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Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

# China SOURCE



After decades when the “masses” were expected to blindly follow the lead of the party leaders at every level, the idea has been spreading that people are not just subjects to be ruled.

Graham Cousins

## The Growing **Rights Consciousness** in China

*Carol Lee Hamrin*

**S**lowly, incrementally, it has been happening. Starting in the coastal regions and moving inward, beginning in economics and spreading to the rest of life, people in China have been learning of their rights—their rights as citizens of a sovereign state and as humans in the international community.

International documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights present four general categories of human rights: economic, social, civil, political. As China opened its door to outside involvement and entered a new path of economic development, the great debate both inside and outside of China has been whether the acknowledgment of rights in one category, such as economic rights, would result in greater demand and resulting protection of rights in other categories, such as civil or political. The answer seems increasingly clear. There is a definite stirring in China and a visible progression from category to category.

### **New Thinking on Citizens and the State**

Change has come on both sides—new expectations by the Chinese people and new behavior on the part of the state. After decades when the “masses” were expected (or forced) to blindly follow the lead of the allegedly infallible Party leaders at every level, the idea has been spreading that people are not just subjects to be ruled. They are citizens with legitimate interests and rights that they have a right to define and that the state, as well as other citizens, must respect and protect. The Chinese government has begun to acknowledge the duties the state owes to the people—not just the centuries-old emphasis on the duties the people owe to the state.

There is no question that some of this new thinking is the result of international expectations, demands and modeling. Some of it comes from the resurgence of liberal democratic ideas from the experience of the Chinese Republic in the 1910s-40s. Given the overwhelming evidence of widespread official

corruption and abuses of power, the government has been forced to admit the need for constraints on government and more effective responses to people's grievances. With growing diversity and conflicts of interest within a fast-changing society, the government has begun to seek new methods of preventing and resolving conflict.

## Economic Rights

The imperative to grow the economy led the way. Beginning in the 1980s, China began enacting contract laws and regulations that would bring regularity to business ventures involving foreign investors. Thereafter, China enacted a multitude of other laws and regulations bringing a semblance of regularity to business ventures owned by Chinese themselves. The result was that Chinese business owners, whether in business by themselves or in joint ventures with foreign partners, now had economic rights which provided the legal framework for the growth of China's private sector.

Consumers were not far behind. For China's economy to sustain its growth into the new century, it became obvious that there would need to be a large increase of domestic consumption—the Chinese people would need to buy a lot of products produced by Chinese businesses. The problem was, however, that Chinese products were defective, dangerous, inferior, fake, and the Chinese did not want to buy them. In 1994, China passed the Consumer Rights Law followed by the Product Liability Law and the Advertising Law. These put pressure on Chinese businesses to increase the quality of their goods and provided means of redress for consumers who got stuck with faulty products—such as the right to go to court and obtain compensation from the company selling the prod-



China enacted a multitude of laws and regulations bringing a semblance of regularity to business ventures owned by Chinese themselves.

uct in the amount of double the retail cost of the product. With these laws, Chinese consumers obtained economic rights, and they have been exercising them—some obtaining impressive profits as they have learned to spot fake products, buy them, and then go to court to receive double their money back!

In October 1997, the official communiqué of the 15th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party stated the goal of building a "rule of law state"—in the context of making China compliant with the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the same month, China signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a year later signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. By signing the two cove-

nants, China committed itself to a process of moving towards compliance in all these arenas. In 1999, the Constitution was amended to add the provision, "The People's Republic of China practices ruling the country in accordance with the law and building a socialist country of law" (Article 5). In 2001, as China joined the WTO, it also ratified the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. China has not yet ratified the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and their foot-dragging is an issue of top concern to the international community. New sets of regulations for various types of social organizations, including religious affairs, may be intended to bring China's regulatory framework more in line with these international norms prior to ratification.

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All these steps forward have formally legitimized the public discussion of the rule of law, including personal legal protections, and an impressive effort in legal education has begun. The international community has taken this opportunity to help China set up legal aide clinics around the country where people can go to learn about their legal rights and hopefully find assistance in seeking redress.

Migrant workers have been a main focus of the legal aid clinics. Migrant workers are a major source of labor supply for China's growing industries, but though vital to China's development, they are often cheated by their employers and not paid full wages. In recent years, China has enacted labor laws and regulations requiring that migrant workers should be fairly compensated, and staff and volunteers at the legal aid clinics have informed the migrants about their rights and have tried to help them to seek redress, including bringing legal action against their employers. The results have been dismal, for the court system is currently too weak and too heavily controlled by local authorities who seek to protect the local industries. Yet through this, the workers have learned that they have rights—economic rights—that should be enforced.

### Social and Environmental Rights

Women have been another major focus of the legal aid clinics, and women's rights have become a popular topic. In the Mao era, it was said that women would hold up half the sky—meaning that they would no longer stay foot-bound at home, but they would enter the workplace, work equally hard as men and get equal pay. They were to be “liberated” as workers, not as women per se. But with the discarding of Communism, China has begun to shift back to its earlier ways, with unequal access for women to educational and economic opportunities and vulnerability to domestic abuse and commercial exploitation. A new emphasis on the rights of women and children has started to change that, at least on paper, with the Marriage Law of 1980 (amended in 2001) and the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests (1992) granting women a wide array of legal rights, including no-fault divorce mechanisms and provisions for civil compensa-

tion for fault, such as co-habitation with another, domestic violence or bigamy. A current major focus is the effort to stop the kidnapping and sex trafficking of women and children which is rampant both in the rural and urban areas of China.

The SARS crisis in 2003 has brought more attention to health issues in general. With the international spotlight highlighting the poor health care system, Chinese suffering from HIV/AIDS—formerly treated as pariahs—are getting more attention. In 2004, the Chinese government established its first legal research center

### Civil and Political Rights

With the rapid growth of the private sector, the issue of land and property ownership has come to the fore, indirectly challenging the residual socialist system whereby the state owns all land, leasing only use rights, a system that abets corrupt practices. Private business developers with political connections acquire rights to plots of land, evict the current homeowners or tenants, then demolish the old buildings and build new ones, driving the residents into court to try to seek fair compensation. Both businesses

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Women's rights have become a popular topic.

on AIDS related issues, and top leaders were photographed shaking hands with patients. Yunnan province has pioneered a law forbidding discrimination against people infected with AIDS and their families. There is a new focus on the needs in the rural areas where the lack of health insurance coverage and a minimal public health infrastructure mean financial devastation and incapacitation or early death for those who become ill.

