
Eyewitness in Beijing: The Re-Emergence of Adventism

by Ed Christian

One of the fascinating things about China is that despite its long conservative tradition, it is changing quickly.

There have been frequent and catastrophic swings of policy in the past decades, but the Chinese people have survived. Millions are now rapidly improving their lot, thanks to the new "responsibility system," for where Marx said "to each according to his need," the official Chinese policy is now "to each according to his work."¹ China remains a socialist country, but a crack has appeared in the "iron rice bowl," as the Chinese call the state policy which guarantees workers their jobs, no matter how little they do. Support for the new system is not unanimous, as many prefer equal wages for unequal work, but the majority seem to welcome the change. Although there will doubtless be occasional campaigns to curb excesses, such as the recent one against "spiritual pollution," which led to the execution of 5,000 criminals between October 1983 and February 1984, China has made too large a commitment to the new policy to turn its back on it for long.

The improved relations with the West which have resulted from the latest shift in

policy have also allowed foreigners to learn more about the church in today's China. The discoveries are heartening. In a country where the government has for many years discouraged belief in God, Christianity has flourished. Churches long closed have opened again, and seminaries are training pastors to staff them. There are still only two recognized denominations, Protestant and Catholic, and the country will probably never again be open to foreign missionaries known as such, but it seems possible that some of the official barriers between Chinese Christians and their brethren overseas might soon crumble.

It would be well for the Adventist Church to prepare for this. In order to do so, it is helpful to take a look at the causes of past failures of foreign churches in China and the more recent problems faced by Chinese Christians, then to discuss what might be done in the future. If we are given another chance in China, we must avoid the mistakes of the past. We must also be prepared to answer such important questions as what our attitude should be toward members working on Sabbath in a country where Saturday is a work day, to what lengths we would be willing to cooperate with a socialist government, how much autonomy we would be willing to give a Chinese Adventist Church if there were one, and whether it would be wise to press for denominational separation in China.

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Past Efforts

There was a time when China vied with Africa as the world's neediest mission field. Millions of miserable Chinese were hungry, naked, or sick. Opium addiction and prostitution ravaged millions more. Few could read or write. The minds of women were as tightly bound by tradition as their feet were by cloth. Strange gods and strange customs combined to make China seem a very heathen place indeed, despite its ancient culture.

Although the history of Christianity in China goes back several hundred years, it was not until the mid-19th century, when the treaties ending the opium wars gradually opened China to foreigners, that there was a major influx of Christian missionaries. The missionaries brought not only Christ to China, but their culture as well. The reform of society mixed well with the reform of the individual, and in the 20th century there was increased emphasis on social reform as missionaries realized that the problems of the people were deeply rooted in their society. Dozens of hospitals and hundreds of schools were built, and thousands of Chinese were educated. Christian campaigns against social evils were picked up and carried forward by radical young intellectuals and led to a good deal of progress in some parts of the country.

At the turn of the century there were some 1,500 Protestant missionaries in China and about 80,000 believers. Fifteen years later, the number of Protestant missionaries had grown to 5,500, while the number of converts had tripled. By the time of the Communist takeover in 1949, there were 6,200 Protestant missionaries in China, representing some 150 denominations or mission boards, but there were also nearly 20,000 Chinese preachers or priests, a million Protestant converts and two million Catholics.² The number of Christians had grown remarkably, but after a century of effort, less

than one percent of the population had accepted Christ.

Seventh-day Adventist mission work in China got a late start but grew steadily. By 1949, Chinese Adventist workers could be found throughout China. There were a number of schools and hospitals, and Adventist tracts and books were published in Chinese. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook for 1948, there were in that year 285 companies meeting in China and a total of almost 20,000 members.

There has been a tendency in the West to blame the gradual expulsion of missionaries in the 1950s entirely on the Communists, but this is not a fair assertion. In fact, despite the benefit China gained from missionaries, the Chinese had some cause for complaint. To the more traditional Chinese, the missionaries represented the unsettling modern ideas which were destroying such old customs as filial obedience, arranged marriages and ancestor worship. The resentment of these Chinese, both young and old, of the methods and effects of Christian proselytizing was one cause of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, during which over 30,000 Chinese Christians and several hundred missionaries were slaughtered.

