

News Update on Religion and Church in China June 18 – September 19, 2013

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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 2013, No. 3, pp. 3-17) covered the period March 2 – June 15, 2013.

June 18, 2013:

Xi Jinping begins “mass line” campaign to realign the Party

According to the state news agency *Xinhua*, the Communist Party General Secretary said that the year-long campaign is intended to thoroughly root out unwanted work styles such as formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagance. He called on Party members to practice both criticism and self-criticism in the spirit of rectifying their style of working. *Xinhua* reports that the “Campaign on Mass Line [qunzhong luxian 群众路线] Education and Practice” is aimed at Party organs and cadres from the county to the top levels (*Asia Times Online* Aug. 13; *South China Morning Post* June 19; *Xinhua* June 18; qzlx.people.com.cn). See also the entry of July 30, 2013, in the “News Update” of this number.

June 20, 2013:

State Administration for Religious Affairs announces adjustment of electricity prices for religious sites

Until now, in calculating the price of electricity, sites for religious activities have been included in the category “industrial and commercial enterprises and others.” As part of a reorganization of the electricity price categories, on May 24, 2013, the National Development and Reform Commission ruled that, effective immediately, permanent and temporary residents of officially registered sites for religious activities (Buddhist and Daoist temples, mosques, churches, etc.) are to be included in the category of “resident population.” According to the Catholic news agency *UCAN*, this re-classification will reduce power costs by two-thirds. Five bishops belonging to the Political Consultative Conference had submitted an application in March (*UCAN* July 9; www.sara.gov.cn/xxgk/zcfg/21002.htm).

June 24 / August 19, 2013:

***The Economist*, *New York Times*: Internal “Document No. 9” sees “Western constitutional democracy” and “universal values” as threats to China’s Communist Party**

As *The Economist*, the *New York Times* and other media reported, a document issued at the highest Party level already back in April of 2013 warned that hostile Western forces and domestic dissidents are infiltrating the field of ideology. The document singles out as particular threats the propagation of “Western constitutional democracy,” “universal values,” “civil society,” “neo-liberalism” and “Western media values.” “Document (2013) No. 9 of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China” entitled “Circular on the Current Situation in the Field of Ideology” was not published outside the Party. *The New York Times* claims to have obtained a copy of the document and reports that since the adoption of the document state media have been denouncing “constitutionalism” and civil society. According to the *South China Morning Post*, since March of 2013, Chinese universities may no longer teach “universal values” such as freedom of the press and civil rights. On August 8 the *South China Morning Post* reported that at least sixteen persons involved in the “New Citizens’ Movement,” including Xu Zhiyong, have been arrested in recent months. According to the newspaper, the search for the phrase “constitutional rule” has been blocked on Chinese microblogs (*The Economist* June 24; *New York Times* Aug. 19; *South China Morning Post* Aug. 8; Sept. 4).

June 25–28, 2013:

100 representatives of Chinese house churches take part in evangelical “Asian Church Leaders’ Forum” in Seoul

According to a report on the website of the evangelical Lausanne Movement, following the government’s 2010 denial of exit permission to 200 representatives of Chinese house church leaders hoping to take part in the Third International Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in Cape Town, South Africa (see *China heute* 2010, No. 4, p. 223), it was decided to organize a special meeting for this group in Asia. This time there were over a hundred leaders of unregistered Chinese house churches among the 300 participants at the meeting in Seoul. Professor Liu Peng of the governmental Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was one of the speakers at the conference. According to the report, he said that Christianity has the potential to gain immense influence in China, and could help to resolve the moral crisis in the country. He added that China must adapt its outdated religious policy to the modern era. Pastor Daniel Li from Beijing suggested that China is in debt to the world church and that by the year 2030 it should send 20,000 missionaries out into the world to “repay” the approximately 20,000 foreign missionaries who had evangelized China during the last 200 years. Under the leadership of Pastor Ezra Jing of the Zion Church in Beijing, the Chinese participants adopted the “Seoul Commitment,” in which they undertake to love and to spread the Gospel in Chinese society, to accept one another in a spirit of unity, to join the global evangelization and to raise a new generation of young leaders (“Asian Church Leaders Forum Report” and “Symbolic Moment as Chinese Gather in Seoul,” www.lausanne.org, date not given).

June 26 and 28, 2013:

Bloody incidents in Xinjiang – official religious leaders call for peace

According to *Xinhua*, on 26 June sixteen knife wielding “religious extremists” killed 24 people, including 16 Uyghur and 2 police officers in Lukeqin Town, in Piqan (Shanshan) County, located in the Prefecture of Turfan. The police shot and killed 11 of the attackers. The Party-affiliated newspaper *Global Times* reported that two days later “over 100 terrorists” on motorcycles attacked a police station in Hanerik Township, in Karakax (Moyu) County, in the Prefecture of Hotan (Hetian), following a gathering at a religious site. *Radio Free Asia (RFA)* reported that, according to a local source, the Uyghurs were outraged by an earlier police attack on a mosque.

