The 10th Annual Conference of the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China will be held on July 10-14, 2013 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Under the theme of “Religion, Spiritual Capital, and Civil Society,” this conference will feature reports from 16 research projects of the Chinese Spirituality and Society Program, which is generously supported by the John Templeton Foundation.

We have come a long way in the endeavor of promoting the social scientific study of religion in China (Chinese SSSR). When the first such conference was held in July 2004 in Beijing, we gathered less than 30 scholars, most of whom were in the humanities. For the 10th conference, however, we are gathering about 100 presenters of empirical studies. Moreover, we had to reject about 20 proposed presentations that were on religion but did not employ social scientific methods.

The annual conference of Chinese SSSR has become a barometer of the degree of academic and religious freedom in China. Throughout the past ten years, we have experienced ups and downs, peaks and valleys. In spite of political and practical restrictions, however, the field of Chinese SSSR has grown by leaps and bounds. Many universities have begun to offer courses. Some major universities have established research centers. Even the state has begun to sponsor large projects that appear scientific. The rapid development of the field is primarily driven by the reality of the revival of all kinds of religions in China. It is also stimulated by the interactions and engagements among Chinese and international scholars.

Our Center was formally established in 2008 with a two-fold mission: to introduce the SSSR to China and to introduce China to the SSSR. Working with a group of pioneering Chinese and Western scholars, we have successfully organized annual conferences and summer institutes, research and writing workshops, symposia and lectures, and numerous research projects. Many renowned and emerging scholars of North America and Europe have participated in these projects and activities.

Meanwhile, our Center has regularly hosted Chinese visiting scholars, who spend one or two semesters at Purdue learning about the SSSR and American religion. The latest cohort of six has some fascinating observations and reflections, which you may read in this issue.

Looking into the future, what is our next big thing? To facilitate the further growth of Chinese SSSR and in response to the growing interest in Chinese religion by Western scholars, journalists, business people, policy makers, and the general public, we are planning to launch a new journal in English, Review of Religion and Chinese Society, about which you may find more information in this issue.

Fenggang Yang
The 10th Annual Conference of the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China and
Chinese Spirituality and Society Program Final Conference

The 10th Annual Conference of the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China and the final conference of the Chinese Spirituality and Society Program will be held July 10-14, 2013 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This conference is co-organized by the Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Center on Religion and Society at East China Normal University in Shanghai, and the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong. It is also co-sponsored by 11 other research centers and institutions from mainland China, Taiwan, Macau, and Hong Kong. The theme of the conference is “Religion, Spiritual Capital, and Civil Society.” About 100 papers will be presented by scholars from mainland China, Taiwan, Macau, Hong Kong, the Middle East, Europe, and North America — including 16 final reports of projects awarded by the Chinese Spirituality and Society Program. The Faculty of Social Science ExCEL3 Project of the University of Hong Kong will hold a special session about spiritual capital in the third sector. Richard Madsen of the University of California, San Diego and Robert Weller of Boston University will provide the keynote presentations.

Robert Weller

Robert Weller is Professor and Chair of Anthropology at Boston University. Dr. Weller’s work concentrates on China and Taiwan from a comparative perspective. One of his research interests has been the problem of cultural change in a global context, with all its flows and stoppages, appropriations, and resistances. His book on the environmental consequences of changes in the understanding of “nature” (Discovering Nature) examines the ways that Western ideas have entered China and interacted with indigenous understandings to create a new understanding of nature. His work on civil society (Alternate Civilities) similarly looks at the influx of ideas about governance and social organization and their long-term consequences, arguing that something similar to a civil society can be built without looking exactly like somewhere in the West. This interest in the relationship between state and society has continued through the book he edited on nongovernmental organizations and political change in Asia. One of his current major projects is an examination of the new role of religions in delivering a wide range of secular services to people in Chinese societies—building hospitals, offering scholarships, providing emergency aid, taking care of the elderly, and so on. Dr. Weller’s other major research endeavor is a more theoretical exploration of ritual.

