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Yi Du Kam

China Partner

Beyond “Back to Jerusalem”

Talk to a supporter of the Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement and you will hear that this is an exciting movement of God among the China church¹ that is sending tens of thousands of missionaries as an “army of worms” across Central Asia all the way to Jerusalem.

Talk to other seasoned observers of the China church and they will say that the original BTJ vision has been “hijacked” and the current Western bandwagon is not a true representation of reality. The debate has been quite emotional with very strong words being used.² The purpose of this article is not to engage in nonproductive discussion but to clear away some of the fog and suggest positive ways to move forward.

First of all, some basic facts and numbers:

• **100,000 BTJ missionaries is a vision that is yet to be realized.** The 100,000 figure is not an estimate of missionaries currently sent out by the China church. Most observers believe that this figure is an aspirational one. It is a vision. Chinese Christians are responding to the vision, and some are in training; others have gone out from China in response to it. It is a vision that will be realized over a long period of time, and it requires training, preparation and the development of resources and sup-

port networks. Estimates of the time scale for these missionaries to be ready to leave China range from years to decades, if and when that vision becomes a reality. The total number of missionaries currently working both within and outside of China is estimated to be under a few hundred. On top of that, less than 1,000 are currently receiving training specifically for cross-cultural ministry.³

• **The “Heavenly Man” is not an “official” spokesman for BTJ or the China church.** Although many times in the last several years Brother Yun, known as the “Heavenly Man,” may have been introduced as a spokesman for BTJ or the China church, there is now open recognition that he does not represent either one in any official capacity, and that such representation in the past was incorrect.⁴

• **There have been large sums of money raised to support BTJ.** The total amount raised for BTJ has not been published. Probably, no one will ever know the exact amount.⁵ The amounts reported

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from different sources, estimated at millions of dollars, are too high for the benefit of the China church. To date, very little accounting has been given publicly. This issue has been a major stumbling block for the movement.

As the Western church seeks to engage in BTJ, several important factors should be considered.

Who speaks for the China Church?

Many were confused when Brother Yun was introduced as the China church leader. Dr. Paul Hiebert, missiologist and cultural anthropologist, has introduced the concept of “boundary set” and “fuzzy set” that can help us understand this confusion. Most of the Western worldview is based on “boundary set” while many other cultures use “fuzzy set.” A “boundary set” perspective sees only black and white while a “fuzzy set” perspective recognizes many shades of gray in between.

Western Christians would be able to understand the China church more easily if it were a unified body with one theology, one administration, one main office and one spokesman. However, such a situation simply does not exist—not even in the Western church. Neither Billy Graham, nor John Stott, nor Luis Palau can represent the church in the US, UK and South America. Christians in the West have deep theological divides over the charismatic movement, conservatism and liberalism. In the same way, the China church comes in all shapes and forms, from the extreme charismatic (borderline cultic) to ultra conservative (men and women sitting on opposite sides in the church) to very liberal theology (try Bishop Ding’s justification by love). The difference between a rural village church in Henan and a returnee church (the so called “sea turtle” churches) in Beijing is as big as that between Saddleback church in California and a struggling inner city congregation.

There is no official spokesman for the China church. On top of that, the structures and memberships of house church networks are not clearly defined. It is almost impossible to delineate the exact relationship between and within the networks. A certain congregation may consider itself part of network A today and switch to network B a few months later. Relationships and partnerships between

networks also change. Take the case of the famous Sinim Fellowship; it is not clear if the Born-Again Movement is part of it. At the initial formation of the Fellowship, it certainly was. However, there were continuous concerns about the Born-Again Movement’s supposed emphasis on an extreme emotional experience upon conversion and accusations of sheep-stealing against it. Furthermore, the Fellowship has not been active as a coherent group for many months. So, it is difficult to gauge if the Fellowship can still be a channel to influence 65 million believers in China, as it once claimed.

Agencies or churches interested in BTJ need to take time to do some serious research and study about the church in China, to connect with others who are active in China, and to seek out those with a long history of China involvement and a wide range of work there. Many China-related agencies have regular prayer letters and newsletters that are helpful in understanding the needs within the country. A “China desk” or committee within an agency or church can help to formulate and guide a cohesive China strategy. ChinaSource is available to serve as a resource for those seeking help in these areas.

Theological Development of the China Church

Many are concerned about the suggestion that BTJ workers will be sent with no regard to local government policy and restrictions, particularly in the Middle East. The talk of a large number of workers being put in prison and sacrificing their lives is frightening to all of us. Such a plan is certainly not strategic and can hardly achieve the goal of taking the gospel all the way to Jerusalem.

The history of the China church gives us some insight into how such an idea came about. The China church has suffered tremendous persecution for the last 55 years, particularly from the 1950s to the 1970s when the government adopted a hard-line religious policy. Thus, the main theological development in the house church today is the theology of the cross. In this context, there is also a glorification of suffering and martyrdom, almost to the point that one’s dedication and commitment is measured by the length of imprisonment. In addition, there are also the mistaken notions of “the further you go, the holier you are”

and “walking the gospel to Jerusalem” (as in the original BTJ vision) “is superior to flying there.”

We all appreciate the dedication and commitment demonstrated by the China churches. The Western churches should learn from the China churches on these matters. Nevertheless, the China church must also understand that the theology of the cross cannot answer all the questions of the Muslims. Moreover, a triumphal, high profile approach highlighting suffering and martyrdom is not beneficial to the cause of the movement. The most constructive approach is to work alongside the China church, to derive a workable plan within its context recognizing its strengths and weaknesses.

The Role of the Overseas Chinese Church

The overseas Chinese church is in a unique position for exploring opportunities in China. It has extensive kinship relationships that the Western church does not enjoy. Its members speak the language and are not a visible foreign group in most parts of China. Many overseas Chinese Christians are already involved in training in China and are well connected with the house church networks.

Western churches should seek to partner with the overseas Chinese church on BTJ. Good models and principles of partnership have been presented by many groups since the idea was first brought up in the 1980s and the 1990s. In a three-way partnership (the China church, the overseas Chinese church and the Western church), it is entirely possible that the most effective ministry for the Western Christians is that of prayer.

We must realize that this work can only be done by the China church. No one, not the Western church nor the overseas Chinese church, should own the BTJ movement. All the plans should have an exit strategy whereby, eventually, the China church can take over the ministry.

