**3/15/09 THESKEPTICARENA.COM**

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (NCCAM)**

**ACCORDING TO A NATIONWIDE GOVERNMENT SURVEY RELEASED IN MAY 2004, 36 PERCENT OF U.S. ADULTS AGED 18 YEARS AND OVER USE SOME FORM OF CAM. CAM IS DEFINED AS A GROUP OF DIVERSE MEDICAL AND HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS, PRACTICES, AND PRODUCTS THAT ARE NOT PRESENTLY CONSIDERED TO BE PART OF CONVENTIONAL [I.E., SCIENTIFIC] MEDICINE. WHEN PRAYER SPECIFICALLY FOR HEALTH REASONS IS INCLUDED IN THE DEFINITION OF CAM, THE NUMBER OF U.S. ADULTS USING SOME FORM OF CAM IN THE PAST YEAR RISES TO 62 PERCENT. --NCCAM**

**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (NCCAM), FORMERLY THE OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (OAM), IS A DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH). THE NIH HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF U.S. CITIZENS FOR OVER A CENTURY. IT TRACES ITS ROOTS TO 1887 WITH THE CREATION OF THE LABORATORY OF HYGIENE AT THE MARINE HOSPITAL IN STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK, FOR RESEARCH IN CHOLERA AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES. LIKE MANY OTHER EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL, THE NIH HAS BEEN POLITICIZED.**

**IN 1991 IOWA SEN. TOM HARKIN (D-IA) WAS A MAIN FIGURE ON THE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF THE NIH. (IN 2008, HE STILL IS.) IN 1992 HARKIN SLIPPED A LINE IN THE REPORT ACCOMPANYING THE NIH APPROPRIATIONS BILL THAT CREATED THE NIH OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE WITH $1 MILLION IN SEED MONEY. NEVER MIND THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS "ALTERNATIVE" MEDICINE. IF WE HAVE AN OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE, WHO COULD QUESTION IT? IN 1999 PRESIDENT CLINTON SIGNED INTO LAW AN APPROPRIATIONS BILL THAT GAVE THE OAM ITS CURRENT NAME AND PUMPED UP ITS BUDGET TO $50 MILLION A YEAR SO IT COULD ESTABLISH A NEW NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE AT BASTYR UNIVERSITY, A NATUROPATHIC COLLEGE OUTSIDE OF SEATTLE.**

**HARKIN GOT THE BUG FOR ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES WHEN HE CAME TO BELIEVE THAT HIS HAY FEVER HAD BEEN CURED BY BEE POLLEN. HE AND A FEW OTHER POLITICAL BUDDIES WANTED TO FUND RESEARCH THAT WOULD PROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BEE POLLEN AND OTHER QUACKERY. IOWA REPRESENTATIVE BERKELEY BEDELL BELIEVED THAT ANABLAST (CREATED BY A QUACK NAMED GASTON NAESSENS; THE STUFF IS ALSO CALLED "NAESSENS SERUM") HAD CURED HIS PROSTATE CANCER AND THAT COW COLOSTRUM HAD CURED HIS LYME DISEASE. COW COLOSTRUM DOESN'T CURE ANYTHING AND ANABLAST IS PURE QUACKERY. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE IN THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE THAT BEE POLLEN CURES ALLERGIES OR HAS ANY BENEFICIAL EFFECT. WORSE, BEE POLLEN CAN CAUSE LIFE-THREATENING ALLERGIC REACTIONS IN SOME PEOPLE. NEVERTHELESS, HARKIN AND THE PROMOTERS OF UNPROVEN PRACTICES WANTED THE NIH TO FIND THE SCIENCE THAT WOULD PROVE THE BENEFITS OF SPECIFIC TREATMENTS.**

