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# 華源協作 CHINASOURCE

Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

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# Two Transformations:
## The Future of Christianity in China

*Huo Shui*

***As compared with any period in Chinese history, Christianity (meaning Protestant in this document) has experienced enormous changes in China today.*** *However, achievement and problems exist simultaneously and challenges and opportunities coexist; this is an indisputable fact. People with different beliefs and viewpoints have never come to consensus on their evaluation and understanding of Chinese Christianity. The current situation and the future of Christianity in China is in fact a question depending on one's perspective. This article attempts to organize the current situation and the problems of Christianity in China from an academic research point of view and suggests the route of its future development as well as the problems that must be solved.*

### The Current Situation

The current situation of Christianity in China is in fact a huge topic. This article is not going to describe all of its aspects but attempts to emphasize a few aspects of its current situation that deserve the most attention.

**Very rapid increase in number.** The most obvious change in Christianity in China is the increase in the number of its believers. According to the estimate of *Religion Blue Paper 2010* published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences World Religion Institute, there are 23,050,000 Christians in China. This is the

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**Editor's Note:** Earlier this year a consultation was held in Asia for pastors, church leaders and organizational leaders from both China and other countries. The title, Building Together to Bless the Nations, incorporated two major themes. First, this is a historical moment both for China and those working there. Second, relationships between believers inside and outside China need to be examined. The articles in this issue are taken from that consultation.

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**ChinaSource** serves the international faith-based community by identifying critical issues, formulating strategies, convening resources and evaluating results for the promotion of responsible and effective service in China.

The purpose of the ***ChinaSource*** journal is to provide up-to-date and accurate analysis of the issues and opportunities facing Christians involved in China service and to provide a forum for exchanging viewpoints and discussing strategies. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of ChinaSource or its cooperating agencies.

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# A Shared Challenge

*Brent Fulton, Editor*

In this issue Huo Shui, a scholar and longtime student of religious movements in China, portrays the church in China as facing a twofold challenge. Externally the church needs to move from the periphery of society to the center. Internally, church leaders must exchange traditional hierarchical control structures for a more democratic leadership style. The stakes are high, according to Huo Shui, who asserts that, "Without these two changes, there is no future for Christianity in China."

The steps Huo Shui prescribes for undertaking these two transformations can be found in a longer version of his article, which is available on the ChinaSource website (see www.chsource.org/site/two-transformations).

**If the church is to step in and fill China's spiritual vacuum** it needs to take the initiative to position itself as providing spiritual and moral standards for the society.

In summary, if the church is to step in and fill China's current spiritual vacuum, Huo Shui says, it needs to take the initiative to position itself as providing spiritual support and moral standards for the society. If the church is able to train "new persons" who can demonstrate the character of Christ in their daily lives, then the influence of the church will extend beyond its numbers. The church must, on the one hand, open the door widely for all types of people to enter in, while, on the other hand, strengthening evangelism so the church can move out into all areas of society. Finally, Huo Shui says, the church should engage in all kinds of charitable services so that "faith and charity become synonymous in China."

Huo Shui's admonitions bear a striking resemblance to James Davison Hunter's call to the Western (primarily American) church in his book, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. Although writing from two extremely different cultural contexts, both Huo Shui and Hunter link the church's ability to impact the society with its positive creative activity in every sphere. Huo Shui's call for the church to cultivate "new persons" resonates with Hunter's concept of "faithful presence," or a recognition that the vocation of the church is to bear witness to and to be the embodiment of the coming Kingdom of God in all areas of life. The new creation spoken of in Galatians 6:15 is, in the words of Hunter, a reference to "a different people and an alternative culture that is, nevertheless, integrated within the present culture."[1]

Both Huo Shui and Hunter also draw a connection between the quality of the church's inner life and its external witness. Only as relationships are transformed within the church can Christians expect to exert a transformational influence upon the society.

Ken Sande speaks to this issue in his article on biblical peacemaking. While the outworking of the scriptural principles which Sande examines may look different in a culture like China's, the believer's central task of reconciliation transcends culture. Living out a vibrant faith in an increasingly pluralistic post-modern culture is a challenge shared by Christians inside and outside China. May we find new ways to encourage one another on the road ahead.

**Endnotes**

1. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 95-96.

***Brent Fulton**, Ph.D., is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the* ChinaSource *journal.* ∎

latest figure that is officially recognized. However, academia and the religious circle generally consider this figure to be lower than the actual, and the number should be more than 50,000,000. Some overseas missionary organizations even consider that the number may be between 80,000,000 and more than 100,000,000. As these figures cannot be verified, it is difficult to draw a scientific conclusion as to which figure is accurate and reliable, so they can be used as reference only. However, it is recognized by all that Christianity is the fastest growing religion in China today.

**Wide distribution.** One obvious characteristic of the rapid growth of Christianity is its wide distribution. Nowadays, no matter whether it is villages or cities, coastal or inland areas, districts of the Han race or border areas where minorities gather, from the north to the south, from the east to the west, Christianity is in nearly every province, city and county in China—even in Xinjiang and Tibet. It is difficult to find a district in China where Christianity is not found.

**Relatively young and highly educated.** There have also been changes in the make-up of Christianity's membership. Nowadays, the average age of Christians in China is relatively young, and middle-aged and young people constitute its main force. On the other hand, the educational level of Christian believers has been raised tremendously when compared with the past. This is especially prominent in the recently developed urban churches, in particular the churches in large cities which have a significantly large proportion of university and graduate students. The phenomenon of the "three many's" (many aged people, many women and many illiterates) of Chinese Christianity, commonly held by people in the past, no longer exists.

## Problems

Similar to the description of the current situation of Christianity in China, this article is not going to set out all its problems but will point out certain problems that are having the greatest impact on its development.

**Church-state relationship not yet rationalized.** The relationship between Chinese Christianity and the government has been a very sensitive and complicated issue for a long period of time. Within Chinese Christianity, the "three-self churches" recognized by the government and the "house churches" not recognized by the government are developing simultaneously. The relationship between either of them and the government is abnormal. The problem of the "three-self churches" is their being troubled by the management model of the government departments concerned with religion that does not separate church and state. The government intervenes and controls the personnel, finances and administration of the church in different ways, leaving the "three-self churches" with no autonomy. Moreover, they cannot get rid of the political mission imposed upon them by the government since their birth. These churches have official political overtones in addition to their religious nature.

