

Pirates and Political Commissars: Toward Indigenous Maritime Mission in Chinese Waters

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“Fighting Our Third Opium War”

“We Chinese are now fighting our Third Opium War—and this time China will win!” So spoke a sprightly octogenarian on the faculty of a theological seminary in one of China’s major port-cities, as this writer was about to leave after delivering a guest lecture there. Well aware that some form of explanation was called for, the professor added: “You see, for years it was politically correct in government circles to not even question Karl Marx’s classical doctrine that religion is opium for the people. There are still dogmatic diehards among them. But more and more are now maintaining that Christians make good citizens and loyal patriots.”

Those words, spoken less than a month before the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong was due to revert to China, were pregnant with irony and hope¹. Arguably, no event in history has had more fateful effects on the future of the Christian gospel in that immense country than the First and Second Opium Wars, in 1839-42 and 1856-60, respectively. That may be



said not only of China and the history of mission in general. As will be seen, it applies in particular to the maritime dimension of mission there during the last one hundred and fifty years.

One historian (Joshua Rowntree) has highlighted the irony of it all by pointing out that, in China, opium and the gospel “came together, have been fought for together, and were finally legalized together”. In broad terms, that was, in fact, how the whole sad sequence of events was destined to develop. However, it was certainly not the way the one who re-introduced the gospel into China had planned it.

Robert Morrison (1782-1834) was by no means the pioneer of Christian mission in China. Starting with the Nestorians in the 7th century, clusters of Chinese Catholics had even survived into the 18th century, despite sporadic state persecution³. However, it is not generally known that the one who was destined to become Protestant Christianity’s pioneer missionary in China would also become the first to bring seafarers’ mission to Chinese waters.

Once Morrison had, in 1807, set foot in China’s only open port city of Canton, it was not long before he began making it a regular practice to visit sick and dying sailors ashore. Despite the mounting missionary burdens he had to bear, Morrison helped sailors however he could, not least ministering to them on board ships in the nearby anchorage of Whampoa. Here there could be two to three thousand mainly British and American seafarers at the height of the trading season. By 1809, after two Cantonese Catholics had risked their lives to teach this foreign missionary the Chinese language, Morrison was appointed official interpreter to the East India Company. With that, he was now also in a position to secure justice for hapless sailors who found themselves arrested during a shore spree, and had to face draconian local laws⁴.

Coupled with compassion was also Morrison’s growing awareness of just how effectively visiting sailors from the West could impact missionary endeavors within a non-Western native population. By unrestrained indulgence ashore, they would expose their assumed religion to “the scorn of the Pagan Chinese,” as Morrison put it. Meanwhile, a sailor who made Christ “the captain of his soul” could become “a missionary to a



degree” wherever he went. From his own everyday reality on the waterfront, Morrison became an ardent advocate for the so-called “Missiological Motive” for maritime mission⁵.

In this emerging ministry among seafarers, the year 1822 would, in more ways than one, become a banner year. In September, Morrison dedicated to them the first English-language tract ever published in China. In November, he preached the first sermon ever held under the Bethel Flag in Chinese waters. Only five years earlier, seafarers themselves had hoisted this biblical banner at their masthead as a call to worship while at anchor in London’s River Thames. Since then, it had become a popular catalyst for maritime mission initiatives everywhere. Now, with Morrison’s sermon on the deck of the American ship *Pacific* in Whampoa harbor, this historic emblem had literally “circled the globe.” More than that, Morrison’s message that day had a powerful effect not only on his seafaring congregation, but also on the crowd of astonished Chinese onlookers. Suddenly they saw sea-going “barbarians” transformed by the Christian gospel before their very eyes.

During the mid-1820s, Dr. Morrison launched a series of spirited appeals, both in Britain and the USA, in order to secure a full-time seafarers’ chaplain for Canton and Whampoa. The London-based maritime mission societies already had more problems than they could handle. However, for the newly organized New York-based American Seamen’s Friend Society (ASFS), the plea of this revered man of God came as a “Macedonian Call” they could not ignore⁶. No place could have been better calculated to fire the enthusiasm of the American missionary public than Canton. Until then, the only opportunity of penetrating the inaccessible Celestial Kingdom was believed to be by evangelizing tsarist Russia. That way the light of the gospel might somehow “shine over the Great Wall.” Now, a ministry to foreign residents and visiting seafarers in such a strategic port city as Canton could provide an alternative entry point into the whole of China, and thus reach “one quarter of the human race.”

