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Christian Witness in the Marketplace in Hong Kong

LEE Kam-hon, Dennis P. McCANN
and MaryAnn Ching YUEN

Abstract

In the marketplace, Christians are bound to encounter problems that challenge their faith. Can the Christian faith overcome various challenges, bringing forth the primacy of God before man? The authors interviewed 119 seasoned Christian executives in Hong Kong and recorded 539 stories. An integrative framework is developed basing on the typologies of H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* and Lewicki and others' negotiation styles. It becomes a five-mode typology that is used to classify different ways Christian executives actually responded to ethical issues. How a hostile culture (China business) and a supportive culture (Christian corporate culture) affected the way these executives chose to respond is examined. When operating under a challenging culture a Christian executive tended to avoid or compromise; whereas under a supportive culture one tended not to yield but dominate. It is found that Christian executives who tried to live out the same faith might take different normative considerations, and make different responses to a similar ethical challenge. In principle different responses to an ethical challenge can be equally Christian.

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INTRODUCTION

In the marketplace, Christians are bound to encounter problems that challenge their faith. When they acknowledge the obstacles and articulate questions that trouble their conscience, they are moving towards a solution. When they share their stories and begin to understand the plight of fellow Christians on the same journey, they receive mutual encouragement and their desire for answers consistent with their Christian commitment gains strength. When they have time to reflect on their experience and recognize God's hand in their lives, they realize that effective business ethics is ultimately more than following a set of rules; it is also putting a dynamic relationship with God into practice and action.

Through interviewing our Christian informants in the marketplace, we collected data to conduct an empirical study. From the results, we developed a new theoretical framework basing on H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* typology¹ and Lewicki and others' negotiation styles² that may be useful in handling and solving practical problems in the marketplace. Both components of our framework are time-tested and proven effective for describing and categorizing issues in their fields. Using the new framework, Christians in the marketplace can access the wisdom of those who have gone before them and assess its appropriateness for their individual situations. Thus, the resulting framework provides a systematic way to negotiate often perplexing ethical challenges. This study also suggests answers to three questions important to Christian executives in the marketplace. Can Christians succeed in the marketplace? Can the Christian faith make a difference? Can Christians sort out conflicting interests?

¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951/2001).

² Roy J. Lewicki, David M. Saunders, and John M. Minton, *Essentials of Negotiation*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Irwin/McGraw-Hill, 2001), 14–19.

CHRIST AND BUSINESS CULTURE

To better understand Christian witness in the marketplace, we conducted an in-depth study among 119 seasoned Chinese Christian business executives in Hong Kong (a business society full of vibrant market forces).³ Our period of study also captures the developmental process of the mainland Chinese market and its effect on business ethics. The role of China in the global economy will continue to be a topic of interest for years to come. There are two criteria for including these executives in our study. First, they are recognized by their peers for upholding a serious Christian commitment. This will qualify them as "Christian." Secondly, they have in-depth business and management experience. This will qualify them as "executives."

The research methodology is Critical Incident Technique. It is a proven methodology in several rigorous research projects in marketing.⁴ A typical critical incident has two characteristics. First, it is critical because it displays extreme behavior that makes a significant difference in achieving the designated objectives. In addition, that behavior is sufficiently complete for observation and interpretation. Secondly, the results of that extreme behavior are clear and predictable.

Hong Kong Professional and Educational Services, Ltd. (HKPES), a non-profit organization sponsoring various professional and educational programs in Asia, was the sponsor of this study. MaryAnn Ching Yuen identified prospective interviewees, secured their consent for interviews and enlisted the help of Lee Kam-hon and Dennis McCann to conduct the interviews.

An interview would cover four parts. They include interviewees' conversion and church life, their business and management experience, their general remarks on faith and work, and the critical incidents in their experience that featured significant challenges involving their

³ Lee Kam-hon, Dennis P. McCann, and MaryAnn Ching Yuen, "Christ and Business Culture: A Study of Christian Executives in Hong Kong," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43 (2003): 103–110.

⁴ Mary Jo Bitner, Bernard H. Booms, and Mary Stanfield Tetreault, "The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favorable and Unfavorable Incidents," *Journal of Marketing* 54 (January 1990): 71–84. Mary Jo Bitner, Bernard H. Booms, and Lois A. Mohr, "Critical Service Encounters: The Employee's Viewpoint," *Journal of Marketing* 58 (October 1994): 95–106.

faith and work. For each critical incident, they would deliberate on the background of that challenge, the response, rationale behind the response, and consequences of the response. All interviews were tape recorded for subsequent analysis.

Nine executives were identified as initial cases for testing. Lee Kam-hon interviewed them in Chinese. Dennis McCann interviewed them in English. Based on the interview results, it was concluded that while the interviews were conducted under different situations (Chinese vs. American interviewer, Chinese vs. English as communication medium, Protestant vs. Catholic interviewer, applied social science vs. religious studies background, etc.), the interview materials remain virtually the same. Only Lee or only McCann, but not both, conducted the interview for all subsequent interviewees. Lee did 82 more interviews. McCann did 28 more interviews.

In preparing the interview transcripts, Lee Kam-hon and MaryAnn Ching Yuen handled together the 82 cases Lee interviewed alone. Dennis McCann and Yuen handled together the other 37 cases. For the first 82 cases, Lee prepared the drafts for 64 cases based on the interview tapes and Yuen listened to the tapes independently and did the validation work. Yuen prepared the drafts for 18 cases based on the interview tapes and Lee listened to the tapes independently and did the validation work. For the 37 cases McCann and Yuen worked together, McCann prepared the drafts and Yuen did the validation work.

Altogether there are 119 interview records that become validated materials for reflection and theorizing.

An important priority was to develop a theoretical framework to capture the meaning for business ethics of the critical incidents we had collected in our interviews. The critical incidents reveal a pattern that we understand, generically, as an encounter between Christ and business culture. The executive who identifies himself as a Christian represents Christ in this encounter. The challenge the executive faces is to resolve conflicts between his Christian discipleship and certain practices characteristic of the prevalent business culture.

