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CHARTING TWO CRITICAL MAPS FOR PRC MINISTRY

I. Time to Re-chart Our Maps

1. GLOBAL CHANGES – CHINA VS. AMERICA

Ten years after Tienanmen Square (1989), U.S.-China relations are as unclear and uncertain as ever. The two nations may be headed for cold war, in the fields of trade and culture; or with the help of the United States, China may enter the international trade community. In the process, global rules of exchange may be changed. Many Americans – unfortunately, many evangelical American Christians are in their ranks – are making China out to be the Number 1 enemy. This is undermining the effective use of relationships, on the part of many Christians, to bless the Chinese people and serve the church in China. China, on the other hand, is responding to this confrontational approach on the part of (many, but not all) Americans, with its own aggressive, angry, anti-American nationalism. A stream of books have been published since The China That Can Say No came out in July 1996. China is accusing America of human rights abuse, widespread abortion and crime (this reminds us of how Muslims accuse America, or Christianity, of similar sins). A more recent book is entitled Behind the Demonizing of China (Beijing, December 1996).

If this exchange of hostile rhetoric leads us to a cold war, will there be responses similar to those in the Korean War days (1950-52)?

Will Christians from the west serving in China today be recalled from China tomorrow?

Will Christians from the west serving in Hong Kong today be recalled tomorrow?

Will PRC continue to remain in North America, in even larger numbers?

And if they do remain in North America, will they take a hostile posture to America (contrast this with a more friendly posture Chinese students in America took toward the U.S. in the Korean War days)?

Will PRC largely become part of the immigrant Chinese community in North America? Or will they continue to seek to mainstream into American society with tremendous effort and creativity?

Will PRC Christians largely assimilate into the existing 700-800 Chinese churches in North America? What about cultural gaps between Taiwan/Hong Kong Christians and PRC Christians? Will they be bridged?
Will the American church interest in China decrease, as the press exposes persecution and abuses in China (including the Christian press)? Will the manpower, prayer and love toward PRC decrease? How could this trend be countered with a renewed initiative to reach these strategically placed minds, hearts and homes?

2. RISE OF INDIGENOUS PRC LEADERSHIP

Into this alarming picture enters a new generation of PRC pastors, evangelists and apologists. This is a fact which American Christians and Chinese churches in North America must do much soul-searching about. Will we continue with business as usual, aiming directly at PRC to convert them? Or will we recognize that the Body of Christ has emerged among PRC? Not only are our Chinese churches filled with PRC coming for baptism; PRC churches and PRC fellowships have arisen. Will we take a servant posture, and seek to empower, equip, serve and support them? Will we be like Barnabas – rejoicing, encouraging, opening doors of opportunities for them? Or will our approach be ... well, reminiscent of the period in which missionaries operated in China – what mainland Chinese call the time of "imperialism"? Will we be neo-imperialists?

Servanthood or neo-imperialism – the choice is obvious.

3. ENTRY OF NEW CHURCHES AND AGENCIES IN PRC MINISTRY

Not only are PRC pastors and evangelists emerging. An increasing number of churches and mission agencies are entering the PRC ministry field in North America, or shifting their focus of ministry to care for the spiritual needs of PRC. This is most encouraging. We can distinguish several sub-groups among these new sister-ministries:

A. Recently formed Mandarin-congregations in Chinese churches in North America. While the number of PRC-led churches are still small, there are dozens (over a hundred?) Chinese churches which have either reorganized their Mandarin worship service (or one of their Mandarin worship services) to target PRC, or have started a brand new worship service to reach PRC. Since Taiwan/Southeast Asian Chinese Christians speak Mandarin, just as PRC do, the new worship service may be designated service #3.” Some of these churches recognize that the issue is a cultural barrier, not just a linguistic one. Others are not so conscious of the cultural barrier, and continue to use “time-proven” methods.

B. Mission agencies already serving the Chinese, now with a renewed focus on PRC. Some China ministries are moving further and further from Hong Kong, and take PRC ministry as one of their primary foci of ministry. Others include Chinese-run ministries which have multiple functions and foci, and have adopted PRC ministry as one of their new priorities.
C. Still others are expanding their existing PRC ministry (out of internal need in the organization, or responding to the tremendous need, or both) by scaling up their PRC work to attract North America-wide attention and concern.

