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Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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•(0835)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome.

This is meeting 33 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Thursday, May 29, 2008.

Today we're continuing our consideration of our subcommittee's draft report on the Canada-China bilateral human rights dialogue.

We will hear testimony today by video conference. In our first hour, appearing as an individual, is Reverend Jian Miller Zhuang. He was born in south China and was a young communist and youth leader. He came to Canada in 1981. Since 1996 he has travelled back to China a number of times, working on social and community development with orphans, youth factory workers, and youth at risk; working in recovery programs with men; doing family and marriage enrichment; and providing consultation and counselling to China law enforcement personnel.

Via the new technology, we're very pleased to welcome Reverend Jian Zhuang with us this morning.

Can you hear me, sir?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang (As an Individual): Yes, loud and clear, and I will say good evening from Hong Kong.

The Chair: And we'll say good morning from Ottawa.

We look forward to your comments. I'm not certain if you have appeared before a committee before, but we would appreciate your comments of approximately ten minutes, and then we will go into a question and answer time. We'll begin with the official opposition, then go to the Bloc Québécois, then to the government side, and then to the NDP.

Reverend Zhuang, welcome. We anticipate your remarks.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: This is a wonderful opportunity to see you all, from Hong Kong and also part of China.

I'm very pleased to be a Canadian working inside China and also, as a returnee, to be helping with development on a social level and also in all different areas for development in a country like China.

First I would like to say I very much appreciate what the Government of Canada is doing with regard to China, even in history. The Government of Canada is playing a very important role in social development. In that sense, we have great respect for Canadians and their contribution to China over all these years.

As a Canadian working in China, even though I'm Chinese in appearance, I think people here probably respect me as a Canadian. I am very proud to be a Canadian serving and working inside China. As I said, I'm mostly working in social development, so I have a different level of commitment and a different level of service in relation to the Government of China and also to some social committees of China.

Today China is changing. It continues to change more and more. I'm very appreciative of the changes, and I am looking forward to more changes and developments for individuals and also for communities. I see this progressing. The leaders of China are more open than before to suggestions and opinions. For example, at this time, with the Sichuan earthquake, I definitely see the Government of China changing tremendously. It has opened the door to foreign help on many levels. Actually, tomorrow morning I will be in the Sichuan area, right after this meeting. One of the things happening is our helping and working together, using and applying some Canadian systems to help surviving families and children grieve and heal.

One of the things they have asked for is to copy and also get references about our system in Canada, about victims services and grief counselling. I'm proud to be a Canadian and to be part of that. I will be meeting some of the key counsellors and we will introduce this kind of approach.

Also, they are really concerned about personal rights. I really appreciate that they want to rebuild the country and at the same time open the door to outside help. This is what I am experiencing.

For the last five years, due to my family's business basically related to law enforcement, I have had many opportunities to deal closely with law enforcement and with human rights issues. They are the first ones, the first good that can be considered. I am serving with them and am trying to introduce some of the working environment of our RCMP. I worked with victims services with the RCMP before, and we're very pleased to know them and, through them, this system.

Just to give you my remarks on that, I see that China basically is changing to a way that is more open, with more respect for the value of the human being. Of course, there are some things that need to be considered. China does have an eastern culture, I would say, an Asian culture as background. That is a little different from the western culture. Individual rights are still not in first place. Government rights are still the first priority.

● (0840)

This is the Chinese culture at this point, but I see that the government is more open to receiving opinions and to listening to the voice of the people, especially the People's Congress. Each time they hold a People's Congress, we really see the suggestions and opinions from the grassroots level.

That is my input for this.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Zhuang.

We'll go into the first round of questioning, and we'll ask Raymond Chan to direct the first questions.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to the committee, Reverend Zhuang. It's nice to see you, even though it's via the television. We haven't seen each other for at least five or six years, I guess.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes.

Hon. Raymond Chan: I was so very pleased to hear you're doing so much in China. There are quite a number of issues that we want to deal with in this committee. One of the areas is underground churches. I know you have been working with quite a number of them over the years. Could you tell us what the situation has been with the underground Christians for the last few years? How is what is going on now different compared to five and ten years ago, and what do you see as the future of those people who worship Christ underground?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I will compare it to ten years ago. I first started working directly with the underground churches in 1996. After five years, basically I worked with both the government church and the underground church. Even today, we do hold conferences and leadership training sessions among both. We see they are more open and that there's more awareness on both sides.

There are also more underground churches becoming open churches that are registered with the government. They have found a benefit to working with the government on the social level. If they remain underground, they cannot participate at the social level, so there are more and more open churches.

Yet I think the government is probably still watching and looking after some underground churches. If they do see some so-called illegal activities, they will intervene, but mostly what we see is more and more open even to the underground churches. If the underground churches really just worship, obey the law, and basically keep their numbers at a level that is not threatening, it is still legal to do that. In some areas—probably in the larger areas—the government still respects those activities.

Of course, one part of my work is also to try to encourage the underground churches to learn to register with the government and to understand that they need to be light and soft in public, and then they do so. I work from the north to the south, the west to the east, in the underground church network. They respect our contribution because they see the benefits.

This earthquake is really one of the examples. A large number of so-called underground churches are participating in these activities.

What they do is register with the government to do that, so I see that the persecution we're used to now occurs less often than it did before.

● (0845)

Hon. Raymond Chan: What's the difference between a government-registered church and an underground church? What kind of control does the government have on those registered churches? When you say the underground churches have to be very careful, have you seen any people arrested by the government, such as the leaders of those underground churches, in the last five or ten years?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Five years ago there were more, but actually today there are fewer arrests of leaders. In the last two years basically the number of those jailed is less.

In the government church and the house church, the difference is the registration. Some of the churches had to close because of their numbers, and also they were meeting in places where the building was not safe. So basically the government comes and lets them know. First the police will come or maybe the religious bureau will come and let them know; they will write down their names and warn them that there is a safety issue or maybe their numbers are too big and they are bothering the neighbours, and they ask them to consider respecting that. If they continue to do that, after the third or fourth time they will send the police to warn them. That is the procedure.

I grew up in a police family, and most of my friends are still working in the police force. That's the procedure. They will not at first come to the scene. They will be asked by the religious bureau to come and interfere. They have to do that according to the law. If there is a request made by the police.... The church can sue them and ask a lawyer to represent them, or just go with some people and do some legal matters.

● (0850)

Hon. Raymond Chan: The government knows of the existence of the underground churches. They know they are there. They know their numbers.

Do they interfere when the outside Christian world tries to work with the underground churches? Do they get interference from the government?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, sometimes, especially with foreigners. They will be careful to do that because they are still under the surveillance of the government.

I do have some colleagues who were very politely asked by the police of China to leave the country. The leader had to write down their names and register their activities, but no arrests are taking place.

