

Equipping the church

Toward a New Approach to Ministry in China

Gary Waldron

China's open door policy has been in effect now for twenty years. At the time that the door first, cautiously, creaked open, Western Christians ventured in to see the state of her church. What they found has become one of the most significant stories in church history. Despite the expulsion of missionaries, the closing of churches and persecution of Christians, the church has grown to an estimated 50 million. Needs, however, have far outstripped the capabilities of this rapidly expanding church. The result has been a shortage of prepared leaders, inadequate training and a lack of reference materials. In addition, inadequate answers to modernity, a rise of aberrant doctrines and an unsupported, yet increasing, pastoral role for women remain unaddressed.

Over these past twenty years, there has been a great deal of ministry effort from neighboring Asian countries and the West directed at aiding this rapidly growing, but very needy, church. However, many fundraising letters and news bulletins from China have frequently focused on areas of need and persecution, creating, in some cases, an unbalanced view of the situation. Rather than accepting this view-

point, the West needs to shift its thinking from seeing China's church merely as a bibleless, persecuted church to that of a church which is undergoing unprecedented revival and growth and possessing enormous potential for Kingdom impact worldwide. If the church in the West is to

Photo by Ken Benintendi



help the church in China achieve this potential, a change in the Western ministry mindset must occur. We must stop thinking in terms of what can be exported to China and begin to consider how we might aid the Chinese in the development of their theology, training programs and mission thrust.

In attempting to aid China with her training needs, there are many threats and obstacles. The task is overwhelming since the church has grown so large so rapidly. There may be a tendency toward paralysis in the face of such great need and the knowledge that any training program will not be perfect or ideal. On the other hand, since there is such a tremendous need, there may be a response of throwing everything at China with-

out careful thought as to its appropriateness. There is also the danger that denominational and organizational loyalties will develop that will hinder the unity of the Chinese church and harm her witness for Christ.

Many ministry efforts from the West have fo-

cused on providing Bibles and Christian literature, and more recently, leadership training. Since the attitude of ministries outside of China has frequently been, "Let's give China what we have," the result has been that the majority of materials going into China have been Western translations. Because Chinese Christians recognize their great lack of trained leadership and are hungry for biblical and ministry training, they welcome Western materials and methodology even though many report that the majority of it is not useful to them.

initiative to critically evaluate their training methods and materials and begin to view their Chinese brethren as partners in the training process.

The Chinese take pride in the fact that the church has grown and now thrives without foreign dominance. They are leery that Western offers of aid and resources may translate into control. Western believers and overseas Chinese need to rid themselves of paternalistic views of their Chinese brothers and sisters.

As the church around the world responds to the increasing openness in

control over content and presentation.

Many house church movements have stopped inviting foreign trainers unless they have proven themselves through a long-term relationship. Such relationships allow Chinese believers to build more genuine rapport with foreigners and instruct them in the unique needs of the church in China. In this way, the ever-present issues of the handling of resources and of control can be diffused. All too often, financial resources are behind the methods and materials used in China, rather than their suitability.

For new partnerships between Christian organizations and Chinese church leaders to occur will require a ministry philosophy shift from supplying Chinese translations of Western materials to aiding in the development of truly indigenous materials. Rather than quickly presenting pre-packaged Western seminary-training modules, it is far more important that Westerners sit with Chinese leaders in a spirit of humility seeking to understand what God is saying and doing through them.

God has gifted the church in China with pastors and teachers; some of these are beginning to write theological and practical materials which speak to the present Chinese situation. Western Christians need to identify these gifted leaders and partner with them as equals in the work of the Lord in China.

There are some foreign groups that are providing excellent training in a Chinese manner, although these tend to be more the exception than the rule. The trainer enters a Chinese home and lives with its members for three to five weeks while providing intensive training that is culturally appropriate and theologically sound. Their

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Rural house church believers, for example, have reported that training is often theologically above their comprehension, not appropriate for the Chinese context, or simply not transferable. One house church leader stated that the training done by overseas Chinese and Western Christians was only 20% useful. When asked why he bothered with such training, his response was that 20% was better than nothing and they wanted to maintain contact with the Western church and its resources. Unfortunately, the enthusiastic welcome given Westerners and their materials has kept Westerners from critically evaluating the effectiveness of what they bring. Western ministries and overseas Chinese need to take the

China, many associations, denominations and global parachurch organizations are choosing to work under the authority of the established Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council. While this relationship with the government allows for certain concessions to foreign Christians, it can confine opportunities for ministry to a fairly narrow scope. The government is quite adamant about maintaining control of the church via the TSPM and preserving its Chinese qualities, ostensibly by regulating outside influence. Training opportunities are limited for foreign groups and must be organized through the CCC on a regional, county, or citywide basis. Usually there is a high degree of con-

ChinaSource
Partnering Resources with Vision

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ChinaSource is published quarterly by ChinaSource, a cooperative effort of the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, World Evangelical Fellowship, the Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism and the Institute for Chinese Studies, 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.

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teaching starts from the experience of the Chinese Christians and builds upon all that the Holy Spirit is doing in and through them. It provides a practical, theological base for understanding the Chinese experience and ministering in house church settings.

The China Christian Council has also recognized the great need for trained leadership. In addition to formal programs at the eighteen open seminaries and Bible schools, lay leadership training is provided by seminaries, or by provincial, countywide, or local church councils. These programs range in duration from one year to just a few weeks. In addition, various institutions, including Nanjing Seminary, offer correspondence courses for church workers. While the quality of the trainers and materials varies greatly, some are very practical programs with required texts and reading assignments that attempt to provide a solid grounding.

Finally, Western Christians need to see beyond China as their target for ministry and begin to view the church in China as a tremendous resource for the completion of the Great Commission. Chinese church leaders have begun to ask for assistance in communicating the gospel cross-culturally. The Chinese church is cultivating a vision to reach the unreached minorities of China as well as the nations that border China. Western believers have an important role to play, at the invitation of Chinese church leaders, in providing the kind of training that can lead to the mobilization of the church in China for effective cross-cultural outreach. This training, as well as all ministries to China, must always be done with respect to the miraculous work of God and the faith of China's Christians.

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Western images in a Chinese mirror

Tony Lambert

Many Christians overseas seek to become involved in Christian work in China.

Churches, parachurch organizations and enterprising individuals are drawn for various reasons to China. In some cases they are ill prepared. While their motives may be genuine, because of the vast linguistic and cultural gulf that separates China from the average modern Western Christian, serious mistakes can be made. My purpose here is not to dissuade anyone from deeper in-

need, therefore, to approach China with a profound humility and a spirit that is willing to listen to what the Spirit is saying through our Chinese brothers and sisters.

Rather than proposing detailed recipes for Christian service in China, I would like to suggest some lessons from history. China, in its vastness, is like a mirror that reflects back that which the viewer wishes to see. Even as Christians, we can deceive ourselves as to the realities of the situation in this complex and ancient culture. Over the centuries, Westerners have seen varied,

China, in its vastness, is like a mirror that reflects back that which the viewer wishes to see.

volvement with China, but rather to enable us to stand back and examine our own motives. Prayerful and informed reflection needs to take place prior to activism.