The "house churches" are having more serious problems of a totally different nature. For a long time, the government has implemented policies not to recognize nor dialogue with them and to attack them if necessary. These churches are trying to find all possible ways to develop under the government policy of non-recognition and suppression. Recently, the relationship between the government and the "house churches" has been alleviated from the country-wide perspective, but the increase in the number of believers within them has not caused substantive changes in the conflicts between them and the government. In some areas, there are often clashes between the "house churches" and the government departments concerned with religion, and this has intensified to the extent of open combat in certain districts. Because "house churches" have enormous Christian communities constituting an important portion of Chinese Christianity, the problem of the relationship between them and the government has become the problem of Christianity in China that attracts the most attention.

**Membership structure distribution not even.** The membership of Chinese Christianity requires specific analysis. Behind the continual increase in the number of Christians there exists the problem of an uneven distribution of Christianity among the major people groups. In the past, Christians in China were mostly farmers in villages and a portion of relatively elderly citizens in cities. Nowadays, the average age of Christians is younger so that in addition to farmers and the traditional Christian families in the coastal areas, new Christians are mainly various kinds of intellectuals, freelancers, people returned from overseas, university students and non-manual laborers of enterprises. There are relatively low proportions of Christians among people engaged in industry and commerce, entrepreneurs, civil servants, state enterprise personnel, the self-employed and retired people in cities. Christianity has not yet become the most common and popular, major religion among the various people groups in Chinese society.

Recently, church leaders have noticed the differences in the needs for church development between villages and cities, but they seldom consider the imbalance in church members' occupations. Because of Christianity's current missionary approach in China and the environment it is situated in, the uneven distribution of

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**Within Chinese Christianity, the "three-self churches" recognized by the government** and the "house churches" not recognized by the government are developing simultaneously.



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# The Church, Its Impact on Society and Partnership with the International Christian Community

*Tiger Lily*

**Most organizations involved in any country will inherently have as part of their vision some measure of the indigenous church becoming viable and making its impact positively in its community and, eventually, across borders and across cultures.** Yet, when the local churches start growing and slowly take initiatives to impact their own societies, quite often foreign organizations are slow to act or react in ways that acknowledge the rising local church. There is often an inertia when it comes to making real adjustments to accommodate and encourage these local initiatives.

Admittedly, in China a few organizations have provided internship opportunities, and some are already partnering with locals for ventures across borders and cultures, but these are fewer than expected considering the size and growth of the local Christian populations. It is essential that we have a better understanding of how fast the local Chinese churches are taking the responsibility to help their communities and reach out even beyond them as they grow and mature. If not, we may end up with frustrated partnerships between foreign and local believers.

Many of us believe it is essential that we dialogue on how best to transition from foreign believers taking most of the initiative to reach the local communities to a more supportive, facilitative and mentoring or coaching role so that local believers are better equipped and empowered to take on roles that have traditionally been filled by foreign Christians. I believe we are at the threshold of a major transition—especially as there are an estimated 70 to 130 million Chinese believers—in different areas at various stages of economic development, influence, growth and maturity.

The more resourceful churches in the large, urban centers and some smaller



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cities and towns have taken initiatives to partner with appropriate bodies or organizations and/or register charitable vehicles, non-profits, social enterprises and businesses so that they have legitimacy in their outreach programs. This means that they are also quickly catching up with the foreign agencies in the issues they face, be they theological, missiological or practical.

For example, those wanting to use non-profit structures often face questions from their congregations as to why they should divert "spiritual work" resources to the social gospel. Sound familiar? The Western church grappled with these issues, especially prior to the 1990s. Yet for the most part today, this is a well-accepted strategy in churches in the West. It looks like we still have much to pass on to our local brothers and sisters in terms of well thought-out theology and missiology as well as the practical aspects of running non-profits.

However when we move to business, missions and social enterprises, the local churches in China have already caught up with the majority of Western churches still working out the why, what, who, when, where and how of business as mission (BAM). Of course, more and more believers in China are embracing this as a strategy, in some ways similar to the process of acceptance of non-profits by the general international Christian community as churches grapple with the theology, missiology and practical issues of non-profits as an outreach strategy. So, as the Western churches now work through what BAM means for them, the local churches in China are also working through similar issues. We hope we will have their well thought-out views in the near future. This is likely possible as there are various ongoing Christian business networks seeking to provide them with information, support and encouragement while at the same time attempting to impact society in a positive way, especially through corporate social responsibility projects.

Let us now turn to some specific ways in which the local churches are impacting society and the degree of help they will need to do this well and be good models, eventually, maturing and expanding beyond their culture and borders.

We had a sample of various initiatives at a conference and this spanned non-profits, charities, humanitarian groups, BAM, media and publishing as well as family, youth, children and migrant workers. We will take a look at each of these.

## Non-Profits (NPOs)/Charities/ Humanitarian Initiatives

(These largely overlap with family, youth, children and migrant workers)

This category seems the most developed because it was one of the earliest strategies adopted by foreign believers when entry into China became possible again. Hence, local believers have had about 20 years of being beneficiaries as well as observers; now, increasingly, they are participants and founders of NPOs. This is generally the preferred option of both foreign and local Christian communities because it avoids the "thorny" issue of profit, the stress of balancing for-profit activities with charitable activities which many mission-based businesses face, as well as the difficulty in finding the rare mix of business competence/acumen and heart for the marginalized.

This was especially visible during the Sichuan earthquake when many people formed informal groups to help the injured and suffering. After the disaster, several of these groups went on to formalize their activities either by registering as civil organizations or partnering with sponsor organizations or departments that could provide them legitimacy. A few have gone on to register as private NPOs. The disaster exposed the lack of an active civil society as well as channels for donations to be effectively and efficiently processed and deployed to areas of real need. Apart from the initial burst of official initiative, it is mostly private initiatives that are continuing to help this affected region, albeit with some degree of encouragement from the authorities.

If we think foreign NPOs face challenges, so also do the local, Chinese ones but the challenges are just a bit different. Local NPOs find it easier than foreign NPOs to operate with or without a formal registration. However, the local NPOs have a harder time raising funds because of local legislation that gives license only to certain approved charities to raise public funds while the law is not that clear for private fund raising. There is also a transparent monitoring of foreign funds that are given to the local NPOs because of the fear of foreign governments using them to "control" the activities of local NPOs. In addition to the cumbersome administrative requirements and regulations, the local NPOs are also hard pressed to find committed people to implement their humanitarian and charitable projects, given the limited channels for mobilization due to the official attitude towards the church and NPOs in general.

Nonetheless, these challenges have not stopped numerous local brothers and sisters. One initiative recruits university students to help the marginalized in the same city. Others have set up community centers for migrants, scholarships for poor students or ways to help upgrade the medical services in lower grade hospitals. In most cases, the greatest needs are how to have clarity in vision, mission, values, strategies, team building, management skills and consistent professionalism in the services being offered while making the effort to grow and mature as authentic

**Local believers have had about 20 years of being beneficiaries as well as observers;** now, increasingly, they are participants and founders of NPOs. This is the preferred option of both foreign and local Christian communities.



