



PhD thesis

**A study of an emerging missions movement in urban China: from the perspective of four Beijing pastors**

**Ro, D.**

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# **A STUDY OF AN EMERGING MISSIONS MOVEMENT IN URBAN CHINA: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FOUR BEIJING PASTORS**

David L. Ro  
OCMS, MPhil. /Ph. D  
March 1st, 2023

## **Abstract:**

This dissertation is a study of the missiology, characteristics, factors, and trajectory of a new missions phenomenon in the unregistered house churches of urban China called *Missions China* (originally *Mission China 2030*). This research seeks to uncover the distinctiveness of the *Mission China* phenomenon from the perspective of four Beijing house church leaders this movement. Following a series of revivals in rural and urban China, a house church overseas cross-cultural missions movement has emerged within the context of intense persecution and both economic and geopolitical rise.

The research methodology combines a case study approach regarding four Beijing pastors, supplemented with qualitative, semi-structured interviews with forty house church leaders. Several missiological concepts have emerged within a persecution context, including the 'positivity of suffering', 'cross missiology', 'creative sending', 'City on a Hill', 'Back to Jerusalem', and the recovery of the Great Commission mandate.

This thesis has been analysed from a theoretical framework called the 'Missionisation Cycle' adopted by Las Ekström. In his research on the Newer Sending missionary movements from the Global South, Ekström builds on Andrew Walls' 'translatability' and 'contextualisation' principles by introducing 'self-missionisation' as the final phase of an indigenous missions development. Several of these missiological concepts will be compared with the writings of contemporary missiologists Paul Fiddes, Karan Kilby, Jürgen Moltmann, and Kosuke Koyman for further theological reflection.

The concluding chapter includes key findings about the emergence of *Mission China*, a general trajectory of the movement, and a possible new missionary paradigm with vestiges of the past coming from the Global East.





**A Study of a Missions Movement in Urban China:  
From the Perspective of Four Beijing Pastors**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Middlesex University

March 1st, 2023

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies



## **DECLARATION**

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed



Date

1st, March 2023

## **STATEMENT ONE**

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by endnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed



Date

1st, March 2023

## **STATEMENT TWO**

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1st, March 2023





## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD 2000	AD 2000 and Beyond
AMTB	Association of Brazilian Cross-Cultural Missions
BAM	Business as Missions
B2J	Back to Jerusalem (inside of China)
BTJ	Back to Jerusalem (outside of China)
CAN	Creative Assess Nation
Cape Town 2010	The Third Lausanne World Congress at Cape Town 2010
CCC	China Christian Council
CCCOWE	Chinese Coordination Centre for World Evangelism
CGF	China Gospel Fellowship
CIM	China Inland Mission
COMIBAM	<i>Congreso Misionero Ibero Americano</i>
CSN	Creative Sending Nation
GCOWE	Global Consultation on World Evangelisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMA	Ghana Evangelical Missions Association
IFES	International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
IMA	India Missions Association
IMB	International Missions Board of the Southern Baptist
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMM	Indigenous Missions Movement
KRIM	Korea Research Institute for Missions
KWMA	Korean World Missions Association
Large Rural Networks	Five Large Rural House Church Networks
MBB	Muslim Background Believers
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
<i>Mission China</i>	<i>Mission China 2030 or Mission China 100</i>
NGO	Non-Government Organisations
NSC	Newer Sending Countries
OM	Operation Mobilisation
OSC	Older Sending Countries
PSB	Public Security Bureau
RMB	Renminbi (Chinese dollar)
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs
Traditional Church	Traditional Indigenous Chinese House Church
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Church
Urban Church	New Emergent Urban Church
UPG	Unreached People Groups
UUPG	Unengaged Unreached People Groups
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WEC	Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WCC	World Council of Churches
YWAM	Youth with a Mission
ZBI	Zion Bible Institute

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the factors, characteristics, and trajectory of a new missions mobilisation phenomenon among the unregistered house churches in urban China called *Missions China* (originally *Mission China 2030*). This study will examine *Mission China's* phenomenon from the perspective of four Beijing pastors: Zhang Heng, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel, along with supplemental qualitative research data from interviews with forty people. For further reflection, the missiological concepts from the Beijing pastors will be compared with the writings of contemporary missiologists Jürgen Moltmann, Paul Fiddes, Karan Kilby, and Kosuke Koyman.

#### 1.2 *Mission China 2030* Phenomenon

Since China opened to the world in 1979, it has emerged from a third world developing nation to the second-largest economy globally. Rapid urbanisation brought about a mass migration of hundreds of millions to the cities. China's geopolitical expansion and global reach opened doors for citizens to travel and access the world. Subsequently, globalisation introduced modern living, urban sophistication, consumerism, materialism, pop culture, and entertainment in global culture. At the same time, pastors were released from prison, and churches reopened. These factors led Christianity to explode in several locations, starting with a revival in the countryside in unregistered house churches. In addition, a separate church growth movement took place in cities with the official Three-self Patriotic Movement. (TSPM) (Lambert 1994; 2006). In the 1990s, another new urban house church movement called the 'new emergent urban church' (Urban Church) began to emerge among intellectuals, young professionals, and students (Kan, Vicky W. 2013; Fulton 2015, 23–24). These three separate movements helped lead the Protestant church to grow from under one million Protestants in 1949 to an estimated range between 38



million to 115 million Christians today. Zhang Heng estimates that there are 110 million Protestant Christians divided between 70 million in the house church and 40 million in the TSPM, which doesn't include the estimated 20 million Catholics (Interview: Zhang and T2-LG 2017, 5). Other sources like Pew Research have quoted more conservative numbers of 57 million Protestants and 9 million Catholics (Pew Research Centre 2011). While the data are impossible to verify, I estimate a mid-range number of 85 million Protestant Christians and 12 million Catholics (D. Ro 2020, 3).<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1900s, overseas mission work in China emerged from evangelists Nai-Tang Huang, Sing Huen Choe, Mary Stone, and John Sung. These four had distinct ministries. Methodist Nai-Tang Huang (1849-1924) secured a Christian community in Sibiu, Sarawak in 1901. Rev. Sing Huen Choe (1888-1963) established a Chinese church in Saigon, Vietnam. Mary Stone, along with Zai Wang and Chi Wang, established the Chinese Inland Missionary Union in 1918; they travelled to the islands of the South China Sea to preach and plant churches. Lastly, John Sung and the Bethel Band had a preaching ministry among overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia (Z 2016, 23–25).

In the late 1940s, a Back to Jerusalem (B2J) movement inspired two groups of Chinese Christians, the *Preach the Gospel Everywhere Evangelistic Band* and the *Northwest*

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<sup>1</sup> The State Council government provides the most conservative numbers of 46 million Christians, with 38 million Protestants in 60,000 TSPM churches and 6 million Catholics in 6,000 churches and meeting points (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2018). The Chinese Academy of Social Science reported 23 million registered Protestants with 73% joining after 1993 (Lin 2010). Liu Peng from the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) has estimated 50 million Christians; taking into account the double-counting of 10% to 15% TSPM and house church (Liu 2009). Pew Research in 2010 estimated 67 million Christians, which includes 57 million Protestants, 9 million Catholics, and 20,000 Orthodox (Pew Research Centre 2011). Lian Xi estimates 50 million Protestants and 17 million Catholics (Lian 2010, 2). Rodney Stark's survey from Baylor University states 70 million Christians in 2011 (Stark 2011). Thomas Lee estimates 70 to 80 million Christians - 15 million TSPM, 54 million house church (T. Lee 2010, 175). Operation World 2010 quotes 75 million Christians with 56 million Protestants (35 million house church and 21 million TSPM members) and 10 million Catholics (Mandryk and Johnstone 2010, 216). Yang Fenggang estimated 93 million to 115 million Protestant Christians with less than 30 million TSPM (Albert 2018). Todd Johnson with the World Christian Database 2010 quoted 108 million Christians (Johnson and Zurlo 2020). Paul Hattaway with Asia Harvest has the highest estimates: 130 million Christians with 110 million Protestants (40 million TSPM and 70 million house church) and 20 million Catholics. (Hattaway 2020). My estimates of 85 million Protestant Christians (55 million in the house church and 30 million in the TSPM) and 12 million Catholics takes a middle road approach based on my general understanding of China.

*Spiritual Band*, to head westward towards Jerusalem. They were not able to leave China due to the Communist take-over but were able to evangelise and plant eight churches in Qiquanhu, Barköl, Turpan, Urumqi, Aksu Prefecture, and Kashgar, impacting around 700 Han Chinese. In September 1950, the People's Liberation entered Xinjiang. The Communist Party arrested the leaders; eventually seven passed away in prison (M. Jin 2016, 13–16).

In the late 1990s and 2000s, another wave of Chinese B2J missionaries from the rural house church networks of Henan and Anhui were sent to the mission field. Simon Zhao (Ximen), after his release from 31 years in prison, travelled to rural Henan and inspired a younger generation of rural Chinese missionaries (Aikman 2003, 199–201). These B2J missionaries travelled to Bhutan, North Korea, Sudan, Nepal, India, Tanzania, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Cambodia, Laos, and other countries (Bach and Zhu 2012, 221–26).

Wenzhou house churches have also sent missions through entrepreneurial efforts worldwide. China's first missionary martyrs were two young people sent to Pakistan from one of the Wenzhou house church networks (Interview: T2-Cheng 2021, 3–6). On May 24, 2017, Xingyang Lee and Lisi Meng were abducted and later killed by Islamic State armed men masquerading as policemen (Ponniah et al. 2017; Reuters 2017).

Though the total number of Chinese overseas missionaries is hard to verify, I am aware of around 500 to 600 Chinese missionaries sent from the various house church networks. From direct contact by those in the field, I also confirmed that there are over 100 Chinese missionaries in two countries (one in South Asia and one in Southeast Asia). From the estimates of several China experts, there were 1,000 to 2,000 mainland China missionaries serving overseas or in cross-cultural missions within China before the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Different sources had different estimates of the number of Chinese missionaries. In May 2015, before the first *Mission China 2030* conference, T1-Cui believed that there were several hundred overseas missionaries (Interview: Cui 2015, 6). Brent Fulton with China Source also estimated the number of cross-cultural Chinese missionaries to be in the hundreds (Zylstra 2016, 21). In 2017, Ezra, Zhang Heng and T2-14

Another missionary movement was formed in relation to the Lausanne World Congress in Cape Town in 2010. House church leaders from the traditional house church, the five large rural networks, and the ‘new emergent urban church’ (Urban Church) partnered together in a ‘unity for missions’ platform to attend the Lausanne Congress (J. Li 2010, 12–14). Unfortunately, the Chinese participants were prevented from attending the Lausanne Congress at Cape Town. Another leadership conference convened in 2013 in Seoul, Korea, called the *Asia Church Leaders Forum* (ACLF). The vision of ‘sending 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030’ was first introduced by Daniel (Chapter 6) at ACLF (E. Jin 2013). In addition, a leadership team of eight key pastors was formed, called the ‘Jesus Leadership Forum’, under the leadership of Ezra (Chapter 5) and Zhang Heng (Chapter 3).<sup>3</sup> With the connections, spiritual energy, and visions shared at the conference, a new missions movement emerged.

In 2014, Ezra convened twenty-five leaders in Seoul and decided to launch the first *Mission China 2030* conference in Hong Kong in 2015, designating T1-Cui from Shanghai as the conference chair. From 2015 to 2018, *Mission China 2030* leaders operated four annual large-scale mission conferences: Hong Kong in 2015, South Korea in 2016, Thailand in 2017, and Singapore in 2018 (Lausanne 2015; World Evangelical Alliance 2016; Zylstra 2016; 2017). Due to a disagreement over the year ‘2030’ within the Jesus Leadership Forum, the term *Mission China 2030* was shortened to just *Mission China*. *Mission China*, preferred by Tianming and T1-Yuehan, is a broader, inclusive term that does not set goals and dates but describes the overall missions activities of the Jesus Leadership Forum.<sup>4</sup> However, for this thesis, *Mission China 2030* will describe the

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Pei estimated there were up to 1,000 missionaries (Interviews: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 8; Pei 2017, 9). On the highest end, T2-Cheng estimated there were 2,000 missionaries serving overseas (Interview: T2-Cheng 2021, 1–3).

<sup>3</sup> The Jesus Leadership Forum consists of four Beijing pastors who were interviewed for this thesis (Zhang Heng, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel). The other pastors include two from Shanghai, one from Xian, and one from Wuhan.

<sup>4</sup> The Jesus Leaders Forum decided to change the name *Mission China 2030* to just *Mission China* and extended the time frame to a century under the motto: ‘*the Century of Mission*’ (百年宣教). This addressed

activities in the first four years, from 2015 to 2018, coming from the perspectives of Ezra and Daniel, who are champions of the *Mission China 2030* vision and still use the *Mission China 2030* terminology.

The broader indigenous Missions Movement (IMM) from China also includes other house church networks that would not officially identify with *Mission China 2030* but are still connected through relationships and activities. For example, T4-Carl (Beijing house church pastor), T2-Cheng (Kairos missions mobiliser), T4-Lee (Anhui missions leader), T4-Bai (Wenzhou Reformed network leader), and T4-Joshua (Reformed Baptist pastor), would not consider themselves part of *Mission China 2030* but are involved with similar missions activities under the broader indigenous missions movement from China (Interviews: T4-Carl 2016; T4-Bai 2017; T4-Joshua 2017; 2020; T4-Paul 2020; T2-Cheng 2021).

### **1.3 Purpose of Study**

It is apparent that a missions mobilisation phenomenon called *Mission China* (originally *Mission China 2030*) has emerged under several house church leaders, primarily four Beijing pastors. This dissertation will investigate the missiology and distinctive characteristics of *Mission China* from the perspective of the Beijing pastors for comparison with other contemporary missiologists.

### **1.4 Research Question**

What is distinctive about the *Mission China* phenomenon coming from the perspective of these four Beijing house church leaders?

Sub-questions:

- What are the early spiritual characteristics and missiology?

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concerns of an overemphasis in numbers and time frame from *Mission China 2030*. The first century (1800 to 1900) represented missions entering China, the second century (1900 to 2000) represented missions in China, and the third century (2000 to 2100) would be missions sent from China. Daniel, Ezra, T1-Cui, and T2-Gao are champions of the *Mission China 2030* vision. Tianming and T1-Yuehan are against the 2030 vision and prefer the term *Mission China*. Zhang Heng is neutral.

- What are the internal, external, and international contributing factors?
- What are some reflections coming from the comparison of the *Mission China* missiology with the writings of several contemporary theologians?
- What is the trajectory of *Mission China*?
- How does *Mission China* impact the field of missiology and global missions?

### **1.5 Four Beijing Pastors**

The primary insights for this dissertation come from four Beijing pastors (Zhang Heng, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel) due to their overall vision and leadership in *Mission China*. Two other Shanghai pastors, T1-Cui and T1-Yuehan, also have been instrumental in founding *Mission China*. However, Beijing has served as the central hub for the missions phenomenon due to several reasons.

The rise of Christianity among urban intellectuals after 1989, called the ‘new emergent urban church’ (Urban Church), started in Beijing with pastors Tianming of Shouwang Church, Ezra of Zion Church, and Daniel of City Revival Church. The congregants from these new urban churches are comprised of intellectuals, professors, students, lawyers, young professionals, CEOs, entrepreneurs, artists, and cultural influencers in society. They have the requisite global exposure and urbanised sophistication to function in a multicultural environment. They have financial resources and have achieved a high level of education. Many of these leaders have lived overseas, have graduate degrees from abroad, and connections to the church worldwide. Jonathan Ro's thesis provides an analysis of the impact of globalisation on four urban churches, including those of three of the four pastors, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel (J. C. Ro 2013).

Beijing serves as the political capital but also, in some sense, as the spiritual capital of China. For example, Zhang Heng's presence and national campaign in Beijing provided credibility among the *China Gospel Fellowship* to transition the house church into larger independent congregations. Tianming's ‘City on a Hill’ vision influenced the overall

house church movement to become a visible witness in society. Ezra founded a national pastoral forum *Shalom China* that involved a national network of several thousand leaders. Daniel's *Mission China 2030* vision set a national goal for all churches in China to send 20,000 missionaries by 2030.

The Beijing house church also has historical spiritual significance. Beijing house church patriarchs include Wang Mingdao, Allen Yuan (Xiangcheng), and Moses Xie (Moshan); all of whom suffered around twenty-five years in prison for their faith. These patriarchs have a national influence through their pietism, sacrificial faith, and uncompromising stand for the gospel's truth (Aikman 2003, 47–67).

The four Beijing leaders have been the primary conveners who partner with leaders from other cities like Shanghai in a broader movement for *Mission China*. For example, Beijing's Zhang Heng represents the five large rural networks, Beijing's Tianming represents the Urban Church, and T1-Yuehan from Shanghai represents the traditional house churches. From rural, urban, and traditional influences, these prominent figures helped lead a coalition of 230 church leaders to attend the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010. The other two Beijing leaders are Ezra and Daniel. Following the Lausanne Congress, Ezra launched the Jesus Leadership Forum and *Shalom China*, a pastoral forum including several hundred churches and thousands of leaders. Additionally, Daniel started a 24-7 missions prayer chain involving thirty house church networks.

## **1.6 Critiques of *Mission China 2030***

*Mission China* is still in its infancy stages, with many critics from within and outside China. The four Beijing pastors are considered too high profile, and conferences have attracted too much attention hindering the practical work and mobilisation of the missions (Interview: T4-Paul 2020, 1). The initial *Mission China 2030* conference was too Korean, different from the security-conscious Chinese house churches low-key culture (Interview:

T4-Bai 2017, 3). A younger leader has concerns and warns of the danger for the movement to become too nationalistic with a Chinese superior cultural attitude (Interview: Liu 2016, 1). Similar missiological concerns included a missions movement coming from power and strength rather than the margins (Wei 2020, 44).

Furthermore, *Mission China 2030* had hardly sent any missionaries implying more hype than reality (Interview: T4-Zhu 2016, 1–2). The goal of 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030 under China’s political environment was a realistic concern (Interview: T1-Yuehan and T2-Dai 2016, 10). The B2J missiology was also a primary concern for several *Mission China* leaders, including Tianming and Wei (Wei 2020, 70–72). Wei’s critique also included the weakness of a movement led not by mission leaders but by pastors who have no mission field experience. He also addressed practical concerns, including a lack of organizational structure and coordination (Wei 2020, 147). Additionally, one Reformed pastor was critical of the broader embracing of some ‘fringe’ Charismatics without more careful attention to theological orthodoxy (Interview: T4-Joshua 2017, 3). The critiques point to a prevalent negative opinion of *Mission China 2030*, primarily from ultra-Reformed and the charismatic rural church networks.

The Jesus Leadership Forum overseeing *Mission China 2030* addressed some of the criticisms with the removal of ‘2030’ from *Mission China 2030*. The goal of 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030 was divisive and a reminder of the unrealistic B2J movement 100,000 missionary goal (T1-Yuehan and T2-Dai 2016a, 11). Despite the criticisms, the Beijing pastors have been able to bring together a nationwide coalition from different regions. Beijing has served as a central hub for *Mission China*. The importance of the four Beijing pastors includes the location of the national capital that has been the political and spiritual centre. Beijing leaders are internationally connected, which helps them have a global perspective. Beijing congregation members include educated professionals who have global cultural awareness and financial resources.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

### **1.7.1 From Sociological to Missiological Approach**

With China's economic and geopolitical rise, my first attempt at a theoretical framework was to examine missionary movements and the rise of empires to compare with the missionary movement emerging from China using a sociological and historical approach.

Christianity expanded North into Europe, with the Roman Empire starting in the fourth century and continuing through the Medieval ages. The Church of the East with the Nestorians grew with the Persian Empire in the fifth century and sixth century, reaching China in the seventh century. The West-to-the-rest missionary enterprise started after discovering the Americas and opening sea routes to Asia. The first missionary order established in the Catholic church was the Society of Jesus. Also called the Jesuits, this order was founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola and officially approved by the Pope in 1540 during the rise of the Portuguese and Spanish Empire (O'Malley 1993; Culbertson and Pieper 2017).

The Protestant missionary movement emerged later under the context of Western colonialism (Bosch 1991, 302–13) and the revivals during the Great Awakenings (Bosch 1991, 277–80). The first Protestant missionary movement started with the European Pietists and the Dutch Empire with two Danish-Halle missionaries commissioned by the King of Denmark in 1706; it was shortly followed by Count Zinzendorf's Moravians missionaries in 1731 (Gross et al. 2006; Hutton 1923; Gallagher 2008). The British missionary movement accompanied the colonial expansion of the British Empire during the Industrial Revolution in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the first missionary William Carey in 1793 sent to Calcutta, India (Stanley 1990; Stanley and Low 2003; Porter 2004; Ferguson 2004; Etherington 2005). Closely aligned with the British was the North American missionary movement which started with Adoniram and Ann Judson in 1812.



It gradually surged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with John Mott and the Student Volunteer Movement with over 20,000 missionaries (Mott 1900; Hutchison 1987; Wuthnow 2009).

Missiologists Andrew Walls, David Bosch, and Gustav Warneck divided mission history into different eras based upon culture and societal paradigm shifts.<sup>5</sup> A sociological approach of dividing history based on external factors would have obscured the more essential internal factors of spiritual and missiological characteristics. To adequately address *Mission China's* internal factors, I decided to place my research in the field of contemporary missiology while including the contribution of external and international factors. The three factors (internal, external, and international) are part of the theoretical framework borrowed from Las Ekström's thesis on the missionary movements from Brazil, Ghana, and India (Ekström 2011, 20).

### **1.7.2 World Christianity**

A new field of study called 'World Christianity' emerged with the rise of the church in the Majority World and the decline of the Western missionary movement. Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh stood out as two principal architects among scholars from multiple disciplines, including history, sociology, anthropology, theology and missiology (Phan 2012, 175; Cabrita 2017, 11). 'World Christianity' became 'the experiences of Christian communities that were not part of Western Christendom, the experiences of

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<sup>5</sup>Andrew Wall's division of missionary movements was based upon six primary cultural ages; Jewish, Hellenistic-Roman, Barbarian, Western Europe, expanding Europe and Christian Recession, and cross-cultural transmission. The progress has been a 'serial' process, with each phase of Christian history seen as a transformation of Christianity as it enters and penetrates another culture (Walls 1996, 16–23). David Bosch divided church history into six missionary paradigms - the Patristic period, the Middle Ages, the Reformation the Enlightenment, and the Ecumenical era. Bosch's missionary paradigms followed Hans Küng's six sub-divisions of Christian history which is based upon the overall experience and understanding of external realities that moulded the Christian faith, experiences and thought process (Bosch 1991, 181–85; Küng 1987, 157). German missiologist Gustav Warneck divided mission history into the different centuries: the Reformation Era in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Seventeenth Century with the Germany, Netherlands, England, and Denmark, the Eighteenth Century with the Danish Halle Mission and Moravians, the Nineteenth Century with the religious revivals and Great Awakenings, and free association of believers (Warneck 1906).

marginalized communities and the poor throughout the world (Irvin, Phan, and Tan 2016, 4).’<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary missiologists had observed Christianity's centre of gravity shifting from the wealthier Western nations moving southward towards the developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia (Walls 2001; Robert 2009; Tennent 2010, 18–37; Jenkins 2011). Secular scholars began to divide the world into a North-South division. The North is the economically wealthier Northern hemisphere of Europe and North America while the South is the poorer third world developing world primarily located in the Southern hemisphere.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, new terminology was adopted to describe the South including the ‘Third World’ (Bosch 1991, 353), ‘Two-Thirds World’ (Samuel and Sugden 2009, 4), ‘Southern continents’ (Walls 1996, 24; 2002, 45), ‘global Christianity’ (Sunquist 2013, 371), the ‘Global South’ (Sanneh and Carpenter 2005, 5; Jenkins 2011, 3; Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing 2020) and the ‘Majority World’ (Noll 2013, 10; Tennent 2010, 34; E. J. F. Kim 2012; Laughlin 2019, 7).

According to Cabrita, the field of ‘World Christianity’ began with these reasons. 1) the voices of anti-imperialist independent indigenous movements, 2) Global South Christian leaders in the 1970s advocating the moratorium on missionaries, 3) the demographic discovery of the Christian population shift to the global South, 4) and the self-critical reflection of Christian mission tainted by the imperial and colonial past of

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<sup>6</sup> Lamin Sanneh distinguishes the term ‘World Christianity’ from ‘Global Christianity’. ‘Global Christianity’ refers ‘to Christianity throughout the globe that still reflects the forms and patterns of European Christianity’; ‘World Christianity’ refers ‘to the Christianity that has been received by and indigenized in different locations, without all the trappings of Western Christianity.’ See (Phan 2012, 171FN1; Sanneh 2003, 22–23)

<sup>7</sup> The North-South division of countries include geographical considerations but primarily consists of economic distinctions between the ‘industrialised and wealthy North’ and the ‘underdeveloped South’ (Horowitz 1966; Eckl and Weber 2007). Another lesser-known term the ‘Majority World’ first coined by Shahidul Alam also includes the economic divide between the West and the developing world stating that ‘we are indeed the majority of humankind’ different from the anomaly of the richer G8 countries whose decisions affect the majority of the world’s peoples (Alam 2008; Shallwani 2015). There is debate on what terminology to use to define the non-Western church in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Some have suggested Third World, Two Thirds World, Developing Countries, or the Majority World. While the ‘Global South’ is the most common term in missiology, it ignores that China and Korea and most of East Asia are in the northern Hemisphere. ‘Majority World’ will be used in this thesis to include all the non-Western countries which includes the Global South and Global East as proposed by Fenggang Yang (Yang 2018).

‘self-reflexive missiology’ of Andrew Walls and David Bosch (Cabrita 2017, 5–9). The decline of Western Christendom placed Walls and other contemporary missiologists ‘in a context of increasing anxiety about the missionary enterprise’s relevance and a guilty conscience about colonialism (Cabrita 2017, 10).’ Indian missiologist Lalsangkima Pachuau, who wrote *World Christianity: A historical and theological introduction*, defines ‘World Christianity’ as:

‘the worldwide character of Christianity as it came to be owned at heart by the people of diverse cultures and societies from every region and continent and portrayed in the multiplicity of church traditions, cultural expressions of faith practices, and doctrinal voices (Pachuau 2018, 2).’

Contemporary Western missiologist and indigenous leaders in the Global South portrayed the problems of the Western missionary movement (Ekström 2011, 317–20; Bosch 1991, 2, 344-345, 518; Bridston 1965, 12–19), especially the TSPM (Merwin and Jones 1963, 185). Part of the problems of Western missionaries include theological biases with their foreign resources hindering nationals from assuming responsibility. They also lacked contextual models, created barriers, and reinforced foreignness who ‘often received strong criticism for their earlier colonial and Western legacy (Ekström 2011, 284).’<sup>8</sup> Walls has called the Western missionary enterprise a distant ‘episode’ in church history, part of an old-aged Christendom that had come to an end (Walls 1996, 239, 259). Bosch writes about the anti-missionary sentiment among Global South leaders advocating the moratorium on Western missionary movement; ‘mission appears to be the greatest enemy of the gospel. Indeed, “the most missionary service a *missionary* under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home!” (Bosch 1991, 518; Nacpil 1971, 79).’ The accusation of ‘collusion of missions with colonialism’ has even led many seminaries and

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Western missionaries who came to these countries carried theological biases... the way missionaries continued to work, investing huge amounts of foreign resources in buildings, social institutions and salaries to local leaders, hindered nationals from assuming the responsibility the three-self formula postulated... Lack of contextualised ecclesiastical models and worship styles created a strong reaction against imported Christianity and, in many cases, complete rejection... attitudes from mission leaders and missionaries, created barriers to accepting the Gospel message and reinforced the foreignness of Christianity in Ghana and India... In Ghana, the tension between Western theology ... often with strong criticism of earlier colonial and Western legacy (Ekström 2011, 282–84).’

theological schools in the United States to drop the teaching of missions and missiology (Van Gelder 2018, 2–3).

### 1.7.3 Redefinition of ‘Missions’ and ‘Mission’

With mounting criticisms of the Western missionary movement and the growth of indigenous Christianity multiplied around the world, ‘World Christianity’ scholars questioned the need for the Western cultural encasing of missions. The broadening definition of ecclesiology has led to an ‘open-endedness’ and the breakdown of any assertion of normative Christian faith (C. Y. Wen 2019).<sup>9</sup> ‘There is not, nor has there ever been, one Christianity; rather there exist Christianities (in the plural), all over the world and all the time (Phan 2012, 175).’ World Christianity ecumenical scholars questioned the need for missionaries with the proposal of a new definition of ‘mission’ (singular) as *missio Dei*, ‘the mission of God’.

The traditional understanding of ‘missions’ (plural) is ‘the sending of missionaries to a designated territory’ (Bosch 1991, 1) or ‘the sending out of missionaries from our churches into the whole world, and by this the expansion of Christianity among peoples (Warneck 1905, 3.2:69; Dürr 1951; Flett 2010, 37)’ ‘Missions’ (plural) was replaced with ‘mission’ (singular). ‘The new image of ‘mission’ is not primarily an activity of the church but an attribute of God (Bosch 1991, 390).’ The focus transitioned from ‘missions’ with the church sending missionaries to ‘mission’ with God sending the church as a missionary into the world. The church is in ‘mission’ everywhere.

Mission could no longer be viewed as one-way traffic, from the West to the Third World; every church, everywhere, was understood to be in a state of mission (Bosch 1991, 379).

A new ‘Postcolonial Missiology for the Whole Church’ has been proposed that focuses on racial righteousness through reconciliation with the restoration of justice and equality

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<sup>9</sup> Clement Wen draws upon Wolfhart Pannenberg’s ecclesiology to maintain Christianity and church’s necessary distinctiveness for the future of Global Christianity. ‘Pannenberg’s unique ecclesiological and ecumenical distinctiveness can critically serve as a constructive resource towards the end of unblurring the blurred distinctions that have cumulatively characterised the age of World Christianity (C. Y. Wen 2019, 58).’

in a holistic ministry. The post-Christendom age is ‘from everywhere to everywhere’ with global partnerships in mission. The ‘Postcolonial missiology’ brings together the global church, the West, and non-Western as equals in partnership in mission to the world (Tizon 2018, 55).’

