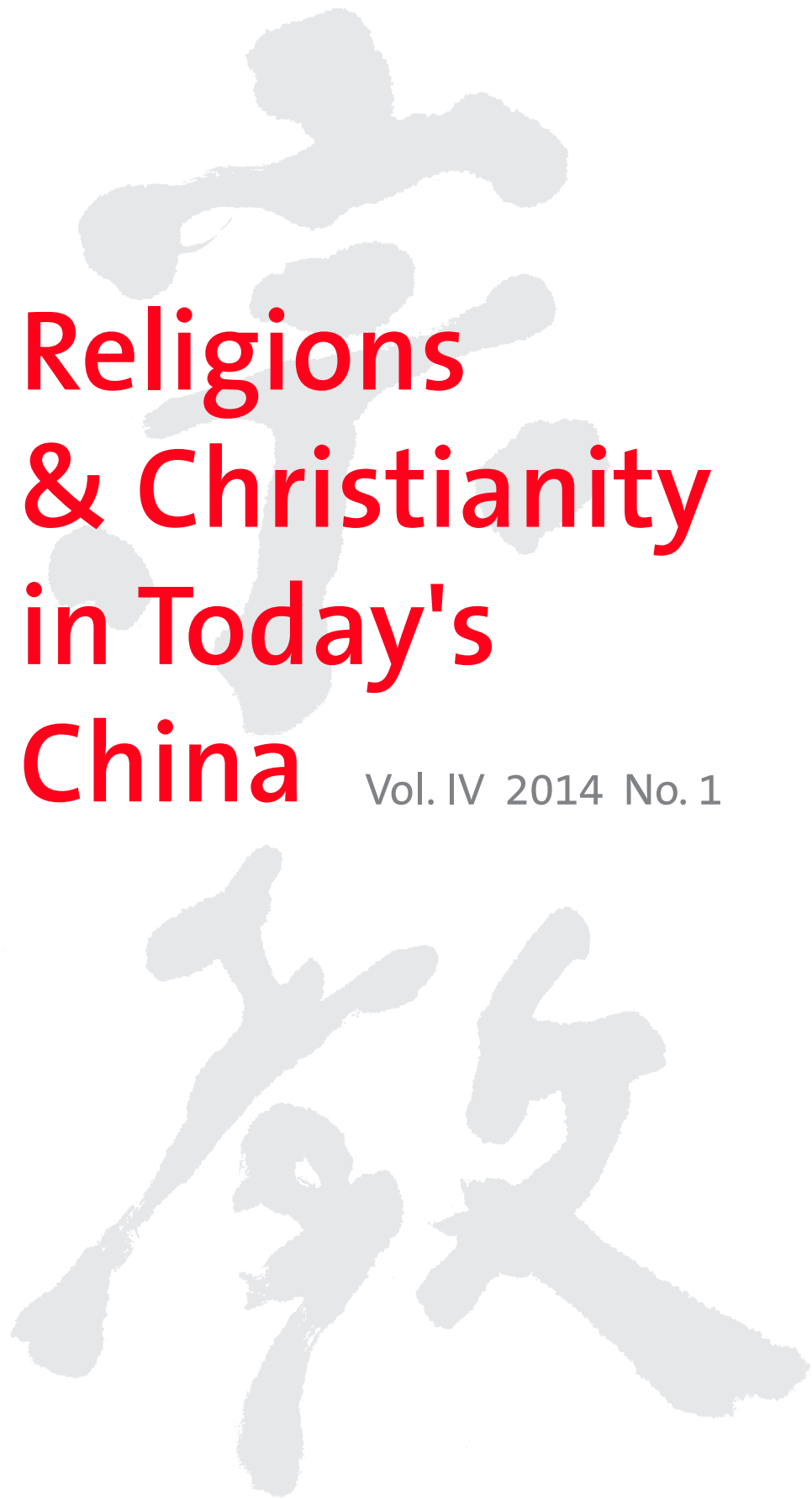


Religions  
& Christianity  
in Today's  
China

Vol. IV 2014 No. 1

中國宗教評論



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## Editorial

Today we can present to our readers the first 2014 issue of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论).

As usual, it includes the regular series of News Updates with recent events and general trends regarding religions and especially Christianity in today's China.

In his article "Relationship between Religion and State in the People's Republic of China," Prof. Dr. Zhuo Xinping – Director of the Institute for World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing – describes this relationship as neither integration nor separation of religion and State. The only relationship, he states, that ever existed in China was the primacy of the State and the subordination of religion. However, today this relationship is also influenced by present developments and the global context. "What role religion should or could play in the PRC, whether religion in China can be accepted as a normal phenomenon among the people and whether there is a possibility for politics to be linked to religion is still a matter of contention in China today. Of course all these problems may be discussed nowadays which shows that there is an open and tolerant atmosphere with regard to this question in Chinese society." In his conclusion Prof. Zhuo gives an outlook on three possible future developments of the complicated relationship between religion and State in the PR China, with the third – "realistic" – possibility in which the Chinese Government would give religion more freedom and maintain the existence of religion within the current framework.

The issue concludes with a report on the international conference "Catholicism and China: Dialogue, Inculturation and Responsibility" in Hong Kong in November 2013. The conference was jointly organized by the Yuan Dao Study Society (Diocese of Hong Kong) and the Centro Studi Li Madou (Macerata/Italy), with the Monumenta Serica Institute and the China-Zentrum (both in Sankt Augustin, Germany) as co-organizers. More than half of the participants came from Mainland China, both from State universities and from the Church.

*Religions & Christianity in Today's China* is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, [www.china-zentrum.de](http://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 in a voluntary contribution.

Sankt Augustin, February 2014

The Editors

## News Update on Religion and Church in China September 1 – November 24, 2013

*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](http://www.china-zentrum.de)). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2013, No. 4, pp. 3-18) covered the period June 18 – September 19, 2013.*

**September 1, 2013:**

### **Record numbers in the “minor seminary” of the Diocese of Xingtai**

30 new students were enrolled for the school year which began on September 1 – the largest group in recent years. A total of 70 teenage students are currently enrolled in the preparatory seminary of the Diocese of Xingtai (Hebei Province), which was opened in 1989. The seminary’s Rector, Fr. Zhang Jican, wants to emphasize the teaching of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation during the coming school year. Since its opening, the seminary has provided a secondary school education to approximately 1,200 minor seminarians (*Fides* Sept. 5; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Oct. 5).

**September 6, 2013:**

### **State Council approves document calling for accelerated development of the aged care sector – with stress on home care**

Since the number of those over 60 years of age will increase from 194 million in the year 2012 to 300 million by the year 2025, and the provision of old age care services is still inadequate and is very unevenly distributed between rural and urban areas, it is urgent to speed up development in this area – the State Council declared in its document. According to the document, it is essential to ensure basic care and services for especially needy elderly people; therefore, massive investment is needed in grass roots services for the elderly. Both individuals as well as families need to be supported in discovering their responsibility in this area, the document says. Otherwise, it puts emphasis on the development of market resources: the “social forces” should become the main carriers of the aged care sector and should be supported in the development of aged care facilities. To this end, equitable competitive opportunities should be created, bureaucratic obstacles should be eliminated, foreign investment should be encouraged, and both family businesses and small businesses should be encouraged to participate in



Volunteers such as this young woman from the Vincentian Fraternal Family in Hebei Province visit elderly people living alone in rural areas. They distribute food and clothes, help with laundry and cleaning, provide rudimentary health care and welcome personal attention. Photo: Vincentian Fraternal Family.

care for the elderly. The document states that by 2020, a comprehensive domestic elderly care network should be in place, with the neighborhood communities (*shequ*) serving as a link. The number of beds available in aged care facilities should reach 35–40 for every 1,000 elderly inhabitants. According to the document, among the important political measures to be undertaken are the training of specialized personnel and the involvement of charities. The latter should be a “major force” in the development of aged care facilities, in the development of care products for the elderly and in the provision of services for the aged. The document also provides for the establishment of volunteer services for the elderly. The volunteer efforts of government cadres, of employees of companies and units, and of students should be encouraged, as should self-help organizations made up of older people themselves (“Views on Speeding up the Development of the Elderly Care Service Sector” 国务院关于加强发展养老服务业的若干意见, can be found at the site: [www.gov.cn/zw/gk/2013-09/13/content\\_2487704.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zw/gk/2013-09/13/content_2487704.htm)).

Already on June 27, 2013, the Ministry of Civil Affairs had issued measures for the establishment and management of aged care facilities. In many places the churches and other religious groups in China are already taking care of elderly people who are on their own through home visits by volunteer groups, etc. (see, for example, the article by Joseph Loftus: “Walk before you can run’: The Catholic Church and the Care of China’s Elderly,” in: *RCTC* 2013, No. 1, pp. 16-23).