H. Richard Niebuhr's treatment of Christ and culture proved to be especially promising for developing a typology to describe the encounter. He identified five types of strategies by which Christianity coped with the practical challenges emergent in the history of Western civilization. Niebuhr's book, *Christ and Culture*, thus is one major source of literature for this research project. Following the work of Niebuhr, van

Wensveen Siker extrapolated five types for understanding the Christian encounter with business culture.⁵ These are based on Niebuhr's original five types: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture. The theme of Christ against culture is opposition. It can define one extreme. The theme of Christ of culture is agreement. It defines the other extreme. The other three types belong to the realm between these two extremes. They seek to maintain the great differences between the two principles and they also undertake the task of holding them together in some unity. They differ in the way each attempts to combine the two authorities. The theme of Christ above culture is synthesis. It features how Christ elevates some elements of culture towards the right direction. The theme of Christ and culture in paradox is polarity and tension. It features the co-existence of two powerful forces. The theme of Christ the transformer of culture is conversion. It features a systematic transformation of culture in conformity with Christian values.

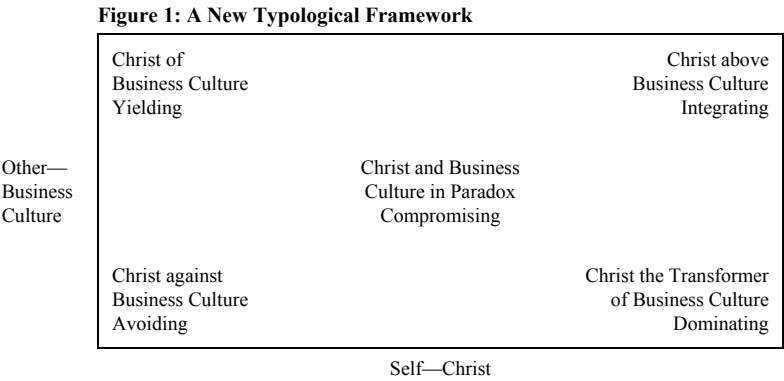
Lewicki and others also identified five types in their proposed framework of negotiation styles.⁶ These five types are dominating (also known as competing or contending), yielding (also known as accommodating or obliging), avoiding (also known as inaction), integrating (also known as collaborating or problem solving), and compromising. Dominating, compromising and yielding represent three positions along the path of distributive bargaining. (In negotiation, there are two basic modes, that is, distributive bargaining and integrative negotiation. Distributive bargaining refers to a zero sum game situation. Integrative negotiation refers to a positive sum game situation.) Basically, distributive bargaining involves a win-lose mode in negotiation. On the other hand, avoiding, compromising and integrating represent the three positions along the path of integrative negotiation. It presents a path towards win-win.

If we position the five types featured in the Niebuhrian Christ and culture paradigm within the Lewicki and others framework of negotiation styles, Christ against culture corresponds to avoiding. Christ of culture corresponds to yielding. Christ above culture corresponds to integrating. Christ and culture in paradox corresponds to compromising. Christ the transformer of culture corresponds to dominating. As a result, the Niebuhrian Christ and culture paradigm can be positioned in

⁵ Louke van Wensveen Siker, "Christ and Business: A Typology for Christian Business Ethics," *Journal of Business Ethics* 8 (1989): 883–888.

⁶ Lewicki, Saunders and Minton, *Essentials of Negotiation*, 14–19.

the negotiation style framework. In a way, the two paradigms are integrated into one framework. The new typological framework may be presented as Figure 1.



The new typological framework will still feature five types. They include Christ against business culture, Christ of business culture, Christ above business culture, Christ and business culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of business culture. While the new typological framework will still feature five types, when these five types are positioned in the context of the negotiation style framework, the implication becomes different. In the new typological framework, it becomes possible to understand explicitly the interrelationships among these five types. It also becomes possible to trace the possible strategies for switching one’s response from one type to another. In the meantime, it is important to see the different implications this integrated framework carries from the two original paradigms. The five types featured in the Niebuhrian Christ and culture paradigm are equally ethical. To quote Niebuhr, “typology helps us to understand the infinite variety of creative morality in Christianity.”⁷ However, the corresponding five types in the negotiation style paradigm are different insofar as they focus on profitableness in business performance.

⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, iv.

REFLECTION ON THE DATA SET

We have collected 539 such incidents from these 119 Chinese Christian executives. These incidents collectively serve as the base for conceptualization and reflection in our study.

The key variable is the type of response to an ethical challenge. Possible types include the five types of responses deliberated in the new typological framework. They include Christ against business culture/Avoiding, Christ of business culture/Yielding, Christ above business culture/Integrating, Christ and business culture in paradox/Compromising, and Christ the transformer of culture/Dominating.

Based on what is recorded in the incidents, it is possible to explore various antecedents and consequences of these responses. However, since the focus of this paper is to explore what leads to these types of responses, our subsequent deliberation will concentrate on the antecedents.

After doing the interview transcriptions, we felt that we had a good understanding of the interview materials. We tried to identify various independent variables that may matter and developed a coding scheme for the independent variables. The independent variables belonged to two broad categories. They are the interviewee's personal background and incident-specific influences. The first category refers to items that are interviewee-specific. They remain the same for all incidents reported by that particular interviewee. The second category refers to items that are incident-specific. Even for the same interviewee, these items may be different for different incidents.

There are 20 items in the first category, the interviewee's personal background. They include gender, education, Christian schooling, education outside Hong Kong, theological training, professional certification, traditional Chinese family with strong moral values, family having higher priority than job/career, conversion being a datable event, conversion occurring after entering business, conversion occurring once and for all, conversion involving moral regeneration, conversion involving spiritual crisis, conversion involving intellectual crisis, having a clear calling to business, Christian faith/values influencing current choice of job/position, actively involved in Christian fellowship/association specifically related to sustaining Christian commitment in business, actively involved in Bible study

group at work, actively involved in Bible study group at church or outside of work, and church activities having higher priority than job/career.

