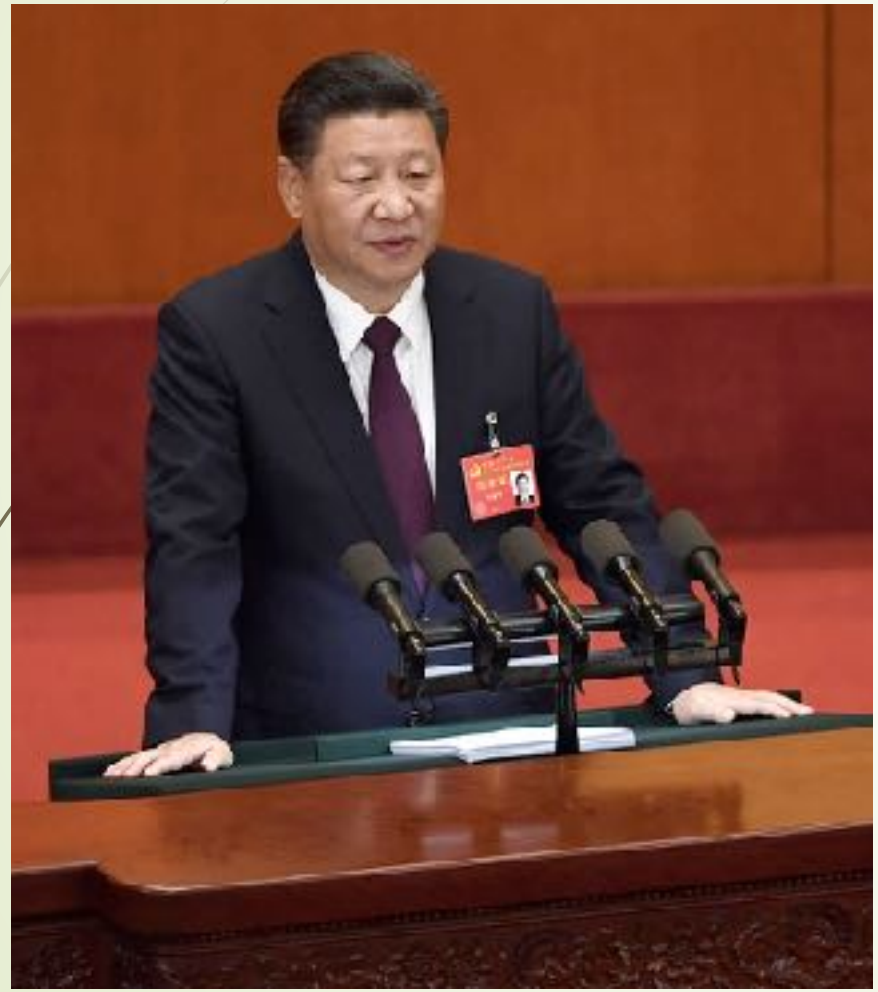


"Sinicization" of Religion and *Xie Jiao* in China: The Case of the Church of Almighty God

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"Sinicization" and Fight Against "Xie Jiao"



- In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping and other top Chinese leaders called for a further "**sinicization**" of religion and for a stronger, merciless fight against "**xie jiao**"
- Both words are politically constructed in China, beyond their literal meaning

Sinicization

- "Sinicization" of religions means that they should strictly follow the leadership and directives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Religious movements born in China and directed by Chinese are not regarded as "sinicized" if they are not fully integrated in the CCP-dominated Chinese system





Xie Jiao

- Chinese Web sites often translate *xie jiao* as "evil cults" in order to elicit the sympathy of Western opponents of "cults," but the translation is wrong
- *Xie Jiao* means "heterodox teachings." Laws against *xie jiao* exist since the late Ming era, and the Emperor "decided on the basis of his own judgement" which religions and movements should be listed as *xie jiao**

*V. Goossaert and D.A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*, University of Chicago Press 2011, 27.