Finally, the ASFS found their man. In February 1830, a young seminary graduate of the Dutch Reformed Church, David Abeel, arrived in Canton as the first foreign-port “sea missionary” of



the ASFS. Here he was warmly welcomed by a delighted Dr. Morrison, who handed him his own Bethel Flag for use among the shipping. When Abeel found he was to move on to missionary tasks elsewhere, the ASFS managed to secure a successor. However, by then events were already moving toward the First Opium War (1839-1842).

The position of the Chinese government was clear. By imperial edict, the importation of opium had been outlawed since the year 1800. Western merchants, however, saw opium from India as the only commodity the self-sufficient Chinese were willing to buy, thus making the opium trade a policy of condoned, even enforced, smuggling. Enthusiastic British advocates characterized such trade as not only an economic necessity, but “a most gentlemanlike speculation”—even one “with all the bench of bishops at their backs”⁷.

In 1828, Dr. Morrison wrote to a friend in Ireland: “There is only one Christian merchant in Canton who conscientiously declines dealing in the pernicious drug. He is an American.” That unnamed American merchant and shipowner was D.W.C. Olyphant, who had come to Canton in the 1820s to enter the tea market. As the one Canton merchant who—based on firm Christian principles—just said ‘No’ to the profitable opium trade, Olyphant soon became an oddity among Western merchants in Canton. So much so, that old-timers there dubbed his local headquarters “Zion’s Corner.”

When Robert Morrison died in 1834, exhausted and fever-ridden, he would for ever be linked to the origins of maritime mission in Chinese waters. However, that mission continued to be exclusively in Western hands. In 1837, Olyphant’s nephew and partner Charles King warned in a missionary journal called *The Chinese Repository*: “There is not a greater barrier to the introduction of the gospel into China by the hands of foreigners, than the trade in opium by foreigners bearing the Christian name.” Those words would prove tragically true at the outbreak of war on Morrison’s own Canton waterfront two years later⁸.

Pirate Crews and Contextualization

In 1842, at the Treaty of Nanking which ended the First Opium



War, the Chinese government, rendered helpless in the face of overwhelming British naval might, surrendered five so-called “Treaty Ports,” as havens of free trade for Western commerce: Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo) and Shanghai. At the same time, the island of Hong Kong in the Pearl River estuary was ceded to Britain as a Crown colony. However, in the text of the Treaty any mention of trading in opium was “conveniently forgotten” (as historian A.J. Broomall puts it), allowing the infamous practice to continue until it was only ended some seventy years later⁹.

One of those who were not prepared to forget was the London-based Rev. George Charles Smith, later recognized as the founding figure of the Seafarers’ Mission Movement. He had warmly encouraged the nascent ASFS in various ways—also to adopt the Bethel Flag (of which he had himself been the primary promoter). In his *Sailor’s Magazine* Smith had gladly publicized Dr. Morrison’s pioneer efforts on the Canton waterfront. Eventually, Smith also became one of the most outspoken critics of his government’s role in the First Opium War. How would God judge, he wrote, “purportedly Christian peoples, who would permit poison to be thrust down the throats of a non-Christian nation at the point of the bayonet?” Worse yet, he added, was the insult of making British sailors involuntary accessories in such a crime¹⁰.

Though not all missionaries expressed themselves in such severe terms, many did voice their adamant opposition to the opium trade, and virtually all refused to condone it. Nevertheless, the new treaty rights that followed the Opium Wars did open the way for both merchants and missionaries to access China’s port cities and eventually its vast interior. Caught in a clear moral dilemma, Western missionaries found they should, in practice, see such access as a providential opportunity to honor the right of the Chinese people to hear the gospel. As a result, the following decades saw not only a surge in Western missions in China in general, but also a series of Western *maritime* mission initiatives, notably in Hong Kong and the Treaty Ports¹¹.

