The Catholic Church in China

1978 TO THE PRESENT

CINDY YIK-YI CHU

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Also by Cindy Yik-yi Chu

Chinese Communists and Hong Kong Capitalists: 1937–1997 (2010).

Meigui xiunü, "*The Maryknoll Sisters*" (Chinese, 2010).

Edited, *The Diaries of the Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1966* (2007).

Edited, *Foreign Communities in Hong Kong, 1840s–1950s* (2005).

The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1969: In Love with the Chinese (Hardcover 2004; Paperback 2007; Chinese edition 2007).

Edited with Ricardo K. S. Mak, *China Reconstructs* (2003).

Edited with Lam Kai-yin, *Yapian zhanzheng de zai renshi, "A Reappraisal of the Opium War"* (Chinese, 2003).

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Cindy Yik-yi Chu

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-1-349-34270-9

First published in 2012 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN® in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-34270-9 ISBN 978-1-137-07565-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137075659

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chu, Cindy Yik-yi.
The Catholic Church in China : 1978 to the present / Cindy Yik-yi Chu.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 978-0-230-34009-1
1. Catholic Church—China—History—20th century. I. Title.

BX1665.C555 2012
282'.5109045—dc23 2012013265

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Scribe Inc.

First edition: October 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In celebration of the Maryknoll Sisters' Centennial

(1912–2012)

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Preface

Maryknoll Sister Betty Ann Maheu once wrote, "We in the West, who like things neatly boxed in categories, are not comfortable with this kind of ambiguity."[1] An American nun who lived in Hong Kong for many years and often visited mainland China made this observation of the situation of the Chinese Catholic Church. It is applicable not only to Westerners and foreign visitors to China but also to a Chinese Catholic like me who lives in Hong Kong, knows Chinese, and speaks both Cantonese and Putonghua. The history of the contemporary Chinese Catholic Church is intriguing, complex, and difficult. Here I attempt to review and clarify this history from December 1978 onward.

The subject matter under study is complicated, constantly changing—if not to say confusing—and challenging. The Catholic Church in China concerns not only the Chinese and their authorities but also the Vatican and its position on Chinese matters. The history has been that of cross-cultural exchange, interactions, and conflicts. Recently China has become an active participant in world affairs; in contrast, the Chinese Catholic Church is not in union with the Universal Catholic Church. Indeed, China's case has been unconventional and has aroused attention, discussion, and speculation.

This book is the first outcome of a long-term research plan that will last for quite a few years. I am much indebted to the early comments of Professor Stephen Uhalley Jr., who was the supervisor of my PhD studies in Hawaii in the early 1990s. At the same time, I am very grateful to Sister Betty Ann Maheu for her insightful explanations, sharing of her experience, and valuable advice. I would like to thank Sister Rose Duchesne Debrecht, MM, for her feedback of my previous works. I also thank Professor Richard Madsen; Professor Jean-Paul Wiest; Mr. John Kamm; Mr. Dominic Cheung; Father Louis Ha; Father Patrick Taveirne, CICM; Sister Anne Reusch, MM; Precious Blood Sister Beatrice Leung; and other friends who are well acquainted with the mainland situation. With the funding of Hong Kong Baptist University, I was able to hire an assistant, Mr. Jacky Li, whose work is appreciated.

During the writing of this book, I discussed some of the problems with a respected colleague, Professor Martha Cheung, whose scholarship has set a model for me. I also benefited from the wonderful working

environment at the David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies (LEWI) in my university and questions from the director, Professor Li Si-ming, and the researchers there, who attended my seminar on the Chinese Catholic Church. Longtime friends in the History Department like Professors Lam Kai-yin and Wong Yin-lee offered their support to complete the book. There are many friends in and outside the university, as well as my family, who also deserve thanks. The Catholic Church in China is an engaging topic, which will take me some more years to further explore and understand. I always say, "History gives reasons for our existence. A historian lives in the present but is a missioner for the future."

A Note on the Names of People and Places

Pinyin is used for the names of people and places in mainland China, for example Jiang Zemin and Sheshan respectively. As for Chinese Catholics on the mainland, their Christian name appears before their Chinese name, for example Aloysius Jin Luxian—Jin being his family name and Luxian being the combination of the two Chinese characters that follow his family name. As for Chinese Catholics in Hong Kong and outside the mainland, their names are spelled in the way they prefer, for example John Tong Hon—whose family name is Tong—and Thomas Law Kwok-fai—Law being his family name and Kwok-fai indicating the two Chinese characters that follow his family name.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHINA

This is a history of the Catholic Church in China since the country opened its doors to the world in December 1978. From that point in time, Catholic churches in China were reopened and priests released from prisons. Almost all priests, members of religious orders, and lay Catholics who had been imprisoned and put to forced labor for the past two decades were rehabilitated.[1] Since then, the number of churchgoers has been rising, and there has been increasingly frequent exchange between Catholics in China and those abroad. Pope John Paul II prayed for the Chinese people in August 1979.

The late Jesuit scholar Edward J. Malatesta described Christianity in China as having been marginalized and considered peripheral and insignificant until 1968. Moreover, this history had been viewed mainly from a European perspective. In 1997, Father Malatesta stated that Christianity in China had become an increasingly mainstream study in Chinese history. Historians realized that Christian churches had not disappeared during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) as once thought but instead had continued underground, persisted, and afterward revived once China opened up to the outside world. When Father Malatesta pointed out this revisionist view, he was putting an emphasis on the revival of Christianity that had never become extinct in Communist China. Moreover, he stated that the growing importance of Christianity in China had propelled scholars to regard the developments since 1978 as part of a chronology in progress and to see them from the viewpoint of a historian.[2]

Historians specializing in Christianity in China may choose to write a history of the Catholic Church in China since 1978. As historian Jean-Paul Wiest remarked, "What a surprise then, when in the early 1980's, the West discovered that the Christian faith not only had survived [in China] but was growing."[3] Akira Iriye, professor emeritus of Harvard

University, has encouraged historians to venture into new areas, which are usually examined by political scientists and nonhistorians. While Iriye believes the works of political scientists and others are valuable, he urges historians to broaden their research dimensions. Iriye points out that historians would be able to trace the continuing chronology and provide a different perspective to these areas of study.[4] According to him, history is "the one perspective that seeks to look at the phenomenon whole," and historians' objective is "to help our readers unify the various ways of seeing . . . into one connected vision."[5] The present author has been inspired by Iriye's works. This book is a history of China's Catholic Church during slightly more than three decades to the present and on various levels: diplomatic, political, societal, and individual. It is the first book to attempt such a history.

This book looks at how Sino-Vatican relations developed over the course of more than thirty years. It also studies the Chinese Catholic Church, its organization and personnel, its relations with overseas churches, and the situation of Chinese Catholics. The book critically evaluates the Chinese Catholic Church on a number of different levels. First, it addresses the diplomatic level through an analysis of Sino-Vatican and Sino-foreign relations. Second, the governmental level is explored by examining the control over the Catholic Church by the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Third, the discussion of the societal level focuses on the supervision of local church activities, as well as religious and cultural exchanges between foreigners in China and Chinese abroad. Fourth, the individual level inquiry concerns the treatment of released clergy, the consecration of government-approved bishops, and the lives of Chinese Catholics.

The Beijing government believes that religion should assume "a stabilizing role," promoting harmony among the Chinese people.[6] The 1982 Constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief—meaning a person can express his or her religious belief but only in places designated for worship—and the right to organize religious activities in China. Nevertheless, it warns that religion must not have an adverse effect on the social order and that churches cannot be subject to any external authority. Even in the contemporary period, Beijing's leaders still uphold the historical perspective and the Communists' traditional view that the government must oversee religion.[7]

In China, religion serves the policies of a government whose leaders have been highly alert to the possibility of foreign intervention. Suspicion of Christian missioners has persisted since their first arrival. During the Second World War (1939–1945), the Japanese interned people from belligerent nations, including missioners. After its attack on Pearl Harbor

in December 1941, Japan was at war with the United States, and this seemed to immediately determine the fate of the Japanese in the minds of the Chinese. In the city of Chongqing, where Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-shek's) Nationalist government was located, the Chinese rejoiced after hearing the news that the Americans had entered the war. The implication was that Japan would definitely lose, and the only question was when it would happen. The Japanese then interned all American nationals including missioners, who had already been accused of spying and being involved in subversive activities.

After 1945, the missioners tried to resume services to the local Chinese people. In 1949, however, the Communist victory came as a shattering blow to Christianity. Like other fellow countrymen, foreign missioners faced charges of engaging in secret intelligence work. Foreign Catholic missioners came under close scrutiny and many were put under house arrest. Under such circumstances, many of them left voluntarily knowing what was coming and the rest were later expelled. Members of foreign missionary groups who were native Chinese citizens were not driven out, though they eventually landed in prison or labor camps. If these Chinese had taken on another citizenship, most of them would have been able to leave with the foreign missioners. Several foreign missionary congregations had founded religious communities whose members were Chinese. Before leaving, the foreign missionary bishop in charge dispensed these sisters of their vows and sent them home. A goodly number of them, however, were subsequently sentenced to imprisonment or forced labor. In 1951, Beijing expelled Vatican internuncio archbishop Antonio Riberi. Religious persecution began and the Beijing government took over all religious, including Catholic, institutions. By 1952, all Catholic missioners except Bishop James Edward Walsh of Maryknoll had left—many were recalled by their orders or congregations or left voluntarily before being expelled.

In 1951, the Communists established the Three-Self Movement for Chinese Protestants, which was headed by Protestant leader Wu Yaozong (also known as Y. T. Wu). The basic ideas underpinning the movement resulted from several discussions between Zhao Enlai and some Christian leaders under Wu Yaozong.[8] On an enormous scale across China, the movement upheld the three principles of "self-government," "self-support," and "self-propagation."[9] The Beijing government assumed control over the Protestants and rebutted criticisms from the Catholics.

In 1954, the State Council established the Bureau of Religious Affairs. The center of Catholic opposition to government interference was in Shanghai, where its Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei led the resistance. In 1955, the Shanghai authorities arrested Gong as well as many priests,

church leaders, and nuns. Around 1,500 Chinese converts were imprisoned. In *Church Militant*, Paul P. Mariani studies the opposition of Gong and the Catholics in Shanghai in the 1950s.[10] Those years of confrontation reflected the Communists' policy toward religion. The book *Blessings of the Divine Bounty of "September 8th"* also recounts this turning point in the history of the Chinese Catholic Church and reveals primary source materials from the Vatican and the Shanghai Diocese.[11] During the same time, the government's attacks against Bishop Dominic Deng Yiming, SJ, and the Catholics in Guangzhou were equally fierce.[12] Deng later wrote his own memoirs and provided valuable insights into the difficulties of the Shanghai Catholics.[13]

The Beijing leaders had their own policies toward the Catholics and the Protestants. In 1957, they established the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which was originally a concession on the part of the clergy in the effort to preserve the unity, hierarchy, and universality of the church. At that time, the clergy did not envision that the association would turn into a political organization to maintain constant surveillance on the church and its activities.[14] By 1958, the Three-Self Movement assumed "the function of an ecclesiastical authority" as Protestant denominations also disappeared from the country.[15]

The Communist mass movements repeated one after another: the three antis and the five antis (1951–1952),[16] agricultural collectivization (1953–1957), the Hundred Flowers Movement (1956–1957), the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957–1958), the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In December 1978, China embarked on the Four Modernizations under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, who was determined never to repeat the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution. Deng believed that China needed no more mass movements but instead required agricultural reform, industrialization, the introduction of advanced scientific and technological knowledge, and military reconstruction. With China opening up to the world, the existence of the Catholic Church once again raised the question of how to establish a dialogue between the Chinese leaders and the Vatican. Adding to the problems was the presence of the open church on the one hand and the underground church on the other. These are the simplified positions adopted by both sides: (1) the members of the open church have accepted the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and have supported the course of action taken by the Beijing government, whereas (2) the members of the underground church have refused to accept the association and have denied "the regulations concerning public religious practice imposed by the Chinese government on the Church."[17] The underground church has attracted the attention of foreigners and observers; some of these people

have written about the well-being of the underground Catholics. One of the most recent examples is the book *China's Underground Catholic Church "Realities."*[18]

In 1979, the State Council decided to reinstate the Bureau of Religious Affairs (which had been done away with in 1975). From 1979, Beijing reemphasized the Three-Self Movement, identifying as its main elements that Chinese Protestants should be patriotic, Chinese churches independent, and the churches free from foreign interference.[19] This rhetoric served government purposes more than it reflected the reality, as the Protestants had not been unpatriotic and churches were never independent of the authority "in terms of supervision or financial support."[20] At the same time, Beijing spoke about the Catholic Church, whose counterparts throughout the world looked up to the pope. Conflict has persisted throughout the history of the Catholic Church in China since 1979. On the one hand, Beijing has stressed that the Catholic Church should be independent (to be exact, independent of the religious/spiritual directives of the pope). On the other hand, the open church has never in reality been independent (of the Beijing government). The open church has always been under the control of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Catholic converts could still be found in China after its self-imposed isolation in the late 1970s. The perpetuation of the Christian faith depended solely on the Chinese Catholics themselves.

The Theme of This Book

The study of the history of the Chinese Catholic Church falls within the realm of cross-cultural studies. In his coedited volume *China and Christianity*, Stephen Uhalley describes the contributors as having engaged "in a longstanding and continuing drama" of remarkable dimensions.[21] In reality and across the history of Chinese Catholicism, it would be no exaggeration to say "this grand story of such an exceptional and historic intercultural encounter, featuring as it does such a provocative religious cutting edge, remains one of epic proportions."[22]

First, this book examines the perspectives of the two sides: the Beijing government and the Vatican. It traces the words and actions of Chinese leaders and tries to explain why they behaved and responded as they did. The Vatican regarded matters from its own point of view and was ignorant of the historical dimension of foreign relations in modern Chinese history and the modes of behavior of the Communist leaders. Second, it is necessary to recognize the cultural differences that have existed between the two parties and the lack of understanding of the causes and nature of Sino-Vatican conflicts. Historians, theologians, and journalists have

reported on the embarrassment involved, the difficulties faced, and the accusations made. There is still much room for researchers to explore and analyze the source of the problems. Third, there is the opportunity for reconsidering the history of Catholic missioners, notably Matteo Ricci and Adam Schall, in the early Ming and Qing periods. Why was this history one of the most successful examples of East-West exchange? Could this history throw light on the contemporary Chinese Catholic Church? The Macau Ricci Institute has done research on this history. Of course, the rites controversy during the early Qing rule ended the honeymoon period. Nevertheless, could Sino-Vatican relations have been more cordial than confrontational? Could a balance have been struck between affection and hostility as relations developed?

As Paul Rule writes in his article "Chinese-Centered Mission History," the first record of the Catholic Church in China was "participant history" mostly written by "early missionaries," with a small percentage being penned by Chinese Catholics.[23] Rule says that the "virtue" of such writings is that readers can understand the initial experience and emotions of the foreign pioneers themselves.[24] Gradually, scholars and missioners came to perceive Chinese Catholic history from a wider perspective. They saw the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches encountering the same kinds of problems and viewed Christianity in China from the points of view of different mission groups.[25] Historians then acknowledged the value of missionary records as primary source materials offering detailed information on the livelihood of the local people, geography, rituals, customs, and society. The diaries of the pioneering missioners thus became archival materials for later researchers of mission and even social history.

Ultimately, Rule places a high value on Paul A. Cohen's call for "a China-centered history" which concentrates on "the contribution of indigenous Chinese intellectual and social traditions" to history.[26] In *Discovering History in China*, Cohen describes his China-centered history as an approach that assesses "Chinese problems set in a Chinese context."[27] Subsequently in *China Unbound*, Cohen emphasizes that the main feature of this approach is "to reconstruct the Chinese past as the Chinese themselves experienced it."[28] This concept is what Rule talks about. According to Rule, the emphasis has traditionally been on Chinese popular culture, elite values, and ethics. To be precise, the main subject of the study has now become "the individual believer, the Chinese Christian."[29] This so-called China-centered history aims to redirect the angle from which events are viewed from through the eyes of foreigners to the lens of individual Chinese. In his recently published book *The Church in China*, Rule points out that China has been a challenging mission field throughout history and that the country still represents a test for Christian preachers. He

adds that it is significant that most attention in the study of world Christianity is focused on China.[30]

In *A New History of Christianity in China*, published in 2012, Daniel H. Bays echoes what Rule says. According to Bays, China witnessed the growth of Chinese Christians after a long history of foreign missionary endeavors, Sino-foreign contacts, and the consolidation of Christian faith on the mainland. There were stages in the historical development; it was a process in which "the Chinese Christians were first participants, then subordinate partners of the foreign missionaries, then finally the inheritors or sole 'owners' of the Chinese church."[31] Again Bays calls this "a cross-cultural process" bringing forth a complex situation of Christianity in present-day China.[32] Currently the situation is in "a state of flux" following the long history of cross-cultural exchanges in the past.[33]

This book points out that on the diplomatic and governmental levels, Beijing has maintained absolute control over the open church in terms of its relations with the Vatican and other foreign churches, the assignment of personnel, and its policy, stance, and public statements. However, on the societal and individual levels, Chinese Catholics have had more opportunities to connect with the outside world. The open church's priests and nuns have had opportunities to travel and study abroad. The experience they gained broadened the horizons of the clergy and religious followers in China. It was difficult, therefore, for Beijing to contain the changing values of the Chinese Catholics. Another issue concerns the presence of the underground church in localities over which the government has sought to exert tighter control. Due to this presence, the conservative and protected open church in China has faced the challenges posed by increasing dialogue and liberalization.

This book argues, first, that it is very difficult for the Vatican to establish diplomatic relations with China, as both sides embrace different concepts. While the Vatican insists that the Chinese Catholic Church should be in union with the Universal Church, Beijing has never accepted the idea of "double loyalty"—that is, Chinese Catholics being loyal to the pope and at the same time to their own country. Sino-Vatican relations were at their lowest point in the second half of 2011. Second, the Beijing government has closely scrutinized the open church's activities, but the underground church has continued to develop and expand. There were arrests of underground clergy and Catholics, but this only created fear and criticism instead of having consolidated the official control over the underground church. Beijing should not consider the underground church a threat to its rule. Third, the division between the open church and the underground church has become blurred. Some scholars have preferred to call them the registered church and the unregistered church.

Fourth, there have been prominent leaders from both the open church and the underground church. Nevertheless, it would be impossible for any leaders to make groundbreaking changes to the Chinese Catholic Church. In summary, this book recognizes the expansion of the Chinese Catholic Church, as well as the odds and difficulties the Catholics have faced. The present study makes a contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the post-Mao period.

Can the decisions of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which have continued to exert an impact on the Catholic Church worldwide, also throw light on how the Chinese Catholic Church is understood? As the most significant episode in the contemporary evolution of the Catholic Church, Vatican II changed how missioners viewed their roles in their own societies, in foreign fields, and in relations with other religions. The resolutions it made have yet to more fully affect the Catholic Church in China and abroad. As I emphasize in *The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1969*, Catholic missioners worldwide from the second half of the 1960s onward were no longer confined to their own institutions. Instead, they were given more freedom to focus on welfare work and activities regarded as most beneficial to the local people: "Evangelization/conversion was no longer seen as the primary objective of the missioners," but "they came to believe that their objective was to promote the well-being of individuals and to support their efforts to be better persons."[34] The underground church, which has looked up to the Vatican, has not acted as an institutional force in China. Rather, the underground church could be regarded as a bonded group of individuals with the same values and belief. The concern of these individuals has been to practice their religion in the way they wish. It is therefore doubtful that the underground church could have posed a threat to the Beijing leaders.

Vatican II has also initiated other aspects of change that might be relevant to Chinese society. The Vatican has encouraged the establishment of the local church and has invited Catholic converts and lay communities to participate more fully in church matters.[35] In addition, the Vatican has called for more understanding and improved communication with other religions and their leaders and converts and for greater interaction with society as a whole. Since Vatican II, the Vatican has opened up and acknowledged the fact that it has been more interactive with different parts of society. Slightly more than a decade after Vatican II, China also opened its doors to the outside world. How have the Vatican and the Beijing government sought to make themselves known to outsiders? What difficulties have the two authorities experienced in improving mutual understanding?[36]

The Diplomatic Level: Sino-Vatican Relations

China ended its isolation and established normal diplomatic relations with the United States in January 1979. Initially, the Beijing government aimed to attract foreign investment from the United States, Europe, and Japan. As China wanted to project a better image overseas, its supreme leader Deng Xiaoping visited the United States and made the headlines. The establishment of Sino-Vatican diplomatic relations, however, was a tremendously complicated matter. Even the United States only began formal diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1984.

In August 1979, Pope John Paul II responded to the new situation, as China seemed willing to reconcile with other foreign governments. In 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, there had been more than three million Chinese Catholics and around 100 bishops, 40 of whom were Chinese. The number of priests had been about 5,800, of whom 2,700 were Chinese. In citing these statistics, the pontiff expressed his wish to reestablish a connection with the Chinese converts and clergy.[37] As he said, the Chinese Catholic Church was "a living Church" in 1949 and had been in "perfect union with the Apostolic See."[38] Under the new circumstances that prevailed in 1979, the pope was confident that the Vatican would have "a meeting" with the Chinese Catholics in the future and that the Chinese could enjoy "full religious liberty."[39] This was his initial reaction to the prospect of change in China.

The optimism of the pope might have resulted from an earlier event in January 1979. That month, more than eight hundred Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, and Islamic representatives and Communist cadres held a conference in Shanghai.[40] On this occasion, the representatives condemned the Cultural Revolution and "all false charges against religions."[41] Beijing was eager to showcase abroad its "more favorable attitude toward its religious policy."[42] The government promised to reinstate the Bureau of Religious Affairs. Two months later, the bureau began functioning. In April 1979, six Catholic churches were reopened in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Wuhan, Taiyuan, and Guangzhou.

As Hong Kong bishop John Tong Hon commented, relations between religion and politics were a manifestation of the Communist United Front strategy.[43] The core of the united front practice was that of "seeking unity" while "preserving differences" to some extent among the people.[44] It was on the basis of this principle that Beijing viewed its religious policy (as well as its minority, intellectual, and cultural policies). According to Tong, the Bureau of Religious Affairs was the facilitator of Beijing's united front effort to supervise and coordinate as much support as possible for its Four Modernizations. The United Front Work Department

formulated the religious policy and, as in all aspects of its work, moved ahead to "mobilize all positive elements, unify all possible strengths, and change negative elements to positive ones."[45] The Communist United Front strategy had its historical origins in Mao Zedong, who considered it "a device to identify supporters of Communist revolution, to target resisters, and to win over the undecided."[46]

After the pope's open request to establish relations with the Chinese Catholic Church, the Vatican sent its first senior personality to China in late 1979. In December 1979, Michael Fu Tieshan became the first bishop consecrated after the Cultural Revolution. The principal consecrator and the two coconsecrators were bishops of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. In response, the Vatican only "expressed regret in its statement" and appeared to be accommodating in dealing with Chinese matters.[47] At the same time, China released a large number of priests from prisons and work camps. Since then, there had been many changes and plans for the Chinese Catholic Church. On the diplomatic level, Pope John Paul II restated the desire to establish relations with the Catholic Church in China. Religious delegations from China attended international conferences and asserted the country's respect for basic freedoms. Chinese Catholic congregations exchanged views with foreign representatives of Rome.

However, in view of the status of Sino-Vatican relations, it was difficult to keep their discourse easy and cordial. In 1980, Eric O. Hanson describes the situation as the Vatican's "China problem."[48] Kim-Kwong Chan discusses the early problems in *Towards a Contextual Ecclesiology*. Here, Chan points out that from 1979 to mid-1981, the Chinese Catholic Church retained some kind of distant but nonantagonistic attitude toward Rome.[49] On some occasions, relations could be tense, awkward, and frustrating. In 1982, the open church reacted furiously when the pope asked bishops of the world to pray for China, implying the assertion of Roman authority. The supreme power of the Vatican over the Catholic Church worldwide was simply unacceptable to Beijing. This kind of situation continued to present difficulties. Works have been written that tend to focus on the conflicts in Sino-Vatican relations since the establishment of the PRC. In *Sino-Vatican Relations: Problems in Conflicting Authority, 1976–1986*, Beatrice Leung traces the historical and existing problems that hindered the dialogue between Beijing and the Vatican.[50] In *The Chinese Catholic Church in Conflict: 1949–2001*, Leung and William T. Liu recognize the rapid growth of the open church under government supervision with the intention of creating a homegrown church and denying the possibility of the Vatican contributing from abroad.[51] In her more recent book *Changing Church and State Relations in Hong Kong,*

1950–2000, Leung reiterates the difficulties of church-state relations and the perpetuation of tension in Sino-Vatican relations throughout the second half of the twenty-first century.[52]

In June 2007, almost thirty years since the launch of the Four Modernizations, Pope Benedict XVI sent a much-anticipated letter to the Chinese Catholic Church. According to Hong Kong observer Anthony S. K. Lam, bishops of both the open church and the underground church on the Chinese mainland found the Vatican's move acceptable. On the open side, the church remained silent and made no response, but it considered the communication "very encouraging."[53] On the other side, the underground bishops were very enthusiastic after reading the letter and tried to hold meetings to explain the papal message to their fellow Catholics. Although the Chinese authorities did not want the underground church to overreact, the pope had made a sensible attempt. Sino-Vatican relations caught a growing level of awareness, and the problems have been discussed in recent books, one of which is Yan Kejia's *Catholic Church in China* released in 2004.[54] However, in 2011, Sino-Vatican relations took a turn for the worst.

The Governmental Level

Despite the fact that Sino-Vatican relations witnessed conflicts and arguments at the turn of the 1980s shortly after China had opened up to the world, the Beijing government allowed the continued expansion of the Chinese Catholic Church. With bishops, priests, and nuns being released from prisons, the government began returning property that had once belonged to the church. Although China rebuked the Vatican for assuming authority over the Catholic Church worldwide, the government reopened the Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai in 1982. In 1983, the government reopened the National Catholic Seminary in Beijing.[55]

On the diplomatic level, Beijing would not tolerate the perceived interference of the Vatican. On the governmental level, however, Beijing oversaw the revival of the open church and the work of its personnel. Somewhere between the diplomatic and governmental levels, there lay the paradoxes and ambiguities. As Jean Charbonnier explains in *Christians in China*, the "various religions of China benefited from the general policy of openness and from the government's attempts at unifying all the energies of the country in a program of modernization" after 1979, while at the same time, Beijing insisted on the appointment of bishops without the approval of the Vatican.[56] According to Charbonnier, Beijing upheld a "separatist line" that asserted the total independence of the Catholic Church in China. The open church consecrated its own Chinese bishops

without the consent of the Vatican. China also criticized Pope John Paul II for interfering in its internal matters, such as in the latter's promotion of Dominic Deng Yiming as archbishop of Guangzhou in 1981.[57]

Nevertheless, the Beijing government and the open church covertly played a game along the way. When the Beijing government wanted to ordain a new bishop, it gave time between the election and the ordination. This allowed (1) the newly elected bishop to find a way to get his curriculum vitae and other information to Rome and (2) Rome to examine the candidate in order to legitimize him before the ordination. Both Beijing and Rome pretended they did not know this was going on. Therefore, today there are only a few bishops not in union with the Universal Church. Every so often, as once in 2000 when Beijing was angry at the Vatican, it does not give enough time before the ordination. But since throughout most of the years there has always been a legitimized bishop on the altar for the consecration, the ordinations have been *valid but illicit* if the person was not first accepted by Rome. A few bishops were not legitimized because of some specific reasons—for example, if they had been forced to marry during the Cultural Revolution.

On the governmental level, Beijing facilitated the opening of churches, initially in the main cities, and restored the Bureau of Religious Affairs. The United Front Work Department played a dominant role, and the open church gradually established its own governance. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission were the official authorities controlling the activities of the open church. According to its constitution, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association supposedly consisted of the Chinese clergy and laity who loved their country as well as the church. These people were expected to follow the leadership of Beijing, "to observe government policies and decrees on religion, to play an active role in the country's socialist reconstruction, to increase relationships with international Catholic groups, to oppose imperialism, to safeguard world peace, and to assist the government in carrying out its policy on religious freedom."[58] The Beijing government was most concerned that the Catholics not challenge its hegemony; it was not interested in their religious belief. Fundamentally, the Chinese Catholic Church was *a political and administrative issue*.[59]

It was in 1980 that the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission came into being. In the beginning, the relations between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and these two newly created bodies were not very clear.[60] In *The Catholic Church in China*, published in 1987, Father Laszlo Ladany points out that it was very difficult to understand Beijing's policy toward

religion. Father Ladany was a Hungarian Jesuit who lived in China and Hong Kong from the 1940s to the 1980s. Well known for his knowledge of Chinese Communism and the Chinese Catholic Church, he focuses on the difficulties Christians had faced. He also emphasizes the wavering policies of Beijing toward Christianity.[61]

The paradoxes and ambiguities remained. In the 1980s, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference asserted increasing administrative control over the Catholic Church in China.[62] Scholars emphasize two aspects of the behavior of the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Church under its governance. According to Richard Madsen, the recent history of the Chinese Catholic Church witnessed "political tensions" along with "many of the constructive energies."[63] Lawrence C. Reardon describes the situation as follows: "Though the bishops continued to acknowledge the pope's spiritual authority, they ignored the Vatican's temporal authority by permitting CCP [Chinese Communist Party] authorities to appoint Catholic bishops."[64] Two examples are that Beijing alone appointed Michael Fu Tieshan as bishop in 1979 and the government refused entry to the pope-appointed archbishop Dominic Deng Yiming to Guangzhou in 1981.[65] This resulted from Beijing's refusal to have Chinese people—namely, Catholic converts—pledging loyalty to an external force, the Roman Catholic Church. James Myers even describes Beijing's perception of the Catholic Church as *Enemies without Guns*, the title of his book published in 1998.[66] Such was the negative side of China's attitude toward the Vatican, one aspect of the church's behavior.

However, there was another aspect of China's behavior. From 1980, China gladly accepted the visitation of Catholic cardinals from abroad. In addition, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association sent representatives to the United States, Belgium, and the Philippines. What happened in 1982 was indicative of the ambiguity of China's Catholic policy. As mentioned earlier, this was the year the open church expressed its dislike for the pope's call for prayer for China (implying the existence of problematic matters there). Nevertheless, it was also in 1982 that the Chinese Catholic Church started including prayers for the pope in the liturgy.[67]

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the number of Chinese Catholics rose to an impressive number of around ten million.[68] To date, the Chinese government has managed to open hundreds of churches and a large number of seminaries and restore religious congregations. The Chinese Catholic Church has expanded throughout the years despite China's troublesome relations with the Vatican.

THE SOCIETAL LEVEL

Societal exchange with the outside world increased after 1979. Christian groups from abroad visited China and had contact with Catholics on the mainland. Cardinals and bishops from other countries traveled to China. In 1985 and 1986, the Hong Kong bishop John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung made official tours to China. Around that time, the director of China's Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ren Wuzhi, visited Hong Kong. There has been mutual dialogue between clergy and officials in China and those outside the mainland. Both inside and outside China, academics and priests attended conferences to discuss religious issues. Nevertheless, there were also police attacks on local churches and arrests of Catholic converts in China, though more Protestants have been arrested from house churches than Catholics from the underground church.

The contemporary period often seems to reflect the early history of Chinese Catholicism. In Daniel H. Bays's edited volume *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Robert E. Entenmann and Alan Richard Sweeten look into Catholic activities and the social interaction among converts and nonconverts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively.[69] Both Entenmann and Sweeten see Chinese Catholics as "an integrated part of the local community"[70]—a phenomenon that continued from the eighteenth century until 1900. "By the mid-eighteenth century, Catholicism had become a popular religion with roots in Chinese society," Entenmann points out, and "Chinese Catholics usually lived in peace with their non-Christian neighbors."[71] Sweeten adds, "Missionaries and lay leaders found converts to Catholicism among Chinese of [*sic*] all walks of life" as the twentieth century approached.[72] Historically, as a foreign religion, Catholicism was not seen as a divisive force, even in the traditional Confucian society. In dynastic times, Chinese people found Catholicism acceptable within their localities. Could this provide hope and encouragement for contemporary Chinese society?

While many researchers stress the differences between the open church and the underground church, Keith Baltrop states that there is no longer "a rigid division" of the Chinese Catholic Church.[73] Baltrop considers this perception a kind of Western stereotype. Instead, he argues that the open church and the underground church have occasionally interrelated.[74] As China progresses, society is becoming more hybridized than it seems. Both the open church and the underground church have been "patriotic in the best sense" and have experienced "considerable tension with state regulation."[75] He believes the main question is how the open church and the underground church relate to each other, and this question concerns the appointment of bishops on both sides. The division

in the Chinese Catholic Church has been due to politics; there has not been diversion in terms of doctrine or belief. Jean-Paul Wiest discusses the changing relations between the open church and the underground church, as his article in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (2003) calls attention to "Catholics in China: The Bumpy Road Toward Reconciliation."[76] Many opinions have been voiced. Another article published in the *National Catholic Reporter* in 2005 aptly addresses the situation between the open church and the underground church. Here, it expresses hope for the future—"Line between the Underground and Official Church Blurs in China; After Years of Hostility, Reconciliation is in the Air."[77] Richard Madsen talks about "a blurring of divisions" in the Chinese Catholic Church in his article in *God and Caesar in China*, edited by Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin.[78]

Madsen and Lizhu Fan give an example of how members of the open church and the underground church respond differently while participating in the same event. The incident was a pilgrimage to Sheshan, a hill on the outskirts of Shanghai. On the top of the hill was a shrine to Mary where many Chinese Catholics have gone throughout the years to pray. Madsen and Fan describe one such pilgrimage in May 2004. The church on top of Sheshan was overcrowded, and many Catholics attended the Mass said by a priest of the open church. At the same time, some faithful prayed on their own to one side without joining the others. These people were assumed to be members of the underground church who did not recognize the legitimacy of those priests of the open church.[79] The Shanghai Public Security Bureau kept a close eye on the entire event and asserted that members of the underground church accounted for fewer than 20 percent of the pilgrims.