Missing Links in the BTJ Movement

The BTJ Movement has been compared to a chain with many rings linked together. The problem is that all of the rings are incomplete, and many of them are missing altogether. These missing links include:

- **Need for training schools.** While



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Even within China, there are many opportunities for cross-cultural work.

there are many training schools in China, very few of them have an emphasis on cross-cultural workers. Quality training programs do not materialize overnight. A good portion of those currently active in cross-cultural work should probably work as trainers and teachers to multiply the next generation of workers. There have been some attempts by the Western church to set up mission training schools in China with only limited success. Perhaps the overseas Chinese church can partner with the house church networks to set up more training programs that are culturally appropriate.

- **Need for training material and curriculum.** So far, very little material is available in Chinese for the training of cross-cultural workers. Of the 400 plus titles on the subject,⁶ many are translated from English and quite a number are testimonies. In order for the movement to mature, much more original training material needs to be written. This, however, will take many years, even decades. Is it possible for existing mission training curriculum to be translated and used in China? The news that the course material from *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* will soon be published in Chinese is encouraging. However, what is probably needed is the translation of a whole set of Master's degree level training material.

- **Need for sending structure.** There

is no structure within China for sending out cross-cultural workers. However, sending agencies have been established in the overseas Chinese church for cross-cultural workers; quite a few of these have extensive experience. These agencies can provide a framework for the China church to follow. Policy manuals, financial guidelines and personnel structures all need to be established. It would be good if several representative samples of such manuals could be collected and made available to the China church.

- **Need for placement programs.** Given the current state of affairs, it is unrealistic to expect large numbers of workers to be sent outside of China in the near future. However, even within China, there are many opportunities for cross-cultural work. The majority Han house churches are often blind to such opportunities. The Hui people, a Chinese Muslim group, is a hidden and unreached people group. Literally in the backyard of some of the major house church networks in Henan province, there are one million Hui people. Yet, these networks have invested very little effort to reach them. How can their interest in missions be channeled to these unreached people that are easily accessible to them? Perhaps expatriate Christian workers among the minorities can consider taking on Chinese believers as partners.

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Kim-kwong Chan

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Chinese Christianity and Global Mission

We have witnessed the emergence of China, the focus of today's global attention, which has almost doubled its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 1997 with a sustained growth of more than seven percent per year. In contrast, the rest of the world grew by much less than half this rate.

China's trade surplus with the U.S. has increased about four times since 1997 to the current figure of USD 200 billion. China received the largest amount of Foreign Direct Investment (USD 68 billion) in 2005. Such aggregation of wealth has translated into rapid development as can easily be felt from the increased price in the international market of raw materials such as steel, oil and aluminum as China imports huge quantities to feed its development boom.

The presence of China's economic influence can easily be noticed on shelves of supermarkets and retail stores in the U.S. and other nations as increasing amounts of "Made in China" goods are available, from clothing to housewares and from toys to electronic goods. Now China outpaces Japan as the second largest producer of electronic goods in the world, after the U.S. China is also the world's largest

producer of clothing, luggage, shoes, television sets, watches, mobile phones and disposable lighters. Its coastal provinces have literally become the "Factory of the World" manufacturing commodities for a global market.

Chinese students are becoming a significant block of foreign students in major international universities as they constitute half of all foreign students in Japanese universities and the largest single block of foreign students in universities in the U.K., Australia and Canada. They make up the second largest group of foreign students on U.S. campuses. At the same time, foreign students going to China are on the increase with countries sending their scholars to China mainly for language studies. The largest group is Korean with 35,000 students in China followed by Japan with 13,000 students. Even small countries send significant numbers

of students to China: Vietnam with 2,300, Thailand with 1,800, Nepal with 1,300 and Mongolia with 1,000. Indonesia, which until recently banned the Chinese language, sent 2,900 students.¹ The increase of Chinese language students from other countries reflects the growing importance of the Chinese language—hence China—in global activities of the future.

Since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, the international political scene has changed from bipolarity to multipolarity with China being the emerging power challenging the leadership of the former superpowers. Now, China practically sets the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agenda by being the largest trading partner with ASEAN nations. China initiated the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO or better known as the Shanghai Summit) in June 2001² which gradually created a special trading zone headed by China with Russia and four other Central Asian Republics bordering China. China, being a permanent member of the Security Council in the United Nations (UN), has effectively influenced the UN decision of using more political rather than military means in international affairs. China has also sent peacekeeping forces to many countries, such as Haiti, under the flag of the UN.³

As one reflects on contemporary world history, one notices that the British dominated world events in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, followed by U.S. in the twentieth century. Currently, China is reasserting herself as a significant mem-

ber of the international community, be it as a new ambitious empire as feared by some observers⁴ or as a peaceful power as suggested by China's leadership.⁵ Is it not reasonable to speculate that China may follow in the footsteps of Britain and the U.S. in this new century—a century of the dragon?

Chinese Christianity: Missionary Exporter of Tomorrow?

With the enthusiasm of China's global ambition and the rapid growth of the Chinese Christian community—one of the fastest growing churches in modern times with unofficial figures ranging from 35 million to 80 million—one may easily speculate on a merging of these two elements into a new missiological movement. This phenomenon is similar to the religious awakening in the nineteenth century which, coupled with the global market expansion of the Western nations, resulted in the largest mission movement in history undertaken by Christians in the Western countries during the period of the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. This article attempts to highlight three emerging issues of Chinese Christianity which may have a bearing on contemporary global mission: the diasporic Chinese community, Chinese Christian merchants—the Wenzhou Christians, and the Back to Jerusalem Movement (BTJ).

1. Diasporic Chinese Communities.

Chinese populations outside of Mainland China are increasingly making their presence felt as the total number of Chinese in diaspora increased from 22 million in 1985 to 33 million by the end of the last century—and the number is on the rise. The majority of these new overseas Chinese are from Mainland China as China opened its doors for Chinese citizens to emigrate in the early 1980s. These new Chinese migrants now live in virtually every country of the world from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe (even in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea as Chinese have substantial commercial activities in that country that is often off-limits to other nationalities). Many work as merchants or operate restaurants while others open factories or run farms. There are also large numbers of irregular Chinese migrants, but their actual strength is not possible to ascertain.

The Christian communities of Chinese in diaspora outside the Greater China Circle (such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao) are on the increase, paralleling the growth of their counterparts in Mainland China. Traditionally, there are Chinese Christian communities in areas where there are large populations of Chinese such as the U.S., Australia, Canada, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. As more Mainland Chinese settle overseas, they are often targets of various mission agencies. The conversion rate among overseas Mainland Chinese is very high as increasing numbers of Chinese congregations, mainly for Mainland Chinese, are established in the above mentioned nations. Recently, there are also records of sustainable Chinese Christian communities in other countries, many without any prior record of a Chinese church, such as Mongolia, most nations of the former Soviet Republic, most Eastern European countries,

and linguistic boundaries?

