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Having worked with Chinese students from overseas who are studying in North America, the author poses the question of how North American Chinese churches should modify their strategies in order to reach these students. After detailing some of the characteristics of postmodern students, he draws from his experience to explain and give examples of strategies he has found useful.

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A Heart for Freedom by Chai Ling *Reviewed by Laurie Michaels*

Chai Ling gives an eye-witness account of the 1989 student movement and massacre in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. She speaks of her early life, her involvement in the student movement and its influences upon her as well as her coming to faith in Christ. She continues to honestly address the questions she puts to God and her relationship with him.

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Editorial

Thinking with Their Hearts: Postmodernism in China

By Brent Fulton

During my years in grad school, Foucault and Derrida were leading the way in the postmodern revolution sweeping academia. While my fellow students struggled to properly pronounce the names of these and other postmodern luminaries, this nevertheless did not deter them from engaging in animated discussions about power relationships or from deconstructing literary classics in order to discover new meanings, found not in the context of the literature itself but in the interaction between it and its modern critics.



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“Why do we spend all our time reading DWEMs (Dead White European Males)?” students asked, and professors dutifully re-balanced curriculums and added new and exotic course offerings. The curriculum overhaul was long overdue. However, the idea which occasioned it, namely, that all truth claims are valid and thus equally worthy of study signaled the delinking of knowledge from any objective criterion. In essence, all truth claims were equally valid and equally irrelevant at the same time since there was no way in which to demonstrate that one was of more value than another. The whole question of value was left to the subjective interpretation of the interpreter.

China, meanwhile, was entering its own postmodern revolution through a very different door. Students—not in classrooms but in a huge square in the center of Beijing—came face to face with the violent reality that they could not pin their hopes on any of the institutions or “isms” they thought would save China and bring meaning to their lives. Their hopes dashed, a whole generation turned inward to find whatever fulfillment they might gain through enriching their own lives in the spirit of their leader who said simply, “To get rich is glorious.”

Watching the aftermath of the Beijing events on TV with a fellow student, a medical doctor from China, I wondered aloud, “How could they do this to their own people?”

“There is something wrong with their hearts,” the doctor, who at the time was not a Christian, replied.

At that moment all of the intellectual arguments we could have had about the veracity of the Bible, evolution, the origin of the universe, the evidence for the resurrection and a whole host of other topics became irrelevant. The doctor had voiced the fundamental question: the condition of the human heart and what could be done about it.

As Dr. Pan points out in this issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly*, “Disillusionment with faith, hope and love leads to confusion for this new generation of young people, but it also creates opportunity for spreading the gospel. Postmodern man fails in his search for life-stabilizing and soul-anchoring faith, as well as in his quest for goodness and for finding a future hope that modernity provided with modernism as the basis. Yet, man craves the satisfaction of these three crucial needs...”

The upside of postmodernism is that it leaves people asking the right questions. Online in blogs and *weibo* posts a new generation surveys China’s social landscape with its food scandals, official corruption, unbridled consumerism and rampant abuse of women and children, and asks, “What’s wrong with their hearts?”

In the context of genuine relationship, as searching hearts are brought near to their Creator through the unchanging truth of his word, the answer—and the solution—are found.

Brent Fulton, PhD, is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the ChinaSource Quarterly.

Intercessory Notes

Please pray

1. That Chinese Christians will be grounded in scripture and able to discern post-modern views that contradict scriptural teaching and a biblical worldview.
2. That churches and individual Christians would know how to wisely introduce the gospel to those interested in learning about different “faiths.”
3. That pastors will have wisdom, compassion and sensitivity as they minister to a younger generation that is growing up in a postmodern culture.
4. That the Holy Spirit would open the hearts of young people to understand and accept the truth and authority of the Scripture.
5. That the Chinese government would see that Christianity brings stability to the culture and can fill the void currently found in society.



Postmodernism and Its Effects on China

By Jason Lim

We are now living in a globalized world where regional trends are able to permeate other parts of the world with a speed never before witnessed. The recent wave of postmodernism from the Western world is but one of the fast-changing trends in today's world that demonstrates this reality. Apart from the Anglo-Saxon continents, the effects of postmodernism have also influenced oriental countries such as China. As we have witnessed the numerous transformations of China following its rise to become the world's second largest economic superpower within the last thirty years, modernization of China's urban residents is clearly seen. Therefore, it is not surprising that they are more exposed and influenced by postmodern values and practices. The content of this article will concentrate solely on the rapid infiltration of postmodernism into China, and its multifaceted effects on the nation.

The Infiltration of Postmodernism into China

In China, Fredric Jameson, one of the renowned contemporary Western critical theorists, has had a successful influence on the theorization of postmodernism since mid-1985.¹ Motivated by an intense interest in Western critical theory, literary theory and related disciplines, Jameson introduced the idea of postmodernism through his lectures at Peking University and Shenzhen University. Such influences can be vividly perceived through his gifted students such as Zhang Yiwu and Zhang Xudong who later become scholars in analyzing postmodernity in China. Nevertheless, a distinctly Chinese form of postmodern cultural discourse only emerged in the 90s. This is due partly to Jameson's other influence in China through the publication of his book in 1987 entitled *Postmodernism and Cultural Theories*, which fueled intense debate by local and overseas Chinese intellectuals over postmodernism from 1994 to 1997.² Also, a forum on Chinese postmodernism (published in the January 1993 issue of *Wenyi yanjiu*) and articles on Edward Said's "Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism" by Zhang Kuan, Qian Jun and Pan Shaomei (published in the September 1993 issue of *Dushu*) reshaped Chinese postmodernism through related issues.³ However, in 1994 Zhang Yiwu and Wang Ning respectively claimed that China had entered a "new post-era" linkage with global postmodernity but free from Western historicity and metanarratives since the early 90s.⁴



[Joann Pittman](#)

In 1995, the term "post-ism" was championed by Zhao Yiheng⁵ and is perceived to be shaped by Western theories. In China, however, it is utilized paradoxically as a means to describe China's social and political reality and support the conservative aim of subverting previous revolutionary radicalism. Zhao Yiheng's view caused some heated debates (such as Xu Ben, Liu Kang and others who have interacted with his article). Xu Ben is another scholar who critiques the ideology of the various "post-isms" but emphasized their "conformity with the nationalism and political censorship of the 1990s."⁶

The Effects of Postmodernism on China

Postmodern Trends in Modern Society. Following Deng Xiaoping's call for economic reforms in the early 80s, China has become the world's fastest growing nation and has captured the attention of the entire world. Undoubtedly, tremendous transformations in China (especially in urban settings) are happening especially in fields related to finance, manufacturing, construction, telecommunications, science and technology. Nevertheless, after a series of revolutions and movements in the course of China's history, it is not surprising that the current regime's thinkers and politicians are seriously seeking an overall inclusive theme for nation building. As Charles Horner aptly puts it:

Whether the subjects are elevated ones like modern history, modern literature or modern architecture, or mundane ones like tariffs, trade and transportation, the party scrambles for ways of explaining how it thinks and why it acts in the ways that it does. Indeed, the regime in power is indefatigable in its search for a unifying theme or a consistent story to serve as a basis for grand design and a national purpose.⁷

Currently, Chinese society is operating under a mixture of political socialism and market economy capitalism. The drive for modernization of China has resulted in "the reinterpretation and reformulation of the origins, composition and ideals of the Chinese nation." Deng Xiaoping's renowned phrase encapsulates it very well: "Socialism with Chinese characteristics"; what follows is "democracy with Chinese characteristics."⁸

However, in contrast to the olden days when foreign culture was always considered an intrusion, China now makes room for more international exchanges. Postmodern trends can now be more easily seen throughout the multifaceted layers of society in China. Of all its characteristics, postmodern thoughts and values—which are more inclusive and tend to be received by the general public—may be the more accepted trends of modernization.

