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Prevention Concepts against Sexualised Violence Reflections for the Work of the Church in China with Children and Young People

Gao Jingchuan

Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge SSps

Preliminary note: Up till now no cases of sexualised violence are known from the Catholic Church in Mainland China. The problem is not or is hardly discussed in the Chinese Church on the Mainland and is generally taboo. With his thoughts on prevention concepts against sexualised violence, Gao Jingchuan, a priest of Yongnian Diocese in Hebei Province, is thus largely venturing into new territory. The following article is an excerpt from his Bachelor's thesis in the Social Work degree programme, which he submitted in German language to the Catholic University of Applied Sciences North Rhine-Westphalia, Cologne Department, in July 2021. The original thesis comprised the following chapters: 1. General Understanding of Sexualised Violence; 2. Reaction of and Measures Taken by the German Bishops' Conference; 3. Prevention Concept of the Archdiocese of Cologne; 4. Contexts of Sexualised Violence in Chinese Society and Church; 5. Suggestions for the Development of a Preventive Protection Concept for the Church in China in the face of Sexualised Violence against Children and Young People. In the following, we publish the China-related chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis with new numbering, as well as in a slightly shortened and edited form, together with excerpts from the "Introduction" and the "Concluding Reflections," in which the author calls on the Chinese Church to immediately begin developing a protection concept to protect children and young people in its ambit from sexualised violence. (Editors).

Introduction

Hardly any topic shocks and disturbs the Catholic Church so much as sexual abuse committed by priests and religious against children and young people. In Germany, a wave of such cases which had been going on for decades in the Catholic Church came to light at the beginning of 2010 through the report of Fr. Klaus Mertes, SJ, on the cases of abuse at the renowned Jesuit grammar school Canisius-Kolleg in Berlin (cf. Ruh 2020, p. 31). According to the study "Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests, Deacons and Male Members of Religious Orders in the Domain of the German Bishops' Conference" (MHG-Studie 2018), there were pertinent indications of sexual abuse against minors by 1,670 clerics from 27 (arch)dioceses in Germany in the years 1946 to 2014. The number of children and

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young people affected was 3,677 (cf. MHG-Studie 2018, p. 5). I was deeply shocked by the data of this study. How can something so bad happen in the holy Church, something that contradicts everything the Church teaches?

Whereas after many years of silence and concealment, the topic of “sexual abuse” is now being openly and intensively debated and systematically dealt with in the Church in Germany, it has not yet been taken up at all in the Church in China, let alone dealt with. Is there even sexual abuse or sexualised violence in the Chinese Church? It is certain that there are cases of abuse also in the Church in China, but they are not spoken about, because sexual abuse is a big taboo subject in China, and as a result, awareness of the problem is less pronounced there. But the Chinese proverb “If you don’t want anyone to know about it, don’t do it” (若要人不知, 除非己莫为) moves me, because it means: Everything that has happened or has been done will become public one day. So if one day sad cases of abuse should also be uncovered in the Church in China, it will probably be too late if the Church leadership only reacts to it then and begins to deal with it professionally. In my opinion, it would be better if the Chinese Church started to deal with the phenomenon of sexualised violence now, to work on it and to develop preventive measures. Since I want to work with children and young people as a priest and social worker, the question of how the Church in China can better protect its children and young people in the face of (possible) sexualised violence is very important to me.

In the following, the problem of sexualised violence is dealt with in the context of Chinese culture. Then I will try to outline some basic guidelines and benchmarks for a prevention concept for the Catholic Church in China. In doing so, I will also consider what the Catholic Church in China can learn from the processing and prevention work of sexualised violence in Germany and what suggestions can be derived from there, in order to protect the children and young people entrusted to it in the best possible way, to support those affected and, above all, to help to effectively prevent any sexual abuse.

1. Contexts of Sexualised Violence in Society and Church in China

1.1 Understanding and Data

In the Chinese penal code, sexual abuse of children and young people is called *ertong weixie zui* 儿童猥亵罪. *Weixie zui* can be translated as obscenity, which is to be understood first of all in general terms as behaviour that does not conform to accepted social norms in the sexual realm and therefore causes disgust and shame in the persons concerned. The section specifically regulates all borderline violations by adults in sexual behaviour towards children that serve the purpose of sexual stimulation or the satisfaction of sexual desire. Excluded from these boundary violations is sexual intercourse, which is judged to be rape according to Chinese law (cf. Section 237 of the CL PRC 2020).¹

¹ There is a considerable difference between Chinese laws and regulations and their implementation. Especially when it comes to the issue of sexualised violence, the gap is even wider. Two cases are presented here. Case 1: On October 27, 2018, a man undid the clothes of a 5-year-old girl and kissed her from time to time. Eyewitnesses said “the man put his hand inside the girl’s pants many times.” But according to the Nanchang Railway Public Security

When the abuse scandal involving former pupils of the Canisius-Kolleg became public in 2010 through the report of Fr. Klaus Mertes, SJ, the topic of “sexual abuse of children and young people” also caused a great stir in China in 2013 due to the following event: On May 8, six grade 6 primary school girls from Houlang Primary School (后郎小学) in the city of Wanning 万宁, Hainan Province, were taken to a hotel by the headmaster Chen Zaipeng and a government employee named Feng Xiaosong. They were not found until 11 pm on the second day. When these six girls were found, they all looked dazed. Some of the girls had bruises on their hands and necks. An in-depth examination at the hospital revealed that the hymen of some of the six girls had ruptured and the lower part of the body had various degrees of injuries (cf. *Jinghua shibao* 2013). This event caused great panic in society, especially among the parents concerned. Surprisingly, the authorities’ official statement did not match the hospital’s findings at all. On May 13, the police announced at a press conference that after the identification of Mr. Chen and Mr. Feng, the latter had not had sex with the six underage girls. This conclusion shocked and angered the parents and many feminists (cf. Liu 2013, n.p).

On June 1 of the same year, after the “Case in Hainan” (*Hainan shijian* 海南事件), the Girls’ Protection Foundation (GPF, Nütong baohu 女童保护) was founded on the initiative of about a hundred women journalists. It works to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and organises workshops, campaigns and research to spread and increase children’s awareness of prevention. Since then, there have been more and more publications reporting sexual abuse cases. According to the statistics of the Girls’ Protection Foundation, only 125 cases of child sexual abuse were uncovered throughout China in 2013 and 503 a year later. In 2020, there were 332 cases of sexual assault against children.

Table: Number of cases of sexual abuse of children discovered in the People’s Republic of China in the past eight years

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of Cases	125	503	340	433	378	317	301	332

Source: GPF (Girls’ Protection Foundation) 2021.

According to the latest findings of GPF, the age distribution of the victims is as follows: The majority of the minors involved were in the age group 7 to 12 years (46.91%), followed by minors in the age group 13 to 15 years (37.04%), and then the age group 1 to 6 years. Interestingly, and noteworthy, the proportion of the 16 to 18 age group was lower than that of the 1 to 6 age group. The majority of victims were girls (90.61%) (GPF 2021).

Bureau, the man’s behaviour did not amount to an indecent or illegal act because of the father-daughter relationship (see Liu 2018). Case 2: In February 2019, a physics teacher named Chen at a middle school in Shanghai was accused of molesting a female student (including patting her buttocks, hugging her from behind, stroking her arms, leaning on her shoulders). The notice from the local education office did not call Chen’s behaviour “obscene” because there was no evidence of it. Eventually the matter ended with a punishment of lowering Chen’s employment level and dismissing him from the position of Director of General Affairs (see Zhang 2019).

Schools or school grounds and school dormitories² took first place among the crime scenes with 25.25%. 21.93% of the incidences took place in the private dwellings of the perpetrators. According to the geographical breakdown of the cases of abuse, 61.89% occurred in the cities, 28.30% in the county towns and 9.81% in the rural areas. In terms of regional distribution, urban areas have a higher rate than rural areas. This does not mean that children in urban areas are sexually assaulted more often than those in rural areas, but rather that due to the lack of awareness, people's perceptions, the [low] level of perfection of the judiciary and the more backward development of the media, cases of sexual assault against children in rural areas are less noticed, there are hardly any court cases and the media are less likely to expose them (cf. GPF 2021).

