to the CSSC so they decided that migrant workers services would become the focus of the next project over the coming few years. In addition, they plan to encourage the five major religious groups within Liaoning Province to collaborate in HIV/AIDS prevention and care work in order to better meet the needs of the provincial CDC. They also have plans to expand the scope of their HIV/AIDS programme by setting up new initiatives such as a drug rehabilitation center.

In summary, the CSSC has chosen to participate in the social services arena, in a manner which is both timely and which matches the development of society, by exploring new areas, developing new projects and in responding fully to the initiative that religious communities offer social services. It has also cleverly and effectively used advocacy and delivered social service interventions in a complementary manner.

(iv) Accurate positioning – launching a model for religious participation in social service delivery

During the second study session of the Politburo meeting last December, President Hu Jintao drew attention to the Party Congress findings of there being a "positive contribution religious people and organizations can play in promoting economic and social development" highlighting the need to encourage and support positive religious participation in social assistance and public welfare in areas such as poverty alleviation, working with vulnerable groups, disaster relief, work with the disabled and elderly, teaching and providing medical assistance. There is clear support and encouragement from the party and the government for there to be religious participation in social services. This does not, however, mean that there will be the same role for religious organizations to play as they are able to do in countries such as Europe and the United States, or in the Chinese territories of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. Instead religious organizations need to pinpoint their own position, and explore a new model of social service delivery.

At present, in some countries in Europe and the Americas and the Chinese regions of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, the NGO sector, including the FBO sector, is energetic and strong. They play a significant role in the provision of education, healthcare, poverty eradication, helping vulnerable groups, protection of women and children's rights, environmental protection, community training and so on. However, the religious organizations in China cannot be spoken of in the same way as those in Europe or America or even those in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. There are huge differences in the actual demand for social services in China, the quality of service which can be offered and the models of work available.

The CSSC has been very clear about this point, accurately identifying their own position, creating a niche for a religious organization to participate in social service delivery and actively exploring new models of work. Through this they have achieved good results.

In the HIV/AIDS projects, for example, the CSSC has recognized that they are not strong enough to work alone. At even the most basic level, they were not directly linked to HIV/AIDS patients, so they requested the Liaoning provincial RAB office to contact the CDC on their behalf in order to establish a referral system to carry out their HIV/AIDS project. Through this they became aware of the fact that only with the government and the community's support could their social services be delivered effectively.

Again, before commencing the rural infrastructure projects in Kazuo county 喀左县, the CSSC project workers first spoke to representatives from the local National People's Congress, the Water Conservancy Bureau 水利局, the Bureau of Agriculture 农业局 and other departments in order to establish good working relations. In the case of the deep well project in Little Poplar village the Kazuo county Water Conservancy Bureau not only assisted the CSSC staff in much of their work, but also helped the villagers build water reservoirs and dig a trench for the pipeline, all free of charge.

At the same time as seeking government support, villagers were encouraged to actively participate in the projects. In doing so, the old way of "blood transfusion" through handouts, e.g. donation of money and goods is combined with "blood generation" e.g. tapping into local knowledge and expertise through gifts in kind. In the Shanwanzi *manshui* bridge 山湾子漫水桥 project, the CSSC bore the major costs of constructing the bridge including the cost of the materials. The village committee covered the labour, through a team of volunteers from the village. The bridge was later named "co-operation bridge" 合作桥. In the deep well project at Little Poplar village, the CSSC bore the main cost of drilling the wells, excavating the main trench as well as purchasing a submersible pump. The villagers organized a group of volunteers to do the manual labour and a liaison team to deal with any problems relating to the wells.

Whether it was being positive about cooperation with the government or it was mobilizing villagers to participate in projects, both were well-chosen options that the CSSC pursued once it had correctly assessed its own position. Only with such collaboration with the government, and such a model of cooperation with the general public, can religious organizations focus in on their own strengths, and participate in social service delivery in a practical and effective way.

3. CSSC participation in social services – difficulties and counter measures

In this study, we have learned that although the CSSC has had notable achievements in its

social service work, in order to progress further some internal and external issues need to be resolved. It should be said that these difficulties and problems are not unique to CSSC, but instead are issues faced by other faith based organizations and can only be solved with positive guidance from the government and through policy support.

(A) Difficulties faced

Following discussions with the CSSC staff members, we can summarize the difficulties they face into the following two main categories.

First, is that within the church itself there are many people who do not understand the relationship between the church and social service work. The CSSC was set up specifically as a FBO, whose purpose was to serve the community. As they were not set up as a Catholic missionary organization, they had no missionary purpose but they did tap into the churches human, financial and other resources. As such, some people within the church argued that the primary role of the Catholic church is to evangelize and that by engaging in social work the focus on evangelism was lost. To a certain extent their opposition to social service work has restricted the development of the CSSC.

Secondly, government policy also has some bearing on religious participation in social services and needs clarification. For example, the CSSC has been plagued with registration problems, which have not been satisfactorily resolved. This issue has in recent years become a "commonplace" issue. Only once it is registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs will the CSSC have any legal status and be able to work legitimately. As it presently stands, although the provincial RAB office fully supports the CSSC, it has still not managed to become successfully registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and remains instead anchored within the Catholic diocese of Liaoning. This means that the CSSC staff have problems in getting certain types of insurance and because they are not able to provide appropriate invoices for offsetting tax a large number of companies are unwilling to donate funds to the organization. If they go down the route of opting for registration as a profit making organization, they will be unable to enjoy tax concessions.

In addition to this, it is hard to define whether faith based organisations like the CSSC which engage solely in social service work are religious or non-religious organizations. There is also a lack of understanding amongst government bodies and other organizations in society, as to what FBOs are. This has been an important factor contributing to the difficulties CSSC has had in trying to register. Another contributing factor has been the fact that FBOs are often subject to skepticism, mistrust and general lack of cooperation from certain individuals, groups and institutions. Since opening for business the CSSC has already encountered such problems. For example, one organization had agreed to cooperate with them but when they learnt their full name, "Liaoning Province's Catholic Social Service Center", they became afraid that they would start to engage in missionary work and so they refused to cooperate any further with them. It is for this reason that the

CSSC changed its name to "Shengjing Caritas".

(B) Observations and recommendations

Given the various problems faced by the CSSC, in order to further develop the work and continue to support the participation of faith based groups in social service work, we make the following observations and recommendations:

First, there needs to be more open-mindedness and awareness-raising. This requires three things. Firstly, religious organizations need to give up their traditional "born again" viewpoint and instead opt to "go out into the world", enthusiastically embracing social service work and being interested in caring for others. This is the most positive role religious groups can play in times of economic and social development. Secondly, related government departments should also open their minds further and be prepared to explore new ideas. They should try to really understand FBOs, researching and learning from the European and American experience in addition to that of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, and then strive to better guide and support FBO participation in social service work through promoting new ideas and new ways of working. Thirdly, in addition to this, the local community should also show its concern for social service work by supporting FBO and other religious organizations' enthusiasm and action in serving the community, thereby helping to create a good working environment.

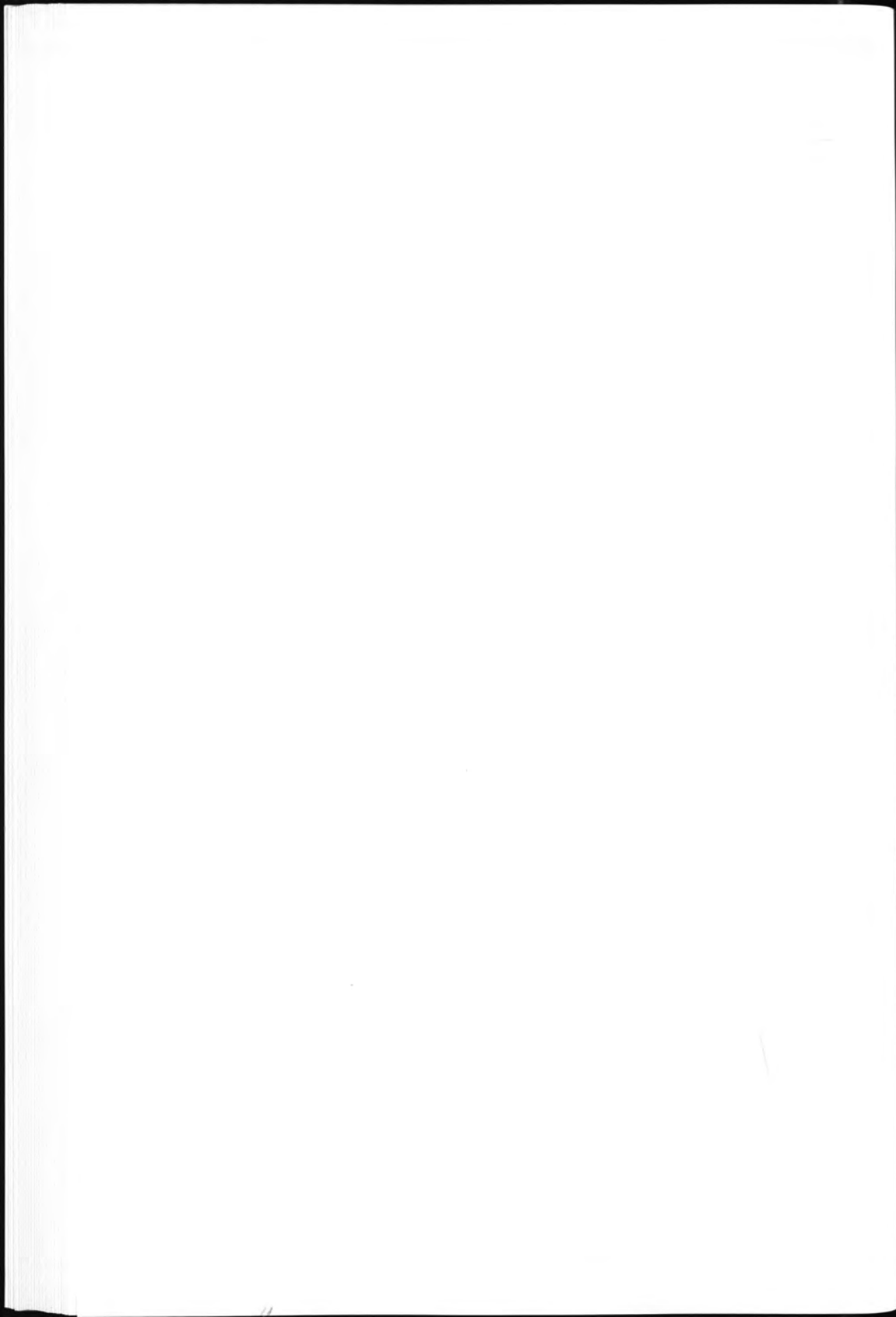
Second, legislation needs to be introduced quickly and policies and regulations have to be improved. Only the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" 宗教事务条例 say anything about religious organisations participating in social services, stating: "religious bodies and sites for religious activities may run charitable social undertakings in accordance with law". However, this has not been accompanied by any incentives, norms, constraints, monitoring mechanisms or specific policies, and is therefore of little use to religious organisations wishing to participate in social service development. In the "Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organizations" 社会团体登记管理条例 there is no clearly defined category which deals with the registration of religious NGOs. With society transforming so fast, and numerous new types of social organizations emerging, the legal situation has apparently been unable to adapt to the times. Our proposal is that the relevant departments speed up and improve the relevant laws and regulations, revising relevant policies that have already been introduced so that work by religious groups servicing the community have a policy basis to work from and legal protection.