This happens in Beijing and it is happening in Shanghai. Sometimes they have activities in a hotel, and their number is 100 to 200 people. Basically they didn't register their activities with the government. They are foreign activities. They have to register first. If they are working in the open and register with the government, this can be done.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Reverend Zhuang.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Thank you, Chairman.

The Chair: We'll now move to our colleague from the Bloc Québécois. Madame Barbot, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Reverend Zhuang, you said there is an established procedure to deal with underground religions. There is often a difference between procedure and what actually happens. I would like you to tell us about the present treatment of so-called underground religious communities in China. First, what is it that makes them underground and how are they treated when there are problems?

[*English*]

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I think you probably all understand that China is dealing with 1.3 billion people, and the landscape is very large. I can say there are procedures in certain areas and in the practice of law, and they still need time to proceed and they need time to educate. It's also a matter for those departments or those places....

For religious activities in China, of course, the procedures are already set. The first interference will come from the religious bureau, in whatever matter, such as with the Muslims, the Christians, the Catholics, or the Buddhists. The religious bureau will be the first one to follow up all those matters, regardless of where. The police really interfere by saying they threaten what they call the community's safety. That's what they come for.

I don't know if I've answered your questions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes, it's all right.

The issue of human rights is obviously the one that we are most interested in. There are presently specific cases of human rights violations. The Canadian government is looking for the best way to deal with the Chinese government. Since you are both Canadian and Chinese, you may be able to tell us about how we can best intervene. Should we publicly question the Chinese government, that is make them aware of the cases we are concerned about, or should we provide them with a list? I am thinking of the list of issues that we are concerned about and the list of people who have human rights problems. What do you think is the best way to deal with this?

[*English*]

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: My opinion as a Canadian Chinese—well, a Chinese Canadian—is that in the Chinese culture, probably one of the main outstanding things is that everything has to go with harmony as a whole. An individual has a vote; this is very western. For China, basically an individual has to respect holistic harmony.

I think as a Canadian government we probably do have a way to keep the relationship and then also to build a bridge with the government of China to let them hear your voice, and then also to build a relationship. I think probably one of the key issues for China to improve in human rights issues is to keep the relationship, and then to build a relationship with the government from the government level. That's really helpful, because Chinese really respect Canadians.

Also, I think that in terms of the historical background, the relationship remains open, and yet I think they will learn from the best of the Canadian system. Then they will implement that in time.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: If I got that right, you think that the relations between China and Canada are good and that Canada can influence China on the human rights issue. However, I did not really understand how this can be done. Should the Canadian government talk to the Chinese government about specific cases? Should it rather provide them with a list of people whom we know have problems? In other words, should this be done publicly or is it better to deal directly with members of the Chinese government?

● (0855)

[*English*]

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I think probably both ways are a means. I think from the government level it's to build a relationship with the government. Then also, of course, it's China; as Chinese, we will probably consider it a face issue, which is.... I don't know; the west should be looking at that. In a face issue, basically they want to protect the image of the government.

In a relationship and if there's a relationship between both countries, I think we can directly mention some of the names to the government, and then also in a respectful way let them consider those people, or those issues can be studied or can be worked with by both governments concerning those people.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Goldring, please.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You mentioned earlier that Asia has a different culture from that of the west. It puts government first rather than citizens. Is accepting that as a truism not part of the difficulty? This is not to criticize China per se, but the process we've been using.

We've been hearing many comments on inadequacy of approach and needing to enhance it, to renew it. What I'm looking for are real suggestions on how that could be done. There was mention one time of utilizing this committee study of a democracy group, to see if that couldn't be partially incorporated into it.

My concern here is that if there is this.... I'm not sure if this is true for all of Asia, but it may very well be, as China is advancing into the more modern global economy. It's not necessarily that this is an actual cultural establishment. Is it not that they haven't had the necessity to have that type of citizen interaction in the past and now it's a learning experience of how to do it?

Maybe you could offer some suggestions on what we could do to re-engage, if we do so, and how we can do that differently so we address some of those concerns and make more concrete gains on the human rights issue. It seems to have rather flatlined and not advanced as far and as fast as it should and could.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I think China is advancing, but probably not at the speed we would like to see. I want to see that advance more too.

I see that China is opening the door more and more now. Of course this year is very critical, with the biggest event in history—Olympics 2008. They have to consider two things. They have to consider the security, which is for the well-being of the whole country, but at the same time open the door for more things to come. The balancing of this is a bit difficult.

I see China dealing with some of the key issues of their essential government, which is group decision-making. It influences them, and maybe it hinders them. Also, there's a gap in between.

● (0900)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Don't we have to be careful in this discussion? The real purpose of the discussion is the sense of the inadequacy of the dialogue that has been conducted. We're all saying there have been some advances, but there is the feeling that it has not been going as rapidly as it could or should.

That's the whole reason for the discussion of this group. We're looking for ideas and suggestions on how we could do better at that dialogue. Accepting the fact that there have been some advances, but not being prepared to accept that the slowness of other advances is a cultural or inherent situation that has to be dealt with, we're looking for ways it can be advanced more rapidly.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I think more dialogue, or maybe even inviting some key leaders to Canada to learn, is how to advance. That's another way to do that. That's my suggestion.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Do you think my comment on the democracy group is something the Canadian government could specialize in if it has the sense and feeling that it could do more work in that area internationally—working on the democratic level of it?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I think so. I think Canada has a special role for this. It could also provide education to the key leaders of China. If there is a relationship that can be built, then this is certainly a great issue. Canada has a multicultural benefit in this. I think this is definitely a great way to go.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you.

I apologize to our guests as I came in late and didn't catch all of your presentations. I just came from another part of the world. I was in Afghanistan and got back only yesterday. I apologize for my tardiness.

I was interested in your comments and the back-and-forth in questions. It seems to me your theme was building on relationships between government, but also between Canadians and the Chinese. I think that's good advice.

You talked about the Department of Religious Affairs and the relationship between that group and the police. You touched on it a minute ago. My understanding was that if there was a concern, or if there was a group that hadn't been properly registered, the Department of Religious Affairs would be the first involved.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Paul Dewar: If the group was not willing to register, it would follow that the police would be involved. Is that correct?