One might expect such a response, of course, to a movement as revolutionary as Christianity was in China. However, the missionaries also made mistakes which angered many Chinese. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the essentials of Christianity from the cultural associations which have mingled with them over the centuries. Most missionaries made little effort to learn about the culture and literature of China; many failed even to learn the language. Convinced that social progress in China depended on the acceptance of Western ideas, many missionaries adopted a paternal or even patronizing attitude and devoted as much time to teaching the Western way of life as to teaching religion.

Other reasons for the disenchantment of many Chinese with missionaries can be traced to the mirror image of this ethnocen-

trism: the difficulty of maintaining one's mental and physical health in a foreign environment. In the 1920s, less than 10 percent of China's population lived in cities, yet fully two-thirds of the missionaries did. Most missionaries lived in compounds and had limited contact with the Chinese. In many cases, of course, this was the only way the missionaries could stave off unbearable homesickness or Sinophobia, the only way they could maintain a modicum of effectiveness. The failure of most missionaries to share the people's suffering, however, reduced their influence.

Many Chinese were confused by the large number of Christian denominations sponsoring missions. They were aware of the frequent bickering or bad relations between missions and the attempts to convert Chinese from one Christian church to another, but at a loss to explain the reasons for such conduct. Many Chinese pastors resented the hesitancy of missionaries to place church administration in native hands. For many years, it had been they who won the most converts, so why should they not lead their church as well?³

The Seventh-day Adventist work in China was unable to avoid these problems. I recall speaking with a pleasant lady who had been

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a missionary in Beijing in the 1930s and had given China the best years of her life. She showed me a photo of a beggar crouching against a wall. "He always stayed right outside our compound," she said affectionately. "One day I made cookies, but they all burned. I was going to throw them away,

but my little boy said, 'Let's give them to the beggar,' so we took them out and threw them to him. He ate them all up and was happy to get them.'" I dare say that no one who has served overseas, no matter how devotedly, would look for stones to throw, for mission service shows us our failings all too well. Still, such an attitude remains a failing, and such failings hindered Christian work in China.

The Present Situation

Even though Mao Zedong and his fellow leaders agreed with Marx that religion was "the opiate of the people," they realized that some addictions are hard or even dangerous to break. They preferred a slow withdrawal by supposedly giving the people the freedom to worship, but actually limiting their right to proselytize, restricting their access to churches, and teaching atheism to their children. As foreign missionaries were seen as security threats because of their ties to the West, the government decided that foreign missions must be phased out. By 1958 the last of them had gone.

In 1951 the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was founded. These "three selfs"—self-government, self-support and self-propagation—addressed three major Chinese complaints about foreign denominations and at the same time defused much of the perceived threat. A Chinese Catholic church was also allowed, as the leaders could find no way to reconcile Catholics and Protestants, but the church was not allowed to swear allegiance to the pope. If the Christian church in China had no connection with Western churches, it was no longer under "Imperialist" domination and was dangerous only because of what it preached.⁴ In theory, the movement, often called the Three-Self Church, was independent, but it was expected to support the government, and in fact, despite the wishes of many of its leaders, it was under strong government

influence. The Communist Party was particularly worried about the minds of the young, so Sunday school was forbidden. Many soon withdrew from the movement because of the taunts of the party members, and the nearly empty churches began to close.

To many—if not the majority—of Chinese Christians, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was not an acceptable substitute for their original denomination. Many of them refused to attend the services, preferring to hold church in their homes. Many pastors also refused to preach for the new church. A publishing house in Shanghai was allowed to print a few religious books, however, and Christians around the country gratefully ordered them by mail.

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For many Christians, as for many Chinese in general, the 10-year Cultural Revolution which began in 1966 was an unparalleled personal disaster. I have not met a single mature Christian who did not suffer greatly in some way, whether by being beaten, imprisoned, sent to a work farm or held up again and again for public humiliation and ridicule. Thousands of Bibles and religious books were destroyed. Life was especially hard for pastors, most of whom were trained by missionaries in Hong Kong or elsewhere abroad, because they were perceived as probable spies due to their exposure to foreigners. Some Christians even died for their beliefs.

