



A STUDY ON CONFLICT BETWEEN THE LOCAL  
COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL CHURCHES IN  
ZHEJIANG PROVINCE, CHINA  
REFLECTION ON THE CAMPAIGN THAT TEARS DOWN  
THREE-SELF CHURCHES' ROOF-CROSSES

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## **ABSTRACT**

Christians are growing fast in Mainland China for a while. When Christianity is expanding in the new China, it meets many issues and challenges. Now one of the biggest issues is the conflict between the local government and the local Three Self-Churches in Zhejiang province. The local government started a campaign to tear down the local Three-Self Churches' roof crosses and to raze some illegal churches' buildings to the ground. This campaign began at the beginning of 2014. It is still going on now. This conflict caused my curiosity to find what reasons lying behind this Church-State conflict in Zhejiang. So the main purpose of this paper is to find what reasons lie behind this conflict in Zhejiang.

Several different disciplines are used in my paper. The field research work and interviews in Zhejiang and in Hong Kong will be in the first part. I will present different scholars and pastor's opinions on this conflict. Christian historical literature in China and the analysis on how those historical events connect with the current conflict will be the main part in this paper. I will present some interesting analysis on

the intimate relationship between the government's policies and the fast Christian growth in new China. Finally, I will give some suggestions based on my analysis and some concerns on the conflict. In this paper, the most interesting part will be my analysis on my interpretation between the fast Christian growth the current conflict in Zhejiang province.

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## **GLOSSARY**

**Three-Self Churches** - The legal, state-sanctioned churches in China are commonly known as “Three-Self Churches,” referring to “self-governance, self-propagation, and self-support.”

**Home Churches** -The non-recognized churches, located in private residences, are popularly referred to as “underground home churches.”

**Modern China** – Modern China in this paper refers to the period, which starts in 1911 after the fall of the last feudal Qing Dynasty.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: Different Views on the Three-Self Churches' Roof-Cross Tearing Down Movement

“A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism”.<sup>1</sup> This specter of Communism that Marx mentioned in his Communist Manifesto over a century ago did not take hold in Europe for a very long time. But Communism became the dominant power in modern China in 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power and established the People’s Republic of China. Communism has now disappeared even in the Soviet Union, but it still rules Mainland China. Another thing that Marx could not have expected was that the spirit of Christianity, the opium of the people, would become more and more popular in some Third World countries, especially recently in modern China. It is a paradox that the religious West did not follow Communism and is becoming more and more secular, but this atheist communist China is getting some religious fever nowadays.

Modern China has many religious issues among different religions such as Christianity, Tibetan Buddhism, Uyghur Islam, and local animism. This paper will focus on a recent Christian issue between local government and local legal Three-Self Churches in Zhejiang province. This conflict started in 2014. Several legal churches like Sanjiang Church and Longganshan Church in Wenzhou were razed to the ground. At the same time, some other churches received the notice from government to tear down the roof-crosses. Later government led a huge campaign to tear down roof

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<sup>1</sup> Karl. Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow: Marists Org, 2010), 14.

crosses from these legal Three-Self Churches. It is a new problem, which is different from what happened to some illegal underground home churches. Since it is something new and important to deal with, the main purpose of this paper is to find what reasons lie behind this conflict in Zhejiang. These reasons may shed some light on how to avoid future potential religious conflicts.

In order to give explanations, this paper will use several different disciplines. My first chapter will be field research work and interviews. I had two research trips in 2015 in Zhejiang and one trip in Hong Kong. I had the opportunity to interview some scholars and pastors there. All this research information will be mentioned in this part. The second chapter will review Christian historical literature in China. It will look at how Christianity worked with local government or even central government during the last century there. Especially, it will focus on the period that the communist government took power from 1949 to the time that China gave freedom to religious groups after the death of Mao Zhedong. The third chapter will be my personal analysis on this conflict. I will build my thesis and arguments in the modern Chinese historical and sociological spheres to explain what reasons lie behind this conflict. The fourth chapter will be a study on suggestions regarding the Church-State relationship in Zhejiang, China. The final chapter will be the conclusion for the whole paper.

During the research trip to Hong Kong and Mainland China, I collected several different opinions among some scholars from different divinity colleges and some pastors from Zhejiang province. I will present their opinions, reasons why they hold different opinions, and critiques on different opinions in this chapter.

## 1.1 The First View on Transforming Old Residential Buildings, Old Factories, Urban Villages and Razing Illegal Buildings

The Zhejiang government conducted on its website a campaign “Three transformation and one razing”, meaning transforming those old residential buildings, old factories, urban villages and razing illegal building. This campaign would last three years (2013—2015). The goal of this campaign was to renovate all those old buildings, to tear down illegal buildings, and to prevent new illegal buildings.<sup>2</sup> One opinion from some Mainland scholars and pastors is that this campaign was to tear down all illegal buildings and their decorations including religious and non-religious buildings. It did not aim to attack religious buildings specifically. So there is no anti-Christian campaign in Zhejiang. This was also the government’s response to the critique that the campaign was against the religious freedom in China. In August 2014, the government office replied that in size of area the majority of buildings torn down were illegal secular buildings. The area of religious building torn down was just 0.26%. The area of tearing down Christian churches was just 2.3% of all illegal religious buildings.<sup>3</sup>

Some scholars observed that some Three-self churches in small towns were really huge. The area of these churches was over what local government approved. So part of these churches was illegal. These huge churches were not used efficiently, because most young Chinese, who worked in big cities, just went back to their hometown one or two times per year. Government has the reason to tear them down.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 浙江建设, <http://220.189.211.53/sgyc/>, accessed on Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> 浙江省政府, [Http://www.zj.gov.cn/art/2014/8/20/art\\_7406\\_1303308.html](Http://www.zj.gov.cn/art/2014/8/20/art_7406_1303308.html), accessed on Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Based on fieldwork interview at December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015.

## **1.2 The Second View on ‘Three Transformation and One Razing’ Campaign and Tearing Down Three-self Church Roof Crosses**

Another opinion agrees with what government did in the beginning of this campaign. The “three transformations and one razing” campaign was not for Christian churches at first. As the statistics showed, the percentage of tearing down religious building is quite low. However, when the later tearing-down Three-self Church roof-cross campaign started in Zhejiang, the affected churches were a large number. The government statistics above did not count these affected churches. Especially, after the provincial government issued a religious architecture regulation in July 2015, government gave detailed instructions on where put a cross in the church. Then the government started to tear down all roof-crosses according to this newly issued regulation. Only then, my sources believed, was there a persecution of these Three-Self Christian Churches. They also mentioned that the fact was that the government wanted to control this religious fever on those outstanding churches and their decorations.<sup>5</sup>

## **1.3 The Third View That Local Government Uses Political Resource to Constrain Christianity’s Fast Growth**

Professor Fuk Tsang Ying, Dean of the Divinity College at Chinese University of Hong Kong, holds a different opinion from the previous two opinions. He argues in his research paper, that the government planned to use its political weapon “Three

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<sup>5</sup> Based on fieldwork interview at December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

transformation and one razing” campaign on religious buildings to oppress religions, especially Christianity on the Mainland.<sup>6</sup>

Fuk Tsang Ying collected some government documents to prove his idea. The first document is on how to deal with illegal religious architecture. It is from the Ethnic and Religious Affair Committee of Zhejiang Province. It talks about the goal, work principles and schedule arrangements. The goal is to reduce this religious fever that spreads too fast in many places in Zhejiang. It aims to guide religious activities in an ordered, regular, and reasonable development.

