

A Survey of the Current Situation of Han Christian Churches and Christian Groups in Mainland China

(June 11, 2019)

Introduction

Since 1979, when the Chinese Communist Party launched the reform and opening up policies (改革开放) and reopened churches, along with economic development and the secularization of society, there has been a remarkable boom in the Christian community in China. This has drawn the attention of Chinese politicians, academics and many people concerned about the development of Christianity in China. However, due to the general environment of Communist ideology, it is difficult for scholars who study the development of contemporary Chinese Christianity to get rid of the dilemma of "statistics and estimation."¹ This has created challenges in understanding and grasping the actual development of contemporary Chinese Christianity.

From 2017 to 2018, we conducted a province-by-province random sample survey among ordinary people and leaders of different types of churches (including Three Self churches and traditional house churches, urban emerging churches, and rural churches, migrant churches, etc.). By analyzing the data and the subsequent in-depth interviews, we can reflect more accurately the actual faith situation of believers in different regions and church forms.

This provides an important data base for further research into the basic patterns of Christian development in China, as well as the challenges and opportunities that it faces. This thesis is mainly based on the data of the survey.

However, before proceeding to the presentation of the survey, there are a few points that need to be clarified in advance.

¹ Ye Xiaowen, former director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, said in an article entitled "China's Current Religious Issues" published in 2013, "How many religious people are there in China? It is difficult to count them. Among reasons for this is that it is difficult to determine objective indicators. It is possible to count the number of people who have been baptized or ordained and have joined a religion but it is difficult to count the number of people who have belief but have not joined a religion. It is also difficult to determine subjective factors, as it is said that "cadres produce numbers and numbers produce cadres" (in religious matters, it is more accurate to say that "cadres produce negative numbers and negative numbers produce cadres."). The figures for the number of believers can therefore only be statistics plus estimates. A more authoritative estimate, which is in line with Premier Zhou's statement during his lifetime is that there are tens of millions of religious people in China, plus almost 100 million who are religious at home and do not go to temples. By this reasoning, there are now more than 100 million people." See Ye Xiaowen, "Current Religious Issues in China;" *World Religious Culture*, March 2013.

原“国家宗教事务局”局长叶小文曾经在 2013 年发表的“当前我国的宗教问题”一文中说到：“中国的宗教徒究竟有多少？很难统计。究其原因，既有客观指标难以确定，受洗、受戒而入教者大体可以有数，不入教而信教者则难计其数；也有主观因素妨碍确定，所谓‘干部出数字，数字出干部’（在宗教问题上确切地说是‘干部出负数，负数出干部’）。因此，对教徒的数字只能是统计加估计。比较权威的估计，至今还在沿用周总理生前的说法：中国的宗教徒有几千万人，加上在家里信教而不上寺庙的差不多有 1 亿人。以此推论，现在当超过 1 亿人。”参叶小文：[当前我国的宗教问题](#)；《世界宗教文化》，2013 年 3 月。

First, the main background explored in this thesis is the historical scene of the development of the Chinese church from 1979 to 2018. Therefore, the term "China" or "Mainland China" in this thesis refers to the actual jurisdiction of the national government of the "People's Republic of China"; the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau are not included in the scope of this study.

Second, the research focus of this thesis is Han churches and Han Chinese Christians in mainland China. From the perspective of population ratios, the Han ethnic group is not the ethnic group with the highest proportion of Christians in China. Other ethnic groups such as Dai, Dahua Miao, and Korean have a higher proportion of Christians than the Han. However, in terms of numbers, Han Chinese Christians still constitute the major part of the "mainland Chinese Christian population".² Therefore, a study of the Han Chinese Christians is undoubtedly a necessary and crucial step related to an overall understanding of "Chinese Christian community". Without an accurate understanding of the Han Chinese Christian community, it is impossible to accurately portray "Chinese Christians."

Third, although comparatively speaking the Christian community in China is not the largest in the world, but because of China's unique political system and administrative model have resulted in decades of embarrassing "statistics plus estimates" in the study of Christianity. It also makes the concept of "Chinese Christians" not only seemingly huge, but also blurry. Therefore, the main questions involved in this questionnaire include:

- What are basic motivations for believers to convert to Christianity?
- How long and by what means and under what influence do believers become Christians?
- For believers what is the basic understanding of the concept of "believing in Jesus"?
- What is the basic understanding of the "Christian life" by professing Christians?
- For which activities and to what extent do believers actually participate in "church life"?
- As a Christian what are the relationships with other believers and non-believers?

The author hopes that through random and stratified sampling, after careful comparison and statistical analysis of the completed questionnaires, followed by systematically collating the questionnaires using processes of classification, statistics, narrative and inference, to clarify the conceptual boundaries of the questionnaire responses and provide some credible answers for questions on the "reasons for the growth of the Chinese Christian community".

² According to the latest data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, the Han population accounts for 91.51% of the total population in China, and the total population of ethnic minorities other than the Han population accounts for 8.49%. Although China has announced in the form of a "white paper" that the total population of the Christian community in China is 38 million (http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-04/03/c_1122631276.htm; (accessed 6/10/2019)), the paper did not publish the distribution and data of the Christian population of various ethnic groups. However, according to the distribution, population, and religious and cultural traditions of various ethnic minorities, Christians obviously do not account for a significant majority of Chinese ethnic minorities. Among the minorities, groups with the largest percentage of Christians are "Korean" with about 600,000, the "Lisu" with the highest ratio of Christians at 47.25%, about 300,000 people (Reference: http://www.gospelherald.com.hk/News/Chi_896/; (accessed 6/10/2019)). According to this reasoning, "the total population of Chinese Christians" should be "the Han Christian population" as the overwhelming majority.

根据最近的国家统计局公布的数据，在中国总人口中，汉族占总人口的91.51%，汉族以外的各少数民族总人口数占8.49%。虽然中国曾以“白皮书”的形式公布中国基督徒群体总人口为3800万

(http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-04/03/c_1122631276.htm; 2019-06-10 存取)，但并没有公布过各民族基督徒人口的分布情况和数据。不过根据各少数民族的分布、人口，以及各自宗教和文化的传统，基督徒显然并不占中国少数民族的显著多数。因为其中基督徒人数最多的是“朝鲜族”，大约有60万，基督徒比率最高的”傈僳族“佔总人口的47.25%，约30万人（参：<http://www.gospelherald.com.hk/news/chi-896/>；2019-06-10 存取）。据此推论，”中国基督徒总人口“应以”汉族基督徒人口“为绝大多数。

Fourth, in studying contemporary Chinese Christianity we cannot ignore the need to pay attention to the problems caused by the tension between Christian thought and the state ideology of the integration of government and authority. For example, there are differences in world views, attitudes to authority, and theological issues raised by family planning policies. Moreover, the main challenge for Christians is how to live out the demands of faith within the state ideology. Examples include human relations and value systems. From the viewpoint of the state ideology, how to deal with the challenges of non-materialism brought by Christian thought?³

After taking all the above into consideration, it is also necessary to consider that during the period 2017-2018, the development of Christianity in China began to face the most systematic and step-by-step national political pressure in the recent forty years. As a result, when churches in different regions responded to the investigation, they had to consider adopting measures to continue to cooperate with the investigation while considering what the external environment allowed. As a result, the investigation was completed in the presence of external interference and the degree of interference experienced by churches in different regions was not uniform. Although the data obtained in this survey can already show the general outlook of "Chinese Christianity" from a macro perspective, many details, such as regional distribution and theological characteristics, etc. still need to be revealed through return visits and in-depth interviews. Therefore, this thesis mainly describes the current situation of "Chinese Christians" at a macro level. Details will be added later.

Section 1

A Brief Review of Forty Years of Development of Christianity in China

The contemporary Christian revival movement in mainland China started after the formal end of the "Cultural Revolution" with the April 8, 1979 Christian "Hundred Year Church" in Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province resuming Sunday worship.⁴ However, similar to the reasons for repeated persecution of Christianity in modern China, allowing Christians churches to reopen and allowing some faithful Chinese citizens to regain the constitutional right of "religious belief" was actually the result of "revisionist" political choices the ruling Communist Party made after Mao Zedong in light of

³ Reference article: Zhuo Xinping: "Difficulties and Hopes of Understanding Chinese Religion"; Pu Fuzeng: "Challenges of Chinese Christian Academic Research in the Current Ideological Struggle"; Both in: He Guanghu and Zhuo Xinping, "Religious Studies in the Contemporary Chinese Social and Political Situation", published by The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, Early 2014.

参考论文：卓新平：中国宗教理解的难度和希望；刑福增：当前意识形态斗争下的中国基督教学术研究的挑战；均见于：何广沪、卓新平著《当代中国社会政治处境下的宗教研究》，香港中文大学出版社，2014年初版

⁴ See Fan Aishu: "A Brief History of the Christian Centennial Church", see "The 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Ningbo Christian Centennial Church – A Thanksgiving Commemoration", published by Ningbo Christian Centennial Church, 2008. For the most important parts of the life of Fan Aishi (1916-2018), see "Looking Back on a Century of Service: Memoirs of Fan Ai-shi" China Christian Council, published May 2013. Xing Fuzeng: "Anti-Rightist struggle and Chinese Christianity", published in the Hong Kong Chinese University "Academic Papers", <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/21c/media/articles/c164-201710003.pdf> (accessed 3/26/2019).

