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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we are happy to present to you the forth issue 2016 of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论).

This number includes as usual the regular series of News Updates on recent events and general trends with regard to religions and especially Christianity in today's China.

In her article, "The State Council Publishes a Draft Revision of the 'Regulations on Religious Affairs'" Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, China-Zentrum, points out some of the numerous, planned changes of these basic administrative legal norms for the State's dealings with religions. Many commentators outside China regard the main objective of the draft revision as stronger control of the religions. It remains to be seen whether the revised Regulations will be adopted in their current form.

In this issue we furthermore conclude the publication of the proceedings of the 9th European Catholic China Colloquium on "Challenges of Evangelisation – China and Europe," from 10–13 September 2015 in Konstancin/Warsaw, Poland with the contribution of Prof. Dr. Fredrik Fällman (Senior lecturer for Chinese at the Department of Languages & Literatures at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden): "Evangelisation in the Protestant Church in China – Reflections of a Western Sinologist." With vivid examples he shows that the rapid development of the Chinese Protestant church since the 1980s – registered or unregistered – is the result of several varying factors.

Religions & Christianity in Today's China is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, www.china-zentrum.de. Additionally, readers who subscribe to *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* will regularly receive e-mail updates providing web links to the contents of each newly published issue.

The China-Zentrum is a non-profit organization. For the publication of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* we are dependent on the generosity of our friends and readers. In order to help us cover inevitable costs, we would be very grateful if you could consider sending a voluntary contribution.

Sankt Augustin, December 2016

The Editors

News Update on Religion and Church in China July, 1 – October 2, 2016

*Compiled by Katharina Feith and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber
Translated by David Streit*

The “News Update on Religion and Church in China” appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today’s China (RCTC). Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum (www.china-zentrum.de). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2016, No. 3, pp. 3-20) covered the period March 23 – June 28, 2016.

Summer / Fall 2016:

Reports of expulsions and the demolition of dwellings at the Buddhist Institute of Larung Gar

According to Western media, the Larung Gar Institute, founded in 1980 by Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, is one of the world’s largest teaching institutions of Tibetan Buddhism. Prior to the events described below, there reportedly were some 10,000 Buddhists studying and living there. Among them were many Han Chinese as well as a number of foreigners. The institute is located in the Sertar County of the Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

On June 9, 2016, the New York based organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a partial translation of a government document (obviously meant for internal use only) outlining measures of “correction and rectification” to be applied with regard to Larung Gar. The document contains orders for the population of the monastery and institute to be reduced to 5,000 by September 30, 2017, with no



View of the Buddhist Larung
Gar Institute – Summer 2014.
Foto: [www.flickr.com/
photos/99261377@
N05/14660043083](http://www.flickr.com/photos/99261377@N05/14660043083).

more than 1,000 to be accepted from other provinces. It also orders the razing of dwellings corresponding to the number of evicted people. In addition, the institute is to be separated from the monastery. According to the document, a first batch of 1,200 people was to be expelled from Larung Gar by October 20, 2016. According to HRW, since late July some 2,000 dwellings have already been pulled down, most of which provided housing for nuns attending the institute, followed by expulsions. At the end of July or in early August three nuns of Larung Gar were reported to have committed suicide, two of whom left notes referring to the demolitions or to government harassment, HRW said.

The *Global Times*, which is under the auspices of the Party newspaper *Renmin ribao*, ran an article entitled “Buddhist school renovated. Rights, exile groups criticize evictions, demolitions.” The article quotes an anonymous government official as saying that fire prevention was the reason for the measures taken and that leaders of the study center wanted to reduce the number of unregistered monks and nuns. The *Global Times* reports that in future as many as 8,000 residents will be allowed in Larung Gar, including foreigners, provided that they are duly registered.

HRW also reported that at Yachen Gar, another big monastic settlement in the Pelyul County of Kardze, up to 1,000 nuns have been forced to return to their home villages in the Tibetan Autonomous Region since April of 2016. There are said to be as many as 10,000 residents at Yachen Gar, most of whom are nuns (*Global Times* July 26; hrw.org June 9; Sept. 14; *New York Times* July 27; a translation of the document can be found at: www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/09/serta-county-order-larung-gar-monastery).

July 1, 2016:

Anniversary of the transfer of Hong Kong to China

According to the organizers, 110,000 people took part in an event held to mark the 19th anniversary of the transfer of Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China. Police countered with the claim that scarcely 20,000 people took part.

As has become the custom, an ecumenical prayer service, attended by about 300 people, preceded the protest march. Cardinal Zen was unable to attend the event this year due to illness, but he sent a message which was read out to those present. According to a report in the *Sunday Examiner*, the atmosphere was overshadowed by an awareness of “increasing political suppression” (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* July 9).

July 10, 2016:

Party newspaper *Renmin ribao* publishes comments on President Xi Jinping’s speech on religion

At the National Conference on Religious Work of China’s leaders on April 22–23, 2016, Party chief Xi Jinping gave a keynote speech, which has since then been cited in Chinese media and institutions and has been much discussed as providing guiding principles for the future. On July 10, *Renmin ribao* published the analyses of three influential experts on religion – Zhuo Xinping of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Mou Zhongjian of the Minzu University of China and Ye Xiaowen, former director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Among other things, the authors highlighted the task of the Party and the state to “guide” the religions which Xi had emphasized, as well as the Sinicization of the religions. The latter was also the principal theme of Mou Zhongjian, who said that in order to achieve this goal, progress must first be made in the “construction of theological Sinicization” (*shenxue Zhongguohua jianshe* 神学中国化建设) of the respective religions and that the theological seminaries of all major religions must be guided to build a theoretical foundation for such Sinicization.

UCAN pointed out that the concept “foreign religions of the same origin” had appeared in the official propaganda for the first time. In the article which he wrote for *Renmin ribao*, Zhuo Xinping said that China’s religions have “to consciously resist control by foreign religions, including foreign religions of the same origin.” Anthony Lam of the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Diocese of Hong Kong saw Zhuo’s statement as directed specifically against the Catholic Church and criticized it as “extreme left” thinking (opinion.people.com.cn July 10; UCAN July 18).

July 14, 2016:

Investigative article by *Reuters* reveals details about Sino-Vatican negotiations

Following a series of interviews with some two dozen Catholic officials and clergy in Hong Kong, Italy and mainland China, as well as with sources having ties to the leadership in Beijing, the news agency *Reuters* has revealed details of an agreement that, while still “fall[ing] short of full diplomatic ties,” would nevertheless “address key issues at the heart of the bitter divide between the Vatican and Beijing.” Possible solutions are being discussed by a special working group made up of members from both sides which was set up in April 2016. The group was modeled on the Joint Liaison Group that China and Great Britain had adopted to prepare the return of Hong Kong to China in 1977, *Reuters* wrote. The working group has the task of solving the problem of the eight illegitimate bishops who have not been recognized by the Pope. Three have been officially excommunicated and, according to *Reuters* (based on reports from Catholic sources), the issue is further complicated by the fact that two of the eight are reported to have children or girlfriends. According to Catholic Church officials, the Pope is prepared to pardon these eight bishops as a part of the ongoing “Year of Mercy,” *Reuters* said. If pardoned, they would then be readmitted to the Church; both sides are now discussing a compromise by which these bishops would retain their titles but would be given other assignments rather than leadership roles as ordinary of a diocese, according to *Reuters*. As of the end of June, however, two of them had still not submitted a clear request for forgiveness to the Holy Father, *Reuters* said. One other key matter that still needs to be agreed upon is that of finding a suitable mechanism for the election of new bishops. According to *Reuters*, a solution is currently under discussion by which the clergy in China would elect the bishops, with the Vatican having a “right to veto” those chosen. Should the Vatican exercise its “veto,” it would then have to provide evidence that the candidate in question is unqualified for the position (on December 11, 2015, Bernardo Cervellera had already reported in *AsiaNews* that such a suggestion was on the table for discussion).

According to *Reuters*, in China the Ministry of Foreign Affairs favors an agreement with Rome as a means to isolate Taiwan but the Party’s United Front Department is afraid of foreign religious infiltration and therefore is less enthusiastic. “Internally, there is division over whether the Pope can be trusted or not,” *Reuters* quotes one source with leadership ties. In the Vatican, on the other hand, the Secretary of State is considered to be the driving force for reaching an agreement, while the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is more cautious, and there is still strong skepticism within the Catholic Church, especially in Hong Kong, *Reuters* wrote. Furthermore, the news agency revealed that Pope Francis had wanted to meet President Xi Jinping at Kennedy Airport in New York on September 26, 2015. Although this wish had been clearly communicated to China, according to *Reuters*, the two leaders just barely missed meeting one another because “Beijing could not make up its mind.”

July 14–15, 2016:

Official Catholic governing bodies hold conference to improve the work of the seminaries, especially in the field of political teaching

The meeting in Chengdu dealt principally with the ideological and political teaching in seminaries, which was said to be inadequate – according to a report of the meeting on the website of the two official governing bodies, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the official Chinese Bishops' Conference. In particular there is a lack of faculty members to teach the textbook *Education Material on the Autonomous Self-Government of the Chinese Catholic Church*, the report said. A revision of this textbook will be prepared which will also address the “Sinicization of the Catholic Church” and the “Chinese Dream.” Other topics discussed at the meeting were methods for raising the quality of the seminarians, as well as the plan to introduce a master's program at the National Seminary. Representatives from eight different seminaries took part in the meeting. According to the report, proposals made by the Party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection for improving the work of the State Administration for Religious Affairs were the background for the meeting (chinacatholic.org.cn July 25; see *RCTC* 2016, No. 3, pp. 17-18).