GPF findings showed that 74.04% of the 332 child abuse cases in 2020 were committed by people who were known to the children. Of these, 30.74% were teachers, 20.78% relatives (including father or stepfather), 18.18% internet friendships, 16.02% neighbours and 14.29% other contacts from the surrounding environment. Due to the special significance of relationship, there is a misunderstanding among many Chinese that relatives, acquaintances and people to whom the children are entrusted cannot do anything to the children. Both at school and in the family, children are always warned about strangers: they should not talk to them or make contact with them as this could be dangerous; however, the children are hardly ever warned of acquaintances. At this point, prevention work must take into account that people who are trusted have favourable access, especially in matters of sexualised violence.

According to GPF statistics, there were 332 child sexual abuse cases in China in 2020. Yet 332 cases are a negligibly small number in a total population of more than 1.4 billion with around 200 million children and adolescents. However, the experts explicitly stressed that the published data was only “a single hair from nine oxen” (*jiu niu yi mao* 九牛一毛). I.e. the data reflect only the tip of the iceberg of actual cases. Experts agree unanimously that many factors make it difficult to publicly report cases of child sexual abuse in China. In the following, an attempt is made to describe the factors which, in the Chinese context, promote sexualised violence against children and adolescents or can lead to the silence of those impacted.

1.2 The Taboo System

In China there are numerous taboo areas, as e.g. name taboos, behavioural taboos, critique taboos, etc.³ The topic of sexuality has also been considered a taboo subject in China for many centuries. Interestingly the philosopher and thinker Gaozi 告子 who lived in

2 In China, almost half the primary schools and more than half of the middle schools and upper middle schools are boarding schools. Parents like to send children to boarding school because they think that children in boarding school have more time to study.

3 For example, one must not mention or use the names of members of the older generations. There must be no criticism of parents and authority figures. One must also avoid pronouncing and using the word *si*. *Si* can mean both “four” (*si* 四) and “die” or “death” (*si* 死). If you say it, it is associated with a bad omen, a misfortune could happen. In many buildings there is no fourth floor. There may be no Audi A4 in China. Showing affection in public is forbidden. Girls can walk hand in hand with each other, but not girls with boys. More on the topic of taboo in China by Krajewski 2015.

the 4th century BC already stated: “Shi se xing ye” 食色性也 (*Mengzi* 孟子 6A.4). Almost every Chinese person knows that saying. Translated it means: “Food and sex are inherent in human nature.” Gaozi held the view that sexuality is neutral in itself. Although sexuality belongs to the essence of human beings and is a basic human need and a central component of human identity, it is still taboo in Chinese society to this day. This is due to the Confucian tradition and its ethics, which has dominated and still dominates Chinese culture. Confucianism advocates a repressive attitude towards sexuality. To speak about sex publicly is not compatible with the Confucian *li* 禮,⁴ that is, it does not correspond to correct behaviour (cf. Zhou 2017, p. 35). The topic of sexuality was officially taboo until the 1990s. Since then, things have changed, but the persistence of traditional ideas is still noticeable. It shows significantly in the fact that broaching the subject of sexuality is seen as obscene, perverse and dirty and is avoided as embarrassing.

The Chinese attach great importance to offspring, as expressed by the Chinese proverb “duo zi duo fu” 多子多福: “Many children, many blessings.” In spite of that they do not like to speak about sexuality. Sexuality has been reduced to its reproductive function within the family and is not part of the public sphere. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), non-procreative sexual relations were attributed to right-wing extremist behaviour (Hartwich 2014, n.p.). Moreover, homosexuality is still classified as harmful and perverse today, as something that officially does not exist (cf. Krajewski 2020, n.p.). It clearly shows how strongly traditional ideas of sexuality are still rooted in society.

The Chinese traditional idea of sexuality manifests itself in the ignoring and neglecting of sexual clarification and sex education both in the family and in society. “Nobody in China has heard of the bees and the flowers,” wrote Inna Hartwich in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Hartwich 2014, n.p.). Thus it happens that new born children, the result of an “accidental,” unwanted pregnancy, are found on the street or the rubbish tip. Very often Chinese parents are embarrassed to talk to their children about sex or contraception. “My mother drilled into me not to get pregnant. But how do you get pregnant anyway?,” asked the 16-year-old girl Zhang Yaoyang (Hartwich 2014, n.p.). Chinese parents are of the opinion that sex clarification and education destroy childish innocence and purity and could lead children astray. Children’s knowledge of sexual issues only creates problems. The less children know about it, the better they can be protected from it. On sex education at school⁵ 15-year-old Song Huo said: “The teachers become red-faced, turn the pages over and continue with some plants or other” (Hartwich 2014, n.p.).

4 *Li* 禮 can be roughly translated as “rite” or “rules of propriety.” *Li* is a fundamental principle of Confucian thought that encompasses the totality of all forms of conduct and behaviour that constitute a good person and ensure harmonious social order. Acting according to the rite (*li*) and benevolence or humaneness (*ren* 仁) are central characteristics of the “noble” (*junzi* 君子) and “wise” (*zhizhe* 智者), for Confucius the epitome of an exemplary human being.

5 The author’s own experience: At high school we had a teacher for biology lessons. She did not show up on time for the lesson which was about sex education according to the lesson plan. About ten minutes after the lesson was supposed to start, a substitute teacher came and said: I am supposed to teach you this chapter because your teacher is so embarrassed that she does not dare to come. He then read the sex education content very quickly and after about twenty minutes he said that we students should read the rest of the content ourselves and disappeared.

1.3 The Authority System

The concept of harmony (*hexie* 和谐) is important and invaluable for both Daoism and Confucianism. Harmony can be understood as conformity, consonance and unity of the whole cosmos with society. Harmony of world (nature) and people is one of the key concerns of Daoism (cf. Malek 2005, p. 84). Harmony is the ideal of the social order (*shehui zhixu* 社会秩序). For the purpose of maintaining and stabilising the social order, especially according to the Confucian view, a clear hierarchy is needed. This is mainly expressed in the five Confucian elementary human relationships (*wulun* 五倫), those between father and children, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, friend and friend. Except for the fifth relationship, that of friend to friend, the other four relationships are between authority persons and subordinates.

The authority figure often had absolute power at his disposal. For example, in the first relationship, children are required to show filial piety (*xiao* 孝) towards their parents. The meaning and requirement of filial piety demands that children must have reverential respect towards their parents, absolute obedience and unconditional compliance with their parents' wishes (cf. Zhang 2017, pp. 55f.). This point is graphically expressed in the book *Di zi gui* 弟子規 by Li Yuxiu 李毓秀 (1647–1729): “When parents call, children should respond immediately; when parents command, children should follow immediately; when parents teach, children should listen respectfully; when parents reproach, children should accept it” (*Di zi gui* 2015).⁶ The parents, especially the father, are quasi owners and rulers of their own children and have absolute authority over them. The ruler also has that kind of authority over his subjects.

The authority described above is based neither on individual characteristics nor on the charisma of the person. According to Max Weber, it is therefore not charismatic authority, but institutional or positional authority, which is based solely on an office or position (cf. Gebhardt 2019, n.p.). In the meantime, the Chinese realm has long since overcome many constricting traditions, but the spirit and the idea of obeying this positional authority has deep roots in society. A typical example is the Chinese attitude towards the social credit system (*shehui xinyong tixi* 社会信用体系).⁷ While there has been much criticism of this social credit system, especially in the USA and Europe, hardly anyone in Mainland China expresses any criticism of it, perhaps for specific reasons; many Chinese even take a positive attitude towards these measures, believing that Chinese morals have improved as a result of social control. Such an attitude towards authority means that dissenting opinions

6 In the original: “父母呼，應勿緩；父母命，行勿懶；父母教，須敬聽；父母責，須順承。”

7 The so-called social credit system introduced in 2014 with the aim of building a “harmonious society” is a points system. Every Chinese person is to receive a points account (cf. SCPRC 2014, n.p.). Citizens' behaviour such as traffic offences, credit history, criminal record, shopping habits and social behaviour etc. is controlled by a monitoring system. Depending on whether it is a good deed, e.g. helping an elderly person, or an undesirable behaviour, e.g. littering on the street, everything is credited to or deducted from a points account. People who have more points in their social credit score are given preferential treatment in many areas of life. On the other hand, people with few points lose their standing until they end up on a blacklist and are restricted or punished in many areas, e.g. they are no longer allowed to take the express train or are deprived of their management position with an entrepreneur. Even those who express criticism of the government receive minus points in the social credit system and must expect consequences (cf. Dorloff 2018, n.p.).

are hardly expressed, if at all, which of course suffocates any criticism and opposition in the long run.