Besides Hong Kong, with its special status, it was Shanghai that would eventually emerge as China’s other megaport. It was



Dr. Elijah C. Bridgman, the first American missionary to China, who would become the pioneer of mission among seafarers in Shanghai. In 1830, he had arrived in Canton together with Abeel, and worked closely with Morrison from the start. When Bridgman later transferred his literary mission tasks to Shanghai, he started holding services on ships in port under the Bethel Flag. With the help of some mission-minded merchants from Boston, a Chinese junk was fitted up as a Floating Bethel, donated by none other than “the head mandarin of the city.” When this vessel could no longer handle all who came, they built a bigger version. This was described as looking like “an abridged edition of Noah’s ark”¹².

Reverting to the year 1832, when Bridgman launched his new missionary journal *The Chinese Expository*, one of the first persons he invited to contribute was the young 29-year old who had just arrived on the scene as Germany’s first Protestant missionary to China — Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff — or Charles Gutzlaff, as he now preferred to be called. In his new publication, Bridgman made a point of including Gutzlaff’s journal of his voyages along the coast of China, later to be given out in book form¹³. This journal was amazing, at least in hindsight, because it gave a glimmer of hope of one day overcoming the first of the two major impediments frustrating the cause of Christian mission (including maritime mission) among the Chinese, namely: (1) The lack of contextualization. (2) The impact of colonization.

In terms of contextualization, Gutzlaff’s approach appeared to herald a new era, one which would take seriously the culture of those among whom one hoped to minister. As Gutzlaff himself put it, “We cannot sympathize with this almost innumerable people, unless we view them in their own character and condition”¹⁴. However historic the pioneer contribution of Dr. Morrison undeniably was, it continued to be fundamentally Western-oriented, and as such totally inadequate to meet the need for indigenous outreach in the new context of the late 20th century.

Who, then, was this Prussian-ethnic enthusiast for all things British, who would soon become a household name in mission circles both in Britain and on the Continent? His detractors



would eventually label him “a cross between a parson and a pirate!” Born in 1803 and raised in a pietistic Lutheran home on the Baltic coast, where he worked as a saddler’s apprentice, the young teenager developed a life-long passion for bringing the gospel to China’s “teeming millions,” as he called them. In 1823, after intense studies in Berlin, Paris and London, the young twenty-year old sailed out to serve the Netherlands Missionary Society in Indonesia¹⁵.

For four years he focused on reaching expatriate communities of Chinese, especially in port cities like Batavia (Jakarta), Singapore and Bangkok. In this way he methodically familiarized himself with Chinese customs, dialects and their itinerant way of life, living like the Chinese on their junks wherever he could. Here he knew he would find a ready welcome. He was especially thrilled by the access he gained to the crews of great ocean-going junks from China’s major port cities. That way he was able to get Scriptures and tracts, recently translated by Morrison, into the willing hands of sailors returning to their homeland. Eventually, he began to envision reaching the tightly sealed Celestial Empire as a Chinese crewmember himself some day.

Exasperated by what he saw as the timidity of the Dutch to sanction such a daring strategy, Gutzlaff cut ties with his sponsoring Society and from now on went freelance, a status far better suited to his restless, independent spirit. After four years on the fringes, he was now more than ready to cast off. This he quite literally did in Bangkok in 1831, as he boarded a piracy-engaged 250-ton Chinese junk headed for Tientsin (Tianjin). From the moment he signed on, Gutzlaff intentionally “went Chinese”—not only in name but in clothing, diet, even dialect. However, at one point he drew the line. Of the fifty men on board, Gutzlaff states, he was at times the only one not under the influence of opium—including the captain!

While heading up the forbidden coast, laden with Christian literature in Chinese, Gutzlaff was well aware he was risking both torture and death for simply stepping ashore on Chinese soil, not to speak of spreading a foreign faith. Wherever he landed, however, this Chinese-speaking “son of the Western Ocean,” dressed as a Chinese mariner, was greeted by local



inhabitants more as a curiosity than a “foreign devil.” In fact, so fluent was his Chinese, that some mandarins would not believe he was a foreigner at all! His rudimentary medical schooling often proved a further bonus, and his books were eagerly accepted.