September 9, 2013:

## President of Turkey’s Department of Religious Affairs pays first visit to Xinjiang

According to Turkish news reports, in meetings with Wei Xinhui, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau of Xinjiang Autonomous Region, and with Nur Bekri, governor of the territory, Mehmet Görmez, President of Turkey’s Department of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), said that the more freely people can practice their religion, the easier it will be to achieve peaceful co-existence. According to state owned *Xinjiang Daily*, Nur Bekri in turn explained that in Xinjiang the official policy of equality, freedom of religious belief and the right to education and to the use of the local language and script is implemented conscientiously. He also said that the country’s policy on nationalities and religions is supported by the members of all ethnic groups. Görmez also delivered a public lecture at the Id Kah Mosque in Urumqi. From Xinjiang, Görmez traveled to Beijing, where among other activities, he was received by the Vice Prime Minister Liu Yandong (*Anadolu Agency* Sept. 9; *Xinhua* Sept. 12; [www.diyamet.gov.tr](http://www.diyamet.gov.tr) Sept. 10; [www.malaysianur.com/turkeys-religious-affairs-in-urumqi/](http://www.malaysianur.com/turkeys-religious-affairs-in-urumqi/); [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Sept. 13; [www.xjdaily.com.cn](http://www.xjdaily.com.cn) Sept. 11).

Turkey traditionally feels a bond of brotherhood with the Turkic speaking Uyghur people and it protested against the suppression of the riots in Urumqi in July of 2009 by the Chinese authorities (see: *China heute* 2009, No. 3, p. 143 [in German]). Since then, however, Turkey has been making intensive efforts to draw closer to China.

**September 13–18, 2013:**

## **Turkish Islamic Cultural Exhibition in Yinchuan – Görmez contrasts Islam in China with Islam in Europe**

With demonstrations of Islamic calligraphy, Qur'an recitations, dance and an exhibition, visitors in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China were provided with a close-up look at Islamic culture in Turkey. The cultural show was part of the official "Turkey Year" in China and was jointly organized by Turkey's Department of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), the Chinese State Administration [Bureau] of Religious Affairs (SARA) and the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA). In the corresponding official "China Year" in Turkey in 2012, Turkish citizens in Istanbul were introduced to Islamic culture in China (see: *RCTC* 2012, No. 4, p. 15).

Before the Friday prayers on September 13, Mehmet Görmez, President of the Diyanet, told Muslims in Yinchuan that they could be proud of themselves and of their ancestors: "While centuries ago when Muslims who set up great civilizations in Europe [...] were thrown out of their lands you in China managed to maintain your existence. Today there are no signs left of Andalusia, Kurtuba, Granada and El-Hamra that brought enlightenment to Europe. However, you maintained the messages of peace and compassion of Islam in your hearts, in [...] Ningxia, Yinchuan and all over China [...] for 13 centuries [...]" "Get on well with your neighbors and all other people in your country. Never abandon the path of peace," Görmez said. He also mentioned that for the last two years there has been a special effort at cooperation between the Diyanet, the SARA and the CIA which involves, among other things, the translation of Islamic works from Chinese into Turkish and vice-versa ([www.diyamet.gov.tr](http://www.diyamet.gov.tr) Sept. 13; [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Sept 15, 18).

**September 18, 2013:**

## **Taiwan: Religious groups hold press conference opposing same-sex marriage**

In a press conference of the "Taiwanese Alliance of Religious Groups for the Love of Families" various religious groups expressed their strong opposition to the legalization of marriage between partners of the same sex. Sixty religious leaders, including Buddhists, Protestants, Catholics, Daoists, followers of Tiandijiao, the Unification Church ("Moonies") and the Yiguandao, took part in the press conference. On October 3, 2013, the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (TAPCPR) made public its draft proposals for three amendments of the Civil Code. The proposed changes would provide for marriage for same-sex couples with the right to adoption, a civil partnership law and the registration of relationships between more than two people. The draft law on same-sex marriage passed its first reading in the Legislative Yuan (parliament) on October 25. While tens of thousands of participants in the Taiwan LGBT Pride Parade marched in Taipei on October 26 for equal rights for homosexuals, bisexuals and transsexuals, on November 29, other tens of thousands marched in protest against same-sex marriage (report by Willi Boehi; *Taipei Times* Sept. 19; [asienspiegel.ch](http://asienspiegel.ch) Dec. 2; [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw) Sept. 22; Oct. 27; [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw) Nov. 30; [newtalk.tw](http://newtalk.tw) Sept. 19; [tapcpr.wordpress.com](http://tapcpr.wordpress.com)).

September 25, 2013:

## Taiwan's Minister of the Interior inaugurates "Temple Stay in Taiwan" program

At a press conference in the Buddhist Ling Jiou Mountain Monastery in Gongliao, New Taipei City, Minister of the Interior Lee Hong-yuan (Li Hongyuan) unveiled the plan to open temples and religious houses for foreign and local tourists to have a live-in experience which will give them access to the multi-faceted culture and spirituality of the island. At the same time, the program aims at promoting local tourism. Among the first five trip destinations selected and recommended by the Ministry of the Interior, there are several Buddhist monasteries as well as the Mount of Beatitudes Catholic monastery in Kaohsiung (report by Willi Boehi; *Taipei Times* Sept. 26; www.moi.gov.tw Oct. 4).

Sojourns in religious houses in Taiwan were of course already possible before this program was launched.

September 27, 2013:

## Appeal hearing in Henan by members of the "Shouters" against their conviction for "cult" activities – another case in Inner Mongolia

30 members of the Christian-inspired group known as the "Shouters" were arrested on April 12, 2012, in Ye County, Pingdingshan City in Henan Province. On April 1, 2013, seven of them were condemned by the county court and sentenced to prison terms of between three and seven and a half years for "using a cult organization to undermine law enforcement." According to reports by the US-based organization ChinaAid, a September 27, 2013, appeal hearing in Pingdingshan ended without a verdict because the 14 lawyers (13 of them Christians according to the *Voice of America*) representing the seven accused did not return to the courtroom that evening in a bid to block a hastily reached verdict by the court.

In another case, on July 25, 2013, three members of the "Shouters" were also convicted in the district court of Yuquan, Hohhot City in Inner Mongolia, and sentenced to eight and nine years in prison. They had been charged with forming and using a cult organization in order to undermine law enforcement. They had already been arrested in July of 2012. As ChinaAid reported on October 13, 2013, the three have so far been prevented by the local government from exercising their right to appeal.

The "Shouters" (*huhānpai* 呼喊派) came into existence as a breakaway group from the "Local Church" (*difang jiaohui* 地方教会). The latter was founded in Fuzhou in 1922 by Watchman Nee and continued in Taiwan and in the USA under Witness Lee. The "Shouters" were banned in the People's Republic of China in 1983 and were declared a cult organization in 1995 (*South China Morning Post* July 7; *Voice of America* Sept. 25; www.chinaaid.org April 27; Oct. 7, 8; www.cnfxj.org).

September 28, November 11, 2013:

## Two Tibetans set themselves on fire in protest

The first case was a 40 year old family man in the Autonomous Tibetan and Qiang Prefecture of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in Sichuan, the second a 20 year old monk in the Pema District in Qinghai. Both died of their burns. Between 2011 and the end of November 2013, a total of 122 or 123 Tibetans have burned themselves in protest against Chinese rule, 104 or 102 of them died as a result (different counts

are found at [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org) and [www.tibet.net](http://www.tibet.net)). The number of self-immolations, however, has declined since May 2013.

In a November 20 address to the parliament in Tokyo, the Dalai Lama said that it was difficult for him to dissuade Tibetans from protesting by self-immolation: “I can’t ask them to act differently because I have nothing to offer them.” He called on the Chinese authorities to investigate why so many Tibetans have chosen this path (*Phayul* Nov. 21).

**September 28, 2013:**

## **Hong Kong Government sets first poverty threshold – 1.3 million Hong Kong residents are officially poor**

The Hong Kong government has set the poverty threshold at an income of HK\$ 3,600 (EUR 340) per month for a single-person household, not including state benefits. According to this standard, 1.31 million Hong Kong residents (19.6% of the population of 7 million) are currently living below the poverty line. One-third of Hong Kong’s elderly and one-fifth of the children are poor, despite the fact that more than half of those living below the poverty threshold have one or more full-time workers in the household. The *South China Morning Post* noted that Hong Kong, with 19.6% poor, is in relatively good shape in comparison with countries such as the UK, the USA, France and Korea, which calculate the rate of poverty using the same formula. It added, however, that after accounting for state benefits, only the United States have a greater percentage of poor. According to the newspapers, critics have pointed to the fact that there are no figures on poverty among people with disabilities and among ethnic minorities. A study by the University of Bristol and City University of Hong Kong came up with the higher number of 1.47 million poor and disadvantaged in Hong Kong (*South China Morning Post* Sept. 29; Nov. 2; *Xinhua* Sept. 28).

**Beginning of October, 2013:**

## **Underground Priests arrested in Baoding (Hebei Province)**

Two underground priests of the Diocese of Baoding were arrested in early October. According to *AsiaNews*, they were charged with having organized catechism classes for adults in Qinyuan City near Baoding. Fr. Tian Dalong and another priest, both in their forties, were arrested and since then are in police custody in Baoding, an area with one of the highest numbers of underground Catholics in China. Four lay people who had been helping the priests in their pastoral activities were each fined RMB 4,000. According to *AsiaNews*, at least 10 priests find themselves in a similar situation, with some of them having been sentenced to several years in labor camps (*AsiaNews* Nov. 19).