Some scholars highlight differences between the open church and the underground church, while others point out that the confusing relations are "the direct result of a decades-long political struggle" between the Beijing government and the Vatican.[80] As Charbonnier remarks, "In 2000 the bishop of Shanghai could congratulate himself on having opened eighty-five churches in his diocese, but his prayer for unity had not yet been answered."[81] Charbonnier describes the underground church as consisting of Catholics who gather closely together and pledge strong loyalty to the pope.[82] In 2004, it was estimated that 38 percent of the bishops, 36 percent of the priests, 33 percent of the nuns, and 37 percent of the seminarians in China belonged to the underground church.[83] In *China's Catholics*, published in 1998, Richard Madsen also asserts that the difference between the open church and the underground church has been "more political than theological."[84] The open church received the support of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, while the underground church did not.

The matters of concern to the bureau could be the building of churches or the organization of activities. Although this difference in treatment has led to disagreement, Madsen believes that conflict is neither certain nor unavoidable.[85]

Issues involving the open church and the underground church have been topics investigated in prior studies. Some researchers even study the situation in small localities, as demonstrated in Eriberto P. Lozada's book *God Aboveground: Catholic Church, Postsocialist State, and Transnational Processes in a Chinese Village*, published in 2001.[86] Paul Mooney told the story of Catholicism in rural communities for the *National Catholic Reporter* in 2006.[87]

The Individual Level

On the individual level, there was the continued release of imprisoned priests while the Chinese government had its own bishops ordained. In 1980, Bishop Dominic Deng Yiming of Guangzhou came out of prison and went to Hong Kong for an operation.[88] In 1986, several Jesuits from Macau "made a historic visit" to Shangchuan Island, which was well known as the place where St. Francis Xavier died while trying to get to the Chinese mainland in the sixteenth century. At that time, it was reported that Guangdong officials and the Bureau of Religious Affairs intended to develop Shangchuan "as a place of pilgrimage and a tourist resort."[89] In 1988, Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei had his civil rights restored and left for the United States shortly afterward. An increasing number of students studied for the priesthood throughout the country.

Nevertheless, individual bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders were still being arrested. In November 1981, more than twenty priests and lay Catholics in Shanghai were arrested. The priests, including several Jesuits, were sentenced to between 4 and 15 years in prison and, needless to say, were deprived of their civil rights for a number of years.[90] As Jesuit Thomas J. Morrissey describes, "Although there were signs that the 'thaw' of the last couple of years was coming to an end, the arrests took many by surprise."[91] The Chinese government was afraid of the Vatican interfering in its internal matters. This was typical of the Beijing mentality. In 1991, an open church bishop, Joseph Zong Huaide, accused the underground church of provoking the people to fight against the Beijing government.[92]

Hong Kong Chinese theologian Chi-Fan Ng reflects on the challenges posed to individual Catholics on the Chinese mainland.[93] Ng stresses that the issue of adaptation has also existed throughout the history of evangelization.[94] According to Ng, individual theologians have confronted the question of how the Chinese can understand Christian teachings and,

more important, incorporate the Gospel into the local culture. There are two aspects of the teachings: that of the Universal Church and that of local adoption. Conflicts are not always unavoidable. Ng therefore urges that Chinese theologians take more time to develop Christian teachings among their own people.

Individual Chinese should be able to develop their Christian values, explain them in simple language, and acquire an understanding of them in harmony with that of the Universal Church. Many Chinese people have "a sense of worry and anxiety" of which local theologians should be aware.[95] The optimistic view has been that morality should be "an obvious meeting space where Christianity and Chinese culture meet and respond" to questions and concerns.[96] In their cultural traditions, the Chinese people value harmony and forgiveness but also worry about their life after death. To individual Chinese, the Christian promise of eternal life has not been sufficiently understood, while the notion of sin has aroused a feeling of nervousness.[97] It has therefore been necessary for theologians and converts to make use of "Chinese philosophies and cultural sources" and to reflect on the "Catholic tradition on sin and salvation" in order to localize Christian teachings within a Chinese environment and among individual Chinese themselves.[98]

In *Chinese and Chinese American Ancestor Veneration in the Catholic Church, 635 A.D. to the Present*, published in 2010, Beverly J. Butcher reiterates the centuries-long dilemma that missioners and Chinese Catholics have faced. On the cultural level, there have been lengthy debates on how to seek a common ground for Christianity and the long history of China's cultural heritage and beliefs.[99] On top of the cultural adjustment is the political atmosphere in which Chinese Catholics have lived. In *The Victimized*, published in 2007, Mary Qian examines how Sino-Vatican relations influence the government's policy toward the Catholic Church. In the extreme, hostility on the diplomatic front can lead to persecution of individual converts.[100]

The Chapters of This Book

This chapter is the introduction, elaborating the subject of this book, its objectives, the main arguments, and existing scholarly thought. It stresses the significance of cross-cultural studies to how the history of Chinese Catholicism is written. Moreover, it discusses the situation of the Catholic Church in 1979, when China ended its self-imposed isolation and opened up to the world. This chapter highlights the four levels of study: diplomatic, governmental, societal, and individual. Following is a brief description of the other chapters of the book.

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the history of the Catholic Church in the 1980s. Chapter 2 studies Chinese Catholicism on the diplomatic and governmental levels. It examines Sino-Vatican relations and Chinese diplomatic history in the decade after 1979. Moreover, it outlines the work of the Catholic Church, which was subject to the authority of the Beijing government. In March 1979, Beijing rehabilitated the United Front Work Department and the Bureau of Religious Affairs. Five months later, China's religious delegation participated in the World Conference on Religion and Peace in the United States.

Chapter 3 then examines the influence of the Catholic Church on the societal and individual levels. It traces the initial exchange between Chinese Catholics and external visitors. In 1979, the first Chinese Christian delegation from Hong Kong visited China and began the earliest of its many contacts with converts on the mainland. Chapter 3 also elaborates on the conditions of the released priests and bishops as well as on the early development of the Catholic Church in major cities in China. It also discusses the odds faced by different individuals. In June 1981, the Bureau of Religious Affairs removed Dominic Deng Yiming, SJ, as bishop of Guangzhou just one year after he had been released from prison. While the first seminary to be reopened, Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai, was reopened in 1982, that year also witnessed the arrest of Catholic priests in the same city.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss events in the 1990s. Chapter 4 studies Sino-Vatican relations and the government's policy toward the Catholic Church after the June 4 Incident of 1989. It examines the impact of the incident on China's foreign relations and the government's tightening of control over the church. Sino-Vatican relations deteriorated after late 1989 when Beijing refused to allow the pope's airplane to fly over China's airspace on the way to Korea. Simultaneously, Beijing elected and consecrated more of its approved bishops in the open church without the approval of the Vatican. In 1991, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Jiang Zemin warned against "hostile foreign forces" in his meeting with religious leaders. In the late 1990s, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association celebrated its fortieth anniversary. In 1998, the State Council renamed the Bureau of Religious Affairs the State Administration for Religious Affairs.

Chapter 5 goes on to analyze this decade on the societal and individual levels. It evaluates the difficulties of communication between Catholics on the mainland and those abroad. It also examines the image of the Chinese Catholic Church in foreign eyes, the effect this image had on Beijing, and how it adversely affected the activities of the church. It highlights the imprisonment of certain individuals and outlines subsequent

developments. Quite a number of priests were arrested from 1989 onward while the government consecrated its approved bishops. Those imprisoned included not only Catholics but also Protestants. In 1992, young priests were obliged to participate in study seminars on Marxism, Socialism, and the official religious policy in Beijing.

Chapters 6 and 7 follow a chronological order and study events in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Chapter 6 highlights the prospects of Sino-Vatican relations and their implications for the development of the Chinese Catholic Church. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI sent a letter to the Chinese Catholics on Pentecost Sunday expressing "his love for and his closeness to" them.[101] Unfortunately, the diplomatic situation then changed for reasons beyond comprehension. The appointment of open church bishops without Vatican approval worsened Sino-Vatican relations, which reached their lowest point in the second half of 2011. In July 2011, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference "expressed their regret" for the Vatican's excommunication of a priest "who received episcopal ordination without papal mandate."[102] Tensions had been mounting in Sino-Vatican relations, and some foreign priests working in Hong Kong were denied entry into the mainland.

Chapter 7 traces progress in the activities of the underground church and social exchange between Catholics on the mainland and those outside. An increasing number of Catholics outside the Chinese mainland have been visiting the Chinese Catholic Church. At the same time, foreign missioners—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—have gone to China to engage in secular work such as teaching English to the Chinese people. Observers have continued to assess the prospects of Sino-Vatican relations. While China has become an established power in international affairs, its relations with the Vatican remain problematic.

Chapter 8 concludes the book by recapitulating the main arguments and forecasting the chances of development in Sino-Vatican relations. Moreover, it describes the latest events to have impacted the Catholic Church in China. It also attempts to project the development of the Chinese Catholic Church. In September 2011, the BBC reported that the numbers of Christians were exploding in China, and the official estimations were far too conservative. As the report describes, "The new converts can be found from peasants in the remote rural villages to the sophisticated young middle class in the booming cities."[103]

This book would be suitable as a major reference for courses on religion, contemporary China, China's foreign and diplomatic relations (specifically Sino-Vatican relations), the Catholic Church, Chinese politics, and Chinese society, and it is likely to be useful for college students, graduates,

professors, and researchers. The book represents a comprehensive study of the topic for Sinologists, theologians, historians, and political scientists looking for information on contemporary Chinese development, the Chinese Catholic Church, and the development of Chinese society. In summary, the present study hopes to present to readers who are concerned about developments of contemporary China and the Chinese Catholic Church some of the major events, issues, and personalities for further thought and reflection.

Chapter 2

Doors Opened in the 1980s

Introduction

The Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), held in December 1978, was a landmark in contemporary Chinese history. It refuted mass movements and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), instead asserting the determination to move ahead with Deng Xiaoping's Open Policy and the country's Four Modernizations. To do so, China had to open up to the outside world, ease its restrictions on society, and showcase its potential for change and investment. The atmosphere in society became more relaxed. The granting of more freedoms, such as freedom of religious belief, was a means of demonstrating the negation of the Cultural Revolution and consolidating the national modernization effort. At the same time, there was a need to assess Mao Zedong: the man, his ideology, and his policies. Without a demarcation from the past, China would not be able to move forward. Indeed, the burden of the past lingered on, regardless of whether it was welcome. The desire to change was already far from easy to put into practice, and there was great difficulty in moving ahead.

The CCP conducted a reassessment of its own history to rehabilitate those accused of all sorts of offenses during the Cultural Revolution and remove the remnants of the past leadership under the Gang of Four. Many old cadres were reinstated, and there was an emphasis on the new framework for political rule, the collective responsibility of the Party, and the grooming of young talent. There was an urgent call for restructuring of the Party, the redefinition of regulations, and preparations for another generation of national leaders. At the beginning of the modernization phase, foreign values and ideologies came into China along with finance and trade from outside investors. Nevertheless, the enduring impact of

foreign culture was not immediately felt. The willingness to accept foreign patrons brought forth other issues as well.

After it opened its doors to the world, the 1980s were challenging years for China. At the end of the decade in 1989, the June 4 Incident was to generate tremendous crises for China, both domestically and internationally. It goes without saying that a state of tension existed among the Catholics in China. There was a rising tide of conflict between the open church under the supervision of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the underground church, which looked to the Vatican for guidance. When Beijing asked all religions to agree with the government's handling of the June 4 Incident, this damaged the credibility of the religious institutions.[1]

This chapter studies the Catholic Church of the 1980s on both diplomatic and governmental levels. First, it analyzes Sino-Vatican relations under the umbrella of Chinese foreign relations. Second, it addresses the open church that was subject to the leadership of the Beijing government. Third, it studies the departments charged with monitoring church personnel, activities, and external relations.

In March 1979, Beijing resurrected the United Front Work Department and the Bureau of Religious Affairs. Foreigners were allowed to visit churches in most areas of China. Beijing was willing to accept both exchange with the outside and the new climate of external relations that emerged. Even a critical observer admitted that "the first year or so of the new religious tolerance after 1980 was quite remarkable."[2] Nevertheless, Sino-Vatican relations remained difficult.

The reason for the ongoing chill in the Beijing-Vatican dialogue was that the lack of diplomatic relations meant there were no channels for constructive exchange. Therefore, as an observer commented, when any controversy broke out, it could easily degenerate into an argument or even a crisis.[3] Sino-Vatican relations became highly sensitive at times. Beijing's consecration of bishops without Vatican approval became the chief thorn of contention between the two sides.[4] The open church, which was managed under the official hierarchy, stressed patriotism among Catholics. The government-approved priests belonged to the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which was a *political* organization supervising their activities.

Once the churches reopened in 1979, an enormous number of Chinese Catholics resumed attending Mass, which was celebrated every day, and received religious instruction. The 1979 consecration of Beijing bishop Michael Fu Tieshan, however, did not receive Vatican approval. Bishop Fu did not ask for Vatican approval—he knew he was not eligible since he had been married. The Shanghai bishop, Aloysius Jin Luxian,

was in another situation. Bishop Jin could not at the time be legitimized since there was already a bishop in Shanghai and there cannot be two Ordinaries in one diocese. Jin had done a lot to help the church in its rebirth. When the elderly Roman-consecrated bishop died, Jin applied to Rome and became a legitimate bishop of the Roman Catholic Church.

A seminary opened in Beijing in 1983, and the priests who trained there were ordained by the open church bishops. The Beijing government opposed the Vatican's appointment of bishops. For example, Beijing became terribly upset over the naming of Dominic Deng Yiming, SJ, as Guangzhou's archbishop while he was overseas in 1981.[5] It came as no surprise that the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association considered the appointment outrageous. Deng had been the first bishop loyal to the Vatican who was allowed to leave China. He was released from prison in June 1980 and reached Hong Kong five months later.[6] As Deng recounted after his appointment, Beijing attacked the Vatican for interfering in China's domestic affairs and condemned him as a traitor.[7] The pope regularly appointed Catholic bishops elsewhere in the world, but China's government perceived such appointments as "a political question" and a form of foreign interference in the country's internal affairs.[8]

As China opened up, the divide developed between the open church and the underground church. The open church was subject to strict government control. The Beijing government "internalized" the open church under the government hierarchy. The open church elected and consecrated bishops itself, but at the same time, it was supportive of the Protestant principles of "self-government," "self-support," and "self-propagation."[9] These principles formed the core ethos of the Three-Self Movement of Chinese Protestants, which the Communists established in 1951 and was then headed by Protestant leader Wu Yaozong. At that time, the Movement meant that "the church must stand upon its own feet and cut off all relationship with the 'imperialistic' West."[10] Under government control, the Movement, its leaders, and members were subject to coercion whenever deemed necessary.[11] From 1979 onward, Beijing once again stressed the Three-Self Movement, urging that Chinese Protestants should be patriotic, Chinese churches independent, and churches free from foreign control. The emphasis on Chinese churches being self-reliant without pledging their loyalty to an external authority not only was significant for the Protestants but also had implications for the Catholics. While the bishops and priests of the open church obeyed the Beijing government, they did so because in conscience they felt it was better to compromise with the authorities in order to provide pastoral services to Catholics who would have no church services otherwise. The duty of the open church clergy was to exercise the pastoral function of the church.

Unlike the open church, the underground church was not recognized by the Beijing government or local authorities. Nevertheless, the underground church managed its own social existence and had a following within society. It refused to obey any authority other than the Vatican.[12] The underground church remained unregistered because its members refused to submit to government orders that violated their conscience. In addition, the underground church adherents considered it more important to witness the prophetic function of the church, which for them meant that they could have nothing to do with an atheistic government. Members of the underground church had their own bishops, priests, and nuns. While they organized their own activities, they could operate in two opposing ways: either in the same direction and with the same rhythm as the state-authorized open church or in opposition to it.[13]

SINO-VATICAN RELATIONS

The 1980s witnessed a huge change in China and its foreign and cultural relations. This was no surprise, considering the priorities of the Four Modernizations. Recent Chinese history is thought-provoking to historians, and this continues to be the case for the country's contemporary developments. One assertion applicable to both China's past and China's present is that "to even the score with the West, China *must* be seen as a vigorous and dynamic society, alive with change of every sort."[14] In 1984, Paul A. Cohen wrote that Communist China, having suffered from the mass movements of the past, was resolute in the belief that it should open up and transform itself.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Pope John Paul II emphasized the idea that Chinese Catholics could be "truly Christian and authentically Chinese" to seek an opening for cordial relations with the Beijing government.[15] The pontiff assured the Beijing leadership that Chinese Catholics were well aware of the need to modernize China and would make a contribution to the cause. His message contained no negative words, phrases, or criticism. Commentators interpreted the pope's message as an attempt to respond to the denunciations that Catholicism was "a foreign and divisive religion, unsuited to China" because of its association "with worldly powers wanting to dominate China."[16] In January 1980, Vatican Radio began broadcasting Mass in Chinese to Catholics in China.

The stance of the Vatican had not changed since Catholic missioners were expelled from and imprisoned in China in the early 1950s. The Vatican did not perceive "fidelity to Catholicism" as a problem. Nor did it question whether Chinese Catholics could stay loyal to both the Roman Catholic Church and their mother country. Nevertheless, this issue of

"double loyalty" was totally unacceptable to the Beijing leadership. From the perspective of the Beijing government, the Chinese people could be loyal to only one authority, and that authority should be the Communist regime, not the Vatican. Moreover, such loyalty among the Chinese people could not be "shared" or "divided up" by more than one party. The stance of the Beijing government had not changed either in this regard. However, the Vatican continued to perceive the Chinese Catholic Church from its own point of view. A Jesuit explained the understanding of the Vatican in 1980 thus: "This was wholly a Chinese church—Chinese in government (administration), Chinese in preaching (evangelization), Chinese in support (financing)—but faithfully loyal to the Vatican."[17] While the word "catholic" means "for all," "faithful loyalty and obedience to the Pope" was the basic teaching of the Catholic Church, without which it could not be "catholic" in the true sense of the word.[18]

In January 1982, the pope sent a letter to the bishops of the world to ask them to pray for the church in China. The letter reflected his continued wish that the Chinese Catholic Church be part of the Universal Church. He therefore said that China was a special and regular concern to him.[19] Pope John Paul II explained his constant anxiety about the church in China: "This anxiety springs from the very nature of the catholicity of the Church, which is one and universal, multiple in the variety of peoples which compose it and at the same time identical in the foundation of the faith and in the bond of the communion."[20] The emphasis was on the "one and universal" church, though multiplicity within the whole was always recognized. The pope also acknowledged the "difficult and prolonged trials" Chinese Catholics had faced in the past three decades.[21] The tone was one of caring and not one of criticism.

Unification with the Universal Church was the fundamental message the pope delivered. While addressing the greater religious freedom allowed in China at the time, the pope reiterated that in exercising this freedom, Chinese Catholics should uphold their faith without obstruction and be able to unite with fellow Catholics worldwide.[22] Two months later in March 1982, the pontiff once again expressed his admiration for the Chinese and their effort for progress.[23] And once again, the Universal Church was of utmost significance. As he said, it must "be assured to the Church in China the indispensable conditions to enjoy also visible union with the Church of Jesus Christ"—that is, the church must be "one, holy, catholic and apostolic."[24]

In March 1982, Sino-Vatican relations suffered from an official rebuke and the emergence of conflict. The open church, supported by the Beijing government, confronted Pope John Paul II over his worldwide call to pray for Catholics being persecuted in China.[25] A few open church leaders,

mouthing the Party line, accused the pope of spreading "vicious slander based on false testimonies."[26] The rebuke from top government-approved bishop Yang Gaojian came in the form of a statement from the China News Agency. Bishop Yang claimed to represent the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. Instead of fostering constructive dialogue, the pope's message had generated much antagonism from the Chinese side. The Vatican needed to find a way to repair the damage done to its relations with China. It needed to find a suitable occasion to pursue this purpose; an occasion on which to emphasize the Catholic missions to China of many centuries ago.

In October 1982, the Chinese Catholic Church celebrated the fourth centennial of the arrival of Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci in China. Taking advantage of this worldwide celebration, the pope stressed that Ricci had been a bridge between Chinese culture and Catholic teachings. As he said, Ricci's "scientific knowledge in the fields of mathematics, physics and astronomy" was "a precious instrument for his cultural exchanges with the Chinese civilization."[27] The time was right to illuminate the long history of cultural exchange between China and Europe. The pope noted that "Father Ricci succeeded in acquiring, through determined, humble and respectful commitment, knowledge of the classical Chinese culture . . . to make him a true 'bridge' between the European and Chinese civilizations."[28] Here, the focus was not only on the bridging of Eastern and Western cultures but also on the humility of the Catholic missioner, his respect for Chinese culture, and his eagerness to communicate with the Chinese people.

Pope John Paul II believed that the Chinese people also acknowledged the contribution Ricci had made to their own history. Most significant of all, Ricci had been able to preach the Good News in a Chinese setting. The pope said that Ricci had worked with Chinese scholars to develop "Chinese terminology for Catholic theology and liturgy, thus creating the conditions for making Christ known," and introduce the "Gospel message and the Church in the context of the Chinese culture."[29] Cross-cultural exchange had a long history in China, and the Catholic missioners had contributed to the process of establishing foreign cultural relations.

In late 1983, Pope John Paul II wrote to Communist leader Deng Xiaoping in an attempt to open a dialogue with the Beijing government. The former felt he had a tremendous responsibility to reach out to Catholics in China. Here, the pope was responding to the centuries-old question of where one's loyalty lay. While Chinese Catholics had "a deep loyalty and love" for their country, the pope believed they also felt a sense of unity with "the Catholic communities of all the other countries."[30] He

stressed that the bond between them—the Catholic faith—was essential to the recognition of unity, and that such faith would not interfere with their patriotism for their country.

More than half a decade had passed since China proclaimed the opening of its doors to the outside world. In the mid-1980s, China started to send a large number of delegations to Europe to participate in "party-to-party exchanges" supervised by the CCP's International Department. On top of these were interactions "under academic and parliamentary exchange schemes."[31] Sino-Vatican relations again came under some strain, however. In April 1986, the auxiliary bishop of Shanghai, Aloysius Jin Luxian, delivered an address to a Catholic audience in West Germany in which he raised certain issues that posed an obstacle to dialogue with the Vatican. According to *Tripod*, the bilingual journal published by Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Study Centre, this was the first time "a member of the Chinese hierarchy" had talked about such sensitive matters in a formal setting outside China.[32] Bishop Jin pinpointed the significance of the "local Church" and the dynamics of interactions between many "local Churches." He said, "The local Church is a concept of some elasticity and flexibility."[33] From the Chinese perspective, he considered a diocese, a regional church, a national church, and a continental church the equivalent of a "local Church."[34]

Bishop Jin believed that the interplay of many local churches made Christianity "richer" and "more beautiful" and enriched its qualities of "vitality" and "multiplicity."[35] In addition, he argued that the Universal Church was an "abstraction," as no such church literally existed anywhere.[36] Rather, he thought the Universal Church could find its existence in each and every local church. This was a direct negation of the Universal Church—the Roman Catholic Church under the leadership of the pope. While the Catholic Church was a foreign church with teachings brought by missioners for hundreds of years, Bishop Jin hinted that the Vatican should let the local people develop it in their own way. He advised that the members of the Universal Church should adopt the following strategy: "After the founding of a local Church, they should retire into the background"; more important, he suggested they should "not [be] holding onto leadership positions for hundreds of years."[37] Such was his perception of the role the Vatican should play.

One year later, in 1987, Bishop Jin expressed his views on how Chinese Catholics should act. Having been jailed and then released in the 1970s, Bishop Jin said he had had more contact with foreign visitors and had observed the changes in the Catholic Church and the world.[38] He said that Chinese Catholics were "only a minority of 0.3%" who "must take part in the life and destiny" of their country.[39] According to him,

the Chinese Catholic Church should be patriotic and uphold the "independence and autonomy" of China.[40] The implication was that Chinese Catholics should regard their national interest as the top priority and should emphasize that their primary loyalty was to their country.

In January 1988, the former Shanghai bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei had his civil rights restored. He made his first statement to the outside world on the tenth of the month after almost thirty years of imprisonment. Gong still proclaimed his loyalty to the Vatican.[41] According to the media, Gong did not associate himself with the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, which presided over the open church but had no connection with the Vatican. From the outsider's perspective, Gong symbolized the resistance of the hundreds of priests being persecuted in China. In 1955, the authorities had arrested Gong and charged him with high treason and counterrevolutionary acts. More specifically, he had been accused of opposing land reform and the sending of Catholics to fight the Korean War (1950–1953). He might have been released from prison many years earlier if he had agreed to renounce the Vatican. Catholic sources in Hong Kong believed that Gong's release on parole in 1985 and his subsequent release from parole and his restoration of rights in 1988 were calculated means of resolving the impasse in relations between Beijing and the Vatican. Nevertheless, the same sources claimed that more than fifty priests and Chinese Catholics continued to be imprisoned in China.

Beijing was aware of China's image abroad. The imprisonment of Gong for almost thirty years was "a standing reminder of the realities of religion in China."[42] This had to be taken into consideration in evaluating the country's self-proclaimed policy of freedom of religious belief. According to *The New York Times*, Western diplomats believed that the Beijing government might have thought the continued imprisonment of Gong would harm the international perception of China.[43] At the same time, the Chinese leaders had begun to appreciate the diplomatic influence of the Vatican. Beijing had therefore offered other ways to lessen the tension in relations. For example, in early 1985, Beijing extended an invitation to visit China to Mother Teresa, who had won the Nobel Peace Prize and been recognized worldwide for her work in Calcutta, India. In the same year, Hong Kong bishop John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung was invited to meet with leaders of the open church. As Bishop Wu recounted, the objectives of his visit were to facilitate better links with the Catholic Church on the mainland and to enhance mutual understanding. He met with leaders of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association in Beijing and Shanghai but was not able to see Bishop Gong even after having made repeated requests in Shanghai.[44] Jaime Cardinal Sin of Manila was also

invited to the mainland in late 1987. These were gestures China made to reach out to outsiders.

As *The Washington Post* noted, the Vatican's insistence on its right to appoint bishops posed the main obstacle to the progressive improvement of Sino-Vatican relations.[45] This was the case despite the fact that Beijing had toned down its call for the Vatican to sever ties with Taiwan. Another move made by Beijing was the release of another priest from prison in November 1987. This time it was Bishop Joseph Fan Xueyan, who had been appointed by the Vatican in 1951 shortly before the Beijing government "ordered the Chinese Catholic church to break with the Vatican in the name of anti-imperialism."[46] Beijing's attitude toward the Vatican was characterized as having "alternated between relaxation and severity,"[47] and "consistently vacillated."[48] Although it insisted on following its own path, Beijing was sensitive to the views of the Vatican on the ordination of bishops. In 1988, the Chinese leadership seemed to be inclining toward a more lenient position. One gesture made was when Bishop Jin of the open church in Shanghai chose to include a prayer for the pope in Mass.[49] Having pledged his loyalty to the authorities, it is unthinkable that Jin's move had not gained the prior consent of Beijing's leaders, and it is possible that he acted upon instructions from the senior leadership.

In the late 1980s, Chinese and foreign clergy exchanged views on international events. Representatives of the open church became involved in the activities of overseas religious organizations. At the same time, Beijing allowed foreign clergy, including many priests, bishops, and a few cardinals, to make visits to China.[50] Cardinals could not make regular visits to China, as they fell under the diplomatic category. The few cardinals that visited China were always subject to special diplomatic protocol. The situation of the Catholic Church in China was "anything but clear and straightforward."[51] There was always the question of how the Vatican could find a common basis to engage in dialogue, if possible, with the Beijing government.[52] The Vatican still maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan, a situation China regarded as an infringement of its sovereignty.[53]

The June 4 Incident in 1989 and the rapid pace of developments in East Europe that same year had profound effects on China. There was a great deal of caution within the Beijing government on how to report on domestic events. The fear of subversion, which had long been an inherent part of the history of Communist rule, was obvious.[54] Not only did China have a problematic relationship with the Vatican, but it also faced difficulties in its relations with the rest of the world. By the end of the 1980s, the situation within China did not allow room for Vatican affairs to be considered. Political scientist David Shambaugh points to Central

Directive Number 21 of 1990, which warned that China's communications with foreign countries had met with enormous complications.[55]

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHURCH

There were about three million Catholics in China in 1949.[56] The emergent Communist government moved fast to control all aspects of people's lives, including their religion. The Catholic Church was soon subject to the authority of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which was established in 1957 after the Beijing government launched the Three-Self Movement.[57] The association and the Catholic Church clearly acted as a united entity under the Beijing government hierarchy and consecrated more than twenty bishops from 1957 to 1980. After China opened up in 1978, foreign visitors recognized the presence of both the open church under the governance of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the underground church that preferred autonomy to official leadership. From the perspective of the Beijing leadership, the open church could not operate under the aegis of the Universal Church and had to retain its self-governing status.[58]

As Jean Charbonnier commented, the Beijing government had "always frowned upon uncontrolled religious groups" and labeled them as subversive.[59] Accordingly, the Chinese leadership emphasized the importance of state supervision in religious matters. The granting of some degree of freedom of religious belief was part of the united front policy aimed at soliciting support for the Four Modernizations. As noted in the *Red Flag*, "The use of violence in propagating atheism is only ineffective and may be very harmful: it widens the gap between believers and non believers when the Party's basic task should be to unite all the people to strive jointly for the construction of a modern, powerful socialist country."[60] To move ahead with economic reforms, Beijing needed to grant the Chinese people more freedom.

The United Front Work Department worked closely with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. The former was very concerned with ensuring that the CCP and the Beijing government could bring together the greatest number of people possible for the modernization effort. In the 1980s, the policy of the United Front Work Department was to unite all forces in society—members of "all other democratic parties," "non-party democratic people," ethnic minorities, "patriotic religious people," and so on—to solicit their collaboration in the country's reforms.[61] This comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with the history of the CCP. In fact, a united front had been one of "the three great weapons" of the CCP, the other two being the Party's leadership and the People's Liberation

Army. The united front phenomenon demonstrated its tremendous value during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949). The basic principles of a united front are to consolidate core supporters, secure the trust of neutrals, make as many "friends" as possible, and eventually isolate "enemies."

During the 1980s, the CCP talked about the "new era's patriotic united front." The concept of the "patriotic united front" very quickly appeared in the newly adopted constitution. Communist leader Deng Xiaoping emphasized the wide ambit of the "patriotic united front," including not only Socialist laborers but also patriots embracing Socialism and other non-Socialist patriots upholding the policy of national unification.[62] The core tenet of the united front policy was that of "patriotism."[63] This particular strategy targeted people who had previous experience in Western countries. Moreover, it was a strategy that allowed "the patriotic united front to broaden its contact and appeal for help from the overseas Chinese and intellectuals in the task of modernization."[64] The Beijing government was eager to show its determination to unite as many people as possible "on the bases of equality, solidarity, mutual assistance and fraternity."[65]

The third synod of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association came to an end in Beijing in May 1980. This event was used as the platform for announcing the government's official policy toward the Catholic Church, which was to "continue to adhere to the policy of independent administration of the church and oppose any foreign interference or control of churches in China."[66] There was a great deal of distrust of ties being established with the Vatican, as the government suspected that doing so would make possible the "use of the name of religion to create rumors" to "sow dissension among the people and create and carry out splittist and illegal activities."[67] The synod was also the forum for the selection of government-approved bishop Joseph Zong Huaide from Shandong as chairman of the association. After the third synod, about two hundred Catholic delegates, not all of whom belonged to the association, attended a three-day meeting. These delegates helped set up two other organizations shortly afterward.[68]

In June 1980, Beijing established the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. The Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference dealt with doctrinal problems, whereas the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission handled pastoral issues. Thus both organizations handled the internal matters of the open church.[69] How far did they progress in the years that followed? Charbonnier points out that by the middle of the 1980s the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference had "not taken any meaningful initiative yet."[70] Moreover, it was "isolated from the other bishops conferences in

Asia."[71] The other organization, the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission, was rather active and exerted its influence on pastoral matters. These included the publications of the New Testament, prayer books, catechism instructions, and hymnals.[72] Working closely with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Commission published its official periodical, *Zhongguo tianzhujiao* (Catholic Church in China).