D. I foresee an increasing number of denominational agencies refocusing their mission interest among the Chinese people, to include a home-missions thrust to reach the PRC. Some are doing so through calling PRC pastors to plant new churches.

4. TIME FOR INVENTORY

In light of these and other significant changes taking place around us, we need to address two questions: (a) Do we understand who our coworkers are in the PRC ministry field? Can we identify their unique emphases and approaches? (b) Can we discern the pertinent issues in ministry methods and in philosophy/theology, which will shape PRC minds and PRC ministries in the 21st century?

Who are doing the ministry; what are the issues – we cannot afford to ignore these two questions.
II. Charting the Map of PRC Ministries in North America

The borders of PRC ministries in North America are not well-defined. Firstly, PRC are flocking to existing Chinese churches (this is not the place to address exodus, but large numbers are leaving through the backdoor as well). The leaders of Chinese churches in North America have traditionally come from Taiwan, with a good number from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. The PRCs are forming the majority of church growth in Mandarin-speaking Chinese congregations. As Chinese churches look to future growth, the one logical thing to do is: reaching PRC.

Secondly, PRC ministry has a natural affinity with China ministries in the west. Many believe that reaching PRC is a strategic way to reach China and to serve the church in China. Some, like former Time magazine writer David Aikman, believe it is the most strategic way.

Thirdly, PRC form one of the largest nationality groups who respond to invitations to international student ministry initiatives (retreats, conferences, sightseeing trips and other activities).

All these make the borders of PRC ministry hard to define. This is probably a gift from God’s providence. God is calling Chinese churches, international student ministries, home mission agencies, and China ministry groups to work together.

One might identify eight types of ministries in this larger family of China/PRC ministries, according to the function of these ministries.

1. DIRECT MINISTRIES

This is the mainstay of PRC ministry. These are groups which aim to befriend, evangelize and disciple PRC. The pioneers in PRC ministry in the early 1980s are mostly of this type. They include:

(a) Traditional American campus ministries (Campus Crusade, Inter Varsity, Navigators, etc.).
(b) Denominational outreach to international students (Southern Baptists, PCA, etc.).
(c) International student ministry organizations (International Ministries Fellowship, International Students, Inc., InterFace, etc.).
(d) Ministries exclusively targeting PRC (China Outreach Ministries).
(e) Ministries launched by overseas Chinese Christian leaders, with an arm specializing in PRC ministry (e.g. Ambassadors For Christ).
(f) Foreign mission agencies who recently are also turning to meet the needs in the North American field (e.g. OMF International).
(g) Local churches with international students outreach.
(h) Individual and individual family initiatives.
It has been my joy to travel in the past seven years, and to encourage American Christians to persevere in what they do; and what they often do, is sowing the seeds of the gospel. My message to them is: Keep up what you are doing – praying, loving, reaching, serving, giving. This, I believe, represents the most precious spiritual treasure of the American people – generosity, love, reaching out – which is a scarce resource in world civilization today. If I sound like I am exaggerating, I am not. Generosity (especially among Christians) is part and parcel of the spiritual heartland* of North American civilization. We lose a lot – indeed, humanity loses out – if we give up this beautiful tradition, which hail from Puritan and Great Awakening days. Let us not become weary of doing good (I Cor. 15:58).

2. DIRECT MINISTRIES – INDIGENOUS PRC BODIES

Some of the new generation of PRC Christian leaders are pastoring churches (e.g. in Vancouver, British Columbia; Los Angeles, California; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Rockville/Bethesda, Maryland). Some have started their own fellowship groups (New York City; etc.). Others have joined existing organizations to reach PRC (Los Angeles, California; Fairfax, Virginia; Paradise, Pennsylvania; Athens, Ohio; Raleigh, North Carolina; Pasadena, California; etc.). Still others have launched out on their own with new ministries to serve PRC (Deerfield, Illinois).

We need to pay special attention to the first two subgroups: new PRC-oriented churches and PRC-oriented fellowship groups. May they see that we (non-PRC Christians) care enough to support, encourage, and accept them into the larger Body of Christ.