The main content in the beginning includes:

- (1). Checking the numbers and size of unrecognized churches and other illegal religious places
- (2). Checking the numbers and size of those churches exceeding the limits of their construction permits
- (3). Checking crosses and other religious symbols<sup>7</sup>

Fuk Tsang Ying thinks that this is obvious evidence that government uses its own resources and non-religious methods to deal with religious issues. Under the cover of tearing down illegal religious building, it aims to constrain Christian growth in Zhejiang.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.4 Critique of These Different Opinions

The first opinion believes that it is not even a religious problem. It holds that local government has the authority to tear down all illegal buildings including

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<sup>6</sup> 邢福增, *拆十字架的政治*, 香港中文大学, 2015, 2.

<sup>7</sup> ‘三改一拆’ 涉及宗教违法建筑处置工作方案, <http://cn.nytimes.com/china/20140530/cc30document/>, accessed on 28<sup>th</sup>, Jan, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> 邢福增, *拆十字架的政治*, 香港中文大学, 2015, 5.

Christian churches. This opinion was challenged by a number of domestic scholars and pastors, who saw the coming of more persecutions of Three-Self Churches from the local government, but they believed that this persecution was not planned. This conflict began only when the government started to tear down roof-crosses based on newly issued regulations on how to position church crosses. Hong Kong scholar Fuk Tsang Ying challenged this opinion. He thinks it was always a religious conflict from the beginning of this campaign. Local government just used non-religious ways to hide its real purpose to constrain fast Christian growth in Zhejiang.

Because of China special political situation, few Mainland scholars can obtain a permit to do the research on this topic. Even new medias are commanded by the government to reduce to reports about this conflict or choose the government's angle to report the news. Most domestic scholars and pastors seemed to have some worries about showing their opinions during my interviews. I am inclined to agree with what Fuk Tsang Ying's opinion, because what the local government said and did was not consistent. Some official government documents that were released by various western media show the local government's purpose clearly. I believe that even if they planned it, different things happened out of their plan during the campaign on roof crosses torn down. They may have not expected local Christians' strong resistance to what they did to the roof-crosses. It also caused huge attention in overseas Chinese Christian communities. As the development of this process continued, they needed issue new policies to face some new challenges. It even took risk in breaking the religious freedom law in China. Some lawyers sued the local government over this issue. Then the local government put these lawyers into prison.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 浙江教会维权律师面临秘密拘押, <http://cn.nytimes.com/china/20150902/co2chinalawyer/>, access on 2016/1/29.



They may plan to constrain the fast growth of Christians there. But it seems Christians in Zhejiang got an even stronger identity as an oppressed community. It caused more tension between the Three-Self Churches and the local government. So in contrast to Fuk Tsang Ying's strong opinion that what the government did brought harm to the Chinese Christian community, I will present some different interpretations on these conflicts between the Church and the State.

In fact, there is lots of information about the persecutions of Chinese Christians by the communist government. Even after opening its door to decrease the ideological conflict in 1978, the local governments in different cities still saw many home churches as illegal gathering places and dismissed them sometimes. At the same time, government had to tolerate the majority of home churches in different areas. In order to understand what reasons lie behind these different conflicts and the current conflict in Zhejiang, I will take a different approach to trace back in modern Chinese history, the relationship between the State and the Churches in those different periods. What was the relationship between the State and the Churches in those different periods then? How is this recent conflict related to those historic events in each different period?

## Chapter 2

### Historical Background and the Church-State Relationship at a Glance

For five years, from 2011 to 2015, I lived outside of Mainland China. It gave me a chance to look at my country from many different angles. Every time I went back to China, I was able to observe on how local churches were going. Whether it was in the four most developed cities Beijing, Shanghai, Canton, and Shenzhen, or some other capital cities like Hangzhou in Zhejiang, Kunming in Yunnan, or even in the central part of China where my grandparents' hometown is there, those huge legal Three-Self Churches would be full of people during the Sunday service. The largest Chinese church Chongyi Church, which I went in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang province, can contain around 5500 people in the downtown area. It will attract many believers to worship within its two Sunday morning services. This surprising growth of Christian believers happens in China at both these legal Three-Self Churches and those countless underground home churches. However, it cannot happen without some foundations in the history. In order to understand the State and the local churches' relationship, this chapter will review the relationship between local government and local churches during different historical periods.

## 2.1 Christianity before New China

Christianity spread to China quite a long time ago. A famous stone monument recorded some historical incidents in Chang'an, capital of Tang Dynasty, in AD 781.<sup>10</sup> The Nestorian Christians, the Catholics, and the later Protestant Christians, entered in ancient China in different periods. But Christianity made relatively little impact until the influential Taiping Revolution, which was led by a large group of Chinese Christians. Although it was defined as a heretical group, it nearly toppled the Qing Dynasty, which lasted from 1851 to 1864. This revolution failed,<sup>11</sup> but it would endure to influence the later reformers and counter reformers.

Another important influence was Western culture, politics, scientific technology. The Qing dynasty was very weak in international politics in its later years. Many Chinese reformers came up with ideas to imitate Western styles to equip this old kingdom.<sup>12</sup> The traditional obstacles and forces were much stronger than these reformers imagined. They all failed to bring new Western ideas to help the old China.

Christianity was treated as a foreign religion by both government and the majority of Chinese people. Central government allowed Christian missionaries to when they contributed to some social works like education, hospitals, and charity. During those colonized periods and wartime, it also allowed some anti-foreign movements like "the Boxer Rebellion", which was mainly against Christians and foreign missionaries,<sup>13</sup> when it felt Christianity's threat or the West's threat.

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Hill, *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 114.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel C. Y. HSU, *The Rise of Modern China* (NY: Oxford Press, 2000), 251.

<sup>12</sup> John K. Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China Volume 11, Part 2*, (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 199-201.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Hill, *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 477.

Both Catholics and Protestant missionaries worked here. By the time of 1900, there were around 700, 000 Catholics and 100, 000 Protestants. Most of these Christians were from the lower classes like peasants, laborers, and criminals.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 Republic of China from 1911 to 1948

‘Nationalism, democracy, and people’s livelihood’ these Three Principles of the People equipped Sun Yat-sen. He overturned the Qing dynasty and was embraced as president of the republic. Sun was the first president and founder of the Republic of China, and also a Christian. After the invasion of the West and Japan, many Chinese were sent overseas, mainly to America, Japan, and Europe, to master foreigners’ skill in different areas. These later Chinese reformers finally brought new ideas from science, democracy, and communism. These modern thoughts contributed to the collapse of that old China. Sun and his successor Jiang Kai-shek, leader of Republic of China, represented the America and Japanese style of leadership to bring democracy and capitalism to China. Later Mao and Zhou Enlai, who were strongly influenced by Communism from Europe and Russia, took another side to establish another new China.

During this period, warfare continued throughout the whole world, including colonial wars, two World Wars, different civil wars between various army leaders, and the long time war between the Communist and Capitalist forces until 1949. It was a time without peace. But it was a time full of new ideas. New traditions, new cultures, and the new Marxist- Leninism all came to the Chinese mind at this time.

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<sup>14</sup> Denis. Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China Volume 11, Part 1* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 543- 550.