July 18–19, 2016:

Forum in Zhengzhou presents state-sponsored study on the dioceses in China

Liu Zhiqing, director of the Institute for the Study of Religious Culture of the Anyang Normal University (Henan Province), presented the study. There is little systematic research on the subject, Liu said, so the researchers' task was to do thorough research into Chinese history, analyze the current situation and plan for the future. The forum in Zhengzhou (Henan Province) was jointly organized by Liu's Institute together with the Center for the Study of Christianity at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The situation of the dioceses in Mainland China is very complicated since the Vatican and the underground Catholic Church continue to use the diocesan division established in 1946, while the official Church has partly changed diocesan structure and boundaries over the last decades (*UCAN* Aug. 10).

July 21–24, 2016:

Panchen Lama installed by the Chinese government holds the Kalachakra ritual for the first time. Chinese media report 100,000 participants daily

According to Chinese media, the official Panchen Lama Gyaltzen Norbu has presided at the Kalachakra (Wheel of Time) initiation, an important teaching ritual of Tibetan Buddhism, at the request of the monks of the Tashi Lunpho Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lamas. The monastery organized the event together with the Buddhist Association of the City of Shigatse (Tibet Autonomous Region). Each day, around 100,000 faithful took part in the ritual, Chinese media reports said; in addition, approximately 100 “Living Buddhas” as well as 5,000 monks and nuns travelled from Tibet, Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan to attend the ritual. According to Chinese media, it was the first Kalachakra ritual to be held in Tibet for 60 years. However, according to a report of the Interna-



The official Panchen Lama Gyaltsen Norbu at his arrival in Shigatse. Photo: www.news.cn.

tional Campaign for Tibet (ITC), some senior Tibetan Lamas had held the ritual in recent years in Tibetan areas outside the Autonomous Region. The ICT also pointed out that the Chinese authorities have sought to prevent the participation of Tibetan faithful from the People's Republic at the Kalachakra rituals conducted in India (most recently in 2014) by the now 81 year old Dalai Lama.

The official Panchen Lama, now 25 years old, was installed by the regime and is being groomed by the government as future leader of Tibetan Buddhism. The whereabouts of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the child whom the Dalai Lama had recognized as the rebirth of the 10th Panchen Lama and who then disappeared in 1995, are still unknown. According to the ICT, most Tibetans are actually loyal to the Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama. Despite this, many Tibetans understand that the “Chinese” Panchen does not really have any choice with regard to his role, since he is closely supervised by the Chinese government, and they respect his teachers, ICT said (chinanews.com July 27; International Campaign for Tibet [savetibet.org] July 29; *Xinhua* July 21, 24).

July 26–31, 2016:

Considerable numbers of young people from Mainland China take part in 2016 World Youth Day

Only a few young Chinese were allowed to travel from the mainland to South Korea for the Asian Youth Day in 2014 but this year a considerable number of young people from the PRC succeeded in making their way to the 2016 World Youth Day in Cracow, Poland. Some traveled by way of third countries.

At the same time there were also reports of harassment such as the example cited by *AsiaNews*, which reported on a group of 50 young pilgrims at the Beijing airport. The young people were in their seats ready for takeoff to Cracow when authorities made them deplane. They were interrogated for hours by immigration; finally, their passports were confiscated.

More than 500 young people from Hong Kong took part in World Youth Day. They were the third largest group of participants from Asia (after the Philippines and South Korea). Auxiliary Bishop Ha Chi-shing accompanied the group. About 140 young people came from Taiwan and another 100 were from Macao (*AsiaNews* July 19, 26; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* July 22; *UCAN* July 22).

July 28, 2016:

Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* reports on sale and delivery of ready-made, pre-fab temples “made in Taiwan”

According to a July 28, 2016 report in the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*, in Taiwan there are several companies that offer ready-made, pre-fab temples for sale. Like pre-fab houses, these temples can be delivered and assembled in a matter of weeks. The article described a business in Pingdong County, where about 100 of the firm's employees are involved in the production of temples and statues. “Depending on the size, a pre-fab temple from Lin's company Chuanso costs between 1,000 and 56,000 Euros, as much as 40% less than one built using conventional construction methods.” Many of these temples are being exported to mainland China – thus *Der Standard* –, the most popular being the tem-

ples of the “Earth God” and of the “God of wealth.” At large temples built on location in the traditional way, construction will often go on for years with construction times for smaller private installations taking several months (*Der Standard* July 28).

July 29, 2016:

Xinjiang Autonomous Region adopts implementation rules for the national Anti-Terrorism Law

Xinjiang has become the first province to adopt detailed rules for the implementation of the national Anti-Terrorism Law, which went into effect on January 1, 2016. The state-run *Global Times* reports that the provisions largely follow the national law but include an additional chapter on the “education and management” of terrorists. Among other things, the act contains a provision that leaders of terrorist organizations and those who instigate others to crimes while in jail or who oppose re-education programs are to be kept in solitary confinement. The *Global Times*, referring to European experiences, writes that this is being done in order to help prevent the spread of radical Islam in the prisons. There are also differences to be found in the definition of terrorism. While according to the national law the state combats religious extremism in order to deprive terrorism of its ideological basis (Article 4), from the outset the Xinjiang provisions are directed against both terrorism and religious extremism at the same time (Articles 1, 2). The spread of extremism via mobile phone, the internet, etc. is also defined as a terrorist act (Article 6.6). The “Measures of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the Uighur for the Implementation of the ‘Anti-Terrorism Law of People’s Republic of China’” (新疆维吾尔自治区实施《中华人民共和国反恐怖主义法》办法) went into effect on August 1, 2016 (Chinese text: http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2016-08/01/c_129195246.htm; English translation: <http://chinalawtranslate.com/xjcounter-terror/?lang=en>; *Global Times* Aug. 2).

July 29, 2016:

The Atlantic reports on the rise of Scientology on Taiwan

While it is becoming increasingly difficult in many places for Scientology to recruit new members and the number of dropouts is steadily on the rise, Taiwan counts as one of the most Scientology-friendly countries in the world, according to a report by *The Atlantic* magazine in its July 29, 2016 issue. Taiwan serves as one of the main sources of income from donations and is an important field for recruiting new members for the Church of Scientology, thus the magazine. At the inauguration of a Scientology mega church in Kaohsiung in a converted hotel at the end of 2013, senior government officials were in attendance and honored it for the tenth year in a row with the national award as an “Excellent Religious Group.” According to the report, Scientology has 15 missions and churches in Taiwan and considers Taiwan as the “gateway to China,” so gaining a foothold there is “the abiding dream of all Scientologists.”

Scientology’s first mission in Taiwan opened in the late 1980s; in 2003 Scientology was recognized by the Taiwanese government as a religion. Due to the extremely high fees, which members must pay for courses, the first Taiwanese Scientologists came mainly from the middle class: doctors, lawyers, teachers and nurses. According to the article, such costs drove many to ruin. The science fiction author L. Ron Hubbard, who founded Scientology, repeatedly plugged himself as a “new Buddha.” He maintained that the Buddha was supposed to appear once again in the West – and with red hair – like Hubbard himself (*The Atlantic* July 29).

July 30, 2016:

Death of Underground Bishop Huang Shoucheng of Mindong

Bishop Vincent Huang Shoucheng of the Diocese of Mindong (Fujian Province) has died at the age of 93. Bishop Huang was born on July 23, 1923, and was ordained a priest in 1949. He was arrested on three different occasions and altogether spent some 35 years in prison, in labor camps or under house arrest. He was consecrated bishop in 1985 and took over the office of bishop of Mindong in 2005. A man of prayer and gifted with farsightedness, he devoted himself intensely to the initial and on-going formation of his priests and to the great number of religious Sisters in his diocese. His successor as bishop of Mindong is Coadjutor Bishop Vincent Guo Xijin, born in 1958 and ordained coadjutor bishop in 2008 by Bishop Huang. Neither Bishop Huang nor Bishop Guo Xijin are recognized by the government.

According to *AsiaNews*, despite government restrictions 20,000 turned out for the funeral on August 2. Fujian Province, with its approximately 370,000 Catholics, counts as one of the strongholds of the underground Church in China. The majority of the estimated 80,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Mindong belong to the underground. The open Church community is led by Bishop Zhan Silu, who was irregularly consecrated bishop in 2000 without papal authority (*AsiaNews* July 30; Aug. 1, 2; *UCAN* Aug. 1).

July/August 2016:

New Museum in Guangxi exalts the execution of a French missionary



Fr. Chapdelaine kneels before the magistrate during his trial: Scene from the new museum in Ding'an. Photo: *UCAN*.

In the City Ding'an in Xilin County of Guangxi Province, a new museum to promote patriotic education opened this past summer. One of its main exhibits features the 1856 conviction and execution of the Catholic missionary priest Fr. Auguste Chapdelaine, a member of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP). According to an August 11 report by Jiangnan Ke in *UCAN*, the museum's declared purpose is "to promote patriotism and condemn Western religions as being 'spiritual opium.'" Chapdelaine is one of the 120 Chinese martyrs canonized by Pope John Paul II in Rome on October 1, 2000. At the time, the canonization triggered fierce protests by the government of the People's Republic. According to the museum's representation of events, Chapdelaine was accused of collusion with corrupt local officials and of rape. Various historians outside of China claim that he had been confused with a bandit by the name of Ma Zinong. The museum glorifies instead the figure of Zhang Mingfeng, head magistrate of Xilin at the time, who had sentenced the priest to death. On February 29, 1856, after severe torture,

Chapdelaine came to death in a small cage suspended in the air. The region is a major tourist area and according to *AsiaNews*, the opening of the museum must also be seen as a part of China's attempts at the Sinicization of religion (*AsiaNews* July 11; *UCAN* July 13; Aug. 11).