While the Cultural Revolution imposed great hardship on many Christians, God was able to use it for good as well. Before the ordeal, most Christians lived in the cities,

where they quietly shared their faith. Sent to distant villages where Christianity was unknown, they continued to witness. Many were converted then, and more as the years have passed and long-planted seeds have sprouted.

The death of Chairman Mao, the downfall of the "Gang of Four," and the rise of Deng Xiaoping have proved to be a religious blessing as well as an economic one. Although there is still far to go, the status of Christians has improved steadily. Article 36 of the new Constitution of the People's Republic of China begins, "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities."

To this point the Chinese Constitution is reminiscent of the American Constitution. Article 36 ends, however, with words which give pause: "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 liberality of the document rests on its interpretation, not only by the courts but—since lawyers are scarce and lawsuits few—on low-level cadres (administrators). It would be possible to see an evangelistic meeting as a disruption of public order. One might easily consider a mother's teaching of Bible stories to a child an interference with an educational system which teaches atheism and evolution. It would even be possible to claim that a vegetarian diet impairs one's health. Technically, the constitution guarantees the right to believe what one wishes about religion but not the right to act on that belief or tell others about it. In practice the law is not quite that harsh, but neither is it ideal.

Without doubt the situation is improving. Whereas during the Cultural Revolution all churches were closed, at least two Catholic

churches and three Protestant churches in Beijing now hold services each Sunday, attended by more than 4,000 people. Eight thousand Catholics attended midnight mass there last Christmas.⁵ Religious fervor is much more intense in South China, however. In Shanghai alone, 16 Catholic and 17 Protestant churches have reopened. *China Daily* observed that one pastor claims that "up to 25,000 Protestants attend church services in Shanghai every week."⁶ The article adds that "both Catholic and Protestant churches have been making hundreds of converts in the last few years. However, admission to churches is selective in that applicants have to prove their personal conviction in their belief of God. They are also required to attend Bible class and pass an oral church examination." There are now over 1,600 Three-Self churches open in China.⁷

I have several times seen young people turned away at church gates, by both police and pastors. Church members have explained to me, however, that those turned away are usually young people who have come to mock the worshipers, while sincere young people are admitted. Pastors at Beijing's Gang Wa Shi Church hold a baptismal class every Tuesday night, attended by over a hundred people. Those who decide for Christ after finishing the class are baptized by immersion (minimum age: 18). Other churches also hold classes.

The situation of Seventh-day Adventists in China is not as satisfactory as that of other Christians, but the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has attempted to accommodate them. Saturday services began in one Beijing church last year and are attended by some 30 to 50 believers every week. The four regular pastors, one of them Adventist-trained, take turns conducting the service, but the sermons are not biased in favor of any one denomination. One recent service opened with a prayer in which the Adventist-trained pastor thanked God for "the Sabbath, the day of the Lord's blessing," and progressed to congregational sing-

ing of the hymn, "Oh Day of Rest and Gladness," including the verse, omitted from the *Adventist Church Hymnal*, identifying that day as Sunday.⁸

I have been told that as with other Christians, the vast majority of Adventists choose not to attend the Three-Self Church. The number of Three-Self Churches holding Saturday services, however, is increasing. The Sabbath attendance in the small city of Anyang in northern Henan province is as large as that in Beijing. I have heard that 500 worship together on Sabbath in Shanghai and are trying to get permission to call themselves an Adventist congregation. Adventists on the island of Xiamen and in the city of Kunming have, reportedly, already begun to do so.

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There are problems, however, despite this good news. Sabbath-keeping is especially difficult in China. Some authorities have tried to solve Sabbath-work problems by pointing out that in the Chinese calendar, Sunday is the seventh day of the week. To insist on Saturday as the seventh day is to insist on allying oneself with Western religion, a possibly dangerous course. If one asks for Sabbaths off, one is accused of not wanting to do one's fair share of work. It is virtually impossible to lose one's job in China, but it is also very difficult to transfer to another. Usually a supervisor will refuse to approve one's taking Saturday off or even to arrange a schedule where one works on Sunday instead. It is possible to skip work on Sabbath, but then one faces

public criticism and losing one's (almost obligatory and very necessary) bonus. Of the Chinese Adventists I know, those not retired have chosen to work on Sabbath if they must and take the day—or part of it—off if they can.