The truth, which can easily be ignored, is that God has raised up the Chinese church over the last three decades without us. During that period, the church in China grew from about one million believers to possibly fifty million. At the same time, the church in the West experienced overall decline. The survival and revival of the Chinese church is one of the greatest stories of church history. Its recent extraordinary growth stems from a period of dark persecution and suffering on a scale that we in the comfortable West can only dimly understand. This growth has been overwhelmingly due to indigenous factors. The only major exceptions to this have been the contributions made by Christian radio and literature agencies—and these have been largely staffed by Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan and elsewhere in the overseas Chinese Diaspora. We

and often deeply conflicting, images of China. The same is true today.

Seven hundred years ago, Marco Polo was the first Westerner to visit China at a time when Chinese civilization was, in many respects, ahead of the European. He returned to Venice with tales of opulent Cathay that many refused to believe. China was exotic, distant and unreal.

The Jesuits, in the 16th and 17th centuries, made serious efforts to evangelize the Confucian scholar class. They immersed themselves in the Confucian classics and, in so doing, emerged with a profound respect for China's ancient culture. They carefully transmitted back to Europe a stream of detailed information about Chinese philosophy, art and culture which had a profound effect on Western thinkers. China was seen as a rational, humanist utopia—a civilization lacking the revelation and blessings of the gospel, but one showing how much mankind could achieve by the aid of natural human reason. The Jesuits, such as Matteo Ricci, were prepared to accept the Chi-

nese custom of ancestor worship and to adapt, to a considerable extent, the Christian message to Chinese culture. Rome, fearing syncretism, was not amused and the “Rites Controversy” in which the Popes forced the Jesuits to forbid ancestor worship, eventually led to the failure of the Jesuit mission.

The Chinese Emperors, on the other hand, were impressed by their Jesuit advisers who introduced the latest Western scientific (particularly astronomical) knowledge. However, they were not prepared to accept papal interference in China’s internal affairs. This attitude can be traced directly to the present day when China’s communist rulers are quite open to learning from Western technology and accepting Christian professionals while re-

decadent, weak, stagnant and ignorant. Unfortunately, it was during this period that modern Protestant Christian mission to China began. The missionaries were children of their era and, while some missionary scholars studied Chinese culture with sympathy, others were far more dismissive.

By the close of the century, a succession of civil wars (especially the Taiping rebellion), famines, floods and other disasters had confirmed the West’s viewpoint of China as hopelessly backward. The Western powers had virtually carved China up into spheres of influence. Chinese were now regarded as racially inferior. The Boxer Rebellion in 1900 saw the Great Powers march in triumph into Peking. The Western media were full of cartoons

missions circles there was a great loss of confidence as over a century of work in China abruptly came to an end. A “bamboo curtain” now fell, severing links between East and West. China was often seen as a regimented society of Maoist “blue ants.” “Red China” became the enemy. Later, the Cultural Revolution seemed to be the triumph of Maoism and the corresponding death-knell of the church. Neither the fulminations of the political and religious right against “Red China” nor the naive applause of Mao by certain intellectuals bore much relation to conditions in China.

The visit by Richard Nixon to China suddenly changed everything. China and things Chinese again became popular. China was seen now as an ally of the West against the Soviet Union. The visit of Deng Xiaoping to the United States and his being acclaimed as *Time* magazine’s “Man of the Year” symbolized the new relationship. The “open door” policy led China into the family of nations.

However, hopes that China would automatically join the democratic, capitalist Western club were shattered in June 1989 with the show of force at Tiananmen Square. Deng Xiaoping and his successors have made it quite clear that China will continue to pursue its own unique course under the authoritarian leadership of the Communist Party. Since 1989 relations between China and the West have been strained while within China some intellectuals have reacted against Westernization (most notably with the publication of the book *China Can Say No!*).

In the United States there have been worrying signs that China may again be demonized by the religious and political Right. The continuing political suppression of all dissent, the repression in Tibet, the persecution of unregistered Christians, the poor conditions in China’s orphanages and the sabre-rattling over Taiwan and the South China Sea all combine to give much ammunition to powerful overseas lobbies who see China as an enemy and a major military threat in the 21st century. That these are disturbing trends

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maintaining adamantly opposed to Western and Vatican political interference. In fact, the entire Jesuit experience merits being studied in depth by the serious Christian professional interested in working long-term in China today.

Voltaire, Leibniz and other Western thinkers learned much from China in the 18th century, but inevitably, at the more popular level, images of China were stereotyped and false. During the 18th century, the “rococo” craze swept the fashionable salons of Europe. China was seen as exotic and fashionable, but few people really wished to understand the Chinese people at a deeper level.

By the 19th century, Western images of China had changed and hardened. Western industrial society had forged ahead of China and Western traders were eager to open up this vast market for their cheaply-produced goods. China had entered a period of dynastic decline and was neither at her best nor able to resist imperialist encroachment. The infamous Opium Wars forced her doors open at the barrels of the gunboats. China was seen in the West as

portraying the “Yellow Peril” and the “Heathen Chinese.” Chinese were viewed as cunning, crafty, shifty and dishonest. In the Treaty Ports, Chinese were fodder for the new factories, but, in contrast, foreigners on Chinese soil enjoyed extra-territorial freedom from Chinese law. Overseas, Chinese were despised as ignorant laundry men and opium addicts in the ports of Liverpool and London, while in California Chinese were exploited to build the new railroads.

The image of China in the West has continued to change in the 20th century. During the Second World War, Chiang Kai-shek and his wife cleverly built up support in the USA for the Nationalists in their fight first against the Japanese and then against the Communists. The press coverage in the States bore little resemblance to the chaos and corruption enveloping the Nationalist forces in China itself.

The victory of the Communist Party in 1949 saw a major shift in perceptions of China overseas. Much soul-searching was done in America as to why China had been “lost.” In Christian

cannot be denied, but the real danger is that relations between China and the West will again be polarized, and extremist views on both sides will become self-fulfilling prophecies. Furthermore, the question should be asked whether political lobbies who attack China over one or more of these issues might not ultimately be more concerned about internal Western politics than the actual fate of suffering Chinese people.

The way in which perceptions of China have changed radically in recent centuries—and even in recent decades—should give us pause for thought. As Christians we must ensure that our motives are pure and pleasing to God. We cannot avoid our citizenship in particular countries, but we can seek to avoid thoughtless nationalism. We must constantly ask ourselves what model we are projecting as we serve Christ in China. Is it one of materialism and affluence? It is a fact that many Western Christians visiting China spend more on one night's hotel bill, and even on one meal, than many Chinese Christian workers earn in a month. What image of Christianity does this portray? Westernization may serve as a vehicle for evangelism as Western Christians teach English and technical skills while living a Christian life-style. However, Westernization can also be seen as a curse in the remorseless spread of a market economy, materialism, and its adjuncts of mass-market pornography and violence. There is a great need in China to distinguish between biblical Christianity, which underlies what is good in traditional Western culture, democracy, art and legal systems, and the post-Christian, decadent West of today with its hedonism and immorality.

Ultimately, the Christian disciple is in China not to spread "Western democracy" or "values" but to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. If Christ Himself "did not come to be served, but to serve," (Matt. 20:28 NIV) then how much more we, who are His servants?

Anthony B. Lambert is a China researcher and author of The Resurrection of the Chinese Church.

