

# Journey to the Ends of the Earth

Dave

**J**udging from outward appearances, there is nothing extraordinary about our church. In fact, one could easily pass by and deem our church irrelevant. In two years we will celebrate a century of existence. The building is rather small and unimpressive, the parking lot more a pasture than anything. Did I mention we are a rural church? The smell of cow manure usually greets a visitor long before any member, and our closest "neighbors" reside in the cemetery next to us. We are plenty friendly, but we are not trying to be "seeker friendly," and our two stop-light town is not exactly growing. So how is it that God has chosen to use this "least of" Body to play a significant role in reaching one of China's minority peoples? A little history is necessary.

In 1984, our pastor came as a twenty-something seminary student, to preach to the thirty or so faithful who were gathering on Sundays. With aspirations to do ministry in a large urban center, his plan was to give the church eighteen months worth of weekends, then graduate and head back to the city. After eighteen months, however, God said "stay," and death was pronounced on his dream. He died to numbers, exposure, relevance, growth and "success." In exchange, he asked for two things: that the members of the Body truly love one another, and that God would satisfy him with His presence. God answered those prayers.

In 1989, another prayer began to be voiced: "God, what could You do through a small church?" At the same time, a consistent request for God to

bring hungry people was being offered. Again, God was faithful to answer. The Body began to grow. Not with the influential or wealthy, but with the broken; with those who knew of their desperate need for God; those who from having been forgiven much, began to love much.

Tom Mizera



Though a specific people group was not revealed at this time, **there was the impression that we were to be involved with a minority people in a certain region.**

In 1998, God would bring nations to the fore of our Body's heart and mind. Our pastor, who had lost interest in missions following a less than successful trip overseas, attended a mission information meeting on work in Turkey. Having no real interest in Turkey, our pastor began to ask one of the presenters about work in China. Before long, an invita-

tion was extended for the presenter to come and share with our Body.

It was with great joy that the Body heard and responded to the message of taking God's glory to the ends of the earth. We listened throughout morning Bible studies, the sermon and an evening of informal questions. A challenge was extended: "If you will believe and obey God by going to the ends of the earth, He will 'fill up' everything in between." Discussion ensued among the 150 who had gathered, and a resounding and unified "yes" was given to the task of making

a love for God and a love for a yet to be revealed "neighbor." Their task was to go and discern to whom God was leading us. Through prearranged contacts, they talked with other laborers in the area, were led through villages and prayed together, while the Body at home prayed earnestly for God to lead them. The Sunday morning of their return was a tremendous expression of worship as we heard for the first time the name of the people we believed God was calling us to love and serve.

Since that time, God has begun to an-

lim people next. At His leading, we also began asking that our church would come to reflect our community, which would mean our Body becoming about twenty-five percent Hispanic. (Our first non-English speaking family joined our Body last week!) And the faithful thirty once attending our church has increased to nearly 1,100.

I share this only to boast of God and His faithfulness to "fill up everything in between." It is not that we believe God needs us, because He does not. What we do believe is that as followers of Christ we are a sent people, and as the Body of Christ we are to be a sending people. God has invited us to be a part of what He is doing to advance His Kingdom, and it is our privilege and responsibility to say "Yes!" Missions is not something we do, but rather a part of who we are. Missions is not a program. *The mission* has become to glorify God as we seek to love Him and love others! Since we believe our life is to be about knowing God and making him known, our desire is to serve our neighbor, whether we have to cross the street, cross a border or cross an ocean.

Our journey has not always been an easy one. We have often found ourselves at the bottom of the learning curve starting up. We have not been as intimately involved in peoples' lives prior to their being sent, which has hindered our ability to stay connected with them while half a world away. We have also had to receive members back from the field who have returned under very stressful circumstances. Their re-entry into Western culture and our ever-changing church culture has not always been easy.

We believe strongly that since we are created for community, we need to do a better job of nurturing intimacy between those we send abroad and those who re-

## There was nothing distinguished about these eight. They were teachers, housewives, students and the like, all unified by a love for God and a love for a yet to be revealed "neighbor."

God known among an unreached people of China. The evening concluded with an hour of fervent prayer asking God to show His glory through us to a people in China. God would answer again.

Within a few months, the pastor and a lay leader were escorted to five different regions of China. At each location the prayer was once again offered: "God what could you do?" Though a specific people group was not revealed at this time, there was the impression that we were to be involved with a minority people in a certain region. A season of prayer began throughout the entire Body, and a team of eight was chosen to make the next trip to China.

There was nothing distinguished about these eight. They were teachers, housewives, students and the like, all unified by

answer what He could do. Where there was no known church among the people we embraced, there are now several hundred. A nationally led and indigenous church is reproducing among them. We have sent four families and a single to live long-term with our Chinese neighbor, and we will soon send another single and another family. Nearly 100 men, women, children and youth have gone on short term trips to China. The impact has been equally great upon our Body.

Fifteen months ago, after a similar process, we "adopted" an isolated and unreached people in Mexico's Sierra Madre. We are also serving a clan of Navajo in Arizona. We have a family serving full time in Africa and have begun to discuss the possibilities of going to a Mus-

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Partnering Resources with Vision

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main. We like to say that when we send a member of the Body to the nations “we all go.” That sounds good, but the realities of working it out are difficult. Because God has called us to that which is worthy—and not that which is easy—we are moving forward.

We have begun a process at our church called “advocacy” in order to address some of these concerns. Basically, when someone in the Body is sensing a leading to be sent to the nations, they are encouraged to meet with our mission pastor (who served in China for seven years). If there is an initial sense of rightness about God’s leading and timing, the individual or couple is asked to meet with our pastor and elders in order to share how God is working in their lives and the story of their journey to this point.

Our Body has been blessed with a godly group of men to serve as elders. Their primary role when hearing from prospective candidates to be sent cross-culturally is to hear their hearts and then speak into their lives as the Spirit impresses them. If a candidate is encouraged to move forward, an elder is appointed to “walk” with him or her in the advocacy process. The candidate is asked to select five to eight others from the Body to whom they relate most closely in order to begin a series of meetings.

The advocacy group provides a safe environment for the candidates to share more intimate details of their life journey.

## **We are grateful for what God has done,** but it does not prevent us from continuing to ask: **“God what could you do in us and through us?”**

No question is considered “off limits,” as candidates share on everything from their upbringing, influences, biblical understandings, sin life and so on. After a couple of meetings with the candidate, the advocates meet alone to discuss what they have heard. They consider a candidate’s strengths and areas of concern and then write an assessment that is to be given to the elders. Before the assessment is given to the elders, it is shared with the candidate in a meeting that is usually very

Photo courtesy China Partner



affirming and filled with prayer.

After the elders are given the assessment, they meet again with the candidate to discern “next steps.” If at this point the mission pastor, advocates, elders and candidate all sense a “rightness” about moving forward, the candidate shares with the Body as a whole, and a season of training is begun. There have also been times where we have asked a candidate to wait in order to address certain concerns.