Returning after two highly productive months of this form of friendly evangelism, Gutzlaff now made his base in Macao. From here, he was able to make a series of similar commercial-cum-evangelistic forays up the China coast. These included one as ship’s surgeon and interpreter on an East India Company trader, the *Lord Amburst*, another in the same role on the *Sylph*, a fully armed British opium smuggler. At first Gutzlaff, who personally never approved of the opium traffic, was torn with indecision. However, he found he could justify this overt defiance of Chinese law with his duty to a higher authority—one that overruled a government who defied God by preventing a whole people from access to His Word. As a result, tens of thousands of Scriptures and tracts did find their way into Chinese hands. In Gutzlaff’s mind, that end more than justified the means, however unacceptable these latter might be in the minds of many others.

After Morrison died in 1834, the British authorities enlisted Gutzlaff in his place as Chinese Secretary and Interpreter to the British Trade Commissioner, based in the Crown Colony of Kong Hong. As such, Gutzlaff inevitably became identified with the British cause during the First Opium War of 1839-1842. None the less, even as the war clouds closed in, he took the first step in a bold new plan to reach the whole of China with the gospel. Based on his own experience of “becoming a Chinese to win the Chinese” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20), Gutzlaff firmly believed that China could only be brought to Christ by means of indigenous Chinese evangelists. In 1838, he made the first attempt to send specifically Chinese colporteurs inland to distribute tracts and preach in regions where China’s imperial law would still not allow foreigners to enter.

After the peace of 1842, which Gutzlaff had himself helped to negotiate, he forged ahead with his master-plan for a nationwide brotherhood of evangelists. Launched in 1844 under the name of the “Chinese Union,” by 1848 it could, according to



Gutzlaff, already count 1,000 indigenous Chinese colporteurs as well as 100 preachers, working in twelve of China's eighteen provinces. Later the next year, he sailed to Europe on a fund-raising tour. Buoyed by his own glowing statistics, he took audiences by storm. Before long, however, new reports from the field indicated that all was not well—what with inflated statistics of conversions, coupled with disturbing news of poorly trained, even fraudulent, co-workers.

By the time Gutzlaff managed to return to Hong Kong in early 1851, the Chinese Union had virtually collapsed. A faithful remnant did remain, as Gutzlaff himself still struggled on to salvage what he could. However, after a brief illness, he died on August 9th the same year, at the age of only 48. According to a close colleague, Gutzlaff was faithful to the end. Whatever the weather, he had still insisted on taking daily evangelistic outings to nearby villages along the shore. Here, his bond with people of the sea as strong as ever, he would make a special point of visiting with the crews of both fishing boats and pirate ships.

Some were quick to declare Gutzlaff's lifework a "signal failure." Certainly, he was by nature a loner, impatient and prone to exaggeration. However, Gutzlaff was eccentric because he was exceptional. His was the calling of a prophet. If—as in the case of his maritime mission forerunner, George Charles Smith of Penzance—his passion could carry him away, he was not deliberately dishonest. The daring dreams of both would be vindicated by those who would later build on them and bring them to fulfillment¹⁶. In Gutzlaff's case, the foremost of these would be none other than James Hudson Taylor, hailed as father of the entire region's greatest missionary organization—the China Inland Mission. Taylor emphasized that Charles Gutzlaff was, at all events, the China Inland Mission's undisputed "grandfather." In the Happy Valley Cemetery in Hong Kong, Gutzlaff's gravestone encapsulates his lasting legacy with the following three words in his native German: "Apostel der Chinesen."

Political Commissars and Colonization

From a 21st century perspective, Charles Gutzlaff's greatest



contribution to the history of mission and ministry in Chinese waters was to demonstrate the decisive need for contextualization. The astonishing success of Gutzlaff's missiological principles and strategy, as later systematically implemented by Taylor in the China Inland Mission, proves the point: The key to multiplication would need to be "Sinofication." In due course, the responsibility for effective, culturally relevant Chinese maritime mission must primarily belong to indigenous Chinese Christians.

Meanwhile, closely interrelated with the need for contextualization was the devastating impact of *colonization*. Gutzlaff's pragmatic compromise with Western—especially British—commercial interests, however well-intentioned, would have totally undermined any indigenous maritime mission initiatives, even if these had been thinkable in 19th century China. The fact remains, the Opium Wars have created, in the Chinese psyche, a deeply entrenched linkage between Christianity and Western imperialism comparable only to the continuing running sore of the Crusades in the minds of today's Muslims¹⁷. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, one of the 20th century's most respected missiologists, has identified the underlying biblical truth, as illustrated through two millennia of church history: "*The church is least recognizable as the body of Christ when it is growing rapidly through the influence of military, political, and economic power*"¹⁸.

