

**Atheist Political Activists Turned Protestants:
Religious Conversion within China's Dissident Community**

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Two related questions most compel China scholars and observers today: (i) why, despite dramatic economic liberalization and growth, has China not democratized? and (ii) will China democratize in the future? While some existing studies are more optimistic than others, most focus on the adaptability of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the key to its longevity.¹ What is missing from this literature is a detailed scholarly examination of what has happened to the pro-democracy activists who led the political protests that arose in China in the 1980s, which culminated in the massive demonstrations of 1989.

One particularly interesting development is that a large number of these political activists have, in the post-1989 period, become Protestant Christians. Moreover, this development has coincided with a larger explosion of Christianity in the post-Mao era. There are an estimated 50 to 100 million Protestants in China today—a sizeable portion of the population, and indeed one that rivals the (roughly 80 million) membership of the CCP.² The expansion of Christianity in contemporary China has spurred a small but quickly growing body of scholarly studies. Much of this work has focused on the Chinese party-state's attempt to regulate and control religion. Another major strand of the literature examines the reasons why Chinese in the post-Mao era have been attracted to Christianity, looking at the impetus for conversion. While numerous pieces of both types mention that many former political dissidents have turned to Christianity, no study has taken this topic as its main focus.

This paper helps to fill this gap. Specifically, it investigates: (1) when, why and how previous political dissidents in China have become Christian; and (2) how their religious conversion has

affected their political attitudes and behavior. To investigate these questions, the paper draws on interviews with dissidents-turned-Christians as well as public statements made by these individuals. With regard to (1), the paper finds that both psychological and sociological factors played an important role. Specifically, dissidents' religious conversion was spurred by their contact with Christian believers during a time (post-1989) that they were experiencing a serious psychological crisis. With regard to the effect of former political dissidents' religious affiliation on their political attitudes and behavior, we find a number of distinct paths. For some, involvement in Christianity has become a substitute for or diversion from political activism. For others, their conversion to Christianity has been unrelated to their political activism; they have continued to publicly criticize the CCP and call for democratic political change and have kept their religious beliefs largely to themselves. For still others, their Christian beliefs and practices have led them to engage in activism that focuses on religious issues that are related to politics, but are not focused on fomenting democratic political change.

Dissidents Turned Christians

A notable number of current and former Chinese dissidents have converted to Christianity since 1989. One well-known dissident with wide connections within China's overseas dissident community estimates that of the hundreds of political dissidents who have come to the U.S. since June 1989, over 60 percent have become Christians. He adds that this is a higher percentage than among Chinese immigrants more generally, among whom he estimates that roughly 35 percent convert.³ Chinese dissidents-turned-Christians include four of the 1989 student leaders listed among the twenty-one individuals on the government's "Most Wanted" list following June 4, 1989: Chai Ling, Zhou Fengsuo, Zhang Boli, and Xiong Yan (see Appendix A). Other notable political dissidents-turned-Christians include Han Dongfang (the most prominent leader of the first autonomous worker association in the PRC—the Beijing Workers Autonomous

Federation—in 1989); Wang Xizhe (one of the most prominent activists involved in the Democracy Wall movement of 1978-80); Yuan Zhiming (a script writer for the 1988 Chinese TV series, *River Elegy*, which was castigated by the CCP following the movement of 1989 for “provid[ing] theoretical and emotional preparation for the [spring 1989] turmoil and rebellion;”⁴ and public speaker and mentor to student leaders in the 1989 demonstrations); Fang Zheng (participant in the 1989 demonstrations), and Fu Xiqiu (Bob Fu) (student leader in the 1989 demonstrations).⁵ A number of influential overseas Chinese dissidents have become Christian as well, including Yang Jianli (an overseas Ph.D student who returned to Beijing to participate in the demonstrations of 1989) and Wang Bingzhang (the U.S.-based founder of the dissident publication, *China Spring*).

None of these individuals were Christian prior to the student-led protests of 1989. To the contrary, most were self-described atheists, and many were CCP members. The case of Yuan Zhiming is typical. He states, “I used to be an atheist scholar. I was a Ph.D. student researching the philosophy of Marxism at China People’s University’s Department of Philosophy. Prior to this, I worked as a cadre in Weishu District of Beijing. I was in the army for twelve years, and I was a party member.”⁶ Yuan, like other former dissidents, was skeptical of Christianity. He relates that in his

first conversation with a pastor, he quoted scripture to prove to me that the Bible is the absolute truth. I was full of contempt for his ignorance. I could not believe a servant of God could be so lacking in common sense and logic. Didn’t he know that the thing to be proven cannot be used as evidence, let alone to prove itself? Later I observed Christians gathering together, offering praise and prayers to God and doing their “Cultural Revolution style” Bible studies and sharing. It all reminded me of a remark made by Einstein concerning German soldiers marching like puppets: “Oh my God, are these man still able to think?”⁷

Similarly, Chai Ling states that when “we were given a Bible at the beginning of my escape from Tiananmen,” she thought, “what good is the Bible going to do to help me hide?”⁸

What led these atheistic and skeptical dissidents to so radically change their conception of Christianity and the existence of God? To help answer this question, we turn to our first point of investigation: when, why and how these former dissidents became Christian.

Conversion Literature

To inform this examination, it is helpful to review the scholarly literature on religious conversion, both in general and with regard to Chinese converts in the post-Mao period. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Edwin Diller Starbuck and William James formulated what is now known as the “classical” model of religious conversion.⁹ This model identifies several stages of the conversion experience: deep disillusionment and melancholy, a period of cerebration, and finally a mystical crisis experience of the divine that gives the person happiness, feelings of peace, and a dramatic change in his or her life. James calls such experiences the religion of the “sick soul” and notes that they are frequently found among individuals with “heterogenous” or dual psychologies.¹⁰ He contrasts these dramatic experiences with a more gradual model that he calls the religious experiences of “healthy-mindedness,” which are generally begun in childhood and built up over a lifetime.¹¹ James also describes these two types of religious experience as “religion of the once-born” for “religion of healthy-mindedness” and “religion of the twice-born” for “religion of the sick soul.”¹² He seems to favor this terminology because “religious experiences of the twice-born” produce such radical changes in the lives of those who experience them that they are like a second birth. Hence, most of James’s work focuses on describing the stages and types of religious experience among people identified as having “sick souls.”

Contemporary scholars have moved away from this classical view. Religious psychologists have emphasized an attachment theory of religious conversion, which focuses on the converts’ childhood attachments and sense of security in their home lives prior to their conversion experiences. Pehr Granquist finds similarities, however, between the classical and

contemporary theories. He correlates James's "religion of the sick soul" with cases of converts who, according to contemporary theory, failed to create stable childhood attachments, while the religion of the "healthy-minded" correlates with contemporary cases who formed stable attachments. Grandquist further notes that the research underlying the attachment theory of conversion mainly focuses on cases similar to those in James's section on "healthy-mindedness." He then suggests that modern Westerners face less trauma in their lives, and thus present fewer cases of the "sick soul" conversions so prevalent in James's work.¹³ At the same time, both the classical model and contemporary psychological understandings focus on the individual's psychology as the root cause of religious conversion.