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believers. Passion is present, but often skills are lacking.

What can foreign groups do differently so that the local non-profits can excel and thrive? They can strengthen their hands by helping them find appropriate resources, imparting their experience and skills to them and providing peer mentoring and coaching instead of just focusing on expanding their own organizations.

## BAM and Social Enterprise

The local churches that have taken steps to use BAM and social enterprise as strategies have faced similar issues and questions as the NPOs and charities. One such issue is why the church should be engaged in making money and the effectiveness of this as compared with being, say, a charity.

Many who have ventured into this area have an even more challenging time than those in NPOs. They have had a shorter experience of being beneficiaries, observers and participants in foreign mission-based businesses. There are currently some local initiatives, but most of those who are successful are those who have been business owners or managers before becoming believers or becoming more committed to outreach. These are few and far between as most will be embroiled with their businesses and not so focused on the mission aspects. Those who do well on the mission aspect often are unable to make a profit or are not well managed.

Some examples of foreign set-ups include businesses that generate employment for poor communities, women or the physically or mentally challenged. These employment opportunities are often in the production of arts and crafts, clothing, food or as a service provider, such as a cafe. Others include running cultural programs, providing health advice, marital counseling or talks about practical life issues. Side by side with these local initiatives are many other foreign mission-based businesses that provide similar services in career counseling, language teaching, consulting, cultural training, logistics/distribution, import/export, education, adventure tourism, production of food, arts and crafts, jewelry, manufacturing, agriculture, farming and tourism amongst other things.

There does not seem to be that much difference between foreign mission-based businesses and local ones. So, is there anything we can do differently to help the local brothers and sisters involved in this strategy? Yes, we can still model and teach them good principles of governance and integrity; we can impart skills in leadership, management, team building and mission programs as well as be peer mentors or coaches. Part of the process is learning together and capitalizing on one another's strengths. Local believers can learn from our mistakes and failures even as we learn from theirs.

## Media and Publishing

This is probably one of the most difficult areas in which to make an impact since it is highly controlled with censorship and other regulations. In addition, it often requires investment in expensive technology which may not have very rapid returns. Yet, if the doors were ever thrown open, imagine the extent of outreach with the technology of media, be that through TV, big-screens, radio, publications, the Internet or mobile phone applications.

At present, most working in this area are involved in the publication and/or translation of books, CDs and DVDs used for instruction or reading—either general or specific. Currently, there are not many involved in this though some local brothers and sisters may be involved in small-scale radio programs, feature programs and the production of CDs or DVDs. Most of those involved in this are based overseas to avoid the restrictive regulations, but a few local brothers or sisters work in partnership with foreign groups that have funds or expertise in this area. Some work in official media and use it to make meaningful programs. Since this is the newest area and probably one of the most controlled, developing it will require further investigation on viable partnerships, continual sharing of information, technology and resources, while constantly pushing the envelope so that the Good News can be proclaimed creatively and extensively.

## Conclusion

The discussions, especially within this group, brought out some frustrations the local brothers and sisters face in working with foreign believers. Sometimes, the abilities, maturity and initiative of the local groups are not recognized because the foreign groups just want to continue doing what they feel comfortable doing, and they think the local groups cannot do it as well. There may also be a lack of a forum for the honest exchange of ideas, opinions and views about the way things are done. These forums need to include how partnerships could reflect a peer relationship rather than the trainer-trainee or donor-recipient relationship and how to practically "map out" the transition from more foreign initiatives that locals can join to more local initiatives with foreigners partnering.

This is just the beginning. We need to have a forum in the near future to work through this transition period in steps since different regions, sectors and churches have varying degrees of ability, resources, experience, vision, skills and passion for His work. This would be a good follow-up to the recent discussions we had.

***Tiger Lily*** *has been in leadership roles that involve vision casting, strategic planning and implementation, and leadership training.* ▮

**If the doors were ever thrown open,** imagine the extent of outreach with the technology of media, be that through TV, big-screens, radio, publications, the Internet or mobile phone applications.



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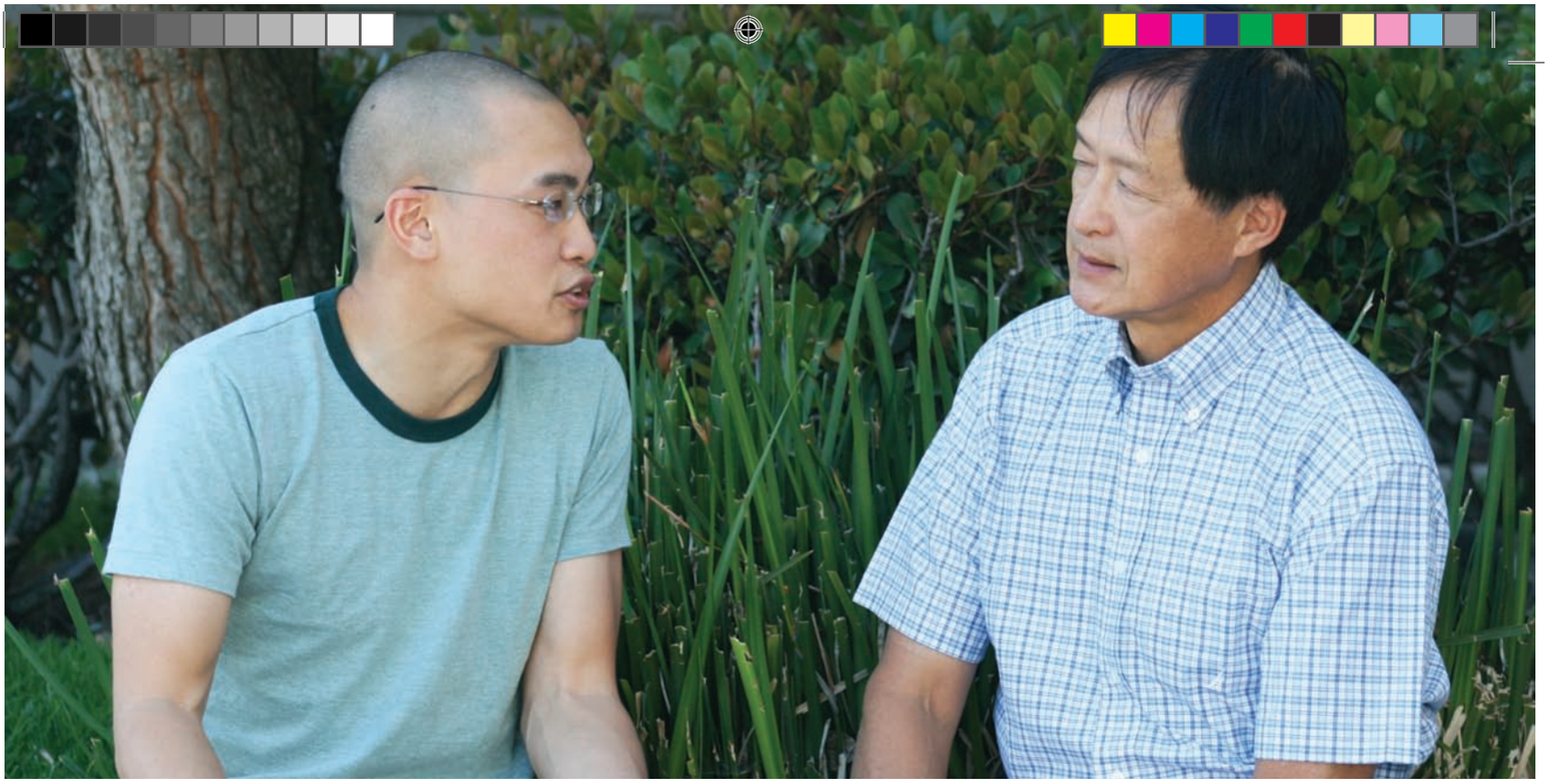