China's environmental protection movement is growing and with it popular demands for clean air and potable water. Chinese interested in protecting the environment were pioneers in setting up non-profit organizations in China, and these environmental groups have likewise been pioneers in group advocacy.

and individuals are demanding better property protections, and the rise of homeowner associations are a hot topic in China right now. Another example of group advocacy, middle class homeowners are joining together and challenging, through litigation, petitions or other means, aggressive developers and landlords. In March 2004, the National People's Congress added to China's Constitution the requirements that “citizens' lawfully acquired private property shall not be violated” (Article 12), and that “the state should give compensation” in cases where the state expropriates urban and rural land (Article 10). The 2004 Congress also added a Constitutional amendment stating that the State “respects and

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# Rendering to Caesar What Belongs to Caesar

Eriene

**A**nyone who visits China from time to time would attest to the fact that the nation is changing at breakneck speed, not just in forms of hardware like skyscrapers and new airports but in all aspects of life.

After years of self-imposed isolation, the hermit state has finally reemerged to engage the outside world, and for the 1.2 billion people inside China, the implications and opportunities corresponding to this change are mind-boggling. The international Christian community is watching with anticipation and special interest as the great commandment mandates our focus on this most populous country on earth.

Though the winds of change have affected most aspects of life, the structure of the Chinese churches (official and unofficial) has not changed much. The government-sanctioned "Three-Self churches" still hold political influence, and the central leadership, who have been appointed by the government and report to the government, are as conservative as ever and can be put off as irrelevant as far as spiritual leadership is concerned. The Three-Self Patriotic Committee still controls the seminaries and the appointment of pastors in churches under its umbrella, yet the local pastors are often open-minded and interested in promoting evangelistic outreach, and a large and growing number of new converts worship within these official churches. This phenomenon is especially prominent in the cities where a new generation of middle-class Christians are emerging, some worshipping in the Three-Self churches and others in informal fellowship groups, often with people in their same professions.

In the rural areas, though, most believers (in ever growing numbers) worship in house churches which still maintain their isolation and their antagonistic stance towards the government. Leaders of the house churches still show the scars left on their bodies from mistreatment in prison



The average Chinese citizen does not view it as necessarily bad to have a religious belief; at the same time, the average non-believing citizen still does not have a high opinion of Christians in the country.

during the Cultural Revolution days as credentials for their spiritual authority. When describing these churches, I avoid using the term "underground churches," as no one who understands the operation of the communist party at the local community level would believe that any regular gathering of a sizable group of people could go unnoticed. It is not that the government does not know about the activities of such church groups, but rather, in the majority of cases, the government chooses to ignore and tolerate them rather than crack down on every gathering in order to avoid conflict within the communities.

The willingness to selectively ignore or tolerate these gatherings represents a fundamental change in the attitude of the government towards religious groups and is a credit to the strength of the church in

China. Despite the years of suppression, the church has continued to grow rapidly, to the point where the government has been forced to shift to selective tolerance. Unlike in the days of the Cultural Revolution, the goal now is not to stamp out religion within the country but rather to monitor it and to make sure that the churches' activities are within acceptable limits. The government's tolerance level can easily wane, though, if the government feels threatened (e.g., by the numbers of party members and university students who are converting or religious groups that are growing), as evidenced by

Graham Cousens

the increasing controls, surveillance and arrests imposed upon believers in 2004.

However, overall, "socialism with Chinese characteristics" has evolved to a stage where religion per se is no longer an ideological concern. People need religion, and a good faith is beneficial to society as a whole. The Chinese government has shown much flexibility in their interpretation and application of their basic ideology—nowadays even capitalists can become communist party members. It is not unthinkable that one day Christianity could find a legitimate place in Chinese society.

Today, the average Chinese citizen—some communist officials included—does not view it as necessarily bad to have a religious belief; at the same time, the average non-believing citizen still does not have a high opinion of Christians in the

country. As the Chinese are becoming more conscious of their own rights, they are in turn becoming more critical of others. Public opinion, once formed, is hard to change. Their value judgment about Christians hinges on whether the belief brings benefit or trouble to society.

With China at the crossroads looking for new direction and partners, there is a chance for a fresh start. It is my personal belief that it is high time for the churches to act with vision and courage and adopt a more conciliatory approach towards the government. They should let go of the past and see themselves—and project an image to others—no longer as passive victims of political oppression, but rather as responsible members of society who wish to engage and contribute. The church is a growing social force, and should work with a concerted effort to win respect and trust from the government and society at large.

By actively participating in social affairs and mobilizing their resources to address social needs such as disaster relief and service to the needy, the churches can establish themselves as active change agents in the new China that is developing. Many areas that were once out of bounds for religious groups in China are now open for Christian influence. Since the expulsion of the foreign missionaries in the 1950s, Chinese Christians have been prohibited from being involved in service sectors such as education, social service and health programs. These are the traditional services that Christians excel in and that have brought very positive impact to developing societies. Now we again see examples of Christian groups getting back into these well-known and strategic service areas.

Under the “big society, small government” slogan, the government is open to having many social service needs filled by various groups in society. Local governments, faced with pressing social needs, are less concerned with ideological issues and have allowed creative “pilot projects.” Some resourceful local churches have successfully contributed to these needs and have gained recognition from local officials and communities.

However, China’s central government, also less concerned about ideological issues, currently is very concerned about national security—that religion should not be used as a pretext to carry out subversive activities within the country. To

the Chinese government, the *Falungong* incident is a painful case in point. The government firmly believes that foreign powers with hostile political motives are looking for opportunities to create havoc in the country in order to undermine the communist government’s rule. Christian missionary activities in the past and at present are suspected of having such evil intent. The assistance given to the house churches by overseas Christian groups has enabled the house churches’ widespread networking activities but has inadvertently reinforced the government’s misconception of foreign “intervention.”

Unfortunately, the stance of some house church groups today does not help to dispel the government’s belief. Dwelling on past conflicts with the communist government, they refuse to cooperate or register, regardless. The house churches worry that registration might bring state control and a diluted gospel. Unlike in the past, however, this has not been the experience of all

the Roman government in Paul’s day was as cruel and oppressive as any in history. Yet, we are told to submit and, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Jesus’ own teaching points in the same direction. As citizens, our call of duty is to “render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.” Unlike in the Cultural Revolution days, in China today there need not be a total irreconcilable conflict between these two lines of duty. By accepting the authority of the state to govern, the churches could, for a start, begin negotiating with the authorities about conditions that would be acceptable with a view toward complying with local regulations for registration. After all, most churches in the democratic world also need to register for certain types of permits from their governing authorities.

I believe this is a good juncture for the Western churches and the overseas Chinese churches that have been actively supporting

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## The church’s role is not to be antagonistic or subversive toward a government, but to courageously engage and be actively participating in society.

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churches that have undergone the process of registration in recent years. Many are still operating with independence and are carrying out such activities as Sunday Schools and evangelical outreach.

Another reason for the house churches’ lack of cooperation with the government may be that overseas support tends to favor those persisting in opposing government policies. The prevailing misguided Western mindset is that only the suffering Chinese church that stands up to the government is the faithful and true church, and thus is worthy of support. This view is shortsighted because with such a paradigm the Chinese church will always remain an outcast of society, surviving on outside support, and cannot really become independent.