August 1, 2016:

Taiwan's President apologizes to the country's indigenous peoples

In a ceremony held at the Presidential Office Building in Taipei, Taiwan's President, Mrs. Tsai Ing-wen, has extended an official apology to the country's indigenous peoples for centuries of "pain and ill-treatment." Leaders representing the various communities of Taiwan's indigenous peoples took part in the ceremony. The President promised that she would undertake concrete steps toward redressing the country's history of injustice in their regard.

According to a report in the *New York Times*, there are 540,000 members of indigenous groups, who make up 2% of Taiwan's population of 23 million. 16 groups are officially recognized, whereby Amis, Atayal and Paiwan make up 70% of all indigenous people. The indigenous peoples of Taiwan suffer from high unemployment and low wages as well as insufficient access to education and other services (*The New York Times* Aug. 1).

August 2–5, 2016:

Prison sentences for the founder of the law firm Fengrui and other rights activists in Tianjin

In the context of the massive crackdown against civil rights activists, a court in Tianjin has been hearing the trials on charges of "subverting state power" of four people arrested in July of 2015. Zhou Shifeng, founder of the Beijing law firm Fengrui, which found itself at the center of the crackdown, was sentenced to seven years in prison. The law firm had taken on a number of politically sensitive cases and represented persons such as: the victims of the 2008 baby milk powder scandal; the artist Ai Weiwei; the blind civil rights activist Chen Guangcheng; the lawyer Gao Zhisheng; the Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti as well as Zhang Miao, a female staffer of the German weekly magazine *Die Zeit*. Hu Shigen, an underground church leader and pro-democracy activist (with formerly already 16 years in prison for earlier political offenses), was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison, Gou Hongguo and Zhai Yanmin were given suspended sentences of three years each. According to the organization Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), Gou was accused of belonging to Hu's religious group, which had become involved with the activist Zhai on advocacy campaigns around politically sensitive cases, while Zhou used his law firm as a platform to launch these activities, thus the charge.

The Buddhist monk and activist Lin Bin (monastic name: Wang Yun), leader of a monastery in Ningde (Fujian), who, according to CHRD, had also first disappeared in July of 2015 and who was arrested in January of 2016 on charges of "incitement to subvert state power," disappeared once again following his release in September of 2016. He had been active in his support for civil rights lawyers.

According to the CHRD, during the crackdown in July of 2015, at least 300 lawyers and activists were interrogated, 13 of whom are still being detained (see CHRD Update with links to other sites: www.nchr.org/2015/07/individuals-affected-by-july-10-crackdown-on-rights-lawyers/; *Radio Free Asia* Oct. 4; *South China Morning Post* Aug. 7; *UCAN* Aug. 3; *Xinhua* Aug. 3, 5).

August 5, 2016:

Falun Dafa Information Center publishes list of Falun Gong adherents in detention since the 2008 Olympics

On the occasion of the launch of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, the New York based information center of the Falun Gong movement, banned in China since 1999 as an “evil cult,” has reminded the world that in the run-up to the Olympic Games of 2008 in Beijing more than 8,000 Falun Gong adherents have been detained. The Falun Dafa Information Center has published a list of the names of 158 adherents of the movement who, according to the center’s data, in 2009 have been sentenced to prison for periods ranging from 7.5 to 18 years and who are, it is presumed, still being detained (see the list at: http://media.faluninfo.net/media/doc/2016/08/FDIC-jan-dec-09-sentencing-for_2016.pdf).

August 7, 2016:

Hong Kong’s Cardinal John Tong has published a statement on the goals and principles of the Sino-Vatican negotiations

As he explains in his statement, the Cardinal addresses the questions and concerns of many Chinese believers and priests with regard to the Sino-Vatican negotiations. He speaks of the Church’s duty to respect all civilisations. “The agreement between the Holy See and Beijing is an example of human dialogue, the beginning of the normalisation of a mutual relationship,” thus the Cardinal. Religious freedom and the communion between the Catholic Church in China with the universal Church are the principal goals of the dialogue. Cardinal Tong goes into great detail about the canonical regulations on the appointments of bishops and on the role that a future legitimate Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China might play in this regard. In doing so, he seeks to dispel concerns that any principles of the faith or the rights of the underground Church could be sacrificed for the sake of an agreement. The statement dated July 31 and entitled “Communion of the Church in China with the Universal Church” was published on August 7 in the Diocesan newspaper *Kung Kao Po*.

Following August 7, 2016:

Reactions to Cardinal Tong’s statement

Reactions to Cardinal Tong’s statement have been very mixed, particularly in mainland China. Some commentators described it as “over-optimistic, balanced and inspiring,” others saw it as “plain unrealistic,” the *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* reported. Among the comments, especially noteworthy was the interview of Gianni Valente with the underground Bishop Wei Jingyi of Harbin. Bishop Wei said Cardinal Tong’s letter had been inspired from heaven and was convinced that the Pope would never sacrifice either the principles of the faith or any legitimate request of the clandestine communities. With regard to the dialogue, he said: “We hope that they will soon reach a concrete result.” On the day after the publication of the statement, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said that China is ready “to continue having constructive dialogue with the Vatican side, to meet each other halfway and jointly promote the continued forward development of the process of improving bilateral ties.”

A remarkably open article in the party-friendly *Global Times* also dedicated itself to the statement of Cardinal Tong. It quoted Tong as saying that the Chinese Government is now willing to reach an understanding with the Holy See on the issue of the appointment of bishops. In addition, it describes several problems still to be resolved and repeats the conviction of Elisa Giunipero (Catholic Univer-

sity of Milan) that the Holy See will not forget the difficulties of the underground Church. Finally he comes around to the point of the “control concerns” of the Chinese Government. Among other things, he mentions that the Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), Wang Zu’an, warned on August 7 of “hostile foreign forces” who want to alter China’s ideology and political system through the use of religion, and called for firm controls over the leadership of the Catholic Church in China. In its conclusion, the article cites the conviction expressed by Liu Peng (Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences, Beijing) that the principles put forward by the Vatican are acceptable to Beijing and that an agreement would be in the best interests of all concerned (*Global Times* Aug. 18; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Aug. 20; Sept. 3; *Vatican Insider* Aug. 12).

August 11, 2016:

Official Hajj of the Pilgrims from the People’s Republic of China to Mecca started

Between August 11-22, some 14,500 participants from all provinces (except Fujian), the autonomous regions and from direct-controlled municipalities departed for Saudi Arabia to take part in this year’s Hajj on 48 charter flights. This information was reported by the official governing body of Muslims, the Chinese Islamic Association on its website (chinaislam.net.cn August 12). The number of pilgrims from the People’s Republic taking part in the Hajj has remained steady since 2014. Any Muslim wishing to go on the Hajj must sign up for the pilgrimage supervised by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). Saudi Arabia sets the quotas for the number of pilgrims from each country.

August 15, 2016:

Radio Free Asia: School Children in Aksu and Hotan (Xinjiang) are being questioned about their families’ religious practices

According to *Radio Free Asia*, all middle and high school students in the prefectures of both Aksu and Hotan in the South West of Xinjiang are being required to fill out a questionnaire providing information about religious practice in their families: i.e., who in the family prays regularly, who wears a *hijab* (Islamic headscarf) or a beard. Local sources interviewed by *Radio Free Asia* informed them that the schools collect the filled out questionnaires, which have to be stamped by both police and government. Similar questionnaires have been issued before, one source said (*Radio Free Asia* Aug. 15).

August 17, 2016:

China Aid reports: Central Hospital of Wenzhou prohibits religious activities



Sign forbidding religious activities in the central hospital. Photo: China Aid.

As reported by the US-based organization China Aid, relying on information obtained from Christians in Wenzhou, a public notice was posted recently in the Central Hospital of Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province), which prohibits the carrying out of religious activities in the hospital. An employee of the clinic confirmed the fact of the prohibition to *Radio Free Asia*.

According to the China Aid report, it has been customary for years now that Christians would go to the hospitals of Wenzhou and the surrounding area almost daily to pray with the sick or to evangelize. It is estimated that Christians make up about 15% of the population in Wenzhou. Prior to 1949, the Central Hospital of Wenzhou had been a Protestant hospital (chinaaid.net Aug. 17; *Radio Free Asia* Aug. 18).

August 18, 2016:

AsiaNews recalls the dilemma of underground priests regarding the government's requirement that they register

According to the work plans of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), by the end of 2016 the process of issuing certificates to Daoist and Catholic clergy should be completed (see *China heute* 2016, No. 1, pp. 4-6 [in German]). *AsiaNews* says that this year they have received many appeals for help from Chinese underground priests. They find themselves in a serious dilemma, *AsiaNews* writes, because in order to be able to exercise their pastoral ministry, they would first have to make an application to be registered with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which has the principle of independent self-government enshrined in its statutes (*AsiaNews* Aug. 18).

August 18–19, 2016:

Conference on the “Sinicization of Islam” meets in Yinchuan (Ningxia)

The talks during the conference, which was attended by even high-ranking politicians, were given by Chinese scholars of religious studies and ethnologists as well as by representatives of official Islam from all over China. Some speakers made a distinction between “Islam in the interior of the country” (*neidi yisilanjiao* 内地伊斯兰教) and “Islam in Xinjiang.” For example, Guo Chengzhen, Secretary-General of the Chinese Islamic Association, said that the indigenization (*bentuhua* 本土化) of the former had been reached, characterized by an active adaptation to Chinese society and culture, while the indigenization of Islam in Xinjiang was still developing as it absorbed elements of the traditional culture of the ethnic minorities. This shows the diversity present in the development of Islam in China, thus Guo. He pointed to the harmful aspects of “Dawa missionary groups and of international Salafism, which have come to our country, to ‘purify’ Islam.” An Islamization of their life would lead the Muslims in China to self-marginalization, it would constitute a departure from the policy of Sinicization and must be resisted, Guo said.