10 years 10 lessons

Reflections on Ten Years of Work with the Church in China

Danny Yu

1. Learn new vocabulary

- The biggest hurdle for American and Chinese to overcome is vocabulary that represents the conflict of two cultures and two mindsets.
- The Chinese church and American evangelicals are separated by a culture clash—not necessarily a difference of theological beliefs.
- Chinese are "face" and authority oriented, quite conservative, quaters of official policy, rather defensive and somewhat poor in image building and public relations.
- American evangelicals consider precious certain terms such as "evangelism" and "missions" that, in the Chinese mind, trigger implications of Western Christianity undermining the Chinese church. New vocabulary such as "witness," "ministry," and "cooperation" is needed.

2. Learn patience

- Do not expect fast results.
- Invest time in relationships rather than just projects.

3. Learn the larger setting

- A view of the larger picture, with patience, is needed.
- China, as both hierarchical and decentralized, presents a paradox. While there is always a higher-level decision required, everybody's opinion and comment will be taken into consideration. This is especially true in the Chinese church and can throw a monkey wrench into the works.
- Recognize that those you work with do not control everything. There are many levels of decision-making.
- A useful mantra is "two steps forward and one step back."

4. Do not over-plan or over-manage

- Allow for major differences in planning and implementation styles.
- Be flexible
- Do not plan a schedule or logistics too extensively or tightly.

5. Do not dominate or make the other party feel that you are dominating

- The most sensitive issue for the Chinese church is being viewed as a foreign religion. Any foreign agency working with the Chinese church needs to be well-trained to

handle this issue so as to give a correct impression to Chinese pastors.

- Do not work unilaterally. Religious freedom as we understand it in the U.S. does not exist in China. There are many things which cannot be done there.
- Be involved with real and felt needs.
- The investment of money, though welcomed, may not necessarily open Chinese church doors. Rather, the influence and power of money may be resented.
- Be sure trust precedes any dealings involving money. The Chinese church is usually willing to provide accounting but does not want controlling oversight. Corruption in the organized Chinese church is uncommon.

6. Do not get stuck with publicity-intensive, money-raising or time-sensitive projects

- Raise funds prior to entering into cooperative efforts.
- Advise donors of what they can expect prior to giving.

7. Do "enabling" of the Chinese Church

- Understand their difficulties and defensive mentality.
- Strengthen and sustain the ministry effectiveness of elderly pastors.
- Encourage the young.
- Pray for and respond wisely to needs.
- Advocate long-term thinking. Development of human resources is always strategic.

8. Do "enhancement" of the image of Christianity in Chinese society

- Avoid approaches or methods that might trigger negative repercussions.
- Be supportive of the "salt and light" approach of the Chinese church.
- Be in the open. Stay on the lamp stand.

9. Do "promotion for unity"

- Do no harm to either the official church or the unofficial church.
- If we cannot help to promote unity, at least let us not promote schism. Promoting division is not biblical.

10. Maintain an unconditional commitment and submission to God's timing and plan

Dr. Danny Yu is president of Christian Leadership Exchange.

PARTNERSHIP

Maximizing Effectiveness for Discipling Peoples

Mark Alexander

Partnerships—what do we mean by them, and why should I consider involvement in one? In my ministry of catalyzing partnerships and mentoring those who are facilitating their development, I have seen that involvement in partnerships maximizes the effectiveness of discipling people groups for Christ. Following are seven simple, but crucial steps for becoming involved in a partnership that have been identified in the course of my work.

Step one

Know what you're getting into. To know what you are getting into, you must understand what is meant by “partnership.” This will help you to have more realistic expectations about a partnership and what it might require of you.

The concept of partnership that we in Interdev promote revolves around Christian ministries working together where they have a mutual and active interest in seeing the evangelization and discipling of certain geographical areas and/or people groups of the world. Partnerships are not mergers as partners retain their distinctives and their independence while they work together in the overlap of mutual interests and goals.

Included in the term “ministries” are churches. Interdev believes that mission agencies and local churches or church networks should work together in partnerships. Not only does our vision include the development of relationships between churches and mission agencies, but it also inspires us to see Western missions and churches involved in the Great Commission working together with missions and

churches from newer sending bases such as South Africa, Korea and Latin America. Interdev's end-goal is culturally relevant national churches emerging among unreached people groups. Therefore, we encourage national Christians from emerging churches to take a significant part in partnerships, in which everyone has an equally important, but different, role to play.

To further clarify the concept of partnership, I have laid out several possible levels of relationships between ministries with mutual interests.

1. Independence—ministries passively hear of one another and continue in their own paths.

2. Communication—ministries actively share information by networking and, ideally, avoid duplication.

3. Cooperation—ministries agree to help one another achieve their individual goals.

4. Collaboration—ministries consent to work together on joint goals to achieve together more than the sum of what they could have achieved by each working on their separate goals. This is what we would usually consider to be the best form of partnership.

5. Constitution—ministries go beyond informal collaboration and set up a constitutional agreement for working together. A disadvantage of this more formal arrangement is that it can restrict partnership activity as much as it can release it.

Step two

Attend a partnership meeting. Many partnerships are spawned and developed by partnership meetings (often called consultations) frequently held over a few days once a year. They operate at several levels of relationship. Some participants just enjoy networking and catching up with what each

other is doing. Others, including nationals, collaborate in partnership on specific projects. In Mongolia, it was from the annual partnership meetings that a constitutional partnership sprang up. This partnership places Christian professionals from its several partner agencies in positions where their skills are needed and their gifts appreciated.

If you are uncertain whether or not partnership is for you but have been invited to a partnership meeting relevant to your area of focus, I suggest you go. By attending, you may find that Christ confirms whether or not you should consider further involvement at this stage.

Step three

Prepare your heart for partnership.

This is perhaps the key step since partnership—practical, working unity—is contrary to our sinful nature. Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV) lists fifteen acts of the sinful nature. Four of these are frequently associated with divisions—selfish ambition, envy, jealousy and hatred. Another three, discord, dissensions and factions, even more clearly relate to division in the body of Christ.

In missions communities, as in churches around the world, people at times offend each other and have disagreements. Others take sides. Rifts form and Satan has a field day. Partnership exposes the need for reconciliation. We need to prepare to attend partnership meetings full of God's enabling grace to bear with each other, forgive, and ask forgiveness, for His glory in the nations.

Partnership does not just mean that others will help you with your agenda. Agendas are good but need to be offered up to God prior to partnership meetings so that they can be held lightly. Trust must be in God to see one's agenda furthered. This type of preparation will release one's heart to hear the agendas of others and see the bigger picture. We need to be prepared to see what God, in His sovereignty, is doing through His body for

His agenda. We need to see how well we are working with Him and with others and be prepared to give to others.

Review with the Lord what your non-negotiables, such as basic theological tenets, are. If you can then anticipate what some of the negotiable items are that might come up and require you to step out of your comfort zone (such as worship style), you can offer them up to God. Then Satan will not find it so easy to distract you from what the Lord wants to do in the meeting in and through you.

Satan desires that we be manipulated by fear, especially those working in “closed countries.” This can isolate us. Bringing this before the Lord in advance will help equip us to relate to others confidently, both resting in His sovereignty and exercising wisdom and discernment.

Successful partnerships require that time be invested in building relationships and trust with other ministries. “Bottom-line” individuals who are high on task and achievement may become frustrated with what might seem to be slow progress. This too is an aspect worth bringing before the Lord.