Paul requested that the Roman church submit to the government for the reason that “all authorities that exist have been established by God.” Even though large-scale persecution of Christians did not start until the reign of the emperor Nero,

the church in the Mainland to reexamine their strategy. It is God’s sovereignty to establish or change governments. The church’s role is not to be antagonistic or subversive toward a government, but to courageously engage and be actively participating in society, and in so doing “you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life,” bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus. As such, we should be encouraging our brothers in the churches of China to be dutiful citizens, engaging in peaceful ventures serving the government and society. While serving the needy, we engage with people, and our lives bear witness to the good news of Jesus. Evangelism is more than words and proclamation; it also involves deeds and the demonstration of Jesus’ love. Our support should be channeled to help organize church-based service, encourage self-reliance and avoid dependency.

*Eriene is with an NGO that is involved in China.* 卞

# Responsible Service— Before God and Man

Finn Torjesen

All who live and work in countries other than their own must determine the basic principles that will guide their decision making and behavior in an international setting. Places change; times change; yet the importance of wise guiding principles remains constant.

For my grandparents, Peter and Valborg Torjesen, missionaries from Norway who in 1939 found themselves running a refugee camp in the western mountain province of Shanxi, China, the issue was how to handle their national identity. By 1939, Japan had invaded China, but Norway was still in a position of neutrality. Thus, the Torjesen's Norwegian citizenship resulted in their property becoming a safe haven for Chinese in the area. They boldly kept their Norwegian flag displayed on their front lawn, warning the Japanese planes not to bomb their neutral home. Soon over 1,000 war refugees were camped around their house.

However, in December 1939, Norway joined the Allies in the resistance to Germany thus becoming an enemy to Japan. Deep in western China, due to the political uncertainties of the region, my grandparents unwisely left their flag displayed on the lawn, attracting the Japanese planes that on December 14, 1939, sought out the Norwegian flag and bombed our home, killing my grandfather and many local Chinese.

Should my grandfather have known, somehow, enough about world politics at that time to have made better decisions so as not to have left his four children fatherless in China? How do well meaning Christians (back then, or today) who feel the love of God and want to share it, balance issues of government, culture and history? Are there basic principles that can shape wise decision making in an international setting?

In 1990, the Torjesen family was invited back to China to visit the location where Peter and Valborg had served. From that visit came an invitation by lo-

cal officials to return to Shanxi. Evergreen (Peter's name in Chinese) was thus established and began its work in 1993. As we began to minister in China, we quickly learned that the various foreign organizations active in China used different approaches toward China and that these approaches conflicted with each other. There were three main issues:



Melvin Sletch

How should a Christian in a foreign country engage the community including the government?

**1. Relationships with local and provincial government agencies:** Should we proactively respect and adapt to local customs and regulations or should we focus on our message, ignoring local customs and regulations? For example, some organizations were unfamiliar with their local officials except for the visa officer and a Foreign Affairs contact person. Other organizations built relationships with the local mayors, party secretaries and pertinent government agencies like the police, civil affairs and education bureau, and kept up with local TV and newspapers.

**2. Organizational agendas versus local needs and agendas:** The question here is a practical business question—should we maintain a franchise-style operational consistency or should we allow each area to respond to local demands and conditions? Should we bring in programs that have been effective in other countries and

present them in a prepackaged ready-made form? Or, should we spend time to learn the local needs and develop local talent that can create homemade programs that fit the needs more specifically?

**3. Historical and cultural awareness and language preparation:** Should we plan for a long-term relationship or just do all we can before we get kicked out? Many organizations responding to the cry for short-term opportunities had very little, if any, language requirements. Expatriates, therefore, ended up interacting with English speaking populations at universities whose agendas often are to explore opportunities in other countries. In con-

trast, other organizations committed time (usually two to four years) for language and cultural studies and for building relationships with respected core people within the local community.

Different views on these issues often bias the reporting on China by the Western Christian community, and they confront every foreigner who ministers in China and who reads about China. As a child, I grew up living mostly in Taiwan, and, as an adult, I had served as a traditional missionary in two other Asian countries for over eleven years. So, when we came into China and faced these issues, we felt a strong pull toward engaging the local community and exploring first the local issues.

In our second year in China, we finally began to meet with a local senior pastor who had spent twenty years in prison and was released in 1978. He was cur-

# ACTING RESPONSIBLY IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY



Melvin Steach

**H**ow should a Christian in a foreign country engage the community including the government? What right do we have as Christian foreigners in a country to disobey government laws and regulations when we have not first taken the time to engage seriously with the local situation and done all that we can within the law?

Below are some principles that I believe are essential to follow in order to act responsibly in any foreign country as well as our own country:

## 1. Live by faith (Ephesians 2:8)

- a. Base our decisions on love not fear.
- b. Think long term with respect to what we see God doing in China. He is building His church, and we have the honor to be a part of His work in that place.

## 2. Work with humility (Philippians 2:3)

- a. Learn to *listen* to and understand not just the local Christians but the officials and community leaders.
- b. Remember that we have as much to *learn* from the Chinese as to teach them.
- c. Be careful that we *respect and honor* their leadership both in the church and the government.

## 3. Witness by good works (Ephesians 2:10)

- a. We incarnate Christ in our lives by engaging whatever community we live in.
- b. We need to be public, not secretive, if our works are our witness.

—Finn Torjesen

rently leading the main downtown church, and we asked him how he dealt with the relationship between the government and the church. Knowing that we were asking him advice on how we foreigners should interact with the government, he responded as follows: “If there are fifteen government regulations out there, you foreigners should follow all of them, since you are guests in this country. However, we Chinese might choose twelve of them that we follow carefully, but three of them we’ll challenge and try to get our government to reconsider. But if you foreigners challenge the government, you force us to choose between loyalty to our government or to a foreign group. Because of the history of foreign Christians in China, it is better if you stay here long term, building relationships, supporting and encouraging us as friends, as we the Chinese lead the way for change in China.” This then became the guiding principle for Evergreen in China.

During the eleven years we have worked in China, God has blessed us with good relationships with local churches and governments. Evergreen has grown a little and now even gets a hearing among those interested in China, which surprises us. But each time I come back to the States, I struggle with the popularity of persecution stories from China that circulate here. Some of the stories represent serious and tragic situations in China, but, as a whole, they do not represent the tenor and spirit of the church in China.

A local Chinese pastor explained it this way: “We are like the people of Israel being led out of Egypt by Moses. Ever since the church reopened in China in the late 1970s, we have been seeing the miracles of God as He leads the church in China. Now we are preparing to enter the Promised Land, and the twelve spies have been sent out. Ten of them have come back with reports of great walled cities and giants.” My

pastor friend said that most of the foreign visitors to China just want to hear the report of the “ten spies”—about all the persecution and troubles—and they forget what Joshua and Caleb said regarding the power of God. This pastor’s concern is that, like the children of Israel, the church in China will have to wait another forty years if God finds that the focus is on fear and not on faith.