In July *RFA* also reported on a police search for Uyghur suspects in connection with a previously unreported attack on May 20, in which seven Chinese dam workers were killed in Karakax County. Only on April 23, 21 people had been killed in a bloody clash in Bachu (see *RCTC* 2013, No. 3, p. 11). On July 29 *RFA* reported that at least 64 deaths had resulted from the violent confrontations in Xinjiang since June 26. According to articles in the foreign media, land confiscations by the authorities and by Chinese firms have also contributed to the unrest in Xinjiang.

Among the countermeasures taken by the Chinese authorities was the attempt to mobilize religious groups to issue their responses to the unrest. At a July 1 meeting, the patriotic representatives of Urumqi’s five religions (the fifth mentioned was not Daoism, but the Orthodox Church which has government recognition in the region) condemned the “terrorist acts of violence” and called on all to support the government’s measures to maintain stability.

On July 3 a spokesman of the Chinese Islamic Association fiercely condemned the killing “of government employees and innocent people, including Muslims” by “violent terrorists.” The chief factors responsible for the violence are the “three forces” [terrorism, separatism and extremism], which pervert religious teachings, disseminate extremist thinking and incite to “holy war,” the spokesman said. He added that according to the teaching of the Qur’an and the Prophet, every Muslim has a duty to protect the peace and to oppose violence. Declaring that the struggle against the “three forces” is not an ethnic or religious problem, but rather a great political battle for the unity of the nation, he called on all Muslims to support the government in the fight against the terrorists. In the Prefecture of Aksu the mullahs issued similar appeals on television, in the newspapers and over the internet (*Global Times* June 29; *South China Morning Post* July 4; *Die Welt* June 30; *Xinhua* July 1, 3; Aug. 12; Sept. 12; www.rfa.org June 28; July 29; www.sara.gov.cn July 2, 3, 4).

July 2013:

Points East reports on first formal conversion to Judaism of Chinese descendants of the Jews of Kaifeng in Israel

The group of seven Chinese men came to Israel in 2009 with the help of the organization Shavei Israel. According to the report, they are the descendants of families of the Jewish community of Kaifeng (Henan Province). Following two years of the study of Judaism in Efrat and a formal examination, six young Chinese took part in the conversion rites in February 2013. The seventh had already converted earlier. One of them reportedly wants to continue to study and become a rabbi in order to help other descendants of Kaifeng’s Jews to learn more about their heritage. Another hopes to open a kosher Chinese restaurant in Israel. According to the report, Shavei Israel had already brought a group of young women from Kaifeng to Israel in 2006. The young women completed their conversion process within a year.

The organization Shavei Israel has as its goal the aim of reaching out to “lost Jews” in an effort to facilitate their return to Judaism, if necessary with the help of immigration to Israel. The group maintains conversion and training centers in a number of different countries. The Jewish community of Kaifeng emerged in the early Song Dynasty (960–1126) and was eventually assimilated into the Chinese culture which surrounded it. The Chinese government does not recognize the Jews of Kaifeng as a distinct religious or ethnic minority (*Points East* July 2013, p. 6; *Points East* took the report from the website www.shavei.org).

July 1, 2013:

In Mainland China, “filial piety” is now required by law

A newly revised law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, which came into force on 1 July 2013, among others, requires family members who live far away from their elderly relatives to visit them frequently and to stay in close contact with them. This paragraph was widely discussed on the internet and in the media with critics claiming that today’s heavy workloads and limited vacation days will make it very difficult for many people to pay regular attention to elderly parents who live far away. At the same time, it was said that the new law amounts to an admission that traditional values such as filial piety can no longer be taken for granted in modern Chinese society and that there is a growing number of elderly people living alone and neglected. However, the law also ensures a basic living and basic medical care for the elderly. According to statistics there are already 200 million people over the age of 60 in the PRC. A recent survey found that nearly a third of them are living in poverty. In addition, 33 million elderly are to some extent handicapped or disabled. It is expected that the proportion of the elderly will have doubled by 2030 to more than 30% of the population. One result of China’s “one-child policy” is that today a married couple between the ages of 30 and 40 might very well have to care not only for all four elderly parents, but sometimes even for one or more grandparents as well (*Global Times* July 7; *taz* July 3; *New York Times* July 7; *The Telegraph* July 1; *Xinhua* Dec. 28, 2012).

