

Winter 2001
Vol. 3 No. 4

What Is Our Role? Hearing God's Voice through the Church in China

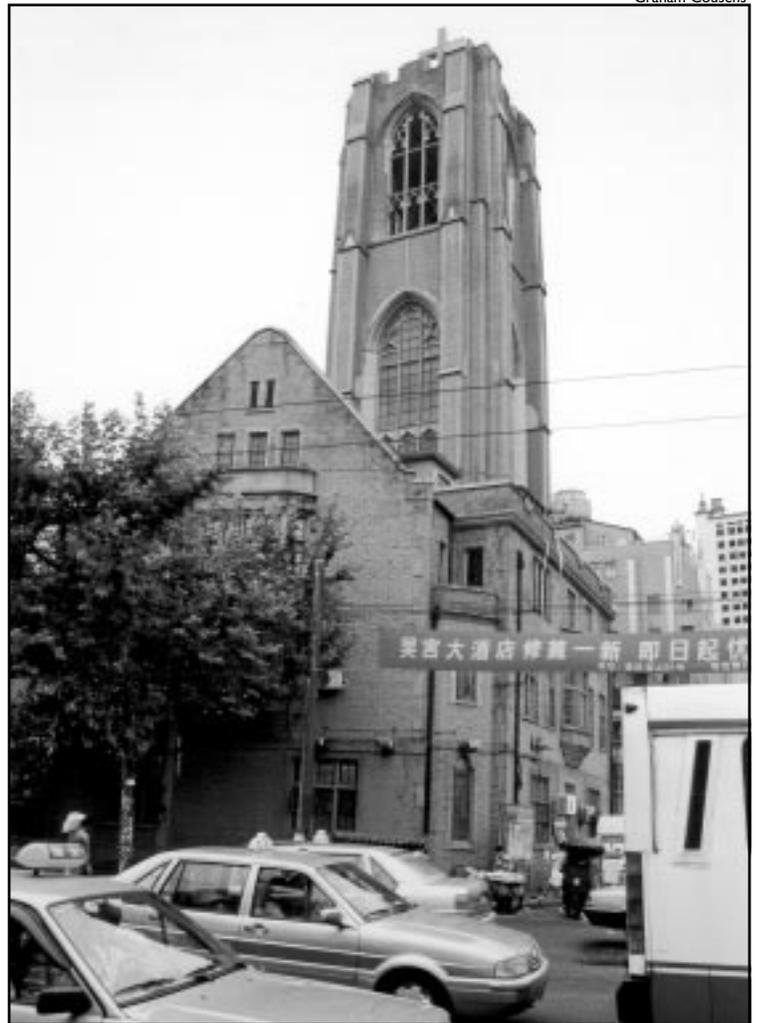
Graham Cousens

John A. Swem

The following article is based on interviews and conversations the author had with leaders of churches in China and with expatriates who work with the church in China—Editor.

Transport yourself back in time 50 years. World War II has just ended. The long struggle against the tyranny of German Fascism and Japanese Militarism has ended in victory for the West. A new era of missions activity is on the horizon, especially for the leader of the Allies, the United States. Young American men return home with their eyes open to the needs of the world in a new way. The old isolationism has died and a new internationalism has been born. New mission agencies are being founded and old ones re-supplied. You are summoned to a meeting to think about missions in China.

The meeting begins with a survey of the church in China. Protestant missions are less than 150 years old. The first hundred years coincided with the Age of Imperialism, the Opium Wars and the Boxer Uprising. A young church was planted and grew to about 80,000 with foreign missionaries playing the leading role in the church. The next fifty years coincided with the Age of Revolu-



tion, the Nationalist Revolution ending the Empire, the May 4th Movement and birth of the Communist Party, and finally the War Against Japan and the Nationalist-Communist Civil War. Foreign missionary work changed significantly after the 1927 disturbances, and Chinese Christians took a much greater role in the leadership of the church. During this time the church grew to around 500,000.¹

China is now in the throes of a bitter civil war. The missionary community is divided. Many favor the Nationalist Party, whose leaders include many educated in Christian schools. Others are disillusioned with the corruption that has grown under

Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China
China SOURCE

its rule and side with the Communist Party—despite its atheistic philosophy and generally anti-Christian rhetoric.

The meeting then turns to the future. Plans are needed no matter who wins. How can the foreign church best continue the work in China? Is it possible for the church to grow 10-15 fold in the next 50 years to the unthinkable figure of 10-15 million? Could its growth be even greater, say 50 million or more?

The committee breaks down into various task forces. When these have completed their work, each one has a report outlining the resources needed to accomplish its plan. The committee

short order, for Chinese pastors to be exiled or jailed, and for Christian schools and publishing houses to be closed. Better yet that all church buildings be closed for an entire decade as part of a broad based campaign of terror.

Parliamentary procedure required a vote on the two reports. How do you think such a vote would have gone fifty years ago?

This scenario is presented to help us come to grips with how much our plans can vary from those of the Lord. God does want the church outside China, the “foreign” church, to think intelligently about how to serve inside China

the foreign church is serving in China. Whether or not it should be doing this is not dealt with here. Second, the foreign church is involved with both the registered and unregistered churches in China. Whether one is better than the other is outside the scope of this article. Third, the foreign church working in China is composed of both ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese and includes significant numbers of Christians from the West, Asia and Africa. Whether one group is more effective than another is not covered here. Fourth, this article is about service within Mainland China by Protestant Christians. While there are many outreach opportunities involving Chinese people in other locations, they are not addressed in this article.

When foreign Christians began to have contact with Chinese Christians after the Cultural Revolution, quite naturally they wanted to know how to help. **Over and over again the answer was simply, “Pray for us.”**

then convenes again. Yes, by God’s grace, with thousands of missionaries and millions of dollars, it is possible to envision a Chinese Church of 15 million within another half century. While politics were not part of the committee’s report, the consensus was that this would likely occur under a government congenial to missions activity.

Oh yes. There was a second report by a minority of the committee. They had the temerity to suggest that the spiritual soil of China was still not ready for this type of growth. It would be better for a hostile government to come to power and for a radical anti-Christian faction to succeed. Better for all the missionaries to be expelled in

today. Yet, may we approach this thinking with great humility and with a great sense of dependence upon the Lord to guide and direct us. The foreign church may be challenged by Chinese Christians to do things that do not make much “sense” to us. We may need to be humbled to realize that it is time to follow their leading and accept that God may be primarily speaking through the church in China about how to serve in that land.

This article describes various ways the foreign church is involved in service in China with suggestions from Chinese Christians about future activities. Given the broad nature of this subject, there are several areas that are outside the scope of this article. First,

Praying. In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers made the following three observations about prayer:

- “Prayer is not an exercise, it is the life.”
- “We look on prayer as a means of getting things for ourselves; the Bible’s idea of prayer is that we may get to know God himself.”
- “In intercession, you bring the person or circumstance that impinges on you before God until you are moved by His attitude towards that person or circumstance.”²

The experience of the church in China over the past half-century may be one of the best illustrations of these truths in the history of the church. Many foreign missionaries expelled from China reported that they became more involved in prayer after they were expelled than they ever were while in

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

ChinaSource
Partnering Resources with Vision

Copyright © 2001 by ChinaSource. *ChinaSource* is published quarterly by ChinaSource, a cooperative effort of Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, World Evangelical Fellowship, and the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College. Its purpose is to provide up-to-date and accurate analysis of the issues and opportunities facing Christians involved in China service and to provide a forum for exchanging viewpoints and discussing strategies. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of ChinaSource or its cooperating agencies.