When I read Luke 2:52 about how Jesus “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man,” I’m impressed. Luke, through the Holy Spirit, reported the importance of Jesus’ relationship with his community and the respect he had there. We as foreign Christian expatriates in China should follow Jesus’ example and learn to live and work responsibly with a holistic approach to our witness.

**Finn Torjesen** is the executive director of the Evergreen Shanxi Family Friendship Services. 卞

# Catholic Social Thought: A Contribution to Civil Society in Contemporary China

Janet Carroll, M.M.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical, entitled in Latin *Rerum Novarum*—generally translated “Making All Things New.” Encyclicals are papal letters containing official Catholic Church teaching about a topic of concern. They are sent to Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church all over the world and are intended for a wide general audience. Thereafter, eleven other encyclicals addressing universal social issues followed from successive Popes. In 1991, Pope John Paul II issued a document entitled *Centesimus Annus*, “On the One Hundredth Anniversary.” This body of teachings includes five of the major documents of Vatican Council II and the post-council period. Taken together, the twelve documents constitute what is commonly known as Catholic Social Thought (CST) and contain analysis and commentary on the major social issues of the day affecting the masses of people in every land.

Catholic Social Thought forms a compendium of ethical and moral teachings that have been favorably received not only by Roman Catholics, but by Christian believers of every tradition, and by many people of other orientations. CST provides the principles and rationale for engaging with the critical social issues and problems that arise from time to time in every society. It offers inspiration, motivation and practical guidelines for all those who accept that the gospel teachings of Jesus Christ call for the social betterment and advancement of the entire human community. In every sphere of human endeavor, CST challenges us to manifest charity, mercy and compassion for our neighbors near and far with the ultimate goal of realizing the global common good with equitable justice and peace for all peoples.

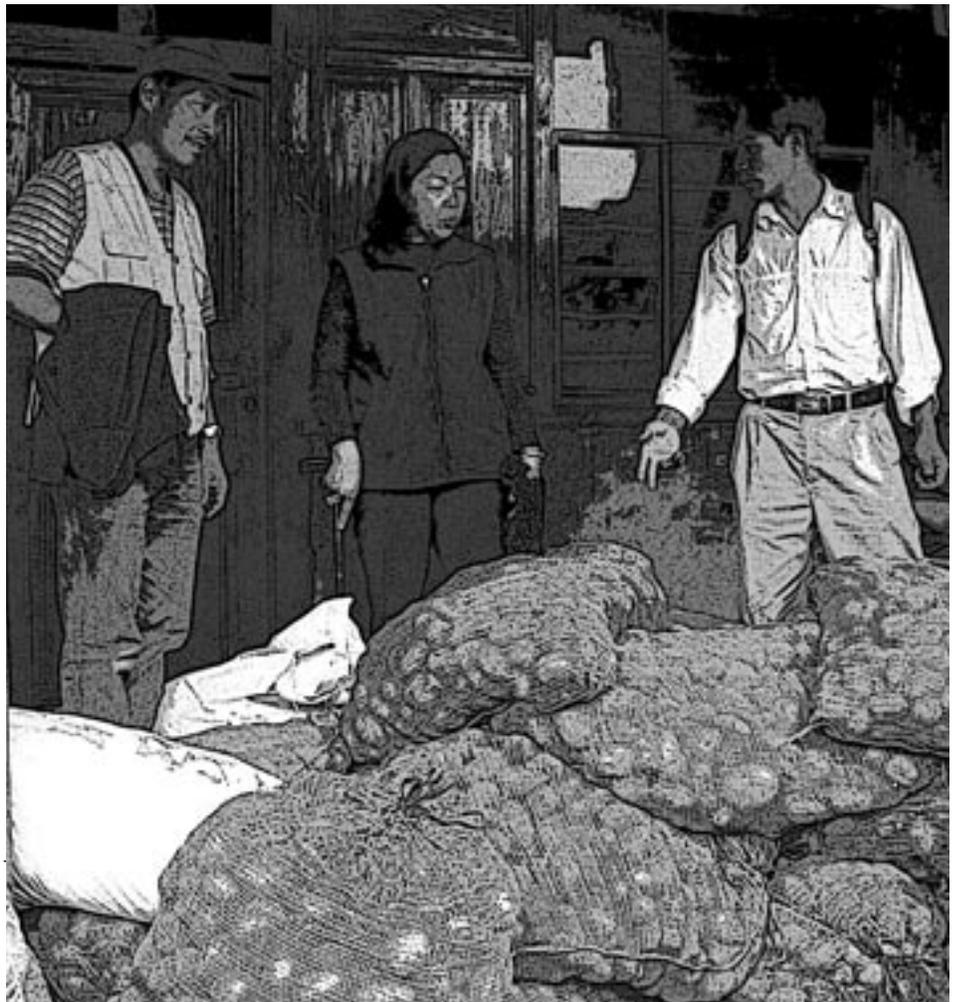
## The Gospel and Social Service in China Today

It is a common lament in North America that Catholic Social Thought is a “well kept secret.” It will not be surpris-

ing, therefore, to learn that knowledge of and appreciation for the Church’s teaching on human development and social justice are not widespread, even in the Catholic Church in China. Yet, the Christian churches in China have always had

Republic of China in 1949.

Following the initiation of the “Reform and Opening” period in the late 1970s, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, religious belief and activities were once again allowed to function in Chinese society. While the priority for the Christian churches was recovery and restoration of their sanctuaries for worship and prayer, followed by the education and training of new generations of Church leaders, the commitment to reactivate Christian social service ministry was evidenced early by the establishment in 1985 of the Amity Foundation. Ami-



Dedication and commitment on the part of Christians in China to respond in charity, mercy and compassion to the needs of their neighbors springs, as it does for Christians everywhere, from their basic understanding and acceptance of Christian doctrine and biblical teachings.

a strong commitment to providing social welfare services and ministering to the most basic needs of people. Major social, medical and educational institutions were the hallmark of the modern missionary era dating from the early 19th century until the advent of the Peoples

ty is a semi-autonomous, voluntary, non-profit organization created on the initiative of Chinese Protestants to promote education, social and health services, and rural development in China’s poorest coastal regions and western ethnic minority areas. While no equivalent nation-

al organization yet exists under Chinese Catholic Church auspices, many hundreds of local parishes have begun to provide care and services for those in need in their areas.

In the past five or more years, very professional Catholic social service centers have been officially established under diocesan auspices in several major cities. These centers offer an array of services and administer social development projects in both urban and rural districts. These services and projects include education and preventive programs to empower the people to improve their own health and well being, the provision of infrastructure-type projects and mechanisms to raise living standards and foster the overall social and human well-being of communities and people, and necessary responses to natural disasters such as flooding and earthquakes. It is important to note that these programs are provided at minimal, if any, cost and are extended to all those in need, regardless of religious affiliation. Such dedication and commitment on the part of Christians in China to respond in charity, mercy and compassion to the needs of their neighbors springs, as it does for Christians everywhere, from their basic understanding and acceptance of Christian doctrine and biblical teachings.