#### **1.7.4 Newer Sending Countries: From Mission Field to Mission Force**

While ‘missions’ declined in the West, a new development surfaced in the 1970s from the non-Western Majority World churches. In Las Ekström’s doctoral thesis ‘From “Mission Field” to “Mission Force”: The Emergence of Mission Organisations in Former Mission Receiving Countries,’ he examines the missionary volunteer agencies in Brazil, Ghana, and India. Ekström builds on Walls’ ‘translatibility’ principle and takes the ‘self-theologising’ concept one step further to ‘self-missiology’. The Global South church became independent from the Western missionaries and contextualised the Christian faith into the local context. Similarly, these independent indigenous churches developed missionisation practices from their local indigenous economic and social context. For example, the Newer Sending Countries (NSC) of the Majority World emphasised a ‘faith mission model’, pioneered evangelism and church planting, and focused on people than on institutions. They also used bi-vocational self-supporting models, adopted diaspora migration, and relied on overseas funding partnerships (Ekström 2011, 322–23). At the same time, the NSCs experienced more significant challenges of high missionary attrition (Ekström 2011, 332; Taylor and World Evangelical Fellowship 1997) and financial sustainability issues (Ekström 2011, 333; Brant 2009).<sup>10</sup>

The NSC’s Christian and Evangelical percentage and population sizes are very different from China. Christianity became the main religion in Ghana and Brazil, which is a substantial minority as the largest religion in Korea, but a minority religion in India

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<sup>10</sup> These indigenous missions agencies or associations are not well developed (Hedlund and Hrangkhuma 1980) with low-cost barely self-sustaining models that are often plagued with inadequate cross-cultural missions training and missionary care for long-term sustainability (Laughlin 2019, 8–9).

and China. Brazil is 81% Christian with 31% Evangelical, Ghana is 71% Christian with 58% Evangelical, Korea is 23% Christian with 18% Evangelical, China is 7.3% Christian with 6.6% Evangelical, and India is at 4.7% Christian with 2.1% Evangelical. (See Table 2.2: Christian and Evangelical per cent of population and size)

**Table 1.1: Newer Sending Country Christianity and Evangelical per cent of population and size**

Country	Christian % of population (Including Protestants & Catholics)	Evangelicals % of population	Evangelical size	Cross-cultural Missionaries	Overseas
<b>Brazil</b>	81%	31%	65 million	15,000	~5,600
<b>Ghana</b>	71%	40%	13 million	750	?
<b>India</b>	4.7%	2.1%	30 million	7,300	?
<b>Korea</b>	32%	18%	9 million	22,259	22,259
<b>China</b>	7.5%	6.6%	55 million house church 30 million TSPM	~2,000	~2,000

Data source: (Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing 2020; T. M. Johnson et al. 2020; Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing 2020; Pew Research Centre 2013; Limpic 2005; Religionfacts.com 2021; T. M. Johnson, Ross, and Lee 2009; Korea Research Periodic Survey 2020; Korean World Mission Association (KWMA) and Hong 2021; Religionfacts.com 2021).

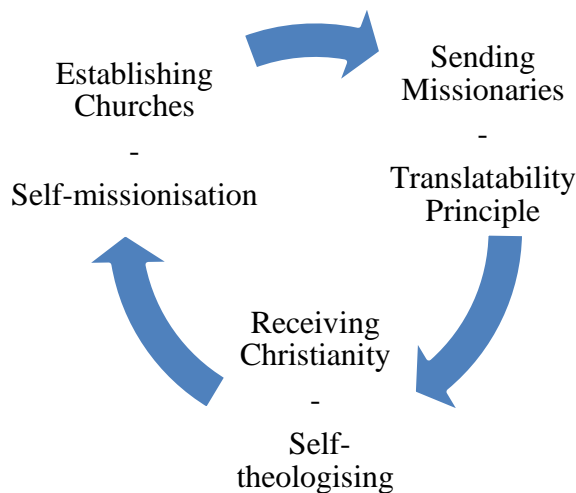
Evangelical percentage, size, and the number of missionaries provide an overview of the church's strength. Brazil's 65 million evangelicals are sending 15,000 cross-cultural missionaries, with an estimate of 5,600 serving overseas. Ghana's 13 million evangelicals are sending 750 missionaries. Brazil and Ghana's Christian population represent 70% of the general population. India's evangelicals are 30 million evangelicals (2.1% of the population) sending 7,500 missionaries. Korea's evangelicals are 17% of the population, with nine million evangelicals with a missionary sending force of over 22,000 missionaries.

India and China's large evangelical population are large but primarily come from low-income rural communities. Even if China's urban church evangelical population is only ten million, like the Korean total evangelical population, *Mission China's* overseas

missionary sending capacity and potential could be closer to Korea’s missionary force in the Global East. The Evangelical church strength from a developed urbanised and globalised Global East context like Korea indicates China’s missionary-sending potential to be in the range of 20,000.

### 1.7.5 'Missionisation Cycle'

My theoretical framework builds upon Las Ekström’s research on missionary movements from Brazil, Ghana, and India (Ekström 2011, 20)<sup>11</sup>. I have adopted Ekström’s three-step missionisation process as observed from a country’s transition from a mission field to a missions force. The three phases are in a cycle that includes 1) translation, 2) contextualisation, 3) and ‘self-missionisation’. The ‘Missionisation Cycle’ has been adopted to summarise and rename the process (Figure 1.1: ‘Missionisation Cycle’: Translatability, Contextualisation, and Self-Missionisation Process). Ekström’s framework also includes a grid of contributing internal, external, and international factors influencing the ‘self-missionisation’ phase.



**Figure 1.1: 'Missionisation Cycle': Translatability, Contextualisation, and Self-Missionisation Process.** (Ekström 2011, 20)

<sup>11</sup> Ekström uses the term called Newer Sending Countries (NSC) in contrast to the traditional sending nations called Older Sending Countries (OSC) which was adopted from the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission, *Starting and Strengthening National Mission Movements* (Castillo and Tunnicliffe 2001, 1). The older (OSC) expressions refer respectively to the longer history of sending missionaries from the West (Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand) (Ekström 2011, 3).

Ekström's theoretical framework starts with Walls's 'translatability principles'. The 'translation' phase is the first phase of missionary involvement, which includes translating the bible, converting indigenous people, and establishing local churches. The Christian faith was translated into the people's culture, 'for Christ was the full expression of God in human medium' (Walls 1996, 28).<sup>12</sup>

The second phase is the 'contextualisation' process. As missionaries become subordinate to local leadership, indigenous leaders are involved with assimilation and 'self-theologising'. 'The newly-established church has the challenge of assimilating the Christian faith and identifying appropriate, contextualised forms of expression (Ekström 2011, 19).' Missiologist Paul Hiebert's noticed a limitation of the Three-self principles of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, which was first advocated by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn in the nineteenth century. Building upon the existing Three-self principles, Hiebert introduced the Fourth-self called 'self-theologising'. 'Self-theological' development of the Christian faith is done within the local context, giving the right for indigenous churches to interpret the Bible for particular contexts (Hiebert 1985b; Walls 2005; Rochelle and Nichols 2009).

The third phase of the 'Missionisation Cycle' is the 'self-missionisation' which builds upon the previous stage of contextualisation and 'self-theologising'.<sup>13</sup> 'Self-missionisation' is the final step with local initiatives reflecting on missiological issues to produce their theological understanding and practice of missions.

Motivated to expand further, the new churches start their own mission movements, continuing the cycle, leading to innovations in cross-cultural missions... These innovative missionary efforts are not adaptations of or simple autochthonous reactions to imported models but are often entirely new ways of doing and reflecting mission based on local and national realities and the fruit of remarkable creativity (Ekström 2011, 19).

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<sup>12</sup> Lamin Sanneh notes two distinct forces within the Translation phase: missionaries 'historic transmissions' and local believers' 'indigenous assimilation' (Tennent 2010; Sanneh 1983, 166).

<sup>13</sup> The expressions 'self-missilogising' and 'self-missionising' have been used by authors such as William Taylor (Taylor and World Evangelical Fellowship 1997, 6) and Warren Newberry in 'Contextualizing Indigenous Church Principles: An African Model' (Newberry 2005, 112) respectively (Ekström 2011, 19n35)



### **1.7.6 Internal, External, and International Factors**

Ekström's theoretical framework also provides several factors favouring the emergence of the 'self-missionisation' in NSC countries of Brazil, Ghana, and India. The internal factors include church growth, expansion objectives, motivation, leadership, and available resources. The external factors are related to economic, social, and political factors influencing the missions movement. The international elements identify international organisations and diaspora influences.

#### 1. Internal Factors

- a. an existing growing church with the explicit objective of expanding to other locations and countries,
- b. motivation for expansion,
- c. entrepreneur leadership,
- d. available resources and funding.

#### 2. External Factors

- a. a society with liberty to establish voluntary associations and with existing models of voluntarism,
- b. a growing economy in society and resources in the churches favouring mission initiatives,
- c. and social factors of urbanisation,
- d. and political factors.

#### 3. International Factors

- a. international exposure and contacts,
- b. diaspora groups,
- c. national associations and international co-operation

(Ekström 2011, 22).

### **1.7.7 Global East Concept**

To address the distinctions between the developed East Asia and the developing Global South, I have adopted Fenggang Yang's Global East category to classify the church context in China and the countries of East Asia as distinctive from the churches in the developing countries in the Global South. Fenggang Yang has proposed the Global East as a new regional classification based on cultural, social, and economic characteristics.

The Global East is a cultural and social concept that includes East Asian societies and ethnic communities of East Asians around the world that maintain East Asian cultural traditions, are closely connected with East Asia, and play essential roles in East Asian developments. These societies, communities, and individuals share distinct social and cultural characteristics. The Global East, as a new concept, is necessary primarily because the existing groupings of countries in the world are either Euro-centric or North-Atlantic-centric and may lead to improper understanding or misunderstanding of East Asian societies, communities, and individuals (Yang 2018, 1).

The 'Global South' has been used to describe the non-Western world which obscures the differences between the developed countries in East Asia and developing countries in the Global South. 'While the East-West dichotomy was based on the ideological conflict between the Communist-ruled countries and the so-called "free world"..., the North-South division is primarily about the economic divide between the developed countries and underdeveloped or developing countries (Horowitz 1966; Eckl and Weber 2007; Reuveny and Thompson 2008). However, it is difficult to fit East Asia into either of these constructs (Yang 2018, 1).'

The Global East classification would allow the division of missions movements into three general regional categories; 1) the Global North: the West including North America and Europe. Australia and New Zealand would be included even though it is in the Southern Hemisphere. 2) The Global South: the underdeveloped and developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Asian countries in the Southern Hemisphere, and 3) the Global East: the economically developed countries in East Asia including Korea, China, and the overseas Chinese Asian tiger countries. These categories provide a general framework to classify the Global North, Global South, and Global East but are not necessarily rigid. Since China is emerging from a developing world into a developed,

globalised, and urbanised society. Therefore, rural China would have Global South characteristics while urban China has Global East characteristics.

### **1.8 Limitations of Research**

1. This research is not an overall or exhaustive coverage of the indigenous Missions movement from China. Instead, it focuses on the perspective of the four Beijing pastors leading *Mission China 2030* and the twenty house church leaders involved. Another fifteen house church leaders have been interviewed with some relationship with the Beijing pastors but would not consider themselves part of the *Mission China 2030* movement. Even though the Beijing pastors are widely recognised in the house church, they have received criticism from other house church leaders. As a result, this thesis does not claim to represent the overall China missionary movement perspective on missions.
2. *Mission China* is at the beginning stages of a missionary movement. With only 1,000 to 2,000 mainland Chinese missionaries, there is reason to question the validity of calling *Mission China* a missionary movement. Thousands of people are involved in prayer, missions seminars, training, and conferences are attached to an overall *Mission China* momentum.
3. The use of the ‘self-theologising’ process as described by Hiebert is not intended to dive into indigenous biblical theologies of each culture but to address the contextual ecclesiological and missiological issues regarding *Mission China* and the NSC missionary movement.
4. The ‘self-missionisation’ phase will be the primary focus of the translation, contextualisation, and ‘self-missionisation’ cycle.
5. This research only provides the perspective of the mobilisation of *Mission China* and not the field side missionaries. Other *Mission China* researchers have focused on the

missionaries on the field, including Tabor Laughlin's 'Factors impacting Cultural Adjustment and Retention of Chinese Cross-cultural Workers' (Laughlin 2019).

6. The scope of this study does not provide an in-depth comparison between the historical missionary movements in history with the Western missionary enterprise or the other overseas Chinese missions in East Asia. Some examples are mentioned, but a thorough comparison should be made in another study.
7. Due to security concerns, many interviewed have used a pen name. Others were not willing to share more details of their ministry. Many details have been left out due to security concerns.
8. This research only interviewed house church leaders and did not include the official TSPM church perspective due to the politically sensitive topic of missions. This thesis recognises the early involvement of house church leaders with the TSPM church and provides some general analysis and distinctions between the two sides.
9. I, as the researcher, was involved in the formation of *Mission China 2030* and have worked closely with these four Beijing leaders. This research acknowledges the subjectivity that comes with the analysis. Self-reflexibility with self-critique of frame of reference and cultural bias provides some level of objectivity.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

### **1.9.1 Grounded Theory and Comparative Case Study**

This section accounts for the methodological approach used in this research. I started with a grounded theory approach, conducting two qualitative semi-structured interviews from 2015 to 2019 with forty people. My first attempt was to study *Mission China* as a social movement phenomenon in religious studies but realised that this phenomenon could not be considered a missions movement at the infancy stage.

The methodology in the initial stages included qualitative research closest to *Constructivist Grounded Theory* where concepts and theoretical relevance emerge from

the ground on the field with the interaction between the researcher and participants ‘constructed or co-constructed (with research participants) through the researcher’s interpretation of the participants meaning (Hernandez and Andrews 2012, 60).’

According to the founder of *Constructivist Grounded Theory*, Kathy Charmaz states

...we start with the assumption that social reality is multiple, perspective, and constructed. We must take the researcher’s position, privileges, perspective, and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality... The constructivist approach perspective shreds notions of a neutral observer and value-free expert. Not only does that mean that researchers must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis, but it also means that their values shape the very facts that they can identify (Charmaz 2014, 13).

The grounded theory methodology had limitations with the potential for subjectivism. But this concern can be addressed through reflexivity, a research process that considers one’s own bias (Hernandez and Andrews 2012, 62).

Since I had a significant part in the earlier stages with the Lausanne Movement in 2010 and the *Asian Church Leaders Forum* in 2013, this methodology allowed the experience and involvement of the researcher who has incorporated knowledge and personal experience with access to some of the hardest-to-reach house church pastors. My inside knowledge helped shape the questions and general themes for this thesis and provided the interviewee's different tiers of importance and perspectives.

After writing the first draft of this thesis with a grounded theory methodology, my new supervisor Paul Noh noticed that the data from my interviews came from four Beijing pastors leading the movement. The other interviews provided supplementary information with challenges and critiques. On my supervisor's recommendation, I switched from a grounded theory to a case study approach of four pastors, which involved an ‘empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson 2002, 146). The grounded theory approach for qualitative data from the interviews of forty leaders will be used as supplementary. The case study approach provides an in-depth and more holistic investigation (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991). Yin and Stake have developed robust case study procedures. Yin has

identified some specific types of case studies: Exploratory, Explanatory, and Descriptive. The Exploratory case study method appears to be the most appropriate phase as *Mission China* is in its infancy stage and ‘not enough is known’ about the four Beijing pastors and the movement (Stake 1995; R. K. Yin 2014).

While Ekström does not mention the type of research methodology in his dissertation, the Comparative Case Study (CSS) approach appears to best describe his methodology (Bartlett and Vavrus 2017, 6). I adapted his methodology comparison of the missionary movements to specific internal, external, and international factors that contributed to the development of mission movements in those countries.

### **1.9.2 Open Coding**

The NVivo software was an essential tool for my data naming, categorising and analysing. I started with Open Coding, ‘the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 101). The first step was to the naming or labelling process by summarising a sentence or even paragraph into a phrase, e.g., ‘eschatology tied to Back to Jerusalem’, ‘debt of 20,000 missionaries’, ‘tighter political environment not a bad thing’. This phrase would be unique enough to distinguish it from other statements under a more generalised concept, e.g., ‘Back to Jerusalem’, ‘Gospel Debt’, ‘Theology of Suffering’. These concepts would then be placed into larger categories (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 113–15), e.g., ‘Missiology’, ‘Internal Factors’, ‘Political Factors’.

### **1.9.3 Active Participant to Moderate Observer**

In 2015, my role switched from an active participant to a moderate participant observer as I conducted forty semi-structured interviews. Twenty-four of those interviewed were directly involved with *Mission China 2030*. From 2006 to 2014, I invited several *Mission China* leaders to missions and church planting conferences and participated with them in

the planning and leading up to the first *Mission China 2030* conference in 2015.<sup>14</sup>

My active role shifted when the Chinese leaders began preparations for the *Mission China 2030* conference in Hong Kong in 2015. Kathleen DeWalt in *Participant Observation* defines the different relationship roles between the researcher and participants. My role transitioned from ‘complete participation’ where the researcher is completely integrated into the population of study beforehand to a ‘moderate participation’. The ‘moderate participate’ researcher maintains a balance ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ role. When I transitioned from a ‘complete participant’ to a ‘moderate participant’ researcher, I was able to have a combination of involvement with those interviewed along with some necessary detachment to remain objective throughout the interview process (DeWalt 2015, 259–99).

#### **1.9.4 Theoretical Sensitivity**

As a researcher, theoretical sensitivity played an essential role in determining the meaning and importance of the data.

Theoretical sensitivity is a multidimensional concept that includes the researchers' level of insight into the research area, how attuned they are to the nuances and complexity of the participant's words and actions, their ability to reconstruct meaning from the data generated with the participant, and a capacity to “separate the pertinent from that which isn't” (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 28; Corbin and Strauss 2015, 44).<sup>7</sup>

Due to my relationships with the four Beijing pastors and many of the *Mission China* leaders, I was attuned to the nuances and complexities in more sensitive areas of security concerns, their theological background, their missions perspectives, their different opinions of the TSPM, their prejudices towards foreigners and much more. For example, in my research writing, I removed some of my prejudices towards what I considered an unconventional flawed ‘Back to Jerusalem’ missiology. To keep some objectivity, I had

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<sup>14</sup> These conferences included *Urbana 2006 and Urbana 2009* in St. Louis, MO, the *Redeemer City-to-City* church planting training in New York 2010, *Lausanne World Congress* in Cape Town 2010, *Asian Church Leaders Forum* in Seoul 2013, the *Mission China Vision* in Seoul 2014 and other mission related activities.

to seriously consider the ‘Back to Jerusalem’ contribution while also including critiques and concerns from other leaders.

Due to my involvement with the Lausanne Movement and *Mission China*, I am aware of my tendency to highlight the significance while downplaying the criticisms. In the final chapter, I have a section that summarises the criticisms of the movement. *Mission China* has many critics, including those from within the house church and even from within the *Mission China* leadership. Other researchers would probably be able to address the weaknesses of the movement at a deeper level. For example, Wei’s doctoral thesis on *Mission China 2030* describes the movement from a critical perspective coming from someone who has seen the weaknesses and challenges from within (Wei 2020). My thesis primarily comes from the perspective of the four Beijing pastors who are the champions of visionary leaders of the movement. Furthermore, my study also covers a wider perspective by comparing the *Mission China* missiology with the views of other contemporary missiologists.

### **1.9.5 Questionnaires**

The qualitative data for my research comes from three types of interviews. The interviewees include thirty-one men, nine women, thirteen younger leaders, twenty-four ‘insiders’ actively involved in *Mission China*. The careers include fifteen pastors, eight missions leaders or full-time mobilisers, ten Christian organisation leaders, three with two years or more of overseas missionary experience, three in theological education, three seminary graduate students, and a law professor.

The purpose of Interview1 (first round) was to find the context and personal background of *Mission China* leaders and their general insight on urban church planting and *Mission China*. The first part of Interview1 questions consisted of twenty-two quantitative questions focused on the person and context. The first few pages of questions



included quantitative information focused on personal information, education, church background, spiritual influences, the context of urbanisation.

The second part of Interview1 included qualitative questions on urban church planting, *Mission China*, and the contributions of the *Lausanne Movement*. Interview1 was conducted from January 2015 to May 2017, including twenty-seven leaders involved with *Mission China* (Appendix III: Interview1 Questionnaire).

The Interview2 (round two) questions focused on *Mission China* itself which provided the bulk of the information for this thesis. The topics included the theology of suffering, B2J, the political tightening environment, and the reasoning behind the call of 20,000. When a question was hard to answer, I would provide a follow-up question with some more familiar missiological concepts and topics; ie: ‘theology of suffering’, B2J,...

1. What is the theology/missiology behind *Mission China*?
2. How does the Theology of Suffering relate to *Mission China*?
3. What is your opinion of B2J? It’s theological, missiological and strategic contribution...
4. Why is *Mission China* taking place now? What is the source behind this movement?
5. The political environment tightens and is not conducive to the *Mission China* movement. How will this movement operate in a further restrictive environment?
6. Why the call for 20,000 missionaries by 2030? Is this just a slogan?
7. How did you get involved with Missions?

Interview2 involved twenty-eight people between May 2016 to May 2019. This round included a more comprehensive range of perspectives including ten T4 ‘outsiders’ who did not directly participate but were familiar with *Mission China*.

A third questionnaire from February 2017 to October 2018 interviewed leaders from five churches, three in Beijing and two in Shanghai. This interview included church mission strategy, policy, budgets, activities, and quantitative data on church mission activities. Four churches were an instrumental part of *Mission China*.

Multiple follow-up interviews, text messages, and zoom calls were conducted for clarification with more details with the four Beijing pastors.

For recent information on the NSC missionary movements, I contacted COMIBAM director Decio de Carvalho, Lausanne Latin America Regional Director Daniel Bianchi, former Lausanne English Speaking Africa Regional Director Nana Yaw Offei Awuku

from Ghana, former Lausanne South Asia Regional Director Finny Philips from India, former Mission Korea Director Chulho Han, and former ATA General Secretary and author of Korean Church Growth Explosion Bong Rin Ro.

### **1.9.6 Participant Selection**

The selection of the forty-four participants was done through purposeful sampling. ‘Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). Finding available time to participate in the interviews was challenging and time-consuming. In addition to knowledge and experience, Spradley and Bernard noted the importance of availability and willingness to participate and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Spradley 1979; Bernard 2002; Palinkas et al. 2015, 2).’

The purposeful sample of interviewees is divided into different categories T1 to T6 (Table 1:2: Interviewee Background). T1 include the four Beijing pastors Zhang Heng, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel and Shanghai leaders T1-Yuehan and T1-Cui. The primary perspective of this thesis comes from the four Beijing pastors perspective. All six T1 leaders are original members of the China Lausanne National Preparation Committee and serve on the Jesus Leadership Forum overseeing *Mission China*.<sup>15</sup> T1 is due to the broader influence and ability to network and connect beyond their churches, cast vision, and mobilise resources and people for missions.<sup>16</sup> T2 includes nine executive-level leaders who are involved in some leadership aspect of *Mission China*. T3 involve eight younger leaders who are involved with the movement. T1, T2, and T3 include a total of twenty-four people who provide an ‘insider’ perspective. Twenty interviewed come from

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<sup>15</sup> Tianming was under house arrest since April 2011 but after his release in late 2020 has joined the Jesus Leadership Forum in March 2021.

<sup>16</sup> The six T1 leaders are T1-Tianming, T1-Ezra, T1-Daniel, T1-Cui, T1-Yuehan, and T1-Zhang; four are Korean Chinese ethnicity and are ‘new emergent urban church’ pastors.

an ‘outsiders’ perspective on *Mission China*. T4 are seventeen ‘outside’ house church leaders and critics familiar with *Mission China*. T5 are three Chinese missionaries who have served over two years. T6 include four interviews with foreign mission leaders familiar with *Mission China*.

**Table 1.2 Interviewee Background**

Tier	Number	Gender	Education	City
T1 Top Leaders	6	M: 6	College: 5 Grad: 5	Beijing: 4 Shanghai: 2
T2 Executive Leaders	10	M: 8 F: 2	College: 8 Grad: 3	Beijing:6 Shanghai: 1 Wuhan: 1 Wenzhou/Anhui:1 Xian: 1
T3 Younger Leaders	8	M: 3 F: 5	College: 8 Grad: 7	Beijing: 4 Shanghai: 4
T4 Outsiders Critics	14	M: 13 F: 1	College: 9 Grad: 8	Beijing: 6 Beijing/Wenzhou: 1 Shanghai: 2 Anhui:2 Xiamen/Beijing: 1 Overseas: 1
T5 Missionary experience (2+ years)	3 <sup>17</sup>	M:1 F:2	College: 2 Grad: 1	Beijing:1 Shanghai:1 Xian: 1
T6 Foreign mission leaders	4	4	College: 1 Grad: 3	Korean: 2 Korean American: 1 Overseas Chinese: 1

### 1.9.7 Participant Observation

Marshall and Rossman define participant observation as ‘the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study’ (Marshall and Rossman 1989, 79) ‘Participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities (Kawulich 2005).’

<sup>17</sup> T2-Joy with over two years missionary experience is also counted as a T5 missionary.

From 2015 to 2019, I attended over a dozen *Mission China* preparation meetings and events as a participant-observer. While participating in the conferences, workshops, pre-conference meetings, and on-site leadership meetings, I conducted interviews and recorded some seminars with *Mission China* leaders and participants after conference debriefing. All *Mission China* leaders knew that I had been working on my doctoral thesis and, at various times, were interviewed for my research. Due to my previous contributions to the house church, I was invited as an advisor and special non-Chinese guest but not be an official member to preserve a solely Chinese leadership at the core of *Mission China*. I had first-hand experience with most *Mission China* activities from 2015 to 2019.

### **1.9.8 Security Concerns**

All of those interviewed agreed to security protocol concerns. My interview started with two questions. The first question I asked was for verbal permission from my interviewees to be interviewed and to be recorded for my doctoral thesis. Only one person did not agree to be recorded. All participants were informed of the purpose of my research beforehand. Due to my relationship with these leaders, I was aware of the different comfort levels of security concerns. Understanding security sensitivity required knowing the kinds of specific questions that would require revealing too much detail, causing those interviewed to stop sharing. One interviewee requested to remove details about their group's activities and asked for extra caution. In the second question, I would ask for a preferred fake name. Some of those interviewed would prefer to use their public name (Zhang Heng, Tianming) instead of a fake name.

### **1.9.9 Language**

Most of the interviews, over thirty out of forty-four, were conducted in Chinese. Around ten interviews (one T2 and nine T3 category interviews) were conducted in English. The top 25 interviews were transcribed into Chinese and then translated into

English. Note-taking would be conducted throughout each interview. For the few interviews that were not translated into English, I would refer to the notes to quickly find an interviewee's response to a particular topic and then go directly to the audio source to transcribe and translate that section for information.

### **1.9.10 Terminology**

The 'house church' refers to a church that is not legally recognised by the government and not necessarily meeting in the homes. The 'house church' chooses to meet in private or sometimes in public venues for Bible study, prayer, and corporate worship. The accepted 'house church' nomenclature refers to an unregistered congregation as opposed to the official government TSPM church. The 'house church' movement started in the homes, but many 'house churches' moved into office complexes, with some 'house churches' in Wenzhou meeting in large church buildings. For this thesis, 'house church' will be used to refer to the unregistered Christian church that started in the homes but may have moved to a public office space or to a church building. These churches are congregations that have not been legally recognised by the government.<sup>18</sup> House churches do not register their meetings with the TSPM, neither do they submit to TSPM regulations, authority, or control (Conkling 2013, 8).'

The 'Global South' refers to the developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and other Asian countries in the third-world Southern Hemisphere. The Global East will include China and the overseas Chinese four Asian tigers Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. 'Majority World' comprises of the non-Western church in the Global South and in the Global East. Ekström's Newer Sending Countries (NSC) terminology refers to the missionary movement coming from the Global South in comparison to the Older

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<sup>18</sup> Dr Yang Fenggang prefers to use *jiating* church instead of a house church. 'As the meaning of a *jiating* church is closer to a "congregation" than a church building, I adopt the transliteration and refer to these churches as *jiating* churches (Yang 2019).'

Sending Countries (OSC), which refers to the traditional missionary-sending nations from the West (Ekström 2011, 3).

David Aikman uses 'Patriarchs' to describe five heroes of the faith who suffered over twenty years in prison: Wang Mingdao, Allen Yuan (Xiangcheng), Moses Xie (Moshan), Samuel Lamb (Lin Xiangao), and Li Tianen (Aikman 2003, 47). These 'Patriarchs' are revered house church leaders who have served over twenty years in prison. In this thesis, the patriarchs are the symbolic leaders of the house church movement and come from the Traditional house church movement.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter, divided into three sections, provides the literary groundwork for the remaining thesis. The three sections include 1) the church in China and its missionary movement, 2) *World Christianity* field and the 'Missionisation Cycle' theoretical framework, and 3) four contemporary missiologists. The precedent literature on the first section (church in China and the B2J) provides the historical backdrop for the Chinese house church and its missionary history. The second section covers *World Christianity* authors Andrew Walls, David Bosch, and Tim Tennent. They provide the missiological context for my theoretical framework with Las Ekström's 'self-missionisation' with the Newer Sending Countries in the 'Missionisation Cycle' theoretical framework. The final section introduces four contemporary missiologists (Paul Fiddes, Jürgen Moltmann, Karan Kilby, and Kosuke Koyama) whose missiological concepts will be used to compare with several missiological topics of the four Beijing pastors in *Mission China*.

#### **2.2 Church in China**

China's house church movement in the 1970s to 1990s has a substantial amount of precedent literature from various authors including David Aikman, Eugene Bach, Dennis Balcombe, Kim-Kwong Chan, Jonathan Chao, Tim Conkling, Paul Hattaway, Tony Lambert, Xi Lian, and Yalin Xin. These writers describe the Traditional and Rural house church movement under persecution accompanied by subsequent revivals which provide the context for rural house church leader Zhang Heng (Chapter 3).

The second section covers the Urban Church among the intellectuals in the cities after 1989 with authors Brent Fulton, Jonathan Ro, Kim-Kwong Chan, Vicky Kan, Paul Moon,

and Rodney Stark. These authors provide literature for the three Urban Church pastors Tianming (Chapter 4), Ezra (Chapter 5) and Daniel (Chapter 6).

The final section includes primarily house church authors on China's missionary movement. The Back to Jerusalem and *Mission China* literature includes authors Ezra Jin, Wei Hong, Mark Shan, Paul Hattaway, David Aikman, Kim-Kwong Chan, Paul Hattaway, and Tabor Laughlin.

### **2.2.1 Traditional and Rural House Church**

Tony Lambert and Jonathan Chao covered the explosive growth of the house church in China under persecution in the 1970s to the early 1990s. Lambert's books *The Resurrection of the Chinese church* (Lambert 1994) and *China's Christian Millions* (Lambert 2006) and Chao's various articles and books describe the house church revivals with miracles, evangelistic fervour, prayer, explosive church growth during the Cultural Revolution and following. Chao's book *Purified by Fire - The Secrets of House Church Revivals in Mainland China* provides a history of the house church movement that started from a few itinerant evangelists who preached the gospel and established churches in Henan Shandong, and Anhui. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the house church started as one 'family' but began to split because of overseas denominational influences (Chao 1993b, 93–94; Xin 2009, 69,74).

