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The Present Religious Policy of the Chinese Communist Party*

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Background

Control of religious affairs in China is not a recent innovation by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Over a millennium ago, in the middle of the ninth century AD, the independent power of the Buddhist monasteries which were fast becoming an *'imperium in imperio'* were crushed by the Tang dynasty emperors. Since then religion has always been considered as a virtual department of state, to be regulated and controlled. The concept of a transcendent God, which provided a powerful focus of resistance to royal absolutism in the West (whether through the medieval papacy, the Reformation or Puritanism), was lacking in China; the emperor, the 'Son of Heaven', ruled supreme. Popular folk religion was tolerated but looked down on by urbane and quasi-agnostic Confucian officials. Secret societies and religious sects which multiplied and became hotbeds of sedition were ruthlessly suppressed. They were *'xie'* – 'heterodox' – beyond the pale of Confucian orthodoxy.

In the nineteenth century the Confucian gentry often fomented riots against Christian missionaries. The pseudo-Christian Taiping Heavenly Kingdom rocked the decadent Qing dynasty to its foundations with its potent mixture of anti-Manchu sentiments and Old Testament iconoclasm. The lesson that certain Christian beliefs (particularly the more apocalyptic) can lead disgruntled peasants into open rebellion has not been forgotten by generations of Chinese bureaucrats, including those of the CCP. In 1900 patriotism and xenophobia reached their zenith in the Boxer Rebellion, in which thousands of Chinese Christians and dozens of missionaries were massacred. It is a historical fact that Christian missionaries entered China as a result of unequal treaties imposed by Britain and the resurgent imperialist western powers after the iniquitous Opium Wars in the 1840s. This, too, has been neither forgotten nor forgiven by CCP officials and many Chinese intellectuals.

CCP Religious Policy: Background

The current ideology of the CCP is 'Marxism–Leninism–Mao Zedong thought'. This is reflected in the CCP's policies towards religion. Marxist atheistic materialism provides the basic CCP world view, which is still taught to every Chinese child from

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kindergarten up to university. A crude Darwinism assumes that mankind has been steadily evolving towards the present Communist state. Mao Zedong saw religion as one of the three ropes binding the Chinese people. In the 1950s, when China was allied to the Soviet Union, the repressive policies of Stalinist control, infiltration and destruction of religion were introduced and refined. Religion was controlled by the United Front Work Department of the CCP and the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) of the State Council. Control was extended from central government level right down to county (*xian*) level through these organisations which were assisted, as necessary, by the CCP-controlled Trades Unions, Women's Federation, Communist Youth League and other organisations.

The five major religions active in China were given strictly limited toleration: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. Each was encouraged to set up its own 'patriotic' organisation run by monks, priests, pastors and imams loyal to the CCP. In the case of Christianity, all foreign missionaries were expelled by 1952 and all independent denominations and churches ruthlessly crushed and amalgamated under government control through the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) by 1958. By this time the majority of churches had been closed across China under the guise of a campaign for church unity. Independent-minded pastors and priests were sent to prison for long periods of time for daring to oppose CCP control of the church. Pulpits became vehicles for CCP propaganda and many faithful Christians quietly withdrew from the few remaining city churches to meet together for worship in the home. This was the beginning of the now flourishing underground Catholic Church and the unregistered Protestant house-churches. CCP ideologues argued whether religion should be controlled and manipulated and allowed to die out naturally (the 'soft' line) or completely suppressed as having no right to exist in the new socialist society (the 'hard' line advocated by the extreme 'leftists'). By the late 1950s the leftist line had won the argument.

In 1966 Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution and the last few churches were desecrated and closed. For thirteen years all religious expression was ruthlessly persecuted. Bibles were burnt and even possession of a cross or a Christmas card could lead to severe beating and labour camp. There were many martyrs. It cannot be stressed too much that the present revival of religion in China can be traced to the immense suffering and despair caused by the catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution.