1.4 Collective Consciousness and Its Systematic Shaping

The idea of the primacy of the community over the individual has a long history among the Chinese people. Both the tradition of thinking about the unity of the whole cosmos according to Daoism and, above all, the idea of harmony shaped by Confucianism promote collectivism. Unity, concord, conformity and harmony of society are seen as the top priority. Loss of unity and harmony leads to chaos (*luan* 亂). That, in Chinese thought, is the worst thing imaginable. While the individual, as in Europe, is strongly emphasised, it does not have this distinctive position in China, where the individual is seen as a part of the whole (cf. Griessler 2007, pp. 48f.). Putting the interests of the individual aside and expecting him or her to be selfless and to do without, has always been a value orientation that was and still is respected within Chinese culture.

The greatest manifestation of collectivism occurred in the People's Republic of China during the time of the people's communes (*renmin gongshe* 人民公社, 1958–1984). Collective thinking and acting were embodied in the production team, which was made up of 20 to 100 families depending on the situation, noticeable above all in the large canteen (*da shitang* 大食堂, 1958–1961). Each production team had a common canteen, all the members and their families ate together. During the time of the people's communes everyone had to relinquish their possessions. There was no longer any private property. There was hardly any reading material except for the biographies of persons who had fully committed themselves to the collective. They were praised as martyrs and role models of socialist construction (cf. Reese 1977, p. 188). Especially in the sixties and seventies, almost all components of traditional culture that did not serve collectivism were demonised and attacked as feudal and oppressive. At that time, nothing other could be heard than the propaganda of collectivism (cf. Hamilton *et al.* 2020, p. 275).

The topic of the collective is already an important topic in the kindergarten. E.g. the advantages of the collective are especially underlined and promoted as a contribution to the collective wellbeing. The author can still remember that at school the booklet *We Love the Collective* (*Women rè'ài jiti* 我们热爱集体) was read aloud. The Chinese people place such high value on the collective that no one dares to do anything different. A proverb known to all Chinese literally translated states: "The gun is always aimed first at the bird that sticks its head up" (*qiang da chutou niao* 枪打出头鸟). This means that the non-conformist is always the first to be attacked.

Nowadays in modernised China "individual needs" and "self-actualization" – i.e. the top of Maslow's pyramid⁸ – are hotly discussed among well-to-do Chinese. Although collective thought and action are influenced and changed by this development they still live on. Collectivism and collectivity are found embodied in contemporary China in the following areas for example: 1) In the existence of the Department of United Front Work of

8 The hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) is a socio-psychological model that categorises human needs and motivations into five levels and ranks them hierarchically. Editors' note.

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. 2) In the way Chinese people speak in everyday life: in the Chinese language, the words “we” or “our” are very often used. 3) In living habits. In the countryside, for instance, after marriage the son usually lives together with his wife and parents in one house, because a large family is roughly regarded as a small collective system. A very current example of collective action are the measures taken against the Corona virus. If a few Corona cases appear in a town, the whole town is immediately closed off without hesitation and without any ifs or buts. It even happens sporadically that the doors of the infected persons’ houses are barricaded so that no one can come out and endanger the community. Hardly anyone dares to speak out against these extremely strict coercive measures.

1.5 System of “Saving Face”

Whether missionaries, diplomats, journalists, intellectuals or employees, etc., anyone who wants to come to China must know about the Chinese culture of “face,” otherwise he or she would find it difficult to cope and soon have to deal with big problems. The “face culture” in China extends into all areas of daily life or social relations. What is it really? It is an extremely complex question for the Chinese that is not easy to explain. “Face,” in Chinese it is called *mianzi* 面子, is the appreciation or prestige that a person enjoys in society or in a particular social circle (cf. Zheng 2010, n.p.). The resources that determine the *mianzi* are things like appearance, clothing, talent, temperament, wealth, social status, old age, power, expertise, wisdom, as well as network, etc. All resources that relate to *mianzi* do not necessarily have to be one’s own, but can also be found in people who have a close relationship to oneself. For example, the face of one’s parents can gain considerable prestige and importance through the children’s excellent performance at school or their career, and conversely, the face of one’s children can gain considerable prestige and importance through the parents’ political power or their fancy automobile. Then you hear *you mianzi* 有面子 (he/she has face). However, face does not necessarily remain unchangeable; it can quickly be lost through one’s own inappropriate behaviour or misconduct. Then you hear *diu mianzi* 丢面子 (he/she has lost face), where the expression *diu ren* 丢人 (to suffer a loss of person) is also often used, which is tantamount to a loss of human dignity and is one of the worst things a Chinese can experience. When you are alone, face is not an issue. Face culture is only important when others are present, and especially in public, depending on how large the crowd is and how high the position of those present and how significant the circumstances of the actual situation are. That determines whether there is a gain or loss of *mianzi*. From that perspective, the subject of face is an interaction of social relations and a psychological phenomenon. A definition by the Chinese social psychologist Zhai Xuewei 翟学伟 reads as follows: “The face is the psychological and behavioural expression that an individual shows after having adapted the impression [he creates outwardly] to conform to an image presumed by a certain social circle to correspond to the identity [of the circle]” (Zhai 2017, n.p.).

Each social system, such as, e.g. the State, the people, the family, has its corresponding face. Each person, regardless of the social milieu he comes from, has and needs his face. People with certain social status need a face, or at least have to behave in such a way that

corresponds to their status, to demonstrate their social status. Those who are wealthy, for example, must dress smartly, otherwise they lose face. People without social status have to put on an appropriate show to gain face, so that they at least give people the impression: “I have social status” or “I matter,” however questionable this may be because of the dishonesty. The Chinese speak about it themselves and call it a “puffed up face.”

If in the European world equality and freedom are key concepts in interpersonal relations, in China they are face and human feelings (cf. Jay 2021, n.p.). The highest principle in Chinese social behaviour is to endeavour not to lose one’s own face and not to offend the face of others. Conveying information plays a secondary role in communication in China. The main goal of communication is the cultivation of human relations, and the cultivation of relations is nothing other than the preservation of one’s own face, as well as the preservation of the face of others (cf. Griessler 2007, pp. 61f.). That is the reality of daily life in China. There are therefore also numerous communicative words, terms and elements of language associated with face: Such as “giving face” (respecting someone); “tearing face” (breaking off the relationship); “punching in the face” (being insulted); “not wanting to have a face” (showing shamelessness), etc.

It is worthwhile briefly to go into the issue, the influence of facial culture, in a little more detail. It can be illustrated by a concrete case. The year 2017 saw the publication of the novel *Fang Siqi’s First Love Paradise* (*Fang Siqi de chulian leyuan* 房思琪的初恋乐园) by the Taiwanese authoress Lin Yihan 林奕含 (1991–2017). The main plot of the novel is simple and can be summarised in one sentence: “This is the story of a teacher who had exploited his office to seduce, rape and abuse his students for years,” as the author herself put it (Lin 2017, n.p.). When the protagonist Fang Siqi is thirteen years old, she is sexually abused several times by her teacher, in whom she has confided and holds in high esteem. In the novel, Lin Yihan obviously processes her own experiences, as her parents explained after her death in an open letter. After the degrading event, Lin kept everything quiet. Because of the cognitive gap in her understanding of the situation, she was probably unable to resist or question what was happening at the time. The adult Lin Yihan, however, obviously could no longer accept and endure her psychological shadow. The silence over her teacher’s infamy against her proved inconsistent with her “self-face;” so she decided to lose her “face,” write the novel and also speak about it publicly (cf. Guo 2020, n.p.). The post-traumatic disorder became so burdensome that she could no longer cope. On April 24, 2017, shortly after the publication of her debut novel *Fang Siqi’s First Love Paradise*, she took her own life at the age of 26.