**October 6, 2013:**

## **LA Times reports on plan to restore the Old Synagogue of Harbin**

In February of 2013, the city government of Harbin announced its decision to restore the former Old Synagogue, built in 1909, which was declared a “national monument” in 2013. From the outside, the 450 seat synagogue is still recognizable as such. The interior, however, is unrecognizable, having been completely changed through years of use as a hospital and later as a youth hostel. The restoration promises to be difficult since the original building plans have been lost. The report does not specify what plans have been made for the use of the building following the restoration. The New Synagogue of



Harbin, built in 1921 and renovated in 2004, currently serves as a museum of Jewish life in Harbin (*Los Angeles Times* Oct. 6; [http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/Harbin\\_Synagogue\\_Restoration\\_Project.pdf](http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/Harbin_Synagogue_Restoration_Project.pdf)).

In 1931 there were about 13,000 Jews living in the northeastern Chinese city of Harbin. They had come to the city mainly as railroad workers or as refugees following the 1917 revolution in Russia. They left China after 1949.

October 6, 2013:

## Wenzhou opens its churches to typhoon victims



The Dongmen church in Wenzhou offered shelter to many during Typhoon Fitow.  
Photo: [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org).

Two churches in Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province) opened their doors to offer shelter to hundreds of people who had fled their homes during Typhoon Fitow, which raged on China's east coast. Those sheltered were mainly migrants who were provided with food and blankets. They stayed in the churches until the next morning. The parishioners took the opportunity to introduce the migrants to the activities of the Church and to show them a video on the life of Jesus.

During the typhoon season, churches in the affected areas frequently offer first aid to the victims. At the request of local governments, they regularly take in migrant workers and residents from zones which had been evacuated (*AsiaNews* Oct. 10).

October 11, 2013:

## Falungong reports that numbers of those persecuted remain constant

According to a report from the US-based *Falun Dafa Information Center*, despite the closure of some labor camps, the kidnapping and torture of Falungong practitioners in China is continuing. Lately, however, the majority of Falungong adherents are no longer being detained in labor camps, but in "brainwashing centers" and prisons, the Center said. It argues that the trend towards brainwashing centers is dangerous, since they are less regulated by law than the labor camps and officially do not even exist. According to a report on the website Minghui, which also belongs to Falun Dafa, in the first half of 2013, 43 Falungong adherents reportedly died from the effects of torture; 2,101 adherents were abducted or arrested; 14 were sentenced to labor camps; 445 were tried in court and/or sentenced to prison; 186 were transferred to brainwashing centers. During the same period, Falungong adherents were released from many labor camps, a move that Minghui described as merely a strategy to reduce criticism levelled at the system of labor camps. According to the report, since the beginning of the persecution of Falungong in 1999, somewhere around 11,500 adherents have been sentenced to prison and 25,400 others have been sent to labor camps (*Falun Dafa Information Center* Oct. 11; Nov. 19; Minghui.org July 22).

October 14, 2013:

## Christians and Buddhists in Taipei stage common protest against abortion

During the demonstration, more than 1,000 Christians and Buddhists shouted “abortion is murder” and other slogans and prayed in front of the presidential office in Taipei. They also handed over to the government a petition calling for the introduction of legislation requiring mandatory counseling and a seven-day period for reflection before an abortion can be performed. The demonstration was part of the U.S.-based “Stand for Life” campaign (*UCAN* Oct. 15).



Buddhist and Christian banners protesting abortion at the demonstration of October 14. Photo: *UCAN*.

October 17, 2013:

## “Global Slavery Index”: 2.8–3.1 million persons in China live in slavery

China comes in at no. 84 out of the 162 countries examined by the private Australian Walk Free Foundation, which ranks countries on a “Global Slavery Index.” India, with an almost equal population, rose to no. 4 on the index, with an estimated 13.3 to 14.7 million people existing in a condition of slavery. In addition to the number of people who are actually enslaved, the ranking also takes into account the incidence of child marriages and cross-border trafficking of human persons. For China, the report primarily refers to slavery through forced labor (also in the context of labor migration, including unethical employment agencies), as well as trafficking in human persons for the purpose of forced marriage. According to the index, there are around 30 million people worldwide who are living in conditions of slavery. For Germany, the number is estimated to be between at 10,000–11,000 (rank 136). The researchers say that according to their findings corruption, and not poverty, is the main factor for the spread and endurance of slavery around the world ([www.globalslaveryindex.org](http://www.globalslaveryindex.org); *Reuters* Oct. 17).

October 20, 2013:

## Chinese NGO Huiling receives international award

The NGO “Huiling,” founded by Teresa Meng Weina, has been awarded the international prize “Vittorio Colombo.” The organization’s members began opening schools for mentally handicapped children as far back as 1985. They were doing real pioneering work in the field and have had a great influence on the development of China’s social system and on local authorities. At present, Huiling operates more than 100 centers in 13 of China’s major cities. Government authorities see Huiling as a model for China’s social services and as an example for other NGOs to emulate. Teresa Meng Weina, president of Huiling today, wants to improve the work of the NGO which she founded and further strengthen the awareness of the needs of mentally handicapped people in Chinese society (*Fides* Oct. 31). *Jan Kwee*

October 21, 2013:

## ***South China Morning Post*: Indian Christian in Hong Kong searches in vain for a place to bury his wife**



The Chinese Permanent Cemetery in Aberdeen.  
Photo: K. Wenzel-Teuber.

The Indian, whose family has lived in Hong Kong for 30 years, has been turned away by many cemeteries on the grounds of his wife's ethnic or religious affiliation. In the Hindu cemetery, for example, where many Indians find a final resting place, no Christians may be buried. The church to which the family belongs is not a member of the Chinese Church Alliance, which is responsible for Protestant cemeteries in the city. The Chinese Permanent Cemeteries only accept the remains of ethnic Chinese. The family has also had no luck winning a burial plot in the lottery by which the city's public cemeteries make some gravesites available each year. The

woman died back in February of 2013. As the report explained, cemeteries in Hong Kong are exempt from the territory's anti-discrimination ordinance and can in fact reject applicants because of their race or religion (*South China Morning Post* Oct. 21).

October 22, 2013:

## **Chinese State Council's White Paper on "Development and Progress of Tibet" contains information on religion**

The extensive text contains two paragraphs on "Respecting and protecting freedom of religious belief." It says that the freedom of religious belief is fully respected by the Central Government as well as by the Government of the Autonomous Region of Tibet. In Tibet, "Tibetan Buddhism, Bon, Islam, Catholicism and some other religions coexist. [...] The majority of the people in Tibet believe in Tibetan Buddhism." According to the White Paper, there are 1,787 places for different religious activities in Tibet, with more than 46,000 resident monks and nuns and 358 Living Buddhas. The system of the reincarnation of Living Buddhas [for which the State Council issued special regulations in 2007] is respected by the State, the document says and continues that "so far, over 40 incarnated Living Buddhas have been confirmed through traditional religious rituals and historical conventions." [What is not clear is the time frame to which this figure of 40 relates (since 2007?).] The State "strengthens the administration of religious activities according to law, prohibits religion from intervening in the country's administration, justice system and education, and allows no individual or organization to use religion for illegal activities." The concluding remarks of the White Paper contain a criticism of the Dalai Lama (the text of the White Paper can be found at: [www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-10/22/content\\_17050578.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-10/22/content_17050578.htm)).

October 22, 2013:

## United Nations scrutinizes human rights situation in China

On October 22, 2013, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva held its periodic universal review process on the situation of human rights in China. The Council reviews the human rights profile of each UN member state every four years, though the results of the review have no binding force. A few hours before the meeting Tibetan activists staged a protest against Chinese policy on Tibet in front of the conference building. During the session, delegates of many Western countries intervened with comments critical of China. The German Ambassador, Hanns Schumacher, urged China to ensure freedom of opinion and expression – including on the Internet – and to continue to go ahead with reforms of the criminal justice system (in particular, the abolition of the “re-education through labor” camps). He also called on China “to further reduce the number of crimes carrying the death penalty, publish figures on death verdicts and executions and inform a public debate with a view to a moratorium and eventual abolition.” During the course of the review, there were also countries that offered a positive assessment including various African countries which for years have been receiving significant support from China. In making his own country’s position known to the Council, China defended its human rights record, pointing to, among other things, improvements in social and economic rights. UN inspectors reported that at the last four-year review China had accepted recommendations to strengthen its engagement with civil society so as to protect human rights – this according to a report by *Reuters* (*BBC News China* Oct. 22; *Reuters* Oct. 16, 22; *The Epoch Times* Oct. 24.; see also entry of Nov. 12). In advance of the review, the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Diocese of Hong Kong had for the first time turned to the UN Human Rights Council with a petition which included the request to check issues of freedom of religion – particularly in the Catholic area.

