

THE EMPTY CROSS:

The False Doctrine of China's Official Church



The Three-Self Patriotic Movement

基督教三自愛國會



The Voice of the Martyrs

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The False Doctrine
of China's Official Church

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Forward

It is difficult for Westerners to remember that 80 percent of the Chinese do not live in a city. This 80 percent (1 billion), which is three-and-a-half times the population of the United States, live in the countryside. Most of the villages in the countryside have no official state church presence, but there are “illegal” Christians who worship and have Bible study. In the village of Huadu, Christians came on bicycle at 4:00 a.m. from many villages to hold church. The police arrested Li Dixian the evangelist and smashed the meeting place.

A large steel sign is welded and erected in front of the village declaring that no unauthorized meetings may take place in Huadu. This sign was erected over five years ago. As of 2007, there was not yet a state church there. The “bicycle” Christians dispersed to meet in other villages. Huadu village is not the exception. It is the norm.

A house church assembly in Tongling city, Anhui province, was closed by the local State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) on November 26, 2006. Church leaders were then told to worship in the local TSPM church. The house church, which has approximately 200 members, was founded by Brother Wang Xingquan, 53 years ago. Xingquan’s daughter has recently come under pressure. Her work unit has stopped paying her salary and has threatened to fire her unless she joins the Three-Self church. On December 5, 2006, the government held a hearing upon request of the Christians and upheld the SARA’s decision to close down the church. To date, the church members are holding worship services in their own homes.⁵³ The pilgrims who came to America left the oppressive state church system in England for the same type of persecution.

Churches in America do not have to register with our government. They only do so to claim the benefit of tax exemption on donations. Nor are all churches in America forced to join one state denomination.

The question is not whether the Chinese should “wait for the state church to come and set up.” The question is whether Christ’s Great Commission challenge places all power in the hands of the state as a gatekeeper. In Christ’s Great Commission challenge, He states that “all power” is His.

Dr. Tom White
The Voice of the Martyrs

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Introduction

The earliest known symbol of Christianity under persecution was the sign of the fish, drawn in the dirt of street ways and side paths when Christians would try to identify each other. It was, and remains, a symbol of the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Another powerful symbol of our faith is the cross, symbolizing our Lord's sacrifice and that death has no power over believers. Jesus Christ's human body was tormented and killed on the cross, but it did not kill Him. We know Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

A Christian's cross is full of faith, full of promise and full of hope because of the promise of Jesus. This cross is steadfast and based on the teaching of our Lord found in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. But, it is not the same cross that is found in the official church in China.

The Chinese Communist Party, through the official church, called the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), has given the Chinese people a way of practicing the Christian religion, maintaining a *form* of godliness, while remaining loyal to the Chinese socialist agenda. They have substituted the truth of God's Word and the Kingdom of God for a "truth" that includes the welfare and destiny of the great proletarian revolution. They have substituted life in Christ that brings peace and victory now, as well as eternal life with Him, for a life devoted to the good of China and, more specifically, the power of the elite within the Communist party. This leaves those seeking true life in Christ with the emptiness of false doctrines. These false doctrines empty the cross of Christ and all it represents to believers who follow the teachings of the Holy Bible. It empties the cross of its meaning, its vitality and its saving grace.

When communism became a force in China following World War II, party members realized their future political success would rest on their ability to manipulate and control the vast population of their huge country. If properly controlled, religion might be of benefit to the Party. From this realization grew the TSPM political movement, originally the Three-Self Anti-American Aid [North] Korea Patriotic Movement, in 1951. The independent national (state-sponsored) church they established emphasized three values: self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting. However, the church as described and mandated by the Chinese Communist Party bears little resemblance to the church as described in New Testament scripture.

The following information is provided in this document: background information about Christianity in China, and the communist government and its influence on the official church. Also presented is an assessment of the current church situation in China as analyzed by 20 Chinese Christian intellectuals. Evidence is provided to demonstrate how the Chinese government has purposely separated the most basic tenants of Christianity from the official church. In doing so, the cross which held the Savior is stripped of power. The government has stolen the ability to have faith, the promise of the resurrection and the hope of salvation from the official church. What is left is an empty cross of false doctrine with the Communist Party as the head of the church, rather than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Overview of China

With more than 1.3 billion residents, China is the most populous nation on earth and fourth largest in land area. Its borders span more than 2,000 miles east to west and almost that distance north to south. This land supports almost one-fifth of the world's total population. There are 56 distinct Chinese ethnic groups. Two-thirds of China's land is desert or mountains, and only one-tenth is cultivated. The eastern half has three extensive river systems that provide ample water for farmlands.¹

Two-thirds of the population resides in rural areas, where unemployment and underemployment are severe. The chief agricultural crops employ more than 43 percent of the workforce. Only 25 percent of people are employed through industry and commerce. Economic development has been more rapid in coastal provinces than in the interior and approximately 200 million rural laborers relocated to urban areas to find work. Even with the latest economic boom in China, 10 percent of the population remains in poverty.

The communist state of China is administered through the Chinese Communist Party from the capital in Beijing. The current President of China is Hu Jintao; the current Vice-President is Zeng Qinghong. More than 60 million people belong to the Communist Party, or more than 5 percent of the total population.² After communism was abandoned in Europe and the former USSR, China became the oldest surviving Communist regime. By the year 2000, economic output had quadrupled through western-style capitalist economic reforms. However, China's government policy remained rigid and repressive when relating to political, religious or ethnic dissenters.

The Official Church: Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement, originally the Three-Self Anti-American Aid [North] Korea Patriotic Movement, began in 1951, originating from Communist Party officials who realized that Christianity was experiencing astonishing growth in China and who were fearful that communism would fall in China, like it had in many European nations. Government leaders in China became more aggressive in their strict control over the instruction of pastors and the nature of worship practices. The majority of church leadership at that time was through foreign Christian agencies, and communists believed that they needed to get rid of this "socially destabilizing" force.

Under the guise of a reform movement, the government stressed the importance of an independent national church for China. They emphasized the "three selves" that were to become the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" — self-government, self-propagation and self-support.

To gain public support, communist leaders cited China's history of treaties with foreign nations where the "right to evangelize" was attached as a condition of surrender as evidence for the need of a state church (i.e. Treaty of Nanjing, 1842 and Treaty of Tianjin, 1858). They said that this was evidence of foreigners using Christianity and missionaries to control China.

“Since 1840, right up until 1949, imperialism had made use of Christianity and the missionaries to serve its aggression and it has never stopped,” commented TSPM honorary Chairman Luo Guanzong. “In the 1950s, Chinese Christians through the TSPM for the first time stood up and with their new political standpoint, unmasked the connection between the Western missionary movement and imperialist aggression in China.”³

By “liberating” the Chinese Christians from foreign control by forming a state church, government officials hoped that the state church, too, would eventually disappear.⁴ High ranking communist officials strongly believed the only reason Christianity flourished was because the foreign evangelists and leadership were charismatic in their presentations. They could see no connection between Christianity and the traditions of Chinese culture.

Communist leaders believed that interest in Christianity would fade away.⁵ During this time, however, the church continued to grow, in spite of the state-sponsored religion.

