

4-30-2015

China's Tale of Two Cities: Beijing, Shanghai, and a Legacy Catholic Perseverance

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Recommended Citation

Clark, Anthony E. , "China's Tale of Two Cities: Beijing, Shanghai, and a Legacy Catholic Perseverance" Whitworth University (2015). *History Faculty Scholarship*. Paper 11.

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY TALK 2015
Anthony E. Clark, Ph.D. (30 April 2015)

TITLE:

“China’s Tale of Two Cities: Beijing, Shanghai, and a Legacy Catholic Perseverance”

LOCATION:

Seton Hall University (South Orange, NJ)

LECTURE OUTLINE:

Introductory Remarks

[SLIDE 1: Introductory Slide] First, I would like to express my thanks for the kindness of Professor Ines Murzaku, Professor Chen Dongdong, and Seton Hall’s Department of Catholic Studies. My parish priest, of the Ruthenian Eastern Catholic Rite, graduated here at Seton Hall, and is jealous of my visit. I am delighted to be here to discuss this timely topic.

I’m going to talk today about the complicated Catholic histories of Beijing and Shanghai, two cities I have lived in and have grown to consider homes away from home. I sometimes in Beijing today recall that in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Matteo Ricci, SJ, (1552-1610) brought clocks, taught imperial eunuchs how to play the clavichord, and established a Catholic chapel down the street from where I now have espresso and pastries in one of the city’s ubiquitous Starbucks. China has changed, and so has Christianity in China. I study Catholic missions during the late Qing (1644-1911), but today I’m going venture into more “sensitive” political areas – today I’ll consider the complicated relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and China’s modern, Communist government, though I will center my remarks largely on the Maoist era, from 1949 to 1976. I hope my account of what

happened provides a more nuanced and two-sided view of this history than is generally given.

What is at Stake?

[SLIDE 2: China's Christians] So, one might ask why the history of Catholics in China's most important cities matters today in our increasingly secularized global landscape. I think it matters because the fastest growing group, or subculture, in today's China is in fact the Christian community. A recent article in *The Telegraph*, entitled "China on course to become 'world's most Christian nation' within 15 years", features an image of Beijing's famous North Church, Beitang, crowded with Catholic Christians attending Holy Mass (April 29, 2014). It cites Purdue professor, Yang Fenggang: "By my calculations China is destined to become the largest Christian country in the world very soon." When I met Professor Yang recently in Chicago, he noted his belief that China's number of Christians will likely grow to around 160 million by 2030, making it the "world's most Christian nation." This has alarmed China's political leaders. National GDP, or "GDP 主義," and the Party's admitted goal to slowly eradicate religious attachments, have caused China's leaders to identify Christianity, as one recent Beijing report puts it, "one of the four greatest challenges to national security" ("Blue Book," quoted in *Vatican Insider*, 7 May 2014).

This document, disseminated as a "Blue Book" in the capital, goes on to assert that, "Hostile Western forces are infiltrating China's religions in a more diverse way and in a wider range; deploying more subtle means either openly or secretly; and are strongly seditious and deceptive in nature." It also asserts that, "Foreign religious infiltration powers have penetrated all areas of the Chinese society." Such statements are merely a Maoist era redux, reconstituted in new reports. Christianity is again identified as a tool for foreign

imperialism, and China's Christians are again watchful for policies that might affect their freedom to practice their faith. Yet, these current tensions emerge from a long history of Sino-Western and Sino-Missionary miscommunication and misprision. The recent spate of church demolition in China, especially at Wenzhou, has brought China's Christian population into more media attention than it has experienced in several decades, so now is appropriate for revisiting the vicissitudes of post-imperial Sino-Christian history.