Sociological approaches, in contrast, emphasize the social and cultural context of the individual—particularly his or her network of human bonds and relationships. For, these determine the "social and thus religious points of contact available to the possible convert."¹⁴ Perhaps most important is the relationship between the possible convert and religious believers. Many sociologists also view conversion as a long-term process wherein factors within the individual work in synergy with external factors such as those described above.¹⁵

Some contemporary scholars of China have investigated how well Western conceptualizations of religious conversion apply to Christian conversion in post-Mao China. The most well-known studies in this vein have been undertaken by Fenggang Yang. Perhaps not surprisingly given his training in sociology, Yang finds sociological approaches more applicable to Chinese immigrants than psychological models. Focusing on the context of potential converts, Yang argues that the "mass" conversion of Chinese immigrants to Christianity can only be understood in the larger context of the "dramatic social and cultural changes in the process of coerced modernization."¹⁶ Among the dramatic changes experienced by modern Chinese people, Yang describes the breakdown of traditional Confucian culture, the effects of war and revolution,

escaping into exile, and also the trauma of the 1989 Tiananmen incident. When combined with interpersonal bonds, individual psychology, and institutional factors such as the active proselytization of Christian groups, these broader contextual factors have acted as a fertile ground for conversion. Christianity is particularly attractive in this context, Yang argues, because it “is a faith that provides peace, certainty, and liberation amid bewildering market forces and a stifling political atmosphere.” Yang adds that for “Western-oriented Chinese, Christianity is not something traditional conservative or restrictive. Rather, it is perceived as progressive, liberating, modern, and universal.”¹⁷

Katrin Fiedler generally concurs with Yang, yet stresses the importance of the role of the Christian community in attracting Chinese converts. Fiedler notes that “the Christian religion is communal both in its outside appearance—specifically, worship forms—and its doctrine’s emphasis on the communion of believers.”¹⁸ In addition, most Chinese Christians are actively engaged in evangelization. When an exile in a new land is welcomed by Christians into their family of believers, he gains a new sense of community and a feeling of human connection.¹⁹

Dissident Conversion

With regard to the timing, mode, and impetus for conversion among Chinese dissidents, one finds evidence of both the psychological factors emphasized by the classical model and contemporary religious psychologists, and the sociological factors emphasized by Yang and Fiedler. In support of both classical and contemporary psychological approaches, all dissident converts suffered psychological trauma prior to their conversion. Given their age (roughly eighteen to forty years in 1989) all had experienced tumult, dislocation, and strained (or severed) familial bonds during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. Many describe their childhoods as being full of isolation, loneliness, hunger, and misery. Chai Ling relates that during the Cultural Revolution, her parents (both military doctors) regularly were on assignment far from home; at

the age of five, she was sent to live with a peasant family, and at the age of ten her parents left home for a year, leaving Chai in charge of her six year old sister, four year old brother, and elderly grandmother.²⁰ Overall, Chai states, “what I remember of my childhood is a terrible sense of loneliness and separation.”²¹ Similarly, Zhang Boli writes that

misery and terror entered my life at an early age...I was frequently tormented by hunger...other than misery and terror, what I had seen most during my childhood and adolescence was the revolutionary madness of the age. When the Cultural Revolution stormed all corners of China and allowed no peaceful classroom to exist, trust and love among people accordingly disappeared.²²

Yuan Zhiming also reports experiencing trauma during these years. He relates that

in 1967, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, I was in my first year of junior high school. It was a lean year. One day, students from the entire commune met...to denounce a priest and a nun. From morning until evening, we all took turns stepping up on the platform, screaming at them...they remained silent...we shouted ourselves hoarse, hollering until we were exhausted...they simply looked at us.²³

For these individuals, and for most Chinese, the early years of the post-Mao era had brought great hope that the chaos of the past was over, and confidence in the CCP’s ability to rejuvenate China and move it in a more practical and modern direction. As Zhang Boli states:

I had confidence in the Communists’ economic reform plan, with its open-door policy to the outside world. I believed that the Party wanted to reawaken the enthusiasm of the people so that they could work for modernization. Then the country could regain her historical greatness.²⁴

Zhang continues his narrative with descriptions of the students at Beijing University and their freedom of expression as they “exercised their thinking, their passion” in discussions about China with their professors and in their Democracy Salon.²⁵ Similarly, Yuan Zhiming describes his belief that in the post-Mao period, he and his fellow intellectuals had embarked on a new project that would lead to a better China. He states that “I participated in the 1989 people’s movement. At the time, especially after ‘River Elegy’ came out ... we all felt that we were saving our country and its people, that we were the beginning.”²⁶ Throughout this testimony,

Yuan repeatedly describes his high-mindedness, his noble goals, and his conviction that he and his friends were working to save China. Chai Ling's testimony, too, shows a stark contrast between her feelings before and after the events of June Fourth. She characterizes herself as an "overachiever, [who] at age 17 ... became one of the few national honor students in China."²⁷ She became a student at Beida and then a leader of the student protest in 1989. She describes how the 50 days at Tiananmen were an experience that touched her profoundly. The students built a community, and the people of Beijing responded, so that there was a palpable "energy of love, hope and that glorious dream that we can be free."²⁸ Chai Ling states that even the "thieves in Beijing called a strike and stopped stealing to support the movement."²⁹

These individuals' hopes were dashed through the events at Tiananmen on June 4, 1989, and the subsequent arrests and persecution of those who had advocated for political reform. Zhang Boli describes how his optimism abruptly turned to deep disillusionment and pessimism upon the violent end of the demonstrations of 1989. At dawn on June 4, Zhang relates, he thought "we might be experiencing the final moments of our lives."³⁰ After the remaining students left the square and were trying to escape from Beijing, Zhang recalls:

I thought about the harsh reality. The Liberation Army was arresting and murdering people everywhere in Beijing. I was clear about what cruelty they were reserving for me.³¹

Ultimately, the actions of the Chinese government caused great disillusionment in Zhang. Although he was a Party member, after the Party ordered the army to shoot the people, Zhang decided to "withdraw from the Party and to struggle to the end" because he could "no longer belong to a party that has lost all rationality and humanity."³² In addition to his disillusionment with the CCP, Zhang experienced great hardships during his life on the run and tremendous anguish at being separated from his family, especially his daughter.³³ These all contributed to his sense of melancholy and depression.

Similarly, when Yuan Zhiming was labeled by the CCP regime as a “black hand” (*heishou*) behind the “counter-revolutionary” protests of 1989, he was forced into exile. Overseas—first in Paris, and later in the U.S.—his optimism was squelched by loneliness and despair. Yuan states that when he “went into exile, [he] was very weak and homesick.”³⁴ Soon after he arrived in Paris, his father passed away. Yuan could not return to China to carry out his duties as eldest son at the funeral. His father’s early death at the age of 56 also gave Yuan Zhiming a deep realization of the brevity of human life. He notes, “I suddenly felt that the shadow of death was very close to me.”³⁵ Moreover, Yuan’s daughter was only 1 ½ years old, and Yuan missed her very much. He felt bereft of all his former human comforts, and these losses created in him a deep sense of melancholy and loneliness.