By 1980, the Chinese government had developed policies that included five legally recognized religions:

1. Three-Self Patriotic Movement (Protestant)
2. Catholic Patriotic Association (Catholic, but not *Roman Catholic*)
3. Buddhism
4. Daoism (a form of Taoism)
5. Islam

These five religious groups are answerable to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (formerly called the Religious Affairs Bureau), which in turn is regulated by the Communist Party. There is an official hierarchy* for religion in China that is recognized by the government.

**See detailed hierarchy chart appendix.*

By 1966, other factors were causing political pressure on the communists, which resulted in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Using a systematic and cruel procedure, students in the semi-military Red Guards targeted Christian churches, burned or otherwise destroyed them, and either killed or sent pastors to “re-education in labor camps.”

By 1976, all of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches had been closed and most registered believers went underground or were imprisoned. Christian officials were replaced in political positions and the Communist Party adopted the hard line that party members were forbidden to adopt a religion. Christianity and other religious beliefs were branded as “opiates of the masses” and banned. Open Christianity was not allowed. The suppression continued until the death of Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong in 1976.

After Mao Zedong’s death, Deng Xiaoping, a moderate politician, became Chairman of the Communist Party and the leader of China. The communist government still considered religion “superstition.” However, because the Christian influence helped maintain social order and provided essential social services, the TSPM churches were allowed to reopen in 1979.

Seven Rules of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement

According to China News and Church Report⁶, there are seven rules that the official (TSPM) churches must strictly follow:

1. (Christian believers) must fervently love the People's Republic of China, support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the Peoples' Government, uphold the unification of the motherland and the harmony among ethnic groups, and work steadfastly on the road of socialism.
2. (Christian believers) must strictly abide by all the laws, regulations, and policies of the Communist Party and the State and strive to be patriotic and law abiding citizens.
3. (Christian believers) must actively work to increase the material wealth and cultivate the spiritual morals of the socialist civilization. They must comply with the government's labor codes and strive to contribute to the development of the "Four Modernizations" established by the Communist Party. When scheduled religious activities are in conflict with production and work schedules, the economic activities must take priority.
4. A permit must be obtained from the county State Administration for Religious Affairs [Communist Party members] in order to establish religious meeting points. No unauthorized meeting points are allowed.
5. (Christian believers) must actively cooperate with the government to thoroughly carry out the party's religious policies to the letter. (They) shall not persuade and force others to believe in Christianity. (They) shall not brainwash teenagers under 18 with religious beliefs. (They) shall not bring children [under 18] to religious activities.
6. One should see a doctor for medication when sick. (Christian believers) must not resort to prayer alone for healing so as not to endanger people's health and lives.
7. (Christian believers) shall not preach their religion outside the church building and specific places which have been designated for religious activities. They shall not preach itinerantly. They shall not receive self-proclaimed evangelists into their homes, churches or meeting points.

Carl Lawrence, author of *The Coming Influence of China*, says that TSPM Christians are forced to value socialism above their faith.⁷ Some implications include:

- Evangelizing is illegal.
- Parents cannot teach their children about Christ.
- Pastors are appointed by the Communist state.
- Pastors may not visit other TSPM churches.
- Pastors are required to submit copies of their sermons to the authorities for censoring.
- New churches are not permitted unless authorized by the State.

Official Church (TSPM) Publications and Publisher

To control the content of Christian resources and materials, the Communist Party established the Amity Printing Company in 1987, in partnership with the United Bible Societies. Amity Printing produces Bibles, Bible commentaries and other materials for distribution to the TSPM churches. Bibles cannot legally be sold in secular bookstores, and only Amity Printing has government authorization to print them.⁸ Unfortunately, many of the items printed by Amity are in English and other languages, rather than the Chinese dialects needed by Christians in the countryside.

Many of the Bibles printed at Amity are for export rather than for inside China. Because of this, according to VOM sources inside China, the annual figures for the numbers of Bibles published in China are deceptive. They do not report accurately on exported items.⁹ In December 2007, the Amity Foundation celebrated the production of 50 million Bibles. The celebration also marked the signing of a new agreement between Amity Printing and the United Bible Societies to extend their cooperation for another 10 years.¹⁰

The Amity Foundation was allowed to be formed by the Chinese government for the purposes of providing social service ministries in health care, education, relief and rural development that are compatible with the teachings and philosophies of the Chinese Communist Party. Amity is allowed to print Bibles and other publications “which do not conflict with Party doctrine.”¹¹ This is an important phrase because the Communist Party doctrine places the state as the head of the church.

Amity also is able to provide teaching programs using visiting foreigners as long as foreigners don't share their faith with Chinese citizens. If caught or suspected of violating these provisions, foreign Christian teachers are deported immediately.

A TSPM pastor explained that one of the lesser-known avenues the government uses to collect information about house churches is through the sale of Bibles at official (Amity) TSPM outlets. Those who purchase large quantities of Bibles must give their names and addresses, which are entered into a database. This information is then used to help monitor and control the spread of Christianity. Some purchasers are followed and watched to see whether their religious worship is done “legally,” which is only within the approved TSPM church nearest their residence.¹² Members of the Communist Party and military personnel are strictly forbidden from owning Bibles; they are supposed to be without religion.

Amity also gathers information through the use of its guest quarters — the Amity Foundation in Nanjing.¹³ The guest quarters are provided free of charge to TSPM church leaders who go to Nanjing. Information about specific house church groups, both registered and unregistered, is collected through the “friendly conversations” that take place in this “Christian” setting.

The Official Church Today

The official Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church claimed a membership of 18 million in 2004,¹⁴ while Shanghai University professors recently released poll data suggesting that 40 [million] Chinese are Christians.¹⁵ There are 23 TSPM seminaries in China,¹⁶ and these only enroll a maximum of 1,300 clergy per year.¹⁷ This is less than one new TSPM trainee for every 1,000 registered churches in China.

Considering the TSPM general secretary in a February 1999 report¹⁸ listed an additional 35,000 registered meeting points within the country, the limitations for growth are clearly evident. Chinese authorities enjoy pointing out there is little restriction on the growth of Christianity in China. To support this claim, they compare membership and available meeting places over periods of time. In 2008, Amity News Service lists 32,000 churches and 16,000 meeting points.¹⁹

In 1989, the government listed 4.5 million registered Christians meeting in 6,375 churches and 20,600 meeting points, and 13 seminaries. Compared to the 1998 official figures listed above, this is a growth rate of over 300 percent in the number of baptized TSPM Christians (4.5 million in 1989 to 13 million in 1999). About six churches are reopened or newly built somewhere in China every day. However, the same reporting agency also details that every year more than 500,000 new converts are baptized in TSPM churches. At this rate, the number of TSPM Christians would double before the end of the next decade.

Using the Chinese government's own official figures of permitted building expansions, this would mean only about 50 new meeting places over the same time period for the additional 13 million TSPM believers. This would be 260,000 worshipers for each of the 50 new facilities, which is not a realistic expectation.