In this period, Christianity continued to work in Mainland China. In contrast to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they did not just share the Gospel, but also focused on the education of Chinese society and medicine, which attracted some new Chinese Christians.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Marxism's influence contributed to influential New Culture Movement (1917—1923) and the establishment of the China Communist Party (CCP), which was critical of all religions as intrinsically superstitious.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.3 People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1965

“Chinese fellows! Today the central government of the People's Republic of China is established.” President Mao declared this new regime on October 1<sup>st</sup> in Beijing to all over the world. Communism seized the political power in China since then. After the long war, it was a time to start to rebuild Chinese society under these revolutionary army leaders. Most of them were strongly influenced by the idea of Communism in the Soviet Union then. They would start to copy the Soviet Union's style to build this new country. Sociologist Ivan Szelenyi mentioned that these Communist leaders started a huge historical and sociological experiment to check whether Marx's ideas on communism works or not.<sup>17</sup> Many huge and catastrophic experiments happened. The Land Revolution (1950- 1952) started to distribute the lands among different peasant classes. The rich landlord class was wiped out. Many of them were sentenced to prison or death.<sup>18</sup> The Agriculture Collectivization (1953-1957) started to speed its agriculture growth.<sup>19</sup> Then it planned to speed its industrial

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<sup>15</sup> Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China Volume 12* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 172- 176.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Hill, *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 477.

<sup>17</sup> Ivan. Szelenyi, *Foundations of Modern Social Thought*, Yale University, [http://open.163.com/movie/2009/9/L/3/M71SK71SK\\_M71SL0CL3.html](http://open.163.com/movie/2009/9/L/3/M71SK71SK_M71SL0CL3.html), accessed on 2016/1/22.

<sup>18</sup> Immanuel C. Y. HSU, *The Rise of Modern China* (NY: Oxford Press, 2000), 652- 653.

<sup>19</sup> Immanuel C. Y. HSU, *The Rise of Modern China* (NY: Oxford Press, 2000), 653.

growth. The Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) totally destroyed its economic system, which brought the Greatest Famine Disaster (1959-1961) in the Chinese history.<sup>20</sup> During this period, China also started to have a crisis in its Communist alliance with the Soviet Union.

Under the CCP in this period, all the foreign missionaries were expelled from the Mainland. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) were built. In the beginning of this period, the CCP was not so against all religions including Christianity. Although the CCP thought that religion was false, they would like to see it decline naturally.<sup>21</sup> Purdue University professor, Fenggang Yang, mentioned that the religious policy had two parts in this period. The first part was to try to absorb different religions and control them (1949-1957). The second part was to transform all these religions (1957-1966).<sup>22</sup>

## 2.4 The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976

President Mao is the reddest sun in the Chinese's heart. This was one of the popular slogans during the Cultural Revolution. This political campaign was first against the return of some capitalist and bureaucratic ideology. Then it developed to be against all traditional thoughts, cultures, rituals and customs. It aimed to transform all the Chinese internal character to achieve an influential revolution that would touch every Chinese soul. All the Chinese would be able to combat Capitalism's ideological pollution by accepting Mao's theories through this ideological revolution in

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<sup>20</sup> 费正清, *剑桥中华人民共和国史: 革命的中国的兴起 1949- 1965* (北京: 外文印刷社, 1990), 311-312.

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan. Hill, *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 481.

<sup>22</sup> Fenggang Yang, *Religion in China: Survival and Revival Under Communist Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65—78.

education, literature, and art.<sup>23</sup> Higher education in all universities stopped. Literature and art mainly served these influential politicians' ambition. This huge influence not only affected the urban areas, but it also spread to rural places. Traditional Chinese rural religious customs were strongly attacked. The Red Guards destroyed all those old fashion traditions like temples, churches, and even some old architecture.<sup>24</sup> They forbade books with any religious content. Mao's Little Red Book replaced these religious books.

In this period, the churches suffered terribly. Every single church at this time was closed, locked, or turned into another sort of place for other useful purposes. The Red Guard persecuted many Christians because of their faith.<sup>25</sup> The central government planned to eliminate Christianity and other traditional religions by this political force.<sup>26</sup>

It is a dark part of Chinese history. But there were some sparks that would lighten a bright China very soon. Firstly, China had a closer relationship with the United States because of the split with the Soviet Union. The American President Nixon visited Mainland China in 1972. In 1978, the United States would officially recognize the Beijing government. Secondly, political power would shift from Mao to another influential politician, Deng Xiaoping, who was pro the pragmatic way to build up the economy again.

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<sup>23</sup> 费正清, *剑桥中华人民共和国史: 中国革命的内部革命 1966- 1982* (北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 1992), 315.

<sup>24</sup> 费正清, *剑桥中华人民共和国史: 中国革命的内部革命 1966- 1982* (北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 1992), 690-693.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan. Hill, *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 485

<sup>26</sup> Fenggang. Yang, *Religion in China: Survival and Revival Under Communist Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65—78.

## 2.5 A New Open China: From 1977 to Now

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”<sup>27</sup> The Chinese media cannot talk freely about domestic politics, but they can argue in the economic area. There is no doubt that they appreciate the last economic revolution under the influential politician Deng Xiaoping, who took the leadership shortly after the death of Mao. He took China out of the Cultural Revolution and those ideological conflicts. In the last 40 years, China decreased ideological arguments between Communism and Capitalism. “Whether a white cat or a black cat, the cat that catches a mouse is a good cat,” was Deng’s most famous guiding words on economic revolution. China enjoys a long and tremendous economic recovery and growth, which brings different levels’ material property to the average Chinese. Now China has become the second largest world economy,<sup>28</sup> the largest trading goods trader in the world.<sup>29</sup>

These fast changes spread to different areas with this new trend and open economy. The central government does not emphasize that traditional Communist society, but focuses on a Chinese-style Socialist society now. Many new political terms appeared with this dramatic economic change in this new period. The central government chose to adopt pragmatism in the economic area, which brought some economic successes. This pragmatic economic success influenced many areas of Chinese daily life, but not much in the political area.

In 1989, the Communist institutions started to collapse in Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup> The whole world changed dramatically within this short period. In Mainland China,

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<sup>27</sup> Charles. Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>28</sup> China Overview, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>, access on 2016/2/22.

<sup>29</sup> China Overtakes US as World’s Largest Goods Trader, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/7c2dbd70-79a6-11e3-b381-00144feabdc0.html#axzz40rsUQhgK>, access on 2016/2/22.

<sup>30</sup> John K. Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Taipei: Cheng Chung Books, 1994), 483.



the most influential democratic movement was the Tiananmen Square movement at the same year. Many university students asked for liberty and democracy in the front of the Tiananmen Square. The Beijing government chose to crackdown on this movement using army power. It rejected the Western democracy appeal by force. But it did not stop the central government to continue its economic reforms by embracing Capitalism in more different area. Then China confirmed that it entered a period of Quasi- Capitalism in a political dictatorship.<sup>31</sup> Market can work well by the invisible hand. But the central government has the authority to control this invisible hand.

Although China did not choose Western democratic politics, people can enjoy much more freedom than in previous periods. They have more income, more education, and more flexibility. On religion, they are allowed to take back what they can believe. It was a period that everything needed recovery and started a new order. The central government adjusted its policy to face different religious issues. They admitted that religion would last for a long period.<sup>32</sup> They took a pragmatic attitude on religion as they did in the economic area. Religion, in some sense, had a social function to guide these religious groups to have a harmonized life under the governing of the CCP. But Christians, especially Protestant Christians, grew dramatically compared with the average growth rate in Chinese Christian history, which caused the CCP to adjust its policy to face the new change. The recent conflict in Zhejiang is a sign that local government wants to control this religious heat. Considering the reality that the central government has authority over the local provincial government, the concept of controlling religious heat can also be seen as the central government's policy to deal with the recent fast growth of Christianity in Zhejiang.