In 1976 Mao died and the infamous leftist 'Gang of Four' were soon after arrested. This paved the way to the return to power of the moderate Deng Xiaoping. In 1978–79 a major U-turn in religious policy was implemented – but it is important to see this as just a small part of the overall opening up to the West and the jettisoning of the Cultural Revolution. Economic modernisation was now the watchword. In principle the CCP sought to reestablish the United Front structures for the control of religion, which had been established in the 1950s and destroyed by the 'leftists' during the Cultural Revolution. However, this was not wholly possible as the political, social and spiritual climate was now very different. Disillusioned by the endless political campaigns of Mao most people were thoroughly disgusted with Marxist ideology and a massive religious revival was soon under way in all the major religions. Nevertheless, the RAB was in operation again by 1978 and in 1979 the various 'patriotic' religious organisations were all simultaneously resurrected. They were still controlled at the top by secret Party members and religious apostates, but could no longer control the increasing numbers of religious believers without a genuine accommodation to their needs and a genuine degree of religious toleration.

Since the early 1980s vast numbers of temples, churches and mosques have been reopened or newly built. In the case of the Protestants, according to official statistics at present six new churches are being reopened or rebuilt every day somewhere in China. There are over 13,000 registered Protestant churches and 35,000 more basic 'meeting-points'.¹ Until Easter 1979 there were none; all this growth has taken place in two decades. Seminaries have been opened and religious literature printed. Over 20 million copies of the Bible have been printed in Nanjing.

In 1982 the CCP formulated its religious policy in the famous 'Document 19'.² This is a carefully crafted statement which rejects the excesses of Maoism and grants some limited autonomy to religious believers while asserting the Party's right to maintain ultimate control of all religious affairs. In the internal version of Document 19 it is made very clear that the CCP must 'powerfully direct and organise all relevant departments' including 'people's organisations' such as the TSPM and CPA to implement the Party's religious policies. This significant clause was omitted from the public, sanitised version and has too often been overlooked by naïve ecumenical delegations visiting China who accept assurances from TSPM and CPA religious leaders that they are genuinely independent of CCP control. This, and massive documentation accumulated over the last two decades, shows conclusively that they are not.³

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 house-church Protestants and underground Catholics had spread across the country, taking advantage of the new, anti-Maoist climate. However, in 1982–84 the authorities, often assisted by the more subservient elements within the TSPM and CPA, launched a crackdown in the form of a 'campaign against spiritual pollution'. Many Christians were arrested and imprisoned. The campaign was brought to an abrupt halt, probably because Deng and other Party moderates did not wish to endanger the economic reforms or allow the 'leftists' to reassert control. There followed several years of relative relaxation until in 1987 another 'anti-bourgeois liberalisation campaign' again brought pressure on unregistered Christians. However, the general climate was one of openness until the crushing of the student movement on 4 June 1989 which resulted in a severe tightening of control of religious affairs as part of the overall crackdown on the democracy activists.

We can thus see how the pattern of CCP implementation of its religious policies has varied over the last two decades. Internally, when there is a need to tighten political control (and this is mirrored when externally the CCP takes a more hostile stance towards the West, and particularly the United States) then the CCP's control of religious affairs, especially of Christianity, also tightens. However, the basic policy documents such as Document 19 and more recent ones are couched in language which allows both a liberal and a repressive interpretation and implementation of religious policy. For example, in dealing with the vexed question of unregistered house-churches, Document 19 states:

So far as Christians undertaking religious activities in home-meetings are concerned, these should not, in principle, be permitted. But they should not be rigidly prohibited. The religious masses should be persuaded through the work of the patriotic religious workers [i.e. TSPM or CPA] to make other suitable arrangements.

In practice, this has meant that in some areas and at some times local cadres have turned a blind eye to burgeoning unofficial house-church activities; but in other places and on other occasions Party cadres have cracked down, prohibiting meetings,

fining Christians, beating believers and even imprisoning them for shorter or longer periods ('reeducation through labour' for three years seems to be a favourite sentence for house-church preachers).

Recent CCP Religious Policy

Over the last decade religious policy in China has taken centre stage in a way that was never true under Mao. All five major religions have shown explosive growth, especially Christianity and Buddhism. Perplexed cadres and Marxist sociologists have wrestled with the evidence before their eyes of massive 'Christianity Fever' (*Jidujiao re*) when CCP ideology, increasingly tired and outdated, insists that all religions will ultimately die out. Both Lama Buddhism in Tibet and Islam in north-west China have stubbornly opposed CCP political control and provided a potent religious core to nascent nationalism. Muslim Uighur nationalists have attacked PRC soldiers and set off bombs. The growth of Christianity and concern overseas at continuing persecution of underground Catholic priests and bishops and of house-church preachers has also made control of Christianity an increasingly sensitive issue. The collapse of communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe in 1989–91 rocked the Chinese regime to its foundation, and the crucial role of the Catholic and Protestant churches there in providing a focus for dissent has not gone unnoticed in China.

