

THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIANITY AND AMERICA'S FOUNDING

Jack Ma
Founder, CEO of Alibaba Holding Co.
September 22, 2014

A good life depends on self-discovery. Today, China's expedient economic development seemingly has brought us much satisfaction, but our value system has totally collapsed. Our culture has been greatly damaged. The earliest New Life Movement in the 1930's replaced old traditional values but without much success. Later on, the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 totally destroyed our value system, producing a confused society with no positive value whatsoever. Today, many Chinese scholars look to the West, especially America, for the right answer, and they think that adopting the America legal system would change China from the inside out. Wrong, wrong! When you say someone is good-looking, is it simply because of his or her nose? Of course not. America's strength is built upon her Christian cultural heritage. From her belief system came her legal system, and from her legal system came her political system - with power given to the people to elect their leaders. The whole system of American society has evolved from her Christian foundation, permeating to every aspect of her people's lifestyle, educational institutions, medical practice, public safety, social welfare, social structure, and role of government.

I firmly believe that you, as concerned citizens of China, will help us to look for a positive value system to be established on this land. Only until then will China start to move forward in real progress with a bright future.

As for America's mainstream cultural values, it is not hard to discover where they originated. America's first rock of democratic foundation was the *Mayflower Compact* in 1620, stating:

"In the Name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten... having undertaken, for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith... a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these present solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic for better ordering and preservation..."

Furthermore, in the *Declaration of Independence*, the Word of God is mentioned four times. If the Word of God was omitted from this document, the spirit of the *Declaration of Independence* would be non-existent, thus

meaningless. Christianity is the foundation of America's culture. Like a tree's root system that continuously feeds and nourishes the whole tree, Christianity has nourished America. Only until you understand this close association will you know the truth of America's success as a great nation.

In America, the concept of democracy, justice, and liberty for all originated in her Christian faith, with the Bible, the Word of God, as its source. Ideas such as equality, forgiveness, unconditional love, even forgiving your enemy, were based on Scripture and taught and practiced among believers who founded America as a new nation over 200 years ago.

Basic Christian teachings include the belief of human beings' sinful nature - that man is limited and imperfect with many flaws. Therefore, man-made systems will also be flawed. This means power needs to be checked and balanced because absolute power will corrupt absolutely. This is why separating the powers of government into three branches - Executive, Legislative, and Judicial - works brilliantly in the American political landscape.

Many American Christians firmly believe God's Word, the Bible, and many go to church regularly to wash the dust from their hearts and lift their souls to a higher ground, to meet their Creator, to confess their sinful deeds, to ask for forgiveness, and to start another week on the right path to be pleasing to God. Many people in America live with this kind of attitude in getting along with others. They believe and trust each other. This reaffirms what has been said in China in recent years, "Planting one more church will lead to one less prison, one more Christian and one less criminal."

Christian belief teaches us that God is God and man is man; only God is above us and he is omnipotent. Man will always be under God's authority, and man can never be above God. This concept of God's rule over man automatically limits earthly rulers' power, minimizing one's power hungry, self-seeking ambition. Even the most powerful political ruler needs to be humble when facing citizens' demand. The famous, the powerful, and the popular need to examine themselves in the presence of God, for disobedience to God means self-destruction personally, politically, financially and/or professionally. According to American political thoughts, liberty, equality, and democracy are as absolutely important as one's bloodline. On the contrary, Americans cannot tolerate dictatorship, special privileges, and favoritism.

Most of us also understand that a belief system can be very influential in every aspect of a person's life (physical, relational, professional, as well as spiritual). Let me give you two examples to explain my point.

There were vast differences between the descendants of two families of the same era. One family was that of a great Christian preacher, Jonathan Edwards, and the other of Max Jukes, a well-known atheist. Max Jukes once said to Pastor Edwards: "I will never believe in your Jesus."

Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan preacher from the 1700's, and his wife Sarah left a great godly legacy for his 11 children. In 1900, Pastor A.E. Winship decided to trace the descendants of Jonathan Edwards almost 150 years after his death. His findings are astounding, especially when compared to the descendants of Max Jukes.

Jonathan Edwards' Godly legacy included one U.S Vice-President, three U.S. senators, three governors, three mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 65 professors, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers and 100 missionaries.

Max Jukes' descendants included seven murderers, 60 thieves, 50 women of debauchery, 130 other convicts, 310 paupers and 400 who were physically wrecked by indulgent living.

This is a powerful example showing how a parent's leadership can have a profound effect on his children. Principles matter.

Christian culture does not discriminate in economics and business, and it even encourages people to become prosperous through hard work and laboring to gain fruits through blood and sweat. Protestants even go one step further to seek wealth and profit not for their own gain but to use properly for God's purpose to glorify His name. Working ethically, living frugally, and tithing to God are considered by Christians virtuous living and obedience to God. John Wesley summed it up best when he said, "Work all you can, save all you can, and give all you can for His Kingdom."

Nothing is by accident in the real world. Certain people can prove themselves with the passage of time to be honest, sincere, or vain and fake. Many of us have a hard time coming to terms with why China, a proud ancient nation with 5,000 years of history, is still struggling and searching in ways that America, a young country with barely 200 years of history, is not. From Jonathan Edwards' family we can see the power of Christian belief. Two distinctive seeds were planted among the Edwards' family from the beginning; the seed of love and goodness which produced so many physicians, professors, and college presidents, and the seed of worshipping and respecting the ultimate authority—God. Children taught to fear God and respect His authority will learn to be accountable and responsible for their own actions. Therefore, being humble and not proud is considered an admirable quality by Christians.

Today, looking around at our own people, I see deep in the hearts of those in power the love of money and position. What do they think of what I am saying? “Grandpa, what’s the use of Heaven?! I am the most powerful! There is nothing I dare not do!! Just look at me - how successful and how powerful I am! I can do anything I want...” It is about the time for us to ponder on these two families, the Edwards vs. the Jukes. Let us learn from them and let us choose a belief system that is founded on the greatest love – that of Christ’s. This will give us unprecedented power to change us from the inside out. Remember, whoever possesses those two seeds will be truly successful down the road. This is the ultimate truth, a right belief system is the fastest way to powerful living.

English Translation by Catherine Liu, Dallas, TX