The conference was organized by the Ningxia Research Society of United Front Theory, the Ningxia Academy of Socialism, the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Chinese Association of Religious Studies. A more detailed report on the conference can be found at: http://iwr.cass.cn/xw/201609/t20160906_21189.htm .

August 24, 2016:

Vatican Secretary of State to *Avvenire*: The aim of negotiations with Beijing is to make the lives of Catholic faithful in China simpler and foster reconciliation

“For the Holy See, it is particularly important that Chinese Catholics be able to live their faith in a positive way, whilst also being good citizens,” said Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, top diplomat

of the Vatican, in an interview with the newspaper *Avvenire*. The claim that there are two different Churches in China [i.e. official and underground Church], is wrong, Parolin stressed. “There are in fact two communities that are both eager to live in full communion with the Successor of Peter.” It is the wish of the Holy See “to one day see these two communities reconciled, embracing one another, giving and receiving mercy in a joint proclamation of the Gospel that is truly credible” (according to *Vatican Insider* Aug. 24).

August 27, 2016:

Vatican Secretary of State in Pordenone: Hopes for a new era in Sino-Vatican relations

In a speech at the diocesan seminary in Pordenone (Northern Italy) which was later published as an extract by Vatican Radio, Cardinal Parolin expressed his appreciation of Cardinal Celso Costantini (1876–1958), the first Apostolic Delegate to China, as a bridge builder between the Holy See and China. Parolin said that today, as ever, “many are the hopes and expectations for new developments and a new season of relations between the Apostolic See and China.” Good relations were not an end in themselves, but should be pursued “only in the measure in which they are ‘ordered’ toward the good of Chinese Catholics, to the good of the entire Chinese people” and in favor of world peace. He said that Pope Francis knows well “the baggage of suffering... which the Catholic community in China carries on its shoulders” (*America Magazine* Aug. 27; *Asia Times* Aug. 30; *Vatican Radio* Aug. 27).

August 29, 2016:

Expert at the *Global Times* says: China is not keen on formal relations with the Vatican

The party-friendly newspaper *Global Times* reported Cardinal Parolin’s words of August 27 that there is much hope for new developments in Sino-Vatican relations. However, quoting the scholar Yan Kejia of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the newspaper said that China is not eager to establish formal ties with the Vatican, “because it is not an urgent issue.” The Vatican should cut off its political relations with Taiwan, thus Yan. The *Global Times* also mentioned that Taiwan’s Vice President was expected to travel to Rome for the canonization of Mother Teresa (see the entry of September 4, 2016). When queried on this topic, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said on August 25 that countries should be prudent when dealing with Taiwan-related issues (*Global Times* Aug. 29).

August 29, 2016:

Appointment of Chen Quanguo as Party Secretary of Xinjiang announced

Since 2011, Chen Quanguo has been the Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region. His new appointment will make him the first politician in the People’s Republic of China to be named successively Party Secretary – i.e. highest political position – first of Tibet and then of Xinjiang. Wu Yingjie, a Han Chinese who grew up in Tibet, will succeed Chen as Party Secretary in Tibet. According to the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, Chen Quanguo’s predecessor as Party Secretary in Xinjiang was replaced as a result of his failure to curb the frequent extremist attacks in Xinjiang.

According to reports in the Hong Kong media, in Pishan County, Prefecture Hotan, Xinjiang, a deputy county police chief was killed during a raid against suspected extremists on September 10 and three other policemen were seriously injured. According to details supplied by Uyghurs in exile, in the incident mentioned there were more than ten dead and wounded, among others Uyghurs and police. Seventeen Uyghurs were arrested following the raid, they said (*Apple Daily*, *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, *Ming Pao* Sept. 19; according to *BBC Global Monitoring*; *Radio Free Asia* Sept. 19; *Xinhua* Aug. 29, and others).

September 1, 2016:

Charity Law goes into effect

China's Charity Law (*Cishan fa* 慈善法) which was adopted on March 13, 2016 took effect on September 1, 2016. It contains provisions for the establishment and registration of charitable organizations, extends the possibilities for fundraising and at the same time strengthens the regulatory monitoring (see *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* 2016, No. 2, pp. 17f.).

The authorities responsible for religious affairs at all levels organized numerous conferences in the past few months, in which representatives of the main religions have received training in matters regarding the Charity Law. At one such training session run by the State Administration for Religious Affairs from June 20-26 in Guiyang (Guizhou Province) with 160 representatives from all over China – governmental as well as representatives of the main religions – the religious circles were encouraged to make combating poverty a focus of their charitable activities in the future.

On March 22, in *Zhongguo minzubao* the Chinese priest Fr. John Baptist Zhang (Zhang Guanglai), founder of the Catholic Jinde Charities, called for the “desensitization” of religion and religious charities. He fears that religious charities will not be able to fairly unfold their real potential on behalf of those most in need if the authorities, despite the new law, with the excuse that religion is a “sensitive” topic refuse them access to public fundraising and if the media due to the same reason are hesitant to report on their activities (*mzb.com.cn* March 22; *sara.gov.cn* June 29; *Xinhua* Aug. 31; Sept. 5).

September 4, 2016:

Taiwan's Vice President in Rome to see Mother Teresa declared a Saint

Chen Chien-jen, Taiwan's Vice President and a dedicated Catholic, took part in the celebrations marking the canonization of Mother Teresa in St. Peter's Square. The Vatican is one of the twenty-two states which maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Chen's visit was the first official visit of a representative of the government of Taiwan in three years. In 2013, then President Ma Ying-jeou travelled to Rome to represent Taiwan at the investiture of Pope Francis, a visit which led to official protests on the part of the government in Beijing (*South China Morning Post* Aug. 24).

September 4, 2016:

First church in the People's Republic of China dedicated to Saint Teresa of Calcutta

In a festive ceremony, presided over by Bishop Joseph Li Liangui, a new church dedicated to “Saint Teresa of Calcutta” was consecrated in Jiaohokou, in the village of Haocun in the Diocese of Xianxian



Members of the Evangelic Association of Mother Teresa in a diocese in Hebei Province on pilgrimage before the Sheshan Basilica of Shanghai (2012). Photo: Martin Welling.

(Hebei) on September 4, the very day she was declared a Saint in Rome. There are already several other churches dedicated to “Mother Teresa” in other parts of China. The little village has a population of about 300 Catholics.

Mother Teresa had tried repeatedly to obtain a foothold for her Missionaries of Charity in mainland China. According to a statement in the *National Catholic Register* (U.S.A.) by Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, the postulator or promoter of the canonization process, opening a mission in mainland China was the “last and only unfulfilled wish” of the newly declared saint. Three visits led Mother Teresa towards China, but she was never granted permission to open a house of her congregation there. Already back in 1985 she visited Beijing at the invitation of Deng Pufang, the paraplegic son of Deng Xiaoping, who later became chairman of the Chinese Disabled Persons Federation. In 1993, her second trip brought her to Shanghai and then once again to Beijing. In Shanghai she met with Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian and spoke to Shanghai’s seminarians at Sheshan Basilica on the outskirts of Shanghai. From the time of that visit until her death, she always carried in a pocket of her sari a little statue of Our Lady of Sheshan, which Bishop Jin had given her as a memento of her visit. On Mother Teresa’s third attempt to open a house of her Sisters in China, this time on Hainan Island in 1994, it was shipwrecked at the last moment. Mother Teresa and her small group of Sisters were denied entry. Sr. Mary Prema Pierick, the current superior general of the Missionaries of Charity, said to the *Register* that her Sisters could start charitable work in China “in no time.”

Following her beatification in 2003, a lay organization, the Evangelic Association of Mother Teresa, was founded in Hebei Province. Today, the organization counts more than 10,000 members in three provinces (*America Magazine* Sept. 3; *Fides* Sept. 12; *National Catholic Register* Sept. 6).

September 5, 2016:

China holds its first ever “Day of Charity”

On September 5, marked by various events, China celebrated its first ever Day of Charity. In future, the Day of Charity will be an annual celebration. The International Day of Charity initiated by the United Nations since 2013 has been held yearly on September 5, the anniversary of the death of Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) (*Xinhua* Sept. 5).

September 6, 2016:

***Fides* report: Prayer rooms installed in Chinese airports**

According to a report by *Fides*, a 30 square meter chapel has recently been opened at Shenzhen international airport. Bibles are readily available for the convenience of those who make use of the prayer room. According to an unspecified local newspaper report “the opening of the prayer hall is a sign of recognition of the Christian culture, of respect for international guests, facilitating their moral and spiritual needs. Being a city with a large influx of foreigners, the initiative also helps to understand the Christian culture and promote evangelization.” According to *Fides*, in recent years prayer rooms for Christians, Muslims and the faithful of other religions have been established in various Chinese international airports, including one in Beijing (with two rooms), Chengdu, Xi’an, Kunming and Ordos in Inner Mongolia (*Fides* Sept. 6).

September 7, 2016:

State Council publishes draft revision of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs”

For some time now, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) has been working on a revision of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” which were adopted in 2004 and which took effect on March 1, 2005. These regulations make up the basic administrative legal norms for the State’s dealings with the religions. The revised text has been made public so that opinions may be collected and evaluated. The new version is considerably longer than the previous one. It has 9 chapters with 74 articles (previously: 7 chapters with 48 articles). The role of the (official) religious organizations and thus of the State Administration for Religious Affairs is strengthened in the draft of the revision. Many commentators outside China regard the main objective of the draft revision as stronger control of the religions. It is true that the draft revision brings hardly any real surprises, since many of the newly recorded topics have been discussed earlier or regulated by subsidiary legal norms. But it limits further the still existing leeway for religious activity. This concerns especially the non-registered, non-official religious groups but also the freedom to act of the registered, official groups, as well as contacts overseas.