# Mentoring in a Chinese Context

*Michael*

- *"All my life I've longed for a mentor!"*
- *"We have no fathers; we have no brothers."*
- *"I minister to everyone; who ministers to me?"*
- *"The pastor of a large church wept, 'I have no one to share the burden with!'"*
- *"We don't need more programs on mentoring; we need people who will mentor."*

These are some of the heart-cries of Chinese leaders for mentoring. Often a mentor does not realize how profoundly he or she can impact another's life.

## "Let Me Introduce You to My Mentor!"

As co-pastor in a Chinese church, I admired SW's effectiveness as a lay leader. He led people to Christ, formed cell groups and multiplied cells within the church. He headed a cluster of cells regularly training and encouraging his leaders. I helped with his training and enjoyed being with him. He also joined me on a mission trip to learn how to lead his cells on their own mission trips. He quickly caught on and began doing the same. SW was one of the best lay leaders I knew.

However, we moved away and I lost contact with him. Then a church conflict hurt him deeply. He withdrew from ministry and stopped attending church. His wife and others around him were heartbroken. On a brief visit back I noticed that SW was missing. When I asked about him, people shrugged sadly, mentioning his alienation from the church. I was deeply grieved and began praying for him.

When I contacted him through email he wrote back, sharing about his hurt and withdrawal. I told him how much I had admired his zeal in the past, recounting some highlights in our journey together. I tried to share a fresh vision with SW of his potential impact for the Kingdom. I encouraged him to forgive and begin serving again; however, I didn't hear back from him. I wondered how he took my exhortation.

A few years later I visited that church. SW eagerly wound his way through the crowd to greet me. His face beamed as he shared. He had indeed forgiven the hurt and moved beyond it. (I'm still not clear what it was). He launched a ministry to foreign maids working in that city. Many came to Christ. He formed them into cells and trained them to lead their own groups. They invited him to their home country to do evangelism. Many more there believed. So, he formed a Bible school to train leaders. He invited me to teach in his school.

When SW saw me in church that day, he insisted on introducing me to the congregation he had formed. His faced glowed as he said, "Let me introduce you to my mentor. Without him, I would not be here today!"

## Mentoring in a Chinese Context

At a recent consultation, a breakout group gathered to share lessons learned about mentoring in the Chinese world.



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Valuable insights emerged, some reflected in the story above. Following are some of the questions we discussed with the responses.

### *Describe Some Important Lessons You Have Learned in Mentoring*

- Be consistently available, both in good times and in bad.
- Be honest about your own struggles.
- Practice reflective listening skills.
- Perform acts of kindness or give small gifts to show your love.
- Pray! Listen to God before meeting together and pray a prayer of blessing at the end.
- Find out what is important to that person (e.g., their children).
- Travel together, creating memories together.
- Learn the Chinese language and history well.
- If you are older, be a father or mother figure to them.
- Show trust through actions, not just words. For example, let them create their own materials and ministry opportunities

### *What Needs do Chinese Leaders have in Mentoring?*

The breakout group identified several mentoring needs of Chinese leaders (and all of us!). On a personal level, they need mentoring in setting priorities (God, family, work/ministry), in having a consistent quiet time and in integrating faith into daily life. They need mentoring in reflection and in anger management. They need mentors to be courageous enough to ask them about sensitive issues in appropriate ways.

On a ministry level, Chinese leaders need help in dealing with church conflicts. They need training in mentoring and developing new leaders. They need mentoring about power and servanthood. Older leaders need mentoring in forming healthy succession plans.

### *What is the Role of Foreigners in Mentoring?*

Context—rural or urban—complicates things for foreigners. Generally, foreigners can have a great mentoring impact among intellectuals at the university level.

Foreigners can build bridges among local Chinese. Sometimes Chinese feel they can share struggles with foreigners that they cannot share with their local brethren, if the foreigner provides a non-judgmental presence and a safe environment. Indeed, foreigners have an advantage as neutral outsiders, because they are not invested in localized "politics" between individuals and groups—provided they do not share sensitive information inappropriately.

## Mentoring Resources Available

- **Lifestyle Check-Up**—A regular mentoring checkup tool to be used every 6-12 months (English): Jerrys1231@yahoo.com
- **Barnabas**—Four books in Chinese: www.xn--gmqq38aqncfyg.com/p16.html
- **Focusing Leaders**—Helping leaders see their lives over a lifetime and how they can partner with God in developing them (Chinese & English): www.crms.org.sg
- **Thirsting for God**—contemplative materials to help leaders in their prayer and spiritual formation (Chinese): gowest99@securenym.net
- **Jesus-in-Context**—mentoring people through the life of Jesus in light of his first-century context (English): D.Michael.Crow@gmail.com
- **CCL**—Personal Spiritual Assessment Tool (Chinese) hkccl@ccl.org.hk
- **Natural Church Development**—identifying the eight growth factors of a church (English): http://ncd-international.org

## Jesus' Mentoring Methodology

Of course, Jesus is our best model of mentoring. Let's look briefly at Jesus' mentoring methodology.

> He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons (Mark 3:13-15).

> Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles (Luke 6:12-13).

