**Hearts and Minds: The Path for the Protestant Chinese Church to effect Democratization in China.**

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates the potential of the Chinese Protestant Church having an impact on the process of democratization in China. Some scholars argue that the Chinese Protestant Church has accommodated the authoritarian Chinese state and thus does not play a significant role in the democratization process. Others argue that the church has greater presence in rural areas organized through ‘house churches’ and thus are not playing a significant role in challenging the authoritarian state. Thus there seems to be a common assumption by scholars that unity within the Christian community and political activism is required in order for the church to influence democratization.

In this research project I aim to show that Christianity in China does not have to be overtly political or even be well-organized in order to have an impact on democratization. By comparing the contemporary Chinese Protestant Church to the earlier Apostolic/Pre-Nicene (Early) Church, I will show that the Chinese Church does not need to be organized in order to cause governmental change in China. Instead, the effects of industrialization moving populations from rural to urban areas and the Chinese Christians embracing beliefs such as imminent return and evangelicalism is and will cause Christianity to spread. This spreading will cause the Chinese Church to have a role in democratization as urban Christians continue speaking out for rights such as the freedom of speech, assembly, religion and civil rights. These individual rights are historically linked to democratic theory and liberalism.

The paper starts with an overview of the history of Christianity in China from its initial arrival in the 8th Century until today. This overview highlights the reasons for Christianity succeeding and failing in the past while also providing the necessary background to understand how the Church is different today. Then the paper begins to review current scholars on Christianity in China in order to establish who these Christians are, how they are organized, why their numbers have increased, and their connections to the Chinese pro-democracy movement. From this review will emerge the scholars’ opinion that Christianity will not play a role in the democratization of China due to lack of political will and disunity. My assertion is counter to theirs. To prove this I compare the Apostolic/Pre-Nicene (Early) Church and the current Church in China to demonstrate how the early church was able to overcome a hostile government without the type of unity or organization scholars are seeking from the Chinese Protestants. I also give the philosophical framework which resides in Protestant Christian belief which will allow for a disorganized group to effect significant change in a society including China.

At the end of the paper, I will highlight a key difference between the Early Church and the Chinese Church. This key difference is significant and will work in the Chinese Church’s favor. I will briefly discuss what I see as the real threat to the development of the Church and its role in democratization. The Chinese Church, similar to ancient times, is not the master of their own destiny.

**Introduction**

There has been an increase in Christianity in China since 1980. This is especially true for Protestant Christianity. Pre-1949 levels are estimated to be roughly 500,000 adherents (Lutz 187). Today, the number of Chinese Protestants is estimated to be as high as 130 million Chinese Protestants (Yang 36). The reasons for this increase have been debated, but the increase itself is universally accepted by foreign observers, dissidents, and even the Chinese Government. This increase presents some significant questions. Will the increase in Protestantism, traditionally linked with Europe and democracy, continued to be viewed as foreign? Is the link between Christianity and modernization and what ways will post-Mao reforms affect Christianity if China continues to modernize? Will it result in a change of government from an authoritarian regime to a more modern democracy?

First, in this case it is important to review scholarship on the history of China from both a religious history and a political history. The review starts with the Christianity in Dynastic China, then moves into the Civil War period, and brings us to the modern day. This review is important because of the reoccurring themes throughout China’s history with Christianity. Throughout the history there has been a link between modernization and Christianity. There has also been a traditional undercurrent of xenophobia (in most cases warranted) which caused disruptions to Christianity’s development.

After the historical review, the paper will look at scholars’ work on modern Christianity in China. There are five areas we can look at in writings to help answer what Christianity’s future impact may be. First it is important to know who these Christians are demographically. This paper will include how the Church is structured in China along with who the individuals are that make up the Church. Next, the paper investigates the factors which have led to this increase in Protestantism. It will also show the movement’s current foundation in China. It will also be helpful to look at the link between these Christians and the Pro-democracy movement in China. This seems to be especially true after the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. Finally, the paper explores if these Christians have a strong affinity towards promoting a governmental change to democracy. All of these areas together will help give a picture of these emerging Chinese Christians and their potential impact on China’s government.

Scholars predominately believe that without a cohesive, unified front, the Church in China will be unable to affect significant change in the country. This paper will argue that no such front is needed. In fact, the Chinese Church is following a similar path as the Early Church did when it was opposed by the Roman Empire. It is through these similarities that the Church will be able to have an influence in the scheme of Chinese government and social spheres. There are also differences between the Early Church and the Chinese Church. The most important difference is their exposure to a State Church and the implications.

**The History of the Church in China**

The history of Christianity in China begins in the seventh century C.E. with the establishment of the first Syro-Oriental church[[1]](#footnote-1) in China during the Tang Dynasty (Witek 13). According to Daniel Bays in his book *A New History of Christianity in China*,a group of Da Qin (literally Syrian but individuals may have been from Persia), whom he refers to as Nestorians[[2]](#footnote-2), came to China via the Old Silk Road. During this time the relative peace in the region had enabled markets to trade throughout the Middle East and Asia (Bays 8). China itself had started to have more foreigners in the country. This was a result of immigration happening through the trade route established by the Old Silk Road (Bays 9). Christians had probably already been to the region, but as traders rather than missionaries (Bays 8). When the missionary group arrived they were welcomed and their sacred texts were translated by order of the emperor (Bays 9). This church would last for over two hundred years (Bays 7). It would end in 845 C.E. when imperial decree ended all religions viewed as “foreign”. Clergy ministers were made to become laity[[3]](#footnote-3) in order to not “adulterate the customs of China.” This xenophobic reaction came as a result of Persian Muslims taking control of the Silk Road and defeating China in Central Asia (Aikman 24). This would be the first of many acts of suppression China has done when they felt politically threatened.

By the Sixteenth Century C.E., the Jesuit missionaries had been trying to get into the Chinese mainland for years. They stayed in the Portuguese controlled Macau as a place of residence year round. This was because they weren’t allowed to reside inland. Only merchant parties were allowed in during trade season. It wasn’t until 1583 when Italian Jesuit Michele Ruggeri gained permission of local officials to reside in Guangdong province as long as he didn’t live in the provincial capital and learned the native language (Witek 17). According to journalist David Aikman, this region today is home to the Fangcheng fellowship. This fellowship is one of the largest house church networks in China today (Aikman 8). Ruggeri brought with him Matteo Ricci (Bays 20-21). Matteo Ricci learned Chinese and gained access into Dynastic China through the Imperial Chinese Court (Witek 17). The Catholics gained a foothold in China, specifically Jesuit Missionaries.