ChinaSource may be requested from ChinaSource, P.O. Box 4343, Fullerton, CA 92834 (china@xc.org or 714-449-0611). Subscription rates: USA: \$24/yr., \$44/2 yrs., \$60/3 yrs.; International: \$28/yr., \$52/2 yrs., \$72/3 yrs. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without prior written permission of the publisher.



China. Many Chinese Christians have shared that during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, as well as at other times after 1949, virtually the only aspect of their Christian life that was maintained was prayer. Prayer went from being an exercise to being the life itself.

When foreign Christians began to have contact with Chinese Christians after the Cultural Revolution, quite naturally they wanted to know how to help. Over and over again the answer was simply, "Pray for us." The steadfastness of this response from the older generation of Chinese Christians, especially those who were house church believers before the Cultural Revolution, has perhaps been God's way of speaking prophetically to the church outside China. Prayer is a means of getting to know God himself, not just of getting things we want for others and ourselves.

The emphasis of the older generation on prayer should not be taken as a refusal of all help from the foreign church, especially as younger leaders cope with the needs of a rapidly growing church. This younger generation of leaders also credits prayer with a key role in the revival that brought many of them and millions of others into the body of Christ over the past two decades. Story after story has been told of healings occurring in response to prayers in the name of the Lord Jesus. However skeptical some outside China may be, Chinese Christians have no hesitation in crediting their revival to their prayer-answering God. Intercession is the exercise of getting the mind of God about the people or circumstances that he has put on our mind and heart.

This message on the importance of prayer has not been lost on the church outside China, but it also may not have been heard as clearly as it needs to be. Although the vast majority of Christians outside China will never be physically present "in" China, they are able to minister "in" China through prayer. Many ministries publish prayer resources about China that are available for Christians living outside China.

Critical Priorities for the church

Recently senior leaders of the church in China met to identify five critical priorities for their membership. They are:

- * leadership development
- * basic Bible teaching
- * Sunday School teacher training
- * global missions
- * social outreach to migrant workers

While the first two have been a major focus for some time, the last three are relatively new and reflect a growing maturity among the church. Leaders noted that in some areas of the world, such as the Middle East, Chinese are more welcome than Western missionaries. Within China, already there are 150 million migrant workers. Peasants continue to pour into China's cities at the rate of 30 million a year. Often poorly treated and living in shantytowns, the church is convinced it must target this needy group.

Source: Open Doors News Release, No. 21, August 15, 2001.

(For an annual prayer calendar, see the Resource Corner in this issue.)

Christians outside China should consider accelerating their involvement with prayer as the 200th anniversary of the arrival in China of the first Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, approaches in 2007. Can we mobilize one million prayer intercessors for China by that date? God is clearly at work in China at this time in an unprecedented way, and the foreign church needs to be about the business of having prayer warriors join in this magnificent work.

Giving and Going. The door into China slammed shut after 1949 and remained largely closed to any foreign Christian entry for 30 years. The door today is not open to overt foreign Christian mis-

sionary activity as it was before 1949. However, God has opened many doors for foreign Christians to serve in China.

The Great Commission was given to the entire church. It is important for foreign Christians to recognize that God, in his sovereignty, has the right to channel the work of the church. He did not allow Paul to go to the outer regions of Asia Minor when that was Paul's desire (Acts 16:6-10). Years passed before God chose to direct Paul to a ministry in Ephesus where he made disciples and saw all of Asia Minor reached (Acts 19:10). In like manner, God did not allow foreign Christians to go to China for nearly 30 years. He chose to allow the passage of time during which foreign Christians examined their work in China.

Today, foreign Christians play a limited role in China in the areas of evangelism, church planting and pastoring. In other areas, such as pre-evangelism and discipleship, God has given foreign Christians greater roles to play. What follows is a survey of some of those roles.

Education. The door has opened the widest in education. Teachers have played an honored role in China for thousands of years, so this door has enabled foreign Christians to play a role that is particularly strategic in Chinese culture. Tsu-Kung Chuang has written words about Chinese in the West that are equally true of those in China: "Many Chinese Christians have a strong conviction that unless we can win many of these Chinese intellectuals, Christianity will not be fully contextualized in China and the foundation of the Chinese church will still be very shaky."³

The emergence of "Cultural Christians," like Liu Xiaofeng, and of apologetic literature, like *The Song of the Wanderer*, by Dr. Feng Bingcheng is surely not unrelated to the involvement of thousands of foreign Christian teachers in various disciplines in China's key universities over the past two decades. These foreign Christians have responded to invitations to come

to China as teachers or language students. Note the key word “invited.”

China’s teachers and students have been influenced by the contrast between the lifestyles of Christians and non-Christians from foreign countries. In the 1980’s, foreign teachers and students were largely confined to key universities in major cities. Now the use of English teachers has spread down to elementary schools, into smaller cities and counties and into the rapidly growing number of private schools.

Christian English teachers have played a major role in China’s modernization process, and language students have brought much needed hard currency into the country. Foreign Christian teachers and students have done yeoman’s work in dispelling negative stereotypes about Christianity and the supposed conflict between science and faith in the Creator God of the Bible. In the future they may also be used to help China nurture a healthy patriotism that focuses on love of country in contrast to a destructive nationalism that takes delight in the misfortune of others.

Business. China’s hunger for foreign investment and trade has opened another strategic door. Unlike the respect accorded to teachers, China’s Confucian heritage looked down on business people. Such people are expected to be liars and cheats. Imagine the amazement when it turns out that among foreign business people there are Christians who live by Biblical standards of ethics and honesty. As “New China” falls more and more in love with money, the need for a Christian witness in this sector becomes more vital. Christian business people have also played a key role in establishing international fellowships in several cities in China, and their families often develop significant ministries in both the foreign and national communities.

Social Development and Disaster Relief. China’s economic reforms have removed the govern-

ment from the comprehensive role it formerly played in society. Cradle-to-grave medical care and many other aspects of the centralized state have disappeared or greatly diminished. Foreign Christians have greatly increased their involvement in a wide variety of charitable activities, often on a very quiet, local and low-key scale. Examples include orphanages, senior citizen homes, crisis pregnancy centers and homes for disabled persons. Foreign Christians have also been involved in flood and drought relief projects. With an HIV/AIDS crisis looming, foreign Christians are likely to have an even greater opportunity to minister to some of the “least of our brethren.”

Bibles, Christian Media and Training. While the three areas mentioned above have the explicit or implicit approval of authorities, this is an area of great contention. The Chinese government is still trying to control religious activities through an “established church” system. While this system provides a legitimate outlet for some believers in some places, it raises real issues of conscience for millions of other and will never satisfy their legitimate concerns.

On the one hand, Bibles, Christian media and training are all available to a certain extent through organizations that are registered with the government like the Three Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council. There are projects in these areas open to foreign involvement, and non-evangelical as well as evangelical Christians participate to varying degrees. Funds are being raised from foreign Christians to construct, remodel, expand and equip registered church buildings and seminaries. The Amity Press was started with foreign financial and technical assistance and prints Bibles and other Christian materials in quantities determined by government regulation rather than popular demand.

On the other hand, it is clear that the vast majority of Chinese Christians are not part of the registered church

system and their needs are not met by it. They continue to cry out to foreign Christians for help. The Bible’s teaching that in Christ there is neither “Jew nor barbarian” could be paraphrased as “neither *zhongguoren* nor *waiguoren*.” Christians in the unregistered churches would point out that Christ’s love does not start or stop at political boundaries and that our duty to respect the political authorities also means that we respect the limitations on the authority entrusted to them by God, an authority that does not include the regulation of legitimate church activity.