For instance, postmodernists cannot accept the only "truth"; on the contrary, they are in favor of many "truths," but even their so called "truth" is merely current trends and fashionable logic. All the "-isms" of the present era will soon be replaced and will become the obsolete "-wasms" of previous culture.⁹ Postmodernists are, therefore, in favor of "pluralism." That is, they accept ideas of various factions and put them in the same pot. It is thought that different views, after all, only come from different per-

spectives. There is no absolute true or false nor is there truth that applies universally. All so-called truth is only subjective, human interpretation without an objective real existence.¹⁰ Based on appearance, postmodernists seem to have many choices, and their thinking can change at any time as can their spiritual experience.

It is postulated that China's modern society will experience tremendous change in the people's philosophical mindset as the general public achieves more financial gains and its culture will gradually inculcate an inclusive attitude towards diverse ideas, which are similar to the ever changing postmodern trends as developed in the West.

Postmodern Challenges to Traditional Values. Similar to the Anglo-Saxon scenario, the growth of postmodernism in China can be considered the result of the material civilization of its society as well as a reflection of the spirit of institutional change, which finds expression in literature and the arts, philosophical thinking and awareness, and society's culture and politics. The tides of postmodern thinking can also gradually influence current traditional social values.

The twenty-first century information and media age is the second great industrial revolution or the second wave of scientific breakthrough. The information age influences the lifestyle of people in material civilization and directly impacts the structure and boundaries of societies and humanistic ideas. Information is no longer seen as a "static" entity but as a constantly changing "dynamic."¹¹ Admittedly, the content of information consists of various media as in images, words, sounds, creativity and artistic functions. Through media information one can make contacts outside the confines of time and space and beyond time and geographical constraints of mass media. The information media of our present age is interactional. It enables participants of both sides to have dialogue and is not merely monologue communication.

As we enter an era of visual technology, the societal way of thinking also changes from logical to imaginative and sensual. With the intervention of information and media, integrative and active expressive thinking has surfaced more aggressively. Because of society's rapid transformation, there is great change in human consciousness and ways of thinking. Information and film media can be perceived to dominate mass and popular cultures which directly influence "cultural consumption" of postmodern societies. In other words, changes in societal ideology hasten the masses to turn toward consumerism which is "symbol" led.

Undoubtedly, postmodernism calls for new perspectives in terms of our evaluations of many aspects of learning and the ultimate value of things in the world we are living in. Postmodernism, in a way, offers different ideological and social impacts, implications and meanings in different parts of the world and in different ideological and theoretical areas.¹² Today, the postmodernists' worldview is unlike the past because of society's fast pace of life and pluralistic environment. Under the premise of "choice and replacement," postmodern social groups naturally feel that the ideas of old traditional morals and ethics are out of date. Like modernism, trends in postmodernism can be hostile to traditional ethical values.¹³ These values directly oppose traditional virtues, especially in terms of family values. Therefore, it is not surprising that the position of postmodern societies in China (especially in urban settings) will be increasingly more liberal, just like what can be seen happening in some countries of Europe and North America where legalization of euthanasia, prostitution, drugs, homosexual marriages, co-habitation and sex before marriage are common. It is not surprising that the rights of minorities, such as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) will be more widely accepted and are championed over the rights of the majority.

The Infiltration of New Age and Postmodern Spirituality. One of postmodernism's features is the emphasis on the individual's intuitive, subjective heart rather than the traditional objective, rational mindset of values or worldview. Such a scenario gives room for the infiltration of New Age spirituality which may in fact be a modern incarnation of classical pantheism. The message of

Identifying Postmodernism

By Jason Lim



[Joann Pittman](#)

Although postmodernism¹ appears initially through the writing of Bishop Bernard Idings Bell in the late 1920s² and later in architectural design in the 40s,³ it was not until the late 60s that it was commonly used in relation to both architecture (especially in the writings of Charles Jencks) and dance (especially in connection with the Judson School, a choreographic approach named for the venue located in New York's Greenwich Village).⁴ Postmodernism finally emerged as a rubric covering various critical methodologies (such as deconstructionism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and new historicism) which were assimilated by intellectual and academic circles (such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, Frederic Jameson, Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard) during and after the mid-80s.⁵

Postmodern thought essentially challenges the basic tenets of modernism. Scholars of Enlightenment treated the individual "self" as the central basis of the philosophical worldview of modernism. Postmodernists' central thinking, however, severely criticizes this "self" thought and assumptions of the "self" of modern men. Differing from modernism, postmodernism generally gives an antithetical reaction (though usually not uniform) to any rational reasoning or assumed certainty of scientific, philosophical or religious efforts to explain objective truth claimed to be valid by groups, cultures, traditions or races (or even autonomy of the individual). Instead, it focuses on the *relative* truths of individuals or individual experiences rather than some *objective*, abstract, concrete, universal or ultimate principles.⁶

Modernism places emphasis on logical study of knowledge through the mind (as René Descartes says, "I think therefore I am"). Through shared "collectivism," postmodernism, however, speaks louder but relatively from one's feeling through the individual's heart (the postmodern person says, "I feel therefore I am"). Therefore, postmodernists

the New Age is appealing since it is primarily egocentric and promotes self-esteem, even to a point that the human individual is seen as divine.¹⁴

Postmodernists have abandoned the idea of permanency and all things are inducted as First Principle, Absolute Idea, a priori and ultimate value. Against such a post-modern background, New Age spirituality seems to provide a unique resolution. "Holistic" is an important concept of postmodernism and the New Age movement links "holistic" and "monism" together.¹⁵ No wonder Arild Romarheim considers New Age thinking as "a syncretism of syncretisms."¹⁶ It is a "nothing is believable yet everything is believable" concept. Its adherents do not believe in the claims of many world religious philosophies in their entirety, but accept only small parts, selecting their likes and favorable values as well as what they need to suit themselves. A small minority among them advocates for their inner conscience as truth and even consider themselves as "god."¹⁷

In China, postmodern religions are deemed to show signs of revival and urge people to join spiritual searches which include the complete abandonment of materialism and pursuit of mysterious spiritual experiences. Some people (especially in urban settings), under various pressures, may blindly choose and follow the new religions in order to seek for alternative spiritual experiences. Consequently, postmodernists once again tread the path of ancient superstitions. Some may be urged to depart from logical reasoning before understanding spiritual matters.¹⁸

New Age religions advocate a total integrative view connecting the major world religions (Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism) with various folk religions as one entity. They then wrap this up with modern theories catering to the desires and needs of social groups in the society. New Age religions tend to explore the spiritual world and promise people "enlightenment" and "salvation." Their ways of spiritual exploration, which are common in ancient China, may include practices such as using crystals (to channel energy), hypnotism (looking for earlier connections), Ouija boards, psychic encounters and witchcraft. Apart from these, some people learn yoga, become vegetarians, practice Tai Chi *qigong*, meditate, farm, do voluntary work, are drawn into clinical counseling, run charity organizations and shops or become involved in the arts (for example, reflexology). All these, it is thought, lead to the same destination through different ways.¹⁹