### The Church in the Public Square

What remains a major challenge in China, as in many other nations, is for people of faith to take on a wider role in their societies, a role that goes beyond simply providing remedial welfare services and programs developed on an ad hoc basis in reaction to manifest need. A more pro-active and foundational approach is required to bring about the structural changes that will prevent constantly having to deal with the same recurrent social evils and problems generation after generation. A more holistic approach that addresses root causes of social problems, care for all of God's creation in efforts to protect the environment and preserve the ecological infrastructure of our material world, and the development of a more equitable and just distribution system for sharing of material goods and resources are but some of the critical issues calling for dynamic and authentic Christian witness. This type of

Christian social service requires a more profound grasp of the fullest implications of the Ten Commandments, of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and of the beauty and depth of the gospel teachings about love of neighbor.

Catholic Social Thought provides one approach to sustain and guide this more far-reaching approach to social and communal justice, to the pursuit of the global common good and to the realization of true peace for all peoples. It is encouraging and very promising for the future of the Church's engagement in the public sector that the major documents spelling out these traditional teachings are part of the theological curriculum taught every year in China's fourteen major Catholic seminaries. This means that many of the future pastoral leaders in the local Chinese churches will be imbued with these principles and teachings. They will be equipped to employ a solid philosophical rationale in the choice of activities and strategies to foster a larger role for religion in the public square. By extension, this knowledge and understanding can be used in their preaching and teaching for local Christian communities. Chinese Christians in their everyday lives and social interaction will thereby become key agents of social changes that can benefit the whole society.

### Affirming the Role of Religion in Chinese Society

As in every society, significant social transformation and basic socioeconomic restructuring produce many challenges and difficulties. China's former social system, which sought to provide nearly universal social security and supplied basic social needs for all the people, no longer functions effectively. The private sector, including religious organizations and individuals, are increasingly challenged to step into the breach. What is most needed in China today is a new code of moral and ethical principles to undergird this social transformation. The need for religion to play a larger role and be welcomed in the public square is widely acknowledged in many circles. China's scholarly and professional elites have begun to affirm the inclusion of religion in the common task of modernization. A recent essay reviewing the prospects, challenges and hindrances faced by those de-

voted to religious studies and research in Chinese academia observes that there has been a progression in appreciation for the role of Christianity, not only for its scientific and cultural achievements in the earlier missionary eras, but also for its later efforts in education, medicine, and agriculture.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, the largely negative interpretation of religion of dogmatic Marxism is being set aside in favor of a more open attitude towards the view of "religion as culture." The vacillating dynamics in the relationship between Christianity and Chinese society is currently in a more positive phase in which it is becoming quite acceptable to acknowledge the commitment and contribution of Christianity to China's development. Many are discovering in Christianity the moral teachings and altruistic principles to support the formation of a new "spiritual civilization." Many are persuaded that this is a necessary requisite to rationalize and guide China's developing role as a responsible world power in the global community.

Christian believers, however, must not be compromised by this utilitarian view of religion. Pragmatism should not be permitted to become a substitute for a principled approach to social and civic well being. The solid biblical and theological principles of Christian social doctrine must remain an essential component of the social discourse between Church and State in China. In this sense, Catholic Social Thought, especially the more recent and very cogent teachings of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, can provide an invaluable contribution to the emergence of a socially just and humane civil society in China in the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. Dr. Jean Paul Weist, "Religious Studies and Research in Chinese Academia: Prospects, Challenges and Hindrances," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 29 No. 1, January 2005.

2. See also, Richard Madsen, *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

**Dr. Janet Carroll, M.M.**, currently serves as the outreach program associate with the U.S. Catholic China Bureau and formerly served as the Bureau's executive director with overall responsibility for a program of education and outreach relating the Catholic Churches in North America and China. ☩

Until the time of the “Open Door” policy, the Chinese people lived according to the motto, “Do what the people upstairs let you do.”

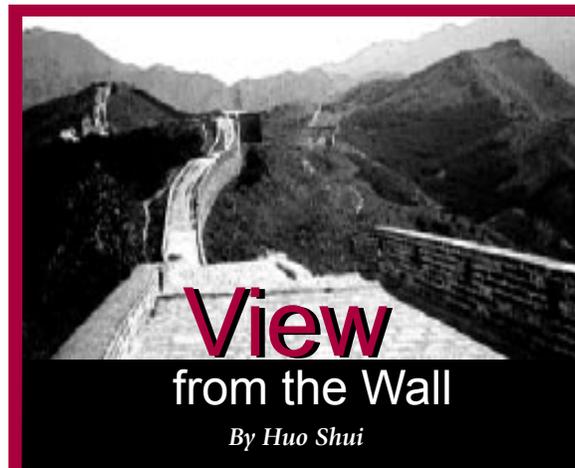
For the ordinary Chinese, how to live and work was all decided by the government. Individuals had no power of self-determination; they were mere instruments to carry out the political objectives of the party and the government. To the average Chinese, their will, opinions and rights did not even come into consideration in their day-to-day living. Common sense and experience told them that it would be wiser to build relationships with those “upstairs” than to fight for one’s rights.

As the market economy gradually took hold in China, moderation and the boundaries of acceptable behavior began to be influenced by the rule of law, particularly with relationships in the economic domain. Law became an important part of the daily life of the Chinese. Free competition, within the boundaries of the law, not only spurred the development of the economy, but it also stirred the consciousness of the rights of the consumers and spurred the protection of these rights. This became an important part of the daily life of the Chinese. Of course, this consciousness was driven by profits and losses which was obvious for everyone to see. The “protection of the rights of consumers” movement was felt deeply by everyone since each individual, in the final analysis, is a consumer. So for the Chinese, the inroad to the protection of human rights was the protection of the rights of consumers.

However, in other areas such as speech, press, religion and establishing social organizations, the situation remained not much different from that of twenty years prior—rights were nonexistent. From a legal standpoint, individuals had little freedom in these areas. When contradictions arose that were outside the boundaries of the economy, rule of law was nonexistent, and decisions were basically carried out by officials according to rules laid down by the party or the government. Everybody had to follow party leadership.

Occasionally some officials would, for whatever reason, do something beneficial for the citizens at large. However, most of the time, individuals seldom enjoyed the rights promised by the constitution in the domains unrelated to the economy.

After many failed attempts to obtain human rights, people began to wish for some “heavenly boss” figure who would truly work for the people with integrity and fairness. Many Chinese movies and dramas depicted such figureheads and expressed the people’s wishful thinking.



## The Long Journey: The Road to the Protection of Human Rights of the Chinese People

Since they felt that they could never obtain human rights, the people were willing to put their hope in a person and basically yield their individual rights to the good consciences of some officials. The quality of their lives would then depend on certain officials rather than on law and the system in place.