The Jesuits were special from other missionaries because they were willing to adapt some customs and beliefs in order to spread Christianity. As a result, they contributed to a Chinese Renaissance that took place between the late Ming and early Qing dynasties (Li 119). Li Tiangang in his paper, “Chinese Renaissance: The Role of Early Jesuits in China,” states that while this renaissance was Chinese in nature, “the Jesuits’ activity was one of the most important factors for Chinese modernization” (122). The Jesuits accomplished this in two ways. First, they helped bring an understanding that the morals and ethics of the native Confucianism were compatible with Christianity (Li 123). This will be important later when discussing modern China. Second, they translated European enlightenment literary works into Chinese (Li 121). This allowed Jesuits to be able to foster a positive relationship between the Chinese intellectuals and Christianity (Li 119-123). This reaching over to the intellectuals is something that is currently happening in China. The Modern Chinese Intellectuals see Christianity as a valuable part of the process of modernization through Capitalism. This is because the intellectuals see Christianity as the value system which enables economic growth in a capitalistic system.

The Jesuits mission to China ended when a judgment by Pope Clement IX banning Catholics from Chinese or Confucian funeral rites was read in 1707. This was because the Pope believed such rites were equivalent in practicing the religions themselves. This led the Yongzheng Emperor to ban all Christian missionaries from preaching in 1724. He declared Christianity to be a cult detrimental to Chinese culture and values. This ban would last until the 1840s. Persecution of Christians, especially foreigners, marked the period of the ban (Bays 30). The Chinese once again shutoff something they believed to be politically threatening. In this case, China felt threatened by the Vatican.

Protestantism came to China starting in roughly 1807. The first protestant missionary was Robert Morrison who was sent by the London Missionary Society and contracted by the British East India Company to do translation work (Bays 44). Protestantism, like today, was divided amongst the various denominational and theological continuums (Lutz 179). Since no missionaries were allowed into the interior of China until 1842, foreigners were only allowed in Macau. This situation caused the missionaries to join cause with merchants wanting access into China. This was similar to the previous situation for Catholics. This time though entry came because of the end of the Opium Wars and the United Kingdom forcing the door open. The British came first into the country through the treaty ending the Opium Wars in 1842. The Americans followed in 1844. This was only a partial opening of China as they were limited to five port cities (Bays 42).

Jessie G. Lutz describes these missionaries as “minimalists”[[4]](#footnote-4) because of their orthodox protestant belief of sola scriptura[[5]](#footnote-5) and not prima scriptura as promoted by Roman Catholicism. This difference is between a profession of faith for Protestants and the required sacramental actions of Roman Catholics. The protestant missionaries were also influenced by the Great Awakening which resulted in them focusing on salvation and confessing. Because of the Protestant focus on scripture, the missionaries set out to translate the Bible into Chinese, as well as various evangelistic tracks (180-181). Once in China, missionaries set up congregations predominately in house churches (182). This is a methodology used by the Church since the apostolic era. They trained Chinese believers to help handle the work load. This work included civics projects like operating day schools and boarding schools, as well as offering medical services (Bays 49).

The social climate in China between missionaries and the people began to change. The situation became problematic when the Taiping Rebellion was led by the heterodoxy[[6]](#footnote-6) Christian leader, Hong Xiuquan. The protestant missionaries of China were initially supportive of a possible Christian leader of China but that faded when Hong refused to guarantee the continuation or expansion of the current treaties. Nationalism had its way, and when the nations reaffirmed their treaties in 1858-1860 with the Qing that was the end of their support with the Taiping Rebellion. However, the intellectuals of the day continued to associate Christianity with the Taiping. The Taiping Rebellion was crushed but the intellectuals and elites still viewed the missionaries as sources of unrest (Bays 53-56).

This continued and was used in part[[7]](#footnote-7) by the Europeans to start another war. As a result of this war another treaty opened the whole of China to the missionaries in 1856 (Bays 56). Ten years later a British missionary landed with his family in China. Hudson Taylor founded China Inland Mission (CIM). C.I.M. was revolutionary for its time. Taylor founded it to be interdenominational, no formal education was required, unmarried women could serve as missionaries, Chinese dress was to be worn, and the authority of the mission would be in China, not overseas (Aikman 40). Hudson was part of a new kind of missionary movement that believed in full immersion. Many of these missionaries would pack their belongings into coffins when leaving for overseas. This was because they expected to never return and would die for Christ. This movement was fueled by spiritual fervor created during the Second Great Awakening.

During the Nineteenth Century, the Chinese began to associate Christianity with Western Imperialism (Lutz 179). At the dawn of the Twentieth Century, the growing nationalistic feelings compounded. This sediment sparked in the late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century what was called the Three Self Movement (Bays 51-52). This movement really began to take hold after the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 (Aikman 41-42). The Three Self Movement believed in a self-supporting, self-governance, and self-propagating Chinese Church (Bays 52). Those in the movement, like Watchman Nee[[8]](#footnote-8), John Sung,[[9]](#footnote-9) and Wang Mingdao, attempted to remove foreign influence from their religious community and promote a distinctly Chinese Church (Aikman 43). These believers had no desire to become involved in politics or to allow outside forces to influence their community of faith. This also meant they were not interested in the various rebellions and revolutions which took place from the 1900s-1940s (Lee 68).

In the early twentieth century, one of the effects of the constant humiliation was that China became open to western ideas for modernization. This included the perception that the West’s progress came as a result of Christianity which missionaries advocated. From roughly 1900-1920 Christianity experienced a dramatic increase. Protestantism increased to an adherence of an estimated 500,000 (Lutz 187-188). This push coincided with the Pentecostal Movement in the United States. Many missionaries came from Pentecostal groups like the newly formed Assemblies of God[[10]](#footnote-10). Those missionaries brought with them a renewed evangelical fundamentalist theology with a belief in the charismata[[11]](#footnote-11) and millennialism (Lutz 187-188). Some who were a part of the Three Self Movement, such as Wang and Song, were influence by these beliefs (Lutz 189). This movement was in full motion when anti-Christian and anti-western rhetoric arose and was utilized by both the Kuomintang (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

When Mao’s communist regime took power in 1949 the religious landscape began to change (Bays 159). In 1951, some parts of the Three Self Movement embraced the new government and changed to become a pro-government movement. This marked the creation of the Three Self Patriotic Movement[[12]](#footnote-12) (Bays 160-164). Groups like Watchman Nee’s little flock refused to be brought under any government control. This led to Nee’s imprisonment in 1956 and the little flock either being absorbed by the TSPM or going underground. Other Christian leaders were persecuted in like manner (Lee 92).