Apart from the debilitating long-term impact of Western military intervention, that principle would also be tragically confirmed by the mid-century Taiping Revolution. The central figure of what began as a religious revival was a Hakka country teacher named Hong Xieu-quan (1814-1864). Born in Guangdong Province, he was deeply impressed by Christian literature given him by both Robert Morrison and others. However, hallucinations about becoming a modern-day "Messiah" for China radicalized him to the point of raising an anti-Confucian, anti-Manchu Peasants' Rebellion. Based on egalitarian yet rigidly theocratic control—ironically termed "Taiping" ("Great Peace")—the movement degenerated into civil war (1851-1864). Centered mostly round Hong's "New Jerusalem" of Nanjing, the insurrection was not over before it had laid waste much of the Lower Yangtze Valley.



Latourette, like many other historians, sees the Taiping revolt of the underprivileged masses as “the abortive first stage of the revolution which in the twentieth century swept away the old order” in China’s long history. Hong had a perversely religious motivation for his millennial paradise. Sun Yat-su and Mao-Tse-tung, who would follow him in 1912 and 1949, respectively, found features in Hong’s faith they could identify with; but both based their utopian visions on essentially secular power. All three met the dual need for native contextualization and freedom from foreign colonization. In the case of the Taiping Revolution, however, Chinese *contextuality* came at the cost of authentic *Christianity*¹⁹.

None the less, by the time of the formation of the Republic of China in 1912, the estimated number of Chinese Christians had risen to over one million. However, these would now have to navigate the maelstrom of a whole generation of civil and foreign conflict. Outright warfare would continue to engulf the nation through the Japanese invasion of 1937, the World War II years of 1939-1945, and finally during four further years of Civil War. In 1949 it all culminated with Communist victory and the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). As Western missionaries now had to withdraw from the Mainland, Chinese Christians were left to face the future alone.

Cut off from all outside support, China’s Protestants launched in 1951 a so-called “Three-Self Patriotic Movement” (TSPM). In principle, the three-self concept of a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church had been around for decades. Still, it took the need for survival under a regime committed to an atheistic worldview to put that concept to the test. First for fifteen years, Chinese Christians struggled on, often in vain, to purge themselves from lingering taints of Western imperialism, as they tried to prove their patriotism in the context of a new China. However, worse was yet to come—during a decade of open persecution under the Red Guard rampage of the “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976).

Then, with the dawn of a new day of post-1976 socio-economic liberalization, it became clear that Chinese Christians had far more than passed the test. Many in the West thought the church in China had disappeared. Instead, it had—like the



Early Church in ancient Rome—literally gone underground. When it reappeared, the world was astonished to learn that the church of Christ in China, among Protestants and Catholics alike, had experienced a quarter-century of growth more dramatic than in any other nation in history. It now numbered more millions than anyone could accurately count.

In 1980, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement among Protestant Christians gave birth to a “China Christian Council” (CCC), an entirely new ecclesiastical organization. As such, it is not just non-denominational in nature, but—for the first time in church history—actually “post-denominational” (or “the way it will be in heaven,” as Chinese Christians now find they need to remind the West!). As for the prospects for the indigenous Chinese church in general, the future has, according to one missionary historian, Hong Kong-based Dr. John LeMond, never looked brighter. Freed from “thirteen hundred years as a foreign religion, the faithful witness of Christians among the adversities of the past five decades has won for the church a place of acceptance in Chinese society”²⁰.

Where does all this leave prospects for indigenous maritime mission in Chinese waters? It remains an ironic fact that, over several decades of the 20th century, the secular seafarers’ welfare services, provided by Communist states in many respects outstripped the Christian-based services of the non-Communist world. On Soviet Bloc and PRC ships at sea, *Political Commissars* regularly nurtured and monitored both the ideological and social needs of all crewmembers. Ashore, multi-service *International Seafarers’ Clubs* (“Interclubs”), built in their major port cities, sought to showcase for foreign seafarers the best their system had to offer. Such was the situation until the last quarter-century.

