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Seeing China through the Lenses of History

Kay Danielson

In May 1999, I found myself on a train from Beijing to Jilin City, a backwater town in China's northeast. The weekend before, Chinese public opinion had exploded in a paroxysm of anger and anti-American vitriol over the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the U.S. State Department had urged Americans not to travel in China. I, however, had things I needed to do in Jilin and so was determined not to let events stop me.

I must admit to being a bit nervous that day as I boarded the soft sleeper car and found my berth. I had decided that, even though I speak fluent Chinese, on this trip I would hunker down with my book and pretend that I was an illiterate foreigner, all the while hoping that no one would directly ask me where I was from. Alas, it wasn't to be. There were two gentlemen already in the compartment when I got there, and as soon as I sat down, the older of the two looked at me and said, "Are you an American?" Hmm. That was going to be a tough one to evade! "Yes," I replied, and turned back to the book. Before I could focus back on my reading, he took his glasses off, stared coldly at me, and said, "*Ni qifu women le!*,"—"You (singular) have bullied and humiliated us."

In modern China there are two major "lenses" through which people have been taught to view historical events. The first is this notion of *qifu*, or

humiliation. For the Chinese, the era that began with the Opium Wars in the mid-1800s until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 is considered a century of humiliation. The outside world arrived at the shores of China at a time when she was internally weak and thus unable to withstand the pressures that were brought to

Photos by Gary Waldron



bear on her. Taking advantage of her weakness, the Western powers bullied their way into China, forcing her to sign unequal treaties and relinquish sovereignty over certain coastal cities.

Even after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, the humiliation of foreign domination continued. China was a member of the allied forces fighting against Germany in the First World War, but following Germany's surrender in 1919, her colonial holdings in China were not returned to Chinese sovereignty, but instead turned over to Japan. University students in China were outraged at this humiliation and launched a series

Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China
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of protests and demonstrations that were part of what has come to be known as the “May Fourth Movement.”

So why do events of a hundred years ago matter so much today? There is a saying in China, *ji yi you xin*, which means, “to remain fresh in one’s memory.” I have a friend who put it more succinctly—“to treat the past event as if it were yesterday.” It is often difficult for Westerners to understand how deeply Chinese today can feel the humiliations of events that took place more than 150 years ago. But it’s important to remember that 150 years ago is three percent

miliation by foreigners, people in China at the time were spring-loaded for the violent reactions that followed the bombing. Here it was, handed to them on a silver platter—the chance to emulate the May Fourth patriots and demonstrate against foreign humiliation. I saw it in my students the day following the demonstrations¹ at the US Embassy as they excitedly told me of their participation in the rock and paint throwing.

It was fascinating to see that many of the slogans used that weekend were the very same ones that had been used dur-

it. Although there were no protests and demonstrations (they were not allowed), the rhetoric of humiliation quickly returned to the front pages of the newspapers and on the Internet.

More recently, China’s feeling of past humiliation played itself out in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the US. While the public voice of China was pledging sympathy and support, a common sentiment bubbling not far from the surface was that the U.S. had finally gotten what it deserved for bullying and humiliating others.

This feeling of humiliation also remains the main sticking point in China’s present dealings with Japan. China demands that Japan own up to and apologize for the atrocities committed against the Chinese during the Japanese occupation during WW II. So this first lens—the *qifu* lens—causes Chinese to see their recent history through the eyes of the little guy, the one who got beat up after school by the tough guys and now wants an apology or a chance to fight back.

The second major “lens” through which modern Chinese are being taught to view history is that of restoration of glory. Nearly every tourist brochure or speech about Chinese history makes some reference to China’s 3000 plus years of glorious history. They are (rightly) proud of the fact that Chinese civilization has existed in an unbroken line from antiquities to the present. Chinese today look back longingly at the Song and Tang and Han Dynasties in particular, as times when China was powerful and the superior civilization in the region, if not the world.

China’s national obsession with hosting the 2008 Olympic Games gives expression to this desire for restoration.



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of Chinese history, which in fact makes it quite recent history. By comparison, three percent of American history would take us to 1993. So the humiliation of the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century is as fresh to them as the Oklahoma City bombing is to most Americans.

This notion of humiliation is helpful for us in understanding how Chinese people react to world events. In 1999, the bombing of the Chinese embassy took place just two weeks after China had celebrated the 80th anniversary of the May Fourth Demonstrations. Having digested heavy doses of speeches, classes and activities hailing the May Fourth students as true patriots who had dared publicly to decry China’s hu-

milium the May Fourth protests. In the minds of the people, the incidents were similar in that they represented foreign bullying and humiliation of China. Further, it served to emphasize to them how weak they felt because of the nation’s seeming inability to fight back or exact some measure of revenge in any way.

The “Spy Plane Incident” in April 2001 also represented to the Chinese people another example of US bullying and humiliation. That US planes were regularly flying off their coastline was hard enough to swallow, but that a Chinese pilot had been killed in this particular incident was almost too much to bear, given that, once again, there was nothing that China could do about

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The received wisdom is that this will allow China to demonstrate that it is a country to be taken seriously on the world stage. Its era of humiliation, isolation and backwardness will, once and for all, be put to rest. This desire for a return to glory has also been evident in China's push to join the WTO, and other international bodies, where it can have a place at the table, so to speak, with the other great powers.

This, however, has not always been the interpretation of the past that Chinese have been taught. Paul Cohen, in his book *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* discusses the tension between various ways in which we “know” the past. Writing about the Boxer Movement at the turn of the century, he makes this observation: “The Boxers as event represent a particular reading of the past, while the Boxers as myth represent an impressing of the past into the service of a particular reading of the present. Either way, a dynamic interaction is set up between present and past, in which the past is continually being reshaped, either consciously or unconsciously, in accordance with the divers and shifting preoccupations of people in the present.”²

This is a crucial point because in an authoritarian state such as the People's Republic of China, citizens do not simply learn history and are not simply influenced by history. Rather, they learn and are influenced by a particular interpretation of history. There are no competing interpretations available (officially), but rather one “line,” determined by the Party, is followed in the media and endless political meetings that Chinese are still occasionally summoned to attend. Much of the history learned and taught here is in Cohen's category of “myth,” not in the sense that it did not happen, but in the sense that “its meaning is governed to an overwhelming extent by the concerns of the present. As the center of gravity of present concerns shifts, therefore, the meaning of the past necessarily shifts along with it, sometimes to a quite extraordinary degree.”³

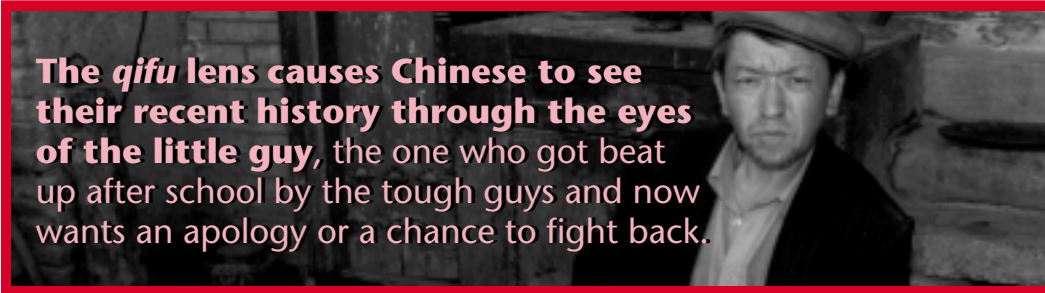
In modern China the “center of grav-

ity” to which Cohen refers has seen an extraordinary shift in the past twenty years. This current official glorification of the past is vastly different from the vilification of the past that was in vogue in the Mao era. In fact, Mao not only decried the ancient culture and civilization, he sought to destroy it.

