

GOD *and* CAESAR
in CHINA

POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF
CHURCH-STATE TENSIONS

Jason Kindopp
Carol Lee Hamrin
editors

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION PRESS
Washington, D.C.

2004

2

DANIEL H. BAYS

A Tradition of State Dominance

Looking back over a thousand years of Chinese history, one finds little new about today's pattern of relations between the state and religion in China. Government registration and monitoring of religious activities, although irregularly exercised, has been a constant reality of organized religious life in both traditional and modern times.

Philip Kuhn's insightful 1990 book, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768*, describes similar circumstances in China more than 230 years ago.¹ The essentials of the story so engagingly recounted by Kuhn include widespread popular panic in several provinces of central China over rumors of sorcery or witchcraft, the emperor's always-vigilant watchfulness for any signs of sedition or rebellion, and a massive scapegoating of powerless victims and fabrication of evidence against them. In short, the Qianlong emperor mobilized his entire bureaucracy for an extended effort at tracking down and exterminating a nonexistent threat to the dynasty. The main outcomes of this campaign were an eventual tacit imperial acknowledgement that the whole affair was a wild-goose chase, relief on the part of the officials who had been given the onerous responsibility for the investigation and prosecution (but who of course had not dared to point out the farcical nature of the events in midinvestigation), and a large amount of human "collateral damage," or human rights abuses, inflicted upon those hapless victims who had been arrested, interrogated, and tortured, some of whom died in the process.

The interesting point for the purposes of this book is that in this case and in countless others that dot the annals of imperial China, among the

main targets for suspicion, arrest, and prosecution were the wandering religious figures—preachers or evangelists—and local lay religious leaders outside the registered mainstream of the religious establishment. Occasionally these included Christians, after Christianity was prohibited in the early eighteenth century.² But most cases involved one of two categories. One was the roaming Buddhist or Taoist monks who were not affiliated with a registered temple or monastery and did not have a proper state-issued ordination certificate. The other category of victims, more dangerous in the eyes of the state, was the leaders of organized syncretic sects that were outside the traditions of state-recognized orthodox religions and their designated worship sites.³ These leaders of heterodox sectarian groups were sometimes priests or monks, sometimes lay persons. Political authorities typically accused the culprits of “deluding the people” with outright antigovernment or “antistate” activities—similar to the Chinese Communist Party’s charges against Falungong and some quasi-Christian groups in China today.

The Qianlong emperor’s view of these “bad elements” is indicative of a tradition of government attitudes and policies toward grassroots religious movements that goes back at least to the Tang dynasty, thirteen hundred years ago.⁴ In the “soul-stealers” case, the emperor fumed that these unregistered religious personnel “steal the name of clergy but lack their discipline” (that is, they do not comply with the state’s rules for religious personnel); “engage in depraved and illicit activities” (a frequent charge was, as it is today, illicit sex with gullible female followers); and “are hard to investigate and control” (a classic understatement and a sentiment surely shared today by top party bureaucrats with regard to Falungong).⁵ With the central government so quick to suspect them, and lacking the protection of organized, registered religious institutions, these marginal religious elements were, as Kuhn says, “made to order for a nationwide sorcerer-hunt” in 1768 and for comparable witch hunts at other times before and since.⁶

The point here is that in terms of the most fundamental level of assumptions of the state toward religion, there has hardly been a Chinese political regime from the Tang dynasty (618–907) to the present that has not required a form of registration or licensing of religious groups or has not assumed the right to monitor and intervene in religious affairs.⁷ For a thousand years there has been a specific institutional apparatus for this purpose. From the Song dynasty until the end of the Qing in 1912, the Board of Rites in the capital supervised a clerical bureaucracy much like today’s Reli-

gious Affairs Bureau. This body authorized and registered temples and other religious venues and licensed clerics by issuing and renewing ordination certificates. This was done for institutional Buddhism and Taoism. Other religious elements, both the fringe-wandering monks and the lay sectarians, populated the untidy world of unlicensed religious personnel operating outside properly registered religious venues and were thus not part of the system. Thus they were fair game for popular suspicion and rumors and for official harassment, extortion, or more severe persecution. Parallels with the situation of unregistered religious groups in China today are obvious. Moreover, just as today, the behavior of local authorities toward unregistered religious groups often varied from disinterested neglect to violent crackdown, depending on the locality—unless, of course, the emperor or some other top central government official roused himself to identify and condemn a particular religious group or movement as especially noxious or an “evil cult,” which would then mobilize the whole national bureaucracy against it.