According to the TSPM, Wenzhou has the highest concentration of Christians in China, with 600,000 Christians in a population of 7 million, which is about 8.5 percent.²⁰ Compass Direct also reported that most TSPM churches, which used to be full of elderly people, now also have a healthy proportion of young people. These "growth" statistics which elicit pride among the Chinese communists, pale when compared to the numbers of the overall population. China contains one-fifth of the world's population at 1.3 billion. The 500,000 converts a year to be baptized in the TSPM church is only .0417 percent of the overall population. (Unregistered churches report 4 to 8 million baptisms per year.²¹)

Religious Summit Conclusions

During August 28-31, 2000, leaders from the "official" religious organizations of China participated as a delegation to the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in New York City. Wang Zhaoguo, Deputy Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC); Fu Tieshan, Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association; Jamyang, Vice-President of the Buddhist Association of China; as well as Muslim, Daoist, and TSPM leaders attended.

During the event, Fu said that religious activities should be organized according to law, as in any country. He further stated that, “Peace is the aim that all religious followers are pursuing and world spiritual leaders should join hands to promote world peace and stability.”

Jamyang commented, “Acts that use religious freedom as an excuse to fuel separatism in other countries go against the world’s religions.”²²

TSPM Theological Studies

Bishop Ding Guangxun, former Honorary Chairman of TSPM and the CCC, said that Chinese churches need to have theological studies to become “compliant with China’s socialist society.” His stand is that the studies of the Chinese church would allow new interpretation for the basic belief and creed of Christianity. Ding gave an example of one area of disagreement: the belief that believers of Christ will ascend to heaven but nonbelievers will descend to hell.

“This kind of preaching has made many Chinese believers sad, as family members who do not believe in God will not ascend to heaven. In reality, there are many truthful, kind and good people who are not Christians. Are all of these people going to go to hell?” Ding asked.²³

Bishop Ding wrote a thick book that is required reading at all TSPM seminaries. Instead of justification by faith, he argued for a “theology of love.” He wrote, “God is not so narrow minded that even communist heroes like Lei Feng or Si De Zhang (dead atheist soldiers) could not be included in heaven.”

Chinese students who disagree with this theology are expelled from the seminaries. Bishop Ding denies the virgin birth and most doctrines of basic Christianity in his marriage of the state to the church.²⁴

A student recruitment brochure from the TSPM Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (the only graduate seminary in China) reads, “This is a Christian theological school that aims at educating those who are politically in support of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, who love the Socialist Motherland with passion, who are firm in the ‘Three-Self’ direction of the Chinese church.”²⁵

In July 2000, several senior church leaders and seminary teachers in Nanjing, Shanghai and Beijing were asked to retire early or step down because they refused to accept Bishop Ding’s interpretations. While these opponents were being purged, supporters of Ding launched a campaign praising the bishop’s efforts to redirect the theology of the faith.

Opponents of Bishop Ding fear these moves are attempts to adapt Christianity to socialism and Chinese churches will lose their religious quality, divide the Chinese Protestant church, and force out those who disagree with Ding.²⁶

Seminary graduates who are pastors with an evangelical style to their sermon presentations are routinely removed from prominent or visible positions and placed out in the countryside. This “relocation” is for the “protection” of the official TSPM church so that “radical elements” will

not corrupt the official religion into a sect or cult. Any deviation from officially approved doctrine is basis for relocation.²⁷

Party Members or True Believers?

At the end of May 2002, China's state-controlled Protestant church held its national conference in Beijing. New leaders were appointed for both the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC), known in China as the *lianghui* — the “two organizations.” Both are firmly controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. Although nominally independent as “people's organizations,” both are supervised by the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department.

Rev. Cao Shengjie, who was born in 1931 and has been assistant general secretary of the CCC since 1980, was appointed President of the CCC. Mrs. Cao has a poor reputation among many older Chinese Christians. According to several well-placed Christian sources within the TSPM, she is nicknamed “Mrs. Marx” by many pastors. During China's Cultural Revolution, a decade of anarchy that started in the mid 1960s, she reportedly led Party cadres to search believers' homes to confiscate Bibles.

Mrs. Cao belongs to the generation of church leaders who in the 1950s collaborated with the Party and today are dubbed by many Chinese Christians as *laosanzi* — “old Three-Self.” She is politically motivated and well-trained in liberal theology, which neatly dovetails with communist ideology.

Writing in the TSPM magazine *Tianfeng* in September 2000, Cao stated: “Over the past 50 years, the Chinese church in its theological reflections has not been concerned for such doctrinal abstractions such as ‘the Trinity’ or ‘the Two Natures of Christ.’” She continued in the same article to attack evangelical theology and Wang Ming Dao, China's most noted evangelical preacher in the 20th century. She also strongly attacked overseas ministries, condemning their efforts to “evangelize China” as the work of “hostile forces.”

She concluded: “We will never support the ‘evangelization of China.’ Because if we do not pay attention to the welfare of the Chinese people but go about ‘preaching the gospel’ on a great scale, we will not only politically fall into the camp of enemy forces but we will harm the church itself. ... Is our theology actually compatible with socialism or with the demands of overseas hostile forces?”

It is not surprising that some evangelical pastors working within the TSPM and CCC are now stating that the “theological construction” campaign pushed by Cao and other top TSPM leaders to make all Christian theology “compatible with socialism” is a dangerous heresy.

Less is known about Elder Ji Jianhong, who was appointed chairperson of the TSPM at the May conference. He was born in 1932 and comes from a Little Flock background. The Little Flock church was founded by Watchman Nee.

Since 1980, he has been working in Jiangsu province for the TSPM. According to one source, he became more politically motivated to support the Communist Party during the 1950s. At that

time, he reportedly came under strong pressure from authorities and was forced to denounce his father at one of the many political campaigns that tore the church apart during that troubled period.

These leaders of the TSPM have a confusing identity; no one knows for sure who they are: true Communist Party members or true believers. Chinese pastors working under the TSPM/CCC umbrella report that they see little hope of genuine openness under this leadership. Rather, their appointment is a sign of the Party and the government's intention to maintain strict control of the church through the old TSPM hierarchy and a politicized theology.

The leadership which the Party appointed has adopted a false front in the selection of most of their pastors for the TSPM churches. In reality, it is the Communist Party and the government who selects these men and gives the orders for the CCC and TSPM to confer the position of pastor upon them. The men are chosen deliberately because of their loyalty and commitment to the Communist Party. Some of these pastors are even the secret Party members. Their purpose in staying inside Chinese churches is to control the churches for the Communist Party. They do things for the Party, not for the church.

Two cases of Party members in pastoral or Christian leadership positions are Li Chuwen, who used to be the pastor of the International Community Church in Shanghai and Zhao Fushan, who was a YMCA leader. Li Chuwen was later promoted by the Communist Party to a high rank official and Zhao Fushan was appointed as a privileged communist official. For this reason and many others, 50 million of the Christians in China have rejected membership in the TSPM church and formed house churches.