2. Wenzhou Christian Merchants.

Wenzhou is a municipality within the Zhejiang Province with a population of about seven million. The Wenzhounese speak a unique dialect that few outside this region can comprehend. They are entrepreneurs by tradition and led the economic reform policy of China by establishing the first batch of private enterprises in China in the late 1970s. They have, perhaps, the highest per capita income in China and surely the highest percentage of merchants in their population. More than ninety-five percent of Wenzhou's GDP is from the private sector whereas the national average is merely around fifty to sixty percent. Further, Wenzhounese take their age-old tradition as itinerant merchants wherever there are business opportunities, and they are currently setting up businesses in at least one hundred countries. They form the largest regional group of Chinese mi-

China is undoubtedly emerging as a major economic and political power within the international community.

many Polynesian nations, all European Union nations, many Middle East countries, half of all South American countries and a dozen African countries. In countries such as Italy, the Chinese Christian churches number in the dozens, and they have formed their own national association of Chinese churches.

Chinese language seminaries/Bible schools have been established in the U.K., the U.S., Panama, Australia, Canada, Korea, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and South Africa to serve the growing demand of these Chinese churches in diaspora. We have already seen examples of the more established Chinese churches in diaspora, such as the Chinese Malaysian (or Chinese-Indonesian or Chinese-Filipino) churches, rendering strong support to the local or national churches. Will the continued development of Chinese churches in diasporic communities become a blessing to their respective host societies as they expand beyond their eth-

grants in Europe. They are called the "Chinese Jews"! Above all, they have the highest percentage of Christians among all municipalities in China with official estimates ranging from 700,000 to one million (ten percent to fifteen percent of the population) and unofficial claims of at least 1.5 million (twenty percent). Visitors to this region can find churches literally in every village.

At any given time, there are at least 1.5 million Wenzhounese living as internal migrants in China and half a million as migrants overseas doing business. They can be found in major cities or remote towns, from the rich Chinese coastal provinces such as Jiangsu to harsh plateaus like Tibet. They set up shops from Morocco⁶ to Montenegro.⁷ Many of them are Christians, and they often establish Christian gatherings among themselves in new places where previously there was not any Christian presence. For example, Wenzhou Christians formed, perhaps, the first government-sanctioned Christian meet-

ing point in Lhasa, Tibet. Today, about a thousand gather each Sunday. They often share the gospel with the local inhabitants where no missionary has ever been before. Many Wenzhounese merge their businesses with their missiological zeal, sharing the gospel in places where they have business ventures, especially in newly developed markets in remote places.⁸ They are also the founders of many new Chinese congregations in Europe such as one in Bucharest, Romania.

With the increase of global Wenzhou merchant-migrants, numbering about half a million with at least fifteen percent who are Christians, there are perhaps 75,000 Wenzhou Christian merchant-cum-missionaries currently carrying the good news of cheap Chinese products as well as the Good News of Christianity to all corners of the world. This includes those countries which forbid any missionary activity or missionaries to enter, or are inconvenient for missionaries from the West to operate from. These Wenzhou Christians, unlike their Western brethren, are free to travel to these hard-to-access areas. Will they, through their global commercial activities and their strong evangelical zeal, be a natural army of missionaries to evangelize in places hard to access by conventional mission channels?

3. Back To Jerusalem Movement.

In the late 1940s, there was a movement among Chinese Christians to initiate evangelistic campaigns in remote regions of China, mainly the northwest and southwest regions. A few of them attempted to spread the Christian faith from the northwestern part of China (Xinjiang) through Central Asia to Jerusalem. One of these small bands was called "Spreading the Gospel All Over the Place—*Pinzhuan Fuyin Tuan*" and was translated into English as "The Back to Jerusalem Band" by an English missionary. The farthest they traveled was Kashgar, and none was able to travel beyond the borders of China.⁹

Such a legacy, or serendipity, gave rise to the name "Back to Jerusalem" (BTJ) movement, and was later claimed by some Chinese church leaders who felt the calling to continue this venture which is currently popularized by hymns, books, websites and discussions in mission conferences.¹⁰ The current BTJ movement calls for the mobilization of 100,000 Chinese missionaries to launch into Islamic-dom-

inated Central Asia and the Middle East regions eventually spreading the gospel to Jerusalem to be ready for the second coming of Christ—a proactive millenarianism. This project regards this mission by the Chinese as the last baton of global mission movements when the gospel traveled from the West to East through Western missionaries and should now be carried back by Chinese missionaries to where it had originated in order to complete the mission mandate of preaching the gospel to the whole world.

This movement has several arguments favoring Chinese missionaries as the carriers of the supposed last baton of global mission. First, China has no major political enemy. China can do business with both Cuba and the U.S.A., with Iraq and Iran, the Palestinian Authority and Israel, Libya and the U.K., North Korea and South Korea. Being from a politically non-threatening country, Chinese can enter places where Westerners have difficulty gaining access, especially Islamic dominated countries. Second, Christians in China have experience in clandestine forms of religious activities suitable to mission work in countries where mission activity is prohibited. Third, Christians in China practice a simple form of Christianity—the house church. Such an ecclesial form is simple to operate and flexible to establish. Fourth, there is virtually an endless supply of missionaries drawn from the vast pool of several tens of millions of Chinese believers. Fifth, the frugal living style of Chinese as compared to Western missionaries' living standard is cost effective. Sixth, Chinese Christians know and accept suffering as part of the Christian reality, and they are ready to be martyred for Christ without hesitation.

Conclusion

China is undoubtedly emerging as a major economic and political power within the international community. The centrality of Christianity is moving away from the traditional European and North American bases into Latin America, Africa and Asia. The emergence of the Chinese Christian community, be it in Mainland China or overseas, is but part of this general trend of the development of global Christendom. This article is intended to bring attention to such a trend along with eliciting from Chinese Christians some possible

contributions on global mission vis-à-vis the changing dynamics of the global order and global Christendom. Critical studies with quality field data—not just enthusiastic mission visions or self-centered research—are needed to discern the divine plan of the Great Commission. Perhaps now may be the time for Christians in China, together with other non-Western Christians, to be the main authors in writing the next chapter of world Christendom.

Endnotes

1. Figures on Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam are from China's *2003 Annual on Education*. See www.moe.gov.cn/edoas/website18/info8021.htm; for other figures, see David Murphy, "Softening at the Edge," in *FEER*, November 4, 2004, p. 34.
2. "Shanghai Summit FMs Meet in Beijing to Tackle Terrorism," *China Daily*, January 7, 2002.
3. "Chinese Police on Haiti UN Duty," BBC News, October 18, 2004. At <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3751814.stm>
4. See Ross Terrill's *The New Chinese Empire*, (New York, Basic Books) 2003.
5. Jiang Xiyuan and Xia Liping, *Peaceful Rise of China* (Beijing, CASS) 2004.
6. See "Attention, les Chinois débarquent!" in *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 15 September 2004.
7. This writer traveled to Kotor, a small medieval town in Montenegro in August, 2004 and saw a Wenzhounese who operated a shop in the local market!
8. See Kim-kwong Chan, Tetsunio Yamamori: *Holistic Entrepreneurship in China* (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press), 2002, Chapter 6, pp. 65-72.
9. Personal interview with Grace Ho (He Enzhen) in Kashgar, August, 2002. Ms. Ho and her husband, Mecca Zhao, felt the call to travel westward with no particular destination in mind. During that interview, Ms. Ho suggested that in 1949-1950, they had planned to travel to Afghanistan but did not do so. Personal interviews with another Band member, Revd Huang Ziqing in August 2002, August 2003 and April 2004.
10. See www.backtojerusalem.com, or Paul Hattaway's *Back to Jerusalem: Called to Complete the Great Commission* (Carlisle: Piquant, 2003).

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L. K. Chiu

A Piece of the Puzzle

Training Mainland Chinese to be Cross-Cultural Missionaries

Among all debates and controversies about the Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) phenomenon, the issue of training Chinese missionaries seems to have fallen on the sidelines. More attention has been given to issues such as the controversial number of 100,000 missionaries, abuse of the genuine grass-root missionary spirit, and who has the right to represent BTJ. Despite the legitimacy of all these concerns, training—a critical component that determines the outcome of missions—has not been given enough attention.

One of the reasons for the lack of debate or discussion on training Chinese cross-cultural missionaries is that there is almost no dispute over the prevailing need for training. In fact, regardless of the kind of China work one is participating in, training in different forms is always involved. Therefore, when heated discussions of BTJ began to emerge, the issue of training simply was not perceived as an area of concern—it is just a matter of doing it. Sadly, it is exactly this kind of take-it-for-granted mentality that ultimately deprives us of the opportunity for a thorough treatment of this issue of such immense importance. Although it is undeniable that some of the discussions of BTJ have led to futile debates, it

is also true that constructive discussions have helped capture the imaginations of the Christian community worldwide and bring the vision to a higher level of understanding as well as appreciation. It is my prayer that constructive, sensible and thorough discussions over the issue of training will emerge. As a result, effective training that is catered to the needs of Chinese missionaries will become available.

The Need for Training

The question of the need for focused missionary training is still arguable for many people. Some mission agencies do not even put appropriate training as a requirement for candidacy. When house

churches in China began to send evangelists to the minority peoples, passion and vision were the major requirements for selecting and sending their young missionaries. Some churches may prefer general theological and biblical training, but they are still far from providing the knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective cross-cultural mission work. Others may see the importance of training but have to give in to the reality of inadequate resources and reduce training to a minimum. There is a missionary training center in Asia which used to provide a two year training program when it first started, but today the training has been reduced to three months. The current director, a career missionary who

spent over twenty years in one of the Muslim countries in Asia, lamented the fact that the current training is more like a survival skill program. With tears running down his face, this faithful servant of God shared how painful it was to even think of the many mistakes he made during his missionary work back then and how much he wished he could help the trainees to be better equipped to avoid those mistakes in the future.¹

The trainees are like merchandise on a production line, each coming and going in three months' time. Most unfortunate

mention that one fell through the program and became a traitor), what makes us think that we can do a better job by finishing the training in three months' time?

When missions expert, Stan Guthrie, studies the emerging non-Western missions movement, he writes about the alarming rate of attrition among Third-World missionaries: "During the Brazilian National Missions Congress in October 1993, participants were stunned to hear that of the 5,400 missionaries sent out in the previous five years, the vast majority had returned within a year. Worse, about ninety percent of the returnees did not go back. A Columbian missions leader has estimated that forty percent of all Latin American missionaries return from their assignments early and discouraged because of a lack of training, on-field pastoral support, and a lack of finance."²

er in Beijing who shared with me his missionary expedition. This young man was sent by his church network as a missionary to Tibet with only a one-way ticket in his pocket and a heart full of passion and love towards the people. He spent almost a year there without prior training or support of any sort, and very soon he found himself begging for food on the streets of Lhasa in order to stay alive. This is just one of many sad stories in the recent history of missionary endeavors among the house churches in China. In my personal interactions with different house church network leaders, I can testify that a situation like this is definitely not intentional; rather, it is a painful reality when facing the lack of resources and expertise for cross-cultural missionary training.

In spite of all the problems, the story of this young missionary to Tibet has a happy ending; the experience did not crush his spirit nor alter his calling. He was more committed to cross-cultural missions than ever before. When I met with him again about a year later in Henan (he went back home after the ordeal in Tibet), he had brought with him a young lady who is also committed to missions. They wanted to get married and receive training together before heading to the mission field again! When I prayed with this couple in that little hotel room, I felt I had a glimpse of the spirit of resilience and steadfastness that carried the house churches through all those years of persecutions and hardships. At that moment, the room became a sanctuary and prayer turned to worship!

I have no doubt that many of the house churches in China are committed to global missions. I believe with all my heart that God is going to use the Chinese to play a part in his master plan of world evangelization. However, let us be vigilant and stand in solidarity with the churches in China by partnering with them in preparing well-trained cross-cultural missionaries. I think Denis Lane's observation says it all when he writes about training missionaries for the Two-Thirds World:

In the past when we had no alternative but to go in our ignorance and in the strength and power of the Lord, God honored those who would launch out. Their sense of call and commission was incredibly strong, strong enough to overcome disease, loss of wife and family,



China Partner

I believe with all my heart that God is going to use the Chinese to play a part in his master plan of world evangelization.

Attrition is not just a Third-World missionary problem; it is universal. It seems that the

lack of training is almost always one of the major factors that contribute to this problem. If there is one thing that the Chinese churches should learn from their Latin American brothers and sisters about world missions, it should be the importance of training.

Not too long ago, I met with a broth-

is that they are expected by their churches and mission agencies to be effective and productive once they have finished the training and land on the mission field! It has always puzzled me when pondering the fact that if Jesus spent three years training his twelve disciples to become church planters and missionaries (not to

persecution, learning a language with no help at all and starting from scratch in a highly hostile environment. There may be some places left where such ministry is called for, but by and large today's world is totally different. We do not bring honor to the Lord by launching out in naivety, when means of preparation are available to us. God's work calls for the best preparation.

The Challenge of Training

Understanding the need for appropriate and adequate training is one thing; actually doing it is another! Anyone who is directly involved in this endeavor knows very well that there are a lot of challenges. They range from the background of trainees to the lack of qualified trainers and adequate Chinese training materials. Just think of how great a task it is to turn a junior high level trainee who is monocultural (having no, or very little, exposure to other languages, worldviews and culture) with few career skills into a mature tent-making missionary. He or she is expected to live and think cross-culturally and missiologically in a highly hostile environment.

The lack of qualified trainers makes it even harder. There are few experienced cross-cultural missionaries who understand the Mainland Chinese culture, have the ability to communicate in fluent "Mainland Mandarin" and are also capable of teaching and mentoring. Even when we have the right trainers, it is hard to find training materials in the Chinese language. The most comprehensive Chinese bibliography on missions in the world is about to be finished, thanks to the hard work of several mission leaders in Hong Kong. We learn from the book list that there are only a few more than four hundred titles of mission books in the Chinese Christian world. Many of these are testimonies, translated works and printed in traditional Chinese characters. There are not many Chinese books available that are really about mission strategy, anthropological and cultural studies or even the history or theology of missions. It is quite depressing for any trainer who wants to teach this subject of cross-cultural missions, particularly when it is so difficult to find appropriate materials. The reality is that when we look at the issue from the larger Chinese context, the whole infrastructure of global missions that includes missiological

teaching, writing and research is still under construction.

The undertaking of the project of training is massive. Just naming a few challenges is enough for us to see the immense magnitude of it. Though it is like an uphill battle, it is also a battle we cannot afford to lose. No one has all the answers to these problems. The Chinese saying of "finding rocks to step on while crossing a stream" captures the essence of the current situation well. It is a path that no one has ever taken, and the things that many of us are doing now are just "finding rocks to step on." Just as the Chinese word for crisis is made up of "danger" and "opportunity," I

There is a frequently raised question: "Is the church in China ready for global missions?"

believe that if we are willing to commit ourselves strategically to training, give enough time and patience to prepare the Chinese church at-large, utilize wisely our unique Chinese culture and status around the world, engage the wealth of resources among the worldwide Chinese Christian community, then we should be able to rise above the challenge and seize the opportunity of bringing glory to the *Missio Dei*.

Are We Ready?

There is a frequently raised question: "Is the church in China ready for global missions?" I always answer by saying that the issue is not whether the church in China is ready, but whether the worldwide Christian community is ready to embrace this new missionary movement. Likewise, on a worldwide scale, the question is not if China is ready for her economic and political development, but if

the global community is ready to receive her as a partner and a friend. Thomas Friedman states, "The world is flat." In other words, we are in a new world, and we are desperately in need of a new paradigm. This is true of the socioeconomical and political worlds as well as the world of missions. One of the challenges to mission leaders around the globe is the capacity to think intentionally and creatively so that partnerships and interfaces for global missions between the East and West, and the First-World and Two-Thirds World can be built. I believe that one of



China Partner

the starting points to engage in such an endeavor is to respond to the need for training a new generation of global workers.

Endnotes

1. This is a first hand experience from the writer's personal visit and interview.
2. Stan Guthrie, "Looking under the hood of the non-Western missions movement," *EMQ*, January 1995, p. 92.
3. Denis Lane, *Tuning God's New Instruments: A Handbook for Missions from the Two-Thirds World* (World Evangelical Fellowship: 1990), p. 31.

L. K. Chiu is involved in training mainland Chinese for cross-cultural Christian service. If you would like to interact with him, you may email him at <lk-chiu2006@yahoo.com>(non-secure). © 2006 by L. K. Chiu. ■



The Present and Future of the BTJ Movement: A View from the Church in China

Wen Mu

China Partner

In the following article, I affirm BTJ's significance and commend these principles to the people of the twenty-first century. BTJ is a missionary vision received by Chinese pastors in the 1940s.

The original motivation was for the Chinese church to respond to missions just as the many Western missionaries working in China had done. The vision was to take the gospel westward, starting from China and then beyond China, following in the footsteps of the missionaries. This was a common vision, shared by many, as God had given the same calling to different Chinese churches on different occasions. This BTJ vision must have had the hand of God in it. However, this vision should not be fulfilled only by the Chinese churches; it should be fulfilled in partnership with churches worldwide.

As Christians, Chinese pastors have a passionate feeling for Jerusalem. At the same time, Chinese, historically, have had strong emotions about the Silk Road. In the twenty-first century, the Chinese church can send missionaries along three Silk Road routes: North from Beijing to Xian, to Lanzhou, to Kasghar and

to Central Asia; Central from Beijing to Xian, to Lanzhou, to Hotan, to Tibet, to Nepal, to India and to the Persian Gulf; South from Beijing to southern China, to Southeast Asia, to India and to the Persian Gulf. BTJ is also a missionary movement

The Chinese church desires to work together with churches from other people groups to bring the world's remaining 4.2 billion people to Christ.

taking the gospel back to Jerusalem and to all the unreached peoples along the routes of the Silk Road, particularly in the 10/40 window. It seeks to reach the Muslims in western China and Central Asia, planting churches all the way to the Persian Gulf before reaching Jerusalem.

BTJ is a faith mission movement. The

original Chinese pastors received much from the Western missionaries; in response, they took on the challenge of mission by faith. This is not to suggest that the Chinese will take the last baton of the Great Commission. The Chinese church desires to work together with churches from other people groups to bring the world's remaining 4.2 billion people to Christ and complete the Great Commission.

Responses from Chinese Churches towards BTJ

I will consider the responses from the perspectives of four different mainline Chinese church streams; the charismatic, the evangelical, the conservative fundamental and the Three-Self. These divisions are rough ones only for the

purpose of our discussion. The Chinese church has never divided itself clearly along denominational or theological lines. However, these four theological positions are quite defined today and will be even more so in the future.

1. An enthusiastic response from the charismatics. This refers to charismatic house church leaders in various provinces. The influence of the charismatics is quite strong although they represent only a small number of Chinese churches. These charismatic churches have been very active in evangelism sending teams to various rural areas, preaching and planting churches. They are also in regular contact with overseas charismatic groups. They have held BTJ meetings since the 1980s and are connected with overseas BTJ agencies (most with a charismatic background). They are actively promoting BTJ in the Western world and are largely responsible for sparking the overseas discussion on BTJ in recent years. Within China, they have special training schools and are waiting to send workers to Central Asia.

Since these charismatic churches are sending the workers out in haste, many missionaries receive very little training in cross-cultural ministry. The casualty rate of these workers is very high. We hope that these churches will be able to provide systematic training and send out well-equipped workers as they respond to BTJ.

The money raised overseas for BTJ must have good supervision and accountability. Several books published overseas on BTJ have significantly exaggerated the suffering of the Chinese church and its ability to send workers. Sending one hundred thousand workers in ten years to Central Asia is an unacceptable exaggeration. Nevertheless, many Western Christians are accepting these figures as truth.

2. A non-committal response from evangelicals. This refers to some of the more open-minded churches, usually led by younger pastors. These churches are usually urban churches or near universities. They are active in evangelistic work and have connections with overseas ministries.

These church leaders feel that at this time the Chinese churches do not have enough resources to send out missionaries. They also think that the Chinese church should focus on the unreached ar-

reas within China first. However, they are not opposed to cross-cultural missions but feel they should be well prepared before launching such work.

Some of these churches have already started specialized missionary training schools for cross-cultural workers. They have invited mission trainers to design their curriculum and internships. They are also promoting prayer support by sharing the BTJ vision among other churches and publishing books on missions. They have networked to support the sending of future missionaries and to set up “mid-way stations” in Central Asia to receive missionaries from China.

My view is that with good planning, the evangelical churches in China will be able to send many well-equipped missionaries in the future.

3. Opposition from conservative fundamentalists. By and large, most Chinese house churches are conservative fundamentals, accounting for as much as seventy to eighty percent of these churches. They were originally started by Western, conservative, fundamentalist missionaries and have grown tremendously under persecution. Their firm biblical stand attract-

With good planning, the evangelical churches in China will be able to send many well-equipped missionaries in the future.

ed many believers. Over the past twenty years, these churches have worked together and seen much success in evangelism and church planting.

Many of their leaders are opposed to the BTJ movement. The main reasons given are:

- They want to concentrate on missionary work within China first. They believe the church is not ready to take on overseas work.
- The movement has become a fundraising scheme for some people or exaggerates the ministry of house churches.
- Some over-zealous responses to BTJ result in high-profile publicity for the house church, endangering their ministry.
- The BTJ movement has no biblical basis.

Recently, some well-known leaders from these churches have united to op-

pose BTJ. They are particularly concerned about the lack of accountability of funds raised by the charismatics. However, some younger leaders from these churches feel that although individual actions by BTJ promoters are unacceptable, they and the BTJ vision are separate issues. Missions work should not be hindered by individual actions.

These fundamental house churches have much mission work going on in many areas: church planting in rural villages and cities, ministry on university campuses and work among minorities. In addition, these churches have organized many leadership training programs: for laymen, Christian workers, pastors and Sunday school teachers. As long as God continues to revive these churches, they will become China’s main mission sending force in the future.

My hope is that leaders will rise up in these churches to promote mission work systematically.

4. A cold response from the Three-Self churches. There is no enthusiastic response to BTJ among the 40,000 Three-Self or registered churches. They know very little about major mission activities

and do not want to participate in them. The former is because BTJ information is shared only among house churches in China but not publicly. The latter is due to the restrictions of the theological stand of the Three-Self and government policy.

Some younger pastors within the Three-Self church are interested in BTJ and have participated in secret. These younger Three-Self pastors are more open-minded and often engage in evangelistic work including pioneer church planting near their churches. In the last two to three years, they have organized leadership training programs and have sent short term workers to northwest China. They also have training programs for missionaries.

I hope these younger Three-Self pastors can participate in BTJ work more actively in the future.

Foreseeable (or Present)

Negative Attitudes and Motives

1. Emotionalism. The Chinese people are rich in emotions and very relational. The term "Jerusalem" draws a passionate response from Chinese believers. This is not bad in itself, but the resulting attitudes and actions are important. One should not be drawn to BTJ because of romanticism and mysticism.

2. Jumping on the bandwagon. Some may consider themselves BTJ participants just by taking a tourist visit or handing out tracks in Jerusalem. This is unfair to the workers who spend a lifetime serving in that foreign land.

3. Over-spiritualizing missionary service. There is a mistaken notion that participation in missions (short or long term) is a more spiritual calling than other callings. The Lord's Great Commission is for all believers to preach the gospel to the ends of the world.

4. The fast track approach. Do not fight to be the first one in the movement. A worker sent out without proper preparation will cause harm not only to himself; other colleagues will be needed to undo the damage.

5. Comity territorialism. Some people have no desire to partner with others to fulfill the Great Commission. They prefer to run their own show. Worse still, they will attack others or divide the mission field. They do not have the resources to complete the task but take over the field and do not allow others to participate.

6. Claiming another's credit. Some groups count ministries that belong to others as their own. Others exaggerate their results.

7. Fund raising. Some people are already using BTJ to raise money. This is a major concern of the Chinese house churches. There are persistent rumors that funds raised by some agencies have not been managed properly and have no public accountability. This has raised questions among many churches.

What Does the Future Hold?

There is already great confusion today even before the BTJ movement has been formally launched. I foresee the following possible responses from the Chinese church.

1. House churches in China will observe this movement carefully. Many major house church leaders are aware

of and observing carefully BTJ activities conducted overseas. The main questions being asked are who is promoting it and what has been done. The protocol of the house church is to respond only to people whom they respect. They will not trust just anyone. I believe that unless some respected leaders come forward to promote BTJ and demonstrate practical actions, there will not be significant or united activities for BTJ.

2. A generation of younger Chinese ministers will take up this mission. In a few years, the older generation of original BTJ workers will pass away. Will the next generation of Chinese pastors be prepared to receive the mission of BTJ or take the gospel from China to others? At this time, the house church does not yet have this ability. I hope that younger leaders will rise up to lead the ministry of missions. I have great hope in the younger generation which is rich in spiritual life. They will be raised up by God to promote cross-cultural mission work among the Chinese churches.

3. Overseas Chinese churches will continue to hold meetings and training sessions both large and small. Many people from both the evangelical and charismatic churches overseas have already focused their attention on this movement. BTJ conferences, both large and small, are being organized in various places. There are also seminaries and training schools being set up for BTJ, both to train and to send workers. We still need to see how these people will be sent out and their ministries in the field. I believe we will see Chinese workers in Central Asia very soon.

God willing, BTJ will be a major missions endeavor in the twenty-first century. I hope that church leaders worldwide, especially the churches in China and overseas Chinese churches, can analyze this movement carefully, find the right direction for BTJ and complete the Lord's Great Commission together.

Wen Mu, an overseas Chinese, is a seminary president involved in theological education in China and other countries. This article, originally written in Chinese, is an abridged translation by the editor. Taken from "May Your Kingdom Come," Great Commission Center, California, 2005. Used with permission. ■

Beyond Back to Jerusalem
Continued from page 3

A Way Forward

Given the controversy and image of the label "Back to Jerusalem Movement," perhaps it would be better to adapt a more descriptive label such as "China's Cross-Cultural Colleagues" (4C Movement) or "Mission from China Movement" (MFC Movement).

Finally, by conventional wisdom, China seems to be an unlikely candidate as a major player in missions. Yet, if history is any indication, the growth of the China church since 1949 is evidence of God's hand at work. Such growth was particularly spectacular when there was no outside (missionary) help, when there was significant persecution, when few signs of Christian activity could be detected and everyone thought the China church was dead. However, none of us is called to be in the driver's seat; that seat belongs to God. Rather, we are commanded to look at the fields and see the plentiful harvest (Matthew 9:37). Our most logical (easiest, perhaps) response may be to give money. Instead we are to pray and ask the Lord to send out workers. Let this be our first response.

Endnotes

1. In this article, the term "China church" will be used to denote the church in China, especially the house church. The term Chinese church would include both the church in China and in the overseas Chinese community.

2. On the one hand, the book that sparked the current BTJ debate has been labeled "a blockbuster that could affect world missions more than anything written since Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?*" On the other hand, the Heavenly Man, the chief promoter of BTJ in the West, has been labeled a "con man" by many house church leaders in China, a charge strongly denied by the BTJ supporters. See the www.BackToJerusalem.com and www.JesusReturn.net websites for differing views of BTJ.

3. Press Release by BJ Foundation UK, December, 2005 and estimates by Tony Lambert, OMF.

4. Press Release by BJ Foundation UK, December, 2005.

5. One Western source had sent over \$500,000 to various BTJ efforts by the middle of 2005.

6. Editor's note: A complete bibliography of the titles available in Chinese for the training of cross-cultural workers is available and can be obtained by emailing info@chsource.org.

Mr. Kam has extensive Chinese ministry experience and now works with multiethnic teams in China. ■



Tony Lambert

China Partner

Back to Jerusalem: A Moving History

The “Back to Jerusalem” movement can be traced back to a vision for evangelism which God gave to several different indigenous Chinese Christian mission movements in the 1940s. It has been claimed that this vision was also widely accepted among the earlier Jesus Family, a communal Christian movement started in Shandong province. However, I can find no evidence for this in the limited Chinese and English documentation of this fascinating group.

In 1949, soon after World War II, Phyllis Thompson, a China Inland Mission (CIM) worker stationed in Chongqing (Chungking) wrote:

The thing that has impressed me most has been the strange, unaccountable urge of a number of different Chinese groups of Christians to press forward in faith, taking the Gospel towards the west. I know of at least five different groups, quite unconnected with each other who have left their homes in east China and gone forth leaving practically everything behind them to the west. Some are in Sikang, some in Kansu, some right away in the great north-western province of Sinkiang or Chinese Turkestan. It seems like a movement of the Spirit which is irresistible. The striking thing is that they are disconnected, and in most cases seem to know nothing about each other. Yet all are convinced that the Lord is sending them to the western borders to preach the Gospel, and they

are going with a strong sense of urgency of the shortness of the time, and the imminence of the Lord’s return.

This is important evidence of the birth of this movement. It came at a time of social and political turmoil during the Japanese occupation of much of China. Spiritually, it seems to have galvanised Chinese evangelists with a strong desire

to emulate the pioneer work of the China Inland Mission among Muslims and minority peoples.

In 1941, the CIM started the new NorthWest Bible Institute in Fengxiang, Shaanxi province. Rev. James Hudson Taylor (grandson of the founder of the CIM) was the principal and Rev. Mark Ma, from Henan, became the vice-principal. Pastor Ma wrote:

On the evening of November 25, 1942 while in prayer the Lord said to me: The door to Sinkiang is already opened. Enter and preach the Gospel.” When this voice reached me I was trembling and fearful and most unwilling to obey, because I did not recall a single time in the past when I had prayed for Sinkiang; moreover it was a place to which I had no desire to go. Therefore I merely privately prayed about this matter not even telling my wife.

After exactly 5 months of prayer, on Easter morning 25 April 1943 when two fellow workers and I were praying together on the bank of the Wei River, I told them of my call to Sinkiang and one of the fellow workers said that 10 years before she had received a similar call. When I returned to the school I learnt that on that same Easter Sunday at the sunrise

“The thing that has impressed me most has been the strange, unaccountable urge of a number of different Chinese groups of Christians to press forward in faith, taking the Gospel towards the west.”

service 8 students had also been burdened for Sinkiang. It was with joy that I gathered them all together and we planned a regular prayer meeting. On the evening of May 4th there were 23 present, including members of the faculty and students. On May 11th we received the first offering amounting to \$50.

On the morning of May 23, as Ma fasted and prayed, he believed God spoke to him further.

I not only want you (the Chinese church) to assume responsibility for taking the Gospel to Sinkiang but I want you to bring to completion the commission to preach the Gospel to all the world. Since Pentecost the gospel has spread for the greater part in a westward direction: from Jerusalem to Antioch to all Europe; from Europe to America and then the East; from the Southeast of China to the Northwest; until today from Kansu on westward it can be said there is no firmly established church. You may go westward from

with a fervent expectation of Christ's return and the need to preach the gospel urgently to the unsaved. In the tradition of the CIM, it was strongly a "faith mission," birthed in fervent prayer and looking to God for every supply. Its constitution stated firmly: "We look to the Lord alone for all financial supplies." In this it seems to differ widely with some modern expressions of the BTJ movement which blatant appeal for funds at every possibility.

Another early pioneer was Simon Zhao. He was born in 1918 and attended the Dongguan American Presbyterian church in Shenyang. He joined a prayer group which met in the church tower. One snowy night, he brought a large map with him and alone in the vast silence laid it down and prayed. He was drawn to Xinjiang with its strange Uygur place names. The more he prayed the

After his release, he came across other believers in the Kashgar area in 1988, and in 1995 he travelled to Henan where he shared his vision of "Back to Jerusalem" with some rural house church leaders. He died peacefully in Henan on December 3, 2001, but his vision has since spread to many Christians across China, mainly in rural house church circles but even to some Three-Self pastors and Bible colleges.

In Xinjiang itself, the wife of one of the other early pioneers, Mecca Zhao, still maintains a quiet witness on the outskirts of Kashgar. In human terms, they have seen few if any converts among the Muslims. Strong pressure from the local Islamic community, and also from the communist authorities who forbid Christian outreach by the numerous Han Christian community to their Uygur neighbors, means that so far only a few individual Uygurs have been saved. Some Han evangelists have moved to Xinjiang but have found learning the language and adapting to the local culture daunting. Irresponsible claims overseas of 100,000 Chinese evangelists poised to take the Islamic world by storm have tarnished the original vision. However, there is plenty of evidence that there are many Chinese Christians praying fervently to become seriously involved in cross-cultural mission—first within China's borders where some have already taken the gospel to Xijiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia—and then further afield. Perhaps a few hundred are already in some kind of preparatory training.

Those I have met in China who are most serious about mission, adamantly reject the naive triumphalism that has gained adverse publicity overseas and drawn the attention of both the Chinese government and certain Muslim governments. They eschew publicity, and in striking contrast to publicists overseas, insist that God will provide the necessary funding from Chinese Christians within China. I believe they are the authentic successors to the original pioneers, and their quiet work will bear ultimate spiritual fruit.

Tony Lambert is the director for research, Chinese ministries, for OMF International and the author of *China's Christian Millions*, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* and the recently published *Pray for China! A 30 Day Prayer Guide*. ■

"You may go westward from Kansu preaching the Gospel all the way back to Jerusalem, causing the light of the gospel to complete the circle around this dark world."

Kansu preaching the Gospel all the way back to Jerusalem, causing the light of the gospel to complete the circle around this dark world. I want to manifest my power through those who of themselves have no power. I have kept for the Chinese church a portion of inheritance, otherwise when I return will you not be too poor?

The same evening I reported the above revelation to our prayer group. The name *Pien Chuan Fu yin Tuan* was accepted by the whole group.

It is interesting to note that the Chinese name means simply "The Preach Everywhere Gospel Band." It was the CIM missionaries who dubbed the movement "Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band." Pastor Ma, at the same meeting, said he believed God was calling them not only to the outlying provinces of China but beyond to seven nations—Tibet, Afghanistan, Iran, Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Palestine.

The vision was thus quite specific and centered on reaching the Muslims and the Jews—no mention of Buddhists or Hindus. Its ethos was strongly premillennial

more Xinjiang imprinted itself on his mind. Later he married, and he and his wife both went to study at Taidong Seminary in Nanjing. There he met two women who also had a call to go to Xinjiang. In 1949, all headed to the northwest, reaching Hami where they joined members of the North West Evangelization band who had arrived there a year or two earlier. Eager to plant the gospel on virgin soil, he headed to Khotan (Hetian), a remote oasis in the far south of Xinjiang, in the winter of 1949. However, they were forced to move west to Kashgar where the band had set up a preaching station. They arrived to a chaotic situation and were soon arrested. Simon was placed in prison as were other members of the Band from Hami and Kashgar. From 1954 until 1981 he toiled in terrible conditions in a labor camp, miraculously surviving one instance of brutality when he was stripped and forced to stand for hours in the freezing cold. Some of the other early pioneers to Xinjiang died as martyrs in captivity.

Resource Corner

OMF China Resource Packet

As God pursues China's people, he is pursuing faithful men and women who will give themselves to serve among the Chinese. This packet is a resource for individuals, churches, small groups, Sunday school classes and mobilizers with an interest in China. Its purpose is to stimulate personal involvement in God's work in China through prayer, supporting, going, mobilizing and other avenues.

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Intercessory Notes

Please pray...

1. For cooperation among the China church, the overseas Chinese church and the Western church in taking the gospel message back to Jerusalem.
2. That God will call out leaders who will develop both programs and materials for cross-cultural ministry training.
3. That God will provide experienced cross-cultural trainers and teachers who will be able to prepare trainees to serve across cultures.
4. For the Chinese men and women God has called to serve him cross-culturally, both those preparing to serve and those currently serving.
5. For God's blessing upon the Christian Wenzhou merchants who develop business ventures in many countries and take the gospel with them.
6. That mission leaders around the world will be able to think intentionally and creatively in order to form partnerships.



China Perspective

Back to Jerusalem: A Difficult Subject

Guest editorial by Wu Xi

Brent Fullton, Editor

Back to Jerusalem is not an easy subject to tackle. Some of us have declared our position openly and explicitly for total unqualified support, accepting the visionary figure of 100,000 missionaries as reality. It is difficult to back down and admit that we may not have gotten all of our facts correct. Others have been silent and cautious on the subject refusing to endorse the visionary figure. The larger community of Christians serving in China has interpreted this silence as unsupportive or even anti-BTJ. Many have felt they were misunderstood. It will take a very generous dose of humility and grace from the Spirit to swallow our pride and accept our very limited understanding.

What is most important in BTJ? Theoretically and theologically, all of us will agree that the focal point should be God's desire for, and prompting of, the church in China to become involved in

cross-cultural missions. In order to make that happen, partnership between the church in China and the worldwide body of Christ is of primary importance.

There is no biblical basis for the church in China to "take up the last baton" of the Great Commission. There is no support for the church in China to "finish the Great Commission" by itself. There is no historical evidence that the gospel traveled only in a westward direction (from Jerusalem to Europe, to North America, then to China), and that by taking the gospel from China to Jerusalem, the Great Commission will be completed.

So, in practice, what is most important about BTJ for you (and your agency or your church)? It is very significant for you to look at the future and to what you and your agency can do. That will be far more constructive than adding fuel to the debate about who says what and when. All of us have made mistakes

in our service to God—be they large or small. None of us is perfect in maturity this side of glory—as the bumper sticker says "Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet."

In the final analysis, as many seasoned leaders in China service have pointed out, the most important role outsiders can take for China is to pray.

This current issue of *ChinaSource* is special in that for the first time, a majority of the writers are Asian. Could this be the beginning of a new era of cooperation between Asians and Westerners? Can Asians play the critical role of linking the church in China with the worldwide body of Christ? I hope that in the not too distant future there can be another issue of this journal devoted to reports of different BTJ related efforts illustrated by effective fruits and synergistic partnerships.

Wu Xi began serving China during the mid-70s, just before China's Open Door policy was implemented. He served in many different capacities including working with Chinese scholars studying in the West, frontline evangelistic work and church mobilization for China. Wu now lives in Asia. ■

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