In the context of the Chinese state, the CCP and the government were of supreme status.[73] Within the government, the State Council had command over the Bureau of Religious Affairs, while the Central Committee of the CCP controlled the United Front Work Department. The Bureau of Religious Affairs and the United Front Work Department jointly supervised the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which in turn oversaw the open church, the clergy, and the laity. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was the link between the state and the church. The open church was therefore accountable to both the Bureau of Religious Affairs and the United Front Work Department.

The CCP's policy toward religion could be summarized by a document issued by its Central Committee in March 1982. This document is titled "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question During Our Country's Socialist Period."[74] The document gave outsiders a glimpse of the authorities' interpretation of freedom of religious belief. It read as follows: (1) "the main purpose of the policy of religious freedom is to unite believers and non-believers behind the task of reconstructing the nation," (2) "special care must be taken to prevent foreign religious organizations from infiltrating China," though (3) "friendly relations with religious organizations abroad based on the principle of equality and mutual non-interference should be developed."[75]

There had been differences between the Vatican and the open church, which found it difficult to adhere to the practices and recognize the position of the former.[76] First, the Chinese people were progressively becoming better educated, but the open church remained "a church of the past."[77] The open church had difficulty following the changes brought forth by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Thus it was hard for it to keep pace with the reforms taking place elsewhere in the world, as the open church had to remain aloof from the Roman Catholic Church. Second, the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association controlled all ceremonies and significant events without recognizing the need to receive the pope's blessing. For example, the teachings of the pope as the pontiff of the Catholic Church were removed from the new edition of the catechism instructions.[78] In addition to representing "a church of the past," the open church was deliberately showcased as "a church of the Communist authority." It was reported that Chinese Catholics filled the

church at a Latin Mass to celebrate the historic reopening of the Beitang church in December 1985.[79] The huge turnout reflected the anticipation of the long-awaited opening of this church, a landmark in Beijing. The Beijing city government spent one million yuan on the renovations and sped up the work schedule to ensure they were completed on time. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association took charge of the historic site and worked closely with government officials and open church leaders on both the national and local levels to manage religious affairs.[80] Third, the open church supported the country's one child policy and insisted on birth control. The Vatican, naturally, had a different stance on birth control. Fourth, the open church joined the Beijing government in denouncing the Vatican's diplomatic ties with Taiwan.[81]

Nevertheless, the 1980s witnessed a degree of freedom of religious belief that was unprecedented in the history of the PRC. In the middle of 1980, two journalists caught the first glimpse of the open church in China. They vividly describe the scene as follows: "Clutching a rosary to her bosom, a wizened woman with tiny bound feet hobbled into" Beijing's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.[82] The title of their article was "Christianity Reborn in China."[83] Although the Catholic Church was reborn, its "freedom" had definite limits. By July 1980, the number of government-appointed bishops was 33. By early 1982, the China News Agency announced that more than two hundred churches had been renovated and were open to the public. The Agency claimed that about a dozen bishops had been consecrated in the previous year alone without the need to seek the Vatican's approval.[84]

The Catholic clergy existed openly across the country by the middle of the 1980s. Of course, their appearance was made possible by their being part of the open church under government supervision. Around five hundred churches were reopened in the cities.[85] Priests also served their congregations in chapels and in specific places designated for worship in the villages. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association worked together with the Bureau of Religious Affairs to provide localities with government grants. In other words, adherence to government directions assured the churches of financial support.

By the end of the decade, there was a functioning Catholic Church in China where Mass was celebrated daily.[86] Nevertheless, Beijing made it clear that the Bureau of Religious Affairs oversaw every aspect of religious activities and that the government was responsible for administering the work of the clergy. There was an understanding that "no religious organization or believer should do missionary work outside places of worship," nor should any religious organization or believer disseminate news and information or distribute religious publications without prior approval

from the government department responsible for the locality.[87] The principle of governance adopted was that religious organizations should be patriotic and always ready to accept the leadership of the Party and the authorities.[88]

Observers and researchers held different views on the progress made in China's reform program by the end of the decade. Optimists and pessimists occupied two extremes, while academics asked whether there could be a "middle ground."[89] Of application to our study here is that while China regenerated and reestablished its governance structure, there was criticism of the extent to which government departments had control over the open church and the close scrutiny of the underground church. The CCP carried out recognizable political reforms throughout the 1980s. Nevertheless, the question was where these political reforms would lead the country. In addition, what was the nature of the relations developed between state and society through the government reforms of the 1980s? Did the reforms achieve their aims? And from whose perspective could these reforms be appreciated?

After a three-decade absence, the Catholic Church had established an official status for itself in China. The open church was under political supervision. No matter how much the underground church wanted to encourage some kind of father-son bonding in its relations with the Vatican, the future did not offer any hope. At one end of the spectrum, observers believed that China should "improve public governance and be more responsive to societal demands."[90] At the other end of the spectrum, there were suggestions to "find some kind of coherent and persuasive vision" to remedy the official ideology of the Communist leaders.[91] In addition, there were various views on paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, whose stance on religious matters was controversial. While some foreign observers hinted he would reach some form of accommodation with the Vatican, others aptly pointed out that he could not allow "any alternative focus of loyalty" to the Beijing government and the CCP.[92] Would a "middle ground" therefore be possible? The Chinese leaders seemed to swing easily from one extreme to the other. Conciliation or compromise was not particularly easy. As a journalist commented on Deng Xiaoping's rule, "Although he has instituted sweeping relaxation in many spheres, he has been quick to crack down on any challenge to the party's [CCP's] power."[93]

Although China changed and opened up to outsiders over the course of the 1980s, the process of cultural evolution did not catch up with the modernization of the economy, the expansion of trade, and the rapid development of science. The Beijing leadership was still highly suspicious of foreign influence. To move forward, the Chinese people needed more

freedom, including freedom of religion. Nevertheless, Beijing was concerned with ensuring that such a change would not lead to "spiritual pollution," which was often under government attack in the 1980s.[94]

Conclusion

By the end of the decade, Sino-Vatican relations were in the doldrums. Pope John Paul II remarked in October 1989,

> I also make mention of *our brothers and sisters in Christ living in Mainland China.* Their geographical proximity, as well as bonds of faith and culture, brings them very near to many of those assembled here. Deep within my own heart, there is always present an ardent desire to meet these brothers and sisters in order to express my cordial affection and concern for them and to assure them of how highly they are esteemed by the other local churches. I am deeply moved when I think of the heroic signs of fidelity to Christ and His Church, which many of them have shown in these past years. Through the intercession of Mary, help of Christians, may Christ be their consolation in every trial and in all life's daily challenges. May the Lord also inspire within them a firm commitment to the delicate task of fostering reconciliation within the ecclesial community, in communion of faith with the successor of Peter, who is the visible principle and foundation of that unity. May he encourage and sustain Christian believers there, as they seek to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of the common good and the generous service of their fellow citizens, working for the progress of their noble nation.[95]

As China's relations with the outside world came to a dead end, at least for a time, there was not much the Vatican could do. Sino-Vatican relations had been broken off in 1958, and the Taiwan issue and the self-consecration problem were still hanging in the air. The situation changed from one of hope in 1980 to one of darkness in 1989. Throughout the decade, Sino-Vatican relations were afflicted by many longstanding problems and difficulties. To be certain, there were exchanges of clergy and personnel that reflected the improvement seen in cultural relations and the eagerness of the Chinese clergy, nuns, and laity to learn from the outside world. Nevertheless, official relations between China and the Vatican were consistently burdened by suspicion, rebuke, and criticism.

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission were the institutions that were visibly in charge of the open church in China. The desire to negate foreign interference in domestic affairs had been a strong and perpetual thread linking the course of

Chinese history. It was impossible to entertain the faintest thought of the presence of Vatican influence. First, the independence of the Chinese Catholic Church from the authority of the Vatican was a "must" for the Beijing leadership. Second, Chinese Catholics were expected to demonstrate their absolute patriotism. Loyalty to the Vatican appeared to counteract the authority of the state as represented by both the government and the CCP. The ideas of "dual identity" and "double loyalty" were totally abhorrent to the Beijing government. These were problems that continued to trouble the authorities at the national level, exert an impact on the clergy at the top level, and affect Chinese Catholics at the various local levels.

Exchanges with Rome were possible, but submission to the Vatican was out of the question. The difficulty was the official hierarchy of the Catholic Church in China. Although outsiders wished to see an amalgamated faith, they knew they were engaging in wishful thinking rather than visualizing a possible future. Hong Kong bishop John Tong Hon said the pope emphasized that there was "no contradiction between being a good Catholic and a good citizen" and that "Chinese Catholics [were] to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the common good, working for the continual progress" of China.[96] This was the message from the Vatican; nevertheless, Chinese history had not shown that such thinking was possible among the state leadership. There was a deadlock in Sino-Vatican relations. Would society be able to change, transform, and progress by itself? Only time would tell.

CHAPTER 3

MODERNIZATION IN THE 1980S

INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces the development of the Catholic Church and society in China in the 1980s. It was the first decade since China opened to the outside world in 1978 and subsequently established normal diplomatic relations with countries such as the United States in 1979. At that time, the Beijing government had shown that it would give some degree of freedom to religious groups. A number of Catholic priests and bishops were released from prison, though they were subject to government scrutiny. Catholic churches subsequently reopened and increased in number. Nevertheless, Beijing appointed the bishops of the open church and refused to consider Rome's approval.

Pope John Paul II expressed his wish to reestablish relations with the Chinese Catholic Church.[1] There had been a rise in the number of church followers and exchanges between Catholics in China and those abroad. Chapter 2 looks at Sino-Vatican relations and the control exerted by the Beijing government over the Catholic Church in the 1980s. This chapter studies the Chinese Catholic Church itself, its relations with overseas churches, and the circumstances of Chinese Catholics during this period. It critically reviews the Chinese Catholic Church in the provincial and local settings and outlines the concerns of individual Catholics.

The examination of the Chinese Catholic Church presented in this chapter is conducted on two levels: (1) the societal level—that is, the supervision of local church groups and religious and cultural exchanges between foreigners in China and Chinese abroad—and (2) the individual level, such as the treatment of released clergy and the opinions of government-approved bishops. The 1980s were a decade in which the Chinese Catholic Church underwent many changes and was the subject of many plans. Beijing initially facilitated the opening of churches

in the main cities, after which societal exchanges with the outside world increased.

On the societal level, bishops from outside China came to visit. The bishop of Hong Kong, John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung, went on official tours of China in 1985 and 1986.[2] In early 1986, the director of China's Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ren Wuzhi, visited Hong Kong.[3] There were also dialogues between the clergy and officials in China and those located abroad. Both in China and abroad, academics and churchmen attended conferences to discuss religious issues. Nevertheless, there were also police attacks on local churches and arrests of underground Catholics.

On the individual level, there was the continued release of imprisoned priests while China ordained its own bishops. Although an increasing number of students studied for the priesthood throughout the country, such progress was undermined by the arrests of individual bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders. Beijing was afraid of interference by an external force—the Vatican—in its internal matters. This was the typical Beijing mentality. Even in April 1991, after China had gone through more than a decade of modernization and external exchange, a government-approved bishop, Joseph Zong Huaide, accused the underground church of fighting against the Beijing government.[4]

On the societal and individual levels, Chinese Catholics had more opportunities to connect with the outside world. Priests and nuns of the open church were given opportunities to travel and study overseas. This experience broadened the horizons of the clergy and religious adherents in China. At the same time, however, there was the presence of the underground church in localities over which the authorities wanted to exert tighter control. The Chinese Catholic Church, which was watched over by the Beijing government, therefore faced the challenges of increasing dialogue and liberalization in society. This chapter traces the initial exchanges between Chinese Catholics of the open church and external visitors. It also elaborates on the circumstances of released priests and bishops and the early development of church activities in major cities in China.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CHINESE SOCIETY

In October 1979, the *People's Daily* made known that the Chinese people would enjoy freedom of religious belief, allowing them to not only choose their own religion but conduct religious services openly as well.[5] In 1979, China's Criminal Code "legislated that government officials who deprived citizens of the right to practise their faith would be liable to prosecution and imprisonment."[6] In the same year, the functions of the Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association resumed.

On the provincial level, the two organizations reopened churches and allowed for religious practice. In 1980, the establishment of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference was aimed at handling "matters of Christian doctrine," and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission was created to deal with "pastoral concerns" in society.[7] Article 36 of the 1982 Constitution asserted freedom of religious belief for the people.

Catholicism was among the five religions (the others being Protestantism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam) to assume official status in society, meaning they were different from folk religions and were deemed to be elevated creeds with their own organizations, scriptures, rituals, and teachings. As with the four other religions, the Chinese Communists believed that Catholicism would "function within Chinese society as contributing moral education for citizens" to instill knowledge of proper "ethical behavior" in society.[8] In this way, religion could promote positive social norms and stability on the local level. In China, religion played an important part "in the social and cultural fields, a role of reconciliation between peoples" of various ethnicities.[9]

The Chinese culture had long emphasized the importance of filial piety. Respect for the authorities, duty toward one's family, and persistence in one's faith were long-established ethics among the Chinese. With regard to their religion, Chinese Catholics maintained a profound sense of traditional piety as reflected in their love for Mary.[10] For example, Catholics continued the practice of climbing up the mountain outside Shanghai to pray to Mary on Sheshan Hill. Shanghai had played an important part in the history of Chinese Catholicism. Like believers of other religions, Catholics had their own views on morality and relations with the outside world.[11] As Jerome Heyndrickx observes, Chinese Catholics were very devoted to their faith:

> Traveling throughout China and meeting various Catholic communities is like being in a caravan that time and time again arrives at another dynamic oasis of living faith. Large crowds gather for Mass on weekdays as well as on Sundays. In some churches on important feast days, worshippers number over a thousand, with many people coming from great distances. Some travel a full day, arriving the night before so as not to miss a moment of the Eucharistic Celebration . . .
>
> In Tianjin hundreds of Catholics attend daily Mass. And should you visit during the Month of May the pilgrimage site of Our Lady Help of Christians on She Shan Hill just outside Shanghai, you would join with hundreds of Catholics coming from all corners of China as they pray the rosary and sing hymns to Our Lady.[12]

Heyndrickx was impressed to find there were prayers for the pope in the new Chinese prayer books. He had met with many Chinese Catholics who told him that they would pray for the Holy Father and that in doing so they sincerely considered themselves united with the Universal Church.[13]

The 1980s saw the beginning of religious studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.[14] Christianity was among the religions treated as priority topics for research. The cumulative research effort led to a National Conference on Religion in Beijing in December 1985. The "Marxist scholars of religion" were supportive of the government's argument that religion should serve as a stabilizing force in society. This message was sent out in different ways. First, a leading Protestant scholar spoke at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and reiterated that religion was a part of the culture promoting "internal cohesion" and "bringing about the Four Modernizations."[15] His speech led to "a standing ovation" as he strictly followed the government stance and stated that "indiscriminate opposition to religious values" should be discouraged and (interestingly) would only force people to "follow the socialist road half-heartedly."[16] Where his logic lay was not significant; the argument that Chinese people could embody both their religious faith and Socialist thinking was crucial. It should be remembered that he was speaking on behalf of the government. Second, the members of the CPPCC endorsed his speech, further consolidating the government's policy that religion should serve as a stabilizing force for society. Third, the overseas edition of the *People's Daily* published the speech and ensured overseas observers were aware of the policy carried out so far.[17]

To publicize the government policy of religious freedom, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association published its periodical *Zhongguo tianzhujiao* (Catholic Church in China). The primary motive for this publication was to emphasize the need to indigenize the Chinese Catholic Church.[18] The importance of indigenization was spelled out as follows: "This means making the church independent, autonomous, and self-administrating, putting its resources to use in socialist construction, and creating a Chinese Catholic theology which harmonizes with the Chinese people and their culture."[19] That is to say, Catholicism should assume its own characteristics in China, helping facilitate a united community of believers who would contribute all they could to the country's modernization. In October 1981, some Chinese Catholic and Protestant representatives attended an international conference abroad. They carried the same message at this "historic international ecumenical conference" held in Montreal, Canada, titled "God's Call to a New Beginning."[20] Several years later, Chinese Catholic representatives from Beijing and Mongolia visited Europe,

undertaking a tour of the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Their trip included mutual exchanges between Chinese Catholic leaders and curious parties abroad. It is undoubtedly the case that academic research, official publications, and overseas delegations served government purposes, if not to say propaganda objectives. Otherwise, no such communications would have been possible in the first place.

With China opening up to the outside world and embarking on its Four Modernizations, religion could serve as a stabilizing force for the country. In 1982, the Central Committee of the CCP issued Document No. 19 to place religion in what it considered its proper role in Chinese society.[21] In the 1980s, the Chinese experienced a relaxation of control to a certain extent and began to understand that ideology would not exert as much impact as it had previously. Mass movements were refuted. The Beijing leadership realized that loosening control over the people would help the modernization effort. At the same time, Chinese society was adapting to the political changes that had occurred. It was observed that religious leaders who had once been persecuted had been released and were providing service to believers and attracting larger numbers of followers.[22]

The development of religion gathered momentum in Chinese society. Document No. 19 was an attempt to regulate religious activities among Chinese people while simultaneously asserting that Beijing allowed freedom of religious belief. It was hoped that Chinese society could enjoy some degree of freedom within an accepted mode of regulation. How could religion serve as a stabilizing force for society? As Beatrice Leung pointed out, permission to engage in religious practice would first improve China's image in the international arena.[23] Second, a Chinese society in which different religious faiths were practiced would attract financial support from overseas. Third, extensive freedom of faith could encourage professionals and intellectuals to be more supportive of the government's modernization effort. Thus the practice of religion in Chinese society could have a positive impact on national goals and targets.

In 1983, the Chinese Catholic Church was a minority community dwarfed by China's huge population. According to government data, Catholics constituted only 0.3 percent of the entire country's populace.[24] As a minority, Chinese Catholics could exert an impact only if they could fulfill the expectations held for them by contributing to China's modernization effort. The open church was willing to follow the guidance of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, as its clergy and laity needed to accommodate the position of the Beijing government. It took a while for mutually accommodating relations to take shape and to make way for the doctrinal freedom of Chinese Catholics.

Father Laszlo Ladany, SJ, seems to provide another clue about the relationship between the Beijing government and Catholicism in his book *The Communist Party of China and Marxism 1921–1985*, published in 1988: "China is the first Marxist-ruled country in which the validity of some basic Marxist tenets has been *openly challenged*. When Deng Xiaoping proclaimed in 1978 that 'Practice is the Sole Norm of Truth,' he seemed to be on solid Marxist ground. Ever since Marx, practice—action and revolutionary action—has counted for more than mere theories. Yet what Deng meant was rather—as his policies in the ensuing years have shown—*'Be practical and forget empty theorising.'*"[25] Father Ladany points to the emphasis on practice rather than theory in China. Though China was essentially a Communist country, Deng should be seen as a pragmatic Communist. In the 1980s, outsiders were wondering what was actually happening in Communist China. Father Ladany reminds readers that (1) China remained Communist, but (2) the country had been more proactive than it would have been had it merely relied on empty propaganda. As he points out, Deng said the words of Marxism could not be taken literally and that Marxism-Leninism could not solve *all* the problems of China.[26] Father Ladany then asks the following questions: "If the old way is to be abandoned, what should be taught? The school of Deng has loudly rejected the old Stalin-Mao brand of Marxism; but it has nothing positive to put in its place. Everybody is fully conscious that the young are not interested in any form of 'ism.' They cannot be harnessed any longer to the old discipline. What is to come next?"[27] In the new era of modernization, China had to find ways to change while keeping society intact and the social order in place. The need for spiritual support for the population was obvious. Religion was a force. Catholicism could be useful so long as the Chinese Catholic Church was under the control of the Beijing government. In the 1980s, China was in the flux of reform and simultaneously asserted the significance of stability amid the import of new thinking, practices, and values. If outsiders were puzzled, one can imagine how difficult the Chinese people found it to deal with their current situation.

Nevertheless, the Catholic Church in the early 1980s was struggling hard to stand on its own feet. At the beginning there were only about fifty bishops and some one thousand priests, and their average age was around seventy.[28] The clergy had the urgent tasks of training new priests and working on the formation of nuns and catechists for local pastoral work. Many Chinese dioceses had no priests to serve the laity. Seminaries were therefore opened in Beijing, Wuchang, Shenyang, Chengdu, and Shijiazhuang.[29] Several years later, the Chinese Catholic Church claimed that more than six hundred men of younger age were ready to be ordained.

During this period, novitiate houses for nuns were also opened in Beijing, Jilin, Hankou, Shanghai, Xuzhou, and Guangzhou. It was reported that an estimated 140 novices were in formation in these new novitiate houses in 1985.[30] Especially in the first half of the 1980s, the Catholic Church felt an extremely pressing need to recruit young people for formation. Another concern was the desire to learn about the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Chinese Catholics were still singing the Latin chants they had learned years ago. Services in church remained "solemn and edifying."[31]

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was the political organization responsible for ensuring the Catholic Church expanded within the means and extent approved by the CCP. In the 1980s, some priests and even some bishops who had spent years in prison and subsequently been released were able to resume their vocation and provide religious services for the laity. These recently released priests and bishops had no experience in dealing with the association, yet they were able to serve their fellow people on the condition that they worked with an understanding of the expectations of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and were law-abiding.[32] The open church clergy had to learn to work with the political organizations. Their ultimate concern was to better serve Catholics within their dioceses.

The message given by the spokesperson for the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association in 1990 was that the Catholic Church had expanded significantly throughout the previous decade. According to the official source, more than three thousand churches had been reopened for religious service.[33] It was reported that more than ten seminaries and over three hundred convents had been established since 1983.[34] In addition, more than two hundred priests had been ordained from 1983 to 1990.[35] These statistics were released in a seminar "to commemorate the 30th anniversaries of the government-recognized consecration of the late Shanghai Bishop Louis Zhang Jiashu and of the founding of the Shanghai Catholic Patriotic Association."[36] The late bishop had also been president of both the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. Such appointments were indicative of the close relations between the three government organizations overseeing the Catholic Church. The event also served as an occasion to unite the open church clergy and laity in Shanghai, as more than three hundred of them attended to review the church's history over the last forty years and state their opinions on "evangelization" in China. This event meant Shanghai again played a crucial role in Catholic history.

The church in Shanghai was active in the 1980s. In July 1985, a Shanghai church delegation made a 10-day trip to Hong Kong and

Macau, marking the first official visit of the Chinese Catholic Church outside the mainland in 35 years.[37] Auxiliary bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, who led the delegation, emphasized that Chinese enjoyed "complete religious freedom" and that the Catholic Church could evangelize and train seminarians.[38] According to him, many of the newly opened churches had catechumen classes. The famous Sheshan Seminary, an hour's ride from Shanghai, had more than ninety seminarians and would further expand to include more candidates for the priesthood. There was an urgent need to train young people as the average age of the clergy in Shanghai was 72. With regard to the Shanghai diocese, he said there were plans to publish books, a religious magazine, and 300,000 copies of the New Testament by the end of the year.[39]

During the visit, Bishop Jin was impressed with the social services of the Hong Kong Catholic Church. An interesting observation he made after his visit to the Caritas-Hong Kong rehabilitation center was that "Christianity and Communism do not contradict each other," as both aimed at "building up a just and peaceful society" and "should co-operate on social services."[40] The exchange of views between the mainland and Hong Kong sides was productive, as Bishop Jin saw what the church could do for mentally handicapped children, the blind, and the deaf. Outside observers were also given the opportunity to learn more about the situation on the mainland. Joining the delegation was the chief secretary of the Shanghai Catholic Patriotic Association, which he said had opened many churches and helped release the clergy and Catholics from prison in past years. According to him, there were more than six hundred such cases altogether.[41] In 1985, the Chinese Catholic Church was still struggling to learn about Vatican II. Mass on the mainland was said in Latin and priests stood with their back to the people. The new practices of Vatican II were an eye-opener for a delegate who attended liturgy in Hong Kong, who remarked, "This was the first time I participated in a Mass in Chinese and with the celebrant facing the people."[42]

Exchange between clergy on the mainland and outside Chinese society continued. Several months later in late 1985, a Macau delegation made a ten-day visit to three Chinese cities: Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai.[43] It was considered a "historic invitation" from the Bureau of Religious Affairs in China. The Macau group included five priests, two nuns, and two lay people. The delegation hoped "to promote good understanding and friendly relations" between the Macau church and China's Bureau of Religious Affairs.[44] The exchange therefore had political ramifications, as Macau—then a Portuguese colony—would soon return to China along with Hong Kong. It was a research tour of the mainland, giving delegates an opportunity to learn about the situation of the Catholic Church there

and the political organizations responsible for the Catholic religion in China. As the head of the delegation told reporters, the main concern was the future of the church in Macau.

The delegation's objective was to gauge the opinion of the mainland authorities so the Macau church could better prepare itself for the future. Because the authorities' opinion might concern matters such as the church's role in local education and social services, the visit was very much an imitation of that made by the Hong Kong Catholic Church earlier that year. Apart from official matters, the Macau delegation hoped to gain a better understanding of the clergy and the laity on the mainland. On the societal level, it also enabled friendly communications between the two sides. The delegates were allowed to visit the tomb of Matteo Ricci in Beijing and the Buddhist temple in Nanjing where the famous Jesuit had stayed. More important, they hoped to meet with Bishop Jin as well as newly released, 85-year-old Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei in Shanghai. Such encounters were not easy to come by and would leave a significant mark on church history.

The release of Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei, who spent thirty years in prison from 1955 to 1985, opened the way for such hopes and desires. Bishop Gong represented a diehard struggle to maintain faith and loyalty to the Vatican. A Mass was held in Taipei (Taibei) in October 1985 to pray for the bishop, who had been released on parole several months earlier. The Vatican chargé d'affaires attended the Mass, as well as many senior priests who had left the mainland for Taiwan after the Communist takeover in 1949.[45] One report stated, "The Mass for Bishop Gong was the most outspoken recent expression of the Catholic Church in Taiwan on mainland Church affairs."[46] The call for changes to be made in China was issued once again. The issues were not new, as they had been repeatedly mentioned by the pope. On this occasion, however, the church in Taiwan expressed the same concerns: religious freedom and the union of the Chinese Catholic Church with Rome. This event in Taiwan revealed once again the decades of anxiety over church matters. As observers pointed out, many of "Taiwan's 374 Chinese priests and 386 missioners fled or were expelled from China."[47] The exodus had remained a "trauma" for them and had been difficult for them to forget.[48]

In the 1980s, some held hope of reconciliation between the open church and the underground church. It was thought that the Chinese Catholic Church should not be seen as divided into the "above ground" church and the underground church.[49] The argument stretched even further to say that Chinese Catholics in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and overseas belonged to "one integral Chinese Catholic Church," as they inherited the traditional Chinese culture, values, and customs.[50] The

second statement is noteworthy but is not discussed further in this book. While the open church followed the leadership of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the latter was merely a political organization that had no connections with the Vatican whatsoever. The association was not concerned with matters of doctrine. Therefore, the question of how to judge the open church and the underground church had already been raised by the end of the 1980s. A decade after China opened up to the outside world, Catholics were still striving for a better comprehension of Vatican II and its reforms: "Churches on the mainland may seem outdated since many are still using the pre-Vatican II Tridentine Latin liturgy, but this is the result of having been isolated from the rest of the world by the Bamboo Curtain."[51]

How then did the official Beijing authorities portray their Chinese Catholic Church? An article that appeared in the December 1987–January 1988 issue of the recognized periodical *Beijing Review* concerned the Catholic Church in Wuhan.[52] According to the reporter, some churchgoers were young, though most of those at Mass were old and middle-aged folks. What messages did the *Beijing Review* want to project to the outside? A 24-year-old college student told the reporter that religion was "idealistic" and offered her some kind of spiritual support. She continued, "Everybody makes mistakes and feels sorry at times, and it is then that they look for a bosom friend; if such a friend is not available in real life, they can speak their minds to God."[53] The Catholic Church offered consolation for those seeking assistance. Another 24-year-old man who studied in a seminary had been brought up in a Catholic family. The *Beijing Review* painted a picture of harmony in the Catholic Church, as the seminarian had parents who were "noble-minded Catholics," maintaining cordial relations with their neighbors as they had all experienced "the spirit of Christ's love."[54] The stress here was on stability in society and that this was an objective that could be achieved through the Catholic faith. Furthermore, the authorities had no objection to the doctrine itself.

The *Beijing Review* repeated the official rhetoric that Catholics had benefited from the policy of the government. As the seminarian said, "I can set my mind towards cultivating myself according to the Catholic doctrine; I owe this opportunity to the state policy on religious freedom."[55] The article expressed the view that the government allowed "religious freedom" and the practice of Christian doctrine, and that it encouraged a strong bond between the Catholics. Despite the article making all these points, the ultimate objective was to encourage stability in society. The article also stated the government was willing to open its doors to foreigners. This message was, at the end of the day, another piece of propaganda the article tried to spread. For example, the article claimed that the

Wuhan Catholic Church could build relations with the Catholic Church abroad. The bishop of Wuhan had visited the United States the previous year. At the same time, the article conveyed the "fact" that people overseas knew very little about the Chinese Catholic Church. The official rhetoric went on: "Each day a continuous stream of believers comes to the church from 5:30 in the morning to 11:00 at night. On Christmas Day and during Easter, the church is packed with worshippers. This indicates that the state's policy on religious freedom is real and has taken root in the hearts of the people."[56] The only negative comment in the article appeared in the very last paragraph, where the Vatican was accused of trying to create "two Chinas." The article stated that Vatican representatives had been to China and that these representatives had admitted their past mistakes in dealing with the Chinese Catholic Church.

Individual Experience

Foreigners were able to see what lay behind the bamboo curtain as China gradually opened up. A delegation of 22 people from the Kennedy Institute at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, visited China in 1979. Among them were two renowned scholars of theology, Julia Ching (professor of religious studies at the University of Toronto) and Hans Küng (professor of ecumenical theology at the University of Tübingen in Germany). Küng had already realized that after the death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of the Gang of Four, "something was changing."[57] In later years, both professors continued visiting the mainland and observed what was happening.

Küng was to have fond memories of his second tour of China several years later. In Shanghai, he talked with Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, who worked closely with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Küng thought his meeting with the Shanghai bishop was thought-provoking, despite Jin's official background. Exchange was easy for the two priests, as the pair had previously met in Rome, and Jin was familiar with the works of Küng.[58]

Recognized for her works on Christianity, Ching said she had refrained from looking for opportunities to get to know the underground Catholics in order to avoid unnecessary trouble for her interviewees.[59] Ching remarked that China was experiencing "more than a mini-religious revival"; rather, it was undergoing a rebirth of the Christian religion, especially among educated people.[60] She believed there was tremendous interest in Christianity in Chinese society. According to her, an increasing number of Chinese people saw Catholicism as the "old religion" and Protestantism as the "new religion."[61] Many Chinese believed the Catholic Church

represented old thoughts, traditional practices, and entrenched institutions while the Protestant Church introduced relatively new ideas and interpretations. As Ching recognized, "Even though there have always been more Catholics than Protestants due to the efforts of the Catholic missionaries, the Protestants are catching up quickly."[62] She continued, "Ironically, some of the new Christians accept the dogmas of Christianity without feeling the need to be baptized."[63] This was Ching's observation of how Christianity had fared in China in the 1980s, the first decade after the launch of the Four Modernizations.

Discussions of experiences with the Chinese Catholic Church attracted much attention from outsiders in the 1980s. Many wrote about their visits to the Catholic Church on the mainland. There were those who tried to reach out to the Catholic Church. One of these outside visitors, Edward Khong of the Hong Kong Diocesan Commission for Non-Christians, wrote that his group contacted the church in Nanjing and asked to visit and that the response was swift and moving.[64] Recounting the occasion, he said, "a cordial welcome would be awaiting us at the Catholic Cathedral."[65] He and his company met the priests of the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Shigu Road, a place not many locals knew. He described the scene thus: "Fr. Joseph Liu Yuan-Ren, the Parish Priest of the Cathedral and Mr. Zhu Shi-zhang, Secretary to the Bishop, were already waiting for us at the entrance of the Cathedral with outstretched hands."[66] Khong and his group had a close look at the inside of the Cathedral. As Khong remembered, they saw antiques from the early nineteenth century, including "a very finely ornamented Monstrance, two chalices, and a Reliquary."[67] Father Liu explained that these treasures were still well preserved because he had hidden them from the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.[68]

Father Liu was one of the few priests serving the entire city of Nanjing. Yet Liu had previously been offered the chance to go to Hong Kong with a Shanghai delegation. Liu held two positions: he was the parish priest in Nanjing and professor of moral theology at a seminary in Shanghai. The church urgently needed to provide training for candidates for the priesthood. In the regional seminary in Shanghai, some of the seminarians were preparing to be ordained for the diocese of Nanjing, which would ease the situation of inadequate personnel that even the open church faced.[69]

In the course of Khong's meeting with the priests in Nanjing, an explanation of the criteria for being accepted for the seminary was given. First, there were the common requirements of age, academic background, physical condition, and spiritual readiness.[70] Second, there was the peculiar concern that the candidate must come from a family that had been Catholic for at least one or two generations. The rationale behind this

requirement might have been that religion and its practice had been eradicated during the rule of Mao Zedong and the Catholic faith could be passed from one generation to another only within a family.[71] The formation of seminarians and thus the increase in the number of priests for dioceses across the country would be an enormous task.