参范爱侍：基督教百年堂简史，见《宁波市基督教百年堂建堂六十周年-感恩纪念》，宁波市基督教百年堂出版，2008年。有关范爱侍（1916-2018）生平最重要片段，参《回眸百年侍奉路——范爱侍回忆录》，中国基督教两会，2013年5月出版。刑福增：反右派斗争与中国基督教，刊于香港中文大学：《学术论文》，<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/21c/media/articles/c164-201710003.pdf>（2019年3月26日存取）

new social conditions.⁵ Due to the "Opening to the Outside World" policy and the actual need of gaining the trust of the world,⁶ along with the large-scale political deployment of "clearing confusion and rehabilitation" at that time,⁷ formulating a new religious policy, with a limited restoration of the religious activities of the ordinary people, inevitably touched on the religious issues of society. Therefore, like other religious groups, Christian churches were allowed to reopen to a limited extent under the leadership of the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" and its derivative religious organizations.⁸

However, since the implementation of the "Reform and Opening Up" policy to the present, the energy and speed of the development of Christianity in the past 40 years has far exceeded the imagination of all scholars around the world who have paid attention to and studied the development of Christianity in China, as well as the expectations of China's rulers. For forty years, although the church's own development has been uneven and the ruling party's policies on religion have also vacillated, Christianity has experienced a high-speed growth process rarely seen in the history of China. Today, the growth of the Christian faith in China is not only an issue for Christians themselves, but has also started becoming an issue for the whole of society. In the words of the contemporary leader Xi Jinping:

⁵ The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was held in Beijing from 18 to 22 December 1978. The central theme of the meeting was to stop the use of the slogan "taking class struggle as the key link", and to abandon the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as established at the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of China from 12 to 18 August 1977. The focus of the post-Cultural Revolution work would be shifted to socialist modernization. The plenary session also proposed the "forever annulment" method of setting up ad hoc bodies to review cadres and began large-scale political rehabilitation. With the party chairman Hua Guofeng still in office, a second generation of the Chinese Communist Party and the central government's collective leadership centered on Deng Xiaoping was established.

中国共产党第十一届中央委员会第三次全体会议于1978年12月18日至22日在北京举行。会议的中心议题是停止使用“以阶级斗争为纲”的口号，放弃1977年8月12日至18日十一大时确立的“无产阶级专政下继续革命”的理论，确立后文革时代的工作重点要转移到社会主义现代化建设。全会还提出“永远废止”设立专案机构审查干部的方式，开始大规模的政治平反。在党主席华国锋依然在位的情况下，形成了以邓小平为核心的第二代新的中共和中央政府的领导集体。

⁶ For example, on January 29 and 30, 1979 when Deng Xiaoping personally promised US President Jimmy Carter, " (Deng) later said he would meet two of my (Jimmy Carter) wishes, for freedom of religion and the Bible distribution. See Jimmy Carter, "I Will Not Lie to You: President Jimmy Carter's White House Diaries", translated by Wang Haizhou, Dong Xianli, Yan Xianning, Guangxi Normal University Press, published January 2013. See also Carter, Jimmy "Through the year with Jimmy Carter," Zondervan, 2011, page 10 .

比如在1979年1月29日和30日，邓小平当面应承美国卡特总统时，“他（邓小平）后来说，他会满足我（吉米·卡特）的两个愿望，即宗教信仰自由和《圣经》传播问题。“参吉米·卡特《我不会对你们说谎：吉米·卡特总统白宫日记》，王海舟译董献利译闫鲜宁校，广西师范大学出版社，2013年1月版。

另参 Carter, Jimmy *Through the year with Jimmy Carter*, Zondervan, 2011. Page 10.

⁷ For more information on the process, causes and results of the movement, see Xiao Donglian, "Turning the Course of History - From Setting Right the Rebellion to Reform and Opening Up" (History of the People's Republic of China, Volume 10), The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, Second Edition, 2013.

有关该运动的过程、原因和结果等，参肖冬连《历史的转轨——从拨乱反正到改革开放》（中华人民共和国史·第十卷），香港中文大学出版社，2013年第二版重印。

⁸ See: The Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee "A Letter to Brothers and Sisters in the Lord," March 1, 1980. Also Ding Guangxun "Retrospect and Prospects - Chinese Christian Third National Conference opening address," October 6, 1980. (Originally published in "Tianfeng" 1981, No. 1) Both of the above documents are referenced: "Selected Works of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (1950-1992)" edited by Luo Guanzong, published by the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, first edition, 1993 .

参中国基督教三自爱国运动委员会常务委员会《告全国主内弟兄姊妹书》1980年3月1日。以及丁光训《回顾与展望——中国基督教第三届全国会议开幕词》，1980年10月6日。（原载《天风》1981年第1期）。上述两份文件均参：罗冠宗主编《中国基督教三自爱国运动文选（1950-1992）》，中国基督教三自爱国运动委员会出版，1993年第一版。

"Religious issues ... have a bearing on the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the party's flesh-and-blood relationship with the people, social harmony, ethnic harmony, and national security and the reunification of the motherland."⁹

And some scholars of Christianity with an official background even called for vigilance against the emergence of "Christianity as the dominant religion."¹⁰

For example, Mou Zhongjian has stated: "Among the five major legal religions today, the proportion of foreign religions is far greater than that of traditional Chinese beliefs. Taoism and Buddhism combined make up no more than half of the total, Christianity has grown in both urban and rural areas at an unprecedented rapid rate (an annual increase of about 1 million believers) and has become the religion with the most official believers. This has weakened the national subjectivity of Chinese religion and culture, and drastically changing the original structure of Chinese religion. ... the dual existence of the above-ground and underground religious groups, has ruptured the unified religious ecosystem, religious groups in the gray and black zones survive in an abnormal state."¹¹ Thus, he stated: "The development of religion in secret, or a dominant religion, or religious tensions, or constant external interference are not in line with the essential requirements of socialism."¹²

As it is in such a highly politicized social context, it is also inevitable to begin with a very political context if one is to understand and get a feel for the extent of Christian development from a macro perspective.

First, in the 40 years since 1979, the Communist Party Central Committee has convened two "National Religious Conferences", notably the "National Conference on Religious Work" in December 2001 led by Jiang Zemin and the Xi Jinping era "National Conference on Religious Work" in April 2016. Comparing the openly published news reports of the two conferences we can see that Jiang Zemin emphasized the importance of the Communist Party doing its religious work well,¹³ but Xi Jinping proposed "the adherence to and development of socialist religion theory with Chinese characteristics".¹⁴ From these you can tell that the ruling party is indeed anxious to deal with the development of religion and its corresponding countermeasures.

⁹ Xi Jinping: "Comprehensively Improve the Level of Religious Work in the New Situation"; Xinhua News Agency, 2016, 4, 23. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/23/c_1118716540.htm (accessed 3/26/2019) (English summary at: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2016-04/24/content_38312410.htm)

习近平：全面提高新形势下宗教工作水平；新华社，2016.4.23。

http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/23/c_1118716540.htm（2019.3.26存取）

¹⁰ Mou Zhongjian: "The Theory of Religious Ecology" published in *World Religious Culture*, No. 1, 2012.

牟钟鉴：宗教生态论；刊于《世界宗教文化》2012年第1期。

¹¹ Ibid. 参同上。

¹² Ibid. 参同上。

¹³ China Communist Party News: *National Conference of Religious Affairs* (December 10-12, 2001).

<http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/151935/176588/176941/177530/10682798.html> (Accessed 3/26/2019)

中国共产党新闻：全国宗教工作会议（2001年12月10-12日）。

<http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/151935/176588/176941/177530/10682798.html>（2019年3月26日存取）

¹⁴ Xi Jinping: "Comprehensively Improve Religious Work Under New Conditions," Xinhua News Agency, 4/23/2016 posting, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/23/c_1118716540.htm (accessed 3/26/2019)

习近平：全面提高新形势下宗教工作水平，新华社2016年04月23日发稿，

http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/23/c_1118716540.htm（2019年3月26日存取）

Second over the past four decades, after the "Basic Views and Policies on Religion in the Socialist Period of China" was promulgated in 1982,¹⁵ and the 1989 proposed draft "Religious Law" was shelved,¹⁶ in January 1994 Li Peng issued and the State Council promulgated the "Regulations on the Administration of Places of Religious Activities".¹⁷ The "Religion Management Regulations" were revised twice: in November 2004 the "Religious Affairs Regulations" was signed and issued by Wen Jiabao¹⁸ followed by the "Religious Affairs Regulations" signed and issued by Premier Li Keqiang in September 2017.¹⁹ Comparing these "policies" and "regulations" the governing authorities inability in managing the country's religious affairs is obvious.²⁰

Reports on the development of Christianity that are truly authoritative are two "white papers" on religious issues issued by the Chinese government. In October 1997, the "White Paper on the State of Freedom of Religious Belief in China" was published by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China;²¹ later in April 2018 the same State Council Information Office issued the "White Paper on Policies and Practice of Guaranteeing Freedom of Religious Belief in China."²²

Comparing the two "white papers" that are 20 years apart, we can get a preliminary glimpse at the religious developments that the Chinese government has publicly acknowledged over these 20 years. First, in terms of total numbers of believers, the 1997 White Paper stated: "According to incomplete statistics, China now has more than 100 million religious believers and about 300,000

¹⁵ The so-called "Document 19". See Zhao Tianen: "The History of Christianity in Contemporary China", Zhongfu Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010 revised first edition, pp. 353-386 .