In 1967, Mao began the Cultural Revolution which would stay officially in effect until Mao’s death in 1976. The government shut down all of the religious organizations, TSPM etc., and persecuted anyone who proclaimed being a Christian. During this time the Christian Church went underground and operated exclusively outside of the public space. The Church during this time was very rural and poor (Yang 426).

In 1979 Deng Xiaopeng began reforming the social and economic space after the Cultural Revolution. Government controlled religious groups and churches were reopened (Bays 489). Since this time Christianity has increased more than at any other point in Chinese history. This is especially true for Protestant Christianity. Pre-1949 levels are estimated to be roughly 500,000 adherents (Lutz 187). Today, the number of Chinese Protestants is estimated to be as high as 130 million Chinese Protestants (Yang 36). The fact that a majority of the Church remains underground makes tabulating the total number difficult.

**The Contemporary Protestant Chinese Church**

Looking at the Protestant Christians of China today, the scholars tend to be pretty united in their view of this group’s demographic profile. The Chinese Christian population is mostly women, less educated, peasants, and elderly. Daniel Bays in his paper, “Chinese Protestant Christianity Today,” states that the majority of the Church is rural and poor (501). Fenggang Yang in one of his papers, “Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald’s: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China,” brings up that the church traditionally has been older and rural but is becoming younger, middle class, and urban (424). Ryan Dunch argues for a regional dichotomy of Protestants between those in the rural interior of China and poorer costal inhabitants who tend to be old, sick, illiterate, and predominately women from those urban Protestants who are young, educated and professional, (203).

In Kit-Chun Lam and Bill W. S. Hung’s 2005 survey Christians tended to be women, who were middle aged, highly educated, and middle class professionals (204). However it should be noted that this survey was done in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Since this region was under British control until late in the reform era, it has a different religious history than mainland China. However, it can serve as a picture of what mainland Chinese Christians will look like in the near future. The predominance of women who are Christians in China should not be surprising. This is true for the majority of Protestant Christianity worldwide. The demographic shift from poor to middle class and rural to urban are linked as poor rural people are moving into the urban areas where they are working in factories or starting businesses.

There are other groups attracted to Christianity in China. Chen Cunfu and Huang Tianhai talk about a “Boss Christian”. These are private business owners who establish churches on their worksites (183). There are also the “Cultural Christians”, which are further segmented into intellectuals who are interested in Christianity for modernization principles and those who are actually Christian Intellectuals (Wielander 855,856). David Aikman in his book remarks how he was surprised to meet so many professional and government workers who are Christians while in China.

Where the discussion on the individual Protestants is fairly clear, the scholarship on how to classify them as a group gets very cloudy. The most basic division is between the government TSPM churches and the unregistered autonomous underground house churches (Yang 37-38, Yang, F 427). In his 2003 paper, Daniel Bays instead thinks it should be looked at as a rural and urban dichotomy. He contends that the urban TSPM and urban, unregistered churches are pretty close demographically and theologically. This applies also that the rural TSPM and the rural unregistered churches also seem to be demographically and theologically similar (491,497). Another view is that there are actually four kinds of church groupings present in China. They are: government sponsored (TSPM), urban activist (like the Ark in Bejing), “respectful” unregistered churches (Little Flock) and apolitical house churches who shun all government involvement (Vala 48-51). Gerda Wielander sees multiple divisions. The church in China is split due to legal status, but there are other divisions even among the varied congregations or house churches. She focuses in on the Cultural Christians or the Chinese Intellectuals who are interested in Christianity versus the “commoners”. These Intellectuals are either believers themselves or they see a positive relationship between modernization and Christianity. She then separates these Intellectuals from the rest of the urban Church (855,856).

Cunfu and Tianhai’s paper distinguishes three groups. These three groups are the state churches, the underground churches, and the churches that are not approved or registered with the TSPM but yet are out in the open. The reason for this is because the congregations were started by private business people, and this helps to shield their activities from persecution from authorities (183). Jacqueline E. Wenger looks at them simply as either being official churches or unofficial churches (169). In his 2006 paper, Fenggang Yang describes the variations of church status as either being red (state), black (illegal), or grey (state approved doing illegal activities) market churches. He contends in his paper that China has all three systems active currently.

The Chinese Christians are becoming more affluent and urban as time goes on because of modernization happening in the country. They started out rural and poor but are becoming increasingly urban and middle class. They are also bringing their Christianity to areas previously not injected with the faith. Thus the average Christian’s demographics are changing because the current Christians are improving and new Christians are increasingly urban and better off financially.

So why has there been such an increase in Protestants? In Fenggang Yang’s mind, the Chinese are experiencing somewhat of a cultural crisis due to the breakdown of socialism and the uncertainty in the job market. He talks about U.S. immigrants from China. He then applies this idea of instability to the mainland Chinese. Yang says the following in his 2005 paper: “I find that the most important factors for the Christian conversion of Chinese immigrants are dramatic social and cultural changes in the process of coerced modernization—wars, social turmoil, political storms, and the collapse of Chinese traditional cultural systems. The immigrant experience as a racial minority in the United States further intensifies their existential needs for spiritual certainty,” (425). Then in another paper in 2006, Yang explains that the increase in Christians happened during the Cultural Revolution while the Church was underground. Observers are only now seeing the increase which has happened because of the less restrictive environment (105). Lian Xi confirms this idea in his book stating that the Church underwent a series of revivals while in the rural areas in the 1960s and 1970s (206). Persecution of the Christian faith has always resulted in a purification of belief and an emboldening of believers. This will be expounded upon later. Lian then goes on to state that he believes the expansion has continued because the “iron rice bowl” of Mao is no longer being fulfilled to the rural poor. This has allowed the Church to step into that void (230).

Another idea is that the increase has come from the effect of the Cultural Revolution’s erosion in the faith of Marxist-Leninism. Also Confucianism, while still regarded for its values on family and order, is perceived by the modern Chinese as not allowing the flexibility needed for an active capitalistic economy (Aikman 16). Christianity’s rise is due to China’s loss of direction from the social change. This allows for a market type system of religion, even if underground in nature, to expand by catering to different people (Wenger 171). Daniel Bay, in his 2012 book, states that the expansion is the aftermath and response to the Cultural Revolution as well. Bay’s believes that the repressive nature of the Revolution caused people to search for stability they no longer had in the government (184). Lap Yan Kung talks about how the TSPM is understood as the religious extension of the government which works for those who are pro government. However, other venues have also expanded because of their significant break from the government, like the underground churches (210).