Why were dynastic governments, like today’s government, so insistent on monitoring and intervening in religious matters? One reason, of course, is that the state itself had, and has today, religious pretensions and claims. Now as then, in its mode of public discourse, in its sanctification of the existing political order, and in many other ways the Chinese government behaves as a theocratic organization.⁸ Another is that the central government was not just paranoid in its constant suspicion of grassroots religiosity and unregistered movements (that is, it was paranoid, but not without cause). Beginning early in Chinese history, a succession of Taoist- and Buddhist-related sectarian movements evolved into organized syncretic heterodox sects, many with their own scriptures.⁹ Eventually, by the late imperial era, these resulted in a whole range of groups, including the White Lotus tradition and other offshoots such as the Eight Trigrams.¹⁰ Some of them did in fact become militant politicized antigovernment forces, a few of which were responsible for weakening and toppling dynasties. These syncretic sects were often characterized by a lively millenarianism.¹¹ A subset of these groups, distinguished by what one scholar calls a “messianic eschatology,” showed a persistent tendency toward political violence and rebellion.¹² Such rebellion was no less threatening to the dynasty for being religiously inspired.

So it is not surprising that imperial bureaucracies developed an instinctive suspicion of any such religious movement that could conceivably evolve into such a dangerous political force. Civic loyalty would always

trump spiritual loyalty.¹³ Of course the nonpolitical and essentially harmless religious groups and movements were often as much at risk of repression as the politicized and dangerous ones in the eyes of imperial bureaucrats who did not know the difference between them. (Again, despite some differences, parallels with today seem apparent; local officials in China are expected to protect "religion" but suppress "superstition." But as always in such matters, one person's religion can be another's superstition, in particular in the mind-set of a local cadre.)

This, then, was the system as it had evolved to the early modern period, about 1800. During the nineteenth century, the venerable tradition of vigilance toward religious sedition on the part of the central government and its bureaucrats intersected with the modern Protestant missionary movement, which reached China in 1807, almost two hundred years ago. At that time Christianity remained illegal, and, within China, to the extent that it registered at all on the government's radar scope, it was just another potentially seditious sect, one of many on the "monitor and harass at will" list. Christianity at this time was not necessarily even viewed as "foreign" by many government officials in the interior of China. Catholicism, after all, had been around for well over two hundred years and was older than some other illegal homegrown sects on the list of proscribed groups. Protestantism was seen as being in close association with the growing number of foreign traders on the China coast in the early years of the nineteenth century and was typically viewed as foreign. But as late as the 1830s there were still no Chinese Protestants beyond the small coastal enclaves at Macao and Canton (Guangzhou).

At any rate, Chinese Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, remained as subject to government monitoring, prohibition, and suppression as did the adherents of any other illegal sect. There were no exceptions to the rule that civic loyalty outweighed religious loyalty. Those "heretical" sects on the proscribed list were presumed to have put religious loyalty, especially to a sect leader, above loyalty to the state and the throne.¹⁴ And in the view of the Qing state, Christianity certainly belonged on the proscribed list.

Then, for reasons having to do with trade, not religion, conflict between Britain and the Qing government (the Opium War) erupted in 1839. This conflict resulted in a British victory in 1842, and it also resulted in a coercively imposed new framework for China's government-to-government intercourse with the West: the "unequal treaty" system. This was a multilateral system of several treaties signed with various Western powers in suc-

cession after the British treaty of 1842. Several features of the treaties were prejudicial to China's economic interests and injurious to her sovereignty (thus the "unequal" label). For purposes of this discussion, the key feature of these new treaties with the Western nations was the end of the prohibition on Christianity. The new treaties, imposed by Western military power ("imperialism," if you will), thus removed Christianity from the well-established official "monitor and harass at will" list of sects and gave it a unique immunity from the Chinese state, a special protected status that no other religion had. Among other results of this development was the removal of Chinese Christians from the full authority and jurisdiction of their own government. Thereby was created the close association between Christianity and Western imperialism in China, which lasted until only about fifty years ago.