Resistance and Perseverance

[SLIDE 3: Sunzi & H. G. Wells] In his famous classic on military strategy, Sunzi 孫子 (ca. 554-496 BC) wrote that, "Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." But H. G. Wells disagreed, asserting that, "The path of least resistance is the path of the loser." Few antagonisms in China's long history have conjured the question of resistance more than the history of Christian missions and conversion, and this history has produced cultural, political, and religious tensions in China from the late sixteenth century, until today. I'll begin with a demographic account and a popular Chinese saying before I discuss the history of Christian resistance in modern China. In 1949 there were around 4 million Christians in China. Most of the scholars I know estimate that today there are around 70 million Christians in China – some estimates suggest there are as many as 90 million. This growth has happened despite forceful efforts during the Maoist era to repress China's Christian population. Foucault's Hegelian-inspired dialectic of an antagonism between power and resistance has manifest as a curious synthesis in China's Catholic Church. Neither the empowered Communists nor the resistant Church has "won" in their ongoing conflict; resolutions remain elusive.

[SLIDE 4: Red Troops Enter Beijing] Let's consider the Catholic landscape in Beijing as Communist forces victoriously entered the city in February 1949. When Mao's

Red Army approached the Forbidden City, Catholics reported having two thoughts in their minds: a memory the violent events of the anti-Christian Boxer Uprising in 1900, and an anxiety over the destiny of the extensive and influential Catholic enterprise that had burgeoned since the Boxer Indemnity was signed in 1901. Beijing, as China's imperial capital, had been the center of Sino-missionary conflict before and during the Boxer and imperial army attacks – a few historical details help to explain this tension. [SLIDE 5: Chinese Saying]

Now we arrive at the popular saying in China: “*Duo yige jidutu bianshao yige Zhongguoren*” 多一個基督徒便少一個中國人, or, “One more Christian is one less Chinese.” The majority of China's population holds that to gain a Christian identity is to lose one's Chinese identity. I should make it clear, however, that there are historical and cultural reasons for both sides of this long antagonism, both Mandarin and missionary. [SLIDE 6: “Three Teachings”] Late-imperial court views of religious practice were complex; they were largely based on the already entrenched cultural traditions of the *Sanjiao* 三教 (Three Teachings), Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, that were as Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer suggest, expected to “coexists and cooperate with each other” (Goossaert and Palmer, 22). Social cohesion was normally defined by participation in, and affiliation with, a local temple connected to these religio-philosophical traditions.

Additionally, the emperor, *Tianzi* 天子 (Son of Heaven), was the putative institutional and theological authority in all spiritual and secular matters. This primacy was challenged by Catholics, who assigned that role to the Pope in Rome, and Protestants, who assigned primacy to the Christian Bible – *Sola scriptura*. The emperor and his designated officials were appointed the tasks of separating religious practices into two categories:

1. Orthodox, *zheng* 正.

2. Or heterodox, *xie* 邪.

With few exceptions, Christianity has been placed into the category of “heterodox” because it is less syncretic than the Three Teachings.

[SLIDE 7: Temple Tax Edict] Other historical factors contributed to the Sino-Missionary conflicts that plagued late-imperial and early-modern Beijing. Beyond the economic, political, and cultural antagonisms that were caused by the Opium Wars (1840s) and Unequal Treaties, Mandarins and missionaries contended over several important cultural and religious matters. First, the central court issued an imperial edict in 1862 under French pressure to exempt Chinese Catholics from paying the required taxes to local non-Christian temples. And, they were henceforth exempt from participating in any non-Christian rites. This caused terrible tensions between converts and other Chinese because the taxes paid to temple authorities were used to collect and store relief food for times of drought or famine. Thus, during famines Christians asked for food to survive, but had not paid the requisite taxes that entitled them to that aid. Second, despite Matteo Ricci’s so-called “accommodationist” method of grafting Christian religion onto China’s indigenous culture, Christian doctrine was nonetheless non-syncretic, as were Daoism and Buddhism. This meant that Chinese Christians could not, like their fellow Chinese, mix their Christian beliefs with the other Three Teachings to create a hybrid religious tradition. Chinese Christians were thus viewed by the court as a “heterodox teaching,” *xiejiao*, 邪教 because they did not contribute to social cohesion. This idea is expressed today in the Party’s attempts to enforce a “harmonious society” 和諧社會 *hexie shehui*, which has been satirized as strong-armed “stability at all costs.” Finally, even though the number of Christians in China during the

late-imperial era was quite small, mission churches, schools, hospitals, and orphanages were visible all over Beijing.

