

What About All Those Chinese?

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http://www.biblicalresearchjournal.org/brj-pages_html/001bp_2007-08-12.html

The online version of *The Korea Times* newspaper reported encouraging news yesterday morning about the surviving South Korean Christian missionaries that have been held hostage by the Taliban since July 19. Headlined "Deal Over Release of Hostages in Rapid Progress,"¹ the story stated:



The South Korean delegation and the Taliban militants of Afghanistan have been making rapid progress on the release of 21 Korean hostages in the second round of the face-to-face talks in Ghazni Saturday, media reports said.

The Taliban are expected to free the Korean captives soon, Reuters quoted Taliban negotiators as saying without offering details.

"We assure you (the media) and the whole world that all of the Koreans will be released and will go to their homes," Mawlawi Nasrullah, one of the two Taliban negotiators, was quoted as saying.

"And our prisoners will come to their homes," he told reporters in Ghazni town where the Taliban and Korean diplomats have been holding talks since late Friday.

It is not clear what, if any, authority the South Korean negotiators have to arrange for Taliban prisoners to be exchanged for the South Koreans being held, which has been a consistent demand of the Taliban, Reuters said.

In an August 7 article in *Asia Times Online*, called "Christianity finds a fulcrum in Asia,"² Spengler helps put the story of these Christians' kidnapping into a broader context:

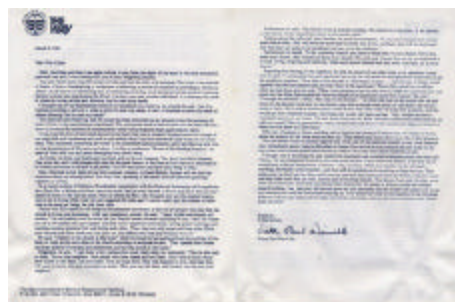
Last month's murder of reverend Bae Hyung-kyu, the leader of the missionaries still held hostage by Taliban kidnappers in Afghanistan, drew world attention to the work of South Korean Christians [link added], who make up nearly 30% of that nation's population and send more evangelists to the world than any country except the United States. This is only a first tremor of the earthquake to come, as Chinese Christians [link added] turn their attention outward.

For most people in America and the West -- including most Christians -- the spiritual revolution that is sweeping the so-called Far East (which just happens to be located west of California and Hawaii, folks) has been taking place well below the radar.

Thirty percent of South Korea has become Christian? When did that happen? And they're not just sitting quietly in their pews? They're sending out missionaries? To Afghanistan, of all places? Who'd have thought?

And what's this about Chinese Christians getting ready to turn their attention outward? When did all of this start?

In a **March 3, 1981 letter to the Way Corps** that I have in my files (written 8 years before the Cold War ended), Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille reported on a speech that Korean pastor Rev. Paul Cho Yongdo gave in the United States at a meeting of the Religious Broadcasters Association and the National Association of Evangelicals. Dr. Wierwille wrote:



...Mrs. Wierwille in her diary of our first outreach ministry to Great Britain, Europe and the East [1955-57] has notations about my sharing about The Way Tree, speaking of the small units of believers gathering together as a Twig...

In [the] meeting ... Rev. Paul Cho ... told [the broadcasters and evangelicals] about his work. He has over 150,000 in Korea and all of this has happened in Korea in the last ten years. How or where did Rev. Cho ... ever get the original inspiration to do in Korea what I laid out and suggested 25 years ago?³ I cannot really say; but instead of referring to his setup as Twigs, he calls them cells.

Pastor Paul Cho stated ... that his church in Korea was increasing 5,000 new members a month. He said, "I have 10,000 well-trained cell leaders" ... "each cell leader has 10 to 15 families who get together and they invite neighbors and friends, having prayer meetings and teaching sessions, praising God and loving each other." Thus, they not only water and keep older Christians blessed with their needs met; but they are also adding new ones and bringing them in.

He said, "I believe in the church in the home" which he stated he had gathered from his working of the Book of Acts. In the early days of the church according to the scripture he said, "They opened their homes and they received Christians and unbelievers and had the church in the home."