During the visit, Khong also met with Bishop Joseph Qian Huimin. Bishop Qian spoke from the perspective of the open church and the Beijing government in saying that although the official government ideology did not acknowledge a God, the Chinese people had their freedom to believe in what they wanted.[72] Qian confided his wish that "one day Christianity would be accepted as part of the nation's life, and not as something alien to Chinese customs and mentality."[73] "Today, as in the past, Christianity is still considered a 'foreign' and 'western' religion," stated the bishop.[74] He then reinforced Beijing's stance of keeping the Chinese Catholic Church independent of the guidance of the Vatican. He continued, "But by being a totally independent Church free of all outside interference, it is hoped that Christianity will gradually become part of the wider Chinese tradition and emerge as something really Chinese, and something which the Chinese people can claim as their own."[75] In other words, the Chinese Catholic Church should be free from external direction and under the sole supervision of the Chinese authorities.

Nevertheless, the Chinese Catholic Church drew much attention from outside, regardless of how much the Beijing government disliked it. Some of this attention resulted from concerns about the future of the church on the mainland. This scrutiny also came from Chinese societies outside the mainland. It was in this context that Hong Kong bishop John Tong Hon explored the formation of seminarians in China. As indicated by Khong's experience in Nanjing, the training of candidates for the priesthood was a matter of great importance. Bishop Tong explained what he meant by official seminaries: (1) those established with government approval and subsidies and (2) those established without the prior knowledge of the government, which in turn did not meddle with or support their operation.[76] As Bishop Tong understood them, the official seminaries were not completely under the control of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.[77] The first official seminary reopened was Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai in October 1982.

In 1989, Bishop Tong talked with a mainland bishop on the issue of seminary formation. According to the latter, formation of seminaries in China was outdated and could not meet the needs of the Catholic Church; the current formation practices in seminaries did not vary much from those of the 1950s.[78] Many seminarians found it hard to adjust to life in the seminaries. First, the rules were very strict and it was easy to be

expelled for any slight violation. Second, suitable candidates could meet the entrance requirements but be refused admission at the same time because the diocese's quota had already been met. The mainland bishop was therefore in a state of despair as he thought "precious vocations" had been lost for these reasons.[79] Many of the seminarians came from families with a strong Catholic background, and some of them were very much committed to their vocation. Many priest-professors avoided mentioning papal primacy directly, while others implied that "Catholicism and papal primacy" could not be divided in their teaching of church history.[80]

As a result of the Communist document "Strengthening Catholic Church Work in the New Circumstances" published in February 1989, Bishop Tong pointed out that Chinese Catholics could accept a spiritual relationship with the pope.[81] He said that the document made it possible for Catholics "to maintain a purely religious connection with the Pope,"[82] recognize his primacy, and pray for him. Tong believed this position represented a new government approach to the Catholic Church. It was "more progressive than former policies and good news for the public seminaries."[83] In 1989, Shanghai's Sheshan Seminary started to invite overseas priests to teach core theological subjects. While seminary formation was tough and there was much area for change, the situation was by no means hopeless. The experience of Tong taught him the Chinese Catholic Church was "a wounded Church, riddled with rumor and strife."[84] His individual reflection was thus: "If there are no Christians to act as mediators willing to bear another's burdens, then reconciliation is impossible."[85]

Conclusion

The first decade after China opened up to the outside world witnessed many changes in its society. The Chinese Communists were willing to allow freedom of religious belief with the expectation that Catholicism—like other religions—could be a source of stability for society. Thus the Chinese Catholic Church existed under the shadow of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Beijing government. The Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference dealt with matters of doctrine, while the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission tackled pastoral issues. Without the consent of the Communist leaders, priests would not have been released from prison and churches would not have been reopened. During the 1980s, the Chinese Catholic Church had a lot to learn as it needed to catch up with the developments emanating from Vatican II. In addition, it faced a lack of priests for dioceses across the country. Seminary formation was of the utmost importance in terms of the quality of education

provided to candidates for the priesthood and the number of men who could be trained.

There were mutual exchanges between members of the open church and outside church members both on the mainland and outside the country. The pope hoped to engage in beneficial relations with the open church and Beijing. Church members living in Hong Kong and Macau were among those who engaged in valuable dialogue with representatives of the open church. China was on the way to some degree of liberalization until the crackdown in the June 4 Incident of 1989. However, society had already experienced the import of new ideas, and pragmatism gradually replaced dogmatism. China could no longer return to its old days characterized by mass movements and the supremacy of ideology. The prime objective was that religion could promote moral education of the Chinese people, who were living in a transitional period in which the Marxist ideology was presented in forms favorable to the Four Modernizations.

Scholars found loyal Catholic families in the many cities they visited, such as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Nanjing. The study of religion became important, especially with regard to the role it could play in society. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was one of a number of institutes that embarked on religious studies. At the same time, the Beijing government and the *People's Daily* acknowledged the significance of religion in society. This was a message that was given a high profile. Members of the open church then traveled to the Chinese societies of Hong Kong and Macau and to foreign countries to learn how others had studied doctrine and contributed to education and social services. Another incident indicating Beijing's willingness to tolerate freedom of religious belief was the release of Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei in 1985.

While the Catholic Church was growing, Catholics remained a minority in China. In addition, Catholics were divided between those willing to follow the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and those who refused to do so. Complicating matters was whether reconciliation between the open and the underground was possible as the Catholic Church expanded and developed. Simultaneously, Beijing was fostering the official rhetoric that Catholics enjoyed their freedom because of government policy and that loyal Catholics should also support their government. There was also the government position that Catholicism, considered by many as a foreign religion, should be independent of the guidance of the Vatican and that there was no need to ask for the pope's approval to appoint bishops in China.

Another feature of the 1980s was that mutual exchanges between the Chinese Catholic Church and overseas Catholic delegations and representatives took place. Exchanges of this type were a way to promote

mutual understanding and were an eye-opener for all parties concerned. With the occurrence of the June 4 Incident in 1989, there was a focus on how Chinese society would develop and how foreign religion would fare in the next decade.

China continued to move on as the 1990s unfolded. The same questions of loyalty, reconciliation, and pastoral work remained. Chinese Catholics were learning as time passed. The effect of Vatican II began to be felt. Once the door was open, there was a constant stream of visitors and an unending outward flow of Chinese. The more communication there was, the harder it would be to return to old ways and styles. What would be the impact of increasing communication with overseas organizations and foreigners? Would that bring in more foreign resources? While it was the Beijing government that asked for greater modernization, change would become unavoidable and the extent of such change would be beyond the control of the authorities. As a large country with a vast population, one question that always remained in China was whether official supervision and even suppression could direct the way in which society moved. As the Chinese people acquired more knowledge of the outside world and came to appreciate their ability to choose their own way of life, it would not be easy for the authorities to fully impose their will on society. Society was following its own course, regardless of how free it was on one hand or how much interference there was on the other. Chinese society would change; so would the Catholic Church.

Another breathtaking decade was waiting to be explored. The 1990s would see greater contact with the outside world. More Catholics would travel to China to see for themselves what had happened so far. Exchange had to be productive and would guide society and the church as well as affect the Beijing government. Both within and outside the mainland, there would be different views on the Chinese Catholic Church. Another chapter of Catholic history would prove to be illuminating.

Chapter 4

Becoming Prosperous in the 1990s

Introduction

Despite the June 4 Incident of 1989, the ensuing domestic crises, and the period of diplomatic stalemate, China was able to recuperate much faster than expected; more important, its increasing prosperity indicated that it would be recognized as a great power by the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Beijing government required all organizations to support the authorities in the wake of the June 4 Incident. The Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches alike therefore stated openly that they stood by the official policy of rejection of the prodemocracy movement.[1] As China entered the 1990s, it generally understood that it had to deal with a world that presented a more complex set of issues than those it had faced in the past. Beijing knew that it had to engage with a "multipolar world," meaning that different powers with different interests had to be dealt with for China to play a more prominent role in global affairs.[2] At the beginning of the decade, outsiders considered political and economic circumstances in China somewhat volatile and were puzzled over how Catholicism could exert a genuine impact on the people, society, values, and culture of China.[3] The early 1990s were a period in which difficulties were inherited from the past decade, but paradoxically, they were years that promised much more than expected as China quickly got back on its feet.

Sino-Vatican Relations and China's Diplomatic Issues

In May 1991, Pope John Paul II wrote a personal letter to the Jesuit Dominic Deng Yiming who he had named archbishop of Guangzhou in 1981. The timing of the missive was important, as it came as Deng

celebrated both his golden jubilee as a priest and the fortieth anniversary of his appointment as a bishop. In the letter, the pope praised Deng's "most courageous witnessing" to Christ.[4] He expressed sympathy for Deng's suffering and imprisonment in the past. He also spoke of the support the Universal Church had for Deng. The letter made three points: First, the Roman Catholic Church considered Deng a shining example of the church. Second, the church would continue to help him and other priests in China in their journey "to reconciliation and to the healing of the wounds of earlier times."[5] Third, there was a blessing for the Catholics in Guangzhou, who in the words of the pope were "the most beloved flock" there.[6]

The pope wished to take the opportunity to acknowledge Deng's loyalty to the Vatican and perseverance throughout all the years of hardship. Concern for the Chinese Catholics had become an issue for the Catholic Church worldwide. As the pontiff, John Paul II was addressing all Catholics outside China on the affairs of the Chinese Catholic Church. This would not have been seen as a friendly gesture by the Beijing government, which insisted that it alone had authority over its people. Throughout the decades, this conflict between fidelity to religion and loyalty to the country had been a constantly recurring theme. Ten years earlier, Beijing had been very much against the Vatican's move in naming Deng as the archbishop of Guangzhou. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association followed the instruction of the Beijing government by condemning the appointment. Deng had been released from prison in 1980 and had left the mainland shortly afterward.

In July 1991, the pope addressed Cardinal Ignatius Gong Pinmei, who had been released from prison and had his civil rights restored several years previously. Gong was a diehard opponent of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and persisted in his loyalty to the Vatican even after he had languished in prison for many years. The pope told Gong that he thanked the Lord for the presence of the cardinal, along with his family, friends, and "well-wishers."[7] More important, the pope emphasized the trauma Gong had endured since the founding of the PRC. The pope said, "I felt that the whole Church could not but honor a man who has given witness by word and deed, through long sufferings and trials, to what constitutes the very essence of life in the Church."[8] "By honoring you the Holy See honors the whole faithful Church in China," the pope explained. "With what prayerful longing and love do I follow the life of the loyal Chinese Catholic communities!"[9] From China's perspective, the pope was acknowledging and supporting those who were loyal to the Vatican: the very many members of the underground church. The message was simply that it was right to look up to the Vatican for guidance,

and it signaled the highest degree of respect for the faithful underground church. This was the position of the Vatican for the Catholic Church worldwide, but it was the opposite of what the Beijing government had been asking of Chinese Catholics. Again, there could be no compromise on the stances of both Beijing and the Vatican.

It was always Pope John Paul II's intention to appeal to the Beijing government to work to improve diplomatic relations. In 1992, he commented, "The immense country of China has been very present on the world scene."[10] In the 1990s, China expanded rapidly through its economic and social reforms. As the years passed, outside observers became well aware of the potential of China as a great power in the not-too-distant future. The pope reiterated his hope that some "fruitful international cooperation" between the Vatican and China was possible.[11] In his message, he again stressed the possibility of "double loyalty." He encouraged the Chinese Catholics "to continue to live their faith in fidelity to the Gospel and to Christ's Church."[12] At the same time, he urged them "to serve generously their nation and their brothers and sisters, as they have always done."[13] His overall message conveyed his belief that Chinese Catholics had been faithful to both the church and their country, and there was no contradiction in it. This was what the pope believed; nevertheless, this was certainly not how Beijing viewed the situation. Again, the two sides were not in tune with each other and spoke different languages in more ways than one.

In 1994, the pope asked all Catholics in Asia to come together as one in a speech titled "Coming Together in Solidarity."[14] Pope John Paul II was to send another message to the Chinese Catholics in January 1995 when he spoke of them while visiting Manila to celebrate the tenth World Youth Day. In his message, he addressed "all Chinese Catholics" as members of a church that was "one, holy, catholic and apostolic, a community of faith, hope and charity."[15] However, he said he knew how difficult their situation was in being "called to bear witness" to their faith in Christ.[16] The pope again hinted that there was no contradiction between Christianity and China's heritage and culture in saying that Chinese Catholics had been "entrusted the task of living the faith in the midst of a people of ancient cultural traditions."[17] They were to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."[18] In addition, the pope believed that Chinese Catholics could be like their fellow countrymen as they pursued "service, self-sacrifice, fidelity, hard work, honesty and justice in society as a whole."[19] Whether he was thinking of the Four Modernizations strategy adopted by China since 1978 depends on one's reading. Nevertheless, it seems highly improbable that he did not have China's reform effort in mind when making the statement. The invitation to Chinese Catholics to

join the Universal Church was repeated once more. Claiming to be aware of the situation faced by Chinese Catholics, he said "bishops, priests, religious and lay people have wished to reaffirm their unshakable and full communion with Peter and the rest of the Church."[20]

In this message delivered in January 1995, Pope John Paul II reiterated four aspects of Chinese Catholicism. He first expressed his wish that Catholics could come together as a united community. This had implications for the open church and the underground church in China as well as for the distant (if not impossible) prospect of a union of Chinese Catholics with the Universal Church. Second, the pope recognized the difficulties Chinese Catholics had faced and asked that people pray for them. Although it was a sincere and common practice of the pope and the clergy, such a call for prayers could lead to bad feelings from the Beijing side. Such misunderstandings and miscommunications had occurred before and would arise again in the future. Third, the pope expressed his respect for the long history and culture of the Chinese people. From his perspective, there was no incompatibility between Christianity and Chinese civilization. Fourth, and most significantly, he noted that Chinese Catholics had also contributed to the country's modernization effort.

Half a decade had passed since the June 4 Incident of 1989. Would there be any advance in Sino-Vatican relations? Doctrine was never in question; there was no difference in basic Catholic teachings beyond the supremacy of the Vatican. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association never communicated with the Vatican however, as it is technically a sovereign state. It should be noted that all communication on that level must be done through diplomatic channels—usually through the Vatican Secretariat of State.

What about the situation of Taiwan? It was a historic and generous gesture toward China when the pope publicly pleaded in favor of China's membership in a United Nations organization at a time when the Cultural Revolution was still going on in China and well before American President Richard Nixon visited China. In 1971 when China entered the United Nations, the Vatican transferred the nuncio of Taiwan to Bangladesh, leaving in Taiwan only a chargé d'affaires until today. Beijing's use of the Holy See's diplomatic relations with Taiwan as a sine qua non for establishing diplomatic relations is an old "bromide" with little basis in the actual situation. In July 1996, Taiwan's newly appointed ambassador to the Holy See ensured amicable relations between both Taiwan and the Vatican.[21] Taiwan was eager to secure close links with the Vatican, as the Holy See was the only European state that still had full diplomatic relations with the Taiwanese government. In response, Pope John Paul II referred to the ambassador's mention of the coming two thousandth

anniversary of the birth of Christ. The pope said, "This great event has significance for all the Church's members, not least those belonging to the Great Chinese Family."[22] Furthermore, he emphasized that the Roman Catholic Church recognized its mission was "not of the political, economic or social order," but of the "religious one."[23] The pope remarked, "It is my ardent prayer that the Chinese people as a whole will have trust in the Church, even as the Church is confident that they will play an indispensable role in serving the cause of peace and development for the benefit of the entire human family."[24]

In October 1996, Catholic leaders from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau were able to come to some agreement. Pope John Paul II had appointed Salesian priest Father Joseph Zen Zi-kiun and Father John Tong Hon as coadjutor bishop and auxiliary bishop of Hong Kong respectively.[25] In mainland China, Taiwan, and Macau, the Catholic leaders showed their support for the pope's decision. The vice chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Anthony Liu Bainian, welcomed the appointments and said that the Hong Kong diocese was too large for Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung to manage alone. Liu dismissed the idea that the appointments were related to the imminent handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. These responses were one of the rare incidents in which leaders from the four Chinese Catholic communities came together. It was also a rare incident in which Sino-Vatican relations were not clouded by political concerns.

Zen and Tong had much experience with the Catholic Church in the mainland. Both of them emphasized that the Hong Kong Catholic Church would strengthen its relations with the mainland church. With more than 237,000 Catholics, the Hong Kong diocese was the largest Chinese Catholic diocese in the world. It was a Chinese diocese that the Vatican had to play close attention to.[26] Tong also had his view on the Catholic Church in the mainland: "The Church in Hong Kong will treat members of both the open and the underground Churches of China as brothers and sisters in the hope of helping them understand each another."[27] Here the reconciliation issue turned up again following the pope's appointments. Tong said, "If they (Catholics in the mainland) maintain full communion with the pope, they will be full members of the Church."[28]

In December 1996, John Paul II sent another message to the Catholic Church in China.[29] During a homily on the feast day of Saint Francis Xavier he called for unity in the Chinese Catholic Church. Moreover, he reassured the Beijing government of the positive contribution of Chinese Catholics in the modernization effort. The Mass commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the first six Chinese bishops ordained in Rome

in 1926 as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in China. John Paul II said, "Just as Saint Francis Xavier, reaching the gates of China, burned with the desire to bring the light of the Gospel to the Chinese people, so we, today, look to that great country with the same sentiments while recalling [these] two significant celebrations."[30] The pontiff was recalling the very distant past and the perseverance of foreign missioners. By doing so, he also reminded the Chinese people of the cooperation between foreign missioners and Chinese intellectuals in history.

In Catholic history, St. Francis Xavier is considered "the Great Apostle of the Far East." Having been to India and Japan, he later hoped for evangelization in China but eventually gave his life for it. In 1552, he arrived at Shangchuan Island in South China but was never able to set foot on the mainland. The pope used the example of the Saint to illustrate the great courage and enthusiasm of later missioners—the Jesuits, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, and the Franciscans—in China many centuries ago.

In the message, Pope John Paul II reiterated the importance of unity with the Universal Church. He said that the Chinese Catholic Church "must therefore keep itself united to Christ, to the successor of Peter and to the whole universal Church, also and especially through the ministry of bishops in communion with the Apostolic See."[31] Another matter the pope had in mind was the formation of the priests in China: "It is upon their authentic theological, moral, spiritual and pastoral formation, according to the Church's tradition and discipline, that there depends in a decisive way the future of Christian communities."[32] Here, the pope drew attention to the long Catholic mission history, the significance of union with the Universal Church, and the importance of the training of the priesthood in China. The Chinese Catholic Church at this time was still struggling to understand the changes and decisions of Vatican II. These issues continued to trouble the Chinese Catholic Church, its relations with the Vatican, and its communion with the Universal Church.

The pope's concern for the development of the Chinese Catholic Church continued to affect relations between the Vatican and Beijing. In 1999, the Vatican explained its position on Taiwan, a sensitive issue that had continued to trouble their relations. According to the spokesperson, the Vatican nunciature in Taiwan was "a temporary facility" that could be moved to Beijing if China and the Holy See established diplomatic relations.[33] He explained that "the apostolic nuncio was constrained to leave (the mainland) and the nunciature was transferred to Taiwan" after the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949).[34] Nevertheless, he said if the current Beijing government wanted to have diplomatic relations with the Vatican, the nunciature could be "transferred

again to China, where it was before."[35] Considering the circumstances, he believed that this would be difficult because of Beijing's "refusal to accept the conditions of religious freedom sought by the Holy See."[36] He continued, "The Chinese authorities from Beijing ask the Holy See to sever all ties with Taiwan," but the Holy See would only do so if it could "have the possibility to have free contacts with the local bishops of mainland China."[37] A second requirement was that the pope could appoint bishops, and a third requirement was that the Chinese Catholic Church could enjoy "normal conditions of life" in all practical manners.[38] The Vatican would need "some concrete assurances" from the Beijing government. There was still no solution to the problem of establishing diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Beijing.

In December 1999, Pope John Paul II made an address to the Chinese Catholics. The timing was noteworthy as the Roman Catholic Church would soon commemorate the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Christ.[39] The pope emphasized that as pastor of the Universal Church, he had particular feelings for the Chinese Catholics, who could not "in a full and visible way" show their communion with the Apostolic See.[40] He called for "the genuine living of the Gospel" among the Chinese Catholics and urged all Catholics "to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to the Chinese people."[41] In order to do so, they must do it with "new vigor."[42] It was to be a huge and challenging mission in China. Here the pope was reiterating his desire for the union of the Chinese Catholic Church with the Universal Church. Furthermore, he again pointed to the issue of "double loyalty." He said, "As good Chinese and authentic Christians, you love your country and you love the Church, both local and universal."[43] First, the Chinese should love their country, and then second, they should love the church. The term "authentic Christians" grabbed attention. To be true Christians, the pope clearly stated that the Chinese Catholics must be in communion with the Universal Church.

What were the prospects of Sino-Vatican relations by the end of the last decade of the twentieth century? The problems continued and possible solutions seemed remote. Political scientists and church members repeatedly pointed out this issue. It was difficult to "reconcile jurisdictional claims" of both the Beijing government and the Vatican in appointing bishops in China.[44] Beijing did not want to grant authority to the Vatican, a sovereign state. So long as the Chinese leaders maintained such a position, further advances were impossible. A foreign state could not interfere in the domestic affairs of China—that had been the creed throughout imperial, modern, and contemporary Chinese history. As Beatrice Leung observes, "The Catholic problem was aggravated by the claim of the Vatican to exercise authority over its clergy in organizational

and theological terms, coupled with its sovereignty status in international law."[45]

More significant, the present author questions the rationale behind both the Vatican and the Beijing government in addressing the issue of reconciliation between the open church and the underground church. The Vatican wanted to see the Chinese Catholic Church in communion with the Universal Church. The pope refuted the term "schism" to describe the Catholic Church in China. However the Beijing government wanted to eliminate the existence of the underground church. It wanted to have complete control over all Chinese Catholics and their activities. By doing so, Beijing wanted to assure that the Chinese Catholics were only loyal to their country and not at the same time to another foreign state.

The Government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association

In February 1989, shortly before the June 4 Incident, the Central Offices of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council sent out a message to the United Front Work Department and the Bureau of Religious Affairs. The recipients were the provincial Party committees and governments, the central government agencies, and all people's organizations. The circular read, "The Central United Front and the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Council of State with the approval of the Council of State and the Central Committee of the Communist Party transmit to you this document on 'Stepping up Control over the Catholic Church to Meet the New Situation.' In the light of conditions existing in each local area and department please proceed to implement this document."[46] This meant that the Chinese Catholic Church was to come under the strict scrutiny of the Beijing government and its three political organizations.

The Beijing leaders made sure the three organizations would serve the functions listed in the circular. The circular clearly defined the functions of (1) the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, (2) the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and (3) the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. According to the circular, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association had the following role and status: "The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association is the national organization made up of clergy and laity. Its basic function is to assist the Party and the government implement the policy of freedom of religious belief, help the church enforce the principle of independent and autonomous administration of church affairs, continue to be the bridge between the Catholic community and the government, actively promote social service, initiate self-supporting enterprises and projects for the common good and encourage all clerics

and lay persons to take part in these two social works."[47] The circular went on to describe the operations of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference: "The Bishops' Conference must be strengthened enabling it to become the essence of the Chinese Catholic Church. Its basic function will be to uphold the Chinese Church's independence and autonomy, supervise its administration, govern it (this will include explaining theological teaching, formulating church rules, examining, and approving bishops to be in charge of dioceses, etc.), as well as be the official representative to other churches abroad."[48] Furthermore, the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission would no longer function as a national organization and would instead operate as a focused committee under the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference. Its task was to administer projects undertaken by the Catholic Church.[49] Moreover, the circular pointed out that the "supreme authoritative body" of the Chinese Catholic Church was the National Congress of Catholic Representatives. The National Congress of Catholic Representatives had the authority to determine the structure of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, to elect the executive committee of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and to produce progress reports for both the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference.[50]

According to the Communists, the main objective of the circular was to prevent the Vatican from having any control over the religious activities of the Chinese people. It stated that the Chinese people should have their own control over the internal affairs of the country. Therefore, a foreign state like the Vatican should stay away from China's internal matters. Religious issues belonged to this category.[51] Therefore, it was of crucial importance to employ practical methods to improve the operations, the effectiveness, and the efficiency of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. How could this be done? To fulfill this task, the CCP and the Beijing government would make the best use of the united front effort to "actively search out patriotic Catholic intellectuals and send them to work at all levels of the patriotic organizations."[52] Patriotism was seen as the key to every religious function, a view that came as no surprise given that China was supposed to be employing the strategy of the "new era's patriotic united front." There was a need to "choose suitable candidates as soon as possible and have them consecrated as bishops and assigned to those places lacking bishops."[53] Most important of all, the political organizations—the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission—should always assume the leadership of the Chinese Catholic Church. To repeat, politics should determine the position of the Catholic Church.

In 1989, the Beijing government formulated this policy to put the Catholic Church under its fullest control. That is to say that it would use any means to suppress the underground church. In order to achieve its objectives, the Beijing government issued Document No. 3, which was titled "Strengthen Catholic Church Work in the New Circumstances." Here "strengthen" was interpreted as "supervise" or "control."[54] Document No. 3 continued to remain effective well into the early 1990s. Some Catholic scholars believed that the Beijing government was very much responding to the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe during that time and the external criticisms of the June 4 Incident of 1989. Observers believed that the underground Catholics were "victims of these crackdowns."[55]

The pessimistic view was that the Communist leaders were fearful of the "intrusion by 'hostile forces' from the outside."[56] The Beijing government considered these external elements the sources of all the problems in the country. During this time, there was an attack against "bourgeois liberalism" in China. The assumption was that problems came from "hostile forces" such as "foreign religious activities and organizations."[57] According to French priest Jean Charbonnier, who has done much research on the Chinese Catholic Church, the Beijing government issued Document No. 3 to suppress the underground church and to isolate the underground leaders.[58] As he explains, the document reaffirmed the policy of suppression of underground church during the past several years. Charbonnier traces these acts of violence and arrests back to the year 1986.

An American professor teaching in China, Gabriel Chen-Abbot, distinguished the open church and the underground church in the following manner: On the one hand, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was "sanctioned" by the Beijing government, which had strict control over the open church and its activities. In most large cities, there were parishes of the open church. On the other hand, there was the underground church whose priests and bishops preferred to be in union with the Universal Church. The underground communities functioned mainly in villages and outside large cities.[59]

In understanding the open church and the underground church, it is important to note that they represented a "pseudo-division" of the Chinese Catholic Church due to their separation according to political orientation, their relations (or lack thereof) with the Beijing government, and their (official or unofficial) status.[60] More significant, it was "not a real schism."[61] Why did bishops and priests serve with the open church? The bishops "judged sincerely the church could be better served by their externally complying with the restrictions imposed by the Government."[62] By doing so, the bishops could stay close to their fellow Catholics and

possibly hope for a better future. The difference between the open church and the underground church was chiefly *political*, based on whether individual priests and bishops wanted to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Even in the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII concluded absolutely that the Chinese Catholic Church was not in schism. The pope promised never to use the word "schism" in the Chinese context.[63]

As previously explained, the open church and the underground church took "diverging positions" on the policies of the Beijing government.[64] The open church worked within the limits of government policies, even if it recognized the restrictions that were imposed on its activities. Unofficial and unregistered, the underground church did not cooperate with the authorities in any form whatsoever. It was aptly put that *the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was the source of the separation of the Catholic Church*.[65] Chinese Catholics were split between those who chose to follow the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association to prove to the government that they were patriots and the others who declined to cooperate with the association even at the risk of their own safety. It was the Beijing government that appointed the open church bishops and did not recognize the authority of the pope. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association supervised the open church, whose bishops and priests were its members. Although the open church clergy submitted themselves to the authority of the association so as to be able to better serve the laity, many of them were in fact and in private in union with the Universal Church. Of course, the underground church pledged its loyalty to the pope.

The underground Catholics were persecuted because they were not registered (not because they were independent), and of course, they were not registered because they did not want to come under the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association's umbrella and control. According to the Beijing government, all Catholics had to register with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Otherwise, religious services in unregistered or non-government-approved churches were illegal and its members were subject to legal punishment. Such a situation proved difficult for the underground church.

Around mid-1996, underground bishop James Su Zhimin from Hebei appealed to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. He was speaking against the religious suppression in his locality. He stated that in the previous months the local government had violated the civil and religious rights of the Chinese Catholics. Furthermore, the bishop urged for an investigation of the human right problems and the infringement upon the rights of the laity. It was reported that both city and county officials were probing the activities of the underground church and the affiliated Catholic families.[66] Young people were affected and were

forbidden to attend school. At the same time, adults were being monitored and could not travel freely. The authorities tore down some underground churches and prayer houses. The underground bishop argued that the authorities had violated the constitution, which ensured the freedom of religious belief, the right to receive education, and prohibited unlawful detention of the Chinese people. In September 1996, several Chinese Catholics in the Zhejiang Province were arrested and sentenced to two to ten years in prison.[67] They included four men and a woman who belonged to the underground church.

That same month, underground bishop Andrew Han Jingtao from Changchun, the capital of Jilin Province, circulated a letter asking for the unification of the open church and the underground church. It was reported that he had sent the letter to both the open church and the underground church throughout China.[68] Here the issue of reconciliation surfaced, and this time it was an outright demand from a non-government-approved priest. There was the implication of communion with the Universal Church. According to Bishop Han, "all bishops in China [were] not to review rights and wrongs but to act 'to be one flock with one shepherd.'"[69] More important, he said that "both Churches should discuss major Church issues, let go of the past and look to the future, and publicly announce their unity as loyal Catholics and loyal Chinese citizens."[70]

Here Bishop Han believed that the idea of "double loyalty" was possible. The concept of "double loyalty" was mentioned not only by the Vatican but by the underground priests in China. In addition, Bishop Han said that the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association should not have control over church matters. He warned that Chinese Catholics needed to learn more about the changes brought forth by Vatican II, as they had been lagging behind due to political issues since the internal turmoil in the 1960s. Of crucial significance was the response from government-approved bishop Pius Jin Peixian of Liaoning. He asserted, "There is only one Church in China, and we are of the same faith. Our difference is only in politics."[71] Repeatedly, the issues complicating the open church and the underground church were political, not doctrinal.

In mid-December 1996, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference held a joint meeting outside Beijing to set the guidelines for the Sixth National Congress of Catholic Representatives, which was to take place in the second half of 1997.[72] The National Congress of Catholic Representatives was the highest authority within the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and was held every five years. The joint meeting reviewed progress reports and asked Catholics to support the "building spiritual civilization" campaign.[73] Bishops, priests,

a nun, and lay people attended this joint meeting. It was also made clear that younger people should take up offices of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association; those over 65 should resign. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was aging, as was the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference. Though the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference also met in mid-December 1996, a third of the bishops did not attend because of ill health. In June 1997, the head of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference died of a heart attack at the age of 80.[74] Moreover, there was the concern that more women should participate in the association. The size of the delegations to the Sixth National Congress of Catholic Representatives would be in proportion to the Catholic population in each city and each province. Questions regarding the diocese management system, the formation of young priests, and the training of the young people were raised.

In the latter half of the 1990s, the Chinese Catholic Church was one entity but with many complications. Some argued from the point of view of faith that there had only ever been one church in China.[75] Still, the open church was under the control of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. And the objective of the three political organizations was clear: namely, to continue an autonomous Chinese Catholic Church that did not follow the guidance of the Vatican.[76] Officially, the open church could not establish communion with the Universal Church. The dioceses of the open church had their own bishops, priests, and seminarians. In November 1996, fifty graduates of Beijing's National Catholic Seminary were ordained. It was the largest group of priests ordained in several years.[77]

Nevertheless, there was an observation that might deserve consideration and lead to further discussion. Although some open church bishops were members of the aforementioned political organizations, many open church members covertly preserved ties with the Vatican.[78] More important, it was a quiet if not secretive fact that many of the open church bishops received approval from the Vatican before their ordination. This was done in a discreet manner. Open church priests also had the convenience of serving the Catholics in their dioceses and had a certain amount of freedom that the authorities could allow them.[79] Doctrine was not an issue as they were not acting or speaking in opposition to the "principles of the faith" of the Roman Catholic Church.[80] In contrast to what the Western media might portray, the priests of the open church were not "opportunists" who used their positions for their own benefit.[81] In addition, the laity actually did not know much about the three monitoring political organizations. All they cared for was the practice of their own faith.