● (0905)

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, but it depends on the level of activity. If the police come in, it's mostly on the security and interference with the neighbourhood.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Would some of the people who are employed by the Department of Religious Affairs have a background in investigations, or are they more cultural liaison types? Who are the people who work for the Department of Religious Affairs? Do they work in tandem with the police? In other words, do they have separate offices? Are they people who are trained differently? Are they interchangeable with the police?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: They are people who are trained differently. They are just one of the departments that are separated from the police department. They look after religious matters. They relate to all religious matters. Of course, under the religious bureau there are different departments that will deal with Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam, but it's a religious bureau as a whole.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I wanted to probe a bit on numbers. Are there thresholds that are acceptable with respect to a religious community? If the religious affairs bureau is looking into something, they might be looking at disruptions within the community. If a particular religious sect started to grow beyond a certain number, would that be a reason for investigation by the religious affairs bureau?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Basically, eight to twenty people is acceptable.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's the criterion.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: That's right, and if it goes beyond that, the government has the right to come in and interfere.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Let's imagine that I'm organizing a community-based religious group. I decide to follow a particular religion. I get beyond twenty, and there's an investigation. Let's say that I then apply for recognition. If I'm recognized by the government, is there a limit to how far I can grow my religious community?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: If they approve, then you could grow as large as 5,000.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But this would depend on the religious sect.

Are there certain religions that aren't approved?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, basically these are the mainline religions: Catholic, Protestant, etc. Muslims have a special right and it's totally different from Christianity. In China, Islam is considered a people group. They have their own local autonomy and basically don't need to apply. They can form their religious sectors right away because they are a people group. When they get together, it is a people group gathering. It's a combination of a religion and a people group. Tibetans do the same. They are a people group and are not considered to be just a religion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So they would see this as more of a cultural organization than a religious group.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Is there a list? Maybe we wouldn't be privy to it, but does a list exist of religions that aren't recognized by the state? Would people be aware of it before they applied to be recognized?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, you're right, because China only recognizes several main religions. Other than that, the others are very hard to apply for.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So there would be an assumption if it wasn't in these categories that you shouldn't bother applying because it wouldn't be recognized. Is that correct?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: You're correct. Yes, you're right.

● (0910)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. I think I'll leave it there, and thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Dewar, and welcome back.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Reverend, it is very enlightening to hear your views.

A lot of people have come here and said China has moved tremendously—and I understand it. There are 1.3 billion, 1.4 billion people, and their growth seems to be steady and slow.

The question to you, sir, is this. The numbers have already been explained, but can you tell me how many Christians or Muslims there are in China? By that question, I mean the total number of Christians, Catholics, Protestants, all denominations put together.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Muslims and Christians are almost an equal number now, according to.... Basically, let me see, there are 100 million Christians.

Mr. Wajid Khan: About 100 million. That's a pretty big number. How do they get together and do their worship when the limitation is eight to twenty people? If you say 100 million people, there have to be an awful lot of churches, underground churches, storefronts, and whatever.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, this is encouraging everywhere.

Of course, I think for Muslims, basically, they're considered as a people's group. If you go to northwest China, almost every mile you will see a mosque.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Are they regionally distributed? In what part of China would the Christians be?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Christians are all over China. Of course, people are meeting at homes. They can be registered and they're meeting at home. So that's why they have so many meeting places. One of the churches that we're helping has over 10,000 people. All of them cannot meet in one place, so they meet in different places, in homes and also in factories, in office spaces.

Mr. Wajid Khan: The general view in certain minds is that the Canada-China human rights dialogue is not necessarily working and it has not actually achieved its objective and it's not going fast enough. So there's a fair amount of criticism. In your opinion, do you believe that the Canada-China bilateral human rights dialogue is succeeding? Or is it not succeeding?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: In a positive way I would probably say yes, it can be succeeding, with a special relationship...Canada and China.

Mr. Wajid Khan: From what you have told us, there's no freedom of religion; you have members and the police come in. I know in certain other areas, as the economy grows the middle class grows, and there's more transparency, some say, in the government that is happening slowly. But particularly from the villages aspect, we still hear people from Falun Gong and others who say they're being persecuted. Could you shed some light on that?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: My personal view toward Falun Gong is that, basically, I really think the Government of China does need to control that, because that was threatening the government. When you see there is a huge number of people who protest and also destroy their own lives for the protest, I think probably that is something that needs to be controlled. Also, there is something going on with that religious sect. Really, for me, I feel that is not a religion, not a belief; it goes beyond that.

Mr. Wajid Khan: So you feel it's a cult that needs to be controlled.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I think so.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Would you say, sir, that whenever there's an organized association, a community, a religion...? Does the government feel threatened by any organized groups that may start to become political? Is that the reason, or is there any other reason?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Well, there are some other reasons, sir.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Could you shed some light? Would you be comfortable talking about the reasons, or are you not comfortable talking about that openly, since you are in China?

● (0915)

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Well, Canadian to Canadian, yes, it's open.

There's a threat in some communities, I think, for security reasons. Also, there's some nonsense going on when they practise—I repeat, practise—those religions and then encourage people not to use medicine, only by one way of doing. Those are the things that sometimes we do see, and it can be that we do see it needs to be dealt with, with some logic and reasonableness.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

We'll move to Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Merci.

Thank you very much, Reverend, for being here with us and sharing your experience.

You said in your opening remarks that you are working in law enforcement and human rights. In 1996-97 the Chinese government introduced a series of amendments to criminal law and criminal procedural law. In recent years also, I think in the 16th and 17th Communist Party congresses, there was a promotion of fairness and justice in the whole of the Chinese society and they promised to implement the rule of law involving the country's legal and justice system.

Do you see in your work a significant improvement for the Chinese society in the field of law enforcement, not just access to courts of justice but access to a just rule of law as reflected in international standards?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, they are working toward that. I will give you one example where we did that and then you can see it.

One time we brought a group of law enforcement people from the U.S. to visit one of the departments, the security bureau. We had a presentation. At the end of the presentation we exchanged gifts with the local police. One of the T-shirts handed to the local government police chief had a list of the people who had died on duty. He held that T-shirt and asked what those names were for and we told him the story. He turned back to his colleagues and told them that this was the way we needed to do that, to respect every law enforcement officer's life.

Right away after that, he told us that in one of the provinces in China, almost every day a police officer dies on duty. He said to be in law enforcement in China is a great danger, so we need to remember those who die on duty. Then he shared what happens in China today as a police officer. Basically, they have to learn according to the law and they have to respect the law. At the same time, they must follow the procedure and then do what is right.

These are things that are right now in practice. When we hear that, we say this is very respectful. Today, to be a policeman in China is still a very, very dangerous job.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

Do you see some improvements in the legal system, and do you think it will bring a bit of an improvement in human rights? Do you think if you have more democracy and a better legal system, it will improve human rights, and not the opposite?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, you're right. I think probably there's more democracy in China compared with the time I lived in China ten years ago. It's totally different now. Personally, living and working in China, I feel safer. Also, the people I work with, from the rural area to the city area, basically do feel safer.

Mr. Bernard Patry: In March 2004 the Chinese government amended for the second time the 1979 constitution. One of those amendments was to recognize human rights as a constitutional principle. The Chinese government signed a number of international conventions on women's rights, children's rights, and a lot of things like that.

Do you see this going on, or did they just sign it for the pleasure of signing it and to please the international community? Or do you see some changes within China?