Deng Zhaoming, editor of Hong Kong's *Bridge* magazine, warned Western denominational leaders to use caution in sending money to TSPM leaders. He contends the majority of funds sent to these Chinese churches are used instead to purchase cars and home furnishings for the leaders. He also charged that the widespread corruption no longer allows the TSPM to be self-supporting.²⁸

Dr. Jonathan Chao, evangelical China watcher, warned Western Christians to question Dr. Han Wenzao, Chair of the China Christian Council. Dr. Chao pointed out that Han could speak authoritatively for the Communist Party, but he is not qualified to speak on either church affairs or theology on behalf of the Christian church of China. Han is a layman, not ordained, and not in a position at the top of the official religious establishment to know much about Biblical Christianity.²⁹

Resistance from Within

Ji Tai was groomed for greatness within the TSPM. Handpicked by Bishop Ding in the late 1980s, he was sent abroad for study to hone his theological skills. On his return from Germany, he was slotted into a coveted job at the country's most important seminary.

Fluent in English and German, he was expected to become an effective ambassador for the TSPM abroad, meeting religious VIPs and charming them into an exclusive relationship with the official church.

But two years after his appointment as Head of Research at Nanjing, Ji Tai objected to Ding's campaign. "It was no solution to replace evangelicalism with liberalism," he said, "Rather all that was needed was that evangelicalism be reformed, not replaced."

Also, he knew what few others did, that Ding's campaign in the final analysis was not about theology at all, but about "showing to the Party that he [Ding] was still useful."

Most evangelicals in the TSPM just hunkered down and hoped to sit out the storm, but Ji Tai went on the offensive. He wrote and published articles such as, "Can Religion be Compatible with Society?" in which he argued against Ding's agenda.

Eventually, in 2000, Ji Tai was forced to resign as head of the Research Department at Nanjing Theological Seminary — a post which he had held since 1995. He was also banned from teaching students at the seminary.

Yet the TSPM's loss has been the house church's gain, as Ji Tai now conducts extensive training as a key teacher of senior house church leaders. Ji uses his high profile status to challenge Western religious leaders about their cooperation with the TSPM.

"Western evangelicals must make a better job of supporting the house churches," he says, "because if you support only them, then the government has to change its policy. But if you support the TSPM, then nothing changes for the better because the government realizes the TSPM is still useful."

The year 2001 was a triumph for Ji Tai, because in the last quarter, government leaders drastically curtailed Ding's campaign, aware that it had completely backfired. Internationally, the adverse publicity was hurting China; domestically, the government could not stand by and see hundreds of the TSPM's best and brightest depart for the house churches.

But Ji Tai's other challenge remains: Can Western evangelicals resist the lure of cooperation with the TSPM and support the house churches, thus forcing the government to change a policy of religious control centered around an official church?³⁰

Chinese Christian Intellectuals' Analysis

Paul Davenport³¹ commented on a 1999 report by 20 Chinese Christian intellectuals, who were not all connected to the TSPM church, which analyzed the current state of the Chinese church. Their main findings included:

1. The top leadership of both the TSPM and the CCC has lost the authority in terms of the faith, the Bible and the church because of their search for worldly prestige and profit. The spirituality of the church has been diluted and its spiritual strength weakened.
2. Deceptive theologies, both within and outside the TSPM, have sprung up on all sides and are shaking the theological foundation of the church. The church is lacking an authoritative voice and God's Word is being drowned out by "raucous voices."
3. In organizational terms, "gangster pastors" and those without any faith are being given leading positions, while pastors and workers who truly love the Lord, the church and preaching the gospel are rejected. The TSPM has lost its distinctive nature, and it is unlike secular organizations, but also is unlike the true church. It has reached the stage where it is unacceptable to both society and the true church.
4. In church management, the TSPM is incapable of taking up the challenge posed by secularism and the corruption endemic in Chinese society.
5. The caliber of TSPM leadership is in question. With the retirement of Bishop Ding, there is no one coming from the ranks of the old TSPM leadership to provide direction. Actually, because of the appointment of lay Communist Party members who are not ordained to leadership positions, the leadership can only move in the direction of unbelief, and the unraveling of true theology and ecclesiology.
6. The most immediate result of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre was the large number of intellectuals and students who turned to Christ in the months and years following. Many thinking people in China recognize the Christian roots to all that is best in Western society in terms of democracy, legal systems, education, health and social concern. This openness of thinking under Mao was not possible, but presents the Christian church with unprecedented evangelistic opportunities.

Using this as a baseline for the situation of the church in China, the communists recognized that external pressures on their policies are posing a problem. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement Church's reputation suffers as leaders sacrifice church interest for economic gain and personal advantage. He Qinglian, a prominent Chinese social scientist and journalist, described China's elite as plundering state resources to create a perverse market economy. Under this system, "power determines the allocation of resources, but has no need to see to their efficient use." Using official government statistics, she further described how only one percent of China's population controls 60 percent of the wealth. "I am not afraid," she said, "to face the consequences of saying that China now has the most depraved group of governing elites in the last thousand years of Chinese history."³²

This situation will have serious consequences for the TSPM Church as the leadership looks to improve relations with their membership. VOM contacts inside China report that many Christians are leaving the TSPM for the refuge of the house churches. Even many of those who remain are attending both official and unofficial church meetings. There is increased pressure on the TSPM leadership from Chinese society as well as criticism of churches and individuals overseas, in addition to pressures from cults.

Within China today, the official literacy rate is 90.9 percent, which is representative of only the most basic skills in reading and writing.³³ However, an entire generation lost an opportunity for higher education during the Cultural Revolution. Economic boom times in the 1990s have further eroded opportunity for education to this group as they are needed for the rapid industrialization of coastal areas, as well as the production of food in rural areas, in order to sustain the population increase. According to Operation World, there are about 7.1 million students enrolled at the major universities in any year since 1989.³⁴ This is only 0.71 percent of the total population. The less educated the population, the more likely they are to believe political propaganda distortions, lies and untruths. Through this, the political leadership is able to manage the thoughts of and control the actions of the people. Contrary to the propaganda distributed by the communists, it is not the Christian faith that preys on the weak or uneducated. It is the Party itself.

The Chinese “Christian intellectuals” provide a convincing analysis of the TSPM churches in the face of political and social pressures. They wrote as committed Christians, expressing a deep concern for Christ’s church, a respectful view of Scripture and a Biblical spirituality. They should be distinguished from “culture Christians” that are intellectuals interested in Christianity from a cultural and philosophical perspective, but have not made a personal commitment to Christ.

Consequences for Following Christ Outside TSPM

In the mid-1990s authorities began to target non-Three-Self Patriotic Movement church leaders, as well as sects, under an anti-crime campaign. The communists used this tactic in an attempt to avoid the appearance of religious persecution.

In 1998, underground church leaders issued a public appeal to end persecution of unregistered Christians. However, this attempt was followed by a crackdown in 1999 on unregistered house church leaders and the forced resignation of three graduates from the TSPM seminary in Nanjing.³⁵

On August 23, 2000, Chinese authorities arrested 130 evangelical Christians in central China, including three visiting Americans, as they attended a revival. These arrests came one day after a TSPM leader speaking in Los Angeles told an audience that “religion in China has entered a golden age of freer expression.”

The detained Christians were members of the China Fangcheng Church, one of the largest Protestant groups with over 500,000 members, which meets across the country outside the supervision of the TSPM. Two Fangcheng leaders were sent to re-education through labor camps.³⁶

A few dedicated TSPM pastors serve the Lord faithfully despite government control; some even assist North Korean refugees to find sanctuary in China. On February 18, 2002, one Beijing house church leader told VOM his pastor, Yudong Yang, was ousted in 1994, despite leading a government-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement church. Pastor Yang, now deceased, was too successful, according to Public Security Bureau officers: he baptized too many Christian converts. Yang also opened his church to young people under the age of 18.