Chao's book *Lead Me to Go Forward* introduces his vision to evangelise China; 1) to share the gospel to 95% unbelievers in China, 2) the 'Kingdomisation' of the church to be transformed by the gospel, 3) the Christianisation of Chinese culture; for the church to influence and transform Chinese society (Chao 1993a, 9–70; 2000). Chao was also an advocate of the indigenisation of Christianity through the Three-self principles of self-support, self-governing, and self-propagating, first raised by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn (Chen 2005, 44–47). Chao has written extensively on the 'way of the cross' –



willing to sacrifice all for the sake of Christ, which is the secret to the phenomenal growth of the church in China.

Suffering purified and strengthened the Chinese church and enabled Chinese believers today to be bolder and wiser. Suffering contributed to the continuous growth of the Church in China (Chao 1993b, 4; Xin 2009, 63–64).

Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan in *Protestantism in Contemporary China* affirm the phenomenal growth of China's Protestantism as already 'a sustainable force' in the 1990s. The earlier Protestant church in China was an outcome of a historical process involving the Western missionary enterprise but became an independent indigenous Christian movement that broke relations with foreign missions. The difference between the Western missionaries and Indigenous Chinese church approach to ministry was related to resources and ministry priorities. The Western missionaries often started with buildings, education, or medical work as a basis for evangelism before forming congregations and hiring pastors. The indigenous Chinese independent model started with establishing independent, non-denominational churches by hiring full-time pastors before erecting a building before expanding into social work (Hunter and Chan 1993, 120; Chao 1986). After the Communist takeover and subsequent persecution and revivals in the 1980s, the house church retreated underground and adopted a conservative pietistic faith based on 'evangelistic programme of saving souls,... firmly rooted in family worship and localised, well away from political concerns (Hunter and Chan 1993, 136).' What is significant is that Hunter and Chan place the church in China with the two-third Majority world church as a 'conservative, neo-evangelical theological orientation, an indigenous ecclesiology, a deep concern from eschatology and an emphasis on signs and wonders (Hunter and Chan 1993, 279–80).'

Chan's more recent book called *Understanding World Christianity China* continues to portray the Protestant Chinese church (including both the TSPM and the house church) as part of the *World Christianity* non-Western Majority world. Chan continues to describe the church in rural China in the 1980s with phenomenal growth as a majority of

female, elderly, poorly educated, and new converts. The religious experiences include the supernatural, miraculous healings, and casting out of demons ‘as peasants were drawn to the transfer their religious allegiance from traditional Chinese folk practices, or even socialist ideology, to Protestantism.’ This was during a time when an urban migration of young people to the cities emptied the rural communities, leaving empty pews with the elderly, women, and children (Chan 2019, 108–16).

To understand some of the indigenous Protestant Chinese church idiosyncrasies before Communism is Lian Xi’s book *Redeemed by Fire: the Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (Lian 2010). Lian offers a description of the indigenous church before the Communist takeover providing one of the most accurate size estimates of the one million Protestants in the early 1950s.<sup>19</sup> His book describes the Jesus Family, the Shandong revival, Mingdao Wang, John Sung, Watchman Nee, charismatic old Pentecostals, and other aberrant sects and cults. Lian uncovers the indigenous Chinese church's characteristics with all its peculiarities and flaws some carried over into the Traditional and Rural house church networks in rural China. His final chapter on the ‘Underground Church in the Communist Era’ ends with the house church in northern Shaanxi in 2007 worshipping in a cave.

Some of the largest rural networks called ‘Five Large Networks’ have joined together including China Gospel Fellowship (CGF), Fangcheng from Henan, Truth and Lixin from Anhui, and the Wenzhou ‘Arminian’ network. Eugene Bach provides the most comprehensive description of each these large networks along with few other midsize networks in his books *The Crimson Cross* (Bach and Zhu 2012). Bach spends a couple of

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<sup>19</sup> According to that report, the Protestant community in China (excluding the Jesus Family, the Little Flock, the Spiritual Gifts Society, and other small independent churches) claimed a baptized membership totalling around 936,000, of which 125,000 (an inflated number) belonged to the TJC and 11,500 were affiliated with the China Christian Independent Church. The addition of the Jesus Family (10,000), the Little Flock (80,000) and the Spiritual Gifts society, along with other small groups such as the Bread of Life Church for which no statistics are available, would bring the total of Chinese Protestants to about 1 million (Lian 2010, 282 FN101).

chapters in *the Underground House Church* relating testimonies from Zhang Heng's China Gospel Fellowship also called the Tanghe Network (Bach and Zhu 2014, 90–116). In another book, Bach provides a biography of Zhang Rongliang who is considered one of the most important of the rural house church leaders from Henan in his book *I Stand with Christ: the Courageous Life of a Chinese Christian* (Rongliang and Bach 2015). Paul Hattaway's *Henan: the Galilee of China* provides narrative stories with some overarching external corroborating historical dates describing the seasons of persecution, church growth, and openings in the 1980s and 1990s (Hattaway 2009). Charismatic pastor Dennis Balcombe has had extensive knowledge and experience in the rural house church. Balcombe claims to have introduced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the speaking in tongues into rural Henan in 1987 (Balcombe 2014, 110). His book *China's Opening Door: Incredible Stories of the Holy Spirit at work in one of the Greatest Revivals in Christianity* (Balcombe 2014) describes the work of the Holy Spirit in the rural house church movement.

Yalin Xin's book *Inside China's House Church Network* provides an in-depth analysis of one of the largest house church networks. The 'Born-Again' movement, also called 'Word Life' and formerly under Peter Xu (Xu Yongze), is another large Henan network separate from the Five Large Networks. Zhang Heng shared that the Henan house churches were originally together as one family before they began to split around 1983 to 1985. Xin uses the renewal movements of Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism as his theoretical framework to analyse the 'Born-Again' movement (Xin 2009, 39-40,71-72; Snyder 1989).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Howard Snyder's mediating model includes the following marks all found in Renewal movements of Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism. Renewal movements 1) rediscover the gospels, 2) exists as a necessary part of the larger church, 3) use some form of small groups, 4) link with institutional church without division, 5) are committed to unity, vitality, and wholeness of the church, 6) are missions oriented, 7) is a covenant based 'koinonia' community 8), train and exercise of new forms of ministry and lay leadership, 9) have close daily contact with society, and especially with the poor, 10) emphasise on the Spirit and the Word as the basis of authority (Xin 2009, 39–40).

The closest corroboration for Zhang Heng (Chapter 3) is an unpublished book written in Chinese by Shen Xianfeng *China Gospel Fellowship's Stormy Road* (Shen 2014). Shen provides first-hand account of the historical development of CGF as one of the leaders who personally experienced the revival church revivals from the beginnings in Henan. Shen and Zhang Heng have served together both as colleagues and CGF leaders who have led the network at various times. Shen describes the CGF as being neutral between the charismatics and the evangelicals.

The Charismatics are evangelistic while the Evangelicals nurture the believers; the Charismatics believe in the joy of the Holy Spirit while the Evangelicals focus on believers determination and reason; the Charismatics focus on the practical application of God's Word while the Evangelicals focus on the preaching of God's Word (Shen 2014, 83).

He is also less optimistic than Zhang Heng and has a realistic understanding of the house church's limitations in sending overseas cross-cultural missionaries.

Wang Mingdao is known for the 'house church stance' on why he would not join the official government TSPM church. Thomas Harvey's book *Acquainted with Grief: Wang Mingdao's Stand with the Persecuted Church* provides some of his thoughts.

'After 1954, with union secured, the CCP determined that Wang's resistance was a liability they would no longer tolerate... Wang Mingdao realised, only partially, was that by refusing to allow the ideology of the state to define the identity and the nature of existence in China, they represented a threat that would not be tolerated... Wang's refusal to join the TSPM was a crime not because it threatened church unity but precisely because it threatened *national unity* and identity (Harvey 2002, 68, 71, 80).'

A recently released book *Faithful Disobedience: Writings on Church and State from a Chinese House Church Movement* by Wang Yi and other writers has a chapter on 'Why we didn't join the National TSPM' by Sun Yi, a former elder of Shouwang Church.

'Once we understand that the Three-Self church is not, by nature, a church, but rather is a government organisation, we can understand Wang Mingdao's position from a new perspective. Wang Mingdao said that believers and non-believers cannot be yoked together. Today we can use this position as the fundamental explanation for why the house church cannot join the Three-Self church... The Three-Self church receives funding from the state, and its primary mission is to fulfil the duty assigned by the Party and state... The Three-Self system's mission is to perform the work designated by the ruling party, or the secular government. Joining the Three-Self system would fundamentally transform the church (Y. Wang 2022).

Wang Mingdao's 'house church stance' as the separation of church and state was reaffirmed more recently in September 2018 by 'A Joint Statement by Pastors: A

Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith’ with the signing of 439 house church Christian leaders lead by Rev. Wang Yi from Chengdu.<sup>21</sup>

The ‘house church stance’ on the separation of church and state does not include ‘anti-Chinese’ or ‘anti-patriotic’ sentiment. Tim Conkling has used the term ‘Cooperative Resistance’ to describe the house church's perspective towards government and church-state relations as researched in his doctoral dissertation ‘Mobilized Merchants-Patriotic Martyrs: China's House-Church Protestants and the Politics of Cooperative Resistance’ (Conkling 2013). Conkling's research has concluded that the overall attitude of house church Christians towards the government is that they are patriotic citizens who would only resist the government in defence when their faith comes under persecution.

Cooperative resistance is a form of rightful resistance in which aggrieved religious believers pledge cooperation with police and officials and promise patriotic adherence to policies and laws insofar as those policies do not curb the fullest expression of religious belief while simultaneously mobilising local, trans-provincial, or international sympathisers to pressure specific officials or the central government to cease persecuting individual Protestant believers, house churches, or house church networks (Conkling 2013, 28).

David Aikman’s book *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* provides a more recent comprehensive book on the church in China including Traditional and Rural, and Urban Christianity (Aikman 2003). Aikman has a chapter on the Traditional house church Patriarchs who survived over twenty years in prison. Aikman has written on the five house church patriarchs including Wang Mingdao, Allen Yuan (Xiangcheng), Samuel Lamb (Lin Xiangao), Moses (Moshan) Xie, and Li Tianen. Simon Zhao (Ximen) from the Northwest Spiritual Band is also mentioned in the chapter on the Back to Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> His book also covered

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<sup>21</sup> 4. For this reason, we believe and are obligated to teach all believers that all true churches in China that belong to Christ must hold to the principle of the separation of church and state and must proclaim Christ as the sole head of the church. We declare that in matters of external conduct, churches are willing to accept lawful oversight by civil administration or other government departments as other social organizations do. But under no circumstances will we lead our churches to join a religious organization controlled by the government, to register with the religious administration department, or to accept any kind of affiliation. We also will not accept any “ban” or “fine” imposed on our churches due to our faith. For the sake of the gospel, we are prepared to bear all losses—even the loss of our freedom and our lives (Y. Wang 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Rodney Stark and Xiuhua Wang provide a brief description of these patriarchs, adding a few more to the list, including Watchman Nee, Wang Zhiming, and John Sung (Stark and Wang 2015, 58–69).

the earlier days of rural house church networks Fangcheng with Zhang Rongliang, Tanghe (China Gospel Fellowship) with Feng Jianguo, and the Born-Again Movement with Peter Xu. Aikman's contribution provides a connecting bridge from the Traditional and rural house church to the growth of the urban Christianity with a chapter on 'Artists, Writers, and Academics (Aikman 2003, 245–64)'.

Other scholars Kalun Leung, Huang Jian Bo, and Yuan Hao have written from a sociological perspective primarily related to the rural house church migration to the cities during urbanisation.<sup>23</sup> Kalun Leung's *The Rural Churches of Mainland China since 1978* attributes the rural church growth to government religious policies that removed Chinese folk religion and homogenous rural community while downplaying the influences of the patriarchs as attributed by Tony Lambert and Jonathan Chao. Leung claims that the rural house church growth in the 1980s was a new faith movement with 'little indirect influence from those confessors [Patriarchs] who are well-known overseas (Leung 1999, 28).'

Leung's conclusions may not be entirely accurate as Peter Xu with Born Again Movement and Zhang Rongliang of the Fangcheng network were apprenticed to Patriarch Li Tianen (Lian 2010, 218). Li Tianen was part of an underground Christian training of 4,000 leaders in Henan in 1974 where he was arrested again and sentenced to death but later released in 1979 (Aikman 2003, 70). Leung's research, however, alludes to the distinction between the Traditional house church under the influence of the Patriarchs in the cities and the more charismatic semi-literate Rural house church movement in the countryside (Chapter 3: Zhang Heng). Leung's conclusion affirms Tianming's assessment of the limited influence of the Patriarchs who were considered symbolic

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<sup>23</sup> Huang Jianbo and Yuan Hao have written on the urbanisation process of the rural church migration into the cities *Rural Churches in the Cities: Urbanisation and Christianity of migrant workers in China* (都市裏的鄉村教會) (Huang 2012) 'China Migrant Worker's Church in the Process of Contemporary China's Urbanisation: a case study of the 'Mount of Olives Church' in Beijing (Yuan 2015)' and 'Urbanisation and Church Transformation: migrant churches in Beijing (Yuan 2020).'

heroes of the faith who suffered in prison but did not have a direct impact on the contemporary Urban Church (Chapter 4: Tianming).

The Traditional and Rural house church literature provides the historical context for Zhang Heng and the CGF network in Chapter 3. The revivals and house church growth under persecution in Traditional and Rural China have also indirectly influenced the Urban Church Beijing pastors and their missionary movement (Chapters 4 to 6).

### **2.2.2 Urban Church**

Brent Fulton's *China's Urban Christians: A Light that Cannot be Hidden* provides an overall description of Christianity in urban China. Fulton's chapter on 'The Church's Global Mandate' describes the combined strength of the rural house church legacy and the urban intellectual church resources to attend the Lausanne III Congress in Cape Town 2010. In preparation for the Congress, the house church was the primary constituency, with invitations offered to TSPM members who could sign the Lausanne Covenant. Fulton describes from an interview with a pastor how the house church was divided into three major categories: 1) Traditional, 2) Rural networks, and 3) Urban Church. This concept was first introduced by house church leaders in preparation for the Lausanne Congress in 2010 (Fulton 2015, 103; D. Ro 2020, 1–2).<sup>24</sup>

Fulton's insight from his section on 'Rural Legacy, Urban Resources' has observed the combined strength of the rural evangelistic vision, missionary zeal, faith healings with the urban church's managerial techniques and well-funded initiatives. Fulton is careful to include other house church perspectives other than those involved with Lausanne Congress. The Lausanne incident 'invariably raises who speaks for the church in China' (Fulton 2015, 104). He raised an important and sensitive issue of who should represent the church in China in the global arena.

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<sup>24</sup> The formation of the Lausanne China Core Committee included T1-Yuehan who represented the Traditional Church, Zhang Heng who represented the Rural networks, and Tianming who represented the Urban Church.

Fulton also identified a conflicting perspective within the house church movement on Shouwang Church. Even though the Shouwang Church registration process with the government was ‘a struggle involving the unregistered church as a whole (Fulton 2015, 111–12)’, many house church leaders disagreed with Tianming and Shouwang Church in their struggle for official recognition (Fulton 2015, 121–22).

Kim-Kwong Chan’s book *Understanding World Christianity: China* lists several factors contributing to the differences between rural and urban Christianity. First, urban Christians are better educated than their rural counterparts and have been indoctrinated in Atheistic Communism instead of the less-educated peasants from folk religion. Since urban intellectuals have transferred their allegiance from the Communist party to Christianity, ‘the growth of Christianity in urban areas poses a direct socio-political threat to the ruling Party and generates fears among the Party leadership... As a result, Protestant communities in the urban areas face stronger administrative constraints than their rural brethren (Chan 2019, 116–17).’ Second, urban intellectual faith issues are more intellectual than pragmatic. Urbanites debate on God and faith rather than spiritual encounters in rural areas. Third, space is a premium in the cities, and there is a lack of space. Fourth, there is a higher socio-economic cost of urban compared to rural. Urban intellectual converts are often former Party members, many employed by the state and have a higher cost due to discrimination, demotion, or dismissal from employment. Fifth, the cities are prone to foreign influences and have been exposed to Korean prayer, Singapore charismatic songs, Taiwan praise groups, US Vineyard and Australian Hillsong. Finally, Chan mentions businesspeople fellowships with the examples of Wenzhou Christian business entrepreneurs (Chan 2019, 116–20).

Urban Churches with Beijing Shouwang Church (started in 1993), Beijing City Revival Church (started in 1997), Beijing Zion Church (started in 2007) have been a topic among several doctoral dissertations coming from different perspectives. Vicky W.



Kan's *The Study of the Emerging House Churches in Beijing* (Kan, Vicky W. 2013) provides overall coverage of the Urban Church. Paul Moon's thesis 'Seeking a new wineskin for the new wine: Inter-religious comparative research of the registration issue of the Chinese house church (Moon 2013)' analysed Beijing Shouwang Church struggle with the government. Moon compared the principles of East Jin Buddhism to evaluate three Church-State positions of Separation, Human Rights, and Dialogue to see if there were lessons for church relations with the government. Other Chinese literature on the Urban Church include articles from the quarterly *Almond Magazine* published by Beijing Shouwang Church and Tianming's unpublished book *City on a Hill* (T. Jin 2013).

Jonathan Ro's doctoral thesis 'Globalisation's impact on the urban church in China (J. C. Ro 2013)' examines the same three Urban Churches in my thesis led by pastors Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel. Jonathan Ro's research explores first, how influences of globalisation penetrate the urban churches (theology, models of ministry, leadership patterns, values, beliefs, and worldviews), second, how global influences on ministries speak to the needs and interests of young professionals (their identities, their needs, and their spiritual growth) in these churches? His research points to how globalisation impacts the Urban Church through Westernisation and McDonaldization with the attention to 'professionalized preaching, worship, leadership training, theological training, church government, youth ministry, and children's ministry, a reality in the era of globalisation (J. C. Ro 2013, 311).'

Sociologists Rodney Stark and Xiuhua Wang analyses the sociological reasons behind why Christianity has grown in China and Asia in their book *A Star in the East: The rise of Christianity in China*. Stark and Wang have discovered Christianity popular among China and Asian elites due to the spiritual deprivation and dissatisfaction of the educated with their own cultural traditional faith when compared to modernity tied to Christianity that came from the West (Stark and Wang 2015, 79–83). The theory has some merit in

explaining the growth of Christianity among China's urban intellectuals. Stark and Wang also provide sociological research data showing a higher percentage of college-educated Christians in six Asian countries.

Lacking an era of persecution, Christianity has gained a much larger share of the population in South Korea (36 percent), Hong Kong (22 percent), and Singapore (18 percent). Christianity has achieved less growth in Taiwan (7 percent) and Japan (3 percent). But in all six of these Asian nations, it is the more educated who are those most likely to have become Christians (Stark and Wang 2015, 80).

### **2.2.3 Back to Jerusalem**

The Back to Jerusalem (B2J) literature primarily comes from Ezra Jin, Wei Hong, Mark Shan, Paul Hattaway, David Aikman, Kim-Kwong Chan, and Thomas Lee.<sup>25</sup> I have selected these authors because they have had primary source interviews with original B2J members.

The B2J movement will be covered in detail in Chapter 5 with Ezra. In his published doctoral dissertation book *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations*, Ezra provides historical background information in the first chapter in preparation for his thesis on the biblical foundation of a Jerusalem-centred mission. Ezra's new missiology is the view that the responsibility of the church is not just to bring the gospel from Jerusalem to the nations but also to bring all the nations back to Jerusalem. 'The mission to the nations should come first, but we must remember that the end goal is to return with all nations to Jerusalem and welcome the advent of Jesus (E. Jin 2016, 162).' The B2J movement is very controversial even within China. Another leader Wei, who has worked closely with Ezra in *Mission China*, provides arguments in his doctoral thesis on "Mission China 2030" directly refuting Ezra's B2J missiology (Wei 2020, 127–29).

The most extensive B2J historical writings with primary source interviews in Chinese are in Mark Shan's last chapter of *The History of Christianity in Xinjiang, China* (新疆基督教史) (M. C. Shan 2010, 201–34). Shan provides an historical account of the two B2J

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<sup>25</sup> Overseas Chinese theological educator and seminary president Thomas Lee also has some similar observations and criticisms with his extensive knowledge of the house church and has primary data interviews with B2J leaders. (T. Lee 2010a; 2010b; 2011)

missionary waves in the 1947. He also encompasses a grander picture of missions work in Xinjiang with bi-vocational Christians who arrived a couple years earlier in in 1945 into Hami and Urumqi, Xinjiang, and the Swedish and British missionaries who arrived as early as 1876 (M. C. Shan 2010, 176).

Paul Hattaway is best known for his writing on the B2J movement in China with his book *Back to Jerusalem: The Chinese House Church Leaders and their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Hattaway 2003). Another more popular book *Heavenly Man* also has a section on the B2J movement (Yun and Hattaway 2002, 278–92). Aikman also dedicated a B2J chapter providing a short description of Mark Ma, Mecca Zhao, and Simon Zhao (Aikman 2003, 193–204). Both Hattaway and Aikman’s books are written in English and include translated narrative stories from multiple primary source interviews. The importance of these interwoven stories is the description of the B2J spirituality, mission passion and all-out commitment and sacrifices of the missionaries. What is missing in Hattaway and Aikman are some rigorous questions and concerns that are addressed by others who have observed serious problems.

The B2J movement has many critics most notable is overseas Chinese academic Kim-Kwong Chan. Chan’s critique comes from his first-hand observation of the B2J movement coming from rural China in the 2000s. He mentions a few concerns including a lack of qualified personnel and cross-cultural training, the dubious motive of missionary candidates, a clandestine style of operation lacking accountability and financial transparency, and ethical issues with the law inside and outside of China (Chan 2013, 78).

Chan’s more recent book *Understanding World Christianity: China* criticises the Chinese missionaries as naïve and reckless with the recent kidnapping and killing of two young Chinese people by ISIS in Pakistan. From the Chinese government perspective, this incident was a reckless endeavour that jeopardized China’s long-term political interest in the region. The incident caused a loss of billions in investments for China’s

One Belt Initiative. The political fallout included the Korean missionary being expelled from Pakistan and China, and the closure of missionary training centres in China (Chan 2019, 196).

#### **2.2.4 Mission China**

Two house church leaders have written doctoral dissertations on *Mission China 2030*. Daniel has written his doctoral thesis in Korean, ‘A Study on The Leadership Development for The Missionary Movement of China’s House Churches: A Strategic Proposal for *Mission China 2030* (D. Jin 2018)’. Daniel uses leadership examples in the bible, church history, and the Korean church to compare with the leadership of Mission China to provide evidence of the movement.

Wei's doctoral dissertation is ‘A Study of the Mission China 2030’. Wei’s perspective comes from his struggles working within *Mission China 2030* (the first four conferences from 2015 to 2019) and, as previously mentioned, questions Ezra’s B2J missiology. He shared with me that his thesis was more critical towards *Mission China 2030* due to his research concluded during the attacks on the house church and the closures of *Mission China* activities at the end of 2019. Wei believed ‘*Mission China 2030*’ would pass, but a broader *Mission China* movement would continue and emerge from *Mission China 2030* (Wei 2020, 167). Wei has written on *Mission China 2030* as an insider in the movement from mobilisation within China. More recently, he has become more optimistic due to the momentum of the revival and missions prayer activities during COVID in 2020.

From the field side, Tabor Laughlin’s doctoral research ‘Factors impacting Cultural Adjustment and Retention of Chinese Cross-cultural Workers’ interviewed 29 Chinese cross-cultural workers providing evidence for the challenges of house church missionaries on the field; including the lack of finances, the need for vocational training for bi-vocational careers to support their missionaries, and the filial piety pressure to

support parents. Probably the most interesting discovery from his thesis is his conclusion that there was no correlation between educational achievement and ministry effectiveness (Laughlin 2019, 170–71). Laughlin’s conclusion may need more verification due to the small sample size and questions on the measurement of ministry effectiveness.

## **2.3 World Christianity**

This section covers the precedent literature from prominent Western scholars in *World Christianity*, providing the context for my theoretical framework. *World Christianity* scholars include Andrew Walls’ translatability principle, David Bosch and the Ecumenical *missio Dei* paradigm, and Tim Tennent’s Evangelical Trinitarian *missio Dei*. Ecumenical World Christianity scholars Walls and Bosch mostly cover missiological concepts in the first two phases, Translatability and Contextualisation, in Ekström’s ‘Missionisation Cycle’. The third phase, Self-missionisation, from the Majority world missions comes from Ekström’s research on the missionary movements from the Newer Sending Countries in Brazil, Ghana, and India (Ekström 2011, 20).

### **2.3.1 Andrew Walls: Translation & Contextualisation**

Andrew Walls, a British historian, is considered the foremost missiologist in the field of World Christianity who furthered our understanding of how Christianity transformed from a Western religion to a global one. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Walls 1996) and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* have been landmarks books along with over 70 published journal articles in the field of *World Christianity* (Burrows, Gornik, and McLean 2011; Weston 2014). Walls has been instrumental in opening a new field of study called World Christianity.

Christianity's centre of gravity has decisively passed from the northern to the southern hemispheres, an idea promoted by Walls and other *World Christian* scholars popularised by Philip Jenkins's book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*.<sup>26</sup>

In 1974 Walbert Bühlmann in *The Coming of the Third Church* predicted a major demographic shift to the global South. Later missiologists such as Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh frequently spoke of the surprising emergence of a vital postcolonial church in the Majority World. David Barrett, the well-known demographer and editor of the *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, provided the statistical support for this shift in 1982 (Tennent 2010, 33; Bühlmann and Woodhall 1982; Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson 2001).

The traditional understanding of 'missions' began to change from the one-way traffic of West to the third-world to 'mission' where 'the local church is everywhere in the world... every church, everywhere was understood to be in the state of mission' (Bosch 1991, 378–79). Many new centres of Christianity from all around the world replaced the 'home base' of the West. 'Church and mission are multi-centric, but different centres belong to a single organism. Christian faith is embodied faith; Christ takes flesh among those who respond to him in faith (Walls and Ross 2008, 202–3).'

Walls first used the term 'serial' to describe the cross-cultural transmission of Christianity, with each new point of the Christian circumference as a new potential Christian centre.

'The Christian story is serial; its centre moves from place to place. No one church or place or culture owns it. Different peoples and places have become its heartlands, its chief representatives at different times. Then the baton passes on to others. Christian progress is never final, never a set of gains plotted on a map... Christian history reveals the faith was often withering in its heartlands, in its centres seeming strength and importance, to establish itself on or beyond its margins. It has a vulnerability, a certain fragility, at its heart – the vulnerability of the cross, the fragility of the earthen vessel (Walls 2002, 66–67).'

The serial nature of the Christian movement followed a pattern with the fall of Christianity in one area (i.e., Jerusalem, Northern Africa, Rome) with the rise in another. This transmission occurred through a cross-cultural diffusion of Christian faith centred in the missionary movement (Walls 1996, 257). In other words, cross-cultural diffusion has been necessary for the growth and continuance of Christianity. 'It has been its life's

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<sup>26</sup> Jenkins acknowledges that Walls along with other European, African, and Asian thinkers were in discussion of this global change as early as the 1970's (Jenkins 2011, 4).

blood, and without it, the faith could not have survived (Walls 2002, 67).’ Each phase transforms Christianity as it enters and penetrates another culture (Walls 1996, 22). Therefore, the Western missionary movement seen in the context of the history of Christianity is one of a series of major cross-cultural diffusions.

Walls has divided mission history into six cultural phases: 1) Jewish, 2) Hellenistic-Roman, 3) Barbarian, 4) Western Europe, 5) Expanding Europe and Christian Recession, and 6) Cross-Cultural Transmission. Walls’ six-phase *Cross-Cultural Transmission* is the period of the emergence of a new field of study called ‘World Christianity’ or ‘Global Christianity’.<sup>27</sup> There were two remarkable developments of Wall’s fifth age of Expanding Europe and Christian Recession; ‘One was a substantial recession from the Christian faith among the European peoples... The other major development of the period was the cross-cultural transplantation of Christianity,’ The seeds of Christian faith had been planted in the non-Western Southern continents (Walls 1996, 21–22). At the beginning of this story,

Christianity appeared to be a Western religion at the beginning of this story. Appearances were deceptive; ... By the end of our story. However, the Western world was giving up on Christianity, with the proportion of Europeans and North Americans in the Christian body declining year by year. The cultural contexts and worldviews of Africa and Asia and the rest of the non-Western world were beginning to remake Christian living and thinking (Walls 2001, 9).’

According to Walls, this diversity has coherence centred on some fundamental truths; namely 1) the worship of God of Israel, 2) the ultimate significance of Jesus of Nazareth, 3) God is active where believers are 4) believers constitute a people of God transcending time and space (Walls 1996, 23–24).

Related to the cross-cultural transmission of the faith is Walls’ translation principle. ‘Translatability is the ability of a message or a model to be translated into another culture

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<sup>27</sup> Jenkins sees little distinction between ‘global Christianity’ and ‘world Christianity’ preferring to use “global” Christianity in a broad and nonjudgement sense (Jenkins 2011, xiii). Lamin Sanneh proposes a distinction between ‘global Christianity’ and ‘world Christianity.’ The former ‘global Christianity’ refers to Christianity throughout the globe that still reflects the forms and patterns of European Christianity; the latter ‘world Christianity’ is Christianity that has been received by and indigenised in different locations, without all the trappings of Western Christianity (Sanneh 2003, 22–23).

(Ekström 2011, 11).’ The Christian faith was translated into the cultures with Christ’s incarnation into humanity. Jesus entered history into Jewish culture, into the Aramaic language during the Roman occupation of Israel in the first century. The Scriptures were translated into specific languages of Hebrew and Greek. The *koine* Greek of the New Testament was the common vernacular language of the first-century marketplace and not a ‘sacred’ language as Latin. Bible translation foreshadowed the first significant movement of cross-cultural Christian diffusion from the Jewish language and culture into the new universe of the Hellenistic Greek world.

Altogether, the effect of that first pre-Christian translation was crucial for developing an indigenous Hellenistic Christianity. Hellenistic people could not be converted without the conversion of the whole universe of Greek thought...There was no alternative for Hellenistic Christians but the conversion of Hellenistic culture itself, the steady application of Christ and the Word about Christ to its processes and priorities – another work of centuries (Walls 1996, 28).

As the whole universe of culture is converted, it’s not simply about the number of believers that multiply. Still, Christianity begins to work through the vast complex of a total system ‘undergirding the law, reflection, education, literature, the intellectual life of a substantial section of contemporary humanity (Walls 1996, 53).’ The process alters the expression of the Christian faith into areas never explored before while at the same time penetrating and challenging the thought patterns of the culture with the truth of the gospel. Walls includes theological development as part of the process with the transmission of the faith involving translation and translation leads to theological expansion. ‘Theology arises as a fruit of vernacular translation in the process of the conversion of the past (Walls 2005, 372, 374).’