• (0920)

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, definitely, I see changes. Especially, as a Chinese person, I see our main leaders, the chairman and also the prime minister, for example, these two, visiting disaster scenes—snow storms, and also the earthquake site. For the first time in my life, I see the prime minister arriving on the scene on the first day already and caring about individuals, caring about people's lives. I think this is probably the improvement, setting an example to influence a different government level. I think the key leaders taking

part in saving lives, treating those as more important than their daily work, is a great example of improvement.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Also, I think their opening of doors to other foreign assistance, even to the frontier of the earthquake, is definitely something that's changing in China.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Reverend Zhuang.

As the chair, I would like to use my prerogative to ask a number of questions, because I found this remarkably interesting.

Canada views China as a very important trading partner, a very important player, especially with the growing economy China has. We certainly want to continue a close relationship with China. We understand the importance of two-way trade, exporting and importing from China, but we also want to help effect change when it comes to human rights violations or the perception of slow growth in the principle of human rights.

Are you aware of the group Voice of the Martyrs?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes.

The Chair: You are aware of that organization. They have video that I received where there's a picture of a crane tearing down a church in China.

Does that type of thing happen in China?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Not often.

The Chair: Not very often?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: I do know the church. There is some other story behind that. When they show that building being destroyed, sometimes we find out there are some other stories behind it. There are some other issues dealing with that building. Basically, the building code and the construction of the building is something they have to deal with in terms of local laws.

The Chair: Another question I have—because I have about four quick little questions—is are all provinces in China equal when it comes to the governance of those provinces? For example, do we have more religious freedom in some provinces than in other provinces? Is it because there may be a governor who may have a heavy hand on some of the churches? So is there a difference between provinces or between local governments?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Yes, there's a difference, for sure, because different governors have different ways of controlling their own places. Definitely, yes, it's different.

The Chair: You've already talked about the numbers of the churches and how the authorities try to hold the numbers down, but what would constitute a church conducting an illegal action? That is, you also stated that sometimes church activity can interfere with the community. Give me an example of what might interfere with the community. For example, would singing hymns or singing in worship constitute an interference in the community? Would it be interference if someone were to approach someone outside the church and ask them about their faith?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Well, I think definitely it is not just the noise issue. Sometimes there are too many outsiders coming and going in the community. Also, you see, China has a lot of high-rises being built right now, and in the cities they have what they call secure villages. So basically that is what they will see.

Also, of course, in some places they do what you would call confrontational evangelism. That sometimes does some real damage.

Of course those are not the only issues.

• (0925)

The Chair: Does the government ever try to control the message of the church? For example, you are involved in social and community development with orphans. They may think that would be all right. Do they work with youth at risk or recovery programs? The social types of programs that the church may carry out would be accepted, but do they control the message of what we may call the gospel or the message of the scripture?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: If you're talking about control, it's only by our religious affairs bureau. They used to have to submit their sermons before they preached, but this has been changed for the last ten years. You don't need to submit the sermons, and the pastor or the minister of the church can create the message.

Of course there's one requirement: no political issues are to be brought up on the pulpit.

The Chair: All right.

You said that some have a tougher time applying for the licence than others. What denominations would have a difficult time receiving a permit in order to conduct a worship service?

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: Well, in China, basically there are no denominations—only Protestant and Catholic. So you can be registered under these two categories. It's not like in Canada and the U.S., where there are Baptists or Pentecostals. There are none here. In China, basically, if you are a Christian church, then you can register.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Our time is unfortunately pretty well up. We really want to thank you for your testimony today.

Again, Canada and China have what we call the bilateral human rights dialogue. It's not just a generic dialogue where we sit down and discuss; it is a format for how we come before each other and discuss human rights in each other's countries. That's what we're studying. We're trying to figure out if there is a better way of communicating with China. So we certainly thank you. From the perspective of your involvement with both the legal system, the policing, and also the religious aspect, you certainly have been of much help today.

Thank you. We wish you all the best there in Hong Kong, and God bless you.

Rev. Jian Miller Zhuang: You too. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to suspend for a few minutes, and then we will come back with our next guest.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (0930)

The Chair: Committee, we'll call you back to order here.

In our second hour we're very pleased to have with us Thomas In-Sing Leung, professor at the Culture Regeneration Research Society.

Dr. Leung has been focusing on the study of Chinese history and philosophy throughout his years of education and right up to the present. In 1999 the International Biographical Centre honoured Dr. Leung as one of the century's outstanding scholars. He was also elected as a member in the *Five Hundred Leaders of Influence* in Cambridge, England. He has produced some 29 books, more than 150 academic articles, over 5,000 articles, and 100 message tapes and CDs. He is also a well-known radio talk show host.

We certainly want to welcome you here today, Professor Leung, and we look forward to what you have for us. If you would give us your comments for approximately ten minutes, we will then go into questions that the members of Parliament here in Ottawa would have for you.

I hope we're coming through loud and clear, and again, welcome.

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung (Professor, Culture Regeneration Research Society): Thank you.

I have a long paper, eight pages, on the observation of the human rights issue in China, but I summarized it in four pages.

I was born and educated in Hong Kong. I received my PhD in the United States, majoring in Chinese philosophy.

In 1993 I began my work in China through the Culture Regeneration Research Society to promote the concept of compassion and human dignity as a replacement for the ideology of class struggle in communist China.

CRRS has a Christian background and is a charitable non-government and non-profit organization registered in Canada. CRRS is fully funded by overseas donations, having chapters in the U.S.A. and Hong Kong. CRRS has 14 years of service, all on a voluntary basis, and no business affiliation, nor has it made any profits in the People's Republic of China.

My work at CRRS is composed of three different levels.

First, I have dialogued with leading intellectuals in China and have published an academic journal in Chinese called *Cultural China*.

Second, my organization and I have tried to help China develop better governance. In 1999 CIDA sponsored CRRS's Pure Heart Culture, an anti-corruption project. Officials from mainland China came to observe the Canadian way of governance. This was well supported by both the Chinese and Canadian governments.

From that time on, I was invited by the Chinese government to give suggestions toward ongoing socio-political reform. I have written more than ten documents that provide suggestions for political reform relating to issues such as human rights, religious freedom, social reform, and the regeneration of communist ideals.

Third, CRRS is involved in promoting education for the underprivileged in China. Since 2002 in Guangxi province alone, we have helped six counties, sponsoring more than 3,000 students and teachers to achieve their dream of education.

The following six points are made from my observation of my experience in China over the last 14 years.

I was invited several times to meet with high officials in China's state department and the United Front department to share my critical opinion on human rights and religious freedoms. They answered my criticism with well-structured documentation and explained that much of the information from the hostile overseas press is not accurate. The Chinese government allowed me to travel freely in China to verify whether the human rights distortion was accurate according to the western press.

