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# The Challenges and Opportunities for Christianity in Contemporary China

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**Abstract:** This article contains five main topics. Firstly, the aim is to briefly describe the number of Christians and the characteristics of Christian development in China through four periods. Secondly, the aim is to describe the characteristics of the contemporary Chinese context through a metaphor constructed by me for this purpose. It is of a flying dragon with one-head-two-wings-four-feet and one-tail. Thirdly, the aim is to explore three challenges and opportunities by describing the legislative limitations to the "selfish wild horse of capitalism" and the Levithan of Bureaucracy. This is done by using the metaphors of rope and cage. The role of Christianity within the contemporary secular and humanistic society is also discussed with the aid of a metaphor, that of a "rescuing pill". Finally, the article has focused on the challenges and opportunities for Christianity in contemporary China through an analysis of political theology, cultural theology (especially identity) and humanistic theology (especially as related to Christianity's pragmatic and secular functions in contemporary China).

**Key words:** period, amount, the flying dragon with one-head-two-wings-four-feet and one-tail, political theology, cultural identity, secular influence

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## I . The Four Periods of Christian Development in China

Christianity in the forms of Nestorianism, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism has experienced a history of over 1200 years in China. The beginning of this timeline can be traced back to AD 635, when Nestorianism entered China during the Tang dynasty. The timeline as related to these three periods runs to 1840 when the Opium War took place between the United Kingdom of Britain and China. Within this long period, there have altogether been three highest peaks and lowest valleys.

The first highest peak and lowest valley: In AD 635 Alopen arrived in Chang'an, the capital of the Tang dynasty, with his Nestorian monks. In AD 845 the Wu Emperor of the Tang dynasty destroyed Buddhism because of its strong threat to the government. Nestorianism was also destroyed that same time. There were 210 years when Nestorianism developed well and there were 426 years

when Nestorianism was persecuted or forbidden. The world then developed slowly, and because of undeveloped technologies and geological difficulties there was not much communication and exchange between the East and the West.

The second highest peak and lowest valley: In 1271 the Mongolian Yuan dynasty was established in China and in 1580 of the Ming dynasty Jesuit missionaries were allowed to live in Dadu (today's Beijing), the Capital of the Yuan dynasty. The highest peak year was in 1368 when the Yuan dynasty was overthrown. There were 97 years when Nestorianism developed well and there were 212 years when Nestorianism was forbidden or destroyed. During the Ming dynasty the door of China was closed. However, the European countries had showed their strength in politics, economics, cultures and religious faith, after the great geological discovery of North - America. In addition to the above, the communication technologies had also been very much improved, thus, it was difficult for China to keep herself isolated from the other part of the world. The valley period of 212 years was much shorter than the previous valley period of 426 years.

The third highest peak and lowest valley: This took place in 1580 when the Jesuit missionaries were allowed to live in Dadu (today's Beijing) and in 1840 when the Opium War took place between China and the UK. The highest peak year was in 1723 when the Yongzheng Emperor of the Qing dynasty came into power; he started to forbid Roman Catholic missionary works in China. There were 143 years when Christianity developed well, and 117 years when Christianity was forbidden or destroyed. Because of the following elements, in the context of globalization China had much more difficulty in keeping herself isolated from the other parts of the world: (1) Foreign political and economic power became stronger and stronger; (2) The strategy and power of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian missionary works became stronger and stronger; (3) The gap between China and the European countries became bigger and bigger. Finally it was difficult to forbid Christianity in China, although some bitterness had appeared in the encounter between Christianity and China.

Among the whole 1205 years from 635 to 1840, the period of the high peak was 450 years, and that of the low valley was 755 years. They occupy respectively 37,3 percent and 62,7 percent.<sup>①</sup>

The fourth period started from the Opium War in 1840 and we today are still experiencing this stage. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many Chinese had been converted to Christianity, and Christianity had contributed to China in many areas. Contributions had taken place, for example, in political modernization, democracy, thinking liberation, scientific and technological development, equality between men and women, modern education, medical care and charity, etc. Meanwhile this period also witnessed many persecutions and anti - Christianity movements.