[SLIDE 8: Favier & Beitang] One of the marks of Catholic history in Beijing is that bishops and priests were as willing to resist China's leaders with arms as were the secular European and US diplomatic representatives in the capital. My research demonstrates that the Boxer Uprising (1898-1900) was not simply an uncontested massacre of missionaries and Chinese Christians. Rather, there was an organized Catholic attempt by many to resist the attacks of radical Boxers and Qing troops. Beijing's North Church, or 北堂 Beitang, is perhaps the most famous.

[SLIDE 9: Eight Allied Armies & Beitang 1900] While most studies of the Boxer Uprising have focused on the siege of Beijing's diplomatic legations, the attacks on the Beitang cathedral, with more than 3,000 people inside, were even more dramatic. In his journal, the cathedral's bishop, Alphonse Favier, CM, (1837-1905) wrote on June 22, 1900: "The façade of our cathedral is badly damaged; the steeples are in ruins, but the cross of marble continues to stand. About half-past three the attack was so violent that we believed our last hour had come. . . . Two Christians met death and two were wounded . . . The Boxers uttered fierce cries, and set fire to the houses of our neighbors" (Favier, *Heart of Peking*, 31). By August the Christians inside the church had run out of rations and dogs were seen ravaging the corpses seen all around them. The Christians actually shot and ate those dogs to remain alive. My point here is that the Catholics inside Beitang resisted militia and Boxer attacks from June 14 until August 16, 1900. When the Eight Allied Armies entered the capital in August 1900, Bishop Favier and his cathedral became icons of resistance among China's Catholics. [SLIDE 10: 1901 Café] In fact, just prior to 1949 a building beside the

cathedral housed Catholic Action, a lay organization mobilized to resist Communism in China – this building is now a popular coffee shop called “1901 Café.” Mao knew very well when he entered Beijing in 1949 that the city’s Catholic population was accustomed to struggle, and was connected to forces far beyond the sweep of China’s geographic borders.

Shanghai and the Maoist Era

[SLIDE 11: Party Document & Gong Pinmei] Let’s turn to Shanghai during the 1940s and 50s, where Party authorities and Catholic resistance collided in incendiary ways. After the Boxer Uprising, the rhetoric of Christian resistance to the state became commonplace, in both Beijing and Shanghai. In a recently de-classified Party document held in the Shanghai Municipal Archives, we see this objective: “When the political struggle and the forces of production have reached a high rate in the stage of their power, then it will be possible for us to destroy the Catholic Church. This is what we aim to do, and it is for this objective that we struggle” (Shanghai Municipal Archives, A22-1-233, “Guanyu Shanghai Tianzhujiào gongzuò de jièshào” 關於上海天主教工作的介紹). From the Catholic side of this conflict, the Shanghai bishop, Gong Pinmei 龔品梅 (1901-2000), advised the city’s Christians: “If we renounce our beliefs, we will disappear, and we will not rise again. But if we resist and keep our beliefs, we will still disappear, but we will rise again.”

Documents show that throughout the history of Christianity in China, the relationship between officials and Western missionaries and their converts, has been one of tension, disagreement, and misunderstanding, and this stigma has unfortunately grown more entrenched in China’s cultural consciousness. After decades of terrible warfare and violence in China, Mao Zedong (1893-1976) declared the founding of the new, Communist, Peoples Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Most Chinese welcomed this event – the restoration of national unity in 1949 did in fact result in a more stable atmosphere in war-torn China.

But while unprecedented crowds gathered to hear Mao's proclamation atop the gate at Tiananmen, Christian clergy and faithful – around 4 million – did not expect this new government to last but a few months. Catholics thought the Communist Party would quickly evaporate from China's political landscape. So, at first, Shanghai's Catholics simply waited for Mao's defeat and disappearance. But Mao's new government apparatus did not disappear as expected.