Richard Madsen

Professor Richard Madsen is a distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of California, San Diego and was a co-director of a Ford Foundation project to help revive the academic discipline of sociology in China. Professor Madsen is the author or co-author of 12 books on Chinese culture, American culture, and international relations. He has also written scholarly articles on how to compare cultures and how to facilitate dialogue among them. His books on China include Democracy’s Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007), Chen Village Under Mao and Deng, co-authored with Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger (Berkeley, UC Press, 1992), Morality and Power in a Chinese Village (UC Press, 1984) [winner of the C. Wright Mills Award], Unofficial China, co-edited with Perry Link and Paul Pickowicz (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), China and the American Dream (UC Press, 1994), China’s Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society (UC Press, 1998), and Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society, co-edited with Perry Link and Paul Pickowicz (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).
Review of Religion and Chinese Society

Launching in 2014, this international, peer-reviewed journal publishes articles and book reviews in the social sciences and certain humanities disciplines. All articles will be in English, and Chinese titles and abstracts will also be provided.

- “Religion” is understood in the broadest sense, including various spiritual and meaning-making systems of beliefs and practices.
- “Chinese society” includes those in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and Chinese diaspora communities in Asia, North America, Europe, and elsewhere throughout the world. The journal also welcomes studies that compare religion in Chinese and other societies.
- RRCS is multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary in its outlook and presents theoretical and empirical studies of religion in disciplines such as anthropology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, sociology, and history. Preferred articles are theory-driven, empirical studies, although the journal also publishes articles that are primarily empirical or theoretical.
- The journal publishes reviews of books that have been published in English, Chinese, and other languages. It may also publish review essays of particular fields, symposia of particular topics, interviews with renowned scholars, and reports of academic conferences relevant to the journal’s themes.
- Article submissions and proposals for special issues are welcome.

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Global China Forum

Our center hosted nine academic talks between January and April of 2013, making this the biggest and the most diverse series of academic talks within one semester. The presenters included the Center’s research fellows and visiting scholars, and some from other universities. The content of the lectures ranged from sociology, history, and anthropology, to journalism, English, and other disciplines. The broad range of topics included house churches, the political system of Xinjiang during the Qing Dynasty, mass conflict incidences, agriculture missionaries in China before 1949, a Confucian new religious movement, the relationship between belief and fertility, Islam and religious policy, comparative scriptural studies, and a re-interpretation of the Chinese ancient classic The Book of Songs. Benefiting from the ensuing discussion and incisive comments, both the presenters and the audience broadened their academic perspectives.

Causes of the Poverty of Rights Among Chinese Christian House Churches

George Hong, Purdue University Calumet (January 30, 2013)

This lecture first explained the notion of the poverty of rights, evidenced by the millions of Chinese house church members who have undergone a characteristic poverty of rights as it pertains to religious belief. The lecture emphasized the need to talk about the reasons leading to the poverty of rights in religious belief, including house churches’ hesitancy to fight for their own legitimacy, the dead-end of legalization, the double or multiple standards exercised by the government to regulate different religions, the conflict between house churches and the “Three Self Church,” and the underprivileged status of house church members.

From Gansu Viceroy to Yili General: The Change of Political System in Xinjiang During Qianlong Sovereign

NIE Hongping, Lanzhou University (February 13, 2013)

The Qing Dynasty planned to implement a province system in Xinjiang and so set up a Gansu Viceroy to rule Xinjiang in the 24th year of Qianlong. But the plan was abandoned a year later; instead, a Yili General was put in charge of the military and politics in Xinjiang. A military system where three counselor ministers and one commander-in-chief had to report to the Yili General was established. Professor NIE’s talk explained the change in the system and analyzed the reasons behind it.

Well Does Not Cross With River: A Case Analysis Based on the S Mass Conflict

LI Qiong, East China University of Science and Technology (February 20, 2013)

A “mass conflict incidence” is a remarkable type of social conflict in China’s transitional period. The current study attempts to employ a developing boundary theory as a framework for exploring a case of mass conflict incidence by analyzing the disagreement of interests among interest groups, the constituting power and rights, and understanding the sphere in which the conflict took place. This study tries to explain the internal relationship between social conflict and the changing social structure, as well as the micro social foundation underlying the resort to a harmonious society.