During that time, I travelled to many provinces in China. I have talked to the press: reporters, editors, and professors of communication in China. Also, I had the chance to talk to many intellectuals and classes of people in China. From my evaluation, the press has 90% freedom and 10% restriction—of course, it's not as good as the Canadian press, but it has only a 10% restriction, in my evaluation—especially on political issues or issues that may influence the masses and create negative feelings toward the government.

In my discussion with scholars who worked on legal reform of legislation and laws, they said they are currently working on some new laws regarding human rights. They discovered the expected chaos and trouble did not happen. On the contrary, the new human rights laws made the society more stable, and now the government is more willing to bring in more reforms in this direction. Also, on TV, I found the government sometimes taught people about what kinds of rights they have.

Once I was invited to give opinions in an inner consultation group about religious policy. I boldly talked about abandoning the atheistic presupposition of communism to allow people of religious faith to join the Communist Party.

● (0935)

I suggested that the control and supervision of the three-self church should be given to the Christian committee in China instead of to the government. I also suggested that the Chinese government abandon its laws against religion and give complete freedom of religion. My documents were highly regarded in that conference and were used as the first document opened for discussion during the government official meeting. Some officials found out that the Communist Party had already discussed all the above points. One deputy minister who worked with religious policy in China said that he would submit my suggestions to President Hu Jintao for consideration.

Fourth, I have worked in academic circles for fourteen years. In 2005 I was appointed chair of Christian studies at Sichuan University. Currently there are more than 50 Christian study centres in the universities of China. For one whole month, I was allowed to teach Christianity without any restrictions. I have not received any counsel or criticism from any Chinese officials. The only restriction is that Christians are not allowed to baptize any student or perform Holy Communion on campus.

CRRS has also sponsored a Christian study centre in Lanzhou University. And we promote religious dialogue between Islam and Christianity through the concept of peace. Some Chinese officials were there to observe this conference, and the government appreciated the religious dialogue.

Fifth, during my time in China, Chinese Christians, including some from the underground church, expressed that the government does not disrupt their meetings, as long as they do not cause any trouble, even though their existence is considered illegal. No persecution was carried out when I was invited by a group with a Christian background to give a public speech about thanksgiving. More than 500 university students gathered in a hotel to listen.

Sixth, since 2002, in my work in the rural area of China, CRRS has demanded the right to monitor the operation of all resources and finances of our education projects. Six out of seven counties have cooperated with us very well. We had access to the students we have sponsored and have received letters written by the students separately.

In conclusion, in my 14 years working in China, China has progressed very rapidly in its attempt to reform the legal system and to set up human rights statutes. Compared to 10 years ago, the atmosphere is much more relaxed than before. Compared to 30 years ago, the change could be considered a miracle.

The key point for understanding China is that it has been humiliated by western power for more than 150 years. These historical events have wounded the Chinese people as a nation and as a culture. A wounded nation needs healing instead of criticism, which can bring more injury. We need to help China develop human rights according to their own culture. Friendly advice and encouragement, instead of hostile criticism, is the only way to help this nation advance and reach the international standard of human rights.

To a mature government like Canada, my suggestion is to respect and encourage China instead of using hostile criticism. Any hostile attitude would wound the nation more and force them to reject any reform of human rights. I believe that a more positive approach to China is what the Canadian government needs to have.

Thank you.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Leung.

We will go to the government round. I welcome Raymond Chan, for seven minutes.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Dr. Leung, nice to see you via TV. I am amazed by how technology has advanced so we can meet like this.

I know that you spend a lot of time in China talking to different levels of government. I would like you to share with this committee your observations about the development of political changes that have come along in the last 10 or 15 years in the Chinese government. What are the political or structural changes that you have seen, both in the structure and quality of the government?

• (0945)

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I think they allow bringing the election system into the rural areas, so this is an important change to the kind of grassroots democracy, but it has not yet developed a democracy in the city. They allow more freedom of speech so that people can criticize the government individually. That means if you are not grouping together with thousands of people and demonstrate on the street, but if only you, yourself, want to give any criticism or suggestions to the government, they allow you to say anything.

In my own experience, when I give critical suggestions to the government, I find that they are very open to receive my criticism. They try to deal with it, and not only just say okay, then we'll have dinner, but they try to deal with it.

Also, one thing is that in the universities you are free to say anything now, except if you say there has to be a revolution. If you teach Christianity, Buddhism, or Taoism, you can teach anything relating to religious doctrine. The only limitation is that you shall not baptise students on the campus.

I think one thing that will help China to change the structure is that they already have a parliament, but the members of parliament are not directly elected by the people. They are indirectly elected by the people in the rural areas, and then they are sent to the legislative council. If we can advise China to change the parliament system to allow more direct election of members in the government, it would be good for China.

I have written a suggestion to China that if they have at least one-third of the members of parliament—they call it the people's council—elected directly by the people, then one-third of them indirectly elected by the other group of the society, and then one-third, maybe, communist members to enter, it would start a more democratic structure. I have made this suggestion. They just received it, and they are considering it.

I think, structurally, China is still not a democratic country, but it is an open-minded country. It is more or less like a kind of Confucian political system. As an expert in Chinese culture and philosophy, I find China is now working in a more Confucian way, and that means to be good to the people, to be a moral government, but not so democratic.

However, it's different from the Confucian system of ancient times. Instead, in ancient times there was an emperor of China. There's no emperor now, but it's a group of elite, and the elite were elected by the Communist Party. That means that within the Communist Party they have certain democracies and procedures so that they can elect people to a high position, and this is the way it's working.

Also, what's different from the ancient system is that the emperors have their power until they die, but in China all people who have power have a limited period of power. They have to retire according to the law. So they are changing, and they are also changing their legal system too.

They are really influenced by Canada, as far as I know. They said that the Canadian government has much advice for them in dealing with the human rights dialogue. They see that it supports them to

publish a book on human rights. They appreciate that, and they would like to learn more from Canada.

• (0950)

For example, when I bring some of those officials from China, and I take them to see some members of Parliament, or members of a province—the MLA or the MP—they are very happy to learn. They are very impressed by the Canadian system. At first, they learn how Canada can keep the government clean, that there's no corruption in Canada. I found they learned a lot. They want to set up something like Canada.

I heard that the president, Hu Jintao, has asked his advisers, or the intellectuals who follow him, to study the Canadian system. They want to learn more from Canada.

So I think a more positive dialogue can help them to develop into a more democratic society.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Leung.

We'll now proceed to the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Madame Barbot, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, on the human rights issue, you said there are changes in China. As their system is completely different, it takes time to see results, but China is learning from Western countries.

I want to know to what degree Canadian assistance to China is making a difference in terms of concrete results. I understand that the Chinese are listening to what Canada says and that they are interested, but can you give us specific examples of actual change?