[SLIDE 12: Popes Pius IX & Pius XI] It's important to bear in mind that in 1949, China's Catholics, much more than Protestants, had distinguished themselves as among the new Communist government's most strident opponents in two significant ways. First, the Church had made its position on Communism very clear. In 1846, Pope Pius IX (1792-1878) asserted that Communism, "is absolutely contrary to natural law itself, and if once adopted would utterly destroy the rights, liberty, property, and possessions of all people, and even society itself" (*Qui Pluribus* 1846). In his 1937 encyclical, *Divini Redemptoris*, Pope Pius XI (1857-1939) called for "the militant leaders of Catholic Action" to assist the Church's battle against the "snares of Communism" (*Divini Redemptoris* 1937). Pius XI also referred to Marxist ideology as, "a system full of errors and sophisms" that "subverts the social order" (*Divini Redemptoris* 1937). The Church's stand was no mystery to China's new Communist leaders, who viewed religion with the same suspicion that Catholics held for Marx's ideas.

[SLIDE 13: Archbishop Paul Yubin] The Chinese Church's fevered resistance to Communism extended even into the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council, when the exiled bishop of Nanjing, Paul Yu Bin (1901-1978), delivered an animated speech entitled, "Mentioning Atheistic Communism by Name." The bishop asked that "atheistic Communism" be mentioned specifically in the Council's schema, "On the Church in the Modern World." He called for the Council to officially assert that Communism is, "militant

atheism, crass materialism – in a word, the sum of all heresies” (*Third Session Council Speeches*, October 23, 1964). And also, the Catholic hierarchy in China had allied itself with Mao’s archenemy, the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975). [SLIDE 14: Yu Bin/Group & Antonio Riberi] Images of Catholic hierarchy hobnobbing with Mao’s chief adversary, with the rival Nationalist flag displayed behind them, did not help mitigate tensions between China’s new Communist polity and the Vatican. And in 1947, the Vatican’s internuncio to China, Antonio Riberi (1897-1967), ordered Catholics to avoid any connection with the Communists – on pain of excommunication. And in 1948 Riberi organized the *Shengmujun*, 聖母軍 Legion of Mary, into an elite organization of mostly Catholic youth, who became anti-Communist activists. It is not surprising that Mao’s new government targeted the Catholic Church as one of its most dangerous enemies.

[SLIDE 15: Legion of Mary] Materials in the Shanghai Municipal Archives suggest that after Mao’s principle enemy, Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalists, had left for Taiwan, Mao’s new main adversary became the Catholics left behind in Mainland China. The Catholic Church for its part consolidated its efforts to resist China’s new Communist government in two areas. First was mobilizing China’s Catholic youth under the banner of the Legion of Mary. In the 1953 edition of *The Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, we find this passage: “The Legion of Mary is an Association of Catholics . . . [who] have formed themselves into a Legion for service in the warfare which is perpetually waged by the Church against the world and its evil powers” (pp 1-2). They defined themselves as an “army” – in close collaboration with the Church hierarchy. By 1950, China’s bishops and other clergy encouraged young Catholics to organize themselves within Marian Sodalties and the Legion of Mary – these young Catholics were referred to simply as the “Catholic Youth.” Second was the organization of high-profile public events to marshal the spiritual resolve of the

faithful. These large-scale protests, mostly in Shanghai, were spearheaded by the now famous bishop, Gong Pinmei.

[SLIDE 16: Bishop Gong – Catholic Youth Event] Bishop Gong became Shanghai's bishop in 1950, and was by far the most influential Christian leader in China during the early 1950s. In Gong's pastoral letters he called for a revival of Shanghai's Catholic Youth, and to support their sense of religious faith and to resist Communism. By 1951, the anti-Communist encyclicals flowing out of the Vatican and the growing militancy of China's Catholic Youth produced an increasingly tense battle line between China's new government under Chairman Mao and the Catholic community that defined itself by its loyalty to Rome. In response to this standoff, China's Communist government mobilized a powerful anti-Catholic campaign. [SLIDE 17: Anti-Legion of Mary Campaign] This campaign focused at first in the media. Shanghai's Party-sponsored media targeted its animus toward Bishop Gong, who the government felt carried too much influence. Articles and speeches connected Catholic missionaries to American colonialism and depicted Catholic hierarchy as secret agents of imperialism and fascism. Nuns were villainized as baby killers. One of the government's most intense campaigns centered on a sustained anti-Catholic cartoon crusade. As Catholic resistance increased, so did the number of creative anti-Catholic cartoons.