Chai Ling describes her experience in the same way. She states that as she stood with the last 5000 students on the square when the tanks and troops rolled in,

The death toll and casualty numbers on the Long Peace Avenue were reported back to me. So the truth came from the leaders: when we offered them love and peace, they handed us death and massacre. None of us could believe it at first. How could I believe that the People’s Liberation Army would kill its own people? I grew up with them. They were uncles and aunties to me. We love them and they love us. I remember when we had to abandon the commanding headquarters made by a tent, I raised my head to the sky and asked in silence, “Why? Why? Why? Why do they have to kill us for wanting to have a dialogue?”³⁶

As she led her students away from Tiananmen Square, Chai Ling was afraid for her life. She did not know if she would survive to the next day, but she did survive, and then she had to go underground before she could escape from China. Her escape lasted for 5 nights and 4 days of darkness and isolation inside a wooden crate on a boat trip that should have only taken 8 hours.³⁷ The boat took Chai Ling to Hong Kong, and from there she went to Paris and then on to the United States, where she notes that life as an immigrant “is not easy.”³⁸ She did not speak good English, she could not return to her homeland, and her first marriage to another student leader

soon disintegrated. Soon afterwards her mother and grandmother passed away. She suffered many things over the years and felt that “each dark hour was darker than the first one.”³⁹

Zhou Fengsuo reports the same traumatic move from optimism and hope to deep despair. Zhou recalls the spring of 1989 as a time of “exhilaration.” He says that it was “just such a thrill to be able to speak from your heart, you know what you dream of all the time...I felt so happy. It [was] a different feeling that I never had before...For most people it [was] like a festival of freedom...it [was] unimaginable that they would crack us down [sic]...it was really hopeful.”⁴⁰ These feelings were darkly transformed on the night of June 3-4. Zhou states that “soldiers were coming out...I stayed there on Tiananmen Square until we were driven out...I was among the last group of students who left. All night long, as night goes on, more and more gunshots...later I saw 40 bodies in the garage...outside the hospital. I just couldn’t bear to look more. It [was] such a terrible thing...I just became numb.”⁴¹ He continues, “I began to think, ‘Is there anything we can believe in?’”⁴² After seeing his name and picture on the government’s Most Wanted list following the crack-down, Zhou went into hiding, but was soon captured; his older sister and her husband had informed on him. Zhou was sent to prison for a year without trial. In June 1990 he was released, but was sent to the border area of Mongolia for an additional year of surveillance and “re-education”—most of which was spent in isolation. In 1995, Zhou fled to the U.S.⁴³

Other dissidents-turned-Christians underwent similarly traumatic experiences. 1989 student leader Xiong Yan was arrested on June 15, 1989, and detained for two years without trial. He was released in January 1991, and fled to the U.S. in June 1992. 1989 labor leader Han Dongfang turned himself in to the authorities following the June 3-4 crackdown. He was placed in a tiny cell with prisoners who had tuberculosis. Near death in 1993, Han was given a medical release to the U.S. 1989 student leader Bob Fu grew up in rural China, in a family that was “grindingly poor.” In the 1980s, Fu “became enamored with Western ideas about freedom,” and

joined the CCP in hopes of changing it from within. In April 1989, when students mourned the death of reform-oriented CCP leader Hu Yaobang, Fu was a student at Northeast Normal University in Changchun. After leading some demonstrations on his campus, Fu led a group of his classmates to Tiananmen, where they joined the student protests there.⁴⁴ Fu reports, “I was very, very moved.”⁴⁵ Following the movement’s violent end, this feeling turned to despair. Fu’s depression was so deep that he considered suicide. He states that his hope “was destroyed by tanks...And I didn’t find hope in myself.”⁴⁶

The accounts of these dissidents show striking similarities. They all began with strong love of their country and high hopes for real reform and improvement after the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Their hopes were dashed when the CCP ordered the army to attack them, and they were further demoralized at being forced to leave their families, go into hiding, and later into exile. The trauma of Tiananmen produced in them a sense of disillusionment and depression, as well as a questioning of their earlier trust in the Party and in the Chinese government.

This psychological crisis clearly was a key factor that contributed to the subsequent religious conversion of these individuals. In this respect, the classical and contemporary psychological models of religious conversion can be seen to apply to the case of Chinese dissidents. They all evidenced the sort of “sick soul” that James describes, and exemplify the type of person who failed to form healthy attachments due to childhood trauma—as contemporary attachment theory posits.

Yet sociological factors were of key importance as well. While these dissidents felt profound depression, sorrow, and a lack of meaning or purpose during their time of escape and exile following the movement of 1989, each came into contact with one or more kind-hearted Christians who provided them with food, shelter, companionship, and solace. For some, this

contact came while the dissident was on the run in the aftermath of 1989. For others, it occurred when they were exiled in the U.S. Also, as emphasized by sociological theories, even for dissidents who experienced a dramatic and sudden “born again” experience, their conversion entailed a longer process of questioning and pondering that lead up to their dramatic “self-surrender” to Christianity. This period of pondering and questioning occurred contemporaneously with their formation of personal relationships with Christian believers. As the well-known dissident cited earlier relates, new Chinese immigrants to the U.S. often are greeted by Chinese Christians who actively evangelize them and invite them to church, Bible studies, and fellowship groups. Moreover, this dissident notes, a number of former dissidents who have become pastors have actively reached out to other exiled dissidents. These pastors’ ability to sympathize with and understand what other dissidents have been through has facilitated the formation of deep personal bonds and mutual trust. This dissident posits that this is why a greater percentage of exiled Chinese dissidents have become Christian than have Chinese immigrants more generally.⁴⁷ Chinese dissidents’ conversion experiences evidence this combination of deep psychological trauma and crisis, and contact with Christians who offer care, solace, and companionship.

Zhang Boli is one example. Following the massacre of June 3-4, 1989, Zhang (like many others on the CCP-issued Most Wanted list), had gone into hiding. Six months later, he was the only top 1989 student leader left at-large in China; the others either had successfully escaped the country, or had been jailed. At this point, Zhang decided to escape into the Soviet Union, and to go from there to the West. A friend helped him get to the border region of Heilongjiang province. While there, Zhang became very ill with a “kind of acute typhoid which could cause death in a few hours.”⁴⁸ Zhang’s friend took him to a cousin’s home, and she (Elder Cousin) used herbs and moxybustion to cure him. Elder Cousin was a Christian, and in addition to her medical

treatments and good food, she prayed daily for Zhang Boli. Zhang stayed there recuperating for several weeks, and after his strength began to return, Elder Cousin asked him to read a handwritten copy of the Gospel of John to her.⁴⁹ The gospel story of Jesus on the cross forgiving his enemies moved Zhang to tears; he could relate to the story because he, too, was “living with the daily possibility of arrest, rough treatment, and the execution ground.”⁵⁰ Elder Cousin preached to Zhang during his convalescence, and although he did not immediately convert to Christianity, he found the faith “appealing and ... profited much from [the] discussions.”⁵¹ Zhang’s period of questioning and pondering with regard to Christianity lasted during his few weeks of convalescence in Elder Cousin’s home. His crisis of conversion occurred on the very night he left.