October 24, 2013:

## Contradictory signals: Shanghai Auxiliary Bishop appears at funeral, while Shanghai seminarian is ordained by the Bishop of Haimen

Bishop Ma Daqin announced his withdrawal from the Patriotic Association at his consecration as bishop in July of 2012 and has since been largely restricted by the authorities in his freedom of movement. He was later formally removed from office and has not been allowed to appear in public. Nevertheless, he showed up on October 24 at the funeral service for Shen Baoyi, who had been Ma’s predecessor as editor-in-chief of the Shanghai diocese’s Guangqi publishing house.



Thaddeus Ma Daqin preaching at Sheshan in May of 2012, prior to his consecration as Bishop. Photo: *UCAN*.

In connection with this story, *UCAN* reported that the continuous restrictions of Bishop Ma’s movements to the Sheshan Major Seminary for the last 14 months seem to have been relaxed somewhat in recent months. Citing an anonymous source, the agency also said that last July, accompanied by government officials, Bishop Ma visited the Jinggangshan revolutionary memorial as a symbolic gesture of repentance to the authorities.

Also, on October 24, Bishop Shen Bin of Haimen ordained Shanghai seminarian Xie Huimin to the priesthood. He had ordained him to the diaconate the previous day. As reported

by *AsiaNews*, readers of Chinese Catholic websites called for Ma’s release so that he would be able to preside over the ordination himself (*AsiaNews* Oct. 25; *UCAN* Oct. 31).

On October 8 Bishop Ma published on his blog a reflection on *Lumen Fidei*, the encyclical letter written by Pope Francis. The reflection quickly disappeared from his blog after having been accessible only a short while. Since then, Bishop Ma has not been permitted to publish any new posts on his blog, although he is being allowed to publish a short daily Scripture reflection on his Weibo account.

October 26–27, 2013:

## Conference of Chinese NGOs which care for orphans

A total of 47 NGOs from all over China specializing in the care of orphaned children and in the running of orphanages took part in a conference in Beijing on the care and raising of orphaned children. The conference was jointly organized by the Catholic Jinde Charities and the Protestant Amity Foundation. A representative of the Ministry of Civil Affairs presented the policies of the Chinese government concerning this matter, policies which had been put in place in early 2013 to provide for stricter supervision of private orphanages after a disaster claimed the lives of orphans. Other speakers included professors, specialists from China and abroad, including Sister Wang Qingfen, who is in charge of the Liming Family, as well as representatives of NGOs from all five of the government recognized religions. The Liming Family includes orphanages, rehabilitation centers and groups which prepare young people with disabilities for employment (www.chinacatholic.org Sept. 5; Nov. 7). *Jan Kwee*

October 27, 2013:

## Tianjin: Catholic Converts go on pilgrimage

A group of 40 Catholics who had recently converted from the Protestant church to the Catholic faith, set out on a pilgrimage to the parish church of Yixingfu in the Diocese of Tianjin. They belong to the Cathedral parish of Tianjin. In his homily, Fr. Yuan, parish priest of Yixingfu, explained among other things the structure of the ecclesial hierarchy and the nature of the Catholic Church. The new Catholics also had the opportunity to get to know the community life and the various pastoral activities of the Catholic parish of Yixingfu (*Fides* Nov. 6).

October 28, 2013:

## 5 dead in attack by three Uyghurs at Tian'anmen Square – video of “Turkistan Islamic Party” claims responsibility

On October 28, a jeep loaded with cans of petrol plowed into a bridge pier directly in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace and burst into flames. The occupants of the jeep, a Uyghur man and his wife and mother, died in the blaze as did two tourists. Forty people, including four foreign tourists, were injured. The authorities later arrested five Uyghurs in Beijing.

According to *Reuters*, on November 22, the US-based “SITE Intelligence Group,” which monitors terrorist forums, posted a video online in which the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) claimed responsibility for that attack and issued a threat to launch attacks against other targets including the Great Hall of the People. On November 25, the Chinese government spokesman Qin Gang identified the TIP with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). The Chinese authorities had previously referred to ETIM as being behind the attack, although non-Chinese media had quoted Uyghur scholars in Beijing who expressed doubts about this. The United States has listed the ETIM as a terrorist group since 2002. *Xinhua* reports indicate that according to police there were 190 violent and terrorist incidents in Xinjiang

in 2012, significantly more than in the previous year (*China Daily* Nov. 26; *Global Times* Nov. 26; *Kyodo* Nov. 1, 3; *Reuters* Nov. 23; *South China Morning Post* Nov. 1, 3; *Die Welt* Oct. 29; Nov. 17; *Xinhua* Oct. 30, 31; Nov. 4, 29).

On the violent incidents in Xinjiang during 2013, see: *RCTC* 2013, No. 3, p. 11; No. 4, p. 5.

October 28, 2013:

## Bishop Peter Liu Guandong (Diocese of Yixian) dies at 94



Bishop Liu Guandong in the year 2006.  
Photo: UCAN.

Bishop Liu was born in 1919 in Qingyuan County of the Province of Hebei and was ordained a priest in 1945. He spent almost 30 years of his life in prison and in labor camps. In 1982 he was secretly consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Yixian (Hebei Province) and in 1986 he became the Ordinary there. After Bishop Liu organized the establishment of a Bishops' Conference of the Underground Church in 1989, he was sentenced to a further three years in a labor camp. In 1994 he suffered a stroke and resigned from all his posts, he was nevertheless placed under house arrest in his home town of Weigezhuang. Bishop Liu eventually managed to slip away from the surveillance around his home in 1997, and from then until his recent death he remained in hiding (*AsiaNews* Nov. 8; *Fides* Nov. 13; *UCAN* Nov. 5).

October 31, 2013:

## Prizes awarded to Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hongkong



Honored for his service of companionship:  
Cardinal Zen. Photo: UCAN.

At a ceremony in Vancouver, Canada, the Cardinal received Canada's "John Diefenbaker Defender of Human Rights and Freedom Award" for 2013. According to the Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird, who presented the award, Canada was honoring Cardinal Zen for his unwavering commitment to human rights, democracy and freedom of religion – both in Hong Kong as well as for Mainland China. On October 23, the Divinity School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong presented Cardinal Zen with its "Lifetime Companionship Award" in recognition of his decades of pastoral concern for Hong Kong's prison inmates. Since the early 1960s, the Cardinal regularly

visited prisoners in the different prisons. Even after his retirement in 2009 he continues to visit inmates twice a month. In September Cardinal Zen invited Pope Francis to participate in the annual tradition of distributing mooncakes to all of Hong Kong's detainees (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Nov. 2, 9; *UCAN* Oct. 23; see also *RCTC* 2013, No. 4, p. 18).

November 7, 2013:

## Last group of Chinese pilgrims to Mecca return from the Hajj – Fewer pilgrims than in previous years

According to figures released by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA), a total of 11,800 Muslim pilgrims took part in this year's Hajj to Mecca. The SARA took charge of the coordination between the various authorities that was necessary for the pilgrimage and, together with the Chinese Islamic Association, assembled a team of several hundred leaders, doctors, chefs and volunteers to look after the needs of the pilgrims ([www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Nov. 7).

In the year of 2013, the number of Chinese from the PRC making the pilgrimage to Mecca was lower than in previous years. According to official data, in 2012, 13,800 Chinese Muslims took part in the Hajj; in 2011, 13,700; and in 2010, 13,000. Pilgrimages to Mecca which are not officially organized by the SARA are not allowed.

November 12, 2013:

## Party Congress: Central Committee plenum votes to abolish “re-education through labor” and to ease state birth planning rules

At the conclusion of its November 9–12 plenary assembly, the Central Committee of China's Communist Party published a communiqué containing decisions on a total of 60 different topics. Paragraph 34 provides for, among other things, the abolition of the system of “re-education through labor” as well as the gradual reduction of the number of crimes punishable by the death penalty. The system of “re-education through labor” (*laodong jiaoyang* 劳动教养), which had been introduced in 1957 to deal with “lesser crimes,” allows a person to be sentenced to up to four years in a labor camp by the police, without judicial process. Civil rights activists, members of Falungong and members of other persecuted religious groups have also been sent to the labor camps. Due to lack of supervision, the system is particularly vulnerable to arbitrary decisions and to outright abuse. Recently, it has also been critically discussed in the state-controlled media. Party Congress deputies have been calling for a reform of the system since before the last meeting of the National People's Congress in early 2013 (see: *RCTC* 2013, No. 2, p. 11).

Although the state's current birth planning policies will generally be maintained, according to the communiqué in future also families in which only one of the parents is an only child will be permitted to have two children (paragraph 46). In the past, it was required that both of the parents be single children. There will be special regulations in place for rural populations and for ethnic minorities (*Die Welt* Nov. 15; [news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/15/c\\_118164235.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/15/c_118164235.htm)).

November 12, 2013:

## People's Republic of China elected to UN Human Rights Council

Beginning in January 2014, China will again be a member of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. On November 12, along with Russia, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Algeria, China received enough votes to be included in the list of the 47 alternating member-countries which make up the council. Protests by human rights activists failed to change the outcome. Countries are elected to the Council for a period of three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms. Thus several states, among them China, after six years on the Council had to pause.