On workers rights, China passed new framework legislation last year. I want to know if Canada can help in that area.

[*English*]

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I think China is discussing all kinds of possible changes in their legal system. Workers' rights are what they are building on now.

We were working with the migrant workers in Shanghai, and we tried to help the students to get an education. We paid for their school fees. They were not under the government education system, which is free. We helped them to build a high school. We paid the school fees to educate the migrant workers. But when we suggested to the government that they should give more rights to migrant workers, we found that they were already discussing it in their people's council. Also, the prime minister was concerned about migrant workers in the city.

For the Chinese, the way is to give honour to the migrant worker. That means food, TV, and the press. They give honour to the migrant worker and show that they have contributed much to society. All the high-rises were built by the migrant workers. But the students are underprivileged; their children are underprivileged. So they also honour the children of the migrant worker on TV and ask them to sing songs. They can be a good performers. They are people with good ability. The first thing the Chinese government did was provide the propaganda to help the migrant people to be respected by society.

They want to take away the restriction that the people from the rural area cannot study in the city. They have a restriction. If you cannot get a certificate from the city, you cannot enter the school system. If you are from the rural area and you have no registration in the city, then you are not allowed to enter the school system, which is free. There is discussion within the government and in the press about removing this restriction. I think that within a few years new legislation will come out that will give migrant workers the same rights as the citizens in the city. So they are going to change.

There is one more thing. When I first worked in the rural areas, we tried to help the students to get an education, because during that time they still had to pay school fees. I suggested to the central government that they should get free education. Learn from Canada. Then it changed. About two years ago, it changed. The government passed a bill stating that all children could have five years of free education. We had a sponsorship program to help the students in the rural areas, and then we had to change our policy, because they can have free education. We don't need to bring funding to help them. All our funding will be for food or accommodation, those kinds of things. We don't need to pay the school fee.

So our funding changed. Our policy changed to give funding to the high school students, because they have three more years that they have to pay for their education. And then we changed our work. We want to help them. Now we need not help those five years. We have three years of high school and then four years of university. But soon we discovered that the government was going to give more grants and loans to the university students. So we had to change our policy again. As a charitable organization, we want to find how to help the students to get a better education.

I find that China is changing. Every time we see these problems, we tell the government to do something, and then they change.

• (0955)

Also, I've found from working among the poor that they have a big problem if they get sick. They have to pay a lot to the hospital for medical advice. If they're poor, they have no funds to pay for this kind of thing. We try to help. I've written suggestions to the government. The policy is in the process of being changed, and it might be that poor people might be able to pay a small amount of money for insurance, just like in Canada. Then they can get free medical advice and treatment.

Actually, I learn from the Canadian system, and then I try to tell the Chinese government that you can change it this way or that way. I've found that they really work on it. I think they are really learning from Canada. I hope Canada can have more dialogue with China, then we can help them to reform.

The final reform that China needs is to change to a democratic society. There needs to be more effort on this in the dialogue.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Leung.

I will now move to the government side. Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, sir, for appearing in front of the committee. It's good to hear your positive comments about China and the changes that are being brought about, as well your receiving, in writing, responses

from the government on your suggestions and criticisms. That is definitely a positive step.

My questions are very simple. I would like to ask them and give you time to answer.

Could you tell us if the Canada-China human rights dialogue is working, if it is successful or not?

Could you highlight the areas of least success and the areas of most success?

Lastly, do you really believe that a country as big and populous and powerful and growing as China can be influenced by a single country, maybe even Canada?

• (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I think the Canadian dialogue with China.... It seems that whenever you dialogue with China, they just say okay, they can see that, and we don't know whether they.... It seems that they're very open and seriously concerned with what we said, but then you don't know what they are doing afterward. And then maybe a few years later, or half a year later, they pass a new law that is exactly according to our suggestion.

So it seems to me that the Canadian dialogue with China is quite successful. They listen a lot if you are friendly; they won't listen if you are hostile. So they don't want to listen to America. They want to listen to Canada, for in the past Canada has been quite friendly to China.

This is China's culture. To build up and put relationships first... If you are friendly, and do not say that they are wrong but say they're right on many aspects, but they can do better, like this and that and that, then they will take it.

I think that the most successful of Canadian influences is the law of anti-corruption. They learned from the Canadian system, because I worked on this with the Chinese government and the Canadian government, sponsored by CIDA. That's the law of anti-corruption, including a kind of accountable system. Canada has a very good accountable system. You have to answer and account for where the money goes and where it's kept.

If the accounting system is independent—not influenced by you, even though you pay for it—then the system has integrity and will work very well to check all your money. Then it's hard to have corruption.

So this is one thing they learned from Canada. It was the Shanghai government that came to Canada and learned this, and later there was a big success in the Shanghai anti-corruption movement and even the chief executive, the chairman of the party in Shanghai, was shut down because of corruption.

So I think this is the most successful way that the Canadian system has influenced China.

Also quite successful, I think, is through dialogue the Chinese government is quite interested in the education and medical system in Canada, because it is closer to the socialist ideal. They don't want to learn from America. They like to learn from Canada, which shares the same ideal of socialism.

The change I have seen up until now is that they are moving toward this way, to have free medical treatment and advice, and also a free health care system and a free educational system, like Canada. So they are influenced by Canada and by other countries, such as Sweden and this kind of country.

You talk to them and you write down the suggestion and then later it has changed. But the least influence is in democracy. Canada has a very good democracy system, and China wants to be more democratic, but the movement is a little bit slow. But compared to the past, China has much more space of freedom than before. It has given more freedom to academics, more freedom to the press, to the people, compared to the time of Mao Zedong.

• (1005)

Also, in human rights, China is listening a lot. They passed a new law that protects the human rights of people. For example, if the police want to arrest a person and put him in jail, it's limited to 48 hours to keep him in the police station or in jail. I know this is a new law that China passed. You're not allowed to keep a prisoner in jail for a longer time. So you have to release them, even some political people. I know from the press that they have some people and they later release them because of this new law. This has somehow changed.

But democracy is the least that we can influence them with. So Canadian influence is good, I think, in a friendly way for China.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Leung.

We will go to Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Doctor, for your presentation and for making yourself available to the committee today.

I have some questions pertaining to people who are members of the government being employed by the government, be they in the civil service or in fact in the police, etc., and their ability to be practising Christians, or practising any other religion. In other words, is it possible for a public servant, for a member of the police force, etc., to openly declare that they are part of a faith community?

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I think this is a very crucial question China is dealing with now. Last year the Chinese government invited me to give a consultation on religious freedom. They are really considering this issue, especially the communist members. Can they believe in religion? In the past, if you entered the Communist Party you had to swear that you served atheism. So a communist member basically is not allowed to accept religion. If you are not a communist member but work as a civil servant, you are free to believe in a different religion, but for a communist member, you are not allowed, no matter whether you're a servant or not.