Third, we must actively guide and appropriately support this work. Religious participation in social services is an inevitable part of economic and social development. There needs to be some guidance in place, so the enthusiasm and strength of FBOs providing social service work can be matched with the requirements of society, can share the government's concerns and can ultimately help solve problems for the government. At the same time, the government needs to formulate a policy which offers appropriate support. The spirit

of the management principles need to be legally based so that religious participation in social services is safeguarded and allows FBOs to enjoy certain rights and privileges. Endorsement of religious participation in social services and society's support for religious groups is a virtuous circle, encouraging the harmonious development of both the economy and of society.

In short, China's religious social services are still in their infancy. The concept of religion and social services has only just been created. The scope and areas of work need to be further expanded. The ways and means that the work is done need to be developed more. Funds and security issues are still seriously lacking. The need to mobilize power and influence also needs to be expanded. In comparison to foreign countries and other areas, there is still a big gap. But even though there is a gap there is also a space to fill, and as long as there is government guidance and support for appropriate initiatives, and a few more organisations like the CSSC who have the courage to explore this avenue, then FBOs in China will definitely be able to carve out their own route of participating in social services.

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The Central Problem of Christianity in Today's China and some Proposed Solutions

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The central problem of [Protestant] Christianity in China today, in short, is the question of the 'house churches'. In the past 30 years, the house churches have developed quickly and widely in scope, outpacing the development of the 'Three Self' church. Today, the house churches probably constitute more than half of Chinese Christianity; at the very least, they are a major constituent.

1. Differentiating the House Churches and their Present Scope

1. In fact, the label 'house church', despite being widely used, is an extremely inaccurate designation. Though we hear the phrase and think of people meeting in a private home for worship, Bible studies, prayers and other such Christian activities, the participants of 'house churches' are rarely just family members, relations or close friends. The location for such meetings is certainly not just in family homes.

Despite its inaccuracy, the name 'house church' is convenient and has gained habitual use. The term in Chinese is not 'house church' (*fangzi jiaohui*, 房子教会), for this sounds preposterous in Chinese, but 'family church' (*jiating jiaohui*, 家庭教会). But, in the same sense, doesn't 'house church' also sound absurd? The whole world has churches 教会 and houses 房子, so why is it only China that has these particular 'house churches'?

The 'Three-Self' churches also have their own buildings and even meet in houses in certain locations, so they too could be called 'house churches'. Equally, the absolute majority of

Chinese house churches, perhaps all of them, are 'self-governed, self-propagated and self-supported'. That is, they all achieve the principles of the 'three selves' and could be called 'Three Self' churches.

These chaotic labels connote the irregular history and contested status of the 'house churches' which is part of the unresolved legacy of the period of 'ultra-leftism' in China.

2. During the intense revolutionary movement of the early 1950s many of the multitude of different Protestant Christian groups went through reorganisation, amalgamation and reduction, uniting together under the leadership of the committee for the Three Self Patriotic Movement, thereby becoming 'Three Self' churches. (This is also an inaccurate label, if still convenient and habitual, because the 'Three Self Patriotic Movement' is not actually a church, nor is any actual church preceded by the label 'Three Self'.) In any case, this period also saw the emergence of the 'house churches'. Some Christians began meeting in their homes because they were unwilling or unable to join Christians worshipping at the churches offered by the 'Three Self' committee. In the destructive campaigns against religious activities during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and '70s, all the Christian activity that was forced underground took on a shape similar to the house churches.

After the Cultural Revolution, the religious needs which had for so long been repressed began to break forth. There was a consequently rapid increase among the rural house churches and the spontaneous formation of house churches in some urban areas. The huge 'demand' for religious activities far outstripped what was on offer, whether legal or not, so the primary location for the house churches continued to be private people's homes. Inevitably and naturally, innumerable large and small house churches sprouted up. These house churches were in all respects the same as normal and legal churches the world over. They all developed their own names, but in part to express that they were different from the legally constituted 'Three Self' churches, and that they were not under the leadership of the Three Self committee, many people (especially academics) began calling them 'house churches'.

3. The past distribution of Christianity in China has been primarily in rural (80%) rather than urban (20%). The growth of Chinese Christianity, particularly the rapid growth of the house churches, can also be divided broadly between rural and urban areas. [Christianity in] rural areas experienced rapid growth during the 1980s, but in the following ten years that growth has become much steadier. In urban areas, growth in the 1990s and prior was not very rapid, but has accelerated since then. These two aspects of development, which were seemingly unrelated, from the perspective of the new millennium can be seen in light of an increasing population shift and urbanisation; migrant rural labourers were entering urban churches, churches were also forming among the migrant workers, and the interflow between urban and rural churches had begun.

From approximate statistics it is possible to say that in 1950 there were 22 different groupings within Chinese [Protestant] Christianity and the total number of [Protestant] Christians was 1,055,699 (this despite the now customarily documented figure of 700,000). According to numbers from the secretariat of the State Council and several Christian *lianghui* pronouncements, the number of Protestant Christians in 2006 had reached 16 million. Many studies have shown that these figures cannot include the vast majority of house church Christians.

So how many believers attend house churches? At the moment this is a question that is impossible to answer with any accuracy. The house churches' illegal status forces them into concealing or half-concealing their true state of affairs, meaning that we are unable to assess their overall statistics. Further, the situation of Chinese Christianity remains delicate, and those who make their Christianity public can find themselves inconvenienced or facing detrimental situations. As a result, the number of Chinese Christians, even given the most general estimates of the last few years, must remain a mystery.

Some statistics have emerged out of the house churches themselves, others from Christian scholars, while others quote international media. Among these figures, the highest estimate for the number of Chinese Christians reaches 120 million, the lowest 50 million. The middle estimate is usually around 70 million. Some researchers of Chinese Christianity calculate that the membership of the house churches is approximately three times as large as that of the Three Self churches. According to these estimates the number of house church Christians should be placed somewhere between 38 million and 90 million. This accords with house church leaders' own estimation. Even so, according to the data from the most recent national surveys, the sociological department at Purdue University in the United States has published a report indicating that the number of self-confessed Buddhists in China is 185 million (18% of the total population), the number of Daoists represents 12 million, and this does not include adherents of local 'folk' religions. It estimates the number of self-confessed Christians at 3.2% or 33 million. At the same time, the most recent study from a group at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute for World Religions estimates that the number of Christians (that is Protestants) stands at 1.8% or 23.05 million.

In that latest study, Yu Jianrong 于建嵘 [from the Institute for World Religions] found that the geographical distribution of the house churches has some specific characteristics: the main concentrations are along the Huai 淮 River valley and in the coastal regions of Fujian 福建 and Zhejiang 浙江 etc. In a 2004 list of provinces containing Christians, though not including the house churches, ranked the provinces thus: Henan 河南 with 5 million, Anhui 安徽 with 3 million, Zhejiang with nearly 2 million, Fujian with 1 million. These made up the bulk of the total population of Chinese Christians (23%, 14%, 9% and 6% respectively). This list is identical with Yu Jianrong's characterisation of two Chinese 'Bible belts' (namely the Huai River valley and the coastal regions of Zhejiang and Fujian,

etc.). Of course, the distribution of the house churches is extremely wide-ranging and one could say that wherever there are Chinese Christians, there are house churches also.

2. The Factors which have given rise to the House Churches.

1. The house churches formed out of several historical and practical causes. These most fundamental reasons merit a rethink of policy toward them.

To take the Beijing house churches as an example. The city of Beijing had 64 churches in 1958, the year in which it became policy for Christians not to worship in separate denominations but to come together in united worship. At the end of 1958 only four churches remained in Beijing: the so-called east, west, north and south churches. Beijing City now stretches out over 16808 square kilometres (or approximately half the area of Taiwan) and has a population of 14 million (equivalent to the population of Denmark, Norway and Finland combined). City estimates now place the number of Christians at between forty and fifty thousand people. But for reasons stated above, the actual number is probably several times higher (at least a few hundred thousand) and is growing rapidly. In these circumstances, the increase of church sites to nine (five in the city, and four in the suburbs) has not brought it back up to the level of many decades ago. This kind of provision cannot meet the spiritual needs of such a large number of people (at best there is one church for every 10,000 believers). This is similar to Beijing's notorious traffic situation, in which a road network set up decades ago can no longer cope with the scale of the vehicles now needing to use it.

A restrictive administrative policy over the long term contradicts the growing religious demands of the masses, which is the essential reason for the emergence of the house churches.

Many other big cities are the same. Shanghai, for example, had 208 churches in 1958, quickly reduced to just 22 and later even fewer. Guangzhou had 68 churches in 1958, soon reduced to nine. Even if the number of Christians in these big cities had remained constant, such a small number of churches could not keep up with demand. Given that the number of Christians, in all likelihood, will have dramatically increased, then it is almost inevitable that the 'house churches' have emerged.

2. There have been varying, historical opinions of the 'Three Self' movement; another cause for the house churches.

From the early 1950s and the creation of the 'Three Self' Movement there were a range of views among Chinese Christians. These different opinions did not just fade away due to the pressure of government policy and administrative regulations. Quite the opposite, these opinions continued and grew in geographical range and scope.

In 1949, Chinese Christianity (not including the Roman Catholics) was already divided into several denominations, each doing their own thing. Each was mutually independent and stood in parallel with its neighbours; this is the nature of (Protestant) Christianity (which is different from Catholicism because it refuses to accept human authority or constraints on religious faith) and is quite normal for (Protestant) Christianity (which accepts only horizontal relational ties and is without vertical affiliations). This situation, however, was artificially destroyed in the 1950s.

In broad terms, some clergy and denominations had been particularly influenced by developments in the West which stressed a liberal theology, and might be called the liberal group 自由派. Among more indigenous clergy and denominations there was a strong conservatism, sometimes called fundamentalism 基要派. These groups held widely differing positions. The latter regarded the beliefs of the former as 'less steadfast', liable to yield to power seeking the re-interpretation of the Christian faith in order to conform to mainstream ideology. The fundamentalists sought to prevent compromise between faith and the popular worldview.