Shanghai was flooded with full-page newspaper cartoons in 1951, at the height of the anti-Legion of Mary and Bishop Gong campaign. Most appeared in the *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily), recently opened for consultation at the Shanghai Municipal Library.

[SLIDE 18: US-Korean War Cartoon] One connected the Legion of Mary to the Korean War – suggesting that the Legion “unpatriotically” supports the American and British militaries in North Korea. The cartoon caption states: “The Holy Mother watches above the American and Korean armies” The side caption asserts: “The people resist America and

support Korea's patriotic movement – as they [the Legion of Mary] exclaim: 'The Holy Mother watches above the American and Korean militaries'." So, the Virgin Mary is here depicted as the Catholic patroness and protector of the Western forces in Korea.

[SLIDE 19: Three-Selfs Cartoon] Another cartoon promoted the new government's alternative to affiliation with the Legion of Mary – the patriotic Catholic community and the official "3-Selfs Movement." On this example a patriotic priest – who is racially Chinese (only racially Chinese clergy are legal in China today) – is depicted holding a pamphlet with the 3-Selfs outlined: "Self-Govern, Self-Support, and Self-Propagation." The ousted bishop appears to be the Papal Nuncio, Bishop Riberi, holding a torn paper with the name, "Legion of Mary." The side caption states: "Appose and suppress the formation of the Legion of Mary. The People's government protects correct religious faith by sweeping imperialist Catholics out of China, which demonstrates the People's victorious struggle against imperialism. Under the nationalistic religious enthusiasm of patriotic Catholics, they shall earnestly advance toward self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation." Thus the state intended China's Catholics to disassociate with the pope and the Vatican authorities, and the imperial-era rhetoric of "correct," or "orthodox," religious faith was reconstituted in Maoist-era announcements.

[SLIDE 20: Fr. Zhao Hongsheng Cartoon] A third cartoon is a powerful example of the Party's reaction to Catholic resistance in Shanghai, and what the government suggested patriotic Catholics should do to those who remained loyal to the Vatican. An extended fist punches a Catholic priest/bishop out of a church; the "metonymic" fist is identified as a "patriotic Catholic." And, the ousted priest is identified as the Chinese Fr. Zhao Hongsheng, who was labeled as a Vatican loyalist and exiled to Inner Mongolia. The side caption reads: "The running-dog Nanjing imperialist, Fr. Zhao Hongsheng, refused to give Holy

Communion to patriotic Catholics, insisting that they were ‘apostates.’ But patriotic Catholics recognize imperialist counterrevolutionary behavior, and they would not acknowledge Fr. Zhao Hongsheng as their religious leader. They kicked him out of their church and no longer allowed him to carry out his counterrevolutionary activities under the cloak of religion.”

Well, to a certain extent this caption was correct – Papal encyclicals had indeed insisted that Catholics who affiliated themselves with the Communist Party should be denied Communion and excommunicated. The government heralded this as an example of anti-Chinese discrimination, for a Chinese should, the Party insisted, support his or her government above a foreign religion. Large Christian demonstrations of resistance were countered with much larger public rallies intended to resist Catholic resistance. [SLIDE 21: Anti-Legion of Mary Rally] A recently released photograph from the Shanghai Municipal Archives, illustrates well the force of the Catholic and anti-Catholic rallies in 1950s Shanghai. This photo was taken during an assembly held in Shanghai in the same year the cartoons were published – 1951. Here we see the Socialist Youth – the other Chinese Youth organization – carrying a banner with the words, “We request the government to eliminate the Legion of Mary.”