According to a leaked internal document, the Chinese Communist Party waged a secret campaign against unregistered house churches from mid-June 2007 until the end of November 2007. The July 24 document from Jingmen city in the province of Hubei, revealed that leading central government figures called for a crackdown to “fight against infiltration by hostile overseas forces under the guise of Christianity and to safeguard the stability of society in the religious field.”

At a National Christian Work Seminar called the 601 Conference held on June 1, 2007, the officials from the United Front Work Department and Religious Affairs and National Minorities departments ordered local authorities to detail “meeting places, participants, locations and patterns.” Information sought reached deeply: “the content of sermons, personal history of [house church] evangelists, the sources of their funds, the system of their activities, key members and the ordinary people who participate.”

The document shows conclusively that the notion that house churches can register with the authorities and avoid control by the state-controlled Protestant TSPM is largely a myth: “Normalization is achieved by registering the meetings established without proper authorization, replacing private meetings with [registered] churches, merging [unregistered] meetings and persuading them to dismantle and abolish [unregistered] meetings.”

The instructions come with the customary sting in the tail: “For those who refuse to mend their ways or to stop their activities ... public security agencies shall work together with agencies in charge of religious affairs and resolutely crack down.”

More evidence of the crackdown came on November 18, 2007, when authorities detained 40 church leaders from China Gospel Fellowship (CGF). CAA reported that Public Security Bureau officers from Xiacheng county, Henan, raided their house church leadership meeting in Peichang village, Fanhu town.

Twenty-one of the CGF senior leaders were released before November 24. Family members of the remaining 19 detainees received notice from police to send blankets and 360 yuan (US \$50) for 15 days’ living expenses. CGF is one of China’s largest house church groups. Among those arrested was the founder of CGF, Pastor Shen Yiping. The leaders, from different counties in Henan province, were studying the Bible at the time of the raid.

The final paragraphs of the leaked government document, moreover, indicate that the Chinese government does not wish any outsiders to know of its designs.

“We should only perform the ‘special administration’ [i.e., crackdown] — but not talk about it,” it says. “Without approval from the district’s leading team for the ‘special administration,’ no agencies in all the areas shall disclose the information in this document to any media ... after the documents are used they shall be stored in a confidential room and their content must not be disclosed.”³⁷

On February 2, 2008, two Christian women, Meng Xiu Lan and Zhou Cheng Xiu, were detained by police in Jun Tun County, Yunan Province, after they were found distributing Christmas cards. According to China Aid Association, the two women, aged 55 and 53 respectively, were “threatened, mocked, stripped and frisked violently.... Police then handcuffed the two women and escorted them back to their homes. After searching the homes, police illegally confiscated CDs, handouts, Bibles, song books and calendars, without proper documentation.”³⁸

On February 29, 2008, police arrested 11 minors and two adults at a house church Bible study. The 16- and 17-year-old children were detained under the charge of an “illegal religious gathering.” They were released the following day after Bob Fu, of the China Aid Association in the United States, called the police station to demand their release. The officers were furious to learn the story had been leaked internationally.

During a June 3, 2004, debate on Voice of America, Bob Fu stated, “I believe that the real difference between the Three-Self and house church is not something as legalization, or registration, not even underground and above ground, I believe it is an issue of where their loyalty is: to the government or to their Lord Jesus Christ. For example, the Party would not allow the Three-Self [members] to cross the country to preach the gospel, but the house churches would obey the Great Commission: Take the gospel to the end of the world.”

The government has developed a different approach to religion with the goal of misleading other countries to think of China as accepting and supportive of religion. Treating religion as part of a normal society is an attempt by the Chinese government to control religion. For example, if the

Chinese government intends to destroy a church or arrest a believer, they would never say the believer is engaged in any persecution against religion, or that they were arresting anyone due to their faith. The government's tactic is to find some excuse, such as breaking the building code, or disturbing the social order. All these cases are conducted in the name of law. It is quite deceiving to the international community.

An example of the success of the government's efforts in this area of misinformation is the statement by a well-known Western evangelist who traveled to China and declared Chinese Christians to be "able to worship openly in China." (The hosts on his trip were state church officials.) He also was misled to believe that "today, you don't get arrested unless you break the law." While this is technically true, most of the charges against Christians are trumped up crimes or are based on forced testimony extracted under torture from other believers.

Christian activities outside the rules of the TSPM are illegal and prohibited. Increasingly, they are dealt with severely. In order for a church to register under the TSPM rules, it must have a name, a place to meet, a recognized leader, a system of governance, a legal means of financial support and a minimum number of members (which varies by province).³⁹

Because only the TSPM is a legal religious activity, the government confiscates unofficial believers' belongings and possessions. They also confiscate materials they find in the meeting, including stools, chairs and utensils. Beatings, often with serious injuries, are also common for those found practicing Christianity outside the rules and regulations of the official TSPM churches. In addition, because many TSPM members attend both official and unofficial services, many believers are put at risk of being caught.⁴⁰

The Cost of the Cross

The communist influence has been unable to control the spread of the gospel. Sources operating inside the country estimate that the unofficial church is more than four times the size of the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement.⁴¹

According to reliable figures from Compass Direct, the unofficial and official church combined is twice the size of the Chinese Communist Party. From 1900 to 2000 the church grew *90 times* its original size. The government lists Christians as less than one percent of the population. However, house church leaders estimate that nine percent of China's people are Christians.

True faith has always been exacted for a price in our earthly lives. When someone in China becomes a Christian, even through a TSPM church, there are definite penalties to expect. According to Compass Direct⁴²:

- It will be more difficult to obtain a job.
- It will be tough to get a good education.
- Followers will be prohibited from traveling abroad.
- Under the government restrictions, they will be unable to publicly practice their faith.
- They will be forbidden to worship anywhere except authorized buildings where the worship can be supervised and guided by the state.
- Christianity is forbidden to be a way of life.
- Persecution will be expected for non-registered Christians, even those baptized through the TSPM church.

Christians, especially those in the TSPM, must take care to not attract unwanted government attention. They are not allowed to express political opinions, as the government has no room for advice from “superstitious” and therefore unpatriotic citizens.