## Jesus' Mentoring Methodology: Selection

Several important dynamics in Jesus' selection process emerge from these two passages:

- **A Large Public:** Jesus had a large following, including "a great multitude from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon" (Mark 3:7-8).
- **Prayerful Consideration:** Jesus spent an entire night praying before choosing a few to mentor personally. Apparently he sought God diligently about whom he should mentor.
- **Personal Affinity:** Jesus called those "…whom he himself wanted." Personal affinity—filtered by prayer—played a significant part in Jesus' choice of his mentorees.
- **Top-down Selection:** Jesus "called" the Twelve. Scripture emphasizes Jesus' choice of them, not their volunteering. This relationship was initiated not by the mentorees but by The Mentor.
- **Mentoree Response:** "They came to him." They felt a divinely-inspired receptivity to Jesus' invitation. They were not forced into this relationship. It was characterized by mutual attraction.
- **Formalized Roles:** Upon their response, Jesus appointed twelve "…whom he also named apostles." He formalized the relationship with specific roles and responsibilities.
- **Intensified Relationship:** "to be with

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# The Four Pillars of Peacemaking

*Ken Sande*

**Biblical peacemaking is inherently *counter-cultural*.** No matter what people group or country we come from, none of us is naturally inclined to obey Jesus' commands to love our enemies, confess our wrongs, confront in love, submit to our church, or forgive those who hurt us. Whether we are Chinese, African, Asian, Latin American, European, or North American, our natural instinct in conflict (as illustrated by so many stumbling people in biblical narratives) is usually to do just the opposite of what God calls us to do.

Christians in China face challenges that are unique to their time and place. But regardless of the circumstances, God calls his church to grow in peacemaking. This happens through his relationship with each of us who are his followers. The church, his precious bride, is changed as he transforms each of us.

He transforms us through the gospel, the good news that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). God sent his Son to pay the price for our sins through his death and resurrection. When we believe this and put our trust in Jesus, God forgives all our sins. Through the gospel he also enables us to learn how to resist temptation, obey his commands, and live a life that honors him.

This wonderful news can radically change the way we respond to conflict. Through the gospel the Lord enables us to become Christ-like peacemakers. As we stand in awe of his matchless grace in our own lives, we find more joy in glorifying God than in pursuing our own selfish ends. When we realize that God has mercy on those who confess their sins, our defensiveness lifts and we are able to admit our wrongs. As we accept and benefit from the way the gospel lovingly shows us our sin, we are inspired to gently correct and restore others who have done wrong. And as we rejoice in the liberating forgiveness of God, we are empowered to go and forgive others in the same way.

Through the gospel, God provides us with the model and motivation for peacemaking! This model is built on four pillars.

## 1st Pillar: Glorify God

When the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to live "to the glory of God," he was not talking about one hour on Sunday morning. He wanted them to show God honor and bring him praise in their daily lives, especially by the way that they resolved personal conflicts (see 1 Cor. 10:31).

You can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting him, obeying him, and imitating him (see Prov. 3:4-6; John 14:15; Eph. 5:1). One of the best ways to keep these purposes uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"

## 2nd Pillar: Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the



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speck from your brother's eye."

There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, ask yourself whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the Christ-like attitudes Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is your actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. One way to do this is to use the **Seven A's of Confession**.

1. Address everyone involved (all those whom you affected)
2. Avoid if, but, and maybe (do not try to excuse your wrongs)
3. Admit specifically (both attitudes and actions)
4. Acknowledge the hurt (express sorrow for hurting someone)
5. Accept the consequences (such as making restitution)
6. Alter your behavior (change your attitudes and actions)
7. Ask for forgiveness

The most important aspect of getting the "log out of your own eye" is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the desires that battle in your heart (James 4:1-3; Matt. 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will, or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to where they are now sinful demands, such as a craving to be understood, loved, respected, or vindicated.

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God ("You shall have no other gods before me"). It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4).

There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, ask God to help you see where your have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, deliberately pursue right worship, that is, fix your heart and mind on God and seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in him alone.

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

## 3rd Pillar: Gently Restore

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. When Christians think about talking to someone else about a conflict, one of the first verses that comes to mind is Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you." If this verse is read in isolation, it seems to teach that we must always use direct confrontation to force others to admit they have sinned. If the verse is read in context, however, we see that Jesus had something much more flexible and beneficial in mind than simply standing toe to toe with others and describing their sins.

Just before this passage, we find Jesus' wonderful metaphor of a loving shepherd who goes out looking for a wandering sheep and then rejoices when it is found (Matt. 18:12-14). Thus, Matthew 18:15 is preceded by and introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation. Jesus repeats this theme just after telling us to "go and show him his fault." He adds, "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." And then he hits the restoration theme a third time in verses 21-35, where he uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving to others as God is to us (Matt. 18:21-35).

Jesus is clearly calling for something much more loving and redemptive than simply confronting others with a list of their wrongs. Similarly, Galatians 6:1 gives us solid counsel on what our attitude and purpose ought to be when we go to our brother. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." Our attitude should be one of gentleness rather than anger, and our purpose should be to restore rather than condemn.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences through mediation, arbitration, or accountability (see Matt. 18:16-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

## 4th Pillar: Go and be reconciled

One of the most unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that rich forgiveness to others. We cover up our disobedience, using shallow statements like, "I forgive her, I just don't want to have anything to do with her again." Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, "I forgive you, I just don't want to have anything to do with you again"?

Praise God that he never says this! Instead, he forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isa. 43:25). One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to make the Four Promises of Forgiveness when you forgive someone:

1. "I will not dwell on this incident."



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2. "I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you."
3. "I will not talk to others about this incident."
4. "I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship."

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his wonderful forgiveness toward you.

Even when you resolve personal offenses through confession and forgiveness, you may still need to deal with *substantive issues*, which may involve money, property, or the exercise of certain rights. These issues should not be swept under the carpet or automatically passed to a higher authority. Instead, they can be negotiated in a biblically faithful manner.

As the Apostle Paul put it, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4; see Matt. 22:39; 1 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 7:12).

## Focus on What Christ Has Done for You

A Christian should *never* close the Bible. When you try to resolve a conflict but do not see the results you desire, you should seek God even more earnestly through prayer, the study of his Word, and the counsel of his church. As you do this, it is essential to keep your focus on Christ and all that he has already done for you (see Col. 3:1-4).

Even if other people persist in doing wrong, you can continue to trust that God is in control and will deal with them in his time (see Psalms 10 and 37). This kind of patience in the face of suffering is commended by God (see 1 Pet. 2:19) and ultimately results in our good and his glory.

***Ken Sande*** *is the president of Peacemaker Ministries (www.Peacemaker.net).* *Adapted from* The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict *by Ken Sande, 3rd Edition © 2004. Used with permission. Copyright © 2011 by Peacemaker Ministries. All Rights Reserved.* ∎

**Mentoring in a Chinese Context**
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him" (Mark 3:14). They enjoyed a proximity to Jesus beyond that of the crowds. An intensified relational network was the crucial context of mentoring.