Yuan Zhiming’s movement toward Christianity began when he was in a refugee camp in Paris, and a Christian pastor came to preach to the refugees. Yuan states: “He spoke for an entire afternoon, and we debated with him all that afternoon. We could not accept believing in Christ.”⁵² Not long after his debate with the pastor, Yuan and a friend visited Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Yuan was moved to tears at the sight of a statue of the Christ-child, which reminded him of his daughter.⁵³ After Yuan moved to Princeton University in the United States, he again was contacted by Chinese Christians, who invited him to dinner and Bible studies every Friday night. He went to be polite, and at the beginning he felt that their “rituals were exactly the same as what we did in the Cultural Revolution ... in praise of Chairman Mao.”⁵⁴ He was attracted to the Christians, however, because they “lived like honest young people.”⁵⁵ Yuan reports that he would sit “on one end of the sofa, enjoying the atmosphere at their gathering, enjoying the friendship and the warmth.”⁵⁶ Eventually, Yuan began reading the Bible, and his reading brought him to a crisis conversion experience.

Zhou Fengsuo's interest in Christianity grew after he fled to the U.S. Initially, he joined with other exiled dissidents to press for democratic change in China. However, he "soon grew disillusioned, finding that bitterness and personal ambition pervaded American communities, too."⁵⁷ On the sixth anniversary of the June 4 massacre, Zhou reports walking alone in San Antonio, Texas. He ultimately wandered into a church service; while there, he heard the gospel for the first time. According to Zhou, the members of the church prayed for him, and one of the congregants remained in contact. Zhou states that "it was the first time I felt some connectedness, that I was not alone."⁵⁸ Over the course of the next eight years, Zhou had many other positive encounters with Chinese Christians, ultimately leading to his conversion.

Bob Fu also was drawn to Christianity through contact with a Christian. Fu relates that in the aftermath of 1989, while he was at his "deepest point of despair," he met an American missionary teacher who gave Fu a biography of a Chinese pastor. Fu was particularly moved by the pastor's statement that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Fu reports thinking, "that's it—only the Creator can make the new creation I am dreaming to be."⁵⁹ Shortly thereafter, Fu became a leader in an unregistered "house" church in Beijing. For engaging in these unsanctioned religious activities, Fu was jailed for two months. Upon his release, he fled to the U.S.⁶⁰

Chai Ling's movement toward Christianity occurred over an even longer period of time. Feeling a cloud of darkness over her life after 1989, she reports putting her energy into myriad enterprises in an effort to remedy her existential dilemmas. She reports that,

I tried many things, a graduate degree from Princeton, a graduate degree from Harvard, working in NGOs, working in government, and working in companies. At one point, China became such a painful issue I simply had to put it back out of my mind and my life. Somehow like Scarlet in *Gone with the Wind*, who refuse [sic] to ever go hungry again, I stumbled on the idea that if only I could become a very successful entrepreneur, like Bill Gates, I could make lots of money and set up a giant foundation, then I could once for all overcome and free China. In the mean time, over a

decade I built back my life with my wonderful new American husband, we had three children; I brought my extended family out of China, gave money to save orphans in China, and built a software company with 280 employees. These tasks kept our minds and hands full as we were inching our way towards that illusive big and grand goal.⁶¹

Chai Ling's American husband is a Christian, and she accompanied him to church for 12 years before her own conversion experience. She converted more than 20 years after the Tiananmen Incident, in December 2009.

For many of these individuals, the actual moment of conversion was a crisis experience that brought them out of their depression and provided them with a new feeling of health and well-being. James' classical model goes so far as to characterize this as the "process of unification" for the "divided soul."⁶² According to James, the most crucial step of the unification process is a moment of "self-surrender," in which the person "ceases to resist or make an effort in the direction he desires to go."⁶³ James further describes the characteristics of these crisis moments of self-surrender:

It is natural that those who personally have traversed such an experience should carry away a feeling of its being a miracle rather than a natural process. Voices are often heard, lights seen, or visions witnessed; automatic motor phenomena occur; and it always seems, after the surrender of personal will, as if an extraneous higher power had flooded in and taken possession. Moreover the sense of renovation, safety, cleanness, rightness, can be so marvelous and jubilant as well to warrant one's belief in a radically new substantial nature.⁶⁴

The conversion experiences of a number of Chinese dissidents contain the elements described by James in the preceding quote. Zhang Boli gives the following description of his conversion, which occurred as he crossed into the Soviet Union during a sudden blizzard.

I worried that in this Siberian blizzard, I would not be able to keep myself alive through daybreak.

At that moment I remembered Elder Cousin's words of farewell: "Brother, you must pray. Jesus will save you."

Even though I still did not believe, I started to pray. I could not think of any better way to comfort myself and to give myself hope.

I prayed to Jesus, asking God to watch over my parents, my wife and daughter, and those schoolmates who were in prison. “Oh God,” I said, “if you do exist, why let me die in this deserted snowy plain?” I prostrated myself. “Lord! I beg you to give me a way to the truth and the life.”

I was in a state of semiconsciousness, but a moment of great clarity had arrived. A blinding ray of light shone through the darkness, and I felt warm all at once. I could not open my eyes, but I heard a voice saying, “Zhang Boli, you are not going to die. For you will go forth in my name.”

I crouched on the ground, saying, “Lord, if you let me live through today, I will be forever at your service.”

At that moment I became a believer in Jesus.

The ray of light disappeared, leaving only the uproar of snow that was ravaging the plain. In this night of raging blizzard, with temperatures of more than forty degrees below zero, in the depth of my despair, on the birthday of Jesus, I gave myself to God.⁶⁵

Zhang was rescued by Russian soldiers, who treated him well while they waited for orders about what to do with him. In the end, they had to send him back to China, but they allowed him to sneak back across the border, instead of turning him over to the authorities and certain death. Zhang returned to Elder Cousin, and with her husband’s help, he secured a hut on the grassy plains by Wild Deer River, where he trapped wild animals and farmed for over year until he was finally able to escape to Hong Kong and then the West. He describes his newly peaceful state of mind in that hut.

I was satisfied that after six months of near escapes and hiding I had finally found a peaceful retreat where I could rest.

I felt gratitude to God. I prayed to him every day. I did not want to run away anymore. I felt so worn out. Amen.