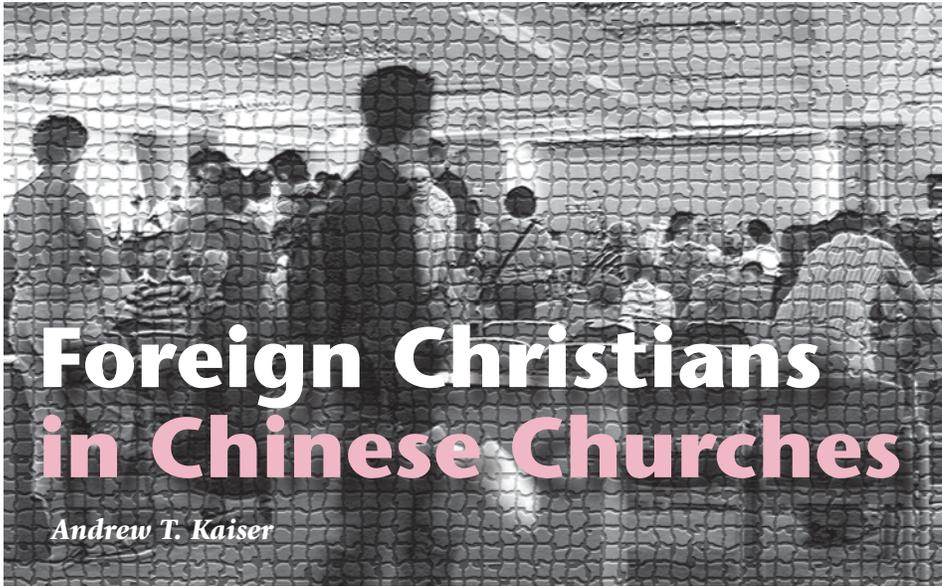
Obviously, such a process requires an environment of love and trust. We are discovering that walking more intimately in one’s journey toward cross-cultural service is fostering a much greater level of community with those we send, as well as heightening levels of commitment from the Body as a whole. We have a ways to go, but there is an increasing sense that when one of us goes to the nations, we all go. We have become truly vested in the lives of those we are sending.

Finances, logistics and cross-cultural partnering are other issues we deal with, but God has been faithful to bring increasing numbers of people into our Body who have significant ministry experience abroad. This has allowed us to connect with like-hearted people in China and other places with whom we can covenant to serve together. It has also afforded us the opportunity to provide relevant training in the context of Body life.

We are grateful for what God has done, but it does not prevent us from continuing to ask: “God what could you do in us and through us?” With increasing desire, we want to move to the fore of God’s glory among the nations. We believe that this is not only the Church’s responsibility but her blessing and privilege. We cannot abdicate to another! Our calling is to Christ, and as a result of that calling, we are sent, whether to the nations or to our neighbor.

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Melvin Sletch



# Foreign Christians in Chinese Churches

Andrew T. Kaiser

**O**ne of the more fascinating aspects of China's post-Liberation history is the fact that when foreign Christians first returned to China in the early 1980s most urban centers already had Christian populations and some had visible, functioning churches.<sup>1</sup> The last twenty-some years have seen tremendous growth in both these areas. Now, more and more Chinese cities also have growing foreign Christian populations—many of which have formed their own fellowships or churches.

How should these two bodies of believers—one foreign, one Chinese—relate to one another? A constant theme throughout the Scriptures is that God's people should exist in unity since, after all, "there is one faith, one Lord over all" (Ephesians 4:8ff.). Moreover, Jesus himself said that people would recognize us as Christians by our love for one another—a command that was surely meant to cross all ethnic and national boundaries (John 13:35).

Unfortunately, in many cases it seems as if these foreign and Chinese Christian communities live in strange parallel universes. They both go about their business, maintaining their own perspective on "what things are really like," but having little contact with, or even awareness of, the other group's existence. In some cases, little trust exists between the different groups making unity impossible and even discord likely. On a more practical level, it is certainly the case that Chinese non-believers in and out of government expect Christians of all nationalities to get along. When conflict appears between Christians, they take it as further evidence that Christians are no different

from everyone else. This falls short of what God expects from His people, presents a bad witness to the world and squanders many valuable opportunities for Kingdom-building partnership.

Of course, it must be admitted that China's unique regulatory structure puts limitations on what foreign-Chinese Christian unity might look like. However,

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these restrictions need not be as limiting as they at first appear. In the China of today, more and more foreign individuals and organizations are finding creative ways to legally participate in the church life of their Chinese brothers and sisters. Foreigners are still not permitted to stand as pastors over Chinese believers; barring this, however, current regulations grant foreigners a sizable degree of freedom to

engage in church service under officially recognized Chinese pastoral leadership.<sup>2</sup> This article will suggest one model for building foreign-Chinese Christian unity that takes advantage of these liberties.

## The Foreign Christian Community

Obviously long- and short-term foreign Christian workers face different sets of issues when seeking to relate to local Christian communities. For many long-term foreign Christian workers, unity with the local Chinese Christian community is experienced through straight forward participation. It is assumed that they will achieve some degree of linguistic fluency, and this makes it possible to participate in Chinese church life on a fairly deep level. From joining in Sunday morning worship to attending weekly prayer meetings and Bible studies, much of church life is open to foreign participation. Of course, each local context is different, and this kind of participation is only effective once the trust and tacit support of local church leadership has been gained. Like everything else in China, this kind of support building takes time.

However, for most short-term workers, this level of participation is considered not just difficult but often unnecessary. It is fairly common for a non-Mandarin-speaking foreign teacher on a university campus to spend his or her entire year witnessing and discipling local people without having had any contact whatsoever with a Chinese church. It is only natural that these local people then come to

see meeting with foreigners not just as a supplement to fellowship with other Chinese believers, but rather as an alternative or perhaps the only option available. Accordingly, the students and others these foreigners influence often do not perceive church participation and body life as a necessary component of Christian maturity. Too many of these kinds of "decisions for Christ" then wither on the vine

when the foreign worker returns home—bringing exciting stories of harvest but leaving little lasting fruit. The long-term workers, meanwhile, lack the time necessary to support their own contacts as well as all the folks left behind by each new group of short-term foreign workers. Yet, given the preponderance of short-term workers and their relatively visible presence, increasing their understanding of and participation in the local Christian community has the potential to greatly increase the quality of the contributions to God's Kingdom in China made by these spiritual ambassadors.

In one northern Chinese city, a medium-sized multi-national foreign fellowship has secured permission from local officials to hold their registered meetings in a classroom at one of the local registered churches. The specific Chinese church where they meet is blessed with evangelical pastors, a well-supplied bookstore, a growing young people's group and a massive Christmas outreach that attracts as many as 20,000 people each year. Various long-term foreign Christian workers living in this city have spent years learning about the church and developing working relationships with the local church leadership. The foreign fellowship itself is also officially registered under some of those same long-term workers.