The 1980s reforms also resulted in a shift to a rapid market economy and it caused relocation from rural to urban. Ryan Dunch states that the “rapid spread of the market economy and consequent social mobility,” has allowed for the movement of traditionally rural Christians into urban areas. This resulted in Christianity spreading where it was mostly contained in the rural areas (203). Rural Christians brought their faith into the urban areas (Cunfu and Tianhai 195). Christianity rose in the urban and rural areas because of the uncertainty in China (Wenger 171). Human rights activist Liao Yiwu in the introduction of his book, *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China*, believes that the lack of security from political reforms may be the reason for the increase in urban areas, but there is a multigenerational Chinese Christian Culture in the rural areas (xx). Not much is known about the rural Church because of the fact that it is underground and remains so out of fear of future persecutions.

Are these Christians then at all linked to the pro-democracy movement? In a large part, no is the answer by scholars. According to Carsten Vala, the Chinese have always valued the state over religion. Unlike Europe where religion and the state fought each other for control, throughout China’s history the government has always had more power than religion. This is in part due to the Confucian ethic in Chinese culture. Although there are activist churches like the Ark, there are other churches who don’t want to fight with the government. The Church seems more interested in religious rights or civil rights than democracy (52). This lack of focus on democracy is in spite of a number of prolific converts who were involved in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. David Aikman lists these 1989 survivors as Zhang Boli, Xiong Yan, Wu Er Kaixi, and Han Dongfang. Other dissident converts include: Wang Xizhe, Dr. Wang Bingzhang, and Dr. Yang Jianli (Aikman 11). Another Tiananmen survivor who converted is Bob Fu, founder of ChinaAid, who was at Tiananmen Square but left before June 4th. His faith in government was shaken. He converted to Christianity then fled the country. Most of his work centers on human rights, not democratization (Kissel A13). Wielander views the source of pro-democracy in the city as coming from the intellectuals. She believes these beliefs may trickle down to commoners in time (854).

Lap Yan Kung makes an important observation: “Official religions do not satisfy the spiritual needs of the people, because the Church is too political. Paradoxically, morality may bring the state and Church closer together but may alienate the Church from the people” (218). This comment is implicating that there is an advantage to the separation currently existing between the Church and the state. Christians are worried about the state using the Church as a propaganda arm. However, the Church and state share some goals in a sense of morality. Lap believes that if they were to join forces in a universal way that the Church may lose the people’s trust. This idea of separation seems to be a continuation of the policy Three-Self leaders decided after the fall of Beijing, that the Church should be apolitical (Liao 161).

So if they are apolitical in nature, then are they going to help advocate for democracy? As Lap Yan Kung observes, if politically rhetoric is what is driving the Church out of the TSPM, then it stands to reason that any attempt to marry politics to the unregistered churches would be detrimental (218). David Aikman states, “I discovered that there are deputy provincial governors, judges, and lawyers in China working hard behind the scenes to try and implement laws of religious freedom and the larger concept of the rule of law” (9). He believes they only want moderate changes to the current political system (290). There are also the humanitarian efforts that seem to be filing the gaps where the government support is lacking. This includes helping the poor (Lian 230). There is a predominate belief that unless the government is directly challenged that the Church is only helping stabilize the government through humanitarian efforts.

Vala is more direct. He believes that the separation of the political from Christian practice that is found in the house churches will ultimately prevent any political agenda from emanating there. He believes in the end the Chinese government is in charge and all change has to come from them (52). Ryan Dunch makes a similar statement: “Neither the TSPM/CCC structure nor the autonomous churches act as a public voice providing a distinctly Protestant perspective on issues of pressing national concern” (210).

Wielander believes that direct intervention isn’t needed. She quotes John Keane by stating there are traces of Christianity in freedom of speech, blasphemy laws, religious holidays and public prayers. She then adds Keane’s two forms of religious protest. First is the call to imitate Christ through ethical concerns for the poor. The other is an emphasis on witnessing (851). She goes on to underscore that even those churches that are politically active seem in discord. This effects how they will work together, the way they perceive others, and their ability to achieve a common goal. Because of this they will be not able to mobilize in a unified way. Most likely ordinary Christians will have a more meaningful impact on China’s process of democratization (864).

Daniel Bays does not believe that Christianity poses a risk to the Communist government, though unregistered churches are subject to watch because of the role they played in the collapse of Eastern Europe (492). He believes that Christian efforts have more to do with social issues like supporting those who are poor, emergency aid, and being for civil rights (500). Wenger agrees with Bays. While Intellectuals mistrust TSPM, they are more open to house church members (175). She views the Church as helping fill in the gap with social transition thus supporting the Chinese government. The lack of unity between the TSPM and the underground church will empower them in each of their districts to play a role in effecting China’s future (181).

Chen Cunfu and Huang Tianhai believe that their Boss Christians might act a little differently. Boss Christians seem better able to negotiate with TSPM or government officials. They like democratic elections and have been pushing for them locally. These Christians are born out of an open economy, are globalists, and less nationalistic. Their churches tend to have democratic systems (195-196).

Yang Zhong’s survey backs this up in part for urban Christians by showing strong support for civil rights and 90% support for freedom of the press. Also, 70% of the sample was for democratically electing officials. 70% also don’t believe the government’s post-Tiananmen Square claim about demonstrations and assemblies creating chaos (45). However, in areas where there are currently elections at the Provincial level, only 5% voted and 65% stated that they have no interest in local elections. So while there is a positive relationship between democratic thought and Christianity in China, there is very little sense that this will lead to a political activism among the majority of the Church (44).

In summary, according to scholars, the Chinese Protestants are a diverse group who are hard to label. They grew up out of evangelical revivals during the Cultural Revolution and dispersed throughout the country, converting others as a result of a market economy. When the pro-democracy movement was set back, some sought refuge in the Church, but that mindset has not become part of the Church. Instead they are focused on their religious goals which include freedom of religion and helping the disadvantaged. In the days ahead the Chinese people will face yet another crossroad in regard to Christianity. As Yang Zhong states at the conclusion of his paper, “The Chinese government faces a dilemma with regard to the flourishing Christian population in China. On the one hand it is not ready to grant complete religious freedom to Chinese churches out of fear that this sediment of the population may slop out of its reach. On the other hand, the Chinese government cannot completely “regulate” or control the churches at this point, due to the social and political costs of extreme measures (47).” Zhong’s statement about the Chinese quandary with Christianity would have also applied to an ancient civilization’s dilemma with Christianity. In this comparison lies the possible implications Christianity may have for China politically.