Human Rights Watch had noted beforehand that China is among the states which have refused to allow UN inspectors into the country to examine various prosecution cases (*South China Morning Post* Nov. 13; *UN News Centre* Nov. 12; *www.zeit.de* Nov. 12).

**November 16/17, 2013:**

### **Pastor and more than 20 members of an officially registered Protestant church arrested in Nanle (Henan Province)**

According to reports by the organization ChinaAid, Pastor Zhang Shaojie was the first one arrested on November 16 while meeting in his church with the head of the public security bureau of the Nanle County. Later on, the authorities also arrested other members of the church. Lawyers hired by the church were then hindered in their attempts to meet with their clients, the organization said; more than a week after the arrests, no formal charges had yet been brought in most of the cases and the families of those arrested had been given no information about where they were being detained. ChinaAid reported that a few years ago the local government of the Nanle County (Puyang City, Henan Province) had compelled all the house churches in Nanle to register with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, had coerced Pastor Zhang Shaojie into accepting the position as chairman of the local Three-Self Church and forced him to become a member of the county's Political Consultative Conference. According to ChinaAid, church members have expressed the suspicion that the government now wants to get rid of Pastor Zhang as Three-Self chairman, since he has often involved himself with marginalized social groups. In a November 27 call for help by members of the church, which ChinaAid made public, they stated that the problems had started after church members had travelled to Beijing to present petitions concerning certain incidents that had occurred with regard to church property. The church is said to have more than 40 different places of assembly in Nanle County (*AsiaNews* Nov. 21.; *UCAN* Nov. 25; *www.chinaaid.org* Nov. 17, 19, 22, 27 and 30).

**November 24, 2013:**

### **Solemnity of Christ the King: Catholic parish communities throughout China celebrate the conclusion of the “Year of Faith”**

Many dioceses and parishes throughout China observed the Year of Faith, which Pope Benedict XVI had inaugurated on October 11, 2012, with a variety of different initiatives. One focus of all of the activities was the propagation of the faith. To mark the conclusion of the year-long initiative on the Solemnity of Christ the King, special activities and presentations were organized in many places (see report in *China heute* 2013, No. 4, pp. 200-201 [in German]).

This “News Update” was first published in *China heute* 2013, No. 4, pp. 206-212 (in German). Unless otherwise indicated, all source references in the “News Update” refer to the year 2013.



## Relationship between Religion and State in the People's Republic of China

Zhuo Xinping

Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge

### Introduction



Prof. Dr. Zhuo Xinping during his lecture on April 11, 2013 in Sankt Augustin. Photo: China-Zentrum.

Chinese society is currently in the midst of a globalizing process that has brought about a major change in relations between China and the rest of the world. The Chinese are now experiencing a tension between opening up to the contemporary world and the preservation of their own traditions. This tension is also felt in the sphere of the understanding of religion. A variety of religions are currently developing very actively in the PRC and there are also differing opinions about religion. Even though in today's China religion is regarded from the viewpoint of globalization and is positively evaluated more often than in former times, the main attention is still focused on its relation to the State. The Chinese observe the relationship between religion and State in the contemporary world, especially in western states, and also speak of different types of relationships such as the

integration of religion and State or the separation of religion and State. Referring to these types, the PRC insists that its principle for this relationship is the separation of religion and State. For religion in China is a private matter and there is no State religion. The mat-

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr. Zhuo Xinping, Director of the Institute for World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, gave this lecture at the 13th Annual Academy of the China-Zentrum in Sankt Augustin on April 11, 2013. The Annual Academy was, at the same time, a Jubilee event marking 25 years of the China-Zentrum e.V. The German original "Die Beziehung zwischen Religion und Staat in der Volksrepublik China" was published in *China heute* 2013, No. 3, pp. 165-170.

ter is not that simple, however. If we look at the actual form of this relationship, we realize that according to western standards religion in China is not a private affair after all and that there is something similar to a State religion. The western theory of the relationship between religion and State does not, therefore, adequately explain this relationship in China. We cannot understand the true relationship between religion and State in China by means of the western theory, rather we find ourselves in an impasse.

To work out the actual facts of this relationship in China we ought to take note of the discussions that have been taking place in China on religion, faith, politics and Chinese characteristics. With the opening of China to the outside world it is now also possible to make comparisons and to address new questions. The rapid resurgence of religions in present day China mirrors the interaction between the globalized world and the ongoing reforms in China. Under this influence of globalization, religions in China have become more open and transparent. But this change has, at the same time, brought up questions regarding the concept and position of religion in Chinese society. In this process, there have been efforts to interpret the relationship of religion and State in China anew. According to my analysis the complex relationship between religion and State in China can be examined under four aspects, namely the relationships between politics and religion, law and religion, society and religion, and culture and religion. These four aspects of relationship are not static but affect each other mutually. The relationship between politics and religion, however, is the most important. What role religion should or could play in the PRC, whether religion in China can be accepted as a normal phenomenon among the people and whether there is a possibility for politics to be linked to religion is still a matter of contention in China today. Of course all these problems may be discussed nowadays which shows that there is an open and tolerant atmosphere with regard to this question in Chinese society.

In reality there is a totally different norm underlying the relationship between religion and State in the PRC which cannot be explained by the western theory of religion and State and yet against the background of Chinese tradition is comprehensible and acceptable. This relationship mirrors the continuity of the old Chinese tradition but is also influenced by present developments and the global context. This leads to the possibility and the hope of change and improvement in the present. To understand the relationship between religion and State in the PRC correctly, we have first to take note of this tradition in China and then turn our attention to its development and change in the present.

## I. The System of the Unitary State and Chinese Religions

The principle of the unitary State as a cultural belief is still accepted and supported by the Chinese people in present day China. Even though there are changes in the international setting and also from the influence of political systems such as federalism and power-sharing, State unity and the centralization of political power have remained the basic structure of Chinese society. In comparison to western societies it seems as though the Chinese government is more efficient in the organization of society. Whereas, for instance, the western nations are currently in the midst of an economic crisis, under this structure the economy

in China is still developing rapidly. The system of the unitary State also requires a unified ideology. State unity, therefore, is also closely connected to unity of thought. Social order and stability are very important for this. That is to say they are the precondition for social development and must be assured.

Within this context there has been much thought about the significance and function of religion in society. Religion is by no means a minor matter. That is valid for all Chinese religions. They have their own position in this structure and must, therefore, also play their political, societal, cultural and conceptual role. This means that religion is not a private matter and that all religions belong to the State. Throughout the history of China until today there has never been either an integration of State and religion in which religion played a leading role, or a so-called separation of State and religion. The only relationship between State and religion that ever existed in China was the primacy of the State and the subordination of religion. It was never the other way round. Religion has to be an aid for the State. That is, thus, the secret of the harmony between the State and religion. The religious structure is subordinate to the State structure. In reality there are not two structures but one. The religious structure is part of the State structure. Patriotism and religious freedom in China have to be understood within this structure. Loyalty to the State came and still comes in first place, then only comes loyalty to a specific religion. The religious organizations were, and until today still are, as a matter of course under the control of the State and many religious leaders were and are at the same time State officials. But the Head of State was always a secular sovereign like the Emperor or king and never a religious priest.

State control of religion was and still is exercised today by the competent, supervisory authorities in the State administration such as, for example, the Fanfang 蕃坊 (Bureau for the Administration of Foreigners) in the Tang Dynasty, the Xuanzhengyuan 宣政院 (Office for Buddhism), the Jixianyuan 集賢院 (Office for Daoism), the Chongfusi 崇福司 (Department for Christianity) and the Huihuihadisi 回回哈的司 (Department for Islam) in the Yuan Dynasty, the Libu 禮部 (Rites Ministry for Buddhism and Daoism) and the Siyiguan 四夷館 (Government Office for Minority Religions) in the Ming Dynasty, the Lifanyuan 理藩院 (Government Office for Minority Religions) in the Qing Dynasty, the Meng-Zang weiyuanhui 蒙藏委員會 (Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs) in the Republic of China and the Zongjiaoju 宗教局 (Bureau for Religious Affairs) in the PR China. Against the background of this political structure and its associated tradition, we can understand why, while the Vatican speaks about freedom of religion in disputes over the appointment of bishops in the Catholic Church in China, the Chinese government claims the appointment of bishops as the sovereign right of the State.

## II. Marxism and Influence of Confucianism

Over the past one hundred years, Marxism has taken over the leading function in Chinese society from Confucianism. Until today Marxism is China's principle ideology. This principle role of Marxism means that Confucianism is no longer the leading political or cultural theory for the Chinese people. At the same time it does not make any difference

to them whether Confucianism is a religion or not. Portraits of Marx and Engels, for example, were displayed for over 60 years at Tian'anmen without causing any problems, but a statue of Confucius in front of the Chinese Historical Museum in the vicinity of Tian'anmen Square disappeared after only 100 days due to strong protests.