After a national church adheres to the indigenous Three-self principles: self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, the next step in contextualisation is the ‘fourth-self’ called ‘self-theologising’ (Hiebert 1985b). Younger churches have the right to read and interpret Scripture for themselves but have a responsibility to dialogue with the global church to find the bible universals (Rochelle and Nichols 2009, 211; Hiebert 1985a, 196)’



Though churches have a right to interpret the Bible for their particular contexts, they also have a responsibility to listen to the greater "international" church to which they belong (1985a, 217).

In order to address the potential dangers of the aberrant indigenous theologies, Hiebert argued for a global dialogue between indigenous and global churches that envisioned the development of ‘biblically-based, supracultural, historical, Christological, and Spirit-led “transcultural theology” or “meta-theology” (Hiebert 1985b, 217–19).’

It was out of this global dialogue that Hiebert envisioned the development of a biblically-based, supracultural, historical, Christological, and Spirit-led "transcultural theology" or "meta-theology" that would compare theologies, explore the cultural biases of each, and seek to find biblical universals (Hiebert 1985a, 217–19)

The culminating missiology is what Walls calls the ‘Ephesian moment’ when both the more prosperous West and the poorer Global South dialogue, partner, and mutually enrich each other as one ecumenical family. The ‘Ephesian Moment’ also announces a church of the poor. ‘Christianity will be mainly the religion of mainly of rather poor and very poor peoples, with few gifts to bring except the gospel itself’ (Walls 2002, 81).’ Sanneh describes a global fellowship united in apostolic lineage. ‘In race, culture, language and style as diverse as the world itself.’ (Sanneh and Grant 1999, 961)<sup>28</sup>

Walls concluding thoughts are in the last chapter of his final book *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity*. Walls calls this the ‘Great Reverse Migration’ when the Great European Migration went into reverse with the migration of ‘thousands upon thousands from Africa and Asia, and Latin America came to Europe and North America’ (Walls Gornik 2017, 262).

### **2.3.2 David Bosch: *missio Dei* and the Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm**

David Bosch was one of the most influential missiologists best known for his book *Transforming Missions: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Bosch 1991). Bosch divided church history into six missionary paradigms based upon their overall experience and understanding of reality that have moulded their faith, experiences and thought

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<sup>28</sup> Sanneh and Wacker, ‘Christianity Appropriated: Conversion and the Intercultural Process’ review of on *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* by Andrew F. Walls (New York: Orbis, 1996), *Church History* 68:4 (1999), pp. 954-961.

process. The world undergoes a fundamental macro paradigm shift of changing from one way of understanding reality to another every three to five hundred years (Bosch 1991, 185; Kuhn 1970, 122–23; Capra 1987, 519). Bosch then builds upon Hans Küng's six sub-divisions of the history of theology; the Primitive Christianity; the Patristic period; the Middle Ages; the Reformation; the Enlightenment; and the Ecumenical era and Christianity to sub-divide the history of mission into six missionary paradigms. Bosch's premise is that each Christian era, with its unique context, wrestles with Christian faith questions and missions to produce different 'Christian theologises' (Bosch 1991, 181–89; Küng 1987, 157).

Bosch's primary purpose of his treatise is revealed in his introduction and his last chapter in the sixth ecumenism missions paradigm. 'Mission' is undergoing a contemporary crisis. The traditional understanding of the sending of missionaries to a designated territory undertaking missionary activities of propagation of the faith, expansion of God's reign, conversion, and planting churches by a missions agency to a geographic area in the non-Christian world 'mission field' has been gradually modified in the twentieth century (Bosch 1991, 1–2; Ohm 1962, 52f; Müller, Gensichen, and Rzepkowski 1987, 31–34). The new era 'missionary sending' is under attack with missiologists and mission executives writing on the failures of the Western missions (Orchard 1964; Scherer 1964; Dodge 1964; Carden 1964; Heisig 1981) and third world leaders calling for the moratorium on the Western missionary movement (Bosch 1991, 518; Rütli 1974; Nacpil 1971, 78–79).<sup>29</sup> A broadening crisis in a post-modern world

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<sup>29</sup> In 1964, four books appeared *Missions in a Time of Testing* by R.K. Orchard (Orchard 1964), *Missionary Go Home!* By James A. Scherer (Scherer 1964), *Unpopular Missionary* by Ralph Dodge (Dodge 1964), and *The Ugly Missionary* by John Carden (Carden 1964). For German theologian Ludwig Rütli, 'the entire modern missionary enterprise is so polluted by its origins in and close association with Western colonialism that it is irredeemable; we have to find an entirely new image today (Rütli 1974).' In 1971, United Methodist Bishop from the Philippines Emerito Nacpil depicted mission 'as a symbol of the university of Western imperialism... the people of Asia do not see the face of the suffering Christ but a benevolent monster... the present structure of mission is dead, and the first thing we ought to do is to eulogize it and then bury it (Nacpil 1971, 78–79).' That same year speaking in New York and Milwaukee, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Rev. John Gatu of Kenya, suggested a moratorium on Western missionary involvement in Africa (Bosch 1991, 518).

included secularisation, ‘dechristianisation’, the blurring of ‘Christian’ and ‘non-Christian’ territories, the guilt complex from Western Christians to slavery, the growing divide between the more affluent Christians and poor, and the autonomy of third-world theologies (Bosch 1991, 3–4).

A new sixth emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm has emerged with a new post-modern post-Christian world framework. At the centre of this contemporary missiology is the *missio Dei* (Mission of God); God sending the church into the world. The church changes from being the sender of missionaries to being the one sent. This redefinition has some important implications. The church is the mission, and the home base is everywhere. The new mission mode now is a partnership with other churches. God’s people are ‘missionary people’ and the ‘church-in-mission’ is, primarily, the local church everywhere in the world. The traditional understanding of ‘missions’ as one-way traffic, from the West to the Third World, is part of a previous era. Every church everywhere is understood to be in a state of mission (Bosch 1991, 379). ‘Individual missionaries are sent as ambassadors of one local church to another local church (where such a local church already exists), as witnesses of solidarity and partnership, and as expressions of mutual encounter, exchange and enrichment (Bosch 1991, 380).’

The scope of ‘Mission’ is broadened to include social justice and responsibilities (Bosch 1991, 400–408), contextualisation (Bosch 1991, 420–32), liberation (Bosch 1991, 443–47), inculturation (Bosch 1991, 447–57), common witness (ecumenical unity) (Bosch 1991, 457–67), ministry by the whole people of God (Bosch 1991, 467–74), interreligious dialogue (Bosch 1991, 474–89), and hope in action (Bosch 1991, 489–510).

Mission is a multifaceted ministry in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualisation, and much more (Bosch 1991, 512).

In conclusion, Bosch is critical of the Western missionaries who save souls, plant churches and impose their ways and wills on others. The new mission for this contemporary post-modern era is the *missio Dei*.

The mission is not a competition with other religions, not a conversion activity, not expanding the faith, not building up the kingdom of God; neither is it social, economic, or political activity. And yet, there is merit in all these projects. So, the church's concern is conversion, church growth, the reign of God, economy, society, and politics – but in a different manner. The *missio Dei* purifies the church... From this perspective, the mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world (Bosch 1991, 519).

The *missio Dei* and ecumenical era paradigm come from contemporary Western missiology and the development of the indigenous church in the Global South.

Contemporary Kirsteen Kim summarises Bosch's greatest contribution as the acknowledgement that the Western missionary enterprise has its own contextuality and the necessity to recognise other mission theologies coming from other contexts (K. Kim 2004, 2). Kim advocates for the global conversations of (contextual) theologies. 'Conversations' instead of 'dialogue' because of the many partners around the world with varying access to social power. 'The theology of the Holy Spirit both authenticates contextual theologies and also calls into question any theological monopoly. Moreover, the Spirit, the agent of mission, motivates the crossing of theological boundaries and the global conversation of theologies from different contexts (K. Kim 2004, 7).

### **2.3.3 Tim Tennent: Trinitarian *missio Dei***

Tim Tennent, the president of Asbury Seminary since 2009 and former Phd student of Walls at the University of Edinburgh (1995 – 1998), recovers the *missio Dei* under an evangelical trinitarian theological perspective.

Walls' missiological contributions are clearly incorporated in Tim Tennent's opening chapter in *Invitation to World Missions* 'Seven Megatrends Shaping the Twenty-first Century Missions'. Tennent lists seven missiological megatrends; the collapse of Christendom, the rise of Postmodernism: theological, cultural, and ecclesiastical crisis, the collapse of the "West-reaches-the-Rest" Paradigm, the changing face of Global Christianity, the emergence of the Fourth Branch of Christianity, Globalisation: Immigration, Urbanisation, and new technologies, and a deeper ecumenism (Tennent 2010, 18–51). In his final Megatrend, Tennent promotes 'a deeper ecumenism':

However, as global Christianity becomes increasingly made up of people from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and as these newly emerging indigenous expressions become normative, the whole structure of our understanding and discourse about Christian history and mission history must also undergo a dramatic change... The global church is a tapestry of diversity... This has important implications for twenty-first-century missions, including the meaning of collaboration and partnership, our understanding of ecclesiology in a global context, and our conceptualisation of Christian identity (Tennent 2010, 47–50).

Even though Tennent echoes similar themes of Walls and the non-Western *World Christianity*, a subtle distinction is revealed in his cover endorsement of Lalsangkima Pachuau's book *World Christianity: a historical and theological introduction*. Tennent includes 'World Christianity' under a broader field of 'Global Christianity' that encompasses the West.

*World Christianity* is a truly stunning achievement in the field of global Christianity (Pachuau 2018, Tennent's Cover Endorsement).

Tennent's nuanced approach includes the Western church in global Christianity as distinct from the ecumenical missiologists who are primarily concerned with *World Christianity* as the non-Western church coming from the Global South and Majority World (Walls and Gornik 2017, Introduction Chapter; Phan 2012, 178; Irvin, Phan, and Tan 2016, 3–26; Cabrita 2017, 1).

Tennent's book *Invitation to World Missions: a Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* lays out a Trinitarian *missio Dei* theology. His Trinitarian framework includes God the Father as the source, initiator, and goal of the *missio Dei*, God the Son as the embodiment of the *missio Dei*, and God the Holy Spirit as the empowering presence of the *missio Dei*. He adopts similar themes from Walls and Bosch, including God the Father as the sender of missions, Christian missions in history as a reflection of the incarnation, incarnation as translation – the translatability principle, the Ephesian moment – coming together of diverse cultures into a new identity in Jesus Christ, and holistic missions.

However, Tennent's evangelical distinction is the necessary inclusion of the biblical missionary mandate rather than the end of traditional missionary sending. 'Missionaries are both bearers of a message and embodiments of that message (Tennent 2010, 83)'. The

Holy Spirit serves as the empowerment and ‘explosion of joy’ motivation for the missionary rather than the missionary just following a set of commands from the ‘missionary mandate’ (Tennent 2010, 98–99). Tennent states:

One of the goals of this book is to re-articulate the missionary mandate to a church that no longer occupies the cultural centre and has largely lost the biblical and theological moorings that have traditionally supported missionary endeavours (Tennent 2010, 31).

John Flett, a contemporary missiologist, acknowledges that one of the potential problems of the *missio Dei* is the intention to criticise the West rather than to construct. Trinitarian missiology, ‘Grounding mission in the doctrine of the Trinity’, could distance ‘the Western missionary enterprise from every colonialist association (Flett 2010, 36).’ In addressing the ambiguity of the *missio Dei*, Joh Flett is critical of the traditional ‘sending’ of missionaries. He questions Gustav Warneck, the dominant mission theologian from 1870 to World War I, who used the traditional missionary theory as his pioneering work with ‘the sending out of missionaries from our churches into the whole world, and by this the expansion of Christianity among peoples (Warneck 1905, 3.2:69; Dürr 1951; Flett 2010, 37).’ ““Sending” ... must undergo a process of purification due to its Eurocentric and geographical connotation. Though theologically grounded in God, the human act of “sending” succumbed to the colonialist agenda by being framed in terms of geographical expansion (Dürr 1951, 2; Flett 2010, 38).’ According to Flett, the traditional missionary sending understanding is too closely tied with colonialism and thus must be thoroughly questioned.

Tennent, on the other hand, includes the positive contributions of traditional missionary sending and receiving models coming from different global centres of Christianity, including the Majority world and the West together in Global Christianity. He has observed that ‘the simultaneous emergence of multiple new centres of Christian vitality has created a multidirectional mission with six sending and receiving continents (Tennent 2010, 33).’ While recognising the growth of the indigenous church in the

Majority World, Tennent incorporates and promotes the traditional missionary sending under the Trinitarian *missio Dei*.

### 2.3.4 David Hesselgrave: Prioritism versus Holism

Several leading evangelical missiologists have been critical of the *missio Dei*. Donald McGavran and Arthur Glasser stressed the traditional themes of evangelism, conversion, and church growth. David Hesselgrave was one of the most ardent critics of the holistic gospel who promotes the traditional view of “Prioritism” in contrast to “Holism” (Ott, Strauss, and Tennent 2010, 143).<sup>30</sup> *Prioritism theology* is defined as ‘the mission is primarily making disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive.’. He has defined other categories as *Liberation Theology – Radical* ‘The mission is to promote justice in society and establish Shalom on the earth.’ *Holism Theology – Revisionist*: ‘The mission is to minister to society and individuals without dichotomising between the physical and spiritual or the body, and soul and spirit.’ *Holism Theology – Restrained*: ‘The mission is to minister to society and individuals socially and spiritually while prioritising evangelism.’ David Hesselgrave further clarifies:

Prioritism recognizes the importance of all or most of those ministries that address the various medical, educational, economic, and social needs of individuals and societies. At the same time, it sustains the time-honored distinction between the primary mission of the church and secondary supporting ministries. With reference to spiritual transformation and social transformation, it gives priority to spiritual transformation. With reference to spirit, mind, and body, it gives priority to the spirit or soul. With reference to social action and evangelism, it gives priority to evangelism (Hesselgrave 2005, 121).

René Padilla and Samuel Escobar should be credited with convincing evangelicalism of the need to embrace a holistic approach to mission over the past several decades. Padilla used the term ‘*misión integral*’, introducing social responsibility as a significant missiological concept at first Lausanne Congress 1974 (Kirkpatrick 2016, 369). Padilla

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<sup>30</sup> Other self-prescribed Prioritist include Carl Henry, Billy Graham, Arthur Glasser, Ralph Winter, George Peters, Robertson McQuilkin, John Piper, Ajith Fernando, Andreas K Stenberger, and Eckhard Schnabel (Little 2016, 143).

first addressed what he called ‘the customary divorce’ between evangelism and social action at the Latin American Theological Fraternity in 1970:

The proclamation of the gospel (kerygma) and the demonstration of the gospel that gives itself in service form is an indivisible whole. One without the other is an incomplete, mutilated gospel and, consequently, contrary to the will of God. From this perspective, it is foolish to ask about the relative importance of evangelism and social responsibility. This would be equivalent to asking about the relative importance of the right wing and the left wing of a plane (Kirkpatrick 2016, 368).

Since then, holistic integral missiology has been widely accepted among evangelicals in other areas of the world.<sup>31</sup> The Newer Sending countries (Brazil, Ghana, and India) missionary movements in the Global South have promoted holistic missions with social concern in their strategies even though the motivation is still the conversion of unreached peoples and evangelisation (Ekström 2011, 143, 201, 256, 284).

### **2.3.5 Postcolonial Missiology**

A new ‘Postcolonial Missiology for the Whole Church’ proposed by Al Tizon focuses on racial righteousness through reconciliation with the restoration of justice and equality in a holistic ministry. The post-Christendom age is ‘from everywhere to everywhere’ with global partnerships in mission. ‘For now, let us grasp that the ministry of reconciliation – the hard work of overcoming distrust, misunderstanding, bitterness, and hatred between former colonizers (and their descendants) and the formerly colonized (and their descendants) in the power of the whole gospel – centrally defines holistic mission in a postcolonial age (Tizon 2018, 54). For the Western church, postcolonial missions must grapple with the ‘confession, repentance, restitution, humility, and a shift in power dynamics, especially in regard to money. It means the avoidance of paternalism... resources (including monetary), spiritual, knowledge, labour and managerial (Corbett and Fikkert 2009, 115).’ For the non-Western church, ‘it will take assertiveness in the Spirit to assume a posture of equality and leadership in mission initiatives (Tizon 2018, 55).’

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<sup>31</sup> Other self-described holists include Samuel Escobar, J. Andrew Kirk, Ron Sider, Chris Wright, Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant Myers, James Nkansah-Obrempong, Richard Stearns, Gary Haugen, and Dean Flemming (Little 2016, 145).



The ‘Postcolonial missiology’ brings together the West and non-Western world together as equals in partnership in mission to the world.

### 2.3.6 Las Ekström: ‘Self-Missionisation’ in the ‘Missionisation Cycle’

My theoretical framework laid out in chapter one was based upon Las Ekström’s ‘Missionisation Cycle’. The ‘Missionisation Cycle’ is built upon Walls’ translatability principle followed by contextualisation which includes Hiebert’s fourth-self principle of ‘self-theologising’. The final phase of the ‘Missionisation Cycle’ is the ‘self-missionisation’ process. ‘Self-missionisation’ is when local initiatives reflect on self-missiological issues developed from their local context to produce their theological understanding and practical application of their mission (Ekström 2011, 19–20).

Ekström has observed a new indigenous mission phenomenon emerging in the Global South. Ekström calls these countries the Newer Sending Countries (NSC) instead of the traditional sending nations called Older sending Countries (OSCs) of Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. These formerly non-Western mission-receiving countries started to send their own missionaries as early as the 1970s and 1980s.

While the overall trajectory appeared to show countries in the Global South increasing their involvement in missions, not all Global South countries are growing in their missionary sending. There has not been an emergence of mission movements as with Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, most of the French and Portuguese speaking countries of Africa, Japan, and Indonesia due to various factors, including historical, size of the evangelical church, political, social, and economic factors, highly developed philosophical world views, civil wars, or the destructive colonial heritage.

**Table 2.1: Number of Cross-Cultural Missionaries in Newer Sending Countries (NSC)**

Country	1972	1980	1988	1992	2000
<b>Asia</b>					
Burma/Myanmar	10	1,010	2,560	2,313	3,160
<b>India</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>3,328</b>	<b>8,905</b>	<b>na*</b>	<b>44,000</b>

Japan	137	125	291	407	397
<b>Korea</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>2,237</b>	<b>12,000</b>
Philippines	170	586	1,814	2,159	2,829
Singapore	10	116	646	567	715
Thailand	8	-	132	117	884
<b>Africa</b>					
<b>Ghana</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>1,545</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>750</b>
Kenya	15	1,002	2,242	2,166	673
Nigeria	820	1,141	2,959	2,873	3,700
South Africa	84	617	999	2,509	2,622
Uganda	5	47	1,113	920	773
Congo - DRC	9	990	2,731	2,086	445
Zimbabwe	-	496	1,540	240	250
<b>Latin America</b>					
Argentina	30	-	70	144	477
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>2,040</b>	<b>2,755</b>	<b>4,754</b>
Chile	10	-	-	102	233
Colombia	7	22	192	148	286
Costa Rica	11	-	3	107	331
Guatemala	8	27	90	123	255
Mexico	69	24	224	376	649
Peru	8	144	164	190	362

(Ekström 2011, 9; Pate 1989; Johnstone 1993; Johnstone, Mandryk, and Johnstone 2001)

Ekström uses Operation World to provide the number of Cross-Cultural Missionaries in Newer Sending Countries (Table 2.1: Number of Cross-Cultural Missionaries from Newer Sending Countries) (Ekström 2011, 9). Within contemporary missiological literature, the China missionary numbers are missing. The lack of China missionary data is due to the *Mission China* activities as newcomers in missions, security concerns, and a

lack of general awareness of mission activities coming from China. My research hopes to fill this missing gap of China's future missionary movement.

## **2.4 Contemporary Theologians**

In chapter 8, four missiological concepts from the writings of contemporary theologians - Paul Fiddes, Karan Kilby, Jürgen Moltmann and Kosuke Koyama, will be compared with the missiology from the four Beijing pastors. The first topic of comparison is the contemporary theological writings on the 'suffering of God' expounded by Paul Fiddes in his book *The Creative Suffering of God* (Fiddes 2002, 16–45). The second topic of comparison is on 'the positivity of sufferings' from Catholic theologian Karan Kilby's chapter on the writings of Julian and Norwich and Hans Urs von Balthasar in *God, Evil, and the Limits of Theology* (Kilby 2021, 121–37). The third topic of comparison comes from Jürgen Moltmann's eschatology on the *Theology of Hope* (Moltmann 1993b). Moltmann's 'theology of hope' will be compared with the eschatological urgency of the Back to Jerusalem. The final comparison is with Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama who uses an analogy of the lunch-box 'with a handle' to describe missions coming from the resourced West compared to the cross 'without a handle' in *No Handle on the Cross: an Asian Meditation on the Crucified Mind* (Koyama 2011).

### **2.4.1 Paul Fiddes: Creative Suffering God**

Following the horrors of Nazism and Auschwitz after World War II, several Western theologians have written on the 'theology of the cross' or the 'theology of suffering' primarily coming from the angle of a suffering 'crucified God' (Fiddes 2002; Jürgen Moltmann 2015; Weinandy 2000). Paul Fiddes book the *Creative Suffering God* covers four theological contributions on the theme of a God who suffers. Most notably of the four theological themes in Fiddes is Jürgen Moltmann's emphasis on the 'particular' event of Christ's forsakenness on the cross over the 'universal' suffering of God in *the Crucified God* (Moltmann 1974). Fiddes lists four theological contributions to the

‘suffering of God’; 1) Jürgen Moltmann and the particularities of Jesus’ suffering, 2) American ‘process philosophy’, 3) the ‘death of God’ theology taking on the word of Hegel and Nietzsche that ‘God is dead.’ 4) classical theism which has considerable objection to the notion of a suffering God (Fiddes 2002, 14–15).

#### **2.4.2 Karen Kilby: The Positivity of Suffering**

In the book *God, Evil and the Limits of Theology*, Catholic theologian Karen Kilby compares the works of Julian of Norwich and Hans Urs von Balthasar to probe this dilemma; ‘Is it a positive embrace of suffering and loss, understood as ultimately bound up together with love, or a positive overcoming of suffering and loss, understood as that which cannot most fundamentally touch love?’ (Kilby 2021, 137)

Julian of Norwich (1343 to 1416) was an English mystic from the Middle Ages who lived through the devastating effects of the Black Plague (1348 to 1350). She experienced 16 visions after coming from the brink of death and wrote about her experiences. As an anchoress, she devoted herself in seclusion to a life of prayer. Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905 to 1988) was a Swiss theologian and Catholic priest as a Jesuit. After leaving the Jesuits in 1950, he renewed his religious vows a few months later. His most notable work was a seven volume *Herrlichkeit* (The Glory of the Lord), a theological trilogy on the classical transcendentals of beauty, goodness, and truth.

Balthasar’s positive valuation of suffering is not clear as an embracement or welcome but ‘the more that can be said of Christ’s suffering, the better (Kilby 2021, 24).’ He believed that the Christian life should include self-loss, humiliation, self-abnegation and an act of sacrifice of self but reacted against ‘a tendency towards a shallow modern

optimism, a contemporary fear of and flight from suffering... Balthasar stressed the dark depths of the faith (2021, 128–29).’

### **2.4.3 Jürgen Moltmann: The Theology of Hope**

The third comparison is on eschatology with Jürgen Moltmann. Moltmann asserts that eschatology, the doctrine of Christian hope, is the framework dogma making Christianity credible and relevant to the modern world. In *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann’s eschatology is ‘the characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole church (Moltmann 1993b, 316).’ Eschatological hope is not merely ‘a proclamation of faith and hope, but also historic transformation life (Moltmann 1993b, 330).’ In addressing the end times, Moltmann rejects eschatology that is only concerned of the individual's future beyond this world. ‘This theology threatens to become a religious ideology of romanticist subjectivity, a religion within the sphere of the individuality that has been relieved of all social obligations (Moltmann 1993b, 316).’

Moltmann was born in 1926 into a secular German family and became a Christians as a prisoner of war in English. He served as a pastor for five years before entering the academic world as a Professor of Systematic Theology. ‘Throughout his theological career, Moltmann has consistently engaged with historical events and social movements: the Jewish holocaust, the nuclear threat, liberation theology, the civil rights movement, feminism, and the ecological threat (Chester 2006, 5).’ Moltmann asserts that eschatology, the doctrine of Christian hope, is the framework dogma making Christianity credible and relevant to the modern world.

### **2.4.4 Kosuke Koyama: No Handles Cross and a Moratorium on Missions**

In *No Handle on the Cross*, Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama compares the cross ‘without a handle’ to the lunch box ‘with a handle’. The cross is ‘heavy, badly-shaped, demoralizing object it is to take along as we follow him! Will it not slow down our pace?’. The lunch box, on the other hand, is equated with the abundant Western resources

and ‘symbolizes resourcefulness, spiritual and mental energy, high-powered substantial theology, good honest thinking (international and technological), careful planning and sacred commitment to our faith (Koyama 2011, 1–2).’ Koyama compares the crusading mind of the Western missionary movement with resourcefulness that ‘does not seek help from others. They know exactly what to do. They have “better ideas”. “They have better strategies” which have resulted in the ‘impoverishment of native participation in the mission of God (Koyama 2011, 5).’

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This literature review chapter provides the foundation for the rest of the thesis. The literature on the traditional and rural house church movement provides the background for Zhang Heng and the CGF (Chapter 3). The literature on the Urban Church and *Mission China* provides the background and missiology for the Beijing pastors Tianming (Chapter 4), Ezra (Chapter 5), and Daniel (Chapter 6). The second section covers literature on the theoretical framework of the ‘self-missionisation’ and the field of study in World Christianity. The last section introduces four contemporary missiologists: Paul Fiddes, Karan Kilby, Jürgen Moltmann, and Kosuke Koyama, for a comparative missiological analysis with the Beijing pastors in *Mission China* (Chapter 8).

## Chapter Three

### Zhang Heng:

#### From the Rural House Church to Global Missions

##### 3.1 History & Background

The rural church revivals started in Wenzhou in the 1970s, Henan in 1980s, and Anhui in the 1990s (Shen 2014, 175). Zhang Heng was an instrumental part of the Henan house church revival in the 1980s and 1990s. Henan province, a population of 109 million, has the largest Christian population of 14 million (House Church 8.9 million and TSPM 5.2 million), representing 14.75% of the province (Hattaway 2009, 337). From 2009 to 2014, Zhang Heng served as the leader of the China Gospel Fellowship (CGF). The CGF was founded by Feng Jianguo and originally called Tanghe Fellowship. In 1975, a loose fellowship of believers began to solidify and a network formed after Feng was released from prison in 1980 (Bach and Zhu 2014, 107–8). Zhang Heng estimated his network to be around four million Christians (Text: H. Zhang 2021b). These numbers are not verifiable and have been claimed by the current CGF leader Xia to be ‘inflated and part of a previous era’.<sup>32</sup> The millions of believers in the large networks were part of a previous decade which are in the range from other sources estimating the CGF to be between 500,000 to ten million people.<sup>33</sup> Zhang Heng claimed that the CGF is comprised of over 10,000 house churches. They are in the countryside and in the city, in every province, in four municipalities, in five autonomous regions including Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and

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<sup>32</sup> The current CGF leader Xia believed that the 4 million number quoted by Zhang Heng were inflated and that those numbers were from a previous era when Zhang was the leader (Xia 2022).

<sup>33</sup> Hattaway quotes another leader Shen Yiping in 2004 claiming that the CGF has around 2.3 million (Hattaway 2009, 270, 277). Tony Lambert claims that a CGF leader is on record in 2004 claiming to be around 2.4 million (Lambert 2006, 65). CGF and Fangcheng were considered at one point to be one of the largest house church networks in China. Eugene Bach estimated CGF and Fangcheng at the height to be 10 million Christians each (Bach and Zhu 2012, 97–107). In 2010, Thomas Lee estimated 30,000 churches with CGF and 10,000 churches with Fangcheng. (T. Lee 2010a, 34). CGF, Fangcheng and Nanyang house church where Brother Yun called the Heavenly Man came from were called ‘the Revival Triangle’ (Hattaway 2009, 216). Tim Conkling’s interview with a CGF leader on Sept 2004 estimated the network at 500,000 people (Conkling 2013, 18).

Xinjiang. The CGF network is in 60% to 70% of China's prefecture-level cities (Text: H. Zhang 2021a).

Several of the largest rural networks joined together in a united house church network called 'Five Large Networks' *wu da tuan dui* (五大团队). This includes CGF and Fangcheng networks from Henan province, Yingshang (also called Truth) and Lixin networks from Anhui providence, and the Wenzhou Arminian (Lambert 2006, 66).

The Born-Again meetings (Spiritual Retreats) required everyone to provide evidence of salvation through hearing the Lord's voice or seeing a vision. In addition, they began to steal people from other churches... They [Five Large Networks] started to connect after 1985 and were officially made public in 1996. There was also Peter Xu at the time of the association. He had left the Born-Again movement and signed a confession of faith with the house church network together in 1998... We have no connections with them [the Born-Again movement] now since Xu does not represent them (Text: Zhang 2022).

Exorcisms and healings were common in the rural house church. The house church's pietistic traditions included exorcism and healing prayers but did not allow speaking in tongues or prophecy (Lambert 2006, 59). In 1987, Pentecostal missionary Dennis Balcombe introduced the charismatic gifts of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the speaking in tongues.<sup>34</sup> According to Aikman, it would appear that all of the Five Large Networks joined the Charismatic fold as a result of Balcombe's ministry.<sup>35</sup> However, from my conversations with Zhang Heng, only three of the Five Large Networks, Fangcheng, Lixin, and Wenzhou Arminian, would consider themselves 'Charismatic'. The other two large networks CGF and Yingshang are open to the gifts of the spirit but would not necessarily regard themselves as 'Charismatic'. CGF leader Shen answered

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<sup>34</sup> 'Before Pastor Balcombe came to Henan, some house churches here were already Spirit-filled. However, their believers generally didn't speak in tongues, clap hands, or dance during worship (Balcombe 2014, 110).' In 1987, Pentecostal missionary Dennis Balcombe introduced the charismatic gifts during the height of the third wave of the charismatic movement. 'I was privileged to be a witness of this part of Henan's house church history, which is characterised by signs and wonders... all resulted in changed lives and massive growth in the church (Balcombe 2014, 110).'

<sup>35</sup> Aikman writes 'Though some of the house church networks would not accept Balcombe's Pentecostalism, notably the Born-Again Movement, the largest networks all did: Fangcheng, Tanghe, Wenzhou, and the two Anhui networks (Yingshang and Lixin). Within a decade of Balcombe's first teaching, one-half to two-thirds of China's house church Christians seemed to have joined the Charismatic fold, according to several Chinese Christians from the main house church networks...Before Balcombe came, no one spoke in tongues. After he left, everyone spoke in tongues and people started to see healings (Aikman 2003, 276).'



this question ‘are we Charismatics or Evangelicals? My answer: we should be charismatic evangelicals who are open to spiritual gifts but take serious value in the Scriptures and the teaching of truth (Shen 2014, 81).’