As Christian resistance continued, Shanghai’s official media was ordered to feature stories on those who agreed to make public accusations against Bishop Gong Pinmei and those who renounced their membership in the Legion of Mary. [SLIDE 22: Anti-Gong & Anti-Legion Articles] Two 1951 newspaper articles featured accolades for those who followed government advice. One announced that “More and More Legion of Mary Members Renounce Their Membership,” while another reported that, “Patriotic Catholics Bravely Publicize the Counterrevolutionary Crimes of Bishop Gong Pinmei.” Shanghai’s

daily papers often-featured articles about Catholic “counterrevolutionaries” because “counterrevolutionary” was largely code for resister, and resistance to the state was not legal. Again, the assumption that China’s population unanimously supported the new government is simply untrue. A very significant Catholic resistance remained a frustrating and persistent problem until around 1966, when Protestant and Catholic Christians formed underground communities after Christian churches and institutions were seized and closed.

Back to Beijing

[SLIDE 23: Sr. De Jaurias & Beitang Ruins] Let me return to 1900 Beijing for a short description of Beitang cathedral during the Boxer Uprising. On August 21, 1900, only five days after Beijing’s cathedral was saved from its two-month siege, the Superior of the Daughters of Charity who had survived the Boxer attacks, collapsed at her writing desk. Sr. H el ene de Jaurias, CM, (1824-1900) and her fellow Sisters had cared for more than 500 Chinese children during the siege. They all ate and slept in their school, orphanage, workshops, clinic, and chapel while cannon fire and landmines exploded below and around them. After the violence of the Boxer Uprising had ended on August 16, 1900, all of the Catholic properties that belonged to the Daughters of Charity were in ruins, and almost all of the children died within months from injuries, starvation, and stress. As the next Sister Superior of the Beitang nuns described the remaining children: “Those who survived were little more than shadows.” After the Boxer Uprising, and the crippling reparations imposed on the Qing court by foreign governments, the empire was also little more than a shadow. After 1912, which marks the beginning of the Republican Era (1912-1949), China’s imperial capital, Beijing, began uneasy attempts to reconstruct what had been demolished in 1900; and the small group of Catholic Sisters there – both Western and Chinese – began to rebuild schools, churches, and lives in the debris of the fallen empire.

[SLIDE 24: Post-Boxer Era Catholic Ruins] From the view of China's Catholics after 1900, there appeared little hope of reconstruction, but when one considers efforts to rebuild in the ruins of the Boxer Uprising, the Christian presence in China has grown at an unprecedented global rate, despite the setbacks of the Maoist era. I'll contextualize this statement with a bit of demographics: While it is almost impossible to be absolutely accurate, I estimate that there are at least twelve-to-fifteen million Roman Catholic Christians in China today. While this is less than one percent of China's total population, the sheer number of Catholics in China is more than double the size of Ireland's Catholic population. [SLIDE 25: Large Group of Chinese Catholic Children] At the advent of the Republican Era there were only around three million Catholics, so we can see at the outset that the reconstruction efforts after 1912 have been effective. Seminaries and churches continue to grow larger and more populated. Beijing and Shanghai's Christians represent only one fragment of a long history of painful adjustment and conflict with the ruling authorities. But, they have left a legacy of determined perseverance.

Concluding Remarks

[SLIDE 26: Ecclesia Militans] I would like to end with a few remarks on one of the principal engines of Christian protest, one that has no analog in any of China's indigenous Three Teachings. Christian missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, who departed for China during the late-imperial and the early Maoist eras went there as imagined members of the *Ecclesia Militans* – or “Church Militant.” When missionaries left their native Europe for China they were commonly dispatched with a “hymn of departure,” intoned by their fellow Christians.

Friends, farewell, and may God speed you,

And to holy combat lead you

In the far off heathen land,
Where in darkness most repelling
Teeming millions still are dwelling
Who await your noble band.

...

Shall he (Satan) longer yet enslave them?
Hasten, brethren, forth to save them.

...

though the hosts of hell impede you,
God will His angels lead you.