Following the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping and the promotion of the so-called “opening and reform” policy, the official line regarding China's ancient past changed. Rather than view traditional culture as something to be destroyed, it is now promoted, and the Communist Party has been recast as the only institution able to return China to her former glory, the glory

phoenix, rising from the ashes of a century-and-a-half of destruction to a bright and noble future that is, in fact, but a return to the glorious heights of the past. It is critical for those of us who regularly engage with China to understand these two lenses.

As for the man on that train in May 1999, he was merely expressing to me his personal and communal frustration at the humiliating events of the week. China was again being bullied by the US; I was an American; so he had the opportunity to express his frustration to the responsible party—me. I responded by reminding him that I had done nothing of the sort, but instead had come to China many years ago, had



The qifu lens causes Chinese to see their recent history through the eyes of the little guy, the one who got beat up after school by the tough guys and now wants an apology or a chance to fight back.

that existed before the era of humiliation. It is the current historical myth. The imperial glories have been reshaped to fit the current preoccupation of the rulers, namely the preservation of power and the establishment of legitimacy in the face of a bankrupt Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. Again, I quote a Chinese friend, an astute (and amazingly objective) observer of his own culture: “The emphasis on the past,” he says, “is used to encourage and emphasize the rising of China.” He even goes so far as to argue that the present popularity of *Tang Zhuang* (Tang dynasty style clothing—the silk jackets with embroidered emblems) is an expression of the desire to return to the glory days of the Tang Dynasty.

The Chinese, then, have two pairs of glasses that are interchangeable. They are the unfairly treated victims of the “hegemonists,” the big, powerful (read: Western) countries that routinely humiliate and exploit weaker countries. But at the same time, they are the

learned his language, and was, in fact, a friend of China who also wanted to see his country strong, stable and respected in the world community. *I told him that I understood why he and the Chinese people were angry about what had happened, but that he shouldn't take that out on me, an American individual.* I held my breath and waited for his counter-response. He looked at me for a few seconds, replaced his glasses, and said to the younger man with him, “She's alright. Give her some tea.”

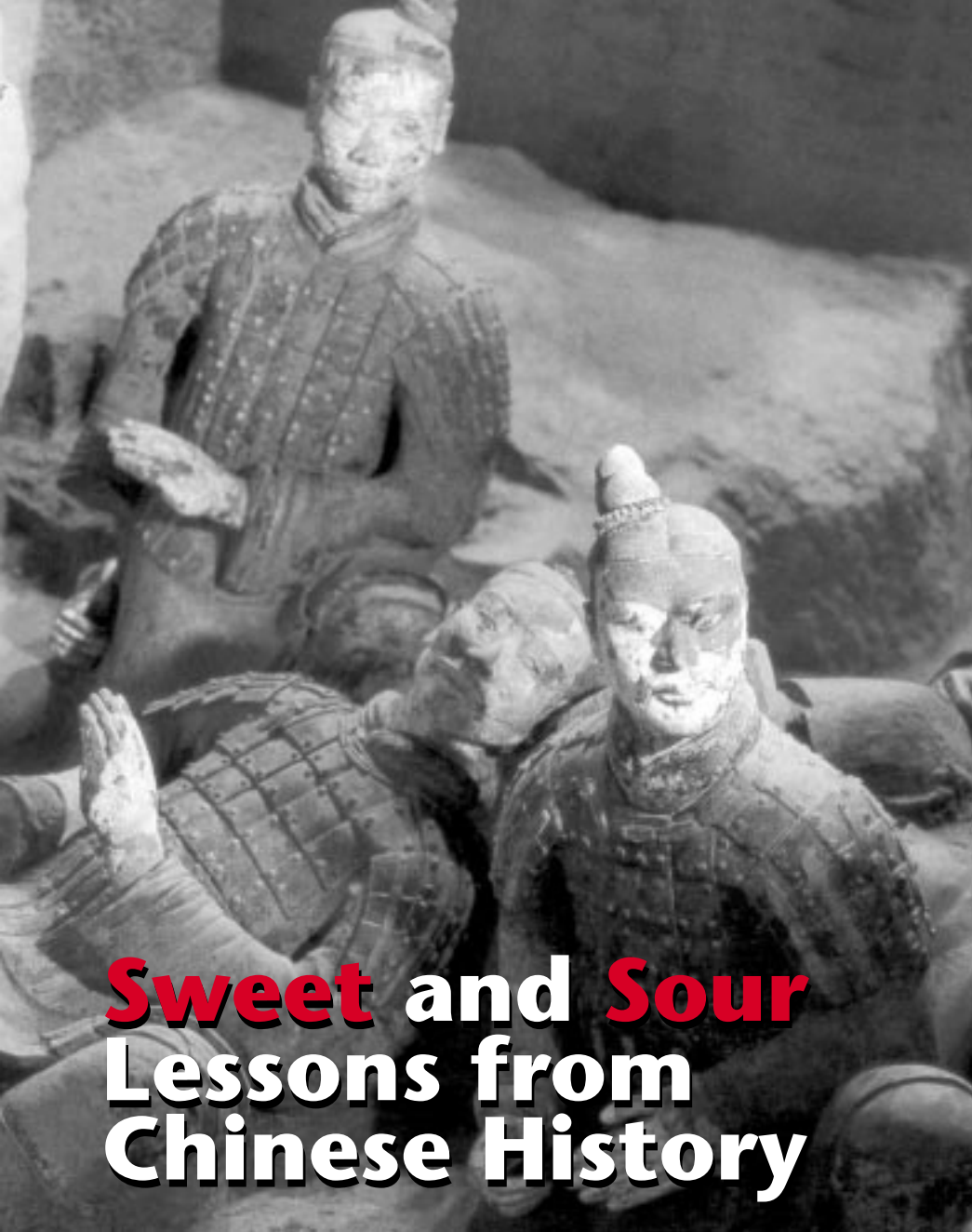
Endnotes

1. These demonstrations were not only sanctioned, but were organized by the government. My students had no choice but to board Party-supplied busses and go to the embassy to protest.

2. Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. xii.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

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Sweet and Sour Lessons from Chinese History

The Chinese have a deep sense of history that permeates their culture.

Tony Lambert

Henry Ford wrote: “History is bunk!” Unfortunately, this attitude is still seen today in North America and Britain where many students are hazy even about details of the Second World War. For Christians, ignorance of history is inexcusable as our faith (unlike the myths of Hinduism and Buddhism) is based on the historical facts of the life, death and resurrection of the man Jesus Christ who was incarnate in a Jewish province of the Roman Empire. Ignorance of history is particularly dangerous when attempting Christian ministry and evangelism in any country or culture, but particularly so in China, which today is the world’s longest sur-

living cultural entity. While the Sumerian and ancient Egyptian civilizations were older than the Chinese, today they are dead cultures. In contrast, China’s present writing system can be traced back continuously to the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty nearly four thousand years ago.