**The de-facto context of contemporary China can be described with a metaphor of a flying dragon, which has one-head, two-wings, four-feet and one-tail. The head is the authority of**

<sup>①</sup> Pong Conglin 2007: *Long yu shangdi* (Dragon and God), Gullin; Guangci shifan daxue chubanshe, 73 - 76. Huang Baoluo 2012: *Daguoan shiye zhong de huiyu zueshu daikua shenxue* (The Sino - Christian Academic Dialogical Theology in the light of the Great Cosmos), Beijing: Minxin chubanshe, 186 - 187

government, which leads and influences almost every aspect of Chinese spirituality, culture, ideology and religion. The four feet are four types of elements. They are: (1) Chinese original indigenization such as Confucianism, Daoism and folk religions; (2) Universal types of elements such as secularism, materialism and pragmatic ideas, human rights, etc; (3) Foreign originated but contextualized elements such as Buddhism and Marxism; (4) Foreign original elements which are still in the process of contextualizing, such as Christianity and Islam. In addition to these four feet, there are more newer and smaller elements, which are like hairs of the tail. All these elements can be divided into either being of Chinese origin or foreign origin, and are likened to the two wings. Such a division of origin has again become a way of thinking, considering Chinese origin as loyal and foreign origin as potentially hostile.<sup>②</sup> In contemporary China, Christianity is living within such a context, which has many challenges and also opportunities.

## II. The Characteristics of the Number of Chinese Christians

Regarding the number of Christians and clergies in China, the following data is worthy of attention.<sup>③</sup>

In AD 840 when the Wu Emperor of the Tang dynasty persecuted Buddhism and Nestorianism, there were around 2000 Nestorians in China.<sup>④</sup> But most of the Nestorians then were foreign immigrants, and very few Chinese local people believed in Nestorianism.

In the 12th century of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty, many Turkestan people believed in Nestorianism, and there were about 200 000.

In the 19th century, during the Qing dynasty, there were about 200 000 Roman Catholic Christians. In 1807 when British Robert Morrison arrived in China as the first protestant missionary, and until 1839 there were about 100 Protestant Christians in China.

In 1860, there were about 300 000 Roman Catholic Christians, and only several hundred Protestant Christians. Most of the Western missionaries then were living in the coastal area, and there were only two Chinese Protestant pastors.

In 1900, there were about 100 000 baptized Chinese Protestant Christians, and there were around 3500 Western missionaries in China. There were about 800 000 Chinese Roman Catholic Christians.

In 1920, there were about 500 000 Chinese Protestant Christians, and there were about 8000 Western missionaries in China.

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② Huang Baoluo 2010: "Cong Oumei shijiao kan tixian zhongguo ruanshili de daguocuo" (The Great guocuo, which Shows the Soft Power of China, in the Perspectives of Europe and North America), in *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao* (Review of Chinese Social Sciences), No. 68, volume 13 Hainan.

③ These data are from a lecture by professor Miikka Ruokanen in the Department of Systematic Theology at the University of Helsinki in 2011.

④ Generally scholars believe that those were Nestorianists from Syria, but some others do not consider Alopen belonging to this school, for example, professor Zhu Donghua from Tsinghua University, China.

In 1902 the Finnish Mission Society started to send missionaries to China. Pastor Päivö Parviainen left China in 1953 as the last Finnish missionary who had lived for several years in Communist China even after 1949 when the People's Republic of China had been established. Since then Western missionaries have been totally officially forbidden to do evangelical work in China. In that time when Parviainen left China, there were about 700 000 or 800 000 Protestant Chinese Christians, and 20% of them were indigenous congregation members, who did not have any relationship with foreign Christian organizations. There were then about three million Roman Catholic Chinese Christians.

In the period of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) in China, Christianity was persecuted very seriously, and many Western Christians worried that Christianity had been destroyed totally in China. However, recent facts show the opposite, since the amount of Chinese Protestant Christians grew 6 times to reach about 5 million. Since in that period the Christian Church was closed officially, many Christians met secretly at home without any official registration, thus, the House Church was born.

Today, in the 21st century, the number of Chinese Christians is a disputed issue. Three of the numbers are famous: According to the Chinese government and the Chinese Christian Council there are about 23 million Protestant and 8 million Roman Catholic Christians in China. According to David Aikman and overseas Christian organizations there are 100 million Protestant Christians. According to many academic scholars there are about 50 million Protestant Christians in China.<sup>⑤</sup> In any case, the Chinese Christian church, especially the Protestant Christian Church in China is one of the most fast growing churches in today's world.