My mind began to recover as well as my body, and I was able to enjoy life for its own sake. And so, despite what would seem to many people a life of hardship and few rewards, I was glad to be living simply in solitude on an unending snowy plain.⁶⁶

Yuan Zhiming’s crisis of conversion was one of mental and emotional anguish instead of physical danger. One night when he was reading the Bible, he felt that “the word of Jesus pricked [his] heart like a needle.”⁶⁷ At the time, he was filled with hatred towards the Chinese government officials, but he read the scriptural passage where Jesus exhorts his followers to love their enemies. The following sentence of the Bible explains that God causes the sun to shine and

the rain to fall on both the righteous and the unrighteous. As a student of philosophy, Yuan was convinced by the absolute moral goodness of that statement. He felt that God was speaking to him directly and that his heart was shaken.⁶⁸ He states,

I remember that when I read this passage, I was lying on my bed, and I immediately sat up. I closed my eyes, and I wanted to pray for my enemies, for those who persecuted me, for the people I had been hating just a moment before. I wanted to obey the word of Jesus because His words came from the heavens. I closed my eyes and wanted to pray for Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng, but I could not do it. Whenever I closed my eyes, one sentence remained with me: “Evil must be repaid with evil. It is not that it has not been repaid, it is that the time has not come.” I opened the Bible, and read Jesus’ word again. Jesus said, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” It seemed that this sentence was spoken to me. I immediately closed my eyes, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not love, nor could I pray. I opened the Bible again and read it again. Then I closed my eyes again. Then I read again and closed my eyes again. I did this over and over several times before my heart became quiet and I was able to obey God’s word.⁶⁹

After this experience, Yuan felt that his “heart was quieted and the lead weight of [his] hatred, that metal chain, opened up and fell away.”⁷⁰ Prior to his conversion, he had a terrible temper, but now that his hatred was gone, he became peaceable. He continued reading the Bible daily, and after a month he prayed with a Christian pastor. After that prayer, he felt: “My life had found its root, my spirit had found its home, and it was filled with love.”⁷¹ He no longer hated the CCP leaders who had presided over the June 4 massacre.

Chai Ling’s dramatic conversion crisis came 20 years after the events at Tiananmen. She had continued to fight for democratic change in China despite her dark pessimism and depression. A dramatic jolt to her feeling of mental stability came when she was on a plane to Washington, DC to celebrate the fact that former 1989 student activist Fang Zheng, whose legs had been crushed by a tank on June 4, 1989, could dance with his wife after being fitted with prosthetic legs. While on the plane, Chai Ling had a panic attack, something she had never experienced before. She states:

I was stuck between the past and the future, I lost all the purpose and clarity, I lost all my strength. Now the truth about me finally emerged. For all those battles and triumphs, I realized, how small I actually am, when confronted with the force of an entire regime. How could I, a humble individual, go against an entire regime who has enormous resources and networks?⁷²

After this harbinger of her conversion crisis, Chai Ling accompanied a Chinese woman named Wujian to the U.S. Congress's human rights committee hearing on China's forced abortion practices. Wujian had not gotten a permit to have a baby, and she was given an injection in her stomach to kill the unborn fetus. When the fetus failed to abort, the officials forced her to have an operation in which the fetus was cut to bits and removed from the womb. Wujian saw the pieces as they were being pulled from her body. As she listened to Wujian's story, Chai Ling was reminded of the events on June 4, 1989. She says: "That night was so brutal, yet we had no strength to stop it, and the rest of the world could not stop it, either."⁷³

Finally, Chai Ling came to the realization that only God could "stop this brutality."⁷⁴ She began questioning her husband and Christian friend Reggie about believing in Jesus. On December 4, 2009, when she was sitting in her office talking on the phone to Reggie about becoming a Christian, Chai Ling suddenly started weeping. She describes her conversion:

At that moment, sitting in my office on a Friday afternoon, tears started pouring down my face. I became speechless and hung up the phone with Reggie before she realized I was crying. I went to the corner of the office, and knelt down, and I prayed, "Dear Lord, Jesus Christ, I now accept you as my savior and my only God. Please forgive all my sins, known or unknown, please come into my heart and guide my life." Then I looked around, making sure no one busted my office door to see me on the floor. I waited to see what might happen, I was expecting some serious fireworks, loud music, like "da da da da ..." or some serious disasters, like the water tank will bust again. What I got was an amazing sense of peace.⁷⁵

Chai Ling goes on to relate that the weekend after her conversion was the first weekend in a long time in which she "felt a complete sense of peace."⁷⁶

In sum, these Chinese dissidents who have converted to Christianity were influenced by both individual psychological factors and contextual sociological factors. During their childhood and adolescence, the chaos of the Cultural Revolution had strained their personal relationships and familial attachments, and as young adults they had experienced the traumatic experience of the violent suppression of the demonstrations that they had helped lead, perilous escapes, and abrupt exile into unfamiliar lands. During this period of great depression and despair, they came into contact with Christian believers who offered them companionship and solace. Many later experienced dramatic conversion crises. All report that their conversion has given them a strong sense of peace and purpose, and a deep feeling of human connection.

Effect of Conversion on Political Attitudes and Behavior

How has the Christian conversion of these Chinese dissidents influenced their political beliefs and activities? Overall, their new religious affiliation has not led them to become more politically active. Some—most notably Zhou Fengsuo—have continued to advocate for democratic change in China, with little public comment on their religious beliefs. Others, such as Bob Fu, also engage in political activism, but have linked it with a broader advocacy of human rights, including religious freedom. Yet most dissidents-turned-Christians have become less politically active. For some, such as Chai Ling, Christian conversion has diverted their focus away from political activism as their primary activity. For others, such as Zhang Boli, Christian conversion has led to total disengagement from political activity, and has coincided with newfound support for continued CCP rule. Interestingly, this is true despite the CCP's persecution of unregistered mainland Chinese Christian groups. Indeed, many dissidents-turned-Christians report that they no longer hate China's top political leaders; these former dissidents' new Christian faith has led them to forgive China's rulers for their sins.

Only a small minority of Christian dissidents has continued since their conversion to engage in political activism directed at the CCP. The most overtly active in pressing for democratic change in China is Zhou Fengsuo. Zhou converted to Christianity in 2003. In 2006, Zhou publicly stated, “for 17 years, I have been looking forward to a day of truth in China. Today, we, those who live through the dreams and tears of the protesters who were striving for a free China, who survived the massacre, prison, and exile, still have to fight for China to acknowledge what really happened.”⁷⁷ In 2007, he founded Humanitarian China, a group that promotes rule of law, human rights, and freedom of expression in China. Along with providing humanitarian assistance to those whose rights have been violated, the group’s website lists current and newly-released political prisoners in China, and asks viewers to send cards to the prisoners and make monthly donations to help these “prisoners of conscience and their families,” who have faced great hardship because they have “made sacrifice for a better China.”⁷⁸ In 2008, Zhou attended a rally in San Francisco to oppose the CCP’s crackdown on unrest in Tibet; Zhou and his companions donned T-shirts and banners with the words “Don’t Forget June 4th” and pictures of Hu Jia, a mainland China-based political, environmental, and HIV/AIDS activist who was imprisoned at the time.⁷⁹ In 2009, Zhou, along with Bob Fu and 1989 activist-turned-Christian Fang Zheng spoke about the need for the protection of human rights in China in front of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission within the U.S. House of Representative’s Committee on Foreign Affairs.⁸⁰ Throughout these activities, Zhou has made no reference to his Christianity. And among the myriad efforts undertaken by Humanitarian China, no activities or statements with regard to religious persecution in China are mentioned. Zhou’s Christian beliefs and practices are thus generally kept out of public view, and are treated as separate from his political activities.