The deadline for the public hearing ended on October 7. It remains to be seen whether the revised “Regulations on Religious Affairs” will be adopted in their current form or whether they will still be modified (for further details, see the article “The State Council publishes a draft revision of the ‘Regulations on Religious Affairs’” in this issue of *RCTC*).

September 7, 2016:

Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang of Wenzhou dies at the age of 88 – His successor was taken away to northwest China on a forced trip

Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang, appointed by the Pope and recognized by the government, was born on December 10, 1927 into a Catholic family in Zhejiang. He studied theology at the Sheshan Seminary near Shanghai and was ordained a priest in 1954. He spent the years from 1955 until 1971, and once again from 1982 until 1988, either in prison or in a forced labor camp. In January of 2009, he was consecrated Bishop with papal approval and on December 23, 2010, he was publically installed as Bishop of Wenzhou. “As a bishop, he spared no effort in safeguarding the rights and interests of the Church,

earning great esteem among all the faithful,” wrote the Vatican News Agency *Fides*. For example, he wrote a Pastoral Letter to all the faithful to protest against the massive removal of crosses carried out by government authorities in the Province of Zhejiang (a translation of his Pastoral Letter in German can be found in *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 165-167).

According to *AsiaNews*, approximately 5,000 of the faithful attended Bischof Zhu’s funeral on September 13. Underground priests were forbidden by the authorities to take part in the funeral. Shortly before Bishop Zhu’s death, his Coadjutor Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin (born 1963), who heads the underground part of the diocese, was taken on a “sightseeing tour” to Qinghai Province by the authorities. He eventually returned but, according to *UCAN*, on September 26 he was once again sent “on tour,” possibly in connection with the death of the neighboring Bishop Xu Jiwei (see the entry of September 25, 2016) or because of the Vatican announcement that he was the successor of Bishop Zhu (see below). In addition to Bishop Shao Zhumin, Fr. Jiang Sunian, underground Chancellor of the Diocese of Wenzhou, and two other priests were also temporarily taken away.

According to Canon Law, as Coadjutor Bishop Shao automatically succeeds Bishop Zhu. This was once again expressly confirmed on September 21 by the notification of the news agency of the Vatican (*news.va*). Some Catholics told *AsiaNews* that the Government, however, had planned that Fr. Ma Xianshi, currently Director of the Council of priests in the official part of the diocese, would take over as the successor to Bishop Zhu. This suggests that the matter of a successor to Bishop Zhu will also be included in the current Sino-Vatican talks. – There are many Christians in the city of Wenzhou. According to *news.va*, the Catholic Diocese of Wenzhou has about 140,000 faithful, of whom approximately one third (according to *AsiaNews*) or two thirds (according to *UCAN*) belong to the underground Church there (*AsiaNews* Sept. 7, 8, 13; *china.ucanews.com* Sept. 22; *Fides* Sept. 21; *news.va* Sept. 21; *UCAN* Sept. 7, 26).

September 8, 2016:

South China Morning Post reported on arrests for the murder of women to sell them as “ghost brides”

In Northwest China three men were arrested after they had killed two women to sell them as “ghost brides,” according to a report in the *South China Morning Post*. One of those convicted, Ma Chonghua, allegedly killed the two women with lethal injections, after he had kidnapped them in Gansu Province. With the help of two other suspects, he is said to have finally sold the corpses in Shaanxi Province. An old belief, according to which the death of unmarried persons brings disaster, is still alive in rural regions of Northwest China. Even though the buying and selling of corpses is banned, it is still the practice in many places to arrange “ghost weddings” for dead family members to prevent misfortune. Ma is accused of having sold one of the corpses, that of a 47 year old woman with mental illness, for 40,200 Yuan to a villager in Shaanxi, who was looking for a bride for his deceased, unmarried 67 year old brother.

According to an article in *Zeit online*, in the last ten years the demand for ghost weddings has begun to grow once again (*South China Morning Post* Sept. 8, 2016; *Zeit online* Nov. 7, 2013).

September 12, 2016:

Council of State publishes White Paper on “New progress in the Judicial Protection of Human Rights in China”

The white paper focuses on the human rights protection in the field of justice. Among other things, it says that progress was made to “ensure lawyers’ right of practice, so that lawyers are playing a bigger

role in safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of parties concerned,” *Xinhua* wrote (german.xinhuanet.com Sept. 13). The English version of the white paper can be found at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2016-09/12/c_135681609.htm.

September 25, 2016:

Bischof Xu Jiwei of the Diocese of Taizhou (Zhejiang Province) dies

81 year old Bishop Anthony Xu Jiwei was consecrated in 2010 with a papal mandate and was also recognized by the Chinese government. He died three weeks after the death of Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang in the neighboring Diocese of Wenzhou. Bishop Xu was born in 1935 in Shanghai and studied from 1948-1958 first at the minor seminary of Ningbo and then completed his studies for the priesthood at Shanghai's regional seminary. Not yet ordained, he spent long years in prison and in forced labor camps. In 1985 he took part in a refresher course at the seminary in Shanghai and that same year he was finally ordained a priest. In 1999 he was appointed administrator for the Diocese of Taizhou and in 2010 he was consecrated bishop of the diocese.

Taizhou is a small diocese with only 9 priests and about 3,000 churchgoers in the official Church as well as three priests who care for the spiritual needs of a few thousand underground Catholics. In 2010 the Pope entrusted Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, underground Bishop of Wenzhou, with the care of the underground community in Taizhou Diocese (for more on Bishop Shao, see the entry of September 7 above). As far as the successor to Bishop Xu as Bishop of Taizhou is concerned, nothing is known at present.

The prosperous coastal province of Zhejiang is one of China's Christian strongholds with approximately 2 million Protestants and 200,000 Catholics. The province was particularly hard hit during the government's campaign to tear down the crosses from church buildings (*AsiaNews* Sept. 26; *Fides* Sept. 25; *UCAN* Sept. 26).

September 29, 2016:

State Council publishes “National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2016–2020)”

Under the sub-heading “Freedom of religious belief” the action plan speaks of improving the rule of law with regard to religious affairs and singles out the following projects: 1) Amending the “Regulations on Religious Affairs”; 2) Supporting the efforts of the religious circles for better self-managements; 3) Encouraging religious circles to organize charity activities; 4) Making efforts to run the religious institutes well and improving the training of religious professionals; 5) Halting commercial use and prohibiting the “contracting” of Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples; 6) Improving organization of the Hajj; and 7) Exchange with the outside world.

All of these points are already part of the current agenda of the State Administration for Religious Activities (SARA). The English text of the Action Plan can be found at: <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0929/c90000-9121608.html>.

October 1, 2016:

***Guide to the Catholic Church in China* is now available online**

As of October 1, 2016, the *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, in the form of an e-book, is now available online. Valuable data on the individual dioceses, religious congregations and Church personnel in China can now be accessed online in this *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, issued since the mid-1980s under the authorship of Fr. Jean Charbonnier, MEP, at Zhonglian in Singapore. *The Guide 2014 Plus*, an updated edition of the print version of 2014, is now available online at no charge at: www.zhonglian.org/ebook.html.

October 2, 2016:

On his return flight to Rome from Azerbaijan, Pope Francis reports that he has received a gift from President Xi Jinping – there are “good relations”

During the in-flight press conference Pope Francis responded to the question of a journalist about China: “As for China. You are familiar with the history of China and the Church: the patriotic Church, the underground Church... But we have good relations, we study and we talk, there are working commissions... I am optimistic. Now I believe that the Vatican Museum has organized an exhibit in China, the Chinese will do another at the Vatican... There are many professors who go to teach in Chinese universities, many nuns, many priests who can work well there. The relations between the Vatican and the Chinese... We have to establish a relationship, and for this we are having discussions, slowly... Slow things go well, always. Things done in a hurry do not go well. I have great esteem for the Chinese people. The day before yesterday, for example, there was a two-day conference, I believe, at the [Pontifical] Academy of Sciences on *Laudato Si'*, and there was a Chinese delegation representing the President. And the President of China sent me a gift. There are good relations.”

According to information provided by Gianni Valente of the *Vatican Insider*, President Xi's gift to Pope Francis was a silk print of the famous “Nestorian Stele” of Xi'an. The gift was presented to the Pope by Zhou Jinfeng, Secretary General of the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation. Together with a delegation of this foundation under the leadership of Hu Deping, son of the former Secretary General of the Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, he had taken part in the seminar on *Laudato Si'* (for the text of the Pope's interview, see: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161002_georgia-azerbaijan-conferenza-stampa.html; *Vatican Insider* Oct. 6).

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The State Council Publishes a Draft Revision of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs”

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber
Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge

The “Regulations on Religious Affairs” published in 2004 and in force since March 1, 2005 are the basic administrative legal norms for the State’s dealings with the religions (a law for religion, as some are requesting, does not exist). The revision has been in preparation by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) for some time. On September 7, 2016 the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China published a draft of the revision of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” on its website for public review. The same website carries explanations of the law. Registered users could give their opinions there up till the end of the hearing period, October 7, 2016.