In addition, the New Age movement has a tendency to seek wealth—which is very attractive to the Chinese indeed. It has a worldwide trend that promotes the accumulation of wealth. Due to the intention of postmodernists who attempt to resolve human need issues worldwide, it will result in the popular emergence of this kind of thought system. No wonder Shirley MacLaine, one of the inspirers for "enrichment," once indicated: "What I want to prove is that spirituality can be profitable."²⁰

Summary

Undoubtedly, with China's rapid economic growth, individuals and families (especially in the urban setting) will gradually be influenced by the effects of postmodernism. Postmodernists' emphasis on rapid change and sensuality could be founded upon a kind of uncertainty and fortuity, permissiveness and pluralistic ideology. On the one hand people hold social attitudes seeking to be participants, looking for excitement, variety, a selective nature of freedom, anomalous liberation and relative equality. On the other hand the postmodern world departs from rationality; contrarily they seek sensuality and advocate comprehensiveness and nondominance; they ask less about real essence but focus on the appearance of things. It is postulated that traditional values will gradually give way to more liberal practices, and Chinese urban residents especially will be pressured to be more inclusive in their approach. Diversity in the societal lifestyles of the Chinese, especially in aspects of the general public's philosophical mindset, communications, culture, traditional values and even spirituality will be more prominent in the years to come.

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are inclined to include thoughts of the "individual/individualism" as mainstream and advocate subjective "authority to speak." Deconstructionists (such as Geoffrey Hartman, Hillis Miller and Mark Taylor) would explore traditional materials through the lens of the "deconstruction" methodology for new dimensions of understanding.⁷ On the one hand, postmodernists focus on the historical nature of things; on the other hand, history is nevertheless constructed by humans. In a way, postmodernists perceive history as comprised of only records, documents, pictures and visual images. History no longer has inevitability and certainty properties. Concepts of both past and future have disappeared. In a sense, postmodernists strive for liberation, and life has become an assembly of fragmented episodes.

¹ For a thorough overview of multidisciplinary and multilingual publications on issues related to postmodernism, please refer to Janusz Przychodzen, *Discourses of Postmodernism. Multilingual Bibliography. Part (1951-1993)* (University of Massachusetts, Amherst: American Comparative Literature Association Net, 2000).

<http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/janusz.html>.

² Deborah Madsen in her bibliography *Postmodernism: A Bibliography* (1994) places the beginning of postmodernism in the 1920s (Bernard Iddings Bell, "Postmodernism and Other Essays" 1926); see also Bernard Iddings Bell, *Religion for Living: A Book for Postmodernists* (London: J. Gifford, 1939); B. E. Benson, "Postmodernism," in Michael J. Anthony, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) p. 544.

³ In terms of its application to the arts, postmodernism appeared initially in connection with architecture over a half century ago in Joseph Hudnot's treatise *Architecture and the Spirit of Man* (1949); Pico Miran, *Manifesto for Post-Modern Art*, New York: American Art Gallery, 1951. B. E. Benson, "Postmodernism," in *Evangelical Dictionary Christian Education*, p. 544; http://www.artspeakchina.org/mediawiki/Post_Modernism_后现代主义.

⁴ http://www.artspeakchina.org/mediawiki/Post_Modernism_后现代主义.

⁵ B. E. Benson, "Postmodernity," in W. C. Campbell-Jack, ed., *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2006), p. 561; http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/617.

⁶ http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20090128_1.htm.

⁷ David A. Hoekema and Bobby Fong, eds., *Christianity and Culture in the Cross Fire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 132.

Urge for Faith: Postmodern Beliefs among Urban Chinese

By Fredrik Fällman

Mao Zedong's death in 1976 is often seen as a watershed in contemporary Chinese history, and it did indeed imply changes on many levels in society. Deng Xiaoping came to power and the era of reform and opening up (*gaige kaifang*) started in late 1978. The so-called "Deng Xiaoping theory" is one of the main ideological foundations for current Chinese political life. Deng Xiaoping supposedly said that "To get rich is glorious," which is one of the central tenets of his "theory"; it also follows the lead of the Communist Party of China (CPC).



By Luafuohue (Own work) via Wikimedia Commons

When the CPC discarded its fundamental ideology for economic development, a vacuum appeared. When Mao Zedong no longer was "the red sun in our hearts," as people had sung just a few years earlier, there was no obvious substitute. Many officials, and also some academics, agree that the reform policy brought on a threefold "crisis of belief" (*san xin wei ji*): a crisis of trust (*xin ren*); of confidence (*xin xin*); and of faith (*xin yang*).¹ Although this expression was originally related to social beliefs, identity and moral cohesion in society, it can also be applied to the religious situation in contemporary China. From all areas of society there is great concern regarding this development, and the drive in recent years to reestablish Confucian teachings as a potential norm is an example of how the CPC is trying to tackle this issue. Nationalistic projects such as the Beijing Olympics, Shanghai Expo 2010 as well as the space program also serve this purpose. Recently, president and party leader Xi Jinping also started to promote "the Chinese dream" as an analogy to "the American dream."

One could easily paint a very dark picture of contemporary urban China as a hedonistic society where entertainment, fun and pleasure dominate, and government supported nationalism is the mainstream thought or "belief." Casual sexual relations are increasingly common, abortion rates are high and there is a rapidly increasing consumption of various drugs. According to the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is now the primary cause of death for the 15 to 34 year-old age group in the PRC.² The party-state shows concern over the moral decline, and several official reports and academic studies confirm the negative trends.³ This is all in stark contrast to the distinct "puritan" morality of the Maoist period.

There is a strong need for faith, even an urge, as there is otherwise a great risk for further social disruption and political instability, the latter being the greatest fear of the Chinese leadership. When acknowledging the "crisis of faith," the party in a way also acknowledges its own lack of legitimacy. The general mistrust in authorities, especially in the CPC, gives little alternative for the individual but to care for oneself and to satisfy one's personal needs. Party membership still increases, but it is merely for career purposes. This situation has led to fragmenting and a strong individualist perspective. Traditional Confucian teachings stress "filial piety" (*xiao*), but the lack of concern for the elderly in contemporary society is so serious that the government implemented a law in July 2013 making "frequent" visits to parents mandatory.⁴

The pent-up urge for cultural and intellectual choice and freedom has been fertile ground for postmodern practice. It was also fuelled by the ideological vacuum. Basic identity came into flux as people realized that what they had believed in was false. What happens if you never get rich—is there only "glory" for those who succeed? After the June fourth massacre of 1989, much of the hope from the 1980s disappeared, and this paved the way for a narrower outlook and egocentrism. The economy and success came even more into focus during the 1990s as a workable way for the CPC to regain at least some credibility. Large parts of Chinese society are in a postmodern state today, an eclectic mix of unfinished modernizing processes, beliefs and hopes. There are also symbolic and geographical border areas where dissidents, the poor, ethnic minorities and other marginalized people struggle to control their own lives, challenge development and protect their subcultures.

In some ways the relativity and lack of absolutes or solid truth in contemporary China have been positive. People are curious about different things and are open to adding their own interpretations. This openness is also having some impact in other areas, and many question authority, social conditions and inequalities. Being religious is not stranger than any other fad or weird behavior in an individualistic society. Religion is becoming a commodity that can be sampled, and people visit temples and churches like a smorgasbord of faith and religious belief from which one can choose a little of everything. This resembles very much the way that New Age is influencing the Western world, and books by Osho and other Eastern gurus have found their way into Chinese bookstores—where Bibles still are not generally available.⁵ Self-help literature is also a bestseller in China. One may associate this with the old Confucian idea of self-cultivation (*xiushen*), but there is actually a significant difference. Confucian self-cultivation aims at a higher goal of virtue and is not ego-centered but takes into account one's place in society.