The same is not true for Bob Fu, another politically active dissident convert. Unlike Zhou, Fu is very public about his Christian beliefs, and has continued to work as a pastor. Although the group that he has founded—China Aid—is committed to the promotion of human rights in China, its clear emphasis is on religious freedom. As stated on the group’s website, China Aid is a

Christian human rights organization committed to promoting religious freedom and the rule of law in China. We believe that religious freedom is the first freedom, which lays the foundation for all other basic human rights. By Exposing the Abuses, Encouraging the Abused, and spiritually and legally Equipping the Leaders to defend their faith and freedom, ChinaAid strives to promote religious freedom for all.⁸¹

As seen in Fu’s testimony for the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Fu does not shy away from political criticism of the CCP. Indeed, he has given dozens of speeches regarding human rights in China to both U.S.-based and international political bodies and NGOs. Yet at the same time, as evidenced in the China Aid mission statement above, since Fu’s conversion, he has been first and foremost a Christian, and his work for human rights in China has centered on his commitment to religious freedom.

Somewhat similar to Fu, Chai Ling has continued to be an activist since her conversion to Christianity, but her focus has shifted away from political freedom. Instead, Chai’s post-conversion activism has been predicated on her new religious beliefs. Although Chai still regularly speaks in public about the student-led protests of 1989, since her religious conversion she has become devoted to a new issue: an end to the problems—particularly forced abortion—that have accompanied the CCP’s One Child Policy. Chai’s organization, All Girls Allowed, seeks to “mobilize the global community to advocate against the cruel methods used to enforce the One-Child Policy” and to “RESCUE victims of the One-Child Policy through...Ending Gendercide...Educating Abandoned Girls...Rescuing Trafficked Children...[and] Defending Mothers - Providing legal defense to forced abortion victims as well as mothers who are in danger of forced abortion or forced sterilization.” The group’s website explains that “All Girls

Allowed is motivated by the love of Jesus Christ... We draw inspiration from Jesus' countercultural concern and affection for women and children, and we hope likewise to restore to them the life, value and dignity that they deserve as fellow image-bearers of God." The site continues, "In all that we do, we seek to give God thanksgiving and praise for his work of redemption among his people."⁸² Thus, as with Fu, Chai is first and foremost a Christian, and her activism now springs from her Christian beliefs. Further, Chai no longer expresses hatred toward China's rulers, or calls for their removal. For Chai, the solution to China's ills is Christian repentance. As Chai relates, "if only the leaders of China, no matter what they have done and committed, if only they repent, they can receive the same kind of love and forgiveness that we all receive. What a great gift they will receive. Freedom for themselves and for China at last."⁸³

Like Fu and Chai, but unlike Zhou, Yuan Zhiming's commitment to Christianity has eclipsed his earlier engagement in political activism. Yet unlike Fu and Chai, Yuan's religious conversion has led to total abandonment of political activism oriented toward the CCP. Rather than criticizing the CCP for its persecution of him and other dissidents, Yuan now sees his hardship as part of God's work to make Yuan closer to God. Following his conversion, Yuan studied at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Mississippi. After his graduation in 1995, he worked as an editor for *Overseas Campus Magazine*, a "popular Christian gospel bimonthly dedicated to reaching out to overseas mainland Chinese students, scholars and professionals for Christ."⁸⁴ Concurrently, Yuan wrote a number of books about Christianity in China, including *Earthly Loss, Heavenly Gain*; *The Dialog of Faith*; *Lao Zi vs. Bible*; *Lai Zi and its New Translation*; and *China's Confession: God and the 400+0 Years of China*. Shortly after completing this last work, Yuan founded the California-based China Soul for Christ Foundation. The group's mission is to "Let God's light shine upon God's land, China. Let history become truth." With this goal in mind, the group states that "With Jesus Christ as our focus, the spread of

gospel as our purpose, modern media as the tool, videos and literature of profound impact, broad vision, and high quality as the pursuit, our commitment is to influence people's hearts and to awaken their souls.”⁸⁵ China Soul has produced dozens of videos, including: “China’s Confession,” “The Cross,” and “Shen Zhou.” Like Zhang Boli (who is also listed on the China Soul website), Yuan spends much of his time as an itinerant evangelist, regularly preaching to thousands. Around 2010, Yuan started a blog on Sina.net. At first, his postings were immediately deleted (presumably by the Chinese authorities), but of late they have not been subject to interference. In 2011, Yuan opened a Sina Weibo⁸⁶ account that reportedly has 70,000 followers who log on to read Yuan’s “Daily Breath.”⁸⁷ In his writings and speeches, Yuan articulates the view that the “essence” of Western culture—including democracy—is “Christian civilization.”⁸⁸ He continues, “I believe that the fruits of democracy cannot grow from people who have lost their souls...Oh China, if you cut yourself off from God’s life-giving flow...one day you will tremble in terror, your grieving tears washing your spirit, until you cry out to God in confession!”⁸⁹ In an interview with the co-authors, Yuan relates that he is no longer concerned with political matters; his focus is now on “hearts and souls” (心灵).⁹⁰

Like Yuan, Zhang Boli’s turn to Christianity has led to a total abandonment of activism—political or otherwise. Indeed, Zhang has come to support continued CCP rule, and praises China’s leaders for their progress in terms of religious and other kinds of freedom. As noted above, Zhang converted to Christianity while he was on the run in northern China. Upon his arrival in the U.S., he was a visiting scholar at Princeton University, after which he studied at Wheaton University in Chicago and the Logos Evangelical Seminary in Los Angeles. Thereafter, he earned an MA and PhD in Divinity at Singapore Seminary. In 2003, Zhang founded the Harvest Chinese Christian church, near Washington, DC. Since that time, he has traveled the globe to evangelize, regularly speaking to audiences of thousands. At an evangelistic conference

in California in 2007, Zhang's sermon was broadcast live online through CCN-TV, a U.S.-based ministry. Reportedly, mainland Chinese were able to access the sermon through portals such as Sina.net.⁹¹ Like Yuan, Zhang believes that the key to China's salvation lies in the Christian faith. He argues that freedom cannot be bestowed by a government; rather "it lies in your own heart."⁹² Similarly, Zhang states that "the spiritual is more important, more powerful, and more real than the physical."⁹³ In great contrast to Zhou Fengsuo, who in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics took to the streets to criticize the CCP, Zhang expressed his satisfaction with the direction of change in China, and the belief that political activism is not necessary:

There have been significant improvements in China's religious freedom comparing [sic] to the past. There are of course still many problems, but the advancements can be easily seen. In the past, China's government views Chinese's religious freedom as an internal affairs, but they are beginning to realize certain religious principles; faith is a longing deep inside the spirit. It surpasses the boundaries of countries, ethnic identity, skin-color, and political parties. I am very optimistic. As China develops more, its room for freedom will become wider. As the leadership becomes younger, intellectualized and professionalized, then religious freedom will naturally have a wider space.⁹⁴

Continuing, Zhang stated, "not everything should be tied together with the Beijing Olympics, because this will cause the pure gospel, cultural mandate, and mission visions to become politicized."⁹⁵ In sum, Zhang's conversion to Christianity has caused him to turn away from political activism.