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<sup>31</sup> Immanuel C. Y. HSU, *The Rise of Modern China* (NY: Oxford Press, 2000), 926-942.

<sup>32</sup> 邢福增, *中国改革开放 30 年: 变与常* (香港: 城市大学出版社, 2009), 314- 318.

## Chapter 3

### **Analysis on The Conflict between the State and the Churches**

As it presented in the previous chapter, Christianity in China faced many different issues during these different historical backgrounds. The Conflicts happened under the different regimes and influential politicians. There are some common reasons among these different conflicts. But they also have their own special context in the history. The current conflict in Zhejiang became a provincial conflict, which might be the severest conflict between the State and the Churches after 1978. What are the core reasons of this conflict in Zhejiang? Why does it happen recently?

During the process of this short history in the new China, something interesting but unexpected happened on both the government side and the Christian church side. In this part, I will try to analyze several reasons behind this conflict. The first reason will be the ideological conflict and the identity of the Chinese Communism. The second will be the cultural conflict and the new Chinese Christian culture. The last will be the relationship between the fast Christians growth and the current conflict in Zhejiang based on both the historical and sociological sphere.

#### **3.1 Ideological Conflict**

The ideological conflict is an important and primary reason for the conflict in Zhejiang. The CCP took Marxism-Leninism ideology, which was from European thinkers, as its party foundation. When the CCP established its party policy, it absorbed Marx's idea to strengthen its own belief that this atheist Communist theory

would liberate and guide the people. Karl Marx mentioned Christianity as the opium of the people. He did not believe that Christianity could guide and benefit the society. Christianity is portrayed in Chinese history books as a foreign western religion, because of the early western missionaries' influence, especially during the colonial period in the late Qing Dynasty. So Communism and Christianity had historical and ideological conflicts long before they came to influence the Chinese. When they came to the New China, both of them evolved and assimilated as Chinese Communism and Chinese Christianity. But this core ideological conflict did not cease. Now the CCP government admits that religion will last long in to the future. Its core policy is to lead these religious groups to behave properly. All the religious groups need to love the country, to support the Chinese socialism, to support CCP's governing, and to obey law, rules and policies. All the religions can have religious activities, but it must put the whole nation's benefit first.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.1.1 Communism as a Religion?**

Every religion has its god or gods. Communism, which is based on modern humanism, criticized these religious beliefs as superstitious. It designed its own future ideal world that would be absolutely just and equal. This idea was very attractive just like religious ideas. Through history, we can see that Communism in China did attract many Chinese and help liberate them from the old hierarchical system. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."<sup>34</sup> Classes, which existed in that old and broken China, would be broken again and again. Then a new China with the idea that everyone should be treated equally was established. Chinese

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<sup>33</sup> 江泽民, 在全国宗教工作会议上的讲话, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Karl. Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow, Marists org, 2010), 14.

Communism succeeded in reaching its initial goal. Although it did not go as smoothly as planned, especially at the beginning of the People's Republic of China, it still continued to hold power. When many religious conflicts happened in the Mainland China, then an important question needs to be asked and answered. Whether Communism in China is a religion or not?

### **3.1.2 Communism Not as Religion**

Communism was not a religion for its founders Marx and Engels. It was an influential human movement against the old powers, the classes in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. "All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies."<sup>35</sup> Marx challenged all the authorities and powerful classes in his small pamphlet. So he would not think of bringing a new religion to his proletariat class.

Communism came to China when the CCP was established in 1921. It is evolving as history continues. Now the CCP gives a detailed explanation of how Communist theory makes progress based on the Chinese situation. The party constitution mentioned five important parts, which are Marxist-Leninism, Mao's thought, Deng's theory, Jiang's Three-Representatives theory, and Hu's scientific development theory. So Communist theory in China now is a progressive theory. Each influential Chairman would contribute to this progressive theory. In contrast to traditional religions, there is now no holy scripture in Chinese Communism. In this sense, it is more like a political philosophy, which guides the CCP and its people how to live in their country. It is not a religion.

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<sup>35</sup> Karl. Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow, Marists org, 2010), 14.

### 3.1.3 Communism Is a Religion

The most religious period in the new China could be the Cultural Revolution period (1966—1976). The majority of Chinese treated Mao as the Chinese savior. His thought in the little Red Book was the absolute truth. “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave”.<sup>36</sup> The ‘Two Whatevers’ in the Government media, which was claimed after the death of Mao, reflected Chairman Mao’s ‘religious status’ at that period. The CCP pushed the whole movement. However, this was not just in the Cultural Revolution period, nowadays Mao’s body is still preserved in Tiananmen Square. His portrait can be easily seen in ordinary Chinese daily life. Although he was criticized after the Cultural Revolution, he was almost portrayed as a holy man at that time. His thought was the foundation of the CCP’s guidelines. In this sense, Chinese Communism copied religious styles to emphasize Mao’s heroic and savior image in modern Chinese history, especially during the Cultural Revolution period.

The CCP members should not have any other religions except Communism. There are also some other specific rules for a CCP member. One key rule is that CCP members should commit their life to help achieve the final Communist society. Compared with Christianity or the other major religions, Chinese Communism does have specific rules and goals. There are influential figures, too. These points aside, being CCP believers or members has a stricter process than being a religious person in China. Only those elite in their areas can join the party. Now around 85, 000, 000 elite

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<sup>36</sup> Two Whatevers, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two\\_Whatevers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_Whatevers), accessed on 2016/2/10.

party members hold the power of the country.<sup>37</sup> Before people became members, they need to apply first. Then they would have party education and an assessment period. After becoming a party member, especially those in the government offices and state companies, there is continuous education in party colleges and administrative colleges. Although there is no holy scripture for them to learn, they are trained to understand the spirit of Communism, to be loyal to the CCP.<sup>38</sup> All these show that Communism in China embodies a religious style. Some people would call it a religion without God.

### **3.1.4 Conflict on Communism's Own Identify**

One problem that was mentioned during my interviews in Zhejiang was that some Communist members had double identities, as both a Communist member and a Christian. Although the number is few, it shows some identity conflicts in both Communist and religious people in China. The government never officially admits that Communism is a religion. They even have self-criticized after the religious Communist fever in the Culture Revolution. But at the same time, it attracted many elite people in Mainland China to be CCP members through a quite strict process. It requires all members to be atheist and believe in the Communist ideas. These CCP elites hold the absolute political power. When the CCP emphasize its own Communism ideology too much and treat it as a religious way, it has the danger to go back what had happened during the Cultural Revolution period.

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<sup>37</sup> Keping. Yu, *Cadre Training System of CPC and China's State Governance* (Beijing: Central Compilation& Translation Press, 2014), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Keping. Yu, *Cadre Training System of CPC and China's State Governance* (Beijing: Central Compilation& Translation Press, 2014), 11.

