

## Strengthening Ecumenical Bonds

Chinese Catholic leaders praised **Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury** for his concern over the development of the local Catholic Church and his efforts to further Catholic-Protestant dialogue during an October visit to China. Traveling to Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan, Xi'an and Beijing, Williams met with local Protestant communities and organizations, religious leaders, academics, government officials, NGOs and business leaders. The head of the worldwide Anglican Communion also visited various Catholic communities, spent a day at a Daoist temple in Hubei province and met with Muslim clerics in Xi'an.



While in Shanghai Archbishop Williams attended an official dinner hosted by Bishop Aloysius JIN Luxian and Auxiliary Bishop Joseph XING Wenzhi of the Shanghai diocese, following which they had an extended conversation. JIN later observed that the Archbishop was particularly interested in the general situation of religious freedom in China. The Jesuit prelate also said he told Archbishop Williams that with China continuing to open up, **Christians in the country are aware of their role in fostering the development of a harmonious society, in which elements such as an ecumenical spirit cannot be left out.**

In Wuhan, Williams met with *Bishop Bernardine DONG Guang Qing* and visited the *Major Regional Seminary for South and Central Catholic dioceses*. The Archbishop held a conversation with the seminarians about issues of celibacy, spiritual formation and challenges ministers face today; counseling the seminarians to *"make friends, relax and take rest after they work; but more importantly, spend time daily in prayer and receive God's grace through their spiritual formation."*

In Beijing, he visited the *Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady* and the *Beijing Diocese' Institute for the Study of Catholic Christianity and*

**Culture.** *Rev. Peter Zhao Jianmin*, director of the Institute, said the Archbishop was interested in progress on China-Vatican relations and showed interest in the theological research done by the Institute, which also runs classes jointly with local universities. The Institute focuses on theology, Catholicism and the Second Vatican Council. Williams.

Archbishop Williams' visit was at the invitation of the *State Administration of Religious Affairs*, the *Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee* and the *China Christian Council*. The latter two are official bodies of the Christian Church in China. [UCAN 11/06]

## Taiwan Church Leader in China

V. Rev. David J. H. Lai, Episcopal Bishop of Taiwan, paid an historic official visit to China in early December, meeting with senior SARA officials in Beijing and church colleagues in Nanjing and Shanghai. Lai emphasized the need for harmonious relationships, a message that motivates the Chinese Christian Church in its post-denominational era. **Lai went to China with the primary objectives of educating himself, establishing relationships with the Church, and fostering a wider and deeper understanding of Christianity in China.**

The delegation also met with 93-year-old *Bishop K. H. Ting* at his Nanjing home; and with students and faculty at *Nanjing Union Theological Seminary*; and learned about the social outreach work of the *Amity Foundation* and *Amity Printing Company*. **Bishop Ting expressed his hope that the Diocese of Taiwan and the Church in China could build a stronger relationship in the future.** *"We have good relationships with the mainline denominations," he said, "but we have very few visitors from Taiwan. I hope we can improve on that."*

**Canon Margaret Larom, Director for Anglican and Global Affairs of the U.S. Episcopal Church** described the opportunity to accompany Bishop Lai as *"a truly galvanizing experience. It was wonderful to see Bishop Ting and other Chinese Christian leaders again; and to explore ways in which our Churches can engage more fully in supporting their various ministries."* [ENS 12/01/06]

*Rev. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches*, also recently completed a week-long tour of China. **Clearly the profile of international religious dialogue has taken on new emphasis and priority at this important juncture in the emerging international stature of the China Christian Church.**

# Society & Church News

## Civil Society in China and the U.S.A.

China's dramatic economic growth continues to dominate headlines and shape international perceptions of the country's changing place in the world. Less well-known is a **quieter transformation taking place in the fabric of Chinese society to expand the role of civic organizations in public life.** In response to this phenomenon, last March 2006, the *Yale-China Association* and the *Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences* co-sponsored a comparative workshop in Beijing focused on "*Civil Society in China and the United States.*" The *Luce Foundation* provided generous support.

**Chinese participants** represented individuals and organizations active in building China's fledgling civil society sector, from university-based sociologists and anthropologists, to environmentalists, to founders of charities to assist the handicapped, to labor organizers, to student volunteers. **American participants** included seasoned professionals knowledgeable about the history of American non-profit organizations, philanthropy, non-profit law, management of non-profit organizations, and relations between government and NGOs.

