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Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

China SOURCE

Welcome to **the City**

Sam Williams with Brent Fulton

The largest migration in human history is taking place right now. Unlike previous migrations, it is not across national borders or continental divides. It is not defined by points on the compass. It is a rural to urban migration. The tipping point is projected for 2007, when for the first time in history more people on the planet will live in cities than live in the countryside.¹

Like most events, there is both good news and bad news in this global happening. For cities, the bad news is that the large influx of people is overburdening the infrastructures, and they are unable to care for the needs of the inhabitants of the city. City budgets are stretched and services, once considered common, are being cut. The good news is that because of the overtaxed infrastructures, there is an unprecedented openness on the part of cities to cooperate or partner with NGOs, including faith-based organizations.

The good news for the church is that since people are most open to faith during times of transition in their lives, this could become a time of great spiritual revival. The bad news is that church and mission organization strategies and successes have typically been more effective in rural rather than urban areas. And so, faced with an open door of opportunity, we have few strategies for entering.

What is true globally is true also in China, only in larger numbers. Already there are more than 180 cities in China of one million or more. That number is



Photo by Melvin Sletch

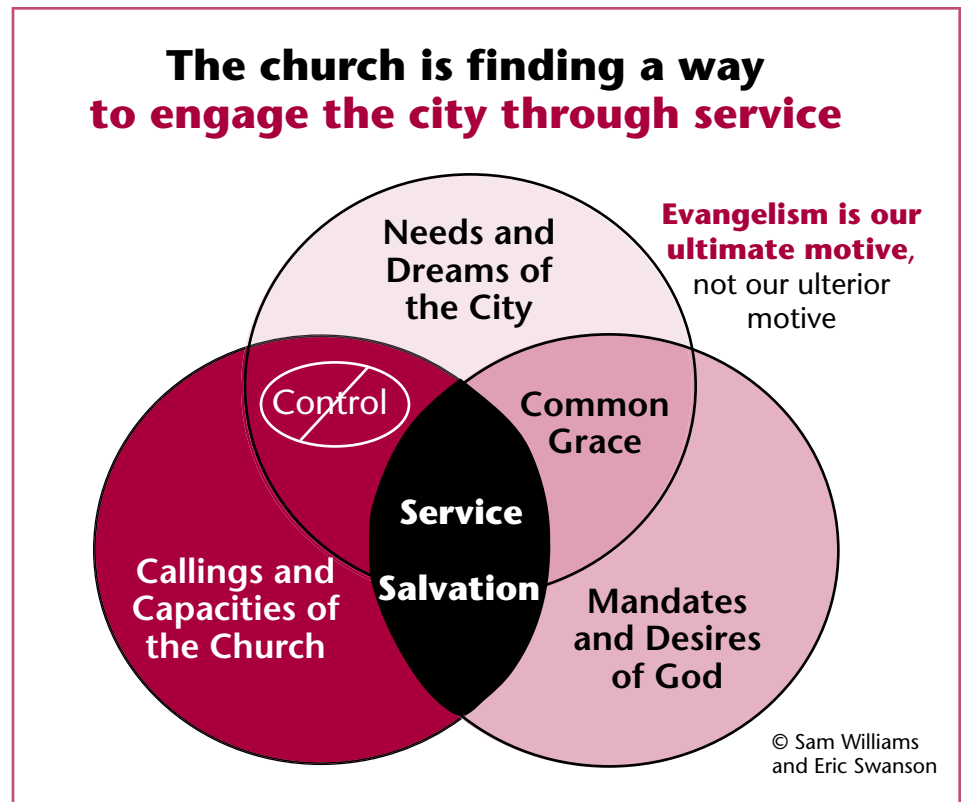
increasing by three to five each year. It takes nothing away from the glorious story of the house church movement to note that it is largely a rural phenomenon. So what of the cities?

Three Elements of an Urban Strategy

There are three elements to consider when developing an urban strategy. First is the needs and dreams of the city. Second is the mandate and desires of God. Third is the callings and capacities of the church. (See diagram this page.) To find ways to engage the city the church needs to find the needs and dreams of the city and to pursue the mandate and desires of God coupled with the callings and capacities of the church.

Common grace is found where the needs and dreams of the city intersect with the mandate and desires of God. Included here are God's creation and the abilities He has given to humankind for social and economic development. The overlap between the mandate and desires of God and the callings and capacities of the church is *salvation*, or the ministry of bringing people into a right relationship with God. Between the needs and dreams of the city and the callings and capacities of the church there is a clear separation of responsibilities and *absence of control*. Some duties, such as civil government or law enforcement, are clearly the responsibility of the city, not the church. Likewise, city authorities have no business getting involved in the church's spiritual life.

However, where the needs and dreams of the city and the callings and capacities of the church intersect with the mandate and desires God, here is the area where the church can engage the city through *service*. Finding the needs and dreams of the city and addressing those which are



within the callings and capabilities of the church and in line with God's mandate and desires begs the "why" question. Thus emerges the opportunity to share the motivation for the church's involvement, which is Christ.

This is best done directly than through organizations operating separately from the church. The church can work with other organizations that are *morally positive* and *spiritually neutral*, thus spreading out the Christians within the secular community. The result is that more people will come to know Christ through natural relationships as believers serve the city than through the church's traditional evangelistic efforts. Evangelism—seeing people come to Christ—is our ultimate motive; it is not an ulterior motive.

These are the indispensable elements of an urban strategy. The strategy looks different in every city. One cannot dismiss the necessity or practicality of a strategy because of the difficulty of the setting. The Holy Spirit directs the development of a strategy in settings that are "open" or "closed" to the church. The first three centuries of the church are a testimony to that. In all settings an additional factor is essential.

Too Big To Go It Alone

Jesus prayed in John 17:23 that his followers would experience total unity. The inclusion of the word "total" implies that there can be partial unity. In fact there are different expressions of unity in the New Testament.

Brent Fulton, Editor Julia Grosser, Managing Editor Dona Diehl, Layout and Design

ChinaSource
Partnering Resources with Vision

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Ephesians 4:3-5a is an expression of the unity of *family*. When each of us comes to Christ we become children of God, which makes us all part of the same family. It is not of our doing. We are placed there. We are all members of the same family whether we acknowledge, or even like, all of our brothers and sisters.

This is the reason for the second expression of unity, the unity of *fellowship*. Romans 15:5-7 is an encouragement to live in fellowship with one another. It is not automatic. We are to ask God for the ability to praise Him with one heart and voice. The prayer movement of the past ten years is an unprecedented expression of this form of unity. God is bringing his church together across denominational and doctrinal divides.

Having experienced this fellowship in the Spirit, pastors and leaders intuitively sense that there is something more—that they ought to be doing something together. And that something more is the unity of *function*, or purpose. Paul, in Philippians 2:1-2, calls on those who are already one in Christ and the Spirit to purpose together to have the heart of Christ, the heart of a servant (v. 7). In cities around the world, the church (all of the family of God in a city, like “the church at Philippi”) are working together to have the mind of Christ for their city. They are purposing together to serve their city. This requires a new view of the role of the church.

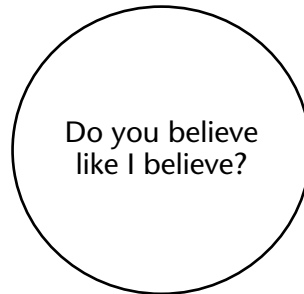
Unity that enables those within the Body of Christ to work together does not require uniformity in all areas of belief. Rather than asking whether a particular church fits within the “bounded set” of a particular set of beliefs, it asks, “Do you care about what I care about?” (See diagram this page.) In other words, is there agreement about the particular needs and dreams of the city in which the church is called to engage? The “bounded set” limits who can be involved, whereas the “centered set” invites participation by all who care about the particular area of need. Partnerships of churches engaged in blessing their cities will have multiple centered sets, depending on the callings and capabilities of the specific churches involved.