Step four

Prepare practically. Clarify in your own mind the key activities and goals of your organization that are relevant to the focus of the meeting. Which are core items and which are peripheral? Take stock of the resources (human, intellectual, and material) at your disposal and determine what can be shared or given away. What do you want to come away with from the meeting? How do you want to present yourself and your ministry? (You may want to consult with others in your organization concerning these questions.) It may be that at a meeting you will only be given a minute to introduce yourself and the agency you represent. Without prior consideration this could be a struggle and you may not communicate as you desire. Partnership meetings are not conferences but consultations. They are very interactive. With ad-

equating preparation in these areas you will increase the benefit to your ministry, other participants and ultimately to the Kingdom.

Try not to take work with you to a partnership meeting, and consider leaving your laptop behind. A morning’s e-mail can easily become a distraction. Arranging to stay on-site at the location of the meeting will help you to get into the flow of the proceedings and allows you to maximize the use of your time outside of formal sessions for relationship building, reflection and activities related to the event.

Step five

Be open to reviewing your methodology and strategy—even your vision and values.

As we consider our work, are we open to the fact that the Lord might want to reposition us? Are we flexible enough to adjust if we find realignment is needed? Do we see adaptability as a virtue?

Sometimes established ministries can resent participation at partnership meetings of new entrants or people not yet active in the field. This is understandable as practitioners want to share experiences and those who do not yet have experience can ask naive questions. However, these individuals can be less entrenched and more open to fit into current programs. They may also be sources of new contacts, prayer support and funding.

Step six

Consider whether other individuals from your ministry should become involved. If so, you will also need wisdom as to when to involve them and in what capacity. For example, do they need to attend a meeting, just be kept in the loop or asked for pre-meeting input? Usually, invitations to a partnership meeting specify a certain number of people per ministry, so it may be possible to extend an invitation to one or two others in your organization.

Field leaders can contribute much to partnerships as they often have the

most experience and knowledge of what’s happening “on the ground.” They are also probably the closest to national Christians and may be able to partially represent the emerging national church or recruit nationals for attendance at a partnership meeting.

Executives based close to the field may have a better opportunity to see the “big picture” and the benefits of the implementation of a more strategic approach. They also usually have a better understanding of the nature of their organization, allowing them to gauge what might be necessary to release resources so their ministry can be effectively involved in partnership.

Ministry directors usually have a significant influence on their organization’s involvement in partnership activity. Involvement of higher level executives can be crucial for the ministry’s successful long-term engagement in partnership activity.

Step seven

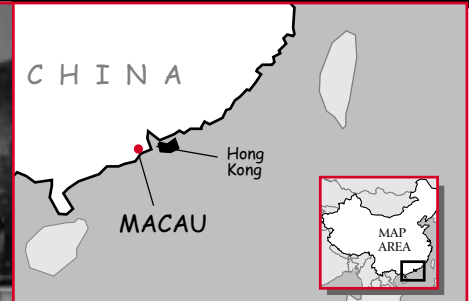
Understand the long-term value of partnering and count the cost of involvement. We need to ask God to give us vision and lead us regarding what He wants us to achieve through partnership and our part in it. He can inspire us far better than any partnership advocate. With a vision for what can be accomplished, involvement becomes easier; nevertheless, sacrifice is often required. The most common areas of sacrifice are:

- **Time.** Taking time out for just two to four days a year (the usual time taken for an annual partnership meeting) can be a significant cost for most people. Partnering with others on work towards joint goals will take additional time. Because many people in ministry suffer from pressure due to over-commitment, consideration of taking on more responsibilities or giving up present ones for partnership activities can seem unreasonable. However, the call to involvement in partnership should result in a reassessment of current time commitments, which can be

MACAU

Photos by Ken Shay

Chinese Culture with a Portuguese Touch



The Portuguese controlled territory of Macau will return to Chinese rule as the Special Administrative Region of Macau on December 20, 1999. Located in Southeast China, Macau borders Guangdong province, and is 38 miles from Hong Kong. Macau's total land area of 21 sq. kilometers includes the Macau peninsula and the islands of Taipa and Coloane. One causeway and two bridges connect the islands to the peninsula.

The Changeover

The Portuguese established administrative structures in Macau following their treaty of 1888 that recognized Portuguese sovereignty over the territory. China never ratified this treaty. When diplomatic relations between Portugal and China were resumed in 1979, Macau was recognized as Chinese territory under Portuguese administration. In April 1987, the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on Macau provided for China to resume sovereignty over Macau on December 20, 1999 and the establishment of the Special Administrative Region of Macau (RAEM). This autonomous region will have its own government and laws and for the next fifty years will maintain its present political, judicial, social, cultural and economic systems. The past twelve years have been a transition period during which both govern-

ments have worked together to ensure a smooth turn-over. Last May, a committee of prominent business and community leaders elected Edmund Ho, a local Chinese banker and businessman, to become Macau's first Chief Executive in December. His appointment has been approved by Beijing.

History

In the mid 1500s, Portuguese seafarers used Macau as a shelter to weather storms. The small settlement that formed grew as trade between China and Japan expanded. In addition, it attracted refugees fleeing difficulties in other parts of Asia. At the beginning of the 19th century, the English, using an ancient alliance with Portugal, began to use Macau as a gateway into China. However, after they founded Hong Kong, which grew rapidly, Macau entered a pe-



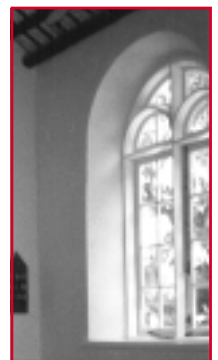
The tomb of Robert Morrison, first Protestant missionary to China.

riod of decline as businesses and inhabitants emigrated to Hong Kong in large numbers.

Over the past two centuries, an ever-increasing flow of people, largely from China, has shaped Macau's appearance, customs, day-to-day life, and economy.

The Church in Macau

With the Portuguese traders came the Roman Catholic Church and historically Macau was almost totally Catholic. Today, however, Catholicism accounts for only 9.2% of the population, Protestantism for 1.8% while the great majority hold to a synthesis of Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist thought mixed with ancient beliefs that include ancestor worship and divination. Nevertheless, the Christian religions played a



major role in both the expansion of Catholicism throughout Asia and the taking of Protestantism to China. In Macau, the first Protestant Chinese convert was baptized, the first Chinese Bible was translated and Robert Morrison, the first missionary, was buried.

Today, the Catholic Church continues to exert unequaled influence in the schools of Macau and is involved with welfare activities. The local Protestant community numbers around 2,500. Church growth has been slow and the church is divided and weakened by emigration and leadership turnover. There are three theological institutions for leadership training. The World Bible Translation Center plans to print 60,000 copies of its contemporary Mandarin New Testament for distribution prior to the December turnover. It is estimated that this will provide one New Testament copy for every ten residents.

Culture and Attractions

Almost half of Macau's visitors come to enjoy its slower, more relaxed pace of life combined with a southern European flavor. Balconies, pastel-colored buildings, open *pracas* or squares, outdoor cafés and Portuguese restaurants lend an aura of tranquility. Old Portuguese fortresses, baroque churches, Chinese temples and faded mansions with charming Portuguese place names take one back in history. Macau's colonial past predates that of Hong Kong by nearly three hundred years as attested by the imposing facade of St. Paul's Church.