July 8, 2013:

Global Times: Chinese universities alarmed at rise of campus missionary activity

The Party-affiliated newspaper *Global Times* has reported that Marxist scholars, who conducted studies on the religious attitudes of students, have warned against the rapid growth of Christianity and against proselytization attempts disguised as cultural studies courses at universities throughout China. According to Ms. Xi Wuyi, a Marxism researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 60% of the students surveyed indicated that they had been approached and asked whether they would be interested in learning more about Christianity. The *Global Times* reported that the Marxist scholars were particularly concerned that foreign mission organizations seem to be promoting missionary activities under the guise of courses labeled cultural or religious studies. In this context, the US-based John Templeton Foundation was singled out by name. The researchers further criticized that some books published by university presses and some dissertations were theological in nature and did not properly belong to the realm of religious studies. The paper explained that public education institutions “technically” are not allowed to publish such books. It also reminded readers that there is currently a government ban in place on religious activities outside of approved religious sites, particularly in schools and universities. The article was referring to an internal circular issued by the Chinese government in 2011 warning against campus evangelism and against the foreign infiltration of the universities by means of

religion. The US-based organization ChinaAid had made public the text of such an internal document on Dec. 18, 2012 (see *RCTC* 2013, No. 2, pp. 7-8); the existence of that document has herewith been confirmed by the *Global Times*. The article concludes somewhat cryptically, saying that, although the concerns of the Marxist researchers were acknowledged, “it seems that for now the religious activities of students at authorized churches will not be affected” (www.globaltimes.cn/content/794610.shtml#Ukm1HfPwDcs).

July 9, 2013:

Inner Mongolia: Ethnic Mongol ordained to the priesthood



The newly ordained priest with his relatives.
Foto: www.chinacatholic.org.

In the church of Meidiliang in Chengchuan, Banner Etuoke in Inner Mongolia, the Mongol Urnud Dubuxin Amur (Du Buxing) was ordained a priest. Bishop Ma Zhongmu (the sole ethnic Mongolian bishop), Bishop Du Jiang of Bameng and Bishop Li Jing of Ningxia took part in the ceremony in the presence of 36 priests, 20 sisters, 18 seminarians and over 500 of the faithful from various dioceses. The local television station covered the ordination ceremony in a live broadcast (www.chinacatholic.org July 12).

July 14–18, 2013:

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) awards first top-level-domains in a non-Latin script – The Vatican has filed an application

ICANN, which coordinates names and addresses on the internet, has for the first time awarded two Russian, one Arabic and one Chinese domain endings at its session in Durban in mid-July (the domain ending is the last part of a URL or internet address which follows the period, for example, .org, .net, .de). The approved Chinese domain extension is .游戏 (*youxi*, “game”). In December 2012 ICANN had decided by lot on the order that it will follow in processing 2,000 pending applications for new top-level domains. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications’ application for the Chinese ending .天主教 (*tianzhujiao*, “Catholic”) then came in at first place at the top of the list. There was no news, however, on the recent status of this application (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* July 19; www.icann.org March 23).

July 15–25, 2013:

Summer course in Belgium on Catholic Social Ethics

53 Chinese priests, religious and laity studying in various European countries and in the U.S.A. have taken part in a ten-day intensive course organized by the Chinese College Leuven – an institute of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation. 16 priests and religious who had studied Catholic Social Ethics and Spirituality at the Canon Triest Institute in Belgium acted as teachers for the course. The aim of the course was to prepare the alumni for their future teaching positions in China. The content of the course was based on the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Verbiest Update No. 24, July 2013).

July 20, 2013:

Eighteen-year old Tibetan monk dies after setting himself on fire

The monk, Kunchok Sonam, burned to death outside his monastery in Zoege County in the Autonomous Tibetan and Qiang Prefecture of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in Sichuan Province. Almost a third of the 120 or 121 self-immolations by Tibetans in protest against Chinese rule since 2011 have so far taken place in Ngaba Prefecture (www.savetibet.org and the website of the Tibetan government in exile, www.tibet.net, give different figures). Altogether, however, it seems that the number of self-immolations in Tibetan areas has been declining somewhat.

On August 6, 2013, a 38-year old Tibetan monk burned himself to death in Kathmandu. His was the third self-immolation of a Tibetan exile in Nepal since 2011.

Since the beginning of 2013 courts have convicted a number of Tibetans of murder in connection with self-immolations (charges of incitement, aiding and abetting, etc.). On July 12 a court in Xining found the monk Tsultrim Kalsang guilty of murder on similar charges and sentenced him to 10 years in prison (www.savetibet.org; www.tchrd.org July 18; www.tibet.net).

July 20, 2013:

First “citizen proposal” for a law on religion is presented at a conference in Beijing

The draft proposal for a law on religion (*zongjiao fa* 宗教法) was developed by a team led by Professor Liu Peng of the non-governmental Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences in Beijing. Among other provisions, Professor Liu Peng proposes the voluntary registration of religious organizations as “religious legal persons.” The conference on “Religion and Rule of Law” was organized by the People’s Congress and Parliament Study Center at the Institute of Law, Beijing University, by the Institute of Law, Beijing Foreign Studies University, and by the Pu Shi Institute (*Jidu shibao* 基督时报 Aug. 15, www.christiantimes.cn/news/201308/15/11937.html; English translation: chinesechurchvoices.com/2013/09/04/draft-proposal-for-a-law-of-religion-unveiled/. See also the report in *China heute* 2013, No. 3, pp. 140-141 [in German]).