In the evaluation of religion, Chinese Communists are still very German and speak a great deal about the Marxist understanding of religion in Europe. But to quote Marx's judgment of religion as the "opium of the people," leads in the Chinese context to a dead end. For that reason, in the 1980's there was a so-called "opium war" in China with regard to the assessment of religion. But Marx was speaking mainly about 19th century European religion. We cannot correctly interpret the phenomenon of religion in present day China in that context. Nowadays, if we speak of the Chinese identity we very often come up against westernization through Marxism. If in the current reform and opening the Chinese Communist Party wishes to assert that it represents the Chinese culture, it has to return to Chinese tradition. This development gives Confucianism a convenient opportunity for its revival. In the discussion about the necessary political theory for China's current development, attention turned to the possibility of dialogue between Marxism and Confucianism in the PR China today. Unlike Confucianism, Marxism did not originate from Chinese culture which is a fundamental disadvantage for Chinese self-esteem.

In order to remain the leading ideology in China, the Chinese Communist Party now speaks of a "sinicization of Marxism." Marxism, however, is fundamentally conceived for the class struggle and is, therefore, by nature a "philosophy for struggle." That brings specific difficulties. According to the Marxist principle religion is a reflection of society. Marx's negative assessment of religion originated from his negative evaluation of the European society of his times. His criticism of religion is by nature criticism of society. Today, if the Chinese criticize their religion while at the same time assessing their society positively that is in Marxist terms a contradiction. And we may also not forget: When Marx was criticizing religion and calling for class struggle, the Communist Party was a party representing opposition to the power of the State and the government. The Chinese Communist Party, however, is now a ruling and governing party itself. This contradiction, arising from the ideological critique of religion in China, has still not been resolved. Consequently there is no other way out: The Chinese must interpret the relationship between religion and society anew. In the process they maintain the principle and method of Marxist analysis of religion and its relation to society: If a society is good, logically its religion must also be good.

The main tendency in China today is the development of a harmonious society. For that a harmonious culture is necessary and there is no longer room for class struggle. A shift from classical Marxism in Europe to a harmonious culture is gradually becoming visible in China. To retain the sanctity of Marxism and Communism, we see first of all a "sinicization of Marxism" and then the emphasis on a "socialist theory with Chinese characteristics." The aim is a harmonious society in China. Consequently, if a "philosophy of harmony" is to form the soul of society, that is, after all, equivalent to a return of Confucianism which strives essentially for harmony. Although the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Government still cling to Marxism as the principle political ideol-

ogy, among the people there is an impressive renaissance of Confucianism. Where are we going? China is currently at a crossroads. Perhaps the best solution is a possible and ideal union of Marxism and Confucianism. That could result in the best harmony for China. Both, however, have to be self-critical enough, to be able to bring forth something new.

### III. Cultural Awareness and Religion

The cultural awareness of the Chinese people today is slowly coming back to life. That inevitably leads to tension between clinging to Marxism and promoting cultural nationalism. To wind its way out of this quandary, China is endeavoring on the one hand to bring about new research into Marxism. It is supporting an extensive Marxism Project with a new translation of the complete works of Marx and Engels from German to Chinese. On the other hand China is also striving to promote the Guoxue (China research) and to establish more than one hundred Confucius Institutes all over the world. These two endeavors do not, however, enjoy the same significance. Whereas the Marxism research has been approved as an academic subject of the first class, the proposal made or supported by a few university presidents and famous professors to recognize Guoxue as an academic subject of the first class was rejected and even criticized as “cultural conservatism.” Nonetheless, Guoxue has a much greater influence on Chinese society because it represents the cultural awareness of the Chinese people. With regard to content, Guoxue essentially covers research into Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, or in other words into the very typical, traditional Chinese religions. All Chinese are, of course, well aware of the cultural significance of these three traditions but the religious significance is to a great extent unclear. Confucianism especially is not yet regarded by most present day Chinese as a religion. If Confucianism were to be accepted in China as a religion, we would have to describe the Chinese people as very religious. Seen historically, the acceptance of Marxism and the rejection of Confucianism occurred almost simultaneously at the beginning of the 20th century through the “New Culture Movement,” especially after the “May Fourth Movement.” With the disappearance of Chinese feudalism, Confucianism lost its position as the principle ideology of China and was no longer regarded as a religion. Several famous intellectuals of that time, such as Liang Qichao, Cai Yuanpei and Liang Shuming, had accepted Matteo Ricci’s assumption that Confucianism was not a religion and they even maintained that China had no religion of its own. Since then many Chinese no longer know their cultural identity and have great problems with their own cultural awareness. In that sense the restoration of Confucianism is highly significant.

### IV. Political Structure and Religion

The political structure in the PR China comprises more or less the following four levels: the Chinese Communist Party as single governing party, the Government, the People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. We can observe the complicated relationship between political structure and religion on these four levels.

Firstly the Chinese Communist Party documents and Party discipline require that its members be atheists and not believe in any religion. However, this is difficult to implement in reality. Theoretically classical Marxism did not require that position. Marx himself was a Christian in the beginning. Lenin showed clearly that the Communist Party could admit religious believers and even their priests into its ranks. These religious believers could still maintain their religion in the Party, on condition they did not contravene the Party program. If the Party could admit and keep such religious believers, it means after all that its members were allowed to be religious. In today's world the Communist Party in Cuba allows its members to believe in Catholicism. And the Communist Party in Vietnam also allows its members to believe in their traditional, national religions. In the past in China, too, several leading personalities of the religions became members of the Chinese Communist Party through the theory and practice of the United Front. In the meantime that is an open secret. In the regions of the national minorities, as for example in Tibet and Xinjiang, it is very difficult for Party members not to believe in their religion because religion there is not simply "the opium of the people" but in reality the "life of the people." This problem is causing heated discussion at present and there are differing opinions. In my view political belief and religious belief should be seen separately because they are different types of belief. One can maintain both beliefs at the same time because they are not necessarily in contradiction or opposition to one another.

Secondly, the Government has the direct task of taking religious affairs into its administration. For that there is the Bureau for Religious Affairs at various levels throughout the whole of China. Interestingly the political and religious administration is sometimes combined. Many government officials responsible for religious affairs have ultimately become religious leaders, for example vice-chairmen or general secretaries of religious associations. They are Party members and now also religious believers. That again is no secret and they find it quite normal. We see here, however, a contradiction between theory and praxis of religious policy.

Thirdly, we discover representatives of the religions also in the People's Congress. For the Catholic Church Bishop Fu Tieshan of Beijing Diocese has to be mentioned especially. He was vice-chairman of the National People's Congress, thus a leading State personality from religious circles. A "Living Buddha" is currently vice-director of the Committee for Nationalities in the People's Congress.

Fourthly, there are numerous representatives from religious circles in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. We find the leaders of the different religious associations especially in its Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs. The director of the Committee is a former vice-minister for United Front Work in the Party and almost all vice-directors are leading personalities of Chinese religions. Zhao Puchu, a Buddhist, and Bishop Ting (Ding Guangxun) of the Protestant Church in China were even vice-chairmen of the Political Consultative Conference, thus again leading personalities of the State from religious circles.

In this political structure of the PR China we find the participation of religion. And the other way round we also find the participation of Party and Government in the religious organizations. Since the Chinese Communist Party maintains that it is an atheistic Party,

the relationship between religion and State in the PR China is neither integration nor separation of religion and State. This relationship in China cannot be explained by the western theory of religion and State.

## V. Globalization and Multinational Religions

In the age of globalization, China can no longer avoid foreign influence through religion. As a result there is political tension between the complicated activities of the multinational religions and the basic principle of State administration of religious affairs in China. But in an open society in the age of information it is difficult to administer and control the religions in China without external influence. On the one hand China tries to reject and criticize such influence as “foreign interference in the internal affairs of China” and to stress the independence and autonomy of Chinese religions. On the other hand, however, China has to participate in the international community and engage in dialogue on religious freedom and human rights with other nations. For China it is necessary to have more international cooperation and to play a greater role in the world. At the same time China is showing greater vigilance in protecting itself from a so-called color revolution.

Currently five main religions are recognized by the Chinese Government, namely Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism. Of these only Daoism is a native religion. The four other religions have an international background and are world religions or multinational religions. It is clear that adherents of these four religions will seek their own religious identity beyond China's borders and emphasize the international dimension of their religion. This is a major challenge for the Chinese Government. The adherents of such religions are tied to two loyalties. When a conflict of interests arises between their religious authority and the Chinese Government as, for example, between the Vatican and China, it is very difficult for them to make a choice. If they remain loyal to the Government their religion will criticize or even excommunicate them. But if they stand faithfully by their religion they are labeled illegal and can only exist in the underground. This is, for example, the crux of the problem of the so-called “Patriotic” Catholic Church and the Underground Church in China. Against this background the relationship between religion and State in China is also influenced by the international relations between religion and State. A definitive solution to this problem requires active international collaboration, constructive dialogue, mutual understanding and even compromise and reconciliation.