There are 22 items in the second category, incident-specific influences. They include involving low-tech marketing/production, involving high-tech marketing/production, making questionable payments/paying kickbacks prevalent in interviewee's industry, other corrupt or morally questionable practices prevalent in interviewee's industry, entrepreneur, family business, MNC, church-related business, Christian corporate culture, related to China business, involving conflict over traditional Chinese practices, involving a business situation in which distinctively Chinese practices are at issue, critical incident concerning issues involving relationships external to the company, critical incident involving issues internal to the company, conflict within the critical incident resolved by appeal to higher moral standards beyond governmental regulations, critical incident involving exposure to sexual overtures as a routine part of business negotiation, issues involving governmental partners/clients, issues involving business relationship with other Christians, interviewee having the authority to make decision, the specific business function related to the critical incident, the specific kind of industry related to the critical incident, and nature of interviewee's institution (profit, nonprofit or government).

Chi-square analysis was conducted for each of the 42 independent variables. When the analysis result was significant at $\alpha=0.05$, we also conducted an analysis of residuals to trace the source of differences.⁸ According to the Chi-square analysis results, there are 7 significant relationships among items under the first category, the interviewee's personal background. There are 23 significant relationships among items under the second category, incident-specific influences. It shows that incident-specific influences are more powerful in shaping individual ethical responses. Also, since they are incident-specific, they are likely to be more relevant in relating to the type of responses that executives would make.

Among various incident-specific influences that have a significant impact, three groups can be identified. The first group includes influences that have a negative impact. They include making

⁸ Sidney Siegel, and N. John Castellan, Jr., *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988).

questionable payments/paying kickbacks prevalent in interviewee's industry, other corrupt or morally questionable practices prevalent in interviewee's industry, related to China business, involving conflict over traditional Chinese practices, and critical incident involving exposure to sexual overtures as a routine part of business negotiation. The second group includes influences that have a positive impact. They include Christian corporate culture and interviewee having the authority to make decisions. The third group includes influences that may be positive or negative. They include concerns involving relationships external to the company, conflict within the critical incident resolved by appeal to higher moral standards beyond government regulation, issues involving governmental partners/clients, issues involving business relationship with other Christians, the specific business function related to the critical incident and the specific kind of industry related to the critical incident.

In order to have a clear framework to anchor the discussion in this paper, we decided to pick one negative force and one positive force that are particularly strong and influential to these Christian executives. By so doing, we may be able to magnify the contrast between positive and negative forces and the thinking process behind making an ethical response to them.

Among the influences that have a negative impact, we picked China business. For business executives in Hong Kong, China business is a great opportunity for practically all industries. However, the ethical challenge is formidable and inevitable as China evolves through the stages of a transitional economy. Unlike other influences like making questionable payments/paying kickbacks prevalent in the interviewee's industry, this factor is not industry-specific. Since its impact is wide and deep for all executives, it becomes an appropriate choice among various variables that pose a negative external force as an ethical challenge.

Between the two influences that have a positive impact, we picked Christian corporate culture. In management literature, it is clear that top management support is a prerequisite for implementing business ethics.⁹ For Christian executives, there is no positive support more powerful than a Christian corporate culture. Also, unlike the other influ-

⁹ Patrick E. Murphy, "Implementing Business Ethics," *Journal of Business Ethics* 7 (1988): 907–915. Christopher J. Robertson, "An Analysis of 10 Years of Business Ethics Research in *Strategic Management Journal*: 1996–2005," *Journal of Business Ethics* 80 (2008): 745–753.

ence, when an interviewee has the authority to make the decision, this influence is applicable to all executives. Thus, it is appropriate to pick Christian corporate culture as an influence for in-depth exploration.

CHRISTIAN BUSINESS ETHICS AS POSITIVE SCIENCE: THE IMPACT OF CHINA BUSINESS

In social sciences, the prevalent model for acquiring knowledge is to study the cause-effect relationship. Social scientists collect a sample and use the data set to explore the typical cause and effect relationships among different variables. The result shows a typical relationship pattern based on the available data. This is the mission of positive science. Analyzing the relationship yields a positive statement. It shows *what it is* and *what individuals do*. This is different from the mission of normative theory. A normative statement shows *what it should be* and *what individuals ought to do*. In this study, the dependent variable is the type of responses to ethical challenges. The independent variable demonstrating the impact of a negative external force is China business. Christian executives, like all other executives, are subject to the influence of external forces. When we assemble a large number of incidents, we can administer a statistical analysis and examine the impact of the negative external force. The analysis result shows a typical response pattern based on the aggregate data set. The Chi-square analysis result is in Table 1.

As we can see from Table 1, there is a statistically significant relationship between the types of responses and China business. When we conduct a follow-up study to trace the source of significant differences, we find that they mainly come from two of the ten cells. When executives are involved in China business, they tend to adopt avoiding or compromising as their typical responses to an ethical challenge. For avoiding, when facing ethical challenges, they may choose to withdraw from China business. For compromising, when facing ethical challenges, they may choose to muddle through. While they want to adhere to their Christian principles, they also give in a bit.

From the two cells that constitute the source of significant differences, we can identify 30 incidents from the cell for avoiding and 44 incidents from the cell for compromising. These 74 incidents form a data base for further reflection and deliberation. They enable us to un-

derstand further how doing business in China affects the way Christian executives respond to an ethical challenge.