3. RESOURCES – LITERATURE AND PERIODICALS FOR PRC

Chinese Christians and missionaries to the Chinese have long recognized the strategic importance of literature as a tool for evangelism and discipleship. The most prolific member of the PRC ministry community who labor in this area is Overseas Campus magazine. In addition to circulating tens of thousands of copies each issue, OC is read on the internet daily by thousands of PRC. In recent years, OC has taken a distinctly literary flavor, seeking to influence PRC with articles which speak from the heart. This represents the strong influence of a literary tradition which dates back to ancient China. The written word has always had a more importance place in Chinese society than, say, North American society. Good literature is very powerful for the PRC seeker. Overseas Campus also publishes issues specifically targeted at the PRC Christian reader.

An indigenous PRC attempt to nurture PRC Christians is Christian Life Quarterly, launched by Zhijin and Esther Wang in March 1997.
OMF International and Christian Communications Inc. (Hong Kong) have been pioneers in producing apologetic books and booklets for PRC. Several other mission agencies are producing Bibles and Bible study materials for China, which meet a real demand among PRC in North America.

One of the most innovative resource ministries serving PRC is Chinese Christian Internet Mission, officially formed in August 1996. Rev. John Tan is an online, proclaiming the gospel and providing pastoral care for PRC and other Chinese students.

Just about all PRC ministry coworkers agree that: the crying need among most PRC ministry workers is relevant, clear, and life-changing Bible study materials for PRC use.

4. TRAINING FOR PRC CHRISTIANS AND PRC CHRISTIAN LEADERS

Since the late 1980s, a number of evangelistic retreats have been held, locally and regionally. Increasingly, the need was felt for retreats to disciple the new converts. Finally, in the past two years retreats and schools have been started to train PRC Christians leaders.

In December 1996 Great Commission Center (Rev. Thomas Wang), in cooperation with Overseas Campus (Rev. Edwin Su), China Ministries International (Rev. Jonathan Chao) and other agencies, launched the School of Servanthood, a two-week intensive time of training and spiritual renewal. The result was a spiritual high-point of commitment for many PRC Christian leaders, and the formation of Mainland Chinese Ministries Council. The second School of Servanthood was held December 1997 - January 1998, hosted by China Ministries International in Pasadena, California.

In November 1996 China Horizon (through Zhijun and Esther Wang), in cooperation with Ambassadors For Christ, China Outreach Ministries, and Stephen Tong Evangelistic Ministries International, sponsored a retreat for PRC leaders. The result was the formation of a network of mainland Chinese ministers. A subsequent meeting was held July 1-5, 1997 in Fairfax, Virginia. These gatherings were important times of fellowship between overseas Chinese Christian leaders and agencies and PRC Christian leaders.

In June 1996, Stephen Tong Evangelistic Ministries International launched the Reformed Institute for Christianity and the 21st Century, in order to equip Chinese Christians to respond to the spiritual and intellectual challenges of the 21st century. Over 100 students attended part or all of the four-week series of 13 courses; among them were a significant contingent of PRC. STEMI continues to hold its Reformed Institute in Washington, D.C. annually from mid-June to mid-July. Among students who attended in 1998, fifteen had enrolled in all three of the institutes. In addition to the U.S. institutes,
other similar seminars are being conducted by STEMI in other parts of the world, e.g. Singapore.

The Chinese Studies Program at Regent College (Vancouver, BC) seeks to train PRC from China and from North America, to think theologically and to dialogue with contemporary mainland Chinese intellectual trends. Another school which has attracted a number of PRC students is International Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, California. ITS was launched by Dr. John Kim, and is strongly supported by Korean church leaders. Current president Dr. Joseph Tong is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and a psychologist. He and his staff have attracted many third-world students to its on-campus and off-campus programs. ITS is specifically dedicated to the development of third world church leadership.

Theological education for PRC Christians continue to be a very needy field. Elsewhere, seminaries in North America which have traditionally attracted Chinese students (from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, as well as North American-born Chinese) have, in recently, admitted PRC, e.g. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Reformed Theological Seminary, Alliance Theological Seminary, etc. Some of the mainland Chinese students in these schools come from churches in China.

Some organizations are providing mentoring, encouragement and financial support for PRC who seek theological training. The oldest group is The Seminary Scholarship Fund Committee, launched in the 1970 by Robert Chang and the late Li Ta-jyh. China Horizon is involved in financially assisting PRC theological students (e.g. Yuan Zhiming, Wang Zhijun and Esther Wang, etc.). The Overseas Chinese Christian Writer Foundation (Dr. and Mrs. David Louie, Cincinnati, Ohio) are helping PRC to publish their autobiographies and theological works.