Thus the top leadership of Party and State in China has taken an increasing direct interest and involvement in religious affairs. This is an almost unprecedented development since Premier Zhou Enlai met Protestant Christian leaders in 1950 to encourage them to break ties with overseas churches and form the TSPM. The present leaders such as President Jiang Zemin, Li Peng and Li Ruihuan have all attended national conferences at which control of religion has been the issue and have made significant policy statements. In early 1990 CCP elder statesman Chen Yun sounded the alarm in a letter he wrote to Jiang Zemin:

Recently I have looked at some materials concerning the increasingly serious problem of religious infiltration, especially the increasingly rampant practice of using religion as a cloak to carry out counter-revolutionary activities. I feel deeply disturbed. Using religion to win over the masses – especially young people – has always been a favourite trick of both our domestic and foreign class-enemies. This is the bitter lesson of several of the communist-led countries that recently lost power. Now is the time for Party Centre to deal vigorously with this matter. We must ensure that it cannot become a destabilising factor.⁴

In early 1991 vice-premier Wangzhen warned that China's villages were being over-run by western religion and that 'while the words of Party cadres in the villages have little appeal, the response to religious figures is overwhelming'. He was particularly alarmed that in many counties of Qinghai province 'the approval of church leaders is required before [CCP] mass meetings can be called'.⁵

In November 1993 President Jiang Zemin issued three authoritative directives (the 'Three Phrases') at the National United Front Work Conference which provide the parameters within which all religious affairs and the activities of the 'patriotic' religious organisations must still work today. They are: (1) implement the Party's religious policies thoroughly and correctly; (2) strengthen control of religious affairs in accordance with the law; (3) positively guide religion to be compatible with

socialist society.⁶ Jiang stressed that the state would 'protect normal religious activities' while 'limiting and striking down those who used religion to carry out criminal activities'. The problem in China is still that atheistic CCP cadres decide (often arbitrarily) which religious activities are 'normal' and which are 'criminal'. In most TSPM churches (there are exceptions) Sunday Schools are banned. There are small bookstalls within temples, churches and mosques, but none of the tolerated religions is free to publish religious books and magazines which can be freely sold in ordinary public bookshops. Even holding meetings for prayer and Bible study can, on occasion, bring down police intervention.

In January 1994 Jiang's directives were dutifully reiterated and passed down the chain of command at the national conference for heads of the RABs.⁷ At the end of the same month the prime minister, Li Peng, issued two important regulations (Nos. 144 and 145) to tighten control over the religious activities of foreigners within China, forbidding them to make converts, and to tighten control of internal religious affairs within China.⁸ Authorisation was clearly given to the RABs above county level to 'guide and supervise' local religious affairs and, if the regulations were breached, to 'warn, stop activities and cancel registration' (Articles 13 and 14 of Decree No. 145). Even some Protestant members of the government's Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference voiced their concern that the new regulations could be used by some local officials as a pretext to eliminate Christian meeting-points.⁹ In February 1994 *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) published a major article 'Zongjiao yao y shehuizhuyi shehui xiang shiying' ('Religion must be compatible with socialist society') in which Bishop Zong Huaide of the CPA openly stated that 'for decades we have undertaken reforms of certain church ceremonies and rules with the aim of making them compatible with socialist society'.¹⁰ There was evidence that within days of the promulgation of these new decrees pressure was brought to bear on unregistered Christians. For instance, in Yuyao City in Zhejiang the head of the local RAB sent a letter (dated 7 February 1994) to a local house-church leader demanding that the time and place of meetings be given to him and stating that 'private meetings which have not been approved are illegal' and that 'fellowship meetings are inimical to social stability and are forbidden by the new regulations'.¹¹