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Type and China Business

			CHINA BUSINESS		Total
			YES	NO	
TYPE	AGAINST / AVOIDING	Count	30	43	73
		Expected Count	21.3	51.7	73.0
		% within TYPE	41.1%	58.9%	100.0%
		% within CHINABUS	20.4%	12.1%	14.5%
		% of Total	6.0%	8.5%	14.5%
	OF / YIELDING	Count	22	85	107
		Expected Count	31.3	75.7	107.0
		% within TYPE	20.6%	79.4%	100.0%
		% within CHINABUS	15.0%	23.9%	21.3%
		% of Total	4.4%	16.9%	21.3%
	ABOVE / INTEGRATING	Count	18	72	90
		Expected Count	26.3	63.7	90.0
		% within TYPE	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
		% within CHINABUS	12.2	20.2%	17.9%
		% of Total	3.6%	14.3%	17.9%
	PARADOX / COMPROMISING	Count	44	67	111
		Expected Count	32.4	78.6	111.0
		% within TYPE	39.6%	60.4%	100.0%
		% within CHINABUS	29.9%	18.8%	22.1%
		% of Total	8.7%	13.3%	22.1%
	TRANSFORMER / DOMINATING	Count	33	89	122
		Expected Count	35.7	86.3	122.0
		% within TYPE	27.0%	73.0%	100.0%
		% within CHINABUS	22.4%	25.0%	24.3%
		% of Total	6.6%	17.7%	24.3%
Total		Count	147	356	503
		Expected Count	147.0	356.0	503.0
		% within TYPE	29.2%	70.8%	100.0%
		% within CHINABUS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	29.2%	70.8%	100.0%

Chi-square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	18.660 ^a	4	.001
N of Valid Cases	503		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 21.33.

Tracing the Residues

	CHINA BUSINESS	
	Yes	No
Against/Avoiding	1.71522154 *	-0.707454349
Of/Yielding	-1.576116029	0.651247521
Above/Integrating	-1.502623551	0.620428898
Paradox/Compromising	1.942081493 *	-0.801239498
Transformer/Dominating	-0.436809593	0.180532146

* Significant at 0.10 in T-test

Here are two illustrative incidents. Incident A reveals how a Christian executive adopts the stand of Christ against culture/Avoiding, while Incident B shows the stand of Christ and culture in paradox/Compromising.

Incident A

My parents were atheists but they sent me to a Christian school because those were considered the best schools in Hong Kong at that time. While my personal ethics were influenced by my Christian education, I did not make a decision for Christ until I was a university student in Australia. After studying abroad, I brought my family back to Hong Kong because I felt a strong conviction to do my part in China. In returning, I went against the wishes of my traditional Chinese parents who believed that living overseas would give my family a more comfortable lifestyle and a better future. But led by my faith, I felt called to serve in China and decided to fulfill my dream through business development in the construction industry.

Influenced by my father's advice and after a realistic assessment of my school performance, I decided to become a civil engineer. Upon returning to Hong Kong with my diplomas, I started working for one of the biggest architectural firms in the area. I progressed through the ranks and soon outgrew the opportunities at that company. When I became a project manager at a listed construction consultancy company, I discovered that my boss was receiving bribes from the contractors. When I refused to go along with that practice, I was pulled off the project and eventually transferred to another department. Instead of staying with the company or finding work at another company, I decided to start my own business. For several years, I tried to compete for projects in China, where corruption remained pervasive in the industry.

After ten years of China business experience, I never succeeded in escaping the prevailing culture of corruption completely. Even if I resisted corruption in my own company, my work involved hiring subcontractors who no doubt experienced similar pressures to make questionable payments. While I was responsible for my own business decisions, I could not be responsible for theirs, too. After exhausting every alternative available, I concluded that I could no longer do business in China without compromising some of my ethical standards and faith convictions. Despite my Christian motivation of reaching the Chinese for Christ, as well as the potential for making money there, I finally decided to quit doing business in China.

My decision to do business in China was based on my faith. Ironically, my decision to stop was also based on my faith. I did not want to give up my Christian values and ethical standards simply in order to do business. For better or worse, I chose the construction industry. Nevertheless, I wanted to do God's work in God's way. I did not believe that fulfilling my calling by any means would achieve my ultimate goal of glorifying God.

In refusing to do business in China, I might have sacrificed opportunities to witness for God as well as financial benefits for my company. But I trusted God to provide other means of witnessing as well as other projects to keep my company viable. By surrendering my work to God, I have experienced God's provisions in my life. In the end, I believed that God has responded to my faith by minimizing the loss suffered by my company due to my withdrawal from the business.

Incident B

I became a Christian at the age of 13, when I attended a Christian summer camp in Hong Kong. From that time on I have attended various churches regularly, and while I was in Canada, I was active in organizing retreats and camps, teaching Sunday school and leading fellowship groups.

I went to Canada for university studies, and eventually obtained an MBA degree. For many years I worked for various businesses there. Later I returned to Hong Kong to start working with a partner in the China trade. Right now, almost all my business projects are China-related. I returned to Hong Kong because I did not enjoy the routine work in Canada.

In the China trade, there is always a challenge of bribing. North American companies would not do it themselves. Their agent companies or the agents of their agent companies would do the bribing. Since my partner and I are serving as an agent for a North American firm, we are the ones who have to struggle over this issue. Whenever we are dealing with the State companies in China, such challenges are inevitable. I would not do it myself. Other people in my company would do it, and I did not object. Sometimes, our agent would do it for us and we did not object. I did not feel comfortable doing it. However, since this would be the only way to secure business and I did not have a strong faith like some other Christians, I just let others do it for me. After all, even the North American firms were practicing it. Although they did not do it themselves, they knew quite well that their agent companies

were doing it for them. Bribing had a significant impact. My hunch was that it led to fruitful results in three out of four cases. Of course, bribing would become an issue only when the relevant parties were very close to making a deal.

I did not share this with brothers and sisters in the Hong Kong church where I attend because I did not take part in the fellowship group there. I did not have an answer, if they challenged me about bribery. My partner in the company is also a Christian. He is handling the marketing side of the business. I am handling the technical side. He considers that bribing is inevitable. Otherwise, we would not be able to secure business. I do not do it. However, I do not object that he would do it. I know quite well that in a way I also do it. But what else can I do? I do not have the capability, courage and readiness to decline bribing and handle the matter in another way. It is justified to make a small sacrifice for a greater good.