The Chinese are rightly proud of their long history and culture. China gave to the world tea, silk, the compass, paper, printing and many other inventions. It is humbling for the Westerner to realize that the golden age of philosophy in China flourished some 2,500 years ago. Two thousand years ago the Han dynasty was the equal of the Roman Empire in splendor. One thousand two hundred years ago Changan, the capital of the Tang dy-

nasty, outshone any city in Europe with the possible exception of Byzantium. When Marco Polo first visited Song dynasty China in the 13th century he was overawed by the opulence of Hangzhou that put Venice to shame. Few Americans realize that Puritan New England began to flourish in the mid-seventeenth century just when China’s last dynasty, the Qing, was starting. Recent historical studies have shown conclusively that the West only began to edge decisively ahead of China in terms of technological invention towards the end of the 18th century.

The Chinese have a deep sense of history that permeates their culture. Both Chairman Mao and today’s technocrats and business people are famil-

iar with the strategies described in the *Art of War* written by Sunzi during the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.). At the popular level, the battles of the Three Kingdoms (220-280 A.D.) have entered into popular story, song and proverb. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) China's ancient culture received a major jolt, but it has quickly recovered over the last twenty years. Today Beijing opera and local folk and ancient religious festivals flourish.

Lack of Historical and Cultural Understanding

Failure to understand Chinese history and culture has done immense harm to the cause of Christ in China. I will raise just a few examples. In the 19th century, the West arrogantly imposed itself upon the Chinese. The Qing dynasty was weak and increasingly decadent. The East India Company built up the iniquitous opium trade to make vast profits. After the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1857-1860) the West was free to establish Treaty Ports and, by the end of the 19th century, to virtually carve up the entire country into 'spheres of influence.' Western missionaries were only allowed into the country by the imposition of the 'unequal treaties.' Although most were humble ministers of Christ, some unavoidably carried the prejudices of the period. Roman Catholic bishops claimed the right to be treated on the same level as the local mandarins. We do not have to accept the cruder propaganda of the Communist Party (A book published in Sichuan alleges that missionaries sold opium on the one hand while preaching the Bible on the other.) to admit that serious mistakes were sometimes made, and the Gospel seriously compromised. Missionaries, priests and local Chinese converts could rely on the threat of physical force from the British, French or German consuls to resist pressures from the local magistrate or mob. Shanghai, where many missions had their headquarters, was a totally foreign-governed enclave. The nadir was reached, possibly, in 1900, when German propaganda

at the time of the Boxer Rebellion and the siege of the foreign legations in Peking caricatured China as the 'Yellow Peril.' Many patriotic Chinese—not just communists—were rightly outraged by the high-handed actions of the West that continued well into the 20th century.

In the early 1950s when the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) was set up to control the Protestant churches, the recent colonial past was still vivid to most Chinese, and the mistakes and compromises of some missionaries could be ruthlessly exposed to the detriment of the church. Today, the propaganda rings increasingly hollow, but it would be a grave mistake for us to forget the lessons of history. Many older Chinese have fond memories of the sacrificial love and dedication of the pre-1950 missionaries. The love of Christ and the deep fellowship in the Holy Spirit has transcended every cultural and political boundary. However, Christianity in China has become increasingly indigenous, and its spectacular growth over the last two decades owes everything to local Chinese evangelists and Bible-women and very little to foreigners.

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA HAS BECOME increasingly indigenous, and its spectacular growth over the last two decades owes everything to local Chinese evangelists and Bible-women and very little to foreigners.

Many non-Christians see Christians as 'good people.' Chinese intellectuals, disillusioned with Marxist ideology, see Christianity in a more favorable light; nevertheless, national pride is high. There are still 'leftist' officials who suspect Christians, both Chinese and foreign, of 'subversion.' The Party is uneasy over the vast growth of Christianity in China seeing it as an ideological threat after the events a decade ago that led to the rapid collapse of Communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Any linking of Christianity with Western or American culture, let alone political power, is highly undesirable.

After all, was not Christianity first brought by humble Nestorian monks across the Silk Road to the Tang dynasty's Changan in 635 AD? They followed in the footsteps of their Master—and so should we. The humility of Christ and the early Christians—their "foolishness" and "weakness"—is a bridge into the Chinese culture so deeply affected by the "emptiness" and "poverty" of Daoism and Buddhism. These attitudes are in strong contradiction to the self-assertiveness and hyper-active egocentricity of some 'successful' Western ministries.

Ignoring History Brings Peril

However, there is much evidence that some Western churches and agencies are ignoring the lessons of history. The deep work of God in China through the suffering church and indigenous evangelists in recent decades can be brushed aside by the arrogant self-centered call to "evangelize China," as if the foreigner were the first to arrive on the scene. Rather, there should be the humble determination to serve the existing Chinese church in its already breathtakingly successful work of evangelism. Throughout China, the

vast opportunities in schools and colleges for Western English teachers should be filled by dedicated Christians. However, unless they are properly trained, the dangers of creating a new cycle of dependence are apparent. Young people, desperate to study abroad (usually in America), will go through the motions of conversion via superficial evangelistic techniques that take no account of their cultural or intellectual background. In the old days, food and a blanket offered to refugees, or flood or famine victims, led to the phenomenon of "rice Christians." Today's converts, more upmarket, may

be attracted by making a foreign friend or gaining a scholarship abroad. If conversion occurs overseas, new converts, unable to face the sometimes harsh realities of discipleship for which they have been ill-prepared, often fall away when they return to China.

Other evidences of a lack of sensitivity may also be mentioned. For example, the sermons or training materials of some famous (or would-be famous) Western Christian preachers/theologians/evangelists are translated into Chinese with little thought as to whether they are culturally relevant to the Chinese situation. Others have desired to set up their own “ministry” (or church or denomination) in China while ignoring the existing churches (whether TSPM or unregistered).

In the 1840s, Charles Gutzlaff sought to evangelize China with much imagination and enthusiasm. He had vast quantities of tracts printed and formed a network of Chinese preachers and tract-distributors. However, he became the victim of his own enthusiasm and credulity. By 1851, it was dis-

of the Gospel mutates into a full-scale uprising against the government. The visionary Hong Xiuquan (a failed Confucian scholar) read a Gospel tract and interpreted his strange visions as a call from God to exterminate the Qing dynasty “demons” and set up a pseudo-Christian theocratic state. The tragic saga is brilliantly told in Jonathan Spence’s recent book, *God’s Chinese Son*. The rebellion was crushed at the cost of 20 million lives. The Taiping tragedy has every relevance today as we see the present government rocked by the sudden upsurge of the Falungong cult. Why is the Party so wary of religious sects including harmless evangelical house-churches? Chinese history is littered with examples of strange Buddhist or Daoist cults which rapidly fomented peasant rebellions when the ruling dynasty became weak. Today, Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought is a dying ideology. Grass-roots Buddhism and Christianity, as well as many indigenous cults, are experiencing spectacular growth. Is it any wonder that the Party responds with repression? Here

meetings were held to which distinguished foreign scholars were invited. What was so different about Ricci? An Italian priest who spent many years studying the Chinese language, Ricci became so proficient in both its spoken and written forms that he was able to debate with Confucian scholars as an equal and write learned treatises. Soon after arriving in south China in 1583, he, himself, donned the robes of a Confucian scholar to better reach the intellectuals of the day. He steeped himself in the Confucian classics. In 1595 he moved to Nanjing, but it was not until 1601, after much patient negotiation, that he was allowed to set foot in Beijing. He brought with him the latest technology that he presented to the Emperor in the form of accurate maps, clocks and the art of painting in perspective. He made friends at the imperial court and by 1608 had made over 2,000 converts.