Recently completed projects including the Macau Museum and the Cultural Centre—a theme park on the island of Taipa—Macau's airport, and over 100 hotels or lodging places attract tourists. Festivals and events such as the Dragon Boat Races, the International Fireworks Festival and Chinese New Year festivities provide entertainment.

Macau's Labor Force

Macau's economy depends largely on tourism that includes a significant gambling element. This industry employs close to a third of the territory's workforce and serves an annual number of

visitors that averages 20 times that of the resident population. Textile and fireworks manufacturing, along with real estate development are other major industries. Smaller industries include toys, artificial flowers and electronics.

The situation for laborers, both foreign and local, is difficult. There are 22,943 foreign laborers from China. To obtain a contract that normally lasts from one to three years, a laborer must pay a company fee prior to arrival. For most, this requires some type of loan with repayment installments beginning immediately upon their arrival in Macau. Once there, they find a low wage forcing them to work overtime. The work environment is adverse with frequent industrial accidents. Dormitory space is minimal and relatives and friends are prohibited from visiting. Freedom to participate in local activities is not allowed and expressions of dissatisfaction can mean loss of employment. As a result, laborers bear their exploitation in silence. Local laborers are also affected as imported laborers are cheaper and take the positions that locals would otherwise fill.

Since wages and factory building costs in China are more attractive than those of Macau, many owners move their industries to inland China resulting in underemployment in Macau. This is reflected in unemployment numbers that have recently been on the upswing. Nevertheless, although not working, laborers must pay for living expenses which drives them to borrow from local friends. When work becomes available, many work much overtime or in various factories

and live frugally as they struggle to pay off their debts.

Petty street crime, frequently near casinos, and gang-related violence related to shrinking gambling profits have been on the increase affecting the public safety. In the wake of the Asian "Financial Windstorm," business is slack with investors staying away. Laborers must take "forced breaks" without pay while being charged fees.



**Unemployment:
5.4% (Dec. 1998)**



Population: 429,152
Chinese nationals 70%;
Portuguese passport holders 28%

Ethnic Groups:
Chinese 95%; Portuguese 2%;
Other 4%

Languages:
Cantonese 96.1%; Portuguese 1.8%; English widely used in trade and tourism



Sources: Macau Government Information Centre on the Internet at: www.macau.gov.mo/eng-txt/; *China Prayer Update*, Chinese Church Support Ministries publication, July 1999, p 3; Johnson, Patrick, *Operation World*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1993, p.359; World Bible Translation Center web site at: www.wbtc.com/articles/news/news/; CIA Factbook web site at: www.odcci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/mc.html; Nova Gazeta Macaense web site at: www.terravista.pt/aguaaalto/; Macau-Consular Information Sheet web site at: <http://travel.state.gov/macau.html>; Zhou, Rong, "Chinese Laborers in Macau," *Proclaim*, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 56 & 57.

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Preparing for China?

What to Know Before You Go

By Wayne Martindale with Nita Martindale and Jewel Schroder

What you need to know before going to China will, of course, depend a lot on your purpose and length of stay. For a short-term trip, where more experienced hands are already there to help, a good attitude, a learner's curiosity, and a humble spirit will take you a long way. But even short-termers will find their effectiveness greatly enhanced by focused preparation. The better the preparation, the greater your potential for strategic impact. Here is some start-up information and a few suggestions.

† Spiritual Discipline

Your most important preparation will be a living relationship with the living God. If you do not have good habits of prayer, Bible reading, a pattern of growth toward Christlikeness and experience in trusting God in hardship, that's the place to concentrate your efforts. Engaging a mentor and accountability partner who has been to China and evidenced spiritual maturity could be invaluable. Even if you have no access to someone with China experience, you should be able to find a mature Christian who will disciple you in areas of need.

✈ Connecting with an Organization

It is highly advisable that someone going to China for the first time go under the guidance of a credible sending agency with experience in China. If the culture and language are new and you have no one in China with clout to plead your case, you could be setting yourself up for unnecessary hardship. Also, you need a credible reason for being in the country, which a job (or student status) and official connections afford. A good agency will have official contacts, obtain a position and negotiate a contract for you, help you with medical insurance and potential emergencies, as well as link you with a network of professionals to enhance your effectiveness and remove some of the logistical and administrative burden. Every good organization will also help you with some amount of training. In addition, a good agency will have asked their Chinese hosts what their needs are and how we as guests can meet those needs.

🏠 General Background

China is a country that values history to a high degree, especially its own. China as a subject can be overwhelming, still, you can learn a lot in a short time, and not only will your understanding of the host culture deepen, but your Chinese hosts will appreciate your interest in their country. The same is true for learning even a little of the language.

🌐 Culture

Everyone should know a few key elements of Chinese culture. First, it's relational. What you can get or get by with often depends on the strength of your relationships with your clients or students, your supervisors (those responsible to the university or agency and hence to the government for your welfare and influence), and the connections of your friends. The focus on relationships also means that Chinese make great friends; they are easy to love and very open. An important part of developing relationships is giving favors (using your position or connections to help someone get something done) and giving gifts. Gifts need not be lavish in ordinary friendships.

Second, avoid causing a Chinese person to "lose face" by forcing an unnecessary confrontation or admission of guilt. Chinese are more likely to respond to an indirect approach and will often use third party intermediaries. If you have a need, you may get better results by presenting your problem and asking for suggestions than by asking for a needed item directly. The necessity for indirection will likely diminish with those who deal routinely with Westerners.

If teaching, a little indirection goes a long way. Use literature, American religious holidays like Christmas and Easter, or American culture and history to

present Christian concepts, then let people ask questions or come to you privately. Directly approaching a group with the suggestion that they need Christ may get you expelled.

♥ Attitudes

You will find the common person eager for friendship with Americans (and Canadians), anxious to practice English (they study it in school from age 5), and admiring of the status of the U.S. as the most advanced country in the world. This means some will feign friendship in the hope of favors. In the big well-traveled cities the Chinese are used to seeing foreigners, and you may pass on the street with little notice. But in more remote cities, you will likely be something of a curiosity and will need to be prepared for staring out of simple curiosity, especially if you have blond or red hair and blue eyes. Use this as an occasion for generating good will and meaningful contacts. Choose not to be offended.

From the government's point of view, if you are there for business, education, or making some other valued contribution, you will be welcome for what you bring—but suspect. It's best to have a paying job since the Chinese don't understand volunteerism and may suspect an ulterior motive. And while the common person may be eager for friendship with Americans, the government maintains a long-standing distrust of foreigners, seeing the U.S. as a bully on the world stage and a nuisance for meddling in Chinese policy, from human rights concerns to support for Taiwan.

Yet there are greater freedoms than at any time in Chinese history. For visitors, this means unparalleled access combined with a hierarchy that is nervous about perceived threats. Any large, organized group that has strong allegiances and/or

ties to the outside (such as the Christian church) is seen as a threat.

Avoid politically sensitive subjects and expect surveillance. These are the hot buttons: June 4, 1989, Tiananmen Square “Event” (the Chinese euphemism preferred over “demonstrations” or “massacre;” Falungong (object of the government’s most recent crack-down, involving everything from exercise to meditation and the demonic); independence for Taiwan; the Dalai Lama; criticism of the one-child policy; criticism of any government leaders; spying in the US; the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. With all of these, proceed with great caution, even in private conversations. Also, expect to be monitored. Phones may be tapped, you may be followed, and you will be reported on. As an experienced China hand once commented, “There are no secrets in China.”