Meanwhile, the 'liberal' Christians were also heavily reliant on missionary aid and relatively weak in the area of self-sufficiency. The indigenous churches were relatively independent, 'each had a strong cohesive energy', and their organisational patterns were 'simple and frugal, well able to continue amid the relative scarcity of resources.' As a result, within the context of the 1950s, a number of indigenous church groups were unwilling to join the 'Three Self Church' and the shape of the 'house churches' began to emerge.

As a result, the fundamentalist and exclusivist character of the indigenous religious groups made them very resist to any form of deviation from or 'reform' of orthodoxy. They felt that the Three Self Church, in matters of faith, were of the 'unbelieving faction' 不信派 and were consequently unwilling to hand over administrative control to them.'

There were also other Christian groups who at first consented to the new situation under the Three Self church but opposed the [later move to] united worship, and desired to resume their own denomination's particular pattern of worship, etc. These, therefore, continued conducting their own religious practices, taking on the form of the 'house churches' rather than accepting the government sanctioned Three Self church, which had become the 'official church' 官方教会.

Naturally, because of these historical circumstances, the 'house churches' have faced serious attacks, and during the Cultural Revolution they had no option but to suspend their activities.

3. Since the Cultural Revolution, apart from a few house churches which survived, the vast majority have arisen from fresh causes. Here we will take Beijing as an example to analyse the causal factors involved.

The first factor is geography. In the last 30 years, Beijing has expanded like a giant flatbread, its population has grown explosively and Christianity has grown with it. City churches have been built and expanded but this has not been able to keep up with Beijing's expansion, nor with the speed of Christian growth. Many Christians have to waste several hours and change several buses merely in order to travel to their nearest church. Many Christians, therefore, want to worship locally – an inevitable and natural reaction. Secondly, as the level of education among Christians has continually increased so their demands of church have multiplied. Many have become dissatisfied with the standard level of preaching in the Three Self churches, and so the number choosing to attend house churches has increased. Third, some Christians want to be involved in a more intimate form of fellowship, a more familial atmosphere, to which the smaller size of the house churches is more suited. Fourthly, some believers, particularly those involved in 'third sector' industries, by the nature of their work cannot attend meetings held on weekends. It is natural that they desire to attend mid-week services which happen on a Monday or a Friday. Fifth, Christians (and in particular those who have received education or baptism overseas) hold theological views different to those of the Three Self, and so wish to attend worship which accords with their own theological understanding. Sixth, it is a facet of social psychology that 'like attracts like'. Some Christians wish to participate in activities with other Christians of a similar status or occupation, whereas the Three Self churches mix all kinds of people from a particular district. Seventh, many house churches have to keep on dispersing, for a variety of reasons (most fundamentally because the locations they meet in are very small and do not have the capacity for a crowd), frequently meaning that new house church groups are constantly forming and generating.

Other cities share similar circumstances to those in Beijing, these being particularly pervasive in the big cities. In rural areas, the transport problems to church are even more acute and so it is little surprise that house churches are even more common. Many of them have also been attacked during political campaigns, more thoroughgoing than those in the cities. More importantly, in rural areas there are hundreds and thousands of nameless independent preachers, making herculean efforts to spread the faith. Sacrificing homes and property, they tramp over mountains and down valleys, visiting town, villages and hamlets. These people invariably suffer surveillance and pressure from local authorities and the public security agencies and so naturally oppose themselves to officialdom and the 'official church'. Such preachers have often formed organisations opposed to the Three Self movement.

3. Factors in the Rapid Growth of the House Churches

1. The rapid growth of the house churches is largely down to the cumulative effect of a number of complex factors, both internal and external, which have interacted to bring about the present state of affairs. At the moment we can leave aside matters of Christian doctrine and organisation (which have enabled Christianity's rapid diffusion across China, and have made it the world's largest religion), but focus instead on analysing the unique environmental factors which have had a direct impact on the growth of the Chinese house churches.

A particular religion's connections with China's wider religious environment can be analysed through three lenses: religious relations to society (that is, a religion's relationship with non-believers and other social spheres); relations between religions; and the relations between religion and politics (primarily, the relationship between a religion and the state).

2. There are some unique aspects to relations between Christian churches and non-believers. First in the innate doctrinal impulse to disseminate the faith (Jesus instructed his disciples to 'go into all the world' and spread the gospel). This gives Christians, as compared to followers of other faiths, a greater consciousness toward proselytism. In a study of 543 Beijing Christians, scholars found that over half thought that proselytism was 'very important, and so I am always positively participating in it'. A further 40.7% agreed that spreading the faith is 'very important, but it depends on the circumstances'. By comparison, only 3.3% felt that personal evangelism was 'not essential 可有可无的事', and only if it was convenient they might engage in proselytism. Only one single believer thought spreading the faith was 'completely irrelevant to me 与己无关, therefore I never engage in it.' This kind of consciousness and participation in evangelism is even more pronounced in rural areas.

Christian churches have another particular characteristic, which may be called 'bringing services to the doorstep' 上门服务. Take rural labourers as an example. Since the 1980s, more than one hundred million have migrated into the cities in search of work, and now a younger generation are growing up in the cities. They have seemingly broken off all their former ties with society and social traditions, becoming solitary individuals in an unfamiliar, faceless sea of people. Their labour is heavy, their remuneration scanty, and their subsistence difficult. They have no way of securing medical costs, housing or education for their children. They are at the lowest level of society, enduring constant injustice. Apart from this, faced all the time with life's difficulties, they are confronted with a multitude of temptations: the bustling city, its abundant wares, 'city folk' drinking coffee, watching television, singing and dancing in a leisurely way, young people freely courting in the public squares, etc. Take all this together and the migrants' lives are not just an almighty contrast, but can also be a huge provocation. They cannot help feeling resentful and confused at this huge sense of injustice, and some may even turn to crime. Such a life urgently requires attention, sincere assistance and spiritual consolation. Some Christian

fellowships, particularly house churches, have entered into this world to which the rest of society turns a blind eye. They have provided attention, comfort and help. They provide services at the door, and so the number of converts among the labourers has risen; another factor in the growth of the house churches.

3. The treatment that churches, in particular the house churches, have received from the government is another component in their rapid growth.

Three Self churches receive all kinds of controls from government, while the house churches also face various bids to inhibit them. These controls and pressures have been counterproductive and led to the rapid growth of the churches, in particular the house churches. This has even led some people to suggest, half joking, that the house churches have received 'special consideration' from the government.

Controls on the Three Self churches can be seen at all levels; from the various hierarchies of the *lianghui* leadership and finances to fixed salaries for pastors, from the syllabus and staff at each of the major seminaries to daily aspects of publicity and work. The Three Self also has to submit to other, even more irrational controls. For example it is prevented from selling the Bible at [public] Xinhua bookstores 新华书店, (when other religions are allowed to sell their religious books), it cannot offer its own publications on the open market. It cannot cooperate with the house churches, nor can it openly express its opinions on such matters. Although its position is fully legal, the space within which it operates is constrained. Inevitably this affects its growth and development. To take as an example a large church in the city of Changsha 长沙: over a ten year period there were only 2,000 baptisms, failing to keep pace with the actual growth in the number of Christians. In many other places [official] promises to return church property have not been met, creating real difficulties for the development of the Three Self Church. In the city of Guiyang 贵阳 there are around 20,000 Christians, yet only a single legal church building. The church is only capable of holding 800 and is in a state of severe dilapidation, particularly as it is crowded to overcapacity at every worship service. At Christmas time the church is surrounded by thousands of residents and worshippers, blocking up the traffic on several major roads. As a consequence townspeople have come to notice the Christians, and some have even taken the road toward faith in Christ!

The effect of such controls has dictated the Three Self church's limited capacity for growth. Instead they have been conducive to the development of the house churches and the growth in the number of believers.

The house churches have suffered numerous efforts to suppress them, especially by public security apparatus and the police. In 1983, 1996 and 2001 there were national 'crackdowns' 严打 which affected nearly every one of the house churches. Since the turn of the century, the scale of the efforts to stifle the house churches has diminished. However, local offices and scattered officials still continue to exert pressure right up to the present. Chengdu 成

都 city's Autumn Rains Gospel Church 秋雨之福教会, Shanghai's All Nations Church 万邦教会, Beijing's Keep Watch (Shouwang) Church 守望教会, the Linfen 临汾 church in Shanxi 山西 province, Guangzhou 广州 city's Liangren Church 良人教会 are all examples of such attempts in 2009 and 2010. In the cases of Shanghai and Shanxi this involved the widespread mobilisation of police, and in Shanxi even involved the beating of many Christian believers and the destruction of a church building.

Beijing's Shouwang Church is a good example to illustrate the issues. The church has around 300 members, predominantly university and college students and staff. It, like the vast majority of house churches, never discussed politics. In 2005 the State Council's new Regulations on Religious Affairs 宗教事务条例 were issued, immediately requiring all religious groups to approach the relevant authorities and register. During a service on 11 May, 2008, the police raided the Shouwang church and members began facing harassment from their work units. On the 12 May, the next meeting after the catastrophic Sichuan earthquake, believers at the church collected 200,000RMB [around £20,000] for the reconstruction efforts, and many expressed a desire to travel to the area to help. In 2009, the government began exerting pressure on the church's landlord, who had little option but to tear up the church's lease at the end of October, forcing the church to move out. On 1 November, Beijing saw its heaviest snowfall in many years, but church members still agreed to gather in Haidian Park 海淀公园 to worship together. The park gates which had never been locked before were now suddenly declared closed, so the church members had to gather instead at the park entrance. Amid the falling snowflakes they held their service! This action quickly circulated around the world on the internet. Early on the morning of 8 November, the church's pastor and leadership suddenly lost their freedom of movement, but hundreds of church members still gathered in a heart-moving re-enactment of the previous week's scene. The following week believers were finally allowed to rent premises on a temporary basis. This repression, however, only united the congregation all the more. In a short time they donated the necessary funds and were determined to purchase a place of worship of their own. Although the building has now been paid for, the seller has been under severe pressure not to complete the sale. These incidents have indicated the strong repressive measures that even a moderate house church can provoke.

From a rural church perspective, such repression has impelled some churches to alter their structures. It has forced churches which had formerly each done their own thing to begin to integrate, even cooperate, in resisting efforts to suppress them. The previously patriarchal house churches have begun working together, increasing their capacity to adapt to the outside world and deal with the pressure. The attacks by local government forced native evangelists to leave their own home villages to preach elsewhere, meaning that the house churches have spread quickly outside of their home districts. At the same time, the greater pressure the house churches suffered, the greater was their international sympathy and support. From a moral point of view and several other perspectives, the pressure has contributed to the growth of the house churches.