• **Ministry Assignments:** Jesus appointed them "to be sent out" to preach and exorcise demons. At times he sent them out in twos. At other times they served beside him (e.g., in feeding the 5,000). Active ministry responsibility, at minimum in pairs, was the larger context for mentoring.

## Jesus' Mentoring Methodology: Characteristics

Many characteristics of Jesus' mentoring methodology can be drawn from the Gospels. Here are a few:

• **He Invested More in the Committed Few than in the Curious Many:** Jesus deliberately weeded out sensation-seekers, curious only in signs and wonders and the latest religious craze. He wanted committed people willing to leave all to follow him.

• **He Modeled Holistically:** The Twelve saw Jesus in many situations: tired, angry and praying; debating opponents and confronting the elite; comforting the grieving and grieving himself; preaching, healing or exorcising demons; eating and sleeping. Jesus modeled life holistically, not selectively (e.g., lecture only).

• **He Inspired Small Group Interaction:** Jesus formed the Twelve into a cohesive whole, who interacted with him and with each other. Not only did they ask him questions, they "discussed among themselves." While ministry was the larger context for Jesus' mentoring program, small group interaction—with Jesus and with each other—was the immediate context.

• **He Mentored One-on-One:** Jesus exposed the Samaritan woman's lifestyle and addressed Thomas' doubts. He questioned Nicodemus and taught Mary. He restored Peter and challenged John. Jesus' mentoring was tailored to each individual's needs.

• **He Privately Explained Public Ministry:** The disciples asked Jesus about his preaching and received further explanation privately. These discussions were characterized not by prepared lessons, but by spontaneous question and answer.

• **He Entrusted Them with Ministry:** Jesus sent the Twelve to preach, exorcise demons and heal disease. He taught them how to handle money, receptivity and rejection. He modeled ministry, involved them in his own ministry, and sent them out to minister, thus multiplying his impact.

• **He Spent Much Time with Them:** Jesus rarely had "alone time" except in prayer. He was not an absentee mentor. He spent much time with the disciples: sitting, walking, eating and serving. Just as Jesus called them to be "with him," he also took time to be "with them" (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:17; Matthew 26:36; Luke 24:14; John 3:22; 4:39; 14:23). Jesus was a "very present" mentor.

• **He Envisioned Multiplication:** Jesus, in compassion for people suffering under spiritual tyranny, urged prayer for more shepherd-laborers. He commanded the disciples to make disciples—who would make disciples—who would make disciples. Jesus envisioned exponential multiplication.

Jesus' methodology differs significantly from conventional leadership development programs today, often characterized by an "add-on approach" of "air-dropped seminars" and "one-way lectures." He did address huge crowds, but he focused on mentoring "*the few*" who would multiply themselves among "*the many*."

However, was Jesus' approach effective? Consider that the church was not founded by the 5,000, though they attended his Power Seminar, saw signs and wonders and ate miraculous bread. A Three-day Power Seminar for the *many*—taught by Jesus Christ himself!—was not enough for Jesus. He did not entrust the founding of the church to the *many*, but to the *few* he called, mentored and empowered by the Spirit.

Through those *few*—the Twelve—rather than the *many*, Jesus turned the world upside down. May God use us, as mentors, to do the same for his glory!

***Michael*** *has been involved in ministry among Chinese for 31 years.* ∎



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# Rediscovering the Roots of China's Indigenous Church

*Lian Xi,* ***Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China.*** *New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010.*

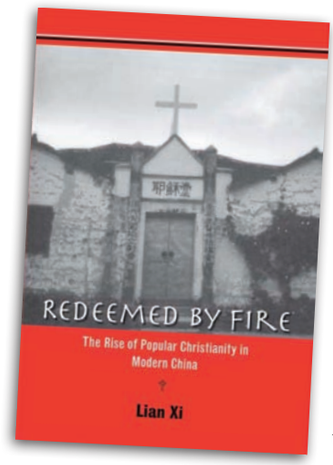
*Reviewed by Brent Fulton*

Years ago a Western teacher was having a conversation with one of her students in China about their respective cultures.

"You know what the difference is between you and me?" the student asked rhetorically. "When people ask who you are, you tell them what you do. When people ask me who I am, I tell them who my father is."

Simply put, the student's point was that Westerners generally find their identity in their work, while Chinese find their identity in relationship. This difference in perspective carries over to how many outside China view the Chinese church: "How big is it? How is it organized? What do they believe? Where is it? What are its needs?" Unfortunately this functional perspective neglects important questions of relationship—relationship to the early indigenous church prior to 1949, which laid the foundations for much of what we see of Christianity in China today, and relationship to the complex socio-political milieu out of which it was born.

Lian Xi, a professor of history at Hanover College, makes an important contribution to our understanding of the Chinese church today by filling in the details of this oft-overlooked history. Following a brief but helpful survey of early missionary efforts, *Redeemed by Fire* paints a series of portraits of prominent figures in the indigenous church, beginning with Liang Fa, the first convert to Christianity under Robert Morrison in the early 1800s, and continuing through to movements such as the Taiping, Jesus Family, and True Jesus Church, and on to familiar individuals including Wang Mingdao, John Sung, Watchman Nee, and Calvin Chao, recognized today as pillars in the early Chinese church. In doing so Lian draws upon an impressive array of archival sources both within and outside China, numerous documents, reports, and historical accounts hitherto available only in Chinese, as well as personal interviews with various individuals who had connections to the church during the first half of the twentieth century. These portraits are skillfully hung against a backdrop that weaves together both the unique cultural factors giving rise to the various Chinese expressions of Christianity that emerged over the past two centuries and the complex, at times antagonistic, relationship between foreign missionaries and indigenous church leaders.




**Lian Xi makes an important contribution to our understanding of the Chinese church today** by filling in the details of this oft-overlooked history.