Still, China is very safe for a foreigner, and the worst that would likely happen is expulsion. The greater concern is for our Chinese friends who must stay behind and take the consequences for our mistakes or for the organization whose mission we may compromise.

◎ Social and Economic Conditions

Develop an awareness of China’s social and economic problems. According to an article in the August 1999 *Atlantic Monthly*, China’s population may now be 1.5 billion. This means insufficient farm land causing migration to cities where the influx has resulted in over 100 million unemployed and increased crime. The government is pressured by the newly rich wanting more power and personal freedom, and by the huge, poorly-paid working class wanting in on the prosperity. Pollution is the worst among modern nations, and two-thirds of the population live in flood zones. Given these situations, governing China is no easy task.

† Religion

Even though the Chinese constitution officially allows private individuals freedom of religion, in the wake of the recent Falungong crack-down, the government has reaffirmed its insistence on atheism and philosophical materialism as the party line. Since the late Deng Xiaoping proclaimed, “To get rich is glorious,” many are now caught up in the

pursuit of wealth. To be in the government, Communist party, or army, one must be officially atheist—though there are obviously some who are either quietly religious or too important to punish at the moment. China allows citizens in non-sensitive positions to join the “Three Self” government-monitored Christian church, which numbers about 14 million. The actual number of Christians, including the larger “house church,” may approach 100 million. In addition, the last two decades have witnessed the rise of many cults, in part due to a lack of trained Christian leadership.

In general, the northwest of China is Muslim, the southwest Buddhist. Although not nearly the force they once were, it is still useful to know something about Confucianism and Daoism—which some nationalists are pushing in an attempt to weaken Western ties and reconnect China with its ancient past.

Within limits, you will likely be allowed a number of Christian books for personal use as long as you have no more than two copies of any title. Any more than that should be carefully evaluated in concert with leaders of your organization who know local officials and current customs practices. A letter from a Chinese official documenting the need for the materials may help (for example, Bibles for a pre-approved class in the Bible as Literature).

✳ Personal & Professional

China is modernizing at a dizzying

pace. Many things are readily available in large cities that were scarce only a few years ago. Still, you will need to take careful stock of what is available in services and goods at your proposed workplace. Whenever possible, find out the specifics about the place you are going to from people who have been there. Who has succeeded? Who failed or had to leave and why? What approaches have worked best? Can you do the same thing with a different approach and succeed? What supplies will enhance the mission?

If you are teaching, even promised books may be unavailable when you arrive. Be prepared for surprises and have a back-up plan.

While this all sounds formidable both in the amount to know and the number of cautions, remember that you do not have to know everything at once. When Nita and I went to China for the first time in 1989, we had much to learn, but today we look back on that time with much satisfaction and great thanksgiving to God.

Dr. Wayne Martindale is Associate Professor of English at Wheaton College (IL). He and his wife Nita, an ESL teacher for World Relief, taught in China in 1989 and 1995. Jewel Schroder has been living in China for nine years teaching graduate students ESL.

An expanded version of this article is available for \$1.50 per single copy. Discounts available for quantity orders. Contact ChinaSource, 501 College Ave., Wheaton, IL 60187 or <china@xc.org>.

Some recommended reading

Wild Swans, Jung Chang (New York: Doubleday, 1991). Providing a grand sweep of Chinese history for the last hundred years, this biographical narrative focuses on the lives of three generations of Chinese women. This factual account, that reads like a novel, will take you from the warlord days when women had their feet bound through the Communist era ruled by Mao to within a decade of the present.

The Search for Modern China, 2nd Edition, Jonathan Spence (New York: Norton, 1999). This book expertly chronicles China’s emergence onto the world scene.

China: Alive in the Bitter Sea, Fox Butterfield (New York: Bantam, 1982). Butterfield elaborates the system of control that gripped China during the height of Maoism. This is updated to the present decade in Kenneth Lieberthal’s *Govern-*

ing China: From Revolution Through Reform (New York: Norton, 1995).

Living in China, Revised Edition, Rebecca Weiner, et al. (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, 1977). Reviewed in *The Connection*, Fall 1998. Though it is written especially for teachers, everyone would benefit from reading the first 110 pages.

China Wakes, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl Wu Dunn (New York: Random, 1994). Good insights into contemporary culture and social issues.

The Resurrection of the Chinese Church, Revised Edition, Tony Lambert (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1994). This work, along with Lambert’s *China Insight* (OMF, Littleton, CO.), discusses issues concerning the church in China.

—Wayne Martindale, Nita Martindale, Jewel Schroder

Peoples of China

Discipling the unreached peoples of China

Jim Nickel

The Adopt-a-People concept has caught on, and many individuals, churches, and agencies are making a focus on a particular people group the heart of their mission strategy. Here are some suggestions relating to the challenge of actually reaching the peoples of China with the gospel.

Prayer

Always first, always foremost, we must seek God's direction and blessing upon our efforts. The Holy Spirit is the Lord of the Harvest. If we do not seek His strategy and His power first, our best plans and our most diligent efforts will be doomed to failure from the start. We must pray as we begin, pray as we plan, and pray as we go.

God wants the unreached peoples of China to have access to His Word, and He will do mighty works in answer to the prayers of His people. But we must pray!

Long-term commitment

Another critical component in effective China ministry is long-term commitment to the task. Short-term mission trips are all the rage today, but the unreached peoples of China will not be disciplined by short-termers. The task is too complex to yield to quick-fix approaches. Short-term workers can be effective at particular stages of the task, but there must be individuals committed to seeing it through from beginning to end. We must be willing to pay the price of long-term commitment if we want to participate effectively in discipling the unreached peoples of China.

Part of long-term commitment is learning to see the parts in terms of the



God wants the unreached peoples of China to have access to His Word, and He will do mighty works in answer to the prayers of His people.

whole. Discipling a people group is a multi-phase project. We must learn to discern where the people are with reference to the goal and understand the phases through which they must pass to move from where they are to where God wants them to be. We must then, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, develop strategies and engage in activities that have a high probability of moving the people group systematically towards that goal.

Experience has shown that the most critical component in effective people-group discipling strategies is a key individual who will give his or her life to seeing a people group reached. Interest in a particular project on the part of a church can wane over time. Priorities in agencies can change with resources being pulled out of a people-group project. A key individual who has given his or her life to seeing a people reached will take the responsi-

bility to keep the attention of a church focused on the project and to find other agencies or individuals to step into gaps left by those who have not persevered.

Gathering information

In his short, but powerful book, *Focus! The Power of People Group Thinking*, John Robb underscores the importance of research as the starting point in developing effective missionary strategies. Coming to understand the people group we want to reach is critical for planning and for ministry itself. If we are to meet their deepest needs in the power of Christ, we need to do our homework.¹ Effective ministry flows out of good strategy, and good strategies can only be developed on a foundation of adequate information.

The movement in people group research is from general to specific. It is important to get specific enough that effective strategies can be developed. Simply focusing on the Han Chinese is far too general to be useful. Choosing one of the 56 official nationalities (55 minorities plus the Han majority) is a step in the right direction, but the categories are still too general to be very helpful. The right kind of people group research will lead us to distinguish people groups by both ethno-linguistic and sociological factors. The goal is to discover the natural groupings within a people within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.