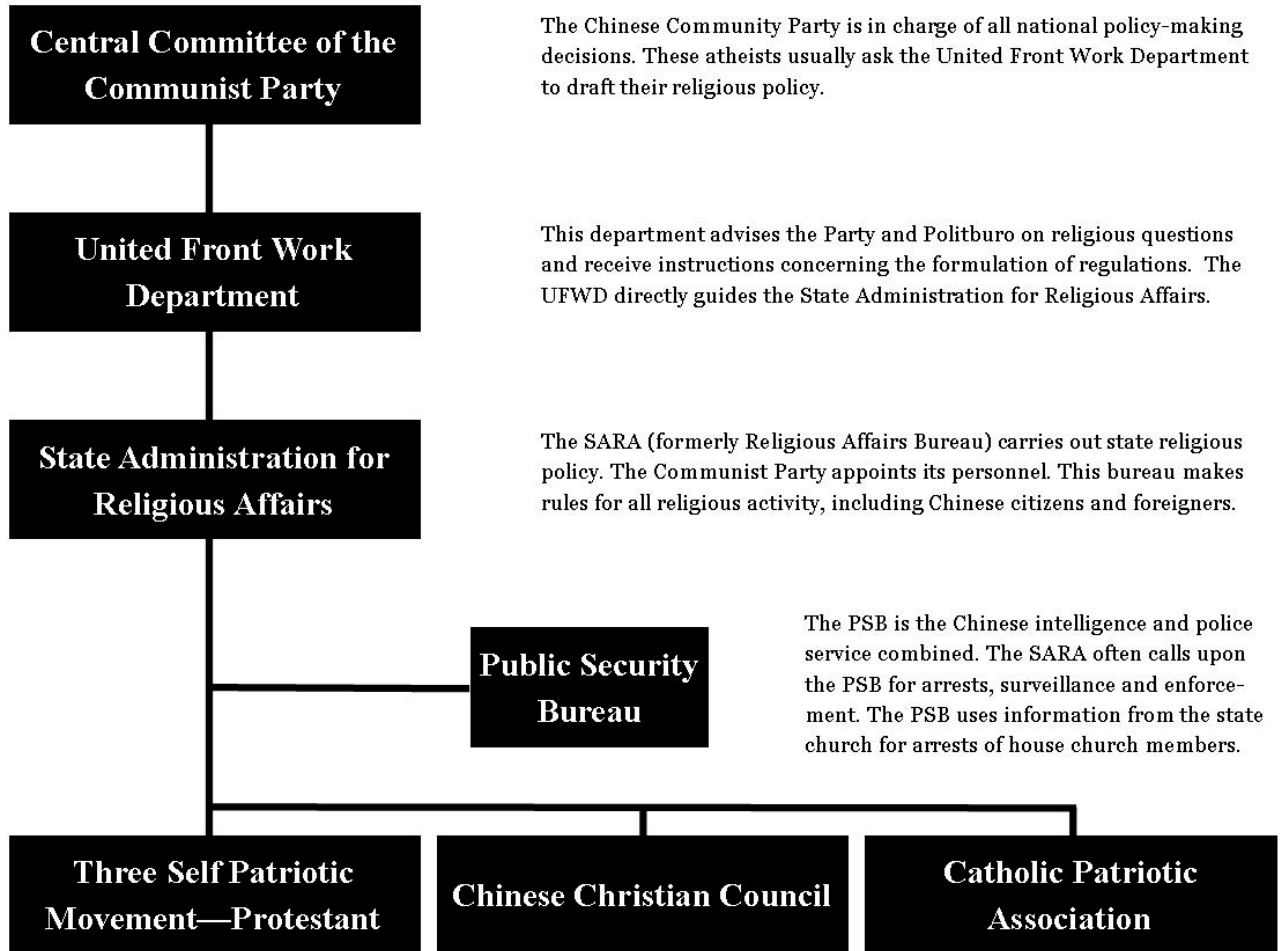
A 32-year-old house church evangelist in Hanzhou, Zhejiang province, suggested some advice for those who want to help Chinese Christians. He said that it is easy to make converts in China, and the church there has the highest conversion rate in the world. However, it is not easy to make disciples, and that is where the underground church is more effective than the TSPM.⁴³

The underground church in China has, indeed, adopted part of TSPM philosophy: it is self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Ironically, the underground church has displayed remarkable proliferation using these techniques.

The heart of Christian beliefs is to realize the cross is empty because Christ completed the plan of salvation. To empty the cross of Christ strips the sum and substance of the gospel, making Christ's death on the cross nothing more than a footnote in history. Christians in China today risk their lives to reach beyond the empty cross offered by the Chinese Communist Party through the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Instead, they choose to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ.

Appendix A:

The Power that Created and Controls China's State Church



The TSPM was started in the 1950s by Communist Party members who worked within the church. The original purpose of the TSPM, which remains today, was to eliminate foreign influence, unite Protestants in to one organization and promote Communist Party policies within the church. State church pastors are appointed by TSPM members, usually Party members. Pastors must demonstrate political loyalty throughout their career; some senior pastors are believed to be Party members. The TSPM remains a tool of the Party.

Founded in 1980 and parallel to the TSPM, the CCC is the leadership structure of the state church. It is the face of the Party, designed to promote Party policies within China and to present a good image to foreigners without. Controls of religious publications are handled by the TSPM/CCC. The CCC implemented the “10 Don’ts” for churches, including no young people in church, no preaching of Revelation and no unregistered churches. Official churches must no present a personal, powerful Christ; power belongs to the state.

All Catholic bishops in the CPA have been chosen by the Communist Party. Many church leaders and members are underground. State control over the CPA is identical to control over the Protestant TSPM. Since 1950, Catholics have been in prison as long as or longer than Protestants.

Appendix B:

A Brief History of Christianity in China

700s

The first Christian missionaries migrated into the western regions of China in the early 7th century A.D. These first emissaries to carry the gospel eastward were Nestorian monks from Asia Minor and Persia. The monks founded monasteries which flourished and grew in number over the following 200 years. Part of the reason for this success was the growth of prosperity and cultural accomplishment under the Tang Dynasty of rulers. The Tang emperors adapted a form of Buddhism into *Zen* as a cultural influence, which caused some clashes with the new Christian followers.

900s

In the mid-9th century the Chinese dynastic leaders became suspicious of the Christian monks' influence and systematically closed or destroyed most of the established Christian religious centers. In the early 10th century, Confucianism was made the "official" state religion of China. During the next 300 years there was little Christian activity allowed.

1300s

In the late 13th century, Marco Polo visited the cultural and political centers of China from his home in Venice, Italy. His trading influence and economic success caused intense curiosity toward the "strange" religious beliefs followed by the Europeans. This curiosity and desire for cultural expansion led to another brief era of Christian expansion into China. In 1289, Franciscan monks began a 100-year missionary effort.

1400s

In the late 14th century, mainland military and political structures were overthrown by invaders from Mongolia. During this period no foreign trade or influence, including Christian religious practice, was allowed in China.

1500-1700s

In the late 15th century, foreign trade resumed. During 1582, Jesuit priests came to China as teachers to introduce Western-style science, mathematics and astronomy. Catholic priests were allowed to minister in China.

1800s

Finally, in the early 1800s, the first Protestant missionaries were allowed into the country, with the first recorded Chinese convert baptized in 1814.⁴⁴ From 1839 through the 1860s, China and Europe battled through the Opium Wars. China ultimately lost the Opium Wars to Great Britain. This increased influence of the Westerners and provided additional opportunity for the growth of Christian missions. Unfortunately, while Christian missions grew, so did new "Christian" cults, especially in the rural areas.

One such cult grew into an influence that caused a series of uprisings known as the Taiping rebellions and eventually the Boxer Rebellion. During this time, most of the Christian workers in China were killed or forced out of the country.

1900s

In 1921, the Communist Party was established in China. As the influence of the communists spread during the 20s and 30s in southern China, the environment became more and more difficult for the remaining Christian groups within the country.