In mid-1995 Ye Xiaowen, a known hardliner, was appointed the new director of the RAB. In March 1996 an article by him on religious affairs was published in *Renmin Ribao* in which he stressed Jiang Zemin's 'Three Phrases' as the guiding policy for the CCP's religious work, together with Document 19 of 1982, Document 6 of 1991 (which reaffirmed Document 19 but called for a tightening of control) and Li Peng's two Regulations 144 and 145 mentioned above.¹² In his article Ye stated that 'implementing the policy of religious freedom and strengthening supervision over religious affairs according to law are one and the same' – an interesting insight into the bureaucratic mindset of PRC officials controlling religious affairs. Ye also stressed the importance of the ethnic minorities as a major factor in religious affairs and stated that Jiang Zemin's 'three phrases' 'aim at one objective, namely positively to guide religion to accommodate itself to socialist society'. In his conclusion he stated that 'we must give expression to the political nature of religious work and concretely talk politics in religious affairs. ... (This) first of all means talking about the Three Phrases and conscientiously putting them into practice.' In mid-1996 the Ministry of Public Security in an internal document singled out Protestants as 'enemy forces' and warned that Christianity had become a threat to the Party.¹³ In the autumn, premier Li Peng visited the troubled Muslim north-west and warned

believers not to step out of line; he called for tighter controls 'by the relevant departments'.¹⁴

The year 1997 was particularly sensitive for the CCP; its prestige was linked to ensuring the smooth transfer of Hong Kong back to Chinese sovereignty. It is interesting to learn from one Hong Kong source that one of seven major sources of instability, according to the Central Government, was 'the great increase in influence of extreme religious forces from overseas in some of our national minority areas'.¹⁵ In February 1998 another conference of national heads of RABs was held in Beijing and addressed by Li Peng. He reiterated the importance of Jiang's three phrases and stressed the importance of the Party's religious work in maintaining unity amongst China's many ethnic minorities. He also stated that 'religion can develop positively only when it is compatible with our society' – again, the clear assumption being that religious doctrines and practices which do not accord with 'Scientific Socialism' should be reformed or phased out.¹⁶

Mention must be made of the efforts of the government to rebuild the legal system destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and to set the implementation of religious affairs within a legal framework. Believers now have redress to recover church properties confiscated during or before the Cultural Revolution, for example. However, implementation of the law is still often arbitrary and hindered by the rampant corruption in the CCP and in society at large. Some progress has been made, but comments by the head of the RAB, Ye Xiaowen, in a preface written to a new handbook on propagating legal knowledge in religious work are hardly encouraging. Ye states bluntly:

'Freedom of religious belief' which we uphold is not the same as the 'religious freedom' upheld in the West. ... In our view, freedom of religious belief is not unfettered lack of restraint in religion while the requirement to be aware and obey the law is certainly not a limitation on the freedom of religious belief.¹⁷

In the same article Ye states his Marxist belief that 'religion is an illusory reflection in people's minds of the external forces controlling their daily lives'. While we must be thankful that he eschews the use of administrative powers to eliminate religion, is it to be wondered that Chinese religious believers chafe under a system of control run by people so unsympathetic and patronising to their faith?

In the year 2000 a number of events meant that religious affairs continued to be centre-stage in CCP policy and ensured that there was no loosening of control. The flight of the young and supposedly docile and 'patriotic' karmapa lama from Lhasa to the government-in-exile of the dalai lama was a great loss of face to the PRC and revealed the failure of its religious policies as far as control of Tibet was concerned. The continuing demonstrations by the Falungong sect (most recently on 1 October 2000, National Day, when 300 practitioners were arrested in Tiananmen Square) showed the inability of the government to suppress what it considers to be dangerous sects and cults. The execution of the leaders of two pseudo-Christian cults (the 'Beiliwang' ('Established King') and the 'Zhushenjiao' ('Lord God') cults) also failed to stop the growth of indigenous 'Christian' cults on the fringes of the genuine revival of orthodox Christianity in both the TSPM churches and the evangelical house-churches. A long article entitled 'Xiejiao weihai guojia anquan' ('Cults harm national security') was published in late September in *Renmin Ribao*. It attacked Falungong along with the People's Temple, Aum Shin Rikkyo, the Solar Temple, Christian Science, the Jehovah's Witnesses and other organisations. It roundly

denounced the USA for harbouring Li Hongzhi, the head of Falungong, who, it claimed, at the height of the craze in China controlled over two million followers and 28,000 Falungong activity centres.¹⁸ The government is extremely nervous of sectarian activities which it knows from history can mutate and provide hotbeds for sedition. Today in inland China tens of millions of peasants are out of work. Huge numbers are pouring into the cities. Apocalyptic cults, whether Christian or Buddhist, have mass appeal. In the continuing crackdown on Falungong unregistered Protestants and Catholics often get short shrift as local cadres close all unregistered religious meetings in their eagerness to obey the central government's edicts.

