

CfP: Special issue of "Religions", 2023: Religion and Crisis in Late Imperial and Modern China

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Call for Papers

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Subject Fields:

Chinese History / Studies, Religious Studies and Theology, East Asian History / Studies

Deadline for abstracts: 15 July 2022

Deadline for articles: 15 January 2023

The issue examines the relationship between religion and various forms of crisis in China's specific political and socio-cultural setting, which was characterised by managed religious pluralism/diversity (Goossaert 2014, Laliberté 2016). Crisis is understood here as a specific moment in time that sees a coalescence of circumstances and/or developments existentially threatening, or appearing to threaten, the status quo. Crises come in different forms and sizes, and they occur at both the personal and collective levels, although it is obvious that personal experiences of and responses to a crisis are shaped by the social and cultural context within which that person lives (cf. Diamond 2019, 32–49). Thus, individuals may experience crises triggered by stations in the life cycle, personal failure or loss, but they are equally impacted by large-scale events such as political and social conflicts, revolutions, wars, famines, pandemics, or climate change. Crises are “both ‘real’, in the sense of actual changes in social processes, and socially constructed, in the sense that different interpretations of the crisis have implications for its outcome” (Walby 2015, 24). In fact, people’s “experience of crisis” (Roitman 2014, 2) may matter more than real facts, and in some cases, crises may entirely be a product of the imaginary. Crises generate uncertainty, as the only assured fact is that they will end but when and how they will be resolved remains unclear (Koselleck 1958, 127). Living through them is thus fraught with pain and fear. On the other hand, they may also be perceived as a transitory state on the trajectory towards a better future, thus carrying a promise of betterment or renewal.

While there exists a rich literature engaging with the relationship between religion

and crisis in general, it appears that very few studies have methodically explored this relationship with regard to China (for an exception, see Chen, Chen & Dean, 2021), despite a vast body of useful empirical studies that can be brought to bear on the subject. Contributors are invited to add to a more systematic evaluation of the topic by presenting case studies addressing any form of religion that has existed in China between the early Qing period and the present day (including, of course, popular religion). Case studies may address, but are not limited to, the following guiding questions:

- How did religions conceptualise crisis, both at the individual and collective levels? What concepts and techniques, if any, did they provide to predict and diagnose crises?
- How did individuals and communities mobilise religious practices, concepts and – where applicable – beliefs to respond to crises? In so doing, how did they navigate between tradition and innovation? How did crises impact on religion – for example, to what extent did they lead to changes in concepts, practices, and affiliations?
- How did religious individuals and religious communities organise pragmatic responses to crises, e.g., by means of political activism, philanthropic or humanitarian activities?
- To what extent did religious practices, concepts and – where applicable – beliefs themselves cause crises, both at the personal level (e.g. where they failed to generate desired outcomes) and at the collective level (e.g. sectarian rebellion or violent responses to religious change such as the ‘missionary cases’)?
- To what extent did the rise of secular worldviews and political movements such as scientism, nationalism and Marxism lead to a crisis of religion, both as an abstract concept and in the form of concrete religious communities? Did religious institutions or organisations conceive of national policies regulating or even attacking religion as a crisis and how did they respond? Conversely, to what extent can the renewal of religious activities and spirituality over the past decades be seen, as the French sinologist Claude Meyer (2021, 25–38) has recently argued, as a response to the moral crisis Chinese society has found itself in?

We welcome contributions in English with a recommended length of 8,000–10,000 words. **The deadline for articles is 15 January 2023. Proposals** including a **title**, an **abstract of up to 500 words** and a **short bio of approx. 200 words** should be submitted to Thoralf Klein (T.E.Klein@lboro.ac.uk) **by 15 July 2022**. Ca. 10

contributions will be published in a special issue of *Religions*. All manuscripts should be submitted and formatted according to the *Religions Instructions for Authors*. Manuscripts are peer-reviewed and are scheduled for publication in the first half of 2023. Further information can be found [on the special issue website](#).

Religions is an open-access journal and charges an [article processing charge \(APC\)](#) of CHF 1,200 (equivalent to ca. £960, € 1,130, US\$ 1,300 and ¥ RMB 8,250). The charge can be waived entirely for 8 contributions; for the remainder, discounts are possible at the discretion of the editorial office.

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Guest Editor

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