The foreign fellowship's decision to encourage meeting at the local church site grew out of a decade of observing the struggles of non-Mandarin-speaking foreign workers in China. This was a conscious decision fed by a number of strong convictions. First of all, foreign workers who 1) know where the church is; 2) feel comfortable walking through the gates and sitting inside; and 3) perceive the church as a good place to be, are more likely and better equipped to introduce their contacts to the larger Chinese Christian community. Secondly, providing foreign Christian workers with access to a good church bookstore enables them to put locally appropriate and locally reproducible Christian literature into the hands of the Chinese people they are working with. Finally, knowledge of a pre-existing, self-supporting, visible Chinese Christian community goes a long way towards countering the pride and imperialism which can easily creep into the relationships between foreign teachers



# Foreign Service in Chinese Churches

According to Chinese regulations, foreigners are free to do most kinds of church service provided it is under the authority of local recognized Chinese church leaders. Here is a list of some of the kinds of activities open to foreigners in various registered Chinese churches:

- Participation in regular prayer meetings
- English teaching
- Vacation Bible School programs
- Instrumental and choral instruction
- Instrumental and choral performance during worship services
- Performing at Christmas and Easter outreach services
- Training children's Sunday School teachers
- Arranging retreats for local pastors and young people
- Marriage and family seminars
- Speaking at young people's retreats
- Financial support
- Preaching
- Participating in church clothing drives (for poor believers)
- Volunteering at church clinics, orphanages, and retirement homes
- Taking blood pressures at church volunteer service days
- Joining church work teams on cleaning days
- \* Introducing new books to be sold at church bookstores

and Chinese students. Though this knowledge takes away some of the excitement and danger of ministry in China, it increases the odds that the seeds spread by foreign Christian workers will grow into strong, healthy fruit-producing trees.

The particular foreign fellowship being described here went a step further and chose to invite the local Chinese pastors to officiate at the foreigner's monthly communion services. Of course, Mandarin-speaking foreigners had to commit to providing translation, and would-be foreign pastors had to defer to Chinese pastors. But this has proven invaluable as it gives foreign Christians without extensive Mandarin language skills a chance to hear what local pastors are preaching. It also implants in foreign minds the image of foreign Christians sitting under Chinese Christians. For those foreign workers who work primarily with local unregistered fellowships, this simple step can even begin the process of moving towards reconciliation between various local Chinese Christian factions: as foreigners come to a deeper understanding of the existing similarities and true sources of discord between the various local Christian groups, they are in a better position to be agents of peace, working for unity between Chinese brothers and sisters—and not just using their considerable resources to

maintain (albeit unknowingly) the walls of division within the body.

## The Local Church

By using local church space and even local church pastors, this foreign fellowship discovered that they were also able to bring real benefit to the local church as well.

The most obvious area of benefit was financial. Foreign workers now had easy access to local church offerings—an opportunity that many naturally took advantage of by depositing their tithes as they came to worship. Moreover, proximity to the church increased people's interest in supporting different financial needs in the local Christian community: local church drives to raise funds for various relief and building projects were often bolstered by sizable gifts from the foreign fellowship's own collected tithes.

In addition to financial support, various church programs gained new access to foreign advisors and participants. Church music and drama programs, in particular, benefited from experienced and eager foreigners who were more than happy to share their gifts with Chinese believers. Since these relationships were formed within the context of the local registered church, there were few restrictions on this kind of service. Foreign

# The Involvement of **Hong Kong Churches in China**

Kim-Kwong Chan

**H**ong Kong enjoys a unique status in China: it is already a part of China but not yet fully integrated into the political system of China. Hong Kong has its own mini-constitution, the Basic Law, which maintains Hong Kong as an autonomous district with full connectivity to the world—while China is still gradually opening up. Hong Kong citizens enjoy visa-free full access to China while Chinese citizens need a special visa for Hong Kong. Hong Kong's high accessibility to China places it in an advantageous position for establishing China-related enterprises, be they commercial, charitable, academic, governmental or missiological.

Historically, many of the churches in Hong Kong have had a special relationship with churches in China. This is especially true for churches in Guangdong Province, since before 1950 churches in Hong Kong and southern China, such as Guangdong, often belonged to the same ecclesiastical or denominational district, synod or conference with common headquarters in Hong Kong or southern China. Churches in Hong Kong were separated from churches in China in 1950; yet, personal contacts have been retained and later relations were re-established and flourished as China began its Open and Reform Policy in the late 1970s.

At that time, churches in Hong Kong became some of the first ecclesiastical bodies to contact Christian communities in China, and Christians in Hong Kong were the first Christian groups since 1979 to help build and rebuild China's churches, to establish church-sponsored kindergartens, elderly retirement hostels and to do pastoral training in China. Such tradition of China ministry by Hong Kong Christians has continued to the present day in various manifestations such as ministry directly by Hong Kong churches, Hong Kong based parachurch agencies with a China focus, Hong Kong faith

(Christian)-based charitable or development organizations with operations in China and Hong Kong Christian business establishments in China.

Many churches have direct involvement in China in the form of mission ministry. Although the Chinese government does not allow mission activity by overseas people (applicable also to Hong Kong compatriots) in Mainland China, according to the most recent (2004) church survey in Hong Kong, of the 715 churches which responded to the survey on mission involvement, 129 have specific mission ministry in Mainland China and 444 have mission ministry



Photo courtesy China Partner

overseas and in Mainland China. In other words, 673 out of 715 churches in Hong Kong (over eighty percent) have China ministry within their mission programs. About thirty-five percent of these churches replied that they have sent missionaries to China. Some of these churches deliberately did not reply to this survey or did not mention their China ministry programs because their ministries are supposed to be of a clandestine nature, illegal or involved with the non-registered sector of the Christian community in China. Again, many churches in Hong Kong may have sent workers into China but will not admit this openly as many of these workers are serving, technically speaking, not as missionaries but as teachers, professionals or merchants and their work is of a clandestine nature.

Therefore, the over eighty percent figure for churches in Hong Kong with mission work in China is a conservative one. In fact, it is hard to find a church in Hong Kong that has no involvement in China.

The Christian community in Hong Kong has a rather high number of parachurch organizations—several hundred Christian organizations among 1,300 church congregations. This is, perhaps, due to the lax and easy regulations for setting up a company and incorporation. In fact, there are more than four million registered companies in Hong Kong which has a population of about seven million. Most Christian organizations have registered as a limited company and this can be done as quickly as in one day. Afterward, this registered company can apply for tax exempt status so long as it is of a non-profit nature, such as a religious or charitable organization. While the more established Christian agencies have been increasing their China focus since

**Hong Kong has been the window to China during the last fifty years.**

1997, there are also a large number of newly established Christian organizations dedicated to China ministry, many of which are supported by Hong Kong Christians. There are also the Hong Kong offices that provide logistical support for the China ministry of international ministry organizations. The numbers of these agencies are increasing, and many of them operate in a semiclandestine nature in China with a legal entity in Hong Kong.

There is also a large sector of Christian based groups among the thousands of charitable organizations in Hong Kong. Some of the larger ones have a major share of their operation in China while there are hundreds of smaller ones. Organizations ranging from as large as a hundred full-time personnel to as small as a handful of volunteers are operating many

kinds of development projects in virtually every province of China, staffed and funded by Christians from Hong Kong. These types of operations touch millions of lives in China that otherwise would never have a chance to be in contact with Christians. It is impossible to tabulate the extent and size of operations of these groups for virtually every one operate on their own—and China is a vast country.