One might wonder why the special status given to Chinese Christians would be a problem, assuming that Christians were law-abiding Chinese citizens. The story of the Taiping Rebellion illustrates the problem quite clearly. In the 1830s and 1840s, at the very time that the Opium War occurred and the first treaties were signed, on another historical track a remarkable case of cross-cultural religious transmission was also occurring. Some of the literary products of early Protestant missionary and Chinese converts' Bible translation and tract writing found their way into the hands of a failed government official examinee, Hong Xiuquan. Hong was the sort of fellow who might well have become a sectarian religious leader or founder at any time in Chinese history. A combination of his own visions and guidance from these limited Christian writings convinced Hong that he was "God's Chinese son," as Jonathan Spence puts it, the direct offspring of a monotheistic, basically Judeo-Christian God and thus literally the younger brother of Jesus.¹⁵

As was typical in the classic pattern of Chinese sect formation and growth in past centuries, Hong's ideas, and his preaching and writings, tapped into social, economic, and ethnic tensions in society at large. Hong's own charisma and the organizing talents of some of his early disciples attracted thousands, then tens of thousands, of followers and in the late 1840s produced in the Far South of China a powerful sectarian movement, the God-Worshippers' Society. Continuing the traditional pattern of behavior for both sectarians and the Chinese government, the increasing scale of the God-Worshippers' activities inevitably prompted government repression. In 1850 the sectarians, faced with the choice between accepting suppression and launching an open political rebellion, chose the latter.

Hong became king of a new political order called the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which in fourteen years of one of the bloodiest and most destructive civil wars in human history nearly toppled the Qing dynasty before succumbing in 1864.

The Taipings were hardly "Christian" in anything like an orthodox sense. Yet the influence of the Taiping movement, including both its traditional sectarian context and its Christian components, is grossly underestimated by scholars in assessing the role of Christianity in modern China. Among Western observers in the 1850s, many Protestant missionaries at first thought that the Taipings might be an orthodox Christian movement. These missionaries were about the only ones sufficiently interested to study Taiping ideas seriously. What they found, of course, caused them to condemn Taiping Christianity as blasphemous, even laughable.¹⁶ They did not in the least consider it to be a form of authentic Christianity. However, the Chinese state and the Confucian elite class of the nation (the "gentry," as some call it) certainly viewed the Taipings as Christian, as the Taipings themselves claimed to be. Moreover, the state and the gentry understandably considered the entire Taiping affair to be obvious confirmation of their ingrained suspicions that Christianity, like other sectarian movements, meant subversion and rebellion. Yet (and most frustrating, from the point of view of the Chinese state) this was the very religious movement given special protection by the new treaties forced upon China between 1842 and 1860.¹⁷ Few more powerful historical examples could be found of a cross-cultural communications endeavor (that is, the nineteenth-century Christian missionary movement in China) starting off on the wrong foot.

The decades from 1860 until well after 1900, during the period of expansion of Christianity, saw many outbreaks of local tension and open conflict between foreign missionaries and Chinese converts on the one side and Chinese officials and local elites on the other.¹⁸ There were many reasons for this phenomenon. Although foreign missionaries were only dimly aware of it during these decades, one of the reasons for the turmoil that often accompanied the spread of Christianity was the extent to which the image of Protestant as well as Catholic missions was tainted by Chinese memories of the Christian Taipings. All the instincts of the state were still to demand civic loyalty from all religious groups. The dynasty's impression of Chinese Christians as being disloyal and rebellious, and of foreign missionaries as promoting subversion, remained alive, even while the practical ability of the increasingly enfeebled Chinese state to monitor or suppress

any religion declined steadily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

After the demise of the Qing state in 1912, and the failure and collapse in 1916 of the republic that succeeded it, there was no national Chinese state to speak of, let alone one with the power to regulate the religious affairs of its people. Yet even at this point, at the lowest ebb of its capability, vestiges of the state at times showed the old instincts of wanting to regulate the practices of popular religion. Paradoxically, even as liberal constitutions created in 1912 and after guaranteed freedom of religious belief, debate erupted over the legitimacy of religious practice. As the republic disintegrated, some individuals, including the respected public intellectual Kang Youwei, advocated a reimposition of orthodoxy, making Confucianism China's official religion. Christians vigorously—and successfully—resisted.¹⁹ Statist-minded modernizers from the first to the fourth decades of the twentieth century denounced both "religion" and "superstition" as vestiges of the past that should be destroyed.²⁰ For example, when a new national political movement took shape in the 1920s, led by the Nationalist Party, one of its first priorities was to demand a significant degree of regulatory power over religious institutions, especially educational institutions operated by Christian churches and missions.²¹ Religious groups, including Christian churches, were required to register their documents, such as bylaws, and names of leaders with the Nationalist government's Ministry of the Interior in the 1930s.²² Despite these continuing evidences of the compulsion to ensure that civic loyalty outweighed spiritual loyalty, no government during these decades was strong enough to enforce its will over more than a small part of the country; it simply had insufficient control.