Although the Beijing government did not recognize the underground church, its members existed throughout China. In some localities, the underground church constituted the majority of the Catholic population.[82] The underground church had its own dioceses under the management of its own bishops, who were in communion with the Universal Church. In the dioceses, there were priests, nuns, and seminarians. The underground church maintained its dioceses much like the open church. As Wang Yandao observed in 1997, the underground church "consciously aims to maintain the faith of our Holy Church in its entirety, and preserve communion with the Universal Church."[83] Furthermore, he continued, "Although it is oppressed and persecuted to varying degrees in different places both by the government and the Patriotic Association, this body will never be destroyed."[84]

In December 1996, the American National Conference of Catholic Bishops met and discussed the situation in China. There were observations from attendants of different places as the participants referred to the pope's messages to the Chinese Catholics. While they acknowledged the "disagreements and tensions" within the Chinese Catholic Church, they recounted that the Vatican never used the term "schismatic" to describe the church in China since the time of Pope John XXIII.[85] A presenter commented that "Chinese Christians have proven that their Christian faith is theirs just as their Chinese culture is theirs."[86] That is, they asserted that the Beijing government did not need to be suspicious of its own people. Again, the source of difficulty for the Chinese Catholic Church in relating to the Vatican had been political, not doctrinal. A vocal critic of Beijing, Hong Kong coadjutor bishop Joseph Zen Zi-kiun, stated that the Chinese Catholics on the mainland were separated from the Vatican in ways because the government did not allow them to have communications. Nevertheless, Zen said "in their hearts they are like we are."[87] He believed that there was no difference in the faith of the Chinese Catholics—"They all love the Holy Father and are waiting for the day when they can join together with the rest of the church."[88]

Was reconciliation between the open church and the underground church possible? It was reported that Chinese Catholic Church leaders were looking for ways for communication with the underground clergy.[89] But what were the objectives? A government-approved bishop mentioned having two underground bishops staying in his home.[90] There were other such contacts between the open and the underground. What about the relations between the Vatican and the open church? According to John Cummins in 1997, "Many of the Chinese bishops, ordained with Government approval but not initially named by the Vatican, have sought and obtained reconciliation with Rome."[91] Many of the government-approved

bishops at one time or another received the recognition from the Vatican, and this was no secret to the Beijing government. While this seemed to be encouraging for better communication between the Chinese Catholic Church and the Vatican, Hong Kong bishop John Tong Hon pointed out that fifty to sixty priests and a number of bishops of the underground church were arrested in the same year.[92] Although there seemed to emerge the possibility of reconciliation between the open church and the underground church, religious suppression continued. The challenges for the future were great, as the Chinese Catholic leaders had to decide how to achieve reconciliation within their church while being subject to the policies of the Beijing government.[93]

In July 1997, a government-approved priest, Reverend Lan Xiaopeng, spoke about the impact of Vatican II on the Chinese Catholic Church. He claimed that the Chinese Catholic Church had gradually learned about the changes brought forth by Vatican II. He said that it was not an easy path, as Chinese Catholics had not been familiar with the reforms when China opened in 1979. The Chinese Catholic Church had been burdened with demands for change, "a situation similar to that faced by the western Churches" in the 1950s and the 1960s.[94] Gradually, the Chinese Catholic Church was able to modernize itself through the understanding of Vatican II. Reverend Lan believed that the Chinese Catholic Church had adapted successfully to the spirit of Vatican II:

> Today, the spirit of Vatican II has transformed the face of the Church in China. There is a change in the concept of faith, a notable example being the question of whether there is salvation outside the Church. Other spectacular changes include the use of the vernacular in liturgy, the publication of the Chinese Bible, the formation of various Bible study groups, the publication of Chinese Missal adapted to the situation of mainland China. Moreover, some parishes are beginning to set up parish councils in accordance with the spirit of Vatican II, while some even provide formation for catechists and encourage lay people to take part in evangelisation.[95]

From his point of view, the Chinese Catholic Church had been modernized in terms of spiritual concepts, the recognition of the importance of indigenization, and the reliance on the laity in church matters.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, the Beijing government continued to be concerned about stability in Chinese society. This was especially the case after the June 4 Incident of 1989. Beijing wanted to rally as much support as possible

for its policies and eliminate any unwanted consequences of the previous demonstrations as well as any ill feelings against the authorities. The government therefore asked all religious organizations to concur with its handling of the June 4 Incident. To a certain extent, this discredited the religious groups. To ensure stability among the Catholics, Beijing stressed the importance of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association in bringing the Catholic Church under close scrutiny. The focus of attention was to enforce the policy of "freedom of religious belief," meaning that Catholics would have no right to initiate religious activities outside the government-supported churches and government-sanctioned places of worship. Any form of religious activity had to be closely monitored by the priests and bishops of the open church, which was subject to oversight by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Only in this way could the Beijing leadership feel they had power over the Catholic Church.

Patriotism and loyalty to the government became the key to all policies and directives. The Chinese people had to show their eagerness and demonstrate their contribution to the modernization effort. This was the new era's patriotic united front under which all possible groups had to be approached and made to display their loyalty to the government. Beijing's leaders were therefore unwilling to accept any form of "double loyalty," a concept premised on the argument that it was possible for Chinese Catholics to be loyal to both their country and the external authority of the Vatican. While Pope John Paul II repeatedly emphasized that Chinese Catholics who had pledged loyalty to the Vatican were equally patriotic and supportive of China's reforms, this argument did not find favor with the Beijing government. To the Chinese Communist leaders, no Chinese citizen could simultaneously be loyal to an outside authority and obey the government. To whom would Chinese Catholic listen first: the Vatican or the Beijing government? This was a particularly troublesome issue when it came to conflicts between the Vatican and China, parties between whom no diplomatic relations existed. Indeed, the Vatican retained its ties with Taiwan. In the event of controversy, which side would the Chinese Catholics follow? From the perspective of the Beijing leadership, the Chinese had to follow government positions and directions strictly. Compromise was impossible in this setting. While it seemed to the pope that Catholics looking up to the Vatican for religious guidance was a worldwide norm, Beijing's leaders found this idea totally unacceptable. Sino-Vatican relations remained in the doldrums, largely as a result of the different cultures of China and the Vatican.

CHAPTER 5

THE DYNAMIC 1990S

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, Chinese society witnessed further efforts to promote the Catholic Church. On the societal level, there were more opportunities for church members to take initiative, make a difference, and engage in exchanges. A reviewer, Arne Sovik, commented on an edited volume on the Chinese Catholic Church published in 1995 that the contributors, in writing their articles, offered "hope for the future of a living, dynamic church in tomorrow's China."[1] There was greater recognition of the necessity and importance of providing more and improved training for priests and nuns. Given the essential role of exchange, priests and nuns who were chosen by the approved bishops and were approved by the government could enroll in courses held outside the mainland, for example in the United States.[2] The open church and the underground church had coexisted for so long that the boundary between them had become blurred. Beijing accepted the presence of both the open church and the underground church in society. The concern of the Beijing government was how to deal with the underground church to its own advantage. What were the acceptable modes and boundaries of behavior of the underground church?[3] These were not straightforward questions.

Ongoing changes in Chinese society meant the Beijing government found it necessary to respond to circumstances as they arose. The Fifth National Congress of Catholic Representatives met in Beijing in September 1992, attended by the bishops of the open church.[4] The task of the Congress was to restructure the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission due to a demand for streamlining the political organizations that managed the Catholic Church. The congress spelled out the governance arrangements for these three organizations and chose their personnel. The number of Catholics was growing, and Beijing wanted to ensure that they constituted a stabilizing force in

society. To what extent could the Catholics serve as a stabilizing force in the manner desired by the Communist leaders? This was another complex question.

In the latter half of the 1990s, the Beijing government tried to clarify its religious policy toward Chinese society. The move corresponded with President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States in October 1997. The *White Paper—Freedom of Religious Belief in China* was an assertion on the part of Beijing that it had provided the Chinese people with freedom of religious belief.[5] This proclamation was said to be in line with the contents of the PRC Constitution and mainland laws. At the same time, the *White Paper* noted that the Beijing government had accepted international agreements on human, civil, and political rights.[6] It was in this period that debates on religious freedom in China took place in the international arena. Beijing's declaration was aimed at refuting accusations of religious persecution in Chinese society.

Observers outside China had frequently referenced the revival of religion in China since it opened up to the world. Although there were discussions on the reliability of statistics on Chinese Christians and who represented them, Christianity had been developing quickly in the Catholic and Protestant faiths alike.[7] As sinologist and Protestant minister Philip L. Wickeri explains, "The revival of religion in China is part of a much broader search for meaning in a society undergoing rapid social change."[8] Although reforms had exerted a great impact on the social and economic realms of China, they had had comparatively little effect on its political dimension. How would China handle the greater changes in society and the economy that were closely related to the political system, which unfortunately had fallen behind in the transformation process?[9]

The open church had been designated the "official" and "patriotic" church from the very beginning. Nevertheless, the open church and the underground church were not necessarily against each other. In some places, they were observed to coexist in harmony and even to cooperate on certain matters. For example, an open church bishop shared his home with another underground bishop, a situation the government knew about but did not interfere with.[10] More important, the Vatican had quietly recognized many open church bishops.[11] It was an open secret that the open church bishops were not as "detached" from the Vatican as the Beijing government portrayed them to be. There was also the question of whether some underground bishops really remained as far "underground" as their label suggested.

The Catholic Church and Chinese Society

How could the Vatican relate to Chinese society? A theologian, Peter Hünermann, pointed out in 1990 that the pope had emphasized that the Roman Catholic Church was not a political power and should not be considered on the same level as other states. This was the perspective of the pope as the head of the Roman Catholic Church.[12] The Communist leaders had been afraid the Chinese Catholic Church would comprise religious communities "dependent on a foreign political power, the Vatican."[13] China had become an ascendant power in the 1990s, fully aware of its "political independence and autonomy of the Chinese people."[14] This desire to be free of foreign influence had long historical roots that could be traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when China had first been subjugated by unequal treaties. By the 1990s, China wanted to participate in discussions with other countries on an equal footing and on friendly terms (not being seen as a military threat, especially by the United States and other Asian countries).[15] It became a question of whether the Chinese Catholic Church—if it were subject to the Vatican's lead—could pose an obstacle in resolving the Beijing government's concerns over autonomy and equality.

How would the decisions of Vatican II be regarded in discussing the role of the Catholic Church in Chinese society? Vatican II pointed out that although the Roman Catholic Church should be a "spiritual community," it also had a firm hierarchical structure.[16] However, the Vatican did not have any power over other political states. In fact, the Vatican requested only "the realm of freedom for giving witness to its faith."[17] In terms of relations between the Catholic Church and Chinese society (or any society), each side had its own domain. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church of Vatican II stated, "In their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and self-governing."[18] The Catholic Church should not therefore be seen as a threat to the political power of the Beijing government. The Chinese Catholic Church—if in union with the Universal Church—and the PRC were supposed to be two separate entities with their own separate governance and structures. Furthermore, it was said that the Roman Catholic Church by all means "shows respect for the political freedom and responsibility of citizens and fosters these values."[19] According to the understanding of the Vatican, the Chinese Catholic Church would not interfere with the independence and integrity of the Chinese people and their country by being in union with the Universal Church. Such was the Vatican's perception of its relations with Chinese society.

Another position adopted by the Vatican in its relations with any Catholic community—Chinese society for this purpose—was reflected in some of the decisions of Vatican II.[20] According to the *Decree on Ecumenism*, reconciliation among Catholics should be achieved in several ways: First, Catholics should not pass judgment on others and ought to refrain from using words and actions that might worsen already existing conflicts. Second, Catholics should encourage mutual understanding through communication, faith, and openness. Third, Catholics should work together for social justice and advancement. Fourth, Catholics should reflect on their own consciousness and achieve spiritual wellness. Fifth, Catholics should work toward genuine fraternity and unity. Sixth, Chinese Catholics should keep one another in their prayers. Taking these recommendations into consideration, it would be difficult to see the Vatican as an intrusive force in Chinese society. The values preached after Vatican II were those of fraternity, mutual trust, and cooperation: exactly those that Beijing had been extolling in the Four Modernizations campaign.

From the other side, how did China regard the Vatican? The Beijing government had at times been quite ready to show its anger at the Vatican. A complaint often heard for many years was that the Vatican was interfering in China's internal matters.[21] Although the Chinese Catholics were a small minority in their country, they represented "something very prestigious and influential outside China."[22] The government leaders understood this when talking to foreign visitors, many of whom were Christians themselves. On such occasions, the Chinese officials asserted that the people had "freedom of religion."[23] In the early 1990s, an anonymous Chinese commentator emphasized that the church was not schismatic, although arguments and conflicts existed within the Catholic Church. He believed that even the bishops of the open church, who abided by the decisions of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, did so for the positive reason of better serving the people in their own dioceses. The cause of conflict within Chinese society had always been *politics*. Differences among the Catholic Church were of a political rather than doctrinal nature.[24] Although the open church bishops followed the lead of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the commentator pointed out that in private they felt allegiance to the Vatican.

A priest from Northern China who wished to remain anonymous said visitors sometimes asked him how many Catholic Churches there were in China. His answer was that there was only one Chinese Catholic Church. He explained that difficulties and challenges existed among the Catholics. Nevertheless, these conflicts were attributable to political and historical reasons rather than doctrinal ones.[25] The unnamed priest said the Chinese Catholic Church had no hidden agenda to create problems with the

Vatican. Instead, he stated even on behalf of the open church that the majority of church members regarded themselves as "true members of the Roman Catholic Church, believing it to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."[26] This was what the priest thought the open church members believed, although it differed from the official position of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

Chinese society was making rapid progress, and the Vatican voiced its opinion on the circumstances of that society. A Vatican spokesperson attended the United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 in a move that demonstrated the Vatican's concern for moral and social issues in China. It was also illustrative of Beijing's acquiescence at certain times and in certain events. In the opening address, the Vatican spokesperson stated, "The Delegation of the Holy See wishes first of all to express its particular appreciation to the President, the Government and People of China for the welcome we have received in Beijing and for the excellent arrangements that have been made for the Conference."[27] On this occasion, developments within Chinese society were a matter of concern for the Vatican. The Roman Catholic Church's position on abortion was that men and society should shoulder most of the blame for the suffering of women. Officially, the Beijing government stated that Chinese women had the right to have an abortion. However, as the Vatican claimed, this pronouncement was very misleading and incorrect. The Vatican spokesperson instead talked about the core problems of trafficking for prostitution, irresponsible lifestyles, and most often the refusal to respect the basic rights of women in China.[28] The Vatican was concerned about the social welfare of all Chinese people, not only that of Catholics in the society. The Catholic position on abortion was well known and had been reiterated around the world. Such a demonstration of the Catholic stance on social issues was at least possible in this event in China. Would such an assertion of Catholic morality have any impact on Chinese society? How would this affect Chinese Catholics?

Observers could see that Chinese Catholics were very much devoted to their faith. A scene from the open church was described thus: "On ordinary days in the churches in Beijing or Shanghai, for the early Masses at 5 or 6 A.M., you will see 400 or 500 people, praying constantly. They enter the church, they practice their religion, they go in and out openly, afraid of nothing."[29] The seat of the underground church was in Hebei Province, surrounding Beijing, where the Catholics most devoted to the pope lived, although the number of followers there was uncertain.[30] Pope John Paul II addressed Chinese Catholics in January 1995 and talked about the unity of the church. He reaffirmed his faith in the Chinese people: "How many testimonies of faith, how many messages of fidelity

I have received from communities throughout China! Bishops, priests, religious and lay people have wished to reaffirm their unshakable and full communion with Peter and the rest of the church."[31]

It was difficult to predict what would happen even from one day to the next in the Chinese Catholic Church. One of the reasons for this uncertainty was that the church was reviving rapidly after the Cultural Revolution. The authorities were reluctant to review the number of newly baptized Catholics, even in the open church.[32] There were 3.3 million Catholics in 1950; by the early 1990s, it was estimated the number of Catholics had grown to between 6 million and 10 million.[33] The situation on the mainland was one of constant change. A Christian observer of China stated in 1992, "I don't know of any China analysts who have a clear vision of what is going to happen in China. You never really know what is going to happen next. So many times those who have made predictions were proven wrong."[34] Arne Sovik wrote of *The Catholic Church in Modern China: Perspectives* in 1995 that the work had "not succeeded in dispersing all the fog" but provided "a great deal of knowledge of recent history, some understanding of the issues that have troubled Chinese Catholics for the last half-century, and some sense of the moral and religious dilemmas that burden[ed] their lives."[35] This was the picture portrayed by specialists in Chinese Catholicism, who tried their very best to analyze what little evidence they had available to them.

Both Chinese society and the church were unsettled. Even sinologists and China observers found it difficult to describe what was happening, let alone what would happen next. Another reason for this lack of clarity was the government's refusal to report clearly on many events. Still another reason was that the government used different strategies to deal with the church in different areas. It tended to adopt a policy of suppression in Northern China, whereas in Shanghai there was an eagerness to show outsiders an open Chinese society to attract foreign investment, meaning priests arrested there had a better chance of being released.[36] The government used religion as a convenient means to pursue its goals and immediate objectives.

How did the clergy respond to the changing circumstances? The renowned bishop of Shanghai, Aloysius Jin Luxian, tried to explain relations between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Catholic Church. He said that the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was "a political mass organization," but it was not the church. According to the bishop, the association was responsible for ensuring church work was effectively managed; it had not replaced (and could not replace) the church. He also said the association was an organization that supported

the church and was not there to make a mockery of it.[37] Such was the interpretation of the Shanghai bishop.

As the spokesperson for the open church, it seemed that Bishop Jin was trying to be politically correct. Nevertheless, if the bishops wanted to serve the Chinese people in a safe and convenient environment, they preferred to observe the directives of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. In this light, the open church bishops took care of the well-being of Chinese Catholics and contemplated better ways to get things done. Bishop Jin continued, "I made a point of saying with great seriousness that ours is a Catholic church, and we haven't founded a new church."[38] The open church insisted there was only one Catholic Church in Chinese society, and it was a church that had long historical roots. There should not be any doubt about the doctrine of the open church or the faith of its lay members. Bishop Jin was arguing against the accusation that the open church merely rubber-stamped the policies of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. He stated that "it is a fallacy to describe us as a 'patriotic church' for the sole reason that we have a patriotic association!"[39] He was also trying to clear his name after being criticized for serving the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

How then did Catholics in Shanghai cope with the unpredictable circumstances they faced? Songjiang County in the suburbs of Shanghai had moved in line with the country's reform effort. Catholicism had a long tradition in Songjiang County, which was home to a large Catholic population. The Catholic tradition there had a significant influence on Shanghai City and neighboring areas.[40] Most of the Catholics in Songjiang County were farmers and fishermen, while others were factory workers, teachers, local cadres, and students. At the same time, the education level of local Catholics had also been improving. Some of them had even attended lower or upper middle school.[41] Nonetheless, there were not enough churches to meet the needs of local Catholics.[42] It was in this context that a problem arose with the Beijing government, as "freedom of religious belief" meant that Catholics could practice their religion in officially recognized venues only. As Xu Hongbao reported in 1992, "The religious policy lays it down that religious activities must only take place in a church, so that, in villages where there is no church, priests who are patriotic [belonging to the open church] and law-abiding hold back from breaking the law; they cannot and dare not undertake their work among the Catholic people."[43] The Catholic diocese of Shanghai City and official departments in Songjiang County cooperated for some time and succeeded in regaining two churches that had previously been confiscated. The relevant departments and officials involved in the fight for

the church properties sometimes became very emotional. Some officials demanded money even if the properties could not be returned.[44]

The village of Zhangpu in Songjiang County, a small locality on the Shanghai City periphery, had remained an important Catholic area. The Catholic population of Songjiang County was reported to have increased from 2.7 million to 3 million, and the number of Catholics in Zhangpu was increasing at a similar rate.[45] Reports showed that Chinese families were responsible for passing the Catholic faith from one generation to another. Even in the 1960s, Catholic families had their babies baptized and secretly taught them the Catholic doctrine. According to local Catholics, continuing the Catholic faith within their family was a basic moral precept passed down from their ancestors, grandparents, and parents. Devout Catholics could not dismiss this family tradition.[46] In Zhangpu, Catholics usually talked about the doctrine with one another but very rarely discussed it with non-Catholics. The Catholics in this single Chinese village could be divided into three groups: the first was the older generation who were simple and prone to rumors, the second was made up of those who had received some level of education such as attending primary or secondary school, and the third comprised others who had been educated to a similar level to those in the second group but were much more devoted to the pope.[47] With the progress made in modernizing the country, the composition of the Catholic population gradually changed (even in a village that already had a substantial proportion of believers). Chinese society came to host an increasingly complex population with the development of education, values, and so on. The extent to which Catholic moral values would continue to affect believers, or even influence nonbelievers, remained to be seen. Nonetheless, Catholicism, like other foreign religions, had become entrenched among devoted families and believers.

The Experience and Transformation of Individuals in the Church

The experiences of individual priests in China varied considerably. In July 1991, Joseph Liao Hongqing became the first priest to be ordained in Meizhou in Guangdong Province in more than four decades. Meizhou Diocese was an important missionary area for American Maryknoll priests and nuns before 1949. Liao was ordained by an open church bishop and after ordination served in the Meizhou Diocese with its approximately 12,000 Catholics. At the age of 25, Father Liao had just graduated from the Central and Southern Theological and Philosophical Seminary in Wuchang in Hubei Province.[48] The open church had obviously realized a long

time prior that there were insufficient priests for the dioceses around the country and that there was an urgent need for the formation of young men.

Young priests also served the church as lecturers in seminaries. The Central and Southern Theological and Philosophical Seminary in Wuchang had a young teaching staff. Just as the aforementioned Father Liao had received training in this seminary, the lecturers there had a similar background. In August 1991, three newly ordained priests assumed positions as lecturers in the Wuchang Seminary where they had received their education. These recently appointed lecturers—Joseph Gan Junqiu (Guangzhou), Joseph Huang Bingzhang (Shantou), and Francis Wu Zhengfu (Hankou)—came from the interior and the southern part of China.[49] Wuchang Seminary served six provinces: Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Henan, Hubei, and Hunan. Like Father Liao, the three lecturers were in their twenties and thirties and were fledgling yet promising fellows. They would be responsible for teaching as well as for tackling student matters and the general affairs of the seminary. Chinese dioceses had a shortage of young priests, and boosting their numbers had been difficult because seminarians needed six years to complete their priestly formation. During this six-year period, newly ordained priests had to study four years of theology, two years of philosophy, and take additional courses on history, languages, music, and other subjects.

Individual candidates for the priesthood seemed to have many opportunities in the early 1990s. In September 1991, the Guangzhou Diocese considered establishing a minor seminary to prepare young men for the Wuchang Seminary. The bishop of Guangzhou, James Lin Bingliang, admitted that seminarian training had become an imperative matter. This "minor seminary" would hopefully satisfy the demand among young Catholics to receive formation.[50] Although this was a piece of encouraging news, young men had to meet several requirements before becoming a seminarian and eventually a priest. First, their application had to be voluntary and have parental support. Second, they had to seek the recommendation of the parish priest. Third, the former employers of candidates had to offer them work again if they failed to complete the training. Bishop Lin was again in favor of selecting young priests to teach in the Wuchang Seminary so as to train new lecturers and share resources.

The church also recognized the need for more and younger priests in the large city of Nanjing. Four priests were ordained at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in October 1991.[51] Chen Xiangsheng (Nanjing), Chen Xiaoping (Haimen), Li Shilu, and Wong Dongfeng (the latter two from Xuzhou) were all in their midtwenties and came from different localities. They graduated from the prominent Sheshan Seminary on the outskirts of Shanghai. The ordination ceremony was a well-attended event,

attracting somewhere between five hundred and six hundred people. In the church, the clergy and the laity sensed that the supply of new faces and energetic people was faltering. Even in Beijing, the church admitted it was necessary to recruit fresh young blood. As 1991 drew to a close, the new seminary in Beijing planned an advanced curriculum to train lecturers for seminaries elsewhere.[52] Despite the admission of young candidates, statistics showed that most lecturers in seminaries were in their seventies or eighties. This old generation of lecturers had been ordained no later than the 1940s. A reporter noted that "a few young priests in northeastern China expressed the desire to learn more about modern theology, especially post-Second Vatican Council theology."[53] They wanted to catch up with developments outside the mainland and current theological studies. The Chinese Catholic Church had lagged behind for a long time and would have to make a huge effort to keep up with new interpretations and understanding of doctrine.

In 1992, the head of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference proclaimed that facilitating the training of priests, nuns, and catechists was the top priority of the church.[54] According to the official, the church was "short of religious personnel and catechists to help evangelization in Catholic communities."[55] The objective was to emphasize the importance of evangelical life among Catholics, who needed to spend more time reading the Bible. Nevertheless, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference thought it was not yet time to adopt the vernacular liturgy because they did not have any models for a Chinese language missal. The position of the authorities was as follows: "Increased ideological training for seminarians and younger clerics should be expected in the coming months."[56] It was evident that "a 40-year gap exists between older priests, generally in their 70's, and those who are younger," and the Beijing government wanted to ensure the correct ideological education of church leaders of the future.[57]

In 1992, dioceses in Fujian moved far ahead of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference by adopting a vernacular Mass for their people. Fujianese priests believed it was easier for Catholics to take part in Chinese language liturgy, which would deepen their faith and encourage their participation in church activities.[58] At the same time, it would draw more attention from nonbelievers and help promote preaching. However, there was still the problem that such training in Chinese language liturgy for priests was not readily available. Although the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference had created a Liturgy Reform Committee in 1986, it had not yet promulgated any liturgical models. Priests in the Fuzhou, Mindong, and Xiamen dioceses of Fujian Province had therefore been forced to adopt a new Chinese language liturgy for themselves. The Fujianese were more innovative than other Chinese priests. According to Fujianese priest

He Dunqian in 1992, "The Church in the mainland officially still uses the Tridentine Latin Mass, the Church's virtually universal norm" from 1570 to Vatican II.[59] It was only in recent years that the capital of Fujian Province, Fuzhou, had begun experiencing the Chinese language liturgy. Priests had gone through many trials and struggled to keep up their spirits.

The key experience of Father He Dunqian was attending liturgies that used Chinese missals in Hong Kong. He told a reporter that "he himself began to use the post-Vatican II liturgy in his own church soon after he learned about it while visiting relatives in Hong Kong in 1989."[60] Father He managed to get hold of Chinese missals from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Another Fujianese priest said he had studied the Chinese Mass from a videotape of Pope John Paul II celebrating Mass about a decade earlier. The other way in which the Chinese liturgy was disseminated was through a Hong Kong priest, Thomas Law Kwok-fai (the director of Hong Kong's Diocesan Liturgy Commission), who taught Chinese liturgy in Shanghai's Sheshan Seminary, where a number of Fujianese priests had previously studied. In Mindong Diocese, Bishop Zhang Shizhi had for some time used Chinese in the liturgy. To incorporate the changes brought about by Vatican II, Bishop Zhang asked the churches in his diocese to move their altars toward the people so the priest could face them during Mass.[61] However, the bishop said the Chinese liturgy was still so new that he had to explain it carefully to his fellow Catholics. The Fujianese Catholics needed time to adapt to the different practices introduced to them. Every step forward required much effort, time, adjustment, and adaptation.

The reforms made in the Fujian dioceses revealed the eagerness for change among the clergy. Within the church, even the older generation of Catholics was receptive to the Chinese language liturgy. All they asked for was to be provided with more Chinese missals. The Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference—representing the central authorities but offering no advice on Chinese language Mass—thus lagged behind the pace of change in society and provincial development. It appears that other provinces also adopted the Chinese language liturgy and used Chinese for the ordination of priests. This trend also hinted at the fact that younger priests were not well versed in Latin, unlike their older counterparts.[62] Chinese society (especially its bishops, priests, nuns, and lay people) had progressed faster than the political authorities. From a positive perspective, this progress could lead to better communication between the Chinese societies of the mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan due to the need for mainland priests to consult their colleagues in order to avoid interpreting Chinese language liturgy from various sources incorrectly. It was reported that priests who had not received proper training might not be able "to grasp the liturgical spirit and help Catholics experience

it."[63] Some well-intentioned people said Catholic dioceses in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan could help the mainland church "promote the Chinese liturgy, as well as provide advice on church design, ways of offering the Chinese Mass, the meaning of the liturgy and homily reference materials."[64] This was because immediately after Vatican II, Catholics in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan had followed the liturgical reform and established the most suitable Chinese language liturgies for themselves. The needs of the Catholic Church therefore facilitated better interaction between Chinese societies on the mainland and on the periphery. It was a development that could generate mutual advancement and learning. Social needs and change could lead to positive outcomes.

A young priest, Father Joseph Peter Xu Honggeng, presented his reflections on the Chinese Catholic Church at an overseas conference in 1996. The venue was the United States Catholic China Bureau's Fifteenth National Catholic China Conference in Holyoke, Massachusetts. It was on this occasion that Father Xu talked about the positive and negative aspects of the church in China.

First, he was very grateful for the faith of Chinese Catholics, who had persevered through all the years of hardship. Father Xu truly thought miracles had occurred in the Chinese church. He remembered the days during the Cultural Revolution when his mother held strongly to her faith, saying he saw her make the sign of the cross and pray in private. He was only seven or eight years old at the time and did not understand what his mother had been doing or why she was doing it. Reflecting on the past, Father Xu was highly appreciative of his mother's perseverance and dedication. She continued to pray by herself, even during what were terrible times. "Although she and her family had suffered," Father Xu said, "she continued to keep faith and hope that God would be with her and her family."[65] More important, he believed that the faith of his mother had paved the way for his vocation. He believed he had been very fortunate and was grateful for his mother's persistence, as not many families dared practice their faith during the great turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.[66] Father Xu was one of those Chinese people who grew up in a Catholic family in which the faith was passed on from one generation to another in a pattern expected of devout Catholics (despite political suppression, revolution, and chaos). These Catholics are usually referred to as Old Catholics since their roots go back to the sixteenth century. The priests from those families are said to come "from Old Catholic families."

Second, Father Xu felt encouraged by the increase in vocations since the seminaries and convents had been reopened. The first seminary (Sheshan) had reopened in Shanghai in 1982. According to Father Xu, men and women went in groups to receive their education. Even the only

son or daughter of some families had received the calling and decided to enter a seminary or convent.[67]

Third, the younger generation was interested in religion. Father Xu said that many young people felt spiritually poor and were seeking the meaning of life, thus making it possible for the clergy to spread the Good News to youngsters in society.[68] Having alluded to the tremendous faith of the Chinese and the increase in vocations, Father Xu then pointed to some of the problems. He stated that more than 650 men had been ordained as priests in the previous decade. There were 1,450 seminarians in China at the time he made his speech.[69] These men and women were trained to become priests and nuns within a relatively short period. While it was important to meet the need for priests and nuns in the dioceses, Father Xu was afraid these newly trained men and women might not have sufficient religious education.[70] The older generation of clergy and religious women were not well aware of current developments in theology. Senior and junior members of the church alike were still trying to grasp the basics of Vatican II. Individual bishops had therefore been sending priests, seminarians, nuns, and laity abroad. The intention was to broaden their knowledge of events in the outside world. Those fortunate enough to be dispatched went to the Philippines, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, and the United States. Some traveled from the mainland to Hong Kong. The Chinese Catholic Church obviously needed to be modernized.

The foregoing précis of events is based on information provided by a Chinese Catholic priest to outsiders. There were attempts at indigenization, self-education, and development among members of the Chinese church. According to Father Xu, the Chinese still sought to understand the transformation brought about by Vatican II. From another perspective, outsiders wrote of what they had seen in the cathedral in Beijing. On a superficial level, Catholicism seemed to exhibit many Western characteristics; however, this impression was one gained only by casual and inexperienced observers. Paradoxes existed beneath the surface of the Western architecture and icons. Cultural exchanges were already an issue of priority. An American who joined a study tour of China wrote that Catholics packed in for Mass at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Beijing. An estimated eight hundred people attended Mass in this famous cathedral, one of the five Catholic churches in Beijing.[71] He described the scene as one that appeared like a mass of black and gray heads nodding to reflect on their own consciousness.[72] "The congregation [of Chinese] was chanting in a monosyllabic, high-pitched tone," he continued, most of them kneeling and many holding the rosary in their hands.[73]

The American saw a mixture of Western culture and Chinese participation and wondered about the paradoxes that surrounded him from all

sides. There were portraits of Western saints on the walls; the Chinese did not have any difficulty accepting and appreciating Western religious icons.[74] When the older generation of Catholics was brought up they were taught by Western missioners, and Chinese priests and nuns were trained by foreigners. The Western portraits and icons therefore came as no surprise to them. In fact, these icons reminded them of their faithful days of the past. The American later related, "In yet another cultural twist, I was told that Eastern icons almost certainly will be introduced in the years ahead because young Chinese artists are now studying in the United States and will presumably return eager to create authentic Chinese art."[75]

The fact that the Chinese went abroad to learn how to create their own Chinese art might seem ironic. Nevertheless, the American realized that "it was only a ripple in that sea of contradictions that is China."[76] It simply demonstrated that the Chinese were eager to learn from the West as their modern history had shown. The American admitted that after only a few hours in Beijing, he had already changed his own preconceptions or biases of Chinese society. Regardless of how "patriotic" the Chinese Catholic Church was, the Chinese people and even their government craved foreign ideas, theology, and even what appeared obvious: religious icons.

Conclusion

The 1990s were a decade of expectations, transformation, and continuous modernization. Members of the Chinese Catholic Church reflected on their circumstances, both positive and negative. While China was attracting foreign visitors and investment, society was also changing with the import of new ideas, technology, and resources. As Chinese people moved from one place to another, Chinese society entered a state of flux. Who could predict what would happen even the next day? This applied not only to society itself but also specifically to the Catholic Church though its adherents were a minority of the Chinese population. The 1990s saw the emergence of a new generation of priests and nuns educated in a different manner from that of older clergy and nuns. The new generation of church members wanted to learn more, see more, and experiment with new liturgy. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association could only monitor the Catholic Church and could not prevent Catholics from looking for more and better ways of worship. The political authorities lagged behind as they struggled to satisfy the ever-growing demands of Chinese society and the Chinese Catholic Church.