Foreign Christians continue to be involved in the production and distribution of Bibles and other Christian resources. Increasingly these are produced within China, many in the popular CD-ROM or VCD format. These resources are often welcomed by both registered and unregistered leaders who are desperate for materials to train the many young believers coming under their care. The development of the Internet means that foreign Christians can make materials in “cyberspace” available to people living in China.⁴ The government continues to block sites it deems objectionable and uses immense security forces to monitor Internet use, but much material is still available to those searching.

In the area of training, foreign Christians also have a variety of opportunities. Foreign Christians have been speakers at some Three Self seminaries and churches. Many have also worked with unregistered Christians in a variety of settings for many years. Recently, house church Christians have articulated a new way for foreign Christians to help with training.

A Final Challenge. Before his death in 1944, prominent evangelist John Sung Shangjie was one of the Christians who used the phrase “Back to Jerusalem.” The phrase signified that the Great Commission had been fulfilled in a more or less west to east direction, spreading generally from Europe to the Americas

Continued on page 15

Serving the Church in China

Five Lessons for Effective Partnership

Jason Lee

We had a visitor last month," said our friend. "He was an overseas Chinese pastor who came to preach and hold training sessions for our younger evangelists."

"How did it go? Was it a profitable time?" we asked.

"Aiya," he replied. "It was a big hassle. A waste of our time!"

After listening to the visiting preacher for two days, the leadership decided they had heard enough. On the third day, they recommended the visitor take a break after working so hard the previous two days. They arranged to take him on local sightseeing tours to keep him occupied for the remaining ten days of his trip before they could finally send him home. The preacher's apparent lack of passion for Christ, dry scholarly content and obvious unfamiliarity with the needs and issues of the church in China were too much for them. They chose to end the meetings rather than force their young evangelists to endure the ordeal.

Though this story may not be a common problem with outsiders who come to "help" the church in China, it is still true. As we attempt to serve the church in China, perhaps it is worth our time to take note of helpful lessons we can learn from one another.



Lesson one

Take the time to learn the local needs and issues. Having done this, we should be prepared to change our messages and even some of our word choices. Vocabulary common among the Chinese diaspora may be offensive and sound foreign to believers in China.

Lesson two

Adjust the teaching to the level of the learner. Among some house churches, a group of leaders has been established who serve as a filter to eliminate teaching that would confuse most rural evangelists. Unaware of this arrangement, the expert from the outside assumes he is passing on essential gems of truth to the leadership. But in reality, sometimes up to 80% of the teaching content is sifted out in order to bring it to a level palatable to young evangelists eager to grow in their understanding of God's Word.

At the other extreme, a large network of house churches began to quietly seek out new relationships to assist them with teaching and equipping their young evangelists. For at least a decade they had enjoyed a steady working relationship with a trusted outsider. However, discontent grew from a steady diet of training at a devotional

level; they wanted something meatier.

The diversity of the church in China demands that we take pains to modify and adjust our teaching and training to the level of the learner. There is a place for college, and even graduate level Bible teaching, in China among those who are able to think, analyze and evaluate concepts and perplexing biblical passages. There is also a place for devotional material, but not as a substitute to train and equip village pastors. Training and teaching material targeted for peasant evangelists must not be so lofty as to confuse or discourage them, nor so shallow that it fails to stimulate their minds and hearts to love Christ even more.

Lesson three

Assume you are making at least some mistakes and seek ways to improve your service and/or your product. Getting meaningful feedback is usually not a straightforward process. When people feel malnourished, they will accept anything, regardless of how devoid of nutrition it may be. We must resist the temptation to think that a return invitation means we are scratching the itch. We may be the only source of supplemental teaching and training, rather than the preferred choice! The invitation to return may be more a

statement of desperation than of quality content. One network leader confessed, “We have been taught the book of Romans 12 times!” A course from the Old Testament proved unexpectedly refreshing and opened up new biblical horizons. We should not assume we know what the need is. Rather, as we learn of a church’s previous experiences, we should be prepared to change our plans and adjust our teaching so that we do not add to their overdoses or overlook their areas of neglect.

We may need some assistance from others to improve our service. Consider asking another organization that

training for their personnel; and by providing financial support.

Literature and Materials. The need for literature is no longer limited to Bibles although the need for Bibles still exists. The literature need has been broadened to include reference tools, Sunday School materials and other literature recommended by other believers in other networks in China. Outsiders have been involved in literature distribution in China for over twenty years and, in the eyes of these rural church networks, this role has not diminished in importance.

Training. More recently, outsiders have been welcomed to provide and as-

used to send out more missionaries and to provide additional training for their co-workers. However, for others, increased financial resources would enable them to provide adequately for their staff, both local co-workers and those they send out to new areas. They could also better provide for the destitute among their flocks.

Like materials and training, money can also become a threat to the stability of a network. Unfortunately, money gifts can easily be mismanaged. For example, a large sum of money was given to an experienced and well trusted, house church co-worker with the specific request to buy a van. The van was to take passengers to house church meeting points and to haul literature. This faithful brother was to explain to his co-workers the source of the funds and that the van would be community property, available for the network’s discretionary use.

As requested, the brother purchased the van, parked it at his home, but told no one where the money came from. He used it for the purposes intended but continued to keep silent about the source of the money. His colleagues became suspicious. Only the registered church could afford such a luxury. Had he been won over by the registered church for the price of a van? Could he be trusted any more? Why was he willing to offer the van’s services to the house church? The brother reasoned that if he kept his source of income private, he could control the use of the van. The result of these good intentions was distrust, suspicion, jealousy, anger, disunity and a poorly utilized vehicle.

Another brother lost his home and business to police confiscation. He asked for help with a rental deposit and a few months’ rent to give him time to get started again. His story was confirmed and he was given a one-time-only gift to cover this need. He found a new location and paid his rent as promised. It seemed to be a straightforward deal of assisting a brother with a legitimate need.

On a subsequent visit to the area,

Continued on page 16

Outsiders primarily assist rural house church movements in three ways: by providing Christian literature and materials, by providing training for their personnel, and by providing financial support.

has established contacts among the constituents you are serving for feedback on the impact, usefulness and significance of your ministry and/or materials. If you are providing materials, how are they being used? Are the pages dog-eared and full of notations, do the items still look new and unused on a shelf or are they found on the floor helping to keep a table level thus showing their usefulness in a less than desired way?

Lesson four

Blessings can become curses. In a study among the leadership of two networks embracing about 300,000 believers (small by China’s standards), assistance from outsiders was viewed as a benefit, rather than a liability by a margin of two to one. While the downside does exist, these responses are probably typical of leadership views across the country. Outsiders primarily assist rural house church movements in three ways: by providing Christian literature and materials; by providing

assist with leadership training through Bible teaching or as some say, “the teaching of truth.” Training has the potential to help the churches address the critical issue of a shortage of co-workers or the equipping of Sunday school teachers. For the most part, training has been a blessing to the rural church. However, where outsiders have argued on behalf of a particular doctrine or a denominational distinctive, the result may be division and separation by some co-workers. This can become a threat to church unity.

In this respect, outsiders can perform a disservice to the house church networks. The greater a network’s exposure to outsiders, the more common this threat becomes.