The new version is considerably longer than the previous one. It has 9 chapters with 74 articles (previously: 7 chapters with 48 articles). According to the attached explanations, 36 articles were modified, 26 new ones added, 12 retained without change. Additional chapters have been added for the institutes for religious education and for religious activities respectively; these topics were formerly included in other chapters, meaning they have been upgraded. The significance of the institutes for religious education, especially, has come more strongly to the attention of the authorities due to their key role in training the religious clergy and the interpretation of religious doctrine, also in view of the “Sinicization” required of the religions (cf. also the “News Update on Religion and Church in China” in this issue, entries of July 10 and July 14-15, 2016).

The following preliminary remarks can only point out some of the numerous, planned changes.

Many commentators outside China regard the main objective of the draft revision as stronger control of the religions. A tougher approach can already be seen in Chapter 1 (General Provisions): The newly added Article 3 lists as the principles of the management

The text of the *Zongjiao shiwu tiaoli xiuding cao'an (songshen gao)* 宗教事务条例修订草案 (送审稿) (Draft for the Revision of the Regulations on Religious Affairs [Deliberation Draft]) was published on a platform for soliciting public opinion on draft laws on the website of the State Council’s Legislative Affairs Office (<http://zqyj.chinalaw.gov.cn/index>); in order to get access to the text, one has to register as a user first. On the same website, explanations of the draft are to be found at <http://zqyj.chinalaw.gov.cn/draftExplain?DraftID=1269>. The Chinese text and an informal English translation are offered on the website of China Law Translate at <http://chinalawtranslate.com/religious-regulations/> and <http://chinalawtranslate.com/religious-regulations/?lang=en>. – This article was first published under the title “Staatsrat veröffentlicht Revisionsentwurf der ‘Vorschriften für religiöse Angelegenheiten’” in *China heute* 2016, No. 3, pp. 140-142.

of religious affairs “protecting what is lawful, prohibiting what is unlawful, suppressing extremism, resisting infiltration, and fighting crime”. Endangering national security, creating conflicts within or between religions, as well as terrorist activities have been added to the catalogue of activities for which religions may not be used (Article 4). Article 6 adds that governments at all levels are to strengthen the guidance of religious work and are to be supported from the basis by villagers’ and residents’ committees.

The role of the religious organizations (*zongjiao tuanti* 宗教团体) is strengthened in the draft revision. The term is not defined in the document. However, since in the Chinese management of religious affairs this term generally refers to the official mass organizations of the 5 recognized religions initiated by the government and coming under the SARA (i.e. Chinese Buddhist Association, Chinese Daoist Association, Chinese Islamic Association, Protestant Three-Self-Movement and Chinese Christian Council, as well as the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and Chinese Bishops’ Conference [which is not recognized by Rome], as well as their local branch offices), their reinforcement gives the competent authorities extended means for steering religious affairs. Most of all, this strengthens the national SARA, which according to the opinion of some commentators has expanded its power with the draft revision.

The newly included Article 8 lists for the first time the functions of the religious organizations to which belong, among others, the formulation of religious rules, the interpretation of religious doctrines and the “construction of religious thinking” (Article 8.3 and 8.4). The version valid until now had no statement on who is responsible for the formulation and interpretation of religious doctrine and rules, but took them for granted. Article 10, also new, determines that institutes for religious education and sites for religious activities, as well as religious personnel have to accept the system of religious rules determined by the respective religious organization.

Different religious groups have for a long time been demanding that religious institutions be able to apply to register as a legal person in order to gain legal capacity. In the draft revision this is now provided for institutes for religious education and sites for religious activities (Articles 14 and 23) – for the latter, however, only with the approval of the religious organization.

According to both the current regulations and the draft revision, recognition of the religious clergy lies within the competence of the religious organizations, however, a new addition is the express prohibition that whoever does not have the status [as recognized by the religious organizations] of religious professional may not engage in activity as a religious professional (Article 36, para. 4). Altogether the draft revision contains more such express prohibitions than the previous version. For example, in the current regulations it merely states (according to the Constitution Article 36), that religion may not be used to interfere with the educational system of the State. Article 44 of the draft revision now explicitly forbids proselytization, religious activities and the establishment of religious groups in State schools and universities.

The Chapter “Religious Assets” has also been expanded, among other things in connection with the requirements of financial management and its supervision by the competent authorities. Corresponding provisions have actually existed for some years in

the form of the “Measures for the Supervision and Administration of Financial Affairs of Sites for Religious Activities (For Trial Implementation)” issued by SARA in 2010. Article 57 contains a newly added provision saying that donations from foreign organizations or individuals that exceed 100,000 yuan [in October 2016 = approx. 13,600 Euro] must be reported to the religious affairs department at the county level or above. According to Article 53, para. 2 it is prohibited to invest in religious sites or large outdoor statues or to contract out their management commercially. This provision refers mainly to certain practices of tourism departments and tourism companies in dealing with Buddhist and Daoist temples, the control of which has long been on SARA’s agenda.

A number of topics newly introduced into the revision draft hark back to recent social changes and discussions. Especially significant here are the provisions for religious Internet information services whose influence has greatly increased over the years (Articles 47 and 48).

In future all local governments are to consider the needs of religious citizens in their land use plans and urban and rural planning (Article 32), and where needed, temporary sites for [religious] activities can be approved (Article 35) – both urgent issues, given the rapid and extensive restructuring and expansion of the Chinese cities.

The legal consequences in the case of violations of the regulations are set out in the chapter “Legal Responsibility” that has also been considerably expanded in the draft revision. To mention one, the newly added Article 68 mandates measures for “where conditions are provided for unlawful religious activities.” These measures range from warnings or fines of between 20,000 and 200,000 yuan to the destruction of illegal buildings and administrative sanctions. This provision seems to be aimed at owners of property who make rooms available for meetings of non-registered religious groups. Religious personnel are subject to sanctions if they preside over unapproved religious activities outside of religious activity sites (Article 70.4).

Article 67 goes very far where it includes legal consequences for the unauthorized organizing of religious citizens to participate in religious training, meetings or activities outside the country. An explicit prohibition of unauthorized trips abroad has up till now only applied to pilgrimages to Mecca (this also in conjunction with Saudi regulations). However, partial travel restrictions set by authorities have also been reported in several other cases (e.g. for the Catholic World Youth Day and for the Asian Youth Day; cf. “News Update,” entry of July 26–31, 2016). For overseas studies for religious personnel the agreement of the respective religious organization is required as before (Article 9).

Many topics that have been newly included in the draft revision have been discussed earlier or regulated by subsidiary legal norms. The strengthening of the role of the religious organizations (and with them of the SARA) was to be expected, after the Party’s Central Commission for Discipline-Inspection, following an evaluation of the SARA in June 2016, advised effective strengthening of the monitoring and management of the national religious organizations (cf. *RCTC* 2016, No. 3, pp. 17-18). Thus the draft revision brings hardly any real surprises. But it limits further the still existing leeway for religious activity and gives more concrete means for the authorities to intervene. This concerns

especially the non-registered, non-official religious groups but also the freedom to act of the registered, official groups, as well as contacts overseas.

It is not yet clear whether the State also perhaps intends to intervene more strongly than before in the teachings of the religions. In his keynote speech at the National Conference on Religious Work on April 22–23, 2016, Xi Jinping said, “the religions are to be supported in [...] interpreting the religious rules and doctrines in such a way that they correspond to the requirements of the developmental progress of present-day China and of the excellent traditional culture of China.” In the same speech, Xi reaffirmed his call for the “Sinicization” of religions, already mentioned.

For the current Sino-Vatican negotiations, where the question of appointment of bishops is one of the main problems to be solved, Article 70.2 of the draft revision will probably present a challenge. It threatens legal consequences for religious clergy who “accept domination by external forces” or “accept nomination for a religious office from a foreign religious organization or institution without authorization.” This clause, together with other signals such as the abduction of the coadjutor bishop of Wenzhou appointed by the Pope (cf. “News Update”, entry of September 7, 2016), is a hint that along with the positive signs of rapprochement (e.g. the gift from President Xi to Pope Francis, cf. “News Update”, entry of October 2, 2016) there are also strong tendencies and forces in the opposite direction.

It remains to be seen whether the revised “Regulations on Religious Affairs” will be adopted in their current form, or whether in consideration of results of the public review of opinion they will be decisively modified.

Evangelisation in the Protestant Church in China – Reflections of a Western Sinologist

Fredrik Fällman

The rapid development of the Chinese Protestant church since the 1980s – registered or unregistered – does not have one single or merely a few explanations, but is the result of several varying factors. Nor is there a coordinated or unified specific strategy for evangelisation, largely because of the decentralised and uncoordinated structure of the Chinese Protestant church. National leaders of the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), and teachers at the national Jinling Union Theological Seminary are to some extent preoccupied with ideas of a common Chinese Protestant ecclesiology, but there are also many tendencies towards a return of denominationalism and less of unity.¹ Since 2014 the Chinese party-state has advocated a “sinicization of Christianity” (*jidujiao Zhongguohua* 基督教中国化), which adds yet another dimension to these issues.² From a more practical perspective, there is an element of straightforwardness in the approach of many Chinese Protestants towards non-Christians that differs from the European context. Besides all this, the transforming power of faith is all too often neglected as an element of academic study.