“A Power No One Can Prevent!”

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Communist regimes quickly collapsed in the Soviet-dominated world. So did also their secular seafarer’s welfare provision, both on shipboard and ashore. Although a Communist regime would continue in China, there too that nation’s reorientation toward a market economy has radically impacted its delivery of seafarers’ wel-



fare services. Dr. Minghua Zhao has recently documented these changes on behalf of the Cardiff-based International Seafarers Research Centre. PRC sailing commissars have become fewer and focus more on regular social welfare. Also, PRC “Interclubs” have become commercialized into four-star hotels—virtually beyond the reach of today’s seafarers. She goes on to point out how the acute need for more comprehensive, holistic seafarers’ welfare is now becoming increasingly evident in Chinese ports²¹.

How has the international maritime ministry community so far responded to these ongoing developments? To its credit, the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) lost no time. From their vantage point in the Mariners’ Club of Hong Kong, the Anglican Mission to Seafarers (MtS) would come to play a crucial role on ICMA’s behalf. In January 1986, only ten years after the Cultural Revolution, MtS Secretary General Bill Down and Hong Kong Senior Chaplain Wally Andrews paved the way with a three-day visit to Shanghai. In 1987, Dr. James Whittemore of New York, then Chairperson of ICMA, joined these two on an expanded fact-finding tour to Beijing and Nanjing, as well as Shanghai. Here they were warmly welcomed to discuss future relations with PRC port authorities, maritime unions and Interclubs, as well as with Chinese church leaders, notably in the TSPM and CCC.

It seemed providential that ICMA’s incoming General Secretary, the Chinese-Australian Rev. Michael Chin, was himself an embodiment of East/West biculturalism. From 1991, in cooperation with Andrews’ successor, Rev. Peter Ellis, Chin made repeated visits to the PRC to reinforce relations with maritime and church officials. One immediate result was a first-ever PRC delegation to ICMA’s Plenary Conference in Helsinki in 1994.

By 1997, the International Association for the Study of Maritime Mission (IASMM) was able to take the process one step further. As President, the Author was invited to offer guest lectures on the history and theology of maritime mission at leading theological seminaries in the PRC (Nanjing, Shanghai and Guangzhou), as well as in Hong Kong – that year reverting to the PRC. This gave an opportunity to bring the Bethel Flag back to China, by presenting a replica to each of these seminaries –



precisely 175 years after the first hoisting of that emblem in Chinese waters. More importantly, the visits also raised the issue of “self-theologizing” by the Chinese church in this “new” area of mission and ministry²².

As for Hong Kong, during the 1970s Rev. Ernst Harbakk, who was at the time a missionary of the Norwegian Mission Society in that still British-ruled colony, initiated a promising outreach ministry to Mainland Chinese seafarers on Norwegian-flag ships in those parts²³. During repeated visits from 1988 on, the Author, as Maritime Ministry Consultant to the Lutheran World Federation, was based at the local Tao Fong Shan Nordic Mission to Buddhists. From here he cooperated with both the Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong in laying the groundwork for ministry among indigenous Chinese on Hong Kong’s enormous waterfront²⁴.

Meanwhile, a number of indigenous maritime ministry initiatives have, in recent years, also originated among several Chinese-ethnic communities around the world. Such examples can be found in Singapore, Kaohsiung, Jakarta, and elsewhere. Of particular note is the fact that the Pusan-based Korea International Maritime Mission (KIMM) has, within its Asian-indigenous global network, recently established so-called “Branches” in five major PRC ports. Chinese-Korean cooperation in maritime ministry holds particular promise in view of the close ethnic and commercial ties between the Chinese people and their Korean neighbors to the Northeast²⁵.

As to the current caliber of the Christian church in China, it is safe to say that gone are the days when it was commonplace to hear: “One more Christian, one less Chinese!” However, the crucial question is: Given the everyday realities which that church still has to face, is it realistic to expect an embryonic indigenous maritime ministry to emerge on the waterfronts of China? Certainly, recent news reports of the many quiet, dedicated house church missionaries now heading westward along the old “Silk Road” in reverse, give pause for thought. Tested during decades of persecution, they do not look to any human organization, but rather to the vision the Spirit holds before them: *Back to Jerusalem!* Bring the gospel back to Israel—



where it first came from—via the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim peoples along the way! With that kind of motivation, why should it be unreasonable to hope that indigenous Chinese Christians will now also be heading eastward—to China's vast border with *the sea*?