Financial Support. The contribution of money is a third way outsiders can bless the rural church. Perhaps to the surprise of some though, money is not always needed. Some rural house church networks enjoy economic stability to the extent they can send offerings to other needy networks. Donations are

A Sixteenth Century Strategy for Serving China in the 21st Century

Larry Roberts



M

Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit, entered China at the end of the sixteenth century with a strategy and goal that were incredibly ambitious: to reach China through the conversion of the top classes of Chinese society, including the Emperor himself. After several years in the country, he decided to shed his dress and identification with the professional Buddhist priests to adopt the dress, lifestyle, and academic vocation of the bureaucratic elites who had achieved their positions through their education. Using his disputation, writing and personal relationships, Ricci established a nationwide reputation. He then was able to more effectively articulate the gospel in terms comprehensible within a Confucian framework.¹

Later Jesuits followed Ricci's lead, finding ways to integrate themselves into Chinese society through their skills in mathematics, physics, astronomy, metallurgy and other practical arts. Protestants followed much the same strategy, linking Christian truth with practical expression. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, universities, medical schools and hospitals arose through the efforts of missionaries such as Peter Parker and W. A. P. Martin.² In most cases, this was out of necessity, as China refused to allow missionaries entrance unless confronted with superior military power.

The results of these missionary efforts created a significant Christian community as early as the turn of the seventeenth century and laid the theological foundation that still remains valid in China today. Nevertheless, in spite of these accomplishments, the

strategies of Ricci are largely considered to have failed for a variety of reasons. Jonathan Spence, for example, argues that these missionaries overestimated their ability to influence China by underestimating the extent to which the Chinese would use their skills while not receiving the gospel message.³ The remarkable achievements of the Jesuits were undermined by the Rites Controversy over the nature of Confucian practices. Thirdly, dynastic changes tended to sweep away the influence of the missionaries along with the old dynasties. A fourth reason is that the strategies of the Protestants lost much of their meaning with the liberalization of their missionary efforts in the twentieth century and the elimination of all Christian influence by the Communist revolution. Finally, this strategy was undercut by the inability of many missionaries, particularly in the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries, to separate the uniqueness of Christ from the achievements of Western civilization. Thus they sought the transformation of Chinese society along Western cultural forms. However, in spite of these weaknesses, these early missionary efforts did bring remarkable results.

Contemporary parallels

In some ways, China's recent history evidences a remarkable parallel to the first century of the Christian era in the Roman Empire. For the first two centuries after the resurrection of Christ, the gospel spread primarily through two social classes, the urban poor and the intellectuals. Ultimately, these two social classes became the first fruits of a larger movement towards Christ as the intellectuals, in particular, worked out the apologetic and theological foundations upon which the faith spread to

the larger mass of society. However, it took approximately 400 years before there was widespread acceptance of the Christian faith, culminating in edicts of toleration and the eventual conversion of Constantine. Likewise, the growth of China's church has been among the rural poor and the "cultural Christians"—Chinese intellectuals who have come to appreciate the theological and philosophical centering of the Christian faith. However, in spite of the movement towards Christ among the intellectuals, they find little in common with the Christianity of the rural classes. Nevertheless, there remains potential for this intellectual class to articulate the faith in a way that creates the intellectual and spiritual conditions for a vast harvest in China.

China's massive social and economic transformation has brought both unprecedented challenges as well as new opportunities for Christians to contribute to the literal re-building of the na-

classes include professions such as the media, business, law, government service and academics—all professions that serve as primary gate-keepers of Chinese society. In addition, these classes also play critically important roles in establishing the intellectual framework by which Christian truth is apprehended or rejected. Each of these groups remains largely untouched by the gospel in spite of two decades of outside involvement. Even ministry to Chinese students abroad has left these groups largely untouched, as these students often do not return to China after encountering the gospel.

People in professional ministry most likely will not be able to fulfill this contemporary Jesuit strategy. Rather, it is best accomplished through horizontal linkages by Christians who are in these professions and are able to articulate the Christian faith within a professional context, and by individuals who are willing to build the necessary cross-cul-

ture that in the contemporary world the experiences and "lifeworlds" of people in different professional or occupational backgrounds lead to separate "sub-universes" or closed systems of meaning. Outsiders find it almost impossible to penetrate positions of influence within these spheres.⁴ In the contemporary world, artisans and politicians, farmers and artists no longer share the same outlooks or experiences. People within the same social sphere often find it much easier to articulate the gospel in a compelling way for those within their sphere than do people without the same basic framework of understanding.

Contemporary professional life inculcates its own way of viewing the world. This creates more distance between urban entrepreneurs and their own rural countrymen than it does between urban entrepreneurs and similar professional classes from other nations. Today, the gaps between countrymen have widened significantly beyond what they were in Ricci's day. For example, a Chinese academic will have a worldview and outlook more in common with a Western academic, who shares similarities in graduate training, theoretical foundations and assumptions about truth and knowledge, than he will with another Chinese from a very different professional background. The post-modern intellectual landscape can be penetrated by an academic who can articulate the gospel within that landscape; it cannot be penetrated by other Chinese who have no understanding of the postmodern worldview. The situation is similar within various occupations, especially with the forces of globalization and the rise of information technology. The digital divide widens the gap between the wired and unwired populations, and information technology provides more opportunities to engage professional contacts across geographical distances. While language does not become insignificant, the English accessibility of many within these classes makes it a smaller barrier than it appears at first glance.

Scripture gives us a third, additional, principle found in Proverbs 22:29: "Do

China's massive social and economic transformation has brought both unprecedented challenges as well as **new opportunities for Christians to contribute to the literal re-building of the nation and its worldview.**

tion and its worldview. At the same time, China's intellectuals search amidst the ruins of Western and Chinese philosophy to find some ideological center. From such a center they desire to make both economic and social progress without falling into the traps of libertinism or rampant social disorder. Nearly two decades of Christian involvement in China, primarily through teaching English, ministry to Chinese studying abroad and working with the Chinese house churches, have born fruit. Yet there remains a gap between the vibrancy and commitment of the rural house churches and the abstract philosophizing of the elite classes.

Closing the gap

A contemporary manifestation of the Jesuit strategy would help to close this gap by prioritizing work among the influential classes within China. These

tural relationship that can serve as a bridge to the gospel.

There are two key operative principles in this strategy. The first, a purely sociological principle, is that people within a professional sphere already have access to others within the same sphere. Chinese academics are open to other academics, Chinese entrepreneurs are accessible to other entrepreneurs and Chinese media personnel are more open to other media professionals. In the same way that it is considered appropriate mission strategy to send people of similar ethnic or linguistic background to a closed group due to ease of access, so it is appropriate to find ways for Christians in these influential professions to relate to their Chinese counterparts.

A second principle, while a bit more abstract, is just as important. The sociologists Berger and Luckmann argue

you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.” Ricci was unable to convert the Emperor, but during his lifetime his teaching was validated by a public perception of imperial favor. Because of that, he was able to guarantee the efforts of missionaries spread throughout China. Later Jesuits were able to build upon Ricci’s reputation.

Applying Ricci’s strategy today

Currently, China faces challenges that are historically unprecedented in scope, including issues of income differentials, geographic dispersion, poverty elimination, environmental degradation, legal reform and political and social integration. Just as in past ages God providentially provided through the lives of men such as Joseph and Daniel at times of national crisis, perhaps God has uniquely prepared professionals throughout the world to serve China at this time—even though they may be scattered around the world. Linking professionals within the body of Christ with their colleagues in China provides critically needed expertise for the nation while the gospel of Christ transforms both individuals.