They find there's a big change among the people now, because religion is spreading rapidly in China, and many communist members also become believers. So they have to deal with this question, and they're trying to give a little reform, a theory in the

Communist Party, which is to allow the communist member to believe in religions, and the faith of life and the faith of political ideals can be separate. You can believe in communist ideals as a good political system, but at the same time you can be a Christian. It is still in the process of discussion. It has not yet passed the law, but I found it was written in the reform document. They publicized a reform document on the Communist Party that was written by a communist expert. I found they already gave this suggestion to the Communist Party.

When I discussed this with them they told me they are already doing all these things. But they challenged me as a Christian. They said that if the Communist Party opened for people who have faith, with Christians and others, this is a tough question for Christians. Of course it's hard to enter the Communist Party. But they just challenged this. Because of this I know that the party is seriously considering this move within a few years.

I know a very famous Christian who is also a famous economist in China. He has a very high position, a young scholar who is famous in economical theory. He openly said that when he became a very committed Christian, he asked the Communist Party. So he resigned from the party. The party leader said, "Just don't ask this question, then we'll allow you to have your religious belief. If you ask, then we have to manage it, and actually we have no answer there. So don't ask this question. Just keep on with your religious faith."

As far as I know, the Communist Party has allowed the party member to have faith, but at the same time it is not necessary to resign from the party. As far as I know they have already reached this point.

• (1010)

Mr. Paul Dewar: They might have taken the strategy that President Clinton took vis-à-vis the military: Don't ask, don't tell.

My next question was going to be on the Communist Party, but you've just established for us that you are able to be an openly practising member of the faith community in the public service.

The next question that you've answered was to establish whether or not the Communist Party was looking at the same kind of relationship with faith communities. That's a work in progress that you've just elaborated on.

But on my question around civil servants, I was distinguishing between them and the police and the military. Are you able to be a practising member of a faith community and be a member of the police or the military, or is that something they're still confining to only members of the Communist Party?

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I think this is an area I haven't encountered, because I've met more with people in the cultural area, and also academics. But for police and military people, etc., I have no friends in these areas.

Someone who has a high position in the party, a critical position, said that after he retires he wants me to baptize him. That means they like to have religion, but not now, because until the party really has declared that they have religious freedom, it's still sensitive for them to say they have a religion. So right now the religious freedom is limited to the party, not people outside of the party.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Leung.

As the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, together with our subcommittee on human rights, the Government of Canada and all parties of Canada are concerned about the policy tools that Canada uses in order to influence countries around the world, and in this case to influence China in order to help promote human rights in China. One of those policy tools that we use is the Canada–China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue. It's not just a generic case of us saying we're going to dialogue with them. It is a policy tool that we use that has come under some criticism.

Our Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, for example, received a lot of criticism on this policy tool, the Canada–China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue, to the extent that in 2005 our Department of Foreign Affairs asked Dr. Charles Burton to produce a report evaluating that tool. In his report, I think Dr. Burton was fairly clear, in that he said China has improved on some human rights. There has been a progression in human rights, in freedom of the press, freedom of religion, some of those freedoms.

But when it comes to this policy tool, where we sit down specifically on certain issues—they may be consular services or specific individual human rights concerns—Dr. Burton came to the conclusion that there were not a lot of verifiable, observable results. So in this policy tool of the bilateral dialogue, there is a concern that we are not seeing enough results in specific cases.

My question is not so much generically how human rights have advanced in China, but how Canada can better address specific cases. Are you aware of that policy tool, the Canada–China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue? And how can we better influence China toward the promotion of human rights?

•(1015)

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I've heard of that dialogue, and I think the better way is not just to have dialogue, but to have more cultural exchanges first. That means not only influencing the governments, but also that it's important to influence the professors and students. We need more cultural exchanges—that is, more Canadian intellectuals going to China to dialogue with the intellectuals there, and not only government officials. Many intellectuals also have influence on the government, because the government is now open to listening to the scholars' and professors' points of view. So I think the human rights dialogue should come together with a cultural exchange program. I think that if Canada wants to influence China to become a better government, in good will, then more cultural exchanges are important.

I have been doing cultural exchanges for 14 years. I think it's very important that the professors, scholars, students, and intellectuals have new ideas. All of these new ideas can influence the government. Then later, some of those people become government officials and their minds are more open, because they have heard of something different from the Canadian point of view.

Also, dialogue should not just be limited to one or two times, with just us, the minister, or MPs coming to talk to government officials. It needs more time and a longer period of dialogue, not only on issues, but also on the basic ideology and the basic idea of human rights. I say this because Chinese culture has lasted for 5,000 years,

and they don't have this concept of human rights. So it's not so easy just to tell them the values of human rights, that according to the standards of human rights, things are not right. But try to look for some ground from their own culture, and say to them that according to Chinese culture, you also respect human dignity, and later this can become a ground for human rights and a ground for democracy.

I have also written suggestions in this field, and they are very appreciative of the use of Chinese culture to argue for this. I think it is well worth while.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Doctor.

We'll go to another doctor, Dr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Professor, for your presence and sharing your time.

In your observation paper you mentioned that there are more than 50 Christian study centres in the universities of China and that Sichuan University, where you teach, is best known for development in the religious studies department.

But my question is about Lanzhou University, where your group sponsors a Christian study centre and promotes religious dialogue between Islam and Christianity through the concept of peace. I would like you to elaborate much more on that dialogue, because it is quite new to me. Who was this dialogue between—religious leaders, or teachers? Who represented the Islamic group? Was it an imam? How many students attended these lectures? Were they one-day lectures or one session? What was the purpose of this dialogue and what was the conclusion? I'm astonished, in a sense, that there is such a dialogue with the Islamic community.

Thank you.

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: It was a two-day dialogue in which I promoted this idea that the whole world has a conflict between Islam and Christianity. Then I said that since within China there was no conflict between Islam and Christians, why not have a dialogue of peace first so that we can influence the whole world? Also, it is good for the image of China.

So the Chinese government thought this was a good idea, for we already have Muslims and Christians that live together in places like Lanzhou. Half of the population of Lanzhou are Muslim, and there are some Christians and some Buddhists there, so why not bring them together? But the government, of course, is concerned about whether there is any conflict happening during our dialogue, so the government officials came and listened to see if anything bad happened. That means if we fight against each other, taunting each other, we would have trouble. But that didn't happen.

The object of our dialogue is that.... I am a Christian, but then I reach out to a leading Muslim professor in Lanzhou. I personally dialogue with him first, and we have written from time to time and published in our journal. Then I asked a lot of questions that western people ask Muslims, and said, "Oh, you are wrong in this and that." I give him total freedom to answer all these questions, and he was very happy that I liked to listen to their point of view.