In 1979, an elder women evangelist prayed for Zhang Heng while he was sick in bed. After miraculous healing, he soon became a travelling evangelist. Zhang Heng’s early spiritual influences came from Chenyi Hui, Guizhi Yang, Shuyu Du, and Guohua Chen from the Jesus Family, Tian Bao Zhang from the China Christian Independent church, and remnants from old Pentecostalism and China Inland Missions missionaries (Interview: Zhang 2018).<sup>36</sup> Zhang Heng also attributed his spiritual growth to 1) the Bible, 2) radio, 3) books, 4) prayer, 5) classmates, 6) a missionary pastor, 7) and Korean missionaries (Interview1: H. Zhang 2015, Questionnaire: Q3).

Zhang Heng’s spiritual roots indicate that Christianity had long been translated and contextualised into the rural Chinese indigenised context.<sup>37</sup>

For nearly forty years, the church has survived and grown either completely cut off from Western control and support, or, as in the last decade, with only tenuous outside support in the form of gospel radio broadcasts and literature sent in from overseas. The church has, under persecution, demonstrated its ability to survive and multiply, and develop its own evangelistic and pastoral ministries, uniquely suited to the Chinese situation (Lambert 1994, 282).

During the early revival years, the house church developed its own theology, spirituality, and practices. Lambert writes about the Chinese church’s early theological development.

Theological exploration of the relationship between the world and the church, belief and unbelief, and of the meaning of the cross and evangelism have led to lively debate. In recent years the growth of the church has led to the necessity of exploring new forms of lay ministry, the ministry of women and indigenous forms of discipleship and evangelism (Lambert 1994, 283).

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<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several indigenous churches were founded, including the Jesus Family by Dianyin Jing in Shandong (Lian 2010; Hattaway 2018, 158–72) and the China Christian Independent church by Guozhen Yu in Shanghai (Chao 1986, Chapter 2; Lian 2010, 32–34).

<sup>37</sup> According to Jonathan Chao, the Chinese Church was already indigenised before the Communist take-over during the anti-Christian movements of 1922 and 1924–1927 ‘which was motivated by anti-imperialism of Leninist origin, forced them to develop concepts of separation from foreign missions, identification with the Chinese people, and integration with Chinese culture and society (Chao 1986, iv).’

## **3.2 Missions from the Rural House Church**

### **3.2.1 ‘Dare to Die’ Missions Migration to the Cities**

After 1979 with China's Open Reforms, the house church movement exploded in growth in the countryside by the millions. The revival was so widespread they have even coined a special term for it: “Christianity Fever”! (Lambert 2006, 57). Characteristics that marked the house church included the centrality of the Bible, prayer, evangelism, signs and wonders, and the theology of suffering. Through hardship and suffering, house church evangelists turned to the Bible for truth and comfort, prayer to sustain them, and miracles as a witness to their testimony. The house church missionary spirit emerged early on under persecution with an evangelistic fervour (Lambert 1994; 2006, 189–200; Xin 2009, 151–74).

CGF's missionary spirit started with a ‘migrant mission’ to send evangelists from rural China to the cities. As early as 1993, the CGF started by establishing five mission agencies for 200 to 300 churches. ‘People sold chickens, or handed over money they had been saving for marriage (Aikman 2003, 84).’

In the Spring of 1994, over 100 co-workers met to discuss missions expansion with the commission of young evangelists thousands of miles into other cities across China. Seventy young people were chosen and commissioned, called the ‘Dare to Die Brigade’ *gan si dui* (敢死队). They had a martyrdom spirit with a willingness to suffer and die for the Lord. Young men and women as young as twenty were given one-way tickets and could only return after several months to report. They would rely on the Lord to provide for all their needs. The instructions were to 1) evangelise into new territories, 2) wake up the old churches, 3) connect brotherhood churches to spread the gospel together, 4) assist weak churches in reviving, 5) fight against the cults and their errors, and 6) fully understand the gospel situation with plans to send missionaries (Shen 2014, 111–14).

When they returned six months later to report, a church movement in Inner Mongolia grew to 100,000 believers. Two young single women planted three churches in Heilongjiang and grew to 5,000 believers (Hattaway 2009, 271). When the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Xinjiang came to visit the CGF founder Feng Jianguo in 1996 to ask why his workers were so effective, he attributed the success to the prayers of the co-workers.

How come your workers have successfully reached so many people in Xinjiang, even Muslims? Please tell us your secrets because these Muslims will not even listen to us, but they listen to you.' This is because the co-workers have also learned that we must pray and go only in God's strength. All else is in vain (Hattaway 2009, 275).

From 1995 to 1998, a government systematic nationwide campaign crushed the house churches with arrests, beatings, imprisonment, and martyrdom. This period of persecution again resulted in revival and church growth in Henan (Hattaway 2009, 183–97). In August 1996, CGF leaders, including Zhang Heng, were arrested and sentenced to prison (Shen 2014, 129).

After being released from serving two years in prison (1996 – 1998), Zhang Heng and the network leaders planned the next expansion phase (Text: Zhang 2022b). In 1999, CGF leaders commissioned thirty more couples and families to plant churches in fifteen large cities called 'Migration Missions' *yi min xuan jiao* (移民宣教). After examining Scripture, they discovered that 'Migration Missions' was evident in the life of Abraham as well as in the Israelites leaving Egypt to the wilderness and then to the Promise Land. Jesus leaving heaven to dwell on the earth to fulfil the Father's command is the great holy 'Migration Mission' (Shen 2014, 178).

In 2000, they trained and sent another forty families and another twenty families the following year. They were instructed to plant three types of churches; migrant churches, suburban churches for rural dwellers who could not afford the city centre, and neighbourhood community churches (Seminar: Zhang 2020b).

### 3.2.2 Influences from the Back to Jerusalem

Zhang Heng's rural house church missions zeal were not from the influences of the Patriarchs in the Traditional house church.<sup>38</sup> Beijing Patriarch Allen Yuan (Aikman 2003, 57–61) reprimanded Zhang Heng and the CGF for spreading the gospel across China.

When I met Allen Yuan (Xiangcheng), we sent evangelists to the whole nation. When Yuan worked at a small church, we were doing something nationwide. So, when we... when was it? We were influenced by them [Patriarchs] before 1990. After 1990, our ministry was in a lot of different regions. So, what we did was different from Yuan. He worked at one church while we started networks of sending missionaries. So what we did was different from Yuan. So, when we were talking with them [Traditional Church Patriarchs], they didn't even know what we've been doing. And Yuan thought that we should quiet ourselves to settle down. So yeah, he criticized us (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 14–15).

Instead, Zhang Heng credits the rural missionary movement's zeal to Simon Zhao (Ximen), one of the B2J first-generation Northwest Spiritual Band who left for Xinjiang in the late 1940s. Zhang Heng claimed that Zhao was instrumental in igniting the passion of the mission among the rural house church networks. After Zhao was released from thirty-one years in prison, he was invited to Henan to share the B2J vision.

At the same time, Simon Zhao from the B2J Northwest Spirit Band started to pass on the vision of mission from the older generation since we sent people to Xinjiang. The Born-Again movement, Fangcheng and us (Tanghe) met the B2J senior leaders there before and after the 1990s. After they passed on the vision, it became popular. At that time, we could do missions, and the fire of mission was ignited (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 14).

According to Zhang Heng, China's first missionaries sent overseas came from another Henan house church network called the Born-Again movement under Peter Xu. These first Chinese missionaries were sent to the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan in the 1990s (Interview: H. Zhang 2021b). Hattaway and Brother Yun provide a narrative of Simon Zhao's influential visit to Henan in 1995 (Yun and Hattaway 2002, 280–82). In March 2000, the Born-Again movement sent the first thirty-nine Chinese house church missionaries to a neighbouring Buddhist country. Thirty-six of them were arrested, returned home, and found another way to cross the border. A year later, 'the number of

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<sup>38</sup> This affirms Kalun's research that the rural house church revivals were not a direct result of the Patriarchs who represented the Traditional house churches in the coastal cities (Leung 1999).

Chinese house church missionaries outside of China already exceeded four hundred, serving more than ten countries (Yun and Hattaway 2002, 289).’

Zhang Heng also recalled several individual Chinese missionaries sent and supported by Korea and overseas Chinese. In 1999, another large group of twenty to thirty from the large rural networks arrived in Pakistan and Nepal with an overseas Chinese missions agency called *Wanjun* (Interview: Zhang 2021a).

In 2002, CGF’s first overseas missionary team was sent to Pakistan. The second team headed to the Middle East in 2004 (Interview: Zhang 2021a). After two years of training in the Philippines with the Christian Missionary Alliance, a dozen missionaries landed in Egypt after being redirected from Beirut due to the political unrest in Lebanon. The team struggled financially and had visa problems, resulting in most of the original group returning home. There was at least one suicide attempt. One couple overcame the earlier struggles and has remained on the field (Bach and Zhu 2012, 104).<sup>39</sup>

In the mid-2000, missionaries from Anhui province arrived in Southeast Asia and South Asia. A Chinese missionary couple from the largest Anhui house church network arrived in Central Asia in 2005. They returned to China for a few years but returned to Central Asia with their adult son. They now lead a large team and have a thriving ministry reaching Chinese as well as leading small groups of Muslim Background Believers (MBB) (Instant Message: T6-Lee 2021a). Lamp, an independent Chinese missionary, arrived in a South Asian Muslim country in 2005. He has been involved in direct church ministry with discipleship, indigenous church planting, leadership training and pastoral ordination. Lamp claimed to know around twenty to thirty Chinese missionaries with over ten years of experience serving in Pakistan, Cambodia, Egypt, Laos, and Myanmar (Interview: T5-Lamp 2021).

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<sup>39</sup> I was able to meet the group of CGF missionaries in Beijing after their two-year training in the Philippines and before they were headed to the Middle East.

### 3.2.3 Early Failures and Weakness

The majority of the first wave of rural Chinese missionaries sent in the late 1990s or early 2000 did not remain on the field. Only fifty CGF units remained on the field out of 100 missionary units sent (Interview: Zhang 2021b). A network from Anhui has the largest numbers, with 120 units still on the field from over 400 missionary units sent.

In the early days, there was a high attrition rate. In the earlier days, the Anhui network sent out missionaries with full support funds brought by pastors to an annual mission conference. A government crackdown closed the annual meetings and stopped this fundraising method. As a result, the network adopted new funding approaches, including the adoption of missionaries by local churches, support from overseas Chinese funds for projects, and the use of a self-supporting bi-vocational employment (Interview: T6-Lee 2021b).

CGF leader Shen describes some of the reasons for the high attrition.

Many overseas missionaries experienced loneliness, discouragement, mental breakdown, and depression. Many came home and decided not to return to the field (Shen 2014, 268).

In the 1990s and 2000s, the rural house churches were not ready to financially support their missionaries. The rural networks could not even support their own pastors. CGF leader Shen shares similar financial struggles.

At least half of the missionaries relied on overseas churches or organisations for support... we are not able to support them financially; even evangelists who have served for twenty years had no salary or benefits. Some of the pastors had to leave the ministry to survive by moving to the city to find work (Shen 2014, 268).

Anhui network advisor Jeremy concurs with the lack of finances.

The reality was that many of these churches were having a hard time meeting the needs of their churches because the pastors themselves weren't getting regular salaries or their own living wages (Interview: T6-Lee 2021b).

Rural house church networks lacked global awareness and underestimated the complex challenge of overseas cross-cultural missions. CGF's 'migrant mission' evangelists moved from a lower economic stratum in rural China to take job opportunities with higher pay and living standards in the cities within the same culture and language. A taxi driver

in a city could make ten times more than what he would earn on the farm (Lambert 2006, 66). Overseas cross-cultural missions required another level of complexity as house church pastors had limited funding and understanding of the world (Shen 2014, 268).

Tony Lambert identifies the problems of sending rural evangelists to the Middle East.

In the cities, rural farmers are sucked into factories and live in dormitories, working long hours in poor conditions. They struggle to survive as committed Christians... It is clearly irresponsible for people overseas to encourage an army of rural evangelists to go to the Middle East, when they struggle to survive as Christians just by moving to the cities inside China (Lambert 2006, 66–67).

The Anhui missions leader Paul shared the problems caused by the lack of qualified candidates from the first wave of missionaries from rural China. ‘Many desired to go, but most were not qualified (Interview: T4-Paul 2020, 2).’

My analysis of the high failure rate of the first wave of rural Chinese missionaries includes a tightened political environment, a lack of finances, a lack of global awareness, a lack of proper training, a lack of supervision and member care on the field, and the recruiting of unqualified candidates with dubious motives.

These initial failures are comparable to the first stages of other missionary sending in history. The London Missionary Society in 1796 to the Pacific Islands experienced similar losses with the first party of thirty missionaries. A couple left due to seasickness even before heading to sea, one refused to go ashore upon arrival, and two others left the next time a boat arrived. At the first sign of violence, eleven left. Three men were murdered, four returned after a few years of service. Three married local women and settled with two giving up all professions of Christianity. Only a handful remained after five years, and the rest had collapsed under the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual strain. Only two mastered the Tahiti language; one was an outstanding figure Henry Nott who preached in the vernacular and worked twenty years to translate the Bible (Walls 1996, 166–67).

Similar challenges and self-supporting approaches and missions strategies of the Global South missionary movement come from the Pentecostal type of churches with

supernatural experiences as a motivation for evangelism (Ekström 2011, 202), lower-resourced regions with a lack of finances, and a high missionary attrition rate, direct local church support.

### **3.2.4 Global South Characteristics in Rural China**

After over fifteen years of experience with failure, Anhui's network has learned to adapt to China's context. They have adopted missions strategy and support structures appropriate to China's context of persecution, lack of finances and limited global exposure. The Anhui network partnered with the international mission world for mentoring, training, field knowledge, missions expertise and limited funding (Interview: T6-Lee 2021a). The network missions leader Paul is moving towards a direction of 'self-support as primary, church support model as secondary' . Paul believes that the traditional full support model doesn't work for China's political context. The China missions model is still in the exploratory stage due to the persecution both at home and on the field.

Paul has adopted an immigration strategy as an essential long-term paradigm shift in mission sending. BAM (Business as Missions) companies were created to provide a legitimate business, visa, and income for missionaries. They sought out self-supporting bi-vocational tentmaking jobs on the field to place his missionaries.

The traditional model of missionary sending of management has its challenges. So example, the ones we have a job position at a company will have a salary, medical, and all the benefits. Also, we can just take care of the spiritual health and then help them start a ministry. But the Traditional model can't solve the first and second issues, so even the following problems are more problematic (Interview: T4-Paul 2020, 3).

Overseas Chinese provided supplemental funds to start ministry projects while providing insurance benefits to the missionaries (Text: T6-Lee 2021b).

With house churches being persecuted in China, a fundamental shift in thinking was needed. So, he [Paul] looked to help the Chinese think about immigration. If you migrate to a place, you are looking to think about how to start a new life there from a different perspective, not dependent upon China to support you financially. So really, the idea was to help the sent worker to have a long-term view of the work. You can use work that you would find to meet nationals who share the gospel, at the same time, because of that work to have wages. And so then the agency would focus on less of the



fundraising aspect, but then focus more on the support aspect in terms of prayer and things like medical insurance and other kinds of support (Instant Message: T6-Lee 2021b).<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2.5 Congregational Transition

Zhang Heng followed Tianming of Shouwang Church (Chapter 4) with a ‘congregational transition’ *tang hui zhuan xing* (堂会转型) campaign. Zhang Heng planted a congregational style church in Beijing and commissioned the CGF network to follow his example. CGF’s ecclesiology transitioned from a simple house church network with traveling evangelists to become an association of larger congregations. Congregational churches with several hundred members would have more resources to hire full-time paid pastors and to have more development ministries to service the church and support missions (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 7).

Larger urban churches began to have the resources to plant other churches and send missionaries. Instead of relying on centralised leadership in a network in Henan or Anhui, independent local congregations could multiply to plant new churches and provide a base to send and support missionaries. On January 1, 2015, Zhang Heng’s Zaidao Church had a congregation of around 600 people meeting in five services in four locations with ten paid pastoral staff and five non-paid staff. By 2020, Zaidao Church planted and spawned eight other churches.<sup>41</sup> The total number of CGF churches in Beijing grew to over sixty congregations (Interview: Zhang 2021b).

Since 2013, Zaidao Church has sent twenty-one individuals in twelve missionary units to nine countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Canada, Cameroon, Cuba, Israel, Myanmar, Uganda, and the U.S. In 2013, the first missionary couple was commissioned to Myanmar to teach in an elementary school, and a single missionary was sent to Nepal to be involved

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<sup>40</sup> The Anhui network support approaches included: 1) Centralised full-support – no longer applicable due to political tightening, 2) Regional and Local church adoption of missionary (40%), 3) BAM – launching businesses as missions to fund missions (30%), 4) Bi-vocational tentmaking – finding professional jobs on the field (30%), 5) Overseas Chinese support for projects, ministry expense and insurance benefits but not salary.

<sup>41</sup> Enquan Church was planted in 2012, Xinde Church in 2014, Fengsheng Church in 2015, Jiayin Church in 2019 and Huaquan Church in 2019. Enquan Church has planted another three churches (Interview: Zhang 2020a).

in campus ministry. In 2015, a family was commissioned to Afghanistan, and a single missionary was sent to Albania to be in campus ministry. In 2016, a single missionary was sent to Israel to work with children and campus ministry. In 2017, three families were commissioned to Uganda. One family was sent to Cameroon to work with the Chinese diaspora and local ministry. Another family was sent to Cuba. They have also supported two families in North America who were sent in 2015 and 2016 to seminary and stayed upon graduation to serve the overseas Chinese diaspora churches in America (Instant Message: Zhang 2021e).

### **3.3 Contributing Factors**

#### **3.3.1 Internal factors**

##### **3.3.1.1 An existing growing church with the explicit objective of expanding to other locations and countries**

The rural house church networks were part of the explosive growth of Christianity in the countryside when China opened its door to the world in 1979 (Lambert 1994; 2006; Chao 1993b). Political reforms provided more freedom with the release of pastors from prison and the opening of churches. Government religious policy also removed Chinese folk religion, giving way to Christianity and tribal homogenous principle villages to become Christians (Leung 1999). By 1982, Henan had seen extraordinary growth at the grassroots, with the first signs of persecution beginning with the arrest of a group of evangelists (Lambert 1994, 81). An anti-spiritual pollution campaign followed in 1983 with arrests, torture, and imprisonment (Hattaway 2009, 174–82).

Zhang Heng's testimony involves miraculous healings, evangelistic fervour, revivals, explosive church growth and persecution.

When I was 27 years old, I was chased by the authorities for five years. I could not return home... I would go to a place to preach. Every time I would have a bag ready for prison and an escape route planned in preparation for a police raid. After a three-day evangelistic meeting, an explosive revival and a co-workers team formed (Presentation: Zhang 2016b).

During this rural church growth explosion, Zheng Heng claimed to have led 20,000 people to Christ and planted 200 churches (Interview: Zhang 2018). Zhang Heng believed that revival was the first step before church multiplication and mission sending.

In 15 years, church planting in mainland China and the revival of the churches will multiply the numbers. So, until then, 20,000 missionaries can be achieved. Not only the number of missionaries, but the most important thing is also to bring revival to churches. So, we must do church plantings, minority work, multiplying churches, youth and college fellowships, and people in the marketplace. The main goal is to move the whole church to revive the Chinese church. After revival, we can send people out (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 8).

### **3.3.1.2 Motivation**

#### **3.3.1.2.1 Eschatology: For the Arab and Jewish world**

Zhang Heng's motivation for missions comes from the B2J movement and the impact of Simon Zhao and the *Northwest Spiritual Band* B2J missionaries. Zhang Heng also personally received a B2J vision and believed it came from the Lord. Before Christ's return, there needed to be two occurrences: the salvation of the Arabs and the Jewish people.

We must take the gospel West before the Lord comes. In other words, B2J is the salvation of all Israel and the Arab world. From the strategic outlook of gospel development from Paul's age to today's Chinese revival, time is the Arab world... the Arab world is the most difficult one and meant for the Chinese to bear... If we want to bring the gospel back to Jerusalem, we must do missions in the Arab world. Only when the Arabs believe we can go to Jerusalem... If you cannot fill the number of gentiles being saved, you can't go to Jerusalem, and the Lord can't return (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 7).

#### **3.3.1.2.2 Cross Missiology: Martyrdom Missionary Spirituality from Suffering**

Another motivation was the suffering and martyrdom spirituality of the B2J missionaries. Zhang Heng and Shen were both CGF leaders who commissioned the seventy 'Dare to Die Brigade' in 1994 (Shen 2014, 54–55). At that time, many wanted to be martyrs. The suffering of missionaries motivated martyrdom in following the older generation's footsteps.

*Mission China* is connected to the missionaries who have suffered and paid the price of blood. When I believed in God, I was affected by missionaries and the older generation's suffering testimonies. At that time, a lot of people wanted to be martyrs. Believing in God is spreading the gospel, being His martyrs and serving to martyrised. I think the connection between *Mission China 2030* and the theology of suffering is excited and stimulated by missionaries who have been sacrificed, persecuted, paid the price of blood, and brought the gospel to China. This [martyrdom] is the motivation. So, we will follow the older generation's footsteps, spread the gospel, and do missionary work (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 1).

Zhang Heng believed that this martyrdom spirit would be the spiritual strength for the Chinese church to go into the most challenging areas to reach in the Muslim world.

Another *Mission China* leader T1-Cui from Shanghai summarises how suffering has shaped the church, providing one of the Chinese missional church marks.

When the Chinese government severely persecuted the Chinese Church, the house church did not run away from suffering. It is firmly believed that the sufferings we bear are for the sake of Christ. Many pastors not only received suffering willingly, but they were also very proud of their suffering. Many shared how they had experienced the Lord's presence in prison in those days. Learning from suffering is a necessary pathway for a maturing life, which brings about life disciplines, helps us depend solely on the Lord to live victoriously so that our lives become stronger and healthier (Cui 2017, 5).

The 'theology of the suffering' and 'the way of the cross' have been commonly used terminology by the house church to describe their persecuted past. Suffering has been a distinctive mark of the Chinese church for the last seventy years, exemplified by the house church patriarchs who were imprisoned for their faith for twenty to thirty years. They have since passed away but are symbolic heroes of the faith for the house church today.

Persecution has been a strong impetus for the spreading of the gospel, as seen in the book of Acts. In the 1980s and 1990s, rural evangelists would flee persecution while sharing the gospel from village to village.

Christians were always on the run. They would run away from the authorities and hide in the homes of their relatives. Soon their relatives would become Christians and often must go on the run as well and go and live in the homes of their friends and relatives. The believers were always looking for new places to hide. That was how the gospel spread at the beginning (Bach and Zhu 2012, 99).

What is the relationship between suffering and missions?

Suffering became a mark of spirituality from the examples of the traditional church patriarchs and the past missionaries. *Mission China* leaders are grateful for the Western missionaries. Robert Morrison, Hudson Taylor and the CIM missionaries are often mentioned as those who laid down their lives and endured hardship for China.<sup>42</sup> The house church Patriarchs provided a model of withstanding persecution and seeing

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<sup>42</sup> Compared to the house church patriarchs who suffered twenty to thirty years in prison, house church Christians rarely used the word 'persecution' or 'suffering' to describe their situation, reserving those words to describe the previous generation who truly suffered in prison for decades. The Urban Church would use the word 'experienced pressure' shou ya li (受压力) or 'limitations' xian zhi (限制) to describe their situation.

suffering as normality. However, the sacrificial suffering examples of Simon Zhao and the B2J missionaries from the 1940s and 1950s inspired the house church of the sacrificial missionary call.

While under persecution, the rural house church spread with evangelistic fervour throughout rural China, launching a rural migrant missions movement from the countryside to the cities. Persecution brought the rural church to unify to face the attacks. They joined in evangelism and missions (Presentation: Zhang 2016a).

The theology of suffering through the ‘way of the cross’ *shi zi jiao dao lu* (十字架道路) instilled the notion that there would be a cost for any spiritual breakthrough in the church. In the 1950s to 1980s, the Patriarchs served twenty years in prison for refusing to join the TSPM and modelled an uncompromising faith for tens of millions of house church believers (Aikman 2003, 47–72). In the 1990s, Zhang Heng and many of the CGF leaders served several years in prison (Shen 2014, 91–103). Zhang Rongliang, the leader of another extensive Henan network Fangcheng, was arrested five times and served fifteen years in prison (Rongliang and Bach 2015, 196). After coming out of prison, they began to spread the gospel and plant churches across China. For the Chinese church to head into world missions, the church must be the cost to bear following Christ first at home.

Suffering has prepared the house church to send missionaries into hostile territories that would require sacrifice. Most *Mission China* leaders believe that the recent political tightening will increase in the coming years. They are still optimistic that God is preparing for the difficult road ahead in their missionary journey. This relationship between suffering and missions is a unique ‘Self-missionisation’ phenomenon coming from China’s political context. I have called this distinct phenomenon the ‘Cross Missiology’; suffering has produced a martyrdom missionary spirit in the Chinese church for an overseas missionary movement.

In summary, the rural network's motivation for missions started in the 1990s. They were inspired by Simon Zhao and the original B2J missionaries who sacrificed their lives to bring the gospel back to Jerusalem. The sufferings of the B2J missionaries were critical motivators in producing a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit necessary for world missions. The suffering church, unity in missions, the urgency of Christ's return, and a back to Jerusalem vision influenced Zhang Heng, CGF, and the other rural house church networks. They believed in a 'unity missions' movement to fulfil the number of gentiles saved before Christ's return. The 'cross missiology', a sacrificial martyrdom spirit for missions, was forged under persecution and fuelled the 'dare to die' migrant missions from rural China to the cities and a Back to Jerusalem overseas missionary movement towards Jerusalem, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

### **3.3.1.3 Entrepreneur Leadership**

Zhang Heng is an entrepreneurial leader with a combination of humility and a strong visionary gift. From an outside appearance, he looks unassuming as a disabled person needing a cane to assist him in walking. Zhang Heng is a junior high graduate who received an informal bachelor's equivalent degree in 2004. He received a Master of Divinity degree in 2006 from an underground seminary and completed a Doctor of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2021.

When the CGF leaders were deciding which cities to migrate to, Zhang Heng chose Beijing. In Beijing, Zhang Heng became an essential key bridge to the Urban Church leader Tianming in preparation for the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010.

But then God opened the door for me to go to Beijing. Then I met the urban church pastors who graduated from Peking University and Tsinghua University. I knew there would be hope to connect the rural churches with the urban church. Then one day in 2008, Tianming and David approached him and invited him to plan for a unity movement to attend the Lausanne Congress. Then I knew there was hope for the Chinese church... At the Asian Church Leaders Forum in 2013, I was invited by Ezra to be the chair of the Jesus Leadership Forum [overseeing *Mission China 2030*]... and when I returned to Beijing, the authorities met with me and 'joked' about my 'promotion' (Shellnutt 2019b; Mozur and Johnson 2019a; Y. Wang 2018).

### **3.3.1.4 Available Resources**

CGF and the rural networks face challenges of a lack in financial resources similar with NSC in the Global South. The house church started as a rural church in a farming community without the culture of giving. Christianity was mainly spread by people walking and biking within a 200 to 300 miles radius without a significant need for financial support. Another CGF leader, Shen from a second-tier city in China, is pessimistic as he has witnessed a lack of training, lack of financial support and reliance on overseas funds.

The Large rural networks have sent out young people without missionary language, culture, and ability without training. Economically is extremely hard as at least half of the missionaries rely on overseas church and mission funding (Shen 2014, 267–68).

Pastors struggle with the tension of not sending missionaries as a disappointment from God. They are torn with a guilty conscience towards well-intentioned global church voices for missions towards the Muslim world. Shen shared how he could not even provide support for the evangelists who were serving in the rural communities of China. Where would they find people to, send and how would they financially support their missionaries?

Our rural communities have declined with elderly and children with the majority of people working in the cities, economically we can't even provide for ourselves, evangelists who have served the Lord for 20 years without salaries and benefits with many leaving the ministry to work in the cities (Shen 2014, 268).

He was also pessimistic about the available missionaries with high building costs, with many still relying on foreign funds. To train future 30 ministers, they could only recruit 15 students, four with mental illness (Shen 2014, 268).

Shen concludes that finances were a significant challenge in China's current economic and political context. Tabor's solution was to provide career vocational training to assist Chinese missionaries in earning an income on the field rather than rely on financial support from churches in China (Laughlin 2019, 170–71).

On the other hand, Zhang Heng is optimistic about CGF's potential. Zhang Heng's 'congregational transition' campaign for house churches to become larger congregations in urban centres would eventually provide local churches with more financial resources

coming from a higher education level congregation with higher paying jobs. Zhang Heng's Beijing Zaidao Church has become an example of a congregation with college graduates and white-collar professionals who joined the original rural migrant church. The church was planted in 2007 with migrant workers. By 2021, the congregation has transitioned to include 40% migrant workers, 25% white-collar professionals, 10% students, 20% retirees, and 5% Youth.

Zaidao Church, a congregation of 600 people, first sent missionaries in 2013. In 2015, the annual budget was 1.5 million yuan, with missions at 150,000 yuan. By 2021, the yearly church budget was 3 million yuan and the missions budget at 1 million yuan. Since 2013, the church has sent out twenty-one missionaries in twelve units. The attrition rate has been low, with only two units who have returned from the field; one family returned to pastoral ministry, and a single returned to study at a seminary in the Philippines. The whole CGF network with 4 million people has only sent over a hundred missionaries, with according to Zhang Heng, only fifty missionaries have remained on the field. Beijing Zaidao church is the exceptional flagship church in CGF under the leadership of Zhang Heng. However, the potential trajectory for explosive missionary growth with 10,000 churches in the CGF is very high (Interviews: Zhang 2015; 2020a; 2021b; 2021d).

### **3.3.2 External Factors**

The external factors for CGF and *Mission China* include the limits of establishing voluntary organisations, the growing economy with resources for mission initiatives as well as political factors. These all fall under China's geopolitical expansion and the national ambitions of President Xi. Zhang Heng believes that God orchestrated the external factors with the relationship between President Xi's China One Belt Road Initiative (OBRI) in preparation for China's missionary movement heading West along the Silkroad towards the Muslim world.

The development of religion is happening simultaneously with economy, politics, culture, technology, and military services... the Silk Roads is the path B2J. We all know this. Xi Jinping used our idea (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 17).



### 3.3.2.1 A society to establish existing models of voluntary organisations

One of the most significant challenges for *Mission China* is operating an illegal missions organisational structure to send, support and sustain its missionaries under the current political context. Paul, who has had over fifteen years of heading Anhui's missions agency, shares the difficulty of operating a mission agency in a Creative Access Nation (CAN) and Creative Sending Nation (CSN) environment.