Therefore, my own view is that the half century from about 1900 to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was an anomaly in terms of the historical pattern of state relations with religion, especially Christianity. For the most part the state's monitoring of religion was a moot issue because of the absence of a central state strong enough to do so.

In the meantime, during these same decades Christianity grew and became well rooted in the Chinese landscape, both in its foreign missionary-led and native-led versions. The Chinese Christianity of 1950 was a very different entity from what it had been toward the end of the nineteenth century. This is not the place for a detailed history of Protestant Christianity in China from the mid-1800s to the communist period.²³ But an

encapsulated version seems in order. To summarize briefly, I would point out three successive periods of development.

The first, from 1860 to 1900, was the great age of institutional Protestant expansion. The number of Western mission societies represented in China multiplied, and many became highly professionalized. Full of Victorian confidence despite only modest gains in numbers of converts, they built . . . and built: schools, hospitals, churches and chapels, and publishing houses with large translation projects. These decades also involved the unsung but important participation by Chinese Christians in all these endeavors, laying the groundwork for the emergence of a more visible Chinese Protestant community after 1900. The well-developed Protestant school system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced both Chinese pastors and leaders and middle-class urban Chinese congregations. Yet in 1900 the Christian presence was tiny (barely a hundred thousand Chinese Protestants) and on the defensive—not because of state regulation (by this time the state was weak) but because of the unresponsiveness of Chinese society.

The second period was from 1900 to the mid-1920s. After the tragic events of the Boxer Uprising in 1900, which seemed such a setback, Protestantism actually enjoyed more than two decades of rapid growth and rise in prestige. Chinese Protestants were active in late Qing reform movements before 1911 and also in the republican revolutionary movement. With the new republic of 1912, Chinese Protestantism seemed to be riding the wave of the future as part of China's modernity.²⁴ The Chinese Protestant community also became a more visible partner with the foreign missionaries, with its own leaders and priorities. The majority of the delegates at the big 1922 National Christian Conference were Chinese, as were the majority of members of the National Christian Council of China, formed in 1924. Yet the partnership, although real, also remained tilted toward the dominant power of the foreign missionaries, especially in the finances of the Protestant world. Partly for this reason, by the 1920s several Chinese Christian movements had emerged that were wholly independent of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, or other denominational foreign missions. These included such homegrown Chinese products as the True Jesus Church and the Jesus Family, as well as the "Little Flock" of Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng, 1903–72). During these decades, the state was hardly a factor, despite the instincts to reimpose control over religion alluded to earlier. Protestants, indeed Catholics as

well, could proceed with their activities without being monitored or regulated by an intrusive Chinese government.

The third and last period of precommunist Protestant history was from about 1925 to 1950. During these years, the Sino-foreign Protestant movement that seemed so promising in the early 1920s suffered heavy blows, though not from actions of a national state so much as from the rise of popular militant nationalism. In the 1920s powerful new political movements mounted effective attacks on the whole structure of the foreign presence and role in China, denouncing Christianity as cultural imperialism, part of the unequal-treaty system. In some ways this was a precursor to much greater pressures to come under communism after 1950. Speaking broadly, the whole Sino-foreign sector of Protestantism was to some extent permanently on the defensive after the late 1920s. Despite Chiang Kai-shek's conversion and baptism (which had the effect of easing the anti-Christian pressures from the Nationalist Party, many of whose leaders were inimical toward all religions as a wasteful obstacle to modernization),²⁵ the challenges multiplied: the gutting of missions budgets by the Great Depression, the loss of self-confidence and reduction in numbers of the mainline churches' missions effort,²⁶ the devastation of war with Japan after 1937, and then the Chinese civil war of the late 1940s. The Chinese Protestant mainstream never did manage to shake off its image of being in close collaboration with the foreign presence in China. The new communist government finally, in the early 1950s, as part of reestablishing controls over religion, forced Protestant leaders to publicly renounce their association with foreigners in a way that was humiliating and traumatic for many of them.