July 23, 2013:

Youth Catechism: YOUCAT appears in Chinese

In July the Chinese translation of the *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church* (YOUCAT) in traditional Chinese characters was released by the Kuangchi Cultural Group in Taipei. The YOUCAT was

first distributed at the World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011. There are also plans to publish the Youth Catechism in Mainland China in simplified Chinese characters. *AsiaNews* reports that the 304 page Chinese edition, which also carries the foreword by Pope Benedict XVI, is enjoying great popularity among young Catholics of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao (*AsiaNews* Aug. 2).

July 23–28, 2013:

Chinese youth attend World Youth Day in Rio

Among the throngs who took part in this year's World Youth Day in Brazil, there was a specially assembled group of 16 young Chinese coming from 10 dioceses across China. The delegation was composed of young people from both the official and underground Church who had either themselves registered on a website or who had been recommended by their bishop or by a youth group. Hong Kong was represented at the event by 29 young people who had travelled to Rio after six full months of preparation. On July 7 more than 300 youths joined them in Hong Kong's Cathedral for a "sending forth" Eucharist presided over by Cardinal John Tong. During the course of the World Youth Day event the Diocese of Hong Kong organized a number of liturgies for young Catholics who had remained at home. A Catholic youth camp was also held to coincide with the Rio event (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* July 20; *UCAN* July 17).

July 24, 2013:

Statement of the Diocese of Hong Kong demanding free elections by 2017

On July 24 the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong issued a statement calling for free, general elections by 2017 and pointing out that civil disobedience is justified within certain limits, as long as it takes place peacefully and without violence.

The governments in both Beijing and Hong Kong are concerned about "Occupy Central," a protest movement in the style of the "Occupy Wall Street" movement of 2011. Occupy Central, among others, was launched by a professor and a Protestant pastor, and is planning a series of peaceful protests and acts of civil disobedience in July of next year, aimed at paralyzing the financial district in central Hong Kong. In an interview with *Reuters*, Cardinal Zen expressed concern about the potential infiltration of pro-China protesters and about possible acts of violence that could serve as a pretext for the authorities to "crush everything."

According to the organizers, on the July 1 anniversary of the transfer of power to the People's Republic of China, 430,000 people gathered in Hong Kong to take part in a pro-democracy protest rally. As part of that event, around 450 faithful joined an ecumenical prayer service in Hong Kong's Victoria Park (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* July 6, 27; *South China Morning Post* July 2; *UCAN* July 8; *Vatican Insider* Aug. 27).

July 30, 2013:

Party newspaper calls controversial qigong grand master the "spiritual opium of some cadres"

Since the 1990s, 61-year-old Wang Lin, through his activities as a qigong master and healer, is said to have built up a network of contacts, among whom are to be found high-ranking cadres, businessmen

and other celebrities, including former railways minister Liu Zhijun, sentenced last July for corruption. Through this network he has allegedly accumulated great wealth. As the *New York Times* and others have reported, in July of 2013 there was a wave of accusations against Wang on Chinese websites and in the media, in which he was accused of swindle, tax evasion and connections with criminals and corrupt cadres. Wang Lin fled to Hong Kong, where he has a permanent residence permit.

On July 30 an editorial in the Party newspaper *Renmin ribao* attacked Wang and described him as a mirror of insatiable greed and the ugly spirit of some officials. They are weak-willed, unreliable at work and acting from a bad conscience they seek support in “feudal superstition,” the editorial said. It called for those officials who do “not believe in Marx and Engels, but in spirits and gods” to be brought to an abrupt awakening.

The *New York Times* opined that the attacks on Wang were to be understood in connection with the launch of President Xi Jinping’s “mass line” campaign for the ideological rectification of the Party (see the entry of June 18, 2013, in this “News Update”) (*New York Times* July 30; *Renmin ribao* July 30; *South China Morning Post* July 28).

August 2013:

Shanghai’s infamous Tilanqiao Prison to be relocated

After 110 years, the Tilanqiao Prison, located in the center of Shanghai’s Hongkou business district, is to be relocated to a site outside the gates of Shanghai. The existing building is to be converted into a housing and shopping complex. In the former British colonial prison – once the largest in the world and known as the “Alcatraz of the Orient” – many prominent Catholics were imprisoned over the years, including 200 members of the clergy. One of them was Cardinal Ignatius Gong Pinmei, who was a prisoner there for 25 years until his release in 1986. Another prominent Catholic prisoner was Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian SJ who was interned there from 1960 to 1962 (*UCAN* Aug. 2; *german.china.org.cn* July 12).

August 2013:

Diocese of Fenyang opens first Family Services Center

With the support of Bishop Huo Cheng, the Diocese of Fenyang, Shanxi Province, has established a center specializing in family services. It will be among the first of its kind in the entire Chinese Church. The *Shangzhi xinling jiaoyu zhongxin* 上智心灵教育中心 (Sophia – “Sapience Intelligence Educational Center”) will be open to receive anyone from any level of society who comes to the door seeking assistance with family problems. The center will offer individual counseling, ongoing education in groups, marriage preparation, help for married couples to achieve “personal growth,” help in parent-child relationships, in crisis management, help with internet addiction, cancer, etc. It will also offer a “hotline” with telephone counseling for people in distress. The center’s Director is Fr. Yang Weijie, a diocesan priest who is a certified psychological consultant and lecturer for the education of youth in the Red Cross. He has already given courses on related topics in a number of provinces (www.chinacatholic.org Aug. 8).