Through the above observations we may notice that the amount of Chinese Christians was growing the most during three periods: One was during 1900 – 1930 when the anti – Christian movement was happening. Another was during 1949 – 1976 when Christians were persecuted, especially in the Cultural Revolution. The third has been since 1980 until today, when political persecution has become less but secularization is becoming more and more serious in Chinese society.

### III. Three Challenges and Three Opportunities for Christianity in Contemporary China<sup>⑥</sup>

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⑤ The Blue Book of Religions in China in 2010, by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of World Religions has published a data that there are 23 millions of Protestant Christians in China in 2009 – 2010. This is close to the official date offered by the Chinese Government and Chinese Christian Council. Roman Catholic Christians were not included in this data.

⑥ This part is abstracted from an article of mine, Huang Baobao 2012: "21shiji hanyu yujin zhong yingyan ceqian de hanyu suoshu shenxue zhi goujia" (The Construction of Sino – Christian Academic Theology, which should be in the 21th century in China), "Christianity and 21<sup>st</sup> Century China Conference", The 5th Forum of Chinese Theology, August 22 – 24, 2012 in Gordon – Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, USA.

Based upon the above characteristics of the stages and numbers of Chinese Christianity, we may foresee that, the existence and development of Chinese Christianity has important meaning to Christianity in general and to the whole world. In order to investigate the challenges for Christianity, we need to have a clear sense to realize and to distinguish what the real problems are. I have summarized these problems as three kinds of challenges, and proper resolution to these challenges will change them into great opportunities for Christianity to develop herself in China.<sup>⑦</sup>

**The first challenge and opportunity is political theology.** Chinese political reality requires Christianity to face and solve political problems in the Chinese context, otherwise, there will be many difficulties for her to exist and to develop. How should Christians deal with this?

On the one hand, it is necessary to understand the philosophical essence of Chinese politics. Chinese politics require all religions, philosophies and cultures to have two kinds of functions; they are both in offering legal apologetic argument for the contemporary political authority and in offering help to maintain stability for the contemporary political authority. In the contemporary Chinese political context, Christianity needs to deal with the relationship between Christian faith and radical aggressive leftist atheism.<sup>⑧</sup> Historically speaking, Christianity and its theology should deal with two issues: One is the negative and bitter memory resulting from the relationship between Christianity and Western imperialism or colonialism since the period of the Opium War in 1840 and the Korean War in the 1950s.<sup>⑨</sup> The other issue is the worry of the Chinese political authority that Western political powers harm China (or the Chinese authority) through Christianity. These two issues relate directly with the existence and acceptance of Christianity in China. Christian theology needs to investigate and clearly state the relationship between Christianity and these ideologies or political movements historically. Misunderstandings should be distinguished out with academic method,<sup>⑩</sup> forgiveness should be asked for mistakes and these mistakes corrected so as to do away with the unnecessary worries. In addition, Christianity should also deal with her relationship with Chinese Confucianism, which may become a political issue through the influence of populism. One such example was that in 2010 some Chinese Confucian professors opposed a Christian Protestant church

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⑦ Some people consider that politics, culture and the development of the church herself are the essences and difficulties for the contextualization of Christianity in China. For example, Mo Zhongjian 2012; "Jidujiao zhongguohua de nandian ji jianyi" (The Difficulties and Suggestion for the Chinese Contextualization of Christianity), in *Zhongguo minzu bao* (Chinese Nationality Daily), 2012-04-17.

⑧ Recently some radical aggressive atheists have disagreed with the contemporary Chinese official policies of Open Door and Reform; they have been trying to criticize all religious research and teaching in universities from political and nationalist perspectives.

⑨ Huang Baoluo 2011; "Quanjihua xia Jidujiao dui zhongguo xingxiang zhi shuzao de yingxiang" (The Influence of Christianity to the Formation of China's Image in the Context of Globalization), in Li Ling and Zeng Qingbao ed. *Zhongguo xiandaihua shiye xia de jiaohui yu shehui* (Church and Society in the Perspective of Chinese Modernism), Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 82-83.