Originally, he said, "I just chose a few nucleus who could really obey my command." Then he also said to them, "Go to your neighbor. Find people who have needs and love them. Don't talk so much about Jesus Christ or the Bible. Just

love them. Pour out your love. They will respond to love, and then they will want to know why you love them so much. Then you can tell them and thereby you can win your neighbor."

Furthermore he said, "My church is not a concrete building. My church is in the town, in the factory, in the school, in the department store, in the market place"...

Regarding the winning of the neighbors, he tells the record of one lady living in an apartment house and he said, "I commanded her and appointed her to be the cell leader in that apartment house and to get the neighbors together." Now this is how she did it. "She began to pray ... and she got so many people together that she has planted cells on every floor of the apartment." Pastor Cho asked her to tell him what she had done and she said, "When I was praying to get an idea of how to fulfill the command you had given me, the Holy Spirit asked me 'How do people in an apartment reach their home?' She said, 'Through the elevator.' 'Okay, then stay in the elevator.'" So from that day on she would ride up and down in the elevator from one to two hours a day and as people were going up and down, she would smile at them. She'd help carry a child home, help older folks carrying their groceries, and she would get their telephone number. On Friday she would call them and say, "Hey, tonight we have a wonderful service in our home. We talk about God and the Bible. We have cookies and coffee and tea, so will you come?" Out of appreciation, many would come and then at this meeting she began to witness to them and win them to Christ Jesus.

Why can it happen in Korea and drag out so long in our country? I believe that the people of Korea sense the urgency of the times more so than we. They believe and know that it is a "do or die" situation.

The cell leaders work so closely together that when any of the believers transfer to any other location they immediately send a note to this effect to Pastor Cho and he in turn contacts the cell leader in the new areas where those people have moved to, and so they keep their fellow believers in tact [sic].

I thought one of the things he said toward the conclusion was wonderful because certain men had said, "Pastor we are completely bound by the code word of love. [We] can't leave this church. If we ever do, it would have to be an immigration to heaven." Yes it is love. When any member in the cell needs anything, the family works together, and they will do anything and everything to help that one. They gather rice, go find jobs for them and if anyone gets sick they come and clean the house, cook the meals and help them until they get well. And he said in his final remark, "You know, I am only 40 miles away from the Communist front lines and should they attack they are going to destroy us and our mother church building. Yes, they may kill me and even my 250 associates, but the 10,000 cell leaders will be going underground, and the Communist may dig up a few dozen but most of the majority of the Christian believers will be kept safely and be taken care of by cell leaders until we all meet in heaven with Christ Jesus our lord."

Faithfully,
In His service,
Victor Paul Wierwille

Although the Cold War may have ended in the West, North Korea remains a communist dictatorship. It's tanks are still parked less than two hours away from Seoul, it has developed nuclear bombs, and American troops along with South Korean forces still patrol the 38th Parallel which divides the North and the South.

The other still-communist country in the region is China.

Fast forward 26 years, and take a look at some of the earth-shaking statistics that Spengler reports about the country of China today:

Ten thousand Chinese become Christians each day, according to a stunning report⁴ by the National Catholic Reporter's veteran correspondent John Allen, and 200 million Chinese may comprise the world's largest concentration of Christians by mid-century, and the largest missionary force in history...



I suspect that even the most enthusiastic accounts err on the downside, and that Christianity will have become a Sino-centric religion two generations from now. China may be for the 21st century what Europe was during the 8th - 11th centuries, and America has been during the past 200 years: the natural ground for mass evangelism. If this occurs, the world will change beyond our capacity to recognize it. Islam might defeat the western Europeans, simply by replacing their diminishing numbers with immigrants, but it will crumble beneath the challenge from the East.