August 1, 2013:

“Good Samaritan” law takes effect in Shenzhen

The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in South China has adopted a special piece of legislation titled: “Good Samaritans’ Rights Protection Regulation of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.” The aim of the law is to provide legal protection to those who reach out to help people in need. In China, it often happens that people do not help those in need either because they were not protected from being sued for damages should the aid attempt fail or because of a general presumption in society that only the guilty helped. In recent years there have been frequent heated debates on this topic, especially following the case of a two year old girl who was twice run over in the southern Chinese city of Foshan in October of 2011. A surveillance camera recorded at least 18 passers-by who walked past the severely injured toddler without stopping. An elderly woman finally came to the child’s help, but the little girl died from her injuries eight days later. Among the law’s provisions, rescuers will be exempt from legal liability for unintentional injury or death unless grossly negligent; those making false claims face punishment; and there will be government compensation if a “Good Samaritan” dies or is injured while helping. In an editorial, the *South China Morning Post* expressed the opinion that once Shenzhen’s law is implemented, it could serve as a nationwide model (Aug. 4; www.stimmen-aus-china.de Aug. 7).

August 1, 2013:

Ningxia: New regulations on religious activities to take effect, including measures that prohibit participation in religious courses by school-age children

On June 3, 2013, the government of Ningxia, where many Muslim Hui live, adopted “Some Provisions on Religious Affairs in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region” (宁夏回族自治区宗教事务若干规定), which were to take effect on August 1. According to official reports, the provisions prescribe a “system for reporting for the [government] records” (in effect, a kind of registration) for any religious activities which extend beyond provincial boundaries. This measure applies to individuals and to groups, who come to Ningxia in order to carry out religious activities, and also to groups from Ningxia who leave the borders of the Autonomous Region in order to take part in religious activities elsewhere. In the case of individuals and groups coming into Ningxia, the measure is meant to put a stop to illegal proselytizing. “Scripture classes” (*jingwenban* 经文班) and other religious courses must also be reported for the record. The provision on “scripture classes” appears to be directed primarily at Qur’an lessons. Registration of children and young people in such courses is forbidden until after they have completed their nine years of compulsory education.

Although Chinese law stipulates the separation of religion and education, the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” do not forbid religious courses for children which are very common in other regions, such as catechism classes for children in the Catholic Church. So far, reporting for the record has been prescribed only for basic religious data like recognized religious personnel and holders of church positions, statutes, etc., not for individual religious activities (report on the website of the government of Ningxia, www.nx.gov.cn/zwx/zwdt/83333.htm; see also: www.guancha.cn/society/2013_07_31_162575.shtml for the text of the document).

August 4 and 31, 2013:

ChinaAid: Police take action against representatives of Protestant house churches in Xinjiang

The US-based organization ChinaAid, which supports house churches in China, has reported that in Xinjiang there was increased pressure during the summer on Protestant house churches which have not officially registered.

According to ChinaAid, on June 6 and on August 4, respectively, the police in Urumqi broke up services which were being conducted by Pastor Tan Wen. In June Pastor Tan had been sentenced to 10 days administrative detention and was fined RMB 500; following the August raid he was again sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention. On June 23 the police also broke into a house church meeting in Urumqi, whereupon one participant called Liu Xia was sentenced to five days detention. In all three incidents, the police officers who conducted the raids did not show official law enforcement identification.

In Xinjiang's Shaya County, according to ChinaAid, on August 31 four house church members were arrested for having organized summer courses for school children during the holidays. Each was sentenced to 15 days detention and a fine of RMB 1,000. In addition, says ChinaAid, the police and the schools also imposed fines on the parents of the children taking part (www.chinaaid.org July 22; Aug. 5; Sept. 4, 18; *South China Morning Post* July 24).

August 5, 2013:

South China Morning Post reports increasing “harassment” of Hong Kong Christians by the Mainland “Church of the Almighty God”

Immigrants from the Mainland brought the church to Hong Kong about 10 years ago, and there has been a push costing millions of dollars to expand the church beyond its 2,000 followers in Hong Kong. Kevin Yeung Tze-chung, Secretary General of the Concern Group on Newly Emerged Religions, was quoted as saying by the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP). Yeung said the origin of the money was unknown. He estimates that more than 200 Christians in Hong Kong have been harassed and have suffered mental injuries.

The Church of the Almighty God (*quanneng shen jiaohui* 全能神教会), which was known earlier as the Teaching of the Eastern Lightning, is said to have a million followers on the Mainland. It teaches that there has been a rebirth of Christ in the form of a Chinese woman and sees the Communist Party of China as Satan or the “great red dragon.” Reports have come out of Mainland China of the church's aggressive recruitment methods, which are rumored to include even kidnapping and extortion. However, Kung Lap-Yan of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, a scholar of religious studies, told the SCMP that until now there has been no hard evidence that the church has done anything illegal in Hong Kong and he prefers to refer to them simply as a new religion. According to him, the established churches call this new group an evil cult because they consider it as competition.