⑩ Professor Chen Caijun has studied the relationship between missionaries and Opium trade, and he has corrected many misunderstandings concerning this history. Referring to Chen Caijun 2012; "Yingguo chuanjiao shi dui wanqing yapian maoyi de taidu yu xingdong" (The Attitude and Action of British missionaries to Opium trade in the late Qing dynasty), in *International Journal of Sino-Western Studies*, no. 2, 91-106.

to be built in Qufu city, the hometown of Confucius.<sup>①</sup>

On the other hand, it is necessary to understand the theological and philosophical essence of Christian politics, thus, it is important to investigate the relationship between Christianity and politics theoretically from the viewpoint of dogmatics. Christianity does not exist either in order to offer apologetic argument and interpretation for any political authority, or in order to maintain stability for any political authority, since her final aim is loyalty to the Triune God and the Kingdom of God rather than any society or system in this earthly world. Thus, Christianity should not be bound to any actual political ideology, authority, government or power. This is the basic principle and essence of Christian political theology and philosophy. In reality, Christians should be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Christianity should hold on to her role of prophet in proclaiming Truth; meanwhile Christians should find a proper and innocent role in the real Chinese context in order to fulfill this prophetic responsibility through serving. Neither should the roles of prophet and that of serving be ignored. It is crucial to remember that Christian basic doctrine concerning politics is to obey the existing authority instead of joining in a revolution for the sake of attaining power (Rom 13: 1 – 7, 1 Tim. 2:1 – 2, Titus3:1). Thus, although conflicts exist between Christianity and politics, in the current day it is not always a tension between Christianity and Chinese politics, since cooperation or compromise is always possible without essential harm to either.

**The second challenge and opportunity is cultural contextual theology.** It involves three key conceptions here: contextual theology, cultural encounter and cultural identity.

The so-called contextual theology<sup>②</sup> refers to theology, which is to face the challenges from a certain context with the power of the Gospel. It relates to the attempt at indigenization, through which a certain theology adjusts to a cultural tradition. As far as contextual theology is concerned, Christianity needs to construct a Sino – Christian Academic Theology in China, which is a Christian

① In December 22, 2010, some Confucian scholars had published a public letter entitled “Zunzhong zhonghua wenhua shengdi, tingjian qufu Yejiào jiaotang—Guanyu Qufu jianzao Yejiào dajiaotang de yijianshu” (To honour Chinese Cultural Saint Place and Stop Build Christian Church in Qufu—A Opinion Letter concerning Building a Christian Protestant Church in Qufu). I have written an article commenting on this issue, Huang Baoluo 2011; “Cong quanqihua shiye zhong de daguoze lai kan Qufu deng rujia xuanyanshu” (Qufu and other Confucian Declarations in the light of the Great Guoxue) in *Rujia youbao (Confucian Post)*, no. 170; Later there are three articles criticizing my article: Hansing 2011; Dui ‘Cong Quanqihua shiye zhong de daguoze lai kan Qufu deng rujia xuanyanshu’ de huiying (A response to Qufu and other Confucian Declarations in the light of the Great Guoxue), in *Rujia youbao (Confucian Post)* no. 170. Sun Tiejie 2012; ‘Cong quanqihua shiye de daguoze lai kan Qufu deng rujia xuanyanshu’ yiwèn zhong cunzai de wèntí (The problems in the article Qufu and other Confucian Declarations in the light of the Great Guoxue), in *Rujia youbao (Confucian post)*, no. 170, 75 – 83.

② Stephen B. Bevans has mentioned five types of contextual theology: translation model, anthropological model, praxis model, synthetic model and transcendental model. Cf. Bevans, Stephen B. 1992; *Models of Contextual Theology*, New York: Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 3, 10. Ahonen, Risto A. 2003; *Lähetys rajien ylittäminen. Kokonaisuutenaisten lähetyskäsitteiden vaikutus lähetystyön rakenteeseen*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 84. Jyväskylä: Gummerus; 29. Chinese theologians have been working on indigenization, i.e., how to adjust the Gospel with Chinese traditional cultural model. Kena, Kirsti 1993; *Kaukoiden teologian näkökulmia*, STKSJ 181, Helsinki; 12. Yang Huilin and Shi Xiaoli 2004; “Hanyu shenxue de chujing hua jieqi wenti lingyu”, in *Jidujiao yu zhongguo wenhua*5 (Christianity and Chinese culture), 2004, 227 – 234. Cf. also Wang Xiaochao 1998; *Jidujiao yu diguo wenhua* (Christianity and Imperial Culture: Chinese Christian Apologetics in the Seventeenth Century and Their Latin Patristic Equivalent), Leiden; Brill.

theology in the context of Chinese language and culture. The aim of such a theology is to express the comprehensive essence of Christianity through rational expression, emotional statement or mystical description and other possible means so that it may be understood and even be accepted by the audiences in the context of Chinese language and culture.