A Continuing Policy

- This policy was continued by the Chinese Republic and by the CCP regime. On January 25, 2017, China's People's Supreme Court defined *xie jiao* as religious groups that "confuse and deceive" the Chinese "by fabricating and spreading superstitious fallacies and other means." Such a vague definition perpetuates the possibility for the power to list as *xie jiao* any group CCP does not like



Three Categories of Religions in China

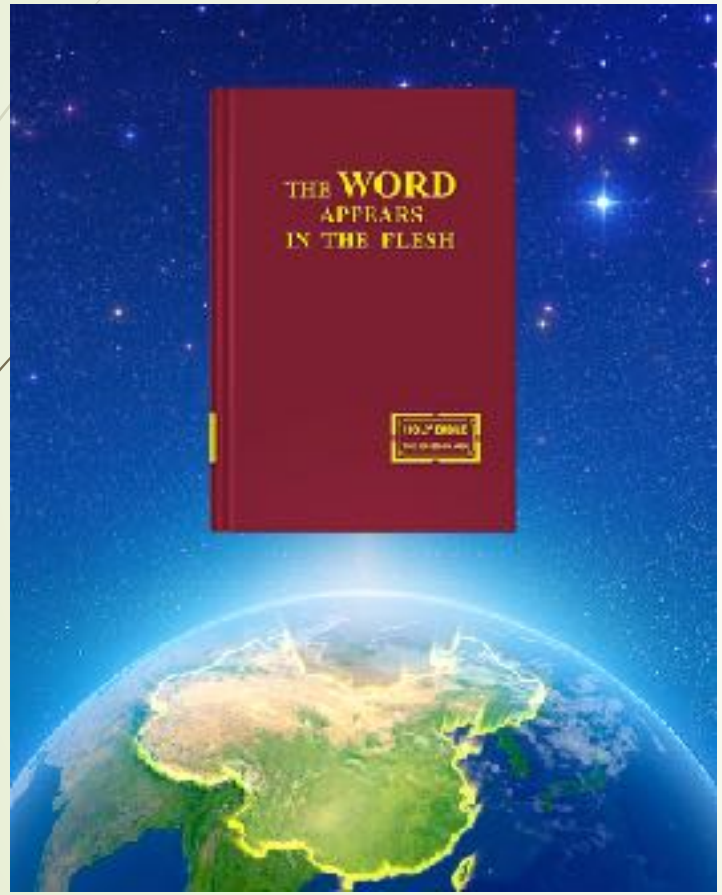
- The concepts of sinicization and *xie jiao* govern the distinction between :

- **fully sinicized religions**, allowed to operate publicly under the control of, and with leaders appointed by CCP, including the unified Three Self Protestant Church and the Patriotic Catholic Association

- **non-sinicized religions**, including the underground Catholic Church loyal to Rome and the flourishing Protestant House Churches, that live precariously and could be hit by the regime at any time

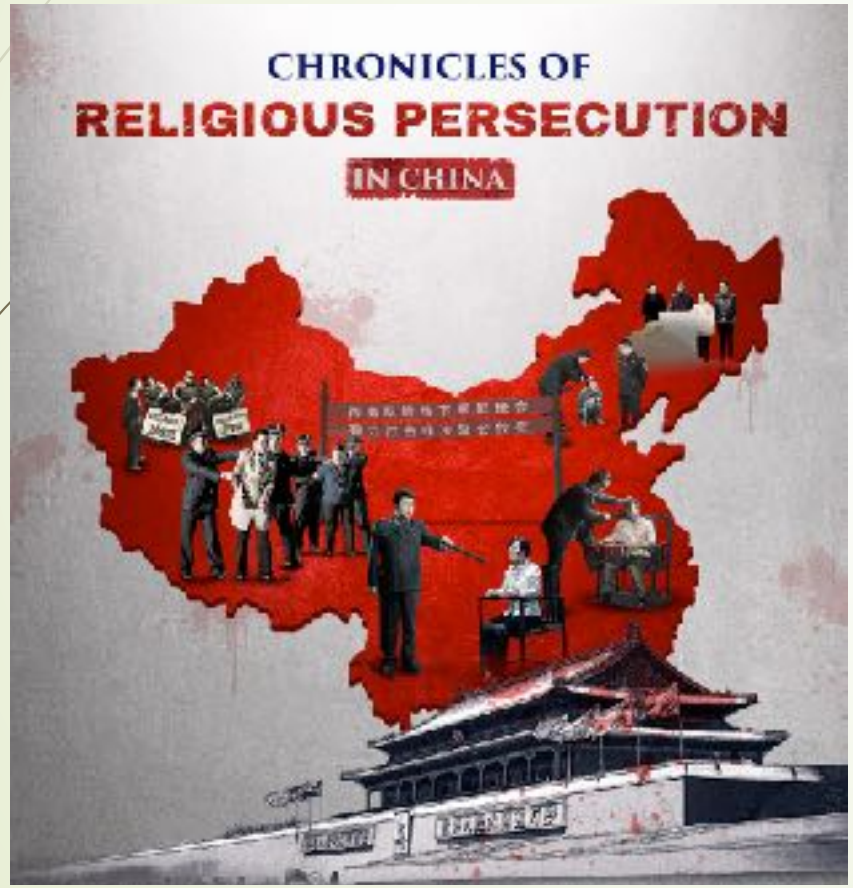
- **xie jiao**, which the regime promises to "extirpate like a tumor": under Article 300 of the Chinese Criminal Code, being active in a *xie jiao* is a crime punished with 3 to 7 years (or more) in jail