According to the SCMP, the Church of the Almighty God operates stands at various places in Hong Kong and distributes leaflets to passersby on the street. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's “mainstream” churches have been issuing warnings about the sect by means of lectures, brochures and on their Facebook pages. UCAN reports that the church has also gotten a foothold and is spreading in Macao and in Taiwan. This last spring, a coalition of Protestant churches in Macao purchased advertisements distancing itself from the group (*South China Morning Post* Aug. 5; UCAN April 10).

The National Assembly of Chinese Protestants adopted a resolution calling for resistance to heresies, and in particular for resistance to Eastern Lightning; see the entry of September 8-11, 2013, in this “News Update.”

August 7, 2013:

Underground priest arrested in Hebei

Thirty-nine year old Fr. Song Wanjun, a priest of the Diocese of Xiwanzi in the north of the Province of Hebei, was arrested by 10 police officers while driving in his car in the early morning of August 7 and taken to an undisclosed place of detention. Three other priests from Hebei were also arrested in August. They are: Fr. Shi Weiqiang, Fr. Tian Jianmin and Fr. Yang Gang. Recent years have seen again and again arrests of underground priests in the province. As the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong had already reported as early as April 13, 2011, since 2006 nearly 20 clergymen in the Zhangjiakou region (northern Hebei) have suffered illegal detention, physical and psychological abuse and were subjected to political re-education programs. In its report the Commission indicated that there had also been several cases of outright torture (*AsiaNews* Aug. 10; *UCAN* Sept. 3; www.hkjp.org/statement.php?id=109).

August 16, 2013:

Tens of thousands flock to funeral of house church leader Samuel Lamb in Guangzhou



Pastor Samuel Lamb.
Foto: Open Doors USA.

Obituaries called the late pastor, who died on August 3, 2013, “one of the most influential leaders” (*South China Morning Post*) and one of the “spiritual pillars” (*Jidu shibao*) of the house churches in Mainland China.

Samuel Lamb (Lin Xian'gao 林献羔) was born on October 4, 1924, in Macao. In 1945 he started to preach in Guangzhou (Canton, South China) and in 1950 founded the Damazhan Church – named after a street in Guangzhou. After an initial detention 1955–1957, in 1958 he was sentenced to 20 years in prison because he refused to join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. After his release in 1978 he re-founded the Damazhan Church. His church became Guangzhou's largest house church, counting around 5,000 participants for the main church services each week at the time of his death. In recent years, the church was permitted to function largely without state interference, but only after two decades of harassment by the authorities with constant raids and arrests of church leaders.

Tens of thousands of mourners flocked to Guangzhou to take part in the funeral, which was brought forward by a day and held under heavy police presence in view of the crowds that were expected to attend. A report in the *South China Morning Post* said that even representatives of the official church came to pay their respects to the veteran Christian pastor (*The Economist* Aug. 24; *Jidu shibao* Aug. 16; *South China Morning Post* Aug. 17; www.chinesechurchvoices.com Aug. 29).

August 19, 2013:

Bishop Jin of Shanghai buried at sea

At the request of the late Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian SJ, on April 27, 2013, his ashes were scattered at sea, in the waters of the port of Wusong, at the confluence of the Huangpu and Yangtze Rivers. Bishop Jin was the first Chinese churchman to have expressed the desire to be buried at sea. One hundred priests, Sisters and members of the laity accompanied the boat out into the harbor. A funeral Mass had been celebrated earlier in the chapel of the Bishop's residence, with Fr. Wu Jianlin as the main celebrant. In his homily Fr. Wu explained the Bishop's request by saying: "He wanted to fully unite with the love of God and to swim to his heart's content in the ocean of God's love." Following the scattering of the ashes at sea, there was a memorial Mass at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius in Xujiahui in which 200 priests, Sisters, members of the faithful and government representatives took part.

At the beginning of August, Fr. Francis Xavier Yao Jingxing, a former publisher of Guangqi Press in Shanghai Diocese, died at the age of 97 (*Xinde* Aug. 22; *UCAN* Aug. 19).

August 26, 2013:

The Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA) celebrates 60 years

Six hundred people, including high-ranking politicians, came together for a memorial ceremony at the Great Hall of the People. Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the Political Consultative Conference, congratulated the leaders of the CBA in the name of the government. Liu Yandong, Communist Party Politburo member and Vice Premier, called on the members of the CBA to exercise their role as a bridge between the Party, the government and Buddhist believers, and to promote "humanistic Buddhism," economic development and stability. On August 27, to commemorate its 60th anniversary, the CBA conducted a blessing prayer for world peace and the welfare of the State and nation in Da'an Temple in Xianghe County, Hebei Province. The ceremony was led by Master Xuecheng, Vice Chairman of the CBA, with representatives of the Han Chinese, Tibetan and Theravada Buddhism participating.