1.6 Fear of Shame and Complicity

In addition to all the above-mentioned specifically Chinese social and cultural circumstances that might favour the concealment of sexualised violence against minors, there are a number of other factors that are related to this issue of silence. In dealing with sexual abuse, above all the shame that a victim can bring upon a family plays a major role. In 2014 a film entitled “If the tree knew it” (*Ruguo shu zhidao* 如果树知道) was made by the Girls’ Protection Foundation. Xiao Lian, a 12-year-old girl who is one of the children

left behind,⁹ lives with her grandmother. Xiao Lian is sexually abused multiple times by a neighbour. When her grandmother finds out, she phones the mother of Xiao Lian and tells her about it. In the telephone conversation, the mother implores the grandmother not to tell anyone about this disgraceful act, in order to spare the family the embarrassment that would make them unable to raise their heads in front of the neighbours and prevent Xiao Lian from having a future (cf. Ma 2014, n.p.). Victims of sexual abuse are often called “broken shoes” (*poxie* 破鞋) or “bad goods” (*lanhuo* 烂货). So Xiao Lian cannot tell anyone about her fate except a tree. Only the tree knows about Xiao Lian’s trauma. When the teacher Guan Shan, who is also a social worker, finds out everything through Xiao Lian’s conspicuous behaviour, she wants to talk to Xiao Lian’s grandmother and help Xiao Lian. But she is thrown out of the house by the grandmother because she is afraid that the other inhabitants of the village might find out about what her granddaughter has gone through. Meanwhile the neighbour continues his shameful behaviour. Finally Xiao Lin’s grandmother cannot take it any longer. After a lengthy inner struggle and a complex process of re-thinking, the grandmother, supported by the teacher, reports the affair to the police. This film held up a mirror to society as a whole in the reaction of the families concerned regarding their behaviour towards cases of sexual abuse of children and young people. An incident of sexual violence is classified as a family disgrace (*jiachou* 家丑) and is not allowed to become public.

In addition, the Chinese are concerned about good personal relationships, such as with family, relatives and friends. When something bad happens within the closest circle of relationships, people tend to think more about maintaining peace and the relationship than about hurting the person concerned. It is also not an isolated case that when sexualised violence against minors occurs, people tend to think that it is just the fate of the child or that the child is even partly to blame. Often one can hear the saying: “One hand cannot make a sound” (*yi ge bazhang pai bu xiang* 一个巴掌拍不响), i.e. it always takes two. The idea of fate and complicity leads to evil being tolerated and those affected losing the courage to fight for their rights (cf. Wu 2020, pp. 59f.) The fatal thing is that victims of sexualised violence often suffer second, third or even more violations in the Chinese context. Here, thorough consideration of what is most important is needed: the good reputation of the family, the maintenance of relationships or the protection of the children.

1.7 The Image of the Priest in China

The study of the German Bishops’ Conference (MHG-Studie 2018) sees clericalism as a cultural and structural cause of sexualised violence within the Church environment. The privileged position of the clergy and its effects also exist in the Catholic Church in China. The mentality of Chinese Catholics is still shaped by the time before Vatican II (1962–1965). On account of the sacrament of ordination the clergy, that is bishops and

9 The so-called left-behind children are children who live apart from their parents. Usually, the children live in their home in rural areas with grandparents or with relatives because one or both parents work and live in cities to earn a living. But these parents cannot take their children to the city because they cannot afford the high cost of living in the city. The phenomenon of left-behind children has become a serious social phenomenon in China in recent years. In 2018, 6.97 million children belonged to this group (cf. *Yangguang wang* 2021).

priests, enjoy authority, respect, trust and great prestige. They have great “face” (cf. 1.5 of this text). The image of the priest among most lay people in China is similar to that of the disciples who, in order to follow Jesus, left their family and possessions, and not least to that of a good shepherd who selflessly cares for the flock, as he is described by Jesus in John’s Gospel (Jn 10:1-18).

Special righteousness and moral authority are ascribed to the clergy, which derives its orientation from the proclamation of the Gospel. They administer sacraments and assist the faithful in situations of personal crisis with consolation, hope and support. The laity constantly express obedience and appreciation towards the clergy. Most Catholics consider the priest sacrosanct in every respect. They consider correct whatever the priest thinks, says or does. Even if he has said something wrong or behaved inappropriately, they do not have the courage to criticise him. It is regarded as a sin to say anything bad about a cleric or even accuse him of moral wrongdoing. The faithful hold back so as to preserve the image of the priest and the reputation of the Church intact. This restraint, which is perceived as respect and esteem for the cleric, could easily give rise to the temptation for the cleric to use it as a power for abuse and sexualised violence.

1.8 The Catholic Church Community in China

According to the data of the Holy Spirit Study Centre (HSSC) of the Diocese of Hong Kong, the number of Catholics in Mainland China is around 10 million,¹⁰ spread across 147 dioceses¹¹ (cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2021, p. 34). That makes the Catholics a small minority in a land with a population of more than 1.4 billion. The ministry activities of the Church in China that deal with children and young people, which are the subject of this study, are easy to describe as there are not as many of them as in Germany. It is not permitted to establish a Christian school, let alone a university. Church kindergartens are tolerated by the authorities in specific dioceses but they are only a few. There are dozens of Church social institutions such as orphanages¹² or homes for the handicapped, but they are often treated restrictively by the State instead of being supported, because the State government (CCP) does not like the Church to appear as provider of social institutions.

Due to the difficult political situation the Chinese Church has hardly any inter-diocesan pastoral activities for children or the youth. Thus pastoral ministry is mainly restricted to one’s own diocese or parish. Since religious education is out of the question in school, parishes pay a lot of attention to catechism courses for children and young people in the

10 According to the 2018 White Paper on Freedom of Religious Belief of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, the number of Catholics is only 6 million; according to the 2014 *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, there are 12 million (cf. Charbonnier 2013, p. 24). Exact numbers of Catholics in China cannot be known because not all members of the so-called unofficial Church (underground Church) can be counted. According to other estimates, the number of Catholics in China is between 12 and 14 million.

11 The HSSC states that according to the Catholic Church hierarchy, the Church in Mainland China has 147 dioceses (116 dioceses and 31 other administrative areas), and according to the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association 95 dioceses (cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2021, p. 34).

12 However, more and more Church-run orphanages in China have recently been closed by the authorities; cf. the “News Update on Religion and Church in China” in *RCTC* 2021, No. 3, p. 12. Editors’ note.

parish in order to pass on the faith.¹³ The catechism courses take place in some parishes on Sundays, but mostly during the summer and winter vacation. Here, children and young people are taught and looked after by religious sisters or seminarians. It should be noted that such events are almost always organised with all-day supervision and overnight stays. However, the structural conditions for this are generally quite tight in the parishes. In addition, there are also liturgical programmes, youth groups, leisure activities and opportunities for pilgrimages in certain parishes (cf. Lepeu 2020, pp. 113f.).

In summary, it can be said: In the Catholic Church of China there are admittedly not as many activities in the field of children's and youth work as is the case in the Church of Germany, because there hardly any organisations, facilities and educational programmes are allowed to exist for the purpose. But if we consider the ill-defined structures of the Church congregations and the narrow spaces in which activities for children and young people can take place in the Church of China, and if we consider the crime scenes and circumstances for possible acts of abuse identified in studies for Germany,¹⁴ the risk factors in the field of work with children and young people are nevertheless enormously high. Note should be taken of this point.

2. Ideas for the Development of a Prevention Protection Concept for the Church in China in the face of Sexualised Violence against Children and Young People

2.1 The Chinese Pavilion as a Template of a Protection Concept

A pavilion (*tingzi* 亭子) is a traditional Chinese building, set up mainly in gardens, Buddhist temples, in public parks or by the roadside. The role of a pavilion is, on the one hand, to decorate the garden space; on the other hand, it is there to provide people with the opportunity to rest or to shelter from heat, wind or rain. Inspired by the model of the house in the protection concept of the German Bishops' Conference,¹⁵ this paper uses the image of the pavilion for a model of a Chinese concept of prevention protection against sexualised violence against children and young people for the Catholic Church in China. The individual elements of the model are explained in detail below.