Several sociological and historical hypotheses suggest that, in certain circumstances, external pressure will lead to increased unity and greater vitality in some social groups. Protestant and Catholic churches in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European are now flourishing, while those in the West which have had centuries of acceptance are facing a comparatively bleak future. The last 60 years of Christianity in China is a prime example. In an academic symposium on Chinese Christianity in 2008 a leader of a house church expressed it in this way: in 1949 there were around 700,000 Chinese Christians in China, after the Cultural Revolution there were 7 million, and now there are 70 million – if you attack us again there will be 700 million. Though no doubt exaggerated, we should understand these statements in the realm of faith and the spirit. The regulations and coercive measures cannot solve such issues but can only intensify them and can even lead to the opposite effect.

4. The Trend of House Church Development

1. Over the last 30 years, Chinese society has undergone huge transformation, not only materially but also spiritually. The most important reflection of this spiritual transformation has been the increased demand for religious belief among the people and greater demand to express such beliefs. Previously there was a strong, unified thought among a group of Chinese to negate and criticise religion. Now, during a stage when most are housed and fed, religious belief and expression are seen as an expression of hunger and thirst. Such thirst and hunger increases and deepens with the increasing inequalities within society, and in such circumstances it is understandable that religions revive and grow. Indeed various kinds of religion, apart from Christianity, are also growing quickly – most notably Buddhism and [Chinese] folk religion. The growth in Buddhism is evident for all to see. Nevertheless, in an investigation by Zhejiang University's Centre for Religious Research 宗教研究中心, Christianity was the fastest growing [world] religion in the provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian and Henan between 1992 and 1996, though folk religion grew even more quickly. For example, the pace at which folk religious temples were being constructed exceeded the building of Christian churches by a factor of between 20 and 100 times!

2. It is clear from such circumstances that religious belief has already become a pressing need for the Chinese people. Consequently it would be natural for Christianity to continue to develop in the same way as other religions. But for Christianity to be able to develop regularly requires some other issues to be addressed. Some scholars believe that 'the relationship between Christianity and the [Chinese] government is very delicate; the house churches do not have a legal 'status' and conflict between some house churches and local authorities continue to break out. Yet given in the current trajectory in government relations, it must be said that the questions surrounding the future development of Christianity in China do not originate with the government and are not political issues.'

The development of Christianity in Taiwan and Hong Kong can also be used to illustrate some of these issues. 'Hong Kong does not prohibit the freedom of religious expression, and no one prevents Christian evangelism and yet the proportion of Hong Kong's population that are Christian is less than 5%. Taiwan does not limit the development of Christianity, yet the growth of Christianity in Taiwan is still less than 5%. Why are the numbers of Christians in Hong Kong and Taiwan so few when there is freedom to proselytise? Or to push the point a different way: from the 1840s over 70 different foreign mission agencies sent missionaries to convert China, but by 1949 the number of Christians was only 760,000 (or, more likely, 1,005,699). What hindered the growth of Christianity in China? Evidently this was not the government. If we look at the future of Christianity from an historical perspective or, more accurately, from the perspective of a religious market, who can say better than the people which religion can meet the demands of the Chinese? Which forms of religion will be accepted by the Chinese, which can even exist or which can grow? Whether or not Christianity has its own very effective administrative structures, whether its theology can be Sinicised, whether it can make a contribution in social services suitable to the needs of the Chinese common people, all of these points will influence the future existence and growth of Christianity in China.'

3. Although this discussion covers the entirety of the [Protestant] Christian religion in China, from the point of view of the house churches, the question is an existential one and the challenges are even greater. The theological tendency of many of the rural house churches is toward fundamentalism, which in the present, pluralistic and modern society appears increasingly conservative. Their more 'spiritual' theological position means they pay less attention to society. These tendencies will impair the rural house churches' various relations with a society striding toward modernisation.

The urban house churches are not the same. In these recent years of growth, the urban house churches have also matured and their development has become more regular. This maturity and normalisation not only expresses the relationship between the house churches and their environment, it reveals a movement from concealment to openness, a movement away from the 'house' or 'family' to a place where they rent dual-use office or commercial properties where they can openly conduct religious activities. Many have moved from operating without a name to selecting their own names, reflected in this new public identity. Further, many house churches' organisations are increasingly comprehensive, most have a clear constitution, an amplifier system, Sunday School, choir, and even publish their own publications. Another important tendency, today's urban house churches are no longer helpless in defending their existence and now seek to defend their rights. That is to say that previously they were undefended and dared not show themselves in public whereas now they use legal avenues to defend their various rights. The quality of urban house churches has risen considerably. Many leaders have masters and doctoral qualifications, their specialist pastors have received theological education, they are consciously beginning to adapt Christianity to Chinese culture and society, including reforming aspects of

liturgy and ritual. House churches are also increasingly concerned about society. After the Wenchuan 汶川 earthquake on 12 May [2008] all churches, no matter how big or small, were actively involved in sending rescuers and working on reconstruction. In one case a house church of around 300 people contributed 200,000 RMB [approx. £20,000]. According to some statistics, the proportion of Christian volunteers who went to the earthquake site was 50% of the total, of whom 80% came from the house churches. The earthquake is now over two years ago, but of the volunteers who have remained in the disaster area, the vast majority are Christians. This attention to and participation in the public welfare is a new orientation in the development of the house churches.

It is worth noting here that, in this new century as never before, the rural house churches and urban house churches have much more interflow. This exchange may well encourage the development and improvement of the rural house churches.

5. A Few Considerations to help Resolve the Issues

Whether the 'house churches' and the 'Three Self churches' can coexist or remain opposed will be decided in the next half century. Given the tremendous changes in the terrain we are facing a completely new situation, and if we approach it together the current irregular situation should cease to exist.

The present anachronistic phenomena are a result of out-dated policies; out-dated policies arise from out-dated ideas. Decades ago, we were completely reliant on administrative regulations 行政手段 to manage the economy and handle social, cultural and ideological issues – including religious ones. But this created untold disasters. In the last few decades we have realised that government cannot run the whole show, cannot be allowed unbridled interference in every domain and issue. So the economy is now no longer run by regulations and administrative measures and the even more complex issues facing our society, culture and ideology are even less amenable to such measures. But in the case of religious issues, when taken in the round, why are we still reliant on such same measures?

The root of the issues, it seems, lies in people's (including leading political cadres') basic comprehension of religion (particularly Christianity) which has, wittingly or unwittingly, remained stuck in the narrow and one-sided views of the past. This limited and biased view of religion (and particularly Christianity) has persisted for several decades, impeding attempts for a more progressive and profound understanding. Such conceptions continue to influence attitudes toward religion (particularly Christianity) and religious policy.

The understanding of religion by the Chinese people has naturally been hugely influenced hugely by the Enlightenment and Marxism. But this influence has been partial and one-sided, distorting some Enlightenment thinkers' and Marxist views on religion.

For example, three representatives of the Enlightenment, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant, all upheld the positive side of religion. Where they opposed certain church thinkers, and even more importantly opposed the corruption in the church, they did not oppose the church itself. During the May Fourth Movement 五四运动 the majority of young, elite scholars considered that the Enlightenment was opposed to religion, and especially Christianity. Most did not understand that the religious Reformation which produced Protestantism had an enormous effect on world modernisation, nor the fact that the arrival of Christianity in China had no connection with invading imperial powers but was part of a cultural exchange. All this produced within the Chinese people a century's worth of one-sided and negative attitudes toward religion and Christianity.

Marxism also affirmed the early stages of Christianity as sharing a similarity with socialism (Friedrich Engels once called it the religion of the 'oppressed', Marx once said Christianity was the religion most suited to the current times) and affirmed the Reformation and creation of Protestantism as a great contribution to the history of the world (calling it a 'decisive moment in the opposition to feudalism'). But all these years later, we find the most common quotation from Marx is that 'religion is the opium of the people', without understanding that this is not the complete negation of religion or that in the same context he writes brilliantly: 'religion is the sigh of the oppressed' and 'it is the spirit of spiritless conditions'. Marx, Engels and Lenin were not at all advocates of 'religious freedom', the separation of church and state but criticised those who declared war on religion as foolish. They maintained that citizens of whatever belief system had equal rights, that religious groups should have no connection with government, and were civic organisations of 'people with a common goal'.

2. If there is to be a comprehensive resolution of the issue of the house churches and the relations between Christianity and Chinese religion, then we must not only accurately understand Marxist views on religion, but also the main achievements of the past hundred years of the study of religions.

For example, sociologists of religion now find that religion is a normal constituent of social structures.

Regular components of society must satisfy the basic needs of members of that social system, thereby helping to preserve that society's survival. According to the leading modern sociologist Talcott Parsons, family, economy, government and religion are the basic and required elements in any social system. These carry out four vital functions. Families provide the norm for sexual relations and the education of the next generation. The economic system organised production and provides rewards for labour etc. The political system integrates territory, power and authority, maintaining order and relations with other societies. Religion furnishes the framework for essential meaning and significance. Religion, as a result, is an essential component of all social systems. Emile Durkheim once put it: 'all known societies are religious, and an irreligious society does not exist.'

The current population of the world is now several billion, of whom approximately 80% are religious adherents of one kind or another. The annual Gallup poll shows that in the world's most advanced, most worldly country – the United States – between 94% and 96% of people say they believe in God, 40% attend church every week, 59% consider religion 'very important', and 90% say they have felt God's love. Those who pray at least once a day outnumber those who make love every day! In 1990 those who attended a religious service regularly exceeded those who regularly watch sporting events by 13 times; in 1992 the gifts given to religious causes (\$56.7 billion) exceeded that spent on America's three most popular sports – baseball, basketball and American football – by 14 times.

So religions form one of the most essential parts of society because humankind needs religion. At the same time, from the Roman Empire's long-term persecution of Christians and Chinese attempts to extinguish Buddhism under Tang emperor Wuzong 武宗 [r. 814–846] to the Soviet Union and Eastern European 'atheist movement' to China's 'Great Cultural Revolution' attempts to extinguish religion, all through the ages there have been attempts to use force to eradicate religion. Yet, if anything, these attempts have been the catalyst for religion to flourish and grow. Christianity in the end became the state religion in the Roman Empire. After Tang Wuzong Buddhism experienced rapid growth. Eastern European religion of all kinds is experiencing revival. Chinese religion after the Cultural Revolution is now experiencing rapid growth. In historical terms, this may be compared to the phenomenon of attempting to hammer down a nail – the more strength you exert, the deeper it goes in. Each nation that has wanted to eradicate religion has ended up in organisational chaos and eventually in social chaos.