**The Chinese and Early Churches**

There are some important similarities between the Chinese Church and the Early Church up to the time of the Nicene Fathers. The government in charge, Rome, started out neutral to Christianity but later became hostile to Christianity. This happened for political reasons. Also similar to China were the persecutions Christians suffered. In the Roman Empire, these persecutions were sporadic in nature and normally spurred by the local officials. However, there was also the occasional empire wide persecution. Persecution becomes the policy of China following the end of the civil war and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China.

The Early Church was fragmented and decentralized like those in the underground Church of China. While the Ancient Church did not have a corresponding state church, it did have some clergy willing to speak out for Christians. This, too, is similar to those in the urban areas of China who worship in public. The early Church typically met in homes or in buildings owned by local prosperous Christians. This organization is similar to that of the Chinese Church with either underground house congregations or congregations which met at a workplace.

The Early Church, like that of China, was active in acts of mercy for the disadvantaged. Also, Early Church leaders advocated for the freedom of religion just as those in the semi-underground Churches do today. At the same time, the Christians were highly evangelistic. For the Early Church, these efforts lead to being eventually accepted by the government.

This acceptance is something that may, in time, happen in China. It took Christianity close to three hundred years to gain acceptance. Yet, like Ancient Rome, there are some specific challenges to Christianity in China. Moving forward, the paper will look at each of these areas highlighted and finish with thoughts on the perils for the Church. Christianity started out as a sect of Judaism, not its own religion (Josephus *Antiq.* 18.3.3[[13]](#footnote-13)). As such, it enjoyed protection in the early days because of Judaism’s tolerated status within the Roman Empire. The Romans had a policy of allowing indigenous religions, language, and culture to stay intact as long as Roman rule was not challenged. As a result, most of early Christianity’s difficulties came as a result of Jews bringing Christians to the Roman officials or the local sanhedrins[[14]](#footnote-14) for various offenses. This can be seen in Scripture through the trials of: Jesus (Matt. 26:57-67), Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60), Peter (Acts 4:1-22), and Paul (Acts 23:1-11). The policy of toleration began to change to a policy of persecution. This started to change when Nero blamed the fire of Rome on Christians, who were a minority religion in the city. As time went on Christians became understood to be their own religion separate from Judaism. One difficulty was that Christianity was not a region religion like Judaism. This was the primary reason Judaism was tolerated within the empire. This led to Romans to reexamine their view of Christianity.

As Christianity began to be viewed as its own religion and the region dynamic disappeared, so did the protections it afforded. Christianity began to be viewed as an alien or outside religion similar to how Christianity has been viewed in China for most of its history. This put the Early Church at opposition to the Empire. The Empire’s official religion was based on the Greek Pantheon, but more important than that was the deification of the Roman Emperor. Since the emperor was a god then to not worship the Emperor’s image was akin to anti-nationalism, heresy, and rebellion. The tenants of Christianity do not allow Christians to participate in idol worship. This is a similar conflict to that which occurred in China around 1707. As previously mentioned, Pope Clement IX forbade Chinese Catholics from participating in Chinese or Confucian rites. Since Confucianism had been absorbed into the whole of Chinese culture it produced a similar effect of distain by the Chinese Emperor. In China’s case, the Jesuits were kicked out of the country. In Rome’s case this led to horrible persecutions. For China the most severe time of persecution was during Mao’s Cultural Revolution. In both this and in many of the Roman persecutions, torture and even death were used to try and compel Christians to abandon their faith. In Eusebius’s *The Church History*, the writer transposes a section of the letter entitled “Martyrdom of Polycarp.” It states:

When he approached, the proconsul asked him if he were Polycarp, and after he admitted it, the (The proconsul) tried to dissuade him, saying “Respect your years! Swear by Caesar’s fortune! Recant and say, ‘Away with the atheists[[15]](#footnote-15)!’” But Polycarp swept his hand across the crowd, sighed, looked up to heaven, and cried, “Away with the atheists!” But the governor pressed him, “Take the oath and I will set you free. Curse Christ!” But Polycarp replied, “For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” But when he (the proconsul) persisted, “Swear by Caesar’s fortune,” he (Polycarp) replied, “If you suppose that I could do this, pretending not to know who I am, listen carefully: I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn the teachings of Christianity, choose a day and you will hear them.”… Said the proconsul, “I have wild beasts. I will throw you to them if you don’t change your mind!” “Call them,” he replied, “for we cannot change our mind from better to worse. But to change from cruelty to justice is excellent.” Again he (proconsul) countered, “If you disregard beasts, I’ll have you consumed by fire unless you repent!”… But Polycarp declared, “…But what are you waiting for? Do what you will,” (149-150).

Polycarp was burned alive for his belief in Christ. In China we also have record of torture being used against Christians, even now during a relatively calm period of persecution. A well-known example of this the current state of torture and imprisonment is that of Gao Zhisheng.

Gao Zhisheng was once a communist party member and a member of the People’s Liberation Army. He was motivated by Deng Xiaopeng’s efforts to develop a Chinese legal system. He took law classes and proceeded to establish a law firm. The bulk of his legal career has been spent fighting Chinese corruption and advocating for civil rights. In 2005, Gao became a Christian and worshipped at an underground house church. However, his activities combating corruption span back to the 1990s, (Kahn 1-2).

Gao is looked at as both a pro-democracy leader and as a persecuted Christian. Since 2006, Gao has been in and out of the secret police prisons. Typically he is kidnapped and no one knows where he has gone, sometimes for years. He has suffered horrible torture through shock rods, beatings, and use of wood splints (ChinaAid). Currently, he is being held in the Shaya Prison in Xinjiang. Gao is not alone in persecution. Even those who don’t speak out against the corruption of the Communist Party are also imprisoned and tortured. One such incident concerned Li De Xian. In 1995 Li was an evangelist who illegally preached at a meeting in Hua Da Village when the Public Security Bureau disrupted the meeting. Voice of the Martyrs gives this account:

“Li was brutally beaten. He was repeatedly kicked in the stomach and groin before the congregation. The young women who were present were grossly molested and loaded into police vans. Upon arriving at security headquarters, Li was beaten with a heavy club by the superintendent. Seven officers dragged him into an isolation cell, where he was thrown on the concrete floor and again kicked until he vomited blood. The officers proceeded their cruelty by alternating beating him on the front and back of his neck. His head was slammed between his knees until he barely remained conscious. Li was then beaten in his face with his Bible and left bleeding on the floor,” (DC Talk and Voice of the Martyrs 170).