即所谓“第十九号文件”。参赵天恩：《当代中国基督教发展史》，中福出版有限公司，2010年修订初版，第353-386页

¹⁶ Liu Peng: "China's Religions and the Rule of Law"; "Times Forum," March 3, 2008

<https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=45802&Pid=12&Version=0&Cid=220&Charset=gb2312> (Accessed 3/27/2019)

刘澎：中国的宗教与法治；《时代论坛》2008年3月3日，

<https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=45802&Pid=12&Version=0&Cid=220&Charset=gb2312>, (2019、3、27 存取)

¹⁷ Reference: <http://www.jincao.com/fa/16/law16.01.htm> ; (Accessed 3/26/2019)

参：<http://www.jincao.com/fa/16/law16.01.htm>; (2019、3、26 存取)

¹⁸ Central Government of the People's Republic of China: "Regulations on Religious Affairs," -

http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2008-03/28/content_6786.htm (Accessed 3/26/2019)

中华人民共和国中央人民政府：《宗教事务条例》，http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2008-03/28/content_6786.htm, (2019年3月26日存取)

¹⁹ Central Government of the People's Republic of China: "Regulations on Religious Affairs",

http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-09/07/content_5223282.htm (Accessed 3/26/2019)

中华人民共和国中央人民政府：《宗教事务条例》，http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-09/07/content_5223282.htm (2019年3月26日存取)

²⁰ Reference paper: Cao Minyi: 2018 Edition "Regulations on Religious Affairs" Analysis of Prospects for Implementation, draft September 9, 2017, revised January 3, 2018. Cf: State Administration of Religious Affairs, Policy and Regulation Department compiled: ""Regulations on Religious Affairs" Relevant Laws, Regulations and Policy Manual" . Religious Culture Press, May 2010, 2nd edition.

参考论文：草民一：有关2018版《宗教事务条例》实施前景的分析；2017、9、13初稿；2018、1、3修订。另参：国家宗教事务局政策法规司编：“《宗教事务条例》相关法律法规及政策手册”。宗教文化出版社，2010年5月，第2版。

²¹ Reference: <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/1997/Document/307974/307974.htm> (Accessed 3/27/2019)

参：<http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/1997/Document/307974/307974.htm> (2019年3月27日存取)

²² Reference: <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/theDocument/1626514/1626514.htm> (Accessed 3/27/2019)

参：<http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1626514/1626514.htm> (2019年3月27日存取)

religious clergy." By 2018, the White Paper acknowledged: "nearly 200 million religious citizens and more than 380,000 religious staff." This shows that in the past 20 years, with the slight increase in the total number of religious practitioners, religious believers in China have almost doubled.

However, considering that these data are of an estimated nature, the huge difference in the number of believers does not indicate the natural growth of the number of believers in China in the past two decades. After several investigations, the Chinese government has come closer to actual estimates of the current situation of religion in China. Specific to Christianity, the 1997 White Paper stated: "There are currently about 10 million Christians in China, more than 18,000 pastoral ministers, more than 12,000 churches, and more than 25,000 simple venues (meeting points)." And by 2018, the expression was: "more than 38 million Christians and about 57,000 religious clerics." Obviously, the total number of Chinese Christians has almost quadrupled in the past two decades. No doubt this is a highlight of the "White Papers" on Chinese religion.

Considering that the "White Papers" show an increase of China's religious population from "over 100 million" to "nearly 200 million", while maintaining the proportion of 68% of the total religious population of the "Buddhist and Taoism" religions, the remaining so-called "one god religions" {monotheistic religions} (Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity) doubled from 32 million to 64 million. The more recent version of the White Paper continues to maintain the absolute dominance of the "Buddhist and Taoist" religions in the total religious population and emphasizes that the macro religious structure has not changed. The Chinese government has skillfully and implicitly acknowledged the fact that the Christian population in China has increased significantly. See the figure below:



It is understandable with the changes in the Chinese religious landscape shown above that has led to an ideological crisis in the ruling party and thus given rise to numerous theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon and resolve this crisis.

Section 2

Introduction and Analysis of National Research Results in Recent Years

Since the start of the 21st century, apart from case studies and limited research in local areas, the main studies on the current status and growth of the Christian religious population on a national scale have been two national questionnaires.

1. "Survey of Chinese Spiritual Life Status"

The survey "Chinese Spiritual Life Status" was conducted in 2007 led by Yang Fenggang with the Horizon Research Group responsible for implementation.²³ The analysis of 7021 samples from across the country found:

- a) 85% of Chinese adults (between 16 and 75 years of age) hold some kind of supernatural belief or engage in a some kind of religious activity. True atheists, those who have neither any supernatural belief nor any religious activity, account for less than 15%.
- b) Buddhism is the largest religion in China. 18% of Chinese professing to believe in Buddhism, while only 3.2% believe in Christianity.
- c) While the number of Protestant Christians has indeed increased significantly, the number of Catholics is likely to have declined.

This survey, in addition to proving that after 50 years of continuous atheistic education, the vast majority of Chinese people still have some kind of "religious" belief, it also shows that, despite its rapid growth, Christianity is far from reaching the level of a "dominant religion". But this study did not cover the state of religious development in China, especially the discussion of the causes and mechanisms for the growth of Christianity. Therefore, it cannot be considered an academic project in the strictest sense for researching and elucidating the characteristics and development models of religion in China.

2. "Chinese Christian Household Registration Questionnaire"

Between 2008 and 2009, a large-scale sample survey of 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities across the country organized by the Research Group of the World Institute of Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences specifically focused on the number, distribution, reasons for believing, etc. of Christian Protestants. The survey covered 321 district/county-level units, 2,718 village (neighborhood) committees, 54,360 households and 211,750 people; 63,680 questionnaires were distributed, and 63,680 valid questionnaires were collected. Afterwards, the analysis results were published in 2010 in the form of the *China Religion Report 2010* ("Religious Blue Book"). The main findings are:²⁴

- a) Based on the results of the survey, the total number of Christians nationwide is estimated at 23.05 million, accounting for approximately 1.8% of the total population. Among them, the gender ratio is 69.9% women / 30.1% men; 67.5% baptized / 32.5% not baptized; Education: 54.6% elementary school or below / 32.7% junior high school / 10.1% senior high school and 2.6% college or above.

²³ Yang Fenggang: "A glimpse of the religious status quo of China: Preliminary analysis of a questionnaire"; China Research Center for Religion and Society, December 2010 Volume 3 No. 2. <https://www.purdue.edu/crcs/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CRCSEnewsletter-V3N2C.pdf> (accessed 3/29/2019)

杨凤岗：中国宗教现状一瞥：一个问卷调查的初步分析报告；中国宗教与社会研究中心，2010年12月第3卷第2期。 <https://www.purdue.edu/crcs/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CRCSEnewsletter-V3N2C.pdf>（2019、3、29 存取）。

²⁴ See "Chinese Religion Report 2010" ("Religious Blue Book").
参《中国宗教报告 2010》（《宗教蓝皮书》）。

- b) When they became a Christian: 3.0% of respondents believed in 1965 and before, 5.7% believed in 1966-1981, 17.9% in 1982-1992, 42.4% in 1993-2002, and 2003-2009 was 31.0%.
- c) Reasons for converting: 68.8% were because of "illness suffered by themselves or their families" and 15.0% are "influenced by family traditions".
- d) Contact channels for believing: 44% "affected by influence of family and relatives", 46.5% "affected by other believers and friends".
- e) The attendance of believers: "Often attend religious activities" accounted for 57.8%, "Sometimes attended" accounted for 38.2%, "Never attended" was 3.9%.
- f) Gathering places: "Activities in registered places" 67.9%, "Activities in unregistered places" 20.2%, "Activities in friends' homes" 26.7%, and "Activities in own homes" 22.4%.

This survey confirms that the number of Christians in China has indeed increased rapidly, especially during the period 1993-2009. However, the traditional "four majorities" phenomenon of "majority old people, majority low educated people, majority women, and majority rural population" still exists.²⁵ Also, in terms of cause of belief, "belief due to illness" remains the most important reason.

However, although this is the first time since 1949 that the Chinese government has conducted a field survey of "Christianity" in China, the results have been questioned. The most powerful questioner comes from within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. According to Zhu Jianzhong, Professor Gao Shining from the Institute of Religious Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said: "The investigation lacked the participation of experts and scholars. In the whole process, they were only consulted during the design of the questionnaire. In addition, the survey was mainly commissioned by the State Administration of Religious Affairs, undertaken by the Institute of Religion, and was conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics."

As a result three questions arise:

"First, this kind of work under the guidance of the State Administration of Religious Affairs but lacking the participation of experts who know the actual situation of Chinese churches may adversely affect the authenticity of the data. Second, the proportion of the first batch of 5,000 household surveys in Jiangxi, Hunan, and Yunnan in the first batch of sampling data; the proportion of the second batch of nearly 40,000 household surveys in 28 provinces and autonomous regions is puzzling? Why are Jiangxi, Hunan, and Yunnan specifically presented in the sampling data and account for a high proportion? In addition, the "self-help method error calculation" used in the sampling estimation scheme is considered insufficiently accurate. Third, because the interview survey was conducted on a real-name basis, it is inevitable that many believers (mainly members of the house church and members of the Party) are unwilling to answer the questionnaire truthfully. And due to the social and environmental factors in which Christianity in China is located, non-religious interviewees may not know or are unwilling to admit that there is someone in their family when they conduct a household survey. As a result, the data presented in the survey may be lower than the actual data."²⁶

²⁵ Author's Note: Due to the development of urbanization, in some descriptions, the "four majorities" has been changed to "three majorities", and the indicator "majority rural population" has been removed.