During his seminary visit in Nanjing in 1997, the Author asked Bishop K.H. Ting, long-time leader of the Chinese church and survivor of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, about his view. We leave the last word to him. "I have to be an optimist," he said. "After the foreign missionaries were forced to leave, China's Christians learned to rely on the power of prayer in Jesus' name—a power no one can prevent!" He voiced the same optimism about the future of an authentically Chinese contribution to worldwide maritime mission²⁶. Considering the growing proportion of seafarers from this most numerous nation in the human race, and the essential role of seafarers in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, the consequences could be incalculable.

Noter

- ¹ Roald Kverndal, "A New Challenge for the Church in China," *IASMM Newsletter*, Winter 1997/98.
- ² Robert Charles, "Olyphant and Opium: A Canton Merchant Who 'Just Said No,'" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, April 1992, 68.
- ³ A.J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor & China's Open Century*, Book One, *Barbarians at the Gates*, Sevenoaks, Kent, 1981, *passim*. See also John K. Fairbank (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Cambridge, 1987, vol. 10, *passim*.
- ⁴ Marshall Broomhall, *Robert Morrison: A Master-Builder*, London, 1924, *passim*.
- ⁵ Roald Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth*, Pasadena CA, 1986, 464-465.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* See especially Note 229 on p. 765, with references to Robert Morrison's *Parting Memorial* (1826) and Eliza Morrison's *Memoirs* (1839).
- ⁷ Charles 1992, 66-69.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* Broomhall 1981, 173-177.
- ⁹ Broomhall 1981, 265-268.
- ¹⁰ *The Sailor's Magazine*, 1825, 15, 163; 1827, 225-227, 241-244; Kverndal 1986, 570.
- ¹¹ The moral dilemma entailed in the tension between imperialism and mission is explored by Brian Stanley in *The Bible and the Flag*, Leicester, 1990.



- ¹² ASFS *Annual Reports*, 1850-1858.
- ¹³ Charles Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China*, London, 1834.
- ¹⁴ Frederick W. Drake, "Bridgman in China in the Early Nineteenth Century," *The American Neptune*, Winter 1986, 38.
- ¹⁵ Principal sources used here on Gutzlaff's life and work: Herman Schlyter, *Karl Gutzlaff als Missionär*, Lund, Sweden, 1946; Broomhall 1981; Jessie G. Lutz, "Karl F.A. Gutzlaff: Missionary Entrepreneur," *Christianity in China*, Suzanne Barnett & John Fairbank (Eds.), Cambridge MA, 1985.
- ¹⁶ Kverndal 1986, 362-364.
- ¹⁷ Kverndal, Winter 1997/98.
- ¹⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, Grand Rapids, 1978. 141.
- ¹⁹ Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, New York, 1996, *passim*; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, New York, 1953, 1326-1327; Broomhall 1981, 311-315.
- ²⁰ John G. LeMond, "A Brief History of the Church in China," *Word & World*, Spring 1997, 144-153; Lee Chee-Kong, *An Overview of Contemporary Chinese Churches*, LWF, Geneva, 1997, *passim*.
- ²¹ Minghua Zhao, "China's Shipboard Commissars Take on Welfare Role," *The Sea*, Nov/Dec 2003.
- ²² Roald Kverndal, *The Way of the Sea: The Changing Shape of Mission in the Seafaring World*, Pasadena CA, 2008, 172, 183-184. Cf. He Qi, "Art, the Gospel and the Sea: In the Wake of China's Cultural Revolution," *The Way of the Sea* (Kverndal 2008), 312-314.
- ²³ Norwegian Mission Society, *Annual Reports*, 1973-1977.
- ²⁴ "Hong Kong Lutherans Plan Mission for Seafarers," *Lutheran Literature Society for the Chinese*, December 1992.
- ²⁵ See recent issues of KIMM's Newsletter *Galilee*.
- ²⁶ Kverndal, Winter 1997/98; Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church*, Maryknoll NY, 2007, *passim*.

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