The emergence of *falungong* in the 1990s showed the great need for spirituality and, to some extent, also put a focus on faith healing. Healing is one of the incentives behind the great religious revival, especially in the countryside. Among the urban wealthy and powerful, health care is readily available, and there is no urgent, actual need for it. Nevertheless, self-proclaimed "qigong masters," who claim to cure disease and perform magician's tasks—all for a hefty sum of money—are very popular. Recently, such a "master," Wang Lin, fled to Hong Kong to escape investigation in the Mainland. Apparently Wang also attracted high-level CPC officials.⁶ Officially, the CPC clamps down on such activities and promotes "a scientific view of development" adhering to an almost "scientific" worldview.

However, when the CPC in 2005 started promoting the idea of a “socialist harmonious society,” it also started taking religion into account as a potential source for “harmony”—although with a purely instrumental perspective. The party expects religious organizations to wholeheartedly support the socio-economic development of society, as well as “making harmony a major part of their activities.” Registered religious groups, more or less willingly, follow this directive but often make something different out of the propaganda, taking the opportunity to preach and spread their original message. In my observation, the majority of believers in registered groups do not approve of such a politicized message, and the Protestant church leadership struggles in earnest to determine how to make theology relevant to contemporary society.

The so-called “cultural Christians” (*wenhua jidutu*) that emerged in the 1980s were an interesting counterweight to the moral struggles of society. They were intellectuals with no Christian background who found that Christian ethics, and eventually faith, were an answer to their search for something on which to build a new society. This handful of well-known scholars claimed to be “Christ followers,” and while rejecting Christian community and rites, they saw faith as something central. The “cultural Christians” claimed that their “personal” faith was the modern, individual form of religion. It is noteworthy that they rarely talked about postmodernism.

Having lost their impact today, the “cultural Christians” have still been important as an inspiration for the younger generation of intellectuals becoming Christians today. They showed that faith was also possible in post-Mao China—not just finance, success and despair. In a kind of postmodern twist, several handfuls of leading young intellectuals—writers, lawyers and cultural figures—have chosen Christian faith in recent years. Since they are outspoken about it, including in the media, they again inspire many students and young professionals.⁷

There is a tendency among some of the urban, unregistered churches to adhere to reformed theology, inspired by what in North America is sometimes known as “New Calvinism.” The focus is more on Puritan teachings than on John Calvin himself. Such communities draw much interest from young urbanites, and they seem to attract these young people because of their solid stance on moral issues and their non-relative beliefs, contrasting with society at large. Reformed Christianity may also appeal to the subconscious Confucian thought patterns and beliefs that linger among Chinese elite intellectuals in general. As both Christian elders and public intellectuals, the young urban church leaders also assume the traditional role of the intellectual, feeling his responsibility to act and assist when the nation is in danger, this time from moral decline.⁸

The “unconsciously postmodern” contemporary Chinese society shows many signs of counter movements and beliefs that go against the mainstream of relativity and egocentrism. The acknowledgement from the party-state that there is a “crisis of belief” is also a sign of urgency, even if the interpretation of what is lacking differs from that of many urban intellectuals. One also needs to take into account the countryside which faces a different set of challenges than those of urban areas. Yet despair for the future and lack of faith are equally serious there, if not more so. However, in both urban and rural areas there is a movement of faith, Christian and otherwise, which shows great hope for China’s future.

¹ All three words contain the character *xin* (faith, belief) in Chinese, therefore the name.

² Wang Hongyi, “Pressure leaves millions of youth exposed to suicide risk,” *China Daily* online, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-02/19/content_16234503.htm.

³ “Abortions Rise among University Students,” [China.org.cn](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2012-10/22/content_26863527.htm) (official China portal), http://www.china.org.cn/china/2012-10/22/content_26863527.htm; Johanne Cochrane, Hanhui Chen, Katherine M. Conigrave and Wei Hao, “Alcohol use in China,” in *Alcohol and Alcoholism* (2003) 38 (6): 537-542.

⁴ “New law requires adults to visit elderly parents regularly,” [China.org.cn](http://www.china.org.cn/video/2013-07/02/content_29291973.htm) (official web portal), http://www.china.org.cn/video/2013-07/02/content_29291973.htm.

⁵ Bibles are available in bookstores run on church premises by registered congregations, and there are no restrictions for purchase. Occasionally, state bookstores carry English Bibles, and they are then promoted for their literary value. Smaller private bookstores may also sell Bibles under the counter at a higher price. Full Bible texts are also openly available on Christian websites published within the PRC.

⁶ Chris Buckley, “Success Brings Scrutiny to Chinese Mystic,” *New York Times*, 30 July 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/world/asia/success-brings-scrutiny-to-chinese-mystic.html>.

⁷ Among the more well-known are writer and critic Yu Jie, who left China for the USA in 2012, bestseller writer Bei Cun, and lawyer and pastor Wang Yi. Well-known congregations are Shouwang Church in Beijing and Early Rain (*Qiu yu zhi fu*) in Chengdu.

⁸ For more on this see Fredrik Fällman, “Calvin, Culture and Christ? Developments of faith among Chinese intellectuals,” in Francis Lim Khok Gee ed., *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, London: Routledge 2012, pp. 153-168.

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Pastors Reaching and Ministering to Today's Generation

By Jon Lu

In order for pastors to effectively minister to the younger generation in China, we must first unpack postmodernism's influence; then we can talk about practical ways to minister.

Postmodernism's impact on China is mixed with Western cultural values coming from globalization and is slightly different from what is taking place in the West. Western postmodernism is a rejection or reaction to a rational movement, a history of ideas. China's history did not go through the Enlightenment period, so its experience is more an embracing of the consequences of Western values—both modernism and postmodernism. Modernism, with its scientific and rationalistic worldview, has created a secularization of society in which religion and the supernatural are pushed into the private sphere. Although communism has taught and enforced atheism and evolution from the top down through education and political power, Western modernism is reinforcing a form of secularization from the bottom up, through the grassroots of contemporary culture.



ChinaSource

Along with secularization, Western consumerism has also come to China. Pop culture (movies, television shows, pop and rock music) is creating a thirst to experience Western contemporary culture. Many Chinese are creating their local versions of these. Young people are embracing the world of globalized luxury and fashion and are experiencing firsthand the liberation of society, individualism and personal moral standards that have come from the Western sexual revolution.

However, unlike Western church history (and Korean church history), there has not yet been a post-Christian era in China—a point in history when the church has risen to a place of influence in society and then lost its influence, relegated to the private sphere. In addition, the church in China has not yet gone through a loss of witness in society due to its own wrongdoings as in the West. The institutional and dead orthodoxy associated with the traditional church, church politics and abuse of power, along with legalistic judgmental Christians, have created a negative perception of God and Christianity in the West.

By God's grace, Christianity in China today is viewed as a positive that interests young people. Since Christianity is associated with Western culture, young people are flocking to Three Self churches to learn more about it. However, if church leaders are not prepared to lead the church well, they could lose a great opportunity for witnessing and impacting the younger generation. If church leaders fumble the ball, as the Western and Korean churches have, society will become post-Christian very quickly as has happened historically. How wide an open window with China's youth do Christians have? No one knows for sure. However, the pressing question today is, how can pastors and church leaders minister to the younger generation at this opportune time?