5. EXPLORATIONS AND DIALOGUE IN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Just as PRC are keen with many questions about faith, thought and society before conversion, they continue to seek strategies to link their new-found faith, after conversion, with thought and culture (both Chinese and western). We have included several very different organizations under this category; each has specific and unique concerns and approaches to their inquiry.

The Boston Chinese Christian Reading Club, subsequently renamed the Chinese Christian Scholars Association, seeks to bring together students of theology and religion in Boston universities, graduate schools of religion and seminaries, for fellowship and discussion. In cooperation with the Ricci Institute on Chinese-Western History of the University of San Francisco (with gracious efforts by the late Father Ed Malatesta), the CCSA helps to host an annual conference on Christianity and religious studies in the Chinese cultural context. A variety of schools in the Boston area is represented in CCSA membership, including Harvard Divinity School, Andover Newton Theological School, Boston University School of Theology, Brandeis University, Weston School of Theology,
Gordon Conwell Divinity School, etc. Cooperative projects are arranged with Logos and Pneuma Journal on Tao Fong Shan, Sha Tin, Hong Kong.

Efforts to dialogue with contemporary mainland Chinese thought include not only the Chinese Studies Program of Regent College (see above), but also Cultural China, edited by Dr. Thomas In-seng Leung (Burnaby, British Columbia). This journal is involved in dialogue particularly with the New Confucianists, in addition to entering into cooperative writing ventures with intellectuals (professors) in mainland China. Dr. Leung recently incorporated his organization in Fremont, California, USA as well.

Yuan Zhiming, the most celebrated convert among the PRC democracy movement leaders, not only writes for Overseas Campus magazine; he is also the leader of the "od and China" Project, hailed as a Christian response to iver Elegy" (He shang). This project will work at finding common ground between Christian faith and ancient/traditional Chinese thought. Yuan is certain that there are links between Christianity on the one hand, and Taoism as well as Confucianism, on the other. He believes that one third of the 81 chapters in the Dao de jing (Lao zi) makes references to the sage, a kind of Messiah figure. Evangelical response to this intriguing idea is yet forthcoming.

Though evangelicals in North America (with notable exceptions) have not always been comfortable, confident, and trained in engaging in intellectual discourse with various academic disciplines, the church needs to understand and to respond to the issues raised by these and other PRC intellectuals (see III below).

6. NETWORKING

Two networks seek to link PRC Christian leaders: the Mainland Chinese Ministries Council, which grew out of the first School of Servanthood held at the Great Commission Center (Texas), December 1996; and the Mainland Chinese Ministers Meeting, which grew out of the retreat in Chicago in November 1996.

A valuable resource is the umbrella organization known as ACMI - the Association of Christian Ministers to Internationals. ACMI Board is made up of seasoned international student ministry leaders; its 1998 conference was held outside Washington, D.C. Agencies traditionally involved in international student work (Inter Varsity, Navigators, Campus Crusade), etc., are both cooperating and co-leading this movement.

A small circle of Chinese Christian leaders involved in PRC/China ministry network informally to explore the challenges which the overseas Chinese church faces after June 1989, in light of PRC responsiveness to Christianity. The initial funding came from the Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelism - USA office; for many years the gathering was coordinated by an agency which refers Christian professionals for service in China. PRC are often invited to be part of this annual dialogue.
It is hoped that the ACMI community and the overseas Chinese PRC/China ministry leaders might find many more opportunities for information exchange and cooperation.

7. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN CHINA

PRC ministry is a natural concern for Christian organizations in North America which provide educational and professional services in China. Because they are engaged in direct dialogue with educators in China year after year, such organizations provide valuable insight for PRC workers in the west. Intellectuals in China and PRC overseas form one seamless tapestry; they must be understood in its global entirety.

8. CARING FOR THOSE WHO CARE; EQUIPPING TOMORROW EQUIPPERS

After surveying the seven different types of PRC ministries, we must ask: since the Body of Christ has invested in, and raised up so much manpower and spiritual gifting in reaching PRC, how will this pool of manpower/gifts be enhanced? And who is working to ensure that, the Lord willing, an even larger pool of manpower/gift resources will be available to meet the needs of the 21st century?