The situation in China is that almost all political officers and state company leaders are CCP members. But with the development of the economy in the last 40 years, the early strong identity with Communism is decreasing among many people including these leaders. It is the reality that being a Communist member can bring people a lot of potential benefits, but at the same time, lots of Communist members have lost that original desire to liberate people or to serve people. When its ideological foundation seems to be unattractive among its members, it needs to adjust its directions and evolve again to adapt to the new situation. This identity conflict within Chinese Communism is bringing them problems. Many people in China, including CCP members, no longer trust it that much. Then a hole appears in Chinese life. In order to fill the hole that Evan Osnos called “the spiritual void”, some Chinese, including the CCP members, turn to other religions.<sup>39</sup> Actually China has many Buddhists believers and, probably will be the largest Christian country very soon. Recently, the central government realized the potential religious trend among retired CCP leaders. It requires that those retired CCP leaders and members should not be involved in any religious activities in order to be consistent with their Communist belief.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2 Cultural Conflict

When Christianity spreads to a new region, it must confront the culture gap. From the Nestorian Christians first arriving in ancient China to the world missionaries stepping

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<sup>39</sup> Evan. Osnos, *Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth, and Faith in The New China* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 226- 229.

<sup>40</sup> 离退休干部党员要守规矩不信教, [http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2016/02/160205\\_china\\_retired\\_officials\\_party\\_rule?post\\_id=1000857069980579\\_1000857056647247#](http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2016/02/160205_china_retired_officials_party_rule?post_id=1000857069980579_1000857056647247#) =, accessed on 2016/2/17.

in to Modern China, some old culture gap still exists. At the same time, some new culture conflict appears. This part will mention two cultural conflicts.

### **3.2.1 Confucianism, Nationalism and Christian Culture**

Culture is one of the core identities for a nation. For a long time, most Chinese saw Christianity as a Western religion. The foreign missionaries with different faces, those unfamiliar terms they used, and the different portrayal of God, were new things for the Chinese.

In traditional Chinese culture, Confucianism was the dominant culture. It has strict hierarchical rules for governing family, society, and nation. It focused on life itself. It does not ask for help from external powers like God or gods. However, Chinese people tried to reach some mysterious power from the sky or their ancestors, especially when faced with some severe unsolved problems in their life. Traditional Confucianism was challenged since the late Qing Dynasty because many Chinese were convinced that this traditional Confucianism was out of date, especially compared with the dominant Western culture. So several cultural revolutions happened to attack Confucianism. It is also ironic that Confucianism served the Chinese for almost two thousand years and was only challenged within the last hundred years. Now it survives and is used by the CPP again to emphasize ethical stability and nationalism. The CCP leaders try to harmonize Communism and the traditional Confucianism to govern the modern Chinese. In this sense, this conflict between Western culture and Chinese traditional culture still exists now and will continue in the future.



When the government tries to tear down Christian churches' roof-crosses, it has many supporters, who believe that it is right to constrain Western religion's influence in China. When the government promotes this traditional cultural identity and nationalism, many Chinese will be influenced, which is a way to counter other cultures' influence and bring more conflicts.

### **3.2.2 New Chinese Christian Culture**

Modern China mixed too many different things together. Traditional Confucianism, Capitalism, and Communism, take turns to play a certain role in Modern China's different periods. It created a new Chinese culture. Recently, it is a period focused on the economy. Both the government and the people have become realistic and pragmatic. At the same time, Chinese Christianity developed with a huge help from overseas Chinese and South Korean missionaries, who came on regular works or studies, but involved themselves very cautiously in the life of home churches. The prosperity Gospel has an important position in these two mission groups. Many different Christian communities were influenced by this new trend, especially under the background of the fast economic growth in the Mainland China.

After several decades' development, many Christian towns and villages have become rich, especially in Zhejiang. In order to keep the prosperity, they build huge churches with big crosses to honor God. They also believe that these huge churches will attract some more believers. In Zhejiang, in order to send the message to more people, many rich Christians not only build these outstanding churches, but they also choose the best locations such as places close to the new high-speed train stations, the top of small hills, or even downtown areas. This prosperity gospel movement will bring the new believers. But it also brings doubt and envy. From the internal Christian

community side, they will doubt the essence of the prosperity Gospel and the potential harm for Christian development in Mainland China. From the external side, the CCP government and other religious groups will envy Christian fast growth, which may bring potential challenges and obstacle for its further development.

### **3.3 Fast Christian Growth and the Conflict**

It is a fact that the Christian growth gets rapid, especially in the eastern coastal areas. “Various forms of Protestantism have been spreading quickly in many provinces in recent years, with estimates of Protestants in China now ranging from 40 million to 60 million, in addition to 10 million to 15 million Catholics. Christians in Zhejiang are believed to be the most numerous”.<sup>41</sup> This New York Time journalist mentioned this fast growth of Christians after some churches were razed in Zhejiang in 2014 when the Zhejiang government started their campaign against some local Three-self churches. Christianity has spread to different Chinese communities and classes. But how does it happen? What reasons make modern Chinese tend to accept Christianity even during these different conflicts?

#### **3.3.1 Christian Community Revival after the Culture Revolution**

The ten years of the Culture Revolution were an historical event and a very special period in modern Chinese history. After the death of Mao and the trial of the Gang of four, a closed Chinese community stepped on to a new stage to embrace a wide and open world. The eastern coastal areas became the first place to have a chance to reach outside. These areas were also the place where the traditional

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<sup>41</sup> Keith. Bradsher, *National goals Still Murky After Zhejiang Church Razings* <http://cn.nytimes.com/china/20140903/c03church/>, accessed on 2016/2/12.

missionaries had worked and the majority of Christians lived. Christians in these areas started to rebuild their Christian community after the government opened this religion freedom. There were no exact statistics on how many Christians came back to the churches. Professor Yang Fenggang mentioned that there were around 3 million Catholics and 3 million Protestants in 1982. Less than 1 million Protestants and 3 million Catholics existed before the Culture Revolution.<sup>42</sup> So it is clear that Protestant Christian revived soon after China opened its religious door. Then in the subsequent 40 years, Christianity went viral there. Although there are still no exact statistics, Purdue University's Chinese religion study center gives its estimation on the Christian numbers in Mainland China (see the graph below). It is a remarkable social phenomenon that the numbers of Christians started to grow sharply, especially after 1980. Behind this miraculous growth, there are some reasons, which need to be explained under China's new special political, cultural, and economical environment. All the reasons given below will also help to understand the recent conflicts in Zhejiang.

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<sup>42</sup> 杨凤岗, *当代中国的宗教复兴与宗教短缺*,

<http://www.21bcr.com/a/shiye/zaiminjian/2012/0228/3275.html>, accessed on 2/11/2016.