In addition, there are the Hong Kong Christian entrepreneurs who have business operations in China such as factories, companies and chain stores. Often these Christian enterprises will have personal managers who also serve as chaplains to their employees. It is not uncommon to find that many of these companies and factories conduct services and various Christian meetings. Many migrant workers from rural areas hear and receive the gospel through the ministries of these Hong Kong Christian business people while they work in these factories or companies. As these workers return to their home villages, they take back with them not only capital and skills which they have acquired while working in the industrial areas but also the Good News.

Hong Kong has been the window to China during the past fifty years. Skills, capital and ideas that fueled the engine of the Reform and Open Policy of China were first supplied by Hong Kong. Even now, with the development of other Chinese financial centers such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, a large number of multinational corporations still base their China operations in Hong Kong due to the efficiency of its society, the security of its legal system and the freedom that it enjoys. There is no better place to have access to China yet remain in a free society than Hong Kong. Naturally, Christians in Hong Kong—those who have opted to stay in Hong Kong despite the 1997 changeover—seem to assume a mission mandate for spreading the gospel in China, somewhat similar to Esther's realization that her destiny as Queen was for the salvation of her kinsman.

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# “Baxiren”: Going Global for the Beijing Olympics

Gary Russell

*“I believe that history about China in Brazil is changing. One denomination wrote several pages in their newspaper, circulation 300,000. Another large agency is doing a Latin Conference in Brazil about China. Praise the Lord indeed. An organization has asked me to coordinate a China Challenge conference in Brazil and lead 300 Brazilians to China in 2008.”*

—David Botelho, President, Horizontes, Brazil, July 18, 2005

## **I**t all began with prayer.

David had already accepted the challenge to take 300 Brazilians to Beijing in 2008 for outreach during the Olympics. In fact, David had been burdened for China since the 1970s but always felt it was impossible to go. Now, after all those years, it seemed the dream might come true. However, he knew little about China ministry and needed a key China contact. So, in 2004 he began praying for God to connect him with whomever that contact was to be.

By then, Steve Miller had been praying for six months for God to raise up a key Latin missions leader to spearhead Latin American involvement in the Beijing Olympics.

In February, 2004, they “just happened” to attend the same missions conference in Seoul, Korea and “just happened” to be roommates there. Spirits were quickly knit together. The very next month, Steve and I were squashed in the back of a Fiat, criss-crossing Brazil for two weeks, speaking every day to churches and pastors about the challenge of China.

Photo courtesy China Partner



**Ask any Chinese about Brazil and absolutely nothing political comes up—just football!**

After one message, a dear young Brazilian couple wept with us. They were faithfully ministering to the deaf in Brazil but had felt a call to China for over ten years. Like David, they had always thought it was an impossible dream but now saw God was opening a way. There are twenty-one million deaf in China, and it so happens that a couple I helped place there seven years ago were just this year convinced that their life's work is to reach them.

Like China, Brazil has been experiencing explosive church growth in recent years. Six thousand Brazilians are coming to Christ every day! More than half of the TV networks are evangelical Christian networks. We spoke in a church that was only eight years old, had 10,000 as an average attendance and had already birthed numerous daughter churches. A mere fifteen years ago, identifying oneself as “evangelical” routinely meant being rejected for a job—but no more.

Brazilian Christians share much in common with their Chinese brothers and sisters: wondrous zeal, evangelistic fervor, willingness to sacrifice, experience with discrimination and persecution, a growing awareness of their responsibility in world missions, lack of financial resources, millions of first-generation believers, limited materials in their own language, mixed experiences with Anglo missionaries, many unreached minorities in their midst and moral degeneration in their society. *Could these common traits translate into significant advantages for Brazilian Christian service in China?*

Another advantage is their lack of political baggage. Ask any Chinese about Brazil and absolutely nothing political comes up—just football! What a convenient tie-in to the Olympics. We found a wonderful video of many of Brazil’s World Cup championship team members sharing their testimonies for Christ that had already been translated into Mandarin, but no avenues for distribution had been found.

Last November, David Botelho and a co-worker attended China Challenge in Atlanta. He briefly shared with the entire group the quandary of 900 Brazilian missionary candidates willing to go to the “10/40 Window” who simply cannot afford to go due to the limits of the Brazilian economy.

Some may remember hearing stories of the mass failures of Brazilian missionaries due to poor training. Horizontes has a mandatory five-year training period before missionaries are placed long-term. This training alternates schooling with apprenticeships in other Latin nations, England and in the “10/40 Window.” Steve and I were much impressed with the quality of the workers at their training school in Monteverde. These workers included some back on scheduled furloughs from North Africa, north India, Nepal and other chal-

lenging assignments—and all eager to return to the field.

Finally, just last February, David and twenty-seven Brazilian Christian leaders went to China with us for three weeks. The group included the head of a large Christian movement in Brazil, the missions director of a church of 80,000 with 300 daughter churches, the head of a Brazilian church denomination, the pastor of a church of 20,000, the leader of a Christian agency base, businessmen and so on. Most had never been out of Brazil before.

We went from the North Korea border in the far northeast to the minorities in the southwest. Looong train rides! I will never forget one pastor’s wife whose tears never ceased as she prayed for hours looking at Chinese villages out the train window. Next year she is coming back, bringing a team of twenty-five from just her own church. She wrote: *“I buried my heart in this nation for God to use it to raise Christ there.”*

As I write this, the Intercessors for China prayer calendar is being translated into Portuguese in Brazil. A condensed Portuguese version of *Operation China* is planned. A football coach is preparing to go and hold football clinics. A team of Christian football players is being recruited to go for exhibition matches. A Chinese house church pastor has been invited to come to Brazil to speak at large youth conferences next month. The pastor of nine ethnic Asian churches in Sao Paulo is preparing to move to China as is a professor of water treatment science.

Anyone leading a team to China in 2008 is required to make two trips to China prior to that date; he or she must also be committed to ongoing China ministry afterwards. This is not hit-and-run Latin American guerilla warfare. When the 1988 Olympics came to Seoul, there were less than one hundred Korean missionaries serving in foreign fields; today there are 12,000!

As the whole world goes to China, what might God use China to do in the whole world? May His glory, indeed, cover the *whole* earth!

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## Foreign Christians in Chinese Churches continued from page 5

teachers were also empowered to bring inquiring students to Chinese church services and, in many cases, would even bring their students to attend some of the young people’s meetings and outreaches throughout the week, thus increasing the local church’s reach into the community.

Finally, the local pastors expressed their appreciation. Having foreign Christians in their church greatly increases their legitimacy in the eyes of local officials. It makes their entire project seem more international, cosmopolitan, modern—and thus less like one of those “superstitious” movements Party officials have learned to dread. For the pastors themselves, the entire experience brings them great encouragement. They are not alone; they are not wasting their time, but rather as servants of the gospel are involved in something larger than themselves, larger even than China! The behind the scenes work necessary to maintain this relationship has also served to increase understanding between the various foreign and Chinese Christian groups within this city.