First, be incarnationally engaged with the global and local culture of young people. When pastors approach the younger generation, they must have the loving, humble attitude of God: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). Jesus came to us first as a baby, lived among us, learned the local language and culture, then died on the cross for our sins. This example of incarnational love, along with a clear gospel message of sin, repentance and salvation, needs to be proclaimed and lived out among them.

We can learn to minister to the younger generation in China from Hudson Taylor's approach to missions 150 years ago. He went to China and contextualized the gospel to the local culture and language. He embraced the good in Chinese culture while rejecting the bad. He learned the Chinese language and wore Chinese clothes. Why? He did this not as a means to an end; rather, his love for China and Chinese culture compelled him to identify with them as deeply as possible. As God gave him opportunities and people's trust, he uncompromisingly preached the gospel. Can those ministering to China's younger generation demonstrate the same love towards those in contemporary culture?

What does it mean to enter the younger generation's culture—their art, music, movies and so on? How can church leaders be a part of contemporary culture and embrace the positives but reject the negatives—sexual immorality, greed and consumerism? How can the church be in this culture but not be of the world? This tension of learning to be a missionary to the younger generation may be a key theological and practical challenge for the church, a church tied to many traditions of the past. *The church needs to wrestle theologically with its identity as a missional church in its global and local culture while remaining biblical and gospel-centered.*

The first step needed is a heart of love, an incarnational entering into the life and experience of the younger generation. As pastors gain credibility and acceptance, they can win a hearing and the opportunity to boldly proclaim the salvation message of Christ. Does that mean a pastor must have a rock band for worship, dress casual on Sundays, listen to Justin Bieber and watch "Big Bang Theory" on TV? Not necessarily. However, when pastors have God's love for these young people, they will come to love what the young people love. God will show each pastor and church how to "incarnate" themselves into the global and local culture in order to identify with the younger generation and "be" (Emmanuel) with them. This kind of identification will give pastors opportunities for deeper levels of relationship, mentoring and discipleship training.

Second, disciple gently towards a theology of suffering, patience and godliness. The consequence of modernization, consumerism and the digital age (internet, social media) has created a “me-centeredness” in young people. Their attention spans are getting shorter, impacted by a multimedia culture. They want immediate gratification and expect instant results. This has caused young people to have a “me-centered” form of spirituality and discipleship. *To counter this type of spiritual mentality, pastors need to train the younger generation for godliness, to have them grow deeper in character and perseverance.* One way to accomplish this is to help them embrace a theology of suffering and patience. This theology will help people to not immediately run away from problems in life but to faithfully depend on God to persevere through difficult times.

A theology of suffering can be learned from the Chinese church history of persecution. Learning about the heroes of faith such as Wang Ming Dao, John Sung, Watchman Nee and many others from the rural house churches is an important part of young peoples’ spiritual formation. However, the way in which they learn about suffering and sacrifice must be done with gentleness and kindness. Many times overbearing church leaders pour guilt on the younger generation as lazy and non-committed. This shame-based, reprimanding approach to discipleship is not only unbiblical (more from Confucius tradition), but it also turns off the younger generation. Along with creatively teaching biblical passages on suffering such as the Lament Psalms, the Gospels and 1 and 2 Peter, pastors need to walk alongside them, be filled with grace, and allow young people to make mistakes along the way. Pastors need to be a gentle, wise and, at times, stern shepherd to guide them towards godliness. It is God’s kindness that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4).

Third, model vulnerability and show compassion in dealing with sin. As young people are exposed to consumeristic culture, they are also exposed to many temptations. The entertainment industry and internet have created a contemporary pop culture which has both good and bad elements embedded in it. This makes it hard for young people to discern how to live in a world filled with materialistic values and sexual freedom. Many young men are becoming addicted to sexually explicit images and pornography. Homosexuality is becoming more prevalent and acceptable. In order for young people to overcome sexual temptation and deal with complex sexual issues, church leaders need to be respected for their authority and known for their authenticity; they need to provide a safe place for young people to share deep inner struggles. However, all too often traditional church leaders are good at judging both the sin and the sinner—like the Pharisees did with the woman taken in adultery. Pastors and church leaders need to learn to be like Jesus who dealt gently with the women caught in sin. *The delicate use of authority and authenticity is an important balance pastors need to find in order to help young people break free from deep, shameful sins.*

Creating a safe place for sharing in a shame-based culture is a top priority for a pastor. This means the pastor himself needs to be vulnerable and approachable. When young people find the courage to approach a pastor to confess a shameful sin, the pastor must also be compassionate. This compassion is necessary because the sin confessed may be attached to more complex spiritual and psychological issues. Pastors who have a judgmental attitude or provide overly simplistic or spiritualized answers may hinder rather than help the healing process. The fragile hearts of the younger generation are in the hands of pastors and church leaders who must deal compassionately and wisely with them.

Fourth, break down doctrinal concepts to enable them to live out the gospel practically. Pastors spend a lot of time preaching, teaching and counseling. The expectation of quality preaching is becoming more challenging today as young people are exposed to quality production entertainment. Their attention spans are becoming shorter needing “commercial breaks” after every four or five minutes of content. On the one hand, young people need a deeper spiritual understanding of God’s word; yet, at the same time, they want teaching that engages their hearts and emotions.

Missing in the scriptural and doctrinal teaching of many pastors is how to help young people live out the gospel in a practical manner. For example, rather than just saying from the pulpit that “God is holy and premarital sex is a sin—don’t do it!” pastors must teach why it is wrong and how it will damage the relationship between God and man. While teaching and counseling, more time must be spent unpacking the consequences of sin. The connection between premarital sex and the long term consequences it will have for future trust and intimacy in marriage, along with unhealthy values it sets for future children must be taught. Premarital sex goes against godliness, the relationship with God as well as his design for marriage which is to be a model of a covenant relationship between God and his people. Unpack the beauty of the marital union of “one flesh” that God has designed. *The more a pastor can break down doctrine into everyday life issues, the more people can live out the gospel without a burden of guilt on their shoulders.*

Fifth, lead a church toward a vision—one that is God-sized and God-anointed—so it can contribute to a kingdom adventure. Nothing is more demotivating for a young Christian’s faith than when he or she hears a compelling vision and sees a well-led company such as Google, Microsoft, Apple or Samsung while serving in a church with a small vision, dysfunctional leadership, unnecessary church conflicts, stagnant growth and a holy huddle mentality. The church has a bigger calling and vision than any secular company! (See Matthew 28 and Acts 1:18.) Therefore, it should be well led towards a God-sized vision. This does not mean we uncritically adopt secular or business principles to build the church; rather, pastors need to see a distinction between leading a business organization (financial profit) and leading the church (spiritual and evangelistic growth). However, they can grow as leaders and learn from proven leadership principles and skills since all truth is God’s truth. As pastors gain more knowledge and experience in leadership, they can lead and mobilize the younger generation towards a God-sized and God-anointed vision for their church.

Pastors need to prayerfully discern which kingdom vision resonates and rallies their young people. Young people need to feel they are contributing to something bigger than just what is within the four walls of their church. They want to be part of a kingdom movement that is macro and strategic such as joining a city-wide evangelistic initiative to reach migrant workers, trans-

View from the Wall

The Postmodern Shift of Chinese Young People

By Jonathan Li

I heard about postmodernism sometime after the 1980s, a time when Mainland China was “opening up.” Local intellectuals were hungry for anything other than Marxism and wanted to learn about Western thought including philosophers such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger and so on. Book series about them were popular among college students in the same way that KFC, Pizza Hut and McDonald’s were popular among all Chinese people.