笔者注：由于城镇化发展，在一些描述已将“四多”改成为“三多”，而剔除了“农村人口多”这一指标。

²⁶ Zhu Jianzhong: "An Analysis Report of the "Chinese Christian Household Survey Questionnaire Report" (draft)"; <http://www.collegesaints.org.hk/schedule/20110429outline.pdf> (accessed 3/29/2019)

朱建忠：《中國基督教入戶問卷調查報告》分析報告(初稿)；

<http://www.collegesaints.org.hk/schedule/20110429outline.pdf> (2019、3、29 存取)

Regarding this issue, Liu Peng pointed out:

"In a society where religion, especially Christianity, is generally rejected or denied, a respondent faces a government investigation and must provide the government's investigator with his real name and contact information. Under the premise of this method, it is not easy to publicly claim to be a Christian and answer questions about religious beliefs. Taking into account the results of answering questions by real names and surnames, it is important to consider the impact on joining the army, joining the party, getting promoted as cadres, working in the interpersonal environment and with individuals, or the negative impact that family social evaluation may bring. Respondents should not say that they are members of Christian house churches that are not recognized by the government; even those of the Three-Self churches recognized by the government have concerns. For their own safety and future development consideration, how many people can openly acknowledge their Christian faith to the government without any concern? Before Chinese society has yet to "desensitize" the political sensitivity of religion or Christianity, the government publicly conducted the "real-name system" with the purpose to understand whether individual citizens believe in Christianity you have to wonder how reliable the results are and be somewhat skeptical. After all, most people have to eat, to work, knowing the attitude of the Party and government toward Christianity; expecting them to candidly reveal themselves to the government as a Christian believer, will this be the average person's normal choice?"²⁷

The author believes that because the survey is too official and attempts to use data as a basis to deny Yang Fenggang's statement that more than 80% of Chinese people have religious tendencies, the motives are very obvious but the academic rigor is clearly inadequate. The report has no practical value other than to reaffirm that the number of Christians in China is indeed growing.²⁸

²⁷ Liu Peng: "China Has How Many Christians? - On the "2010 Report on Religious Blue Book" on the number of Chinese Christians" ; <http://zhanlve.org/?p=3078> (accessed 3/29/2019)

刘澎：中国有多少基督教徒？——浅析《2010年宗教蓝皮书》关于中国基督教人数的调查报告；
<http://zhanlve.org/?p=3078>（2019、3、29 存取）

²⁸ Regarding the fact that Chinese Christians are indeed growing, Wang Zuo'an, former director of the Chinese State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) and deputy head of the United Front Work Department, has publicly stated: "For the past two or three decades, the number of religious believers in our country has grown, and few people are skeptical. "

Reference: Wang Zuo'an: "New Changes in Our Country's Religious Situation," Central Institute of Socialism Reports, Vol. 3, 2008.

对于中国基督徒确实在增长的情况，原中国宗教事务局局长，现统战部副部长王作安曾公开表示：“二十年来，我国信教人数不断增长的判断，几乎没有人持怀疑态度。”参：王作安：我国宗教状况的新变化；《中央社会主义学院学报》2008年第3期。

Section 3

Presentation of the Results of the "Survey on the Current Situation and Growth of Han Chinese Christianity in China" from 2017 to 2018

I. Basic design and implementation of the written questionnaire survey

Because of the wide distribution of Christians in China, the uneven density and the "large number" of Christians, and the fact that the proportion of non-institutionalized churches such as "house churches" is greater than that of the institutionalized "Three-Self Churches," a set of questionnaires was designed to be administered randomly province by province. The principles used were:

Principle 1: Survey by entering the church rather than entering the home. This was a lesson learned from the failure of the official "home" investigation. We considered, although not all Christians are in churches, finding Christians requires entering the church.

Principle 2: Except for Xinjiang, Tibet, Guangxi, and Yunnan, universally invite all provinces rather than pre-selecting specific provinces to conduct surveys.

Principle 3: Pre-set church categories, which include

- Traditional house church
- Urban emerging church
- Rural church
- Migrant church
- Three Self Church

Survey method:

- A. Design two sets of questionnaires:
 - Church leaders/co-workers version
 - Church member version
- B. All questionnaires will be administered in writing. It is not allowed to answer the questionnaires through electronic communication.

Survey process:

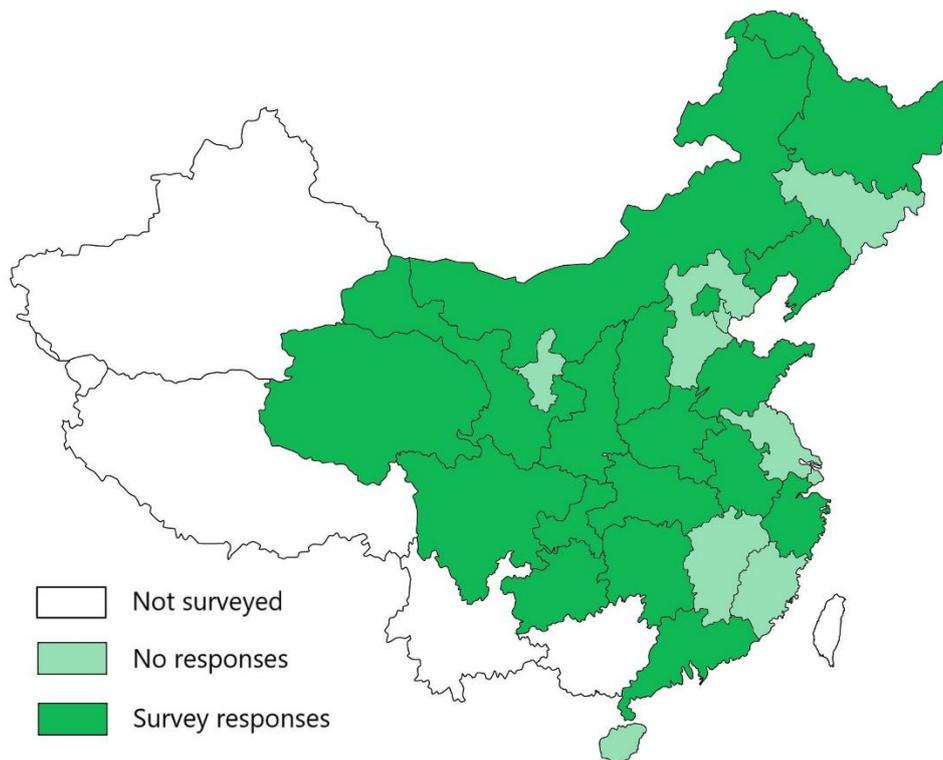
- A. The church is allowed to choose a safe way to answer the questionnaire for security reasons, but it is not allowed to change the questions.
- B. Pastors and church leaders are allowed to fill in a "Member Survey" as a "Member", but not allowed to fill out questionnaires on behalf of other church members.
- C. Can only complete the survey at the church or meeting place; it is not allowed to leave the church or meeting place and complete at a workplace or private space.

Sample size requirements: Unless for security reasons, in principle 30% of the members of the church and 50% of the pastoral staff are required to complete the questionnaire.

After several experimental questionnaire surveys and revisions, it was finally determined that it would start in the spring of 2017 and end in the summer of 2018 as the time period for formal surveys (the time period was set relatively broadly because it must be kept completely confidential; the author brought the questionnaire to personally visit churches in various places). However, for participating churches, although the author does not need to be present in person to allow the church to do the survey, they completed the questionnaire on a specified day and time and immediately received the surveys. The same church is not surveyed twice.

The final results are:

More than 1,000 churches were actually invited but because the survey took place at the same time that churches in various places began to receive different levels of attention and impact, the preachers were forced to "drink tea," and so on, in the end, only about 10% of the churches, nearly 120 churches, accepted to take part in the survey. However, because of the deadline for submission, only about half of them were actually collected - that is, written questionnaires from nearly 70 churches in 18 provinces and municipalities, including some individual questionnaires of poor quality that could not meet the interpretation requirements. The distribution of these responding churches is shown in the figure:²⁹



The distribution of questionnaires from these 18 provinces is:

- A total of 1655 valid questionnaires for church members were collected;
- A total of 110 valid questionnaires for church leaders and preachers were collected.
- They represent Christian communities ranging from 72,000 to 143,000 members in the 18 provinces and municipalities mentioned above.³⁰

²⁹ In addition to Xinjiang, Tibet, Yunnan, Guangxi, which were not invited, provinces also missing: Jilin, Hebei, Tianjin, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Fujian, Ningxia, Jiangxi, Hainan. The main reason for the lack of papers was related to the actual situation of the local church at that time and the decisions of their leaders.

除了新疆、西藏、云南、广西没有被邀请之外，最后缺卷的省市为：吉林、河北、天津、江苏、上海、福建、宁夏、江西、海南。造成缺卷的主要原因，与当时当地教会的实际处境，及领袖的决定有关。

³⁰ The total number of Christians is based on the total number of churches related to pastoral work. Due to increasingly urgent security considerations, the requirements of 30% members and 50% pastoral co-workers were not strictly enforced, and only nearly 20 churches met this requirement. Some pastoral workers and members only filled in the membership papers; some only allow some of the main co-workers and main members to participate; but there are 11 churches with only 100% pastoral papers, but no member papers. There is also a church that does not require members to fill in personal information.