College students who want to keep the Sabbath face even more trouble than most Christian students. Officially, China's civil law stipulates that "no one should be deprived of the right to higher education, wage raises and promotion because of his or her religious belief."⁹ In fact, however, though many non-Christians have denied this, several Christian students have told me that baptized church members are not knowingly admitted as college students. Some of these students claim that they do not go to church for fear they will be expelled from school. Another college student, however, who attends church every Sabbath, claims that skipping school on Sabbath is no more serious than skipping on some other day—though of course if one misses an exam one might not be able to make it up—and that those who worship on Sunday are no longer harassed at all. It may be that the situation of Christians in college is improving, but of course Sabbath keepers still face that worrisome clause in Article 36 about interfering with the state educational system.

It is unfortunate that the government has not yet seen fit to allow Sabbath or Sunday school classes, for though church services are relatively short, they are not of great interest to children, so there is little to help them learn to love church going. Parents are allowed to teach their own children about God, but not to mention God to other children. Meanwhile, the state schools provide a steady diet of atheism.

In the past few years there has been an important change in the government policy toward the publication of religious literature. Not long ago Bibles were rare, and new Bibles had to be smuggled in from outside. Today one can purchase a hard-bound copy of the Bible in Chinese, on good paper,

printed in Shanghai, for only five yuan (U.S. \$2.50), an easily affordable sum. They are sold by church offices. During a church service in Beijing, one can see more than half of the worshipers using their own Bibles.

The Bible is not the only Christian book available. Since 1982, bookstores have been selling a collection of Bible stories, suitable both for children and for adults who have not read the Bible. Two hundred thousand copies have already been sold, and two hundred thousand more have recently been printed. In his introduction, the editor claims that "if we Chinese wish to study Western literature, history, philosophy, economics, law, or any of the humanities, we cannot help coming into contact with the Bible."¹⁰ The book's 108 stories range from the creation to Paul preaching in Rome, and include a good selection of Christ's miracles.

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This new recognition of the Bible's importance is reflected in the inclusion of Genesis 1, parts of the Song of Solomon, John 1, and I Corinthians 13 (King James Version) in the Renaissance section of a new college textbook of English literature. The 16 pages of notes on the selections make it clear that the Bible is not entirely trustworthy, but are not blatantly Marxist.¹¹ Another book recently printed in Chinese is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Widening acceptance of the Bible allowed Professor Kuo Siu-may to teach a course on the Bible as literature in 1982 at Nanjing University, one of China's most prestigious schools.¹²

A major problem now facing the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is how to train enough

young pastors to answer the growing need. Although the Nanjing Theological Seminary trained pastors from 1952 to 1966, it has been said that its training at that time was more political than religious. Most of the few pastors preaching today are beyond retirement age, men trained by missionaries years ago. Who will take their place?

It is difficult to say for sure how many seminaries are presently operating, but at least six of them are Catholic. The total number of students in these schools, however, is almost certainly less than 500, not nearly enough to fill the need. Admission is highly competitive; students must not only be baptized and recommended by their pastors, but pass stiff examinations. At Nanjing, the oldest and best known seminary, students must study Hebrew, Greek and English. The majority of courses are theological, however. A third of the students are women.¹³ The Catholic seminaries do not admit women. They also prefer to admit students from families with many children, believing that this will reduce the parental pressure on priests to marry.

A question which naturally arises in the West is, "How many Christians are there in China now?" It is impossible to give an accurate answer. Bishop K.H. Ting, leader of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and president of the China Christian Council, claims that there are now three million Catholics and three million Protestants, but he includes only those who have registered with the Three-Self or Catholic churches.¹⁴ Every Christian I have asked has said that most devout Christians have not registered, whether out of fear that the government policy toward religion will change yet again or out of loyalty to their original denominations. According to *China Daily*, there are some 37 million Communist Party members. It is often said by Christians in China, both native and foreign, that there are more Christians in China than there are party members. Some consider this figure exaggerated, but I suspect that it is not far from the truth. It is ironic that years of repression

have made Christianity grow rather than wither away—the expected result. The missionaries were expelled, but God's Spirit remained.