During the 1990s, postmodernism may have been systematically introduced but only within the small circles of academia. A new generation of college students was beginning to care more about their future careers. Ironically, since the 1990s, Chinese young people are becoming more postmodern than ever before. They are beginning to doubt absolute standards, and this lack of absolutes easily causes them to become disoriented and lost in the pursuit of a career or academics.* What caused this postmodern shift? What are the typical postmodern life situations of China’s young people?



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The postmodern shift was caused by the special political situation in China across the 1980s and 1990s, the economic-focused policy of the government and the social-economic change in the new millennium.

Despite the economic reform policies of the 1980s, the top leader of China’s Communist Party was cautious about political reform. The constant worry about “capitalist liberalization” resulted in several rounds of clashes on college campuses between the government and intellectuals advocating freedom, democracy and other Western political values. These clashes culminated in the spring of 1989 when a student movement erupted in Beijing, the capital. Supported by a discontented public that was against power-related corruption, this student movement, known in the West as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, caught media attention around the world and was crushed at the consent of the top leader. Guns were fired; blood was shed; lives were taken. The younger generation became disillusioned overnight about what government can do and what politics mean. Reality was seen as paradoxical to textbook teaching. The result was political inertia for most and a shift toward opportunism for a few. For all, communism was no longer worth mentioning. For me, I felt that only patriotism might work as a common ground to hold the nation together.

When political buzzwords—like the 1981 slogan “Rejuvenating the Chinese Nation”—no longer resonated, the top leader tried to restart a reform movement. His comment that “development is of paramount importance” heralded new rounds of reform and opening-up policies driven almost solely by economic growth figures. When the phrase “socialist market economy” was coined, incumbent college students put down their books and went looking for money-making ideas. Wealth and power gradually became the ultimate measure of success. In order to make quick money or secure a money-making future, nothing was out of bounds and everything became negotiable. Moral relativism crept in when it sounded like “a fair deal” to “invest” for one’s future. It became okay to give a monetary gift to your professor for a better GPA, to pay an administrator for admission into a degree program leading to a high-paying career or to sleep with your supervisor who would guarantee your graduation and find you a government job.

Under the “socialist market economy,” housing, healthcare and higher education were made marketable in less than a decade. College admissions went way up, yet, college costs increased greatly as well. Using the customary entrance exam system, students with a much lower academic performance were entitled to receive a higher education; they might be the first in their family to receive a college degree. Their families then expected them to find a high-paying job upon graduation, yet the number of jobs has not increased in proportion to the increase of college graduates.

This disproportionate development in higher education set the stage for another type of disillusionment. Employers in the job market now have more power to choose those from prestigious colleges, with higher degrees, or with other credentials to compete for the job. A PhD holder will now compete for the job of a bank teller simply because there are so many competing with him. A full-time position in a state-owned mega-bank will offer an enviable level of income. For those unfortunate graduates who are less competent in terms of school reputation or degree level, the bank is “benevolent” and offers, through employment agencies, contractual jobs with the same workload but a much lower income. The underdog graduates will often be persuaded by their families to take these contractual jobs simply for the hope of being upgraded to a full-time position according to their performance. In reality, the bank did not make such a promise.

Since the mid-1990s, the state-owned mega-enterprises in the strategic “pillar” industries have become more prominent, often with monopolistic powers. Government income was boosted by the selling of land; this was the root cause for real estate prices to sky-rocket in big cities. The increase in the market power of the state-owned sector and the government itself make two types of jobs extremely popular among young career starters: (1) jobs in state-owned monopolistic companies which are now more

desirable than those in the previously favored foreign-owned enterprises; (2) civil servant positions which are the most desirable because of the benefits to be enjoyed, including tax-free allowances of various kinds. Several hundred college graduates often compete for a single job position of these two types. The selection process and criteria may not be at all transparent and may not necessarily favor those who have solid competency and aspirations to build a better country. Instead, people with power-related connections tap into their “resources” to find shortcuts to access these enviable positions. It is likely that wealth and power will be shared within a relatively small group of people. The gap between the haves and the have-nots may become wider, and education may cease to provide chances for social mobility.

The above social-economic changes sound like a premodern scenario when the rich and powerful ruled. Yet, the result has been a feeling of despair for many young people that is quite postmodern. The growth of national wealth does not come with an increase in a sense of personal fulfillment. Traditions are being carried forward with contempt. Slogans of moral codes and values are reinvented from time to time yet are never faithfully practiced. Words are losing their meaning while trust, unity and order function less and less in both social and personal life. In an advertisement, a young shepherd was asked why he was tending his sheep. His answer was to make more money, get married, have children and let his children tend his sheep. It is said that after watching this ad, many young shepherds took their lives.

Typical postmodern life situations are hard to define. Demographically, those who were born in the 1960s and 1970s are likely to have experienced the first disillusionment, the political one in 1989. Those born in the 1980s and after, the so-called “post-80s” are the first generation of the “one-child policy,” too young to understand what happened in 1989 but old enough to be inspired by the economic boom under the market-oriented reforms of the 1990s. These “post-80s” may experience their personal disillusionment when they find little chance to align their own career development with the economic growth of the country.

Two groups of young people, both urban, might feel postmodernism the most; they have become disoriented and lost. The first group is from rural areas. These young people managed to get into an ordinary college, graduated with an ordinary record and decided to do whatever was necessary to stay in the city. Their purpose in life sounds no different from that of the young shepherd: to survive, get married, have at least one child and bring up that child to go to college. They may have been pushed by their rural parents to buy a house so that their parents can come to live with them to take care of their baby and reap the harvest of having brought up a college graduate. Some of these young people might accomplish this, but many may have to lie to their parents about their situation when visiting their hometown. They may not have been able to pursue their own dreams.

The second group was born to migrant workers in big cities since the 1990s and belongs to the “post-90s.” Their upbringing has been fragmented. They have migrated between the hometown of their parents and the city, been cared for by their grandparents in the countryside, had elementary schooling in the city and gone back to their hometown for middle school and the college entrance exam—or have simply given up middle school in order to assist their parents in the city. They may have little memory of the rural hometown of their parents, yet they do not have residential status in the city to enjoy its benefits of housing, healthcare and education. They are neither here nor there! As these young people feel rejected by the environment that surrounds them, they will then care little about other people. When they cannot see much in their future, they will become bitter about life.

The postmodern state of mind of Chinese young people seems to be the outcome of a series of disillusionments and an unsustainable way of living. They have limited knowledge and dismal guidance in terms of what life is all about. How can we find access to their hearts, in a way that reaches them and reveals the much bigger picture of the meaning of life? How can we lead them to realize that they are created for a good purpose and loved totally, all the time, in an unconditional way by their Creator?

*This rough understanding of a postmodern state of affairs is taken from the testimony of a college student who took part in a course offered by CEO Global. See www.ceoglobal.org.

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forming their neighborhood by serving the poor, joining a nationwide church planting movement or partnering with Korean ministries to send missionaries to unreached people groups and so on. Finding ways to help young people contribute their gifts and talents, networking them with realistic opportunities and encouraging them to make a difference in their world for Christ go a long way toward spiritually energizing young people.