The so-called encounter of cultures refers to the encounter between two or more cultures, and here the methods of exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and particularism should be especially paid attention to.<sup>③</sup> As far as Sino – Christian Academic Theology is concerned, it is important to notice that the contemporary context of Chinese is like a metaphor of a flying dragon, which has one hand (political authority), two wings (Chinese and foreign elements) and four feet (the Chinese, universal, originally foreign but already Chinese contextualized, and foreign origin and still in the process of Chinese contextualization). In such a context, Christianity should deal with the head, Chinese elements and other originally foreign elements.

The so-called cultural identity refers to the essential characteristics which make a specific culture itself. If a culture is based on theistic revelation, for the perspective of humanism, the identity of a culture is the result of its development through various stages in the history of the society. Thus, from the viewpoint of humanism, the model of every cultural development is the interaction between interior and external elements, as well as powers. On the one hand, a certain culture needs to criticize its own tradition prophetically; on the other hand, a certain culture needs to learn from and absorb positive elements from foreign cultures. In the lack of any aspect of the above two sides, a cultural model will not be able to face the challenges so as to fall into the danger to be eliminated. Strictly speaking, humanism cannot result in an absolute identity of any one culture, since every culture is the result of a mixture of various elements from local and foreign cultures through the long history of development in society. Only theistic revelation or theism can result in a claim that a culture is based upon God or the metaphysical background is absolutely correct and non – changeable. However, some nationalist Confucian scholars face a self – contradictory situation between their theory and practice in dealing with the encounter with Christianity. On the one hand, this viewpoint rejects the identity of Christianity as the absolutely correct one, since it emphasizes that according to humanism no cultural identity is absolutely correct. On the other hand, this viewpoint considers Confucian identity as the one, which should not be changed essentially, since if so, there would be no real Confucianism anymore.

In order to explore the relationship between Christian and Confucian cultural identities from the perspective of cultural encounter and contextual theology, Sino – Christian Figurist theology<sup>④</sup> and the issue of building a protestant church in Qufu city<sup>⑤</sup> may be studied as two important cases.

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③ Huang Baoluo 2012; *Daguoze shiye zhong de hanyu xueshu diahua shenxue* (The Sino – Christian Academic Dialogical Theology in the light of the Great Guozue), Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 158 – 177.

④ Cf. Huang Baoluo 2010; "Hanyu suoyin shenxue—Dui Faguo Yesuishi xujiang Limadon zhibou wenming duihua de yanjiu" (Sino – Christian Figurist Theology—A study on the civilization dialogue continued by French Jesuits after Matteo Ricci), in *Journal of Shenzhen University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, No. 1, 2010, 1 – 10.

⑤ The opinion letter, disputations between Paulos Huang (Huang Baoluo) and Han Xing, Sun Tiejie have been referred to above.

**The third challenge and opportunity is the pragmatic function of Christianity.** From a humanistic and especially a pragmatic perspective, Christianity needs to explore what kind of influence it can have in the secular society. Many people care about neither political nor cultural interest, but they do care about the potential continuous influence of Christianity coming from a secular perspective.<sup>⑨</sup> Therefore, through the following metaphors invented by myself, I emphasize three issues that relate to the secular influence of Christianity within contemporary China.