We operate in both creative access and creative sending environment. We experience problems going out, and we experience problems coming back. Our closed country background is different from a free country. International agency reporting, finances, fundraising, all our open and transparent... but China environment is different and needs much work to get done (Interview: T4-Paul 2020, 5).

Henan CGF and Anhui networks have created their mission sending structures with distinctive differences. In early 2000, both rural networks started with a highly centralised approach of recruiting missionaries relying on outside funding. Without long-term funds for sustainability, many missionaries could not survive on the field. The political context also forced the networks to decentralise with local church involvement and self-supporting models.

CGF experienced failure and a high attrition rate from the first wave of missionaries sent without long-term support from local churches.<sup>43</sup> The CGF mission structure decentralised approach included 1) a Central Committee *zonghui* (总会) responsible for facilitating and coordinating overall missions vision and strategy, 2) regional Committees *lianhui* (联会) to serve as the mission sending agency, and 3) local congregations responsible for financial support and member care (Instant Message: Zhang 2021d).

The Anhui network missions initially experienced high failure rates and began to dedicate full-time personnel and finances to sustain their missionaries. Jeremy, a Korean American missionary, shared how this Anhui network started its missions program. The first missionaries were sent with an overseas Chinese mission agency, but due to a

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<sup>43</sup> In 2004, CGF's second team of a dozen missionaries were sent to Lebanon and then ended in Egypt. Only one family remained with the rest returning to China (Text Zhang 2021a).

conflict, Anhui decided to setup up its own mission-sending structure. The Anhui leadership invited an IMB (International Missions Board) missions leader to share the cost structure for setting up a missions agency, including the expenses for mobilisation, recruitment, training, member care, missionary children... When they first heard of the high costs of setting up a missions agency, some of the Anhui leaders were discouraged and did not believe they were ready for overseas missions. However, this discouragement eventually motivated the leadership to allocate significant funds and personnel to start their own mission agency. The leadership made overseas cross-cultural missions a top priority by designating personnel to oversee the missions program and providing significant funds for mobilisation, training, travel, and missions. The missions budget was ten times the amount the local ministry funds. Anhui leaders learned from their mistakes and significantly reduced the attrition rate to develop a sustainable model for their network (Interview: T6-Lee 2021a).

### **3.3.2.2 Urbanisation**

China's urbanisation has created a morbid dual structure of two classes of urban dwellers: the short-term rural migrants and the long-term urban dwellers. The rural house church migrants fall into the first category who have moved to the city's outskirts.

China's urbanisation is morbid and has a rigid dual structure of the city residence permit to control rural-urban migrants strictly. Many Christian ministers who came from the villages were marginalised in these cities. For twenty years, they struggled to make a living there, and eventually, many of them had to migrate back to their hometown (Interview1: Jin 2015, 2).

Several Chinese Christian scholars have documented the effects of urbanisation on the rural migrant Christians (Leung 1999; Huang 2012; Yuan 2015; 2020). The migrant churches come from ethnocentric provincial cultures with highly centralised leadership. Rural migrant churches in urban cities are often marginalised communities between urban and rural areas with a high turnover rate and limited ability to evangelise urban locals due to their provincial culture and charismatic forms of the faith (Yuan 2020, 76–80).

Urbanisation paved the way for Zhang Heng's Migrant Mission campaign to bring rural Christians to the cities. Before Lausanne Congress in 2010, the urban intellectual and rural migrant churches were separated by geography, socioeconomic status, culture, and theology. Urban intellectuals have been sceptical of faith healings, dreams and visions, and other 'superstitious' traditions. They looked down on the rural churches with authoritarian leadership and unhealthy characteristics, seen as 'backwards, unenlightened, and dangerous (Fulton 2015, 108).' Zhang Heng shared how he feels marginalised compared to this urban church.

Still, they [urban people] don't acknowledge us [rural people]. People from the city can blend in with them [urban church], but people from the rural area are margined. Like me, when I stay with them or with Tianming, I'm like margined somehow (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 12).

Urbanisation created the opportunity for church leaders from the urban church intellectuals and rural church migrants to meet. In summary, urbanisation paved the way for the rural church to migrate to the cities. It also brought together the distinctive characteristics and contributions of the contemporary Urban Church and the 'spiritual' rural migrant church in preparation for *Mission China*.

### **3.3.2.3 Political Factors**

CGF experienced persecution throughout its history, from national campaigns against the house church in the 1980s to the imprisonment of the top tier leadership in the late 1990s. Throughout the years, house churches have operated under what Tim Conkling has described as 'Cooperative Resistance'.<sup>44</sup> The 'New Regulation on Religious Affairs' release on September 7, 2017, was enacted on February 1, 2018, which removed all grey areas of the religious activity (Introvigne 2018; World Watch Monitor 2018). A new era was dawning, with all religious activity requiring government approval. A 'new normal'

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<sup>44</sup> Cooperative resistance is a form of rightful resistance in which aggrieved religious believers pledge cooperation with police and officials and promise patriotic adherence to policies and laws insofar as those policies do not curb the fullest expression of religious belief while simultaneously mobilising local, trans-provincial, or international sympathisers to pressure specific officials or the central government to cease persecuting individual Protestant believers, house churches, or house church networks (Conkling 2013, 28).

for Christianity would end the openness experienced during President Hu and President Jiang (Pittman 2019). The house church experienced another wave of persecution under a national campaign as Beijing vowed to ‘clear’ the house church (Qiao 2019). The authorities attacked Anhui house churches, with SWAT police charging the leaders' homes in 2016 (Interview: T6-Lee 2021a). Henan house churches came under intense crackdown in August 2018.

For the last few days, I have been in Henan province to visit the towns of Xinyang, Tongbai, Tanghe, Nanyang and have seen the church under hardship. The whole church is under intense attack. They can mobilise many different government departments and utilise all kinds of methods. The public security, the armed SWAT police, provincial, city, town, village, high and low officials come together to threaten, arrest, demolish, seal shut, beat, break, confiscate all kinds of equipment. It is a complete repeat of the "Cultural Revolution". This behaviour has no law or reason, no common-sense understanding. It goes against the trend of times! My heart hurts. I am sad and cry out Late into the night! I try to reason but can't understand. Are these government officials really in an all-out battle internally and externally? They are fighting America with a trade war overseas and attacking the weak kind-hearted Christians domestically. What are they thinking? Why are they doing this? These government departments have many important matters to attend to but are not doing their jobs. Don't they have anything else to do? Who has given them this authority? What are their intended results? Can their plans succeed? Is it worth it? Oh, how pitiful is my country! [tears], [tears], [tears] (Blog: Shen 2018).

However, Zhang Heng is the only house church leader who is optimistic that the government would change to officially recognise the house church as a legal entity. Before the 2018 political tightening, Zhang Heng incorrectly predicted that the environment would become more open.

But considering the trend, for now, the Chinese government does not reject the Chinese church being strong, nor against our missionaries. In other words, they don't object to *Mission China 2030*. In their view, the Chinese churches are strong enough, and the Chinese house church can decide for themselves, communicate with global churches, and send missionaries to other nations. So, it is a pride for them, an honour for China. The development of religion is happening simultaneously with the economy, politics, culture, technology, and military services. The faith must develop along with others to communicate with the West. So, I think the environment in the future will become better and better (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 16).

Zhang Heng still believes that China's religious laws would eventually recognise the house church even after the recent house church attacks. “God will open the door for the house church to be legalised in preparation for *Mission China* (H. Zhang 2021c).” If Zhang Heng is correct, the barriers of separation between the house church and the global church would be removed. The *Mission China* momentum could experience explosive growth within a freer environment. However, even if he is wrong, *Mission China* leaders

are not deterred. *Mission China* leaders see harsher conditions as preparation for the more difficult missions task ahead. However, with the arrival of the new tightened religious policies in 2018, the large-scale sending of 20,000 missionaries by 2030 would be a highly questionable reality.

### **3.3.3 International Factors**

#### **3.3.3.1 The Lausanne Congress**

In 2008, Tianming from the Urban Church, Zhang Heng from the Rural Networks, and T1-Yuehan from the Traditional house church joined to form a China National Committee in preparations for the Lausanne World Congress III in Cape Town 2010. Zhang Heng described how the Lausanne Movement connected him to Tianming and the Urban Church.

One day, Tianming found me and introduced me to David [the researcher] and the Lausanne Congress. I had heard of the Lausanne Movement and was highly interested. From 2009 to 2010, we met many times for meetings during those years... we started to travel across China to promote this. The confidence level was so high that the government permitted us and was completely open and transparent. Praise the Lord. We had twenty to thirty key leaders from Wuhan, Northwest Inner Mongolia, Wenzhou, Anhui, Henan, to form an All-China representative committee including the Urban Church, the five large networks, and leaders from Beijing, Shanghai, the first-tier cities... all the significant mainstream representatives of the house church movement came to meet. If this strength meets together regularly and does not split, this would be a strong force that will undoubtedly influence China (Presentation: Zhang 2016a).

The Lausanne Movement brought the house church movement together for 'unity in missions'. Previously, the Traditional, Rural, and Urban house churches were divided due to security concerns, theological differences, and territorial conflicts.

But all of these are partial influences; the most effective impact is Lausanne... So, the widespread movement-like connection between rural and urban churches is Lausanne. For example, the relationship between the five major rural networks and the connection with the Born-Again movement existed, but this one isn't related to the urban churches. The connection between urban churches and rural churches is the Lausanne Movement. Although we couldn't go in person, we all get connected through interactions. Through Lausanne, I connected to pastors Ezra and Tianming (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 13).

Furthermore, the Lausanne Movement allowed the opportunity for the Chinese government to have a better understanding of the house church.

One of the most significant contributions was that the Lausanne Congress allowed the government to suddenly understand the house church movement. The whole government understood the house church movement, changing the original thinking of just a few people to many people with strength. (Presentation: Zhang 2016a).

Before Cape town 2010, the government's overall understanding of Christianity in China was often through the reports from the government's Religious Affairs Bureau (SARA) and the TSPM. Previously, house church Christians were considered small and insignificant. After Cape Town in 2010, the Chinese government realised the strength, size, and influence of the house church (Interview2: T2-FB 2016).

After the Cape Town 2010 Congress, Zhang Heng has been invited to several other international conferences to speak on behalf of the house church in China. From Zhang Heng's perspective, Lausanne's most significant contribution is the *Mission China 2030* vision shared at the mini-Lausanne Congress in Seoul in 2013, which launched the *Mission China* movement.

The most significant contribution was following the Congress. Ezra took on organising the mini-Lausanne Congress in Seoul in 2013. At that meeting, 100 attended from China. At that meeting, the vision and goal of *Mission China 2030* were shared [by Daniel]. I was invited to be the chair of the Jesus Leadership Forum [overseeing committee]. A few days after I returned to Beijing, the PSB contacted me to share that they heard about my 'promotion' (Presentation: Zhang 2016a).

### **3.3.3.2 Diaspora**

Zhang Heng considers the Chinese diaspora as part of *Mission China's* 'unity in missions' movement. Zhang Heng and Daniel (Chapter 6) are most optimistic about the overseas Chinese church partnership among the four Beijing pastors. While Daniel sees the overseas Chinese church as advisors and mentors for the mainland Chinese church, Zhang Heng believes that God raised the mainland Chinese churches to mobilise and ignite the overseas Chinese churches in a unity movement for missions.

...for Chinese churches overseas, we could mobilise them and ignite their heart for missions, like passing on their visions, mobilising them, and walking alongside them. Let's send missionaries, build Chinese churches, spread the gospel, and build churches only among Chinese people. It is not a unity mission but a cultivated wasteland (Interview2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 19).

## **4. Conclusion**

Zhang Heng and the house church network in rural Henan experienced miraculous healings and revivals with explosive church growth amid persecution in the 1980s and 1990s. Zhang Heng and many of the CGF leaders were imprisoned for their faith. In a 'dare to die' migration missions campaign, Zhang Heng commissioned young evangelists

with one-way tickets and then sent couples and families to plant churches across China. As a completely indigenous church, the rural house church thrived under harsh conditions completing the 'Contextualisation' second phase of the 'Missionisation Cycle' as an established indigenous church assimilated into rural China.

Zhang Heng was influenced by the missionary example of Simon Zhao, the original *Northwest Spiritual Band*, who shared the Back to Jerusalem vision after being released from 31 years in prison. In 2000, the first overseas missionaries from China were sent from another Henan house church network called the Born-Again movement. A couple of years later, the CGF sent out their first overseas missionaries to Pakistan. A distinct missiology emerged from China's house church, a term I have called the 'cross missiology': a sacrificial martyrdom spirit for missions forged under suffering. China entered the third phase of 'self-missionisation' in the 'Missionisation Cycle'. The 'cross missiology' - a willingness to die as a martyr nurtured under suffering, provided the core spiritual strength for Chinese missionaries to sacrificially go to harsh regions in the world hostile to the gospel, which may require martyrdom.

Rural house church missionaries serving overseas experienced early failures due to inadequate financial support, training, language and cultural preparation, and member care. An Anhui network adapted by decentralising financial support with the adoption of missionaries by local congregations, engagement with BAMs and bi-vocational tentmaking, and partnerships with overseas Chinese to fund ministry projects. Coming from poorer communities, rural churches had similar Global South characteristics of Pentecostal experiences, missions through migration, self-supporting mission models and inadequate training, language and culture due to a lack of funds.

Zhang Heng moved to Beijing and began a 'congregational transition' campaign to transform the Henan CGF network of smaller house churches into larger independent congregations. Zhang's larger church congregation provided a base to support full-time

pastors, provide developed church ministries, birth new church plants, and support overseas cross-cultural missionaries. In 2013, Zhang Heng's Zaidao Church, a house church congregation of 600 people, sent out its first overseas missionaries to Myanmar. By 2021, the church had commissioned twenty-one missionaries in twelve units to nine countries with an annual church missions budget of 1 million yuan.

In summary, Zhang Heng's life is an incredible journey of the rural house church Christianity on the road to global missions. His missiological contributions include 1) the supernatural healings and evangelistic fervour combined with persecution, which resulted in revivals and explosive church growth in rural China. 2) A 'cross missiology' emerged from the influences of the B2J movement with a sacrificial 'willingness to die' martyrdom missionary spirit from the context of suffering. This 'willing to die' spirit commissioned evangelists and church planters to move to the cities and sent out its first overseas cross-cultural missionaries with a heart for the Arab and Jewish world. 3) Finally, the 'congregational transition' of churches in the cities transformed a network of smaller house churches into larger sustainable urban congregations for healthy church ministry development, further expansion in urban church planting, and a strong sending base for missionaries. This transition would help to address sustainability challenges from the earlier failures of the rural church missionaries who left in faith with inadequate funds and overseas cross-cultural training and support.



## Chapter Four

### Tianming:

#### From Urban Intellectuals to Cross-cultural Missions

##### 4.1 History & Background

Tianming came to faith in September 1989 while he was a Tsinghua University student majoring in Chemical Engineering in Beijing. He received a call to full-time pastoral ministry in 1993 and founded the first house church of intellectuals in Beijing, later called Shouwang Church. Tianming's vision for Shouwang Church was to 'rise to the surface' *fu chu shuei mian* (浮出水面) from an underground movement to become a visible witness in society as a 'City on a Hill' (T. Jin 2013). After the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, a new type of Urban Church called the 'new emergent urban church' began to emerge in the megacities comprised of mainstream urban intellectuals, white-collar professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, returnees, students, and young people. This Urban Church was a separate movement from the rural house churches that migrated to the cities from the countryside and the Traditional house churches, which were closed underground churches also in the cities (Sun 2009; Fulton 2015, 22–25).

On January 22, 2005, the Shouwang Church leadership attempted to register as an official entity with the government apart from the TSPM (Almond Flower Editorial Committee 2008a). Shortly, Shouwang Church started to conduct open public worship services at one location in a high-rise office building. The government eventually rejected Shouwang Church's application (Sun 2008). However, Shouwang Church's failed attempt contributed to an open era for house churches across China to begin conducting open public worship services in rented offices and apartments. Under Tianming's leadership, Shouwang Church grew to around 1,000 people on Sunday worship (GlobalTimes, Editorial 2011). In April 2011, Shouwang Church's worship services were halted again, and church members were arrested each week as they headed to worship

outdoors (Steffan 2012). While the government focused its attention on Shouwang Church, the rest of the house churches experienced an open era of relative freedom. Across China, the house churches moved into rented office complexes, grew into larger congregations, and multiplied through church planting. Other house church pastors Ezra (Chapter 5), Zhang Heng (Chapter 3), Daniel (Chapter 6), T1-Cui, and T1-Yuehan, were able to start *Mission China 2030*. The open era ended with the New Religious Regulations instituted in 2018 as house churches across China came under a national campaign of dismantling and harassment (Monitor 2018; Shepherd 2018a).

In Interview 1, question 8 of twenty-four *Mission China* leaders, Tianming was the top choice to represent China in the international arena.<sup>45</sup> On April 27, 2018, while still under house arrest, Tianming stepped down as the Senior Pastor of Shouwang Church to focus on missions mobilisation under a new ministry called Call from All Nations (T. Jin 2018d). After serving nine and a half years under an unlawful house detainment, Tianming was freed in October 2020 (Church in Chains 2021).

#### **4.1.1 Early Spiritual Roots**

The spiritual roots of a dozen Korean Chinese University students in Beijing started with Korean Chinese diaspora Christians and Korean missionaries. A small congregation of older women who were semi-literate ethnic Korean Chinese worshipped at the TSPM *Chongwenmen Church*. According to Tianming, the Korean Chinese diaspora spirituality was a separate Christian movement with ‘no relations’ with the indigenous Han Chinese church. These spiritual roots came from Northern Korea before the Korean war, possibly connected to the Pyongyang revival in 1907. Since the ethnic Koreans living in Northeast China already had the Christian faith, they were given an official minority group status. They were granted special privileges to conduct religious services in their language within

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<sup>45</sup> Interview 1, Question 8: “who would you want to represent the church in China in the global arena?” Tianming was the number one choice in 22 out of 24 questioned. Ezra came as a distant second.

the TSPM.<sup>46</sup> A small Korean Chinese congregation worshipped with relative autonomy at the *Chongwenmen* TSPM Church (Interview: T. Jin 2020a, 1–2).

Tianming, Ezra (Chapter 5), and Daniel (Chapter 6) were Korean Chinese University students who first encountered the Korean Chinese diaspora at the *Chongwenmen* Church. This tiny Korean Chinese Christianity community offered a glimpse of an alive faith under Communism. Tianming's Korean Chinese classmate Zhang Yongsheng invited him to church and led him to Christ. In September 1989, Tianming was converted after hearing the worship song, 'the love of God comforted his poor soul (Interview: T. Jin 2020a).'

Tianming downplays his Korean ethnicity and is the most careful not to associate himself with the Korean church. Even though he respects the Korean church's spiritual heritage, he does not want people to mistake his calling as motivated or influenced by an ethnic factor. The Shouwang Church he founded is completely a Han Chinese congregation (J. C. Ro 2013, 285).

#### **4.1.2 Korean Missionary Influence**

Tianming credits his spiritual growth to a Korean missionary who disciplined and taught him the foundations of the faith. Tianming claimed that the missionary had a more spiritual influence on him in the early years than the house church patriarchs or the Korean Chinese diaspora community at the *Chongwenmen Church*. In January 1990, Tianming felt the assurance of salvation and was called to full-time ministry. He struggled with his calling for about a year and a half as his parent's wanted him to study further as a research graduate student. Under this missionary, five Korean Chinese Christian students,

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<sup>46</sup> Korean Chinese are Chinese citizens who are ethnically Korean with ancestors who immigrated to North-East China. They speak often speak both Korean and Chinese and consider themselves fully Chinese with Korean heritage. The Korean Chinese are considered an official minority group in China with nearly two million people according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (Times 2022). The spiritual roots of these ethnic Korean Chinese most likely come from the Pyongyang revival in 1907. The Pyongyang revivals a 'genuine Pentecost' where the Korean church became self-supporting resulting in 300,000 Korean Christians (Shaw 2010, 40–46). The Korean Church sent missionaries to China as early as 1913 when the Presbyterian Church of Korea commissioned three missionary families to Shantung, China (Park 2010, 156).

including Tianming and Daniel, were called into full-time ministry and joined the missionary's first seminary class. In 1993, Tianming and several students received a vision from the Lord. As a result, Tianming broke ties with the missionary, dropped out of the seminary, and planted a church. Later in life, the missionary experienced a crisis of faith and left the ministry. However, both Tianming and Daniel are grateful for the missionary's role in the early formative years of their discipleship training (Interviews: T. Jin 2020a; D. Jin 2020).

Tianming describes the impact of Korean missionaries in Beijing.

They were strong in discipleship training. Of Korean missionaries, 99% were seminary educated with some pastoral experience, even though they were not senior pastors but assistant pastors. They were strong in discipleship training and teaching the Bible. Koreans had strong relationships with the Chinese and brought many of them to Christ. Many Chinese students were connected and came to the Lord. Discipleship was strong with results... Many of us were called to full-time ministry. They [Korean missionaries] then started seminaries to train full-time workers. Around 40 to 50% of the early underground seminaries in Beijing were started or influenced by Korean missionaries (Presentation: T. Jin 2020b).

#### **4.1.3 Personal Spiritual Encounter**

While the Korean missionary provided the foundations of the faith, Tianming attributed his spiritual growth primarily to his encounter with the Holy Spirit through the strong sense of God's prophetic call in his life. He describes his early spiritual experience as an intervention from God in the 1990s into urban China. He later discovered that his conversion and spiritual experience matched others in early Chinese Christians' biographies and testimonies.

You can use me as an example. I read many books and encountered missionaries, but no theology influenced me. It was my own spiritual experience and reading the Bible that moulded me *su zhao le wo* (塑造了我). There was not any theological position or denomination that influenced me. The early people whom God used were all the same (Interview: T. Jin 2020a).

Tianming's self-study reading materials included China Inland Mission founder Hudson Taylor and Chinese indigenous evangelists who shaped the overall house church in China. Two biographies had a significant influence on his early spiritual formation; Hudson Taylor's biography *The Lord loves China, zhu ai zhong guo* (主爱中国), and John Sung's biography *ling li ji guang* (灵历集光). Tianming's ministry call and personal

encounter with the Holy Spirit gave him the confidence to weather the challenges of financial uncertainty, criticism, persecution, and house arrest (T. Jin 2020b). In 1993, he started a church with ten people in a rented apartment, which eventually became Shouwang Church (Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 113).

#### 4.1.4 House Church Patriarchs

Tianming claimed that the house church patriarchs Wang Mingdao, Allen Yuan (Xiangcheng), and Moses Xie (Moshan) had minimal influence on his spiritual growth.

‘What was Wang Mingdao’s influence on you?’ Tianming’s answer was:

He [Wang Mingdao] did not influence me... My convictions for not joining the TSPM came from many years of reading on my own. I read his book ten years later after developing my own convictions. I heard about his position, but it wasn’t that my convictions came from him. When I first became a Christian, I felt that the church should be that way... I wasn’t influenced by them with my house church position. I had this [non-compromising]’ house church’ stance first, then discovered it was the same as his. It wasn’t that they [house church patriarchs] influenced me. (Interview: T. Jin 2020a)

Tianming had frequent contact with house church patriarchs Moses Xie and Allen Yuan. Yuan performed Tianming’s wedding ceremony, and Xie conducted his ordination. After twenty-three years, Yuan was released from prison and started a house church called Baitashi Fellowship. Tianming’s early encounter with Yuan confirmed that they had the same convictions he had ‘already received from the Lord’. In a presentation of the Urban Church history in Beijing, Tianming shared four areas of similar beliefs with Yuan.

- 1) We would not join the TSPM.
- 2) ‘Not by might, nor by power or ability, but by the Holy Spirit.’
- 3) They continued to worship even during the most challenging times.
- 4) **They had a spirit of martyrdom, and carrying the cross had a profoundly personal impression. He had the same sacrificial faithfulness ‘be loyal until death’ (致死中心) (Rev. 2:10).**  
(Interview: T. Jin 2020a)

Tianming only agreed to be ordained by Xie after refusing him twice (Interview: T. Jin 2020b). While respecting the traditional house church patriarchs, Tianming believed that the Urban Church was separate from the Traditional Church. The new Urban Church movement was the fruit of missionaries and the work of the Holy Spirit and not the direct

result of the Traditional house church patriarchs. The Traditional Church had minimal impact in the early formation of himself and the Urban Church.

Dr. Leung's research of the rural house church revivals in the 1980s noticed a similar discontinuity between the Rural and Traditional house church movements. According to Leung, the house church revivals in rural China were not primarily influenced by the Traditional house church patriarchs but by government policies (Leung 1999, 26–30). Leung's research agrees with Tianming's observation that the Traditional patriarchs did not have a direct influence on the Rural and Urban house church. According to Tianming, the three house church streams: Urban Church, Rural house church, and the Traditional house church - all had different spiritual foundations which account for their distinctiveness.<sup>47</sup>

According to Tianming; Wang Mingdao, Watchman Nee, John Sung and Jia Yumin are the four influential patriarchs who had an overall indirect influence on the house church movement. Wang Mingdao's contribution was his non-compromising 'house church stance' *jia ting jiaohui lichang* (家庭教会立场) against joining the TSPM. Watchman Nee's contribution was Brethren ecclesiology. The Church is 'when two or three are gathered in my name' (Matthew 18:20) even without a pastor. In the house church ecclesiology, anyone could preach, baptise or lead the Lord's Supper. John Sung's contribution was the emphasis on the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the repentance of sin in his

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<sup>47</sup> Ezra and Daniel would not necessarily state that the Patriarchs had no influence on them as clearly as Tianming. In Chapter 6, Daniel shared how the Patriarch Yuan had an early spiritual impact during crucial times of conflict. Ezra in Chapter 5 was deeply influenced by the sacrificial spirituality from the older generation. Zhang Heng and the Rural house church in Chapter 3 were direct spiritual descendants of the indigenous traditional house church. Zhang Heng, however, had major differences in their evangelistic zeal and missions strategies with the Traditional house church patriarchs.

evangelistic ministry. Jia Yumin's influence was on devotion, prayer and spiritual retreats (Interview: T. Jin 2020b).

#### **4.1.5 Summary: Background**

In summary, Tianming's conversion started with a Korean Chinese diaspora community of elderly semi-literate women in Beijing who came from Northeast China. Tianming turned to Christianity right after Tiananmen Square 1989, when many intellectuals and students lost faith in Communism. The most important early spiritual influence came from a Korean missionary who provided discipleship and initial theological training. After a personal encounter with God, Tianming separated from the missionary to establish what would later become Shouwang Church. Tianming claimed that the house church patriarchs did not directly influence him. The Urban Church of intellectuals, students, and young professionals were a distinct church movement separate from the Traditional or the Rural house church. According to Tianming, the Urban Church was a completely new church movement that came from the spiritual fruit of the missionaries and the Holy Spirit and did not originate from the existing indigenous Han Chinese church.

### **4.2 Missions from the Urban Church**

#### **4.2.1 'City on a Hill'**

Tianming and Shouwang Church of urban intellectuals created a new type of church with a 'City on a Hill' mission to reach mainstream Chinese society. 'The church is a 'City on a Hill', and should not be hidden, the church is a Light on a Lampstand' (Matthew 5:14-16) and must be placed to be seen by this generation.' The editor of *Almond Flower*, Beijing Shouwang Church's official publication, writes about the need for the house church to rise to the surface from an underground 'illegal' unregistered church to become a 'City on a hill' and a light on a lampstand not to be hidden but shine for others to see.

We believe that God will not give up on the world (Ps 22:28). Christ holds all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). Therefore, we believe this world comes under the basic laws and process under God (Romans 13:1, 4) which will be carried out in a certain way in society. Furthermore, God's church, under a legal system, should have a legal position. We believe the church is Christ's presentation in the world. The church in the society is a 'City on a Hill' (Matt 5:14), and is 'Light on a Lampstand' (Matt 5:15) that should not be hidden (Matthew 14), so that the light can shine on more people (Almond Flower Editorial Committee 2008b, 18–20).

This new 'City on a Hill' vision required boldness since a house church to register as a legal entity apart from the TSPM would challenge the existing religious laws. In the mid-2000, Shouwang Church transformed itself from an underground house church 'rising to the surface' *fu chu shui mian* (浮出水面) to be a visible public witness to society. Tianming's ecclesiology was not 'bounded' by the more low-key posture traditions of the house church. He separated himself from other house church leaders in the patriarch Yuan's ministry who were 'not able to leave Yuan's model of church influence (Interview: T. Jin 2020a).'

To reach urban intellectuals and mainstream society, Tianming introduced a modern church governance structure and congregational practices distinct from the traditions of the indigenous Chinese house church culture. Tianming led Shouwang Church through a series of bold steps.

1) Sunday service was opened to the public in a move towards *gong kai hua* (公开化). This open church policy broke the house church practices of an 'invitation only' worship service.

2) An official name, 'Beijing Shouwang Church,' was adopted with a church constitution, statement of faith, church discipline manual, church budget, church address and website. These actions broke the hidden underground secrecy of the house church.

3) Church governance transitioned to a congregational church model *tang hui hua* (堂会化) which included a fully developed leadership structure with full-time paid pastors, an elder board, and 'deacons' called co-workers at the local level. Rural Networks governance operated under an authoritarian leadership structure with a centralised



headquarters that would send rotating evangelists *chuan dao ren* (传道人) to local house church congregations.

4) The church began to emphasise the collection of tithes and offerings, which replaced the former non-solicitation common practice of trusting only in God *ping xin* (平信心) for finances. The annual church budget was transparent for the examination of the congregation. Church finances were posted on the church walls.

5) Pastoral ordination affirmed the role of the clergy as a full-time paid pastor, which replaced a simple bi-vocational lay leader at the local congregational level.

6) The church developed specialised ministries including Sunday School, Prayer, Baptism, Fellowship groups, seekers class, seminars, banquets, retreats, all kinds of fellowship including Youth Group, college, wives, women, elderly, migrant workers, professionals, returnees, University students, library, outdoors, evangelism, annual celebrations, publication ministry, Easter and Christmas outreach, premarital and marital counselling, parental education, choir, baptism class, discipleship class, Bible school, co-workers training, library, publication, web online ministry (Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 65).

7) The church entered society to minister through hospital visitations, elderly visitations, campus ministry, park outreach, earthquake relief, and local and world missions.

8) Reformed theology provided a general framework for urban intellectuals to understand the faith. In the past, the house church relied on pietistic charismatic experiences and a simple understanding of Scripture (Interview: T. Jin 2018b). Shouwang Church's magazine, the *Almond Flowers*, edited by elder Sun Yi, published 25 articles on John Calvin for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009 (Almond Flower Editorial Committee 2009).

Tianming's first mission was to create a church for urban intellectuals and mainstream Han Chinese urbanites. Due to globalisation and urbanisation, he created a church culture

contextualised for modernity suited for intellectuals and students. Jonathan Ro's doctoral thesis study provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of globalisation and urbanisation on the Urban Church in China (J. C. Ro 2018).