CHRISTIAN BUSINESS ETHICS AS POSITIVE SCIENCE: THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN CORPORATE CULTURE

By the same token, we can study the impact of a positive external force. In this study, we picked Christian corporate culture as the independent variable. When we conducted a Chi-square analysis to examine the impact of Christian corporate culture, we got the result in Table 2. It became clear that the relationship is statistically significant and there is a positive relationship between these two variables.

When we conducted a follow up study to trace the source of significant differences, we found that they mainly come from two of the ten cells. When facing an ethical challenge, Christian executives who work in a firm with Christian corporate culture tend to adopt *not* yielding or dominating. For not yielding, Christian executives in such situations will refuse to legitimize the business culture with Christian values. This is reflected in the significantly *lower* than expected frequencies in this cell. That means, executives tend to *do the opposite* of yielding. They will stand firm on their ethical conviction. They do the opposite of what the prevalent business culture expects. For dominating, Christian executives under this situation will try to transform the prevalent business culture and turn it into a Christian way of handling business matters.

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of Type and Christian Corporate Culture

			Christian Corporate Culture		Total
			YES	NO	
TYPE	AGAINST / AVOIDING	Count	6	72	78
		Expected Count	8.9	69.1	78.0
		% within TYPE	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
		% within Christian Corporate Culture	9.8%	15.3%	14.6%
		% of Total	1.1%	13.5%	14.6%
	OF / YIELDING	Count	5	111	116
		Expected Count	13.3	102.7	116.0
		% within TYPE	4.3%	95.7%	100.0%
		% within Christian Corporate Culture	8.2%	23.5%	21.8%
		% of Total	9%	20.8%	21.8%
	ABOVE / INTEGRATING	Count	17	82	99
		Expected Count	11.3	87.7	99.0
		% within TYPE	17.2%	82.8%	100.0%
		% within Christian Corporate Culture	27.9%	17.4%	18.6%
		% of Total	3.2%	15.4%	18.6%
	PARADOX / COMPROMISING	Count	9	103	112
		Expected Count	12.8	99.2	112.0
		% within TYPE	8.0%	92.0%	100.0%
		% within Christian Corporate Culture	14.8%	21.8%	21.0%
		% of Total	1.7%	19.3%	21.0%
TRANSFORMER / DOMINATING	Count	24	104	128	
	Expected Count	14.6	113.4	128.0	
	% within TYPE	18.8%	81.3%	100.0%	
	% within Christian Corporate Culture	39.3%	22.0%	24.0%	
	% of Total	4.5%	19.5%	24.0%	
Total	Count	61	472	533	
	Expected Count	61.0	472.0	533.0	
	% within TYPE	11.4%	88.6%	100.0%	
	% within Christian Corporate Culture	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	11.4%	88.6%	100.0%	

Chi-square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	18.138 ^a	4	.001
N of Valid Cases	533		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.93.

Tracing the Residues

	Christian Corporate Culture	
	Yes	No
Against/Avoiding	-0.990075458	0.127737436
Of/Yielding	-2.421337029 *	0.313249049
Above/Integrating	1.768323704	-0.228189214
Paradox/Compromising	-1.124627149	0.145228426
Transformer/Dominating	2.655797229 *	-0.342577418

* Significant at 0.05 in T-test

From the two cells that constitute the source of significant differences, we can identify 5 incidents from the cell for yielding and 24 incidents from the cell for dominating. They form a data base for further reflection and deliberation. The 24 incidents enable us to understand further how Christian corporate culture leads executives to dominate the business culture. The 5 incidents serve as a counterpoint to show the rare situations when executives under Christian corporate culture will still yield to the business culture. Other than under such circumstances, no executives will yield to the prevalent business culture. They are like using our short shadow to reflect the noon day sun. Incident C below serves as an incident to demonstrate Christ transforming culture/Dominating. Incident D shows the rare case where a Christian executive will yield to the prevailing business practice and regard it as Christian to do so.

Incident C

I have been a Christian for more than 10 years. I have been a lawyer for over 20 years. As head of my own law firm, I also run a business. Since I am the boss and I am a Christian, I can run my law firm with Christian principles. Our target market consists of Chinese banks and Chinese state-owned enterprises. I believe in building relationships and fostering goodwill in order to gain business, and at the same time, in maintaining my independence to fulfill my professional duties objectively. That has been my guiding philosophy all these years.

Even when I was new to the profession and before I became a Christian, I was aware of many legal yet problematic ways to make money. But after I became a Christian, I realized that there could be even more temptations. In one incident, one of my partners rushed a property transaction for a client, who wanted to make sure that he had the right to resell the properties individually after purchase. In haste, my partner failed to notice anything against this stipulation when he checked the original deed of mutual covenant. As a result, he went ahead and advised our client to put down \$10 million as a deposit. Later, we discovered a clause in the deed stating that the buyer could not resell the premises individually without the developer's consent.

Instead of trying to find ways to evade our responsibility, I prayed about it and felt convicted that our firm should bear the consequences. So I admitted our oversight to our client and indicated that we were willing to reimburse the \$10 million deposit to him. At that time, the property market was flourishing. The client appreciated my action and

was willing to wait several days to see what could be done. Somehow I managed to have a face to face meeting with the developer, thanks to a mutual acquaintance. Although the developer did not know me, he agreed to allow my client to resell the premises. In addition, he did not charge me a penny for giving his consent. I felt grateful that I could give the developer's consent to my client and settled the case without incurring any loss.

Another example comes to mind regarding how I acquired the property for my law firm. I bought it at a good price from a bank in 1997, but before closing the deal, prices dropped rapidly to almost half of the original price due to the financial crisis at that time. My wife and I had prayed prior to the purchase and felt at peace to proceed. Yet this problem still arose. Some friends thought that we should talk to the bank about lowering the price. We could even consider walking away from the deal. After more prayer, we decided by faith to close the deal that we had agreed to. We had already dedicated our business to God so we decided to continue our trust in Him. The president of the bank appreciated our decision. Since then, he and I have maintained a close relationship based on trust and integrity.