有关基督徒规模的总数，是根据教牧同工卷有关教会规模的总计而成。由于出于越来越急迫的安全考虑，完全按设计30%会友和50%教牧同工的要求并未能严格执行，最后只有近20间教会达成此要求。有的教牧同工与会友一起，只填写会友卷；有的只让部分主要同工和主要会友参与；但有11间教会只有100%

These participating churches include:

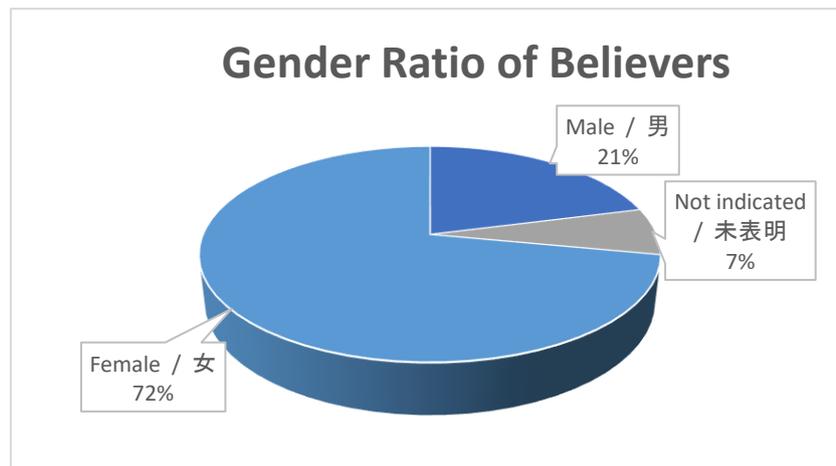
- 11 rural churches
- 43 urban churches
- 5 migrant worker churches
- 6 traditional Three-Self churches
- None of them was a church founded by overseas missionaries planting churches
- Three of them have a long history and have been meeting since before 1979

II. Basic data about the questionnaire analysis and its preliminary conclusions

Although the questionnaire covers a wide range of issues, this paper only covers issues such as the structure of believers.

(A) The basic situation of the Chinese Christian community from the perspective of the respondents:

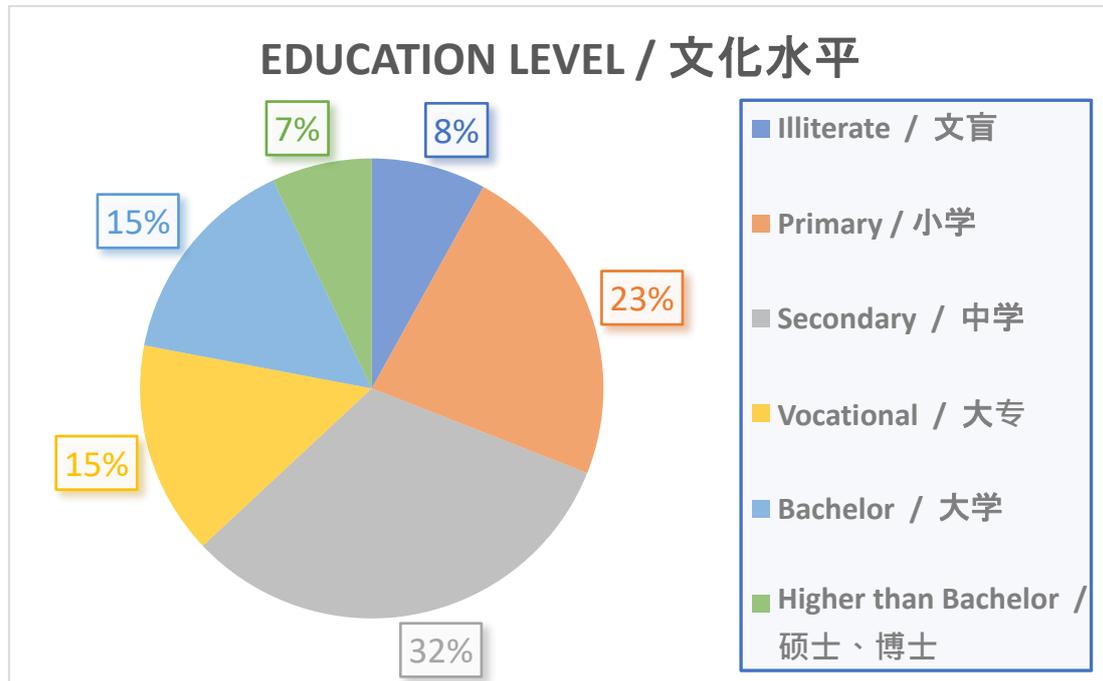
1. Gender ratio of believers:



The chart shows that at least 72% of adult Christians who have the ability to complete the survey are women. This is generally consistent with the results of the 2008 government-led "household" survey. The "majority women" among the "four majorities" or "three majorities" basically is confirmed. This shows that the feminization rate of the Chinese Christian community is relatively high. Because the Chinese churches are not established or led by overseas missionaries, they are autonomous. Therefore, the feminization rate is relatively high, and the tendency of the introverted church is relatively easy to appear.

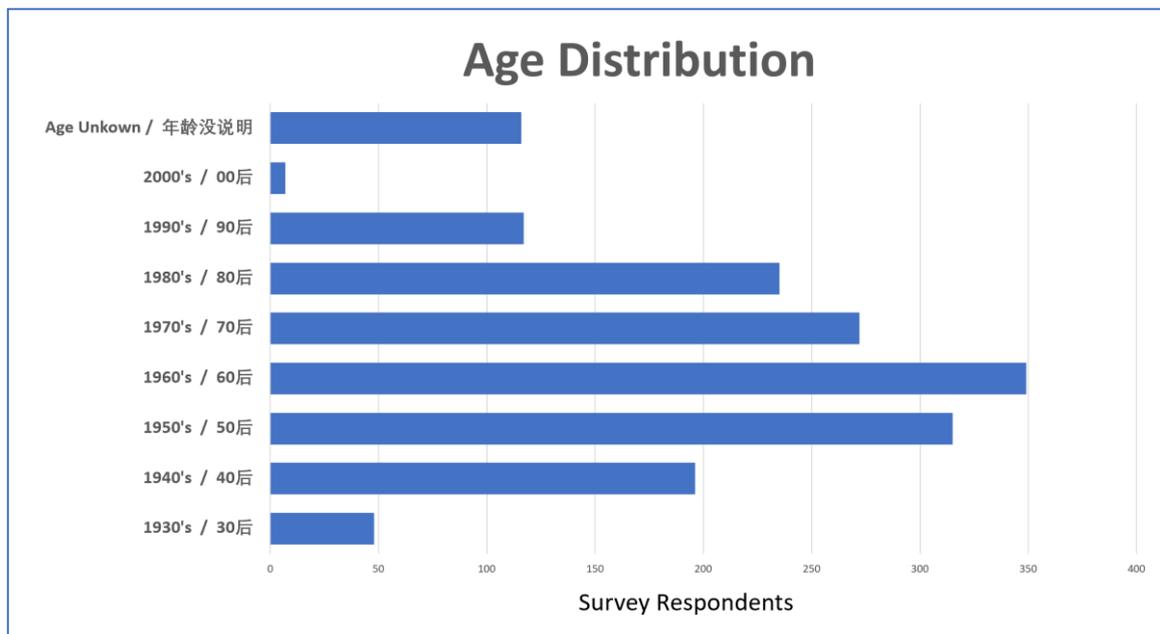
的教牧同工卷，却没有会友卷。也有一间教会，没有要求会友填写个人信息

2. Educational level of believers (including preachers):



The chart shows that the education level of Chinese believers has changed substantially, and this change is consistent with the improvement of urbanization and education in Chinese society. Among these, only 31% of believers are illiterate or have a primary education. This is considerably lower than the value of 54.6% in the Blue Book of Religion. This shows that those in the church who do not have the ability to read the Bible independently no longer occupy the mainstream of the Chinese believers. In the long run, this change is irreversible and will only decrease in the future. At the same time, 22% of believers have a bachelor's degree or above. Since Chinese higher education requires students to have a certain foreign language ability, this data shows that not only the majority of Christians in China have the ability to read the Bible, but also those who can independently think about Bible and theological issues have also increased greatly. This not only indicates the increase in the degree of rationalization of the Chinese Christian community but also brings new challenges to pastoral care, apologetics, church planting, children's education, etc.. At the same time, it will also create many new opportunities, such as cross-cultural missions and local community involvement. Compared with the local churches in China before 1949, the Chinese churches in the 21st century already have many services that previously could only rely on Western missionaries to provide services, such as theological reflection, Bible translation, organizing NGO work, etc.

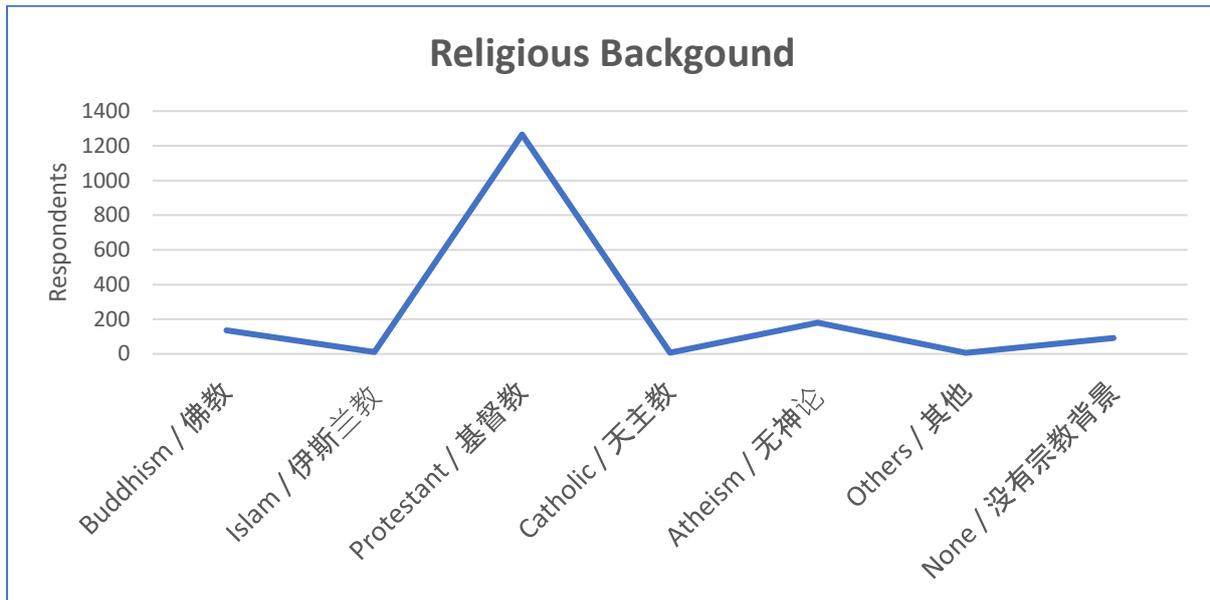
3. Age distribution of believer groups



The chart shows that among the current Christian community in China, the largest group was born in the 1960s, and are now around 50 years old. The most common feature of this age group is that they were born in the period of great famine or the turbulent period of the Cultural Revolution. They were mainly educated in the 1970s. They also experienced the whole process of the rise of materialism from the Cultural Revolution to Reform and Opening Up. Thus, their conversions bear important timestamps and profound personal insights. This means that the basic set of the Christian community in China today is composed of a group of people with deep introspection, rich life experience, and strong will. They became the ballast of the Chinese Christian community. Because the social restlessness caused by more than 30 years of Reform and Opening Up and urbanization is very serious, this impetuous wind will inevitably affect the church, but it is precisely because of the existence of a group of ballast stones that the Chinese church can come out of this restless period.