A Comparative Reading of "The First Man" in the Quran and the Bible

HEI Ying, Minzu University of China (March 20, 2013)

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, recorded the story of the creation and fall of the human progenitor Adam. The same story is also mentioned several times in the Quran. Following the comparative reading method proposed by Francis Clooney in his Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders, whose principle is to use faith for understanding and “use one's own view to look into other traditions, use others' views to look into one's own tradition,” this report shows some common theological interests rooted in the Quran and in the Bible.
The Illusion and the Truth of the Most Populous Nation: Discussing the One Child Policy's Impacts from the Angles of Demography, Economics, Education, and Religion

WANG Ling, China Business News (March 6, 2013)

The world's most populous country—China—is experiencing a disillusionment: after 30 years of rigid practice of the one child policy, the demographic structure and population have undergone dramatic changes. The rapid aging and the lack of young people pose serious challenges to China's labor provision, consumption, elderly care, and other sectors. At the same time, there have been abortion rampages among people of fertile age and millions of babies have been aborted as a result of the morbid value regarding life and fertility among the Chinese. By comparing religion's impact on reproduction in Chinese and American Christian churches, a series of issues have drawn our attention: Will the recent development of religion in China provide relief from the out of control abortion phenomenon in China? How will religion influence China's future demographic structure?

From Opium to Positive Functions: Contemplation over the Change of Religious Policy in Socialist China

WANG Chao, Shaanxi Normal University (April 3, 2013)

Because of the paradigm shift and political transformation regarding the religious policy in China, the treatment of religion has undergone several transitions in China: from absolute atheism to the elimination of religion, then to utilizing religion's positive functions. By discussing and reflecting upon the influence and background of this change, this study points out that religion is inevitably subject to political control in China regardless of whether it is considered the intoxicating “opium” or the saving “medication.”

The Birth of a New Religion: The Development of the Confucianist Daotan in South China

CHEN Na, Fudan University (April 10, 2013)

This report explored the emergence of a new religion—Confucianist Daotan—in Fujian, China. By discussing its historical background, beliefs, rituals, organization, and evolution, the existence and development of a new religion in China are revealed.

The Spread of the Gospel and the Reconstruction of Society: American Agriculture Missionaries and the Reconstruction of Chinese Rural Communities from 1907 to 1937

LU Yuqin, Yancheng Normal College (April 17, 2013)

American agriculture missionaries went to China intending to spread Christianity through teaching modern agricultural technologies to evangelize rural China. Because of the agriculture missionaries’ efforts, agricultural technology became an important medium of evangelism, similar to medicine and education. Agriculture missionaries were also the pioneers of China’s rural reconstruction movement. However, facing the complex environment in Chinese society, they could not ease the tension between evangelism and social welfare efforts while doing agricultural evangelization.

“Magnificent Is the God on High” the Supreme God in the Daya of the Book of Songs

Alice Wang, Purdue University (April 24, 2013)

In several chapters of the Yasong of the Book of Songs, the music and dance during sacrifice integrate with poetry, showing the uniformity of art and religion. Starting from this uniformity, the current study discusses the relationship between heaven and humanity in Daya, and searches for the notion of the supreme god from the following cues: How does the Book of Songs describe the supreme god? Are “heaven (tian)” and “god (di)” in the Book of Songs one? Why does the song use two names for one identity? What was the relationship between heaven and god? What was the relationship between the supreme god and humans in the Western Zhou dynasty? What are the impacts of these religious views from Western Zhou on China’s posterity?
International Forum on the Social Basis for China’s Democratization

On the evening of January 8, 2013, the Center on Religion and Chinese Society organized an international forum on “The Social Basis for China’s Democratization” in the Stewart Center at Purdue University. Two months before that, we had another forum on “Directions and Options of Chinese Democratization,” where elite scholars from China discussed their suggestions for the path to democratization. In line with this, the January Forum focused on the grass-roots dynamics toward democratization. The well-known house church pastor WANG Yi of Autumn Rain Reformed Church and independent scholar YU Jie gave presentations.

The title of WANG Yi’s speech was “The Public Nature of the Chinese Church and the Democratization of Chinese Society.” WANG explained the weaknesses of the social foundation for democratization in China as evidenced by a series of failed village autonomy attempts and rural elections in the 1980s. According to his interviews with new believers in his church, he found that Chinese people’s community life was virtually non-existent before they joined the church, and that most Chinese have never enjoyed the right to vote in any election. Social consciousness of the republic and its citizenry is severely lacking.