**First, Christianity may help China overcome the negative influence arising from selfish capitalism and from the Leviathan of Bureaucracy.** As far as the development of social economics, capitalist free market economics is like a wild horse without a rope; since it seeks selfish benefit blindly, it can bring certain economic and material development to human society. Free market economics and capitalism are a powerful weapon, which may bring great blessings to human kind and stability to society once it is properly connected with Christianity, as the history in Europe and North America has shown. Max Weber has explored the relationship between the Capitalist spirit and Protestant ethics.<sup>⑩</sup> However, once it is separated from Christianity, capitalism may bring much damage to society and human kind as the history since the Enlightenment Movement has shown; capitalism and free market economics may result in imperialism and colonialism. Christianity can play a role of limiting and controlling capitalism and the selfish free market wild horse to a certain extent so that the stability of society can be attained. But Confucianism and the Chinese traditional value system have difficulty in playing such a role of relating to capitalist wildness.<sup>⑪</sup> In contemporary China, it is important to employ Christianity to balance capitalist free market economics so as to take advantage of its good side and to avoid the negative influence of it. On the one hand, Christianity may help China overcome the blindness of the capitalist wild horse, that is, its potential of harming Chinese economic development. On the other hand, Christianity may help China overcome the negative influence of the Leviathan of Bureaucracy; the negative influence can be harmful towards economic development and can cause social corruption. In secular and pragmatic aspects, it is important to explore and to develop the positive influence of Christianity to China.

**Second, Christianity may help China overcome the negative influence of populist democracy which tries to flatter the will of all.** As far as the social system and principle are concerned, the continuous development basis of European and North American societies is rooted in the non-corruption of government and the limiting capacity of law as related to capitalism and to the Leviathan of Bureaucracy. Christianity does not only emphasize that Christians should be obedient to

<sup>⑨</sup> Huang Baobao 2012; "Jiduzongjiao xinyang duiyu shehui zhixu de yiyi" (The significance of Christianity to Chinese social order), presented in Beijing Forum 2012: The Harmony of Civilizations and Prosperity for All Panel (Session II Faith and Society: Spiritual Reflections of Global Age), November 1-4, 2012. Huang Baobao 2012; "Cong xinhanxue shijiao laikan Jiduzongjiao xinyang duiyu zhongguo shehui zhixu de yiyi" (The significance of Christian faith to Chinese social order from the perspective of New Sinology), presented in Renmin University of China, November 3-5, 2012 in the Third Sinology Conference 2012.

<sup>⑩</sup> Weiho zhu, Chen Ping yi 2007; *Zibenzhuyi jingshen yu xinyao lanli* [Capitalist spirit and Protestant ethics], Xi'an: Shaanxi shifan daxue chubanshe, "Bianzhe xu", 8-9.

<sup>⑪</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-27.

governmental authority but also denies the existence of perfection in any government or any secular authority, thus, within a situation of stable obedience, government is under supervision of God and the democratic supervisory institutions. In the Christian tradition, government has been described by Hobbes as a Leviathan, which can bring blessings but also may harm the common people.<sup>①</sup> Later, through thinkers such as John Lock and Rousseau,<sup>②</sup> law in the democratic system has become a rope to control the wild selfish horse of the capitalist free market, controlling the Leviathan so as not to harm people. In this way the continuous and stable development of Europe and North America has been achieved. However, law can control only people's bodies rather than their souls, thus, law only has a limited positive influence on economic and social order. Why? Since democratic law is separated from Christianity and is related only to humanist rationality, the democracy which originally sought for the General Will becomes populist in nature, seeking only the Will of All; thus, only the majority is important, and truth itself becomes more and more invisible and less important.<sup>③</sup> This is the main reason which today causes the European and American societies to be stable in the material aspect but empty and uncertain in the spiritual aspect. Thus, democracy and law are powerful weapons. Once they are connected with Christianity, the populist negative aspects of the Will of All may be limited and controlled so as to be transformed into a seeking of the General Will in accordance with Truth. Therefore, in the sense of system development, it may offer a platform for peaceful transformation. When democracy is separated from Christianity and from the seeking of the General Will, it may be connected with violence, populism and the simple opinion that the majority is correct. Thus, such a model cannot bring peaceful and continuous transformation to societies, and it is impossible to avoid the damage of dynastic revolutions.<sup>④</sup>

**Third, Christianity may help China return to the universal horizon (Tianxia/All Under Heaven) from a narrow-minded national country by offering transcendent spiritual power.** As far as the spiritual aspect is concerned, the continuous development of a society needs a metaphysical spiritual latitude. Christianity has experienced persecution in the beginning stage of her birth, became the state religion of the Roman Empire, and has been challenged by humanism, especially rationality and science. Gradually she has been limited into the private area of human lives; within contemporary Western countries, she has become like an instant cardio-reliever pill, which is not used everyday but works very well in the crucial moments such as in the event of social

① Huobusi zhu, Li Sifu and Li Yanbi yi 1985; *Liechuan* [The Leviathan], Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan. Zhao Dunhua 2001; *Xifang zhexue jianshi*, Beijing daxue chubanshe 208-209.