Today, the Chinese people’s understanding of human rights is changing in a significant way. They have begun to realize that human rights and their protection have to be demanded by the citizens themselves. Since enjoying the protection of their consumer rights, the people have begun to appreciate the notion that protection can only come from the rule of law and not from any man. This must be the bedrock of any modern society.

Lately, there have been some successful efforts in demanding individual rights. During the SARS rampage in 2003, Dr. Jiang, of Beijing, stood up and declared that the people had a right to know the true situation. This had the effect of changing the government’s handling of the crisis and broadened the scope of media coverage saving lives in the process. Soon after, some people in the legal profession spoke up for the rights of human freedom and freedom of movement after Mr. Sun, a college graduate working in Guangzhou, was wrongfully detained and placed in a custody and repatriation center. He was beaten to death there while his trial was pending. After Sun’s death, Internet users engaged in a very heated discussion protesting the arbitrary custody and repatriation process where public security officials would detain migrants, and then ship them back to their home areas. As a result of the large public outcry over this death and the courageous actions of these law professionals, the State Council convened a cabinet meeting and revoked the custody and repatriation regulations.

In June 2003, some people from private, nongovernmental circles attended a meeting in Qingdao to discuss possible amendments to the Constitution, especially with regard to noneconomic issues. Speeches suggesting over twenty amendments covered freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of religion along with other vague statements related to the basic rights of individuals. The protection of private property ownership topped the list of recommended amendments. Early in 2004, at the National Peoples Congress, an agreement was made to incorporate into the Constitution two of the items that were discussed at the Qingdao meeting, namely the protection of ownership of private property and a general pledge to guarantee human rights. The Qingdao meeting was the first successful public attempt to seek comprehensive political-legal reforms that would protect individual rights.

Within the religious domain, religious adherents have begun to seek protection of their rights through the legal process,

addressing issues such as recovery of property, wider scope of religious activities, greater access to the media, permission to construct new religious facilities and more lenient conditions for registration. These efforts are beginning to draw the attention of lawyers and the legislature, as well as the religious affairs bureau. The right to believe and to practice one's belief has been shifted from a political issue to a human rights issue.

Any change in China would require a

Melvin Sletch



Any change in China would require a lengthy process given that China is a large country of 1.3 billion people.

lengthy process given that China is a large country of 1.3 billion people. However, as long as human rights are considered to be gifts from the government, any laws that are enacted will reflect the will of the ruling party and not necessarily that of the people. Legislation coming from the bottom up by the people would make a significant change in this current model of top-down power concentration. This means that every effort from individuals to secure human rights would be valuable and meaningful, and such effort should be supported and encouraged. Activities to secure human rights in various domains should continue to provide more openness and more governing by law. China has hope as long as efforts from the people continue to come forth.

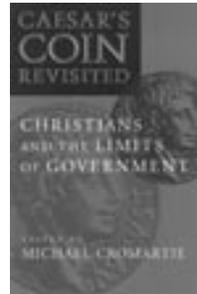
**Huo Shui** is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Nelson Cao. 李

## Resource Corner

### Caesar's Coin Revisited: Christians and the Limits of Government

*Michael Cromartie, editor. Eerdmans Publishing Co., April 1996, 197 pages. ISBN: 0-8028-4202-x. Cost: \$16.00, plus S/H.*

Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." But what does this mean in China or other places drastically different from first-century Palestine?



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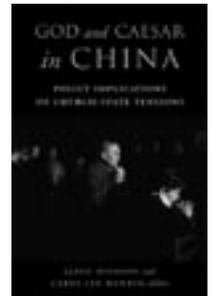
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### God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions

*Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin, editors. Brookings Institution Press, 2004, 200 pages. Cost: \$49.95 clothbound, ISBN: 0-8157-4936-8; \$19.95 paperback, ISBN: 0-8157-4937-6.*

Religion's dramatic revival in post-Mao China has generated tensions between the ruling Communist Party state and China's increasingly diverse population of religious adherents. The state's response has been a mix of accommodation and repression with the aim of preserving monopoly control over religious organization.



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## Literature Review

# Opposing the Unjust

A review by Scott Becker

"A Letter from Birmingham Jail," by Martin Luther King Jr., *The Christian Century*, June 12, 1963, p. 767. (Graphic used by permission from *The Christian Century*.)

**Note from the Editor:** "Civil disobedience" is a troubling issue that arises in disturbing times when one must decide whether to obey the law of the governing authority or to disobey the law for reasons based on a higher moral standard. People have considered the option of civil disobedience in societies across the world and throughout time, prompting responses such as the Apostle Peter's who proclaimed that "We ought to obey God rather than men," to more modern expressions in American society such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s explanation of "Why We Can't Wait."

While sitting in a jail in Birmingham, Alabama, as a consequence of disobeying a police order, Dr. King wrote the famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," explaining his position on nonviolent civil disobedience. Although a generation has passed

city found itself locked in a standoff between white business leaders and a mostly black crowd. Soon the police were called out to break up the crowd and send the protesters home. When King's followers refused to disperse, they were put down with clubs and fire hoses and

Although many Christian theologians have found in Jesus' words an ethic of personal purity with little or no public relevance, **King understood the social force of Jesus' teachings.**

since it was first read, the philosophy of peaceful civil disobedience presented in King's letter continues to offer resources to men and women working toward greater justice within their own societies, and it is worth special attention by Christians seeking to determine what is a biblical approach to state-society relations.

In early 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. led what began as a peaceful march through the streets of Birmingham, Alabama, protesting the city's hiring practices and the segregation of blacks and whites in the local department stores. The march grew as young people left their classes to participate, until eventually, the

many, including King, were arrested.

On hearing of King's imprisonment, eight local ministers composed a letter urging the black leader to curb his recent activities. These ministers were among the white moderates of the South, proponents of racial equality and desegregation but concerned that aggressive or illegal activities might disturb the social order and snuff out what little good will there was between blacks and whites. King's activities, they warned, were "unwise and untimely," and could create a racist backlash. In response to these ministers, King wrote the famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which he explained his doc-

trine of nonviolent civil disobedience. Dr. King then published the letter in the June 12, 1963 edition of *The Christian Century*, eliciting an enthusiastic response among the periodical's readers.