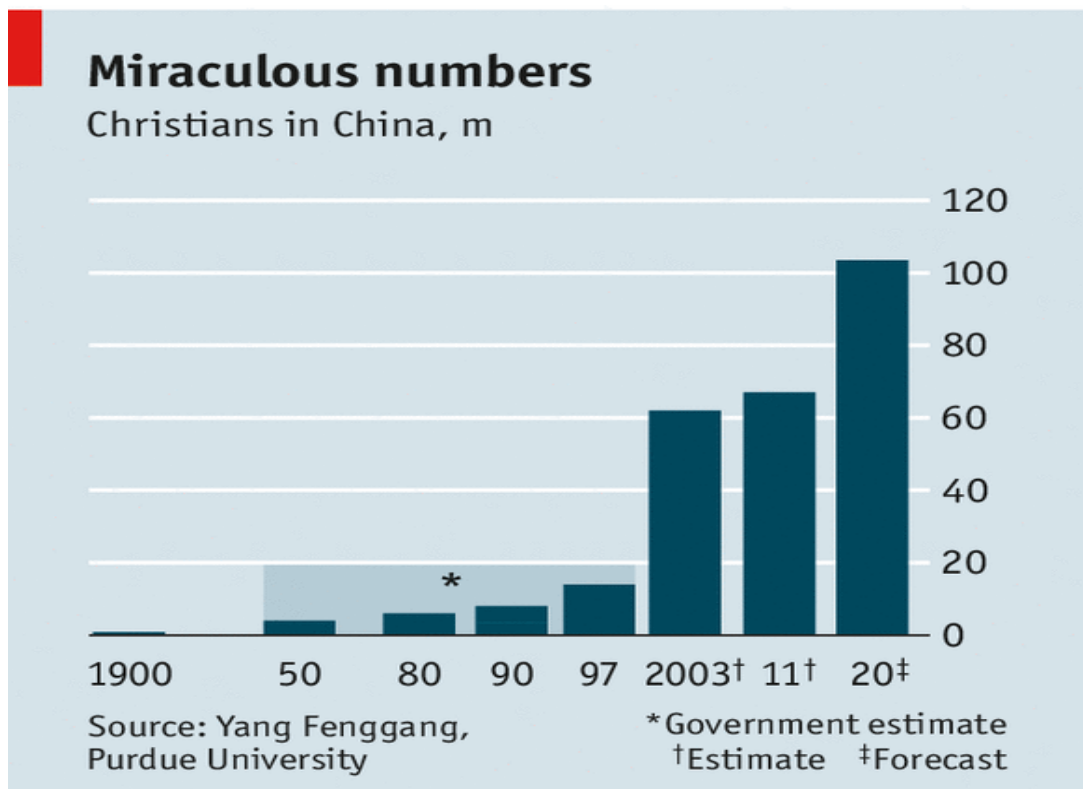


Figure 1 Miraculous numbers of Christians in China

### 3.3.2 Political Education and CCP's Christianity Strategy

Two main political reasons provide the foundation for the fast Christian growth. The first and somewhat ironical reason is CCP's strong ideological education among all the Chinese. The second one is CCP's strategy on the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM).

The central government pushes their political and ideological education to all the students from elementary school onwards. All the Chinese need to learn these ideological lessons from a kid in an elementary school until a master degree student in a university. Although not all the people can get higher education, all people at least learned some ideological lessons. Usually, these lessons are the most complicated and boring for the majority of people whether for a kid in an elementary school or for an adult in a university. The content of these course are full of philosophical concepts,

which are not that related to people's real life. When it pushes the atheist ideology again and again, people just become numb when they grow up under this kind of education. For the CCP members, they will have many more ideology courses than average people. It is one reason that why Communism lost Chinese believers. But the key point is not that the Chinese turn to Christianity because of losing interest in Communism. This atheist ideological education has a deep root in most Chinese hearts. When these Chinese face a different ideological concept in their life, like Christianity or Buddhism, it will arouse different levels of interest as they discover this new worldview. Many of them will find Buddhism and Christianity much more close to their hearts and life, compared with empty Communism. When the CCP plants the atheist seed in people's hearts, it blossoms into many curious flowers. Modern Chinese, who are liberated from a single ideological society, are much more curious to discover a new world, especially in this multi-media society.

Another political reason that provided a foundation for the unexpected Christian growth was the CCP's Christianity strategy—the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. It planned to build the legal Three-Self churches in order to govern and control them. But conversely, it gives a way for the growth of independent home churches in Mainland. In the previous time, government officers had the right to check a pastor's sermon. Many believers thought that they could not get God's words from those pastors in these Three-Self churches. So many chose to start their own home churches. At the same time, local governments also have the authority to control the numbers of legal Three-Self churches. These home churches have the advantage of flexibility and freedom. They then grow rapidly. It is difficult to give statistics on how many home churches there are in Mainland China. Many people, including the government, realize home churches' members are much more numerous

than the Three-Self churches'. When the government wants to use its policy to control the organized Christian groups, it turns out that the development of Christianity in the Mainland is spreading everywhere. Although these home churches are quite loose and don't have many connections with each other. It is so separate all over the country that it is out of any groups' control.

### 3.3.3 Cultural Revolution and Restoration

Modern China experienced culture revolutions several times. The early cultural revolutions started after the later Qing Dynasty. Two key historical cultural revolutions are the New Culture movement from 1917 to 1923 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. The first Cultural Revolution challenged the traditional Chinese culture because many Chinese wanted to embrace Western culture to strengthen the weak China against different foreign powers at that time. This movement attacked all traditional language, ethics, and customs in the weak period of the Republic of China. Another even more influential Cultural Revolution happened under the CCP's government (1966-1976). Although at first it was the CCP's own internal political conflict, it aimed to eliminate "old thought, old culture, old customs and old habits". It was against the potential influence of capitalism and the tendency of revisionism.<sup>43</sup> The result was that the whole of China went into a disordered state for almost 10 years. But by the end of this disaster, it gave the whole CCP leadership a strong warning to avoid ideological and cultural conflict. Then after giving up this ideological conflict, the People's Republic of China's economic golden age began.

These different Cultural Revolutions in modern Chinese history challenged traditional Chinese culture and tradition. But they also opened a way to embrace and

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<sup>43</sup> Immanuel C. Y. HSU, *The Rise of Modern China* (NY: Oxford Press, 2000), 697- 703.

tolerate new cultures from outside for both the average Chinese and the CCP's leaders. It took the process of almost a century, to lay this foundation for the Chinese to embrace diverse cultures from outside. The fast spread of Christianity also met this open golden age. Foreign culture was not the main worry of the CCP. Modern Chinese are much more open to a new different culture. The love of Jesus Christ reaches their hearts much more easily, compared with their ancestors in the early period of the new China.

### **3.3.4 Fast Economic Growth and Its Influence**

After almost 40 years of economic development, China faced many different changes. From absolutely poor to relatively rich, from Communist economy to Capitalist economy, from atheist conformity to theist fever, from monolithic society to diverse society, all happened in just 40 years. Several reasons for the fast growth of Christianity under the booming economy will be presented in this part.

Firstly, it is the first time in Chinese history that the majority of Chinese people can move freely. Government loosed economic control. First it started the relatively free market. Then it created huge number jobs demanding workers. In the beginning of this period, most people came to work in the eastern coastal areas like Zhejiang, where Christianity had a certain root before. When the individual migrants came to these new places, it was quite important for them to find their own community. It provided a chance for the churches, especial the home churches, to gather these individual migrant workers to form a new community. At the same time, in this period of fast economic growth, all workers changed their work and workplace much more frequently than ever before. So these Christians would bring their own

identity to form new home church communities when they changed their work and moved to different places.

Secondly, this open economy also brought culture exchange. Many more foreigners had the chance to work and live in the Mainland, bringing their own culture with them, than in the previous 40 years. At the same time, many missionaries, especially overseas Chinese missionaries and Korean missionaries, came to work in the Mainland. Although the Chinese government does not allow open foreign missionaries, many came to Mainland China with their own jobs or business. The independent home churches provided the best places for them to start their mission works. On the other hand, many Chinese also got the chance to travel, work and study abroad. This also allowed these Chinese to be involved with different cultures including Christianity. Like the domestic migrants, these overseas Chinese, who studied and worked in foreign countries, mainly in America and Western Europe, also needed to adapt to the different new culture. Many of them from these overseas Chinese communities became Christians.

Thirdly, the fast economic growth created the demand for spiritual growth, especially for the new rich class in the eastern coastal areas. These rich classes can satisfy their material needs, but for some people the chasing of material things, will not be the ultimate end. They need their spirit pursuits. Some of them turn to pursue their spiritual needs. Buddhism, Daoism, and Christianity all became optional choices for them.