Servants Can Go Anywhere

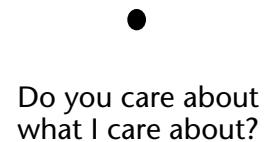
What the church is discovering in a hostile environment (which is almost everywhere), is that if it wants to control

There is a growing unity among churches around share interests

“Bounded Set”



“Centered Set”



the city, it has to fight for power. Even when it wins, it loses, because the church of Jesus is not attractive when it uses force and does not advance by coercion. The words of Jesus, usually applied to individuals, are no less true of the church. We do not operate like the world. “Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:25-28). Servants can go anywhere, even into the king’s palace, as the believers at Philippi discovered (Philippians 1:13).

God has called his church to the ministry of Jesus for the city. When Peter summed up the entire ministry of Jesus for Cornelius’ household he did it with two phrases, “You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the *good news* of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around *doing good*... because God was with him” (Acts 10:36-38). Good news and good deeds. The good deeds of a servant church have the power to change the hearts of people and create an audience for the good news. Overburdened cities, in every environment, around the world, are welcoming a servant church, which is not divided by sectarian agendas, to serve the needs of the city.

A Message to Exiles

The church is in exile in the city. It matters little whether it is Berlin or Beijing or anywhere in between. The church lives in a hostile environment. It has little power or influence. It is right where God

wants it to be! God has a message for his exiled people! “Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because as it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7). God’s message to his exiled people is:

- Serve the city—do not fight it
- Pray for the city—not against it
- Seek the city’s prosperity—not its destruction
- Enter into the life of the city—do not isolate yourself (see vs. 4-6)
- Experience prosperity (quality of life) in a prospering city

God loves cities. The Bible starts in a garden and closes in a city. Jesus was born in a village, but died and rose again in a city. God has a plan for cities. That plan is for his unified servant church to bring peace to the city by *being* and *sharing* the Good News of redemption.

Endnotes

1. *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2003 Revision*, “Data Tables and Highlights.” New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, p. 11, (www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2003/2003WUPHighlights.pdf).

Sam Williams is a consultant for CitiReach Intl., coaching cities where the church is engaging the culture in spiritual and societal transformation. Brent Fulton, Ph.D., is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the ChinaSource journal. ☞



City Reaching

A Model for Holistic Service and Witness

Jack Dennison

Dozens of initiatives have emerged over the past decade, and the vision for holistic ministry in the cities has taken root in most places around the world. While city-focused initiatives are rapidly and dynamically emerging everywhere, I find there is a great deal of confusion regarding what City Reaching is, what we mean by the process, and how we achieve our goals.

What is City Reaching and What Constitutes a City Reaching Initiative?

City reaching may be defined as *“the ongoing process of mobilizing the whole body of Christ in a geographic area to strategically focus its resources on reaching the whole city with the whole gospel, resulting in the blessing of the city and its societies.”*

The definition includes three fundamental components of the city reaching strategy: the whole Church, the whole city, and the whole gospel. Dedication to mobilizing the whole Church requires the initiative be *inclusive* of every believer in its approach. Commitment to the whole city requires that the initiative be *comprehensive* in its scope to include all peoples, problems and conditions that af-

fect community life. The whole gospel requires methods that are *holistic* in nature requiring a balanced integration of proclamation and incarnation. A city reaching initiative by definition must be inclusive in approach, comprehensive in scope and holistic in nature.

City reaching is not a synonym for ev-

all because the approach is not designed to be inclusive of the whole Church, or it is limited to some part other than the whole of the community and its needs, and it frequently fails to use an integrated and balanced approach to words and works. Foggy thinking and limited approaches will not get us to our destina-

City reaching is a technical term referring to a new and highly specialized ministry approach that has at its core a strategy to mobilize the Church to spiritually and socially bless its community.

ery kind of ministry. It is not a modern day equivalent for the Great Commission. City reaching is a technical term referring to a new and highly specialized ministry approach that has at its core a strategy to mobilize the Church to spiritually and socially bless its community.

We must be clear on what city reaching is so we can do it intentionally and effectively and we must choose approaches that, if successful, will actually lead to the intended effect upon the community. My experience is that many citywide initiatives are not city reaching initiatives at

tion. The approach we employ to reach cities must be capable of doing that, and not every approach that gets passed off as city reaching is.

Foggy Thinking Regarding the Use of the Term Transformation

Critics argue that the conditions of sinlessness or perfection that transformation implies are unbiblical and impossible. They remind us that employing an agenda that has as its goal the Christianization of our cities and nations in a desire to impose biblical values on others is equally

unbiblical.

None of this is meant by those who use the word. Transformation is a reference to two points of time in a city's history: where the city is now and where it once was.

When I became a Christian my life was transformed. I was not perfect or without sin, but I had been undeniably transformed. I moved from spiritual death to spiritual life and my lifestyle was changed dramatically. I was transformed. Since then I have been transformed again and again. There have been other experiences and periods in my life where the work of God has brought such dramatic and profound change that transformation remains the only word that could possibly describe the degree of change. And I, like you, hope to be transformed again and again as our lives are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ.

Deep and profound change is possible in human beings and is equally possible for the social organisms that we call cities and communities. George Otis concludes that it is less important where a city is on the transformation continuum than where it is compared to where it was.

Confusion Arising Out of the Two Primary Approaches

The first approach emphasizes divine visitation and revival. In visitation, God acts apart from the Church. He acts on



not divine visitation, but divine partnership. God works not apart from the Church but through it in a joint effort to heal pain, end suffering, release captives from human and spiritual forces, and to infuse culture with the power and presence of God. This partnership produces incremental change that compounds over time.

The first approach calls the Church to pray for visitation while waiting for His

plan and go in divine partnership. The problem comes with the tendency to do one or the other. If we only pray and wait we are disobedient to our call to mission. If we only plan and go we are oftentimes disappointed by limited results that do not fulfill our desire for change.

George Otis agrees that these two approaches are not two ends of a continuum that compete with and are in conflict with one another, but rather are two rails to the same track. They are two components that must be married into a single, cohesive and dynamic approach that can produce change in our communities.

As we experience spiritual and relational health with God and one another, as our hearts are awakened to God's urgent call to the city, as leaders are empowered who have the credibility and competency to weave the Church community together around common vision, as we gather information that helps us accurately understand the condition and resources of the Church and the needs of the city, as we commit to discovering and utilizing the most effective models that will genuinely make a difference in our city—we will see progress and change.

Jack Dennison, D.Min., is the founder and president of CitiReach International, an agency committed to fanning the worldwide flames of city reaching. 卐

When God visits a community, he comes in a swift and powerful way that invades every corner of community life and results in broad and far-reaching societal change. He produces a level of change no human effort could produce.

the Church bringing revival and acts on society bringing spiritual awakening. When God visits a community, he comes in a swift and powerful way that invades every corner of community life and results in broad and far-reaching societal change. He produces a level of change that no human effort could produce.

The second approach emphasizes the Church's obedience to its missional responsibility. The Church is an apostolic people with an apostolic mission toward the peoples, places and the culture within which it lives. This approach emphasizes

coming. It is internal in nature and calls people to purity and sanctification. It is a matter of personal devotion and spiritual preparedness for visitation. Let's pray and wait, they say.