Such rhetoric was common of eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth-century missions to China; indeed, the vocabulary of “holy combat” was commonly employed within the missionary enterprise. Missionaries were the vanguard members of an imagined Christian militia that struggled against the devil, and, as St. Paul refers to this battle in his letter to the Ephesians, “the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Franciscan and Dominican missionaries were known especially for their language of spiritual conquest, which is particularly evident in an early memorial by the Dominican chronicler, Diego Aduarte, OP, (1570-1636) who wrote that: “In the spiritual conquest (conquista espiritual) of this powerful kingdom [China], God takes up the Gospel as the battering ram that gradually approaches and finally breaks those great walls of resistance.” The language of most Christian missionaries of that era was infused with St. Augustine’s notion of “two cities,” the city of God and the city of the world – both locked in spiritual

conflict until the eschatological end of time. [SLIDE 27: St. Michael & China's Dragon] St. Michael the Archangel appears often in the discourse of the Church Militant – we see this in the Apocalypse: “Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. . . . The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Rev. 12.7). For most China missionaries, St. Michael personified the spiritual confrontation against Satan’s forces that awaited them in the Middle Kingdom. Clergy spoke of leaving their native shores to “conquer the forces of Satan” under the banner of St. Michael. It complicated matters that the dragon was for China a symbol of themselves and their country, while for Western Christians it symbolized the devil – the enemy of God. It was thus not unexpected that conflict and resistance was inevitable.

[SLIDE 28: Shanxi Party HQ & Catholic Church] For his part, Mao referred to Christians as “enemies without guns,” and in one speech in 1949 he asserted: “After the enemies with guns have been wiped out, there will still be enemies without guns; they are bound to struggle desperately against us, and we must never regard these enemies lightly” (“Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China,” March 5, 1949). Happily, today the intensity of earlier rhetoric of conflict and resistance by both China’s officials and Christians has been tempered. While visiting one village in Shanxi I noticed that the church had been built across the road from the Communist Party headquarter. I asked the Christians there what they thought of having the Party office across the road from where they worshipped – I was thinking of the centuries of antagonism between Mandarins and missionaries in that very region. They

looked at me with a very puzzled look on their faces and replied: “Why would we mind? They paid to have our church built.”

Catholics in China still talk about their long “culture of perseverance,” but in the wake of recent economic growth and optimism Chinese churches enjoy a level of freedom, and even state support, almost unprecedented in China’s Christian history. Problems persist, especially as the Protestant “house church movement” escalates faster than the government can monitor. Even if China’s Christian population equals as high as 90 million believers, this is still a small number considering its total population of 1.4 billion. During my recent visit to Beijing I witnessed a Bible study at a coffee shop, and was aware of a pro-Christian play at Renmin University, two Christian art shops at Liulichang Book and Art Street, and several Christian bookstores around the city. In a 1990s survey at Renmin University, 4 percent of the students openly acknowledged practicing Christianity, while 61.5 percent declared an “interest” in the religion. Both these numbers have risen since then (Goosehaert and Palmer, 302).

Tacitus once wrote that, “Humanity is implanted with the desire to resist oppression.” Without oppression, resistance is unnecessary – objective historical research reveals that “oppressive approaches” have been employed by both Mandarins and missionaries in China’s late-imperial and modern history. As one Christian missionary put it: “It is above all the thirst for true justice that drives the Chinese toward Christianity. But this liberation from oppression has gone to the heads of several Christians – from being the oppressed to being the oppressors” (see Bickers and Tiedmann, 21-22). Some have commented that the causes of oppression and perseverance have less to do with religion and ideology than human nature. [SLIDE 29: Matteo Ricci - Friendship] In any case, I’d like to end on a more optimistic note: It is now just 5 years after 400th anniversary of the death of

the famous missionary, Matteo Ricci. And Ricci is someone who both China's growing Christian population and its government admire, for he represents a way to bridge the religious and cultural gap between Christianity and China's indigenous traditions. Repression and perseverance are less desirable than friendship, Ricci suggested, and in his famous *Jiaoyou lun* 交友論 (Essay on Friendship), he wrote: 友之與我，雖有二身，二身之內，其心一而已。 "My friend and I, even though we are of two bodies, within our two bodies we share the same heart, and that is all."

[SLIDE 30: Closing Slide] When I contemplate the struggles between Christians and state officials in Beijing and Shanghai over the past two centuries I cannot help but harbor some hope that our common heart will begin to encourage greater tolerance and mutual understanding in future years. In the meantime, I am conscious of an assertion made by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): "In the realm of ideas everything depends on enthusiasm. . . . In the real world everything rests on perseverance."

I'D BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.