

HOW CHINESE CHRISTIANS EVALUATE WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

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Interviewer (I) : Let's move on to another important question. How do the Chinese Christian's evaluate western Christianity?

Chinese House Leader (CHCL): We feel the church in the West is playing games. We are troubled by the frivolity in many of their meetings. Our people are broken and weeping in our assemblies, western Christians are telling jokes. This brings very different results. We feel the Church in the west is bound by traditions and programs and therefore cannot follow the Holy Spirit's leadings. We have to make sure we have that direct line to the Holy Spirit and seek to hear His voice. Christians in the West have been able to eliminate Christ and His direct presence in their midst. I have a feeling sometimes that the whole Christianity in the West could be going for years before they discover that Jesus has not been with them for a long time. He has gone somewhere else. He is not with them anymore.

(I): What does the Chinese church believe about the Holy Ghost? It seems very evident that you are a powerful people. How does this work out in your theology of the Spirit?

(CHCL): We believe it is God's command to every believer to be baptized by the Holy Ghost. We also believe that we must have continual infilling as our life goes on in the Lord Jesus. This is the primary reason for all the amazing things that we share in our meetings.

(I): What does the Chinese church believe about holy living? This is an area of much confusion in the west. The professing church is filled with worldliness.

(CHCL): We are conservative Christians. We order our lives according to the word of God. Many do not have Bibles, but those who do study much to see what God says about living a Christian life. Our women are modest, in spirit and in their clothing. This matter of holy living is a real problem for us when we try to relate to Christians from the West.

(I): Some of the testimonies about healing are amazing. They cause me to sit in astonishment as I hear them. Could you elaborate on the subject of healing a bit more? What is your theology of healing?

(CHCL): First, let me answer the theology part of the question. We have a very simple theology about healing. We believe that God is a healer. It is simply one of the many manifestations of His holy character. In the west you believe that God can heal. In China, we believe He does ALL the time. It is according to your faith and ours. You receive what you believe. The people are poor and cannot afford to go to the doctor. Because of this, they have to trust in God in ways that western Christians do not.

Healings happen all the time, but people also have sickness that they have to deal with. Poverty and persecution brings extra hardships upon them, and thus they get sick more often. Sometimes God heals, and sometimes He does not. God is sovereign.

(I): Could you also comment on some of the other miracles that we hear about? It is hard for us to relate to so many supernatural happenings. How does this affect the church in China?

(CHCL): We believe in a miracle working God. At first, in the beginning of the revival, everyone was astonished as well. As God began to work many miracles, the church just began to expect miracles. It is not a distraction for us as it is in the West. Miracles happen at a meeting, and the preacher just goes right on preaching the Gospel. There is an expectation that God will confirm His word with miracles. Eighty percent of the church has experienced miracles of some sort or another. Because of this, they expect them. They never glorify the miracles; they glorify God. The gift of miracles is in the Bible, and God works through this gift to honour His name.

(I): Have you ever heard of someone being raised from the dead?

(CHCL): Oh yes, it happens quite often. Many times when someone is killed, or dies from persecution, the leaders will go where the body is to pray and find out if God would have the person live again.

(I): I have often said in my preaching, "When persecution comes, true unity will come with it, because there will be no mixture with the world." In light of this, what do you believe about unity? We have all this ecumenical confusion here in the west.

(CHCL): Again, our theology is very simple. Our unity is based on the essentials of the faith and true marks of discipleship. We say, "Disciples witness, and are persecuted because they witness." This is where the lines of unity are drawn. There are differences among us, but we do not allow these to divide us in the war for souls. We believe there is more that unifies us than there is that separates us.

(I): Could you comment on the name "house churches." What is the significance of this name?

(CHCL): The name signifies several different things. First, the name is given because we meet in houses. There are several reasons for this, and I will comment on them in a moment. The second reason has to do with a distinction between us and the registered churches, which meet in buildings. The last reason is the most important one, we call ourselves house churches out of conviction. We meet in homes because we believe it is more biblical. It is also true that we have to because of persecution, but the primary reason is evangelical in nature. Even if the government of China allowed us liberty to meet openly, we would still meet in houses. Meeting in homes is one of the greatest keys to the tremendous growth of the church. The more meeting places, the more

they can win the lost to Christ. In addition, when we meet in houses, it does not cost us any money. Finances often slow church growth.

(I): Could you tell me what the church services are like when you meet together and feel free? I know there are times when you have to be quiet, but what is it like when you are free?

(CHCL): Chinese Christians are a lively, responsive congregation when we gather in freedom. We sing some hymns and some choruses, and the singing is wholehearted. During the preaching and open testimonies, there are lots of amens and hallelujahs. We meet in forests and caves to do this. so we will not be heard.

(I): Revival has been continuing for decades. Can you give me some reasons why it does not grow cold or stop?

(CHCL): There are two reasons. First, the church is busy fulfilling God's purposes for it on the earth. That purpose is evangelism. As God's people do His work, He continues to pour out His Spirit upon them. This is a secret to ongoing revival. The Chinese church has a powerful vision of the Great Commission. We believe it is the Church's responsibility to preach the Gospel to our generation. The second reason flows out of the first. Because of our persistence in preaching the Gospel, we are persecuted repeatedly. This persecution brings purifying, and that brings more anointing. These two work together to create an atmosphere of revival. As church leaders we are always careful to give the Holy Spirit His place in directing the work. We allow God's Spirit free course to move how and where He will. We see the American church as one that is too organized.

(I): Could you comment on the eschatology of the house churches? What is their end time theology?

(CHCL): Our theology is very simple. We believe that Jesus Christ is coming again. He is coming for His bride who has made herself ready. As far as the details of how all this will happen, we have some differences. These differences however do not divide us. The strongest point of our theology has to do with evangelism. We believe the gospel must be preached among all nations, and then shall the end come. We get this from Matt. 24:14. Because of this belief, we have strong convictions about evangelism. We believe that if you are not actively busy preaching to others, you are hindering the second coming of Christ, and you need to repent.

(I): The church is growing at a very fast rate, and yet it is underground. Therefore, it would be hard to give much formal training to the leaders. From a western perspective, many would believe you cannot lead a church until you have had much formal training. Obviously, this training is not happening in China, yet the church is thriving. How can this be? Can you explain some of the preparations the leaders receive?

(CHCL): Most of the top leaders are very poor. The strongest point of their character is love. They pour out their lives for the persecuted sheep in China both in labours and by subjecting themselves to the dangers of imprisonment. One wrong move and they sit in a prison cell for five or ten years. This is love as many in the west have never known. We do train our leaders. The training, however, is very simple. We train them in three major areas. Let me state them briefly..

..We teach them how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and walk with Him daily. Then from that walk, they must learn how to witness for Christ in a dangerous hostile environment

..We teach them how to die daily. This is very important because of the persecutions leaders face

.. We teach them how to escape the police when they are caught, and how to escape from prison if God says "Run." The word of God is very important to these leaders. They have memorized and internalized many chapters of the Bible. They cannot carry a Bible around in their hands, so they make sure that they can carry one in their heart. The fire of the Holy Ghost is also very important in ministry. These men are constantly being empowered by the Spirit. This is leadership in China, and this is how the church spreads so rapidly.

Editors note: When Communism closed the doors to China in 1949, there were one million believers in China. Now, fifty years later, there are eighty million disciples of Jesus Christ. Christ is building His Church in China, and the gates of hell are not prevailing against her.

Source: An interview with a Chinese House Church Leader

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