The second approach calls the Church to plan for change and go with God into the harvest field to secure the fruit of its prayerful efforts. It is external in nature and calls people to create structures for change and commit to selfless service. Let's plan and go, they say.

Each is right. We must pray and wait for divine visitation but we must also

Graham Cousens



The Gospel for the Poor Reflections of a Returnee from Overseas

White Dove

Part I
I was working on the computer when it went down. I started towards the front door of the internet café to find the manager to get some help. Right then, an old man with a severely hunched back and in filthy rags walked into the internet café. He was obviously a beggar looking for some handouts. “If your right hand can do good, do not turn down your neighbors,” I thought. Who is my neighbor? Clearly, someone in desperate need as was seen by the Good Samaritan.

Another somewhat younger man, who was blind, was standing at the doorstep playing his *Erhu*—a familiar sight as I recalled quite a few of these musical instruments among the many migrant blind people. Among them, I remembered, there were a good number who were God’s children—my brothers and sisters no less.

“Are you related? Just divide the money, okay?” I cried out to at them as I walked out of the internet cafe. They thanked me profusely as they began to

leave. “I am a believer in Jesus!” I responded. I did not want them to thank me but to give glory to God. If God had not provided enough for me, I would not be able to do good to others.

The reply of one surprised me: “Once I was a believer too, but I do not believe Him anymore.” Realizing they were leaving the scene, I felt an urge to catch up

with them and asked, “What happened to you?” He parted his few gray hairs to show me a disfigured scalp due to a car accident in 1996 which had blinded him in both eyes. “What’s worse, I got sick, and my wife divorced me taking away my child as well. I am very weak, and I do not believe Him anymore.”

At that moment, I was moved by the Spirit to speak a word of comfort to encourage this weak member of the Body of

Christ. So, I uttered with confidence, “You may not want to believe in Jesus, but He will never forsake you. Just like right now, God led me out of that internet cafe to tell you that He loves you.” At this point, I was somewhat choked up.

The manager from the internet cafe along with his staff and other bystanders were all present and witnessed what was going on. “Yes, it must have been the Lord who used you to lift me up,” he said somewhat reluctantly but from his heart.

“His grace is sufficient for you. His power is made perfect in our weaknesses. Whenever we are weak, we become strong. I boast in my weakness so that the power of Christ can protect me,” I replied. God’s Word is powerful. I could see that it was bringing comfort to his wounded heart, and I continued speaking. “Do you know, I never married, so I cannot say that I understand the pain of your divorce. But we all make mistakes. Once I was engaged to a person under the guidance of God. We loved each other very much. But one day, without giving me any reason, he asked to break off the engagement. Later, I agreed that we should go our separate ways. Through our parting, I came to realize that only God can love a person forever, but we humans cannot do that. Through this process, I understood Jesus’ words that He would never leave us nor forsake us. Even in the most painful moments, He wants me to be His gospel light to the needy ones.”

The man before me was obviously moved. “Yes, let me be a light too. Let me

“You may not want to believe in Jesus, but He will never forsake you. Just like right now, God led me out of that internet cafe to tell you that He loves you.”

play the Lord’s song,” and he began playing one of the hymns—and sang as well. Actually, he knew quite a few of the Lord’s songs. Ah, did we not pray for this, that the Lord’s songs would spread among the migrants who can play *Erhu* so that they would shine for Him? It was such a good day with many witnessing that God had received the glory due Him.

As I stood there, I remembered yet another time when I was talking with some

security people who were driving off the beggars from a church. They saw that we were trying to help the beggars and questioned us about our intentions. We told these security people that we were explaining the gospel to them because God has chosen the poor and the weak. Since they were busy with their work, the security people took their leave. However, they reminded us to tell the beggars to stay away in order to maintain a good image for the city as well as for the country. Their words were somewhat hurtful because the beggars were respectable people too. No humans would stoop to begging unless they were at the end of their means. However, I understood that the police were doing their job, sorting out the good from the bad—because some impostors would mix in with those who were truly in need. However, even those people are objects of God's love and salvation. He can save their lives, and ours as well, making us all anew.

As I stood in front of this needy brother with his faith almost in bankruptcy, I was moved by God's faithfulness to His own. Today, He sends me to one of the least of the brethren, and another day He will send someone to me, the least of them all.

After listening to his singing, I thought of the song by Xiaomin. With joy in my heart, I said to him, "I would like to sing to you also."

"Having the Lord, you don't need anything else; having the Lord is enough.

Mention not, friends and loved ones are leaving me;

Mention not, I am in the season of storms. My eyes will look only to the Lord, knowing that He will never leave me;

Even though I wander to all corners of the earth, my Lord alone satisfies me."

At that very moment, I believe this song, provided by the Lord Himself, met this blind brother's need. He had been listening intently, and now he said, "Not only the tune is good, the words are excellent. Ah, my inner eyes have been opened!"

His remarks made me recall another blind brother who I met last year on the roadside. With great joy on his face, he said that though his physical eyes were blind, his inner eyes could see. His inner

joy touched my heart so deeply that I often recalled this scene while going through life's difficulties. So, I used this story to encourage this blind brother in front of me. "Really!" he exclaimed with admiration. We closed our eyes and prayed. We prayed for each other and blessed each other. Now remain faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.

"Mention not, friends and loved ones are leaving me;

Mention not, I am in the season of storms; Having the Lord is enough for me."

Part II

Trusting in Jesus, becoming a child of God, being in Christ and abiding in His word—all these need to be experienced within one's circle of brothers and sisters, church elders and societies in good times as well as bad. We should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength. We should love our neighbor as ourselves.

I felt a tug in my heart. This woman most likely was not a Christian, and she was showing real concern for these two. How much more should I respond with Christ as my treasure?

One day, while I was in the market place near Fudan University in Shanghai, I came across a middle-aged person crawling on the floor begging. His face had many burn scars, and his legs were rotting with flies and insects covering his wounds. Beside him, a young girl about two years old was biting into an apple left by some bystanders. The father and his daughter were surrounded by many onlookers, local as well as outsiders. Behind them were the vendors selling food and drinks. Some passed by and left some money; others were talking about the little girl, obviously taking pity on her. As a newcomer to Shanghai, I was going to the university to take some pictures, and before leaving the house, I had prayed that God would guide me. He brought me to this market place. Like others, I dropped ten *yuan* onto the sidewalk near this father and daughter and began to walk away. Just then, I overheard a local woman saying that it was too bad she had just

been laid off; otherwise, she would have helped them more.

At that moment, I felt a tug in my heart. This woman most likely was not a Christian, and she was showing real concern for these two. How much more should I respond with Christ as my treasure, who became poor for our sakes that we might become rich? So I prayed silently to God asking what I should do beyond giving and praying. I felt I should show my faith and love with some concrete actions. I did not have much with me, but it was enough for them to be put up in an inn for a few days.

I asked a local woman whether there might be an inn nearby. Upon finding one close by, I invited the father and daughter to stay there for a few days, at least to take a bath, change into some clean clothes and have something to eat. I was a little worried that the innkeepers would not take them in for they were truly filthy, and their smell was unbearable.

Thank God that the lady in charge of the inn that day was a kindhearted person. She could not stand the smell as well, but did let them take a bath first. The local women were moved by my generosity thinking I must be a reporter. Later, they found out that I believed in Jesus.