## VI. Civil Society and the Multiple Existence of Religions

In reality religious life in the PR China is at present no longer limited to these five religions. The panorama of religions in China today includes more religions: officially recognized, for example, are the Orthodox Church in Northeast China, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, the Sanyi Religion (unity of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism) and the Mazu Cult (goddess for fishermen) in Fujian. The other religions which have not yet attained their legal position in society also exist in a certain sense. This phenomenon is especially very typical for the new religions and the popular religions. For example, the

existence of the Bahai'i faith, Judaism and the Mormons in China has been an open secret for a long time. The popular religions in China are characterized as folk belief which is sympathetically regarded and tolerated in terms of a preservation of traditional Chinese culture. Very often academic organizations or non-governmental organizations in China Mainland collaborate with Yiguandao (normally under the title of "Society for Confucian and Mencian Morality"), Dejiao (Religion of Virtue) and Tiandijiao (Religion of the Emperor of Heaven). In this connection one often uses the phrase "li shi qiu zhu ye" 礼失求诸野 (when the ritual has been lost by the authority, one can still find it among the people). Many traditional Chinese religions with a Confucian background have indeed been preserved among the people through such popular religions.

In a civil society the existence and manifestations of the religions are subject to certain changes and alienations which have further complicated the relationship between religion and State. A few unlawful religious adherents, for example members of the so-called "house churches," also sought for alternatives and have become very political. They demand "international attention and intervention" for religious freedom and human rights. Their organizations have become mainly political. They are therefore regarded as a danger to the stability of the State. That is to say, striving for harmony does not yet in fact mean being truly harmonious. Due to such political considerations religion in China is "no minor matter."

In the course of the economic development religion was regarded and used by certain persons as an economic undertaking. Some religious adherents and also priests became corrupt. There are numerous reports about the stock market launch or a contracted management of certain temples and monasteries for commercial purposes. All of that was mostly supported or organized by the local government. The catch phrase for that is, "religion sets the stage on which the economy sings its opera." A few monks are secretly or openly married and also have children. If the Government punishes them they protest and deplore this "separating and scattering of the members of their family." Some believers work in religious circles to become functionaries. At New Year in certain temples the first incense sticks and chimes are sold for a very high price. Such actions are criticized and called "cult for the God of wealth (Mammon)." A great danger for the religions in China now is secularization. The Government is already considering new regulations against corruption and alienation in religion.

Some adherents of religions with a foreign cultural background resist the idea of a unified ideology in China. They regard the return to the traditional culture as veiled cultural conservatism and isolated seclusion. They consider the openness and freedom of all religions to be the inexorable trend of our time. They also have reservations regarding the inculturation and sinicization of their religion. To them, religion ought to be universal and pluralistic. They regard the central Chinese religious associations as quasi government organizations. What the Chinese Government actually wants in view of this pluralistic tendency is the adaptation of religion to Chinese socialist society. It needs the centripetal force, not the centrifugal force of religion. It would like to lead all religions in China in this direction. And what it absolutely has to avoid is especially a gradual "victory of the Lamb of God over the Chinese dragon" (as David Aikman expressed it) under western influence.



This expression causes great apprehension with regard to Christianity. Consequently the inculturation and sinification of Christianity is strongly promoted in China.

## Implications

The relationship between religion and State in the PR China is very complicated and differs very greatly from the relations between religion and State in western nations. For the future development of this relationship in China there are in my opinion three possibilities.

The first possibility would be a pessimistic notion. In this possibility the Chinese Government would maintain its categorical criticism of religion and pursue a limited religious policy. It is really not easy to find a way out of this impasse because the negative view of religion has existed for over a hundred years and is deeply rooted in the Chinese people. It would be easy to maintain this traditional attitude toward religion. A change in this attitude in future, however, would take a revolution in the way of thinking.

The second possibility would be an optimistic notion. In this possibility the Chinese Government would give all religions their freedom and strive for and guarantee a real separation of religion and State. If China has more collaboration and consensus with the international community and if the world is committed to a harmonious connection with China, that would without doubt be possible. China is currently striving to build up a harmonious society in China itself and also wishes that a harmonious world be realized in the future. Let us make still greater efforts in this direction.

The third possibility would be a realistic idea. In this possibility the Chinese Government would give religion more freedom and maintain the existence of religion within the current framework. The five main religions would be regarded as State religions and their present significance maintained. That would surely leave new room for theoretical and political reforms and improvements. For this possibility we have to produce new ideas and seize favorable opportunities.

Which way will China go? The coming five to ten years will be decisive.

Sincere thanks!

## International Conference “Catholicism and China: Dialogue, Inculturation and Responsibility” in Hong Kong

*Katharina Wenzel-Teuber*

*Translated by Jacqueline Muhlberge*

From the late 1980s onwards, intensive research into Christianity and Christian theology has been developing outside the Church in universities and academies in Mainland China. Until today, however, only a relatively small number of these researchers concern themselves with Catholic theologians. Then again, inner Church theological efforts at inculturation such as began in Taiwan and Hong Kong several decades ago are still in the initial stages in Mainland China. Among the establishments in the Catholic Church of Mainland China that are active in the field of theological research – apart from theological seminaries as places of study – there are the Sapientia Press 上智编译馆 (since 1946 / 1997) in Beijing, with the associated Beijing Institute for the Study of Christianity and Culture 北京天主教与文化研究所 (since 2002) as well as the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies 信德文化研究所 (since 2001) in Shijiazhuang, which, however, concentrates more on pastoral and social topics.

Though not based in Mainland China, the Yuan Dao Study Society 原道交流學會, which belongs to the Diocese of Hong Kong, and the Centro Studi Li Madou 利玛竇研究中心, founded in 2010 by Mainland Chinese Catholic theologians in the Italian town of Macerata – birthplace of the China missionary Matteo Ricci SJ – also aim to promote the development of an inculturated Chinese theology in a Catholic context. At the same time, they intend to foster dialogue between theologians within the Church and university researchers into Christianity in Mainland China. These two organizations introduced themselves to an academic public for the first time with a joint conference in Hong Kong from November 6–8, 2013. “Catholicism and China: Dialogue, Inculturation and Responsibility” 天主教與中國: 對話、本地化與責任 was the title of the international conference. Co-organizers of the conference were the Monumenta Serica Institute and the China-Zentrum (both in Sankt Augustin, Germany).

The composition of the participants already clearly showed that dialogue was a central aim of the conference: More than half of the approximately 50 regular participants at the conference came from Mainland China, from both State universities and Church theological seminaries and research institutes. The others were mainly theologians from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Europe.



Conference participants in the meeting hall of the Caritas Oswald Cheung International House in Aberdeen.  
Photo: Rubie Chung.

The conference opened with the question of the **inculturation of theology**. The Jesuit fundamental theologian **Hans Waldenfels** (University of Bonn) presented “**Contextual Theology.’ Origin – Purpose – Method,**” relating it to China. According to Waldenfels, one of the gravest questions for theological teaching in China is how far it has to adopt the Western processes of inculturation and contextualization – as for example its history of encounter with the Greek philosophy. Waldenfels argued for a theology which expresses biblical faith with concepts of the Chinese tradition and in which today’s Chinese can find answers to their needs and questions, while still transmitting the feeling of belonging to the universal Church. Such a theology, however, can only be developed by Chinese Christians.

An interesting new phenomenon was dealt with by **Geng Youzhuang** 耿幼壯, expert for studies in comparative literature at the Renmin University in Beijing. His presentation was entitled “**Movable Borders: How ‘Scriptural Reasoning’ Can Enter the Chinese Context.**” Scriptural Reasoning is a method of dialogical reading and reflection of sacred Scriptures during which Jewish, Christian and Muslim participants jointly discuss texts of their respective religions. It was developed in the 1990s in the USA in academic circles but in the meantime has been used in the broader Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue. According to Geng, there has been a discussion for some years on whether the method of Scriptural Reasoning (chin. *jingwen biandu* 经文辩读) could also be used for the joint reading of Chinese and Western classical scriptures. That could be a way of dealing with the crisis which befell subjects such as comparative literature, *guoxue* [“national studies”] and sinology, Geng said. According to Geng there are parallels between Scriptural Reasoning and hermeneutic techniques used in the study of the classics of the Confucian tradition, in spite of the difference in the fact that the Confucian classics (in the predominant opinion) have no theological or religious content. Geng mentioned that his colleague Yang Huilin, a driving force in the introduction of Scriptural Reasoning in China, uses a special

approach: Yang regards the reading, translation and interpretation of Chinese classical scriptures by the early Christian missionaries and the new discovery of these activities of the missionaries by today’s Chinese academics as Chinese-Western Scriptural Reasoning reaching beyond time and space.