Central to Lian's thesis is the observation the indigenous church, emerging amidst waves of social turmoil, took on a millennial character which came to define early Chinese Christianity and, Lian would argue, continues to color the Chinese church today both in theology and practice. Recurring themes include an evangelistic message emphasizing escape from the chaos of the present world, efforts to create communities that provided a refuge from this chaos, extreme ecstatic experiences, miracles and predictions of Christ's imminent return. Drawing parallels between these characteristics and elements prominent in Chinese traditional religions (which were very present in the upbringing of most of the indigenous church leaders under consideration), Lian raises the difficult question of how uniquely Christian these movements were. Taken to an extreme, this millennialism resulted in movements such as Hong Xiuquan's "Heavenly Kingdom" (*Taiping Tianguo*) or, more recently, quasi-Christian sects such as Eastern Lightning, the Three Grades of Disciples (*San Ban Puren*), and the Exalted King (*Beili Wang*) sect. Lian contrasts this other-worldly character with the reformist agenda followed by many missionaries and the Chinese intellectuals who worked with them. John Sung, for example, although highly educated, jettisoned his own Western degrees and turned his back on a promising scientific career to become China's best-known evangelist, preaching a message of spiritual redemption fueled by an urgent conviction that the end was near. Whether Communist, Nationalist, or Protestant, Sung had no interest in an agenda of national salvation. Likewise, Watchman Nee, Wang Mingdao, and others saw little hope for China's future as the country was ravished successively by civil war, natural disasters, foreign attack and occupation, and more civil war, followed by the eventual victory of an avowedly atheistic regime.

Lian probes the growing division between prominent indigenous movements and leaders and the foreign missionary



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establishment, exacerbated by successive waves of anti-Western sentiment that put the onus on Chinese Christians to prove they were not simply tools of imperialist powers. At the very least, this pressure made it inconvenient and perhaps embarrassing to be seen as being too close to foreigners, whose culture and customs were very different from those of the Chinese and who were assumed to be accomplices in a Western effort to colonize China. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Lian quotes a Chinese dressmaker who had served three generations of China Inland Mission pastors as saying, "…there seemed to be little inducement to repent and be saved, if going to heaven would entail associating with foreigners for all eternity" (p. 7). At its worst, such as during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and later under the Communist regime, this foreign association could mean death.

The Chinese church responded by seeking to distinguish itself through culturally appropriate expressions of the faith as well as through indigenous organization and funding (ironically, the same "three selves"—propagation, government, and support—that missionaries had held forth as their goals for the church and which the Chinese Communist Party would later seize upon in its creation of the Three Self Patriotic Movement). The Jesus Family, for example, expressed its faith in songs that contained more than a hint of popular Buddhist and Daoist imagery. Members lived communally (separated by gender) and supported the movement through farming. The True Jesus Church, likewise, developed its own hierarchical structure and was supported through tithes and gifts from its wealthier members as well as income from church-run businesses and rental properties. On the other end of the theological spectrum, Chinese intellectuals sought new expressions of the faith through indigenous music, art, and literature. Lian's portraits of these early indigenous efforts provide a thought-provoking glimpse into what the church might have become had it been allowed to continue to develop its own forms and structures further into the 20th century.

Although the indigenous church self-consciously sought to separate itself from its foreign predecessors, it nonetheless bore the marks of much of what characterized Western Christianity at the time. Lian meticulously traces the influence of prominent non-Chinese individuals from various Pentecostal, Brethren, Christian and Missionary Alliance, CIM, and other traditions upon leaders within the indigenous movement. The interplay between, on the one hand, readily incorporating certain theological streams that found resonance in China and, on the other hand, actively repudiating and, in the case of more than a few indigenous leaders, denouncing, the foreign church, is fascinating. While shunning foreign support, they could also find their efforts stymied due to lack of acceptance by foreign missionaries who, quite understandably, might have seen the indigenous leaders as ungrateful recipients of their tutelage, sheep stealers, or even heretics. A case in point was Watchman Nee, who, early in his ministry, had denounced denominationalism as a sin and advocated a radical separation from Western missions. Nee, according to Lian, "…wrote tearfully…of his thwarted hope to go to America to study at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago"—likely a result of Nee's having offended the denominational missionaries whose recommendation could have secured him a place at the school (p. 162). Lian's unvarnished portraits constitute a welcome departure from the "hagiographical" tradition that has characterized much missionary writing. The figures that emerge are at once giants of faith, courage and vision, as well as flawed individuals whose egos at time get the best of them, or who end up abusing the privileges that come with leadership and lapsing into questionable, if not outright sinful, behavior.

Bringing his account of the indigenous church up to the present, Lian traces the link between several of China's contemporary movements and pre-1949 individuals and groups (including the True Jesus Church and the Little Flock, which, according to Lian, emerged in the early 1980s as the largest surviving sects). Those familiar with the Born Again Movement, Fangcheng Church, China Gospel Fellowship, and other rural church networks will find interesting background on the origins of these movements.

As to the future of the church, Lian, who sees in today's movements ongoing continuity with China's folk religious traditions, is not hopeful that it will be able to break out of its millennial mold to become a major force for change in society. Thus, while acknowledging the existence of a growing Christian movement among China's urban elite, he still sees Christianity's greatest potential as among China's masses, where it will continue to provide an other-worldly hope to the disenfranchised and a potential (although ultimately unsuccessful) challenge to government power.

On this point Lian, as a historian, is perhaps too wedded to his own historical narrative to see another way forward. China's emerging urban church has, in the past decade, distinguished itself as being quite cosmopolitan, self-aware, and comfortable with its role in, rather than against, society. Given these discontinuities with the indigenous tradition Lian has described, it is possible that a new chapter is being written and that the role of the indigenous Chinese church in the 21st century may be very different from that of the previous hundred years.

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**Lian's unvarnished portrait** constitutes a welcome departure from the "hagiographical" tradition that has characterized much missionary writing.



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Christianity in China's population is not easily changed, even over a considerable time in the future unless the churches themselves adopt a new missionary and development strategy and regard the imbalance in church membership as an important issue to tackle.

**Insufficient pastoral personnel.** The development of the Christian church requires a large number of qualified full-time clergy, but the number of students recruited by and the teacher qualifications of the seminaries of the "three-self churches" are far from meeting the needs of church development. Among the numerous grass-root churches, there is a common problem of insufficient number and low quality of clergy. In respect to the "house churches," because of their lack of legal identity, they cannot openly establish seminaries. Theological training and education have become more difficult, and it is a non-disputable fact that the majority of pastors of the "house churches" have no formal theological training. Both the "three-self churches" and the "house churches" attach great importance to training clergy. Recently, both entities have sent people to receive training in overseas seminaries, but that number is very limited; even if all of these returned to China after their training, they might not be able to contextualize what they have learned so it can be adapted to the development of the church in China. Therefore, the lack of pastors is a major issue that stymies the development of China's church.

**Administration not standardized.** The internal administration of the church is a major worry restricting the development of Christianity in China. The government's religion administrative department has strictly controlled the personnel, finances and administration of the "three-self churches" for a long time, and church internal administration has become part of the government's religion administration work. Although this situation has ensured the official recognition of the existence and development of the "three-self churches," it has also marked the "three-self churches" with the mark of "being politicized" and "government-run churches." In the long run, dependence on the government without separation of church and state will only cause the church to lose her capability for independent development by her own strength. It will cause the church to deviate from the religious goals and sanctity of development of Christianity, which is not conducive to the healthy development of Christianity in China.