Spengler assertions would sound far-fetched, were it not for the events in Afghanistan that are making headlines on this very day. Christian believers "from the East" are already moving into Islamic lands to hold forth the Word of God: namely, from Korea into lands of the Taliban. Spengler goes on to say:

The Word Christian Database offers by far the largest estimate of the number of Chinese Christians at 111 million, of whom 90% are Protestant, mostly Pentecos-

tals. Other estimates are considerably lower, but no matter; what counts is the growth rate. This uniquely American [movement], which claims the inspiration to speak in tongues like Jesus' own disciples and to prophesy, is the world's fastest growing... In contrast to Catholicism, which has a very long historic presence in China but whose growth has been slow, charismatic Protestantism has found its natural element in an atmosphere of official suppression. Barred from churches, Chinese began worshipping in homes, and five major "house church" movements and countless smaller ones now minister to as many as 100 million Christians. This quasi-underground movement may now exceed in adherents the 75 million members of the Chinese Communist Party; in a generation it will be the most powerful force in the country.

Historians are well-familiar with the migration of Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism south into the Korean peninsula. But the question that writers on the subject of Christianity in China have failed to trace is, where did today's exploding home-church movement in China come from?

The answer is self-evident: The movement migrated in the opposite direction, from Korea north into China, spread by Christian disciples such as those in the movement that Dr. Wierwille reported on back in the spring of 1981, which was begun by Pastor Cho.

Some of the perpetrators of the fraud that -- among the West's polyglot of Christian denominations and sects -- some kind of coherent "orthodoxy" exists (based on adherence to the creeds from the Council of Nicea and the Council of Ephesus, but you can omit the latter if you're Protestant), and who believe that this fictional orthodoxy is something God has called them to defend, have sniped at Pastor Cho's teachings. Yeah well, they wouldn't recognize a movement of God if it bit them on their ever-widening spirit-of-slumber-seized asses (and I'm not talking about their donkeys).

Beyond preaching Christ, I don't know what Pastor Cho teaches, nor for that matter, what the leaders from the five major home-church movements in China teach (check Philippians 1:14-18). But I do know that Far Eastern believers are no more exempt from God's command in II Timothy 2:15 to "study to show thyself approved unto God" than anyone else. And just like everyone else, to the end they "rightly divide the Word of truth" they will have the true Word, and to the end they wrongly divide it they'll have error.

It doesn't help matters that the ministry that God raised up to represent the accuracy of His Word -- likewise organized around in-home fellowships -- has,



Main Street in Ephesus circa 1900

photo by Gertrude Bell

except for a few scattered fellowships, disintegrated its constituent dysfunctional "old-man" parts. But when it comes to making available God's accurate Word to the believers that are rising up in the Far East, like the poem says, "God's bank ain't busted yet."

Christianity of both the Protestant and Roman Catholic varieties, along with every other religious and spiritual movement including the Falun Gong, is still being suppressed by the Communist government in China.

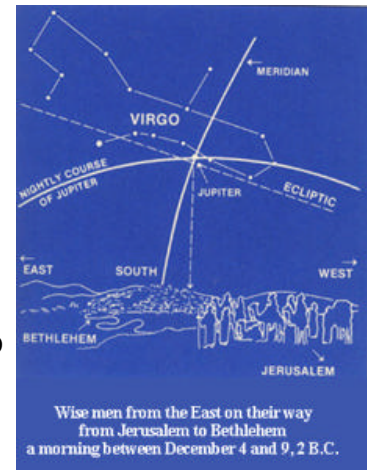


It's instructive of God Almighty's simple strategic plan for the movement of His Word over the world, to note the differing reactions to the persecutions of the Roman Catholics versus the upstart in-home Protestants. Spengler says:

While the Catholic Church has worked patiently for independence from the Chinese government, which sponsors a "Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association" with government-appointed bishops, the evangelicals have no infrastructure to suppress and no hierarchy to protect.

John Allen, in his article in the National Catholic Reporter,⁴ weighs in that:

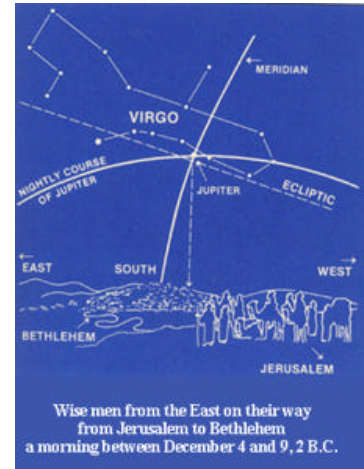
Much Catholic conversation about evangelization in China is usually phrased in the subjunctive: "If China were to open up on religious freedom..." or "If the Holy See and China were to establish diplomatic relations..." The implicit assumption is sometimes that structural change is required before Catholicism can truly move into an expansion phase.



Pentecostal talk about mission, on the other hand, is very much phrased in the simple present. Most Pentecostals would obviously welcome being arrested less frequently, but in general they are not waiting for legal or political reform before carrying out aggressive evangelization programs. The most audacious even dream of carrying the gospel beyond the borders of China [following the example of the hostage Koreans], along the old "Silk Road" [link added] into the Muslim world, in a campaign known as "Back to Jerusalem." As Aikman explains in Jesus in Beijing [link added], some Chinese Evangelicals and Pentecostals believe that the basic movement of the gospel for the last 2,000 years has been westward: from Jerusalem to Antioch [except that, Mr. Aikman or Mr. Allen, Antioch of Syria which was the Apostle Paul's headquarters, was to the north; what about saying "to Macedonia and Greece" instead?], from Antioch [sic] to Europe, from Europe to America, and from America to China. Now, they believe, it's their

turn to complete the loop by carrying the gospel to Muslim lands, eventually arriving in Jerusalem. Once that happens, they believe, the gospel will have been preached to the entire world.

Most experts [*uh oh, time for the eggheads to weigh in*] regard that prospect as deeply improbable; [one says] he doubts more than a handful of Protestants in China take the "Back to Jerusalem" vision seriously. Aikman is more sanguine, reporting that as of 2005 two underground Protestant seminaries in China were training believers for work in Islamic nations. In any event, it's revealing as an indication of missionary ferment.



Ah yes, "missionary ferment." Sort of reminds me of a hoary gospel song -- of backwoods American Bible-Belt fame:

Gimme that ol'-time missionary-ferment, Gimme that ol'-time missionary-ferment, Gimme that ol'-time missionary-ferment in my soul...

Who knows? Maybe that's the very song that in-home ministers of music are wont to lead their Chinese congregations into -- you know, "to get the spirit of the meeting up" -- just before the in-home preachers spring up out of their recliners and launch into a motivational "talk about mission."

Spengler, on the other hand, is not only enthusiastic about the rise of Christianity in mainland China, he's expansive about what it means for the country's outlook for democracy:

China's Protestants evangelized at the risk of liberty and sometimes life, and possess a sort of fervor not seen in Christian ranks for centuries. Their pastors have been beaten and jailed, and they have had to create their own institutions through the "house church" movement. Two years ago I warned that China would have to wait for democracy. I wrote:



For a people to govern itself, it first must want to govern itself and want to do so with a passion. It also must know how to do so. Democracy requires an act of faith, or rather a whole set of acts of faith. The individual citizen must believe that a representative sitting far away in the capital will listen to his views, and know how to band together with other citizens to make their views known. That

is why so-called civil society, the capillary network of associations that manage the ordinary affairs of life, is so essential to democracy. Americans elect their local school boards, create volunteer fire brigades and raise and spend tax dollars at the local level to provide parks or sewers. [To which I'd add, that Americans today are beneficiaries of being accidentally born into a country whose founding documents were written by men who counted God to be God, and not the government.]

China's network of house churches may turn out to be the leaven of democracy, like the radical Puritans of England who became the Congregationalists of New England. Freedom of worship is the first precondition for democracy, for it makes possible freedom of conscience. The fearless evangelists at the grassroots of China will, in the fullness of time, do more to bring US-style democracy to the world than all the nation-building bluster of President George W. Bush and his advisers.



Except for his Bush-bashing -- which seems to be required these days for writers who want to hold onto their journalism licenses -- I agree with Spengler's sentiments for political change in China, and I hope that he's right and that it's becoming more likely.

As far as the American invasion in Iraq, who's to say the world is not witnessing the beginnings of a pincer movement of providential proportions? If -- while Islam is facing military and political pressure from the West (which is going to continue, whatever the outcome of the battle for Iraq) -- it has to at the same time watch its back for evangelizing tongues-talking Christians spilling over its borders from the Far East *it's all good*.

That scenario, in fact, looks similar to the smaller-scale (hah!) pincer movement with which Islam threatened European Christendom for more than a hundred years -- one arm extending up through the Caucasus Mountains in the east, and the other over through Spain in the west -- until the Frankish king, Charles "The Hammer" Martel, stopped the advance of western arm cold at the Battle of Tours in 732.

One danger that a lot of well-meaning Christians and others may be overlooking is the very-real threat of an armed conflict breaking out between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Such a war would, in its scope and casualties, dwarf today's war on terror by several orders of magnitude.



In order to challenge the military hegemony in the Pacific that America has enjoyed since World War II and put muscle behind its territorial disputes with its neighbors, China has been arming itself to the teeth. Correspondent Charles R. Smith, who has been reporting in exhaustive detail for the better part of a decade on the buildup, in his May 29, 2007 column "China is U.S.' Greatest Threat" outlines the strategic challenge that the People's Republic represents:

The Pentagon has issued its latest report on Chinese military power and the picture painted by U.S. defense analysts is not a pretty one. China is using its massive trade imbalance with the United States to build-up the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into an advanced, super-power military force.

The leading edge of the PLA is the Second Artillery Corps, the unit charged with carrying nuclear war onto American soil. The Second Artillery has recently enhanced its long range ballistic missile strike force with the addition of a new, and deadly accurate nuclear tipped missile, the Dong Feng 31.

China is not neglecting its conventional arms in the event of conflict with America. In fact, the pace and capability of Chinese conventional weapons acquisition is breathtaking.

According to the Pentagon report, China is building capacity for conventional precision strike Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs). According to DIA estimates, as of October 2006 the PLA had roughly 900 short range missiles and is increasing its inventory at a rate of more than 100 missiles per year.

China is also acquiring large numbers of Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs). The PLA is fielding conventional medium range missiles such as the improved DF-21 to increase the range to which it can conduct precision strikes, and use them to attack naval ships such as U.S. carrier battle groups...

The Pentagon report also noted that China's recent test of an anti-satellite missile "poses dangers to human space flight and puts at risk the assets of all space faring nations."

The aggressive and provocative test by the Chinese military is clearly part of Beijing's intentions to deny every nation on earth - other than itself - with access to space. According to the Pentagon report, China has historically claimed that any use of space to image its soil is a threat to its security...

China has not only laid claim to all of outer space but to huge tracks of land on earth. China continues to pursue territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea, with India along their shared border, and with Southeast Asian nations in the South China Sea...

"Although China has attempted to prevent these disputes from disrupting regional relations, occasional statements by PRC officials underscore China's resolve in these areas. For example, on the eve of President Hu's historic October 2006 visit to India, PRC Ambassador Sun Yuxi told Indian press, "the whole of what you call the state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory . . . we are claiming all of that - that's our position"...



According to the Pentagon report, China is likely to strike first during armed conflict. Despite claims to the contrary, China has a long history of striking first.

"The history of modern Chinese warfare is replete with cases in which China's leaders have claimed military pre-emption as a strategically defensive act. For example, China refers to its intervention in the Korean War (1950-1953) as the War to Resist the United States and Aid Korea"...

"Similarly, authoritative texts refer to border conflicts against India (1962), the Soviet Union (1969), and Vietnam (1979) as 'Self-Defense Counter Attacks.' This logic suggests the potential for China to engage in military preemption, perhaps far from its borders, if the use of force protects or advances core interests, including territorial claims (e.g., Taiwan and unresolved border or maritime claims)."

Finally, the report concludes that China continues its war of espionage against America and her allies. "China continues a systematic effort to obtain from abroad through legal and illegal commercial transactions dual-use and military technologies..."

"Several high profile legal cases highlight China's efforts to obtain sensitive U.S. technologies [e.g., missile, imaging, semiconductor, and submarine] illegally by targeting well-placed scientists and businessmen. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials have rated China's aggressive and wide-ranging espionage as the leading threat to U.S. technology. Since 2000, ICE has initiated more than 400 investigations involving the illicit export of U.S. arms and technologies to China."

In summary, the report shows that China is the leading threat to America - now and into the future. The current U.S./China trade imbalance is financing a war machine aimed directly at us. The range and spectrum of aggressive Chinese military power will have to be dealt with sooner or later. How long we continue to feed the dragon at our doorstep is a question that perhaps will come too soon or too late to save us.

If Smith and others sound alarmed, they've got plenty of reasons to be. Starting a trade war, however, would most likely to produce *the opposite* of its intended effect. Remember FDR's embargoes on Japan begun in the 1930s? They helped foment the war in the Pacific in the 1940s.

The Bible says that the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), and that the "ruler of the darkness of this world" (Ephesians 6:12), and that the one who "holds the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14) is the Devil (Luke 4:5-6). And there's nothing that the Devil would like more -- to counter the move of God in the Far East -- than to once again, during the history of this dark world, manipulate people and events to the end that God's people find themselves aiming weapons at each other across a battlefield.

The root of this threat is not political or military, it's spiritual. As believers "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Corinthians 10:4). And there's no sharper weapon in our arsenal than prayer:

I Timothy 2:1-6

I exhort therefore, that, first of all [*first of all!*], supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The "due time," for the generation living in China and the Far East today, is today -- praise God! So let us continue to supplicate, pray, intercede and give thanks for all men to Him through Christ Jesus our Lord -- remembering those Korean believers still held hostage -- knowing that God alone has the power bring the schemes of the Evil One to nothing.

UPDATE 09-03-2007: Freed South Korean hostages arrive home, by Davinder Kaur, Telegraph.co.uk:

Nineteen South Koreans held hostage by Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan for six weeks returned home to loved ones' tearful embraces today.

Released in stages last week under a deal between the Taliban and the South Korean government, the former hostages arrived on a flight from Dubai.

They were reunited with family members at a hospital outside Seoul before undergoing medical checks...

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1. *Korea Times*, "Deal Over Release of Hostages in Rapid Progress" (August 11, 2007).
 2. *Asia Times Online*, Christianity finds a fulcrum in Asia (August 7, 2007), by Spengler.
 3. In chapter 12 of his book *The New Dynamic Church* (first published in 1971), called "The First Century Church in the Twentieth," Dr. Wierwille wrote (pp. 147-148):

The early Church, the Body, as recorded in the book of Acts and the Church Epistles, developed a pattern for its growth in various localities:

1. Each person was responsible to witness with boldness to the Word of God. When a person accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord, "older" Christians continued to nurture and shepherd him until the new Christian was grounded well enough to stand and walk alone on that Word.
2. Small supervised meetings, called churches, were held in private homes with a head elder or pastor overseeing each home unit.
3. Personal revisits and written communications were kept up with each group, each church, by apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
4. Christians were not to be side-tracked by material possessions. Thus they sold their unneeded possessions in order to further the work of the ministry.

The early Church was born into a society which was just as indoctrinated and hardened as any society has been at any time. The Romans were governmentally in control and paganism was rampant. Yet the first century Christian Church turned the world upsidedown - which means they turned it right sideup. They had the potential spiritual ability which became kinetic in a most wonderful and dynamic way. Within one generation the early believers changed the whole spiritual and moral climate of that part of the world. We do not know how many Christians really walked on the Word of God in the first century and witnessed to the then-known world, but we do know that according to Acts 19:10, in two years and three months "... all ... Asia [currently known as Asia Minor] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

This feat certainly could not have been accomplished, and was not accomplished, by one man. But under Paul's ministry and teaching the original "... about twelve ..."* men (households) were inspired and learned to walk on the Word of God and share it with others. All Asia Minor heard this wonderful Word of God as it spread out from Ephesus because each believer endeavored to win one, and nurtured that one until the new-born Christian was strong enough to stand and walk on the Word of God, operating the manifestations of the spirit. All this was accomplished without the modern aids of radio, television and printed matter.

4. *National Catholic Reporter*, "The Uphill Journey of Catholicism in China" (August 2, 2007), by John L. Allen Jr.
5. *Jesus in Beijing* (2006), by David Aikman.