The American participants were struck by the extraordinary challenges Chinese counterparts face in carving out a legitimate, socially and politically sanctioned sphere of activity for their organizations and for the civil society sector more generally. They were also deeply impressed by the passion, commitment, and courage of these pioneers, and by the cheerful spirit of camaraderie and shared purpose evident in their interactions with one another.

Whereas Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) formed to assist the disadvantaged, support culture and the arts, enrich civic life, or advocate for a particular cause have a long history in the United States, such organizations are a much more recent phenomenon in China, and their right to exist and operate freely is neither enshrined in law nor recognized by the public at large.

**At the same time, rapid economic growth in China has resulted in a host of new problems and social tensions that CSOs can often address efficiently and effectively** reaching out to certain populations and

disbursing social resources more adequately than government agencies. They can also help provide channels for citizens to express dissatisfaction and resolve conflicts rather than resorting to violence and to **nurture healthy civic values and civic-minded behavior.** CSOs can also help to protect citizens' rights and check absolute state power. However, as China's political traditions have historically favored an overwhelmingly prominent role for the state, several speakers noted CSOs would be well advised in the current environment, to concentrate on building a strong framework for civil society and providing social services rather than engaging in political activism.

**Discussion among participants ranged from the theoretical to the practical.** How should China build a culture of philanthropic giving among wealthy individuals and businesses? How can a CSO distinguish itself in the public mind from a commercial enterprise and win the trust of a citizenry unfamiliar with the nature of non-profit organizations? What is the best way to ensure integrity within an organization, and who should monitor and regulate non-profit organizations to prevent corruption and abuse? How can a young organization ensure financial security from year to year?

In both China and the U.S., participants agreed, the role of the founder and/or leader of a non-profit organization is critical, requiring energy, commitment, versatility, and the ability to learn and adapt quickly on the job while inspiring and motivating others. The challenge of transition once the leader is ready to move on was also recognized as universal.

Nancy Chapman, Executive Director,  
Yale-China Review, Fall 2006

Ed. Note: **Three Catholic Social Service Centers**, sponsored by the dioceses of Xi'an, Shijiazhuang and Liaoning are **recognized as NGOs**: registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Along with other sectors, religiously motivated organizations have a very crucial contribution to make towards fostering Civil Society, confronted at once with both challenges and exciting opportunities. The following account of an interview on the topic sheds some interesting light on the development of NGO/CSOs in China today.

## Citizenship Education in China Today

The same issue of *Yale-China Review* [Autumn 2006]- provided an account of a very interesting interview with a Fulbright scholar, currently at Yale University, and who is the Director of the *Institute of Political Science* at the *China University of Political Science and Law*.

*Prog CONG Ri Yan* addressed the **impact of China's legal, political and educational system on NGO activity and autonomy in China**. In general, the PRC authorities view "NGOs as an extension of the government, (which) are expected to follow the lead of the government and carry out its goals." So much so, CONG noted, "the authorities will promptly shut down any NGO activity that contravenes government agenda." [Ed. note: This stance towards NGOs is not unlike many other non-western countries – where in common parlance, such organizations are known as *GONGO's* ["government organized" NGOs.]

**Prof. CONG cited three major obstacles to NGO autonomy in China:**

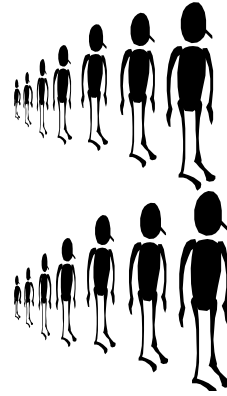
<1> "China's legal system does not grant legal status to truly autonomous NGOs; and requires that all NGOs register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs". . . . Nonetheless, "non-registered NGOs are much more prevalent than registered ones –although their size and influence is much smaller."

<2> "Chinese leaders want to control not only public opinion, but to be the source of public opinion. Even if the(y) agree with an NGOs stance, it prohibits activities and ideas that do not originate with the Party. Despite widespread economic privatization in China today, political and social spheres are still dominated by the State."