Thus the traditional missions-related denominational churches faced one crisis after another from the 1920s on, although interference by a suspicious Chinese state was not one of their major problems. Interestingly, some of the independent Protestant movements that had struggled through their beginnings in the 1920s fared better, in some ways, in the 1930s and 1940s. Unencumbered by the heavy institutional budgetary burden of the missions churches and effective in addressing people in desperation, they grew steadily during these years. By 1950, both the Little Flock and the True Jesus Church were probably larger than any single denomination in the Sino-foreign Protestant sector. The strong evangelical or fundamentalist features of most of these independent groups before 1950 also may have created a resiliency of faith and a core of stubborn believers who later con-

tributed significantly to the survival of Chinese Protestantism when it was in its darkest hour, from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s.

The Sino-foreign Protestant mainstream and the more sectarian independent churches, though different in many ways, were similar in that during the entire first half of the twentieth century they were spared the demands of an intrusive state. However, both sectors of Protestantism, and of course Catholics as well, had to deal with such a state after 1950. Indeed, the demands and pressures that the new government put on the Christian community, now stripped of any vestiges of protection from its links to foreigners, were both powerful and somewhat unexpected. It had been a long time, more than a century, since Christianity had stood nakedly exposed to the actions of any Chinese state and many decades since a Chinese state had existed with both the capability and the inclination to interfere in internal Christian affairs. In the context of this discussion, this development should not have been a surprise. In one sense it was simply the resumption of a long-standing tradition. However, in another sense the new regime, because of its Marxist underpinnings, constituted a more serious threat to the very existence of organized religious life than had any previous regime.

Chinese religious history after 1950 is, of course, tightly intertwined with the theme of state and Communist Party control, interference, and repression. That has been particularly true for Chinese Catholics, as is evident in Richard Madsen's chapter 6 in this volume. Moreover, as Jason Kindopp shows in his essay on Protestantism today (chapter 8), Chinese Protestants also had to function within a much more hostile set of parameters imposed on them by the new state, beginning soon after its inception.²⁷ Did the restrictions and controls of the new communist regime constitute a difference of degree or of kind when compared with those of previous governments?

One element largely absent from the dynastic motivations for control of religion, though it was increasingly present in the last years of the Qing dynasty and in the republican period after 1912, was nationalism. The new communist regime's intense nationalistic animus against "imperialism" boded ill for those foreign missionaries who remained after 1949. The Korean War in 1950 sealed their fate, and within two years practically all were expelled or jailed. The war also brought Chinese Protestants under suspicion because many had foreign ties.

The state did not overtly attempt to abolish religion, but it did construct a complex and comprehensive apparatus through which to unify, monitor,

and control religious groups and organizations and to isolate them from broader society. This apparatus seems to have been rather similar to the control devices used by dynastic governments in the past, but more intense. The new government not only registered and monitored Protestants and other religious believers, as dynastic regimes had done, but also systematically reduced the influence of religion in society (as some premodern regimes had wished to do but had lacked the means).

The "patriotic" religious organizations that were erected under Chinese Communist Party rule operated from a Marxist belief that religion was socially retrograde and doomed to eventual extinction. From their inception, therefore, these organizations not only regulated religious activity but also actively eroded the autonomy of religious groups and communities. In this regard, communist control went significantly beyond pre-1949 levels. As is well known, with the coming of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 all churches, temples, monasteries, and venues for any kind of religious activity were closed for more than a decade. Religion was effectively abolished, a goal of total eradication that went beyond anything attempted by the monitoring devices of dynastic or republican regimes in the pre-1949 era. Organizations such as the Religious Affairs Bureau and the patriotic religious organizations now had no purpose, and they too were dissolved.

In the late 1970s, as part of a general loosening of Maoist controls by the reformist leadership under Deng Xiaoping, the state backed away from a radical stance of eradication of religion and retreated to a more historically familiar policy of registration and monitoring. Both the Religious Affairs Bureau and the patriotic religious organizations were resurrected as the umbrella under which religious life could legitimately occur.²⁸ The Religious Affairs Bureau, under its directing unit, the United Front Work Department, and the officially authorized religious organizations continue today to constitute what are in many ways the equivalent of the old imperial devices of monitoring and control that existed for many centuries.