What happens more concretely then in regard to evangelisation? The PRC constitution provides for “freedom of religious belief” (§ 36) but says not much about the actual protection of religious expression and activity, including evangelisation, not more than that it should be in the form of “normal religious activity” (*zhengchang zongjiao huodong* 正常宗教活动). The expression about “normality” is particularly troublesome, and is one of several signs that the CPC and the PRC government would like to assume the right of interpretation over religious matters and even theology. Since the CPC strongly promotes

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- 1 Jinling Union Theological Seminary Vice President Wang Aiming has written on ecclesiology on several occasions, one example is “Tizhi jiaohui yu ziyou jiaohui: wenti, weiji he keneng de chulu 体制教会与自由教会: 问题、危机和可能的出路” (Structural Church and Free Church: Issues, Crises and Possible Ways Out), in: *Lingdao zhe* 领导者, December 2012, No. 49, website Gongshiwang 共识网, www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/gqmq/article_2013022077383.html; Brent Fulton, “Denominationalism in China: Pre or Post?,” website China Source, March 25, 2015, www.chinasource.org/blog/posts/denominationalism-in-china-pre-or-post; G. Wright Doyle, “How Should Chinese Urban Churches Organize Themselves?,” website China Source, March 30, 2011, <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/how-should-chinese-urban-churches-organize-themselves>.
- 2 Tang Xiaofeng, “Jidujiao weishenme yao Zhongguohua? 基督教为什么要中国化?” (Why Must Christianity Sinicize?), in: *Minzubao* 民族报, August 19, 2014, <http://mzb.com.cn/html/report/140833075-1.htm>.

atheism, and struggles to deal with religiously active party members, it is ironical that at the same time they try to take control of the actual content of religion.

But how does this situation affect evangelisation efforts among Protestants? “Normal” religious activity is supposed to occur within the walls of the place of worship, or another designated area or place for that particular religious group. Therefore outdoor meetings, evangelisation campaigns on the streets or public advertising is not possible, except under special circumstances. In such an environment, personal meetings and small groups have become more important for spreading the Gospel. I have seen this from my own experience through visits to China, and preparing this article I also asked several pastors from the registered Protestant church about the most common and successful methods of evangelising in contemporary China in their view.³ Their answers complemented what I have discerned from empirical and textual studies of religion in contemporary China in the last decade, and I will discuss here some tentative fields or factors that have an impact on evangelisation in the Chinese Protestant church: one-to-one evangelisation and small groups, in-church secularisation, the role of intellectuals, the role of the Bible, healing prayer and miracles, and social belonging.

Individual or Small Group Evangelisation

My limited group of informants rather unanimously mentioned small groups as a primary method of deep evangelisation, going beyond the first curiosity of seekers’ questions or a random visit to a church service. These small groups may take different forms, often categorised for youth, women, men, etc., but sometimes also formed out of a geographical or social context. In such a setting one may come to know the others and feel confident to ask and discuss questions, and also to learn more in a structured way. My informants also mentioned such groups as efficient training points for congregational members wanting to be evangelists, and these groups may also be organised in different categories. In the case of training evangelists, the groups provide good ground for further motivation, Bible training, and how to express oneself in one-to-one or group evangelisation situations.

All around China Protestant groups, registered and unregistered, organise training courses for lay people. Hardly any registered local or regional church centre being built or rebuilt in China today is without a floor or half a building to house lay training sessions. Also unregistered groups organise training courses, but naturally more low-key, in rented premises, but often with similar content as in the registered churches. Following this process is a growing and already strong general awareness of the need to put one’s faith into practice and “spread the Gospel” (*chuan fuyin* 传福音) to others. There is sometimes a straightforwardness in the manner of Chinese Christians that has some importance in this respect. Often you can hear people ask straight out of acquaintances as well as strangers:

3 I contacted a handful of ordained friends working within the framework of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, living in Central and Eastern China, and asked the following questions: 1) What is the most important method for preaching the Gospel?, 2) Do you have any special experiences to share?, 3) What role does preaching content play?, and 4) What role do individual meetings or small groups play? Their names will not be disclosed to protect their anonymity. Questions were asked by e-mail during August 2015.

“Why don’t you believe in Christianity? Why don’t you believe in Jesus?” (你为什么不信教呢? 为什么不信耶稣?). They may also go directly into an explanation of and discussion about how faith has changed their lives. While this attitude may not be applicable to all Chinese Protestants, it is of high prevalence in many different Chinese church settings. It is interesting to contrast such actions with the more restrained manner of mainstream European Protestants, and possibly the adoption by Chinese Protestants of a “by-gone” paradigm of evangelical Protestant ways of evangelising. It is therefore in a way both very un-Chinese, and in its straightforwardness still very Chinese. What is often perceived by Westerners as goodhearted and sometimes a little over-inquisitive curiosity from Chinese people, may act as an important factor helpful for reaching out to people and for spreading the Gospel. However, this aptness for outreach may also be linked to the lack of continued development in some Chinese church settings, where growth is limited to numbers but missing in depth and continuity. Lack of depth and lack of experienced leadership often hampers congregational development, at worst turning the group into a sect or a dispersing, failed congregation. This complex “field” or factor may be linked to the practical nature of Chinese religiosity in general, where praxis and rituals are sometimes more important than theological explanations and elaborate structure. Having said that, I concur that this point does not quite conform to the relative stability and progress of the Catholic Church in China.

Imbalance in Outreach

Besides the obvious foreign influence on Chinese Protestants through exchanges and visits, and also teaching at seminaries and at training programmes, there are also other more subtle influences that are more surprising. Despite the pronounced opposition of CCC/TSPM to direct foreign mission and also theological influence, the CCC/TSPM Council for Rural Work (Nongcun gongzuo weiyuanhui 农村工作委员会) in the 1990s produced “a small book series for volunteer training” (Yigong peixun xilie xiao congshu 义工培训系列小丛书) with five small tracts. In one of them one can find “18 points for explaining the Bible.”⁴ This book was published in 1996 and is based on a correspondence course publication, *Shijingxue* 释经学 (Hermeneutics), from 1993, published by Far East Broadcasting Centre (FEBC, Jidujiao yuan dong chuanbo zhongxin 基督教远东传播中心) in Taiwan. FEBC is exactly the kind of Western evangelical mission organisation that the party-state and the national CCC/TSPM usually renounce. However, due to the lack of well-structured and good material for lay teaching and training of local church leaders, this tract series was still published and used around the country.

To what extent this particular kind of Bible teaching has penetrated local congregations is more difficult to say, but as it was promoted by the CCC/TSPM it must have had certain impact. With a large percentage of the Chinese population still in the countryside it is reasonable to focus on “rural work,” but it is surprising that the CCC/TSPM still relied in the late 1990s on foreign material from a source they officially kept a distance

4 Yu Cheng 余成, *Nongcun shiyong jiangdaofa* 农村实用讲道法 (Practical Rural Preaching Methods), Nanjing: Zhongguo jidujiao xiehui 1996, pp. 92-144.

from. The registered church has yet to systematically deal with the more well-educated urban population and their spiritual interests, even if local congregations are aware of and deal with the situation accordingly. Information provided by my informants showed that similar methods of evangelisation are used in various parts of China, but this seemingly well-structured and methodical process of evangelisation still leaves some aspects worth further comment. The methods, tone, language and perspective of evangelisation emanating from these efforts are not (yet) perfectly suited for the needs of all groups, especially not the higher educated and elite in society. There is some awareness about this, but still much time and effort needed to come to terms with these issues. It is also related to the general academic educational level within the Protestant church, where few of the clergy have an academic degree. However, this is about to change as the CCC/TSPM in the last few years has promoted the idea of seminary teachers getting degrees, often abroad, and also implementing measures for conferring theological academic degrees in China. Until recently Jinling Union Theological Seminary was the only Protestant seminary to confer academic degrees in the PRC.⁵

One result of the lack of diversification and pursuing a further deepened evangelisation is what I would like to call “in-church secularisation.” This expression is a description of a kind of circular movement where curious seekers came to the church in the 1980s and early 1990s, became Christians and were very active, but since some years are less active. They are still church members, but church life is no longer the most important part of their lives. Economic development has changed their material conditions for the better, and they are now more like secularised European Christians. This group presents a challenge to the rapidly developing Chinese Protestant church. How to keep them in the church, how to re-evangelise? This aspect is often overlooked when analysing Chinese church growth, as only the growth as such is taken into account, not the following steps of development and spiritual growth, not just numbers.

Evangelisation to, among and from Intellectuals

Since the emergence of the so-called “Cultural Christians” in the 1980, with Liu Xiaofeng 刘小枫 (b. 1956) in the forefront, at least the registered Protestant church in China has adopted a rather ambivalent attitude to intellectuals and their non-conforming investigations of faith and theology. Liu Xiaofeng was among the first Chinese after 1949 to get a doctorate in theology, in Basel 1993 with a thesis on Max Scheler’s phenomenology. Liu was also a guiding star for other seeking intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s with publications like *Zhengjiu yu xiaoyao* 拯救与逍遥 and *Zou xiang shizijia shang de zhen* 走向十字架上的真, of which the latter was his “credo” as a “Cultural Christian.” These books are reflective introductions to Western Protestant and Catholic theology as well as literary works with spiritual value. Liu also adds comparisons to Chinese society and tradition,

5 The 2014 “Zhongguo jidujiao shenxue yuanxiao xuwei shouyi banfa shishi xi ze (shixing) 中国基督教神学院校学位授予办法实施细则 (试行)” (Implementing Rules for the Measures for Conferring Degrees at Chinese Protestant Theological Seminaries [for Trial Implementation]) are available at the CCC/TSPM website, www.ccctspm.org/news/ccctspm/2014/526/14526640.html.

giving Christian teachings a definite place in the Chinese context. Liu's and others' work from this time is not evangelistic, not even traditionally theological, but more essayistic and a kind of polemic for greater plurality in Chinese society, rooted in a private expression of faith. Only a few of the earlier "Cultural Christians" were ever baptised, but were hugely influential for the younger generation of students following in their footsteps. Liu Xiaofeng even envisioned a new kind of Christianity emerging in the form of "Cultural Christianity," and he borrowed Ernst Troeltsch's terminology, calling the established (registered) churches "Kirche," the unregistered churches "Sekte" and the "Cultural Christians" "Mystik."⁶

Among the younger generation were the well-known writer, critic and activist Yu Jie 余杰, author Bei Cun, law scholar and pastor Wang Yi 王怡 and a number of others. Although not evangelising in any traditional sense, what Liu Xiaofeng and other "Cultural Christians" did in the 1980–1990s still had a similar impact. Young persons became interested, curious and wanted to know more, to learn more. They often went through a brief similar stage as their forerunners, approaching theology and faith through culture, but then turning to Christian ethics and eventually theology as such, and also openly professed their faith.