The canonisation by the Vatican of 120 Chinese and missionary martyrs, also on National Day, drew a swift and angry response from Beijing. New China News Agency and the entire government propaganda machine went into action to denounce the martyrs as agents of imperialism. Leaders of the CPA and, indeed, of the TSPM Protestant Church were duly produced to attack the Vatican's action. Bishop Fu Tieshan of the CPA announced that 'choosing this date to canonise the so-called saints is an open insult and humiliation against the Chinese Catholic adherents'. He stressed that some of the missionaries perpetrated 'severe crimes against the Chinese people'.¹⁹ PRC-Vatican negotiations now appear to have been set back years just as they were inching forward towards dialogue and perhaps a rapprochement.

The government has recently promulgated stricter new rules for the administration of religious activities within China.²⁰ Foreigners are allowed to worship on 'patriotic' religious premises but forbidden to set up their own religious organisations, to make converts, to preach without permission or to 'distribute religious propaganda materials'. The head of the TSPM recently denounced the large number of Christian businessmen from South Korea who are active in spreading the Gospel, especially in north-east China. In some cities, such as Shanghai and Nanjing, foreign Christians now hold quite large worship services on TSPM premises. However, in Shanghai, I observed that a sign (in Chinese only) stated that local Chinese were not allowed to enter. Singaporean and Overseas Chinese are often embarrassed by having to show their passports to the official sitting at the entrance monitoring everyone going in.

Conclusions

This paper has concentrated on policy documents and statements issued by the central government and the highest leadership of the PRC including Jiang Zemin himself. Overseas some observers make much of a supposed difference in policy between the central government and the government at local provincial or county level. In fact, there is no discernible policy difference at all between religious regulations issued by the CCP at central government level and those issued at provincial or even lower levels.²¹ As noted earlier, PRC and CCP religious policy is guided ideologically by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought and continues the Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist tradition of totalitarian control, eased only by the allowance of a degree of autonomy under the CCP's 'united front' policy. Religious affairs are highly politicised and are part of the continuing priority to maintain 'stability and unity' at all costs. Religious affairs are closely linked with 'minority' affairs, especially in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia where Lama Buddhism and Islam have increasingly become foci for ethnic political dissent against central control from Beijing. The concern to maintain social and political stability is also in the forefront of efforts to crush cults such as Falungong and all unregistered groups, including the pro-Vatican 'underground' Catholic Church and the Protestant house-

churches. Historical memories of the Opium War, the unequal treaties and the Boxer Rebellion also colour present PRC views of the Christian church in China (especially in the eyes of the more 'leftist' cadres). These may be reinforced by present concerns to resist western and particularly American efforts to impose western concepts of human rights on China and by fears that Christianity is capable of being used to subvert the Party, as happened in Eastern Europe, by 'peaceful evolution'.