Religious monitoring and regulation by the state in the recent past and present is not only a "Chinese communist" phenomenon but also a "Chinese state" one. Attitudes of suspicion and systematic policies of regulation or suppression (or both) toward grassroots religion have characterized the mind-set of all Chinese political regimes. This pattern held until the foreign-imposed treaty system in the nineteenth century removed Christianity from the list of targets of close supervision. The absence of strong central state power for the first half of the twentieth century also con-

tributed to a somewhat artificial situation, one in which religious movements of all kinds did not have to worry much about state interference, such as demands for registration. Since 1949, however, a more historically "normal" situation has prevailed. All the old instincts of state control have reemerged; bodies such as the Religious Affairs Bureau and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement have been seen by the state as indispensable. In recent years, the extent of the state's control of religion—for example, its ideological dictates and institutional manipulation—has often gone beyond the parameters (and resources) of premodern regimes. But the underlying pattern is familiar. Today's leaders sometimes sound downright archaic—rather like the Qianlong emperor—in denouncing and proscribing certain movements as "evil cults."²⁹

This situation will not easily change. This is not to say that it cannot, or will not, change. One might argue that if the present Chinese state is capable of adapting to international regimes such as the World Trade Organization, it is certainly capable of adopting international standards of religious freedom, or at least of easing up on the compulsion to interfere in its citizens' religious lives. Of course it is capable; but it is not inclined to do so. One of the reasons is that the state's suspicion of and interference in religion is not only a short-term policy driven by Marxist ideology and measured in terms of decades. It is also a long-established practice measured in centuries or even millenniums, one rehearsed countless times by emperors and their bureaucrats long before the actions of today's cadres.

Notes

1. Philip Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Harvard University Press, 1990).
2. After the proscription of (Catholic) Christianity in the early part of the eighteenth century, some local Catholic leaders were arrested and accused of being members of the outlawed White Lotus sect or other allegedly seditious groups. They were generally cleared of these charges of overt sedition, but as followers of an illegal sect they still remained vulnerable to arrest. See Robert Entenmann, "Chinese Catholics and the State during the White Lotus Rebellion, 1796–1805," paper presented at the International Institute for Asian Studies workshop, Contextualization of Christianity in China: An Evaluation in Modern Perspective, University of Leiden, June 6–8, 2002.
3. Religions recognized by the state included Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and some state-co-opted local deities like Guandi and Mazu. The greatest orthodoxy of all, of course, was the state cult of Confucius and the cult of filial piety and veneration of ancestors.

4. The Chinese state today still routinely refers to holders of unwelcome views, both religious and secular, as "bad elements." See Ian Buruma, *Bad Elements: Chinese Rebels from Los Angeles to Beijing* (Random House, 2001).
5. Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, p. 110.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
7. Kim-kwong Chan, "A Chinese Perspective on the Interpretation of the Chinese Government's Religious Policy," in Alan Hunter and Don Rimmington, eds., *All under Heaven: Chinese Tradition and Christian Life in the People's Republic of China* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1992), pp. 45–51; Timothy Brook, "At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism," in Theodore Huters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu, eds., *Culture and State in Chinese History* (Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 161–81; and Vincent Goossaert, "Counting the Monks: The 1736–1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy," *Late Imperial China*, vol. 21 (December 2000), pp. 40–85. The main themes of this phenomenon were actually laid out clearly forty years ago by the sociologist C. K. Yang in chapter 8 of *Religion in Chinese Society* (University of California Press, 1961), and the situation specifically regarding sectarian religious movements was extensively if tentatively described almost a century ago in J. J. M. De Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903).
8. Alan Hunter and Don Rimmington, "Religion and Social Change in Contemporary China," in Alan Hunter and Don Rimmington, eds., *All under Heaven: Chinese Tradition and Christian Life in the People's Republic of China* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1992), pp. 11–37.
9. Daniel Overmyer, *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Harvard University Press, 1999).
10. Stevan Harrell and Elizabeth J. Perry, "Syncretic Sects in Chinese Society: An Introduction," *Modern China*, vol. 8 (July 1982), pp. 283–303 (an introduction to a two-part symposium of eight articles in nos. 8.3 and 8.4 of the journal). For the White Lotus sect, in particular, see B. J. Ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1992).
11. Harrell and Perry, "Syncretic Sects," pp. 290–92.
12. Richard Shek, "Sectarian Eschatology and Violence," in Jonathan N. Lipman and Stevan Harrell, eds., *Violence in China: Essays in Culture and Counterculture* (State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 87–114.
13. This principle was codified and enshrined in the high Qing period by the "Sacred Edict" of the emperor Kangxi, sixteen hortatory maxims later elaborated upon by his son, the emperor Yongzheng, and put into a colloquial form that could presumably be understood by the common people. Kangxi's maxim 7, "Extirpate heresy to exalt orthodoxy," was expanded considerably by Yongzheng to include a wholesale denunciation of all supernatural beliefs, including the "orthodox" mainstream of Taoism and Buddhism, as superstition or heresy. In a striking parallel to today's Chinese government's tenet that religion will eventually disappear from a sufficiently modernized society, Yongzheng's gloss on maxim 7 confidently predicts that "if none of you believe in heretical sects, they . . . will become extinct naturally." See Pei-kai Cheng and Michael Esler, with Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* (Notton, 1999), pp. 65–68.