I paid using what I had, enough to cover a few days' stay, but that was all I had. I did not let anybody know about my desperate situation—only God knew. I was staying with a few sisters whom I had met through some introductions. They all loved the Lord, and when they heard of the need of the father and daughter, they went and visited them.

I prayed quietly in my heart. The psalmist says, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart." Since God had taught me to love others as myself, had led me to them and

Christmas Eve, 2004, northern China, cold as usual. Around 7 p.m., one of Beijing's winter regulars, the Gobi gust, is cutting through an old and abandoned auditorium previously owned by the military. Several hundred Christian believers are celebrating Christmas in the cold, dark auditorium. Many of these people are Christians from the Wenzhou area of southeast China's Zhejiang Province. They rented this auditorium for a Christmas celebration with performances and music remembering the birth of Christ.

As people were beginning to gather in the auditorium, ready for the celebration, the government authority decided to shut off the electricity and heat supply. In the meantime, a group of both uniformed and plainclothes police invaded the meeting and occupied every entry way. They announced that there was trouble supplying electricity and heat and urged the entire audience to leave the auditorium. In fact, they had cut off the electricity. With no heat and no lighting, people were shaking in the freezing temperatures.

However, no one wanted to leave; they encouraged each other to stay. They helped latecomers find seats in the darkness by holding hands. Candles would not have been a feasible alternative because the police would have shut down the whole auditorium in the name of preventing a fire hazard. However, the Lord gave these people wisdom. Some went out and bought flashlights to be distributed among the audience. People on the stage had to use very loud voices because the loudspeakers were of no use without electricity. Still, no one complained.

Without electricity, the stage was dark. Nevertheless, one member of the audience was inspired and had everyone who was sitting in the auditorium, flashlight in hand, point them towards the stage as the performance and music began. The flashlights concentrated into beams that were powerful enough to allow the performance and singing to continue. In the coldness of this man-made disaster, the flashlights warmed the people's hearts.

That was a unique experience. As the

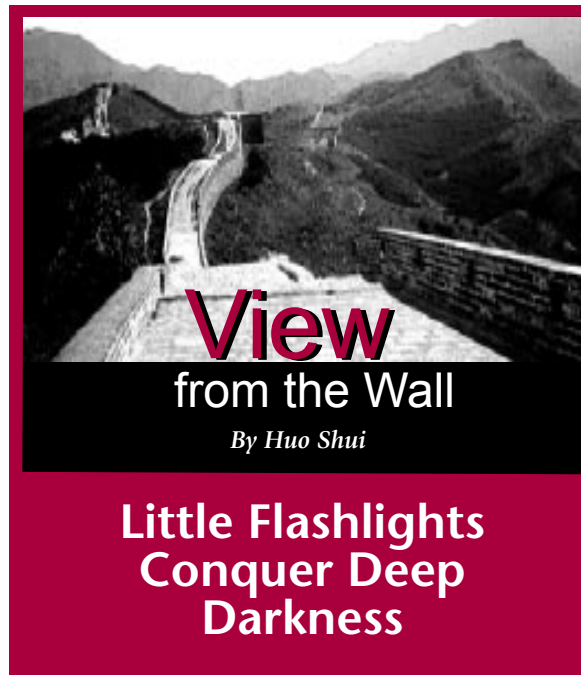
flashlights were dying down in the harsh winter night and the burning cigarettes of the police dotted the air near the auditorium entrance, these Christian people were focused on the message delivered through the performance and music on the stage. They were brave souls resisting not only the darkness and coldness of the Beijing winter but also the cruel political pressures.

This successful celebration of Christ's birth in Beijing was only a small part of the exciting existence of large Wenzhou

Migrant workers are a big reality in China. They are in large cities—and they are almost everywhere in these cities. For China's destitute farmhands, jobs in the cities—many sourced from America and Taiwan—offer a new hope for a better life. Population migration, especially labor migration, has always been an indispensable element of China's economic progress. Societal changes, such as clearer and finer categorization of jobs, give rise to new work opportunities enticing farm labors from the countryside to the cities.

These farm laborers are often not skilled workers who, without many painful struggles, can meet the cities' demands for increasingly high quality products and services. Yet, they are vital for many kinds of indispensable services for which the cities have appetites. They build high-rise apartments and office towers, finish the interiors of homes and apartments, provide security and parking services at the doors of hotels, wait at dinner tables, babysit children and adults, distribute newspapers, sell vegetables and do many other physically tiring, health risky, low-paying jobs. Without these migrant workers, a big city could hardly survive unless its own local citizens decided to pick up this kind of "dirty" work themselves.

Beijing has four million "noncitizens," many of them migrant workers. In recent years, many new faces have joined the pool of migrant workers; these are the college educated outsiders, hired by tech companies and new businesses, who rent apartments on the northwest and northeast sides of Beijing. Their fields of work are so diverse that the term farm labor can no longer accurately describe the fresh group of workers from outside Beijing. Many of these educated migrant workers become stable wage earners with fairly handsome incomes. Some are extremely successful in making a fortune, but most migrant workers are living at the bottom layers of society with the city's ambitions and glories on their shoulders. They keep the city "machinery" running on its normal course, they take care of the details of elaborate parties and auto shows for the enjoyment of city dwellers—and in so doing, they taste the hardship of urban living. They are



Christian communities all over the country. In large cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, there are many Christian gatherings like this composed mostly of people from Wenzhou. Wenzhou Christians are present wherever there are business opportunities. However, they are not the only groups of Christian migrant workers and small business entrepreneurs that are taking roots in many barely reachable corners of China. Christian migrant workers from many other rural areas have formed churches in big cities as well. They provide manual labor or small business services to locals during the week; they also gather to worship in makeshift places, as well as care for fellow Christians and other people in worse living situations than their own. They are becoming lighthouses and refuges for many people from their hometowns as well as for urban locals.

second-class urbanites, existing on the fringes of other people's preferences. They are the neediest and the weakest group of people in the city.

Against this kind of background, migrant workers' churches came into being. These churches have their closest origin in the house church movement. Migrant workers, especially the farm labors, have often been the victims of city dwellers' discrimination and prejudice. These migrant workers churches are the only places in cities where they find Christian warmth and brotherly love.

The enticing opportunities to work in big cities also introduce the beasts of evil to job seekers. These evils are inherent in Chinese cities that are the size of many individual nations. They are waiting to devour the hope of inexperienced young people. Migrant farm laborers are especially vulnerable to the temptations from the devil and the lure of exotic human life styles. The morality of cities is being ruined by cheating, betrayal, evil intent, stealing, greed and murder. The success in the pursuit of material possessions has been overshadowed by the gradual deprivation of hearts unsatisfied by these temporal belongings.

Because no one wants to relive the poverty of the countryside, even though the city is becoming a collection of traps and evil temptations, life in the city has to go forward. What can people of conscience do once they have been thrown into such a situation? Some of these migrant workers seek to detoxify the fertile land of evils and cultivate a piece of spiritual soil; they separate themselves for righteous living. They seek to comfort the injured with the love of God and to cleanse polluted minds with God's words. Previously, house churches in cities have been attended mainly by intellectuals and students who have hearts for truth. These churches exist to serve the needs of a relatively stable population. Now, some of these churches are attended largely by migrants and are serving the needs of migrants, especially those doing manual labor. These churches serve as their home away from home where they can lay down their heavy burdens and share their struggles. Otherwise, they have little chance of being heard and cared for by society.