The Reverend Jon Lu, PhD, Professor of Missions, researches contemporary issues and the church in China.

Peoples of China

Serving the Postmodern Generation

Personal Comments from a Worker in Overseas Chinese Student Ministry in North America

By Juta Pan

In 1 Corinthians 9:22b, Paul says, “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” This does not mean changing the essence of the gospel to cater to the target audience of evangelism. Rather, it is adjusting the evangelistic strategies to better reach different groups. From one generation to the next, cultural trends continue to develop and bring their subtle influences on one’s worldview, value system and lifestyle. Furthermore, they affect people’s attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the gospel.



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At the latter half of the twentieth century, objections to modernism with its social ills led to the emergence and development of postmodernism. The spread of postmodernism from the West to Asia affected China’s younger generation and naturally the overseas Chinese students in the United States as well. In the 1980s, North American Chinese churches experienced a great wave of Chinese students, who had come from abroad, coming to Christ and had perfected quite an effective evangelistic model. However, faced with the ever increasing influence of postmodern ideologies on the new generation of Chinese students and scholars, the question arises, how should North American Chinese churches modify their strategies in order to be used by the Lord to reach these students? Over the past years, this author’s ministry has been targeting the population of overseas Chinese students and scholars in the city of Boston and its vicinity. This question has been an important issue under examination.

Due to the assertion that language and recorded history do not reflect factual events and phenomena but are only the products of regulated cultural constructs, postmodernism denies the existence of “truth” and asserts that man cannot know facts and absolute truth. All truth, standards and norms are viewed as products constructed under specific situations to be used as a tool by one group to control another. Thus, men need to eradicate the concept and declaration of truth and free themselves from its oppression. Because of this denial of absolute truth, all faiths that provide stability in life and an anchor for the soul, along with all truth and laws are relative.

This understanding of truth as relative leads to the belief that morality is relative. Without the absolute distinction between good and evil, right and wrong conduct, all moral laws are relative. The relativity of truth and morality leads to utilitarianism and self-interest as the guidelines for life decisions. Man openly seeks to benefit only self without regard for the welfare of the public and the community. His main pursuit is personal gain, and while the community may benefit, it is only because the individual’s benefits are being protected. Altruism, love and care for others thus become rare.

As postmodernism distrusts all historical records, it is skeptical towards all so-called laws of history—the metanarrative. When men lose faith in the metanarrative with its guidance for future world development, they become lost and confused. This, together with the rapidly changing times, is causing people to lose the ability to have an optimistic outlook on life. Once hope is lost, they can only live in the present.

Disillusionment with faith, hope and love leads to confusion for this new generation of young people, but it also creates opportunity for spreading the gospel. Postmodern man fails in his search for life-stabilizing and soul-anchoring faith, as well as in his quest for goodness and for finding a future hope that modernity provided with modernism as the basis. Yet, man craves the satisfaction of these three crucial needs; faith, hope and love are the most precious gifts offered to mankind and are at the core of the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 13:13). Now, with the collapse of modernism, there is a great opportunity for the gospel to fill the emptiness found in so many lives. Without these three gifts, the postmodernist is left with a void—but that void provides an excellent opportunity for the gospel to win his or her heart!

At the same time, the church is faced with the challenge of modifying its approach in sharing the faith. In the past, ministries to students in North America from overseas had adopted strategies for spreading the gospel to Chinese students and scholars that coincided with modernist ideologies. As ideologies have gradually shifted over time, the church needs to make appropriate changes to facilitate winning the new generation for Christ.

Since this is still a developing topic, and given the limited space of this article, this author can only discuss some postmodern influences on Chinese students and scholars from overseas as well as the corresponding strategies and modes for evangelism based on personal experience in ministry among them.

First of all, sharing our faith can no longer adhere to the traditional and authoritative didactic format. Emphasis should be placed on using multifaceted means of communicating faith, that is, audio, video, two-way and multidirectional interactions as well as the practice of rites or liturgies such as Holy Communion, worship and special rituals at Christmastime. One new Christian from the author’s church said in her testimony that she decided to convert to Christ during a Holy Communion service. Another new Christian said that the first time he attended the author’s church on a Christmas Eve, the gospel attracted him so profoundly that

he was baptized one year later. As intellectuals and professionals, the postmodern generation does not like traditional, noninteractive, Sunday School curriculum and favors diverse learning modes such as small group Bible study, interactive discussion, hands-on learning and similar methods. Sermon style and content also need to be more creative. So far, the adult Sunday School ministry has been relatively successful in North American churches; however, what the postmodern generation needs now is more caring, shepherding and modeling.

Secondly, because postmodernists distrust any truth communicated in words, in the process of leading one to God, life witnessing and establishing community identity should precede the verbal gospel presentation. A living example and testimony of love hold great appeal and are the keys to their hearts for sharing the gospel. A strong desire for identification with and commitment to a community is a characteristic of postmodernists. This desire is even more intense for Chinese who are away from their homeland. As the Chinese economy grows rapidly, and with it improved living standards, students no longer care about living assistance provided by North American churches. Now, to attract them to church, it is more important to establish community that they can identify with, such as small groups or fellowships.

Furthermore, friendship evangelism is more effective than a short, one-time, personal evangelism presentation. In the author's church, one seeker was finally baptized after being a seeker for four years. During these years, innumerable times countless people played basketball with him, performed alongside him in a band, resolved his troubles, endured his provocations and supported him patiently before finally leading him to make a decision for Christ. On the contrary, asking one to make a quick personal decision during an event with a short, evangelistic presentation of the gospel often causes the opposite effect or even results in seekers disappearing from fellowships and the church entirely.

Though rational assent undoubtedly has an important role in people's decisions whether or not to accept the faith, the real key to their decision to believe in Christ often lies in their knowing that only God can give them purpose, hope and sense of value in life. When they are fully convicted that they need Christ, the majority of their traditional faith questions are easily resolved because of their changed presuppositions. The gospel of Christ points them in a worthwhile direction; it prompts them to pursue a new life and way of living. This plays a more crucial role than moving them to make a decision for Christ based on cogent rational arguments.

An example of this is twins who obtained PhDs in engineering from distinguished universities in the US and the UK, then came to do postdoctoral research at MIT and began to attend the author's church. Though they were strongly suspicious about some doctrinal issues such as creation and its "conflict" with the theory of evolution, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of prophecies in the book of Daniel, they continued to attend the fellowship meetings and Sunday services because of the loving atmosphere they found in the church. After one year, to the surprise of the author, they both decided to be baptized. During a serious conversation, they explained that the critical reason they decided to convert to Christ was that the Christian life of faith provides what they were seeking and now intended to live. After the transformation of their perspective on life, they found it was easy to resolve the issues that previously had presented difficulties because those issues had been based on their presuppositions.

Postmodernism has brought opportunities as well as challenges to spreading the gospel. Making adjustments to address cultural trends is not a matter of right or wrong, correctness or error; neither is it a prioritizing of options. Rather, it is a strategic modification to effectively respond to the changes in the targeted group. Discussions on this issue have only started among North American churches and a more comprehensive study is pending. However, we simply cannot sidestep gaining a deeper understanding of our target group in order to effectively and skillfully lead them to God.