While evangelicals will not wish to copy Ricci in his traditional Catholicism, his missionary methodology still has much to teach us today—especially those who wish to communicate Christ to Chinese intellectuals. How many Westerners reach a proficiency in Chinese that allows them to not only share the Bible in depth but also debate science, atheism, Marxism, modern Western philosophy and culture with their Chinese friends? How many can prepare evangelistic and discipleship materials which are not mere translations of books used in North America or Europe but are culturally sensitive to the Chinese situation?

Learning from Chinese history, including secular and church history alike—both of which are under the sovereign control of God—is not an optional extra for Western Christians headed to China. It is an absolute essential.

Endnotes

1. The sad tale is told in Latourette’s *History of Christian Missions in China*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1929.

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LEARNING FROM CHINESE HISTORY, including secular and church history alike—both of which are under the sovereign control of God—is not an option. **It is an absolute necessity.**

covered that the great majority of his “preachers” were opium-smokers and criminals. They were even selling back his literature to the printer who resold it back to Gutzlaff!¹ Today, how many schemes have been hatched in the West to raise large sums of money to evangelize China? Some have been shown to be dubious and their Chinese contacts shady. Some have sunk without trace. Serious evangelism, theological training and discipleship ministries must be undertaken with the long-term future in mind. This means thorough preparation in the Chinese language—and an understanding of Chinese history and culture.

The devastation wrought by the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s and 1860s is a clear example of what can happen when a partial understanding

again, an understanding of history is absolutely critical. China’s joining the WTO is likely to leave millions of peasants and workers unemployed. In their misery and despair they will become easy prey to cults and sects. A period of economic and political instability is in the cards. The lessons of history from the Taiping Rebellion may well be of use.

Learning from History

While there are many negative examples from which we can learn, what about the positive ones? Last year was the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci, in Beijing. It is highly significant that this missionary, unlike most others, received a glowing write-up in the Chinese press. Many commemorative

Understanding China's Intellectuals

Lessons from History

Samuel Ling

Photo by Graham Cousens



Cross-cultural workers in China service are increasingly aware of the strategic importance of reaching China's urban intellectuals. Some of these intellectuals, often (mis)named "Cultural Christians," have taken up Christian thought as a subject for serious academic study. At the same time, these are exciting, confusing days. China is stepping onto the international scene as a member of the WTO. She is searching for new ideas and values. What can the history of China, and the history of Christian missions in China, teach us as we seek to understand China's intellectuals?

The Social Context of Miscommunication

When we look back in history, we may be sobered by the recent past. One could make the case that the history of the Christian church's outreach to China's intellectuals has been a history of deep-seated inter-cultural misunderstanding. Even during Matteo Ricci's brilliant career, his Chinese friends, who admired his personality and became interested in his technology, could not fathom why he was in China. After Robert Morrison arrived in China in 1807, French Catholics penetrated the hinterland, often as the first white people ever seen by the local people. The story of Chinese opposition to Christianity has been chronicled by Paul Cohen and others.¹ A number of misunderstandings and faux-pas resulted in riotous response by the scholars and the gentry. The results were disastrous: the series of anti-Christian riots finally culminated in the Boxer

Uprising of 1900.

Cohen and others showed how 19th century missionaries failed to understand and appreciate the social role played by the gentry-scholar in China's countryside.² Missionaries, eager to survive and develop their work, often focused on their own well-being and that of their mission compound. They did not personally know the scholars, gentry or the local magistrate around them. Many of the gentry had passed the Confucian civil service examinations. They were often the intermediaries between the government and the people, even sometimes collecting taxes for the government. They were in charge of local educational and charity projects, such as repairing and building schools and examination halls. On the local level, they exemplified and defended the Confucian tradition.³ When missionaries penetrated China's interior and began schools, orphanages, clinics and chapels, they were

supplanting the role of the gentry unaware.

What about today? What roles do intellectuals play in China? Are they the guardians of China's present and future worldview and value system? There is evidence that mass media and the stock market may supplant intellectual inquiry in shaping China's value system. Yet national pride, anti-American anger and indigenous religions are very much alive. Intellectuals are struggling to obtain a hearing for their proposals for China's future cultural construction. Will Christians offer an understanding ear?

The Anti-Christian Arguments

Beyond the socio-cultural misunderstanding, the history of Christian missions among China's intellectuals can also be understood as the history of Christian response to anti-Christian arguments. In the 1860s, Cohen tells us,

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Beyond the Shadow of History

Chinese people have often said that China has a long and glorious history. Since the Xia dynasty, when handwriting was first introduced, there have been at least three thousand years of recorded history. As we Chinese look back on this heritage, we cannot help but feel very proud of it.

Indeed, in the perpetual flow of human history China has played a significant role on various occasions. During the Tang and Han dynasties 1,000 and 2,000 years ago respectively, China was the most dominant country in the East. Printing, gunpowder and the compass were invented in China and later exported via the Silk Road to Europe where they were widely used. The Chinese civilization also had a strong influence over Japan, Korea, Vietnam and other Asian nations. More importantly, beginning with the Han dynasty, Confucian thought established itself as the dominant philosophy and paradigm that shaped the foundation of Chinese politics and society for centuries to come.

During the Han dynasty, the centralization of Chinese feudal society achieved a high level. As the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties came and went, this feudal system matured. The unique characteristic of China's economy during those days of feudalism was that of a self-enclosed and self-sufficient nation. Confucian philosophy provided the moral fabric that laid the foundation for this society and, with the standardization of the Chinese written language, it became the people's religion. If the Western nations had not developed and risen above the rest of the world in recent centuries, China would probably have continued on her feudal path.

Nevertheless, a long history can become heavy baggage. An excessive centralized feudal system suppressed the vigor of Chinese society and China declined over the last three hundred years. At the same time, Western nations rose via the Renaissance, Industrial Revolution and capitalism. Even Japan joined the Western world as a developed nation after the Meiji Restoration. Suddenly, China discovered that her once formidable empire was no longer. After the 19th century, Western nations, using their military might, forced China to open her doors. Her previous pride and glorious history were replaced by humiliation and pain. The once proud civilization had become history.

The people of China became angry and resentful toward the corruption and incompetence of the Qing dynasty then in power. Many intellectuals realized that something had to

be done quickly before China began an even steeper plunge. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, the most influential of the reformers, attempted a top down political reform. They acquired Western science, technology and military equipment while still maintaining the old centralized feudal system in hopes of restoring China to her previous powerful status. The reform failed. Rather than saving the Qing dynasty, the reform movement of 1898 actually increased the resolve of the Chinese people to overthrow it.

For China, the first half of the 20th century was a bloody one. The Boxer Rebellion, the 1911 Revolution, the Sino-Japanese War and the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists all occurred within this short span of history. By 1949, China's violent revolutions finally came to an end. Under the Communist Party's rule a series of political movements followed: the land reform, the Three Against and the Five Against campaigns, the Anti-Rightists campaign, the Great Leap Forward and, finally, the Cultural Revolution.

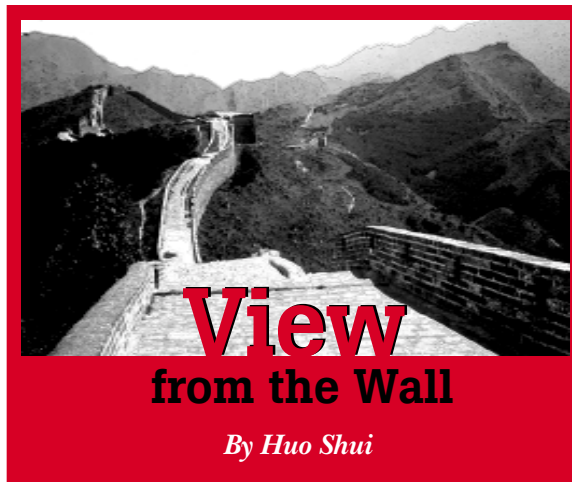
Then, at the end of the 70s, Deng Xiaoping began a new reform with joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) as one of its main goals. Today, more than 20 years of effort have finally paid off. At this time, when most of the world is in an economic slowdown, China is enjoying a steadily growing economy. China is re-emerging on the world's center stage as a rising superpower. The sleeping giant has finally wakened.