The reason for this is that religion has a unique value and significance. Religion regulates the relationship between personal beliefs and common values, furnishing the individual's choices with significance and their ordinary life (birth, death, suffering, happiness, etc.) with meaning. Given that our modern societies are increasingly complex, the opportunities available to people are multiplying and so are their aspirations. As the difference between reality and ideals can become greater so the influences affecting people's lives become more complex. Modern science and technology discovers something new every day but cannot resolve existential questions. Consequently 'religious values' are far from being weakened in modern society. The dehumanisation of social life, the rationalisation of human contact and the alienation of humankind from nature have all reinforced the lack of understanding between people. The contrast between an abundant material life and an impoverished spiritual one deserves to be stressed. Modern society lends people a sense of loneliness and apathy.

In a modern society, or modernized country, religion is no longer a leading force in politics, yet it can speak for a wide number of believers, thereby becoming an independent moral force. In this way it can help to control social moral life. In Asian cultures and subcultures, personal identity is becoming increasingly complex and so religious values are

strengthening. Religious values and meaning are even more important to the disadvantaged, the lonely, the underclass, ethnic minority or immigrant.

3. When we move beyond politics and look at religious function in contemporary China from in a more objective way, incorporating historical, social, cultural and moral perspectives, we can see its positive impact on the development of our society and economy.

Every religion in China has played an historical role in the positive promotion of social life. Christianity played a critical role in the development of modern Chinese education. To 1914, the Catholics had founded 8034 schools at various levels as well as the Zhendan 震旦, Jingu 津沽, and Furen 辅仁 universities. To 1920, the Protestants had founded 7382 schools and 14 universities. In terms of medical development, Christian missionaries founded as many as 800 hospitals; before 1949, mission universities accounted for 70% of the total. In respect to philanthropy, the churches established founding hospitals 育婴堂, orphanages, elderly peoples' homes. Between the 1840s and 1890s, Christians founded 70 printing presses for foreign and Chinese publications, or 90% of those founded during that period. Through until 1930 the Catholic church founded 20 publishing houses, with the Protestant churches establishing a total of 69 by 1935. The works that these publishing companies produced, in areas as diverse as the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities made them the pioneers and promoters of modern Chinese publishing.

Even leaving aside these aspects of China's modernisation, other aspects of modern Chinese life are intimately associated with the influence of Christianity, initiated or promoted by missionaries: the seven-day week, monogamy, the abolition of foot-binding, public sanitation, sports, etc. Modern ideas and systems, such as democracy, the rule of law, a system of checks and balances are inseparable from the influence of Christianity. It is irrefutable that all of this was associated with Christianity and the period of the Christian mission to China. Nor is it possible to contest the direct consequences of that period; Christianity played an important role in the modernisation of Chinese life.

In the thirty years between 1949 and the end of the Cultural Revolution the space occupied by all the major religions in China shrivelled even to the point of disappearing entirely. Since the Reform and Opening period [begun in 1979] religion in China has grown and developed; it has resumed its place in the life of Chinese society, first in providing relief for the poor. In 1991 the Chinese Buddhist Association collected more than five million RMB in flood relief funds, earning an award as an 'model work unit in rescue and relief efforts' 抢险救灾模范先进单位. In 2003 Buddhist groups gave more than five million RMB toward efforts to cure and control SARS. They have also given funds to work with handicapped children, the restoration of the Great Wall of China, saving the Giant Panda and other public works. At the same time they have provided subsidies to children, helped renovate primary schools, helped elderly people with physical disabilities, provided scholarships and free clinics. The situation of [Chinese] Catholicism is much the same. Based on incomplete statistics, in the five years between 1998 and 2004, the total

Catholic spending on philanthropic projects of all kinds was over 55.54 million RMB, the provision of over 700,000 items of clothing, the renovation of 60 primary schools, the subsidising of 3630 university students, built 22 kindergartens and 174 clinics. During the Wenchuan earthquake and the past two years' great disasters, a great number of religious organisations, including a number of house churches, have quietly contributed funds to the reconstruction efforts, helped with the rescue and reconstruction efforts, prayed for those affected by the disasters, re-establishing homes, treating injured souls through huge dedication. In the past ten years, numerous religious NGOs and NPOs have been established, though their number remains relatively few and their scope limited. They provide a new platform for the long tradition of religious relief for the poor and help to the needy, but in a newly systematised, standardised and regularised way.

When compared with the contribution that Christianity made to the development of China prior to 1949, and its continuing contributions to Hong Kong and Taiwanese society, the present place of Christian social action in China is withered and small. Indeed the activity of all [Chinese] religions, given their manpower, financial and natural resources, is actually negligible. In other words, Christianity and the other religions should be given free reign to greater action. Religion (and especially Christianity) is entering society through the channel of social service – but this channel is not yet unimpeded.

The social contribution of Christianity in today's China is indeed limited, yet it is making a distinctive contribution in the mitigation of some social contradiction, the maintenance of social stability and making a positive influence on morality. The huge disparity in income and power between the poor and rich in today's China is one of the biggest obstructions to the creation of a just and equal society. While the government is necessary to overcome such a hurdle, social support is also required. With religion, and indeed Christianity, being such an important component of social life, it should be given much greater freedom to engage in this kind of activity.

Christianity's place in historical traditions, international relations, cultural traditions, cultural interaction, moral traditions and the construction of ethics should be widely acknowledged and pondered on. It is a resource for the construction of society. Such thinking vastly exceeds the one-sided political angle, and is needed in the construction of our nation.

To sum up, if we are to solve the important questions surrounding Christianity in today's China, particularly the central question of the House Churches, and reach an age of peace and prosperity for all religions, we suggest the following:

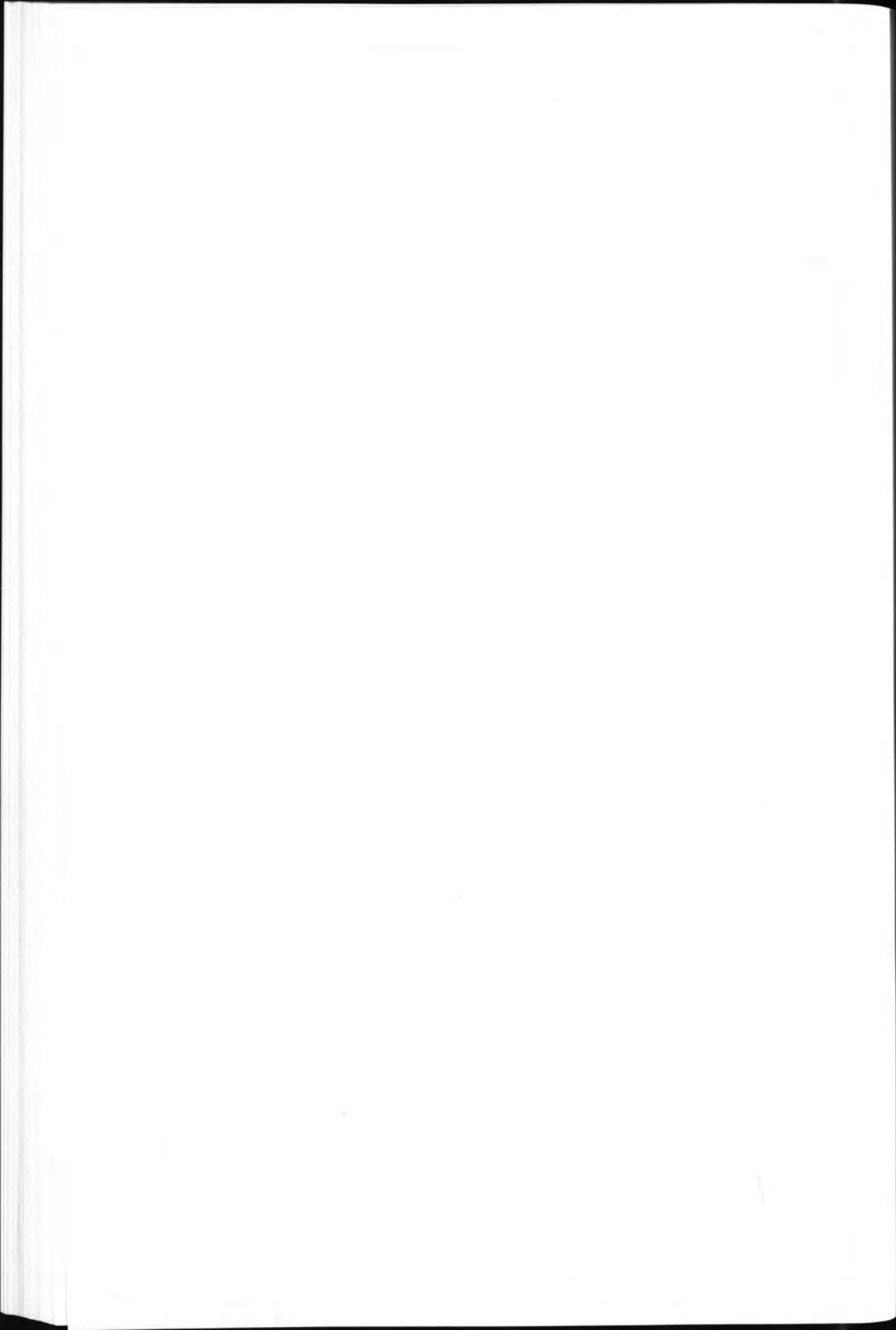
1. A change of ideas from a narrow, political angle, to one that incorporates social, historical, cultural and ethical measures. Together, this objective view of Christianity and the function of the Christian churches will enable a shift from a sceptical guarded mentality toward a much more positive and open one.

2. We must recognise all the actual and historical reasons for the development of the house churches, objectively recognise the current situation and make an overall judgment. This way each district will stop making its own decision to stifle the house churches, permit progressive registration, and allow them to separate themselves from their current illegal, 'underground' situation. Their new, regular status will bring their activities under the remit of the law.

3. We must move away from the administrative model of 'supervisory bodies' to one where the rule of law operates through regulatory organisations 裁判机构. Promulgate a religious law through the National People's Congress, regularising the Christian Church and other religious organisations' process to register as Non-Governmental Organisations or Not-for-Profit Organisations. This will establish their legal status, legal rights and responsibilities. Accordingly, enable legal institutions to handle legal issues when they occur according to concrete legal stipulations.

Preparatory work includes the invitation of Three Self Church leaders, House Church leaders and scholars of Christianity to have informal discussions. This will allow a forum to listen respectfully to one another, hear appeals and propositions. It should also be possible to set up in some localities a registration process without prerequisites, allowing opportunities for churches which have previously resisted registration. A lenient and understanding attitude would permit churches to opt for the freedom under criminal and civil law, and allow legal scholars to promulgate propositions.