In the 1950s the communist leadership of China prompted the formation of mass organizations of the five major religions. The CBA was founded on June 3, 1953 (www.chinabuddhism.com.cn [official website of the CBA] Aug. 26, 27).

August 30, 2013:

The Chinese Islamic Association (CIA) celebrates 60 years

The memorial service took place in the Great Hall of the People with the participation of high-ranking politicians, including Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the Political Consultative Conference, and Liu Yandong, Communist Party Politburo member and Vice Premier. Liu called on the CIA to exercise their role as a bridge between the Party, the government and Muslims, and to promote patriotism, unity among ethnic groups and stability. The CIA was founded on May 11, 1953 (*Xinhua* Aug. 30; www.chinaislam.net.cn [official website of the CIA]).

August 31, 2013:

Pope Francis names Archbishop Parolin to Vatican's second highest post

On October 15, 2013, Archbishop Pietro Parolin replaces 78-year old Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone as Secretary of State of the Holy See. Parolin, born in Northern Italy in 1955, is a Vatican career diplomat with a Ph.D. in Canon Law. Since 1992 he has been assigned to the Vatican's Secretariat of State, where he filled the post of undersecretary in the Section for Relations with States, a post which would be equivalent to that of vice-foreign minister. In 2009 he was appointed Papal Nuncio to Venezuela. His appointment as the Vatican's Secretary of State is generally seen as a confirmation of Pope Francis' intention to reform the Curia and to strengthen Vatican diplomacy.

During his time as undersecretary for relations with states Parolin, along with others, was responsible for negotiations with Vietnam's Communist regime, which led in 2009 to the creation of a high ranking bilateral commission and in 2011 to the appointment of a non-resident papal representative to Vietnam. Relations with China were also part of his portfolio. *Vatican Insider* wrote that in 2005, after the beginning of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI, there had been a resumption of direct contacts with China and that Parolin led Vatican delegations involved in talks with the Chinese side between 2007 and 2009, talks which reportedly made progress at the time, but which came to a standstill soon after Parolin's 2009 transfer. According to Robert Mickens' account in *The Tablet*, the transfer to Venezuela took place after some critics claimed that Parolin was agreeing to too many compromises in his dealings with Beijing. In his article, Mickens wrote that under Parolin's successor in the Secretariat of State, Monsignor Ettore Balestrero, the Chinese side had been informed that the Pope would not sign an accord that had already been worked out. From 2010 onwards, Sino-Vatican relations have deteriorated drastically.

Many observers now expect that under the direction of Secretary of State Parolin it will be possible to resume the talks. An anonymous Catholic commentator from Mainland China, whose words were reported by *UCAN*, pointed out that the many fundamental problems between China and the Vatican, which had been building up over the last 50 years, will not be solved simply by the new appointment (*Radio Vatican* Aug. 31; *The Tablet* Sept. 7; *UCAN* Sept. 5; *Vatican Insider* Aug. 30, 31; Sept. 1).

September 1 and 7, 2013:

World Day of prayer for peace to also include China

On September 1 Pope Francis announced that September 7 would be a day of worldwide prayer and fasting for peace in Syria and for other regions in the world which are experiencing conflict. He also invited members of non-Christian religions as well as all people of good will to join in this initiative. In Mainland China, the Catholic newspaper *Xinde* printed an appeal by Chinese clergymen and faithful to all Chinese dioceses, parishes, convents, seminaries and charitable works as well as to the Catholic faithful to join the Holy Father in praying for peace with liturgies, fasting and personal prayer. Believers in many places throughout Mainland China responded to the Holy Father's appeal.

Apparently by mere coincidence, in an open letter on August 28 the Patriotic Association and the official Chinese Bishops' Conference had also called for a day of prayer for peace to be observed on September 1. They cited the 68th Anniversary marking the end of the Second Sino-Japanese (anti-Japanese) War and of the Second World War as the reason for this day of prayer. In announcing this measure they were responding to an initiative by the Commission of the Chinese religions for world peace, urging the five official religions to pray for peace, each according to their own traditions, on the

anniversaries of these events. It was requested that reports on the outcome of the initiative should be sent to the offices of the Patriotic Association and of the Bishops' Conference (www.chinacatholic.cn Aug. 29; www.chinacatholic.org Sept. 6, 8, 13).

September 2, 2013:

Hong Kong's Justice and Peace Commission asks UN to check on freedom of religion in China

For the first time the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong has presented a petition to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on the eve of the October 22 date fixed for the "Universal Periodic Review of China's Human Rights Record." With this petition, the Commission is urging that China should adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which include in their provisions the right to freedom of religion. Among other things, the request states: "The Chinese authorities have imposed political and religious policies that have been against the principles and practices of the Catholic faith, and that they have gravely violated human rights. This has caused the Catholics in Mainland China to split into the so-called 'Official Church' and 'Underground Church' communities. This brings pain and suffering within the Church." The request to the UN gives many examples of oppression and interference for both clergy and laity; of a lack of freedom of association and of demands to join organizations authorized by the government; of unlawful detention and house arrest up to inhuman treatment like torture (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Sept. 14; *Radio Vatican* Sept. 4; *UCAN* Sept. 3).