These migrant workers' churches are

not only the moral fortresses behind which the newly arrived can regain their strength to fight against the evil lures, they are also windows through which heavily laden believers can catch a glimpse of the hope to come. These churches serve to reaffirm the countryside Christian believers' simple faith in God. No matter how far away from their familiar hometowns life has led these believers, Christ remains the same source of their hope and life. These churches provide migrant workers tools to adjust to the new environment and platforms to meet fellow believers—especially those

Graham Cousens



from the same hometowns. These churches unite believers and make them stronger as groups. When a truth-loving, lone believer becomes mature in faith through the help of a migrant church, then, wherever he goes for work or wherever the winds of life blow him, he is like good, new, seed that takes root for the gospel and bears abundant, good fruit.

Few can say they know how many migrant churches are scattered in Chinese cities. The government does not recognize these churches as religious organizations and would never want to release any statistics on them even if they might have the data. However, no one can reasonably deny the widespread existence of these churches and their rapid growth. They are like the flashlight in the hand of a lonely foot-traveler, braving the dark winter

night. As the light becomes dimmer, it becomes more precious.

House churches, and now their new city branches, the migrant churches, have a special need. Yes, these churches need doctrinally sound and dedicated pastors. They need increased amounts of Christian literature, steady financial supply and reasonably comfortable meeting facilities. However, what they need the most is a revival from inside. The Christian life is a long journey for most believers. Many times, as it passes through the night and cold winter darkness, it requires a flashlight that will stay strong.

As a dimming flashlight needs to be recharged to stay lit, the churches need rekindling to meet their new challenges for their strategic existence inside the cities full of evils. For those who live near well lit passages, there is little need for flashlights—let alone the need to recharge them. But, for those making the journey in China's big cities, the passage can lead through a valley of concrete jungle overshadowed by darkness and coldness.

The power of love provides for the recharging; it can rekindle the strength of these migrant house churches that are serving millions of migrant workers. That love comes from the Lord Christ.

Huo Shui is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Ping Dong. 译

Influentials

Individuals and Networks Who Largely Determine Change

K.C.H.

I read a fascinating book in 2003 titled *The Rise of Christianity* by Rodney Stark. It is a sociologist's look at how Christianity grew from a small collection of adherents to the dominant world religion in less than three centuries.

There are a number of fascinating lessons and insights in the book, but the main issue that caught my attention and imagination is that believers in those times did not live their faith privately. They did not withdraw to suburban churches and pursue private piety. They pushed into every part of their world taking their faith and making it relevant. They did not withdraw from civic involvement but pushed in further. They did not wait for government to fix their problems but provided solutions in the "secular" areas of health, abuse of women, care of abandoned infants and a host of other issues. Neither did they have a professional clergy to rely on to lead all "religious" activities.

These were believers who influenced the people and institutions around them. Their faith was publicly relevant and Christians were influential—not because of political positions but because of their networks and active engagement in society. Stark says the power of the early church came from its ability to revitalize society like other religions of the day could not. As such, the Christian faith was not only attractive but relevant, and people responded to the gospel in remarkable numbers.

Community Transformation

As the discussion continues on "Community Transformation," it is helpful to look at the issues of how transformation takes place and who are the ones who lead it.

Why does society today have norms and values which are significantly different from the ones held ten years ago—especially values/norms in the moral and

ethical realm? There were people behind these shifts in thinking. Who are they and how do they exercise this degree of influence? What are the issues that become prevalent topics of discussion in our society? Who pushes them to the fore? It is not the number of people in a society that shape the public values but the level of influence among those people. This explains why homosexuals in the U.S. make up just three percent of the population but exercise an inordinate amount of influence, changing the cultural view of alternative life styles. Gay rights activists are not legion in number but have become highly influential.

This article is designed to stimulate some thought on who, humanly speaking, leads change and transformation?

Photos by Graham Cousens



Influentials have a wide network of people they know and interact with—more than the average person.

Leverage—Where Is it Found?

Given finite resources and time, no matter what our particular focus as believers, we want to find those who lead and facilitate change and engage them. "Multiplication" in ministry has long been held as the best way to leverage faith into the broader world. Who are the ones who multiply? Who are those who know how to share their faith and bring it into their vocation and community effectively? Who not only speaks their convictions (integrity) but lives their convictions (conscience) in growing networks of acquaintances?

pire to Community Transformation and to bring the gospel to the whole world.

Influentials Traits

Traits that "influentials" hold in common:

1. Convictions: They know what they believe, what matters to them and why. They have priorities in light of these convictions.

2. Activists: Influentials act on their convictions. This "activist" trait is what makes their beliefs "convictions" rather than simply beliefs. They follow through

on what they hold to be true and right. In addition, they view change positively and thus work toward it.

3. Articulate: They are able to articulate their convictions and draw people into conversation. They are users of technology largely because it connects them with other people in verbal and written ways. They desire to communicate with others on issues that are important to them.

4. Widely Read: They keep current on books, articles and issues being discussed in society. They are generally not TV watchers but seek to be informed through

If we broaden our definition of leader to include qualities of influence that are not tied to position, **we will be able to refine our filter for working with leaders.**

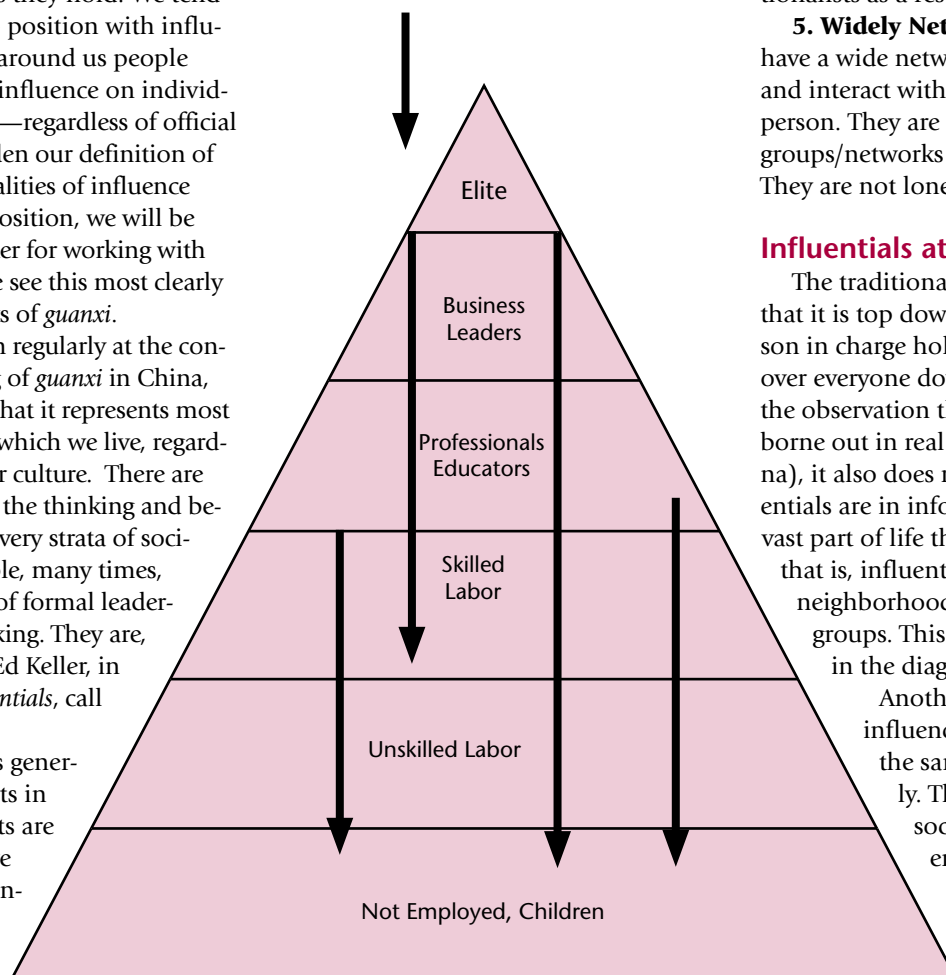
Difference between Leaders and Influentials

Traditionally we have viewed "leaders" in terms of positions they hold. We tend to equate leadership position with influence. Yet, we see all around us people who have pervasive influence on individuals and institutions—regardless of official position. If we broaden our definition of leader to include qualities of influence that are not tied to position, we will be able to refine our filter for working with leaders. In China, we see this most clearly through the networks of *guanxi*.