This article is meant to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. The case presented above is an example of how one group of foreigners in China have approached the question of how to envision their relationship with the local Chinese church. It is hoped that this example will serve to increase awareness and stimulate discussion within the foreign Christian community in China regarding both the challenges and possibilities of foreign-Chinese unity in Christ.

### Endnotes

1. This article will use the words “foreign” and “foreigner” to refer to those residents living within China who are not Chinese citizens.

2. Due to spatial constraints, this article will not address the issue of how foreign fellowships in China should relate to local unregistered Chinese churches. Once the decision has been made to work outside of Chinese social and legal restrictions, then the specific local context is the primary remaining restraint on foreign-Chinese interaction.

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# Peoples of China



Melvin Sletch

## Strangers in a Strange Land Expatriates in China

James H. Law

**C**hina's allure over the centuries has been a magnet for the bold and adventurous. Pioneers, the likes of Marco Polo and Mateo Ricci, Robert Morrison and Bill Gates, have come to the Far East with high hopes of cracking the "China Puzzle"—and just as many have returned home with a lot less money and only a little more wisdom.

As China continues its ascension as one of the most important economic and political powers in the twenty-first century, the influx of human capital has created world-class cities—like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong—from their gleaming skyscrapers and wide streets to their seedy underbellies of prostitution and migrant laborers. As the Chinese from the west have gravitated towards China's eastern/coastal regions, the largest migration in human history has created incredible strains on urban resources. Multinational enterprises and large Chinese national cor-

porations have found that the skilled labor pool in China is lacking, and there are great opportunities for skilled foreigners to work and live in China.

Beijing's embassy district boasts the largest number of diplomatic relations with any nation on the planet except for the United Nations. Previously, Hong

The large, **expatriate communities** in China's major cities are playing a role in **shaping the new cosmopolitans of China.**

Kong was the primary port of call, but now, economic and political power bases such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Guangdong provide multiple gateways to unlock China's wealth—all this in only sixteen short years after that sad, June, 1989 in Tiananmen Square. Everyone wants to get in on the China action.

Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers and Taiwanese are moving to

China to make a new life; tens of thousands of Korean and Japanese parents, encouraged by their governments, are sending their children for undergraduate and graduate degrees at Chinese post-secondary institutions. They all believe that the future of Asian (and perhaps global) economies lies in connecting with China. Morgan Stanley reports that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and foreign consumers are investing as much as one billion US dollars per week in China.

The large, expatriate communities in China's major cities are playing a role in shaping the new cosmopolitans of China. Cities like Beijing and Shanghai are now offering "Green Cards"—permanent resident cards—to those expatriates working in certain promoted/designated labor categories. For the first time, expatriates have access (for a fee) to the Chinese educational, employment and health systems. One should also note that since 2004, foreigners no longer are restricted in property ownership (residential or commercial real estate). This has led to increased investment and speculation in the urban housing markets including gluts of residential and commercial property in major centers such as Beijing and Shanghai. Everything from condominiums to town houses to fully-detached luxury villas can be owned at prices starting from US\$250,000 with the sky the limit.

Shopping malls and rampant consumerism in the cities of China mean that consumer goods from Swiss chocolate to French wines, from Russian caviar to Pringle's Potato Crisps are all available—for a price. One can remember, not too

long ago, when there were only four or five MacDonald's Restaurants in the city of Beijing; now there are more than one hundred. Starbucks outlets have gone from three in early 2000 to more than forty, including one at the Arrivals Terminal of the Beijing International Airport.

What does this mean for the expatriate? What does it mean for living in China in 2005 and beyond? Who are the ex-

patriates? Can one generalize as to their experience and the challenges and issues they face?

As we discuss expatriates living in China, I would suggest that we take a broad and encompassing view which should include looking at at least three specific cultural groupings: (1) overseas Chinese (from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other locations such as North America); (2) Asians (from Korea, Japan and other Asian countries); and (3) other expatriates that do not fall into the first two categories. The Chinese government estimates that more than half a million expatriates live in China. These numbers probably do not take into account overseas Chinese who may be of Chinese descent/heritage but carry foreign passports.

In addition to cultural differences, there are also personality differences for the typical expat arriving in China. There seem to be several “types” of people who come to China and, at the extremes, I suggest they be called the “overachievers” and the “underachievers.”

The former are at the top of their game, usually promoted with a full “expat package” to live in some of the most expensive cities on earth (Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong). These go-getters are success stories in the eyes of the world; they have made it to the top and are being sent to face the challenge that is China for their multinational enterprise.

The underachievers come from the opposite end of the spectrum. These are typically those who have not made it in their home countries—they are “washed up” or are not “cutting it” in their business or job, and they are looking for a new life—and perhaps a new identity. Probably more so in China about ten years ago, but still to a certain extent today, these foreigners with their non-Chinese physical features can be a “star” in China either because of their uniqueness or because of their passport. It can be all too easy for a person to make a new life in China by teaching English (with a university undergraduate degree) and then going on to other forms of commercial activity.

In between these two extremes are the expatriates who willingly choose to sacrifice good positions and salaries in the West so that they can have opportunities for Christian service to the Chinese, or



**The expatriate arriving in China** for the first (or second or third) time **is confronted with the many changes required to adapt and get through the culture shock.**

from the worldly side, to find fame and fortune. In both cases, these expatriates are not blessed with an “expatriate package” to make their China lifestyle more comfortable.

As for coming from different cultural backgrounds, overseas Chinese arriving in China will typically have the least “culture shock” in adapting to their new life. This can take other twists and turns however as language abilities can often be a challenge, especially if one speaks only English or Cantonese (Hong Kong dialect). Even the slang and colloquialisms from Taiwan are different than those of Shanghai or Beijing. That being said, typically an overseas Chinese will make some of the quickest social in-roads to connect with locals because they are seen as the “same blood.” However, for other Asians (Korean/Japanese), we have seen recent examples of cultural stress in the lingering latent (or not so latent) feelings of anger from World War II.

In all cases, the expatriate arriving in China for the first (or second or third) time is confronted with the many changes required to adapt and get through the

culture shock of being a stranger in a strange land. Cultural issues are a constant factor for adapting to life in China, even for overseas Chinese. Even the expatriate with the “full expat package” of salary, apartment allowance, automobile and driver and maid (*ai-yi*) can have issues regarding lifestyle and cultural issues once the dichotomy between “haves” and “have nots” in Chinese society is seen. However, these times of stress and adaptation can also be a key time for Christian expatriates to connect with these new China arrivals who may be open to an opportunity for fellowship and friendship that only Christian fellowship and a community such as the church can provide.

If there is one constant in China, it is change. In general, life has grown easier in terms of livability and creature comforts. Many resources have made expatriate life in China more comfortable. Websites such as “Expats in China” ([www.expatsinchina.com](http://www.expatsinchina.com)) are designed to be an on-line community supporting those foreigners who are living in China and helping them with basic understandings of Chinese culture as well as practical issues

such as medical clinics and international schools. However, there continue to be regular challenges for expats living in China—even for those of Chinese/Asian background.