Japan began an intense military campaign in China in 1937, which culminated with the 1941 bombing of Hong Kong.⁴⁵ Known missionaries were interned under harsh conditions or forced to leave China.

In 1949, Mao Zedong had established the dominance of the Chinese Communist Party. His new government was the People's Republic of China. Religion, especially Christianity, initially was condemned by the government.

However, by the early 1950s, Mao realized that in order to eradicate the "foreign-influenced" Christianity, the communists would have to have a mechanism to control it. Thus, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) was established in 1954 as a way to monitor and control Christianity in China.

Appendix C:

Chinese Government Policies & Rulings

1982

“Document 19,”⁴⁶ issued in 1982, formally outlined the limits of tolerance, as well as the punishments for disobedience to the state. Neither of these documents considers the instructions of the Holy Bible or the penalties for disobedience to God.

1990

“Document 6,”⁴⁷ issued in 1990, warned of the danger of “hostile foreign forces using religion to undertake ‘peaceful revolution.’” This document also called for a crackdown of unregistered house church preachers and encouraged citizens to work toward materialistic, scientific and atheistic society.

1992

In 1992, the government initiated a policy called “Synthetic Control,” which applied to all religious groups, including the TSPM churches. An emergency mobilization of all government departments, party organizations, civilian associations and industrial units was called to strive for national unity, and to reject foreign allegiances. At that time, all of the religious laws were codified. Under the United Front Department Decree,⁴⁸ which followed the government’s “Four Basic Principles,” the following restrictions became strictly enforced:

1. No believers could engage in itinerant evangelism or preach the gospel. Only TSPM pastors could preach, and then only in their assigned TSPM churches.
2. Believers were forbidden to hold house church meetings in the villages and farms. This rule became a hardship in those areas since most of the TSPM churches were inaccessible to them.
3. God must not be mentioned outside the doors of the TSPM churches.
4. Young people and middle-aged people were forbidden to believe in God. Only old women were mostly ignored and thereby allowed to believe. No one under 18 was allowed to believe, especially students.

1994

In 1994, Premier Li Peng signed **decrees #144 and #145** to control religious activities of foreigners in China, even those associated with the TSPM churches, as well as those of Chinese religious believers.⁴⁹ Since then, the government has sought to implement strict registration of all churches, and to suppress unregistered house church activities. In general, government documents on religious policy have become more detailed and restrictive at every level since 1994.

1995

In 1995, China’s President Jiang Zemin stated at a top State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA, then known as the Religious Affairs Bureau or RAB) conference that the Communist

Party was still engaged in a “secret struggle” with the Christian church and that even the Three-Self Patriotic Movement should be monitored much more closely for adherence to the law.⁵⁰

1996

In 1996, the director of the SARA, Ye Xiaowen, admitted, “Our aim is...to use registration as a means to tighten lawful control over places for religious activities as well as on all religious activities themselves.” When confronted with accusations of persecution, SARA blames crackdowns on local cadres who “do not properly understand the national laws” respecting freedom of religion.⁵¹

Article 99 of the criminal code, enacted in 1996, calls for the execution of members of secret societies who carry out counter-revolutionary activities. Attending a non-TSPM church is a counter-revolutionary activity. This decree also banned use of Christian names, and restricted foreign TV programming to 15 percent of total broadcast time. Most Biblical-based programming, both radio and TV, are to some degree produced or sponsored by foreign denominations. Article 99 severely limits the content and availability of quality Biblically-based Christian programming.⁵²

1998

In November 1998, Bishop Ding of Nanjing Seminary, the primary provider of pastors for the TSPM churches, advocated that (Christian) theology must be more in line with official Communist Party doctrine⁵³ in order to:

1. Exclude thought incompatible with socialism.
2. Eradicate stubborn conservative faith.
3. Dispute that Jesus rose from the dead.
4. Dislike fundamentalism.

Since 1998, there have been increased police sweeps, fines and arrests for both TSPM leaders who disobey the government, as well as for non-TSPM unregistered church leaders. The purpose of these raids is to instill fear of reprisal and severe punishments in all who do not put the state’s interests above God’s interests.

In August 1998, evangelistic representatives from unregistered house churches met together and issued a public appeal to the government for an end to persecution, with a willingness to open a dialogue with both the authorities and the TSPM. The government declined the offer, refusing to deal with any “illegal” representatives of “illegal” churches who do not follow the official religious policies.

The China News Agency, Xinhua, listed in a news article about the work of the top State Administration for Religious Affairs (then known as RAB),³¹ that there were three immediate tasks to clean up religious problems within the country:

1. Order that all Protestant Christian places of worship be required to register with the TSPM.

2. Deal with difficult religious problems of public concern, including elimination of dangerous sects [such as unregistered house churches].
3. Cultivate contingents of young patriotic religious preachers, who will observe the CCC dictates of the TSPM church.

The TSPM seeks to lessen the influence of foreigners through enforcement of communist policies. Some of the policies include:

- A church minister is assigned to a certain church for pulpit ministry only.
- The minister is allowed to speak only in his own TSPM church and is forbidden to speak in any other church. Assigned ministers are not allowed to speak in other cities or villages.
- There are no provisions for some of the traditional pastoral duties within the community, such as visitation for the ill or dying, or for performing the marriage or baptismal services out of doors.
- Pastors are also forbidden to maintain allegiances with foreign denominations. They are allowed to be ordained only by the state.⁵⁴

The following is only a small portion of one document which illustrates the government policies behind TSPM authority.

- Responsibilities of townships and community offices
 1. Continue to enforce the rules of administration of the “three fixedness” (fixed person, fixed place, fixed area) and “three licenses” (registration license, legal person license, and evangelist license). Prevent illegal evangelists from other places from entering into our jurisdictions. Activities conducted by evangelists from elsewhere shall be reported immediately.
 2. Strengthen the propaganda and education. Publicize the Party’s religious policy and the state’s laws, rules, and regulations by using all kinds of instruments. Do a good job in educating clergies [state churches] and responsible persons of religious sites. Group studies shall be conducted at least twice a year. Meanwhile, the Party members shall be educated not to believe in religions. Those Party members involved in religious activities shall be disciplined in accordance with the Charter of the Communist Party of China.
 3. Religious sites and churches established without approval, and activities beyond limits shall be banned immediately.
- Religious Affairs
 1. Administrative organizations shall be established in religious sites with various rules and regulations.
 2. Quarterly meetings of responsible persons of religious sites shall be held in every township.
 3. There shall be no unregistered meeting places in villages.
- Self-improvement of the officials in charge of religious affairs

1. Do a thorough and down-to-earth job. Officials in charge of religious activities or united front work shall visit the religious sites at least once a month to learn about the situation.
- Methods of evaluation
 1. Each township shall do self-evaluation, write reports of self-evaluation and summaries of work at the end of the year, and report them to the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of the city.⁵⁵

2000

Compass Direct⁵⁶ reports that a top-secret Chinese government document dated April 30, 2000, lists 14 “cults” targeted for suppression. The document gives a unique insight into Beijing's view of the seriousness of the growth of unauthorized religions. The document gives statistics of sect members and the relationships between different sects, which are particularly useful since the groups often have several different names and can bewilder the outsider.