② Laoke zhu, Ye Qifang deng yi 1963; *Zhengfulun* (xiaopian), Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 57-58. Beijing daxue shexue xi xifangzhexue jiaoyanshi bian 1982; *Xifang zhexue yuanshu mandu* (Xiqiwon), Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 72. Zhao Dunhua 2001; *Xifang zhexue shi*, Beijing daxue chubanshe, 252, 281-283.

③ Rousseau has distinguished general will from the will of all, cf. Zhao Dunhua 2001; *Xifang zhexue jianshi*, Beijing daxue chubanshe, 282-283.

④ Taking law as example, only when law should be believed in can it be respected and obeyed in practice, otherwise it is difficult to establish law. Cf. Halvode Boerteman zhu, Liang Zhiping yi 1991; *Falu yu zongjiao* (Law and Religion), Sanlian shidian.

chaos caused by a Tsunami or terrorist attacks. Faith in God as such a pill is contrary to narrow – minded humanism and secularism, and has positive significance in limiting the wild horse of capitalism and the bureaucracy of the crazy Leviathan (as a rope and a cage). And we may learn much from this to find a proper solution to the Chinese context. ③ In order to avoid the aggressive danger of a social Darwinist wild horse of humanism, relativism, nihilism and populism in contemporary China at a time when Confucianism is employed to construct the soft power of China, it is necessary to connect it with Christianity in many aspects so that Confucianism may explore the traditional concept of its *Tianxia* (All Under Heaven). This can be done so as to adjust it to the contemporary globalized context, and connect the concept of *Tian* (Heaven) with the universal concept of God in Christianity. ④ Uniting the two concepts may offer very much help to China in facing the globalization challenge and the requirement of continuous development by offering a metaphysical basis, a concrete vision and plan for China’s development.

In summary, Christianity can play many positive roles in China. For example, the Christian metaphysical perspective may be useful in solving the misunderstanding of humanism (especially that of narrow – minded rational natural science) and the problem of cultural identity. ⑤ And such an attempt may help China in gaining the capability to face the challenges posed by post – modern deconstructionism, relativism and nihilism.

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③ Huang Baoluo 2012; “Jiduzongjiao xinyang duiyu shehui shixu de yiyi” (The Significance of Christianity to the Social Order in China), presented in Nov. 1 – 4, 2102 Beijing Forum 2012. Peking University.

④ Sun Xiangchen 2010; “Xixue siye xia ruoxue xiandai zhuanxing yingyou de jige weidu” (Several Latitudes for Confucianist Transformation in the Perspective of Western Studies), in Zhang Zhigang, Yan Jun ed. 2010; *Xinyang yu zeren – – Quanguohua shidai de jingshen fansi* (Faith and Responsibility), Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 270 – 271. Yao Dali 2006 “‘Tianxia xingwang, pisu youze de zai quanshi yu zhongguo jindai minzu guojia yishi de shengcheng”, in *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, 2006, No. 10; Wu Zengding 2005; “Cong guojia chongfan tianxia: Zhongguo gudai tianxiaguan de dangdai yiyi”, in *Wenming de hejue—Xitongguo heping jueqi yihou de shijie*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

⑤ Descartes, Freud and Karl Marx are such examples, who emphasize the wakening of human subjective identity.

中文题目：

## 基督教在当代中国所面临的挑战与机遇

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**摘要:**本文简述了基督教在华传播的四个阶段特点与不同时期的信徒数量发展特点之后, 特别通过笔者独创的“一首两翼四足一尾的飞龙”来描述当代中国的语境特点, 以“缰绳”与“笼子”来描述法律对资本主义自私野马和官僚主义利维坦的约束, 以“救心丸”来描述在世俗化人文主义猖獗的社会里的独特作用, 重点论述了基督教在华生存与发展中在政治神学、文化相遇与世俗影响三个方面所遇到的挑战与机遇。

**关键词:**阶段、数量、一首两翼四足一尾的飞龙、政治神学、文化主体性、世俗影响