Who will reach PRC in the 21st century?

a. PRC Christian leaders, many of whom have begun ministering in the 1990.

b. Existing western ministries in international student outreach.

c. Overseas Chinese churches, which will include a much larger segment of PRC members.

d. Christians in the church in North America with a heart for China. These include mission committee leaders in the local church, Bible college and seminary students and faculty, former and future teachers serving in China, and mission executives in various agencies.

e. Third world mission-minded Christians, especially Korean Christians. What do these future servants of PRC need? Information, insight, networking, prayer and fellowship opportunities, and much encouragement.

Before we leave the topic of classifying PRC ministries, we should raise the issues of (a) quality control in PRC ministry, especially in the area of discipling and mentoring PRC Christian leaders; and (b) integrity in promotion and communication with the Christian public. PRC Christians can make a tremendous impact on the Christian public in the West. Yet, how do we help a PRC Christian grow, without turning him/her into a "celebrity" to his/her detriment? And how do we communicate the latest
developments in PRC work without over-exposing our PRC brothers and sisters – to the detriment of their maturing process? These issues can be addressed more effectively if PRC ministry organizations and leaders consult with each other in a cooperative spirit.
III. CHARTING THE MAP OF ISSUES IN PRC MINISTRY

What are the intellectual issues which PRC (especially PRC Christians) wrestle with? What practical as well as theoretical issues emerge in the course of PRC ministry?

1. EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHP METHODS

There are many overseas Chinese Christians from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia who believe that large-scale evangelistic meetings are a crucial part of evangelism. God has raised up powerful preachers since the days of John Sung, Watchman Nee and Wang Mingdao of the 1930s. Today evangelists like Stephen Tong continue to conduct crusades around the world. (Tong is unique in that he is a theologian, apologist, revivalist and evangelist all in one.)

Evangelistic meetings and revival meetings meet a felt need in many PRC hearts, because they look for limax” or risis” experiences. The effectiveness of crusades to a large extent depends on the pre-evangelistic friendship cultivated, and the follow-up work and assimilation of converts into local churches. It seems that PRC also benefit from pi-ling, or “deeper life” meetings and conferences, to renew their faith.

Many Americans look upon these evangelistic and revival meetings and wonder whether they are indigenous methods to reach and disciple the Chinese. If by “indigenous” we mean in harmony with the fundamental worldview of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Chinese Marxism,” then the answer may be in the negative. However if by “indigenous” we mean effective in the experience of the Chinese church throughout her history,” then many of these techniques used are part and parcel of the indigenous Body of Christ among the Chinese people.

Mainstream (Caucasian) American ministries targeting PRC are usually sensitive to the culture issue. They often ask: What is the most culturally appropriate way to present the gospel? What are the most culturally appropriate ways to disciple new PRC Christians? Into this discussion enter seasoned PRC ministry workers who are writing papers and doctoral theses on the topic (e.g. Katie Rawson, Fuller Seminary; Bruce McDowell, Westminster Seminary). PRC ministry is becoming a subfield within missiology. This is most encouraging! It is hoped that more Chinese Christians (both PRC and overseas Chinese) would also seriously study evangelistic and discipleship methods.

2. THE RESURGENCE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE THOUGHT
Beyond considerations of methods in evangelism and discipleship, one must ask: what are the philosophical, social-science and theological issues which affect the thinking of the PRC in the 1990s? What questions do PRC seekers ask? What values are PRC converts affected by? What do they read, and what issues do they think about?

We begin by acknowledging that, as soon as we seek to answer these questions, we are dealing with two larger questions: (a) What are the philosophical and theological issues which Chinese Christians reflect and debate about? This points us to the writings of mainland and overseas Chinese Christian publications, including those coming from Canada, United States, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China. PRC readers and respondents these books and periodicals, and the output is tremendous. (b) What are the philosophical and social-science issues which come from the discussion in the community of mainland Chinese intellectuals at large, both in China and overseas? Which non-Christian issues affect PRC Christians most significantly?

One set of issues stem from a reconsideration of traditional Chinese thought, particularly Confucianism and Taoism.