In addition, the chart also tells us that the Chinese church is generally composed of members from the 1950s to the 1980s, so it is a spiritual group with a high degree of "ageing" (that is, more middle-aged people). Although the "ageing" degree is relatively high, we also have to consider the Chinese women "at home" ratio is far lower than in areas with high levels of industrialization. The demands of life make the Chinese church have a relatively high degree of social participation (such as a higher employment rate for women, a higher proportion of children receiving education in public schools, etc.). Therefore, the introversion of the church does not mean that the Chinese Christian community is a minority group that is out of touch with the world. However, it can be shown that due to the "non-institutional" characteristics caused by external political factors, there is no substantial influence of "denominations" in teaching affairs, theological training, etc. The Chinese Christian community is largely fragmented and silent at all levels of society. It should be pointed out that although fragmentation may make the Chinese Christian community lack cohesion, it is also the most penetrating way to exist in society.

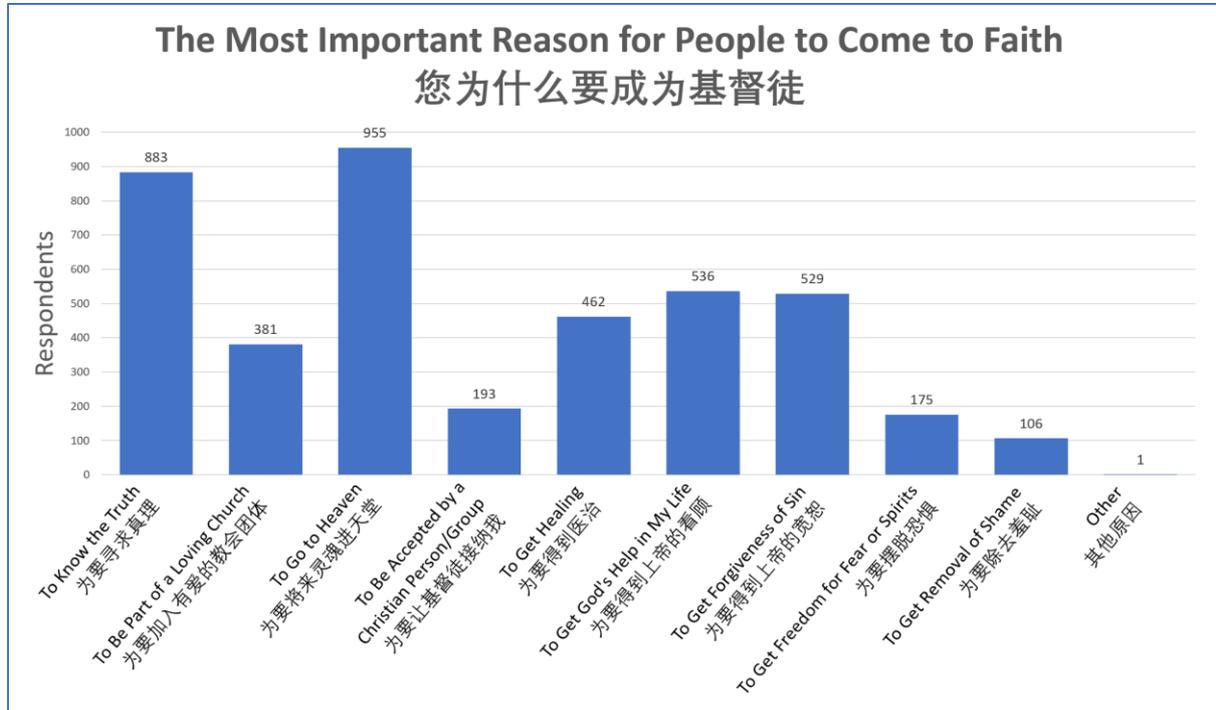
4. Religious background of believers



This survey has a different target group from the "Household" survey; this survey is directed at churches in various places and is a pastoral survey of church members completed in the church. The survey found that the personal religious background of the interviewees was relatively homogeneous. Although some members originally had Buddhist and atheistic backgrounds (in the Chinese context, the answer to "No" also falls into the category of "Atheism"), but most members of the church had a Christian background. This implies the growth of the church has mainly occurred among people of with some Christian background. These "backgrounds" may date back to the 1950s or even earlier Christians. These could also be the next generation of middle-aged people currently in church or Christian family and friends. This suggests that China's social environment does not allow the free dissemination of Christian ideas, so that church growth still occurs in the form of "life affects life". Although this is consistent with the "underground" status of Chinese Christianity, in the long run, Chinese churches still have a long way to go before they go public.

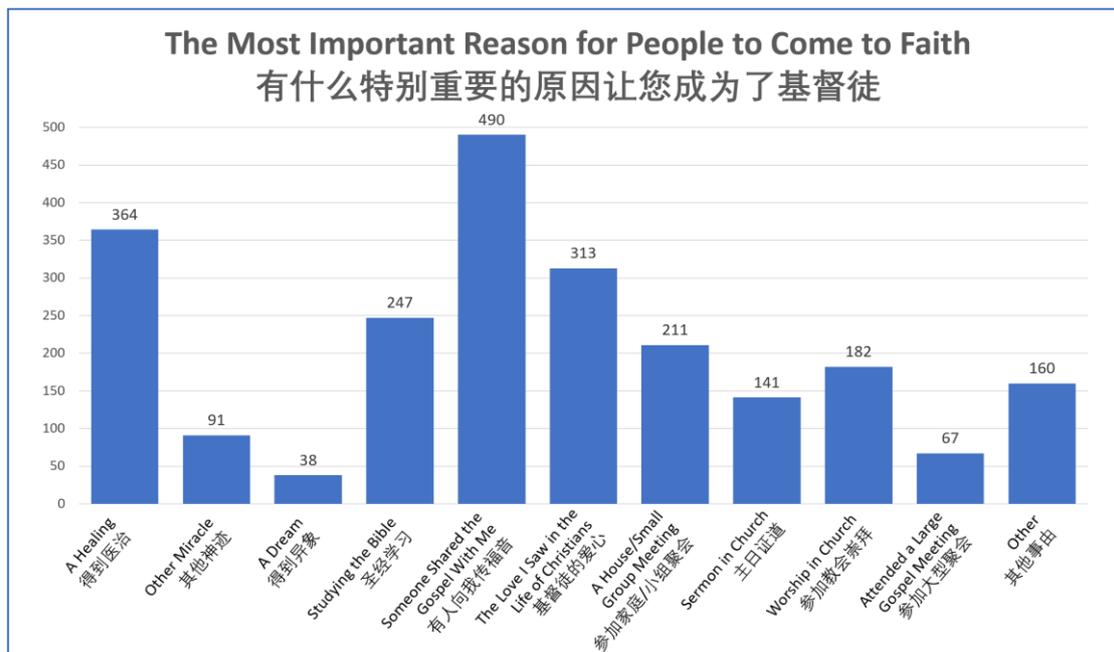
(B) the reasons for the growth of the Chinese Christian community from the interviewees' perspective