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Section II

Documentation

January

The **State Administration for Religious Affairs has issued a statement with its priorities for 2011**. One particularly significant one will be its determination to guide Chinese Protestants into worshipping at registered sites. A CASS survey, whose preliminary results were published last year, suggests that of the 23.5m Chinese Protestants, around 30% worship in homes or unregistered sites. The statement from SARA also says it will step up efforts to educate Chinese Catholics in the principles of self-governance in church affairs. SARA will continue to survey and research Chinese folk religion and to resist foreign infiltration under the guise of religion, according to the statement. (See Xinhua, 24 Jan)

A high-level **religious delegation from the mainland visited Taiwan** from January 8-15. The delegation was made up of ten members of the CPPCC, from the five recognised religions and was led by Dao Shuren, vice-chair of the Chinese Buddhist Association. The delegation met with Taiwanese church leaders including Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi. (See UCAN, 12 Jan)

A **7.9 metre-tall statue of Confucius has been unveiled on Chang'an Avenue**, on the east side of Tian'anmen Square. The statue stands at the front gate of the newly renovated National Museum of China, and faces the famous portrait of Chairman Mao. The statue is said to represent the revival of Confucian culture in recent years. (See SCMP, 12 Jan)

A Uyghur Protestant Christian, sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for revealing state secrets in 2009, has had his case reviewed. News that Alimujiang Yimiti's case was reviewed in November, 2010, by the Xinjiang High People's Court has only just been made public, but the findings of the review have yet to emerge. (See Christian Newswire, 26 Jan)

The Catholic **bishop of Cangzhou, Li Liangui has now returned to his diocese** after being informally detained for a 'study session' in December. Bishop Li was one of several bishops not to attend the National Congress of Catholic Representatives, but did so by going into hiding. After his detention, he was ordered to write a self-criticism for his 'departure from duty'. Some reports suggest that he has been threatened with removal from his diocese if he does not admit to the 'negative impact' of his actions. (See UCAN, 20 Jan)

An 'underground' Catholic Priest, Fr Peter Zhang has been detained in his Xuanhua diocese (Hebei Province). The priest was taken from the home of a lay Catholic, and no information has been provided to his family or parishioners. It is suggested that local authorities are insisting that he carries a work permit and submits to the authority of the 'patriotic' church authorities. (See UCAN, 19 Jan)

The number of **Catholics, Chinese and non-Chinese, in Hong Kong is estimated to be around 530,000**. The number of baptisms has dropped since its peak in the 1960s and 1970s, when many refugees from the mainland joined the church as so-called 'rice

Catholics', benefitting from the Church-run aid programmes. Emigration from Hong Kong reduced the numbers prior to 1997. (See HKSE, 16 Jan)

A Theological Education roundtable was held for leaders of all twenty Protestant theological schools and seminaries. The emphasis was on the training of new pastors and included representatives from the China Christian Council (Kan Baoping), Nanjing Seminary (Lin Manhong), Yanjing Seminary (Gao Ying), Taiwan Baptist Theological Seminary (Cai Ruiyi) and the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong (Carver Yu). (Tian Feng, no. 372, Dec, 2010; ANS)

East China Theological Seminary, Shanghai, celebrated its 25th anniversary in November, 2010. The Seminary was formed in 1985 as a joint effort between the Christian Councils of Shanghai, Shandong, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Fujian. It has moved three times in 25 years, and has graduated 880 students. The seminary currently has 134 students of whom 20 are studying a specialist course in church music which will soon recruit nationally across China. (Tian Feng, no. 373, Jan. 2011; ANS)

A new board of directors was announced at the Catholic Hebei Seminary after a prolonged strike in November-December. The new rector is Mgr Feng Xinmao, bishop of Hengshui, who replaces the bishop of Kunming, Mgr Ma Yinglin, who is not recognised by the Vatican. Bishops and delegates from every diocese in the province make up the remainder of the board. An official from the local RAB has not been appointed to the new board. (See AsiaNews, 16 Jan)

An 'underground' Catholic orphanage for children with disabilities is set to close following government pressure. The orphanage at Wuqiu in Hebei Province was initiated by the 'underground' bishop Jia Zhiguo, who founded a community of nuns to look after children who were regularly found abandoned near churches and the bishop's residence. Over twenty years, the orphanage has grown to care for over 100 'children', aged from several months to 20 years old. In December, bishop Jia suffered his most recent 'study session', at which pressure was brought to bear on him to sign over care of the orphans to the local authorities. (See EDA, 14 Jan)

Bao'an parish, in Shenzhen city, has run its latest 'matchmaking' day, at which 70 young Catholics had the opportunity to meet and get to know each other. The day was initiated in 2009, after it was found that many young migrant Catholics found it difficult to meet partners of the same faith. (See UCAN, 13 Jan)

Chinese religious leaders issued a statement saying that **Chinese people of different religions would recognise and respect each others' differences**, leaders would work to promote communication and cooperation. Religious people in China would continue to love their country and their religion. The Joint Declaration on Promoting Religious Harmony was timed to coincide with the UN's World Interfaith Harmony Week. Wang

Zuo'an, director of SARA, said that the government would continue to give equal consideration to all religions, but oppose groups which sought to use religion to undermine national security, ethnic unity or social stability. (See People's Daily, 28 Jan)

The Tibetan Parliament in exile has **appealed to the Dalai Lama not to go ahead with his 'complete retirement'**, though he has said he will retain a 'moral responsibility' to be involved 'as a spokesperson' for the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama has already said that he has delegated much of his political and administrative power to the elected Prime Minister of the government in exile. (See Phayul, 6 Jan)

Buddhism is growing quickly in China, according to the Dalai Lama, in a speech at Bangalore. He reiterated figures from a Chinese university study which suggest that there are now 300m Chinese who practice Buddhism, and that Chinese authorities are having to become increasingly tolerant to religion. (See DNA, 31 January)

February

Chinese religious leaders issued a statement saying that Chinese people of different religions would recognise and respect each others' differences, leaders would work to promote communication and cooperation. Religious people in China would continue to love their country and their religion. The Joint Declaration on Promoting Religious Harmony was timed to coincide with the UN's World Interfaith Harmony Week. Wang Zuo'an, director of SARA, said that the government would continue to give equal consideration to all religions, but oppose groups which sought to use religion to undermine national security, ethnic unity or social stability. (See People's Daily, 28 Jan)

Senior Protestant leader and **former chair of the TSPM, Luo Guanzong, has died** in Shanghai at the age of 91. Mr Luo still held positions as honorary chair of the advisory committee of the CCC/TSPM, honorary chair of the Shanghai TSPM/CCC and director general emeritus of the Shanghai YMCA. Mr Luo was born in Guangzhou, became a member of the Anglican church during his student years, and joined the YMCA in 1943. He was a founding member of the TSPM. Mr Luo also served multiple terms on the CPPCC national committee. (See ANS, 28 Mar)

The **new secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, Salesian archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai**, arrived in Hong Kong after being ordained in Rome as the first Chinese to gain high office within the curia. Archbishop Hon was ordained by the Pope in a ceremony attended by over 300 Chinese Catholics, including Bishop John Tong Hon of Hong Kong. Bishop Savio Hon cautioned against those who argued that the Vatican ought to make concessions 'just for the sake of normalisation' with Beijing, saying that path risked distorting the 'very nature of the Church in China'. (See HKSE, 13, 27 Feb; UCAN 10 Feb)

A Chinese digital Bible will soon be available to download as an app for internet and smart-phone users. The YouVersion Chinese edition has been created by LifeChurch.tv which has released Bibles in 20 different languages already, and whose apps have been downloaded 11m times. (See The Christian Post, 25 Feb)

Cardinal Paul Shan, the retired Catholic archbishop of Kaohsiung (Taiwan), is planning his first visit to the mainland. This will be the first official visit by a leading Taiwanese Catholic to the mainland, and will focus on visits to Cardinal Shan's home province of Henan, but it is anticipated that the Cardinal will celebrate Mass with the Bishop of Shanghai, Aloisius Jin Luxian. It is hoped the visit will also go some way to repair damaged relations between Beijing and the Vatican, with the retired archbishop suggesting both sides should be in contact, clarifying their jurisdictions and emphasising mutual respect. (See AFP, 20 Feb; Taipei Times, 22 Feb)

Mgr. Augustine Hu Daguo, the 'underground' Catholic bishop of Shiqian diocese (Guizhou province) died on 17 February. Mgr Hu, 88, had been suffering from stomach cancer. The bishop had been restricted for many years to the Saint Joseph cathedral complex in Guizhou, but was in good relation with his coadjutor bishop, who is recognised both by Rome and Beijing. (See EDA, 18 Feb)

Tony Blair told American students that there are more practicing Catholics in China than in Italy, more Muslims than in all of Europe, and over 100m Buddhists. As a result, Mr Blair says, 'Wherever you look, religion matters. Faith motivates. Understanding faith, its adherents, its trends, its structures, can be as important as understanding a nations' GDP, its business, its resources.' (See UCAN, 18 Feb)

Christian media company ZDL has celebrated publishing its 100th Chinese title. Marriage on the Rock, by Jimmy and Karen Evans, has been translated by ZDL and was released in November. It is now being made available through bookshops and retailers across China. (See Publisher's Weekly, 23 Feb)

The Chinese New Year has seen thousands of Chinese flock to temples and churches. The first day of the new year, 3rd Feb, was celebrated by over 60,000 Beijingers at the Yonghegong Lama temple complex. Over half the visitors were 'young people' according to the Temple authorities. There is a common belief that the Buddha will particularly look after those who are the first to offer incense in a given year. (See China Daily, 10 Feb)

March

The 'underground' Protestant Shouwang church in Beijing has been forced to meet out in the open again, after its landlord refused permission for them to use rented premises. The church of about 800 members has faced repeated pressure, and for some time in 2009-10 was meeting in a local park. Government authorities prevent the church

from meeting in a building which is owned by church members. Tianyun and Rongguli churches in Guangzhou have also seen their landlords forbid them from gathering. (See SCMP, 1 April)

Sr Wu Lin from Hubei province became the **first woman to receive a senior role in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association**. In 2009 there were 5,400 sisters in the 'patriotic' and underground communities. Issues of formation and training remain prominent, despite sisters taking on more and more responsible roles in the Chinese Catholic church. (See HKSE, 27 March)