Seven of the “cults” listed are indigenous to China, and seven have come to China from overseas.

The numbers given for those involved in all 14 sects are not huge. Many have only a few thousand followers. The largest are the Shouters with 200,000 and the Disciples with 350,000. The total for all 14 is probably below 1 million. This compares to 15 million Christians officially registered with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and 50 million or more unregistered house church evangelicals.

Twelve of the sects proscribed are Christian or pseudo-Christian; only two are Buddhist. This presents a serious problem for unregistered house church Christians. In the eyes of the authorities, most of the forbidden cults are Christian in their background and therefore local authorities are likely to continue to crack down indiscriminately on all unregistered Christian activities — both “heretical” and “orthodox.”

On May 26, 2000, the Religious Affairs Committee of the Ninth People's Representative Congress in Canton Province passed Declaration #83.⁵⁷ These 69 new laws and regulations contain much more restrictive language than previously passed national religious regulations. One primary focus is in the area of training for new pastors. The declaration restates that the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement church is the only one authorized for the training of religious leadership. In Chapter 6, rule #37 states that religious academies must be run by a religious organization according to the laws and regulations of the State. It continues in rule #38 to say all short training courses should first be reported to the related department in the province. In Chapter 5, rule 29 states that any of the following circumstances would disqualify religious teachers and staff to carry out religious activities: teacher was not officially appointed; teacher previously resigned from another religious teaching staff; teacher was de-certified by the provincial religious body.

The document also addresses the “competition” between the official TSPM churches and unofficial house churches, making movement of smuggled materials more difficult and enacting stern punishments for violations. In Chapter 8, rule #52 organizations and individuals are banned

from carrying, selling, copying or distributing self-printed or illegally imported religious publications.

Rule #55 requires invitations for foreign religious organizations to visit a church to be authorized by the State and are prohibited under rule #57 from establishing new religious organizations, or to develop their religion. This is a direct reference to evangelizing. Rule #59 restricts foreign news media from reporting religious information that has not previously been approved by the religious bureau. This rule will make established foreign networks unable to provide uncensored materials in their broadcasts if they want continued access to information from official Communist sources and entry into China.

Penalties listed under Chapter 10, rule #63 allow for fines up to 20,000 RMB (about 14 years wages) for each of the following violations:

- 1.) Violation of rule #29: unauthorized, resigned or dismissed religious teachers, if they practice activity as a religious teacher or staff.
- 2.) Violation of #37: running a religious academy without authorization.
- 3.) Violation of #38: running a training activity without approval from the government.

These rules and regulations have serious consequences for the TSPM members and leadership who are sincerely trying to follow a moral path as outlined in the Bible. Many pastors in the TSPM church who also attend services or conduct services in underground churches now face additional penalties. It has become more difficult for these TSPM leaders to acquire materials and training provided through underground sources.

Rule #68 underscores the importance of Document 38 for the authorities who administer it. If government departments are believed to have neglected their responsibilities in carrying out the laws and regulations, they are warned, and if the offense is deemed serious, they are punished. This is a clear mandate from the province government. Local authorities need to be vigilant and intolerant of Christian activities which occur outside the umbrella of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. The government appears to be slowly tightening a noose around the “freedom of beliefs” protected by the Chinese constitution. These additional new rules on top of existing Communist bureaucratic limitations make it more and more difficult for Christianity to be practiced legally, even inside the TSPM churches. The increased defection of believers from the official church is causing authorities to address what is their worst fear: not being able to control Christian believers’ beliefs.

On July 11, 2000, *The Australian* reported that millions of Chinese bureaucrats were ordered to formal classes to study the thoughts of then President Jiang Zemin.⁵⁸ He is using a Maoist-style campaign to extend his base of power. These studies involve a focus on “The Three Representations,” which hold that the Communist Party represents China’s highest economic, political and cultural aspirations. A booklet is used in the study session detailing the important instructions of Comrade Jiang. All officials must read and reproduce the information in long essays to prove they have absorbed it in detail. Xinhua, China’s official information agency, reported the Three Representations view is an important part of China’s future at the turn of the

century. They praised Jiang's work because it refines and summarizes the spirit of experience provided by the Communist Party.

This latest campaign is an attempt by the communist government to restore its ideology to the importance it had during the days of the Cultural Revolution. Combined with the latest round of restrictions placed on religious worship, this situation could mean serious consequences for the TSPM as well as the underground Chinese church.

On September 27, 2000, the Communist Party issued a new document containing *22 Articles Governing Religious Activity by Foreigners in China*. Article 5 and 6 restrict religious observance by aliens to "churches lawfully registered within Chinese territory." Preaching by aliens is restricted to those who have the invitation of Chinese religious bodies, approved by the national government, and may be done only at lawfully registered sites.

Article 6 specifically instructs preaching visitors to "abide by the administrative rules of the legally registered sites [which are TSPM locations], and respect the belief customs of the personnel of those sites." This clause is a direct effort to stop the "infiltration" of ideas, which conflict with the repressive government opinions on how religion should support the state. Article 9 forbids foreign religious organizations with no legitimate corresponding Chinese religious organization to have any activities unless they are approved by the province, state and national governments.

Article 10 restricts the performance of religious activities such as baptisms, weddings and funerals by aliens. Aliens must instead invite Chinese religious personnel, recognized and recorded by lawfully registered religious bodies, to conduct these activities. If the activity is a wedding, only those who have previously been married in a civil ceremony are eligible to participate in the religious ceremony. This article sets up the government as the supreme authority, and the TSPM as the only legitimate source for the sacraments.

Article 11 forbids the transport of religious articles (books, videos, CDs) without certification issued by the department of religious affairs at province, region and municipal levels; even for personal or cultural use. This article seems to be directed toward groups who have been taking these materials into China because official sources are unable to keep pace with demand for resources. There have been crackdowns by authorities in areas that have had "blanket distribution" of Christian materials. Materials have been left overnight in bicycle racks, door frames, public areas, etc. Resident foreigners who are suspected of participating in these distributions are arrested and deported.⁵⁹

Article 13 forbids recruitment and enrollment of Chinese students in religious study either abroad or within China except for those individuals chosen by the Chinese government. This article seems to address the increased need for additional pastors that has caused underground seminaries to spring up around China. The TSPM has been slow and deliberate in selecting personnel, apparently

in an attempt to control the growth of Christianity by preventing the “official” spread of preaching.

Article 17 forbids aliens from: appointing religious personnel in China; developing religious followers in China; preaching or explaining Scripture without permission; conducting religious gatherings outside of approved sites; producing or selling religious books, audio-visual products, electronic goods or other religious articles; distributing religious propaganda materials; and performing missionary activities [evangelism].

Article 19 states aliens who violate the rules will be stopped by either the department of religious affairs or other related departments of the people’s governments. Enforcement of penalties for violation of these rules is also allowed from the Law of the Control on the Entry and Exit of Aliens, and Regulations on Administrative Penalties for Public Security; each of which carries stiff penalties of their own.

Article 21 states interpretation of the rules will be done only by the State Administration for Religious Affairs.⁶⁰

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