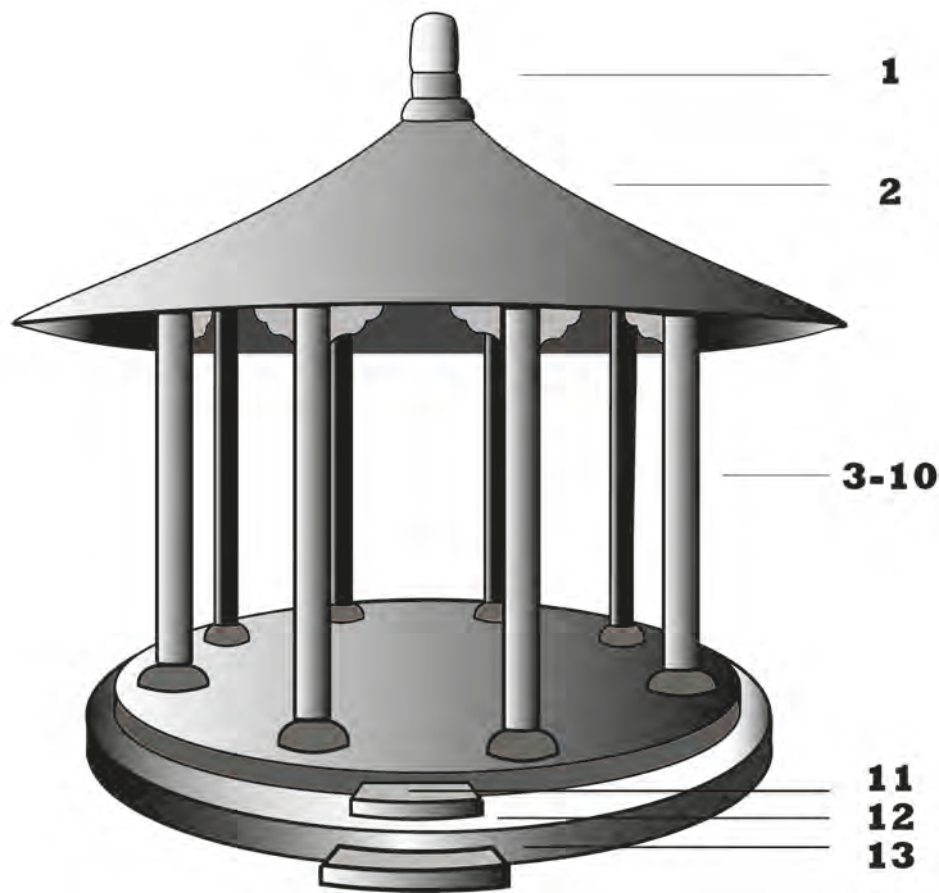
2.2 The Apex of the Pavilion: Child Protection

Child protection forms the apex of the pavilion. This is to show that protection of children has to have highest priority. That children are the future of the Church and society needs no further explanation. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, in Chinese tradi-

13 On the increasing state restrictions on the Church's work with children and youth, cf. the article of Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, "Einschränkungen der Religionsausübung Minderjähriger durch den Staat – Rechtliches und Praktisches," in *China heute* 2021, No. 4, pp. 207-210. Editors' note.

14 The author provides more details on this in point 1.2.1 of his thesis, which is not published here. Editors' note.

15 An illustration of this model can be found, for example, in DBK 2019, p. 54. The author discusses it in chapter 2 of his thesis, which is not printed here. Editors' note.



The Chinese pavilion as a template of a protection concept

- 1 Apex: Child protection
- 2 Roof: Culture of Harmony
- 3-10 Supporting columns:
 - 3 Strengthen the awareness of child protection
 - 4 De-tabooing and creation of an appropriate climate
 - 5 Awareness raising, training and education
 - 6 Analysis of the potential risk factors
 - 7 Development of a code of conduct
 - 8 Collaboration between competent bodies
 - 9 Counselling and complaint channels
 - 10 Intervention Plan
- 11 Steps: Participation
- 12 Foundation: Justice as a bulwark against injustice
- 13 Foundation: Loving appreciation of the human being

Figure: Idea of Gao Jingchuan; graphic realisation Martin Welling.

tion children owe their parents strict obedience. This traditional mould is still perceptible today. It must not be forgotten that its purpose is to give the children a better future. That is exactly why Chinese parents give so much, in fact everything, for their children. However, if one wants to ensure a good future for the children and thus the happiness of the family, children must first and foremost not be wounded in body and soul, because some injuries, such as those caused by sexualised violence, can severely affect children throughout their lives. Comprehensive child protection is a common goal of State and Church.

Child protection is a mission of the Church founded by Jesus Christ. It is therefore essential to the Church and should never be forgotten or overlooked by it. That children have a special value in the eyes of Jesus is shown by one of the most beautiful stories in the gospels, the account of the blessing of the children (Luke 18:15-17; cf. also Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16). It states that it is the authentic will of Jesus to bless and protect children. On no account are they to be harmed.

2.3 The Pavilion Roof: The Culture of Harmony

The roof of the pavilion refers in Chinese imagination to “harmony” as a defining characteristic of social life. According to traditional Chinese understanding of the world, all the elements of the entire cosmos are in a harmonious, balanced process. Heaven,¹⁶ earth and man are seen as a trinity, whereby correct human behaviour leads to harmony in cosmos and society. Harmony between world (nature) and man is, as already stated above, a central tenet of Daoism (cf. Malek 2005, p. 84). Confucianism, for its part, referred to such harmony between man and heaven as the “great unity” (*datong* 大同). In the view of Confucianism, the achievement of ideal-typical harmony between heaven and man depends on whether people behave towards each other in a way encouraged by the influence of the virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁) – a term that combines aspects such as benevolence, love, kindheartedness, kindness, altruism, magnanimity, charity and humanitarianism. Harmony of interpersonal relationships is the true meaning of life (cf. Huang 2008, p. 90). Following this traditional concept, Hu Jintao, President of the People’s Republic of China from 2003 to 2013, developed the idea of a “harmonious socialist society” (*shehuizhuyi hexie shehui* 社会主义和谐社会), with the aim of building up a relatively fair and just society.¹⁷

In the field of Christian thinking, the thought of harmony is anchored in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The scene of the “garden of Eden,” as described in the book of Genesis, indicates the original, perfect harmony between God and man, between one person and another, as well as between humankind and the whole of creation (cf. Gen 2:4-25). The ideal of a “harmonious society” of the messianic end times is then also developed by the prophet Isaiah: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. [...] They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD [...]” (Is 11:6-9).

Also, the deep meaning of the Ten Commandments (Decalogue) of the Christian-Jewish tradition is to make justice and love effective in the relationship with God and the people among each other. They form the basis of harmony, as it were, and serve to build a harmonious society (cf. Lü Dezhi 2016 and Liu Yuanlong 2010). Harmony among human

16 *Tian* 天 (Heaven) is one of the oldest Chinese terms for the supreme deity and a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophy and religion. One is supposed to follow the “will of heaven” (*tianzhi* 天志, Mohist tradition) or the “way of heaven” (*tiandao* 天道, Confucianism). Until 1911, the worship of heaven was the Confucian orthodox state religion in China.

17 Regardless of the question of the practical implementation of this ideal, what is important in our context is that in the ideology of the State “harmony” is present as a theoretical statement.

persons is therefore obviously a message of Jesus and a mission of the Church. Jesus says: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). “Peace,” however, ultimately means a harmonious atmosphere among men, so that one could also say: Blessed are those who work for a society in which people live together in such a way that harmony reigns. In the farewell discourse passed on by the Evangelist John, Jesus prays for his discipleship before his death on the cross: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21). Jesus’ legacy indicates that his heart’s desire is to bring people together in unity. Jesus’ prayer for oneness is consistent with the Confucian idea of “great unity” (*datong*).

Where the Catholic Church in China is committed to the goal of building a culture of harmony, it will, in the service of the gospel and anchored in the Chinese tradition, make every effort to contribute to the happiness, well-being, protection, equality and security of all people. This is especially true when it raises and strengthens the awareness that all forms of violence, especially sexual violence against children and young people, are contrary to the goal of building harmony. The Church’s commitment would become a strong protective shield for children and young people against any form of sexual abuse. Part of a culture of harmony is to realise all elements of preventive protective measures.

The ceiling of the pavilion (culture of harmony) is circular. In Chinese philosophical thinking, a round shape¹⁸ symbolises completeness, integrity. Finally, the top of the pavilion, its crown, rests on this completion: the protection of children.

2.4 The Supporting Columns of the Pavilion

2.4.1 Strengthening the Awareness of Child Protection

In first place the Chinese Catholic Church ought to arouse and strengthen awareness to pay focussed attention to the protection of children. Children and young persons are among the weakest in society and need adequate protection and security while growing up. The Church which sees itself essentially as a “communion,” i.e. a community, must always keep in mind how brutal and destructive the effect of sexualised violence can be on the lives of children (cf. Ackermann 2013, p. 184). Paul, who describes the Church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), states clearly and explicitly: “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:26). This clearly means that the whole Church suffers when one of its members, and if it be a child or a young person, is violated in his or her dignity.

The fact that the Church has many times put its own prestige and the reputation of the clergy above the well-being of minors shows a loss of responsibility that has made sexualised violence within the Church possible in the first place. In his closing address at the Child Protection summit on February 24, 2019 in the Vatican, Pope Francis said: “A change of mentality is therefore needed to combat the defensiveness that protects the

18 As far as shapes are concerned, the Chinese have a preference for round shapes. The shape of the round symbolises perfection and flexibility in communication, which can be understood as harmony. One can often hear in China: “As a person, you have to be square and round” (做人要有方有圓). Square and roundness symbolise probity and elasticity respectively.

institution, thus promoting a sincere and determined search for the good of the community.” (Franziskus 2019, n.p.). Strengthening the sense of responsibility is indispensable, because where there is a power imbalance and the sense of responsibility has dwindled, the danger is immense that abuse of power will occur, which can also lead to sexualised violence (cf. Perner 2010, p. 4).