It is a logical question to ask how such punishment by the government could be helpful to the Church. The answer to this question must be looked at on multiple levels. There is a religious answer to this, but there is also a socio-political answer as well. Church Father Tertullian once wrote that the “blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, (Eusebius 9).” This statement is believed to be true for a couple of reasons. However, it is important to note that Christian martyrs have been incredibly successful throughout time. This success has been the case from the days of the Roman Empire, to the rise of Protestantism, and even into modern stories like that of Jim Elliot and Nick Saint[[16]](#footnote-16).

First, theologically there is an understanding that the blood of the martyrs cries out for vengeance[[17]](#footnote-17) (Rev. 6:9-11). So if a country begins killing a lot of Christians then there is the idea that those murdered for their faith will call out for justice against their killers. Thus regimes against Christianity are removed for those who either tolerate or endorse Christianity. This idea has been so prevalent throughout Christian history that in the Middle Ages aging monks would travel to non-Christian areas for the purpose of being killed by the inhabitants for preaching the Christian message. They viewed this as establishing a foothold into that region for Christianity.

The other thing that needs to be taken into account is that Christianity is based on a Savior/God who died through persecution. In fact, in numerous places either in the Gospels or in the Epistles, Christians are instructed in regards to such persecution. They are admonished to “take up your cross” (Matt 16:24-25). This point of identification with their God is a strong motivator for believers.

So important was this element of identification that there were disputes within the Early Church over those who failed under persecution. Namely, could those individuals be brought back into the fold even after sacrificing or had they according to Hebrews trampled the blood of Christ, (10:19-31)? There is still a powerful association today that Christians who are persecuted take comfort in the fact that they are being persecuted like Christ.

The above gives the motivation for the Chinese Christian to endure persecution. However, how does it affect society and the political structure? Throughout history, when Christians have suffered unjustly for their faith, there have been non-Christians who have spoken on their behalf to have them freed of unjust persecution. When this happens, it puts pressure on the government in charge to become lenient towards Christianity.

During the early church’s time, many of the defenses and apologies laid out by the Pre-Nicene Fathers actually cite Roman officials and even emperors’ admonishments to officials not to persecute Christians. According to Eusebius, Tertullian does this very thing in his *Defense*. When Pliny the Younger saw the deaths of so many Christians he was alarmed. He sent word of it to Emperor Trajan. In the letter, Pliny even goes into the conduct and practices which is done in a positive light. Trajan then concludes that Christians should no longer be hunted but only arrested if found (Eusebius 122[[18]](#footnote-18)). Since Christianity has spread in part due to the social migration in China from rural to urban, it has become middle class and even moved into the intellectuals. This has caused Christianity to become more sympathetic as it is no longer mainly confined to the rural space like during the Cultural Revolution. In China, as previously noted by the scholar, there is a rising class of intellectuals who are interested in Christianity and even advocate for its expansion. In some cases this is because Christianity is viewed in a positive light for economic purposes. However, there are those like Gao Zhisheng, pre-conversion, who took up the legal fight for Christians because of the religious and civil rights violations. The suffering of these individuals becomes more apparent in a culture that in turn becomes more accepting of Christian beliefs and values.

It is important to highlight two specific theological beliefs that resided both in the early church and among those in the Chinese Protestant Church. Those two beliefs are in imminent return (or pre-millennialism) and belief in the supernatural charismata gifts. Daniel Bays, throughout his writings that have been referenced previously, speaks of these two beliefs as making the underground church heterodoxy. The sense of this is that they don’t act or believe like Presbyterians. Instead they act and believe like Pentecostal/Charismatics. So he consigns them as heterodoxy which is a way of dismissing them.

However these two doctrines are important to explain the expansion of Christianity in China. In the case of imminent return[[19]](#footnote-19), it has implications for the ability to survive through persecution and motivation for evangelism. The supernatural charismata[[20]](#footnote-20) beliefs give an experiential element to Christianity which is vital for a community of faith. When someone is undergoing persecution, for those who believe in imminent return it is a hope that they could look towards. As someone running a mile and who is on last one hundred meters, so the believer can see the present as a short time compared to a much greater, vaster time represented by Christ’s reign. They only have to weather the persecution for a short time before they are removed from the situation. Secondly, imminent return inspires Christians to evangelize. If at any moment Christ may come for the Church, then they believe they must be hard at work. There is a parable which details that there will come a day of exacting. Each person will give account on the talent[[21]](#footnote-21) God left with them. Those who do not produce have their talent taken away and are sent to utter darkness, (Matthew 25:14-30). So, the belief that Christ could come at any moment motivates the Christian to evangelize those around them.

The belief of the supernatural charismata does provide an important experiential element to Christianity. This is true for both the urban and rural Christians. It allows the belief to take a more tangible form, something needed by both impoverished rural believers and purposeless urban believers. Chinese culture has always had an element of mysticism to its religious beliefs. This can be seen in Zen Buddhism, Daoism, etc. These supernatural beliefs give Christianity this element of mysticism. In imminent return there is the mystery of the return and its true nature. While with things like the gift of healing, word of knowledge, and gift of miracles, there is an unknown about how these things could come about. This mysticism adds an element of wonder to life, wonder which is needed to combat the struggles of everyday life.

One of the complaints almost universally brought by the scholars reviewed earlier is that the Chinese Church is too fragmented to affect change on the Chinese culture. The Book of Acts records that within the first twenty years they had to have a council in order to deal with division (15:1-35). This division didn’t end there as Paul writes about Peter forcing Jewish customs[[22]](#footnote-22) on Gentiles in Galatians (2:14). In fact the vast majority of the Church Councils had to do with dealing with theological disputes. When a council decided against a certain belief, that belief would typically branch off into another movement. Most of these no longer exist although some take modern forms[[23]](#footnote-23). Moving out of the biblical times, a good example is the United States. The various religious groups that came over from Europe were not all the same. There were Baptists, Anti-Baptists, Quakers, Shakers, Methodists, Calvinist Methodists, Scottish Presbyterians, Moravians, etc. This multitude of groups had different tenets and governance. However, the United States is, even still today, seen in the world as a Protestant Christian nation with homologous beliefs. This division also did not stop at various times the groups coming together during times of religious revival. The most notable of these for this example would be the First and Second Awakenings, as well as the Charismatic Movement. These revivals crossed denominational lines.