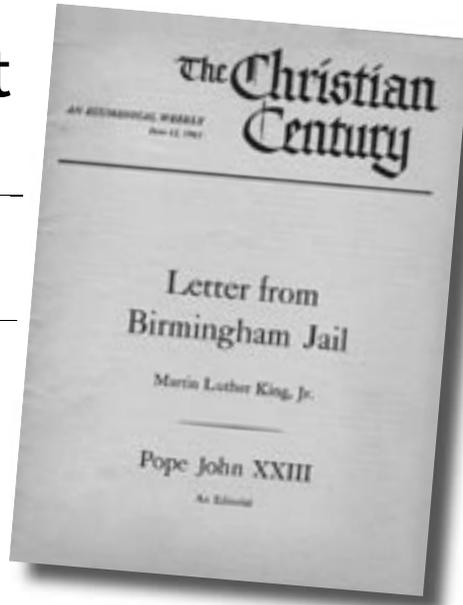
The content of King's letter might best be understood if one first considers the

two main sources of King's philosophy. The first was Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* is a compound of two Hindu words meaning "truth" and "firmness." It refers to the power of truth to vindicate itself without recourse to violence. For Gandhi, the practice of *Satyagraha* included public denunciation of an unjust law, open disobedience to that law and willingness to suffer the consequences for that act of disobedience. It was Gandhi's belief that unjust laws derived their force

from the fear of those subject to them. When the oppressed understood that the truth was on their side, and that this truth was stronger than violence, the oppressors lost their power.

The second source of King's philosophy was Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that it was possible to turn the tables on powerful enemies by repaying evil and abuse with love and truthfulness. Jesus taught first-century Jews, who had been intimidated by occupying Roman soldiers, neither to run and hide nor to take up armed resistance but to stand firmly when struck in the face and to give beyond what was asked. "Love your enemies," he said; "Bless those who persecute you and pray for those who abuse you." Although many Christian theologians have found in Jesus' words an ethic of personal purity with little or no public relevance, King understood the social force of Jesus' teachings. He believed that love had the power to transform societal evil in a way that violence could not.

Through his study of both the Sermon on the Mount and Gandhi's doctrine of *Satyagraha*, King had arrived at the conviction that only through direct nonvio-



lent action could unjust structures be effectively challenged and lasting justice called into being. For King, the pattern put forward by Jesus and Gandhi constituted a "third way" between the softheaded passivity that allowed injustice to go unchallenged and the hardhearted violence that only served to perpetuate racial hatreds. "Through nonviolent resistance," he believed, "we shall be able to oppose the unjust system and at the same time love the perpetrators of the system."<sup>1</sup>

In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King points out that love requires truthfulness, and that to be truthful means to take action against injustice. He repudiates the notion that silent submission will soften the hearts of racists over the course of time. He had seen the power of unjust structures to rationalize and reinforce themselves over time, as well as the corrosive effect of humble waiting on the self-respect of black community members. If the civil disobedience of King and his followers was "unwise and untimely," as the pastors in Birmingham had said, it was not because they were acting too soon. If anything, King believed, they had allowed their condition to go unchallenged for too long. In his letter, he argued that his generation would have to repent "for the appalling silence of the good people." Progress, he warned, was not inevitable. It was the result of "the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

Thus, King found himself, as he wrote in his letter, "in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community." On the one hand were those who had grown too complacent with the status quo, either from having accepted their inferior place in society or from having achieved enough success within the system to want to avoid disruption. On the other were those in whom resentment had fermented into bitter hatred which was about to explode into violence. Between these two he offered a third way, "the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest." And none too soon. "If this philosophy had not emerged," King wrote to the pastors, "by now many streets of the south would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood."

The effectiveness of nonviolent resistance, according to King's letter, lay largely in its power to confront oppressors with the injustice of their actions. "Nonviolent direct action," he wrote, "seeks to foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored."

King was not naïve as to the risks and difficulties involved in nonviolent civil disobedience. He understood that it was not a miracle cure promising quick solutions to society's ills. Disobedience incurs penalties, and those in power, once challenged, are often quick to retaliate. It is in the face of such retaliation that the resister learns what it is to love one's enemies. "One who breaks an unjust law," King wrote, "must do so *openly, lovingly*, and with a willingness to accept the penalty." This kind of resolve in the face of punishment testifies to the authenticity of the resister's actions and thus contributes to the

success of the cause. By willingly accepting unjust punishment, King argued, the resister arouses "the conscience of the community" and calls it to its highest virtues.

Racial injustice has not been eradicated in the United States. Nevertheless, the situation has drastically improved since the 1950s, and the American conscience has been so awakened that overt racism is no longer tolerated in public and covert racial inequalities continue to come under closer scrutiny. After half a century, the practices of nonviolent civil disobedience spelled out in King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" continue to bear fruit.

#### Endnote

1. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 19.

**Scott Becker** is a doctoral student and adjunct faculty member in the school of theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. An ordained Baptist minister, he has served in various churches as youth pastor and pastor of Christian education. ☞

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Continued from page 3

protects human rights" (Article 33, Chapter Two), which may prove to be another step toward China's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The human rights amendment certainly is indirect evidence of the popular expectation that China's new generation of leaders should extend greater human rights protections. However, it will take some time for current laws to be reviewed and new laws written; bureaucrats, judges, police and security personnel retrained; and implementing regulations and judicial interpretations rendered in order to extend these very general concepts from the Constitution to the streets.

In recent years, the growing interest in economic and social rights has been tolerated, even encouraged, by the Party as a tool of governance in order to show the people that it is governing well and deserves to stay in power. There has been a sort of implicit understanding that people could pursue their economic and social interests, but with very limited civil rights, and political rights such as elections exercised only at the grassroots, nongovernmental level of society. But these new constitutional amendments and talk of a future "constitutional politics" portend an altered social contract reflected in the new "people first" political program. Developed since 2003, the strategy reflects a new recognition that state legitimacy rests not only on economic growth but also on social justice. The stated goal is to instill balance in China's development. Whereas rapid economic growth has been the sole criteria for the performance (and *promotion*) of local or central officials, other factors now will also weigh in, such as the distribution of the benefits of economic growth, environmental concerns and social development.

A major factor in the greater balance of power between state and society is the growing access to information after decades of state monopoly. The quest for economic development in China began the process of rights protection, and the fruits of economic development have fueled the process—especially the spread of new communication technologies such as radio (currently 1,000 stations), cable television (currently 100 million subscribers), and satellite television (with dishes popping up in the remotest of villages).



Internet access for more than 87 million Chinese is especially powerful in fueling the new public conversation about rights.

Internet access for more than 87 million Chinese is especially powerful in fueling the new public conversation about rights. Past protest movements in China consisted of sporadic local demonstrations led mainly by college students or by workers and were relatively easy for the government to control. But now, a broad spectrum of people can build virtual "alternative communities" around topics of interest and communicate over long periods of time, sharing experiences and learning from each other and from the outside world. Millions of Chinese are learning about the constitutional provisions and laws in their own country, as well as international thinking on human rights and the international norms for protecting them. The 310 million users of mobile phones and pagers now have instant communication, and these devices serve a key role in organizing mass protest gatherings springing up all over China—protests demanding the payment of wages, fairness in taxation or protection from arbitrariness.