It was evident that religion in China was undergoing a revival, and it became a topic for research and study. Christianity grew and developed

among both Catholics and Protestants. The Chinese Catholic Church began receiving more information on the Vatican. How would the Vatican exert an impact on Chinese society and on Catholics in particular? From the Vatican's perspective, it did not see itself as a political threat to China. The Vatican only assumed spiritual leadership of Catholics around the world and would not interfere with the rule of the Beijing leaders. It fully accepted the independence and integrity of China. Nonetheless, the Beijing government was always suspicious of the influence the Vatican could have on Chinese society. Stability was the major issue. Religion needed to serve as a stabilizing force, as Beijing had always stressed. How would Chinese Catholics shape their relationship with the Vatican with the political authorities overseeing them?

Chinese Catholics had shown themselves to be very devoted. Churches were always filled with people for Mass. The pope was very appreciative of the devotion and faith of the Chinese, a message that was echoed many times. In 1995, the pope talked about Chinese Catholics and stressed the unity of the Chinese church. For different reasons of their own, both the pope and the Beijing government emphasized the existence of only one Chinese Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Chinese society and the church were unsettled. How would future events affect them? Some observers believed that most Chinese Catholics felt a union with the pope. How would the political authorities react in future? There was no clear picture for the future. The fog lingered.

Individual Catholics had their own experiences in China and abroad. Some who were most eager for change were able to tell their own stories about being educated abroad or by foreigners teaching in China. The younger generation was a fledgling cohort of promising, energetic fellows. How would younger Catholics transform their own church? The church was opening up new seminaries and convents, and the priests were preaching to curious individuals. Fresh young blood was being recruited for the church. The new generation of church members would be responsible for how matters developed in future. How could they change the church? To what extent could they make an impact? How would the authorities perceive the transformation within the church? How would Chinese society and the church relate to the Chinese societies on the periphery of the mainland—namely, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan? Some societies and Catholic leaders were more outreaching than others. It was a positive sign to see China progressing despite its difficulties and to see the Catholic Church introducing reforms despite the lack of proper guidance and resources. Church members recognized their difficulties yet still continued with their endeavors. In China, there was always the desire for change and hope for a better future.

Chapter 6

The First Decade of the Twenty-First Century

Introduction

In the first year of the new decade, news came of the arrest of members of the underground church. News reports of August 2001 mentioned that those arrested included a bishop and a number of nuns. While the underground church was illicit in the eyes of the Communist regime, foreign observers considered such arrests illegal as the public security office offered no explanation or warrants.[1] (The explanation sometimes given was that members of the underground church were not being arrested because of their religion but because they violated the law by worshipping in unregistered venues.) The incident was one of the numerous events covered in reports circulated outside China. The negative publicity on China's handling of the underground church continued as the first decade of the twenty-first century progressed. Such incidents arose one after another, and Beijing considered any criticism to be interference in the internal matters of the country. Whether such criticism had an impact on the Beijing government depended on the circumstances. Internally, the Beijing leadership retained its control over the Catholic Church, but externally, Sino-Vatican relations remained an issue that attracted a good deal of interest and attention. After all, domestic affairs and foreign relations exerted an impact on each other. Domestic matters could become issues of international concern while foreign relations might promote or hinder the development of the Chinese Catholic Church. China's affairs became increasingly complicated as the country grew in prosperity and accumulated power and influence in the international arena.

SINO-VATICAN RELATIONS

The *Economist* asked the following question in 2001: "Both China and the Roman Catholic church have much to gain from patching up their differences. But where to start?"[2] In January 2000, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association appointed five bishops who had not been approved by the Vatican. These "ordinations of bishops without papal mandate" became troublesome in the context of Sino-Vatican relations.[3] Also in 2000, the Beijing government became tremendously upset over the conferral of sainthood on 120 Catholics whom the Vatican perceived as martyrs killed in China between 1648 and 1930.[4] From the perspective of the Communist leaders, these people were not "saints" but "sinners" who had trampled on the Chinese people.

In March 2000, Pope John Paul II held an ordinary public consistory to vote on the canonization of Chinese martyrs. After the voting, the pope agreed that the martyrs would be canonized on October 1, 2000, one of the three dates set for canonizations in the year 2000.[5] (This chapter later explains that the pope got blamed for this date. Actually, it was the only Sunday date left on the calendar for the event. The pope did not decide the calendar. The calendar was set by others who, in this case, mindlessly forgot that it was China's National Day. It was a serious mistake, and unfortunately the pope did not notice it either.) On that date, the pope expressed the view that the psalm "The commands of the Lord give us joy" described "the experience of Augustine Zhao Rong and 119 companions, martyrs in China," and that their testimonies provided Catholics with "a glimpse of their state of soul marked by the deepest serenity and joy."[6] He continued, "The Church is grateful today to her Lord, who has blessed her and fills her with the brilliant light of the holiness of these sons and daughters of China."[7]

While the pope said it was not an occasion to assess the many centuries of Chinese history, he emphasized that the church wished to recognize the "courage and coherence" of all Catholics through the proclamation of sainthood, which was "an honor for the noble Chinese people."[8] These Chinese "men and women of every age and situation: priests, religious and laity, gave witness to the same conviction and joy . . . and to the Church with the gift of their lives."[9] Apart from these Chinese men and women, there were also "missionaries, men and women, who left their own countries and endeavored to enter into the Chinese situation."[10] The pope announced the canonization of the 120 China martyrs at the dawn of the new millennium.

The pope intended to honor the Chinese martyrs and to use the opportunity to speak to the Chinese people: "Likewise, my thoughts reach

out to all the Catholic faithful in China. I know that you are spiritually united with us, and I am certain that you understand that this is a special moment of grace for the whole Church, and for the entire Catholic community in China. I wish to assure you once more that I pray for you every day. May the Holy Martyrs comfort and sustain you as, like them, you bravely and generously bear witness both to your fidelity to Jesus Christ and to the genuine love of your people."[11] The pope once again stressed the "double loyalty" of Chinese Catholics to both the Roman Catholic Church and their country. The canonization of 120 China martyrs was seen as a tremendous celebration on the part of the entire Catholic Church for the Chinese people. The pope believed the event recognized the "heroic fidelity" of the martyrs and their "nobility of soul."[12] At the same time, he made it clear that the Catholic Church had no wish to pass any judgment on this long period of Chinese history.[13] More significantly, he hoped that the testimony of the martyrs would remind Catholics of the long history of cultural exchange between foreign missioners and the Chinese since the time of Matteo Ricci. It was a proclamation of the missioners and the laity in China as saints of the Catholic Church.

From the Vatican's perspective, the move was meant to be a manifestation of goodwill. Nevertheless, cultural relations were not that simple or straightforward. What was meant to be an extension of goodwill on the part of the Vatican was seen as a humiliation by the Beijing government. Because the martyrs had previously been beatified, the Vatican did not expect such furious denunciation from Beijing.[14] Beijing reacted by asking the Catholic Church of each province to rise up against the canonization.

The protest of the open church in China focused on several points.[15] First of all, October 1 was China's National Day, and from the Communist perspective, it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the Chinese Catholic Church from the Vatican. The selection of this date implied a challenge to Chinese patriotism and the autonomy of the church. Moreover, Beijing pointed out that some of the saints were actually individuals tagged as "criminals" in Chinese history. The use of the term "martyr saints" was scandalous to the Chinese Communists, who charged the Vatican with intentionally demeaning Chinese history. The term implied that because these 120 people were killed for political reasons, they were martyrs. Beijing was extremely angry at the canonization, the choice of the date for the canonization, and the 120 martyrs selected.

Most of the martyrs (86 of them) had died during the Boxer Uprising of 1900. The official newspaper *People's Daily* accused the Vatican of offending the Chinese people, claiming that the martyrs were in fact those who violated Chinese laws of the time and were protected by

Western imperialists. Moreover, it said that they had committed unforgivable crimes and deserved the punishment they had received. Beijing's position not only directly opposed that of the Vatican; even worse, the former considered the latter's move an offense to China and the Chinese people. The leaders of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association reiterated the official denunciation of the Vatican.[16] Some of the open church clergy—under duress, of course—did as well, though it was not by any means all of them. Nevertheless, Sino-Vatican relations plumbed to new depths of despair and depression.

As Deborah A. Brown comments, "In the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s, the Catholic hierarchy in places around the globe, such as in Chile, Mexico, East Timor, Poland, Ukraine, and elsewhere, has encouraged freedom and the expression of the creative energies of individuals."[17] She claims that Pope John Paul II was the most influential religious leader of the twentieth century and remained so in the early part of the twenty-first century. There is no doubt that the late pope stands as not only a widely admired religious leader but also an authority who had a great impact on international affairs. While Brown is critical of the Beijing government, her evaluation of the pope's stature around the world is very positive.

As Jean-Paul Wiest explains, problems of Sino-Vatican relations often resulted from cultural differences between the two sides.[18] The month of October had special meaning for the Catholic Church for several reasons. October is the month of Our Lady of the Rosary, and foreign missioners introduced the devotion to Mary and the recitation of the rosary to China. In the province of Hebei, Chinese Catholics were called the "Old Rosary Sayers." Wiest observed that the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Virgin Mary were the two pictures most often found in Chinese Catholic churches and homes and that the Chinese said the prayers of the rosary. Its designation as the month of Our Lady of the Rosary was one reason October was important for Catholics around the world. Another reason was that October was considered the mission month, the month to emphasize the importance of overseas missions. As Wiest points out, "In 2000 John Paul II opened Mission Month with the canonization of 120 martyrs who died in China."[19] The Vatican considered the event a solely religious issue that did not have any political implications. Nevertheless, this was not how the Beijing government interpreted it.

China has a long history of subjugation to Western imperialism and unequal treaties. The lessons of the past were entrenched in contemporary Chinese society and in the people's mentality. First, it was in the month of October in 1860 that the Anglo-French invasion, sometimes referred to as the Second Opium War, took place. The incident forced the Qing regime to take the unequal treaties imposed on it seriously, yield to

the demands for increasing concessions to the foreign powers, and finally realize that the Chinese were no match for the armed forces of the West. It was also in October 1860 that the magnificent Summer Palace was burnt down. The date October 1860 was therefore one of national humiliation. Second, the 1911 revolution that eventually overthrew the Qing dynasty broke out in October. The date October 1911 represented another aspect of Chinese history: that of national awakening and the determination to acquire equal standing with foreign powers. From national humiliation to the awakening of the Chinese people to create a new China, progress had been difficult, complicated, and full of hardship. The progress symbolized the perseverance of the Chinese people in the midst of external threats. Third, as explained earlier, October 1 marked the founding of the new China, representing a demarcation from the many years of Western encroachment.[20] In summary, it was not surprising that the date reminded the Beijing government of the decades of subjugation by Western imperialism. No matter how the Vatican explained its intention or goodwill, the Chinese leaders found its reasons ridiculous and the canonization insulting to national prestige.

Writing in 2005, Hong Kong Precious Blood Sister Beatrice Leung, then professor of international relations at Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages in Taiwan, argued that the old hands in the Vatican were no longer in the position to formulate policy toward China. She argued that the authority charged with tackling Chinese affairs had changed from the Secretariat of State of the Vatican to Propaganda Fide in the 1990s.[21] According to Leung, the head and the assistants of Propaganda Fide initially knew very little about China. Therefore, it was crucial when in early 2002 the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide held a meeting to gather information on the situation in China: "During this consultation, 51 specialists in China studies as well as religious superiors from the USA, Europe and Asia whose . . . men and women had been engaging in the China mission, came together to give a comprehensive picture on the current situation of the Catholic Church in China, regarding what kind of bridging work they had been doing and what their future plans were."[22] Although Propaganda Fide tried to seek advice from various sources, it did not have the appropriate staff to understand Chinese affairs and negotiate with the Beijing government.

On the Beijing side, Chinese leaders officially recognized five religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism.[23] Beijing had its own individual associations to monitor the activities of these respective religions. The same problems that had hindered the normalization of diplomatic relations between Beijing and the Vatican for decades continued into the twenty-first century. The Universal Catholic Church requires

every Catholic Church in the world to look to it for leadership. The Holy See is the seat of authority over the entire Roman Catholic Church everywhere throughout the whole world. Nevertheless, the Vatican is also an independent state. As described in previous chapters, the Beijing government had always been suspicious of foreign interference in China's internal matters. The Vatican's status as a sovereign state complicated the problem of oversight of the Chinese Catholic Church, as Beijing was not happy to see a religious organization in its midst subject to the leadership of a foreign state.[24] For example, the Vatican recognized the bishops of the underground church. Moreover, the Vatican's ongoing recognition of Taiwan was totally unacceptable to the Beijing government as the mainland rose as a great power at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In Sino-Vatican relations, the three obstacles were "competition for final authority" over the Chinese Catholic Church, the tricky relations between the open church and the underground church, and the Taiwan problem.[25]

One interesting observation made in the second half the first decade of the new millenium was that regardless of the stagnation in Sino-Vatican relations, the Chinese Catholic Church continued to grow.[26] The expansion of the Chinese Catholic Church seemed obvious, as reported in *The New York Times*.[27] As Nicholas D. Kristof, a well-known and informed journalist, commented in 2006, "The rise of Christianity constitutes one more challenge to the Communist Party by establishing a network the party cannot easily control."[28] The international community was well aware of this complication in Chinese religious matters. The problems manifested by Sino-Vatican relations were only one of the hurdles China needed to tackle in international relations.

Commentators on the Chinese Catholic Church included the head of the Hong Kong Catholic Church, Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kiun. Unlike his predecessor, Zen was a very open critic of the Beijing government. His approach was therefore very different from the line taken by the Hong Kong church since the establishment of the Chinese Communist state. On the Beijing side, the Communist leaders were upset with Zen's extremely harsh criticism. There were reports saying that the Vatican would elevate the bishop to a cardinal, and people guessed at the reasons behind the promotion. Zen's predecessor John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung had been a cardinal. According to the Hong Kong newspaper *South China Morning Post*, Pope Benedict XVI was eager to have Zen as a cardinal, and his decision was a very personal one.[29] As the report stated, "Church insiders said elevating Bishop Zen . . . would show the Holy See's recognition of the Hong Kong diocese and goodwill towards China."[30]

The reports ultimately proved correct; Bishop Zen became a cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church. The tricky point was that Zen would

become the only Chinese cardinal located in a place under present mainland China's sovereignty. The pope saw the decision as a "welcome move" for the Chinese on the mainland and potentially for those based overseas as well.[31] As a man very critical of the Hong Kong government and of Beijing and its religious policy, Zen considered "his new position" with interest.[32] Zen hoped to be the bridge for communication between the Vatican and Beijing despite his ongoing condemnation of the policies of the Communist leaders. That was not the official explanation for his appointment, but Zen preferred to read it this way. As the *South China Morning Post* pointed out, Zen was "a controversial figure, even within his diocese" in Hong Kong.[33] Zen had attacked the Beijing government over the suppression of the underground church. From a source in the Vatican, it was known that Beijing had not been consulted beforehand. Nevertheless, the Vatican believed that this would not have any negative effect on its relations with China.[34] Speaking to reporters, Zen was confident that the appointment would lead to the constructive development of Sino-Vatican relations.

In a regular briefing session the day after the pope named Zen a cardinal in February 2006, China's Foreign Ministry warned Zen not to interfere in the country's internal affairs.[35] According to the spokesman, the Beijing government upheld the idea that religion should not interfere with politics. He said that Zen's promotion would not change Beijing's position on Sino-Vatican relations and that the Vatican must cut off its ties with Taiwan before it could proceed to negotiate diplomatic relations with China. In addition, he mentioned that "diplomatic negotiations were a matter for the governments of China and the Vatican" and that communications between mainland and Hong Kong church leaders could only be considered "on an unofficial basis."[36] At the same time, however, top officials in charge of religious affairs in China "welcomed an offer by the cardinal-designate to visit the mainland for talks, and urged him to contribute to rebuilding Sino-Vatican relations."[37] Vice-chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association Anthony Liu Bainian sent his congratulations to Zen and indicated that he would be receptive to any suggestions from the latter to open a dialogue with the mainland. In turn, Zen described his role as that of an advisor to the pope on China matters. Zen believed that the Vatican could appreciate the knowledge and experience the Hong Kong church had concerning the mainland church.

Zen's elevation remained the leading news story on Sino-Vatican relations for a couple of months. According to a senior official in the Vatican, the Holy See was interested in reaching a compromise with Beijing over religious rights to improve relations between the two sides.[38] Nonetheless,

the main issue—"the mainland's insistence that it should appoint bishops and determine who should be trained as priests"[39]—remained irresolvable. There were people in the Vatican who thought that Zen could serve as a bridge to China. Although Zen was a vocal critic of Beijing, some in the Vatican saw him as the most qualified person for this task, because no one else in the Vatican had equivalent qualifications. Zen continued to be a staunch supporter of human rights issues and refused to temper his passion. Moreover, he insisted that the Vatican should not establish diplomatic relations with Beijing until the Communist leaders reconsidered their religious policies. Zen emphasized that Beijing should truly give religious freedom to the people, as religion served as a stabilizing force in society.[40] During this same time frame, Pope Benedict XVI indicated his desire to visit China![41] Hong Kong priest Dominic Chan Chi-ming invited the pope to visit the mainland.

Disputes over the appointment of bishops haunted both the Vatican and China. Shortly after the controversy with Zen, the Vatican made attempts to dissuade Beijing from appointing a new bishop.[42] Though both the Vatican and Zen raised objections, Beijing moved ahead with the appointment of Liu Xinhong as bishop of a diocese in Anhui Province in May 2006. As one report stated, "A clear message was sent by the Holy See to Father Liu's house in Anhui . . . that he had not been endorsed by the Vatican to become a bishop."[43] This was done after much discussion in the Vatican. On the Beijing side, however, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association denied having received messages from the Vatican. It was difficult to read the mind of the Beijing leaders, as Liu had been the second prelate appointed within a week.

In his usual critical manner, Zen said that Beijing's moves were destructive to the mutual trust needed for establishing a dialogue with the Vatican. He also claimed that Beijing had caused "serious damage" to the communion of the Chinese Catholic Church with the Universal Church.[44] On the Chinese side, the spokesperson for the China Catholic Bishops Conference responded that there was a need to appoint bishops to fill openings in the dioceses. In addition, the spokesperson warned that the Vatican should not "politicize" matters.[45] The China Catholic Bishops Conference stated that the Vatican should "give its priority to the consideration of the development of churches," "be magnanimous and tolerant," and be aware that there were many dioceses without bishops in China.[46] The newly appointed bishop, Liu Xinhong, had faced serious pressure and admitted he was perturbed by the controversy over his situation.[47] Chinese bishops had been suffering from the squabbles between China and the Vatican for some time. Bishop Liu was one of the many who emphasized their Christian faith but at the same time pledged loyalty

to the Communist regime for the sake of national unity, construction, and modernization. In a way, all bishops suffered under such political circumstances. The State Administration for Religious Affairs (formerly the Bureau of Religious Affairs) also attacked the Vatican in a move that was hazardous to Sino-Vatican relations.

In January 2007, the *South China Morning Post* reported that the Vatican would have to devise new strategies to respond to Beijing's unilateral appointment of bishops. Beijing repeatedly claimed that it did not need to secure the approval of the Vatican.[48] Zen was then seeking to retire from his position as head of the Hong Kong Catholic Church to turn his attention to mainland affairs. The political situation changed rapidly. That same month, Pope Benedict XVI approved the ordination of a bishop for the diocese of Guangzhou. It was "the first such backing given by the Holy See after bilateral ties were strained" in the previous year.[49] Chinese sources were rather receptive to the attitude of the Vatican. The appointment of bishops caused difficulties in Sino-Vatican relations, though the Vatican had quietly approved many bishops of the open church in the past. With such incidents repeatedly occurring, the Vatican decided to set up a commission to handle Chinese affairs.[50] The Vatican had long considered creating a permanent body to formulate its China policy.

In mid-2007, Pope Benedict XVI called for a "respectful and constructive dialogue" with the Beijing government.[51] The press reported as follows: "While the Pope reiterated his power to appoint bishops on the mainland—a major point of discord between the two sides—he expressed the hope that an agreement with Beijing over an appointment mechanism could be made."[52] The pope's 54-page letter written in Italian was released at Saint Peter's cathedral in Rome on Pentecost Sunday, May 27; the translation was released on June 30. The pope's letter represented a big move on the part of the Vatican and was aimed at finding ways to unify the open church and the underground church.[53] It was the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association's decision to disseminate the letter. An underground bishop believed that "the unification between official and underground church should be the ultimate goal of mainland Catholics but this would only happen when the mainland had real religious freedom."[54]

In his letter of 2007, Pope Benedict XVI expressed his "fraternal closeness" to the Chinese.[55] He explained his purpose was to provide some guidelines for the Chinese Catholic Church and its evangelization work. Here the pontiff emphasized the spiritual needs of the Chinese in their rapidly changing society and economic situations. He pointed to the growing interest in Christianity, especially among the young people, but he also warned against "materialism and hedonism" in large cities across China.[56] Nevertheless, he believed that the Chinese Catholic Church

could look hopefully to the future. He was confident in the faith of the Chinese Catholics and their eventual unity. Most important, the pope called for "the opening of some form of dialogue with the authorities" of China.[57] He stressed that such dialogue would be possible once past misunderstandings were settled. He even mentioned the "normalization of relations" with China.

He also referred to the declarations of Vatican II separating the church from any political authority. He described the Universal Catholic Church as "*one, holy, catholic and apostolic*."[58] In order to be truly in union with the Universal Church, there needed to be tremendous efforts at reconciliation. The pope insisted that "communion and unity" were "essential and integral elements of the Catholic Church."[59] Anything other than that would be incompatible with Catholic doctrine. The ordination of Chinese bishops "without the pontifical mandate yet respecting the Catholic rite of episcopal ordination" was "illegitimate but valid."[60] In summary, the pope looked forward to the reconciliation between the Vatican and Beijing. The normalization of Sino-Vatican relations would allow for the union of the Chinese Catholic Church with the Universal Church. That was the message he sent to the Chinese people and authorities. It would lead to continuous speculation.

In 2009, Cardinal Zen stepped down as head of the Hong Kong Catholic Church; Bishop John Tong Hon was his successor. Bishop Tong headed the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong and had frequently visited the mainland with a small group of scholars. It was reported in the local newspaper that Bishop Tong had "established contacts with every mainland bishop—both those recognised by the government and 'underground' clerics loyal to the Pope."[61] The Holy Spirit Study Centre also kept a large collection of mainland materials. While China and the Vatican were exploring opportunities to improve relations, Beijing had kept a close eye on who would succeed the outspoken Zen as head of the Hong Kong Catholic Church. During this time, there were rumors that the pope might want to visit the mainland. Not long afterward, Beijing denied the possibility of the pontiff making a trip to China.[62] In early 2010, the papal commission on Chinese affairs met after substantial debate and discussion. The commission had come into being after the release of the pope's letter to the Chinese in June 2007.[63] Despite the commission bringing bishops from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Chinese communities overseas together with senior Vatican officials, it was still unable to achieve a breakthrough in the Vatican's China policy.

The Government Level and the Role of the CCP

The Vatican had long negated the use of the term "schism" in describing the Chinese Catholic Church. Relations between the open church and the underground church were more hybridized than portrayed by the Western media. Academics in Hong Kong believed that the open church and the underground church were moving forward together and that this process would result in some tripartite model of communication between the open church, the underground church, and the Beijing government being worked out. They further believed that this process of development would continue and become a characteristic of church-state relations in China.[64] At the same time however, the academics argued that the prospects of the Chinese Catholic Church depended on three factors: relations between the open church and the underground church, the policies of the Beijing government (as carried out through the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association), and Sino-Vatican relations.[65]

The differences between the open church and the underground church were *political*, very much so in terms of their objectives, structure, and attitude toward the Beijing government.[66] The focus of attention was whether *reconciliation* to any extent was possible. From the perspective of some Hong Kong observers, differences were slowly narrowing down. Because Chinese society had been developing at a rapid pace, changes had been possible for the Catholic Church. It was noted that "the 'open church' has negotiated change in the government's religious policies and has gradually taken steps towards re-establishing traditional ties with the Holy See."[67] The open church and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association were not unified, though the former was subject to political supervision. It was further observed that "underground bishops have been switching over to work in the 'open church' and seminarians are being sent to study in seminaries" of the open church.[68] It would be difficult to imagine that Chinese Catholics did not have their own ideas for communication possibilities within their church, regardless of whether they were members of the open church or the underground church.

Catholics in China represented a very small proportion of the entire Chinese population, reaching 12 million converts in total by the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century.[69] Nevertheless, a prominent sociologist on the Chinese Catholic Church, Richard Madsen, claimed that Chinese Catholics had been very devout despite their relatively small number. This had been the case throughout Chinese history, from earlier times to the modern era. According to Madsen, Chinese Catholics went to Sunday Mass, and many of them were willing to risk political arrest and imprisonment. Madsen says the "revitalization of the Catholic

Church in China," despite its comparatively small number of followers, resulted from the general expansion of religion on the mainland.[70] The revival of religion was a topic that attracted much attention, as it was a phenomenon that developed and grew beyond the realm of total political control. With regard to the controversy over the 120 China martyrs canonized in 2000, Madsen was puzzled by the "political battle" initiated by the Beijing government, as this prevented it from using the opportunity to establish friendly relations with the Vatican and gain substantial control over the Chinese Catholics.[71] Politics exerted an impact on religious development. Thus scholars have continued to pay close attention to Beijing's policies toward the Catholic Church.

Overly optimistic, some Hong Kong academics pointed to a scenario in which the open church and the underground church would eventually be united and reconciled as a unified body.[72] Of course, government policies had the most influence on the reconciliation process. In 2002, Hong Kong academics argued that the Beijing government could make dialogue possible between the open church and the underground church. The relations between the open church and the Beijing government were formal and official, but the underground church had long established its existence in society. The open church continued to be closely watched over by the Beijing government, while the underground church adherents were not afraid to raise their opinions. Here, the emphases were on the internal evolution of the Chinese Catholic Church and the possibility of changes in the government's perception of and policies toward the church.[73] The perception of some Hong Kong scholars who were privileged by their close proximity to the mainland, however, was rather different.

In 2003, Jean-Paul Wiest wrote that the Chinese Catholic Church was undergoing a constant and complicated evolutionary process. The title of his article was "Catholics in China: The Bumpy Road Toward Reconciliation."[74] The implications were that, despite the negative portrayal of the Chinese Catholic Church in the Western media, the reality was very different from what had been reported and that in the midst of difficulties, hope and reconciliation were possible. In the West, especially in the United States, newspapers described two opposing sides of the Chinese Catholic Church: the open church and the underground church. The American media saw the open church as government-sanctioned and regarded the underground church as hiding from the authorities. Nevertheless, Wiest calls attention to the *fact* that an increasing number of Chinese Catholics inhabited "a large gray area between these two."[75] How would the Chinese Catholics continue to fare and make use of this "large gray area?" This was a question that would have to be answered.

Instead of standing in opposition, the open church and the underground church were able to function in parallel. As Wiest writes, "I view the Catholic Church in China as one church, not as two."[76] According to him, "the division did not lead to the formation of a schismatic church because the difference never amounted to a doctrinal deviation or a total breach of communion with the worldwide Roman Catholic Church."[77] Moreover, he reminds readers that the Vatican did not declare a schism of the Chinese Catholic Church. As noted in previous chapters of this book, the Vatican refuted the use of the term "schism" in the Chinese context. Here, the emphasis was that the Chinese Catholic Church was not "right and wrong" or "black and white" but adopted a blended stance in certain areas and was probably confused in many aspects. In summary, the church was not so simple as to seek to accommodate two extreme ends of the spectrum—this was just sensationalist reporting and not the reality. There was a large difference between the simple definitions of the open church and the underground church and the actual operations of the Catholic Church in China.

Wiest's interpretation found support from Madsen. Madsen also points out that the "black-and-white conflict" between the open church and the underground church no longer existed.[78] Instead, there were "shades of gray" in their relations.[79] A sociologist, Madsen thinks the terms "open" and "underground" do not reflect the reality of the behavior of the Chinese clergy and laity. The more correct terminology from his point of view reflects the political division rather than social divisions. He prefers to call the open church "the official Church" and the underground church "the unofficial Church." Again, the differences were political. According to Madsen, "official refers to the realm of activity that is publicly recognized and controlled by the state."[80] Therefore, "unofficial refers to a realm of private transactions at least partly independent of state control."[81] There had been interactions between the open church and the underground church, as it had always been difficult to control mass activities or movements in contemporary Chinese history. An intertwining relationship between the two was not impossible. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, there were about 110 dioceses and more than 6,000 churches in China. There were also 136 bishops, more than 3,000 priests, and more than 5,000 nuns.[82] What did these statistics mean? The Catholic Church was ever-growing and would therefore become increasingly diversified, and it would be hard to define or categorize any particular religious event or activity.

Maryknoll sister Betty Ann Maheu, who then worked at the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong, seems to agree with the perceptions of both Wiest and Madsen. She states that the ordinary view of the Chinese

Catholic Church was "a kind of double image," that of "an open and an underground Church."[83] Describing this view as "simplistic," Sister Betty Ann argues that the reality had been very sophisticated "historically, ecclesiastically and canonically."[84] First, she reminds readers that there was only one Catholic Church and that the pope had always been careful to address *the* Catholic Church in China. Second, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was a political organization set up to supervise the open church and was not the Catholic Church itself. There were other such associations to oversee other religions in China. Third, she was ahead of other scholars in saying that the division *within* the one Catholic Church was political and *not* doctrinal.[85]

Sister Betty Ann argues that the underground church was not literally hiding from view. Remarkably, she recounts visiting an underground church building that was huge, stunning, and in the middle of the town.[86] Instead of referring to the open church and the underground church, Sister Betty Ann adds another interpretation: the registered church and the unregistered church. As she explains, the government asked that "places of worship" be registered; therefore, "open, official or government-approved churches" were all registered.[87] The underground churches remained unregistered. Although China upheld the "freedom of religious belief," the term had a special connotation meaning that religious worship and activities must take place in registered churches and places of worship. Therefore, unregistered underground churches were considered illicit and were prone to suppression. In some instances, however, the underground or unregistered church was the only church building in the locality.[88] According to Sister Betty Ann, the registered Church and the unregistered Church might use the same building for religious instruction and service. In registered seminaries, unregistered bishops taught religion. Here, Sister Betty Ann would have agreed that "a gray area" or "shades of gray" existed in the Chinese Catholic Church. More significant, she points out that "we in the West, who like things neatly boxed in categories, are not comfortable with this kind of ambiguity."[89] Ambiguity constituted the gray area that was the nature of relations between the open church and the underground church in China.

In the second half of the first decade of the twenty-first century, scholars drew attention to the "religious revival" in China.[90] The numbers of believers and government policies toward religious groups were increasing.[91] In response to such a phenomenon, questions were raised on how the Beijing government handled the complicated religious situation in the country, what specific policies the Communist leaders had adopted, how they explained their position to religious groups and society, and the state of relations between the Beijing government and the various

religious groups.[92] Religion became an important issue in contemporary China. Could the Beijing government exert complete control over religion and religious development and activities?

The Chinese Catholic Church also had its own difficulties. The year 2006 saw the emergence of reports on its internal problems, one of which was its aging leadership. There were eight Catholic representatives on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) including the head of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan. However, only five of the eight representatives could attend the CPPCC meeting; the other three were unfit to participate because of health reasons.[93] At this point in time, Beijing allowed Catholics to worship in government-sanctioned churches and to recognize the pope as *the spiritual leader*. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association supervised the open church with its estimated five million members, but there was the belief that the number of Catholics would double if the underground church was counted. In terms of membership, the underground church could even be larger than the open church. The Catholic Church, as a unified entity, was growing beyond control. According to a government-approved bishop, the Catholic Church preferred not to use the term "underground church."[94] He claimed that it was only a matter of time before the Catholic Church unified all Catholics in China. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association supervised the bishops of the open church, but the government-approved bishops belonging to this official association were quietly in communion with the pope, providing an important link between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Vatican.[95] Unofficial communication had taken place between the Beijing government and the Vatican. This was the situation in 2006. Because the appointment of bishops was the main issue of contention though, future problems could be expected. Supervision of the Chinese Catholic Church by an official government body increased the complexity of church matters. As one report stated, "With many dioceses still without bishops, the time ahead could be a tense one for Vatican-China relations."[96] The exact nature of the relationship between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Catholic Church remained unclear. The Beijing government controlled the Catholic Church through the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which assumed responsibility for and had the authority to appoint bishops. Politics overrode religion in China, and continues to do so.