Now people are asking what the difference is between today's new China and the old China. What have the Chinese people learned from their own culture during this transition?

Desire for Dominance

In Chinese culture, "grandfather" is a symbol of power and authority; "grandchild," on the other hand, is a symbol of weakness. "Grandfather" gives orders. He is the commander in chief. "Grandchild" is the one who follows orders. While China's long and magnificent history often serves as a stimulus to generations of Chinese who have a desire to relive the old dream—to return to the old days of glory of the Han and Tang dynasties—in reality, the past hundred years of China's history have been full of pain and humiliation. This period of history reminds every Chinese person of what it is like to be the "grandchild." However, having a strong nation and bringing honor to the ancestors should be the norm; the "grandfather" is what the Chinese should be.

To be the "grandchild," dictated to by other nations, is not normal and should only be temporary. Therefore, Chinese nationalism has been the over-arching spirit of every revolution. From the Sino-Japanese War to the Nationalist-Communist Civil War, the Communist Party has always used China's



View from the Wall

By Huo Shui

restoration as a world power as their way to mobilize the masses for their cause. The “Revive China” slogan provides a good picture of how desperate and anxious China is to return to the old days of glory. With such a mentality, even the outcome of a soccer game, the launching of a missile or the competition to host the Olympic Games become a focal point for millions of Chinese. When success is achieved, the people shout for joy. When there is failure, the people mourn.

For this same reason, the Chinese envy the strength and riches of the United States on one hand, while on the other they view the U.S. as the primary obstacle keeping China from becoming strong. Therefore, many Chinese would love to see the U.S. decline. This explains why many Chinese were actually glad to see the September 11 attack on the U.S.

There is still quite a disparity between China and many developed Western nations in areas such as economic development, science and technology and social development. This continues to be a source of psychological imbalance for many Chinese. It drives Chinese people to reflect on their own history while they work diligently to try to catch up with the West. The Chinese desire is that China once again be a dominant nation. Chinese Communists advocate, and market in party propaganda, nationalism—not Marxism or communism. This is a clever strategy they deploy by exploiting the desire of the Chinese people to be a dominant nation once again.

If China indeed is able to become an influential and powerful nation as a result of her economic development, then she needs to be not a “grandfather,” but a responsible, compassionate, righteous member of the world community. Unfortunately, what is still burning in the hearts of many Chinese is the spirit of nationalism. In many ways, this nationalism is similar to some extreme Islamic movements that destroy rationality and civility. If we Chinese do not see this clearly, then China will not be able to move beyond the shadow of her own history.

Seeking Values

The nucleus of Chinese culture is Confucianism. Ancient Chinese often exhibited characteristics such as gentleness, humility, diligence, courtesy and incorruptibility that are traditional virtues in Chinese culture. Nevertheless, these virtues have been under attack—or eradicated—as China has gone through the storms of revolution over the past hundred years. Under communism, these virtues were replaced by the new “struggle” (*Dou Zheng*) philosophy by people who wanted to be “liberated.” Class struggle, ethnic struggle, philosophical

economic growth has been nothing less than phenomenal. At the same time, morality in China has declined. Corruption and crime fill the new China. In the absence of balance and accountability within the dictatorship, morality and virtue are merely empty slogans. Lying, cheating, and materialism fill the society. Traditional Chinese values are nowhere to be found.

It is quite obvious that Communism’s own morality and virtues have failed completely while it has successfully erased traditional morality and virtues. The moral crisis in China has been one of the hot topics since the

Graham Cousens



struggle, political struggle, military struggle, civil struggle—regardless of style or substance, everything was decided by one of these “struggles.” Mao Zedong said, “Communist party philosophy is a philosophy of ‘struggles.’”

To struggle, you must have tools. The slogan “political power comes out of the barrel of a gun” became a great tool for the Communists. They believed in using violent revolution to acquire and maintain their own political power. Dictatorship through harsh repression was substituted for democracy and the rule of law. It was not until the late 20th century, when people realized all these struggles brought much harm to China, that the nation became desperate for an alternative. It was then she finally gave up class struggle and started economic reform.

More than 20 years have passed. As the rest of the world can see, China’s

early 80s—even in the media. Almost everyone understands that one cannot have material life without spiritual life. As the Chinese abandon their faith in Communism, they look back in history with the hope of rediscovering old-fashioned virtues. Recently, the government released Guidelines for Construction of Civility. By resurrecting the old morality and virtues, they hope it will somehow make up for the lack of morality and virtue in the new China.

How can China travel this road? The answer is simple: she can’t. Once traditional values were eradicated and communism abandoned, how can two systems that failed individually be combined and expected to now work together? The combination looks like a huge “chop suey.” Trying to knit together pieces of moral teachings and expecting them to actually fill the

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Peoples of China

Why We Must Not Forget the Past

Ralph R. Covell

As new Christian workers enter needy areas among the minority nationalities of China, it is tempting for them to think that God's work is starting with them and that past efforts are of no importance. In 1919, J. Houston Edgar, a missionary with the China Inland Mission (CIM), deplored the fact that he and other Protestant missionaries were not trying hard enough to get the information needed to evangelize Tibet. "Why," he asked, "do we know less about the need and potential strategies than Roman Catholic missionaries did seventy-five years ago?"¹ Events of the past can help to give us direction for the future—to avoid obvious mistakes and to try former strategies that may be duplicated in the present. Helpful, also, is to understand how the past has created the obstacles of the present.

An example of the latter is found in China's northwest, which has always posed difficulties for Christian witness because of heavy Islamic influence. Yet, Christian churches were established in the early 20th century by the humanitarian work of the Swedish Missionary Union and the itinerant evangelism conducted by CIM missionaries. Most of this work came to an end in October 1933 when an Eastern Turkestan Republic was established independent from the Chinese central government. This alerted the People's Republic of China to watch for any ideological activity that might turn the peoples of the area against them. This sensitivity was heightened by the dissolution of the USSR, creating near China independent republics made up of people groups also found in sizeable

numbers in China's Xinjiang Province.

The situation has worsened in the past two months as Chinese leaders believe that some of these rebellious activities may be linked to Central Asian terrorism linked to the Al-Qaeda network. Might it be wise, then, for the current increasing witness in Xinjiang to focus more on humanitarian and educational activities, which pose less of an ideological threat than more overt evangelism? It may also mean that, even as was the case with the

When Protestant missionaries first came to China, they noticed that, in addition to the many Islamic people groups in Xinjiang with varying languages and cultures, there were also the Chinese Muslims.

Swedish work, the first workers may need to be converts from Central Asia. These, of course, will also face difficulties, but they will not stand out to the same degree as foreigners from North America.