Incident D

When I was growing up, my mom worshipped idols at home, but I felt more inclined to believe in science than in superstition. After entering the business world, I attended a church fellowship meeting and enjoyed the unpretentious and wholesome interaction with other young adults my age, unlike the encounters that are common in my daily business dealings. I also remember going to a Christian concert where I was deeply moved by the speaker's message on moral hypocrisy. Almost immediately after I became a Christian, I was liberated from my gambling habit of betting on horses. I became a better manager of God's money because my money was God's money. I also tried to integrate faith and work in my life.

I entered the world of business through my first job at a hotel after secondary school. Those early years enabled me to learn personnel management skills. Through my interaction with the office equipment vendors, I developed an interest in sales which led to my next job in selling copiers. After acquiring some years of experience, I went into business with two Christian partners. The three of us decided to invest in the beauty industry and tap into the growing market. At that time, the media coverage of the industry was rather negative so we also wanted to rectify the negative image and use the profits to help Christian or-

ganizations. My partners were in charge of training and trading while I was in charge of financing and management. Business kept growing. Soon we expanded beyond the initial retail business and started selling to other businesses and conducting training courses. Eventually we also sold products to mainland China.

Initially, we had trouble dealing with others' perception of our business. Since the three owners are all Christians, some customers mistakenly assumed that all of our employees are Christians, too. So they were shocked when they noticed some employees playing the lotto or indulging in other forms of gambling. We thus felt an urgent need to explain that when we operated a firm with Christian principles, it did not mean that we should only hire Christians. However, some Christians did not understand the rationale. As a result, we felt a need to explain. Gradually we did not feel too anxious about it. As long as we served our clients well and they were satisfied with our products and services, then we were on the right track.

CHRISTIAN BUSINESS ETHICS AS NORMATIVE THEORY

Executives make decisions based on different considerations. The impact of positive and negative forces is only one such consideration. Christian executives also try to discern what Jesus would do. This is in line with the Niebuhr framework that was originally proposed as an ideal-typical study of theological ethical ideas drawn from the history of Christian thought.¹⁰ It addresses the issue of what should be done and what ought to be done. It is about normative theory. In a way, each of the more than 500 incidents is a demonstration of what a Christian executive would do in that particular situation. In order to have a clear contrast between normative theory and positive science, we will follow the data in Tables 1 and 2 to identify relevant incidents for deliberation.

For example, for avoiding, we can identify 30 incidents under yes and 43 incidents under no on China business. We can also identify 6 incidents under yes and 72 incidents under no on Christian corporate culture. In the context of constructing a normative theory, we may broadly classify them into three groups. Thus the most important group

¹⁰ James M. Gustafson, "Preface: An Appreciative Interpretation," in H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 2001), xxi–xxxv.

of incidents would be the 6 incidents under yes on Christian corporate culture. As we have already established, when operating under Christian corporate culture, a typical response would be to dominate or not to yield. Avoiding is atypical. Thus these six incidents are atypical responses. Reconstructing the rationale behind these will allow us to understand the normative considerations that motivate a Christian executive's response to that type. The next important group of incidents would be the 30 incidents under yes on China business. While these incidents show typical responses under the influence of a negative external force, that negative external force is unlikely to explain all the reasoning in the executive's mind. Therefore, there is room for scrutinizing the reasoning behind this response and identifying Christian reasoning beyond the influence of China business. The last group of incidents would be the combination of the 43 incidents under no on China business and the 72 incidents under no on Christian corporate culture. These may include overlapping incidents. Thus the number would be smaller than 115 (43 plus 72) incidents. These incidents allow us to understand a response of avoiding when the incident is neither related to China business nor related to Christian corporate culture. Following the same procedure, we would go on to identify relevant groups of incidents for the other four types of responses.

For Christ against culture/Avoiding, normative reasoning for the Christian faith stands out in Incident E because the response is atypically made under Christian corporate culture.

Incident E

My Christian parents sent me to study at a Christian college in the US. While I was getting my MBA and pursuing an advanced degree in science, I became a Christian. After graduation, initially I worked in investment banking but that displeased my father because I made money by causing others to lose their jobs through leveraged buyouts. As a result, I sought to identify industries that would be both profitable for me and beneficial to others. One of the industries identified was nutrition.

That was how I came to purchase my food science company more than fifteen years ago. In my company I deem it important to do research and secure third party endorsements. Thus we commission scientific research and work with medical schools on clinical testing. We apply for patents and we also publish scientific papers in journals. I support professionalism. When I started my operation in Taiwan, I urged the government to write up government regulations. When I

started my operation in Beijing, I collaborated with one of the leading universities.

Since my privately-held company has been doing well, over the past few years bankers have been asking me to go public. Although such a move might benefit the company financially and bolster my reputation as an entrepreneur, I do not feel comfortable whenever I pray about it. I have been rejecting these offers because I would have to give up at least 30% of my shares and answer to shareholders regarding my management decisions. I will not have the freedom to make significant donations to Christian ministries. I want to retain management control of my company so that it can continue to operate based on my Christian convictions. Whatever I have lost in turning down these offers, I have gained in peace of mind.

This Christian business owner in the food industry rejected offers to make his privately-held company public, a common next step in growing a successful business. He treasured God's sovereignty rather than further business success.

For Christ of culture/Yielding, Incident F below is instructive because the Christian executive adopted this stand under China business, where she saw no conflict between meeting professional standards and upholding her Christian values.

Incident F

I accepted Christ in high school when my teacher invited me to a gospel camp. I learned most of what I know about the Bible during my college fellowship days with the Fellowship of Evangelical Students. I have served as a fellowship counselor for many years, and I am regular in my church attendance.

I graduated from a local university in Hong Kong. Very few women studied electronic engineering at that time. I only knew of three possible areas where I could find jobs: radio, semiconductor, or computers. Based on my understanding of the market and various requirements, I decided on computers and found my first job with a Japanese computer company, but it didn't last long. After working several years for trading firms, I became a technical salesperson for a Swiss firm, marketing high-tech products. After seven years in that job, I was able to start my own business when some European manufacturers allowed me to distribute their products for them. I have now been doing this for 9 years.