2.4.2 De-tabooing and Creation of an Appropriate Climate

In view of the taboo in the areas of sex education, sexuality and sexualised violence against children and young people in the Chinese context of everyday life, for the purpose of child protection the Church in China should keep to the maxim: “But it shall not be so among you” (cf. Mk 10:43a). Of course, it is not easy to de-taboo a taboo subject in an established social and cultural context. The topic of sexual abuse towards minors in Germany was also very taboo until the disclosure of the abuse cases in 2010. It is certainly a significant challenge for the Church of China to talk about the issue of sexuality and sexualised violence against minors. But the Church should be prepared to take the lead in this regard. The gospel of Matthew states: “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14a). The question is whether preservation of a taboo is more important for the Church than the best possible protection of children and young people.

As comprehensively explained in section 1.2 of this article, it is not done in China to speak publicly on the topic of sexuality. Apart from this conditioning, the Church of China is also influenced by a (pre-conciliar) tradition of ecclesiastical sexual teaching in which sexuality is almost always seen in negative terms. Precisely for this reason, the Church should be courageous and seek to connect with today’s Church teaching on sexuality, so as to create a climate of mentality and conversation in which the topic of sexuality can also be taken up, because it is a matter of the well-being of children and young people. The Church should thus provide a platform where children and young people can learn to assess their bodies correctly and positively and to accept and value sexuality, which is part of the basic existence of human beings, as a precious gift from God. Only in this way can a corresponding ability to speak develop. If children and young people are in danger of sexualised violence, they can then also express themselves in appropriate language about their unpleasant feelings and the violations.

What is tabooed has no language; what cannot be put into language cannot be processed. So an atmosphere in which sexuality is taboo is virtually a breeding ground for sexualised violence (cf. Geissler 2011, p. 111). The step from taboo to the removal of taboos is an urgent task of the Church in China when it comes to prevention.

2.4.3 Awareness Raising, Training and Education

Since there is a lack of sex education in China, the Church can play an important role by giving children and young people the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge, e.g. of love, friendship, sexuality, conception regulation and the values connected with them. By and large the goal is: “Children should grow up in an environment that provides safety and security. They should get to know an uncomplicated, positive, non-prudish way

of dealing with the body and sexuality, so that they can use these experiences as a treasure in their life” (Leimgruber 2020, p. 326).

However, all those who have contact with minors in the parishes must realise how important preventive measures are in the area of sexualised violence against girls and boys. It is essential that they have sufficient basic understanding of what sexualised violence is, how it can arise, where their own professional responsibility lies and where personal boundaries lie. In addition, they must have the corresponding competence, for example, the ability to act accordingly (know-how) in cases of suspicion and incidents. Last but not least, the ability to network and cooperate is also necessary. However, it is also important that all persons with contact to minors are aware of the locally available intervention measures (cf. UBSKM n.y., n.p.). In order to impart this knowledge and the corresponding competence, it is indispensable to develop and carry out appropriate training.

2.4.4 Analysis of the Potential Risk Factors

The analysis of potential risks factors involves examining the structures, premises, concepts, working climate, etc. in an institution with regard to possible risk factors for sexualised violence (cf. Pontius 2021, n.p.). This places high demands on the Church leaders in China. They must make every effort, within the framework of the respective situation of the groups, associations, organisations as well as the parishes, to explore and uncover the potential and dangerous factors that could enable or favour sexualised violence. The following factors could prove problematic: Lack of awareness of child protection and respect for children’s rights, no clear proximity-distance regulation, lack of reflection on power relations, no climate for exchange and discussion, no contact persons, no constructive error culture, etc.

It must also be mentioned that there is generally no system for complaints for children and young people in the parishes. The current situation is that if a suspicion or incident of sexualised violence were to occur, other clergy might be contacts; however, it would be important that these contacts have a mandate from the diocese. All of the above factors could well carry risks of sexualised violence and should not be ignored, especially as they are also relevant to a code of conduct.

2.4.5 Development of a Code of Conduct

The code of conduct gives instruction on how one should behave and what is absolutely to be avoided (cf. Pontius 2021, n.p.), for example in dealing with language, gifts, proximity-distance relations, physical contact, privacy, photographs, use of media, sanctions, children’s rights, etc. Clear, binding and established rules of conduct create security and provide orientation. That way, children and young people know exactly what the adults in question (staff members) are allowed to do or not to do. They know exactly when they can and must say no. The persons who have contact with children and young people also know how to deal with them appropriately. In this way, the code of conduct helps create a safe environment in which minors can be protected from sexualised violence.

When children and young people come closer to the Church, it is a sign that they and their parents place trust in the Church. The word “trust” consists of two characters in

Chinese: *xin* 信 *lai* 賴, whereby the first means: to have faith in someone, the second: to rely on someone. The character *xin* 信 again consists of two parts; the lefthand part 亻 *ren* stands for person and the righthand part 言 *yan* for word. In short, therefore, *xin lai* can be interpreted as follows: “I realise that I cannot do something on my own, so I believe a person whose words match his/her deeds.” That trust may not be betrayed. It is the basic principle for social living and guideline for being human. One whose actions correspond to his words is honest and credible (*cheng xin* 誠信), the opposite would be the loss of credibility (*shi xin* 失信). If someone loses his *xin*, it means that he destroys himself.

The Church certainly does not want to destroy itself. It follows, therefore, that it is indispensable to establish a clear code of conduct that incorporates the results of an analysis of the potential risk factors of Chinese social-cultural conditions. A typical example: In China, if an adult touches, embraces or caresses a small child, he shows that he likes the child and the child is loved. Parents like to give their child to the clerics so that the clerics embrace the child. Besides being a sign of favour, it is also a blessing. At this juncture, one cannot regulate the situation in such a way that it is completely forbidden for an adult person to touch or embrace a child at all; rather, one must carefully consider how to develop an appropriate and practical code of conduct for the Church of China. Whether and in what form a child is touched and embraced is not solely dependent on the will of the parents, but must also be done with the child’s consent. In the Chinese context, it should also be noted that Chinese children do not learn to say no either in the family or at school. It is therefore all the more important that the adults deal with the children with full awareness and responsibility.

2.4.6 Cooperation between Competent Bodies

The possibilities of an individual or a Church parish are limited. Solidarity and cooperation provide great strength. To be able to better protect children and young people from sexualised violence, comprehensive expertise from various disciplines is needed, for example, canon law, psychology, psychotherapy, medicine, etc.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 until the present there has hardly been any collaboration between the different dioceses. The CCP has also shown little tolerance towards the Church. It controls and suppresses the Church. There is a so-called Chinese Bishops’ Conference, but it is dependent on the CCP. It does not even know when the next Bishops’ plenary assembly will take place, because when and where it will take place depends on the CCP.

All those in positions of responsibility in the Church of China should muster enough courage to break this deadlock and make a concerted effort to take a clear stand against sexualised violence. Likewise, they should create platforms for cooperation among professionals from different disciplines at both national and regional levels, because good cooperation creates strength and promotes initiatives. Only in this way can the Church’s contribution to protecting children and young people from sexualised violence succeed in the best possible way.

2.4.7 Counselling and Complaint Channels

The aim should be to gradually establish offices in parishes or deaneries where children and young people can seek advice with all their problems, fears, doubts, as well as conflicts and where they can complain. To find support and help there is a very useful and important means of child protection. It therefore makes sense for the Church or the parishes to address counselling and complaint channels or to create such channels.

Regarding the development of a counselling and complaint system, the question is: Given the lack of qualified conflict management professionals in China, who could be appointed as an appropriate contact person? Generally speaking, mediation in conflict situations requires people who have patience, honesty and considerable prestige (old age, high position, good reputation, influence). However, how should an appropriate body be formed in Church cases of sexualised violence against children? It is of great relevance that, apart from the above-mentioned character traits, the persons responsible also possess special skills and appropriate expertise. The problem situation of children and adolescents, especially in the case of sexualised violence, is completely different from that of adults. That can be shown by a small example: In a case of sexual violence perpetrated on minors, the competent persons must believe the children from the very first moment and they may not ask “Why” questions, otherwise the young persons will not recount anything further or they will perhaps not say anything more at all. Ideally the contact persons would be made up of experts, parents’ representatives, laypersons and clerics. It should be emphasised that they may not be only clergy and men. That is certainly quite a challenge for the Catholic Church in China.