1. Basic motivations of Chinese people willing to accept Christianity



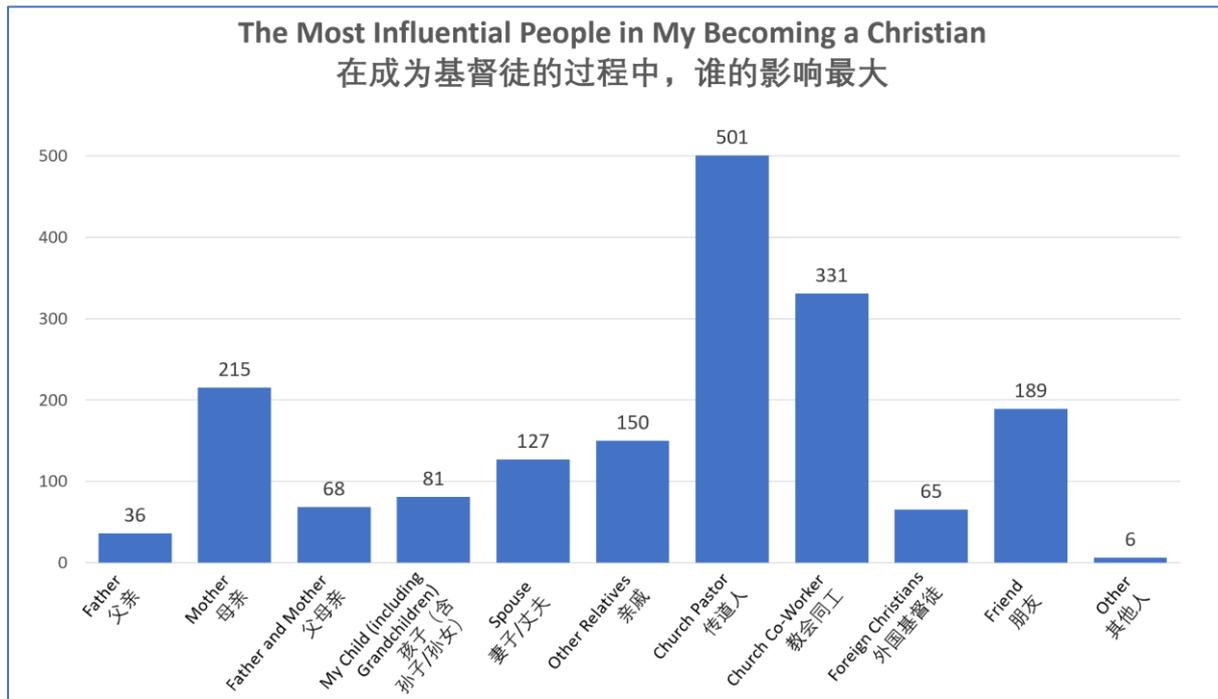
This illustration clearly shows that, as far as church members are concerned, conclusions that are completely different from the household survey. The main reasons people believe in Jesus is not "because they or their family members are sick", or even "to receive help from God". Mostly, there are many metaphysical reasons, such as, "know the truth" and "for going to heaven after death." At the same time, people's consciousness of "sin" is almost as high as the desire for God to intervene in their lives. Because the main body of Chinese Christians is from different tangible and intangible church entities in various places, and the thinking of church members is so "metaphysical", this shows that among Chinese Christians Idealists outnumber the Utilitarians. The author believes that this is the primary driving force for the growth of Chinese Christianity in the past 40 years. This again shows that there were fatal weaknesses in the survey scope and design in the large-scale "Household" survey from 2008 to 2009 which led to misleading conclusions. If combined with the analysis and briefings by Zhu Jianzhong, Gao Shining and others, it is almost certain that the appearance of these misleading conclusions were predetermined by the survey sponsor.

2. The basic reasons for Chinese converting to Christianity



Promoting the desire of modern Chinese to believe in Christ is different from the actions that lead the Chinese to actually convert to Jesus (commit to Christ and become a Christian). The diagram shows that the primary reason that actually leads modern Chinese to trust in Christ is personal evangelism or by various channels to hear and agree with what you heard about the gospel. The second is for insurmountable practical needs, such as illness. The third is to enter into a fellowship of Christian love, and to study the Bible and worship God. However, although the previous figure shows that the elements of Chinese Christian idealism are far higher than the utilitarian motives, this does not mean that Chinese Christian ideals are divorced from reality. Because this illustration shows that, compared to the "gospel" persistence, Chinese Christians do not treat "wonders/miracles" and "dreams" equally. This result is in line with the cultural background of the Confucian "respecting ghosts and gods while keeping them away". At the same time, it also shows that the Christian Church in reality, whether visible or intangible, is an important way for the Chinese to achieve a beautiful and ideal life. This includes the study of truth, fellowship of love, and satisfaction of practical needs. This is clearly the second important reason for the growth of Christianity in China. This conclusion, in turn, foreshadows that no matter how the authorities suppress it, as long as they cannot provide the products currently being provided by the church that can realize the people's ideals for a better life, then the church will not only not be destroyed, but will continue to grow in an "underground" form.

3. The main people that influence Chinese people to become Christians

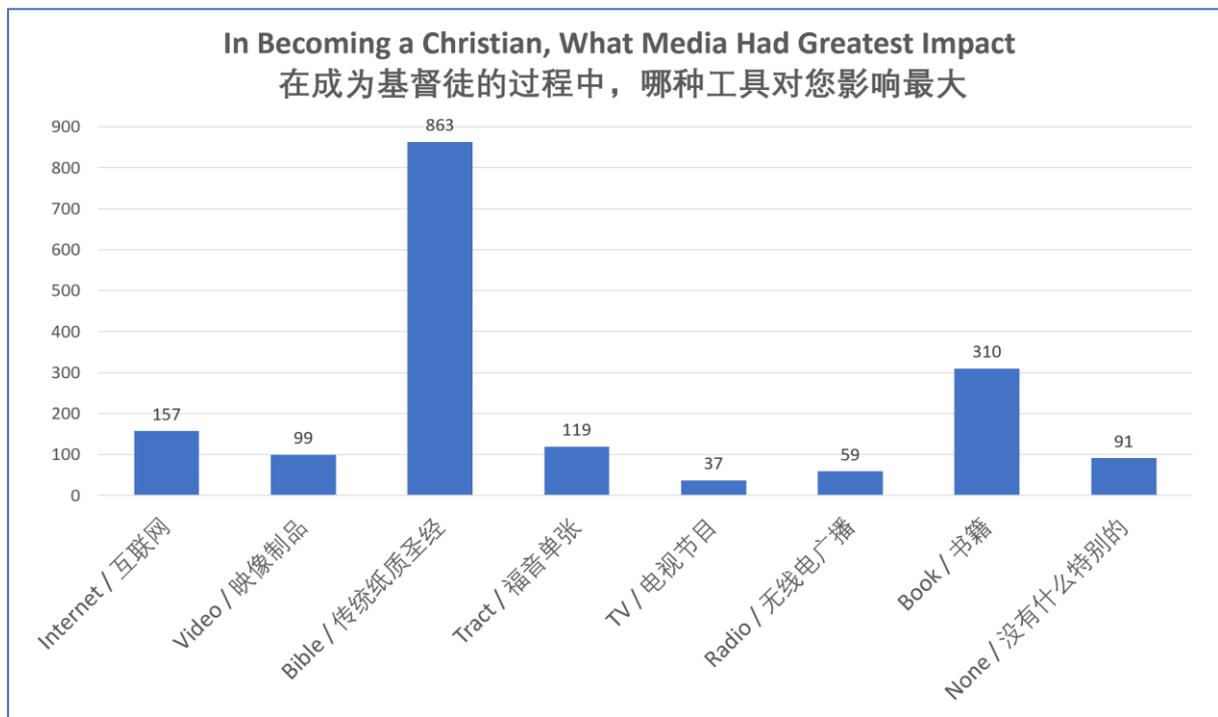


Although the current belief background of church members is mostly Christianity, it does not indicate that the growth of Christianity in China has been achieved through "spread within the family". Objectively, although "family spread" can cause "inheritance" to occur, it is difficult to lead to "growth". This illustration shows that what really led to the "growth" of Christianity was church ministers and co-workers, followed by mothers. It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that "friends" have almost the same influence as "mothers". That means that the existence of the church and Christians' recognition and implementation of the "gospel mission" are the reasons for the "growth" of the church. Because of the social environment, the church can only exist in "underground" and "informal" forms. The combination of this "gospel mission" and the "underground" situation has enabled the church to grow faster and more broadly. Therefore, the third impetus for the growth of Christianity in China is the result of the implementation of "evangelicalism" under "informal conditions".³¹

³¹ The authors note: the so-called "informal conditions" refers to the social system with an absence of religious freedom, the inability to have legal status and registration for Christianity and the inability to freely use public media.

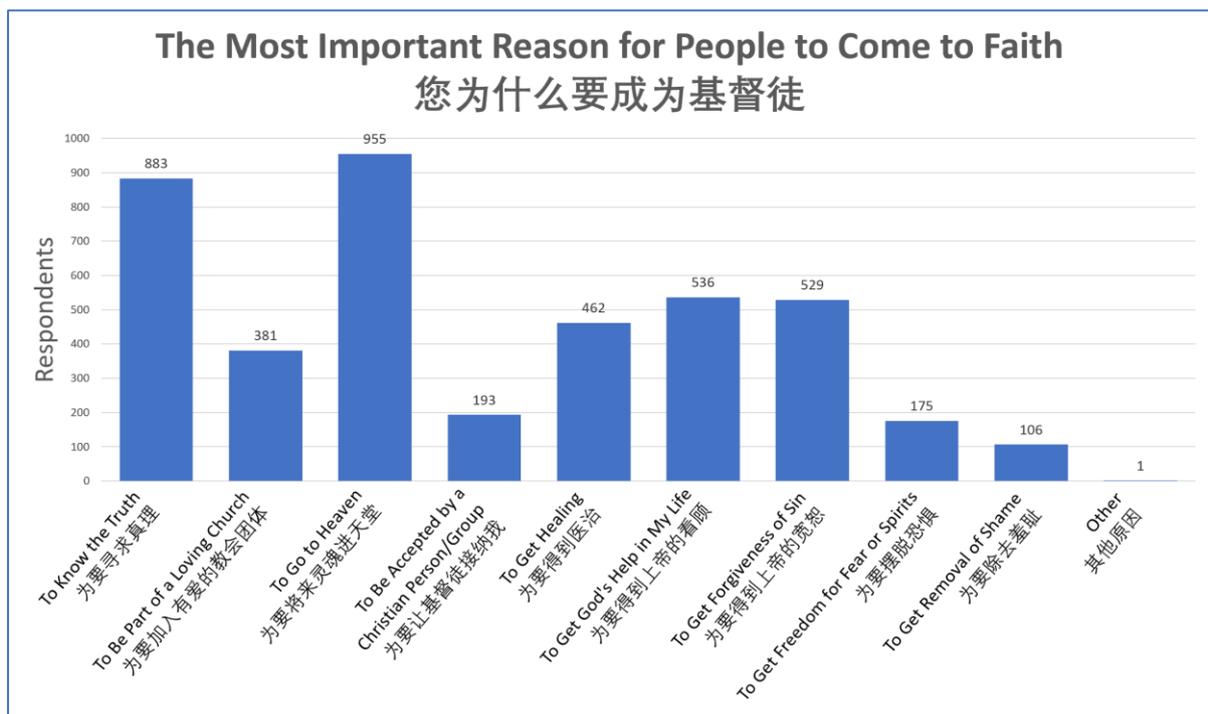
笔者注：所谓“非正式条件”是指在没有宗教自由的社会处境下，基督教因为无法获得合法的存在资格，以及无法藉着公共媒体自由传播的条件。