In respect to the "house churches," those in villages have long been suppressed, and most are in a secretive or semi-secretive state. It is relatively common for them to exist under tremendous pressure so they have strict internal controls, paternalistic leadership and a closed management style. In certain churches there even exists a management style similar to that of secret associations in China's civil society. With the focus of the church shifting to the cities, the easing of relations with the government, the increased openness of society and the popularization of the concept of governance within Christianity itself, democracy and openness in the internal administration of village "house churches" have been enhanced a great deal. Relatively speaking, the "house churches" in cities have already begun to focus on the standardization and democracy of internal church administration. They are trying to establish a relatively standardized, internal, democratic, supervisory system for collective decision making and supervision of pastors through elected elders or staff that represent the congregation on church matters. However, churches with this type of system are in the minority. Overall, the current internal governance of "house churches" in China is still based on decision making by leaders—especially the individual church pastors. Churches rely more on the personal charisma of their leaders; the democratic supervisory system has not yet become mainstream in church administration.

**No room for charitable services.** The providing of charitable and social services has always been the tradition and strength of Christianity in various countries. Since the reform and opening of China, both the "three-self churches" and the "house churches" have actively been trying to participate in services of this nature. However, because of political considerations, the mechanism for legal protection of religious organizations entering this realm has not been established. The government has not set out the ancillary policies, such as those on fund raising and preferential tax treatment, for religious organizations to enter this area. Charitable enterprise is not open, and government-run charities are still the main body for charitable services in China.

In spite of this, charitable organizations were set up by the government-recognized "three-self churches" for the undertaking of some charitable service projects. However, these projects were undertaken largely in consideration of political image. The "three-self churches" across the country cannot set up high profile organizations to run charitable enterprises independently. Provision of such services is not the essential daily work of the "three-self churches," nor is it the main channel for the public to be aware of and understand Chinese Christianity; there is no necessary link between charity and Christianity in Chinese society.

Regarding the "house churches," since they have not solved their identity problem and are in the "shadows," not known by society, they cannot enter the public domain in "the sunshine" to legally carry out charitable and social services. In the long run, whether or not the churches can openly be engaged in carrying out charitable and social services is an important factor for Christianity in China's ability to obtain social recognition. If Chinese Christianity cannot enter the charitable services realm legally, there will be serious problems for its prospects of development in the nation.

**Culturally boycotted.** In recent years, with globalization, development of information technology and more cultural exchanges between the Chinese and foreign cultures, the extent of acceptance of Christianity in China has been raised, and the number of Christians in China has increased enormously. From a political and legal perspective, Christianity is one of the five officially recognized religions; the "three-self churches" are the officially supported churches, and the Chinese government has never opposed or criticized Christianity in the official



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media. However, in the eyes of the average Chinese, Christianity is still regarded as a religion of the West and an "imported product" of Western culture. Despite the fact that there are a lot of farmers among Christians, many Christians in cities are intellectuals, university students or people in coastal areas who know English or have opportunities to contact "the foreigners."

As a system of faith, ethics and morals, the contextualization of Christianity has not been completed. In addition to Marxism which is officially advocated, the ethical and moral resources of the Chinese people are still largely derived from traditional Chinese culture, especially the Confucian culture. The prejudice, doubt and worry most people have against Christianity are mainly cultural. In China's mainstream media and publications, Christianity has only changed from having a negative role to a "neutral" one; its presence is tolerated without the need for public criticism. The government has never given any public recognition or affirmation to the culture, values, ethics and morals of Christianity. From a cultural perspective, the position of Christianity cannot be compared with official, orthodox Marxism, traditional Chinese culture or Confucianism. A very small number of fundamentalist Marxists, radical nationalists and patriots regard Christianity as a cultural tool of the hostile forces of the West against China and demonize it from time to time. The classics and other publications of Christianity still cannot be published freely. Overall, Christianity is still in a position of being culturally discriminated against and has not become an indispensable part of mainstream Chinese culture.

## Summary

Christianity has never had so many members in China, but at the same time its development has also inevitably exposed and magnified its flaws and problems; the future of Chinese Christianity is not entirely bright. Notwithstanding its tremendous development as compared with its situation sixty years ago and its legal recognition, it is still doubted and excluded culturally; it has no place in the social public domain, and it is still on the edge of Chinese society.

However, compared with the external resistance for the development of Christianity, the biggest obstacle to the church's development is to recognize its own problems and correct them. To exist and develop in China, Christianity must begin to change itself, namely to realize two changes: to move from the edge to the center of the society; and to change from the management model of individual responsibility by church leaders to a collective management model of democratic supervision. Without these two changes, there is no future for Christianity in China. This is the major strategy for the development of the Chinese Church and is also the only way for the development of Christianity in China to be inevitable. Christianity must achieve these two changes in order to seize the historic opportunity for its development in China.

For the reasons above, if the Chinese Communist Party cannot offer spiritual values that meet the needs of the Chinese people and cannot resolve the growing faith crisis within a period of time in the future, it will lose its qualification as the official source of morals and defender of moral standards for its people. If the other religions in China are unable or cannot fill the void created by the defaulting of the Communist Party, and if they cannot propose a solution to resolve the faith crisis when the Chinese people are most in need of a spiritual belief system, then Christianity has its opportunity. If Christianity can come out in time with a position as the provider of social ethics and morals and provide a spiritual belief system for Chinese society, if it can address the loss of faith of the Chinese people, then the people, the society, the culture, and China's rulers will completely change their opinion of Christianity. This is the historical opportunity Christianity has in China; this is the breakthrough point for the development of Christianity in China!

***Huo Shui*** *is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Amy Chow. This article was adapted from a longer article by Huo Shui which is on the ChinaSource web site, www.chsource.org/site/two-transformations, in its entirety.* ▮

## INTERCESSORY notes

### please pray

1. **For discernment and understanding** on the part of China's Christian leaders as they give shape to the church in the coming months and years.
2. **For those involved with NPOs**, social enterprises, BAM and other charitable efforts as they seek the best avenues to serve others while bringing them the gospel.
3. **For Chinese and international leaders** as they work together exploring and defining the roles that each has in developing China's church.
4. **That those who have known Christ** for many years will give of themselves in mentoring spiritually younger Christians.
5. **That peacemaking** will become a part of the Chinese church.

## The Urban Migrant Toolkit

**This set of resources is designed to help you and your organization** or team begin serving among China's urban migrants. Assembled by a consortium of organizations currently involved in a variety of migrant-related endeavors, the Toolkit brings together years of experience drawn from different cities in China.

**Inside the Toolkit you will find:**

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