A complaints system is of no use if it is not known. Care must be taken that the counselling and complaint channels for children and adolescents should also be accessible to their parents, i.e. they should be sufficiently informed about the possibility to complain, the contact persons should be on site, the channels should be simple, fast and no detours (cf. Urban-Stahl *et al.* 2013, p. 14.). This can contribute a great deal to protection from sexualised violence against minors.

In view of the Chinese cultural background presented in Chapter 1 of this paper, the Church of China should realise that the expression of complaint is not an attack on the authority system and not a slap in the “face” of the Church. Rather, it is an instrument of credible and gospel-compliant realisation of the Church’s mission, thus a great help and safeguard for the Church.

2.4.8 Intervention Plan

If one regards the complaints process as a hearing, one can understand intervention as action. What is heard must also be acted upon accordingly. The intervention plan is the core of the Church’s institutional protection concept. It regulates the precise procedure to be followed in a suspected case or incident of sexualised violence. Important components of the intervention plan are the assessment of the situation, documentation, internal and external obligation to report, making transparent, assumption of responsibility and tasks. The development of an intervention plan is not a “general suspicion” but a “signpost” for effective action to protect against sexualised violence against children and young people

(cf. UBSKM n.y., n.p.). The intervention plan enables professional action and provides orientation and certainty of action. Thus the intervention plan is an indispensable component of the protection concept.

The intervention plan of the Archdiocese of Cologne¹⁹ is helpful and can serve as a model for the Church of China. One step in the intervention plan, however, is not applicable in the context of the Church in China. That step is: As soon as there are indications that an offence has been committed, the matter is immediately forwarded to state law enforcement agencies and to the Vatican. For the following reason that is currently out of the question for the Catholic Church in China. A good relationship does not exist between state and Church in China. Before the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the Church was publicly regarded as an instrument of imperialism, nowadays it is more likely to be accused of being under the influence of foreign powers (cf. Open Doors 2021, p. 6). Due to the worldwide unity of the Catholic Church the CCP is constantly afraid that the Church could endanger the power of the Party and the government. Consequently, from the founding of the New China (1949) until today, the Church has been persecuted and suppressed to varying degrees. Against this background, members of the parishes would never allow the procedure of referral to a prosecutor. It should also be noted that China is not a state governed by the rule of law, so the government could easily exploit a weakness of the Church.

For its part, however, the Chinese Church could change its position step by step. After all, if it recognises Chinese criminal law in the face of offences such as theft, drink-driving or murder, why not also the criminal law concerning sexual abuse against children? The Church must be transparent and active, otherwise it will always give the authoritarian government reason to really question it, as has happened again and again throughout history.

It is equally unrealistic to refer abuse cases to the Vatican. Any vote from the Vatican to the Church of China will be seen in the eyes of the CCP as interference in internal Chinese affairs, which the CCP will never allow. In this case, it is best that the Church of China be given a special right under which it is empowered to deal with cases of abuse within its own dioceses and, if necessary, its own system, such as an ecclesiastical province, if the bishops' conference cannot function regularly at the moment.

2.5 The Steps of the Pavilion: Participation

The participation of children and young people is a central principle for the development process of a successful institutional protection concept, because they are the experts of their own lives (cf. DBK 2019, p. 47). Through the children's and young people's voice and participation, those perspectives that the adults do not necessarily have are also usefully brought into the protection concept. The participation of children and young people plays a decisive role in the analysis of potential risk factors, the development of the code of conduct and successful implementation of the complaints system.

¹⁹ The prevention concept of the Archdiocese of Cologne is discussed in chapter 3 of the author's bachelor thesis, which is not printed here. Editors' note.

Participation is not only important in the development of the protection concept itself, but also strengthens the children and young people and boosts their self-confidence. That last encourages them to get help and support in the case of sexual assaults. The opportunities for co-determination are also an authentic sign of an atmosphere of trust and transparency, which are very important for the prevention of sexualised violence against minors in an institution. The participation of children and young people gives them the feeling that they are respected and valued. If they have such a feeling, they will be active and creative and respect each other and others.

“Sexualised violence is a form of abuse of power” (Peetz 2020, p. 357). Abuse of power often begins where people find themselves in a relationship of dependency on another person. Opportunities for participation also affirm the position of children and young people at the same time, which can weaken and reduce the power imbalance between adults and children. The scope of participation should also be expanded to include the parents or reference persons of the children.

Participation is the key to an ideal and efficient concept of prevention. For that reason, in the pavilion participation is assigned to the steps of the pavilion. The Church of China should therefore enable participation. Furthermore, the Church should encourage children and young people as well as their parents and all actors within the Church to actively participate in prevention work. Unfortunately, the question of participation is exactly China’s Achilles’ heel. Due to the authority system, the collective thinking and the system of saving face, almost every social system – be it the State, the Church, an organisation or even the family – lacks a positive attitude to stimulate or criticise; something that is definitely one of the important components of participation. In addition, as explained above, Chinese are formed from an early age to believe that whatever parents, teachers and authority figures say is right and should not be criticised. The Chinese school system is strongly focused on exams and performance. The acquisition of education and knowledge is usually done by memorising the contents of the textbooks. China’s traditional school system hardly encourages creativity, co-thinking, co-determination; nor does it promote the children’s ability to criticise, because in such a school system there is no room for diversity and creative power of the individual (cf. Junker 2011, n.p.).

Accordingly, it is a great but challenging and at the same time wonderful task of the Church in China to build the steps of the pavilion and to fully develop the opportunities for participation for children and youth, as well as for their relatives and all members of the Church community. In the family, when it comes to the parents’ affairs, all siblings are involved in finding solutions and will be able to have a say. If one considers the Church as the family of God, then the members of the Church are like brothers and sisters.²⁰ Therefore, why should they not have a say in the concerns of the Church? Participation of the members of the Church community is a great contribution to the future of the Church.

20 The Second Vatican Council took up again the early Christian way of speaking of the Church as the family of God. It is found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (Art. 6; 28; 51), in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (Art. 32; 40), in the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Art. 2; 4), in the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* (Art. 1) and in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Art. 6).

2.6 Foundation of the Pavilion: Basic Attitudes

A solid foundation is needed for the stability of the pavilion. It is worth looking for such a foundation in the Chinese context as well. The base of the pavilion depicted is again round. Besides the meanings of harmony and completeness, the roundness also symbolises equality, as there is no top or bottom in the circle. Based on their equality, all people should treat each other appreciatively and respectfully, especially those entrusted to their care.

2.6.1 Justice as a Bulwark against Injustice

Righteousness (*yi* 义) belongs to the so-called “five constants”²¹ of Confucianism. The “five constants” are the fundamental behaviours that characterise humanity. They are ethical principles that serve to harmonise interpersonal relations (cf. Xia 2019, n.p.). According to Confucian perspective, justice is the manifestation of the inner virtue of a noble person’s (*junzi* 君子) benevolence. Confucius says: “A noble man measures everything by the standard of righteousness, the mean man measures everything by the standard of his personal advantage” (*Lunyu* 论语 4.16).²² Whereas Confucian thought regards justice and a dvantage as two opposing poles, the philosopher Mozi 墨子 in the 5th century BC assumed that justice means advantage (benefit) (cf. Malek 2004, p. 465). His reasoning was: Any action that is in line with “benefit for the world” or “benefit for the people” is justice. An action that is harmful for the world is injustice. Self-interest at the expense of other people is injustice. For Mozi, the distinction between good and evil is based on the criterion of whether it is useful or not (cf. Mo 2019, n.p.).

In Mozi’s opinion justice has its origin in heaven. Heaven wishes justice to be tangible everywhere in the world while injustice (evil) is to keep away from humanity (cf. *Mozi*, Chap. “Tianzhi” 天志, *shang* 上).²³ Evil is present: “When nations attack each other, when families plunder each other, when people mutilate each other, when rulers and ministers do not show favour and loyalty to each other, when fathers are no longer loving and sons no longer reverent, when elder and younger brothers no longer love each other” (*Mozi*, “Jian’ai” 兼爱, *zhong* 中). Evil in the world is the cause of the state of chaos (*luan* 乱) and the miserable situation of society. As Mozi clearly explains: “If there is righteousness in the kingdom, there will be life; if there is no righteousness, there will be death; if there is righteousness, there will be wealth; if there is no righteousness, there will be poverty; if there is righteousness, there will be governance; if there is no righteousness, there will be chaos. Surely heaven desires life but not death, wealth but not poverty, governance but not chaos. Therefore, I know that heaven wants righteousness and abhors unrighteousness” (*Mozi*, “Tianzhi,” *shang*). That is why throughout his life Mozi propagated the motto: “Promote benefit [*li* 利] in the world” and “eliminate the evil [*hai* 害] in the world” (Malek 2004, p. 466).

