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Post-Mao Period: Chinese Communist Party Religious Policy.  
Its Implementation and Grass-Roots Response**

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# The Resurrection of the Chinese Protestant Church in the Post-Mao Period: Chinese Communist Party Religious Policy. Its Implementation and Grass-Roots Response

M.Phil. Thesis, Anthony P. B. Lambert, 1989

## Abstract

Since 1979 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has re-established the apparatus of religious control, which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). As part of its overall 'United Front' policy, the Party has sought to rally all Protestants behind the Party's programme of economic reform.

The CCP re-activated the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) to supervise all Protestants in China, but has only been partially successful in uniting them. Many have preferred to meet independently.

CCP policy towards the Protestant church, although more liberal than during the Cultural Revolution, has been ambiguous at some points.' This has allowed doctrinaire 'leftist' cadres to implement repressive religious policies at the grass-roots level. This has caused tensions and alienation from both the Party and the TSPM. In 1983, and other times, Protestants refusing association with the TSPM suffered persecution.

Despite continuing restrictions, the Protestant church has enjoyed great growth and vitality over the past decade, becoming truly indigenous in many areas. In the ideological vacuum of the post-Mao era, the church has attracted new members from a wide spectrum of society, including many youth.

In this thesis CCP religious policy, its Implementation, and Christian reaction at the local level are examined in the overall political and sociological context prior to the Beijing massacre.

Because previous writers have tended to rely heavily on open, official PRC sources, this study is based primarily on original Chinese Internal documents from government and TSPM sources. Many are presented here for the first time in English. Mew statistical data on the number of Protestant Christians in China is also included. The author has also made use of a large number of letters from, and interviews with, Chinese Christians, as well as personal observations of the state of the church in China made when living in China, and during subsequent visits in the period 1973-1989.