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, Chinese dissident conversion parallels the experiences of Chinese Christians, particularly those who have converted while in the U.S. for study or as immigrants. Virtually all Chinese aged forty or older experienced the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, and even those who are younger have experienced dramatic changes within their lifetime as capitalism has transformed Chinese society. For many, the result has been a feeling of a lack of meaning or purpose in life beyond making money. For those who have moved overseas, the combination of these past experiences in mainland China and their new linguistic and cultural

isolation in a foreign land has exacerbated their sense of disconnectedness. For Chinese dissidents who were forced to abruptly flee their country, their families and their friends after witnessing the violent death of their fellow citizens and their dreams, such feelings of isolation and despair have been exponentially greater. In this context of internal anguish and unmooring, Chinese Christian believers who have reached out to these new immigrants and exiles have found fertile ground for conversion. In sum, the interaction of psychological crisis and contact with a new community that provides both human connection and a powerful feeling of spiritual purpose has led Chinese dissidents and Chinese immigrants alike to embrace Christianity.

With regard to the effect of Christian conversion on the political attitudes and behavior of dissident converts, one also finds some similarities with Chinese Christians more broadly. The vast majority of both overseas and mainland Chinese Christians are evangelical and fundamental in their beliefs. For these individuals—as with former dissidents-turned-Christians such as Zhang Boli and Yuan Zhiming—Christian conversion has led to an overwhelming focus on proselytizing so as to save the souls of others, and a diminution of (or even outright disappearance of) prior political concerns. Indeed, for Chinese Christians such as these, hardship on this earth—including political repression—is not viewed as an impetus to engage in political dissent, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen one’s faith.

Appendix A

Individuals on the Chinese Government's 1989 "Twenty One Most Wanted" List Highlighted: Christian Converts since 1989

1. Wang Dan (王丹)
2. Wuer Kaixi (吾尔开希)
3. Liu Gang(刘刚)
- 4. Chai Ling (柴玲)**
- 5. Zhou Fengsuo (周鋒鎖)**
6. Zhai Weiming (翟伟民)
7. Liang Jindun (梁擎墩)
8. Wang Zhengyun (王正云)
9. Zheng Xuguang (郑旭光)
10. Ma Shaofang (马少方)
11. Yang Tao (杨涛)
12. Wang Zhixin (王志新)
13. Feng Congde (封从德)
14. Wang Chaohua (王超華)
15. Wang Youcai (王有才)
16. Zhang Zhiqing (张志清)
- 17. Zhang Boli (张伯笠)**
18. Li Lu (李禄)
19. Zhang Ming (张铭)
20. Xiong Wei (熊炜)
- 21. Xiong Yan (熊焱)**

Appendix B

Dissidents Turned Christians

Name	Pre-Conversion	Conversion	Post-Conversion
Chai Ling	1989 student leader; on 21 Most Wanted list; fled to Paris, then U.S.	2009, in U.S.	Anti-abortion/anti-One Child Policy activist
Fang Zheng	1989 student activist and star athlete; paralyzed on June 4; expelled from school; 1992 competed in All-China Disabled Athletic Games, then banned from future competitions; 2009 permitted to leave China, later granted asylum in U.S.	2009, in U.S.	Some political activism
Fu Xiqiu (Bob Fu)	1989 student leader	1989, in Beijing	House church leader in Beijing, imprisoned for "illegal evangelism;" pastor, human rights/religious freedom activist in U.S.; founder of China Aid
Han Dongfang	1989 worker leader; Imprisoned 4 years	1993, in U.S.	Labor activist; founder of China Labour Bulletin

Wang Xizhe	Democracy Wall leader	2000, in U.S.	Political activist; leader of China Democracy Party
Xiong Yan	1989 student leader; on 21 Most Wanted list	2000, in U.S.	Chaplain, U.S. Army
Yuan Zhiming	co-writer of River Elegy; mentor of 1989 student leaders; named "black hand" behind 1989 demonstrations; 1989 exiled to Paris, then U.S.	1991, in U.S.	Christian evangelist; founder of China Soul for Christ Foundation
Zhang Boli	1989 student leader; on 21 Most Wanted list	1990, in Northern China	Pastor, Harvest Chinese Christian Church
Zhou Fengsuo	1989 student leader; on 21 Most Wanted list; imprisoned 1 year, followed by 1 year re-education	2003, in U.S.	Political activist; founder of Humanitarian China

Overseas Dissidents

Wang Bingzhang	U.S.-based founder of <i>China Spring</i>	in U.S. (year unknown)	political activist, affiliated with China Democracy Party; 2002 kidnapped in Vietnam and imprisoned in China
Yang Jianli	1989 overseas Ph.D. student, participated in Beijing student demonstrations, then returned to U.S.; 2002 returned to China to investigate labor unrest in North, imprisoned for 5 years; 2007 released to U.S.	in U.S. (year unknown)	political, labor, human rights, & religious freedom activist; founder of Initiatives for China, Foundation for China in the 21 st Century, Interethnic/Interfaith Leadership Conferences, China E-weekly (<i>Yibao</i>)

¹ See, for example, Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14(1) (2003), pp. 6-17; Dali Yang, *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Kelly Tsai, *Capitalism without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Stanford University Press, 2010).

² Estimates generally range from 50-100 million Protestants in China; most scholars lean toward the lower estimate. See Richard Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," *Journal of Democracy* 21(4), p. 62; Lauren B. Homer, "Registration of Chinese House Churches under China's 2005 Regulation on Religious Affairs," *Journal of Church and State* Vol. 52, No. 1 (2010), p. 61; Paul Hatthaway, "How Many Christians Are There in China?" (Asia Harvest, 2010); and Carsten Vala, "Pathways to the Pulpit: Leadership Training in 'Patriotic' and Unregistered Chinese Protestant Churches," in *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China*, ed. David L. Wank and Yoshiko Ashiwa (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³ Personal e-mail communication with co-author.

⁴ Nicholas Kristof, "China Calls TV Tale Subversive," *New York Times*, Oct. 2, 1989.

⁵ While there have been some reports that Liu Xiaobo and Wu'er Kaixi have converted to Christianity, our research has found no evidence to back this claim.

⁶ Yuan, Zhiming, "我为什么信耶稣》之一：从流亡到故乡" (Why I Believe in Jesus #1—From Exile to Home).

http://www.chinasoul.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1936&Itemid=105&lang=en-gb Accessed 3-23-12. Translated by Teresa Zimmerman-Liu.

⁷ Yuan Zhiming, "The Dialog of Faith." <http://www.chinasoul.org> Accessed 7-6-11.

⁸ Chai Ling, "Chai Ling's Testimony." <http://www.allgirlsallowed.org/chai-lings-full-testimony> Accessed 3-23-12.

⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: The Modern Library, 1902); Edwin Diller Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness* (London: Walter Scott, 1899).

¹⁰ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 183. Accessed at Google Books: <http://books.google.com>. It is interesting to note that Judith Herman documents the term "double consciousness" as being a late 19th century psychological term for what we now call PTSD. [Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from domestic abuse to political terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 11.]

¹¹ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 77-125.

¹² Ibid., p. 79.

¹³ "Attachment Theory and Religious Conversions: A Review and a Resolution of the Classic and Contemporary Paradigm Chasm." *Review of Religious Research*, 45:2 (Dec. 2003), p. 172-187.

¹⁴ Katrin Fiedler, "China's 'Christianity Fever' Revisited: Towards a Community-Oriented Reading of Christian Conversions in China," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 39(4) (2010), p. 78; in reference to John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 30(6) (1965), pp. 862-875.

See also Fenggang Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44(4) (2005), p. 425.