#### **4.2.2 Shouwang Church 'Cross Missiology'**

Shouwang Church became the targeted church to come under attack by the authorities. In 2005, over thirty police stormed the first baptismal service on Shouwang Church's move to the office complex. In November 2009, Shouwang Church was forced to worship outdoors in a snowstorm. In April 2011, Shouwang Church facilities were confiscated, Tianming and other leaders placed under house arrest, and church members were arrested each week as they headed to worship service outdoors (Steffan 2012).

Tianming understood endurance under persecution was preparation for the sacrifices needed for missions. For years, Shouwang Church struggled each week just to worship freely. The church nurtured a boldness and provided spiritual strength to influence society and send missionaries sacrificially. Shouwang Church bold actions opened the doors for other Christians to have a bold witness in the offices, marketplace, schools, publication, and culture in general.

In such an environment, Shouwang Church needed to start outdoor Sunday worships. Churches in China have grown to the point of hiddenness and even to public testimony. With persecutions from the government, our church still stands.... From this perspective, it is time for a mission. The Urban Church influences our society, more than on the individual level but at the societal level. (Interview: T. Jin 2016b)

Another house church leader T2-Pei used the term 'theology of the cross' to focus on the positive outcomes of the faith through suffering. Endurance during suffering is not just 'keeping the faith' but preparing the church to be a 'City on a Hill' to impact society.

Shouwang Church mentioned earlier behind 'the City on a Hill, the light of the world' vision to be visible on a hill and not hidden. So, it is like removing the cover of distress and showing the charm of the faith. So, I think, in our understanding, it is part of the Chinese 'theology of suffering'... I can accept another word, the so-called 'theology of the cross' (Interview: T2-Pei 2017, 6).

T3-Joy, Shouwang Church missionary to Chinese diaspora in Africa, shared how the persecution of Shouwang Church caused her to want to share her faith with other cultures.

We want to share this precious gospel with Chinese people and people from other cultures with this gospel preciousness. (Interview: T3-Joy 2016, 1)

She also shared how the suffering and sacrifices of missionaries inspired her to be a missionary.

I was inspired by my interaction with these missionaries; they helped me experience a more profound gospel of Christ. Because they were able to leave their own luxurious life to come to a complex, challenging place in China, especially those who came 200 years ago, like Robert Morrison and Hudson Taylor. They experienced suffering persecution and died in China. Because of this reason only Jesus can do this kind of thing because of this contrast. I'm not sure about others, but this has been a core mission motivation. Also, because I experienced some suffering, maybe it's because of what we experienced, the hardship within China maybe helped us adjust. It's Hudson Taylor and China Inland Mission, OMF. In mostly OMF missionaries like you. I've seen those who learned a language, and Hudson Taylor wore Chinese clothing and the Chinese Que. It had a strong impression on me. Moreover, for the martyr's letters what they wrote, I cried. Just like Taylor said, if I had a thousand lives, I would give it to China. But not China but Christ. These missionaries highly inspired me, but I know they could do this because they were not themselves of Christ. (Interview: T3-Joy 2016, 1)

#### **4.2.3 Unity with the Global Evangelical Church**

The Lausanne Movement invited the church in China to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Lausanne World Congress* in Cape Town in 2010. For Tianming, the Lausanne Congress was an opportunity for the Chinese church to re-join the global church missions movement. He recalled this experience in Shouwang Church's *Almond Magazine*.

Three years ago, when we heard that Lausanne International invited the church in China to join, we sensed that this was the global Christian family calling out the house church in China. The church in China and the global church had been cut off from fellowship for sixty years. Two years ago, we established a China preparation committee to join the Third Lausanne World Congress (T. Jin 2010, 15).

Twenty-eight house church leaders met in Hong Kong for the first Lausanne China consultation and recommended the following in 2008.<sup>48</sup> A China Lausanne Preparation Committee of 20 leaders gathered to represent the different streams of the church. On a smaller core committee, Tianming represented the Urban Church, Zhang Heng represented the Rural Networks, and T1-Yuehan represented the Traditional Church. The China Lausanne Preparation Committee affirmed the theological *Lausanne Covenant*

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<sup>48</sup> The China Lausanne meetings recommended the following: 1) to seriously consider the TSPM issue, 2) to establish a China Preparation committee, 3) to recommend Congress expenses should be covered by ourselves, and 4) to advance through this platform a unity movement within the church in China and to begin joining in global missions (J. Li 2010, 11).

and recommended 230 leaders according to the regions, church streams, and ministries (J. Li 2010, 12).

China Lausanne leaders convened separate meetings in Shanghai and Beijing with different church leaders. The first meeting was in Shanghai on October 15, 2008, with leaders from Shanghai, Fujian, Zhejiang, Wenzhou, including the patriarch Li Tianen. Li shared about the Lausanne Congress II in Manila 1989 when the government prevented China from attending. Lausanne III in Cape Town 2010 would be another opportunity to unify the Chinese church for world missions.

Formerly, the church would not connect with each other. There was a lack of open communication, posting of their own criticisms and causing much division. The church in China especially needs to unite. It appears that God is at work to open our hearts to bring the house church in unity together. How should we be united? Through Lausanne, each church should work in unity for the sake of Christ (J. Li 2010, 12).

China Lausanne Committee members travelled across China to raise funds in Beijing, Xiamen, Shanghai, Wenzhou, Xiamen, Hohhot, Anhui, and Shenyang. By September 2009, the Committee had raised over six million RMB (nearly 1 million USD). Funds were raised to cover China's congress and hotel fees along with an additional amount of scholarships raised for a hundred neighbouring country participants (J. Li 2010, 13).

The authorities started a campaign to prevent all from attending (Lim 2010). With the added pressure, 160 chose to go far as possible until they were either stopped at the airport or prevented from leaving their homes.<sup>49</sup> On October 15, 2010, an open letter was sent to the Lausanne Movement from house church leaders detained at a hotel near the Beijing airport.<sup>50</sup> Even though China was absent at the Lausanne Congress, the process prepared

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<sup>49</sup> Over twenty house church leaders were detained at a hotel near the Beijing International Airport. One leader was wrestled to the ground and dragged back to his home on the second floor by six fully armoured police. In the end, only seven participants were able to attend; two younger women from the house church slipped through immigration in Shanghai, a sister from the TSPM in Fuzhou, and five others who were already studying abroad (J. Li 2010, 14).

<sup>50</sup> The open letter drafted by China house church leaders stated: 1) The house church represents the majority of Christians and churches in China and is an independent self-governing church. 2) China's house church leaders desire to attend the third Lausanne World Congress. 3) Some departments of the government have

a unity movement for missions among the house church leaders in China, who eventually formed *Mission China 2030*.

*Mission China* leaders have listed several contributions of the Lausanne Movement for the church in China (Interview 1, question #24): 1) the Lausanne Congress provided an opportunity for the churches to connect. 2) Lausanne highlighted the growth of the Chinese house church to the government and to the world. 3) Lausanne provided a national platform for promoting missions.<sup>51</sup>

Without Lausanne, there would be no national missions platform except region-based or relationship-based networks. Lausanne also provided a precious experience of connecting with different churches (Interview: T. Jin 2016a, 8).

#### **4.2.4 Internationalisation replaces Indigenisation**

Tianming holds to the position that the church in China should move away from indigenisation and head towards internationalisation. For him, the era of indigenisation of Chinese Christianity was over years ago and is no longer needed. The Chinese church is already indigenous for the last 60 years due to the government's removal of all foreign missionaries in the 1950s. At an 'Indigenous and Partnership' conference in Hong Kong, Tianming shared:

The era of indigenisation in China is over. We do not need you [Westerners] to remind us that we need to be more Chinese. We are already entirely Chinese. The Chinese government removed foreign influences over sixty years ago. The Chinese church should not be more Chinese. We should be more internationalised and less indigenous to join the global church in missions.<sup>52</sup>

While Zhang Heng (Chapter 3), Ezra (Chapter 5), and Daniel (Chapter 6) see the global missions world assisting China's indigenous missions movement, Tianming's global perspective sees the Chinese church joining an existing global missions movement. He

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attacked a wide body of religious people's freedom, and seriously violated the country constitution (T. Jin 2010, 60–61).

<sup>51</sup> Interview 1, question #24 'What is your opinion of the Lausanne Movement and its contribution (negative or positive)? What is your view of Cape Town 2010 and ACLF 2013 in Seoul?'

<sup>52</sup> Tianming shared his thoughts at the *China Source / Leadership Source* conference on 'Indigenisation and Partnership' in Hong Kong in the mid-2000s.

is against indigenous nationalistic tones that encourage China to become independent from the global church.

In world missions, we, as ordinary team members. Chinese shouldn't do missions with nationalism. However, we are sure that the Chinese church should offer as many mission resources and talents as possible. Also, I'd like to add that: 1. Chinese churches should first learn missions with a humble heart. It will take 15-20 years. 2. Chinese churches should join international mission agencies. I don't think that we could do something independently on our own (Interview: T. Jin 2016a, 10).

During the preparation process for the Lausanne Congress, Tianming wanted to reconnect the church in China with the evangelical Global Church by finding theological commonalities through the *Lausanne Covenant*. Tianming's overall Chinese church direction to move towards internationalisation away from indigenisation goes against the general trend of World Christianity.

Furthermore, Global South leaders and World Christianity scholars have often described the Western missionary enterprise as primarily negatively tied to colonialism and paternalism (Ekström 2011, 317–20; Bosch 1991, 2, 344-345, 518; Bridston 1965, 12–19). Tianming's attitude towards the Western missionaries, along with most of the *Mission China* leaders, primarily comes from a heart of gratitude.

Since Robert Morrison's mission in China in 1807, tens of thousands of missionaries from all over Europe, America, Australia, ... have been called upon to leave their homeland and beloved families and have come to this ancient land of China with God's love and gospel, including the well-known Hudson Taylor, Samuel Pollard, the Cambridge Seven, and many unknown missionaries. Through hard work, they spread the gospel inland from the coast to the small mountain villages along the border and established churches, hospitals, and schools throughout China. In the process, many missionaries and their families gave their precious lives. The seeds of the gospel sown by missionaries have thrived in China and become a blessing for the establishment of the Church in China. As the young brothers and sisters of the new generation of heirs of the Chinese Church, you commemorate the significant contribution these missionaries have made to spread the gospel in China in the Lord and emulate their dedication to Christ and their passion for mission (Presentation: T. Jin 2017a, 1).

Shouwang Church does not fit into the categories of Bevan's Contextualisation Models. Instead of the 'anthropological indigenisation' model with the primary concern of 'the establishment of preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 54; Moreau 2012, 39)', Shouwang Church has a combination of the 'praxis' and 'countercultural' models with the fighting against the injustices of persecution against the church. The 'praxis' model is framed in terms of social change on behalf of the oppressed in a local setting (Bevans 2002, 70; Moreau

2012, 39–40). The ‘countercultural’ model goal is to ‘truly encounter and engage the context through respectful yet critical analysis and authentic gospel proclamation in word and deed (Bevans 2002, 119; Moreau 2012, 41).’ However, what is missing in Bevan’s Contextualisation models is the context of globalisation and internationalisation. Jonathan Ro’s thesis provides another contextualisation model of the impact of urbanisation and globalisation on the Urban Church in China (J. C. Ro 2013).

#### 4.2.5 Nationalism Concerns of *Mission China 2030*

While Tianming is supportive of the overall *Mission China* movement, he is not as supportive of the ‘20,000 missionaries by the year 2030’ vision and China’s ‘gospel debt’ to the world proposed by Daniel (Chapter 6). He is cautious of the underlying nationalism that assumes China to be the main component of world missions.

It [*Mission China 2030*] is no better than the ‘Back to Jerusalem’ slogan. It is not helpful to promote the vision. If we fix our eyes on ‘twenty thousand’, we are on the wrong foundation. The fundamental foundation of our task is the Lord’s command. If we see it as ‘paying off our Chinese debt’, we mingle nationalism into missions. If so, it means that in our thinking, we still haven’t crossed our cultural and national boundaries. We should break the mindset that the Chinese church is at the centre of global missions (Interview: T. Jin 2016a, 6).

Tianming is concerned with the *Mission China 2030* vision has no biblical and missiological support. Tianming’s evaluation of the four *Mission China* conferences from 2015 to 2018 has not been as positive. He once shared that ‘all the energy has been dedicated to running conferences rather than sending out missionaries.’ The bottleneck is the lack of a bridge from the *Mission China 2030* platform with young people who are called to missions who follow through and actually go to the mission field.

Apart from the [MC2030] platform, I think there should be an agency willing to accept and train these brothers and sisters or ready to establish a mission academy for them or serve as a bridge to recommend them to mission agencies worldwide. Otherwise, we will encounter a bottleneck (Interview: T. Jin 2016a, 8).

#### 4.2.6 Cross-cultural Missions: Call from All Nations

After twenty-five years of pastoral ministry, Tianming resigned from the pastorate of Shouwang Church to enter full-time into missions mobilisation to ‘build a highway for missions’. His ‘Call from all Nations’ article answered the purpose of missions. Tianming understanding of ‘*pan-ethne*’ (all nations) in Matthew 28:19 is defined as ‘all ethnic’ groups. However, local evangelism (same ethnicity) and cross-cultural missions (other races) are simultaneously accomplished. Paul and Barnabas were called to the Gentiles. In contrast, James, Peter and John were called to the circumcised Jews (Ga 2: 9). At that time, the church’s missionary activities continued to expand to reach different ethnic groups simultaneously.



Tianming's analysis is that Christianity has already been firmly established among the Han Chinese in China. Since there is a church in virtually every city and township of the Han Chinese culture, the primary focus of missions now should be for the church in China to bring the gospel to the minority groups within China and unreached peoples overseas.

It is now challenging to find counties and towns without churches in these Han cultural circles. Not to mention cities—a city generally has many churches, and big cities like Beijing and Shanghai have hundreds or thousands of churches. (T. Jin 2018a, 4)

Tianming's mobilisation ministry is called 'Call from All Nations', which comes from the Apostle Paul's Macedonian call in Acts 16:9 'please come to Macedonia to help us.' His missions to other ethnicities have been influenced by the mission classes he has taken with Kairos and Perspectives; both classes originated from Ralph Winters's Unreached People Group (UPG) missiology. Tianming believes that the church in China has entered the final third phase of 'self-missionisation' in its readiness to join the global church to engage in cross-cultural missions to unreached people group.

### **4.3 Contributing Factors**

#### **4.3.1 Internal Factors**

##### **4.3.1.1 An existing growing church with the explicit objective of expanding to other locations and countries**

When is it time to take action to go to all nations? Why is the church in China ready now for missions? Tianming used the Antioch church example to demonstrate why now was the time for the church in China to be engaged in cross-cultural missions.

First, the Antioch church became a witness in its society. The disciples were first called Christians by the Antioch society (Acts 11:26). They already had a testimony of a people. 'This shows that when a church is made up of truth and grace and becomes a witness in this region and ethnic group, we can say that this church has grown to the point where it can send missionaries.' A church is ready to send missionaries to other cultures when they have influenced the power structures of their own society.

Due to Paul's preaching, the entire industry of making silver was almost closed, and a whole city was in commotion. The Ephesus church became a spiritual strength in that era affecting the church

throughout Asia. Not only that, but the early Roman church also influenced European missions. The British church that sent the most missionaries in the 19th century and the American church that sent the most missionaries in the 20th century also had their spiritual influence in their society (T. Jin 2018a, 7).

Second, the Antioch church developed a mature team of five core co-workers. (Acts 13:1-2) When they sent off their best church leaders, Paul and Barnabas, to the missions, other leaders carried on the church ministry.

Third, the Antioch church had many people who truly lived out the gospel. Barnabas sold everything and laid it at the apostle's feet (Acts 4:36-37), Paul regarded everything as worthless and Christ as a treasure (Phil 3:8). The Antioch Church also included those who were fleeing persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-21).

Fourth, the Antioch church not only cared for their own but helped other churches in need (Acts 11:27-30). From this, we know the reason for the love of the Antioch church: they knew they 'owed the gospel debt', so they acted to repay the debt of the gospel. The missionary sending church is not giving because they are more affluent than other churches, but because they have Christ's 'gospel debt' missions responsibility (Romans 1: 14-15).

The Antioch Church has been used as a measure to determine the Chinese church readiness for missions. The Urban Church in China was having an impact on a societal level while withstanding the persecution from the government.

Churches in China have grown from being in hiding to being a public testimony. With persecutions from the government, our church still stands... From this perspective, it is time for missions... Chinese house churches, especially the 'new emergent urban house churches', influence our society more than on the individual level but at the societal level... Also, hundreds of churches have open Sunday services in office buildings in Beijing. We can see that the church has grown to this point which we could never imagine before... Faith has a considerable impact as the church influences society. (Interview2: T. Jin 2016b, 1)

Tianming has also assessed the church's readiness in China as a whole. He gave a message to the next generation in preparing them for missions which included five points; 1) the sacrifices of the Western missionaries, 2) the sufferings of the house church patriarchs, 3) the revivals in rural China with the persecuted evangelists, 4) the rise of the

Urban Church from Korean and American missionaries, 5) and the Urban Churches growing in the cities in the last 20 years. (T. Jin 2017a)

In summary, Tianming provides evidence for the readiness of the Chinese church in cross-cultural missions by using the example of the Antioch church. The four characteristics of the church readiness for missions. The Antioch church 1) impacted society as those around them called them ‘Christians’. 2) They had a team-based ministry and could send their best ministers to the mission field without a loss at home. 3) They demonstrated gospel living and gospel sharing with those who had fled persecution. 4) They had an indebtedness to the gospel.

Shouwang Church first influenced its society by facing the challenges of its government power structures. Their leadership co-worker team was able to withstand the government’s attacks with incredible sacrifice, providing evidence that the church had the spiritual strength to impact other cultures and was ready for missions. Tianming and other Urban Church pastors now have the vision for a missionary movement coming from China. Tianming’s reasons for the readiness of the Chinese church for missions are summarised in this statement:

if you cannot influence your society, you cannot bring changes to people in other cultures, the spiritual power you have is not enough (Interview2: T. Jin 2016b, 2).

#### **4.3.1.2 Motivation: Missions Passion and Piety**

According to Tianming, the core strength of China’s missionary-sending passion is piety. He used the example of the Little Flock and Watchman Nee to connect the pietistic ‘preciousness of the Lord’ with missions. For Watchman Nee, what was the relationship between piety, spirituality, and missions? Did suffering help keep the faith but did not result in missions? Does the passion for evangelism and missions come from piety?

Tianming’s answer:

Pietism, loving the Lord, is connected to Chinese traditional culture as it is close to meditation. However, how is it related to missions? Pietism focuses on loving the Lord. They care and regard the Lord as important and precious (Interview: T. Jin 2018b, 1–2).

Did they love the Lord and then follow in obedience?

No, it was ‘the Lord is precious.’ So, they wanted others to have it. It should be this kind of attitude. It [missions passion] is not coming from the Great Commission; I’ve rarely heard them speak of the Great Commission. Their traditional hymns are ‘The Lord is most precious’ *zhu shi zui wei bao qi* (主是最為寶貴). **With this precious love, they wanted to share the gospel. They are not coming from a vision of the Great Commission, but the ‘Lord is precious’ as the most important thing** (Interview: T. Jin 2018b, 1–2).

The house church experienced the precious love of God during suffering and had the desire for others to experience this same special love. Hardship drew the Chinese church closer to God in times of need. This personal spiritual comfort and experiential life relationship with God became the ‘core power’ that compelled Christians to give their lives sacrificially to go to share the gospel. Their mission motivation was not out of obedience, nor a duty from a command in Scripture, but out of a desire for others to experience what they had experienced, the precious love of God during times of suffering. This love from God compelled them to become evangelistic in mission.

#### **4.3.1.3 Entrepreneur Leadership**

As founding pastor of Shouwang Church, Tianming had the entrepreneurial gift of starting the first Urban Church in 1993 when Christianity in Beijing was virtually non-existent. He led Shouwang Church to become one of the largest house churches in Beijing, reaching around 1,000 in Sunday attendance in one location before being shut down by the authorities in April of 2011. Tianming’s ‘City on a Hill’ vision changed the overall trajectory of the house church from an underground movement to become a visible presence and influence in society by challenging the existing governmental and house church accepted cultural and ecclesiological norms.

Tianming was a key leader for China to join the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010. Even though they could not attend, he was instrumental in building a unity movement for missions from the three streams of the house churches: Traditional, Rural Networks, and Urban Church.

In May 2010, Tianming and I invited twenty house church leaders to New York for a month-long church planting training at Redeemer Church with Timothy Keller. This training brought together other house church leaders, including Zhang Heng from the CGF, Chen and Paul from the Anhui Truth network, T1-Cui from Shanghai, Gao from Beijing, and Wang Yi from Chengdu. A Grace City-to-City Church planting network formed from Reformed pastors with hundreds of Gospel-centred churches.

In April 2018, Tianming stepped down as the pastor of Shouwang Church to mobilise the Chinese church towards missions to unreached people groups. He also created a mission-sending platform in Beijing, uniting a consortium of churches to support and send missionaries.

#### **4.3.1.4 Available Resources**

In 2017, Shouwang Church, members around 500 to 600 people, had an annual General Budget of 2.4 million yuan. The missions budget was 400,000 yuan with 500,000 yuan in actual missions spending. Local parachurch ministry is not included in the missions budget was another 400,000 yuan.<sup>53</sup> The annual church missions budget was 21% of the General Budget. If missions included local parachurch ministry, the percentage is higher at 42% of the General Budget. The annual salary for the Senior Pastor was 150,000 yuan which was the same support level of a fully supported missionary unit. Shouwang Church's mission fund was established in 2007. In 2017, the church supported fifteen missionary units with three spouses and six kids. Four of the missionary units come from other churches. Eight missionary units are sent within China. In October 2017, Shouwang sent out their first overseas missionary from their own church. The missions budget also includes an agency work project in Myanmar and a short-term mission team of three people (T. Jin 2017b, 1).

#### **4.3.2 External Factors**

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<sup>53</sup> Parachurch ministry includes student ministry, returnee ministry, literature, and seminarian scholarships.

### 4.3.2.1 Political Environment under Open Reforms

Due to China's Open Reforms with Deng Xiaoping in 1979, the overall political context for society and religion in China had been moving towards a more open environment. Many intellectuals and students turned to Christianity after their country's ideals were broken during the political turmoil after 1989.

God used 1989 to break the hearts of intellectuals. Our dreams and ideals of the country were shattered. Chinese intellectuals choose three paths. Some lost their hope in China and moved overseas. Some went into business to make money, and others turned to Christianity. Researchers claimed that it was popular to become Christians in the 1980s and 1990s. Many University students came to Christ (Presentation: T. Jin 2020b).

Tianming started a church in 1993 during President Jiang Zemin's era (1993 to 2003) during market reforms. China was opening up to the world. China's economy exploded in growth as Jiang continued forward with Deng's market economy approach. China entered the WTO in 2001 when the economy was around 10% GDP annual growth rate. Thousands of American English teachers arrived at Chinese University campuses. Christian expats from the West, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia moved into China as students, NGO workers, and businesspeople. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students were studying abroad and many returning to China with a newfound faith in Christianity.

Tianming's 'City on a Hill' for the house church 'rise to the surface' was under President Hu Jintao's 'harmonious society' period from 2003 to 2013 (Mohanty 2012). During this period, China was in preparation for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. There appeared to be an openness for a religious policy change to officially recognise the house church. The *Global Times*, a government mouthpiece news source, stated, 'China's current religious policy is the legacy of the past and was seriously disconnected with today's social reality (D. Liu 2013).' This news source agreed with Yang Fenggang, the Director of the Centre on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University,

"The government needs to update its objective understanding and knowledge on all kinds of emerging religious phenomenon and adjust its outdated policy to keep up with the changing times,... the government should allow different churches to be able to legally register and develop naturally, which is helpful for building a harmonious society,..." Yang said (D. Liu 2013).

#### **4.3.2.2 Shouwang Church struggle with the Authorities**

In 2005, Tianming began the application process to register Shouwang Church as a legal, religious entity apart from the official TSPM church structures. Shouwang elder Sun Yi shared with the *Global Times* why Shouwang Church would not join the TSPM.

We think the TSPM is the extension of government, and true Three-Self churches should eliminate the influence from the West and break away from the government, which is a universal principle in churches of many other countries (D. Liu 2013).

Shouwang Church followed the legal procedures and submitted all the required documents on July 21, 2006. The government rejected the application as they were not ready to recognise a religious entity outside their control (T. Jin 2008, 18–19). Shouwang Church's justification for its registration path impacted society as they believed in the universal 'rule of law'. The rejection was not seen as a failure but a turning point towards a step in the right direction. From an overall Church in China perspective, Tianming writes:

First, the church registration is a symbolic turning point for the house church in China... Second, the church registration process honestly addressed the historical issue of the church in China (TSPM vs House church) ... Third, the church process revealed an understanding of Church-State problems. Fourth, the road to official legal recognition is not finished with the end of one church (T. Jin 2008, 40–42).

Soon after, Shouwang Church began to attract international media attention. On May 11, 2008, Shouwang Church came under intense pressure from the authorities. In 2009, the government started to pressure the landlord to end its lease of Shouwang Church's rented facilities. As a result, the church leadership decided to worship outdoors in a snowstorm on November 2, 2009. The authorities had pressured the landlord to evict the church from the facilities. Church leaders claimed that President Obama's visit to China three weeks later provided the incentive for the government to temporarily allow the church back indoors to prevent an international incident (Jacobs 2011). Shouwang Church then purchased a floor of an office complex for \$4 million (USD) in December 2009. After the purchase, the authorities prevented the church from entering the facilities.

After Shouwang failed to be recognised as an independent church by the authorities, they could not get the key to a property they had purchased and paid for as their church building due to actions by the government. At the same time, several landlords of their current worship venues asked them to move out (D. Liu 2013).

On April 11, 2011, the Beijing authorities began another crackdown detaining fifty Shouwang Church members and placing Tianming under house arrest. Church members were released after 24 hours to 48 hours of detention (Jacobs 2011; Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 121).

Shouwang Church members were fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes, detained, followed, harassed, and intimidated by the police.

In one instance, according to overseas reports, uniformed and plainclothes police took into custody over 160 Shouwang members, including clergy. Between April 10 and May 15, authorities reportedly placed a total of approximately 500 members and church leaders under “soft detention” (ruanjin), a form of unlawful home confinement (Merkley and McGovern 2011).

The government's target on Shouwang Church culminated from years of built-up tension from the Church's uncompromising stance with the official registration process and the purchasing of the \$4 million (USD) building campaign. Tianming's foreign involvement with the Lausanne Congress would also likely be a reason. Furthermore, the growth of an unregistered ‘illegal’ house church with over 1,000 influential intellectuals, academics, lawyers, students, and professionals from mainstream society in the capital of China was a threat under the current political system. The *Global Times*, the mouthpiece of the Chinese government, writes,

Shouwang Church is said to have many intellectual members, and its membership is over 1,000. They should understand that such a large religious organisation is sensitive under the current system in China. It is vastly different from a real “family church” held in a house. It is not realistic to deny this point (“Family Churches Should Abide by Law - Global Times” 2011).

China's official church TSPM and SARA (formerly the Religious Affairs Bureau) officials strategically planned a two-month Bible Exhibition tour in the United States. Government officials and church leaders met with Evangelicals leaders from the World Evangelical Alliance, the Billy Graham Evangelism Association, Willow Creek Church, and Dallas Theological Seminary. One news source questioned if the Bible Exhibition tour had “great political and propaganda significance?” as an attempt to silence criticism



regarding the attacks on Shouwang Church that had been ongoing for 27 weeks (M. Shan 2011, WEA; P.R.China Embassy in the United States 2011).

While fiercely targeting one church, the Beijing authorities opened the religious environment for other house churches to operate with relative freedom. The targeted attack on Shouwang Church was a common government tactic described in a Chinese idiom: ‘kill the chicken to warn the monkeys’(杀鸡儆猴) which means ‘to make a public demonstration of punishing a wrongdoer in order to deter innocents who might mimic the example of the wrongdoer (Wiktionary 2016).’

Shouwang Church was raided as early as 2004 and experienced intense harassment of members and eviction from their rented facilities in 2008 and 2009. A targeted crackdown occurred in April 2011 when Tianming was placed under house arrest (Lea 2020).

#### **4.3.2.3 Open Era for *Mission China* 2030**

A new Open Era with limited freedoms for the house church began in 2005 with Shouwang Church’s move to the office complex. The house church movement overall experienced a period of expansion due to more freedoms. Tianming was able to see the ‘City on a Hill’ vision become a reality while he was still under house arrest. Thousands of house churches in cities across China moved into the office complex for public worship under an open era new period of freedom.<sup>54</sup> From 2005 to 2018, the house church movement emerged from the underground to become a visible witness in society. Under a freer political environment, Ezra (Chapter 5) planted Beijing Zion Church in 2007, which grew to become the ‘Biggest house church in Beijing’ with over 1,500 worshippers before it was banned in September 2018 (Shepherd 2018b; Monitor 2018). During this period, Ezra and the other *Mission China* leaders, T1-Cui, Daniel (Chapter 6), T1-Yuehan

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<sup>54</sup> Zhang Heng and the CGF network in Chapter 3 alone claimed to have 10,000 house churches that followed Shouwang Church’s congregational transition.

and Zhang Heng (Chapter 3), launched *Mission China 2030* with four large conferences from 2015 to 2018.

#### **4.3.2.4 Political Tightening in 2018**

In 2018, President Xi Jinping introduced the New Religious Regulations with a nationwide campaign to ‘make it significantly more difficult for the unregistered church (house church) to function (Pittman 2019)’. House churches across China were forcibly banned and members harassed: Beijing Zion Church in September 2018, Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu and Rongguili Church in Guangzhou in December 2018, and Shouwang Church in March 2019 (South China Morning Post 2018; Shellnutt 2019a; Lea 2020). Tianming acknowledged that the Open Era pioneered by Shouwang Church’s ‘City on a Hill’ vision had ended. In April 2018, he stepped down as the Senior pastor of Shouwang Church to focus on missions mobilisation. In the new politically restrictive era, Tianming believed God would raise another leader to carry the house church mantle forward in the next phase of the Church-State relations (Interview: T. Jin 2018c).

The re-emergence of persecution is not always seen as a negative but viewed as part of the process of God’s overall purpose. Tianming believes the time to send missionaries is during persecution. Persecution provides evidence that the political powers are concerned about the church’s growth and its broader impact on society. A church that influences its own culture is ready for world missions. The external factors of political restrictions may attempt to stop the church and its activities, but the internal factors indicate that the church is prepared for missions.