The presentation of **Madeleine Kwong** (Kuang Lijuan 鄭麗娟) gave a concrete example of the efforts to express Christian content with the help of Chinese concepts. She is the superior general of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Hong Kong and is a professor at Holy Spirit Seminary College. The title of her talk was “**Taking the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit as Starting Point to Reflect Anew on the Work of Theological Inculturation.**” She pleaded for the development of a “theology of the Spirit” which, unlike the “theology of the Word” which is determined by reason, is based on emotion and in her opinion suits the East Asians better. She proposed especially to connect the Holy Spirit with the experience of the *qi* 氣 (breath, vital energy). She argued that the *qi* which penetrates everything in the world has an important place in the thinking and in the daily life of the Chinese; it pervades cosmology, the doctrine of human nature, society, ethics, medicine, art, etc. Unlike the Greek *pneuma*, which under the influence of dualistic thinking finally came to be understood as essence and pure spirit, the Chinese *qi* has retained the original life force and could, thus, renew the western theology of the Spirit which – in the words of her teacher Zhang Chunshen – is “anemic.” Based on the Holy Spirit’s appearance in the significant stages of the life of Jesus, she sought to develop and present a Christology from the experience of the *qi*.



Sr. Madeleine Kwong connects the experience of *qi* with the Holy Spirit. Photo: Rubie Chung.

An historic encounter between Christian and Chinese thought was presented by **Rui Xin** 芮欣 of the faculty of Chinese Literature of Xiamen University in her paper “The French Jesuit Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730) and His Studies of the *Yijing*.” – Two further talks at the conference also dealt with historical questions: **Li Jianqiu** 黎建球, former president of the Catholic Fu Jen University in Taiwan, discussed developments “From Matteo Ricci to China Today” and **Li Zhengrong** 李正榮 (Beijing Normal University) dealt with the research of the scholar Chen Yuan on “Yelikewen” of the Yuan era.

**Christianity and Chinese Society** was a second major focus of the conference. Three talks sought answers to the questions of today’s China:

The well-known researcher of Christianity **He Guanghu** 何光沪 (Renmin University, Beijing) dealt with the foundations of the political system from a Christian point of view in his talk on “**The Goal of the State in Today’s China – a Reflection from a Christian**

**and also a Non-Religious Perspective.”** The Chinese Christians – and theologians – ought to share in the reflection on this question, He Guanghu stipulated at the start. Their voices would be heard, he said, giving the following reason: While with 100 million (sic) adherents only the second largest religion in China, the Christians are more organized, more “in the world” and with their socio-political thinking are closer to the pulse beat of the times than the more numerous Buddhists. Then he argued that since 1949 the goal of the State has always been the State itself. He explained that all the resources of the country, even human lives (in the course of the campaigns up till 1978), had been utilized as a means for this purpose. The “Chinese Dream” also pursues the goal of the rich, strong State and the strengthening of the nation. From the Christian viewpoint – which He Guanghu supported with statements from the Bible, the Fathers of the Church and also of theologians and political philosophers – the State is not a goal in itself. The secular State ought to serve the people and is relativized by the Kingdom of God. If, therefore, the State is not an end in itself, what goal should it pursue in first place, asked He. The rights of the citizens or the power of the State? Justice or a rich, militarily strong State? World peace or the rise of an individual nation? He stated that Christianity as well as reason and historical necessity all speak for the first of these alternatives. Since 1949, however, China chose the second alternative each time, he argued. In his view, the “old system” with its false understanding of the nature and goals of the State is the “root of the malady.” The main problem according to him lies in the absolute power of the State while the rights of the citizens are unprotected. He pointed out that today the clearest visible result of that is the large number of civil servants who are corrupt and commit criminal offences. Whether the leadership of China is capable of carrying out truly far-reaching reforms will be decisive for the future of China and of the world, He said.

The Catholic theologian **Jing Baolu** 靖保路 (Centro Studi Li Madou, Macerata) gave a talk on **“Crisis and Salvation of the Nihilistic Era – a Reflection on the Transformation of Chinese Society and Culture based on the Thinking of the German Philosopher of Religion Bernhard Welte.”** It presented an interesting application of Welte’s theological approach to the China of today. Confronted with the nihilism of the modern age, Welte developed the thesis of the ambiguity of the Nothing: the Nothingness that the human person experiences can be understood either as the experience of a completely senseless emptiness or as the hidden presence of an eternal power; in that it can be a path to the (mystical) experience of God. Jing stated that the nihilism of today’s Chinese society is especially shocking because the Chinese intellectuals [in the 1st half of the 20 century] threw out the tradition and its values more radically and in a shorter time that was the case in the West; the rest was destroyed later in the political campaigns. The result, according to Jing, is a complete collapse of the value systems which has left people deeply insecure and has led partially to a distortion of human nature. Jing interpreted the resulting emptiness, however, also as a possibility and space for the people in China – in a “reversal of the Nothing” in Bernhard Welte’s thinking – to be able to experience God anew. Jing saw a significant responsibility for Chinese Christians and adherents of other religions to contribute to a new value system for China.

The moral crisis in today's China does not consist in first place in a lack of a value system – it is more the lack of the motivation to do what is right, stated the theologian and priest **Geng Zhanhe** 耿占河 (Centro Studi Li Madou and Holy Spirit Seminary College, Hong Kong). Geng studied theology in Sankt Augustin and did his doctorate in Bonn. In his presentation “**The ‘Kingdom of God among Men’ and Pure Love [Agape]: From Potential to Realization**” he spoke about love which he identified as this necessary motivation. Love is the Christian response to the longing for the ideal society and harmonious relationships among people which is deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, he said. This longing has risen anew in the face of the moral crisis of society today. In his talk Geng described the essence of Christian love. Every person needs to believe that God is love to be able to realize the ability to love that dwells within him or her.

**Kang Zhijie** 康志杰 (Hubei University, Wuhan), who for many years has studied the history of the Catholic Church in China in the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century, contributed a historical component to the topic “Christianity and Society”: “**How the Chinese Catholic Church Went the Way of Self-Support: The Example of the Church in the Countryside.**” She reported on the purchase of land by the missionaries (later criticized as “feudalism”) where they settled converts who came mainly from the poorest classes. In that way Catholic villages came about. The missionaries not only built schools and hospitals, they also brought new ways of farming (such as new types of seed, new plants and methods of farming, special breeds of pigs) and new trades (such as cheese-making methods, machine shoe production, printing presses). The respective villages still partially draw profit today from the infrastructure introduced in the past. These efforts at “self-support” are also a form of inculturation in the opinion of Kang.

While the first two days of the conference were interesting due to the variety of perspectives, the third day was to a certain extent the most surprising. It concentrated on a topic that one would not particularly have expected to find in the Chinese academic landscape: research on the **Theology and Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas**. A focus on Thomistic research has developed at Wuhan University and they have established an exchange with Fu Jen University in Taiwan. Four of the five speakers came from Fu Jen or from Wuhan. First, however, the Italian theologian, Dominican **Antonio Olmi** (Facoltà Teologica dell'Emilia-Romagna, Bologna) spoke on “Il paradigma di Calcedonia e il realismo sapienziale di S. Tommaso d'Aquino.” The four Chinese speaking contributors all came from the field of philosophy. The religious sister **Gao Lingxia** 高凌霞 (Fu Jen University, Taiwan), doyen of Chinese language Thomistic research, spoke on “Analogy in Thomas.” **Huang Zhao** 黃超 (Wuhan University) spoke on “Freedom of Emotion and Good and Evil in Thomas Aquinas,” **Dong Shangwen** 董尚文 (Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan) on “The Religious Philosophy of Language of St. Thomas.” **He Jiarui** 何佳瑞 of Fu Jen University even risked an attempt at a comparison in her talk on “The Role of Emotions in Morality: Thomas and Confucius.” With the presence of so many professional colleagues, the discussion naturally went into greater detail, and the appetite for research with which the Chinese Thomistic experts take up their topic was tangible.

The Bishop of Hong Kong **Cardinal John Tong** spoke in his closing address once again of dialogue and the responsibility of Chinese Christians for their country and said he hoped that such conferences would take place again in future. **Peter Choy**, Director of the Yuan Dao Study Society (and also Rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary College), expressed thanks for the financial support given to the conference by the Institute of Missiology Missio e.V., by Aid to the Church in Need and by a benefactress in Hong Kong.

The conference took place in a good and open atmosphere to which the active, organizational collaboration of Hong Kong volunteers contributed. Naturally the conversations and establishment of new contacts on the margins of the conference were also important and will hopefully help to promote research in Catholic theology in Mainland China still further. Consequently it is greatly to be hoped that a continuation of this conference can be realized in one or the other form, as Peter Choy expressed in his closing address.

## Imprint – Legal Notice

ISSN 2192-9289

**Publisher:**

China-Zentrum e.V.  
Arnold-Janssen-Str. 22  
53757 Sankt Augustin  
Germany

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**Editorial submission deadline:**

February 12, 2014

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Name of the bank: Steyler Bank GmbH  
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53757 Sankt Augustin, Germany  
Account holder: China Zentrum e.V.  
Account number: 17 881  
Bank code: 386 215 00  
IBAN DE 94 3862 1500 0000 0178 81  
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**Religions & Christianity in Today's China** is an e-journal published four times a year. It is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, [www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de). Part of the contributions of each issue are translated from *China heute. Informationen über Religion und Christentum im chinesischen Raum*, the German language journal of the China-Zentrum.

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