The implementation of this strategy would require a radical reorientation of current strategies. It would call for both institutional and individual commitment. It would involve the recruitment of Christian professionals from around the world who would be willing to spend time, and perhaps money, to establish “peer-to-peer” relationships with Chinese colleagues. It would also involve the recruitment of institutions such as universities, foundations and Christian professional groups that would be able to engage in short term visits to China or sponsor similar visits within their own nation.

At the individual level, Christian lawyers, for example, might travel for a short time to China to establish a handful of professional contacts and to share ideas. Then, upon returning home, these lawyers would stay in contact with their new friends to provide encouragement, advice and other po-

tential resources. Ultimately, a bridge of commitment and friendship is built across which the gospel can travel. At the institutional level, this would require a focused effort by larger professional groups, foundations or ministries. For example, a local church that has a large number of business entrepreneurs could host a group of Chinese entrepreneurs, with presentations by Christians as well as site visits to successful businesses. Similarly, Christian universities can host Chinese academics for a semester or year-long sabbatical with the funding often coming from governmental or NGO grants.

End results

The necessity of this strategy is clear. In spite of the fact that large numbers of Chinese are coming to Christ, there remain significant legal and political barriers to the unhindered spread of the gospel. Christians from the rural house church movements, although fully committed to the declaration of the gospel to these classes, lack the professional credentials, educational qualifications and, hence, credibility to effectively proclaim a Christian apologetic and evangelistic message. Many times, they also lack the cultural understanding of the urban context. Thus, although the gospel continues to grow in the rural sector, the newly emerging political and economic order is likely to be built upon secular and flawed notions of justice, equality and human rights. Moreover, the flow of the gospel along lines of association is likely to be stopped along the buffers of professional and occupational experience, thus preventing a wider harvest within Chinese society.

The goal of this strategy is not to duplicate the conversion of Constantine, as Ricci and his followers hoped to do. Rather, the goal is to lay the foundation for a movement of God within China—a people movement that is helped, rather than hindered, by the intellectual framework that determines laws, policies and social norms. By transforming the Chinese worldview as well as the hearts of individual Chinese, God’s glory and grace will flow more

freely throughout the Middle Kingdom.

End Notes

1. Jonathan Spence, (1984), *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, (New York: Penguin Books). See also Vincent Cronin, (1984) *The Wise Man from the West: Matteo Ricci and his Mission to China*. Fount Paperbacks: London.
2. Jonathan Spence, (1969) *To Change China: Western Advisors in China, 1620-1960*. Penguin Books.
3. Spence, *ibid*.
4. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, p. 87.

Larry Roberts, Ph.D., is an academic in Singapore studying cultural change in China. He is active in outreach in both China and Singapore and can be reached at <intlconnector@yahoo.com> 廖

Partnering to Reach the Peoples of China Continued from page 11

came efforts to form a partnership to have the Bible translated into the language of this people group and provide literacy training for them.

Quite apart from all this, at just the right time, a businessman called our office to inquire if we knew of anyone else focused on this particular people group. We connected him with those we knew, and he was recruited to lead the group through a strategic planning process. Momentum continues to build in this partnership, and there is little doubt now that this particular people group is going to be disciplined.

What of the hundreds—perhaps thousands—of other unreached people groups in China? Will more of God’s people around the world come together to form partnerships to reach them? The church in China is beginning to catch the vision. Leaders of four large networks of churches recently committed themselves to send workers to every one of the 467 identified unreached people groups. But they need our help. Will we partner with God and the church in China to reach all the peoples of China?

Jim Nickel is Vice President of China-Source. 廖

Keys to Effectiveness in an Ever-Changing China

A recent street saying in China proclaims that “It doesn’t matter what you say or whether it’s good or bad; if it’s about China, it’s true.” There is some truth to this. Why? It’s not just that China is so big, it’s that China is constantly changing. Coastal provinces increasingly contrast with the inland ones. Cities become more distinct from villages. Modes of transportation and communication are rapidly advancing. What people wear, where they eat and how they enjoy their spare time are constantly evolving. This year differs from last year. The only constant in our society is change.

In an ever-changing society, many Chinese are puzzled, and many feel at a loss. To speak to the needs of the Chinese people, Christian workers in China must clearly know how to position themselves. Many workers simply say they work for the Lord and do not study the Chinese situation. “We are where the Lord put us,” is their stance. Other workers come to China expecting to see much fruit in a short time—a mode of thinking that is impractical in modern day China. These attitudes are not sufficient for addressing China’s complex needs. Adopting a simple approach for complex problems will not produce desirable results. Those coming to China with this outlook will miss great opportunities because they are either inadequately or ill prepared. To avoid this, they must first understand the needs of the Chinese people.

China has realized amazing economic achievement over the last twenty years. For most people, the basic needs of sufficient food and warm clothing are no longer problems. Many people in China own cars and beautiful homes. There is a rich supply of products on store shelves as the country has moved away from the controlled economy of past days. Even though poverty still continues and a wide gap in wealth exists between eastern and western China, poverty is no longer a main problem.

At the same time, various forms of crime, addictions and counterfeit products plague society. Cheating and bribery now go hand in hand as China travels a new path to a market economy. Today, murders, robberies and explosions have become common news. Government leaders from villages, townships and provinces up to high-ranking officials in the central government are corrupt. The result has been a decline in public trust, justice and moral standards. Material wealth coupled with moral poverty is especially evident among the younger generation. More and more people

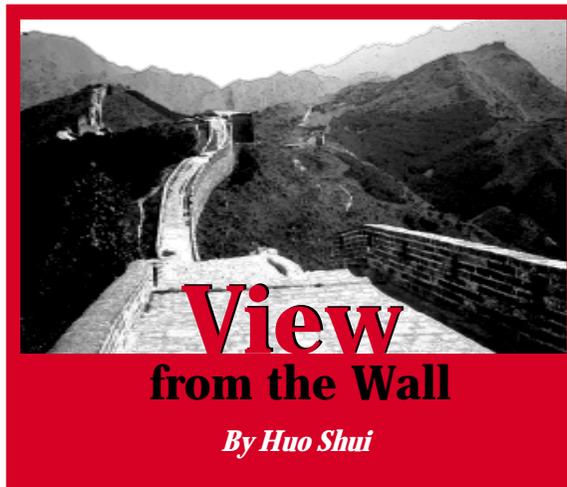
have come to realize that money cannot solve their problems nor can it bring true happiness. Society is in a deep spiritual and moral crisis.

What, then, do Chinese people need? They need honesty, trust, integrity and faith. Chinese people need higher moral standards, they need to obey the laws, care for the environment, respect human lives, control personal desires and develop responsibility toward their family and society. Chinese people need a higher ethic than the pursuit of material desires. They need humility and forgiveness rather than arrogance and covetousness. They must desire truth. Above all, Chinese people need love; they need to know and respect the God who is love. Simply put, Chinese people, who are deprived spiritually and hungry for real faith, need real spiritual food that satisfies the soul and enables the pursuit of the real purpose in life.

Such needs are no strangers to us. The question is, How do we meet them? Our attitude is the key. We must understand that China, boasting a culture with a long history, suffered much humiliation over the last 150 years. Nationalism and patriotism, mixed with traditional Confucianism, live deep in the heart of every Chinese person. Chinese are very sensitive when foreigners approach them with an attitude of superiority. This hurts their self-respect. If we cannot approach our friends in a spirit of humility and love, if we cannot deal with one another on an equal basis, then our actions can easily be viewed as a bestowal out of pity.