In China, there is a lot of competition among trading firms. To do business and to minimize the expense of setting up a full office, I had to hire a local agent to represent my company in each city. In 1996, I almost went broke because I had no business. Not knowing my agent had set up his own company to do the same kind of business, I lost a big project to my agent in Shanghai. I could only blame the problem on my own poor management because I could not travel to Shanghai that much at that time. As a result I learned to do more follow up by visiting or calling long-distance. I also realized that finding the right agents was important.

A few years ago, a factory in China needed a piece of testing equipment for the plastic fan blades they were producing. At first, the factory could not decide which standards they needed to comply with. Depending on the standard to be met, the price of the equipment could differ by 4 times. The cheaper model that I recommended at first turned out not to meet what we assumed was the relevant standard. So I thought I would lose the business. But when the client checked the QC requirement again, he found out that our piece of testing equipment, judged by another accepted standard, was sufficient after all. Since my priority was to sell technology, our company had to know the capability of our equipment well to ensure that the proper standards were met for the client. Although selling that piece of equipment was not big business for us, the client observed that we paid attention to meeting standards. Since then, the client gave us valuable marketing information and good word-of-mouth referrals for more business.

This Christian business owner almost went broke due to the lack of business, until she realized that at least one of her agents was stealing business from her firm by setting up his own business. Instead of quitting, she diagnosed the problem as caused by the lack of supervision she was able to provide. She learned from her mistake and redoubled her commitment to professionalism. She saw no conflict between meeting the professional standards and upholding her Christian values. Since she saw no conflicts, she could embrace the professional standards and yield to the prevalent business culture that demanded them.

For Christ above culture/Integrating, Incident G is instructive because it shows that Christian faith and business grow hand in hand.

Incident G

I have been going to church since I was young. After getting baptized at the age of 16, I started serving as a Sunday school teacher and as a fellowship group counselor. Later I also became a deacon at my church.

At college, I studied electronic engineering and upon graduation, worked for two companies as an engineer for about six years before joining my current employer, a start-up at the time. I felt ready, and was eager, for more challenging work, but what attracted me most to this company was its motto: Glorify God and Benefit People. The company was founded by a group of Christians who continue to serve as its board of directors. As a Christian, I wanted to find out how a company (rather than an individual) can live out this motto so I accepted the board's invitation to become the company's managing director.

When I took over the position, every morning I would put the business before the Lord and prayed. It seemed like nothing much happened in the first half of the year. Business remained at US\$300-400K per month. There was a turning point in the second half of the year, however, when our business reached US\$1 million per month. Then, our annual business volume grew to US\$8 million. That was the first year when we donated 10% of our profits as an offering for God's work, although the Christian management had pledged to offer one tenth of the profits to God from the company's inception. By faith, I proposed that we donate 15% the next year and that year, our business reached US\$15 million. I then proposed to donate 20% the year after, if our profits remained at or above the US\$10 million mark. Indeed, business reached US\$40 million that year and we donated 20% of our profits. Then, I proposed that we donate 20% regardless of how much we made. The board agreed. Business kept growing. At the peak, our business reached US\$95 million a year. Lately, sales have dropped. Last year, we even lost money, but we still have a financially sound business. Looking back over the past ten years, I could clearly see God's grace and guidance in enabling our company to become the top provider of our product in Hong Kong and one of the top providers in Asia. When I acknowledged God as the true owner of the business (rather than my assistant) and me as his steward, then I witnessed a difference in the results.

I saw a difference not only in our overall performance and profits, but also in various individual functions of the company. Our marketing department was able to land a big customer whose standing order for five to six years would constitute one third of our business. That com-

pany also always paid in advance so the funds helped us tremendously in financing our business, especially when finances were tight initially.

So we saw God's hand in our financing as well. Instead of continuing to receive financial support from my boss' other companies to make ends meet, I wanted the company to eventually be able to stand on its own. So I prayed to the Lord for help and guidance. Within a month, I received financial offers from two bankers who came to us on their own. The two banks that were already financing us also came to offer us more financing at about the same time. In two months, our financing doubled.

In purchasing, we also experienced God's providence when we encountered a supplier whose company was managed by a Christian. We developed a great relationship with him, and his company trusted his judgment in working with us. Thus we got 60% of our supplies from that source alone.

I saw these things happening when we truly depended on God to run our business. Others may attribute our success to formulating the right strategies and policies, but I knew in my heart that it was God's work because if we could do it on our own without divine help, then we would have succeeded before we started trusting God as the boss of our business. Besides, I was an engineer by training and knew little about managing a business. I truly believe that I was only able to do a good job because of God's hand in my life.

This Christian executive can attest to the synergy characteristic of Christ above culture/Integrating. In daily seeking God in prayer to oversee the business operations, he expectantly looks to follow God's guidance.

For Christ and culture in paradox/Compromising, Incident H shows normative reasoning because the Christian executive atypically adopts the stand while working within a Christian corporate culture.

Incident H

When I was small, my parents were already Christians. They were refugees from China to Hong Kong. From childhood, I got food and other supplies from the church. While my attendance was spotty for some years, during high school I returned to church with my classmates. I prayed a lot before God whether I as a Christian should become a businessman. I realized that it would mean less time with family, less opportunity to have fellowship with brothers and sisters, and too much

time spent on business deals. As a businessman, it would be difficult to lead a normal Christian life.

When I was a child, I already started helping my father at the factory that he had started. Later we moved the factory to China and have grown steadily for the past 10 years. The factory operation in China was quite solid. I was thankful to the Lord for the piece of land we used to build our factory, since we got a very good deal on it. In the first seven years of its operation, I stayed permanently in China and yet also maintained our sales office in Hong Kong. Right now, there are 550 workers in the factory in China, with all of our production now located there. Recently, my family and I returned to Hong Kong, and my elder brother has moved to China to manage the factory. His wife and children are in Canada. Thus it did not make much difference whether he is stationed in Hong Kong or in China.