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Translation by Ping Ng

Book Review: God at Work in a Student Leader

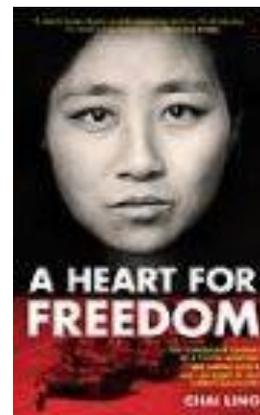
A Heart for Freedom

by Chai Ling

Reviewed by Laurie Michaels

A Heart for Freedom by Chai Ling. Tyndale Momentum; 1st edition, 2011, 370 pp, ISBN-10:1414362463, ISBN-13: 978-1414362465; \$19.04 at amazon.com.

For twenty-three years, I have been waiting for this book to be written. Reading it took me on a reliving of the experience I had in Beijing in 1989 and gave me new perspective and details which were insightful and healing. Chai Ling's, *A Heart for Freedom*, is an answer to prayer. It is her eye-witness account of the 1989 student movement and massacre in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China. It answers many of my own questions such as, how did the student leaders emerge and become involved in the movement, what key decisions did they make and how did they make them, what did they hope to accomplish, who authorized the killing of peaceful civilians and students, where did the student leaders hide after the massacre and how did they escape, what did they think was accomplished by the movement and how did they begin their new lives outside of China?



Her storytelling is genuinely personal and deep. The irresistible, unfolding grace of God is made so evident in her life journey, beginning with her early years when she yearned to become an “extraordinary child” excelling in academics to please her “tiger father.” He and a remarkable teacher influenced Chai Ling both positively and negatively, motivating her to strive to make it into the most prestigious university in China, Peking University, also known as Beida. Envisioning the loveliness and serenity of the Beida campus was made easy by her descriptive writing. I remember the campus just as she paints it, with its atmosphere of enthusiasm for knowledge and political discussion. Love was also in full bloom throughout the university with young couples engaging physically under every tree and on every hill, as I recall. Chai Ling pours out the emotions of first love, sexual encounters and exploitation. Her honest confessions of the joys, pains, sufferings and duties of love parallel her revelations of being swept up into the student movement with its passions and sorrows. As she speaks frankly of her forced abortions, I think of how her personal tragedies eclipsed the national tragedy of Mother China ending the lives of so many of her own children before their time.

From an eye-witness, first person viewpoint, Chai Ling explains the events that led to the student movement which culminated in the massacre of unarmed civilians and students on Chang An Boulevard and Tiananmen Square. It is astonishing to read of her rise from obscurity to prime leadership of the movement, involvement in the class boycotts, hunger strike, negotiations with government officials and communication with, as well as organization of, the multitudes of students. I have not read anything so revealing of the personalities and relational dynamics between the different student leaders such as Wang Dan, Feng, Liu Guang, Wu'er Kaixi, and others. Now I am clearer about how the decision to leave the Square occurred. I was there in Beijing before, during and after the event and received other eye-witness accounts of the shooting, wounding, killing and running over of students with tanks and armored cars. Chai Ling's reports further attest to what I saw and was told. Now I understand the ten months in hiding Chai Ling endured after the massacre, and her harrowing escape into Hong Kong and then to France. For the longest time, I had wondered how it was ever possible for any of the student leaders to remain hidden and escape the net of the Chinese police and military.

A subtle thread of God's witness in Chai Ling's life becomes more and more evident, and I cheered in tears when she wrote of her coming to faith in Jesus Christ after reading *The Heavenly Man* by Brother Yun. I actually feel that God answered my own prayers which I prayed in 1989 for the students and their leaders to come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and to understand the true meaning of freedom. My heart poured out adoration to our sovereign, powerful and faithful God for letting me glimpse the awesome marvel of answered prayer. I believe multitudes of Christians prayed for them as I did. God answered our prayers, and Chai Ling bears powerful witness to this.

The importance of the book in giving the world a written eye witness of this historical event cannot be minimized. The denouement of culture shock, adaptation, education, success and fame in the Western world continues Chai Ling's saga. However, the impact of her writing, I believe, occurs in the latter chapters where she grapples with difficult questions such as, where was God in her life before, during and after the Tiananmen massacre? Why did God choose her to become a student leader? What purpose did God have in allowing her to survive such a horrific event, and what purpose does he have for her now? Again, the eclipse in her personal tragedies cause her to likewise grapple with dilemmas such as, where was God when she was being forced to have three abortions and when she had a fourth abortion? Should she reveal the shame, guilt and terrible aftermaths of those abortions? How would that affect her marriage and family? What good could God possibly bring from all her sufferings?

Struggling with God, Chai Ling finds him present, good and loving through every circumstance of her journey. This brings me and other readers face-to-face with God, as real and personal as he is, with each and every child he created. If you already believe in the God of the Bible, after reading, *A Heart for Freedom*, you will believe even more and more deeply. You will rejoice over—and perhaps become involved in—Chai Ling's quest for an end to forced abortions and the one-child policy in China. If you do not yet believe in Jesus Christ and have not yet accepted him as your Lord and Savior, you will be left with Chai Ling's ending question, “‘Are you ready to walk with Jesus?’”

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Endnotes

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredric_Jameson.

² Important contributions came from Zhao Yiheng in London, Xu Ben and Zhang Xudong who were based in the USA (the latter had gone on to study under Jameson as a doctoral student at Duke). http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/617.

³ Such as “From ‘Modernity’ to ‘Chineseness’” (Cong ‘xiandaixing’ dao ‘Zhonghuaxing’) by Zhang Fa, Zhang Yiwu and Wang Yichuan. http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/617.

⁴ Wang Ning elaborated his postmodern criticism in the context of Chinese literature. Zhang Yiwu, on the other hand, perceives postmodernity in broadly urban popular culture for its democratic power and encourages the exploration of postmodernity in the Chinese language; however, he excludes current Western postmodern discourses in his thesis. http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/617.

⁵ Especially in his article entitled “‘Post-Isms’ and Chinese New Conservatism” [published in the Hong Kong journal *Ershiyi shiji* (Twenty-First Century) 27:4–15].

⁶ http://contemporary_chinese_culture.academic.ru/617.

⁷ Charles Horner, *Rising China and Its Postmodern Fate: Memories of Empire in a New Global Context*, (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 167.

⁸ Charles Horner, *Rising China and Its Postmodern Fate: Memories of Empire in a New Global Context*, p. 173-174.

⁹ 郑建生, “后现代再着魅”, 97页.

¹⁰ 麦拉伦 (Brian D. McLaren), “教会大变身: 后现代教会发展新思维”, 104, 210-211页.

¹¹ 梁永泰, “新领袖 DNA” (香港: 突破出版社, 2005年再版), 39页.

¹² Janusz Przychodzen, *Discourses of Postmodernism. Multilingual Bibliography. Part (1951-1993)* (University of Massachusetts, Amherst: American Comparative Literature Association Net, 2000 <http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/janusz.html>).

¹³ Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁴ See David K. Clark and Norman L. Geisler, *Apologetics in the New Age: A Christian Critique of Pantheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 223.

¹⁵ 参 郑建生, “后现代再着魅”, 96页.

¹⁶ Arild Romarheim, *The Aquarian Christ* (Hong Kong: Good Tidings Ltd., 1992).

¹⁷ 参 郑建生, “水晶、轮迴、外星、通灵” (香港: 卓越书楼, 1995), 147页; 郑建生, “后现代再着魅”, 69-70页.

¹⁸ <http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/dotrel.htm>.

¹⁹ 参郑建生, “后现代再着魅”, 135页.

²⁰ 郑建生, “后现代再着魅”, 31页.

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