Fourthly, Max Weber mentioned in his thesis “The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Christianity” that there is an intimate correlation between the ethics of Protestantism and the spirit of Capitalism, especially in Capitalism’s early stages. This is what is happening in China now. It only recently began to adopt Capitalism.



Protestants in China are growing rapidly, especially Wenzhou city in Zhejiang province, ‘Chinese Jerusalem’. It is also one of the most developed cities.

### **3.3.5 Missionaries and Their Evangelical Strategy**

The whole of China has only a few official theological colleges. Basically, the Government controls the study of religion, especially the study of Christianity. It therefore creates a huge demand for underground bible groups and colleges. Overseas Chinese and South Korean missionaries have become an influential force in giving help. In contrast to the early western missionaries, these overseas Chinese and Korean missionaries find it much easier to become involved with Chinese communities, because of the racial identity and language ability.

The way to evangelize the Chinese mainly focuses on the love of community from the love of Christ. Many new Chinese Christians may not be familiar with the Scriptures, but they keep in their mind that their brothers and sisters from the Christian community are full of love and hospitality, especially when many of them live far away from their families for their work and studies. For those new Christians who are under 35 years old, it may work even better, because most of them are the only child in their family because of the one-child policy since 1980. This focus on the love of community brings all these people comfort.

### **3.3.6 Fast Christian Growth Brings Conflict**

This fast growth of Christianity in the Mainland is unexpected, especially for the CCP. But it is also reasonable. Ironically, it is the CCP’s policy in politics, education, economics, and culture that together have largely contributed to this

miraculous growth of Christianity in the Mainland in such a short period, although they did not mean to do it. This fast growth of a foreign religion brings them fear, which leads them to respond by trying to control it by razing some churches, tearing down the symbols of Christian churches—the roof crosses, in the most Christianized province, Zhejiang.

## Chapter 4

### Suggestions about the Conflict

The historical and current conflicts between the Church and the State in China show clearly that the political power of the Chinese government, especially the CCP's political power, is much greater than any religious power. This brings many problems for modern China and the Chinese. Tibetan Buddhists and Uyгур Muslims are always portrait as the oppressed minority religious groups under the power of the CCP by Western media. Their homelands are places where severe religious conflicts continue to occur. Now as the number of Christians grows quickly throughout China, this relationship between the State and the Christian Church is changing rapidly. The previous conflicts were mainly between individual home churches and local governments after 1978. Now it is turning into a conflict between the whole province's Three-Self churches and the local Zhejiang Government. The number of Christians affected in this conflict pushes up the tension to a new level.

What are the best ways to reduce this potential tension between the State and the Church in Mainland China? It is a natural question to ask when the conflicts appear, but in reality, it is a huge question for the new China. As the analysis mentioned in Chapter 3, the two core reasons of this current conflict in Zhejiang are ideological and cultural. In order to address this question based on these two core reasons I have given before, this chapter will talk briefly about some suggestions regarding the conflict between the State and the Church.

## 4.1 Models of State-Church Relationship

The separation of Church and State is a complicated issue. It also arises in many other religious and secular countries. Across these countries, there are different levels of separation of Church and State. There are five basic models of State- Church relationship are mentioned on my teacher Hendrie van Maanen's presentation on Church- State models in Europe.

Firstly, theocracy. Religion is the basis for government. The State is under the guidance of the Church or spiritual leaders. Many Islamic countries like Iran or Saudi Arabia choose this model.

Secondly, the established State- Church model, that there is a close link between the Church and the State.

Thirdly, the pluralistic cooperation model. The State is neutral and has equal approach to religions.

Fourthly, the separation model. The State is neutral to religion and abstains from it.

Fifthly, it is the atheistic ideology model. Most communist countries adopt this model.

“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.”<sup>44</sup> The Church and the State have a balance between each other, because each of them has their own area. Many countries and regions from the West to the East follow this balanced model.

Considering China's situation, here will give two models— State-Church model in France and Taiwan. “Laïcité in France is the absence of religious involvement in government affairs, especially the prohibition of religious influence in the determination of state policies; it is the absence of government involvement in

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<sup>44</sup> Mark 12: 17 in the NIV Bible

religious affairs, especially the prohibition of government influence in the determination of religion.”<sup>45</sup> In this sense, government became secular and neutral. It will not take any position against whether a religion is a dominant religion or a minor religion. The separation of church and state has now become the common principle and moral foundation for many secular countries. It came out of the reflections on the relationship between the State and the Church. Different countries, especially in Western Europe, suffered a lot during the conflict between the State and the Church. After long periods of theory and practice, the belief is that freedom in religion reaches to common human values.<sup>46</sup> From different historical angles, the balanced model gives freedom to humans’ spiritual area, which liberates human thought and contributes to human innovation.<sup>47</sup> This is the trend of State- church relationship in the future. Although the Laïcité model is good for France, China and France have a different historical background and reality, but some people may argue whether China can copy the State- Church relation in France.

In the Chinese area, Taiwan is an example of the separation of church and state. It shares the same history and a similar culture to Mainland China. In its constitution, it mentions that people have freedom of religion. It also mentions that irrespective of gender, religion, race, class, or party, everyone is equal under the law. No religious organizations can be involved in political power. The State also cannot be involved in any religious education and activities.<sup>48</sup> Compared with the Mainland, Taiwan does have many fewer religious conflicts. However, Taiwan chose Western

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<sup>45</sup> René Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 66.

<sup>46</sup> 韩大元, 试论政教分离原则的宪法价值, 法学, 2005.

<sup>47</sup> 江登兴, 政教分离, <http://www.sginsight.com/xjp/index.php?id=8827>, accessed on 2016/2/19.

<sup>48</sup> 翁城都, 宗教自由與政教分離關係之研究, 中正大学法律学硕士研究论文, 2012.

democracy, which the CCP is very cautious about, it has no priority on any parties or religions. So now there are some intrinsic differences between the Taiwanese government and the CCP government.

## 4.2 Suggestions about Ideological Conflict

Religious freedom is in the Chinese constitution. The separation of church and state means that religious groups cannot be involved in the State's administration, judiciary, and education. But it does not mean that religious groups in the Mainland have absolute autonomy in their area.<sup>49</sup> The CCP government can guide all religious groups' development.

The CCP government takes Communism as its foundation. In particular, only atheist CCP members can lead in politics and core state companies in China. Communism is much more like a religion, which cooperates with the government. In this sense, the government takes a secular religion as its national religion. Although it does not forbid other religious religions, the ideological conflict appears between the atheist spirit of the Communist government and the theist spirit of the religious community. There is no trust between them. How could a pro-atheist government not have a bias against other religions?

Since the Chinese Communist theory is also an evolving philosophical theory, my suggestion is that the CCP government can lead and unite people in the whole country by accepting a secularist government model. It does not require any revolution or Western democracy, which the CCP is strongly against. It requires Chinese Communist theory to evolve again. The key factor here is its atheist requirement for CCP members. It should have no more problems about choosing a

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<sup>49</sup> 邢福增, *当代中国政教关系讨论*, 香港中文大学, 2009, 14.

religious person or an atheist for a CCP member in the future. The CCP government needs to face these issues in order to guide the whole country and unite all the different groups, not just the majority. Chinese Communist theory has the ability to evolve as a secular theory to reach its common wealth for all people. When it turns into a secular party, it can attract more people from different backgrounds to govern the whole country. At the same time, there is no bias in its nature against other religions.