A. Dr. Thomas In-Seng Leung is one of a small number of overseas Chinese Christians who have been trained by the masters of The New Confucianism (not to be confused with the Neo-Confucianism of the Sung and Ming periods in traditional China). New Confucians in the 20th century seek the revival of Confucian thought for the modern world. (In this sense Dr. Lit Sen Chang, before he became a Christian in the 1950s, could be regarded as a New Confucianist. He organized Kiang Nan University in the late 1940s for the rejuvenation of Asian religions and philosophies.) There are several generations of New Confucianists; the most recent generation, led by men like Dr. Tu Wei-ming, seeks to make Confucian values relevant to the post-modern information world. Dr. Leung, through his journal, Cultural China, has created a forum for dialogue between the New Confucianists and Chinese Christians. Being a philosopher rather than a theologian, Dr. Leung’s efforts should be regarded as a Christian attempt to create a presence in the secular field of contemporary Chinese philosophy, rather than a theological reflection on contemporary Chinese thought representing a churchly tradition. He enters seriously and sincerely into the themes and methods of contemporary Chinese thought, with all its creativity and risks. (Such methods include 20th century social science methods.)

B. Yuan Zhiming was trained as a poet and an author before he became a Christian. In his articles, published both by Overseas Campus magazine and Chinese Christian Mission of Petaluma, California, he has taken a highly personal approach to the interpretation of the historical faith. Like Leung, Yuan rejects the western, cognitive, propositional method of understanding the Christian faith. Such does not go deep enough, in their view; to truly root Christianity in Chinese soil, a poetic, literary, aesthetic and mystical approach is to be preferred. For Yuan, the history of Christian thought is also seen as a barrier for a true seeker of Jesus Christ; “et us directly knock at the door of Jesus” would be Yuan’s approach, echoing Chen Duxiu, editor of the New Youth
magazine of the May Fourth period (1915-27). Or perhaps one could compare Yuan approach to Christianity with that of Wu Lei-ch an and others and Yanjing University in the 1920 and 1930 (see my book, Xian qu yu guo ke). A strong anti-intellectual, Yuan is discovering parallels between Taoism and Christian ideas, and has published Lao Tzu vs. Jesus (1998), re-translating and re-interpreting the Dao De Jing to find a Messiah figure in this classic. He regards these insights as one of the most significant events in modern Chinese intellectual history.

Many missiologists rejoice to see such serious attempts by Leung and Yuan. The orthodox theologian seeking the doctrinal purity of the visible Church on earth wonders if the spurning of propositional truth may compromise the accurate, competent interpretation and application of God’s Word in any culture, specially contemporary Chinese culture. In any case, an issue worth pondering is: to what extent should biblical doctrine and evangelic systematic theology speak to the issues of philosophical method? Does one have to choose between traditional apologetics (understood to be the defense of the Christian faith and the critique of humanist philosophy) on the one hand, and dialogue (understood by many, incorrectly, to be the neutral pursuit of truth, in which Christians and non-Christians can participate as equal partners) on the other?

A third major thinker which brings traditional Chinese ideas to bear upon PRC, in my judgment, is Dr. Ka-lun Leung of Alliance Bible Seminary, Hong Kong. Among many topics on which Leung writes is the whole area of Chinese church history. He has published a history of the Protestant church in Guangdong province. My understanding of his approach is that he treats Chinese church history as Chinese history. In response and reaction to what is often perceived as missionary imperialism, Leung takes his cue as a Chinese historian, and seeks to carve out the field of Chinese church history as an indigenous enterprise. He has written several important pieces, in the newsletter of the Fellowship of Evangelical Students, in the journal of China Graduate School of Theology, and in Jian Dao, the theological journal of Alliance Bible Seminary, outlining the attitudes of Chinese intellectuals toward Christianity, particularly as these ideas relate to patriotism; and the tensions of intellectual choice as modern Chinese intellectuals (since the 16th century) gives us part of his Confucianism and adopts Christianity as a newfound faith and value system. On the pages of Hong Kong Christian Times (a weekly newspaper), Leung decries the reappearance of triumphalism in certain China ministries, and takes issue with Dr. Ping-cheung Lo (of the Hong Kong Baptist University philosophy department) as to the significance of the emergence of Cultural Christians. Ka-lun is a major force to reckon with in the coming days. We see nationalism and Christianity interacting and integrating in the thought of Ka-lun Leung, reminding one of the tensions in T.C. Chao and Wu Lei-ch an of the 1920 and 1930 (the author here does not intend to compare Leung’s theological convictions with those of Chao and Wu; Leung calls himself Reformed).