It is important to seek out both primary and secondary sources in our research efforts. Much ethnographic research has already been done in China, and it is wasteful to send teams in to do primary research before acquainting ourselves with the work of those who have gone before.² On the other hand, there is no substitute for information gathered through first-hand contact with the people we hope to reach. John Robb's book, referenced above, gives some very helpful pointers to those new to this process.

It is important to look at the potential harvest force as well as the harvest

Ken Benintendi

field. Discipling an unreached people group is a complex task that will require many different resources, and we would do well to begin looking for those resources from the beginning.

Selection

As adequate information is gathered, decisions concerning our ministry focus will need to be made. The first decision is whether to focus on one people group or engage in ministry that makes a strategic contribution to reaching many people groups. Churches will generally be best served by selecting a particular people group, while agencies will tend to focus on a specific type of ministry which may be applicable to many different people groups.

If the decision is made to focus on a people group, other decisions will need to be made. Obviously, a group will need to be selected. Once a group is selected, additional research may reveal that the selection is too general to be useful. A commitment to reach a specific sub-group of one of the official nationalities of China will probably be more effective than the adoption of one of these official nationalities as a whole.

If the decision is made to focus on a particular ministry that could help reach many people groups, it would still be good to consider which people groups to focus upon. It is important to balance realism with vision. We want

to see the world reached for Christ, but real progress towards that objective will not be realized until we get specific enough in our selection of target peoples to be able to apply our resources in a meaningful way.

Partnering

We must also consider how our ministry relates to that of others. No matter how big we are, we all need partners. If the task of discipling the unreached peoples of China is to be accomplished, churches, agencies, and training institutions must join together in well-designed partnerships focused on various aspects of that task. Strategic partnerships will include both an on-field component and a sending-country component. The latter is often called a Resource Partnership.

A final thought

There is a great cartoon that summarizes the dilemma I often feel when I consider the complexity of the task of discipling the unreached peoples of China. It shows a young man surveying two T-shirts lying on his bed, one says "Just Do It," the other "Just Say No!" The caption underneath says, "Sometimes it took Joe all day just to get dressed."

There is an urgency to the task of world evangelization that tends to make us want to "just do it," and then there are the challenges inherent in doing it right that can tend to paralyze us. The Great Commission requires both zeal and knowledge, balancing urgency with long-term thinking. Let's respond to the Lord of the Harvest with both great zeal and carefully-developed strategies focused on discipling the unreached peoples of China.

END NOTES

1. John D. Robb. *Focus! The Power of People Group Thinking* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), p. 29.
2. One of the primary goals of our ministry at the Institute of Chinese Studies is to make the best of the research that has been done on the unreached peoples of China available to the China ministry community. Contact us for additional information at <ics@xc.org>.

Jim Nickel is the President of the Institute of Chinese Studies in Colorado Springs, CO. E-mail: <jnickel@xc.org>.

PARTNERSHIPS

Continued from page 7

very helpful. We may end up with fewer time commitments and become more effective. God will bless faithfulness with the use of our time.

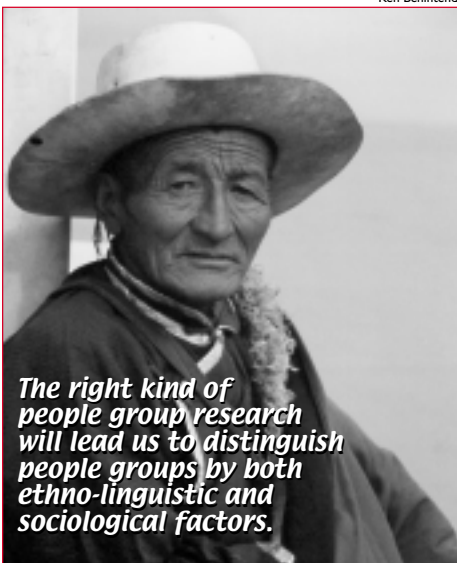
A realistic estimate of the time that can be given to partnership involvement is also necessary. In a working group it is easy to come up with big joint goals and tasks for the following year. Once back home, however, even a minimal amount of time given to the partnership activity can seem like too much. Goals set should be modest and achievable.

● **Pride.** Achievements resulting from partnerships must be shared. No one can boast that their organization was solely responsible for achievement X, if X was achieved through partnership, but we can say that through partnering with others we achieved X, which will often be greater than what those partners could have achieved on their own.

● **Control.** If we work with others we will have to share control in areas of joint effort. Independence gives us control; interdependence is costly. We may have to bear with other work styles and cooperate in control.

In Scripture, we are told that "...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor. 12:25 NIV). Surely we should consider this regarding our place in the missions community. As one body in Christ, ministries with a shared interest in a region or people should explore whether or not they are functioning appropriately within the larger body. Should not our assent to the concept of Christian unity in missions go beyond expressions such as joint communion celebrations and singing praise songs together while holding hands? Partnership gives an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the unity of the body of Christ by action.

Mark Alexander is with Interdev, a ministry serving the church worldwide by catalyzing partnerships and enabling those who facilitate their development.



The right kind of people group research will lead us to distinguish people groups by both ethno-linguistic and sociological factors.

Ken Benintendi

Book Review

Counterfeits and Kings

A review by Anthony B. Lambert

God's Chinese Son, The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan, by Jonathan D. Spence, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 1996. ISBN 0-393-03844-0, \$27.50.

One hundred and fifty years ago, a failed Confucian scholar in south China read a Christian tract and had visions. He came to believe he was Christ's younger brother and drew a band of disaffected peasants to him to overthrow the hated Qing Emperor. The Taiping rebellion was born. Between 1850 and 1864, the disciplined Taiping armies swept across south and central China and even within striking distance of Peking. In 1853, they occupied Nanking which they made their "Heavenly Capital." Hong appointed various *wang* or kings to take charge of the growing movement and its armies. Temples were razed, idols burnt, the Sabbath upheld and a weird mixture of Old Testament monotheism and Chinese morality enforced. For a time, evangelical missionaries held their breath and wondered whether the Taipings would establish a Christian China.

Jonathan Spence's fascinating and well-written book tells the story of how the dream turned into a nightmare. Hong Xiuquan's visions and "hotline to God" led to madness and a bloody war in which more than 20 million people perished. The few Western missionaries allowed entry into Nanjing found a fanatic cloistered in his harem who haughtily rejected biblical orthodoxy. Spence, drawing on unpublished Taiping documents, shows that Hong was quite prepared to rewrite the Bible to prove his pretensions. When a rival king claimed divine inspiration equal to Hong's, he and his followers were wiped out in a bloody palace coup in

which thousands were slaughtered.

The Taipings failed to implement utopian land reform schemes, alienated the all-powerful Confucian scholar-gentry and rejected trade with Western traders downriver at Shanghai. They were unable to resist the combined forces of a regenerated Qing army led by Zeng Guofan and the "Ever-Victorious Army" of the Western powers whose most famous leader was General "Chinese" Gordon. The noose round Nanjing tightened. The now-crazed Hong decreed that his starving followers should eat weeds and finally, in June 1864, committed suicide. One month later, Nanjing fell amid scenes of appalling carnage. The Taiping movement along with its syncretistic religion collapsed, and virtually all traces of it were systematically erased by the victorious Imperial regime.