According to his observations over many years, WANG Yi pointed out that a Christian community has been forming despite prolonged persecution in mainland China. The house church may be the place within which freedom of speech is mostly practiced along with freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. In this sense, the Christian church, with an estimated 70 million members, may be the most important part of China’s civil society today.

The title of YU Jie’s speech was “The Future of the Freedom of China Lies in Grass Roots.” He first talked about the revival of the Chinese house church and republicanism. YU showed that global Christianity has moved eastward towards Asia in the past few decades, where a fast growing economy is accompanying the development of Christianity. Christianity played a pivotal role in South Korea’s democratization. In China, the emerging churches in urban areas will also become significant forces behind peaceful democratization in China. Although the obstacles are many, YU Jie believes that the fast development of the internet and the spread of information bring hope. When China joined the internet era in 2000, information blocking became less and less effective.

The director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University, Professor Fenggang Yang, commented that the Chinese intelligentsia has had a blind spot about religion since the May 4 Movement in 1919. It would be a great loss if religion did not play a role in the process of modern democratization in China. Republicanism was practiced extensively in Christian churches early on in the history of the West, and was gradually adopted by the secular state. But most Chinese people do not have a clue about the meaning of “republic” even though the word is part of the country’s name. The rapid development of the house churches gives us a hope that civil society has finally emerged in China.

About 70 people attended the forum and raised more than 10 questions in the discussion part of the forum. Many interested attendees stayed after the forum to talk with our experts.
Thoughts of Visiting Scholars

The Spring of the Soul

HEI Ying

Ph.D. Student
Philosophy School, Minzu University of China

I was surprised to enjoy such unpolluted fresh air when I first walked out of O'Hare International Airport with heavy, bulging luggage in October of 2012. As this visiting scholarship comes to an end, the best memory for me is the fresh air that my soul has breathed in.

The renewal of my mind and intellect has benefited from the series of academic talks hosted by the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University. When living in a strange land, my worrisome heart constantly bemoans the hidden scars under the bustling neon of flourishing China. The previously unheard voices I am exposed to here reveal several serious problems with Chinese society, including: the environmental destruction, moral crisis, demographical imbalance, and democratic challenges. Comparing China with the U.S., one cannot help but ask what China’s path will be. We once mocked America’s lack of history, but it is now recognized that the essence of European and Christian culture is well rooted in this new continent.

Maybe the lack of history is the lack of burden. Once I only wanted to do research for knowledge’s sake, but now I have begun to reflect on studies that can benefit society as a result of my awakened sense of social responsibility. I think this is the greatest take away from my stay at Purdue.

I have also grown considerably academically, in addition to my spiritual maturation. Due to attending the Sociology of Religion class and reading the required articles and books, I am now able to clearly understand the development and context of this sub-field in the international scholarly community. I learned much about the academic standards and rules in the U.S.; furthermore, I now understand that the contemporary sociology of religion is an empirically established and systematic study that seeks to analyze data from the field by using scientific methods without boasting scientism.

The above three points seem to be simple, but they are all priceless gains for me who is accustomed to a traditional style of study. I will maintain the academic spirit learned in the U.S. in my future career.

In terms of day-to-day life, the highlight of my experience has been warmth and love. The Center admitted six visiting scholars from China along with me. We enjoyed our time together despite our diverse disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. We attended different academic talks and activities, gathered at Dr. Yang’s home every Friday evening, and helped each other with life and research. The Pleasant Streams Christian Fellowship organized a wide range of activities for us. I particularly enjoyed Dr. Leonard Siddharth's lectures, which employed a rational and philosophical approach to facilitate understanding the truth of Christianity. In the meantime, I became acquainted with several doctoral students in the Department of Sociology at Purdue; our frequent talks about study and the future relieved me of the loneliness from staying in a foreign country. I will appreciate these friendships forever.

Time flies! With unknown and longing, I arrived at Purdue University in the colorful fall, through the freezing snowy winter; now I am writing my memoir in this fragrant bird-whispering spring time, hoping the seed of my soul planted at Purdue will grow as I leave here and enter the journey towards the future.
A Historic-Cultural Journey through Time and Space:  
A Memoir of Visiting Purdue University

LU Yuqin
 Professor, Yancheng Normal College

I have to say that I and Purdue seem to have a predestined relationship. When I was a student, J.K. Fairbank and other American scholars who specialized in Chinese History had such a great impact on me that I dreamed of seeing America one day. Maybe God listened to my request. After conquering many obstacles, I received a fortunate opportunity to visit the Center on Religion and Chinese Society hosted by Dr. Fenggang Yang in the Department of Sociology at Purdue University. The disciplinary difference between sociology and history confused me for a little while, but I gradually began to enjoy the experience here.

The strict review of papers
I attended the 2012 research workshop for Chinese scholars in the Chinese Society and Spirituality Program almost immediately after getting off the plane. The Center invited American experts to teach us how to draft, write, review, and edit in English as seen by their own lively experiences. I sincerely felt that — even as successful scholars — they were not arrogant, but full of care and equality. When I saw the pages-long review report the experts gave back to us, I appreciated the opportunity to expand my academic landscape with the help from these earnest people.

Academic exchange with mentor but also friend
I attended Dr. Yang’s classes including Religion in America, Seminar of the Sociology of Religion, and many presentations. I started to understand the classical theories in the sociology of religion advanced by people such as Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and Rodney Stark, along with the development of religion in the contemporary world and the sphere of secularity and divinity. The “triple color market theory” and “shortage economies” proposed in Dr. Yang’s work, Religion in China: Survival and Revival Under Communist Rule, provided a viewpoint for deepening my thinking from a unique perspective. I also benefitted greatly from the bi-weekly academic talks from presenters of different backgrounds (religious studies, anthropology, literature, journalism, history, etc.) also benefited me greatly. The suggestions and encouragement given by the professors and fellow scholars during my presentation helped tremendously in my study of American agriculture missionary work and China’s rural development.

The marvelous education system in America
While auditing two undergraduate classes offered by the Sociology and History Departments, I felt the unique charm of undergraduate pedagogy in the U.S. The professors are very serious about the teaching content, but the atmosphere is not stiff or dry. Students are very enthusiastic and express opinions openly. I am very touched that the university even provides a sign language interpreter for a student with a hearing disability in a history class I attended.

The colorful church life
The Chinese Church became the weekend spot, where delicious food, accessible Bible knowledge, and sundry entertainment are available to enrich the empty soul and free time of the foreigners. It provided a peaceful and serene harbor for the foreigner's thirsty soul.

Everything is a gift. Flowers and tears, applaud or troubles… I will treasure this short period at Purdue University all my life.
A hundred years ago, Sun Yat-sen borrowed the slogan of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” from the Western world. Since I first heard this slogan when I was 10 years old, I have always wanted to experience the Western world and feel it myself. This wish came true in 2012. On the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China by Sun Yat-sen, I arrived in the U.S. Here at Purdue University in West Lafayette, I verily tasted the feeling of “liberty, equality, and fraternity.”

**Liberty:** Purdue has a great natural environment with grassland and forest everywhere; I feel as if I am walking with the mother earth herself. Animals roam freely. Squirrels and rabbits hop; swans and ducks dive slowly. The university is open and free to access; you can audit almost any class without issue. Within the class, students feel free to ask questions and express their viewpoints. Scientific research is conducted without ideological restriction. Our mentor professor talked with us about the importance of doing research freely and down-to-earth, without the influence of any ideology. The Christian churches are also free and open to the public; people can attend or quit as they choose. The internet is free from censorship, which enables a variety of voices. There is no reproduction policy; no one else can determine the number of children you may have.

**Equality:** people from different countries and races all come to study and teach here; professors and students have equal rights to express their opinions. Daily activities are well ordered: When there are stop signs at crossroads, vehicles stop accordingly; when a school bus loads or unloads children, all vehicles—even police cars—stop and park on the spot. Our kids were enrolled at a local public school—free to enjoy the same educational services as American children. The school even offered them additional English language courses. In Christian churches, everyone is equal as the sons and daughters of God. In the presidential election, all citizens express their voice with their vote.

**Fraternity:** I experienced the long absent feeling of love in West Lafayette. The school buses’ priority on the road reflects the love for children in this country. All the roads, public transportation, and buildings are equipped with lifting devices in favour of handicapped people; motor vehicles yield for pedestrians showing love and respect for life; well preserved environments for animals and plants show the people’s love of nature; theological and philosophical education at church help people to deal with spiritual and social needs. They also organize various recreational activities for us to show the love of God to humanity; national flags are lowered for the victims of the Boston Marathon Bombings to show the love of the State for its citizens; the Center arranged regular seminars and informal gatherings to help us with our problems both in life and research, showing both love and responsibility, not to mention the help from numerous people for me and my daughter. I realize there is really a love like casting one’s bread upon the waters.

This year I experienced a rare calmness of the heart because of the “liberty, equality, and fraternity” I felt. After many negative incidences that took place in China such as the Beijing smog, the Shanghai pig-river, and the prohibition of milk powder in Hong Kong, I asked myself, would there still be that many problems if “liberty, equality, and fraternity” were present in China? During the past year, China has also seen an anti-Japanese protest and claimed that “China can totally outplay the U.S. by the year 2049.” However, I ask whether China is able to choose the road of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” rather than engaging in total conflict with America to maintain self-esteem.

Hopefully the entire world can become more like here, with a feeling of harmony with nature.
Combining Theory and Practice, 
Connecting Research with Friendship

WANG Chao

Associate Research Fellow
Center for Research on Northwestern Ethnics, Shaanxi Normal University

At the close of the last class, last seminar, and the last weekend party, my yearlong stay in America is also coming to an end. During this short period of time, I have gained an intellectual renewal, as well as unforgettable cultural and academic experiences.

First of all is the study of theory. Sociology of religion is both familiar and strange to me. Although I have some previous experience with religious studies, the focus there was on historical rather than sociological perspectives, which enables me to better understand contemporary religious phenomena from a comprehensive point of view.

During my stay at Purdue, I attended classes of Dr. Fenggang Yang's American Religions, and Sociology of Religion Seminar, as well as anthropological methods and advanced research methods of sociology. Through taking these courses, I obtained new understanding concerning the development and function of religions and improved my own research abilities, which will help me in my future academic career.

Second is participation. Participating in religion is another important component of learning about religion. With the help and introduction from Dr. Yang and Mrs. Yang, I actively participated in various religious activities, especially in Christian churches. Through participant observation, my understanding of Christianity improved by moving from textbook knowledge to real life experience, from perceptual to objective, from ignorance to in-depth understanding, and from rare involvement in mainland China to active participation and understanding in the U.S.

These experiences not only enriched my knowledge of the history, theology, customs, and ideas of Christianity, they also showed me the inner world and community life of the believers. How Christians struggle with everyday life with genuine faith is a great topic of study for the sociology of religion.

Furthermore, academic participation has also been intensive. The Center on Religion and Chinese Society provided us with diverse academic information; including, academic talks and workshops to accelerate the exchange of intellectual ideas and present our own studies. These academic activities broadened our outlook, provided necessary materials for future research, and expanded our research capacity.

Lastly is communication and friendship. During the past year, I became acquainted with many professors, fellow visiting scholars, and local professors and students through the platform of the Center. I became surrounded by a lot of friends in this foreign country.

At the same time, with the introduction from Mrs. Yang and the church, I befriended many local people, students, and scholars from China. They helped me better understand the culture and academic context of America. Not only was my academic circle enlarged, I also developed precious friendships with the people I came into contact with. The weekly gatherings at Dr. Fenggang Yang’s house were especially marvelous; this will be the part I will miss most after returning to China. The gathering was full of love, friendship, and affection. We not only enjoyed an intellectual feast, but also warmth of friendship lacking in other places.

The short year of studying in the U.S. will soon end. With immense nostalgia, I have already started to miss Purdue. This visiting experience has changed my life greatly; it has laid a solid foundation for my future research.
The Renewing Power

WANG Ling

Senior Journalist
China Business News

The past half year at Purdue University has been like tasting an olive, rich in flavor yet unpredictable.

I have been a journalist in China for 16 years, spending most of my career interviewing and writing news. After giving up on Peking University’s International Communication’s doctoral entrance exam in 2003 because of the SARS epidemic, my heart was disturbed, and more importantly I was seeking an answer to this question: What type of research should I invest my fleeting life in for it to be meaningful and valuable?

Ten years later, this question has been preliminarily answered after my time spent at Purdue studying, reading, observing, discussing, and thinking.

I had the great enthusiasm typical of young people when I started my journalism career. I wanted to use my pen and paper to uncover social abuse and to dispel evil and promote good. In these years, I witnessed first-hand the dark and shocking reality of Chinese society from both elite and grass roots levels, in terms of economy, education, culture, population, and social life. The observation and contemplation thereof only gave me disappointment and depression. How can we change China’s future? Where is the hope for our children? I cannot see it.

This half year at Purdue has been short but worthwhile. Thanks to the help of Dr. Fenggang Yang, I can study and think efficiently as though my mind has suddenly been enlightened.

I realized that the maturation of the people is the key to China’s future. But how do we mature? How can our people think with their own minds and walk boldly with their own legs? The path is long, but with unbending faith, the to-be-liberated religious fervor will fill our vague spirit and renew the corrupted mentality of this morally collapsing society of China.

From the Zhu Ling case that occurred years ago to today’s Huang Yang case, and to the thousands of mass protests taking place each year, these are not isolated cases. Rather, they remind us that China has no more leeway.

In regards to this point, the question I asked myself ten years ago has been answered. To me, doing research is not building castles in the air but should be a voice of reality and have meaning and value to society. Only this type of research deserves my effort and unrelenting devotion. Sociology of religion opens a window for me to think about and analyze the world. From the extensive reading of the classics in the sociology of religion to the careful discussion in Dr. Yang’s seminar, the influx of knowledge filled me with bliss.

The topic of fertility and faith, a question that has garnered my attention, has also been illuminated during my stay here. While attending different churches in Lafayette, I observed many representative examples of how faith and fertility interact, and compared them with those of China. I hope such experiences can help transform me from a news reporter to an academic researcher.

During the last six months, I visited many churches and seized every opportunity to experience the love felt in different denominations. As a result, I deepened my knowledge of Christianity. These are the treasure for me to press on in the future.

My visiting scholarship will end soon, but a new journey awaits me.

The feelings, study, and contemplation I have experienced at Purdue have made me a better person. I can see I am more empowered and wiser than before. For this, I am very thankful. I hope to turn these feelings into practical actions, helping society and working for the good of the people.
News and Activities

CRCS co-sponsored, along with Purdue’s Religious Studies and Asian Studies Programs and the Confucius Institute, the 6th Sino-American Comparative Literature Symposium on “Comparative Literature, Religion and Society,” which was held at Purdue on May 1-4, 2013. Director Fenggang Yang presented a paper on “Soul Searching in Contemporary Chinese Literature and Society” and CRCS Associate Dr. Alice Wang presented “The Supreme God in the “Da Ya” Section of The Book of Songs.”

CRCS co-sponsored, along with the Centre for Christian Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Princeton China Initiative, a workshop on “Chinese Religious NGOs and Civil Society,” which was held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on May 22-24, 2013. Director Fenggang Yang spoke on “Christian Churches and Democratic Polities,” and Co-Director George Hong spoke on “The Poverty of Rights among House Churches in China.”


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Some Thoughts from Participants of Global China Forum

“Fate brought me to the Center on Religion and Chinese Society’s lecture series. These lectures opened a genuine window of new information, a free platform of intelligence, and a spiritual homeland secured by tolerance. The people in this center are caring and are serious about the future of China — displaying the devoted pursuit for truth and goodness ingrained in the Chinese intellectual tradition. The lecture series touched me with deep reflections and gratefulness that will stay with me for a lifetime.”

-------- LIU Yan, Tourism College, Hunan Normal University and Visiting Scholar at Purdue University.

“During this transitional time in China we face many old problems that show up with new masks. Both the government and academia demand new perspectives and dimensions to explain these problems because traditional approaches are no longer applicable. The lecture series sponsored by the Center on Religion and Chinese Society and Professor Fenggang Yang explored the exact problems that China faces today: demography, religion, and others. The serious attitude and outstanding research presented by the speakers impressed me greatly.”

-------- CAI Xiaobing, Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Science and Visiting Scholar at Purdue University