21 The five constants (*wuchang* 五常) are: *li* 礼 (rules of propriety), *yi* 义 (righteousness), *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *zhi* 智 (wisdom, ability to judge) and *xin* 信 (credibility).

22 In the original: “君子喻于义, 小人喻于利。”

23 Original: “天欲义而恶不义。”

Promotion of justice was also one of the central aspects of the mission of Jesus. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God is identical to the proclamation of justice. Jesus spent his whole life fighting for justice, always fighting where there was injustice. The paramount feature of Jesus' justice is: It is always oriented to the needs of the people. The measure is not the achievements of the people, but rather what the person needs for life (cf. Mt 20:1-16). Jesus taught his followers to strive for justice because God the Father is just (cf. Jn 27:25). In the sermon on the mount Jesus calls those blessed, among others, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, as well as those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (cf. Mt 5:6 and 10). Thereby it becomes clear that the way of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew is understood as a way of justice (cf. Rose 2011, p. 13). In the Beatitudes of Jesus, we can also see that justice has high priority alongside gentleness, mercy and peace. Where justice reigns, harmony and peace also reign. A clear commitment to justice is therefore by no means alien to the Church, but rather a matter close to its heart.

2.6.2 Loving Appreciation of the Human Being

The idea of the special status of the human being has deep roots in the Chinese teachings of Daoism as well as Confucianism, which have profoundly shaped Chinese culture. Thus, e.g. Laozi 老子, the founder of Daoism, who reportedly lived in the 6th century BC, said: "The *dao* is great, the heaven is great, the earth is great and man is also great. There are four great realms, and man is one of them" (*Daodejing* 道德经 25).²⁴ This highlighting of the human being is not only found in Daoism. From the perspective of Confucianism, the human being is exceedingly valuable. As Mengzi 孟子 (also Mencius, ca. 372–289 BC), who was the most significant disciple of Confucius, emphatically expressed it in the thought: "The people are the most important, the state comes second, and the sovereign is least important" (*Mengzi* 7B.14).²⁵ And according to the most famous representative of Han dynasty Confucianism, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC), human life comes directly from heaven (*tian* 天). Because heaven gave life to the human being, the person is essentially different from animals (cf. Xu *et al.* 2011, pp. 81ff.). The philosopher Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 313–238 BC)²⁶ in turn assumes that humans are different from animals because of their special "qi-powers":²⁷ "The elements have qi-powers but lack procreative ability. The plants have procreative powers but lack judgement. Animals have judgement but lack the ability to behave properly. Humans have qi-powers, procreative ability, judgement ability and also the ability to behave properly. So humans are by far the most valuable (beings) for the kingdom" (quoted according to Gassmann 2016, p. 259).²⁸

The CCP, too, has not infrequently emphasised that the people, or the human person, are central and that the purpose of all the Party's actions is to safeguard the interests of the people. In 2007, for example, Hu Jintao, then General Secretary of the CCP and State President, expressed the following position at the 17th National Congress: "We must ad-

24 Original: "故道大, 天大, 地大, 人亦大. 域中有四大, 而人居其一焉."

25 Original: "民为贵, 社稷次之; 君为轻."

26 Xunzi's teachings are attributed to Confucianism.

27 The Chinese concept *qi* 气 means air, breath, (vital) energy.

28 Original: "水火有气而无生, 草木有生而无知, 禽兽有知而无义, 人有气有生有知, 亦且有义, 故最为天下贵."

here to the people-oriented approach. The basic aim of the Party is to serve the people wholeheartedly, and all its struggles and labours are for the good of the people” (Hu Jintao 2012). The present State President Xi Jinping has stressed several times that all actions and deeds of the Party must be oriented to the person. In his time as governor of Zhejiang he already stated: “Man must always come first. The process of development must not destroy people’s environment. Otherwise, how can people live in peace and happiness and how can we speak of a harmonious society?” (Qiao 2017, n.p.). In the view of the CCP, however, there is no clear basis for the value of the person. Regardless of their motivation and the question of the correspondence between word and deed, the party’s theory at least manifests an affirmation and a high degree of respect for the value of the human being.

The Christian perspective on the special status of the human person is actually so simple that it can be expressed in one sentence. Due to the fact that human beings are created in the image of God, they have an inalienable and precious dignity, which is why they must be respected and valued. In New Testament terms, this attitude to human dignity has been confirmed even more significantly by the words and deeds of Jesus. The reciprocal love or neighbourly love alone, which Jesus himself lived and preached, advocates it (cf. Jn 13:31-35; Mt 5:43-48). Surprisingly enough a similar love is also found in the Chinese culture. Mozi was the only Chinese philosopher ever to argue that people should love each other regardless of hierarchy and geography. He called this “all-encompassing love” (*jian'ai* 兼爱), a love in which all humanity is united (cf. Malek 2004, p. 6). Mozi’s reasoning was quite simple: It is so, because Heaven loves all the people in the world (cf. *ibid.*, p. 463). Jesus’ love of neighbour and Mozi’s all-embracing love are thus very close to each other. Based on love, people will automatically value and respect each other.

The basic attitudes of love and responsibility, respect, appreciation and justice can therefore be justified both from the perspective of Chinese culture and from a Christian perspective. They are indispensable as a basis for a functioning and effective concept of protection against sexualised violence against children and young people. The crime of sexualised violence is nothing other than the result and manifestation of ignoring such attitudes as mentioned above.

2.7 Conclusion

A preventive protection concept against sexualised violence drawn up on this basis is intended to ensure that abuse against minors never has a place in the ambit of the Catholic Church in China. In the picture of the pavilion chosen here, it is still to be noted that the pavilion has neither rooms nor walls. Thus, it allows a wide and undisturbed view outside as well as inside. For a more detailed interpretation, the following can be said: The world inside the pavilion should not be separated from the outside world, anyone can enter at any time, everything always remains open, transparent and accessible. For a functioning and effective protection concept, solidarity, accessibility, openness as well as transparency are of utmost relevance. Only in this way can the roof (culture of harmony) be securely put on and the apex (protection concept equals child protection) be effectively put on. The top of the pavilion is yellow and very close to the sky. Yellow is considered the “colour of the emperor” in China and symbolises fame, wealth, dignity and wisdom. Close to heaven

also means very close to the “will of heaven.” That children and young people are protected from sexualised violence is in accordance with the will of God and heaven.

3. Final Considerations

In the wake of the abuse scandal, the “face” of the Catholic Church in Germany was damaged. It was plunged into a deep crisis of confidence. The Church in China should learn from the sad history of the German Catholic Church and use it as a mirror. The Catholic Church that is a small minority in China would not be able to cope with it, if things should come to pass as in Germany. Therefore, the Church in China must recognise and take seriously its own role and specific mission: The human person should always be central, not the reputation of the Church as an institution. The Church in China must come to the realisation that the “face” of the Church does not count compared to the “face” of children and youth. People or children and young people are children of God and *Imago Dei*, in this sense the face of the people is actually the face of God. From this point of view, paying attention to the “face” of children means paying attention to the “face” of God.

In this paper, some suggestions for the development of prevention protection against sexualised violence against children and young people have been presented. However, almost none of the suggestions presented can be directly implemented in the Church in China. Nor can it be ruled out that the majority of the Chinese faithful, clergy and laity alike, are of the opinion that sexualised violence does not exist at all in the Church in China. That is of course to be hoped and would be ideal. But it is important to realise that just because no cases are reported, it does not mean that there really are no cases and that none may occur in the future. That is why the Church in China ought to begin immediately to develop a protection concept to prevent sexual assaults of children and young persons and to prepare how to respond to suspicions and incidents. If the Church in China, despite all the specific Chinese socio-cultural challenges, puts in place the necessary protective measures to protect children and young people in its ambit from sexualised violence, it can illuminate and inspire the other social systems as well as gain great significance for society as a whole. Only a de-tabooing of the topic and raising awareness of it can bear fruit in this process. This article concludes with a sentence by Hans Kasper: “It is better to build dykes than to hope that the flood will gradually come to its senses.”

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