Potshots are taken regularly at the concept and outworking of *guanxi* in China, yet it can be argued that it represents most clearly the reality in which we live, regardless of our country or culture. There are those who influence the thinking and behavior of people at every strata of society—and those people, many times, are not in positions of formal leadership or decision-making. They are, what Jon Barry and Ed Keller, in their book *The Influentials*, call "influentials."

These influentials generally hold several traits in common. These traits are instructive to us if we desire to affect and influence people and society—if we as-

Influence moves down through social strata



reading and conversations. Influentials are motivated by a desire to be life-long learners. They are interesting conversationalists as a result.

5. Widely Networked: Influentials have a wide network of people they know and interact with—more than the average person. They are part of several different groups/networks (formal and informal). They are not loners who stay at home.

Influentials at Every Level

The traditional view of influence is that it is top down, hierarchical. The person in charge holds greatest influence over everyone down the line. Apart from the observation that this is often not borne out in real life (especially in China), it also does not tell us who the influentials are in informal networks and the vast part of life that is not structured—that is, influentials among students, in neighborhoods, in social clubs and groups. This view of influence is seen in the diagram to the left.

Another way to look at who influences others is to look at the same pyramid horizontally. There are people in every social stratum who influence the others in that stratum—"influentials." Thus, influence works horizontally within

the strata rather than vertically between strata. Look at any group from CEOs to factory workers to primary school children and you will find a few people that the others gather around and listen to. The diagram below shows how this influence paradigm works out.

In this paradigm the "influentials" are the small percentage running up the side in every social/economic/grouping stratum. In this paradigm, influence does not run from top to bottom as much as across every grouping of people.

The lesson here is that there are "leaders" or "influentials" at each strata of so-

world and seek to change it. Much has been said over the years about F.A.T. people: faithful, available, teachable. Influentials are this and more. Working with influentials becomes a priority if changing the world (or neighborhood, city, people group) for Christ is my objective.

The second question to consider is whether or not we are influentials. Influentials hang out with other influentials and are influenced by them. Before developing a strategy to reach the influentials in whatever our sphere of ministry, it might be helpful to consider the list of "influential" traits. Where does personal

development need to take place in my life in order to become a more influential person? What about our colleagues and those we are responsible for—are they influentials? Can they become so? It is not an issue of position, but of the traits one develops and holds.

As believers, we are called to not only "reach" this world but to shape it as well. From the cultural mandate in Genesis, through Jesus' life and ministry, the Great Commission, and the prophecies in Isaiah and Revelation, God's children are called to be part of the world, to engage it and to shape it in the ways of God.

As believers, **we are called not only to "reach" this world but to shape it** as well. ...God's children are called **to be part of the world, to engage it and to shape it in the ways of God.**

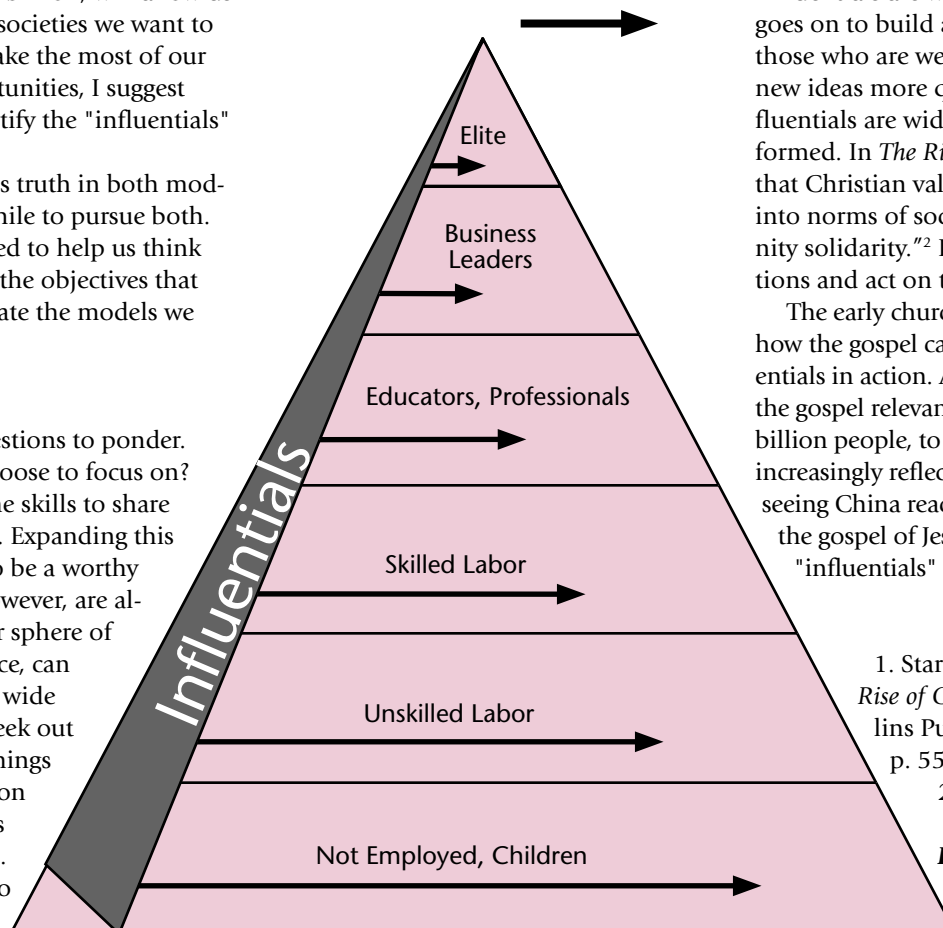
ciety rather than just at the top. Keeping this in mind as we consider strategies for reaching and transforming 1.3 billion, as well as the global six billion, will allow us greater access to the societies we want to reach. In order to make the most of our resources and opportunities, I suggest that we learn to identify the "influentials" in our midst.

Obviously, there is truth in both models, and it is worthwhile to pursue both. This article is designed to help us think more broadly about the objectives that we pursue and evaluate the models we use in that pursuit.

Conclusion

There are two questions to ponder. First, who will we choose to focus on? Many people have the skills to share their faith and do so. Expanding this number continues to be a worthy goal. Influentials, however, are always expanding their sphere of contacts and influence, can speak relevantly to a wide number of people, seek out new ways of doing things and act consistently on their convictions—as they share their faith. These are people who actively engage the

Influence moves across social strata



As Rodney Stark says, "...movements grow much faster when they spread through preexisting social networks."¹ Influentials are widely networked. Stark goes on to build a case for the fact that those who are well informed will adopt new ideas more quickly than others. Influentials are widely read and well informed. In *The Rise of Christianity*, we see that Christian values were "...translated into norms of social service and community solidarity."² Influentials have convictions and act on them.