### The Challenge—to Find Win-Win Solutions

The demand for social justice and fairness in China is growing, with a shorter fuse for anger and violence. Complaints about the corruption of government offi-

cial and officials' abuse of power are rampant. The disparity in income levels between urban dwellers and people in rural areas is increasing the demands of rural dwellers to have the right to relocate to the cities and live and work there with full benefits of city dwellers. Demand for equality before the law, instead of the typical blatant unfair treatment between the rich and the poor, is a highly emotional issue as shown by two recent incidents. In one case, the driver of a BMW reacted to a spat with a vendor cycling a load of green onions by crashing her car into the crowd, killing the cyclist's wife and injuring a dozen other people. Rumors spread that the BMW owner was the daughter-in-law of a provincial VIP. When she received a very lenient court sentence, locals rioted and a furor broke out nation-wide with bitter complaints that the murderer was getting off easy because the victim was poor and the perpetrator rich and powerful. In a very similar case, a scuffle between shoppers and a porter on a busy street escalated into an outraged protest by 50,000 people, a shutdown of the city center and the burning of a government building, all because the shopper and wife beat the porter severely, claiming they were important officials who could easily pay \$2500 to have him killed. Even larger riots have taken place

among migrants and farmers.

The government appears to realize that the use of martial law and paramilitary troops to quell such incidents is only a temporary palliative. But whether it can come up with the kind of “win-win” solutions that WTO negotiations introduced into common parlance, solutions that accommodate all or most interests involved rather than continuing to play the zero sum game where the state suppresses society, is a major challenge to China’s continuing peaceful progress.

Progress in actually seeing citizen rights play out in practice is slow, but visible nonetheless. Traditional ways of petitioning for redress, such as sending letters to the official “complaints offices” or traveling to the capital to present petitions to higher authorities, have never been effective. Currently only 0.2 percent of petitioners succeed in getting their complaints addressed. But these modern approaches are achieving results. When a college graduate was wrongfully detained and placed in a custody and repatriation center where he was beaten to death, a very heated discussion spread through the Internet protesting the arbitrary custody and repatriation process wherein public security officials would detain migrants and then ship them back to their home areas. As a result of the large public outcry over this death, the State Council convened a cabinet meeting and rescinded the custody and repatriation regulations. Similarly, the outcry over the death sentences given to Pastor Gong Shengliang and two other leaders of the South China Church resulted in a retrial and a life sentence for Pastor Gong and lesser sentences for the others. This reflects progress, of sorts. Meanwhile, debate has heated up over the improvements needed in the criminal procedure laws.

Religious believers in China have shared in the general growing awareness of rights, and as time goes on, more and more believers are demanding greater civil protections for religious belief and practice. They want to learn to defend themselves, not just “run away.” Advocacy organizations overseas are receiving more frequent requests for international intervention and timely information, and with an unprecedented level of detail of information—even including the phone number of local police offices.

The State Council regulations for religious activities due to go into effect in March 2005, replacing 1994 regulations on religious venues, are an example of the government’s adaptation to the reality of large-scale religious practice in China. The new regulations are longer and more comprehensive than the 1994 regulations, yet they are a “snapshot” of current practice, since there is little in the new regulations that cannot be found in existing provincial regulations and implementing guidelines. Key terms such as “religious belief,” “normal religious activ-

new state-society paradigm that admits that problems are not always the fault of citizens but may be due to government abuses that require restraints and due punishment. As with the other regulations affecting the social sector that have been recently enacted or are currently being revised, the drafters and implementers are well aware that they will be engaged in ongoing negotiations and hard bargaining with the various interests groups involved.

As religious believers take a more active role in engaging with society and government and negotiating mutual



Religious believers in China have shared in the general growing awareness of rights, and as time goes on, more and more believers are demanding greater civil protections for religious belief and practice.

ities,” and the prohibition of “foreign domination” are still not defined, and there remains much room for arbitrariness as bureaucrats define and apply the regulations. The regulations retain the control system—the special religious affairs agencies and monopoly organizations assigned to officially represent each religion. Yet, the enactment of these regulations is evidence that the state is under internal and external pressure to regularize or normalize its relations with religious believers. There is a new requirement for the government to solicit the views of religious adherents, reflecting the

rights and obligations, the burden will be on them to do so constructively. There is a major opportunity for believers to articulate and model “responsible engagement,” to take the lead in creating nonviolent approaches to conflicts of interest and protection of rights. Their overseas supporters need to step up to this challenge as well.

*Carol Lee Hamrin, Ph.D., is a China affairs specialist advising nonprofit organizations that support social services in China. She served at the Department of State for 25 years and was their senior China research specialist.* 译

# Twenty-five and Counting

Seven years ago, retired Wheaton College professor Dr. Melvin Lorentzen helped bring together a small but distinguished group of church, business, academic, government and media leaders for a wide-ranging discussion on China's future. Out of that gathering emerged the vision for this journal as a means of equipping those who serve China to better understand the trends shaping that country.

Julia Grosser, then serving in the College's Institute for Chinese Studies, took on the challenge of managing the new publication and has served faithfully in that role ever since. Dona Diehl of the Evangelical Missions and Information Service (EMIS) designed the first issue and continues to lend her artistic touch to each one.

During the past six years we have witnessed China's entry into the World Trade Organization and her successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games. These events stand out as milestones in China's pursuit of international prominence at the dawn of a new century.

Trends such as the emergence of China's urban middle class, the mass migration of millions of peasants to

the cities, the coming of age of the "little emperor" generation, and the explosion in internet usage point the way to what China is becoming. This China of the twenty-first century contrasts sharply with the millennia-old agrarian society that still exerts a powerful cultural influence, causing one observer to describe present-day Chinese society as "a pre-modern people living in a modern world influenced by postmodern ideas."



Brent Fulton

Within the family of faith we have witnessed theological struggles in the classrooms of China's official seminaries, the development of a new kind of church among urban professionals, and a new willingness on the part of Chinese Christians to engage their society at all levels. As pointed out in this current issue, a growing rights consciousness within Chinese society raises expectations that the church will one day be allowed to function legally outside the government-imposed box into which it is now expected to fit—a box that is far too small and constrictive to even begin to contain the very diverse Body of Christ in China.

As we celebrate this 25th issue of *ChinaSource* we remember Mel (who passed away January 15, 2005) for sparking the vision that became this publication. And

thanks to Julia, Dona and our many contributors whose ideas have graced its pages.

## An Invitation to our Readers

This issue features Cindy K. Lail, J.D., LL.M, as Guest Editor. A lawyer, Cindy currently serves as executive assistant to Dr. Carol Lee Hamrin, who has been a frequent contributor to *ChinaSource* since its inception.

As we plan future issues of *ChinaSource*, we welcome the contributions of you, our readers. Upcoming themes include community development in China, the relationship between the international Christian community and the Chinese church, and Christian involvement in ministering to those with physical needs. If you would like to contribute an article (or photos) related to one of these themes—or if you would like to pick a theme and serve as guest editor for that issue—please send an email to Julia Grosser, Managing Editor, c/o [info@chsourc.org](mailto:info@chsourc.org).

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

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