However, even in the more difficult times in the past, religious matters were not as upsetting as one would expect. Wiest explains, "As bad as the situation may look, it did not result in the formation of schismatic Church because the division never amounted to a doctrinal difference

nor a total breach of communion with the worldwide Roman Catholic Church."[97] First, doctrinal issues were not the source of difficulties in Catholic matters in contemporary China. Second, the Holy See had never issued "a formal declaration of Chinese schism."[98] The Chinese Catholic Church was not schismatic. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association knew that relations between the open church and the underground church were loose rather than rigid, sometimes overlapping rather than clear-cut, and sometimes accommodating rather than divisive. Wiest holds that the Catholic Church in China has been "one church and not two churches."[99] He continues, "No breach of faith exists between a particular segment of the Chinese Catholic Church and the worldwide Roman Catholic Church."[100]

Was reconciliation possible in the twenty-first century? For the many years after China opened up to the outside world, the open church and the underground church slowly moved away from suspicion and conflict to the possibility of mutual understanding and communication. The division between the two sides had become more elusive; therefore, observers raised the question of whether reconciliation between both sides was possible.[101] Wiest even pushes his argument further: "Fidelity to the Holy See has become less of an issue since the pope has legitimized most of the bishops in the Open Church."[102] In the previous decade, the pope had approved the newly ordained bishops of the open church. Governance of the Chinese Catholic Church had affected Sino-Vatican relations. Who would see the reconciliation of the Chinese Catholic Church? This reconciliation was the precondition for an improvement in Sino-Vatican relations.

Perceptions of the Chinese Catholic Church were far from united, ranging from unreserved optimism to total pessimism.[103] For many, there was only one Catholic Church in China. The pope had been careful to address *the* Chinese Catholic Church. Although the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association supervised the Catholic Church, it was not united with it.[104] When observers focused on the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, they tended to emphasize the political control exerted over religion in China. When observers actually took part in the activities of the Catholic Church in China, they leaned toward the diversity within the church itself and saw more hope than problems.

Conclusion

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed challenges to China's religious policies. At the beginning of the decade, there was negative publicity concerning Beijing's arrest of underground church members.

Such news circulated worldwide highlighted superficial aspects of the circumstances of the Chinese Catholic Church. Differences in cultural perceptions hindered the development of Sino-Vatican relations. While the pope praised the courage and devotion of Chinese Catholics, Beijing interpreted the move as Vatican interference in China's own internal matters. The revival of religion and the rise of Christianity, however, were beyond the control of the Beijing government. Sino-Vatican relations remained an issue to be tackled. Would the Hong Kong cardinal be able to serve as a bridge between Beijing and the Vatican? This was a difficult question, considering Zen's open criticism of China's religious policies. Even China's Foreign Ministry cautioned against any uninvited move on the part of Zen. The Vatican was obviously concerned about its relations with Beijing; thus, it established a special commission to study and to evaluate its China policy.

Apart from the prospects for Sino-Vatican relations, the possibility of reconciliation within the Chinese Catholic Church was also a topic of discussion. Some observers even refused to use the terms the open church and the underground church, instead preferring to call them the registered church and the unregistered church. At the same time, scholars pointed out that there were gray areas within the Chinese Catholic Church. The dividing line between the open church and the underground church had been blurred. Most important, scholars noted that differences between the open church and the underground church were political rather than doctrinal in nature. The pope quietly approved most bishops appointed within the open church. Nevertheless, the problem that remained was that the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, not the Vatican, appointed the bishops. This practice was not one the Universal Church would accept. The Beijing government wanted to retain its political control over the Catholic Church, and it had been impossible for any party to argue against this practice.

While there was no "black and white division" within the Catholic Church, the situation at the time still generated much discussion and debate. Opinions ranged from optimism to ultrapessimism. At one end of the spectrum, some commentators and scholars argued there was only "one Catholic Church" in China and that reconciliation was possible. At the other end of the spectrum, critics emphasized the suppression of religious freedom by the Beijing government. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association exerted a great deal of pressure on the Catholic Church. As a political organization of the Beijing government, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was concerned that the Catholic Church observed the official stance and policies. What about the points of the view of the clergy and sisters of the Chinese Catholic Church? Would they be

able to initiate change? Or had they been making changes already? How about the laity? As Chinese society developed, Chinese Catholics came to form their own opinions as well. Sino-Vatican relations were complicated; so too were relations between the Beijing government and the Chinese people, specifically the Chinese Catholics. History continued to run its own course.

CHAPTER 7

CHINESE SOCIETY AND CATHOLICISM

INTRODUCTION

How had the Catholic Church fared in Chinese society by the beginning of the twenty-first century? From the perspective of outsiders, the prospect of China and the Vatican establishing diplomatic relations seemed remote. The open church and the underground church both existed, though relations between them were in reality more fluid and interactive than perceived by outsiders. At the same time, different provinces, counties, and localities faced differing sets of circumstances. Chinese society had taken control of its own course. The Catholic population had expanded, and most believers stayed in union with the Universal Church, though secretly. The Catholic Church had become such a diverse organization that the Beijing government could not keep it in check, and casual observers were unable to comprehend it. The history of the PRC showed that the Beijing government and the CCP could seldom exercise complete authority over a mass movement once it had been launched and had taken on its own form and initiatives.

This inability to exercise total control could also have applied to the activities of Catholics in China. Having promised freedom of religious belief to the Chinese for three decades, the Beijing government exerted control over the open church; yet the division between the open church and the underground church was increasingly blurred. In 2001, foreign media reported that most of the bishops of the open church had been approved by the pope. Beijing, of course, knew about what had been going on but pretended it did not know. Although these open church bishops were legitimate and felt united with the Universal Church, they were under the supervision of the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.[1]

Foreign religions had made their impact on Chinese society for many centuries; one subject often spoken about was the presence of the Jesuits in the late Ming and early Qing periods. Catholic missioners were used to cultural assimilation and adaptation in a Chinese environment. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a continuation of the missionary effort. Even after the Communist takeover in 1949, Catholic families passed down their faith from one generation to another. Devout Catholics recognized their moral obligation to teach the doctrine to the younger generation. Moreover, Catholics retained their loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church and prayed in secret by themselves. The Catholic Church had long historical roots in Chinese society. As previous chapters explain, when China opened seminaries in major cities, newly recruited seminarians came from traditional Catholic families that had passed the faith from the older generation to the younger. The rise in the number of Catholics demonstrated that a religious revival had taken place in the last decade of the twentieth century. Catholics, regardless of whether they were members of the open church or the underground church, had followed a "live and let live" way of life.[2] All they wanted was to be able to abide by their Christian faith. This happened in most parts of China, as related by the well-informed China-watcher John Kamm, who had been paying attention to social problems on the mainland for many years.

Even an insider who was a renowned scholar on the Chinese Catholic Church and lived in Beijing admitted that open church bishops had their own opinions on their relations with the pope. The scholar remarked that the Catholic Church had by then developed a new and striking experience.[3] "So while the seats of church and state are still feuding," a journalist responded, "nearly all of China's 70 official bishops actually have been approved by both Beijing and the Holy See."[4] This peculiar phenomenon in the open church, which did not officially pledge allegiance to the Vatican, went beyond the superficial, despite suspicions held by the Beijing government, Sino-Vatican disputes, and Beijing's insistence on the independence of the church. Could the Chinese Catholic Church be redefined? It remained the core issue in squabbles between Beijing and the Vatican. Catholics abroad had donated much money to the church, both the open and the underground. Who would control these resources from overseas? The Vatican still expressed reservations about a few open church bishops. Political rivalries between China and the Vatican persisted. Yet the open church, which was absolutely *not* the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, followed the Vatican closely with regard to doctrinal matters, though it adopted a low profile in doing so.

Despite the fact that many bishops privately stayed in union with the Universal Church, China was not an enthusiastic participant in the

Catholic world. Chinese society was not taking an active role in the development of the Universal Church. This shortcoming of Chinese society was a direct result of political factors. By the end of 2010, Chinese and foreign observers expected that China's "dialogue with the Holy See" would move forward only slowly and solely for *practical reasons*. In comparison with the instigators of disorder in Tibet and Xinjiang, the Beijing leadership did not regard the Vatican as such a troublemaker. This was the perspective of someone looking outward on the mainland. Ren Yanli, former research director on Catholic studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, explains the situation: "China is keen to keep a line of communication open with the Vatican but would not rush to establish official ties."[5] He continues, "Compared with the Tibet and Xinjiang separatist movements, *the Catholic Church causes less trouble*, so the Chinese government has no urgency in establishing diplomatic relations."[6] Political and diplomatic priorities hindered the participation of Chinese society in Catholic Church events in other parts of the world. There was simply "no urgency" to advance Sino-Vatican relations.

The Catholic Church and Chinese Society

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Chinese society was still searching for the meaning of life. While outsiders saw China as becoming more "capitalistic" and increasingly "less communistic," the Chinese needed to answer some of their spiritual questions. An American priest stationed in Hong Kong stated in 2003, "The great fear now, even of government propagandists is that China's 'crisis of faith' leaves people with no framework by which to judge right from wrong."[7] There was a lack of substantial moral guidance or even education for Chinese society. While China had been highly successful in its Four Modernizations, the outlook, identity, and mindset of ordinary Chinese were constantly being challenged and molded. Chinese Catholics depended on their faith to live in an ever-changing set of circumstances. The Beijing government had hoped since the launch of the Four Modernizations that religion could serve as a stabilizing force in society. Catholicism could contribute to the stability of Chinese society by providing moral and spiritual support for the people.

The country was continuously reformed as it went through a period of modernization. Society faced all sorts of trials and difficulties. At the beginning of the new millennium, China was still seeking recognition from the international community. Of course, China's rapidly expanding economy had captured a tremendous amount of international attention. Countries all over the world wanted to share in the benefits of China's

ever-growing trade and economic activities. Faced with such circumstances, the Catholic Church had to define its role in society to see how it could serve the spiritual needs and moral education of the Chinese people. According to American Maryknoll priest John Cioppa, the Catholic Church needed to have well-qualified and trained personnel to serve the Chinese people. The starting point for the church therefore needed to be the seminaries and convents where priests and nuns were trained.[8] The formation of priests and nuns was of crucial significance. There were more than 1,700 men studying in open and underground seminaries and around 2,500 women in convents.[9] While the figures looked promising, much more could be done. The Catholic Church could promote more vocations and higher standards of education for the clergy, nuns, and the laity. The church had to be able to adapt to changing circumstances and adjust to the demands of contemporary Chinese society.

What more should the Chinese Catholic Church do? How could the church develop further on its existing basis? How could the church establish better relations with Chinese society? How could Chinese society benefit from the work of the church? Some priests overseas had observed the development of Chinese society. They offered some possible suggestions and hoped the church could achieve the objectives they set. First, the church should be an "absolute, ultimate point of reference" for its own people.[10] Chinese Catholics needed to be able to look to the church for guidance even amid hopeless circumstances. The church should offer spiritual support and relevant assistance. Second, the church should further emphasize the dignity of individuals and show that they deserved the utmost respect from the authorities. It was stated that Catholics could "share their conviction of the dignity of the human person" despite their problems in work, family, and society.[11] Third, the church should provide Catholics with the ability to judge "what was right and wrong" in an increasingly sophisticated society. This was not easy, given the possibility of various forms of harassment. Catholics needed to know how to improve their spiritual life without too much distraction from the outside world. Fourth, the church should hold Catholics together so they could keep their faith and extend their influence to nonbelievers. Catholics needed to stress the bonding of their families. Finally, the church should promote charity work in society and emphasize people's willingness to help each other. Though these recommendations seemed applicable to any society, the Chinese Catholic Church had to make sure it could deliver such messages to believers and hopefully to nonbelievers as well.

An incident, which demonstrated the state of relations between the open church and the underground church, occurred in Tianjin City in April 2004.[12] Members of the open church and the underground church

attended the Good Friday liturgy in the same cathedral compound at the same time, "but not together."[13] According to Chinese law, Catholics could only participate in religious services in government-recognized churches; therefore, some one thousand people crowded into Saint Joseph's Cathedral in Tianjin City on Good Friday. At the same time, "lay leaders led almost *200 other Catholics* in the same Passion liturgy" outside the church building but within the cathedral compound.[14]

It was convenient for these other Catholics (underground church members) to travel there. However, they refused to enter the church building because they could not have their own underground bishop celebrating the Easter liturgy. It was reported that the underground bishop Stephen Li Side (age 78), who had been clandestinely ordained in 1982 but was not recognized by the government, was under house arrest in a remote village north of Tianjin. The underground Catholics therefore refused to enter registered churches because their bishop had been rejected by the authorities. Interestingly, the underground Catholics had been "praying and holding separate liturgies at the Marian shrine for more than 10 years" with the full knowledge of the government.[15] To what extent then were these Catholics really "underground?" The underground church was unregistered, to be sure. Nevertheless, the authorities were well aware of the existence of these underground adherents who were under government surveillance and coexisted side-by-side with members of the open church.

The open church also faced its own problems. Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan, who had been elected as president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, died in 2007. Joseph Liu Yuanren, president of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, died in 2005. In 2009, the Chinese Catholic Church still needed to decide on suitable replacements.[16] These were problems of the Beijing government, but irregularities existed in many other areas as well. For example, different authorities had their own statistics on the Catholic population. The Faith Institute for Cultural Studies in Hebei Province estimated there were almost 6 million Catholics in China in 2009.[17] Sources outside the mainland had their own figures. First, the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Hong Kong Catholic Church claimed that the number of Catholics on the mainland was 12 million: double the official number recognized in China itself.[18] Second, the US Department of State released the following information:

> Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) reports that 5.3 million people worship in its churches and it is estimated that there are an additional 12 million or more who worship in unregistered Catholic churches that do not affiliate with the CCPA. According to official sources, the

> government-sanctioned CCPA has more than 70 bishops, nearly 3,000 priests and religious sisters, 6,000 churches and meeting places, and 12 seminaries. There are thought to be approximately 40 bishops operating underground, some of whom are in prison or under house arrest. Of the 97 dioceses in the country, 40 reportedly did not have an acting bishop in 2007 and more than 30 bishops were over 80 years of age.[19]

The statistics varied owing to the existence of the underground church. Nonetheless, this information illustrated the lack of priests—or more specifically, young priests—for the dioceses across the country. This had been the case for quite a long time and is discussed in Chapter 5 covering the 1990s. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association had not been able to solve the problem for many years, and the great demand for priests and nuns to serve the growing Catholic population had become a persistent crisis. The Catholic Church rushed to supply the personnel needed. Although this responded to the needs of the Catholic population, it might have reduced the quality of education for seminarians, and it aroused concern about the formation of priests in China. Had the priests received adequate training? What was the quality of their education in the seminaries?

The education and training of future priests and nuns continued to trouble the Chinese Catholic Church. Hong Kong bishop John Tong Hon had his own views on the matter. From his position on the doorstep to the mainland, Bishop Tong could view matters from an external perspective and at the same time take a closer look at the picture. More important, he was a member of the China commission of the Vatican. This was an additional advantage, as it put him in a better position to understand the concerns the Vatican had about China. According to Bishop Tong, the structures of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference were ill suited to the Catholic doctrine.[20] Previous chapters of this book explain that the association and the conference were political bodies. These two organizations had no understanding of Catholic doctrine. Instead, the open church bishops privately hoped to keep the doctrine in tune with the Vatican. Nevertheless, politics often took priority over other issues, social, economic, religious, and so on.

Pope Benedict XVI had tried to communicate with Chinese Catholics through his papal letter of 2007 and the compendium (a question-and-answer format to explain the papal letter) of 2009. The pope had called for "for more careful vocational discernment on the part of Church leaders, and for more in-depth education and instruction of aspirants to the priesthood and religious life."[21] Bishop Tong pointed out that the pope was trying to provide Chinese Catholics with some guidance

and encouragement.[22] The bishop expressed his hope that the Catholic Church on the mainland would better comprehend the requirements for seminaries elsewhere in the world. This might give the mainland church some points of reference for formation of the clergy. According to Tong, mainland bishops needed to take positive steps to improve the formation of their seminarians. He pointed out that the mainland church should encourage vocations among the Catholic communities. Furthermore, he stated that mainland priests should engage in further studies to enable them to explore new ways of "spirituality and vocation formation training to improve the formation needs."[23] This would also allow them to constantly review their perceptions and methods of dealing with contemporary problems.

While the formation of seminarians was one concern, another was the continued enrichment of mainland priests and nuns. Bishop Tong therefore stated that mainland church members studying abroad (for example in the Philippines, Italy, Germany, and the United States) should take advantage of their opportunity to learn as much as they could from others. This meant they should make an effort to learn the language of the foreign country, engage in discussions with overseas scholars, and struggle to meet the academic standards of the schools where they were studying.[24] From the other side, the Vatican sent a delegation to China in December 2008 and again in February and June 2009 in response to an invitation from Beijing.[25] These were excellent opportunities for both Beijing and the Vatican to develop some kind of mutual understanding. Nevertheless, talks between the two sides on each occasion did not produce immediate or positive results. The meetings failed to have any direct impact on Sino-Vatican relations and thus did not offer any promises for Chinese society.

This failure to make progress in Sino-Vatican relations was also the case with the compendium of 2009, which represented a tremendous effort to reach out to the open church and the underground church. Of particular importance was that the compendium allowed "mainland bishops or diocesan administrators, *especially those in the underground community*, to ask the Vatican for special faculties 'whenever particular situations so require,' a practice the letter had revoked."[26] The Vatican was trying to speak directly to Chinese Catholics to show its openness and readiness to assist them in every possible way. The Vatican's overall aim was to become closer to the Chinese Catholic Church. Whether this could produce any results was another matter. The compendium was available in Chinese—traditional and simplified characters—and English on the Vatican website. The Vatican communicated with Chinese Catholics through open channels, usually without the presence of Catholic delegates on the mainland. This was done through the pronouncements of the Vatican and

not through individual contact between foreign missioners and locals as in modern Chinese history before 1949. There could not be any instant response from Chinese Catholics, who were being watched by the authorities. Therefore, any possible effect could only be discerned very slowly and could be hard to measure.

A 2010 report showed that Beijing had taken "a more flexible approach in the past three years [2007–2010] toward the ordination of bishops, turning a blind eye when *candidates apply privately for a papal mandate* and not pushing illicit ordinations."[27] Matters among Chinese Catholic bishops and in Chinese society were extremely delicate. Events went beyond the obvious. What happened among the Catholics was complex and occurred in the gray area of relations of Chinese Catholics with the Vatican and the pope.

In 2010, foreign media reported that there had recently been "tentative signs of compromise" and that Beijing and the Vatican had come to "quiet deals involving joint approval of candidates."[28] How accurate was this information? And even if it was in some sense true, how long would cordial relations between the two sides last? It was stated that "China and the Vatican must negotiate with each other on the choice of bishop candidates *to avoid the tension that arose in 2006*, when the mainland Church ordained three bishops without papal mandates."[29] This tension had affected Chinese society because a foreign relations crisis had arisen between Beijing and the Vatican. Nevertheless, there was no consensus on the future direction of Chinese Catholics. Chinese society ran its own course, occasionally with the support of the authorities but more often searching for a different direction. Some discussions took place on the "independence" of Chinese society. The state of affairs in Chinese society was described thus: "*The independence principle would no longer apply to the doctrinal aspect of Church life.*"[30] Yet the principle of independence as applied to "*the political aspect of Church life*"[31] remained fixed and strictly observed. Simply put, the Chinese Catholic Church could not pledge allegiance to the Vatican or the Universal Church. Chinese Catholics could stay in union with the Universal Church only in private.

This perspective was a less-than-optimistic view of the possibility of Chinese Catholics participating in the Universal Church. Nevertheless, if Chinese Catholics could play a role in the Universal Church, how would their role be defined? How would the Chinese Catholic Church be different from the Catholic Church abroad? How could the Chinese Catholic Church prove itself to be an indigenous church serving its own people? John Worthley points out that Chinese society responded in its own way to "*evangelization* and the missionary call of the church."[32] Unlike Western societies, Chinese society had to appear acceptable to the political

authorities. The participation of Chinese society in the Universal Catholic Church had become rather unique, and the role of the Chinese Catholic Church was different from the role it had played earlier in China's history before 1949, and had become very "intriguing."[33]

This template would become the contemporary model of relations between Chinese Catholics and the Universal Church. It was explained that "in part because of its historical experience with foreign missionaries, China's religious affairs regulations prohibit evangelization by foreigners while allowing it from within."[34] The past model of Chinese Catholic Church participation would therefore become outdated. That is to say, foreign missioners would no longer go to China to engage in preaching and conversion work. A new alternative model emerged as Chinese Catholics themselves became involved in church activities. Local missioners replaced the foreigners who had arrived in China long ago. The Chinese preached to their own people and converted them to Catholicism.[35] Local priests and nuns, instead of foreigners, would be the sole missioners engaging in most Catholic Church activities in China. The example of the Chinese Catholic Church might shed light on a new missionary experience in the history of China and of the Universal Church. Instead of the church of the past in which foreign and local missioners worked together, the new Chinese Church depended largely on its own clergy, nuns, and devout Catholics. Chinese Catholics had proven by their participation in the Universal Church that the foreign religion was totally indigenized. It was a Catholic Church of the Chinese people led by the Chinese themselves. The church leaders themselves were Chinese rather than foreigners.

Jean-Paul Wiest provided an insightful observation of the Chinese Church. Wiest stated that there were four types of bishops in China.[36] The first type was the underground bishops who had the pope's recognition, most of whom had not received government approval. The second type was the illicit open church bishops who had government approval but had not gained the pope's recognition. The third type was the legitimized open church bishops who had received both government approval and the pope's recognition. Although these bishops had earlier been ordained without the consent of the Vatican, they now had the pope's recognition and thus were not considered illicit. It is of the utmost importance to note that the majority of open church bishops were members of this group. The fourth and final type was the licit open church bishops. They had been approved by both the Beijing government and the Vatican before their ordination. Such was the state of affairs among bishops in China, one that had existed for some time and would persist into the foreseeable future. In October 2007, the CCP mentioned in its constitution that "the

Party strives to fully implement its basic principle for its work related to religious affairs, and rallies religious believers in making contributions to economic and social development."[37] Xinhua News Agency reported, "The resolution on the amendment said the principles and policies the Party has formulated for guiding efforts to strengthen work related to ethnic and religious affairs, among others, would achieve full implementation and better results by being incorporating into its Constitution."[38] As explained by the official spokesman, this development was a response to changing circumstances and future tasks that required close attention. Such was the situation as the first decade of the twenty-first century drew to a close. The acknowledgment of religious affairs and religious believers in a Communist Party constitution was significant. How much this would affect the Catholic Church remained to be seen.

Individuals and the Church

The pattern of underground church members being arrested had persisted throughout the history of the Chinese Catholic Church. In July 2001, it was reported that 83-year-old underground Bishop Li Hongye of Luoyang, Northern China, had been arrested. The arrest was made in a retreat, and a number of nuns had also been taken away and detained in county-level public security offices.[39] According to the deacon of the underground church, the arrest was illegal as the public security office did not file any charges or show an arrest warrant. What subsequently happened to the bishop remained unknown at the time of the report. The arrest of Bishop Li was probably related to his being in Luoyang, less than seven hundred kilometers southwest of the capital, Beijing. Bishop Li had previously been arrested several times. This piece of news was also confirmed by two underground bishops in Henan Province. At around the same time, an Italian news agency reported that simultaneous arrests of underground priests had been made in Jiangxi Province in Eastern China.[40] Like Bishop Li, the underground priests in Jiangxi had previously been arrested. These events show that members of the underground church were resilient and persevering in their missionary work. Underground Catholics preferred to operate in this way, as they would otherwise have entered the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association already.

The Beijing government continued to devote most of its attention to the underground church in northern and northeastern China, probably because of the proximity of the to the country's capital, which made its activities seem particularly disturbing to the Communist leaders. In late 2000, an underground bishop and three priests of Hanzhong Diocese in Shaanxi Province, northern China, were put under house arrest. The

authorities sent the underground priests to Hanzhong Socialist School for reeducation and forced them to enter the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.[41] Nevertheless, these priests refused to abide by the directives of the authorities and were subsequently sent to remote parishes where they could not get in touch with their bishop, Bartholomew Yu Chengti (age 72). Bishop Yu had been placed under house arrest because he refused to cooperate with the open church. It was reported that several years earlier in 1997, Bishop Yu had "appealed to overseas clergy, Catholics and human rights groups to condemn and make known to the world the religious persecution and human rights abuses in his diocese."[42] He was rather outspoken in his opposition to government supervision and control, making him a target to be watched over and monitored for any suspicious signs.

In early 2002, authorities arrested another underground bishop, Julius Jia Zhiguo (age 67) of Zhengding in Hebei Province, northern China. The report of his arrest failed to mention the whereabouts of the bishop, who had previously spent twenty years in jail.[43] The source pointed out that in the past several years, "Bishop Jia was taken away by government officials on the eve of every major holy day, apparently to prevent him from leading Catholics in liturgical celebrations."[44] Bishop Jia was later released and again refused to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. As a result, the authorities forbade him from celebrating Mass in public. According to the report, the authorities made the "usual demands," which were "to join the government-approved Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, to have dialogue with bishops of the 'open' Church on the issue of communion, and not to leave the area" where the bishop stayed.[45] The underground church was under close surveillance.

A few months later in July 2002, an underground priest in eastern China was arrested. Father Leo Chen Nailiang was a vicar general of the underground church. As the previous paragraphs have shown, the profiles of arrested bishops and priests were rather similar. These underground church leaders had previously been imprisoned for a number of years and had been persistent in their resistance against the authorities. Like the others, Father Chen had been arrested many times before and yet refused to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, one of the typical demands made of underground priests.[46]

Although there were similarities between these cases, it would be understating the situation to make a generalization of the Chinese Catholic Church.[47] This would be like putting together a brief summary of the highly complex situation in the country as a whole. Circumstances changed in various places across China, a pattern observed by Wiest. The authorities continued to bolster the open church and attempted to get

rid of the underground church.[48] However, Wiest stressed that despite government policies the division between the open church and the underground church had become blurred. Most important, he stated that "fidelity to the Holy See has become less of an issue, since *the pope has legitimized most bishops in the open Church* and a number of new ones are being ordained with his approval."[49] Reconciliation could be a possibility in such cases, but given the arrests of underground church members, the authorities had caused a great deal of ill feeling in the localities, and it would be difficult to tackle such antagonism. Although the pope had silently approved the open church bishops in a welcoming manner (which might be seen as a friendly gesture to China), local authorities continued to act in an intimidating manner that made Catholics even more defiant and critical of the Beijing government. The arrests and the government harassment had resulted in frustration and increased conflict, and they laid the ground for possible crises in future.

Hebei Province was the seat of the underground church in China. In early 2003, the authorities detained at least 11 underground bishops and priests there.[50] Father Dong Yingmu (age 37) from Baoding Diocese had been arrested on his way to Mass during the previous Christmas and imprisoned. He was put in jail after the arrests of two bishops and eight priests in the same diocese. There was no news of the whereabouts of Bishop Joseph Su Zhemin (age 70) and Bishop An Shuxin (age 53). The situation there represented serious suppression of the underground church in Hebei Province. There were fears of "insubordination" on the part of people in the diocese and priests who celebrated Mass locally.

There must have been a great deal of suspicion of activities in Hebei Province. The Beijing government had just finished conducting a 17-month evaluation of the Catholic seminary in Hebei.[51] As a result of the inspection, the seminary in Shijiazhuang (very close to Beijing) had been ordered not to accept new enrollments for a year. At the end of the lengthy process, the director of the local Ethnicity and Religion Office told the seminary rector that the findings were "positive." The United Front Work Department oversaw the entire procedure and the recommendations. According to the authorities, the aim of the inspection was to "'straighten out' the direction of the seminary, and improve its *political education program*, management of enrolment examinations, and other aspects."[52] The inspection was divided into four stages: "learning," "intense education," "assessment," and "rectification and conclusion."[53]

Originally designed to last only two months, the evaluation took a prolonged, tiresome period of time to complete. During that time, seminarians underwent military training and political education. The latter included a visit to Xibaipo in Pingshan County (also in Hebei Province),

considered "the last revolutionary base of the Communist Party" before the founding of the PRC in 1949.[54] Simultaneously, the seminarians studied the "theory of three representatives" of President Jiang Zemin (which was written into the CCP constitution). The "three representatives" were that the CCP must represent (1) "the development trend of China's advanced productive forces," (2) "the orientation of China's advanced culture," and (3) "the fundamental interests of the Chinese people."[55] In summary, the authorities asked the seminarians to contribute to the modernization objectives, be independent of foreign influence, and—from the government's perspective—to work only for the Chinese government and people. According to a local priest, the seminary then had only 29 seminarians studying there and 30 others on internship programs despite its capacity of 120 students.[56] Established in 1984, the seminary had trained more than 300 priests by the time of the evaluation. The government aimed to increase the seminarians' awareness of the significance of patriotism and Socialism in addition to the religious classes they took.[57] The Beijing government believed that religion should serve the political needs and social concerns of the country. In other words, modernization and stability were the top priorities. The Catholic religion needed to serve the needs of the Four Modernizations and support the stability of Chinese society.

Hebei Province was again to be the source of trouble. In April 2005, several underground priests in Zhengding Diocese were arrested during a retreat, though they were released the next day. Various local security bureaus were involved in their detention. It was reported that "security personnel took them back, but [the priests were] asked to leave the vehicle when it neared their counties."[58] The reason given for the arrests was that the underground priests were holding a retreat outside their own counties. Police cars were around to keep a close eye on events. Similar incidents occurred with regularity. In mid-2006, an overseas source reported that about thirty Christians had been detained "in a raid on an unregistered church service at a private home."[59] On this occasion, the arrests had been made in the nearby province of Henan; some of those detained were later released, others had to pay a fine, and a few were imprisoned. At around the same time, Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding in Hebei Province was arrested for the ninth time in three years. Overseas observers called him "the most prominent leader of the *underground* Catholic Church in China's Hebei province."[60] Although his whereabouts were unknown, the authorities said he had been sent for reeducation. He had been imprisoned for five months before this incident, and he had then been arrested again within three months.

The situation was also severe in eastern China. In 2007, two underground church members from Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province were

arrested and imprisoned after returning from a pilgrimage in Europe.[61] They were moved from their diocese to a detention center and were finally sentenced after a wait of 6 months. The charge was that they had committed the crime of "illegal exit."[62] One of them was named a "repeat offender" as he had been imprisoned before for "illegally publishing hymnals" and was sentenced to 11 months of imprisonment.[63] The other priest was sentenced to nine months in jail. Although underground Catholics learned about the sentences, they were prevented from visiting the two priests. As seen in events described previously in this chapter, the underground priests were not afraid of committing the so-called crimes and had therefore been imprisoned on quite a number of occasions.

Outsiders became aware of the detention of underground church leaders, though the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association denied some of the cases. Its deputy head, Anthony Liu Bainian, had been a seminarian long ago. His office was in Beitang (North Church). Liu told Japanese media that it was impossible for a priest to be arrested simply because he did not want to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.[64] This statement was made despite repeated reports of underground church members being arrested because of their refusal to join the official patriotic association. How could the denial of such charges serve the Beijing government? The official explanation offered by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was that the arrests had been made because of the illegal religious services conducted by these underground priests.

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association asked Catholic priests to join but refused to admit the consequences that had befallen stubborn underground church members who ignored its calls. What was the use of such denial? Was the denial made only to provide an answer to foreign media? The Beijing government had been rather persistent in claiming it had the power to appoint bishops and assert authority over the open church, and its consistent standpoint in this regard did not give it a reason to deny how it treated recalcitrant underground church members. Individual members of the underground church were suffering because they shunned the official political organization, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. The arrests and suppression were means of alerting these underground church members to the consequences of their refusal to comply.

Conclusion

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Chinese society was growing, prospering, and becoming increasingly complicated. The revival of religion in China in the preceding decades had been obvious. The Catholic population continued to grow, and the open church and underground

church were very much in a state of flux. The circumstances of the Chinese Catholic Church could be different or even contrasting in different parts of China. A common thread, however, was that change was occurring everywhere; no one could predict what would happen one year or the next. Chinese society and the Catholic Church had their own dynamics of change. Modernization efforts had set in motion the evolution, progression, and self-development of the Catholic Church. Regardless of how much Beijing and the local governments wanted to control the Catholic Church, they could never exert overwhelming control over the Catholic population. Foreigners, who did not openly reveal their identity as clergy or nuns, sometimes had to leave China or were refused entry to the mainland. Nevertheless, the Catholic religion had gained its own momentum and there was no turning back. While the open church expanded, the underground church established its own bases and identities. The open church and the underground church conducted religious services in the same place at the same time, but paradoxically *not yet together*.

Foreign religions had been part of Chinese history for such a long time. As one of the foreign religions, Christian Catholicism found devout believers in traditional Catholic families. The faith was passed from one generation to the next; the older generation recognized that it was their moral duty to educate their own children about the Catholic religion.

The Catholic Church also found it a great challenge to train enough priests and nuns to serve the dioceses. Many seminaries had been opened in China; nevertheless, there was concern about the standard of formation of seminarians. In this context, the Chinese Catholic Church would need to look outward to see what other seminaries overseas expected from their students. To improve the quality of education given to church members, Chinese Catholics had to participate in Catholic activities internationally. Study tours of overseas seminaries, Catholic universities, and Catholic institutes were of the utmost importance. In time, Chinese Catholics would come to play a more active role in the history of the Universal Catholic Church.

The first decade of the new century saw the arrest of underground bishops and priests engaged in religious service. Foreign media frequently reported on these cases. The northern, northeastern, and eastern parts of China received the most attention from the Beijing government owing to their proximity to the country's capital. Yet it was in these places that the most well-established underground communities were found. Many of the underground priests had been arrested and imprisoned time and time again. Nevertheless, this did not stop them from serving as restless leaders among their communities. Of course, underground Catholics were always being watched over, but they still kept up with their church work.