The early church, as a model, shows how the gospel can spread through influentials in action. As we look to presenting the gospel relevantly and effectively to 1.3 billion people, to seeing cities reached and increasingly reflecting Godly culture, to seeing China reached and transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, the issue of "influentials" looms large.

Endnotes

1. Stark, Rodney. 1997. *The Rise of Christianity*, Harper Collins Publishers, San Francisco, p. 55.
2. Ibid, p. 74.

KCH has been involved in China service for over 20 years. 恒

Continued from page 7

had brought the gospel to them, now they would experience God Himself through my good works rather than my helping them directly.

My faith was challenged those few days, not only to bring them to trust in the Lord rather than relying on themselves as they begged on the street, but also for my own trust in the Lord's faithfulness to provide for our daily needs. When the sisters were preparing food, I remembered the word of the Lord to Elijah directing him to say to the widow, "Give me what you have and you will lack nothing." Amazingly enough, through these sisters, each day God provided me with enough as well as the father and daughter. The little girl was even provided with some new clothes and the expenses of their extended stay at the inn were taken care of.

The suffering of the father and daughter was caused by a fire. The father had been burned over sixty percent of his body, and all the money he had could only cover the medical expenses necessary to take care of his upper body leaving his legs still festering. He was burned after he fainted while trying to save his older son who never got out of the fire alive. His little daughter was at the doorstep and was saved by others. His wife subsequently left him.

A few days later, the father and daughter could not be found anywhere at the inn. We were told they had gone back to begging. I prayed for them a good deal and did not find them until the evening of the second day. It had rained when they were on the street, and the little girl had caught a cold with a high fever as a result. I told the father that he should not go back to trusting in their begging because the young girl would not be able to last long. They needed to trust that God would provide.

I went back on my knees asking God to provide the means to cover the rest of the medical expenses so that the father could get back on his feet again instead of dragging the young girl around the streets. God truly is merciful. In less than a week, I received a large donation that not only covered all the necessary medical expenses but had funds leftover as well.

The man was full of joy and thanksgiving when he received the donation for his

Resource Corner

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In the planning stages: a Beijing Olympics DVD

surgery. He knew that I, by myself, would not have had such resources, but God loved him and his daughter. When he prayed to accept the Lord in the inn, he was holding a Bible and beaming with a big smile. His little girl was radiant with smiles.

I do not mean to brag about myself when I give this testimony. It was God's word telling me that I should love my neighbor as myself. I should have the mind of Christ, not only regarding my own business, but that of others too. I should do to others as I wish others to do to me. The final time will soon come, and we need to pray, to watch and to love one another for love covers a multitude of sins.

When I see God's love for others, I begin to understand that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Through God's love for others, I begin to truly understand the meaning of loving oneself, of seeing others and myself through the eyes of God.

White Dove studied in the U.S. from the late 1990s until 2002 when she returned to her native China taking with her the greatest treasure she received while in the States—the gospel. She now resides in Shanghai where she serves the poor. Used with permission from Christian Life Quarterly, March, 2005, Vol. 9, No. 1, www.cclife.org. Translation is by Nelson Cao. 卍

Book Review

The Church's Great Asset

A review by Wayne Martindale

***The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* by Rodney Stark.** Harper, San Francisco, 1997, 246 pp. ISBN 0-06-067701-5. Paperback, \$14.95 at Amazon.com.

Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity* has both positive elements as well as underlying presuppositions that may put off a Christian reader. Positively, he provides a fuller understanding of the early church and the ancient world, reinforces evangelistic strategies (largely already known to missiologists), and acknowledges the superiority of the Christian doctrines of love, marriage and caring for the weak. On the negative side, however, is his social science perspective on the growth of Christianity. Perhaps more

Readers may not be likely to accept Stark's "cost benefit" understanding of martyrdom and church membership, nor may they warm to the rationalist assumptions and explanations or the elevation of Paul over Jesus as the central figure in church growth. There is little new for mission strategists, and many may not want to use their time in reading this

The first gain may be a fuller understanding of the early church and the ancient world as Stark gathers a host of information in making his case.

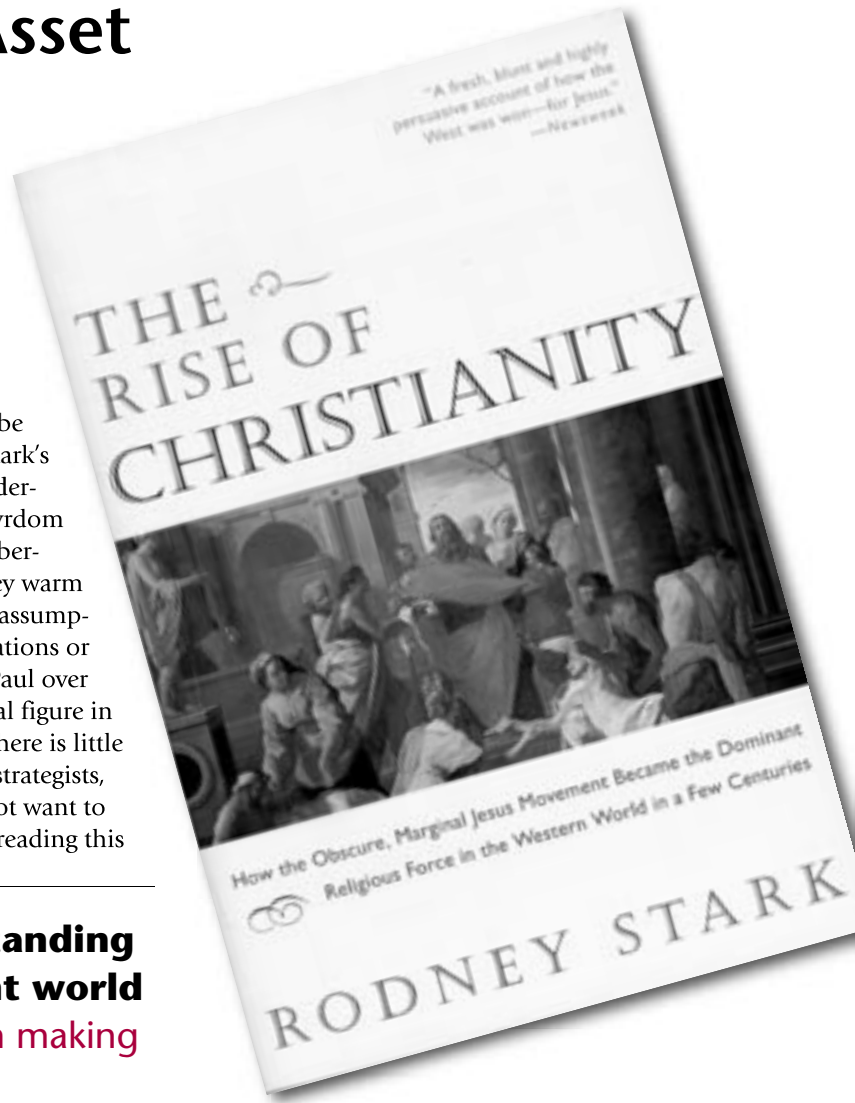
than any other "science," sociology has been rationalistic, atheistic and hostile towards Christianity. While Stark's volume goes a long way towards moderating this unhappy tradition, it still has many of the drawbacks of approaching the essentially spiritual from the merely rational. Christian readers will wince at the application of growth models developed from observations of the Moonies and Mormons. They will cringe at terms like "cult" applied to Christianity and models and language drawn from economic theory.

book. Then again, for readers mature in their faith, there may be worthwhile gains.