In China, even with the regulation and persecution, this effect can happen. Like many of the American Church denominations during those revivals, the Chinese groups value evangelism. The Church of China does not have to be ecumenically organized in order to have an effect on the culture. They simply have to evangelize individuals and bring them into the Church. From there, as the hearts and minds of the converts change, then the culture by effect will change as well. This culture includes the political structures that are now in place. In fact, there seems to be evidence this is already happening. As noted previously, China has allowed democratic elections in the provincial offices through influence of the “boss” Christians.

Another shared attribute of the early church and the Chinese Church is its decentralized nature of house churches. Paul gives salutations to congregations which met in people’s homes (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col 4:15; Phil 1:2). The first known building specifically owned for Christian services was not until 240 C.E. Early believers did meet in some public buildings like warehouses but the majority of worship was handled in individuals’ homes (Ferguson).

The Chinese Christians in large part don’t have buildings but are organized to meet in people’s homes. While the state church have buildings and there is some overlap between them and the underground, the majority of Christians in China do not attend services in a specialized setting like a church building. As the scholars have pointed out, there are some Christian business owners who have opened up their factories to congregational meetings. This is similar to Roman Christians using warehouses.

This gives the Chinese Church a tactical advantage in dealing with the authoritarian government. Since the churches are not bound to a building, it is harder to lock them down. This makes the government’s job of removing illegal churches at this point virtually impossible. Similar to how it is near impossible for a standard army to eliminate terrorists hiding in an area. It is hard for the Government of China to find the Christians. The house church structure allows the Church to be pre-emptive and move meetings if worried about being found. In ministry, I heard stories from missionaries working in China who were at underground church services. The congregation’s meeting took place on a bus. As the bus went around the city, the congregation held services, thus not locking down the congregation to one spot.

Another aspect of both the early church and the Chinese Church is their social benevolence motivations. Scholars, while negating the potential effect of the Church politically, do credit them for their activities by helping the disadvantaged. If it is the poor who have been forgotten by the regime, the elderly who have lost the family support to capitalism, or natural disaster victims, the Church has been active in humanitarian efforts.

This motivation should not be a surprise, as many social welfare institutions in the West come from Christian sources. These include: education, healthcare, homeless shelters, food banks/kitchens, etc. There is a great example of this attitude in Galatians. After discussing the Jerusalem Council from his perspective Paul says, “They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do,” (Gal. 2:10). This idea is also contained within Jesus’s teaching through the Parable of the Guests and Dinner. These parables are in Luke 14:7-24. The excerpts dealing with are:

12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. 13 But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

21 And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’

The concept of aid and support for those who are needy is a principle in Christianity, one that the Early Church and the Chinese Church take very seriously.

Another area that the Early Church and the Chinese Church line up is through the idea of activism. As previously mentioned in this section, various Pre-Nicene Fathers sent letters to the emperors advocating for the end of persecution and the allowance of Christianity to have its own toleration policy. The great apologist of the Early Church was Justin Martyr. He wrote eight works in total. Of these two were specifically addressed to the Roman Emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius (Eusebius 155-156).

Obviously the route of doing this is a bit different for the Chinese Church because of the introduction of new political philosophies. It is specifically different because of the development of the ideologies of Communism/Socialism and Liberalism. However, there are those among the Church who are advocating for civil rights and religious freedom. As I have previously covered those scholars or even democracy advocates don’t seem to be pushing for a full democratic system but for the implementation of civil rights. However, rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and individual rights are hallmarks of liberalism. It only stands to reason that as these issues are advanced the more democratic in nature China will become. This is already coming about as democratic elections are now allowed in the provinces. There may come a time in the future when there will be a one party national election but with multiple candidates from that one party. This is especially true as there is more interest in rooting out corruption in the Chinese political system. One way to deal with it would be the election of officials within the party. This would allow the party dominance to continue but give the accountability of a democratic republican system.

One interesting difference is the fact that there is some acceptance in China of Christianity where there was none in Rome. This obviously is in the form of the TSPM churches which allow for Christianity. While there are challenges even for the TSPM, especially with the spread of Christianity, there is some official allowance for Christianity. Rome, on the other hand, never really allowed Christianity to exist. There were times of toleration dependent on the prejudice of the emperors, but it wasn’t codified until the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. (Eusebius 331). Even then it wouldn’t become the state religion until roughly 70 years later. When the State and Christianity merged, Christianity started to have to make hard decisions on doctrines, scripture, and practices that had previously been left up for debate. This series of decisions began in 325 C.E. with the First Council of Nicaea. Since China has already been exposed to a government church, which the majority of Christians reject, there is a strong chance that such accommodations will not be tolerated by the Christian Church. That means even with religious freedom there would develop a natural separation of Church and State. This attitude can be seen through the survey done by Yang Zhong. Christians seem to be interested in their rights and religion but not interested in government participation.

The challenges to the Church of China are ones that have been its challenge throughout Chinese history. These have nothing to do with the persecutions or lack of freedoms. Instead it has to do mainly with exterior issues like economics or war. In my earlier overview of the history of Christianity in China a pattern emerges. When the Syro-Orientals came they were accepted until Persian Muslim’s closed the Silk Road and foreigners became suspect. With the Catholics, specifically the Jesuits, the issue became the outside power of Rome trying to change China’s traditions. When that happened the Chinese emperor expelled the Roman Catholics. When the protestant missionaries came in, they too were accepted as the groups before. However, when Christianity became linked with European colonialism the Chinese forced them out. The stigma of colonialism led to the creation of the original Three Self Churches. These churches lasted until the end of the civil war. At this point anti-western sediment took hold in China through Mao and the churches that would not be overseen by the government were shut down by force. The Cultural Revolution was just another example of suppression from perceived anti-government belief, this time aimed internally, even at the TSPM.

The biggest threat to the Church of China is an economic collapse or war in China. If these were to happen then history tells us that the Chinese will start cutting ties with the outside world and will begin suppressing and eradicating anything viewed as foreign. This would include even Chinese Christianity. Even though the agenda of the original Three Self movement has been successful, the party would still view Christianity[[24]](#footnote-24) as a western ideology. I do not believe this would result in the complete elimination of the Church. I do believe, though, that the Church would be forced completely underground like it was during the Cultural Revolution. There would be no state church at all. This would eliminate almost all of the social and political gains the group has made since the 1980s.