Mgr **Paul Liang Jiansen was ordained the Catholic bishop of Jiangmen** with the approval of both the Vatican and Beijing. His ordination was the first for a Catholic bishop in China since last year's controversial conference. Jiangmen diocese in Southern Guangdong province has seven priests and 26 nuns serving 20,000 faithful. The new bishop said it was a priority to train lay leaders as there is a lack of new religious vocations. (See UCAN, AsiaNews, 30 Mar; EDA, 31 Mar)

An evaluation is being conducted in Rome regarding how best to assess the situation of the Chinese Catholic Church following the 'independent ordination' in Chengde and the 8th Catholic Representatives Conference last December. Some Chinese bishops have been asked informally to submit their reading of the developments. Several Chinese bishops have apologised to their priests about the actions taken at the Conference, while others have celebrated the increasing developments toward independence. (See UCAN, 1 April; Ferdinand Verbiest Centre Update no. 16, Mar, 2011)

The Catholic diocese of Hong Kong has released a Chinese translation of the Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church after six years of translation work. It was launched by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Diocese on 20 March and an electronic version is being prepared. (See UCAN, 22 March)

Mgr Hao Jinli, bishop of the Catholic Xiwanzi-Chongli diocese, in Hebei Province, has died at the age of 94. The bishop was born in 1916 into a Catholic family. He was made a priest in 1943, and consecrated bishop in September 1984 after spending twenty years in prison and labour camps. His ordination was never recognised by the Chinese authorities. Despite suffering from diabetes and, more recently, Alzheimer's disease, bishop Hao was kept under constant surveillance following his ordination. He lived in the small village of Gonghui which holds around 2000 Catholics. His funeral is expected to be tightly controlled. The situation in the diocese is now very complex. Mgr Hao's coadjutor bishop, Mgr Leo Yao Liang predeceased him in December, 2009. And in 1980, the CPA merged the Xiwanzi-Chongli diocese with Xuanhua diocese, a development that is not seen as legitimate by the Vatican or by underground communities in the dioceses. (See UCAN, 10 March; EDA, 11 March; AsiaNews, AF, 21 March)

The Third China Committee on Religion and Peace (CCRP) brought together 100 delegates from the five recognised religions. Its members were encouraged to build understanding with foreign counterparts, develop friendships and introduce them to the true picture of China. The CCRP chairman Pagbalha Geleg Namgyae is also a deputy chair of the National Committee of the CPPCC. (See People's Daily, 14 March)

The Catholic bishop of Urumqi, Xinjiang region, has said that the lack of clergy and churches should mean that Catholic families set up altars in their own homes. This way every family will become 'a sanctuary and every member in the family more holy.' Bishop Paul Xie Tingzhe expressed the desire in his Lenten pastoral letter. (See UCAN, 21 March)

Tibetans across the world (but not in China) have taken part in voting to determine constitutional changes and the new prime-minister of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile. Despite pleas to stay on, the 76-year-old Dalai Lama has insisted that he be allowed to step down from all political responsibilities and that the role of the parliament is strengthened. The favourite to become the next prime-minister is Lobsang Sengey, a senior fellow at Harvard Law School and resident in the United States. A Chinese spokesperson has described the Dalai's retirement as 'a trick to deceive the international community.' Some suggest that it will be easier for the Dalai to meet foreign leaders if he is merely a religious leader rather than a political one as well. The Dalai Lama has suggested that, as he is likely to die in exile, he will be reincarnated outside of Tibet. China continues to dispute this. (See AP, Guardian, 10 March; EDA, AsiaNews, 11 March; Guardian, 11 March; AP, BBC, 15 March; AsiaNews, 19 March; AP, 20 Mar)

A Russian Orthodox priest has been given permission to celebrate at Easter services with co-religionists in northeast China. The lack of priests among the Russian Orthodox church in Harbin has been a long-running concern, and church leaders have expressed the hope that Russian priests will be allowed to make more extended pastoral visits to the 15,000 Orthodox believers who live in the region. (See Interfax, 16 March)

April

The **Vatican Commission on the Church in China** has held its fourth plenary meeting from 11-13 April and released a communiqué. The Commission looks to 'encourage' the Chinese church amid the 'general climate of disorientation and anxiety about the future'. The Commission found that the 'independent' ordination of Guo Jincai as bishop of Chengde, while not invalid, was gravely illegitimate, and that all bishops who took part must explain their actions to the Vatican and to the priests and faithful in their dioceses. However, it says that excommunication of these bishops 'is not automatically incurred', and encourages local Catholics to support their bishops. The Commission reiterates Pope Benedict's request in his letter to be 'completely free to appoint bishops' and that implementation of the principles of independence and autonomy is incompatible with Catholic doctrine, but held out possibilities for further dialogue with the Chinese

authorities. The communiqué highlighted the need for the appointment of new pastors to vacant dioceses. The Commission concluded by highlighting the steps taken toward beatification of Paul Xu Guangqi (1562-1633). (See VIS 9 April; AsiaNews, 13 April; VIS, 14 April; AsiaNews, 15 April; Zenit, 17 April; UCAN, 19 April; UCAN, 21 April; HKSE, 24 April)

Catholic Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai, secretary for the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples, has said the **Chinese 'underground' Catholic communities still have reason to exist**. He said that some Chinese bishops recognised by the Vatican had still gone 'spontaneously' to last November's controversial Catholic congress. He stressed the importance of selecting 'good candidates' for the many vacant dioceses. Cardinal Zen Zekuini has told reporters that Pope Benedict's intentions for the Chinese Catholic Church have been given a 'wrong interpretation' by Vatican officials seeking 'compromise at any cost'. He says that some of the 38 'underground' Catholic bishops have expressed their disappointment with the communiqué. The 'underground' faithful wonder how far they should go in expressing unity, and wonder whether the Vatican is pushing 'underground' priests to join the CPA. (See Catholic News Service, 4 April; CNA/ETWN News, 12 April; UCAN, 13 April)

Another **'underground' priest from Hebei province has been detained**. Fr Joseph Chen Hailong was taken away by plainclothes police while travelling with two young Catholics in Beijing. Fr Peter Zhang Guangjun, also of Xuanhua diocese, who had been detained in January and temporarily released for the Spring Festival, was picked up again on 8 March and reportedly beaten. Fr Wang Lifang, of Zhengding diocese, has not been seen since he was detained earlier in the month. (See UCAN, 13 April)

Authorities have blamed Tibetan monks for stirring up trouble in a western Sichuan province. According to International Campaign for Tibet, **two Tibetans have been killed and 300 monks detained** from Kirti monastery in Aba prefecture. The strife started after a monk, Lobsang Phuntsog, set himself alight in March after which police detained several monks thought to be his associates. Local people surrounded the monastery in the hope of staving off further reprisals but paramilitary police broke up the demonstration and detained several hundred monks for 'patriotic education'. Foreigners have been banned from travelling to the area. A monk from the monastery, who is a student at the Central Nationalities University in Beijing, has also been detained. The Dalai Lama has urged local Tibetans to avoid provoking authorities for fear of a 'catastrophic' crackdown. (See Radio Free Asia, 3 April; AsiaNews, 13 April; Guardian, 17 April; Reuters, 22 April; AFP, 26 April)

Pastor Jin Tianming and senior elders of the unregistered Protestant Shouwang Church in Beijing have been placed under house arrest after the church again began to meet in public spaces. Pastor Jin leads the church of nearly 1000 members, which had been meeting in the rented premises of a restaurant until early April. The Old

Story Restaurant terminated the rental agreement on 3rd April. When the congregation attempted to worship outside a commercial building in Zhongguancun district on 10 April, police detained 169 worshippers on, fifty on Sunday, 17 April and a further 39 people the following Easter Sunday (24 April). Most were released within 24 hours, but over thirty have been prevented from leaving their houses on subsequent Sundays. Pastors Li and Jin remain under extended house arrest. Shouwang Church is one of the most prominent of the 'urban house churches' which draw congregants from the professional and intellectual classes. The church has been repeatedly prevented from occupying space in a Beijing office building which it had bought for 27m yuan (£2.5m) in 2009. Its website has also been closed down. Prof Ying Fuk-tsang has suggested that the crackdown against the Shouwang church is a sign that the government will not allow such churches to get too large. (See ChinaAid, 1 April; Reuters, 3 April; ChinaAid, 9 April; AP, 10 April; SCMP, Global Times, 11 April; SCMP, 12 April; SCMP, Globe and Mail, 18 April; Irish Times, EDA, 19 April; SCMP, 20 April; Christian Post, 22 April; SCMP, 25 April)

At least ten Protestant 'house church' leaders in Inner Mongolia have been detained. Ten were detained by Hohhot PSB on 'suspicion of fraud' for their involvement in the October 2010 Lausanne Congress, others have been reportedly detained throughout the province. (See Christian News Wire, 26 April)

The 'underground' Catholic bishop of Luoyang has died at the age of 91. The elderly prelate was blessing water for baptism, when he collapsed and was rushed to hospital where he was pronounced dead. Bishop Li was born in 1920, ordained a priest in 1944 and served as a parish priest until being arrested in 1955. He was released in 1985, and secretly consecrated bishop in 1987. The Luoyang diocese currently only has one 'open' priest and one church, with eighteen 'underground', serving approximately 10,000 Catholic faithful. (See UCAN, 26 April)

Eleven Catholic dioceses have elected candidates to fill vacant bishops' seats, which are now awaiting approval from the Catholic Bishops Conference and the CPA. Bishop Fang Xinyao, chair of the CPA, reported this to the China Daily noting that vacancies in 44 out of 97 Chinese dioceses have seriously hampered the work of the Church. It is unclear how many of the candidates have secured Vatican approval. (See UCAN, 11 April)

The first course of continuous formation for Beijing's Catholic priests was launched by Mgr Giuseppe Li Shan on 14 March. The course at the National Seminary will last from March through until June and then from September to December, but priests will return to their parishes every weekend (See AE, 9 April).

Paul and Joy Hattaway of AsiaHarvest have put together **a new map representing estimated Christian populations in China** which can be found at <http://www.asiaharvest.org/pages/Christians%20in%20China/Map%20of%20China's%20Christians.pdf>

May

Several thousand Catholic faithful made the **annual pilgrimage to the Marian shrine at Sheshan** on 24 May. Mgr Xing Wenzhi, coadjutor bishop of Shanghai, led the celebrations at the top of the hill, which included some Catholics from neighbouring dioceses. However, several underground priests were sent away on 'government vacations' and others were prevented from attending 'for security reasons'. The 24 May was chosen by Pope Benedict in 2007 as an international day of prayer for the Chinese church. Special prayer services were held in Italy, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Other pilgrimages have also been held to shrines in Shandong (Huzhuang) and several churches have been opened during the month.