One of these challenges is the diversity of the Chinese people. While many think of the Chinese as a homogenous grouping of 1.3 billion people, between seven and eight percent of the population are not Han Chinese and represent fifty-five official, and hundreds of unofficial, minorities including Muslim and Buddhist groups at the western edges of the frontier (i.e. Xinjiang/Tibet). While members of these diverse cultures may be of Chinese nationality and carry a Chinese passport, they have more in common with cultures and countries such as Korea, Vietnam, Uzbekistan or Myanmar.

Chinese government statistics indicate that more than ten million foreigners visit China each year for business and tourism. Statistics from the Beijing taxation department show that foreign nationals paid 5.89 billion *yuan* (US\$710 million) of income tax from January to November of 2004, up 29.8 percent from that of the previous year. Analysts also note that with China's implementation of its WTO entry commitment, China is increasing its demand for foreign talent.

Over the years, while many expatriates have come to make their millions, very few stay permanently. It is very easy to feel alone and confused in cities of millions. One must try to understand his or her place in the "chaos"—what the Chinese refer to as "harmony"—and survive in it. "Whereas to most foreigners China seems too centralized, with an all-controlling party brooding at the hub of a vast monolithic state, everywhere there seems to be a kind of institutionalized confusion" ("Mr. China," p. 129). Chinese have understood and lived for centuries with the tension of contradiction, and that indeed is what the current China is really like—you can have the best and worst day of your life in the same day.

Expatriates continue to be a social change agent in China (some for good and some for bad). With China's drive for "international-ness," all things Western—fashion, music, and even religion (i.e. Christianity)—are of great interest to the Chinese, especially those in urban settings. In the new China of rampant con-

sumerism, everything is available—for a price. For those who like a fast-paced and dynamic environment, there may not be another place on the planet like it. However, this can have both good and bad effects. Everything is available and permissible from materialism to mistresses, from great opportunities for friendship evangelism to helping plant a church at a micro and macro scale.

For years, foreigners who have come to China have had opportunities to encounter Christ. Since the Chinese experience is not one easily assimilated into (for both language and cultural reasons), Christians expatriates have time and again welcomed nonbelievers into their homes. They have invited them to attend any one of the International Fellowships that meet legally in cities like Shanghai, Bei-

teen Alpha groups meet in workplaces or work units. Alpha participants meet as well in various international home groups of expatriates throughout the country. Nikki Gumble, founder of Alpha Course, held a successful international Alpha Course at a TSPM church in Shanghai in December, 2004.

Ethnic groups that may not necessarily be English speaking are also starting fellowships and churches across the country. In Beijing alone, at last count there were more than fifteen Korean churches, and multiple fellowship groups serve the hundreds of thousands of expatriate Koreans living in major cities like Shanghai and Beijing.

While this article does not have the scope to provide answers to the following, there are certainly issues to be con-

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jing and Nanjing that provide hospitality and friendship to "outsiders" who may not be easily welcomed into Chinese culture. International Fellowships such as the Hang Cheng Community Church in Shanghai and the Beijing International Christian Fellowship (BICF) have weekly and Sunday meetings where several thousand expatriates from hundreds of nations speaking many different languages can worship together. BICF even has simultaneous translations of their morning worship services into languages such as Korean, Japanese and French. On last count, Beijing had more than ten Protestant congregations/communities meeting on any given Sunday.

Other international programs such as Alpha Course ([www.alphacourse.org](http://www.alphacourse.org)) provide expatriate seekers and new Christians with an introduction to Christianity through a series of dinner meetings and video tape studies. These groups have sprung up across China at International Fellowships and, more recently, have received the blessing of the TSPM/CCC churches. Business people and workers meet in affinity groups in cities like Beijing and Shanghai where more than fif-

ty considered by expatriate churches advancing into the future. How can expatriate Christians and churches/fellowships have an impact on furthering the Kingdom for non-believing expatriates? What kind of role could expatriate Christians play in working with and building unity in both house and registered churches in China? How can expatriates play a role in encouraging China's development of the charity and non-profit sector in light of SARS and the Beijing Olympics 2008?

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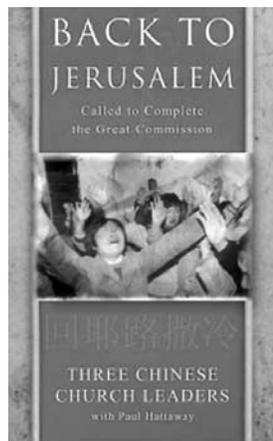
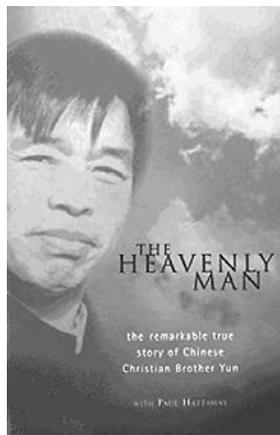
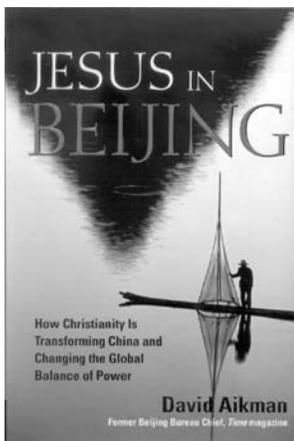
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## Book Review

# Into China and Beyond: A Timeless Journey of Faith

Reviews by Samuel E. Chiang



***Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power.*** David Aikman. Regnery Publishing, Washington, DC, 2003. ISBN 0-89526-128-6. ***The Heavenly Man: The Remarkable True Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun.*** Paul Hattaway. Monarch Books, UK & USA, 2003 edition. ISBN 1-85424-597-X; ISBN 0-8254-6207-X. ***Back To Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete The Great Commission.*** Brother Yun, Peter Xu Yongze and Enoch Wang with Paul Hattaway. Piquant, Authentic Media, USA, 2003 edition. ISBN 1-884543-89-8

### JESUS IN BEIJING

At the turn of this century, China captured the imaginations of many with the lure of billions to be served and equally tantalizing billions to be made in trade. Consider this: China alone accounted for forty-one percent of the growth of the total world oil demand in the last twelve months;<sup>1</sup> forty percent of the world's cement; thirty-one percent of global coal; thirty percent of iron ore; twenty-seven percent of steel products; and twenty-five percent of aluminum.<sup>2</sup>

Borrowing a geopolitical practice from the United States of securing one's own

backyard (Central and South America), China has commenced the shaping of her own backyard through the process of a "Free Trade Area" with the ten Associations of Southeast Asian Countries.<sup>3</sup> By 2010, this will create the world's largest tariff free trade zone for nearly two billion people with a combined gross domestic product of more than two trillion US dollars.

David Aikman's peering into China in light of its regional and global contexts is significant. Library stacks are generally full of books on military, political and economic prowess of nation-states. Sel-

dom is there a contribution of knowledge from the social and societal fabric viewpoint and much less from a Christian perspective supported by a cast of Christian characters. This is why *Jesus in Beijing* is remarkable, significant and destined to be a "timeless" book as required reading for many in years to come.