The first gain may be a fuller understanding of the early church and the ancient world as Stark gathers a host of information in making his case. His analysis of paganism and its weakness as an organizing, motivating and ethical system is quite good as is his presentation of challenges in the ancient world that Christianity was prepared to meet that paganism could not. Whereas paganism fostered a

privileged class, pursuit of individual gain and personal pleasure, and maintained a pronounced bias against women, Christianity fostered community, care for the hurting, hope for the future and dignity for women and families.

Stark develops two especially compelling examples of the superiority of the



Christian worldview that help to account for its widespread embrace by the ancient world. First, there were two devastating plagues. The first of these began in AD 165, lasted fifteen years and destroyed a fourth to a third of the Roman Empire's population. The second epidemic hit a century later and, at its height, killed 5,000 per day just in Rome. Not only did the general decrease in population increase the ratio of Christians, but the pagans died in considerably greater num-

bers because they fled the sick to avoid infection, even in their own families, whereas Christians remained and nursed the sick. With even such simple care as food and water supplied to those too weak to get it for themselves, many survived who would have died. The result was a dramatic increase in the ratio of believers in the Roman Empire. Beyond that, Christians extended care to their pagan neighbors who added to the number of Christians as people converted in response to the logic of love in action.

The second example of Christianity powerfully transforming culture comes from its valuing of women, marriage, and the family. In pagan culture, female babies were routinely eliminated by abortion or infanticide. Men had power in

There is another set of reasons Christians might want to read this book: that is, for the re-enforcement of evangelistic strategies largely already known to missiologists. First, Stark's early chapters, analyzing the arithmetic of growth, show that from a small beginning a sustained growth of 40 percent per decade will in 300 years produce a population of over 30 million believers. Based on a population of 60 million, in 300 years, Christians went from .0017 percent of the total to nearly 57 percent. The explosion of growth comes in the last 50 years, where the numbers shoot up from six million to 33 million. This rate of growth, with the mushroom effect at the end, is common in successful religious movements of all stripes. This suggests that, under normal

be checked, it seems to me that the Chinese church has grown faster than Stark's model allows as the norm.

In a short concluding chapter on virtue, Stark acknowledges that there really is superiority in the Christian doctrines of love, marriage and care for the weak that embraces sacrifice not only for family and church, but for neighbor and even enemy. This, of course, is the church's great asset—and the missiologist's winning strategy. What Stark seems unwilling to concede is the supernatural source of world-changing love. Virtue is not arbitrary: it flows from the character of God. In the final analysis, mere religious growth, however impressive the numbers, is not the final indicator of truth or value.

The most encouraging aspect of this

The most encouraging aspect of this book is the stunning number of parallels between the pagan Greco-Roman world, which saw the rise of Christianity to the dominant world view, and the cultural conditions of modern China.

their families to order a wife or daughter's abortion for reasons ranging from economic to hiding sexual indiscretions. Abortion methods were crude and further decimated the female population. State law permitted the elimination of handicapped or female children by virtually any means, the most common being exposure, which meant death by starvation or from wild animals. The result was that males outnumbered females in large numbers throughout the empire. By the year 200, Rome had around 130 males for every 100 females, and even large families seldom had more than one daughter. It is easy to see how the number of Christians grew proportionately in a subculture that elevated women and embraced a culture of life. Among Christians, there was a naturally occurring greater number of females than males. This not only meant more births but marriages outside the Christian community in which children were raised almost exclusively as Christians by their mothers, with many pagan husbands converting. This chapter is worth reading for its contrast of humanism gone amuck with the healthy and life-giving consequence of Christian belief.

circumstances, all mission efforts will seem disappointing in the first several generations, but will, if sustained, eventually reach a point of explosive growth in simple arithmetic progression.

A second implication for mission strategy is that the early church expanded primarily through networks of family, friends and acquaintances who were directly touched by the lives of Christians. We use such terms as friendship and lifestyle evangelism to describe this kind of deliberate strategy for reaching the lost. Stark further suggests that Christianity grew first among the educated and socially well connected. He cites the large number of educated and socially privileged people in Paul's letters and in the early church. Further, the movement spread chiefly among urban populations. Stark's logic is that large populations provide a critical mass of likely "social deviants" who are willing to buck the system. While this model has explanatory power for the early church and religious growth generally, it makes the situation in China an anomaly where Christianity has spread most dramatically, initially, in the countryside. While the numbers need to

book is the stunning number of parallels between the pagan Greco-Roman world, which saw the rise of Christianity to the dominant world view, and the cultural conditions of modern China. In the ancient world, Christianity rose to dominance because it met the challenges and opportunities posed by urbanization, corruption in government, brutal and inhumane public policy from persecution to forced abortion, male-female population imbalance, the ravages of epidemics and the squalor of the poor. Stark's point is that Christianity grew in such conditions precisely because it had the belief system and ethics to address the needs and hurts of the people. Despite its rationalist outlook, there is every indication from Stark's account that history is poised to repeat itself in China.

Dr. Wayne Martindale is Professor of English at Wheaton College (Illinois) and has just published Beyond the Shadowlands: C. S. Lewis on Heaven and Hell. He and his wife, Nita, have been making significant trips to China since 1989 and will be taking a group of students to China this summer, teaching English and American culture. 馬

Communities of Hope

Recently I had the opportunity to visit a number of orphanages and schools for special children in several Chinese cities. Some contained mostly infants, the majority of whom would be adopted by families outside China. Others had children ranging in age from toddlers to teens. Several specialized in caring for children with disabilities, while others had residents whose only shared characteristic was simply that their parents were nowhere to be found. Despite such wide diversity, several common factors stood out in these small communities of hope, all of which were run by Christians.

Compassionate entrepreneurs.

Each facility was started by someone who saw a need and responded creatively. Similar to the story of White Dove in this issue of *ChinaSource*, they did not necessarily set out looking for an opportunity to help others, but when the need presented itself, neither did they shrink back. In one case the mother of a child born with a disability realized that no support system existed for families with similar children, so she set out to build one by starting a

school for children like her daughter. Other institutions were started by foreign Christians whose acts of compassion created the space for other believers, both local and foreign, to step in and get involved.



Brent Fulton

Partnership. Whether started indigenously or by foreigners, each example involved partnership between Christians inside and outside China. The foreign component was not limited to funding, but could involve staffing, professional expertise (often through visits by short-term specialists), or consulting in areas such as fund development or strategic planning.

In most cases there was a three-way partnership, with the government providing some funding, personnel or facilities.

Public recognition. Over dinner with friends in a large city we began to describe an orphanage in an obscure suburb we had just visited. "Oh yes," our hostess interjected, "I just read about that place in the paper this week."

Beyond their immediate benefit to the children they serve, these orphanages and schools also provide an example of caring and generosity to the community at large. The fact that those doing the work are motivated by the love of Christ is usually not hidden.

"Complicated" official relationships. Despite widespread public affirmation, these institutions do not necessarily enjoy unqualified official favor. In a legal climate where the regulations governing non-profit organizations are still being written, officials operate out of a variety of motives, and boundaries for foreign involvement are often fuzzy at best, one's status vis-à-vis the government cannot be guaranteed. Tact, discernment and much grace are necessary ingredients in successful official relationships.

Changed lives produce changed communities. While widespread transformation in China's megacities may seem at times to be a discouragingly remote possibility, these small communities of hope provide a reminder of what can be done when God's people heed Christ's command to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

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

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