To make friends in China is not hard, but to become really good friends—to be in a position to share God’s truth—requires giving of one’s self. As we interact with those who do not know God, we need to see beyond their outward pride and into their inner being. We ought to understand each individual totally from his physical needs, his daily living and employment needs, to his spiritual needs. As we dialogue with these individuals, we should not be proud of ourselves thinking we are better or more spiritual. Rather, we must humbly offer understanding as an expression of our love. Ultimately, the spirit of love and truth is the only key for unlocking closed hearts and minds.

Sharing the gospel is not about persuading others to believe God; the gospel cannot be imposed on people. Arguing or lecturing will only cause people to reject what we have to give. The Chinese people have listened to so much “preaching” (Communist doctrines) and propaganda during their lifetime that they instinctively reject any form of it. As a result, a lack of belief has become the hallmark of the new China. If a Christian desires to share the love of God with the Chinese, preaching is not the answer. Chinese people usually judge each other by actions, not by words. This is why



View from the Wall

By Huo Shui

Communism failed in China. There was a great gap between what was said and what was done, a large disconnect between theory and actual practice. When Jesus healed the sick and forgave sinful people, it was not just his words, but his actions that spoke truth and love—and won their respect. This is what changed their worldviews.

It is not easy to live out God's truth through our actions—but it is easy to criticize others. Some have criticized the Chinese as being very pragmatic. While this is true, today's pragmatism is the result of yesterday's shattered dreams. Remember, every action of every day testifies to what you believe. Once you enter China, numerous pairs of eyes will be watching you—not listening to you.

The number of Christians in China is not large in light of its huge population, but it is increasing everyday. While it is wonderful to lead someone to the Lord, this is only the beginning. After an individual has come to the Lord, we must focus on discipling this person instead of hurrying out to convert someone else. This approach puts quality above quantity. Lacking qualified Bible teachers and without enough discipleship and training materials, spiritual growth is hindered. This has been the issue with the church—its roots are not deep enough. Once a Christian becomes mature and strong, he will naturally bring others to the Kingdom of God and Chinese Christians will develop their own church. Our task is to ensure that each Christian we lead to the Lord grows to full maturity. Focusing on quality will turn out to be the best way to achieve quantity although it may seem slow at times.

Much of what is written above is not new, but it does identify real problems in the church of China. As we serve in this great nation, let us examine our attitudes and actions. In so doing, we can become more effective in meeting the needs of the citizens of an ever-changing China.

Huo Shui is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Tian Hui.

Peoples of China

Partnering to Reach the Peoples of China

Jim Nickel

“I pray...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17:21, NIV).

God is building His church among the peoples of China, but the vast majority of Chinese have still never heard the gospel—or even the name of Jesus. How can we reach them?

The key to effectiveness in China service today is partnership. Jesus prayed that we might be one. Working in partnership is a very practical way to

Twenty people, representing perhaps a dozen different churches and China ministries, recently gathered to discuss how they could pool their efforts to reach a particular unreached people group in southwest China. As they compared stories, they discovered that God had been weaving them together into a partnership even before they met one another.

About five years ago, a group of people spent 40 days praying and fasting for this particular people group. Shortly after this, a pastor from another group had a dream in which he saw a

God is building His church among the peoples of China, but the vast majority of Chinese

How can we

have still never heard the gospel—or even the name of Jesus.

reach them?

demonstrate the unity of the body of Christ. People doing their own thing in China often results in duplication, overlap, inefficiency and ineffectiveness. In a recent people-specific working group at a consultation on China ministry, participants discovered that three different Bible translation efforts focused on a specific language of China were being pursued, each without the knowledge of the others.

Partnership develops when God's people intentionally come together to develop relationships that lead to trust, to learn from one another and to look for ways of working together. This is happening in large and small consultations held in various parts of the world. The goal and outcome of these gatherings is synergy in ministry.

unique-looking bridge. A man came to him in his dream and told him that he was to take the gospel to the place represented by that bridge; however, he didn't know where the bridge was, nor whom it represented. Not long after this, a China worker came to his church and showed him a video that featured the bridge characteristic of many of the villages of this particular people group. When the pastor saw the bridge in the video, he said, “That's what I saw in my dream!” He subsequently sent people to China, went himself, and a church was planted among this people group. Representatives from the pastor's church then attended a minorities consultation and connected with a linguist while there. From that connection

Continued on page 9

March 18, 2000

Letter from a Chinese evangelist

Editor's note: Following are two concerns expressed by a Chinese evangelist regarding the interactions between Chinese churches and overseas organizations. They are taken from a letter he wrote and have been translated from the Chinese. We have asked Tian Hui to comment on them.

Maintaining the Spirit of Partnership

Most foreign Christians come to China with a pure motive and a sincere heart. They have provided much help to the church in China, and their positive contributions and effectiveness are an indisputable fact. However, I would like to point out that while some overseas churches report only good news, there have been serious issues within the Chinese church as a result of their interaction with overseas organizations and individuals. These issues are very worrisome. They call all of us—Chinese Christians and overseas workers—to reflection, rethinking, repentance and renewal.

Concern one: Often overseas workers will require a liaison for communi-

cation with a church and its workers. Overseas organizations usually look for at least one local Chinese Christian to act in this capacity as they seek to serve. Normally, the organization will find a liaison either through someone's introduction or, perhaps, through a private contact. In either case, the organization will not know the individual well. (The foreigner's limited contact in China makes this a difficult situation.) Chinese leaders have a saying among themselves that foreigners are merely "sightseeing from airplane windows," meaning that foreigners usually do not take the time for a close look at an individual before they act.

Most of the liaisons foreigners interact with are current church leaders or

A Commentary

Perhaps you are like me. When I first read this letter from the Chinese evangelist, I found it hard to believe that what was written was a fair description of foreign involvement in the church of China today. How could these things happen? When outside Christian organizations come to China to work side by side with

utmost integrity, take great risks to have fellowship with foreign Christians never asking anything in return. However, we need to be aware that our involvement can introduce new kinds of temptation that our Chinese brothers and sisters have not faced before. This letter points out the dark side of such involvement. We must heed the warn-

something you need." We should not go with the intention of promoting our own theology, methodology, organization, denomination or training material.

2. When foreigners provide money (usually without asking for accountability) to Chinese Christians, they often cause an unintended effect. They create unnecessary temptation and distraction for the believers in China. Some leaders have fallen into temptation, or at least stumbled when outside funds have been given to them. Uneven distribution of money within a church is known to be one of the reasons churches split.

3. There is almost no need for foreigners to financially support Chinese Christians—they are very capable of supporting themselves. A Chinese Christian without a secular job often raises the suspicions of the PSB, especially in the cities.

4. If a liaison with the Chinese church is not a top level leader, the leaders of a foreign organization

How many of us actually thought that our involvement as foreigners with the church in China could actually lead our Chinese brothers and sisters to stumble?

Chinese brothers and sisters to reach those who have never heard of Jesus, we expect synergistic partnership to develop as a result of our common vision and commitment. How many of us actually thought that our involvement as foreigners with the church in China could actually lead our Chinese brothers and sisters to stumble?

Many Chinese Christians, with the

ing and re-evaluate our China strategy if we are to really help the church of China.

Following is some food for thought that may keep us from falling into such traps.