**HOWEVER, THE OAM'S FIRST DIRECTOR, DR. JOSEPH JACOBS, WAS NO LAPDOG. WHEN THE OAM COULDN'T COME UP WITH ANY GOOD SCIENCE FOR ANY SO-CALLED "ALTERNATIVE" TREATMENT, HARKIN ATTACKED JACOBS IN A PUBLIC HEARING. THAT WAS IN JUNE 1993. HARKIN THEN "HANDPICKED FOUR ALTERNATIVE-MEDICINE ADVOCATES" AND HAD THEM APPOINTED TO THE OAM'S ADVISORY BOARD (SATEL AND TARANTO: 1996). IF REAL SCIENCE WASN'T GOING TO GET RESULTS, MAYBE PSEUDOSCIENCE WOULD.**

**JACOBS CALLED THE ALT MED ADVOCATES "HARKINITES" AND THEY SOON ATTACKED JACOBS FOR TRYING TO SET UP PROPER SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH CENTERS. SUCH EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH WOULD BE "HOSTILE" TO CAM, THEY SAID. THE HARKINITES WON OUT. THE OAM SET UP RESEARCH CENTERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S CENTER FOR ADDICTION AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE RESEARCH AND AT BASTYR UNIVERSITY. THE HARKINITES WERE SO RESISTANT TO GOOD SCIENCE THAT JACOBS RESIGNED IN SEPTEMBER 1994. "IT'S PATHETIC," HE SAID. "THEY WERE SO NAIVE ABOUT SCIENCE. I WOULDN'T TRUST ANYTHING COMING OUT OF THE OAM AS LONG AS THE HARKINITES ARE MICROMANAGING IT" (SATEL AND TARANTO: 1996). IN 1993 THE MAKER OF THE BEE POLLEN CAPSULES THAT "CURED" HARKIN—ROYDEN BROWN OF THE CC POLLEN CO.—PAID THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION $200,000 IN A CONSENT DECREE "FOR MAKING FALSE CLAIMS ABOUT HIS PRODUCT'S CURATIVE POWERS" (SATEL AND TARANTO: 1996).**

**IN 1995 HARKIN CRONY WAYNE JONAS, M.D., BECAME DIRECTOR OF THE OAM. JONAS STAYED UNTIL 1999. IN 1996 JONAS CO-AUTHORED HEALING WITH HOMEOPATHY: THE COMPLETE GUIDE. TWO YEARS LATER HE CO-AUTHORED HEALING WITH HOMEOPATHY: THE DOCTOR'S GUIDE. TO HIS CREDIT, JONAS WROTE THAT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HOMEOPATHY MIGHT BE DUE TO THE PLACEBO EFFECT. SINCE THERE AREN'T ANY ACTIVE INGREDIENTS IN HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES, I'D SAY JONAS MADE A PRETTY GOOD GUESS. I'D ALSO SAY THAT IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT DISCOVERY THAT WILL EMERGE FROM HARKIN'S EFFORTS IS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLACEBO EFFECT.**

**IN 2007, BILL CLINTON REFERRED TO SEN. HARKIN AS "A GREAT FRIEND OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH." TO BE FAIR, HARKIN HAS ALSO BEEN AN ADVOCATE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED (HIS BROTHER, FRANK, WAS DEAF) AND SOME OF THE RESEARCH HE'S SUPPORTED (E.G., FOR COCHLEAR IMPLANTS) IS EVIDENCE-BASED.**

**IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT THE IMPACT OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE NCCAM HAS BEEN ON PUBLIC OPINION. DAVID M. EISENBERG, M.D., OF BETH ISRAEL DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER IN BOSTON, AND HIS COLLEAGUES SURVEYED 2,055 ADULTS BY TELEPHONE IN 1997 AND COMPARED THE RESULTS TO THEIR SIMILAR 1990 TELEPHONE SURVEY OF 1,539 ADULTS. EISENBERG REPORTED THAT THE "USE OF AT LEAST ONE OF 16 ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES INCREASED FROM 33.8 PERCENT IN 1990 TO 42.1 PERCENT IN 1997. THE THERAPIES THAT SAW THE LARGEST INCREASE IN USAGE INCLUDED HERBAL MEDICINE, MASSAGE, MEGAVITAMINS, SELF-HELP GROUPS, FOLK REMEDIES, ENERGY HEALING AND HOMEOPATHY. PRAYER AND ACUPUNCTURE CONTINUE TO BE TWO OF THE MOST POPULAR FORMS OF "ALTERNATIVE" THERAPY. WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR SIXTEEN YEARS FOR THE NIH TO ANNOUNCE SOME MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN HEALTH CARE THAT HAS EMERGED FROM NCCAM. UNFORTUNATELY, MOST OF THE "ALTERNATIVE" RESEARCH IS DRIVEN BY FAITH, HOPE, AND IDEOLOGY RATHER THAN SCIENCE. AS DR. WALLACE SAMPSON NOTED: THE NCCAM "IS THE ONLY ENTITY IN THE NIH [AMONG SOME 27 INSTITUTES AND CENTERS] DEVOTED TO AN IDEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO HEALTH."**

**OTHER EXAMPLES OF POLITICIZATION IN THE NAME OF CONSUMER PROTECTION INCLUDE THE ACTION OF SEN. ROYAL COPELAND (1868-1938), A HOMEOPATH, WHO SPONSORED THE 1938 FOOD, DRUG, AND COSMETICS ACT THAT EFFECTIVELY EXEMPTS ALL HOMEOPATHIC POTIONS FROM FDA OVERSIGHT; AND BILL CLINTON'S APPOINTMENT OF JAMES S. GORDON, M.D., TO HEAD THE WHITE HOUSE COMMISSION ON COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE POLICY, WHICH LED TO THE 1994 DIETARY SUPPLEMENT AND HEALTH EDUCATION ACT. THIS LAW "ALLOWS 'NATURAL' SUBSTANCES TO BE MARKETED OVER-THE-COUNTER WITHOUT PROOF OF EFFICACY OR PURITY AS LONG AS THE MAKER DOESN'T PROMISE TO CURE ANYTHING" (PARK 2008: 177).**

**ACCORDING TO THE FDA:**

**IN 1938, SEN. ROYAL COPELAND OF NEW YORK, THE CHIEF SPONSOR OF THE FOOD, DRUG, AND COSMETIC ACT AND A HOMEOPATHIC PHYSICIAN, WROTE INTO THE LAW A RECOGNITION OF ANY PRODUCT LISTED IN THE HOMEOPATHIC PHARMACOPEIA OF THE UNITED STATES. THE HOMEOPATHIC PHARMACOPEIA INCLUDES A COMPILATION OF STANDARDS FOR SOURCE, COMPOSITION AND PREPARATION OF HOMEOPATHIC DRUGS.**

**FDA REGULATES HOMEOPATHIC DRUGS IN SEVERAL SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT WAYS FROM OTHER DRUGS. MANUFACTURERS OF HOMEOPATHIC DRUGS ARE DEFERRED FROM SUBMITTING NEW DRUG APPLICATIONS TO FDA. THEIR PRODUCTS ARE EXEMPT FROM GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO EXPIRATION DATING AND FROM FINISHED PRODUCT TESTING FOR IDENTITY AND STRENGTH. HOMEOPATHIC DRUGS IN SOLID ORAL DOSAGE FORM MUST HAVE AN IMPRINT THAT IDENTIFIES THE MANUFACTURER AND INDICATES THAT THE DRUG IS HOMEOPATHIC. THE IMPRINT ON CONVENTIONAL PRODUCTS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY EXEMPT, MUST IDENTIFY THE ACTIVE INGREDIENT AND DOSAGE STRENGTH AS WELL AS THE MANUFACTURER.**

**"THE REASONING BEHIND [THE DIFFERENCE] IS THAT HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS CONTAIN LITTLE OR NO ACTIVE INGREDIENTS," EXPLAINS EDWARD MIRACCO, A CONSUMER SAFETY OFFICER WITH FDA'S CENTER FOR DRUG EVALUATION AND RESEARCH. "FROM A TOXICITY, POISON-CONTROL STANDPOINT, [THE ACTIVE INGREDIENT AND STRENGTH] WAS DEEMED TO BE UNNECESSARY."**