¹⁵ Fiedler, p. 78; in reference to Reginald W. Bibby and Merlin B. Brikerhoff, "When Proselytizing Fails: An Organizational Analysis," *Sociological Analysis* 35(3) (1974), pp. 89-200 and Lewis R. Rambo, "Theories of Conversion: Understanding and Interpreting Religious Change," *Social Compass* 46(3) (1999), pp. 259-271.

¹⁶ Fenggang Yang, "Chinese Conversion to Evangelical Christianity: The Importance of Social and Cultural Contexts." *Sociology of Religion* (53)3 (Autumn 1998), p. 254.

¹⁷ Yang, "Lost in the Market," p. 425.

¹⁸ Fiedler, "China's 'Christian Fever,'" p. 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 101.

²⁰ Chai Ling, *A Heart for Freedom* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), pp. 12-15.

²¹ Chai, "Chai Ling's Testimony."

²² Zhang Boli, *Escape from China: The Long Journey from Tiananmen to Freedom* (Trans. Kwee Kian Low) (New York: Washington Square Press, 1998), pp. 14-17.

²³ Yuan Zhiming, "The Authority of the Soul," 1993. <http://www.chinasoul.org> Accessed 7-6-11.

²⁴ Zhang, *Escape from China*, p. 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 28-29.

²⁶ Yuan, Zhiming, "Why I Believe in Jesus #1."

²⁷ Chai, "Chai Ling's Testimony." p. 1

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Zhang, *Escape from China*, p. 47.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 8.

³² *Ibid.* p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 116, 6.

³⁴ Yuan Zhiming, "Why I Believe in Jesus #1."

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Chai, "Chai Ling's Testimony."

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 4

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 5

⁴⁰ Zhou Fengsuo, interview on National Public Radio, June 4, 2009.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104967661> Accessed 3-25-12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Zhou Fengsuo, cited in, "The Tiananmen Generation," StudentNewsDaily.com, May 26, 2009.

<http://www.studentnewsdaily.com/world-briefs/the-tiananmen-generation/> Accessed 3-25-12.

⁴³ Stacy Mosher, "Tiananmen's Most Wanted—Where Are They Now?" *China Rights Forum* 2 (2004), p. 49.

http://www.hrchina.org/sites/default/files/oldsite/PDFs/CRF.2.2004/b6_TiananmensMost6.2004.pdf Accessed 3-25-12; "The Tiananmen Generation," StudentNewsDaily.com, May 26, 2009.

⁴⁴ "The Tiananmen Generation," StudentNewsDaily.com, May 26, 2009; and personal communication with co-authors.

⁴⁵ Bob Fu, cited in "The Tiananmen Generation," StudentNewsDaily.com, May 26, 2009.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; and personal communication with co-authors.

⁴⁷ Personal e-mail communication with co-author.

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- ⁴⁸ Zhang, *Escape from China*, p. 116.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 118.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Yuan Zhiming, “Why I Believe in Jesus #1.”
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ “The Tiananmen Generation,” StudentNewsDaily.com, May 26, 2009.
- ⁵⁸ Zhou Fengsuo, cited in, “The Tiananmen Generation.”
- ⁵⁹ Bob Fu, cited in, “The Tiananmen Generation.”
- ⁶⁰ “The Tiananmen Generation;” “Media Call: Chinese Campaigner Bob Fu available for interview,” Release International, Sept. 15, 2011.
<http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/posts/media-call-chinese-campaigner-bob-fu-available-for-interview-882.php> Accessed 3-25-12.
- ⁶¹ Chai, “Chai Ling’s Testimony,” p. 5.
- ⁶² James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 163, 186.
- ⁶³ Ibid., pp. 204-205.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 224.
- ⁶⁵ Zhang, *Escape from China*, pp. 128-129.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 162.
- ⁶⁷ Yuan Zhiming, “Why I Believe in Jesus #1.”
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Chai, “Chai Ling’s Testimony,” p. 6.
- ⁷³ Ibid., p. 7.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 8.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 9.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 10.
- ⁷⁷ Zhou Fengsuo, cited in Miranda Wijaya, “June 4 Remembered: 17 Years Later,” *Epoch Times*, June 9, 2006. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/6-6-9/42509.html> Accessed 3-26-12.
- ⁷⁸ Humanitarian China website, <http://h-china.org/default.aspx> Accessed 3-26-12.
- ⁷⁹ “Zhou Fengsuo Harassed During the San Francisco Torch Relay,” Standoff At Tiananmen, April 11, 2008. <http://www.standoffattiananmen.com/2008/04/zhou-fengsuo-harassed-during-san.html> Accessed 3-26-12.
- ⁸⁰ Hearing notice, “Twenty Years after the Crackdown: Tiananmen Square and Human Rights in China,” June 2, 2009, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, House Committee on Foreign Affairs. http://tlhrc.house.gov/hearing_notice.asp?id=1189 Accessed 3-26-12.
- ⁸¹ “Our Mission,” China Aid website. <http://www.chinaaid.org/p/mission.html> Accessed 3-26-12.
- ⁸² “Our Mission,” All Girls Allowed website. <http://www.allgirlsallowed.org/about/our-mission> Accessed 3-26-12.
- ⁸³ Chai, “Chai Ling’s Testimony,” p. 6.
- ⁸⁴ Yuan Zhiming, SourceWatch http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Yuan_Zhiming Accessed 3-26-12; interview with co-authors.

⁸⁵ “About China Soul,” China Soul for Christ Foundation website.

http://www.chinasoul.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54%3A2009-10-21-06-36-50&catid=26%3A2009-10-16-02-04-46&Itemid=50&lang=en-gb Accessed 3-26-12.

⁸⁶ Sina Weibo is a Chinese microblogging site that resembles a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook. As of early 2012, it reportedly had 300 million users. It is said to be used by 30% of mainland Chinese Internet users [“Sina Weibo,” Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sina_Weibo Accessed 3-26-12].

⁸⁷ Interview with co-authors.

⁸⁸ Yuan Zhiming, “The Authority of the Soul,” *Overseas Campus Magazine* (Nov. 1993), pp. 34-37. Translation: http://www.oc.org/eng_txt/o0434.htm Accessed 3-26-12.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Interview with co-authors.

⁹¹ Luke Leung, “Rev. Boli Zhang Leads Millions to Christ through Internet Broadcasting Technology,” *The Gospel Herald*, Nov. 1, 2007. <http://www.gospelherald.net/article/missions/43969/rev-boli-zhang-leads-millions-to-christ-through-internet-broadcasting-technology.htm> Accessed 3-26-12.

⁹² Zhang Boli, interview with National Public Radio, cited in Janell Fiarman, “The Bible: an escape to freedom,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 19, 2010. <http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Articles-on-Christian-Science/2010/1119/The-Bible-an-escape-to-freedom> Accessed 3-26-12.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Zhang Boli interview with Luke Leung, “Rev. Boli Zhang on religious freedom and opportunities to preach the gospel during the Olympic,” *The Gospel Herald*, April 22, 2008. <http://www.gospelherald.net/article/ministries/44203/rev-boli-zhang-on-religious-freedom-and-opportunities-to-preach-the-gospel-during-the-olympic.htm> Accessed 3-26-12.