14. For many examples over the past few centuries of the imperial era, standard sources are Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (Yale University Press, 1976); Susan Naquin, *Shantung Rebellion: The Wang Lun Uprising of 1744* (Yale University Press, 1981); Daniel Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion* (Harvard University Press, 1976); and De Groot, *Sectarianism*.

15. Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (Norton, 1996). At least early in his thinking, Hong seems to have conflated the Old Testament Jehovah, the Christian God the Father, and the Lord on High divinity (*Shangdi*) of early China.

16. For example, Hong believed that God had a heavenly wife (that is, the mother of Hong and of Jesus; Hong left the role of Mary fuzzy) and that in fact Jesus had a wife and children in heaven.

17. The second round of treaties between China and the Western nations expanded even more the rights of both foreign Christian missionaries and Chinese Christians throughout the country.

18. See the standard account of Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870* (Harvard University Press, 1963); also several more-recent essays in the first part of Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford University Press, 1996).

19. Charles A. Keller, "Nationalism and Chinese Christians: The Religious Freedom Campaign and Movement for Independent Chinese Churches, 1911–1917," *Republic of China*, vol. 17 (April 1992), pp. 30–51.

20. See Prasenjit Duara, "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: The Campaigns against Popular Religion in Early-Twentieth-Century China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 50 (February 1991), pp. 67–83.

21. Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920–1928* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988).

22. My own observation of materials in the Second Historical Archives in Nanjing; for example, registration files under "Zongjiao" [religion] and subfile "Zhongguo Yesujiao zilihui" [China Christian independent church].

23. For a single source that covers the modern period in broad strokes, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (London: SPCK, 1929). Another usable work is Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity* (London: Collins, 1988). See also my own survey of modern Chinese Protestantism, "China," in Hans Hillerbrand, ed., *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), and contributions by several scholars in R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 2, *1800 to the Present* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2004, forthcoming).

24. A fine study of influential reformist Chinese Christians early in the twentieth century is Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857–1927* (Yale University Press, 2001).

25. See Duara, "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity."

26. For this point, see the fine study by Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907–1932* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

27. For Protestants, useful histories of the 1950s to the 1970s, from varying political points of view, can be found in Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter*; Richard C. Bush Jr., *Religion in Communist China* (New York: Abingdon, 1970); Francis P. Jones, *The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal* (New York: Friendship, 1962); Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988); and Thomas A. Harvey, *Acquainted with Grief: Wang Mingdao's Stand for the Persecuted Church in China* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2002).

28. Actually, some of the problems of having such an overtly political organization as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement monitoring matters of faith were acknowledged within a year, in fall 1980, when the third National Christian Conference created a new body, the China Christian Council, to pair with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. The China Christian Council is supposed to concern itself with matters of faith, church order, theological education, and the like. Its personnel and leadership overlap so much with that of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, however, that the two are virtually indistinguishable and are in fact referred to as the *lianghui* (two committees). With Wu Yaorong's death in 1979, Ding Guangxun was elevated to top Protestant leadership and was made head of both organizations.

29. This label, indicating extreme illegality, marks the sect as the target of vigorous extermination efforts by the police power of the state. It is used not only for the Falungong but also for quasi-Christian groups such as Eastern Lightning, the Disciples' Sect, the Established King, and several others. In considering parallels in this general area of analysis, I am indebted to the insights of Daniel J. Nierering, "Grounds for Suspicion: China's Totalitarian Regimes Encounter Heterodoxy" (unpublished seminar paper, Calvin College, Department of History, Spring 2003).