### **4.3 Suggestion about Cultural Conflict**

China is a big country with lots of different cultures. These suffered a lot during different cultural revolutions. Both government and people can learn from these different historical events that honoring different cultures is honoring basic human rights and dignity. Although Confucianism was the dominant culture for the majority of the Han Chinese for a long period, some influential cultures like Buddhist culture, Islamic culture, Christian culture, and some minority group cultures, played important roles for their specific community. In this post-modernity time, reviving a specific culture like Confucianism by using government resources is harmful for both government and people in such a huge country with diverse cultures. Promoting a specific dominant culture and discriminating against other minor cultures will only bring more potential conflicts. The CCP government needs to be neutral on the cultural side for the benefit of all people.

For the churches, whether it is home churches or Three-Self Churches, they need to have more reflection on their own internal Christian culture, like the prosperity Gospel movement against the background of fast economic growth. At the

same time, they need to reflect on how to exist with other different cultures in this pluralistic period.

Being critical of their own culture and developing constructive dialogues with different religious and non-religious groups will be a good way to eliminate misunderstandings and reduce further potential cultural conflicts.

#### **4.4 Suggestions on CCP's Policy on the Fast Christian Growth**

The Christian community is now a major component of Mainland China. It is quite harmful to start a campaign to control and oppress this big religious group and its fast growth. As mentioned in chapter three, these campaigns or policies achieved the opposite effect and contributed a lot to the growth of religious fever. According to historical experience, religious groups usually enhance their religious identity during difficult times. They will then grow even faster once the control is relaxed. In Mainland China, if the government starts to operate its policy from Zhejiang of tearing down these legal Three-Self Churches' roof crosses all over the country, it will encourage more Christian believers to start their own home churches. They are not only outside government control, but also outside of any wider governance structures. At the same time, many religious believers will also lose their trust in the government. It just makes it more difficult for the government to build relationships with these Christian citizens.

Central and local government should not interfere too much in religious affair if these religious affairs are not harmful to others. Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. The role of the CCP government is to do a good job in secular affairs and respect its citizen's religious dignity to achieve their common goal. The CCP government needs to not just allow this religious freedom for



all citizens, but also encourage the different religious groups to join in the governing of the whole country. It will benefit its own governing in the Mainland and also benefit all Chinese citizens.

For the Christian communities, especially TSPM in Zhejiang, they need to confront what the local government is doing and speak out in support of the religious freedom. Considering the political reality in Mainland China, they need to push the local government to set an agenda for dealing with this religious conflict. Only they, as a united collective community, can negotiate with the local government and prevent them from tearing down roof- crosses and razing more churches.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Christianity came to China for a really long time. It met many challenges and conflicts during those different periods in the Chinese history. The most interesting part happened under the background of the dramatic historical change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The modern Western civilization broke old China and forced it to open the door. Different ideologies and cultures came to influence modern Chinese. The ideological conflict between Capitalism and Communism change Chinese society. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Capitalism played the influential role. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Communism took that position. Now it is a mix. Economy here adopts a lot from Capitalism, but politics still remains the Communism style. It is quite unique as a large country in this world.

These dramatic changes in politics and economy also influence Chinese in many different aspects of their life. One unexpected but interesting thing is that they are becoming curious about religions. To being a Christian becomes a fever in this traditional, but quite new communist country. This phenomenon happened suddenly with some reasons. Ironically, CCP's different policies on religion, education, economy, and culture push and speed up this religious fever. However, ideological and cultural conflict decreased, but never disappeared in Mainland China. This recent conflict in Zhejiang happened because of this ideological and cultural conflict.

The persecutions on the Three-Self Churches in Zhejiang will not help the government to control the religious fever. In the contrary, it will help those Christians reinforce their religious identity. Considering Chinese home church situation, the more government oppressed the Three-Self Churches, the rapider the home churches will grow. If the government continues its campaign, it not only breaks the trust of its people, but also harms the harmony of the whole society. Out of their expectation, probably Christianity in the future will grow even faster than now.

Christianity booming in Mainland China is a reality. The totalitarianism of the CCP government is also a reality in China. The conflict in Zhejiang Province still continues. The deep-set mutual fear between the government and the people works during this conflict. Ancient Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus mentioned that when human beings were in fear, they always appealed to religion. As a Chinese, I can feel Chinese people's fear. It is visible everywhere and at every moment in modern Chinese society. But it is also invisible in their spiritual status. This uncertain fear exists within the CCP government and among the Chinese Christians, too. I will end by enumerating the worries of the CCP government and of the Chinese Christians.

## **5.1 Concerns Regarding the CCP's Fear**

The CCP became the dominant political power in Mainland after it defeated the foreign colonial power and domestic enemy. From 1949 to now, the CCP never lost its fear, watching out for some potential people, organizations, and foreign powers. They fear that these potential and unknown people or organizations will challenge its authority. They react to this fear by controlling the free flow of information. In the beginning of this short period, it closed its country's door to stop the arrival of information. This brought huge harm. It was forced to reopen the door

after 1978. But this controlling of information never disappeared in the Mainland. Sensitive books, speeches, and topics are all controlled by their new leviathan system. This information censor influences every aspect of Chinese life. The CCP pays special attention to religious communities. Christianity, Tibetan Buddhism, and Uyghur Islam are all headaches. In contrast to other religions, Christianity has spread all over China now and has rapidly grown beyond their expectation and controlling. The fast growth of Christians is due to the flow of religious information, the foreign missionaries, the foreign culture, and some influential people. The CCP realizes this situation and reacts to this fear by using the old controlling methods.

In Zhejiang, the CCP government tries to eliminate the fear of Christianity by controlling the legal church numbers, tearing down the magnified red roof-crosses, and detaining the influential Christian lawyers and pastors. Several influential lawyers are still detained. The most influential chief pastor in Chongyi Church, who is also leader of TSPM in Zhejiang, was arrested at the beginning of 2016. One lawyer recently confessed their illegal behavior on a state TV program. The central government seems to hold a very strong belief to continue its campaign against the Christian heat.

Communism is the CCP's foundation. Atheist Marxism philosophy is the spirit of Chinese Communism. It is uncertain how long it will take to evolve their theory, especially in political area, in order to solve conflicts and bring real peace and benefits to its people.

## **5.2 Concerns Regarding the Chinese Christian's Fear**

Modern Chinese are full of different fears under the CCP's uncertain governing. They live with fear from both the political and economic side. They

experienced the Great Famine disaster, the Great Leap Forward, several decades of ideological conflicts and political movements including the Culture Revolution, then the greatest economic transformation in this short history. Everything seems to be so fast and uncertain. But it does not stop them pursuing a good life. Religious fever in China is one phenomenon that many Chinese seek in order to get rid of fear and achieve this inner peace by appealing to different religions. Chinese Christians, who choose to believe in Christ, are actually a group of people without political power in the government. These powerless people gather together to get rid of uncertainty and fear by collective support and love in those unstable home churches and the controlled Three-Self Churches. Many missionaries, who I talked with, mentioned that these Christians were very divided and immature. It is a fact that historical government policy and actions have pushed the huge Christian growth in those home churches and Three-Self Churches in a short period. Christianity will continue to grow fast in the Mainland. Many home church Christians especially, lead a Christian life by themselves without much guidance sometimes. It is uncertain how they will respond to some coming conflicts in the future. Considering the fact that many heretic groups have frequently occurred among those home churches, it is uncertain which way Chinese Christianity will go in the future.

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