While Liu Xiaofeng only seldom went to a regular church service, today the younger generation has established a number of unregistered congregations in the Central and Eastern parts of China, Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Chengdu, Kunming, Guangzhou and so on. In these congregations we find well-educated, well-articulated and very well-read young Christians, who in recent years seem to have a tendency towards Calvinism and Puritanism, most likely as a reaction to a demoralising society and various issues in other churches and congregations. Geneva at the time of Calvin and Zwingli seems like a model for these groups who are in a kind of spiritual resistance, deprived of their right to worship freely, with pressure from the registered mainstream church as well, and possibly with the notion of being elect, chosen, fitting well into their modern, intellectual but also Confucian inspired mind set. These congregations are very well managed, and often have an internal publication or website where sermons and other material are published.

These intellectual Christians are sometimes called "New Calvinists," sometimes "public theologians," as they are also preoccupied with the notion and role of a "public intellectual." This is a sort of side track to the mainstream Protestant development, appealing to many educated young elites, however not all. Calvinist structure and teachings may be one part of the attraction, but not really the "method" of evangelising. What is attractive are instead the seriousness, the efforts to live as they learn, and the loving and caring approach despite the comparatively harsh message, and strict church discipline is often practiced in these groups.⁷

6 For an in-depth study of the phenomenon of "Cultural Christians" see Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China*, Lanham: University Press of America 2008.

7 For more on this topic see Fredrik Fällman, "Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of Faith among Chinese Intellectuals," in: Francis Khok Gee Lim (ed.), *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-Cultural Perspectives*, London: Routledge 2013, pp. 152-168, and Alexander Chow, "Calvinist Public Theology in Urban China Today," in: *International Journal of Public Theology* 8 (May 2014) 2, pp. 158-175.

Interestingly, the above mentioned Yu Jie, Bei Cun and Wang Yi have put forth the notion of “evangelising culture” (*wenhua fuyinhua* 文化福音化), arguing that “for long, Chinese Christians, evangelists and the Church have seriously neglected the merits of writing, and the creation of Christian literature, music and art, as well as academic research.” Their aim is to reach the educated elite, and eventually to influence Chinese culture and society at large with the Gospel. Through writings, cultural criticism and artistic expressions such “public theologians” take part in cultural life and public debate, and at the same time express their Christian faith.⁸

One central Christian intellectual in contemporary China, the author Bei Cun, has helped in the promotion of another important factor for Protestant evangelisation in China, the Bible. Although not available in ordinary bookstores, the Bible is readily available in church run outlets in most parts of the country, and is increasingly referred to and acknowledged as important literature, if not primarily religious text. In 2004 Bei Cun was interviewed in the newspaper *Xinjingbao* 新京报 about his “best reads.” His first choice was the Bible, and he explained his choice in this way:

... this is a marvellous book. The notes on every page in the annotated Bible show the corresponding and mutually agreeing texts. For a book written by many persons over a thousand years ago this is very strange. If there was no Holy Spirit revealing it to the prophets then it would certainly be very difficult to achieve such a high level of unity.

Inspiration is not mystical at all, and for authors to create there must also be inspiration. It is only that the former kind [of inspiration] originated from the highest authority and enlightenment, not from man himself. Therefore the language of the Bible has authority ...

Even more strange is that it [the Bible] can provide [material] for scholars to do research, but it can also provide reading for old ladies in the countryside. It is not like a textbook; on the contrary it is more like a living entity, bringing a breath of life.⁹

Social Belonging and Faith Healing

One of my old friends in Beijing is a business consultant in his late forties, originally a middle school teacher from Fujian, later adding studies in English, French and business administration in Beijing. He is now a devout Buddhist, but grew up in a non-religious

8 The notion of “evangelizing culture” is inspired by ideas from Dr. Jonathan Chao (Zhao Tian'en 趙天恩) (1938–2004), an evangelical leader and scholar from Taiwan. Chao led China Ministries International (Zhongguo fuyinhui 中國福音會) and proposed to “Christianize Culture” in the Chinese setting. Quotes from “Fa kan ci 发刊词” (Foreword to the first issue), in: *Fangzhou* 方舟 2005, No. 1, (no publisher given), inside cover. (The publication *Fangzhou* was published by the congregation of the same name in Beijing, without official permission, therefore no formal publishing data in the print issue.)

9 Bei Cun 北村, “Bei Cun jian shu: rensheng shi du (yi)” 北村荐书: 人生十读 (一) (Bei Cun Recommends Books: Ten Reads in Human Life [First]), in: *Xinjingbao* 新京报 (The Beijing News), July 21, 2004, http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2004-07/21/content_1622311.htm.

family and was an active member of the Communist Youth League in his early adulthood. Some years ago he told me that his mother, who still lives in Fujian, had become a Christian due to the influence of neighbours and friends. In his mind it was more a choice out of social needs than a religious longing, but he indicated that she was now more “harmonious” and had a hope for her last years and thereafter, which he approved of very much, however without sharing her beliefs. This is an interesting example of how social belonging, community and comfort is part of the larger sphere of evangelisation, and possibly also the lack of social cohesion in the rapidly changing and developing contemporary Chinese society.

Community life, genuine belonging and a common commitment to the Church are factors not to be underestimated in the growth of the Chinese Protestant church. Traditional family structures and social life are less important in contemporary society, and socialist collectivist ideas and structures that might have provided some sense of social belonging are also gone, and the void has not been filled by any new nationally uniting idea. Here is a space for Christian evangelisation that only to some extent is filled today.¹⁰

In this respect I would also like to mention faith healing and miraculous occurrences. There have been many stories of miracles coming out of China in the last decades, mostly through evangelical and charismatic sources, often hard to corroborate. However, also in the CCC/TSPM context prayer for healing is a natural element, and in rural areas with lack of adequate access to health care many people turn to the church, maybe after first trying other possibilities but without results. Here is a factor of belonging and trust, possibly even if the outcome of the prayer for healing is not as expected, people may be attracted by genuine involvement and care missing elsewhere. Thus faith healing may be a factor, if not a method, for evangelisation in the Chinese Protestant Church.

“Disturbing the People”

As noted by my informants, and also based on my own observations and experience, “everyday evangelisation” through friends, neighbours and colleagues is one major method among Chinese Protestants. This can be done in many ways, but the straightforwardness and daring to ask about faith is a central point. Such an attitude may not always be well accepted, and for some possibly also disturbing. The Chinese party-state only condones “normal religious activity,” with “normality” conveniently not very well defined, therefore leaving space for interpretation. In later years the Communist party has even asked for religions to promote harmony, and Mr. Jia Qinglin 贾庆林, then CPPCC Chairman, said the following at a national seminar for religious leaders in Beijing in November 2006:

10 Recent studies show that social belonging in rural China is increasingly connected to religious networks, often related to popular religion, Daoism or Buddhism. See for example Qin Mingrui, *Vom Aufbruch zum Verfall. Der Wandel eines chinesischen Dorfes*, Berlin: Reimer Verlag 2002.

I hope that every religious group sturdily establishes a sense of calling, responsibility and urgency for promoting harmony as the important content in the work of religious groups.¹¹

Some years ago a friend of mine who is a Protestant minister and teacher of theology in a province in central China¹² suddenly said something strange when we were talking about evangelisation in China. She said: “We must disturb the people”. At first I could not really follow her thought, but later it became clear that she was referring to Acts 16:16-40 where Paul and Silas are detained in Philippi because they “disturb the city.” Her reference to Paul and Silas is thought provoking as it raises questions of what is “disturbing,” “harmonious” and also what can be the right methods for evangelisation.

The NRSV translation says in Acts 16:20-21 that “these men are disturbing our city, they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.” Driven by their faith they preached a message that was deemed “unlawful” and certainly not harmonious, but rather “disturbing.” After a sudden earthquake the prison doors broke open, and they were released and apologised to. Eventually their visit led to the founding of the first Christian congregation on European soil. After the miraculous earthquake the local magistrates found out that Paul and Silas were also Roman citizens, not only Jews as they first thought.

The original Greek text uses the word *ektarassó* (disturb), meaning to stir that which should be calm, also mentally or spiritually. As can be seen from the continuing text it is not so much a matter of adhering to “customs that are lawful” or not, but a message that stirs people. It was easier to claim “unlawfulness” to keep them out, and to keep the “harmony” of local society. Paul and Silas preached a message that had an apparent and direct impact on people, but the local power holders wanted to keep a “harmony” that they knew and could control. There are many parallels here to contemporary society and issues of identity, harmony and normality, just as in present-day China. My friend quite certainly did not mean to “disturb” people in the face value sense of the word, but rather to be straightforward and “stir” people to hear the Gospel.

11 “Jia Qinglin yu quanguo zongjiao tuanti lingdaoren yantaohui quanti chengyuan zuotan 贾庆林与全国宗教团体领导人研讨会全体成员座谈” (Jia Qinglin Talks with All Participants at the National Conference of Religious Leaders), website Xinhua wang, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2006-11/14/content_5329644.htm.

12 Our discussion took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in May 2006, during a church conference where this woman pastor was invited to speak. She works in the CCC/TSPM framework and prefers to be quoted anonymously.

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