When Protestant missionaries first came to China, they noticed that, in addition to the many Islamic people groups in Xinjiang with varying languages and cultures, there were also the Chinese Muslims, the *huihui*. These people spoke Chinese, were very similar to the Han Chinese culturally, and could be found scattered throughout China. Many missionaries assumed naively that they could evangelize these people with the same message and strategies that worked with the Han Chinese. They included them in the same evangelistic outreach meetings and told them that they must forsake idolatry, the use of false deities and repent of many other sins common to

the Han Chinese—but not to them. Apologetic methods were used which tended to be confrontational and laid all of the difficult theological issues on the table immediately. Christian literature failed to emphasize similarities between Islam and Christianity, which potentially could have served as a bridge to interest Muslims in the Gospel. If there was no immediate response, the conclusion was drawn that they were hardened, unresponsive and without hope.

Eventually, Protestant missionaries saw the value of setting up special committees, such as the Muslim Committee. These discussed ways of leading Muslims to faith in Christ, of inviting leading experts on Islam, such as Samuel Zwemer, to come to China to help form evangelistic strategy and of having special conferences to discuss work among Muslims. With such stimulus, some missionaries tried harder to

contextualize their message to Muslims. For example, Montgomery Throop, of the American Lutheran Mission, explored how the Christian faith fulfills and enriches the practical side of the Muslim faith. He spelled out in detail how the Christian witness might relate to the "five pillars of Islam."²

In the past, as missionaries worked among the *huihui* they viewed them as a homogeneous entity: all Muslims were the same wherever they were found. But increasingly, they became aware of the fact that there were many sectarian differences. Basic doctrine was nearly the same, but cultural and social distinctions existed that could dictate how the Gospel needed to be presented.³

A wealth of material can be found in mission society minutes, magazines, journals and books on pre-liberation work among Muslims in China. Are those interested in Muslim evangelism in China today aware of this material?

More important, are they willing to expend the energy and time to learn from it and apply it to their work? Or, are the insights and strategies that God gave to his servants in the past of no value today?

A major lesson from past ministry among minority nationalities with a folk religion background is the value of people movements. As contrasted with missionary work among the Han Chinese, many of those who worked with the minority nationalities advocated that conversions to Christ were best if they came by families and not merely by individuals. Decisions would be multi-individual, mutually interdependent. Decisions were personal, but not singly individual. James Fraser, the CIM missionary best known for his work among the Lisu in Yunnan in the 1920s and 1930s, preached in many different contexts in open-air meetings—in tea shops, in Chinese inns, in small chapels—but increasingly his focus was not on individuals, but on the bridge that they might give to their families. The clan system among the Lisu was strong, and unless the village elders approved, it was difficult for even the father in one home to do away with the family altar and sacrifices so crucial in demon worship. A people movement, the term now popular in missiology, did not mean that every family member would make a full commitment to Christ. It did mean that all responsible family members would publicly disavow and leave all aspects of demon worship in an initial step of repentance. This kept the door open for further decisions and meant that everyone was moving from the past toward conversion, rather than turning against one another.

People movements, small and large, were the common way in which many minority nationalities—Miao, Yunnan Yi, Lahu, Lisu and Wa—came to Christ in Mainland China and among many of the minority nationalities of Taiwan. For this to have happened meant that

those doing the work had several theological assumptions that are as useful today as then. The one-by-one method of leading a person to faith, so common in North America, was intentionally laid aside in preference for patiently waiting, maybe over an extended period of time, for family and clan members to make a decision.

Conversion, from its beginning of repentance to a mature acceptance of Christ, was seen as a process rather than a point. Immature or even incorrect expressions of what it meant to become a Christian were tolerated at the beginning and even for a longer period



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as the Holy Spirit worked in people's hearts.

The crucial issue here is our definition of a Christian and our view of conversion. Do we view a Christian as one who has reached a high level of maturity in belief, action and ability to communicate and explain the “ins and outs” of some catechetical system? This approach leads to what Paul Hiebert has called a “bounded set” (as a square or rectangle bounded on four sides) definition. All inside the bounded lines of the set are Christians and all outside are not yet Christians. People will differ widely on what should be the specific characteristics of those inside in terms

of belief and action. This approach views conversion as a point. An alternate understanding is what Hiebert calls a “centered set” definition. The center is Jesus. All who have changed the direction of their lives to head away from their past and head toward Jesus are in the process of conversion. Their lives have changed. They may still have a long way to go, but they can be viewed as Christians. This approach enables the facilitators of a people movement to allow its momentum to move forward in bringing many potential converts to this point of change. And, as the author saw among the people movement of the Sediq, one of Taiwan's original inhabitant groups, leaders were very careful not to separate between people as being “inside” or “outside,” but as people at different stages in their progress toward Jesus, the center.

Once the decision process was initiated the need was seen for a constant day-by-day instruction period rather than the “twice a week meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays.” Music was utilized as a vital part of the growth process since it enabled people to employ familiar folk melodies, repeating endlessly some of the truths they were learning. The daily meetings were not necessarily organized as preaching services—prayer, testimonies and fellowship were basic. Samuel Pollard called the movement among the Miao “sacramental,” since he taught the people how to observe communion in their meetings.

Missionaries best stimulated people movements to Christ when they used important parts of the group's culture as building blocks in the Gospel presentation. Pollard, for example, among the Flowery Miao took the people's Festival of Flowers on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month and transformed it from a time of sexual orgy into a festival filled with games, races, lantern shows and preaching.

How were some of these early missionaries able to tell when a people

movement was ready to develop into what Scripture might call a “harvest?” Only God, the Lord of the harvest, is able to orchestrate the religious, cultural, social and political factors to bring about a people movement. However, as Christian workers take the time to learn the minority languages, to make friends among core leaders—not merely the marginalized who often relate better to outsiders—and to analyze what changes are developing in the society, the potential for a movement to Christ will begin to be evident.

Today we know that China’s minority nationalities number far more than the government documented fifty-five—maybe more than 500. Even though one family of groups may seem unresponsive, there may be one or more of the related sub-groups that is responsive and can therefore be the beginning point of a people movement that will bring it to Christ and influence many of the other groups as well. The Black Yi of Yunnan turned to Christ as a people late in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A possible critical factor was their sinicization and need for a new identity, which they found in the Christian faith. The Shengzha and other Yi peoples of Sichuan (formerly Xikang) were far different. Independent, war-life and feudal, they knew who they were. As their lives and societies were radically changed in the mid-1950s, a harvest time was approaching and has become more apparent in the last decade.

A people movement among adherents of folk religion will develop more easily when the themes of the Christian message fit well with the aspirations, hopes and personality of the people. The Flowery Miao saw in Samuel Pollard and in the Jesus whom he proclaimed a “friend of the oppressed.” One Miao Christian testified, “I did not understand the meaning of the suffering endured by Jesus on the cross. But now we have suffered all forms of cruelty that have punished us.” The announcement that Jesus was King fulfilled aspects of long-held messianic-type expectations. The post-liberation CIM work among the Flowery Miao

in Guizhou province seems to have emphasized strongly the traditional culture of the Miao with its heavy emphasis upon the old spirit world, spiritual songs, dancing, visions, dreams and power to heal the sick—and has resulted in a stronger Miao church than is found in other areas.

Wherever there has been a strong response to the Gospel among the minority nationalities, God has raised up an insider who has been the leader in the spread of the faith. The outsiders may have introduced or helped introduce the message, but it was carried forward best by the local people. Again, there are abundant research materials that will enable us to see the characteristics of those whom God raised up in the past and how today’s workers may follow this same path. Leaders such as Fraser (Lisu) and Pollard (Miao), as well as other expatriates who followed them, identified with their people and their problems. They spoke the language well. They were people of prayer. They knew well that their struggle was not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers in high places. In today’s China, it may not be wise for foreigners to seek to play the same kind of role as they did in the past. However, they should avoid the temptation to insulate themselves from the people and carry on their work by proxy through intermediaries. Even as Christ revealed God to mankind, today incarnational models are still needed.