1. We should approach our Chinese brothers and sisters in a spirit of humility. We should ask, "How can we serve you?" rather than saying, "We have

Chinese who can speak English. Generally, these individuals are gifted communicators and very social. One lady acknowledged that she had moved to Shanghai to be in a better position to become a liaison for foreigner workers. Calling herself the “Secretary of Foreign Affairs,” she became successful in what she set out to do. She does well in socializing and promoting herself. A church leader once wondered aloud how a servant of God could have so much spare time to spend on socializing. Only those with impure motives would put aside service to God and think only about how to establish relationships with foreign organizations to win their trust for personal gain.

Many liaisons work for several foreign organizations at the same time. They hide the fact that they receive money from different sources. Some of the liaisons use money contributed by

foreign organizations for personal purchases such as apartments or even cars. Others use the money to recruit full time workers for the purpose of expanding their outreach territory so they can report their “fruits” to foreigners thus receiving additional funding.

Concern two: The church in China is known to have been a target of persecution over the last sixty years. The Chinese government is very sensitive to Chinese churches having contact with foreigners and in recent years, Chinese churches have been persecuted, in part, because of their involvement with overseas organizations. The persecution of a Chinese church with this kind of involvement is much greater than that of a church without foreign involvement. The literature of overseas organizations often reveals the situation of the church in China to a certain degree. Therefore, the Chinese government is con-

stantly watching house churches in China. A Shanghai based liaison was sentenced to three years in labor camp for his involvement with overseas organizations and their training materials. This event also implicated numerous leaders around the country. Another brother was sentenced to labor camp and endured much hardship there because he had arranged for a training session to be led by an overseas organization. Not long ago, a foreign pastor was teaching at a training session when the Public Security Bureau raided the classroom. Both pastor and students were arrested. Unfortunately, this foreign pastor also carried names and contact information of other church leaders and many on his contact list were also affected.

—*A Chinese Evangelist*

should ask to meet the top level leaders of the Chinese church. Any work-related decisions should be made only with these top-level leaders. Avoid private Bible study or discipleship training with Chinese Christians without permission from their top leaders. Many Chinese Christians have the idea that foreign teachers must have more biblical knowledge and are more spiritual than their own leaders. When these Christians return to their own churches, they spread the new teachings they learned that are different from their leaders’ positions. When this happens, it creates a potential for conflict and division within the church. Often this occurs without the foreigner’s knowledge. We must not undermine the spiritual authority God has placed over these Chinese Christians.

5. Many foreign organizations establish business platforms in China. Typically, they hire English-speaking Chinese Christians to be on their staff. However, we must avoid taking up too much of their time for our ministry at the cost of their home church’s ministry. Many of these Chinese workers have no time for fellowship at their

own church due to a heavy work schedule. This scenario is not unusual in China, and many house church leaders feel that foreign workers “stole” their sheep.

6. All training and teaching should be conducted with the blessing of the Chinese church’s leadership. Review any materials with the leaders beforehand to avoid potential surprises and embarrassments.

7. When partnering with the Chinese church, require mutual accountability in progress and resources. Perform periodic reality checks and assessment. Do not assume everything will go as planned just because all are Christians. Synergy comes only through mutual and intentional effort.

8. Senior foreign leaders, who visit China from time to time, are encouraged to mentor Chinese church leaders. Chinese leaders tend to need help in areas of goal setting, planning, strategy development, church leadership, creativity and accountability since these are not strengths of the Chinese culture. A mentor’s role is to help Chinese leaders to be on track to achieve their own vision and calling; they should not decide what the leaders should do.

This mentoring should be carried out behind the scenes.

9. Long term workers should consider working exclusively with their non-Christian relationships. After conversion, start a new church with these people. Disciple them to become reproducing Christians so that they become a new generation of church planters. This strategy does not involve connecting with existing churches.

A Chinese church leader said that negative things can happen when well-intentioned Chinese Christians and foreign workers partner together. Often foreigners are exposed only to the positive side of such partnerships and do not see this negative side. The problem is not with the idea of partnership; rather, it is our lack of understanding of the realities of China and Chinese churches. The Bible tells us not to cause our brothers to stumble (Rom 14:21). As foreigners, we should strive to obey this command while maintaining the spirit of partnership.

Tian Hui, B.S., is a China researcher residing in the United States.

Book Review

More Like Us?

To Change China: Western Advisers in China 1620-1960 by Jonathan Spence. Little Brown, Boston, 1969. Reissued with a new introduction and conclusion by Penguin Books, 1980, xvi, 335 pp. Currently out of print, used copies may be purchased via the web through www.Amazon.com or www.BarnesandNoble.com. Prices range from \$8.99 to \$50.24. Many university and college libraries will have this classic as well as some public libraries.

A review by Daniel H. Bays

Some who are enthusiastic about engaging in China ministry today should probably do a little homework and discover the historical record of their predecessors. This is a story that goes back to 1583 and the arrival of the talented Matteo Ricci in China. *To Change China* is a classic in the field of Sino-Western relations, and still makes profitable reading today. It was written by Jonathan Spence, Professor of Chinese history at Yale (and in my opinion today's most eminent China scholar) early in his career in the late 1960s, in the midst of the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. Spence framed a new introduction and conclusion for its reissue in 1980, just as China's reform programs accelerated social and intellectual change in China and, not coincidentally, created a whole new set of opportunities for Christians to live and work in China. Although it is not a comprehensive history or specific analysis of missions alone, Spence's ability to tell a compelling story, and the strong personalities of most of the characters described in this work, make for a memorable read. Unfortunately, the book is now out of print, although it can still be found in many libraries and used bookshops.¹ It is well worth searching for.

The sixteen individuals profiled by Spence in this work were in China at various times between the early 1600s

and the late 1940s. Only six of them were, technically speaking, Christian missionaries, but they were all convinced they had some body of truth, or skills, that they were eager to offer the Chinese. The religious missionaries included Adam Schall von Bell and Ferdinand Verbiest, 17th century Jesuit astronomers; Peter Parker, the first modern medical missionary to China in the 1830s; W.A.P. Martin and John Fryer, intellectuals who worked with China's scholars and were employed by Chinese government agencies as teachers and translators in the late 1800s; and Edward Hume, distinguished missionary educator and head of Yale-in-China during the first



The sixteen individuals profiled by Spence in this work were in China at various times between the early 1600s and the late 1940s. Only six of them were, technically speaking, Christian missionaries, but they were all convinced they had some body of truth, or skills, that they were eager to offer the Chinese.

three decades of the 20th century. Some of the secular "missionaries" were Mikhail Borodin, brilliant carrier of the gospel of Marxism in the 1920s, O.J. Todd, dedicated civil engineer who was eager to save China from the scourge of floods and natural disasters, and Norman Bethune, a Canadian M.D. who literally poured out his life healing sick and wounded Chinese during the war with Japan.

The lives of these individuals and the role they played in China consti-

tute, in Spence's words, "more a cautionary tale than an inspirational tract" (p. 291). Some showed, at times, commendable attributes: tenacity, energy, sensitivity, organizational genius, personal courage, and dedication. But most also showed, more frequently than we are comfortable in reading, arro-

gance, impatience, intolerance, and tactlessness—qualities which often turned their Chinese colleagues and associates against them and resulted in their own disappointment, bitterness or cynicism.

One of the recurring themes of this work is the complexity of motives of these historical figures.