September 8–11, 2013:

Ninth National Assembly of Protestants meets in Beijing

At the convention of this highest assembly of official Chinese Protestantism, Elder Fu Xianwei said in his report that the number of Protestant Christians in China has now increased to 24 million. Fu Xianwei and Pastor Xu Xiaohong were re-elected to their respective offices as Chairman and Secretary General of the Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. For the China Christian Council, Pastor Gao Feng was re-elected as Chairman and Pastor Kan Baoping was re-elected as Managing Director. The 315 delegates adopted a resolution calling for "resistance to heresies and cults," which is specifically directed against the Church of the Almighty God (Eastern Lightning). They issued an appeal to all Protestants "to develop positive energy in order to complete the Chinese dream together." The delegates also approved a "Letter to the brothers and sisters in the Lord throughout the country." In addition, they revised the statutes of the Three-Self Movement and of the China Christian Council. On 12 September the delegates were received in the Great Hall of the People by Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (www.ccctspm.org/201309/; see the report in *China heute* 2013, No. 3, pp. 141-143).

September 10, 2013:

Memorial plaque dedicated to Jesuit Father Jacquinot in Berlin

The French Jesuit priest Father Robert Emile Jacquinot de Besange (1878–1946) in 1937 saved the lives of about 360,000 civilians, including 80,000 children, through the establishment of a security zone – the "Shanghai Safe Zone" – during the course of the Second Sino-Japanese war (1937–1945). Jacquinot



Memorial plaque dedicated to Jesuit Father Jacquinot.
Foto: Jiang Yuchun.

sons.” He died there in 1946 and is buried in Berlin’s Heiligensee cemetery. Following his death, in 1949 his concept of “security zones” was formally inserted into the protocols and commentaries of the Geneva Conventions. In honor of Fr. Jacquinot’s humanitarian achievements – who during his Shanghai years was in contact with John Rabe, “the good German of Nanking,” and helped him to establish a similar safety zone in Nanjing – on September 10, 2013, a memorial plaque was dedicated at Jacquinot’s grave.

This was done at the suggestion of Jiang Yuchun, director of the newly founded “Jacquinot-Rabe Friendship Association” (China) and International Communications Manager of the “John Rabe Communication Centre” (Heidelberg) (<http://klauspegler.de/texte/frohnu-frohnu/robert-jacquinot-de-besange> ; www.berliner-partner.de Sept. 11).

September 11, 2013:

Survey in Asia: A quarter of all men admit to having raped

Nearly a quarter of all men who were interviewed in a UN study on violence against women in some parts of Asia, admitted to having committed a rape at least once. Rape is particularly common within existing relationships. Ten thousand men from six countries participated in the survey. The island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea ranked in first place at 62%. In China, the percentage of men who admitted at least one rape was estimated at 22.2% (*BBC* Sept. 11).

September 17, 2013:

China Disabled Persons’ Federation: Many of China’s disabled live in poverty

On September 17, at the Sixth National Congress of the China Disabled Persons’ Federation, Zhang Haidi, the Federation’s chairwoman, said that people with disabilities are among the poorest in China, with 15 million disabled people in rural areas and more than 2.6 million in cities living below the poverty line. Moreover, according to Zhang, about 2.8 million disabled people in rural areas either have no home or live in unsafe houses. The Association wants to make sure that within the next few years

all people with disabilities will be included in social security programs and will receive a minimum wage. The disabled should also benefit from appropriate rehabilitation therapies. At the same time the chairwoman acknowledged the progress that has been made in the last five years in these areas. The Disabled Persons' Federation is also working to promote a better social standing of disabled people in Chinese society (*Xinhua* Sept. 17).

September 19, 2013:

Pope Francis donates mooncakes to Hong Kong jail inmates

Pope Francis gladly responded to Cardinal Joseph Zen's request for a symbolic donation for mooncakes for the more than 10,000 inmates in Hong Kong's municipal jails. The Pope's participation in Cardinal Zen's project triggered a wave of cash donations in Hong Kong. The Cardinal, who for the last several years has been overseeing the distribution of the traditional mooncakes to prisoners for the Chinese Moon Festival – which this year fell on September 19 –, made his request to the Holy Father in August. Pope Francis replied with a greeting card in Italian: "Dear Faithful, I gladly join with you to donate mooncakes to our brothers and sisters in the prisons of Hong Kong. Jesus will recognize us at the door of Heaven. Happy Moon Festival! I cordially bless you, PP Francesco." The Pope included a contribution for the fund. About 15,000 mooncakes were distributed to inmates in all of Hong Kong's 23 prisons, correctional facilities, rehabilitation centers and addiction treatment centers (*UCAN* Sept. 11; *Vatican Insider* Sept. 18).

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