In one incident, the Customs Office had a record showing that we had brought in several thousand tons of certain materials to China, and there was no record showing that we used the materials to produce products and sent them out. According to our record, we did not bring in such materials. We wanted to check with the Customs Office. However, it was in vain. When we enlisted the help of a government official in China, he could only spend money to smooth out the situation for us. (Whatever money he paid on our behalf, we had to pay him back.) In the meantime, the Customs Office already stopped us from bringing in materials to the factory. The production in the factory was thus put on hold. We had to allow the government official in China to clear things up for us.

My experience in the China business was tough. If you did not bribe, there was no way to conduct business in China. Although you did everything properly, you still could not get it done. You would have delays all the time. Also, when you got a penalty and you paid it, you would not even get a receipt for the full amount you paid. While you might pay \$100,000 as a penalty, you might only get a receipt of \$80,000. Nevertheless, there was a consensus among people in the China business that the government officials still knew who were basically innocent and who committed mistakes. They treated these two groups differently although they would impose penalties on both.

This Christian executive is coerced into paying a customs “penalty” on imported goods that had never been ordered or received. Since he was the owner, when he adopted Christian principles to run the factory, he nurtured a Christian corporate culture. When he faced this ethical difficulty, he had no choice but to pay, unless he wanted to see his factory shut down indefinitely. Yet he knew that the government officials knew who were basically innocent and who committed mistakes.

For Christ the transformer of culture/Dominating, Incident I below stands out because it shows how a Christian executive was able to turn the tables on corruption through decisive action even under the challenging environment of China business.

Incident I

I studied at a Catholic school for my primary and secondary school education in Hong Kong. Thus I had some exposure to Christianity although I was not a Christian at that time. When I was studying at a university in the US, I was invited to attend a Bible study group on campus organized by Chinese Christians and that was how I became a Christian. I reflected on the issue of life and death and concluded that there must be more beyond death. I confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.

I studied chemistry for my undergraduate study and organic chemistry for my graduate study. I worked for a leading chemical firm as a research scientist. After that, I worked for a leading petroleum company. And then, I joined an even bigger petroleum company. I have worked in the USA and in Europe. More recently, my company assigned me to establish a branch company in China before assigning me to work back in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, I had more opportunities to learn from fellow Christians. We attended church with a pastor we knew back in the USA. When I worked in China, I was able to take a more active role in serving others. Thus it was clear to me that the Lord's guiding hands were not just on my business career. Whenever my job changed, there seemed to be a reason behind it, perhaps even more than what I saw in my daily work.

In Tianjin, I represented a foreign multinational company in its dealings with the China side. In one incident, I invited representatives of a Chinese company to pay a visit to our plant in South Korea so that they would be able to understand how we operate a plant properly. They accepted our invitation. However, they also sent a long list of delegates. They also specified while they would pay the air tickets themselves, we should absorb all their accommodation expenses, including a significant portion of tourism.

I advised my colleagues at the home office to restrict the number of invited participants to three, that is, the general manager, the purchasing manager and the technology manager. Since other people would be irrelevant, they should not be included in the delegation. Also, we might provide two hotel rooms for the three persons but no more.

There would be a courtesy tour towards the end of the trip but no more. In addition, I told my marketing manager and sales representative in Shanghai that I understood that our competitors had sent them to Italy covering all their expenses including touring. However, we should not do it even if we might lose business because of that.

I would rather suffer the adverse consequences than yield to an unreasonable request. I could still remember how a Chinese delegation would live when they visited a company in the USA. Because of China's ignorance of the living standard in the USA, members of the delegation might only have been given a per diem allowance that was way below the subsistence level. Given their need, of course, we should try to accommodate. However, we should not be involved in activities that could be considered as bribing.

I knew quite well that my superior at the home office might not like it if I failed to bring in their business. But he could not say anything about it because what I did was follow the company guidelines. Other executives might follow a double standard in handling cases like this. They might yield to such requests in order to get business, and yet they said that they followed company guidelines.

The Christian executive succeeded in eliminating the usual corruption involved in such corporate visits, but particularly noteworthy here is the skillful intervention required in exercising moral leadership. Both parties—the Chinese company whose business he was soliciting, as well as the home office of the firm he was representing—needed to change their actual practices.

CONCLUSION

Christians who are skilled in business and mature in faith are needed to bridge the gap between the Church and the marketplace. The Christian community needs to better understand the marketplace in order to minister to those in it. Living an effective Christian life inevitably leads to being a good witness for God in the marketplace. The heart cry of Christians ultimately echoes the heart cry of God, for the world to hear the good news and respond to His invitation of eternal life. In the marketplace, working and witnessing for God are intricately intertwined. Handling ethical challenges effectively undoubtedly supports the validity of the Christian faith.

This study presents a framework based on H. R. Niebuhr's typology and negotiation literature. Through data analysis, we understand the impact of positive and negative forces on the ways Christian executives typically respond to ethical challenges. Through in-depth study of atypical responses, we learn to appreciate diverse normative reasons behind various Christian attempts to witness for Christ in the marketplace. Individually and collectively, they are useful references for Christian executives who want to become effective witnesses in business. Yes, Christians can succeed in the marketplace although it can be tough. Christian faith can make a difference. Christians can also sort out conflicting interests.

In the meantime, there is a need to understand the implication of Christian witness to profitability. While all five choices under the Niebuhrian typology are considered as equally legitimate forms of Christian witness, their implications for profitability differ. For avoiding, it brings no profit to either party. For integrating, it is win-win, both parties profit. For the other three choices, it is win-lose. While yielding brings no gain to self, dominating brings gain only to self. Compromising is in-between. Also, while external positive and negative forces have a natural impact on our inclination to make a particular choice, ultimately it is our capacity for freedom and responsibility that will guide us in how to respond ethically and with a full awareness of its implication to both profitability and faithfulness.