During Pope Benedict's call for Catholics around the world to pray for Chinese Christians on 24 May, he said that Chinese bishops were under 'pressure' from Chinese officials. 'We know that among our brother bishops there are some who suffer. ... To them, to the priests, and to all the Catholics who encounter difficulties in the free profession of their faith, we express our closeness.' (See VIS, 18 May; AsiaNews, 18 May; AF, 23 May; AsiaNews, 23, 26 May)

Yang Caizhen, a leader of the Linfen Church has been released from a labour camp after nearly dying in custody. Mrs Yang, one of ten leaders given a range of sentences in 2009, was transferred to a hospital in February, but has now been released back into the care of her family who transferred to a hospital in Xi'an. A former medical doctor herself, Yang Caizhen is the wife of Pastor Yang Xuan who has led the Linfen Church since it split from the local TSPM in 1994. (See China Aid, 27 May)

The Catholic bishop of Linfen, Mgr Huo Cheng, led celebrations at the opening of a new church in Nanyidian, Shanxi Province. The village church was built with funds raised by the congregation and neighbouring Catholics, and is dedicated to Our Lady Help of Christians. (See AF, 31 May)

A spokesperson for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Jiang Yu, has called on the Vatican to make 'concrete actions' for the development of China-Vatican ties. Ms Jiang said that the Vatican needed to be aware that 'China practices freedom of religious belief.' (See UCAN, 20 May)

Several Catholic dioceses have held elections to name candidates to vacant bishop's posts. The Catholic diocese of Fengxiang (Shanxi Province) has selected Fr Peter Li Huiyan as its candidate for coadjutor bishop. The election was held in an 'open, fair and just' manner, and the result will be submitted to the Bishops Conference for approval according to bishop Li Jingfeng. Mgr Li Jingfeng, 82, is an influential figure in both the underground community and the Bishops Conference, and the process is being seen as an attempt to gain support from the Vatican and Beijing for his successor.

The Catholic diocese of Chengdu, Sichuan province, also held elections for a new bishop. Fr Simon Li Zhigang received 41 out of 45 votes. In the diocese of Shantou, 72 representatives elected Fr Joseph Huang Binzhong as a candidate for bishop after the underground bishop, Zhuang Jianjian, was placed under house arrest last month. The elections in Shantou took place under a heavy security presence. Fr Huang is a deputy to the National People's Congress and a vice-chairperson of the CPA. (See HKSE, 22 May; UCAN, 23 May)

Mgr John Lu Peisen has been ordained as the **new Catholic bishop for Yanzhou** (Shandong Province). Mgr Lu was formerly a seminary professor at Holy Spirit Seminary in Jinan, before being transferred to Yanzhou diocese in October last year. He takes up the post left vacant in 2005 when bishop Zhao Fengwu died at the age of 85. (See AsiaNews, 20 May)

Bishop Ma Yinglin, president of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, has said that the **younger bishops elected last year, are providing the leadership for the BCCCC**. Bishop Ma was speaking after Liu Bainian, who had reportedly stepped down as vice-chair of the Catholic Patriotic Association, gave an interview in Wen Wei Po (14 May) which still used his old title. In the article, Mr Liu emphasised that 'self-electing and self-ordaining bishops' did not require Vatican approval, and stated that up to ten candidates preparing for such ordinations. . (See AsiaNews, 16 May; EDA, 17 May; UCAN, 19 May)

The Catholic bishop of Yichang, Mgr Francis Lu Shouwang has died at the age of 45 from pancreatitis. The bishop was ordained a priest in 1991, and was made coadjutor bishop in 2002. His death means that none of the five dioceses in Hebei currently have a bishop. (See UCAN, 3 May; AF, 7 May)

The tombstone marking the grave of Catholic bishop Li Hongye was partly demolished on 8 May. The bishop who was not recognised by the state, died on 23 April and was buried near his home in Gong county. Officials had already removed a wall surrounding the grave, and then demolished a cross and a dome which local Catholics had raised to mark the site. (See UCAN, 17 May)

Representatives from SARA have visited church and government figures in several African countries. The minister for religious affairs, Wang Zuo'an, led the delegation which visited Uganda, South Africa and Kenya and was organised through John Chew, the Anglican bishop of Singapore, and the primates of the Global South Anglican Communion. Mr Wang said that he hoped relations between the Chinese and African churches would improve, and noted that most of the Bibles being used by the African churches were being printed in China. He noted the need for more 'qualified' clergy in China, those who could contribute to social development. (See ENI, 17, 20 May)

30 members of the Shouwang Church in Beijing were detained on 2 May, and a further 13 on 16 May, as part of an ongoing crackdown on the church. The Christians were

marched away when they tried to hold an open-air service in the Zhongguancun district of Beijing. A large number of church members were also put under house arrest over the weekend, to prevent them from attempting to attend. Thirty church members had been forced to move after landlords had evicted them from their homes. 169 members were briefly detained during the first outdoor service on 10 April since when the church's pastor, Jin Tianming, has been under house arrest. A pastor, preacher and two deacons were said to have split with the rest of the leadership of the church and begun to meet separately. (SCMP, 2 May; AsiaNews, 9 May; SCMP, 16 May; SCMP, 6 June)

Seventeen Chinese pastors from around the country have signed a letter **petitioning the National People's Congress to investigate the case of the Shouwang Church**. The letter suggests that the official crackdown is 'a typical phenomenon' in the current conflict between church and state, contradictory to Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution and citing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which China has signed). The letter also asks the NPC to review the Regulations on Religious Affairs to see whether they are constitutional. (See UCAN, AFP, 13 May; Eternity News, 14 May)

June

Fr Paul Lei Shiyin was ordained bishop of Leshan diocese (Sichuan) but without a papal mandate. The ordination in Emeishan city was celebrated by bishop Johan Fang Xingyao of Linyi, president of the CCPA, and con-celebrated by six other Vatican-approved bishops. This was the first 'independent ordination' of a Chinese bishop since the Vatican issued a clarification whether bishops celebrating independent ordinations were to be excommunicated. Bishop Lei said he had written to the Vatican a year ago seeking approval, but has accepted ordination without approval for the 'benefit of the local church' and to 'encourage evangelisation' in the diocese. Fr Yang Yu, a spokesperson for the CCPA, said the church 'faces an urgent task' of selecting and ordaining bishops for forty vacant dioceses and would continue to do so 'without delay'. (See Vatican Insider, 29 June; UCAN, 29 June; AsiaNews, 29 June; UCAN, 28 June; Xinhua, 24 Jun; ENI, 24 Jun; AP 23 Jun; UCAN, 23 Jun)

A six-point clarification of the canon law surrounding excommunication was published by the Vatican's *L'Osservatore Romano* on 11 June. The Chinese text has been made available on the Vatican's website. The document reemphasises how serious violation of church discipline, but also how bishops ordained in violation of these canons may be reconciled with the church. It also clarified that those con-celebrating at an illicit ordination may also fall under *latae sententiae* but that this was not inevitably the case if those participating were under severe duress. (See UCAN, 14 Jun; CNS, 10 Jun; AsiaNews, 13 June)

The ordination of Fr Joseph Sun Jigen as Catholic bishop for Handan diocese (Hebei province) set for 29 June was cancelled after he was seized by police three days beforehand. The current whereabouts of Fr Sun, whose ordination was approved by the Vatican and

the Chinese government, is unknown beyond that he is being 'looked after' by officials in Shijiazhuang city. It is suggested that provincial officials and diocesan leaders had failed to reach agreement on the date of the ordination and the presence of Bishop Guo Jincai, who was ordained without papal approval last year. (See AsiaNews, 27 June; UCAN 20 Jun)

The ordination of the Fr Joseph Shen Guo'an as bishop of Hankou was indefinitely postponed. Archbishop Savio Hon had said that he was concerned by the prospect of the illicit ordination, and said that the faithful of Wuhan had 'pleaded with the government and the CCPA citing the code of canon law.' He asked Chinese Catholics to remember the words of Pope John Paul II: 'be not afraid'. The 'government could do nothing', he said, if Catholics resolutely stood firm and refused to be illicitly ordained. Each division 'causes great pain to the entire body', leaving the 'whole body scarred and bleeding.' (See UCAN, 1 June; EDA, 1 June; AsiaNews, 3 June; EDA, 9 Jun; CNS, 10 Jun)

The Catholic bishop of Nanjing has made a visit to Daejeon, South Korea, to witness the formation of vocations, evangelization and social services. Mgr Lu Xinpeng was welcomed by the bishop of the diocese, Mgr Lazarus You Heung-sik who had invited him and a delegation of seven priests and two lay people. It is hoped that some Chinese seminarians will be able to undertake study at Daejeon's seminary in future. (See AF, 26 Jun)

Chinese Protestant house church leaders participated in a seminar from 14-16 June on ways to safeguard legal rights. The seminar was sponsored by China Aid, and included study of Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution which relates to freedom of religious belief. (See ENI, 24 Jun)

Fr Li Zhigang, who was elected as candidate for bishop of Chengdu (Sichuan province) has died at the age of 48 of liver cancer. His ordination was scheduled for late 2011, though he had yet to receive the Vatican's approval. Sichuan province now only has one bishop in its five dioceses. (See AsiaNews, 18 Jun)

A retired, 'underground' Catholic bishop has been recognised by the authorities. Mgr Joseph Zhu Baoyu of Nanyang diocese (Henan), aged 90, was consecrated in secret in 1995 but retired last year. However, Bishop Zhu has now gained the approval of the CCPA, with some suggestion that he has done so in order to better gain back church buildings in Nanyang city confiscated during the 1950s. It is said that the Vatican did not know or sanction his decision. (See UCAN, 30 Jun)

The hundredth anniversary of the first Maryknoll missionaries, whose first overseas field was China, has been celebrated by Faith (Hebei) with the dedication of a memorial. The Society for Foreign Missions of the United States of America was founded in New York in 1911, and continues to work for the formation of mainland Chinese Catholics, in Taiwan and Hong Kong. (See AF, 30 Jun)

Vatican spokesman Fr Frederico Lombardi has announced the beginning of the beatification

process for Paul Xu Guangqi, a prominent Chinese lay Catholic of the seventeenth century. This has been a cause championed by Mgr Aloisius Jin Luxian, bishop of Shanghai, and means that the two old friends Fr Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi may be beatified at the same time. (See JCAP, 1 Jul)

Taiwanese cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi has been denied an entry visa onto mainland China and has had to cancel his planned visit. The cardinal had been invited to China during a visit to Taiwan by Wang Zuo'an, director of SARA. (See UCAN, 3 June)

The Chinese Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation hopes to raise \$3bn in China and abroad to build temples, an airport, convention centres and a Buddhist university at Lumbini (Nepal), the birthplace of Gautama Siddhartha (the historical Buddha). (See Reuters, 16 June)



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