Then afterward I presented the great idea of dialogue between Islam and the Christians. They were very happy. Then the Christian representative from Hong Kong.... There are several Christian professors and Christian leaders from there, and also some Christian leaders from Lanzhou go to the conference. The Muslims also have their imam and the priests all come. There are about 20 Muslims and their leading priest in the mosque. They invite us Christians to go to the mosque and treat us to a good meal and we have a very good talk. Then we invite them to the church in China, and they ask questions about Christianity. Afterward we go to the university and have a real dialogue between Christian scholars and Muslim scholars. Some of them are Muslim leaders and some of them are Christian leaders.

It lasted for two days, and the result was very good. Both sides were happy that we did not fight against each other. We can be friends. We can be brothers and sisters.

Then we invite the Muslim leaders to Canada to dialogue with a professor from Trinity Western University, a Christian university. Then both sides feel very happy, and afterward the government feels happy. The government appreciated this dialogue, because it can bring peace and harmony, for harmony is the standard ideal of China now.

They will allow us to have an international conference next time, so next year we are going to have an international conference. We are going to invite a Muslim leader from the Middle East and a Christian leader from the west, from America or Canada. It will be a big conference that brings peace between these two religions.

You are welcome to come also.

●(1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Leung.

I'm going to Mr. Goldring very quickly, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Leung.

It's come up several times from witnesses mentioning that the Asian culture is different from the west. You mentioned earlier that the Chinese culture puts government rights first over citizen rights, and it takes a long time for that type of adjustment of philosophy to come through to all the areas, concerning human rights, etc.

I have difficulty understanding that, I suppose, and that's one of the real concerns. The feeling of the inadequacy of the Canada—China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue is that it seems somehow to be stalled in that type of philosophy or philosophical approach to it by saying that some of these are bicultural and it takes time for this to come through.

On the other hand, there has certainly been no delay in the Chinese approach and philosophy in very successfully accomplishing globalization as a concept that was also once a real shift in philosophy for the country, over the last short period of time. I suppose the concern is more over what we can do to increase and to move forward the issues of human rights.

One of the questions I have is about your comment that freedom of the press was 90% freedom and 10% restrictions. I would like to know how that's manifested, because of course you have produced some 29 books, 150 articles, and messages, internationally and in China. How does that manifest itself?

How do you accomplish this, to keep your sensitivities for your writing and direction in China and in foreign countries, so that you have that kind of comfortable acceptance in China? And as well, are there things you have to tread very sensitively on, or issues you mention quite openly? Have there been any accomplishments to move forward on any issues you may have mentioned openly, looking for constructive improvements?

Could you comment on how this is manifested, and how you handle this situation?

●(1025)

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: Because I am an expert in Chinese culture, I know the Chinese way of handling this.

The way is to respect them first and not to say they are wrong, but to have respect for China. It's a 5,000-year-old civilization. It's like an old man: you have to respect him. And now it's an old nation, so we have to respect it.

But at the same time, regarding modernization, China has only 30 years of development, so it's still a kid, a child. As a child, you have to encourage him instead of just saying he is wrong or beat him. My approach is that I respect them as an old civilization, and second, I encourage them as just a child in new developments. In this way, if you have a good attitude, then they are open to listen because you are not against them.

About 14 years ago, when I first went to China, I was not there to mention the term "human rights", because this seemed to be sensitive. However, I used the other term, "human dignity", and the concept of human dignity is accepted by Chinese culture. According to our ancestors, we emphasize the human being as having human dignity, and we hope that China, the Chinese people, all people individually, can have their human dignity.

Now this term is appreciated. Now we can mention human rights, because China is more open to accept this new term. Also, I dared not mention democracy during that time, but only later. I just said we need a government that is really supported by the people. This means democracy, but I didn't use the term. I also said the ancestors understand this too. But now even the Chinese government is using the term "democracy"; so I can openly use the term now.

So it's something like that: you have to be skilful by using the Chinese way to deal with them.

About the development of culture—

Mr. Peter Goldring: I suppose that's my point, Mr. Leung, that you are finding ways to communicate this and to move forward with it by your own form of dialogue, if you like. And that is my point, that China in turn has the capacity and has shown the capacity internationally that it can move forward with great strides too.

So just to simply say it's proceeding in its own character and at its own speed from a cultural background and basis is, for some, to suggest more can be done better to bring forward these issues on a more rapid basis without infringing on cultural sensitivities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Leung. Did you want to expand on that a little more? I hope I wasn't cutting you off.

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: Yes, okay, maybe just a bit more.

The Chair: Very quickly.

Dr. Thomas In-Sing Leung: I studied the history of democracy in the west, and it took 200 or more years to develop real democracy in England. In 1689 they declared the Bill of Rights, but not until 1938 did they have total human rights in which everybody can elect the government. So it took 200 or more years for the British to understand the real meaning of democracy.

And for America too. Canada is better because we have the British and the American systems to follow.

At first China just followed the Russian system. They've just now learned to follow western ways.

So the best strategy is that by using the term to keep track with the international community, that means the track of western countries; we have to match your track. This is a term used by the Chinese. We want to become a good country that is just like western countries, like you are. We have not yet developed the same system, but give us time.

Culturally it needs time, but they are going through all kinds of reform, even though slowly, but they are still moving forward.

These are my observations of China.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Doctor.

To conclude our statements, it's my understanding that the reason we're having this discussion as a committee again was that the

United Nations Commission on Human Rights seemed to get bogged down. China and other countries felt we were just coming up against a roadblock.

Then there was this exercise whereby other countries moved toward more bilateral discussions. What Canada called its bilateral discussion was the Canada-China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue. Now I think there is the feeling of getting bogged down again on some of these specific issues.

Your suggestion is to have more cultural exchanges and continue talking and doing those. We all agree with that. But there still has to be some stage or some avenue to be able to voice specific concerns and bring certain issues to the front, not just with a cultural exchange.

But what happens when we have a Canadian citizen who is denied consular services in China? What happens? How do we deal with that with China?

So to that end our subcommittee began a discussion and study on this policy tool, and we're going to continue that. Certainly we want the cultural exchanges to continue. Certainly we appreciate the influence both ways. The students who are trained here in Canada in universities and colleges and then go back to China, we think all of that is positive for human rights and for other issues, like emerging economies and for commerce and trade. All those things are good.

But when we have those specific concerns, we need policy; we need a tool to address them. So that's why we're still continuing to study and to try to learn.

We thank you for your words today and for your testimony. I think we've seen another side of China today and we've seen there is hope and there is growth.

I really loved your analogy that we have the old culture, the old country, but we have the new, the child as well, where they're learning but they're growing, they're taking those steps.

We thank you for your input today.

We are going to conclude now. Do we have any committee business we want to discuss today? No?

We will adjourn, and again, thank you all.

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