4. The main media that influence Chinese people to become Christians



If the "Internet" has not become the main tool for the conversion of Chinese people's beliefs, it is caused by the ruling party's vigorous control of Internet information. Radio and video products (because there is no Christian television station in China, so the response to "television" here can be regarded as "video products") also have limited impact. This is not a result of Internet policies, but other reasons. The illustration shows that the most important material media that influence Chinese people to become Christians are the Bible and other written Christian works. This result shows, on the one hand, that the choice of the Chinese by the media is closely related to the educational structure of Christians in contemporary China, and is in line with the results reflected in the previous "education level". But at the same time, it also shows that the traditional culture of "writing is for conveying truth" is still regulating the Chinese thinking mode. Therefore, the author believes that the cultural background of "writing is for conveying truth" is an important cultural factor in the growth of Chinese Christianity.

5. The main reasons for the Chinese to enter the ranks of "Christians" marked by receiving baptism



The figure shows that the most important motivations for contemporary Chinese to be "baptized" and become a Christian. First is their desire for eternal life and a deeper understanding and experience of truth. Second is their willingness to see their own life changes (including dealing with sin). Third is healing of the body. Another very important finding is that baptism will not help people to eliminate the existing "inferiority complex", but it is an important and glorious declaration in an atheistic society. The author believes that although Yang Fenggang's research found that more than 80% of people in China have religious feelings or yearning for religion, the purpose of people yearning for religion is often to seek the knowledge and grasp of "ultimate concern". Within traditional culture, the worship of idols and superstitions lacking clear moral guidance cannot provide truth about "ultimate concern" to people. Therefore, the spread of Christianity among the Chinese people is closely related to providing clear "ultimate concern" to people.

3. Preliminary Conclusions on the Reasons for the Growth of Christianity in China

Although the scope of the "2017-2018 Survey of the Status and Growth of Christianity in China" covers many areas, including "member analysis", "believers theology", "(church's) operating mechanism", "religious life" and "belief motivation" aspects, this paper only provides a preliminary analysis of the composition and contours of belief for Christians in China based on collating the survey data. However, comparing with the results of the 2007 Survey of the "Spiritual Life of Chinese People" and the report in the "Blue Book of Religion 2010", the author can already put forward the following five propositions:

- Proposition 1: The pursuit of metaphysical ideals is the primary reason for the growth of the Chinese Christian community.

- Proposition 2: Church life leading to Chinese experiencing an idealized beautiful life, including the study of truth, fellowship of love, etc., is an important reason for the growth of Christianity in modern China.
- Proposition 3: The implementation of "evangelicalism" in "informal conditions" is an important reason for the growing Christian community.
- Proposition 4: The cultural background of "writing is for conveying truth" is an important cultural factor for the growth of Chinese Christianity.
- Proposition 5: Christian thought on "ultimate concern" is an important factor that has caused Chinese to convert to Christ; it has also an important factor for the widespread growth and increase of Christianity in China.

In reality, there are still a number of variables in the development of Christianity in China, mainly due to the variable pressure resulting from changes in politics and policies as well as changes in factors such as secular trends of thought, materialistic worldviews, etc. But looking at the problem rationally, one can find that although the amount of pressure from politics and policies is not consistent and constant in different regions and at different stages, the five factors mentioned above and the reasons for them will not change with changes in the amount of political and policy pressure. Similarly, although secularization and materialism can have an impact on the growth of Christianity, this impact is also uneven. Their influence on different regions and different Christian communities is inconsistent. On the contrary, the church (or individual Christians and groups) can use evangelism, life testimony, etc. to impact people controlled by secularization and materialism to lead people away from these influences. Therefore, secularization and materialism cannot fundamentally pose a challenge to the above five factors and causes. This is because man is a "living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Secularization and materialism may dissolve and even dilute the ultimate concern for oneself and others, but it cannot fundamentally erase any person's spiritual existence and needs.

Summary

These forty years of the Chinese Church have been an era where China developed its economy under the banner of "Reform and Opening Up" and actively promoted urbanization, secularization, and the proliferation of materialism. At the same time, it is also an era when post-modernist trends of thought, globalization and Internet technology are increasingly affecting human life. During the past forty years, although the ruling Party's religious policies have been erratic, the idea of strengthening "regulation" has been consistent. At the same time, Christianity has experienced rapid growth seldom seen in China's history. This seems to break all modern missiological theories. What is more notable is that all of this happened after all missionaries were expelled nearly 70 years ago and after the theory of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" was carried out for 30 years. So why has a grassroots Christian wave in China emerged in a country with high-intensity monolithic social ideology and after carrying out a cultural revolution? And for these forty years, this trend has not died down and is still growing?

In addition, how can Christianity, existing under a communist ideology, where ideology and state power are intertwined and ubiquitous in the public sphere and impacting every aspect of a closed society, without any financial, material, or political support, go from the absolute edge of society to the grassroots of society, and finally caused a fierce reaction from the highest ideology of the country? According to some modern scholars, this is because the development of Christianity has led to and promoted the trend of non-communist ideology in Chinese society.³²

However, the author believes that the above investigation has already shown that although the result of accepting Jesus Christ is that people have abandoned materialistic worldview and atheistic teachings, but people "abandoning" materialism and atheism is not a direct reason leading them to "accept" Jesus Christ. It is because people find in "the Bible" what the former cannot provide, and they can actually satisfy themselves and their loved ones' longing for a "better life." This includes learning about the truth, love, enjoyment of fellowship, etc.

Therefore, if materialism cannot provide people with the expectation of a good life from their hearts, simply strengthening the "management" of religion will not end people's yearning, exploration and acceptance of the "good life." In other words, the objective fact of China is that materialistic theories cannot meet the spiritual needs of human beings, but Christianity can fully satisfy all the subjective appeals of the search for truth and meaning of life. Therefore, regardless of the pressure, Christianity will continue to grow and develop in China in the future, and this cannot be stopped.

In fact, since the early 1980s, domestic discussions around the basic proposition of "government management of religion" have never stopped. Although there are different views, official scholars supporting and maintaining the ruling party's use of the power of the government to manage the people's religious activities and control of the direction of religious development have maintained a

³² Reference article: Zhuo Xinping: "Difficulties and Hopes of Understanding Chinese Religion"; Pu Fuzeng: "Challenges of Chinese Christian Academic Research in the Current Ideological Struggle"; Also see: He Guanghu and Zhuo Xinping, "Religious Studies in the Contemporary Chinese Social and Political Situation", Published by The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press in early 2014.

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consistent position. Today, while continuing to implement more stringent "management methods", there is a new requirement that Christianity should "implement the core values of socialism and continuously improve the breadth and depth of its compatibility with socialist society" and advocating the "Sinicization of Christianity".³³ In other words, it is using the "adaptation theory" to dilute the "doctrinal Christianity", to cause it to lose its original development momentum and to change its development direction as a result of "Sinicization."

Looking back at the history of Christianity throughout the world, although the Bible needs to be translated into different languages in order to be learned by people in different cultures and the description of beliefs must be localized as much as possible to be understood and accepted but the essence of Christianity has never been transformed by any culture. Instead, peoples everywhere are adopting Biblical perspectives and gradually "improving" their own cultures. For example, in traditional Chinese culture, "bad habits" such as women's foot binding, smoking opium, polygamy, abandonment of babies, etc. have all gradually been subdued because of the influence of Christian thought. At the same time, the promotion of universal education, the establishment of a public health system, a monogamous marriage system, etc. are typical examples of Chinese culture using Biblical inspiration. And these have fundamentally changed China's social outlook and progress, in line with the universally recognized universal values. None of this has anything to do with the "socialist system" that was later introduced by some Chinese. The latter is only a political ideology.

Scholar Xie Zhibin once pointed out that in the current discussion of human rights the idea of human dignity has two major challenges: The first is the imbalance between personal and social rights caused by ideological challenges. Second, the establishment of the dignity of marginalized people and the disabled.³⁴

The author believes that using an ideological perspective or even raising to the level of institutional identity is a fruitless approach to viewing the existence and development of Christianity in China. This is because the core concern of the Christian faith is not political system questions but matters of man and human nature under any system. The results of this questionnaire survey show that a political system cannot fundamentally change people's internal problems and that only by addressing the problem of people's internal "sin" and recognizing the need of people for "love" can fairness and justice be established in society and the boundaries of "dignity" be extended to everyone, including those at the margins. The survey show that these areas have begun to develop among Chinese Christian communities and will continue to develop gradually. This shows that Christianity will not only continue to develop but will continue to be an indispensable element of development in Chinese society.

³³ <http://m.gospeltimes.cn/news/44465> (accessed 6/11/2019)

<http://m.gospeltimes.cn/news/44465> (2019-6-11 存取)

³⁴ Xie Zhibin: Reformed Theological Approach to Dignity and Rights; Dao Feng: A Review of Christian Culture , Special Issue (Winter) 2018 . Pages 81-112.

谢志斌：尊严与权利的改革宗神学进路；《道风：基督教文化评论》2018年（冬）特别号。第81-112页。