The Church of Almighty God (CAG)



- CAG is a new religious movement founded in China, in 1991. It teaches that Jesus returned to Earth and incarnated in a Chinese woman as Almighty God, a living person who teaches the fullness of truth.
- CAG is perceived by CCP as a fierce enemy of Communism. In fact, it identifies CCP with the Great Red Dragon of the *Book of Revelation*. However, it also teaches that the Great Red Dragon would fall by itself under the weight of its own errors, and there is no appeal to a revolution

CAG persecuted as a *xie jiao*



- Credited by Chinese governmental sources with a membership between three and four million, CAG has been continuously listed as a *xie jiao* since 1995. Several hundred thousand CAG members have been arrested in China. This is confirmed by frequent references in CCP's own literature to extensive anti-CAG campaigns. CAG also claims, with believable evidence, that many CAG members have been tortured, and at least 30 died while in custody in highly suspicious circumstances.

The McDonald's Murder

- The Chinese regime justifies the persecution by accusing CAG of various crimes, including the murder of a woman in a McDonald's diner in Zhaoyuan in 2014. Scholarly studies have proved that the murder was committed by a *different* new religious movement, with nothing to do with CAG



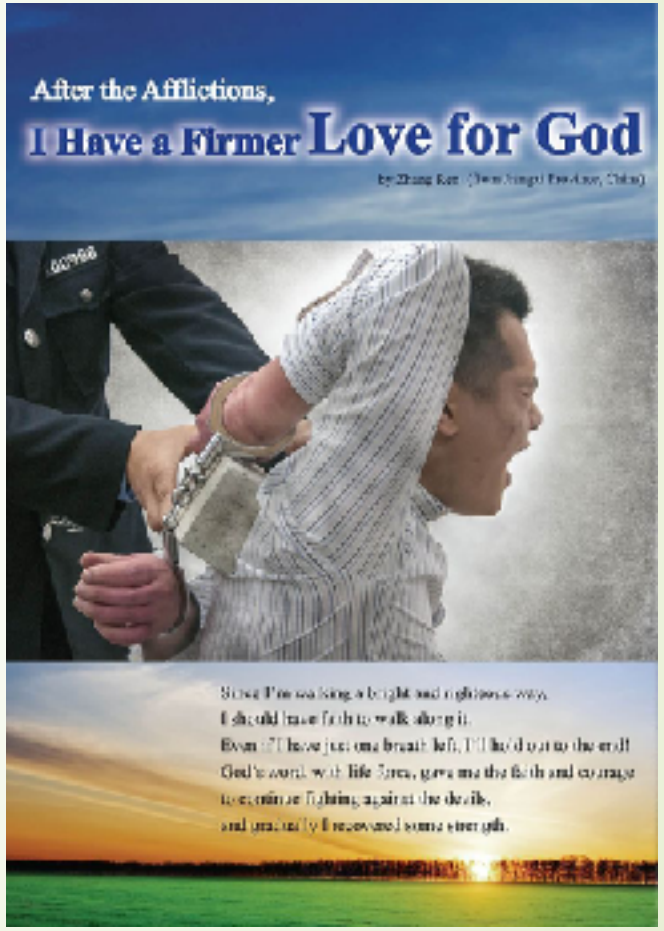
Independent Investigations



- I was among the Western scholars invited by the CCP-related Chinese Anti-Xie-Jiao Association to two 2017 conferences in Zhengzhou and Hong Kong to discuss the notion of *xie jiao* and the Church of Almighty God. I went there with an open mind, but concluded, based on documents supplied by the Chinese authorities themselves, that the accusations against CAG are "fake news" fabricated by the Chinese propaganda

Refugee Status

- There can be no reasonable doubt that the mere fact of being a member of CAG in China means to be exposed to a serious risk of imprisonment for several years, if not worse. This should mean that CAG members who escaped abroad are entitled to the status of refugees for reasons of religious persecution



Asylum Should Be Granted!



- As a scholar concerned with religious liberty, I regard it as a scandal that in South Korea and in several European countries, under various pretexts, the obvious fact that CAG asylum seekers would face persecution if they would return to China is sometimes not recognized

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