**Conclusion**

The future for the estimated 130 million Protestant Christians in China is not settled. They are experiencing a historic level of expansion in the midst of relatively moderate persecution by the government. This expansion is happening during a time of economic development in China and is leading to Christianity spreading into the urban areas from its traditionally rural foundation. Like the Early Church, Chinese Christians are committed evangelists who value experiential faith. They are committed to humanistic endeavors like aiding the poor. At the same time they have a determination of faith and a hope in an eschatological[[25]](#footnote-25) outcome which allows them to overcome persecution. As they have become more affluent, like the Early Church, the Chinese Church and sympathizers press the government for freedom of religion and civil rights. As more people convert the more pressure will be brought to bear on the government.

How the government will respond will depend on historical factors. Factors like economic problems and internal/external conflict could bring another crack down on Christianity from the government. China’s policy of opening its borders economically and allowing globalization helps the Church to be more tolerated. There is a possibility that over time the one party democratic election in the provinces could move up into a national one party election with multiple candidates. This would be fueled by pro-democracy elements, the intellectuals, and “boss” Christians in the country. Most Christians, however, simply want the ability to worship freely. This too can be achieved as it was in Rome by changing the image Christianity portrays to the Chinese. This has, in large part, been done thanks to the original Three Self Movement.

The future of China’s Church’s effect on democratization is more affected by outside forces than those within. As long as the situation is right as it is now, Christianity seems like it will continue to grow and gain influence in the country. Contrary to the belief of scholars, this can easily happen without the need to have an organized Christian political effort. Like the Early Church the Church of China must simply continue to do what it has done thus far. It is more than likely that China will soon have the most Christians in the world.

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1. Throughout the paper I will be using a combination of Church, church, and congregation to describe the Christian community. Capitalized Church refers to the universal body of believers. Lowercase church will be used to refer to a denomination. When referring to specific organized group of believers instead of church, I will use the word congregation. This is done for theological reasons as the universal Church belongs solely to Christ while denominations or single congregations are human organizations. I realize this violates standard grammar, thus I am providing this explanation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bays and Witek disagree about how to label these early missionaries. Traditional thought is that they were Persian Nestorians from the Church of the East. Witek disagrees with this labeling. This seems to be in part because Witek views calling all of the Church of the East, especially at this point in history, Nestorians is incorrect. This was may be true because not all of the Church of the East were Nestorians. However, over time they did become predominately Nestorian in theology, especially in Persia. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Clergy means those ordained to preform ministerial functions. This typically carries the connotation of a paid profession. The laity is all church members who are not clergy. In effect, the emperor made it illegal to be a professional minister. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This should not be confused with early twentieth century liberal theology or late twentieth century minimalism. Lutz here is comparing Protestant theology with Catholic theology. She is speaking of minimalism in that the Protestant missionaries did not bring a religion which focused on the sacraments but on faith. This made Protestantism simpler, or minimal, compared to China’s previous exposure to Christianity. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I use the Latin here for theological purposes. Lutz gives a list of things including God’s supremacy, Jesus’s substitutionary death, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit as Paraclete and contrasts that with lack of authority from the Church (implied comparison to Catholicism) and reliance on “The Bible as final authority.” This is much more easily done by stating the theological principal that caused Protestants to form these doctrines. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I use the term heterodoxy because that is how Daniel H. Bays presents it in his book. However, based on what he outlines in the text, namely that Hong believed himself to be God’s literal son and brother to Jesus, I would not assign the label of heterodoxy but that of heresy. To use more simplistic language, the Taiping movement would have been a cult not a fringe group (like say the early Seventh Day Adventists). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In part because Bays cites other conflicts as well including the legality of opium, trading in China, and being able to tax exports to the West while still in China. He does cite opening travel in the country to foreigners and protecting Chinese Christians rights to peacefully practice their faith as a result of the treaty. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ni Tuosheng was his Chinese name. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Song Shangjie being his Chinese name. In both cases, I choose to use the names those outside of Asia would know them by. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Assemblies of God in the US formed in 1914. Various other international branches formed during this time as well. The AG was referenced directly by Lutz but I added information. From 2005-2009, I was certified for ministry by the Assembly of God and received my practical ministry degree from a school affiliated with an Assembly of God congregation. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Lutz in her passage states, “Pentecostal, Charismatic, and millenarian preachers,” This can be potentially misleading. While both Pentecostals and millenarians existed at the time, the actual charismatic movement had not happened yet and would not happen until in the 1960s. I conclude that Lutz is indicating that other missionaries from other mainline denominations and missions organizations adopted Pentecostal values such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. To indicate this I use the term Charismata for a renewed belief in spiritual gifts. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Daniel Bays in his writing seems to identify with the state church more than with the underground church. In fact from his writings it seems that he believes the TSPM to be the true Chinese Church while the underground are the heterodoxical remains of western missionary efforts. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This section of Josephus’s *Antiquities* is known to be interpolated. However, for our purposes the parts dealing with Christianity seem to be free of interpolation. This is according to other versions of Josephus which include the passage in its original form. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This was the ruling religious body for Judaism during the time of Jesus until just after the establishment of Christianity as the Roman state religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Christians were commonly referred to as atheists as they rejected the pantheon and the godhood of Caesar. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Elliot and Saint went to South America where they were killed by a local indigenous tribe. Elliot’s wife Elisabeth went to be a missionary to that same tribe and was successful among them. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. It’s important to note that Christianity believes martyrs to act in a non-aggressive way. This means you are not a martyr if you die trying to revolt. The implications on this will be dealt with during the socio-political section. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Pliny’s letter and Trajan’s response are preserved, both of which are not as favorable as Tertullian would have them believe. Pliny’s opinion is very classical in that while they do not commit crimes Christians should be discouraged, i.e. tortured and killed, due to lack of sacrifice to Rome’s gods. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. This is commonly referred to as the rapture. Historically, it has more to do with pre-millennialism in general. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Charismata is the word for “gift” in Greek. There are different kinds of gifts mentioned in the New Testament. I use “Supernatural Charismata” to denote the 1 Cor. 12 gifts. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. This is technically, in the parable of the Talents, money. However it has been traditionally also applied to giftings and abilities. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The individuals that believed Gentiles had to adopt Jewish customs to be saved are referred in history as “Judaizers”. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For instance, Jehovah’s Witnesses are essentially Arians. This is not to be confused with German Aryanism but with Arius of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. This is something that they have accepted in recent years. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Christianity is from Middle Eastern/European origins. Even though the Church in China is led by the Chinese and ministers are predominately Chinese, the ideology itself is European even still. The beliefs in the underground are similar to Evangelical Protestants around the world or in the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Eschatological means study of last things. I am referring to the belief in imminent return or pre-millennialism. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)