Endnotes

1. J. Houston Edgar, “The Exploration and Occupation of the Centres on the Tibetan Marches,” *Chinese Recorder* 50 (September 1919) 607-12.

2. Montgomery H. Throop, “The Fulfillment of Moslem Ideals in Christianity,” *Friends of Moslems* 11, (January 1937), 67-69.

3. See Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic of China* (Harvard University Press) for a treatment of four sect groups among the *huihui* in China today.

Ralph R. Covell, Ph.D., lived and worked in China from 1946-51 and in Taiwan from 1952-1966. He has been affiliated with Denver Seminary from 1966 to the present serving as professor and academic dean and is the author of five books on China.

Beyond the Shadow of History continued from page 9

deepest needs of mankind is doomed from the beginning.

Many of China’s industries are going to be severely impacted by the WTO entry and many people will lose their jobs in the short term. Dissatisfaction, pressure and instability will become more severe and be further worsened by existing problems in the environment, resources, population and ethnic conflicts. Whether China will experience another uprising, or even a split, depends on the Chinese leaders’ abilities to deal with these problems. It depends on whether the traditional Chinese values are strong enough to hold the society together and on whether the Chinese are able to return to positive aspects of Confucian philosophy such as family values. It also depends on balanced views winning out over extremist views.

Using History to Shape the Future

Five thousand years of history cannot simply be denied; neither can the course of history easily be reversed. Past aspects of history cannot readily be evoked for use in the present: traditional values cannot be used to serve the purposes of communism. The only way to advance is to have an open mind and begin a dialogue that seeks a common ground between traditional values based on Confucian philosophy and values from other civilizations.

China’s long and unique history will impact the new China from the 21st century onward. At the same time, there is a commonality in civilizations of all cultures around the world. China can no longer afford to remain apart from other cultures; rather, she should work with them and strive to become a force for world peace. This fits well with both the will of God, who desires that all men live together in peace, and with the will of the Chinese people, who desire peace.

Huo Shui is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Tian Hui.

Understanding China's Intellectuals Continued from page 7

the scholars rejected Christianity because it was foreign. China had just concluded a second series of humiliating treaties with Western nations (Tianjin, 1858, Beijing, 1860). When a foreign "cultural invader" (Christianity) made its presence felt in the countryside, Confucianists, Daoists and Buddhists joined ranks and opposed the "foreign" in the name of "Chinese" tradition.⁴ In the 1920s, China, having terminated the Confucian civil service examination system in 1905 and having thrown off the Manchu imperial yoke in 1911, sought, in the midst of warlordism, a new order. Intellectuals rejected Christianity because it was contrary to reason and science—or their understanding of science, perhaps appropriately named "scientism."⁵ In April 1920, Chen Duxiu, editor of *New Youth* magazine (the most influential periodical among China's youth at that time), fired his first salvo against Christianity as the agent of Western imperialism. As late as the fall of 1919, Chen admired Jesus Christ for his warm personality, but this did not prevent him from rejecting Christianity as an agent of foreign imperialism. What followed was a series of anti-Christian attacks: April–May 1922 against the World Christian Student Federation convention in Beijing; 1923–24 the Campaign to Restore Educational Rights and numerous riots; the May 30 incident in 1925; and the Northern Expedition in 1926–27. By the end of this period, students and soldiers were killing missionaries and destroying mission property.

What are the intellectual arguments against the Christian religion today on the part of China's intellectuals? My view is that all the old arguments are still very much alive: Christianity as un-Chinese and foreign; Christianity as somehow contrary to logic and science; and Christianity as the agent of imperialism. (In addition, there are also new arguments.) A Chinese intellectual can be extremely curious about why highly educated Western scientists can embrace the Christian faith and about the relationship between Christian ideas

and modern institutions such as law and democracy and Newtonian science. At the same time, he or she may reject the Christian religion as inappropriate for, and below the dignity of, an educated Chinese elite.

My interpretation is that a clash of values—Confucian/Daoist, atheist/materialist, modern/scientific and post-modern/nihilistic—characterizes the inner self of many intellectuals in China today, although they may be unaware of this. How will they understand and accept the Christian faith if they do not distinguish between the various components of their own worldview? Who will have the knowledge and understanding that will allow for meaningful dialogue? Will Christians be able

and willing to help them sort out these issues?

Endnotes

1. Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1963.
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3. Chang Chung-li, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955, 32–41.
4. Compare Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.
5. For more on this subject see David W. Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

Samuel Ling is president of China Horizon and co-editor, with Stacey Bieler, of Chinese Intellectuals and the Gospel (P&R Publishing Company, 800-631-0094). His website is: www.chinahorizon.org.

Resource Corner

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Book Review

Building a Nation

Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China 1857-1927 by Ryan Dunch. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2001, pp. xxi, 293. ISBN: 0-300-08050-6 Hardback. Cost: \$35

A review by Jason Kindopp

This path-breaking book is not merely a local area study of Fuzhou Protestants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; rather, as the title suggests, it is also about their role in forging a modern Chinese nation. Dunch's central thesis is that Protestants in Fuzhou were "vitaly involved" in the areas central to the modernization process: education, professionalism, progressive politics, and forging a national consciousness through the creative use of ideas, symbols, and rituals. While the argument runs counter to dominant views of China's early Protestant converts, Dunch backs it with meticulous research. The result is a compelling account of Fuzhou's Protestant population which shatters many of the long-held stereotypes of Chinese converts to Christianity in the late Qing era and their role in Chinese society.

Protestantism's contributions to Chinese modernity in Fuzhou began with education. As Dunch points out, "conversion for these people brought both the motivation and the opportunity to learn to read" (37). Pastors taught converts to read, and the instruction held for baptism candidates often included literacy training. Missions developed formal rural schools, which became a "ladder of mobility between rural areas and Fuzhou"—especially for women (43). The missions also established the Anglo-Chinese College (ACC), whose great majority of graduates entered the growing professional elite. As Dunch

observes, "Protestant conversion opened up, quite literally, a whole world of opportunities for young Chinese of ability" (35).

A segment of Fuzhou's Protestants also became active in progressive politics, and "played an important role in the political changes of the 1901-1911." Progressive Chinese Protestants were at the forefront of the anti-opium and foot binding movements, and took leading roles in Fuzhou's reform societies. At least 15 of the 87 members of the influential Qiaonan Society had links to Protestantism, including several prominent Methodist pastors (64-6).

THE MOST INTERESTING PARTS of Fuzhou's narrative are those which directly challenge conventional stereotypes of Christianity in late-Qing China.

When the Qing government succumbed to popular reform pressures and allowed the formation of representative bodies, leading Protestant figures were elected to Fujian's Provincial Assembly. Chinese Protestants were even found in the ranks of political radicals. In one interesting example, Dunch notes that the director of a Methodist orphanage "had the boys in his orphanage making bombs for the revolutionary side on the eve of the battle with the Qing garrison in November 1911" (67).

One reason Fuzhou's Protestants

were active in progressive social and political movements was the way they defined their Christian identities. For many Chinese Protestants, Christianity held the most effective keys for estab-

lishing a moral foundation for a modern Chinese society, which, they believed, was integral to building a strong nation. This outlook was embodied most fully in Fuzhou's YMCA, which, Dunch argues, "stood for a vigorous, masculine, *useful* style of Protestant Christianity" (p. 76, emphasis in original text).