Stringent in words, yet finely detailed, Aikman starts with the historical journeys of the Nestorians, Franciscans, Jesuits and Protestants of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, "tentmaking" and illegal "smuggling" for ministries in China have had precedents in the modern mission movement since the 1800s. His short section on "Opium Boats and Christian Tracts" may lead readers to a deeper reflection that perhaps God had a purpose in closing China to the outside world in the middle of the last century.

With the roots of Christianity introduced, China's door closed and then reopened to the outside world, Aikman aptly moves on to establish the "Patriarchs" of the modern Christian faith in China—a faith that is virtually indigenous.

Being politically correct, Aikman does not discuss three decades worth of missing pastors and Christian leaders due to China's attempt to wipe out Christianity. He focuses, rather, on those whom God has preserved: Wang Ming Dao, Allen Yuan, Samuel Lamb, Moses Xie and Li Tianen. Biographical descriptions and contextual nuances will allow any student of Christian history to appreciate the presentation from a first person account. Furthermore, Aikman has probably whetted many people's appetites for an account of Christian history from 1949—1979. Each patriarch presented also represents many others who have stood for the "faith"; fewer and fewer are going to march forward into this century. There is a potential wealth of church history of that era that will be lost forever.

The chapters on "Aunts and Uncles," and "Nieces and Nephews" wonderfully present the body of Christ in China. While not talking about the fullness of the body (many other church networks), there is a sense of the body dynamics. There are three areas of interest here: Aikman explores the house church "networks" and the possible numbers of Christians in China; he examines their theology and an indigenized "Confession

of Faith"; and he introduces a further cast of multigenerational leaders who are making an impact in China. While I sincerely do not believe the "Confession of Faith" is indigenous in nature (I suspect much foreign assistance was provided to come to this understanding), I do believe that it is significant that the house church groups came together on agreement of the precious faith. (It is difficult to secure agreements amongst Chinese church leaders on many things).

Four short pages are devoted to Lu Xiaomin, or "Sister Ruth," who has been enabled by the Holy Spirit to write many songs which have become known as "Songs of Caanan." I suspect there will be future volumes on Sister Ruth and many stories throughout China on how her indigenous songs are used by God.

In his survey of Christianity in China, Aikman skillfully weaves in seminary training, the ministries of foreigners in China (and their code words), the State church, the Catholic church, some of the Mainland Chinese Christians overseas and the relationship of official bodies in the international realm.

Interestingly, this book has stirred up controversy in different circles. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* actually reviewed the book and took Aikman, the former Beijing bureau chief for *Time* magazine, to task for providing only anecdotal evidence for a book with such a title and importance. In other circles and with people who have participated in China ministry, suggestions came forth that Aikman was "paid" for the book to reveal and to take down the "Church in China." I have found both accusations silly. In fact, when a China-based correspondent of *The Wall Street Journal* requested a meeting,<sup>4</sup> I took the opportunity to let him know that the passion of Aikman is clear, and the implications for Christian transformation and global power are significant.

One of the revealing themes that is somewhat teased out in the book has to do with the "Back to Jerusalem" movement and the potential actualization of this goal. At the heart of the question is, "Would China be able to send 100,000 evangelists across the Silk Road to bring the gospel back to Jerusalem?" Aikman uses broad strokes in this matter and leaves it in a curious state.

## THE HEAVENLY MAN AND BACK TO JERUSALEM

Meanwhile, Paul Hattaway has written two books. One is *The Heavenly Man*, written with Brother Yun (who is known as the "heavenly man"), and the other is *Back to Jerusalem*. Both books have raised the imaginations and ire of many!

*The Heavenly Man* is a quasi autobiographical account of Liu Zhenying, known as Brother Yun and also known as the "heavenly man." (If you are curious about this title, you may wish to read the book to understand how it came to be). In the broadest sense, this book is one man's perspective on how the church in China has developed. (Aikman provides a much better, deeper and broader perspective of the development of the church.) From a purely spiritual-devotional literature viewpoint, this is a viable book since no one can, nor should, argue with someone's experience in Christ.

Brother Yun is the "authorized representative" to speak for the house churches around the world; in fact, a grouping

*The Heavenly Man* is a quasi autobiographical account of Liu Zhenying. **In the broadest sense, this book is one man's perspective on how the church in China has developed.**

of house churches of 58 million adherents, called the Sinim Fellowship had drafted such a letter.<sup>5</sup> Sadly, the Sinim Fellowship was only mentioned once in Aikman's book, and the authorized representative who is to speak for China, who is recognized by the "uncles," was missed in Aikman's book, as well as any mention of Paul Hattaway's two books. Shoddy journalism? Perhaps. Or did Aikman's journalistic instincts tell him more, informing him to stay away from the real, first-class controversies? I suspect the latter!

Some former reviewers of both of Hattaway's books have become *resoundingly concerned* with the books.<sup>6</sup> The Sinim Fellowship no longer exists and depending on whom one believes, the Sinim Fellowship might have disbanded even prior to the publication of both of Hattaway's books. Moreover, for argument's sake, let us sup-

pose the Sinim Fellowship (if it ever did have a large number of believers) did disband after the publication of the books. One would have thought that this fact would have been revealed in later reprints of the books—especially since there are three different versions of the *Heavenly Man* book in the market place.

What about *Back to Jerusalem*? Is this a vision, or a legitimate movement, and what will be the future of the Mainland Chinese church in Central Asia and in the Middle East? The origin of the "Back to Jerusalem" vision came to several groups of people in China and is well documented in Aikman's book. However, in Hattaway's book, one may come away with the impression that the entire house church movement, especially in the rural areas, is all imbued with the "Back to Jerusalem" vision. I do not believe this is the case as asserted by the book.

The original vision to preach the gospel "Back to Jerusalem" was to involve seven countries including: Afghanistan, Iran, Arabia, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and

Turkey. An original group formed and was called the "Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band." However, it was not a movement, and, in fact, all activities stopped in 1949—1950. Some of the Chinese Christians had gotten as far as Xinjiang.

In Hattaway's book, *Back to Jerusalem*, the enlargement of the original vision is real; he provides a list at the back, which includes not only the Islamic world but also the Buddhist and Hindu worlds. There are a total of 51 countries. Is this the new vision or a self-serving vision from the West? Many Christian leaders in China have the desire and passion to take the gospel back to Jerusalem. I heard this passion voiced as early as 1991; however, if you were to ask the church leaders which countries are involved in this vision, not many can name 51 countries—and even the original seven may be a stretch!

Chinese publications, such as the *Great Commission Bi-Monthly Journal* take the traditional meaning of the Silk Road as going through Central Asia and on into the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> This concurs with Aikman's research and understanding of the "Back to Jerusalem" intentions. However, in *Back to Jerusalem*, Hattaway, along with

I believe the "Back to Jerusalem" vision is alive and is still in the hearts of many church leaders in China (comprised of people in house churches, official churches and Christians in the market place). This is why Aikman's chapter on "Artists, Writers and Academics" is significant and ties in well with China's

## Not a small amount of controversy exists with the "Back to Jerusalem" movement both in and outside of China with respect to human and financial resources.

his cohorts, insists on two additional silk routes which conveniently include the Hindu and Buddhist worlds. This enlargement of the vision will require people. Are there 100,000 Chinese cross-cultural missionaries prepared and ready to legally go into these difficult parts of the world?