While they wanted to bring the Gospel to Chinese people, at the same time they wanted to bring social improvement (to "uplift" Chinese civilization) and help China reform and modernize. They were also often looking for a place in which to make their distinctive personal

mark or imprint—to make a difference. Sooner or later, most were disappointed when the Chinese they dealt with ignored, rejected or distorted the message they were offering. Then they tended to throw themselves even more into "The Work" (whether evangelism, teaching, medicine, or whatever), or withdraw into bitterness. One of the most poignant stories is that of Peter Parker, who as a medical missionary did vast amounts of human good, but converted almost no one, and in the last

part of his life ended up very frustrated with China—in Spence’s words, “incontinently angered by those he had meant to love” (p. 56).

For Christian teachers working in China, the examples of Martin and Fryer are perhaps relevant. Both ended up working for decades in China, doing important educational and translation work. In the end, however, being reminded that they were just employees, their Chinese employer would pick and choose what seemed useful, rejecting the rest and always keeping the foreigner in the position of outsider. Edward Hume is an example of the tensions between expectations of the home constituency (the Yale-in-China board in the U.S.) and what his conscience and personal experience told him to do on the ground in China. Unable to reconcile the two, he ended up resigning and leaving China.

There is a certain amount of glorified missions “history” written about China, for example, on Hudson Taylor, Griffith John, or other heroes or martyrs such as the victims of the Boxers in 1900 or, later, John and Betty Stam. That has its place. But sometimes the analytical eye of the secular scholar can also be a valuable resource to the Christian who feels called to go to China. This old but still-relevant book by Jonathan Spence, full of examples of those whose hubris or presumption led to disappointment, can remind that person that she or he needs to go to China not to solve problems, nor to advise, much less “To Change China,” but just to serve.

End Notes

1. Another classic that is out of print is John Hersey’s novel *The Call: An American Missionary in China*, a nationwide best seller at the time of its publication in 1985.

Daniel Bays, Ph.D., is Professor of History, Emeritus, University of Kansas and Professor of History and Spoelhof Chair, Calvin College. He has authored several studies of Christianity in China’s modern history and is the editor of *Christianity in China: From the 18th Century to the Present* (Stanford U. Press, 1996).

Resource Corner

2002 Intercessors for China Calendar

Pray for China strategically, comprehensively and specifically.

- Monthly profiles on China’s provinces allow you to pray strategically.
- Weekly focuses on a city in China help you to pray comprehensively.
- Daily requests for individuals or groups in the named province or city let you pray specifically.

Available in Chinese, English or Korean.

1-4 calendars	\$5.75 each plus s/h
5-49 calendars	\$4.50 each plus s/h
50-249 calendars	\$3.75 each plus s/h
250-499	\$3.25 each plus s/h
500+	\$2.75 each plus s/h



Calendars may be ordered via the web at www.prayforChina.com or in the U.S. by calling toll-free: 1.888.462.5481

Or by mailing your check made out to Ambassadors for Christ to: Ambassadors for Christ, 21A Leaman Road, PO Box 280, Paradise, PA 17562-0280

What is Our Role?

Continued from page 4

and then to the Pacific Rim. Some Chinese Christians have seen themselves as being God’s primary agent to continue the progression of the gospel around the globe through the Hindu and Muslim worlds of South and Central Asia until the church is “back” to Jerusalem.

The younger generation of unregistered leaders senses this call, but they are also aware of their isolation from much of the rest of the Christian world and their inability to partner with the church outside of China to fulfill the Great Commission and to have access to Christian materials in English. This isolation is due in part to political and geographic barriers over which they have no control. The isolation is also due in part to the language barrier, but the church has the means to lessen this. Leaders of the largely rural unregistered churches know that thousands of foreign Christians have come to China to teach English in colleges, secondary and even primary schools. Their cry now is: “Come train us in English. Help connect us with the church outside China and equip us to travel outside our borders.”

This request may strike some outside

of China as strange, and is probably not on the agenda of most agencies and churches outside China. Perhaps the foreign church needs to consider again the way God chose to build his church in China after 1949. Perhaps we, the church outside of China, need to make sure we are carefully listening to the cry of those whom we purport to admire so much. Perhaps we need to make this a matter of deepest concern.

End Notes

1. “Was It Worth It?” *Christian History*, Issue 52 (Vol. XV, No. 4) pg. 41.
2. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Readings for May 26, August 28, Dec. 13.
3. Chuang Tsu-kung, *Ripening Harvest: Mission Strategy for Mainland Chinese Intellectuals in North America*. Ambassadors for Christ, Inc. (Paradise, PA 1995), pp. 1-2.
4. The Chinese Bible can be accessed at sites like: <www.antioch.com.sg/bible/gb/table.htm>; <www.ibs.org.hk/onlinebible.htm>; and <www.o-bible.com/gb/hgb.html>. The popular apologetic work *Song of the Prodigal* can be found at <www.cbible.net/seek/song/prod-main.htm>.

John A. Swem is director of *ChinaInsight, Inc.* and a researcher for the *Intercessor for China prayer calendar series*. He lived in mainland China for more than a decade with his wife Beverly and their five children.

Serving the Church in China
Continued from page 6

one of the top leaders was quite disturbed about the financial support. The needy brother was involved with another external ministry and had exclusive access to their literature, videos and other materials. He had set up his new place as a storage and distribution center and used the literature and videos as a means of power, income and influence over brothers and sisters within the network. From the well-intended assistance of the two external ministries, he was usurping the network leadership. The second outside organization, eager to find a good contact to distribute their materials, had not considered how their materials might be used in a manipulating or controlling way.

Financial assistance to a network must never be carried out through just one individual. A clear set of regulations, an understanding of specific needs and strong, open lines of accountability must be set up. A small committee must be formed to handle money, oversee its distribution, respond to any queries about its use and give a clear accounting of needs and expenses to the source. Time frames should be discussed.

For how long will this support be needed? When will it end? Is it a one-time project? Will there be a gradual decrease?

Lesson five

Approach the relationship with the church in China as a partnership whose participants give and take as equals.

Outsiders can assist as fellow servants but should use caution, if not refrain, from the requests and temptations to make decisions for network leaders. We may do them the greatest favor by listening and offering to pray with and for them as they seek God's will. He has, can and will lead them. We must recognize the areas in which they are more mature and spiritually sensitive than the church from outside China. How often and how long do we outsiders fast and pray? How much Scripture have we memorized in comparison to the passages of God's Word they have hidden in their hearts? How do our experiences of God's provision, power, protection, comfort and forgiveness compare with theirs? To what extent do we know and understand the blessings associated with suffering and persecution?

As partners in ministry, we have much to offer the Lord in service to-

gether. Rather than trying to decide which of us should set the pace, perhaps the church would be better served if we concentrated on getting our steps in sync, side by side, behind our Master.

Future Implications

These lessons emphasize a posture of service and humility. Our goal is to model for the church in China a role she may soon play in reaching out to the nations herself. Is she learning the skill of identifying the needs and issues facing her target group? Will she be responsive to the educational level of the learner and adjust her message and content accordingly? Will she accept correction and learn to adapt her service? Will she discern when her efforts at blessing others can be turned inside out and harm those she is trying to help? Will she step out to lord it over others or serve them in partnership and mutual submission? If we serve in China, we must live before the church in China in such a way that she will witness the answers to these questions.

Jason Lee has served in Chinese ministry since 1979. His first exposure to China was in 1982.

尾

Brent Fulton's editorial will resume with the next issue.


ChinaSource
Partnering Resources with Vision
P.O. Box 4343
Fullerton, CA 92834

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID

FULLERTON CA
PERMIT NO. 98

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED