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THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RISING

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William Miller (1782-1849), founder of the Millerite movement, which was the forerunner of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) movement, believed in the popular concept of his time, the concept of the “Gospel Sun”—the gospel being preached first in Asia, then in Africa and Europe, and finally in America, the last quarter of the globe. “The gospel, like the sun, rises in the east, and will set in the west.”¹ He used this analogy to explain the fulfillment of “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world” (Matt 24:14).² In 1842 Miller also elaborated on the term “witness.” He remarked that the text does not tell us that the gospel shall be preached in all the world at one time, or that all men would believe it, but that it would function as a witness among all nations. In his view, the text might mean that the present truth would be given to different racial and national groups who had come to America, or the gospel would be reaching many different countries by various publications. Therefore, the Millerites did not think it necessary that this gospel message be given to every individual. We can now see that this popular concept was wrong.

The Bible says, “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world” (John 1:9). For centuries, the gospel sun did not seem to appear on the horizon of old China. As the prophet Habakkuk prayed, “LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab 3:1). God answered

¹William Miller, “A Lecture on the Signs of the Present Times,” *Signs of the Times* (Millerite), 20 March 1840, 4.

²All Scripture quotations in this paper are from the NIV.

immediately. "His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden" (vv. 3-4).

China is the world's largest country in terms of population, with almost 1.3 billion people (1.259 billion as of February, 2000, by official census, which is about 22 percent of the world's population) composed of eleven major ethnic groups. It has an area of 3,719,751 square miles (9,596, 960 sq. km.), next in size only to the former Soviet Union and Canada. During the past millennia China has not had much of a Christian background, but was strongly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Since 1949, atheism and evolutionism have been dominant forces under the present political regime. But this is not the whole story.

By God's grace and power, and through the work and witness of His faithful children, the Chinese Christian Church (including the SDA church) in the past fifty years has not only survived but thrived in the midst of adversities and in the face of severe trials and persecutions. Church membership has increased dramatically as God's work is spreading by leaps and bounds in modern China. The Sun of righteousness indeed is rising and shining upon the hearts of many truth seekers.

The following report is confined to mainland China, with focus on the mission work in the past, the present situation, and what can be expected in the future.

Historical Background

According to legend, when the apostle Thomas went to India as an evangelist, he also worked in China. If this were true, it would mean that from the very beginning of Christianity, China already was given the gospel light. This, however, cannot be verified. What can be known is that the Nestorian Tablet, unearthed in A.D. 1625, now on exhibit in Beiling, Xian, China, is authentic, and the inscription on the Tablet describes Nestorian Christians from Persia arriving in China in the seventh century. Emperor Tai Zhong of the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) sent his officials in 635 to welcome those foreign missionaries. The first group of Christians was permitted to build temples (churches) in many places and to print Scripture and religious literature. Unfortunately, the Christian influence did not last long or leave any deep impression among the common people, as Buddhism and Taoism became popular with the succeeding emperors.

However, a remnant of the Nestorians did survive and surfaced in the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) with another name and form. The Catholic Church continued to send missionaries into China during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties. In fact, several missionaries were appointed as high officers and their work was much appreciated by the monarchs. Emperor Kang Xi of the Qing Dynasty almost became a Christian, and he was credited as the author of many religious poems.

The Tai Ping Heavenly Kingdom (1850-63), a patriotic group who unsuccessfully rebelled against the Manchu Qing Dynasty once claimed to have control of two-thirds of the territory of the Qing administration. Interestingly, not only did the leaders of the Tai Ping movement claim to be Christians, but it is said that they also kept the seventh-day Sabbath. But again, their influence faded like fireworks in the night.

In 1911 the Qing dynasty, the last vestige of the long-running Chinese monarchy, was overthrown and replaced by the Republic of China with its founder, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1867-1925). Dr. Sun was baptized by Dr. Hagar in Hong Kong at age 18. His later successor, Chiang Kai-shek, who was the President of China until 1949, claimed to be a Methodist Christian.

Many of the Chinese emperors, kings, and presidents have shown interest in Christianity and a few of them have even accepted it. Others have appreciated the work and contributions by the missionaries and have supported the Christian Church directly or indirectly. Catholic Father Ricci arrived at Guangdong in 1583. The first modern missionary of the Protestant church, Robert Morrison, arrived in China in 1807, and Timothy Richard, an English Baptist, entered China in 1870. The first Adventist lay worker, the elderly Abram La Rue, started his work first in Hong Kong in 1888, and later also on mainland China. The first official SDA missionary, J. N. Anderson, was sent from the United States to China in 1902.

After a century of Christian mission work in China, with all the hardships and trials endured by many faithful and self-sacrificing missionaries and indigenous Christians, the total membership of all the Protestant churches in 1949, right before the Communist Party takeover of China, was estimated to be 700,000 out of the 500 million Chinese people at that time. And some fifty years of Adventist mission resulted in about 21,000 members (registered on the books). Against such immense spiritual darkness that covered the vast land of China up to 1949, the gospel light indeed was all too inconspicuous.

Then God did a new and strange thing in China. Thanks to our merciful God who takes all the Chinese people to His heart, what could not be done under the blessing and protection of the earthly power was miraculously accomplished during the atheistic administration in China. In the face of sufferings and trials, God has promised that for all who revere His name, the Sun of righteousness will rise with healing in His wings (Mal 4:2). The Holy Spirit has hovered over China. What has God wrought!

Present Situation

The Brighter Aspect

While the Chinese population by the year 2000 has doubled that of half a century ago, the Christian church membership has multiplied at least twenty times during the same period. For this we rejoice and praise God. Religious freedom is legally protected in China under Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution, which stipulates:

Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. . . . No State organ, public organization or individual may compel a citizen to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, in any religion. . . . The State protects normal religious activities. . . . No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State. . . . Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination. The legitimate property of religious bodies is subject to legal protection. . . . All citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs, enjoy equal educational opportunities in accordance with the law. . . . Citizens shall not be discriminated against in terms of employment. . . . Lawful rights and interests and normal religious activities at the sites shall be protected by law. No organization or individual may violate or interfere with such rights, interests or activities.³

According to United Nations documents and conventions on human rights, there are provisions governing the expression of one's religion:

Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are proscribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals of the fundamental rights and freedom of others.⁴

Accordingly, China maintains that

the punishment of criminals by China's judicial organs in accordance with the law has nothing to do with religious belief. No one in China is punished because of his or her religious belief. But no country that practices the rule of law in the world today would tolerate illegal and criminal activities being carried out under the banner of religion.⁵

³"Freedom of Religious Belief in China," official document, Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, October 1997, 4-5.

⁴Ibid., 7.

⁵Ibid., 8.

In the same document just quoted from, some incomplete statistical figures include over 100 million followers of various religious faiths, including 4 million Catholics and 10 million Protestants, with 12,000 Protestant churches and more than 25,000 other meeting places throughout China.⁶ Unofficial figures put the estimate two or three times above the official tally, yielding a total of 20 to 30 million Protestants, mostly evangelical Christians.

Although the SDA Church has no formal structure in mainland post-denominational China, where all denominational boundaries and distinctives are de-emphasized, the government does recognize those churches that register themselves as SDA Christian churches.

Our own SDA membership has topped 280,000. In 1999 alone, more than 17,000 people were baptized into the Adventist church. Today, there is a total of some 700 formally recognized Adventist churches in addition to more than 2,000 informal churches. Hundreds of new church buildings have been erected in cities, towns, villages, and mountainous areas. The total number of books and pieces of religious literature published since 1980 has already surpassed the accumulated number of volumes from our own Chinese publishing houses in all previous years combined up until 1949.⁷ During the so-called Great Cultural Revolution (1966-76), not only were churches closed down, but many preachers were either jailed or sent to the factory or farm for reeducation. All the Bibles, hymn books, and religious literature found were confiscated or burned. But thanks be God, since 1980, 22 million Bibles have been printed inside China, and still the supply cannot keep up with the demand. The gospel light is beginning to shine once again, ever more brightly, in China.

The Area of Tension

The modern missionary movement in China came largely from America and Europe. The Chinese in general have always had a fondness for America. For many decades, the people of China and the people of America have had a history of friendship and mutual respect. Unfortunately, the Korean War for a while pitted the US against China like adversaries. Thus, it was not hard to understand why the Chinese church was drawn into the political storm and asked to wage the accusation campaign—accusing the foreign missionaries and their mother churches. That was also the beginning of the Church Three-Self Movement—self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting. In 1950-51 these two events changed

⁶Ibid., 1-2.

⁷Recent publications include Ellen White books such as *Steps to Christ*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*; various pamphlets on repentance, grace, law, Christian life, family, education, and morality; commentaries on different books of the Bible; and a lay training instruction series.

the perception of the Chinese Church by the ordinary people both inside and outside of the church.

Regarding the success and directions of the Three-Self Reform or Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), there has been an up-and-down trend during the past four decades. People who are for the Three-Self Principle justify their position by saying that this only represents the political views of the Chinese clergy and the believers in general. Those who are opposed to the Three-Self Principle complain that this is where the fault of TSPM is—always putting as its top priority the fulfilling of its political mandate. Let us briefly review the history.

During 1951-58, after cutting off its relationship with the Western churches, the Chinese Church set up and consolidated the TSPM to win over or suppress the anti-Three-Self non-conformists. In 1957, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association was formed. Between 1959 and 1965, in an effort to coordinate the government's Great Leap Forward Movement in the cities and its People Commune in the rural areas, the Three-Self organization at all levels led or forced the churches into unification in order to save manpower, space, and time for Socialist construction. As a result, only one tenth of churches and workers were left to maintain the religious enterprise. It has been said that since that time the Chinese Church has entered the Post-Denominational period.

From 1966 to 1976, during the chaotic Cultural Revolution, all religious activities were banned, churches were closed, Bibles were burned, and seminaries were shut down. It was like a nightmare for the ordinary citizens as well as for the faithful believers and preachers. Even the Three-Self Christians, many of them sincere followers of Christ, waited for the light at the end of the tunnel.

Beginning in 1978, with the government's more open policy, the whole Chinese society and the Chinese Church entered a new phase. Both the official and the unofficial (home and underground) churches flourished. Christian religious assemblies sprang up like bamboo shoots after a seasonal rain.

In October of 1980 the Chinese Christian Council (CCC) was organized in Nanjing, in order to handle the affairs of the local churches. The Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference was also established in the same year. The Three-Self Committee became the liaison between the government (Bureau of Religious Affairs under the State Council of the Chinese government) and the CCC. Many members of TSPM were also members of CCC. Bishop K. H. Ting has pleaded for love and tolerance between the Three-Self churches and the house churches.

Since 1990 the government's open policy has continued, and the emphasis is for more and more contacts with the outside world, particularly the Western world. The Amity Foundation, affiliated with TSPM, has printed millions of Bibles for distribution. Today, anybody can walk into a church and purchase a good quality Bible or Bibles inexpensively. Two large churches, each seating two thousand, are being built in Beijing with funding of RMB 30 million, or about USD 3.63 million. There is a message from the authorities from the top down that organizations which want to strengthen their work should recruit more support, money, and

personnel to help the community. The sources of support are left to the discretion of the growing organizations. The Chinese Church was asked, on the one hand, to adhere to the Three-Self Principle, but also was encouraged to run the church well in preaching, finance, and management and to be resourceful in its development goals. At the same time, along with enhancing exchange programs and cooperative activities with the outside world, regulations have been issued to require house churches to register as legal entities. The rationale behind this regulation is for monitoring cults, other illegal religious groups, and swindlers which deceive innocent people. Admittedly, there is fear on the part of some house churches who consider such registration as the first step toward rigid control of their activities. Conflicts have risen and tensions remain. The gray line between legal and illegal, between licensed church and home church, is still a problem that has no immediate solution. The truth is that there are God's faithful people inside the Three-Self churches as well as within the unregistered home-church groups. Varying from area to area, there are different degrees of cooperation and mutual dependency between the official and unofficial churches. More tolerance, understanding, and cooperation in the Spirit of Christ are urgently needed.

In theology, there is also an area of tension. Debates have surrounded the publication of Bishop Ting's *Collected Works*, which are intended to promote Chinese theology and Christian ethics in conformance with the Spiritual Construction Campaign among the common people in the face of growing moral decay in society. The social-gospel camp and the evangelicals confront each other on the real purpose of the Christian Church. Some people ask whether the church and theology should always be subordinated to the demands of society and government. The other camp argues that Christians need to adjust their understanding and knowledge of God and the Bible in order to help explain their faith more accurately and relevantly to modern society. Some have gone so far as to depreciate the value of evangelism for fear of being misunderstood or being accused of promoting a particular brand of theology.

Following the recent crackdown on Falun Gong (a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, traditional Chinese exercises, and meditation) by the government as superstitious, cultic, heretical, illegal, and an evil organization bent on destroying social stability, certain Christians have been mistakenly targeted as objects of political repression by some uninformed local cadres. On the other hand, some CCC church officials and congregations consider the suppression of Falun Gong as a blessing in disguise for the Christian churches because what they themselves could not do in preventing members from being lured away by such non-Christian religions, the government is doing for them.

The Serious Aspects

Our Adventist churches in general are no less confronted with problems similar to those discussed above. Cults, heretical teachings, and perverted religious imposters, whether home-grown or imported, are rampant in China today. Without trained and dedicated pastors as leaders, the churches face enemies from without as well as low spiritual morale from within.

Like other churches throughout history, internal strife among different factions within our own church has hurt the progress of church development and weakened our effective witnessing before the public. Truly there is a spiritual war that is being waged among the rank and file. Often the finger points to egotism and pride.

Another urgent matter is how to nurture thousands of new church members and to train hundreds of local preachers and equip them with administrative skills, financial expertise, and above all, emotional and spiritual strength to do God's work under great pressure and often incredible hardship, so that the work of God can move forward. The age-old problem of lack of effective leadership, disharmony between young and old workers, absence of collective leadership or democratic centralism, improper appropriation of churches as private property, and isolation from the masses are only a few of the serious problems Adventist churches have to contend with.

Future Outlook

The Challenge

In the face of materialism, individualism, money worship, growing disparity between the rich and poor, rapid economic growth and modernization, widespread superstitions and cults, and the impact of some decadent aspects of Western culture, in addition to all the problems discussed above, some pessimists argue that the golden age of evangelizing China has passed. But is this an accurate assessment?

The renowned British historian Arnold Toynbee said that the twenty-first century would be the Chinese century.⁸ Based on the growth statistics of 7 percent annual church growth, it is projected that China will have over 300 million

⁸Arnold Toynbee, quoted in John Chang, "Striving toward the Chinese Century," *China Source* 1, no. 1 (1999): 3. Toynbee was, of course, thinking in terms of geopolitics, economics, and military might, in addition to the cultural and religious aspects of the nation. Dr. Lawrence H. Summers, Professor of Economics at Harvard University, former chief economist of the World Bank, and Secretary of the Treasury under the Clinton administration, stated, "For more than a century, the U.S. has been the world's largest economy. The only nation with a chance of surpassing it in the next generation in absolute scale is China." Lawrence H. Summers, quoted in Gao Wangzi, "Christianity and China's Modernization," *China Horizon*, January-March 1997, 13.

Christians by 2025, comprising the largest Christian community of any ethnic group or nation.⁹

We must think through these developments realistically and confidently in the context of God's promises.

Pat Gustin, director of the Seventh-day Adventist Institute of World Mission, points out in her recent article, "The 10/40 Window: New Mission Opportunities," that China is listed at the top of the list of all countries with the largest non-Christian populations. Also, the main ethnic group in China, the Han race, is the second largest people group least evangelized.¹⁰ We praise the Lord for the 280,000 Adventists and about 30 million Christians in China, but we must realize that this represents only a small fragment of the whole population of China. When we realize that there is only one Adventist in 4,490 Chinese, we clearly feel a heavy responsibility on our shoulder. Besides the Han, there are 55 major and minor ethnic groups that are also waiting for the gospel light.

The Global Mission Department of the Chinese Union Mission reports that there are close to 1,000 cities in China with a quarter of a million people each. There are over 400 medium-size cities with a half million people, and sixty-one large cities of over one million population without the presence of a single Adventist church. Confronted with such statistics, we cannot be unrealistically optimistic nor resting on our laurels.

History and experience tell us that the Chinese, in general, are not a people who diligently seek after religion or look for abstract truth and things in the future. They tend to emphasize reality and concrete things in this world. Hardened by subtle influences from ancient philosophies, conventional religions, ancestor and money worship, official atheism, evolutionism, materialism, and individualism, the Chinese mind is soil in which the gospel seeds take root with difficulty, from a human point of view. But is there anything too hard for the Lord? (Gen 18:14).

A View by Faith

Doubtless the 10/40 Window is a window of reality. It is also a window of urgency, a window of opportunity, a window of recovery from our lukewarm attitude toward the church and evangelization. If we would only follow God's Spirit, who can soften our heart, enlighten our mind, and renew our strength, He will empower us to do His work and He will bless our effort.

China is the greatest mission field in this century. Whether the Apostle Thomas was in China or not, we are not sure. But the Nestorian Tablet which documents the visitation of the gospel light in China some 1,350 years ago is a matter of fact. Likewise, whether Sinim in Isa 49:12 denotes China or not (Bible

⁹Chang, 4.

¹⁰Pat Gustin, "The 10/40 Window: New Mission Opportunities," *DIALOGUE* 12, no. 2 (2000): 15.

scholars are still in debate), what Jesus Himself says in Luke 13:29 is absolutely certain: "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God." Is China the largest country in the eastern part of the world? Assuredly yes! As the gospel and present truth for the last generation must be preached to every language, tongue, and nation before the end comes, the masses in China must have a chance to listen to God's message before it is too late. There will be many redeemed in the kingdom of God who will have come from China because, "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess 5:24).

The postmodern generation is here. Distrusting faith, reason, or even feeling, subscribing to relativism in beliefs and ethics and to indeterminacy in truth and ultimate answers, people today do emphasize belonging and experience. They are longing for love and justice, which is the essence of the biblical message. The incarnated Jesus, the ever-present Friend, the wonderful Counselor, is the One who can meet people's needs for belonging, for relationship. This is especially true for the Chinese, since all human political systems and ideologies, empty philosophies, man-made religions, and materialism have failed to satisfy them. Everywhere, old and young people are searching for the meaning of life, the hope for the future, and eternal truth. The 18 October 1999 issue of *TIME* says,

Everywhere in China you hear talk of a spiritual vacuum. . . . On Oct., [sic] 1, as China celebrated the 50th anniversary of Mao's revolution, high-tech military jets screamed over Beijing, foreigners arrived in search of new investment opportunities, and the government celebrated a nation transformed. But what was missing is faith.¹¹

For such a vacuum, God has already prepared the soil, seeds, sunshine, and rain. He calls for our cooperation in winning souls, in going out to reach the lost and wandering, in teaching the teachable, and in having faith that God will provide faithful workers for the tasks ahead of us. Following are a few illustrations of the way in which God is working in China today.

There are two large churches, one in the north and another in the south part of China, which are located in a poor, mountainous area. Less than ten years ago, only a handful (actually only seven church members) were there. Today, not only does a sizable church building stand there as a witness to God's glory, but more importantly, two thousand believers have joined the SDA Church. In some of the largest cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing, several hundred people are baptized every year. In Xian and Shenyang, more than three thousand people regularly worship on Sabbath. Such attendance was never heard of before 1949, or even 1979. Those who once were confined to the winter of unbelief and hopelessness

¹¹Mia Tumer and Edward Barnes, "Inside China's Search for Its Soul," *TIME* (Asian ed.), 18 October 1999, 24; cf. *ibid.* (US ed.), 4 October 1999, 70.

are today yearning for the springtime of faith and hope, truth and joy. Their thirst can only be quenched by the Living Water, Jesus; their stumbling in the dark can only be illumined by Christ, the glorious light that lights every human.

As we think of evangelizing China, we must do so seriously, for the time is short and the tasks monumental. We ought to always pray fervently, plan carefully, learn to adapt and innovate, act lovingly, serve creatively, and organize the ministry integrally.

What We Are Doing and What Is Being Evaluated

Gospel Radio/Video Ministry

The apostle John says in Rev 14:6, "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people." Can this be a symbol of modern audio and video tools? The psalmist says regarding the heavens, "Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. . . . Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Ps 19:1-4) This is a beautiful description. One of the SDA radio ministry pioneers, J. O. Iverson, says,

For centuries, transportation and communication made but little headway. . . . God designed that in this explosion of communication knowledge His objectives might be achieved. . . . God has placed the tools of radio and television within the grasp of His church to communicate His last warning message of hope and help to a faltering world.¹²

In his article "The Future of China: Communism or Christianity?" David Aikman writes, "One of the greatest messages of the gospel to China is the message of hope. Hope can change a nation."¹³ Meaningfully, our shortwave Mandarin gospel radio program is using "Voice of Hope" as the call sign. Ruth Graham, wife of Dr. Billy Graham, and their translator, Dr. Phillip Deng (a theologian who was the dean of the China Theological Graduate School), in their China trip of 1989, both are reported to have identified the broadcast ministry as the best way for outsiders to preach the gospel in mainland China.¹⁴ Even Ellen G. White noted the importance of mass communication like radio: "God directed in the invention of rapid travel, as well as rapid communication, that His work might

¹²J. Orville Iverson, *So You're Going on the Air* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1969), 17.

¹³David Aikman, "The Future of China: Communism or Christianity?" *Religious Broadcasting*, February 1992, 46.

¹⁴*Far East Broadcasting Association Newsletter*, June 1989.

be done in this generation.”¹⁵ “Means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the past.”¹⁶

Since 1987, our Adventist World Radio/Asia station in Guam has been set up, and through this fast, safe, economic way, we have been able to broadly spread the Good News to a huge population in China, where there is limited religious freedom. This God-given tool has contributed a great deal to winning souls for Christ. As a result of its survey in China, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has twice reported the fact that our program attracted the largest audience in the same categories among other religious stations, estimating of 1,130,000 listeners to the Mandarin “Voice of Hope” program. As a result of a video ministry and through an Internet service which we have made available to the listeners, every month hundreds of letters and E-mail responses rush into our office every month. However much we have attempted to provide in services, demand still outpaces supply. There is, in my opinion, no better substitute for this audio and video gospel ministry in the current situation in China.

Literature Ministry

The literature ministry is another member of the evangelism trinity. God said to the prophet Habakkuk, “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that whoever reads it may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false” (Hab 2:2-3). This is wonderful instruction. “Like the leaves of autumn” is how Ellen G. White described the way our publications should be distributed.¹⁷ She even said, “I must see the publishing work prosper. It is interwoven with my very existence. If I forget the interests of this work, let my right hand forget her cunning.”¹⁸

This publishing ministry is in more demand in China as God opens the way, so that our brethren inside and outside of mainland China can cooperate with one another in collecting resources—material, money, manuscripts, and so forth. Praise the Lord! Amidst hardship and sometimes dangers, millions of books, training series, and pamphlets have been distributed as the living bread to feed the

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education: Instruction for the Home, the School, and the Church* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1932), 409.

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *Evangelism as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1946), 105.

¹⁷Ellen G. White, “A Remarkable Dream,” *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, 4 November 1875, 1.

¹⁸Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 As Written by Herself; with a Sketch of Her Subsequent Labors and Her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915, 1943), 248-49.

spiritually hungry people in China. Our brethren consider such literature as the best gifts. If we say the radio ministry is broad in scope, we must say the fruit of this publishing work is long-lasting and its spiritual content leaves a deep impression on human minds and lives. In view of his work experience in the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, Mark Finley says, "What should we expect next? I am not a prophet, but I read prophecy. We should expect China to open in the very near future. If we are wise, we should prepare literature right now for China, and prepare people who understand the language to be able to move quickly."¹⁹ He said this eight years ago! What have we done since then?

Cassette/Disk Ministry

The cassette and disk ministry is another member of the evangelism trinity. It is a supplement to the radio and publishing work. Even the illiterate, or the housewives busy with household chores, can enjoy the tapes. Nowadays the computer discs also appeal to the intellectual class, in particular the young students. We have started something, but there is room for improvement.

Church Building

We, as outsiders, can contribute to the construction projects to help our brethren in economically disadvantaged circumstances. The buildings will not only house our church members, but also serve to enhance our church recognition in the community. Thank God, in the past few years, through our Chinese brethren's willing sacrifice, in addition to the help from the East Asia Committee and the newly organized Chinese Union Mission, scores of new church buildings have been erected in many Chinese provinces. Some larger churches can hold two thousand members, while others, only a few hundred or even less.

All the ministry and services described above cannot replace personal contacts—counsel, admonishment, comfort, and prayers face to face. Along with the open policy endorsed by the current Chinese government and rights guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution, people do have some degree of religious freedom in China. Personal ministry is feasible when done tactfully and discreetly. How excited we are when we can hold the hands of a long-separated or forgotten friend or can greet a stranger, the least of God's children, in the name of Christ, with grace and love and a prayer in our heart.

¹⁹Mark Finley, "How Near Is Near?" *Adventists Affirm* 6, no. 1 (1992): 22.

The Global Pioneers Project

Pairs of believers go into the unreached areas to start new work by witnessing among their own people. With motives to love and serve, the potential for success only God can measure.

Tentmaker Ministries

Through teaching, healing, serving, and friendship by lay volunteer groups, a formless church is established in many peoples' hearts, preparing them to receive the light from Heaven. Coordination with these groups should be both a learning opportunity as well as a demonstration of Christian courtesy and openness.

Campus Ministry

There has been a lack of a coordinated program of campus ministry for reaching students with the gospel. We should pay more attention and exert more effort in this direction for Chinese students both inside and outside of China.

Training

The last, but not the least, form of ministry is the most urgent and important: training preachers, elders, leaders, lay workers, and church administrators, and as many as possible, by whatever means available. We also need to ordain more and more qualified pastors and elders to take up the heavy load of church functions necessitated by the phenomenal growth of the church. As the Bible says,

How, then, can they call on the one whom they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without some preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? (Rom 10:14-15)

Of course, they need to be equipped before they are sent. To improve the quality and the quantity of our full-time and part-time gospel workers, we need the best of teachers who have sat at the feet of the Great Teacher. This is a recurring demand and an urgent issue! Our church's future in China depends on it.

So far, we have not done much to address this issue. We should have a strategic plan; we need to pray, ponder, plan, practice, and promote more and more. The Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White emphasize this a great deal. "The things you have heard me say . . . entrust to reliable men [and women] who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim 2:2). "How can we find language to express our deep interest, to describe our desire that every soul should awake and

go to work in the Master's vineyard? Christ says, 'Occupy till I come.'²⁰ The highest official leader of the Chinese church, Bishop Ting reportedly has admitted that, because of the aging leadership of the Chinese church, the need for trained younger workers is desperate.²¹ Our veteran, Elder David Lin, once was asked: "What is your greatest concern for your church?" He simply answered, "The problem of training successors for the cause of God."²²

Conclusion

If we review the history of the church in China and pay attention to our current situation, we may consider all the different kinds of ministry described above as a shaft of light. By God's grace working with our prudent efforts we may combine and amplify these into a powerful laser beam focusing on evangelizing China. Thus God's name will be glorified. Slowly and surely, His church will be fortified, His people blessed, and His kingdom in China will be expanded! The Sun of righteousness will shine forth brighter and brighter upon our suffering Chinese people. The last-day mission is a glorious part of the Great Commission, and the China mission must be an important component of that mission. The future success of evangelism in China is ultimately in God's hands. In humility and thankfulness, we consider the privilege of being called to be coworkers in His cause. We need to keep our minds open to opportunities yet unseen in these fast-moving scenes of the last days. At times we need to link hands with all God's sincere followers, wherever and whoever they may be, in our pilgrimage toward the heavenly land. Dr. John Wong, a surgeon-theologian, states, "God's design for the Chinese church may well be vastly different from the American or European models, and we should not expect societal or church progress in China to be always consistent, uniform, linear, and favorable to us."²³ Let us dedicate ourselves anew to this great task of helping finish God's work on earth by bringing multitudes of God's people to the glorious hope of eternal life. We want to hasten Christ's second coming and bring more Chinese people face to face with the Sun of righteousness in all His fullness of love and grace.

²⁰Ellen G. White, "Redeem the Time, because the Days Are Evil," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 21 April 1896, 241.

²¹K. H. Ting, press conference in New York, 19 May 1991.

²²"Interview with David Lin," *Tian Feng* 3 (1992): 43.

²³John Wong, in a speech delivered at the Los Angeles Chinese Church, Los Angeles, California, 10 July 1999. Dr. Wong is president of the US-China Christian Institute.

Supplement

Taiwan, with her 22 million people, and Hong Kong and Macao, with their 7 million more Chinese people, are surely great mission fields too. God's work in both the Taiwan Mission and Hong Kong-Macao Conference has a fifty-year-long history. Not only do we have churches, we also have hospitals and different levels of schools. Due to secularism, materialism and individualism, church growth is slow, sometimes set back. According to a report in 1999²⁴ on name lists there are about four thousand and seven thousand members, respectively, in these two regional units. (Unfortunately, the Sabbath church service attendants are less than 50 percent of the membership.) Every year there are only a little over three hundred people being baptized into our church in these areas. Have mercy upon us, Lord! We have seen that thick darkness is over Your people. May the following prophecy be fulfilled before our eyes: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you" (Isa 60:1).

²⁴James Wu, secretary of the South China Island Union Mission, reported during the Inaugural Session of the Chinese Union Mission, 13-15 June 1999.