**ANOTHER DIFFERENCE INVOLVES ALCOHOL. CONVENTIONAL DRUGS FOR ADULTS CAN CONTAIN NO MORE THAN 10 PERCENT ALCOHOL, AND THE AMOUNT IS EVEN LESS FOR CHILDREN'S MEDICATIONS. BUT SOME HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS CONTAIN MUCH HIGHER AMOUNTS BECAUSE THE AGENCY HAS TEMPORARILY EXEMPTED THESE PRODUCTS FROM THE ALCOHOL LIMIT RULES.**

**"ALCOHOL IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF MANY HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS," SAYS MIRACCO. FOR THIS REASON, THE AGENCY HAS DECIDED TO DELAY ITS DECISION CONCERNING ALCOHOL IN HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS WHILE IT REVIEWS THE NECESSITY OF HIGH LEVELS OF ALCOHOL.**

**"OVERALL, THE DISPARATE TREATMENT HAS BEEN PRIMARILY BASED ON THE UNIQUENESS OF HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS, THE LACK OF ANY REAL CONCERN OVER THEIR SAFETY BECAUSE THEY HAVE LITTLE OR NO PHARMACOLOGICALLY ACTIVE INGREDIENTS, AND BECAUSE OF AGENCY RESOURCES AND PRIORITIES," EXPLAINS MIRACCO.**

**HOWEVER, HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM ALL FDA REGULATIONS. IF A HOMEOPATHIC DRUG CLAIMS TO TREAT A SERIOUS DISEASE SUCH AS CANCER IT CAN BE SOLD BY PRESCRIPTION ONLY. ONLY PRODUCTS SOLD FOR SO-CALLED SELF-LIMITING CONDITIONS--COLDS, HEADACHES, AND OTHER MINOR HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT EVENTUALLY GO AWAY ON THEIR OWN--CAN BE SOLD WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION (OVER-THE-COUNTER).**

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**THE SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**SURPRISE! MILKY WAY MUCH MORE MASSIVE**

**JANUARY 5, 2009**

**SCIENTISTS HAVE DRAMATICALLY REVISED THE MASS OF THE MILKY WAY, SAYING OUR HOME GALAXY IS HALF AGAIN AS HEAVY AS PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT.**

**THE MILKY WAY IS NOW ON PAR WITH THE NEARBY ANDROMEDA GALAXY IN TERMS OF HEFT. THE MILKY WAY SPINS A LOT FASTER THAN WAS THOUGHT, TOO.**

**ASTRONOMERS ARRIVED AT THE NEW MASS BY USING THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION'S VERY LONG BASELINE ARRAY (VLBA) RADIO TELESCOPE TO MAKE DETAILED IMAGES OF THE GALAXY'S STRUCTURE, MEASURING DISTANCES AND MOTIONS OF DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE MILKY WAY.**

**THESE HIGH-PRECISION MEASUREMENTS, PRESENTED HERE TODAY AT THE 213TH MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INDICATE THAT THE GALAXY'S SPEED AT THE POSITION OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM (AT A DISTANCE OF 28,000 LIGHT-YEARS FROM THE GALACTIC CENTER) IS ABOUT 600,000 MPH TO 100,000 MPH FASTER THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT.**

**THAT INCREASE IN SPEED INCREASES THE MILKY WAY'S MASS BY 50 PERCENT, SAID TEAM MEMBER MARK REID OF THE HARVARD-SMITHSONIAN CENTER FOR ASTROPHYSICS, AND THAT ADDED HEFT MAKES OUR GALAXY A MUCH MORE SERIOUS CONTENDER AGAINST ANDROMEDA.**

**"NO LONGER WILL WE THINK OF THE MILKY WAY AS THE LITTLE SISTER OF THE ANDROMEDA GALAXY IN OUR LOCAL GROUP FAMILY," REID SAID.**

**THE NEW MASS FOR THE MILKY WAY IS 3 TRILLION SOLAR MASSES, REID SAID, AND THAT LARGER MASS, IN TURN, MEANS THAT THE MILKY WAY EXERTS A GREATER GRAVITATIONAL PULL THAT INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD OF COLLISIONS WITH ANDROMEDA OR OTHER SMALLER NEARBY GALAXIES.**

**THE TEAM USED THE VLBA, A SYSTEM OF 10 RADIO-TELESCOPE ANTENNAS STRETCHING FROM HAWAII TO NEW ENGLAND AND THE CARIBBEAN, TO OBSERVE REGIONS OF PROLIFIC STAR FORMATION ACROSS THE MILKY WAY. GAS MOLECULES STRENGTHEN THE NATURALLY-OCCURRING RADIO EMISSIONS IN PORTIONS OF THESE REGIONS, IN THE SAME WAY THAT LASERS STRENGTHEN LIGHT BEAMS.**

**THE ASTRONOMERS TRACKED THESE AREAS, CALLED COSMIC MASERS, OBSERVING THEM WHEN THE EARTH WAS AT OPPOSITE SIDES OF ITS ORBIT AROUND THE SUN. THE APPARENT SHIFT OF THE LIGHT CAN BE MEASURED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF MORE DISTANT OBJECTS TO TRIANGULATE THEIR POSITIONS AND MOVEMENTS.**

**THE OBSERVATIONS ARE ALSO SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE MILKY WAY'S SPIRAL STRUCTURE, BECAUSE COSMIC MASERS "DEFINE THE SPIRAL ARMS OF THE GALAXY," REID EXPLAINED.**

**THE MEASUREMENTS SHOWED THAT "MOST STAR-FORMING REGIONS DO NOT FOLLOW A CIRCULAR PATH AS THEY ORBIT THE GALAXY; INSTEAD WE FIND THEM MOVING MORE SLOWLY THAN OTHER REGIONS AND ON ELLIPTICAL, NOT CIRCULAR, ORBITS," REID SAID.**

**THE ELLIPTICAL ORBITS ARE THE RESULT OF WHAT ARE CALLED SPIRAL DENSITY WAVE SHOCKS, WHICH CAN TAKE GAS IN A CIRCULAR ORBIT, COMPRESS IT TO FORM STARS AND CAUSE IT TO GO INTO A NEW, ELLIPTICAL ORBIT, REINFORCING THE GALAXY'S SPIRAL STRUCTURE.**

**THE VLBA OBSERVATIONS ALSO YIELDED OTHER SURPRISES ABOUT THE SPIRAL STRUCTURE.**

**"THESE MEASUREMENTS INDICATED THAT OUR GALAXY PROBABLY HAS FOUR, NOT TWO, SPIRAL ARMS OF GAS AND DUST THAT ARE FORMING STARS," REID SAID.**

**RECENT SURVEYS BY NASA'S SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE SUGGEST THAT OLDER STARS ARE FOUND MOSTLY IN JUST TWO SPIRAL ARMS. WHY THEY DON'T FORM IN THE OTHER ARMS IS A QUESTION ASTRONOMERS SAY WILL REQUIRE MORE MEASUREMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS.**

**IN SEPARATE NEWS TODAY, NASA RELEASED A STRIKING NEW IMAGE THAT IS THE SHARPEST INFRARED VIEW EVER TAKEN OF THE MILKY WAY'S CORE. IT REVEALS A NEW POPULATION OF MASSIVE STARS AND NEW DETAILS ABOUT COMPLEX STRUCTURES IN THE HOT GAS AROUND THE GALACTIC CENTER.**

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**THE ARENA GOES ABROAD**

**BEIJING HOLDS SECRET TALKS WITH BANNED CHURCHES AS 100 MILLION DEFY PARTY RULES**

**1/26/09**

**A SECRET MEETING BETWEEN CHINESE OFFICIALS AND LEADERS OF THE BANNED UNDERGROUND PROTESTANT CHURCH HAS MARKED THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARDS RECONCILIATION IN DECADES.**

**THE DISCUSSIONS, WHICH WERE HELD IN AN OFFICE IN BEIJING, WERE THE FIRST TIME THAT MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND STALWARTS OF THE OUTLAWED “HOUSE CHURCHES” HAD SAT DOWN AS NEGOTIATORS RATHER THAN FOES, THE TIMES HAS LEARNT.**

**THE TIMING WAS SIGNIFICANT: THIS YEAR IS THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF COMMUNIST POWER AND THE GOVERNMENT IS KEEN TO ENSURE THAT THERE ARE NO DISTURBANCES TO MAR ITS CELEBRATIONS. THE YEAR OF THE OX ALSO BEGINS TODAY AND BEIJING IS ANXIOUS TO USHER IN A YEAR OF STABILITY DESPITE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES.**

**FOR THREE DECADES CHINA HAS ALLOWED OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED CHURCHES TO OPERATE WITHIN STRICT LIMITS. PROTESTANTS ARE SUPPOSED TO WORSHIP UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE OFFICIAL RELIGIOUS BODY, THE THREE-SELF PATRIOTIC MOVEMENT — STANDING FOR SELF-GOVERNING, SELF-TEACHING AND SELF-SUPPORTING. CATHOLICS CAN WORSHIP IN CHURCHES RUN BY THE CHINESE PATRIOTIC CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION. OTHER CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS ARE ILLEGAL.**

**IN RECENT YEARS THE NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS HAS SOARED. OFFICIALS PRIVATELY ESTIMATE THE TOTAL AT 130 MILLION — FAR OUTSTRIPPING THE 74 MILLION MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. MOST ARE PROTESTANTS AND ARE AFFILIATED WITH UNOFFICIAL HOUSE CHURCHES.**

**CHURCH LEADERS BELIEVE THIS IS ONE REASON WHY THE STATE COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE — AN OFFICIAL PARTY THINK-TANK — CALLED THE TWO BREAKTHROUGH MEETINGS LATE LAST YEAR. THE FIRST INVOLVED ABOUT A DOZEN ACADEMICS AND LAWYERS, MANY KNOWN TO BE MEMBERS OF THE UNOFFICIAL CHURCH. THE SECOND BROUGHT TOGETHER SIX HOUSE CHURCH LEADERS.**

**NO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC CHURCH WERE INVITED — THE VATICAN IS STILL VIEWED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS A RIVAL FORCE AND TENTATIVE TALKS YIELDED LITTLE PROGRESS.**

**PASTOR EZRA JIN, WHO STARTED THE ZION CHURCH ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, SAID THAT HE FELT THE INVITATION HAD BEEN INEVITABLE. “THE GOVERNMENT HAS A MORE OPEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION SO WHEN THEY ASKED ME TO COME I DIDN’T NEED THEM TO EXPLAIN WHY,” HE SAID.**

**CHURCH LEADERS SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT — INCLUDING THE POLICE, WHO HAVE RAIDED AND CRUSHED UNDERGROUND CHURCHES FOR YEARS — HAD REALISED THAT THE TIME FOR CONFRONTATION HAD PASSED.**

**SEVERAL HUNDRED WORSHIPPERS GATHER EACH SUNDAY WITH PASTOR JIN TO SING HYMNS AND PRAY IN AN ANONYMOUS OFFICE BUILDING IN THE CAPITAL; MANY MORE CROWD INTO LIVING ROOMS ACROSS CHINA TO WORSHIP TOGETHER, EVEN IF THEY CANNOT FIND SOMEONE TO OFFICIATE.**

**THE OFFICIAL CHURCH PUTS THE NUMBER OF PROTESTANTS AT ABOUT 21 MILLION AND CATHOLICS AT ABOUT 5 MILLION. THAT MEANS MORE THAN 100 MILLION CHRISTIANS ARE WORSHIPPING INDEPENDENTLY.**

**PASTOR JIN TOLD THE TIMES: “THE GOVERNMENT IS ANXIOUS TO WORK OUT THE WAY TO GO FORWARD. THEY HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IS NOT AN OPPOSITION FORCE BUT A FORCE FOR STABILITY AND HARMONY.”**

**HE ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO DISCUSS THE POSITION OF HOUSE CHURCHES AND TO EVALUATE WHETHER THEY POSED A THREAT TO THE REGIME. THEY ALSO WANTED TO KNOW WHY THE HOUSE CHURCHES COULD NOT ACCEPT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OFFICIAL BODY.**

**EVEN MORE SURPRISINGLY, THEY APPEARED TO WANT ADVICE. “THEY WANTED TO KNOW OUR REQUIREMENTS WHEN IT COMES TO SETTING FUTURE POLICY,” PASTOR JIN SAID, WITHOUT ELABORATING.**

**IN A REPORT ON THE MEETING, ANOTHER HOUSE CHURCH PASTOR WROTE THAT ONE OF THE MAIN TOPICS WAS THE DIFFICULTY OF KEEPING THE UNOFFICIAL CHURCH UNDER THE GOVERNMENT’S HEEL. PASTORS SAY THAT RAIDS, FINES AND EVEN PUNISHMENTS SUCH AS RE-EDUCATION THROUGH LABOUR ARE NO LONGER EFFECTIVE; IF ONE CHURCH IS BROKEN UP NEW ONES ARE STARTED.**

**A SENIOR ECONOMIST, WHO OPENLY DECLARES HIS FAITH, SAID: “THE CLOSER UNDERSTANDING MAY HAVE COME IN MEETINGS BETWEEN JAILED PASTORS AND THE POLICE, AND THOSE CHANGES IN ATTITUDE MEANT THIS DAY COULD COME.”**

**FAITH IN CHINA**

**— THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO INTRODUCE CHRISTIANITY TO CHINA SINCE ABOUT THE 7TH CENTURY BUT MOST FAILED UNTIL THE START OF THE 19TH CENTURY**

**— ROBERT MORRISON IS REGARDED BY PROTESTANTS AS BEING THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY TO CHINA — HE ARRIVED IN MACAU IN 1807. HE PRODUCED A CHINESE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE**

**— THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY RECOGNISES FIVE RELIGIONS: TAOISM, BUDDHISM, ISLAM, CATHOLICISM AND PROTESTANTISM. EACH HAS A STATE-SPONSORED RELIGIOUS BODY**

**— ARTICLE 36 OF THE CHINESE CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES FREEDOM OF RELIGION, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NUMEROUS RESTRICTIONS INCLUDING PROHIBITIONS AGAINST PROSELYTISING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES DEEMED TO “DISTURB PUBLIC ORDER”**

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**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**HUGH AULD (BIRTH & DEATH DATES - UNKNOWN)**

**THE FAMOUS AMERICAN SLAVE, FREDERICK DOUGLASS, WAS SENT TO SERVE CAPTAIN HUGH AULD AT AGE 6. AT AGE 12, AULD’S WIFE SOPHIA BEGAN TO TEACH DOUGLASS TO READ. WHEN HUGH FOUND OUT, HE CHASTISED HIS WIFE WITH THE FOLLOWING MEMORABLE QUOTE AS RECORDED BY DOUGLASS.**

**"A NIGGER SHOULD KNOW NOTHING BUT TO OBEY HIS MASTER - DO AS HE IS TOLD TO DO. LEARNING WOULD SPOIL THE BEST NIGGER IN THE WORLD. NOW, IF YOU TEACH THAT NIGGER HOW TO READ, THERE WOULD BE NO KEEPING HIM. IT WOULD FOREVER UNFIT HIM TO BE A SLAVE."**