Faced with these pressures both internal and external, the CCP has become increasingly conservative, even reactionary, in its religious policies. This conservatism harks back beyond the early 1980s (when Document 19 was formulated) to the 1950s (when religious policies were first forged). Whereas other areas of government, especially in the field of finance and economics, have forged ahead, the area of religious affairs seems stuck in a time-warp. The old tired phrases are brought out and the old policies revamped and refined. The gap between rhetoric and policy on the one hand and the reality of thriving religious communities on the other is growing. In the late 1980s, when the Party under Zhao Ziyang experienced a breath of genuine liberalisation, there was talk of dismantling the whole structure of religious control and even of abolishing the 'patriotic' religious control organisations. Such dreams were shattered in June 1989. However, as Chinese society rapidly evolves and advances, the CCP's policies on religion appear increasingly out of touch and old-fashioned. At grass-roots level the more liberal cadres turn a blind eye to the growth of mainstream Christianity, which is often regarded as an asset in an increasingly corrupt society. The stress on modernisation of the economy means that overseas Christian donors increasingly find a warm welcome by CCP officials and TSPM and CPA leaders. Huge, modern church centres (both Catholic and Protestant) are now prominent features of many cities. Most importantly, the perception of Christianity at the grass-roots level among the general population has changed from one of complete hostility in the days of Mao to one of appreciation and interest. The huge increase in overseas visitors and businessmen, China's joining the World Trade Organisation, and the growing use of the internet by ordinary Chinese make controls ever more difficult to enforce. Thus, while policy documents continue to call for control, implementation may vary widely at local level. Change is in the air. Large numbers of Christians working within the TSPM and CPA structures are totally disillusioned with the system of control. Many CPA priests and bishops are secretly loyal to the Vatican. Within the TSPM many pastors maintain close links with the house-churches and are prepared to speak out against the current political campaign by Bishop Ting and other TSPM leaders to impose liberal theology on the Protestant Church in order to make it 'compatible with socialism'. The CCP increasingly has to rule by consensus and this includes its control of religious communities. Progress is slow, but as religious leaders insist upon their legal rights, so the parameters of what is allowed are gradually widened. In the area of social services, the central government does not have the finances to deal with the growing problems of the rural and urban poor, the handicapped, victims of AIDS and drug addicts. In its concern to maintain Party control and political and social stability it seems likely that the government will have to ease restrictions (and is already doing so) on both Chinese and overseas religious organisations wishing to help in these fields. While Party religious policies will remain unchanged for the foreseeable future, over the next decade they will increasingly become an anachronism. Cross-currents of liberal thinking and old-style 'leftism' will continue to clash within the Party itself. Periodic repression is likely to continue, but the overall trend of Chinese society, and of religious affairs, is towards plurality and greater openness.

Notes and References

- ¹ Statement made by Matthew Deng, vicechairman of the TSPM, whilst on a visit to the USA, 22–26 February 1999.
- ² *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian 19 hao: 'Guanyu woguo shehuizhuyi shiqi zongjiao wenti di jiben guandian he jiben zhengce' di tongzhi* (Concerning our Country's Basic Standpoint and Policy on Religious Questions during the Socialist Period), 31 March 1982. Full translation published by Christian Communications Ltd, Hong Kong, September 1983.
- ³ See the bibliography of my *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (2nd edn, Harold Shaw, Wheaton, IL, 1994), which lists 43 State, Party and TSPM documents concerning religious affairs.
- ⁴ Letter of Chen Yun of 4 April 1990, *Asia Development Brief*, November–December 1994.
- ⁵ *South China Morning Post*, 12 March 1991.
- ⁶ *People's Daily*, 8 November 1993.
- ⁷ *People's Daily*, 17 January 1994.
- ⁸ *Liangge zongjiao fagui: xuexi xuanquan cailiao* (Study and Propaganda Material on the Two Religious Regulations) (Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council, 14 April 1994).
- ⁹ *Amity News Service*, 94.2/3.1.
- ¹⁰ *People's Daily*, 6 February 1994.
- ¹¹ *News Network International*, 7 September 1994.
- ¹² *Renmin Ribao*, 14 March 1996.
- ¹³ *South China Morning Post*, 4 June 1996.
- ¹⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 13 September 1996.
- ¹⁵ *Ming Bao* (Hong Kong), 14 June 1997.
- ¹⁶ *Zhongguo zongjiao* (China's Religions), no. 2, 1998.
- ¹⁷ *China Study Journal*, April 1998.
- ¹⁸ *People's Daily*, 28 September 2000.
- ¹⁹ *Shanghai Star*, 3 October 2000; *China Daily*, 6 October 2000.
- ²⁰ 'Guojia zongjiaoju fabu zhonghua renmin gonghe guo jingnei waiguoren zongjiao huodong guanli guiding shishi xize', *Renmin Ribao*, 27 September 2000; full English version in *China Daily*, 27 September 2000.
- ²¹ See for example a list of 50 government religious policy documents, ranging from Regulations 144 and 145 issued by Li Peng to regulations governing religious affairs issued in Tibet, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia and other places, published in *Zhongguo zongjiao*, an official publication of the RAB. There is no hint that any of these documents might be out of step with central government policy. Rather, the reverse.