Currently, the rural house church movement in China is facing tremendous challenges. Regionalization and globalization mean that the lure of money is located in the cities, and many of the younger house church leaders are migrating there. The rural house church is, once again, graying swiftly. These migrating house church leaders are discovering the challenges of the cities: educational differences, legal means of working and accountability. These new social-educational-legal realities are not small.

If the rural house churches are graying swiftly, and if the younger leaders are in a mode of urban migration, then what about the "Back to Jerusalem" movement which is, in fact, tied to the rural house churches? What about the 100,000 cross-cultural missionaries who are under training and ready to go? In fact, I ask the same question: "Where are they? How many are under training and may be able "to go" legally?"

Not a small amount of controversy exists with the "Back to Jerusalem" movement both in and outside of China with respect to human and financial resources. In fact, a formidable group of "Patriarchs," the same ones introduced in Aikman's book, are standing up against this movement with Samuel Lamb being the most vocal.

Christian future. Could it be that God is creating several layered strategies to bring the gospel back to Jerusalem?

Aikman has excelled in bringing contemporary Christian history of China into the new century. *Jesus in Beijing* is a first-rate, timeless book that is a must read for anyone who is interested in what God is doing in China in the twenty-first century.

### Endnotes

1. British Petroleum (BP) statistics for China, as reported by *Asia Times*, [www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FI23Ad09.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FI23Ad09.html)
2. [www.ceramicindustry.com/CDA/ArticleInformation/features/BNP\\_\\_Features\\_\\_Item/0,2710,125927,00.html](http://www.ceramicindustry.com/CDA/ArticleInformation/features/BNP__Features__Item/0,2710,125927,00.html)
3. The 10-member ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) nations are: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.
4. August 2004.
5. *The Heavenly Man*, p.291
6. Googling cyberspace will reveal the controversy; there is also a dedicated multilingual website providing periodic updates to this topic.
7. *Great Commission Bi-Monthly* (ISSN 1537-1875), April 2004.

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### Whose Agenda?

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es if our partners in China refuse to be bought by our funds? Examples abound of how unwise use of excessive funds, combined with no accountability, have corrupted church leaders in China.

### LESSON 3

#### The Importance of Cultural Adaptation, Language Acquisition and Learning the History of the Chinese Church

An incarnational model of ministry demands that we work alongside the Chinese church. We may need to leave behind our own way of doing things and adapt Chinese ways. One of the earlier BTJ training schools was set up on a Western seminary model, complete with cap and gown graduation ceremony. Privately, Chinese church leaders lamented that the entire training program made little contribution. Unfortunately, the Western partners did not understand their Chinese counterpart until after the first class graduated.

In BTJ meetings, Brother Yun (the Heavenly Man) has often been introduced as a spokesman for the Chinese church, a notion that many Chinese church leaders reject. Indeed, the BTJ website points out that the assertion that Brother Yun is a main leader of a house church network may have been made by others in error. Also, the official translator for Brother Yun has not been faithful in his translation on many occasions, adding his own thoughts to Brother Yun's testimony.

Much debate has swirled around the accusations leveled against Brother Yun by many senior Chinese church leaders on the JesusReturn website.

These leaders are responding to two issues from their conservative Puritan background. First, they see the Born Again Movement (with which Yun was associated in China) as a cult and will not hesitate in denouncing it. Along the same line, they reject any association with the charismatic movement which includes some of the fastest growing house church networks in rural

China. Second, following the standards of Wang Ming Dao, they consider presenting the partial truth but not the whole truth (see Lesson 1) as a sin. Such a tradition will certainly label someone who preaches falsehood (100,000 as reality versus vision) as a con man.

#### LESSON 4

##### Partnering with the Overseas Chinese Church

It is interesting to note that the overseas Chinese church has been silent in the BTJ debate. Most overseas Chinese groups know enough about China to realize that the 100,000 figure is a vision, not reflecting the current reality. The Caucasian church should learn to take some cues from the overseas Chinese church which can give tremendous input, avoiding the pitfalls of Lesson 3.

The Great Commission Center has circulated widely a statement on BTJ. The following excerpt is a fitting summary and concluding remark (emphasis mine) to the thoughts I have presented here.

"To ensure the movement's integrity, it is our prayer that this vision will not be harmed by human weaknesses such as *misrepresentation, sensationalism, arrogance and exaggeration*. We further ask the Lord to *protect us from spiritual attacks*, that we will be *unified and transparent* as we commit ourselves to this challenging and significant task."

#### Endnote

1. The debate about the Back to Jerusalem Movement is highly emotional and at times difficult to follow. The [www.BackToJerusalem.com](http://www.BackToJerusalem.com) and [www.JesusReturn.net](http://www.JesusReturn.net) websites present opposing views on BTJ from the two perspectives. Many agencies also publish overviews of the issues involved. See, for example, the April 2004 issue of OMF's *Global Chinese Ministries* prayer letter and the October 2004 issue of Great Commission Center's bimonthly magazine.

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## Resource Corner



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# Whose Agenda?

The revival of the Back to Jerusalem Movement (BTJ) in China has caught the imagination of many overseas who would like to partner with Chinese Christians to equip and send missionaries, particularly to the Middle East. While there exist rich opportunities for partnership, the rush to participate in BTJ has also served to highlight some of the pitfalls that can spoil well-meaning attempts to work with the Chinese church.<sup>1</sup>

**Wu Xi**, who has been involved with China ministry for over 20 years, recently shared these lessons from the BTJ Movement, which speak directly to the topic of international cooperation in China service, the theme of this issue of ChinaSource. —Brent Fulton



Brent Fulton

## Lessons from International Involvement in the BTJ Movement

Wu Xi

### LESSON 1 Presenting the Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth

The size of the workforce is the most critical issue in the BTJ debate. In his best-selling book that sparked the current interest in the BTJ Movement, Paul Hattaway was careful to identify 100,000 workers as a *vision*. However, since the only number giv-

en in the whole book is 100,000, many among the Western Christian public assumed 100,000 missionaries are ready to be commissioned or have already been sent.

Furthermore, many supporters of BTJ do not choose their words carefully from the pulpit and present the 100,000 figure as *fait accompli*. Most China ministries estimate the number of current BTJ workers and trainees in the hundreds.

Nobody can dispute a vision God gave to a fellow Christian. As a matter of fact, even the harshest critics of

BTJ are very excited about the Chinese church's role as a mission-sending body. The question is how ready is the church and whether this vision will be accomplished in years or in decades. As we share about BTJ, it is imperative that we present not just the vision, but also the reality, so that we will not be guilty of misinformation.

### LESSON 2 Money Is the Source of All Kinds of Evil

There are two aspects to this lesson. First, are we faithful and transparent in how our ministry handles finances? Do we present the financial need accurately without misleading the donors? This follows closely from Lesson 1. If funds were raised based on the 100,000 figure, then there is a significant issue of integrity.

Second, the financial capacity of the Chinese church often puts her at the receiving end of resources and finances from outside. Is our attitude one of superiority and controlling? Do we threaten to withhold our financ-

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