<3> An obstacle which has not received nearly as much attention is **the lack of citizenship education among China's populace**. "Even if China's legal and political systems were completely overhauled and NGOs were given greater autonomy in society, the average citizen would not be prepared to take advantage of these changes." This is in part due to the fact that **"traditional Chinese education and political thought focused more on becoming good subjects than on becoming good citizens."**

For this reason, **"educational exchanges play an important role in encouraging Chinese students**

**to think critically about their relationship to the State and to humanity".** ... These types of exchanges also **introduce Chinese students to principles of community service, pluralism ... and other aspects essential to building a vibrant civil society."** [Translated and reported by Travis Sevy]



## China's Exploding Migrant Crisis

Around 300 million people, a quarter of China's population, will leave rural areas to work in cities over the coming 20 years, becoming the country's new migrants, according to a study conducted by the *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences* and funded by the *UN Development Program*. The report calls for new resource management policies.

The authors of the report are all university professors who have monitored five Chinese cities for more than five years, measuring the level of natural resources, public safety and public finances.

A Report on China's development situation, commissioned by the *United Nations*, has suggested that the government develop new policies, crucial to sustain the rapid urbanization growth. According to the report, in fact, **many cities may soon have to face crises arising from limited natural resources like available land and water**. According to its findings, Chinese cities contribute less to the national economy than their equivalent in other developed countries. It also found low productivity rates and high densities made them unable to support future growth.

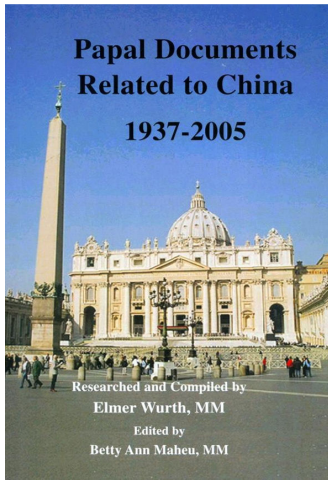
A respected geographic economist of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Lu Dadao, has called on the PRC government to slow the frenzied pace of urbanization. Lu said that existing policy focused on massive construction projects, which are often *under-utilized* and *deprive farmers of arable land*.

The UN report predicted that in four years about 125 Chinese cities would have a population of more than 1 million and, about 50 of these would have more than 2 million people. However, the authors added, "limited natural resources would create a bottleneck in this growth." The government *should strengthen city planning and find innovative ways to save resources, such as power and fuel by providing better public transport and encouraging the use of smaller vehicles*.

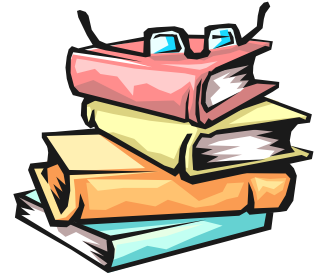
Asia News 08/06

# Reading Notes

## ➤ Papal Documents Related to China 1937-2005



Researched and Compiled by Elmer Wurth, MM  
 Edited by Betty Ann Maheu MM. 456 pp.  
 Holy Spirit Study Centre, Hong Kong US\$25.00  
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***Papal Documents Related to China 1937-2005***- the fruit of nearly 25 years of research, is a compilation of documents revealing the dramatic evolution over the years in the thinking of recent popes, and their references in speaking about the China Church. Gone are the harsh language and condemnations of Communism found in the encyclicals of Pius XI, and Pius XII. **Pope John XXIII gradually distinguished Communism as an ideology, from the Chinese people living under a Communist regime.** Paul VI, continuing this precedent, refrained from using harsh language and was sensitive to the suffering already endured by Chinese Catholics. **John Paul II**, always eager to effect a breakthrough in relations, went even further and **exerted great efforts to find channels for meaningful dialogue.** Whatever he wrote always manifested his great love for the Chinese people; concern for reconciliation in the Church in China; his great desire to visit China, and his hope that

the Church in China would be given the freedom to be fully united with the Universal Church.

A revised and expanded version of an earlier work published by ORBIS Books, Inc. in 1985, the book is divided into two parts: **Part I** contains statements of Pius XI and his successors up to John Paul I. **Part II is a collection of all statements made by John Paul II during his long pontificate [1979- 2005].** Although papal documents throughout these decades sometimes betray misunderstanding, frustration and disappointment, they repeatedly affirm the love of the Roman Pontiffs and their profound respect for the Chinese people, their millenary culture and revered traditions. They also reveal the Holy See's desire to deal with the Church in China and its hierarchy in the same way that it deals with the Church anywhere in the world. ***Intended primarily, but not exclusively, for scholars and researchers, the work will be very useful to anyone interested in the situation of the Church in China in both historical and contemporary perspective.***

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