3. MODERN MAN AND IDEAS
Since the 1970s, Hong Kong’s most articulate Christian theologians and social scientists have been writing and speaking on the issue of culture. One such occasion for interaction was the Seminar on Gospel and Chinese Culture sponsored by the Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism in 1985. In the late 1980s, Hong Kong Baptist University has sponsored several symposia, and today its philosophy and religion departments is a virtual team of talent and expertise. In the same neighborhood, the China Graduate School of Theology, whose vice-president, Dr. Carver Yu, is a former professor of philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist. These and other schools have contributed much in the area of reflecting on: what does it mean to be human in the modern world?

A. The method of contemporary theology has been, in my opinion, to focus on the immanence of God at the expense of his transcendence. The dialectical method of Barth is also influenced by existential philosophy. Such are themes found both among theologians of China Graduate School of Theology, on the one hand, and PRC centers of research such as Logos and Pneuma, the journal edited by Liu Xiaofeng, on the other. The intention, in my view, is to find a God who relates to the pain and agony of modern men and women.

Liu has translated a large number of theologians into Chinese, directly from Russian, German, Italian, French as well as English.

B. The popularity of medieval mysticism in Christian spirituality among Hong Kong evangelicals is a remarkable development in the 1980s and 1990s. Dr. Milton Wan of Tyndale Seminary (formerly Ontario Theological Seminary), a former lecturer at the China Graduate School of Theology, has taught a number of courses and seminars on the cultivation of spirituality, sometimes understood as Christian sagehood. Prof. Chi-Hok Wong, President of the First Evangelical Church Association and Christians for Social Justice (Los Angeles) is teaching Christians the art of solitude, self-discovery and intimacy with God. Henri Nouwen’s books have been translated into Chinese and published by evangelical publishers in Hong Kong. Asia’s Christians, living in hectic, postmodern cities, are exhorted to come away, and be silent in God’s presence. This fits well with the concerns of Yuan Zhiming and Thomas In-seng Leung. An aesthetic and mystical approach to Christianity has emerged from different quarters. One can expect the Hong Kong and the PRC theologians of spirituality to converge.

Taking a more traditional, churchly approach, and finding cues from more traditional theologians, Dr. Edwin Hui of Regent College expounds a trinitarian theology for Christian spirituality in his articles, which have appeared in Chinese Churches Today and elsewhere. Hui is an excellent interpreter of the spirituality of James Houston for the Chinese speaking world.

I am deliberately classifying “medieval” mysticism under “modern Man and His Ideas,” because with the change of context, the meaning of ideas also change. What is going on in the contemporary search for a Chinese Christian spirituality is a thoroughly modern (or postmodern) phenomenon. As a Protestant evangelical churchman, I am...
grateful that traditional Protestant thought is interacting with, and responding to, medieval mysticism in providing more biblical content to Christian meditation. In this regard, a number of doctoral students at Westminster Seminary are devoting their efforts to expounding Puritan spirituality. We should see their labors bearing fruit in coming years.

4. THE INFLUENCE OF POSTMODERNISM

Before the 1980 , the evangelical theological scene held a consensus as to God’s revelation in Scripture. Propositional truth was received, and the Bible’s authority in the areas of science and history, as well as in faith and ethics, was unchallenged, although there were disagreements as to precise interpretations of doctrines, e.g. infant vs. adult baptism, predestination vs. free will, covenant theology vs. dispensationalism and the various millennial views on the second coming of Christ.

Since the 1980 , however, the language of discourse has changed. Indeed, the study of language has dominated the field of hermeneutics. Such is the situation today in the west, and it is no different in the Chinese theological world. And this is impacting the development of PRC Christian thought.

We are beginning to see the influence of contemporary linguistics on hermeneutics in the Chinese church. Theological lecturers in Chinese seminaries are expounding postmodern ideas, e.g. that words (signs) are arbitrary, and their meaning uncertain. Both the radical and not-so-radical views of contemporary linguists are presented to the Chinese church, often without critique. (An exception is Wai-Yee Ng’s treatment of hermeneutics in China Graduate School of Theology CGST Journal, 1997.)