Spence's book is timely as it is directly relevant to recent events in modern Communist China. This review is being written within days of a massive crack-down throughout China on the Falungong cult which has millions of followers. The Chinese government is worried by the growth of syncretistic religious sects that it fears could establish rival power-bases to the Communist Party. Millions of poor peasants and unemployed workers are forming a growing, but still disorganized, mass of humanity that is increasingly vocal in its opposition to Party corruption and injustice. Many are attracted by religious sects that provide spiritual solace, such as Falungong, as well as by Christianity. However, the Party knows that

China has a long history of dynastic decline and fall in which such sects have provided crucial foci of opposition to the central government. It only needs a charismatic leader for the dry tinder of discontent to spark into a formidable blaze.

For Christians, Spence's book is particularly thought-provoking. Tracts written by Western missionaries filtered into the hinterland and influenced the sensitive and unbalanced Hong. By the time missionaries sought to give true biblical teaching to the Taipings, it was too late. Today, we must similarly question some "hit and run" evangelism undertaken by foreigners in China. Vast and frightening consequences could follow from naive and ill-considered

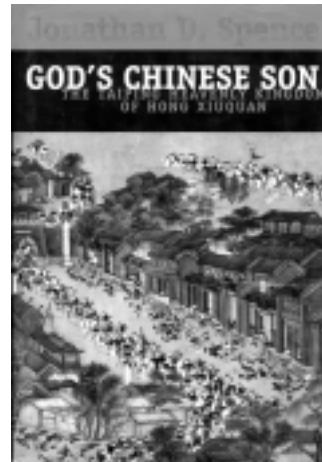
evangelistic efforts. Unless the full gospel is presented in a biblical, culturally relevant and sensitive form, one-sided and exaggerated presentations (such as stressing miracles and healings rather than salvation by grace through the cross of Christ) could spawn sub-Christian movements which could mutate into monstrous cults.

The Taiping rebellion was the last great rebellion until the Communist Party

itself seized power a century later.

However, the Taiping ideology was not atheistic Marxism, but a form of heretical or syncretistic Christianity. Ultimately, it failed to win over either the peasantry or the intelligentsia because of its fanatical iconoclasm.

Today the situation is very different. Christianity in China has made a most remarkable recovery and revival over the past thirty years. Most of that growth can be traced to the vigorous witness of unofficial house churches. These have mushroomed, in some cases, from small cell-groups to large-scale movements covering several provinces—even nation-wide. While the heart of this movement (or movements) is based on biblical and evangelical Christianity, growing numbers of pseudo-Christian cults flourish at its



fringes. Often they have charismatic figures claiming to be the Messiah (much like Hong). Some, like Hong, place their own writings alongside, or even above, the Bible in authority. Many, like Hong, are virulently opposed to the current regime.

In the last decade or more, the Chinese government has cracked down hard on such groups, sometimes taking few pains to distinguish orthodox house churches from heterodox groupings. Such persecution persists. Last year several major house church groupings issued a joint Confession of Faith expressing their firm adherence to biblical Christianity and called for a dialogue with the government and an end to persecution. House church Christians constantly wrestle with the issue of "Christ or Caesar" and need the prayerful support of Christians worldwide.

Christians overseas need more and more wisdom and discernment as they are faced with the increasingly complex religious, and even Christian, situation in China along with a plethora of discordant voices. There is a very real possibility that certain religious groupings could become political bases of opposition to the government. Spence's book goes far to explain, even if it does not excuse, the deep-seated Chinese bureaucratic fear of fanatical sects and the desire to control and suppress them. These fears have been magnified more recently by the role played by Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christianity in the overthrow of Communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe barely a decade ago. Some years ago a leading Chinese government figure was reported to have said, concerning the burgeoning house church movement, that the "baby must be stifled in the cradle" before it could grow up and threaten the State. In China, the governing class has a long collective memory when it comes to history. In Chinese terms, the Taiping Rebellion was but yesterday.

Anthony B. Lambert is a China researcher and author of The Resurrection of the Chinese Church.

Resource corner

Christian Life Quarterly Discipling Chinese Christians

Begun in 1997, *Christian Life Quarterly* is the first Christian magazine started by and designed for PRC Christians. The purpose of the magazine is to help PRCs know Jesus Christ better and grow in Him. Today, the magazine is well recognized among Chinese Christians all over the world.

Christian Life Quarterly makes a great gift for your Chinese friend. (To own a copy is a privilege for many of them!) For your friends in China, you may request the simplified script version (printed in Hong Kong). For further information contact CLPI.

Donations are appreciated.

Christian Life Quarterly Digest Informing the English-reading Church

The demand from the English-reading community desiring to know firsthand of God's working among the Chinese has given birth to the *Christian Life Quarterly Digest*, a compilation of articles written by Christians from China and translated into English. The first issue became available September, 1999.

Suggested donation: \$5

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Can the Chinese Church Say “No”?

The people of China have historically been ambivalent toward knowledge and technology imported from the West. The *ti-yong* debates of the late-19th and early-20th centuries highlighted their desire to enjoy the practical benefits (*yong*) of Western learning while maintaining the essence (*ti*) of Chinese culture.

More recently, the rush toward Westernization that seemed to characterize the 1980s has been replaced by the “China Can Say No” spirit of the 1990s. Yes, China wants to modernize, but it does not want to merely copy the pattern of Western nations.

For the church in China as well, there is a certain degree of ambivalence when it comes to partnering with the church abroad. Generous offers of literature, training, and other helps are welcomed by a church that is stretched in all areas, yet one often hears later that the resources provided did not ultimately meet the needs. Several factors that contribute to this paradox are worth noting by Christians outside China who seek to assist their brothers and sisters inside.



Brent Fulton

Since the needs of the church in China are so great, virtually any form of assistance will likely be seen as an improvement over the current situation. As one observer stated rather bluntly about church leaders with whom he was acquainted, “They are so hungry they’ll eat rocks.” Unfortunately, this uncritical acceptance fuels the outsiders’ belief that they are truly meeting the needs of the Chinese church.

While Chinese Christians may appreciate the practical help given by Christians outside, perhaps more important to them are the fellowship and moral support which these contacts provide. Organizations and individuals outside China function as a voice for believers inside, rallying prayer on their behalf, calling attention to their needs, and indirectly strengthening their hand vis-à-vis the Chinese government. Rather than risk losing this important link to the outside world, Chinese Christians tend to go along with ministry initiatives suggested by foreign Christians in order to keep relationships intact.

Finally, traditional Chinese norms governing relationships with foreigners affect how Chinese Christians respond to assistance from abroad.

Since foreigners are viewed as guests while in China, it is natural for their hosts to respond favorably to the gifts and offers of assistance they bring. Particularly when China is just one stop on the whirlwind itinerary of a busy Christian leader, this gracious reception may be taken as an unconditional welcome of the ministry he or she represents. In reality, it is more likely a signal that the Chinese Christians appreciated the fellowship and desire further dialogue.

The missing ingredient in these relationships is *time*. Chinese hospitality has a wonderful way of making first-time visitors feel like old friends, but genuine friendships require many subsequent meetings in order to mature. Only then will Chinese believers be comfortable expressing their true feelings about the nature of their partnership with outside Christians.

Effectively partnering with Christians in China will require the building of long-term relationships that permit real dialogue on what is best for the church in China. **In order to sincerely say “Yes,” the Chinese church must first be allowed to say “No.”**

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