Of the 35 to 50 million Christians in China today, not many are Adventists. It is probable that since most of the Christians were converted after the traditional denominations were formally abolished in China, only the old feel strong emotional ties to specific denominational groups. Even among those who keep the Sabbath there are probably few who are well-versed in Adventist doctrine. Basing my estimate on hearsay and the apparent ratio of Adventists to other Christians, I would guess that there are between 40,000 and 100,000 active Seventh-day Adventists in China. They are not completely isolated from the outside world, for there is a small flow of Adventist laypeople from Hong Kong bringing literature and encouragement. (The church has also continued to send sustentation checks to workers after 1949, though in some cases these are quite small, as most workers still living did not work many years for the denomination. The government seems to have made no attempt to stop this money, though during the Cultural Revolution some were doubtless criticized for receiving foreign funds.)¹⁵

Future Prospects

It seems likely that the Chinese government will continue to allow increased religious activity unless frightened by a sudden upsurge of Christian enthusiasm. Millions of Chinese are hungry for the Christian message, but the way in which it is presented must be suitable. Most Chinese schoolchildren have learned about the real or supposed crimes of foreign missionaries, but this does not place them beyond reach. Communism in China has aided Christian witness in one substantial though unintended way: it has broken down much of the Chinese people's belief in Bud-

dhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, a task which missionaries found difficult. These old superstitions were replaced with the vision of a truly communist society, which will appear sometime in the future (some have estimated 300 years in the future). Millions of Chinese are no longer satisfied with this faint and impersonal hope, but are little inclined to return to the old beliefs. They have been taught an ethical code more Christian than Confucian, but it has not been given life by a belief in God. They have been promised a temporal heaven, but they themselves cannot hope to survive to see it. These people may discover that Christ is the answer.

In the next few years, Adventist leaders must decide what attitude they will take toward the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. I believe the answer is not simply to repudiate it and brand it a government tool. One of the major factors which discredited Christianity in old China was hostility among the Christian denominations. This probably diminished the gospel's effectiveness. I have heard sermons in services of the Three-Self Movement that were clearly Christ-centered. I think a good argument can be made for not opposing the movement. Not only does it run the Protestant seminaries, but it represents many sincere Christians.

This was the attitude taken by Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, during his tour of China in December 1983 (his second visit). In a service I attended, Runcie said, "England has an English church; it is right that China should have a Chinese church." This is a logical conclusion for an Anglican, but perhaps an unsatisfying one for members of most denominations. While most Christians would admit that a church should meet the needs of the people, not many would agree to drop inconvenient doctrines or invent new ones in order to incorporate native beliefs. Of course, the archbishop's statement is deliberately imprecise and meant more as an expression of good will than as a notice of intent. He may have meant merely that the church in

China should have Chinese pastors and songs and sermons. Whatever he meant, such tact reassured the government and put him in a position to ask a favor. Reportedly, the government allowed Bibles to be printed again because Runcie, on good behavior during his first visit, suggested that not enough were available.

It is significant that the pope has not yet visited China. While the government has allowed the Chinese Catholic Church to survive, to maintain the apostolic succession and celebration of the sacraments, it does not allow the church to acknowledge the pope as its head. As the government does not ask Catholics to actually repudiate the pope, they seem to be temporarily satisfied. Were the pope to visit China, however, Chinese priests would be placed in a very awkward situation indeed. It is possible that the government may someday allow Chinese Catholics to acknowledge the pope—though presently his stand against birth control and abortion, among other things, is inimical to that of the government—but until then a papal visit is unlikely.¹⁶

The Seventh-day Adventist attitude should probably be somewhere in between those of the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans. It is time now, I believe, for the General Conference president to begin planning a visit to China. Negotiations in China take a long time, so it might be wise to begin establishing friendships. This is not to say that the church ought to offer full support to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Many of the movement's pastors were trained by Anglicans, and its doctrines are largely compatible with Anglicanism, but the relation between Adventism and the Three-Self Movement is different. It deserves support to the extent that it is the only legal Christian movement, and its efforts to accommodate Sabbath-keepers are laudable, but it need not be embraced. Indeed, while many Adventists do attend Three-Self services, most refrain; to these people, many of whom have suffered a great deal for their faith, church support of the movement

would be a crushing blow. Chinese Adventists should not be condemned either for attending Three-Self services or for working on Sabbath; instead they should be encouraged in their faith.

I would not be surprised if Chinese Christians were allowed within the next few years to form denominations—indeed, the government will probably soon realize that divisions in the church make it easier to control—but the days of foreign missionary work in China are over. I do not think that permanent missionaries will ever be allowed to return; nor are they needed, for Christianity has thrived without them. (I refer to full-time missionaries whose sole work is evangelism. In the past year there have been at least a dozen Westerners in Beijing—students, teachers, and businessmen—whose chief purpose in coming to China was to spread the gospel, and their influence has led to a number of conversions. On the other hand, a pastor from California, asked to become a permanent chaplain at the U.S. Embassy, has been unable to get a resident's visa and is allowed into the country only for three week periods.) I also doubt that the government will ever allow direct foreign control of denominations in China—the memories of past excesses are too vivid. If a Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church were formally chartered, it would be, like the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. However, it would probably be allowed to cultivate a friendly, if unofficial, relationship with Adventists in the rest of the world.

There are a number of things which the church can do before that time arrives. For three years Union College has had a teacher exchange agreement with the Beijing Languages Institute. This has helped to build trust and has led to some useful contacts with Chinese Adventists. Negotiations are presently underway between Union College and the language institute for the establishment of a language school similar to the

Adventist English language schools throughout Asia. Such a school would allow Christian students to meet many Chinese who had never before met a Christian, and to bear Christian witness through their actions. Should it prove successful, schools could be started in other large Chinese cities.

If the Chinese government someday allows the establishment of a Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, it will also be necessary to establish a seminary to train pastors. Until that day arrives, there are several steps which the church could take. A set of *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentaries* has already been donated by Union College to the Nanjing Theological Seminary. This will give the students—all of whom read English—some exposure to our interpretation of the Bible. It might prove useful if internationally recognized Adventist Bible scholars and archeologists could offer to lecture in Chinese seminaries. Also, Chinese students could be brought to Adventist seminaries around the world for training.

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Several Chinese Adventists have already studied or are presently studying in America. Such students should be carefully selected for academic and leadership potential. The goal should be to prepare several dozen men and women to lead the church or train pastors. This should be done as soon as possible.

In the past few years, China has encouraged the growth of joint ventures between Chinese and foreign corporations. Usually these ventures produce items for sale abroad. One interesting possibility, though presently unlikely, would be a joint venture between the Review and Herald and a Chinese printing company to produce religious books. Books can be printed in China for a small fraction of the cost in the West, which makes the country a good place to print books for other Third World countries. The potential market in China is also great. Barring the possibility of a joint publishing venture, it might be possible to allow the China Christian Council's press in Shanghai to reprint the Chinese translation of Arthur Maxwell's *The Bible Story*. The whole set could probably be produced—on cheap paper with black-and-white pictures, in one or two volumes—for less than two dollars, and would be a boon to parents who want to teach their children about the Bible.

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By far the most exciting missionary opportunity is the General Conference's plan to devote the 1985 General Conference Offering to the establishment of a powerful short-wave radio station on Guam. Most large radios sold in China—and several million are sold every year—include short-wave receivers, and at present China does not jam foreign stations. Within a few years, such a station could be picked up by almost every

family in the country. Would they be interested? While teaching in Beijing, I conducted a poll among my Chinese students by secret ballot. I asked them if they believed in God, hoped that God exists, or wished that God existed. Of these students—top graduate students chosen to study abroad and young scientists trained by the state since childhood—one in four admitted to believing, hoping or wishing. Extrapolating from this small sample, I believe it is not unlikely that at least 200 million Chinese who are not Christians would be receptive to Christian broadcasts. In the last week of class, finishing a lecture early, I offered to tell my students a story. They had only one request: that I tell about the birth of Christ. Yes, I think the Chinese would listen to this new station.

How often or how long they would listen would, of course, depend on the programming. Most of the broadcasting should be in Chinese, with heavy emphasis on stories and songs. Bible studies and sermons should also be aired, as many rural listeners would have no access to a church. Part of the programming should be in English, as millions in China are studying the language. Those who now listen to Voice of America to improve their language skills—many of them uninterested in religion—might also listen to the Adventist station and be drawn to God by it. The English programs should be on a relatively simple level, but might include readings from Maxwell's *The Bible Story*, *Guide*, or *Insight*, and the dramatic versions of Bible stories recorded on Chapel records. The emphasis should be on presenting the gospel in an entertaining way, both in English and in Chinese. It might also be possible to offer correspondence courses and free books, which could be sent from Hong Kong.

Whether in spite of persecution or because of it, God's work has prospered in China. It is possible that there might be a sudden shift in policy, leading to another "cultural revolution," but for the time being, the position of Christians in China is improving.

While the Adventist Church cannot yet establish ties with Chinese Adventists, the day when it will become possible may arrive soon. It would be wise to plan ahead for this eventuality. Meanwhile, there are other things which can be done to share our faith.

China will never return to being the "mission field" which once drew thousands of foreign workers, but it remains a challenge. There are more people in China who have never heard of Christ than in any other nation on earth.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *The Constitution of the People's Republic of China* (adopted December 1982), Article 6.

2. David H. Adenay, *Christian Witness in China: Past and Present* (Berkeley: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, n.d.), pp. 5, 6, 10. For a more detailed and authoritative view, see K.S. Latourett's *A History of Christian Missions in China* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929).

3. *Christian Witness*, pp. 5-7.

4. New World Press in Beijing has announced that it will soon publish a paperback book in its China Spotlight Series called *Christianity in China Today*, by Bishop Ting and other church leaders, but it is not yet available. Until then, see *Beijing Review*, Vol. 27, No. 24 (June 11, 1984), pp. 21-29, for the official government position. My description of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is very brief and ignores such related bodies as the China Christian Council. A number of books have been published on Christianity in Communist China, and the interested reader can refer to these, to the journal *China Notes*, published by the Division of Overseas Ministries of the National Council of Churches, or to the short-lived Adventist journal *China Evangelist*.

5. "8,000 at midnight mass in Beijing on Christmas," *China Daily* Vol. 3, No. 753 (Dec. 26, 1983), p. 3.

6. Zhu Yinhuang, "Now we feel free and happy to go to church," *China Daily*, Vol. 3, No. 845 (April 11, 1984), p. 4.

7. "Christianity gains cited," *China Daily*, Vol. 3, No. 879 (May 21, 1984), p.3.

8. See my "Sabbath in Beijing," *Adventist Review*, Vol. 161, No. 12 (March 22, 1984), pp. 5-6.

9. Pastor Shen Yifan, quoted in "Now we feel free and happy to go to church."

10. Jiu Xuan, editor, *Bible Stories* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academy Publishing House, 1982), p. 1 (in Chinese).

11. Wang Zuoliang, et al, editors, *An Anthology of English Literature: Annotated in Chinese* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1983).

12. See Kuo Siu-may, "An Excursion into the English Bible," *China Notes*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Autumn 1982), pp. 221-227.

13. Xing Wenbin, et al, "Theology at Nanjing Seminary," *China Daily*, Vol. 3, No. 739 (December 9, 1983), p. 3.

14. He Qide, "Archbishop: be loyal to faith and country," *China Daily*, Vol. 3, No. 744 (December 15, 1983), p. 3.

15. Some of the information in this article comes from church leaders in Hong Kong, though they do not agree with everything said here. As with information gathered in China, I have chosen to name only published sources. For Chinese Christians, talking with foreigners is not completely without risk. Nor do I wish to complicate matters for those who travel from Hong Kong to their old homes.

16. See "Closer Vatican links ruled out," *South China Morning Post*, Vol. 40, No. 143 (May 25, 1984), p. 8; "The Catholic Underground," *Newsweek* (Pacific Edition) (May 14, 1984), p. 16; "Key to Rapprochement Lies in Vatican," *Beijing Review*, Vol. 27, No. 24 (June 11, 1984), pp. 23-26.