In the field of systematic theology, a most harmful presentation of the doctrine of God was made by Clark Pinnock in The Openness of God (Inter Varsity Press). Pinnock calls his position free-will theism; I would rather label it finite-immanentism. He makes God out to be vulnerable to the vicissitudes of human life; what surprises humans also surprises God. It remains to be seen whether this kind of view of God will be expounded by PRC or overseas Chinese theologians. Judging by how quickly Asia seminary lecturers respond to and expound the latest theological ideas, I am rather inclined to think that the Chinese church will be exposed to such heresies before long.

It is high time that the historic, Protestant emphasis on the sole authority of Scripture and a high view of God the transcendent sovereign over all the universe, be heard at large in the Chinese church! One could be a member of the academic community, and review the latest theological trends. Yet one needs to ask: what is my responsibilities as a church leader (traditionally, a churchman in the best sense of the word)? To what extent am I obliged to profess the faith of the church of the ages? Am I only responsible to the demands of the academic/publishing community? Or do I have obligations to the historic, visible church of Jesus Christ as a doctor (teacher) of the church?
We may renew our consideration of the historic position that God revealed propositional truth. Perhaps postmodernism in its extreme form will cause a rebound, and the limitations of contemporary linguistics would soon be felt, and be dealt with, by Chinese theologians.

5. THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON PRC

Evangelical PRC ministry workers may be bewildered by the array of issues and thinkers read by PRC. This is especially true of the reading of PRC in the humanities, and specifically those in religious and theological studies. For the first time, North American graduate students in theology from Taiwan and Hong Kong now sit down at the conference table with PRC counterparts. And they discuss dozens of topics. At the first conference on Christianity and religious studies cosponsored by the Ricci Institute and the Boston Chinese Christian Scholars Association, the following papers were presented:

As another example of the influence of contemporary theology and religious philosophy on PRC, let me list (in English translation) the table of contents of a volume of theological writings, translated into Chinese under the leadership of Liu Xiaofeng (the leader among the so-called cultural Christians):

Is the evangelical church in North America, and the Chinese church overseas, ready to dialogue with, and respond to, this broad-based, and profoundly academic interest in religion? Would the Chinese church send statesmen and ambassadors into this academic field of ministry?

IV. CONCLUSION

With the rise of PRC Christian leadership, the community of China-concerned Christians has a new partner. Overseas Chinese as well as western Christians engaging Chinese minds need to re-think our models and theological assumptions. Fundamental paradigms need to be re-examined:

I end with a few questions for the reader:

Should western models of evangelism be re-examined? Is evangelism a process, and if so, how do we effectively listen to the PRC mind and heart?

Can one justifiably speak of a "hinese" or "sian" theology, when the Chinese church is turning to the west for cues?

At what point does creativity in theology and apologetics becomes syncretism and heresy?

What church models can overseas Christians offer the PRC Christian leader, as they develop their own congregational life?
Exciting times lie ahead. Wherever PRC ministry will lead to, these are moments we need to learn together - and learn from Scripture in a fresh new way.
From a technological standpoint, the PRC quickly has achieved parity with USN standards and capacities for warship and submarine production. PLAN ships and submarines do not have to match U.S. naval capabilities precisely; they only have to be good enough to achieve more hits and win any given battle. Naval capability. The PRC has both the will and the means to push for rapid increases in the PLAN’s order of battle in support of an expanding set of missions to fulfill the China Dream. CHARTING TWO CRITICAL MAPS FOR PRC MINISTRY Ten years after Tienanmen Square (1989) Samuel Ling I. TIME TO RE-CHART OUR MAPS page 2 1. Global Changes China vs. America 2. Rise of Indigenous PRC Ministries 3. Entry of New Churches and Agencies in PRC ministry 4. Time for Inventory II. CHARTING THE MAP OF PRC MINISTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA page 5 1. Direct Ministries 2. Direct Ministries Indigenous PRC Bodies 3. Resources Literature and Periodicals 4. Training for PRC Christians and Christian Leaders 5. Explorations and Dialogue in Thought and Culture 6. Networking 7. Educational Services fo