Their existence was common knowledge in China. There was no way to eradicate them or stop them from expressing their devotion to society. Although it would be unwise to make generalizations, it could be said that Chinese Catholics continued to pursue their religious service and activities by all means possible.

Having been promised freedom of religious belief, Chinese Catholics had their rights, though they were not entirely the same as those promised elsewhere in the world. Religion could serve as a stabilizing force for society, but suppression of religion would lead only to opposite results such as ill feelings, conflicts, and the refusal to cooperate with the authorities. Chinese Catholics were becoming more aware of events elsewhere in the world and were maturing in their faith and in their participation in religious service. Chinese Catholics could be active participants in the Universal Church. Nevertheless, they were unable to do so for the time being because of political reasons and often troublesome Sino-Vatican relations. These problems had lingered for so many decades, yet many Chinese Catholics wanted only to practice their faith and be in union with the Universal Church. The pessimism that existed with regard to the development of Sino-Vatican relations affected the possibility of participation in the Universal Church.

Foreign media and outsiders consistently reported on the imprisonment of Chinese Catholics or cases of suppression. How could outsiders make a bigger contribution to the Chinese Catholic Church? While the church was the recipient of money and resources donated by foreign groups, the use of these resources would cause other problems. Who would control these resources in China? Would external forces exert their influence over Chinese Catholic communities? This would be a question faced by the Beijing government and local authorities. How could China become part of the international history of Catholicism? How could the Beijing government be more tolerant of differences within the church? Chinese society was developing very rapidly. Very soon the Chinese would demand much more from their government. The Beijing government would appear to be a respectful authority if it could tolerate the existence of differences within the Catholic Church. How would the Beijing government advance its policy toward Chinese Catholics? Would Beijing be able to relate more closely and sensibly to Chinese society? Outsiders could only guess at the answers to these questions, but matters changed very quickly as circumstances were totally different from one day to the next. What course the Chinese Catholic Church takes in future remains to be seen.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The Chinese Catholic Church

The history of the Chinese Catholic Church over the past three decades has been very complicated. Foreign nationals, resources, and ideas have made an impact on China since it opened up to the world in December 1978. The mainland has central, provincial, regional, and local authorities, and circumstances vary in different parts of China. It is very difficult to predict what will happen to China tomorrow, the day after, or further into the future. The Beijing government promises the Chinese people freedom of religious belief, meaning they can practice their religion and conduct religious activities in government-approved venues. Catholicism has established a presence in China that is unique among foreign religions. Officially, the Chinese Catholic Church has not looked to the Vatican for leadership. The Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association have maintained a close watch on the activities of the Catholic Church. The Beijing government has also appointed bishops of the open church. Whenever there has been a problem in Sino-Vatican relations, it has usually concerned the ordination of open church bishops without Vatican approval.[1] Such problems occurred repeatedly during the time this book was written, and Sino-Vatican relations have made news headlines.[2] While observers predicted several years ago that Sino-Vatican relations would develop in a positive fashion, the situation has recently in 2011 taken a turn for the worse.[3] How are Sino-Vatican relations likely to develop in future? Any speculation on this question is likely to fall wide of the mark. From being rather optimistic one day, one can become somewhat pessimistic the very next. Circumstances in China have always been confusing, and the development of the Catholic Church has been even more perplexing.

Since China opened up to the world, the Beijing government has wanted religion to serve as a stabilizing force in society.[4] This would greatly promote the modernization effort and provide some kind of

spiritual support for the Chinese people, who have faced changes unprecedented in their history.[5] Chinese society is in a state of constant transformation, fluidity, and challenge. Living in an ever-changing society, the Chinese people need to find sources of emotional and moral support and equanimity. The country has long abandoned the practice of mass movements. Deng Xiaoping asked the Chinese people to be pragmatic and work to implement the Four Modernizations. Rather than emphasizing ideology as in the past, Beijing then upheld a policy of pragmatism and economic reform. The 1980s were a decade of experiments, trials, collaboration, and the struggle to find potential new paths for the country. The Beijing government found religion a suitable choice as a substitute for dogmatism. Religion would have to serve government purposes, however, and be subject to close supervision by the authorities.[6] As explained in previous chapters, the Chinese Catholic Church cannot be led by the Vatican, as that is a scenario completely unimaginable to the Beijing leaders, who have repeatedly warned against foreign interference in the country's domestic affairs.

The late Pope John Paul II always praised Chinese Catholics for their dedication and devotion to their religion. He saw the Chinese Catholic Church as one church and hoped that it would eventually be in union with the Universal Church.[7] This stance has since been affirmed by Pope Benedict XVI.[8] On the Chinese side, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association—a patriotic political association, as indicated by its name—never had an understanding of the Catholic faith. The association concerned itself only with political affairs. Politics—not doctrine—were the cause of all disputes and conflicts between China and the Vatican, according to the present Chinese mentality. Because open church clergy wanted to serve their fellow Catholics in a safe way, they became members of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Underground bishops and priests refused to join the association and were constantly scrutinized by the central and local authorities. As previous chapters describe, the division between the open church and the underground church has become somewhat blurred. Many gray areas have contributed to the complex and confusing situation in China.

The Universal Church with the Vatican at its center has a transnational history. Catholic missioners of any nationality traveled the world to preach and to serve the needs of local people. The Universal Church can be described as having contributed to the cross-cultural, religious, and social dimensions of history. From a cross-cultural studies viewpoint, the members of the Chinese Catholic Church are Chinese citizens who have devoted themselves to a foreign religion. Culture has always influenced diplomatic relations; Beijing and the Vatican view matters from different

perspectives.[9] Not only has this been so on the diplomatic level, as seen in the way the Beijing government's perception of the Chinese Catholic Church influenced its policy toward the Catholic religion, but the influence of the Vatican has also been reflected in China's policy toward Chinese Catholics. The policy has never been consistent; there have been good times and bad times. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association has been the government's official spokesman. At the same time, Chinese society—having undergone modernization efforts and been subject to foreign influence—has constantly changed and adjusted to new circumstances. It would not be difficult to imagine that the Chinese Catholic Church has adapted to such changes and the needs of the Chinese people.

First, the Chinese Catholic Church took quite some time to understand what impact Vatican II had on the Catholic religion and Catholic practices. This, of course, was no fault of the Chinese people. China had been closed to the outside world for a long time before 1979. There was no way for the Chinese people to know that there had been a Vatican Council in the 1960s. Catching up with the reforms was no easy task, as the Chinese clergy required help with all sorts of matters such as administering the sacraments in the vernacular. On the societal level, the church responded to the great demand for priests to serve in dioceses across the country. Formation of the priests became an important matter to be addressed. On the individual level, priests had their own views on relations with the government, the Vatican, and their dioceses. The Chinese Catholic Church comprised members with different views, backgrounds, and experiences. From what was initially a church with a rather aging leadership, it has moved on to a younger generation of priests. Circumstances on the diplomatic, governmental, societal, and individual levels of the Chinese Catholic Church have been intriguing and have aroused attention from various groups as well as from the flock of China observers.

Sino-Vatican Relations

China has sought to project a positive image abroad since it opened up to the outside world in December 1978. China wanted the world to know that it welcomed external visitors, investment, and collaboration with foreign enterprises. Pope John Paul II then openly expressed his desire to reestablish connections with Chinese priests and Catholics.[10] However, Sino-Vatican relations were subsequently somewhat brittle and fell far short of reflecting a sense of understandable development. While there were times of optimism, there were also moments of crisis. There were occasions when observers saw signs of encouragement, but Sino-Vatican

relations seemed impossible at many points in time, resulting in tensions and failures to communicate.

Sino-Vatican relations constitute part of the development of Catholic history and are also an element of China's foreign relations as a whole. In the 1980s, China's foreign relations progressed under a more open atmosphere than in the past. Yet there was still much room for improvement in Sino-Vatican relations; dynamics between the two sides continued to worry church members and external observers. In the absence of diplomatic relations between Beijing and the Vatican, it remained impossible for the two sides to advance their understanding through mutual exchange and interaction.[11] The ordination of bishops has been the focal point of conflict between China and the Vatican.[12]

Rome appoints bishops in a certain way. A special group in the Curia receives names and does character evaluations as well as theological bents. Then the group gives its opinion to the pope, who then decides. In certain countries in Europe, there are concordats left over from long ago that allow governments to have a say in appointments. This solution could be implemented in China and hopefully will be. The trouble, however, is that the Chinese government is atheistic, and the Vatican is skeptical of Beijing's choices.

In the 1980s, Pope John Paul II expressed his hope that the Chinese Catholic Church could be in union with the Universal Church.[13] Nevertheless, his wish was not shared by Beijing and seemed impossible to fulfill. This again raised the issue of foreign interference, and Beijing saw the Vatican as the intruder. Nevertheless, neither the Vatican nor the pope used the term "schism" to describe the Chinese Catholic Church.[14] The problem that the open church and the underground church had was *not doctrinal but political*. At least this understanding on the part of the Vatican revealed its respect and admiration for the devotion of Chinese Catholics. From this point of view, the Vatican was wise in its perception of matters in China.

Pope John Paul II again showed his concern for Chinese Catholics at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1991, he praised the Jesuit Dominic Deng Yiming, who had left China after being released from prison and whom he had named an archbishop.[15] In the same year, the pope acknowledged the suffering Cardinal Ignatius Gong Pinmei had gone through in China.[16] The pontiff was trying to encourage the Chinese to stay close to their religion. He aimed to find possible ways to handle historical problems with the Beijing government. The pope intended to communicate with Beijing in a more productive way. He was highly appreciative of the Chinese for their loyalty to the Catholic faith and acknowledged that in the past some missioners had made mistakes in China relative to Chinese customs and

culture. Although this was the view of the pope, how the Beijing government interpreted his messages was another question. Did Beijing consider the pope's statements to amount to interference in Chinese matters? Did Beijing think the pope was asking the Chinese to look to the Vatican for guidance rather than relying on their government? Again, Pope John Paul II said the Chinese could be loyal to both their religion and their country.[17] According to him, there should not be any contradiction in being loyal to both their faith and their responsibility to join efforts to implement the Four Modernizations.

On occasion during the 1990s, the pope stressed that it should not be difficult for Christianity to become rooted and expand on the mainland. Christianity and Chinese culture had coexisted in China for a long time. In this context, he emphasized his deep respect for Chinese history, traditions, and heritage. From his perspective, Chinese Catholics were also proud of their own civilization and were eager to contribute to the country's needs. In saying so, the pope wanted to transmit the message that the Roman Catholic Church had a high regard for China. It was during such events that the pope could relay his thoughts and intentions to the Beijing leadership.[18] In this way, Sino-Vatican relations were manifested by means of open communication through the world's media. This was often how the Vatican and China communicated with each other and was the manner in which the pope addressed the "Great Chinese Family."[19] On the feast of Saint Francis Xavier in December 1996, the pope recalled that the saint had had a strong desire to serve on Chinese soil but died before setting foot on the mainland.[20] Tracing the long history of the Catholic mission, the pope reminded the Chinese government of cooperation between the Jesuits and Chinese scholar-officials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The core message was that the Roman Catholic Church had always had a close interest in Chinese matters. Through his speeches, the pope conveyed the idea that Sino-Vatican relations could have progressed better and produced more fruitful results.

From the perspective of foreign observers in 2001, China and the Vatican could have achieved much if they could only resolve their differences. Both sides had gone through tough times in diplomatic relations. Was there any way to ease the tension, if not to resolve the problems they shared? Crises occurred with regularity. The canonization of the Chinese martyrs had angered the Beijing government and resulted in a great deal of ill feeling on the part of the Chinese.[21] It was a terrible mistake of the Vatican to schedule the canonization for October 1, 2000, which was the PRC's National Day. As seen in earlier chapters, Sino-Vatican relations suffered because of ignorance, negligence, and recklessness. The factors that caused the crisis might be described as mere oversight; nevertheless,

Beijing saw the entire event as an expression of foreign arrogance and adverse intentions. Such consequences could have been avoided if more care and consideration had been given at the outset. It was already too late when the damage had been done to Sino-Vatican relations. The deterioration in Sino-Vatican relations resulted from cultural differences and misunderstandings.[22]

In 2007, the pope repeatedly asked for constructive dialogue with the Beijing government.[23] The appointment of open church bishops continued to be a bone of contention between the two sides. As this book is being written, the ordination of bishops has been the chief reason for the serious deterioration in Sino-Vatican relations. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the papal commission on China is continuing in its quest to seek reconciliation in church matters. Efforts have been made, but their effect remains to be seen. The Vatican has been unable to make a leap forward in its relations with China.

The Governmental Level

The revival of religion in China during the period covered by this book was obvious. Because there was no way to bring religion under complete control, there was no way to manage the Catholic religion as a single entity. The Beijing government reestablished the Bureau of Religious Affairs and subjected the Catholic Church to supervision by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, a responsibility shared by the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. As its name suggests, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association expected Catholics to be patriotic and support the country's modernization in every possible respect and manner.[24] What is meant by the term "patriotic?" Does it mean following government directives without question or reservation? This interpretation could reflect the mindset of the Beijing government. Nevertheless, once the government allowed different religions to develop under official jurisdiction, there was no way to forestall the expansion of the Chinese Catholic Church. In a newly developing movement, there were bound to be political tensions, anxieties, and conflicts among the participants themselves. How would development of the Chinese Catholic Church be related to the Beijing government? Would its developmental path be one of complete compliance? Or would it be challenging and unpredictable? Alternatively, would it raise problems? Were many churches, seminaries, convents, and parishes being opened or reopened? How would the government manage all these changes? How would the government react if all these changes took place within a comparatively short period? The Beijing government

allowed prayers for the pope to be included in the liturgy.[25] Yet on many occasions, it warned the Chinese people not to allow foreign forces to interfere in their domestic affairs. How should one perceive the Beijing government's policies toward the revival of Catholicism on the mainland?

The Chinese Catholic Church acquired official status on the mainland in the 1980s after three decades of suppression and radical Communist movements. While the Catholic Church enjoyed such official recognition, it also meant that the church was controlled by the Beijing government. A more precise way of describing the situation is that the open church was legitimized by the willingness of its members to abide by government instructions. Taking into consideration China's reforms in the 1980s, there was also concern on the mainland over spiritual pollution from the outside. It was a logical move for the Communist authorities to exert total control over the open church and prevent Chinese Catholics from having any unwanted "spiritual problems."[26] The Chinese Catholic Church continued to grow in spite of government supervision. The faster the church grew, the greater the anxiety of the Beijing government over the church's operations. This could be viewed as a logical outcome of the government's policy.

Shortly after the June 4 Incident of 1989, Beijing alerted the United Front Work Department and the Bureau of Religious Affairs to the necessity of strictly scrutinizing the Chinese Catholic Church.[27] Directives were issued with regard to the various areas of responsibility of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission. Patriotism was the top priority and was emphasized in every religious event. In the early 1990s, the Beijing government became very sensitive about the possibility of foreign interference in China's domestic affairs. It therefore decided to exert as much control over the Chinese Catholic Church as possible. The early 1990s saw the authorities attack what they regarded as "bourgeoisie liberalism."[28] While China had to modernize and learn from abroad, there was a fear among the Beijing leadership that foreign influence would endanger the unity of the country. The open church worked within the confines imposed by the government during the 1990s. The underground church sought the freedom to undertake their activities and refused to compromise with the government. The open church and underground church took diverging positions with regard to their relations with the authorities. All the problems that arose were political in nature. So too was the fear of the government with regard to the underground church. Politics had created more problems than were necessary.

Having noted the above problems, historians, political scientists, and sociologists have all recognized the difficulty of clearly distinguishing

between the open church and underground church.[29] The authorities closely scrutinized the activities of both the open church and the underground church. Nevertheless, members of the underground church continued with their activities, sometimes in the same events open church members attended. However, members of the open church and the underground church did not "join the event together." Open church members prayed in government-sanctioned church buildings, while underground Catholics merely wanted to gather outside and pray by themselves as a closed group.[30] Another scenario that arose was when an open church priest allowed an underground priest to stay in his residence.[31] Members of the underground church, however, did not stay "underground" in reality. The authorities knew about events or religious services organized by members of the underground church; it was a matter of whether the authorities chose to arrest those Catholics who participated. Therefore, in terms of relations with the government, scholars have pointed out that the open church was (and is) a registered organization with official recognition and support. In contrast, the underground church was (and remains) unregistered without official approval or financial support from the government.

The circumstances of the open church and the underground church and how they got along with each other varied from region to region. There were gray areas in which the open church and the underground church stayed together but focused on different aspects of their work. It would prove to be beyond the central, provincial, or local authorities to exert complete control over the church's activities. The revival of Christianity in China developed and advanced on many fronts. Many scholars who have written on the Chinese Catholic Church tend to regard a simple dichotomy of the open church and the underground church as too simplistic, literally incorrect, and misleading. If one really wants to locate "the division" and put Catholics into two main categories, then the difference between Catholics of the open church and the underground church was *only and truly political*.[32] The Beijing government created this problem, and its actions led to a mistaken perception of the Chinese Catholic Church. To prevent the Vatican from playing any role in China, the Beijing government asked Catholics to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Those who refused to join the association were labeled members of "the underground." Over the course of time, underground Catholics came to carry out their activities rather openly. They did not receive subsidies from the government, but they were not and could not be stopped from engaging in their religious activities. There were two options for the authorities: arrest underground Catholics or allow them to conduct their own services. Of these two options, the government in

some instances chose to place underground priests and Catholics under arrest. The usual charge was that underground Catholics conducted religious activities in venues not approved by the government.[33] It was not because of their religion that underground Catholics were arrested but because of where they held their activities. When it chose the second option, the government still kept a close watch on the activities of underground Catholics, who were able to manage their affairs rather openly. The government therefore adopted both the first and second options.

The Societal Level

In 1979, the Chinese people were told they had freedom of religious belief.[34] This message of freedom of religious belief was reasserted in the 1982 Constitution. The government hoped religions such as Catholicism could serve as a source of moral and ethical education for the Chinese people.[35] In this way, religion could contribute to the stability of Chinese society. There was an urge to acquire knowledge from the outside. Given that religion played a useful role for the Beijing government, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences began to explore the possibility of religious studies and research in the 1980s.[36] It was openly asserted that religion could encourage social unity and thus help with the country's Four Modernizations. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association published its Catholic Church periodical as a means of transmitting the official position and policies to society.[37]

Chinese society came to have an increasing level of contact with the outside world. China became the top priority for many outsiders as a place to visit, do business, and teach. In the mid-1980s, the bishop of Hong Kong visited the mainland to engage in talks with local Catholic priests. Once the momentum was under way, Chinese Catholics traveled abroad to study and attend conferences, while Catholics from outside China went to the mainland to learn more from the open church clergy and observe church work. Foreign Catholic newspapers, media, and journals reported on what had been seen on the mainland. Some foreign newspapers tended to be very critical of the Chinese Catholic Church. However, there has always been much more to observe than what appears on the surface. When China first opened up to the outside world, the Catholic Church had much difficulty understanding the teachings of Vatican II and the resulting changes. As a consequence, the Chinese Catholic Church initially continued to celebrate Mass in Latin in the pre–Vatican II manner. Casual observers from overseas believed this represented a refusal to comply with the Vatican directives. The real reason, however, was that the mainland clergy had been separated from

the outside world for so long. They were advancing in years and found it hard to receive assistance from anyone to learn about Vatican II.[38] It took the mainland clergy a very long time to learn how to conduct the liturgy in Chinese. While the Chinese Catholic Church needed a great deal of time to adjust to the outside world, foreign observers mistook its actions as a deliberate rejection of the current practice of the Vatican to celebrate Mass in the local language.

The Chinese Catholic Church struggled to face new circumstances as the 1980s unfolded. The church initially suffered from a shortage of priests and bishops, and the existing clergy had an average age of around seventy.[39] The Chinese Catholic Church needed to increase its number of priests. It had to be a youthful church to serve Chinese society. Seminaries, convents, and novitiate houses were all reestablished as the decade wore on. The church educated a new generation of priests and nuns who would cater to the needs of society at large. Young men were recruited from traditional Catholic families.[40]

The Sheshan Seminary on the outskirts of Shanghai was well known for its admission and education of seminarians. The seminary was also where devout Catholics moored their boats and climbed the mountain to Our Lady of Sheshan. During this time, Shanghai again played an important role as it witnessed a conscious attempt to bring together priests and lay Catholics. Shanghai also sent a Catholic delegation to Hong Kong and Macau in 1985 to gain experience and participate in a Mass said in Chinese.[41] The leader of the delegation, Auxiliary Bishop Jin Luxian, also planned to visit Europe and North America the following year.

As the 1980s drew to a close, Chinese society was making progress in its modernization effort, and the Chinese Catholic Church was striving to adapt to the post–Vatican II changes. As a political organization, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was less concerned about doctrine, so there was room for the church and the laity to learn it. It was politics that separated Chinese society from the Universal Church. In some provinces, churchgoers came from a younger generation and were better educated.[42] The laity sought support from the church and maintained cordial relations with the neighborhood. However, the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association kept a close watch on the Catholic Church.

With regard to political considerations, the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II states that the governing authority and the Catholic Church should inhabit two separate domains. The Vatican therefore believed it would not pose a political threat to any country where the Catholic Church had an established presence. As a result, despite Beijing's political concern, the Vatican did not see the presence of the Catholic Church in

China as a problem.[43] More specifically, the Vatican wished that the Chinese Catholic Church could be in union with the Universal Church and believed that should not pose a threat to the Beijing government.[44] As the pope repeatedly asserted, the Vatican respected the freedom of the Chinese people. The Vatican was also respectful of the independence of the Chinese and the integrity of their society. Of course, the considerations of the Beijing government had historical origins; it remembered the time when China had been subject to unequal treaties and foreign missioners had been under the protection of their respective governments.

While the Vatican emphasized the fraternity of Chinese Catholics on the one hand, it pointed to the importance of social justice in Chinese society on the other. In their pursuit of social justice, the underground Catholics could be persevering and faithful to their religious beliefs. They were particularly concerned about the arrests of the underground clergy and laity. The underground church could therefore challenge the local authorities and even the Beijing government. From Beijing's point of view, such a scenario would threaten the stability of society. Open church members were affiliated with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and were therefore closely monitored. What about underground Catholics who refused to join the association? Would they pose a threat to Beijing's rule over Chinese society? This was undoubtedly the concern of the Beijing leadership.

Nevertheless, Chinese Catholics were very devoted to their religion and their service at the end of the 1980s. Foreign observers frequently noted how crowded mainland churches were during Mass and how faithful churchgoers were. The Catholic faith served as the fount of spiritual support for Chinese Catholics, reminding them of basic moral values and their responsibilities to family and society. In this sense, the Catholic religion did serve as a stabilizing force in society. The Beijing government had a favorable impression of the open church despite the small minority of Catholics in China. Chinese Catholics (even those who were arrested) in big cities like Shanghai where the government wanted to portray its rule in a positive light fared better than those in some other places.[45] The central government wanted to ensure that Chinese society appeared free and stable to foreign investors. Such was the rationale behind the government's relatively relaxed attitude toward Catholics in the large cities.[46]

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was general discussion about the moral and social values of Chinese society. Despite enjoying much success in its program of economic modernization, Chinese society also experienced many problems and crises. In an age of rapid change, Chinese Catholics found support from their religious faith. Moral education is what Chinese people need most amid the growing wealth and

power of China in the new century. At the same time, the Chinese Catholic Church has been trying to identify its role in society and establish how it can contribute to the spiritual needs of the Chinese people. The formation of priests has therefore been crucial in ensuring the quality of church teachings and religious service. Local Chinese priests have shouldered the enormous tasks of preaching, managing the church's apostolic work, and organizing activities. The Chinese Catholic Church has truly become indigenized with the Chinese bishops and priests who lead the laity and direct the future path of the church. There were four types of Chinese bishops in terms of their relations with the Beijing government and the Vatican.[47] The Chinese situation has become more muddled and increasingly difficult for both insiders and outsiders to comprehend, let alone forecast.

THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Members of the Chinese Catholic Church had to adapt to new situations from the 1980s onward. Imprisoned clergy were released, and the formation of young priests also became a significant matter. Most young priests came from old Catholic families; the older generation had passed on their faith to the next generation even in chaotic times such as the Cultural Revolution. These newly ordained priests were usually in their twenties or thirties. An adequate number of priests was needed to serve the dioceses across China. There was therefore a historical and ongoing concern about spreading the Catholic faith in a local Chinese setting. Priests had to reach out to the Chinese through their own culture, particularly after the decades-long experience of Communist indoctrination, Mao Zedong's cult of personality, and the mass movements since 1949. If how individual priests viewed their relations with the Vatican was one question, then how they regarded the politics of the Beijing government and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was another. A further question was how politics affected the development of religion. What type of relationship should exist between members of the church and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association? How did the open church clergy respond to criticisms from both foreign observers and the underground church?

Foreign observers were eager to get into China in the 1980s. They were curious to penetrate the thinking and understand the perspectives of priests and Chinese Catholics. They sought the answer to the question: what was the Chinese Catholic Church really like? Prominent scholars of religion and theology went on tours of China. Professor Julia Ching from the University of Toronto pointed to a revival of religion in China.[48] From

what she saw, many Chinese, including those who were educated, were eager to understand more about Christianity. She did not look for underground Catholics, however, because she wanted to avoid causing them trouble.[49] From the other side, open church priests were eager to receive foreign visitors and explain their conditions. Mutual exchange occurred on a personal basis. Foreign scholars talked to priests who might have already traveled abroad, thus making their conversation easier and communication more fruitful. On some occasions, open church priests would show their visitors around and explain the various parts of their church, the church's history, and the conditions under which they labored.[50]

The Chinese Catholic Church attracted much international attention. There was much curiosity about what was going on in China. The Sheshan Seminary was hiring foreign priests from abroad as lecturers by the end of the 1980s.[51] In places like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, outsiders could find young church members who wanted to learn more from them. Church members were trying to catch up with the outside world. Chinese priests believed that Christianity had become more established and that the church should acquire better standing both within and outside China.

Having talked to priests on the mainland, outsiders formed their own judgments on the church. Hong Kong bishop John Tong Hon openly expressed his wish that the mainland church move further ahead in the formation of priests.[52] He encouraged mainland priests to travel abroad to see what was required of foreign seminarians during their education. The Hong Kong Catholic Church had convenient access to news and developments on the mainland. Comparisons were made between the mainland church and the Catholic Church in other parts of the world. China took steps to give more freedom to individuals as the end of the 1980s approached. The June 4 Incident of 1989, however, came as a shock to the Chinese people and the outside world. The question was how the Chinese could move on to implement what they had already learned from foreign visitors and during foreign visits. As a minority of the Chinese population, Catholics were also puzzled over how society would proceed going forward. Catholics had certainly demonstrated to the authorities that religion served as a stabilizing force in society. They had also demonstrated that they could run the affairs of their own church. Catholics experienced the same ups and downs of society like anyone else. After the chaos of Tiananmen Square, both the authorities and the Chinese people had to face difficult situations and determine what they should do next.

Many young priests have been ordained over the last two decades. These new priests were in their twenties and thirties and graduated from major seminaries in the various regions of China. Seminarians from the six

provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Henan, Hubei, and Hunan studied at the Central and Southern Theological and Philosophical Seminary in Wuchang in Hubei Province.[53] Chinese society lacked priests to serve in the dioceses, a shortage that would take time to address given that seminarians studied for six years before being ordained.[54] These young priests would be sent to the dioceses or even to teach in the seminary they had graduated from. It is no exaggeration to say that China had for quite a number of years lacked the clergy required to serve its Catholics. As a major city, Nanjing recognized the need to recruit more young men to the seminary.[55] The famous Sheshan Seminary on the outskirts of Shanghai provided education to promising young men. Observers realized that hundreds of Catholics attended ordination ceremonies for the young priests.[56]

In the 1990s, some priests were well ahead of their peers in celebrating Mass in Chinese. The use of the Chinese language for religious services was indeed a great leap forward. First, it encouraged other provinces to follow one another's examples and was a response to the decision of Vatican II to use the vernacular language to serve the local population. Second, this move to adopt the local language represented the determination of the church to change and adapt to the needs of the people. Third, priests certainly hoped that it would cause non-Catholics to be interested in learning more about the church and the religion. Fourth, it showed that local priests were moving ahead of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference in terms of reform and actual work being done.[57] Fujianese priest He Dunqian had learned about the Chinese Mass during his stay in Hong Kong,[58] Many priests like him used every opportunity to change, learn from outsiders, and travel outside China to observe and understand what other people were doing. Certainly, it took time to appreciate what others practiced. There was much to see for Chinese priests from the mainland. In addition, individual priests had to adapt to local circumstances and explain the changes to their own people. This process of adaptation and adjustment was required not only of the clergy but also of individual Catholics. During this period, individual bishops, priests, nuns, and Catholics tried to transform themselves to suit the contemporary world. The younger Catholics found it easier to adapt to new situations while the old Catholics had difficulty making the adjustment. Nevertheless, Chinese individuals were responding and acting more quickly than the political authorities.[59]

The activities of the underground church in northern and northeastern China have been the focus of attention for the Beijing government in recent years. The proximity of these areas to Beijing has made the authorities much more alert to what has been going on in its neighboring

provinces. The arrest of underground priests has become a key issue in this part of China. Hebei Province has been the center of underground activities.[60] Individual Catholics have been quick in responding to the arrest of their church bishops and the scrutiny of their work. The suspicious stance of the authorities toward these Catholics has led to the latter expressing ill feelings toward the government. Incidents in which underground bishops, priests, and Catholics have been arrested remain the subject of headlines in the Catholic news media.

The Contemporary Situation

The ordination of open church bishops has continued to trouble Sino-Vatican relations, which are at their lowest point at the present time. On July 12, 2011, the Vatican issued a statement announcing the *excommunication* of Lei Shiyin (Leshan, Sichuan Province), who had been "ordained as a bishop without Vatican approval."[61] The message was that "illicit ordination means excommunication."[62] The Vatican expected the Beijing government to appoint another bishop without its approval in the near future. The appointment of Shantou bishop Joseph Huang Bingzhang without papal mandate in July 14, 2011, upset the Vatican. The Vatican had earlier mentioned that no appointment could be made because the Shantou Diocese already had a legitimate bishop. According to the Vatican source, "the Holy See had knowledge of the fact that some Bishops, contacted by the civil authorities, had expressed their unwillingness to take part in an illicit ordination [of Huang] and also offered various forms of resistance, yet were reportedly obliged to take part in the ordination."[63]

In response, China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (formerly the Bureau of Religious Affairs) denounced the Vatican as outrageously irrational and rude, having hurt the feelings of the Chinese people.[64] Most important, Beijing stated that "the Vatican must rescind the 'so-called excommunications' of the illicitly ordained bishops" before Sino-Vatican relations could progress.[65] The *People's Daily* challenged the Vatican's position, asserting its right to appoint bishops as "the West's historical baggage and frankly its problem."[66] The paper argued that China opposed "the principle of letting a foreign state [the Vatican] dictate to another what happens on its own territory."[67] In addition, it dismissed the Vatican's excommunication of bishops as "a medieval tool that has no place in 2011 in China or anywhere."[68] From June to October 2011, China refused the entry of nine Catholic priests, who had valid visas. Four of them were Italian, four were of Chinese origin, and the other one was French. Most of them worked in Hong Kong but then could not go to the mainland.[69] Also, insiders in the Vatican believed that Beijing had

blacklisted twenty or more people, the majority of whom were priests, and would not allow them to enter the country either.[70] It was reported in late 2011 that the Chinese Catholic Church had been subject to strict scrutiny.[71] Sino-Vatican relations were in the doldrums, and the clergy had to choose their own stand in the face of such circumstances. Some priests and bishops continued to follow the Vatican and refused to register with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Nevertheless, the other clergy maintained that working with the Beijing government would give them more opportunities to do church work and spread the Christian faith to their fellow people.[72]

In February 2012, the Roman Catholic Church welcomed 22 new cardinals, one of whom was John Tong Hon. Cardinal Tong said there was a need for constructive dialogue between Beijing and the Vatican.[73] The Roman Catholic Church has experienced a unique history in its relations with China. For more than three decades, there have been exchanges between Chinese Catholics and foreign Catholics from other parts of the world. The late Pope John Paul II often mentioned the Chinese in his prayers for Catholics of the world, a tradition continued by Pope Benedict XVI. This may have exerted some kind of influence on the Chinese, though foreign missioners can never work as missioners on the mainland. Many questions have not been resolved and continue to puzzle observers, scholars, and devout Catholics alike. First, how would China react to the Vatican given its role in church matters? Second, as China becomes a great power that actively participates in world events, how can the Chinese Catholic Church shun being in union with the Universal Church? Third, though it is supposed to lead the Catholic Church throughout the world, the Vatican has had a great deal of trouble with China and cannot relate constructively to China at this point in time. Can the Vatican ever resolve this problem?

China has always been suspicious of foreign interference in its domestic affairs. This has been China's position in matters relating to the Catholic Church, meaning the Vatican cannot have any say in Catholic matters on the mainland. The Chinese position has thus presented a recurrent and frustrating barrier to progress in dialogue. The future of the Chinese Catholic Church remains confusing and problematic. Sino-Vatican relations will be volatile for as long as this impasse is unresolved.

Notes

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Chapter 1

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CHAPTER 7

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