Linking Christian moralism with

nation-building also explains why progressive Protestants were accepted by Fuzhou's secular activists. Dunch observes that both secular and Protestant progressives "tended during this period to see the process of building China into a strong, modern nation primarily as a matter of moral education, of molding the Chinese people into a nationally conscious and public-spirited citizenry" (xviii). Another reason is the appeal of American-style republicanism for many of China's early 20th century progressives. Given their close contacts with Western missions and their early use of patriotic hymns and national flags, Protestants "were regarded by their non-Christian political associates ... as possessing a special expertise on the use of symbols in the service of the nation" (xix).

The most interesting parts of *Fuzhou's* narrative are those which directly challenge conventional stereotypes of Christianity in late-Qing China. One example is the view that Chinese converts were wholly dependent on and subservient to Western mission organizations. Yet missionaries are peripheral in this book. The reason, Dunch explains, is that "in most instances they *were* periph-



eral to the day-to-day life and religious practice of Chinese Protestants" (4). Where Western missionaries do appear in this volume, they are often at odds with their Chinese colleagues on issues ranging from educational curricula in mission schools to U.S. foreign policy. In instances of direct conflict between Western missionaries and Chinese converts, it is the missionaries who yield more often than not.

Another stereotype Dunch brings under scrutiny is the role of Chinese Protestant clergy in late-Qing society. Official Qing sources depict them as "no-good, unscrupulous troublemakers," due largely to their propensity to intervene in legal disputes on behalf of their members (26). The appropriate view of Chinese clergy, Dunch argues, is similar to lower degree holders and lineage elders, who, as literate, educated men in positions of leadership, were obliged by the dictates of social custom to play the role of teacher to those under their care. As acknowledged community leaders, Chinese preachers "were seen as men of status and turned to for help in difficult situations" (27). While they were not legally permitted to intervene in judicial affairs (which was reserved for members of the scholar-official stratum), Protestant pastors filled an ambiguous social elite role which, Dunch argues, was "exactly parallel to the ambiguity in the relationship between local elites and the state in late Qing China" (32).

The stereotype Dunch dispels most decisively is that of Chinese Christians as deracinated individuals, who effectively renounced their Chinese identities by choosing to embrace the Christian faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. The identities of progressive Chinese Protestants were inextricably linked with the concepts of national strength, and Fuzhou's Protestants were unhesitant in defending China's national interests when they believed them to be encroached upon by foreign powers. When the U.S. passed the controversial immigration restrictions against Chinese coolie labor in 1905, students at Fuzhou's Protestant colleges "were ahead of their

government school counterparts" in protesting them. Not only did they object earlier, Protestant students, faculty members, and community leaders used their mission connections to deliver directly to the U.S. Consulate a 350-signature petition opposing the policy.

Far from being divorced from broader society, Fuzhou's Protestants during the 1900s and 1910s enjoyed considerable support from society's leading figures. This is most visibly demonstrated in the YMCA's ability to raise \$48,000 in local funds in two months during the spring of 1911 to build a new center. Many of Fuzhou's elite were among the donor list, including one of its wealthiest families, the Lins, whose \$10,000 contribution catalyzed a flurry of donations from other local elites. Matched by a \$45,000 pledge from the YMCA in America, the resulting YMCA center was the tallest

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church in China cannot help but be struck by the parallels between the climates of the early 20th century and today.

and most modern building in Fuzhou.

These heady days of Christian progressivism mark the apogee of Christianity's influence in 20th century China. In an insightful concluding chapter, Dunch addresses the counterfactual question of why China did not develop into a Christian republic. Rather, Protestantism was forced to the margins of Chinese society and out of the political sphere altogether. Dunch points to sea changes in the political order and intellectual climate as the driving forces behind the demise of China's socially and politically progressive Protestantism. The collapse of the Qing and the resulting warlordism brought a new group of military elites to Fuzhou that was less tolerant with the church's role in social and political affairs. The warlords were soon eclipsed by an increasingly totalitarian

Nationalist Party, which held an equally dim view of the church.

These developments were reinforced by the growing influence of a Chinese nationalism that drew on Lenin's theory of capitalist imperialism as an explanation for the Western nations' aggressions. As a result, within a few short years, Christianity came to be viewed as an expression of Western cultural imperialism and an integral part of the West's efforts to dominate and subjugate China.

While Dunch's narrative ends with the developments of the 1920s, he points to two important later developments. First, dwindling opportunities for social and political activism gave rise to a Protestantism which emphasized individual piety and subjective experience over social involvement (exemplified by the emergence of Watchman Nee's Little Flock that has grown rapidly in the post-Mao era as well). Second, despite the increasingly negative view of Christianity among China's intellectual elites and the growing totalization of political control, China's Protestant population still doubled between 1927 and 1949. Understanding how this occurred, and what forms of Protestantism held the greatest appeal during this period, is essential for a thorough understanding of the Chinese church today.

Finally, observers of the contemporary church in China cannot help but be struck by the parallels between the climates of the early 20th century and today. Profound concern with the moral state of Chinese society, apprehension over China's deepening political problems, and widespread dissatisfaction with the dominant answers to life's enduring questions are all as salient in Christianity's appeal today as they were a century ago.

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Discovering "His Story" in China

China's rich history flows back and forth like a string of waves on an ever-turbulent sea of years—a series of recurring themes that reinvent and adapt themselves to the current situation while maintaining strong ties to the past. Even in an era of unprecedented change, the lessons of history and millennia of accumulated tradition continue to guide China's course as it forges boldly into the 21st century. As various contributors to this issue of *ChinaSource* have pointed out, we ignore these waves at our own peril. Those seeking to live and work effectively within the Chinese culture must either learn to ride these waves or be crushed by them.

Beneath these undulating waves of history lays another current, often unseen and unnoticed, running persistently through the centuries. Some have referred to this subtle but powerful current as "His story," or the account of God's working amidst and in spite of the waves of human history. The vessels He chooses to work through are often unremarkable and

their immediate impact slight. It is only when one takes the long view of history that one is able to discern their role in "His story."



Brent Fulton

Matteo Ricci entered China during the Ming Dynasty with the goal of introducing Christ to the intelligentsia of his day. For all Ricci's successes in learning the language and becoming accepted by those he sought to reach, he never saw his goal fulfilled in large measure. Yet the past decade has seen unprecedented numbers of

Chinese intellectuals find in Christ a hope that fulfills the longing of their hearts and their aspirations for their country's future.

Centuries later, in 1807, Robert Morrison arrived in Macao with a vision to see the Gospel spread to every province of China. He too, never saw his vision realized, and the number of lives he directly impacted was relatively few. Yet today the church is active in every province of China, and its numbers continue to increase exponentially.

J. Hudson Taylor, pioneer missionary to China's interior, spoke of the missionaries as "scaffolding" that would

one day be removed to reveal a strong and independent Chinese church. Taylor and those who followed gave sacrificially in building up the church. However it was not until the 1950s, when missionaries were forced to leave China, that the scaffolding finally came down. Following a season of trial and testing, the church did in fact emerge stronger than ever before.

Countless others could be cited—evangelists, Bible women, pastors who spent decades in prison for their faith, many who gladly faced death rather than deny their Lord. Like the heroes of faith listed in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, these servants of God in China saw only through eyes of faith the things that God would one day bring to pass. So today, it is up to those who serve China not only to discern the historical realities in which they live but also to see through the eyes of faith their own role in "His story."

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