In this regard, the Book of Acts tells us that the church in Jerusalem was greatly persecuted, which just became an opportunity for many of them to “go preaching everywhere”. The Chinese church was not persecuted when the gospel was first introduced since the faith had not yet settled. The political power persecuted the church because church growth has had a broad impact on society. Does this prove that the time for the church in missions is now? (T. Jin 2018a, 9)

The New Religious Regulations in 2018 instituted under President Xi have been far more restrictive than the Open Era policies of President Jiang and President Hu. The new political conditions point toward a regime that intends to be in power for several decades

with strict policies to eradicate the house church and its religious activities. Nevertheless, Tianming believed that the church in China is ready to continue forward with missions while under a renewed persecuted context. While under house arrest in 2018, Tianming stepped down from his pastoral duties as the Senior Pastor of Shouwang Church to dedicate the remaining of his life to ‘build a highway’ to mobilise the Chinese church for missions.

### **4.3.3 International Factors**

International factors and global connections have been essential for Christianity in China due to two main questions: 1) Who represents the mainland Chinese church outside China whether the TSPM or House Church? 2) What is the primary Christian theological identity outside China, whether Evangelical, Charismatic, Reformed, or Protestant Mainline churches? These questions are sensitive issues for Beijing as they view foreign influence as an intrusion into internal affairs. The complexity of these issues cannot be covered in this thesis. However, I will summarise my understanding of Tianming and *Mission China* leaders perspective of the global church.

The Lausanne Movement connected the broader house church movement to the conservative evangelical theology of the *Lausanne Covenant*. Tianming and the *Mission China* leaders were involved with the Lausanne Congress in 2010, which laid the foundation for a unity movement for missions. The official TSPM church is a member of the WCC (World Council of Churches 2021), although ‘most TSPM churches teach a Christianity that is orthodox, evangelical (Aikman 2003, 137).’ Due to government restrictions, top TSPM government officials would not allow their pastors to sign the Evangelical *Lausanne Covenant*, even though many would privately affirm it.

The traditional house church leaders and hyper-Calvinist ultra-conservatives would not necessarily identify with the Evangelical Lausanne Movement. Instead, the Reformed churches have aligned more closely with the Gospel Coalition, Tim Keller and Redeemer

Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Baptist with Mark Dever (D. Ro 2020). Many Reformed churches in China consider the Lausanne Movement too theologically broad.

The rural house church Charismatic networks Fangcheng, Lixin, and Wenzhou Arminian would align closer to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement through Dennis Balcombe, David Damien and other overseas Chinese Charismatics (Balcombe 2014; D. Ro 2020). Most of the Large Rural Networks have not participated in *Mission China 2030* and have developed their own international connections. The only large rural network to join *Mission China* is CGF through Zhang Heng. Anhui Truth has developed connections with international mission agencies as well as with overseas Chinese churches.

The Overseas Chinese churches are divided between the TSPM and the house church. CCCOWE, representing overseas Chinese churches, have generally adopted a neutral position varying depending on the leader. Tianming's opinion of the Overseas Chinese influence on the *Mission China* movement has been 'almost non-existent (Phone Call: T. Jin 2021)'. Tianming has recognised overseas Chinese leaders such as Thomas Wang and Cyrus Lam, who influenced *Mission China* leaders Daniel and T2-Hou. However, the Overseas Chinese churches are considered a separate movement with little impact on the mainland Chinese church.

We have to look at this objectively. The Lausanne Movement provided *Mission China's* platform, which developed into an independent movement launched by the indigenous mainland Chinese church. The Overseas Chinese church did not assist nor financially support Mission China but was only invited as participant speakers in a limited manner. Some even spoke against it (singing a different tune) *chang fan diao* (唱反调) . (Call: T. Jin 2021)

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Tianming became a Christian as a Tsinghua University student following 1989 while attending a Chinese Korean diaspora church. However, his early discipleship formation and seminary training came from a Korean missionary in Beijing. In 1993, he experienced a spiritual encounter and received a personal vision and calling from God to plant a church and a strong calling for missions. He founded and pastored the first Urban

Church of intellectuals, young professionals, and students called Shouwang Church for twenty-five years. With a 'City on a Hill' vision, he led Shouwang Church from an underground house church to become an open and public worship service of up to 1,000 people in the heart of Beijing. This move catalysed a house church movement with thousands of churches rising from an underground movement to be public witnesses in society. Shouwang Church was a direct challenge to China's existing political power structures who continued an outdated religious policy of Mao and Stalin. Throughout the years, Shouwang Church experienced a series of intense battles with the authorities, which drew mixed opinions of criticism and respect. Tianming was detained without trial under house arrest for almost ten years (April 2011 to October 2020).

Tianming believed that a church is ready for cross-cultural missions when it has first overcome the challenges of influencing its own mainstream society. He compared the church in China with the Antioch Church. The Antioch church had already influenced its society, developed a healthy team leadership structure, produced sacrificial believers with indebtedness of the gospel, and possessed a spiritual burden for the world.

Tianming established a unity platform for the house church to join the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010. For the first time, he united a couple of hundred pastors and leaders from the different streams of the house churches. Even though most were stopped from attending, the unity platform provided the opportunity for Ezra (Chapter 5), Daniel (Chapter 6), Zhang Heng (Chapter 3), and others to launch *Mission China 2030*. While still under house arrest, Tianming stepped down from his pastoral ministry to focus on global missions to 'build a highway' for cross-cultural missions to unreached peoples.

Tianming's missiological distinctiveness is his internationalisation which distinguishes him from the other three Beijing pastors. He avoids China's unique indigenous theologies to emphasise a global church and international missions culture. Tianming is also concerned with the nationalistic tones in the *Mission China 2030* '20,000

missionary' vision. He believes that China is at the beginning stages of cross-cultural missions and should first come with a learning attitude by joining the existing international mission agencies instead of creating a parallel indigenous Chinese missions structure.

The Urban Church in Beijing challenges the West and non-Western Majority World division of understanding among the contemporary missiology in World Christianity. The first 'Translation' phase of the Urban Church came with Korean and American missionaries who arrived on the University campuses to reach a younger generation after 1989. The Urban Church was a separate movement from the existing Chinese church originating from recent missionaries in the 1990s into the cities. The origins of the Urban Church challenge the notion that missionaries are no longer needed, but local church ministry should instead rely on an existing indigenous church.

The Beijing Urban Church also does not fit neatly in the second 'Contextualisation and Indigenisation' phase as defined by Ekström's 'Missionisation Cycle' and Bevan's Contextualisation Models. Ro's study on the contextual influences of urbanisation and globalisation on the Urban Church provides some of the missing gaps. Should missionaries start new churches in areas where the indigenous church is absent or weak among the younger globalised generation who are culturally closer to the West than their own traditional indigenous culture?

Tianming's 'City on a Hill' vision emerged from China's political, socioeconomic, urbanised, and globalised context. Shouwang Church's struggle with the authorities occurred during an open era when other house churches assimilated into the hearts of mainstream Han Chinese in urban society. According to Tianming, a church was ready for cross-cultural missions because it had first overcome the challenges of influencing its own society's cultural elite and power structures.

The third phase of ‘Self-missilogising’ is Tianming’s ‘Call from All Nations’ mission to send cross-cultural missionaries to other ethnicities and unreached peoples. Tianming’s missiological distinctiveness is that he sees the Chinese church under a grander Global Christianity <sup>55</sup>, which includes and appreciates the Western missionary enterprise. Tianming believes that the church in China should no longer stay in the indigenisation phase but move toward internationalisation and global missions.

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Global Christianity’ which includes the Majority non-Western World and the Western world together is a perspective defined by Tim Tennent. ‘World Christianity’ is primarily defined as only the non-Western World as defined by World Christianity scholars in Chapter 2.

## Chapter Five

### Ezra:

#### Back to Jerusalem with All Nations

##### 5.1 History & Background

Ezra (Mingri Jin), a Korean Chinese graduate of Peking University class of 1990, is one of the most recognised Chinese house church pastors. Ezra served ten years (1992 to 2002) in the TSPM as a pastor and seminary lecturer at Yanjing Seminary. He first met Zhang Heng in 2001 when the Eastern Lightning cult kidnapped fifty CGF leaders (Shen 2017, 185–97). CGF leaders reached out to Ezra for assistance. As a TSPM pastor, Ezra requested help from the government to send the police to rescue the CGF leaders.<sup>56</sup> In 2002, Ezra moved overseas to Fuller Seminary in Southern CA for his doctoral studies on *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations* (E. Jin 2016). When he returned to Beijing in 2007, Ezra did not return to the TSPM but founded a house church called Beijing Zion Church. Zion Church grew to become the largest house church in Beijing before being dismantled in September 2018 (Monitor 2018).

Ezra joined the China Lausanne Committee to prepare for the Lausanne World Congress in Cape Town in 2010. After 230 leaders were blocked from attending the Congress, Tianming detained under house arrest, the house church movement entered a lull. In 2013, Ezra invited 100 house church leaders to join 200 Asian and International leaders at the *Asian Church Leaders Forum* (ACLF) in Seoul in 2013. ACLF was a mini-Lausanne Congress intended for the mainland China delegates who could not attend Cape Town 2010. At ACLF, Beijing pastor Daniel (Chapter 6) first shared about the *Mission China 2030* vision of ‘sending 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030.’ (E. Jin 2013; D. Ro 2013; D. Jin 2015, 15)

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<sup>56</sup> After this incident, the authorities began to dialogue with the house church leaders to gain an understanding of the differences between a cult and an ‘illegal’ but legitimate Christian house church (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017).



Ezra established the Jesus Leadership Forum with eight leaders from some original twenty China Lausanne committee members. The following year in 2014, Ezra invited twenty-five house church leaders to Seoul, where the decision was made to officially launch *Mission China 2030*. Pastor T1-Cui from Shanghai Wanbang Church was designated to host the first conference in Hong Kong in 2015. However, Ezra has been the chief architect and primary driver behind *Mission China 2030*. Ezra and Beijing Zion Church hosted the second *Mission China 2030* conference in 2016 of over 1,000 people in Jeju. He set up the overall strategy of the sub-committees (MC0 to MC4); MC0: missions mobilisation, research, training, and prayer, MC1: missional church, MC2: missions to minorities within China, MC3: overseas Chinese diaspora ministry, and MC4: overseas cross-cultural missions (Y. Yin 2017, 17).

In 2018, the political landscape tightened with the implementation of the New Religious Regulations. Sixty police stormed the Beijing Zion Church facilities and evicted the church from the premises after Ezra refused the government to install surveillance cameras in their worship service (Walker 2018; Webber 2018; Monitor 2018). Ezra divided Zion Church into smaller house churches and adopted a multi-site church planting strategy. Zion Church produced high-quality online worship combined with face-to-face offline meetings. The church has multiplied to different cities and has tripled on Sunday online attendance. Daily morning prayer worship participants include 4,000 people online. On November 6, 2021, Ezra claimed that the enrolment at Zion Bible Institute (ZBI) had reached 1,600 students and that his Zion Church was planting a new church planted every week (Call: E. Jin 2021, 2). A year later, on Dec 6, 2022, the president of the ZBI claimed the enrolment at ZBI had grown to 2,200 students with 120 churches planted in the Zion Church network (F. Wang 2022). During the rise of COVID in early 2020, Ezra created a pastor and church leader's forum called *Shalom China*. This forum has gained momentum, attracting thousands of house church pastors and leaders.

### **5.1.1 Early Conversion and Discipleship**

Ezra attended the funeral service of an elderly Korean Chinese lady at Chongwenmen TSPM church in 1987 and was deeply impressed by the elderly lady who loved him and moved him to consider the meaning of life (Yu and Jin 2009; Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 155). After several months of attending the Korean Chinese worship service, Ezra met a Korean American short-term missionary, Benjamin Lee from Berkland Baptist Church in California, who led him to faith. ‘The Baptist wanted a conversion, so I made a profession (Presentation: E. Jin 2020a).’

A Korean American missionary named Che and his wife Sarah, who arrived in Beijing in 1989, had the most significant spiritual impact during Ezra’s early years. Che was a Korean American Presbyterian who graduated from Westminster seminary with strong Reformed theology. As Ezra was pastoring at TSPM Church and teaching at Yanjing TSPM seminary, he was being discipled by Che. Ezra graduated from the underground seminary established by Che (Interview: E. Jin 2020c, 1). Missionary Che died in a mysterious car accident. His disciples eventually became independent pastors and formed a network of Reformed churches under a Presbyterian denomination model. Ezra eventually left Che’s ministry, did not adopt Che’s Presbyterian Reformed theology and has been against forming denominations in China.<sup>57</sup>

### **5.1.2 Northwest Spiritual Band**

While the missionary Che provided theological education and a biblical foundation for Ezra’s early spiritual development, Chinese B2J missionaries had the most profound spiritual impression. In 1991 as a young Christian, Ezra met the original B2J *Northwest Spiritual Band* missionaries in Xinjiang, Northwest China.

Even though I was brought up under the missionaries, my true spiritual experience of God’s mighty and holy work was meeting the *Northwest Spiritual Band* older generation. I learned true holiness when

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<sup>57</sup> Ezra has warned against denominations in China. ‘We must under no circumstance allow for overseas denominationalism or theologies to judge the church in China. Because even before this country emerged, we experienced God’s amazing work (Presentation: E. Jin 2020d).’

they shared their story in their humble homes. The Church in China has a strong holy tradition. (Presentation: E. Jin 2020d)

The difference between Tianming and Ezra was the direct impact of the older generation. For Tianming, the patriarchs and the Back to Jerusalem missionaries had minimal but affirming indirect influence. For Ezra, the spirituality of the older generation grounded his faith and kept him from moving overseas permanently. He observed from his peers that those trained by missionaries in the early days but did not encounter the older Chinese church spiritual leaders would eventually waver in their faith or leave China to minister overseas. Witnessing the older patriarch's spirituality provided Ezra spiritual strength to overcome the challenges of ministering in China's complex context and planted the missions seed in his heart (Interview: E. Jin 2020c, 1).

I still remember when I met Lude; she told me that when they passed that desert, they ran out of water, 'everyone was lying on the ground because of exhaustion, but in the morning, they found spring water came out from the ground ten meters away. She said, 'we did not see that last night, did we?' 'Ten meters', she said, 'God was with us providing water from the desert springs.' I met Rev. Zhang Guquan's wife. She laid her hand on me and prayed for me (pause), which affected the rest of my life. It was a miracle (Presentation: E. Jin 2017).

### **5.1.3 TSPM and House Church Differences**

Ezra was involved in pastoral ministry for ten years in the TSPM (1992 to 2002), five years at *Gangwashi Church* and five years at *Chongwenmen Church*. He also taught at the *Beijing Yanjing Seminary*. He mentioned two older TSPM pastors who had an early impact on his spiritual life; Rev. Yudong Yang and Rev. Mujiao Wu. They had served twenty years in prison for the faith and were invited to join the TSPM after their release (Interview: E. Jin 2020c).<sup>58</sup> During the 1990s, the *Beijing Gangwashi Church* had a growing youth ministry under Rev. Yang. In 1994, police charged in on a Sunday morning worship service fighting off church members and dragging Rev. Yang from the pulpit during his sermon (Poole 1994; South China Morning Post 1994; Youngblood 1994; Acrossky 2006).

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<sup>58</sup> Rev. Wu Mujiao graduated from Huabei seminary (North China Theological Seminary) and originally was not part of the TSPM. After he was released from 20 years from prison, the TSPM/CCCC Yanjing seminary invited him to teach Greek.

When Ezra returned to Beijing in 2007, he claimed that the authorities met with him and offered ‘any position’ he desired in the TSPM. For several reasons, Ezra chose to leave the TSPM to start a house church. First, Ezra understood the implications of working under a government-controlled church from his previous ten-year experience in the TSPM. He once described a scenario as a TSPM pastor. After the end of a pastoral staff meeting, even before they headed out of the room, one of the pastors would receive a phone call from the authorities to stop their plans immediately. He also shared that any TSPM pastor with spiritual influence or potential would eventually be removed or marginalised.

Second, Ezra believed that the future potential was in the house church.

Although the TSPM churches have governmental approval and have large numbers of people, the TSPM churches tend to be without momentum, easily involved in corruption, and lack pastoral vision... In Beijing, the members of TSPM churches are relatively old-aged. The majority of young people, professionals, overseas returnees, and other elites prefer to worship in house churches ... The cultured and forward-thinking people don’t like the TSPM, but go to house churches (Interview: E. Jin 2015a, 3).

Ezra sensed the momentum was in the Urban house church with the growth and rise of Christian urban intellectuals. Ezra writes:

In the last ten years, Pastor Tianming in the Beijing church has been dynamically promoting the movement “The City on the Hill” and a move towards public worship. The movement demonstrated that the Urban Church is maturing. The government tried to suppress Beijing Shouwang Church in the past four years. Pastors were under house arrest, and the congregation couldn’t participate in Sunday gatherings anymore. But the Urban Church across Beijing continued to grow and mature. They have more operating spaces and bigger gathering sizes. Therefore, we can say that Urban Churches as a whole are a burgeoning force (Interview: E. Jin 2015a, 3).

Third, the TSPM had an ‘anti-missionary’ stance. The official TSPM position considered missionaries as an invasion of Western imperialism.

My pastoral church ministry started in the TSPM. I served as a pastor for five years in Gangwashi TSPM and five years in Chongwenmen TSPM Church. I deeply experienced an altogether ‘anti-missions’ Church. They had money and people, but they could not do missions. It happened when I was a pastor. On the one hand, I was being disciplined under a missionary, and then I had to pastor a church against missions; the conflict within me was immense. Thank the Lord, in 2002, I was able to leave the TSPM and head to America for five years of study... When I returned to China in 2007, ... I wanted to establish a church that could promote missions fully. God knew in my heart. When I started Zion Church, it had a clear mission vision ... In all our struggles and challenges, I’ve always wanted to establish a church that could be primarily for the missions (Interview: E. Jin 2020b).

Since the DNA of the TSPM church is ‘anti-missions’, they are divided from the global church and will not be the main force of the future of missions. The main strength will still be from the house church (E. Jin 2015, 5).

#### **5.1.4 Beijing Zion Church**

On his return to Beijing in 2007 from his doctoral studies, Ezra founded the Beijing Zion Church with twenty people. He described Zion Church as ‘open and independent’; ‘open’ because the invitation to worship is for the public. ‘Independent’ meaning free from the control of the government but not part of any denomination. The ‘rising to the surface’ movement started by Tianming and Shouwang Church in 2005 had opened the door for house churches in Beijing to rent public office space for worship. In 2011, Ezra rented an office space that could seat 400 people for worship. Zion Church conducted five services per week: a Korean service, two in Chinese services, a youth service, and an English service. Zion Church reached around 1,800 before being dismantled by the police in 2018. Ezra transitioned Zion Church towards a multi-site model using technology to produce high-quality, contemporary worship services online for home worship. His new multi-site model doubled church attendance and multiplied into different locations in other cities. Online worship also included a hybrid of in-person meetings (Presentation: F. Wang 2021). Ezra shared the success of his online and offline church that has multiplied to planting a church every week in China.

In the last two years, I believe that our church has done the best in combining online and offline church for fast-paced growth. Once the church grows, pastors need to shepherd the flock. We need to raise pastors/co-workers offline, but we worship together online on Sunday. We reduced the pressure on Sunday to produce a worship service. For China finding 50 people to worship is hard. We now have many workers, and we have Sunday worship there. The rest of the activities and meetings are done by offline pastors. I believe his model has been very successful (Call: E. Jin 2021, 2).

### **5.2 Back to Jerusalem**

#### **5.2.1 History**

Ezra believed that the B2J movement is China’s unique mission heritage and China’s contribution toward world missions. ‘The first [B2J] wave is the only missionary heritage of the Chinese church, which will never happen again (E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017).’ This heritage started in the late 1940s with two groups, the *Preach the Gospel Everywhere Band* (also known as the Back to Jerusalem Band) from the *Northwest Bible*

*Institute* in Shaanxi Province and the *Northwest Spiritual Band* from a Presbyterian seminary in Shandong Province (Hattaway 2003, 23–51).<sup>59</sup>

#### **5.2.1.1 *Preach the Gospel Everywhere Band***

Mark Ma, the vice principal of the Northwest Bible Institute in Shaanxi province, where James Hudson Taylor the II was the principal, received a vision from the Lord on November 25, 1942 (Hattaway 2003, 23–24). While he was praying, Ma saw ‘the Northwest territories with burdened souls with the need to bring the gospel to Jerusalem’ and that God had especially reserved the most challenging task of missions for the Chinese. He argued with the Almighty and asked why that territory under Islam was ‘the hardest of all peoples to reach with the Gospel’. The answer was that ‘Even you Chinese, yourself included, are hard enough, but you have the Gospel has conquered you asked why the Western missionaries had little success with reaching the Muslims. The answer was, ‘It was not that their hearts are tough, but that I have kept a portion of the inheritance; otherwise, will you not be too poor when I return? (Aikman 2003, 197)’. ‘Therefore, I hope that our Chinese church will with determination and courage hold fast to this great responsibility and, depending upon our all-victorious Saviour, complete this mighty task, and taking possession of our glorious inheritance, take the Gospel Back to Jerusalem. There we all stand on top of Mount Zion and welcome our Lord Jesus Christ descending in the clouds with great glory! (Ma 1947)’

According to Ma, the Lord told him that Xinjiang doors had been opened and missionaries needed to be sent there. When Ma shared his vision with the school, a women teacher, Grace Ho (He Enzheng), shared that she had a similar call to head to Xinjiang with Gospel ten years before she was seventeen years old. On April 25, 1943, Easter morning service under the encouragement of James H. Taylor II, eight students

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<sup>59</sup> Mecca Zhao wrote a letter in Oct 25<sup>th</sup>, 1950, to a missionary wife Thompson saying, ‘At every city there are Preach the Gospel Band and Northwest Spiritual Band missionaries sharing the gospel... in Yarkland, Hetian, there are Han and Uyghurs receiving the gospel.’

committed themselves to head Northwest to Xinjiang. The *Preach Everywhere Gospel Band* (便传福音团) was established, and in the Summer of 1944, three women and two men were sent to Lanzhou in Gansu province for a short-term mission. When word got out of the Band, Xian churches and Christians offered donations, while *China Inland Mission* (CIM) strongly opposed and refused financial support.<sup>60</sup>

The principal of the *Northwest Bible Institute*, James H. Taylor II, was caught in the middle.

On the one hand, he witnessed an indigenous missionary vision and passion surface among his staff and students but possibly understanding the CIM leadership Western missionary concerns of the local readiness for cross-cultural missions. As a result, he could not support nor oppose them. The Band delayed to gain consensus but decided to head West without CIM blessings (M. C. Shan 2010, 209; He 2001).

This was a missed opportunity for the Western missionaries and Chinese churches to partner together in missions. On the one hand, the Western CIM missionaries missed a chance to support an indigenous missions movement. The only Western missionary from England, Helen Bailey first joined the band and mistranslated the name as the ‘Back to Jerusalem Band’ (Chan 2013, 71). At the same time, the indigenous B2J leaders could not comprehend the importance of cross-cultural and language learning to reach the Muslim world.

In 1946, Mecca Zhao (Maijia)<sup>61</sup> and Dai were sent to Xinjiang but landed in Xining, Qinghai province. Zhao continued West and wrote a letter back to the *Northwest Bible*

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<sup>60</sup> The reasons for CIM opposition were conjectured by Mark Shan as missionary territorial issues. CIM leadership opposition to B2J would have been understandable on many other levels. CIM concerns could have included the political uncertainties since the purge of 1937 with the withdrawal of missionaries and the previous decimation of the church in Xinjiang, China’s war with Japan and the growing Communist anti-Christian anti-missionary threat, the missionary knowledge of the tremendous task needed to undertake cross-cultural ministry to the Muslims in Xinjiang, and the understanding of the maturity level of the Chinese church. In short, the CIM leadership understood the tremendous task of cross-cultural missions and possibly realised that Chinese church was not ready and would likely fail (M. C. Shan 2010, 210).

<sup>61</sup> Mecca Zhao had a strange vision shortly after his conversion to Christianity as a teenager where he saw a piece of paper with the name ‘Mecca’ on it. He drifted away from the church and was drafted into the Chinese Nationalist Army. He recovered his faith while in prison during the civil war in the late 1940s. In

*Institute* about the hardships experienced. As a result, several students gave up their plans for missions in Xinjiang. On March 16, 1947, Grace Ho led a team of twelve people, including five students. They met up with Mecca on the way, and eventually, nine members, five women and four men, arrived in Xinjiang, with one sister remaining in Lanzhou. Grace Ho and Mecca Zhao were married in 1953 (M. C. Shan 2010, 211–13). They had no contact with the outside world other than a few other B2J members and operated a small house church at their home. They also had no idea of the mistranslated name English name ‘Back to Jerusalem Band’ until Kim-Kwong Chan informed them in July 2001 (Chan 2019, 190–91).

This band numbering in total no more than thirty had no particular destination in mind at their formation. They move in a generally westward direction as they “felt the call.” without maps, travel plans, money, or information on the area. Despite their geographical and political naivety, more than half of them managed to remain in various parts of Xinjiang. However, none of them had studied the local language, since they had no particular ethnic group target in mind (Chan 2019, 190).

#### **5.2.1.2 Northwest Spiritual Band**

The second group, the *Northwest Spiritual Band*, arrived in Hami city in East Xinjiang in 1947. In 1945, a revival meeting was conducted in Shandong province with *North China Theological Seminary* students, an American Presbyterian seminary. Academic Dean Rev. Zhang Guguan preached on the Antioch Church and received a passionate response from students. In the Fall of 1946, in a Spiritual Retreat Centre, after a message from Rev. Zhang, students received a special message from the Holy Spirit to head to the Northwest province of Xinjiang in the direction towards Jerusalem (M. C. Shan 2010, 214).’ They also read Mark Ma’s ‘Preach the Gospel Everywhere: bringing Gospel back to Jerusalem’ pamphlet. Four single women and a couple arrived at Hami, Xinjiang province, in November of 1947. From August 1946 to the Spring of 1948, forty-two

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prison, he had another vision of the map of Ningxia, a Chinese province with a large Muslim population. In 1947, he was freed from prison and joined the *Northwest Bible Institute* where Rev. Ma explained the significance of the world ‘Mecca’ to him (Aikman 2003, 198).



people arrived in Xinjiang. The *Northwest Spiritual Band* ministry grew to about a hundred members by merging an existing Hami ministry of fifty Christians.<sup>62</sup>

Simon Zhao and his wife Muling Wen joined the *Northwest Spiritual Band* on August 15, 1949. The *Northwest Spiritual Band* planted eight churches in Qiquanhu, Barkol, Turpan, Urumqi, Aksu, and Kashgar, with an estimated 700 Christians with 300 from their fruits. (E. (Mingri) Jin 2016, 15–16) In 1951, the Communist government arrested and imprisoned the leaders, including Rev. Zhang and Simon Zhao. Zhao was released in 1981 after thirty-one years in prison.

### **5.2.2 Biblical Foundation: *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations***

Ezra's missiological foundation for the B2J movement comes from his doctoral dissertation and published book *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations* (E. Jin 2016). He considers the B2J as the essential missiology for *Mission China 2030*. The Jerusalem-centred core is even more critical than the theology of suffering (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 3).

According to Ezra, *Mission China 2030* was not just a sudden movement from several leaders coming together to attend a Lausanne Congress. *Mission China 2030* was the third wave of the B2J movement. The first wave was the *Preach the Gospel Everywhere Band* and *Northwest Spiritual Band* in the 1940s. The second wave of the B2J movement started from Simon Zhao, who influenced the rural house churches in Henan and Anhui

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<sup>62</sup> The unknown pioneers of the first Christian Hami church in Xinjiang after the 1937 purge were not from the *Preach the Gospel Everywhere Band* nor from the *Northwest Spiritual Band*. The Hami church had already been established by two less unknown lay brothers Chen Xiaoying and Liu Xuefei. In 1943, Chen Xiaoqing and Liu Xuefei were lay Christians who met regularly to pray together. Originally from Xian in Shaanxi province, they were influenced by Mark Ma's B2J vision. After much discussion, prayer, and fellowship, these two brothers decided to move their wives and kids together to bring the gospel and plant a church in Xinjiang. On their way through Lanzhou while visiting church ministry to lepers, they happened to meet veteran CIM Xinjiang missionary George Hunter who encouraged them to continue. (M. C. Shan 2010, 218–19) Lee Kaihuan was another Christian who planted a church in Urumqi in 1945. Lee Kaihuan was invited by the Kuomintang provincial government to the head of the postal service in Urumqi. He and his wife move to Urumqi in 1945 and established the *Xinjiang Chinese Christian Church* among Christian refugees fleeing the war. This church financially supported Chen Xiaoqing's church in Hami (M. C. Shan 2010, 205). These two churches led by bi-vocational Christians were already in existence when the B2J missionary bands arrived at Xinjiang in 1947 to 1948.

in the 1990s. The third wave is *Mission China 2030* which started with the first conference in 2015.

I think *Mission China 2030* is the third wave indigenous Chinese mission movement. The first movement was back in the 40s in the last century to spread the Gospel based on the *Northwest Spiritual Band*. The movement failed because of political reasons. Then, the second movement was Simon Zhao, the core leader of the first movement, who came back to Henan in the 90s and started with leaders in Henan and Anhui. They all had the vision of mission, which was very special. It was different from Wenzhou, the revival happened almost simultaneously, but Wenzhou did not have a clear idea of missions like Henan and Anhui (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 2).

When Ezra arrived at Fuller in 2007, the B2J movement was under strong criticism. Most of the complaints had been primarily due to Liu Zhenying, a.k.a. Brother Yun, the Heavenly Man (Yun and Hattaway 2002; Hattaway 2003). Ezra's doctoral thesis was intended to provide biblical support to address some negative perceptions and misunderstandings. The 'B2J movement' outside of China included P. Hattaway, Brother Yun, the [www.backtojerusalem.com](http://www.backtojerusalem.com) website, and 'many North American Chinese church leaders who act as brokers, linking the leaders from unregistered Christian groups in China with Western mission agencies eager to promote the B2J vision (Chan 2013, 72, FN15).'<sup>63</sup> Ezra attempts to distinguish the B2J from within China with those currently involved from outside China.

1. Those leading the current B2J (outside China) movement proclaimed themselves representatives. However, there are no representatives of the Back to Jerusalem movement either inside or outside China.
2. All members of the [original] Back to Jerusalem movement supported themselves financially and have been very cautious about receiving aid from the Western Church. The B2J movement (outside China) has raised significant funds relying on collections and fundraising from outside of China
3. ...The [original] B2J movement's faith, a spirit of sacrifice and zeal for preaching the Gospel are to be admired. They were professionals who were trained and educated to be capable missionaries, some from the aristocracy... The current B2J (outside China) movement has a highly questionable quality of missionaries... It's not about quantity but quality.
4. The current B2J Movement (outside China) exaggerated mission statement is a massive difference between vision and fantasy. Is the Chinese church ready to send out 100,000 missionaries? ...The exaggerated numbers can create hostility in China and other nations.
5. The B2J (outside China) theological background is not sound. Kim-Kwong Chan assesses that the key players in the final hurdle of global evangelisation have nationalism fuelled by aspirations for China (Chan 2013, 75–76)... The Chinese church needs a firm theological foundation based on the Scriptures. (E. Jin 2016, 20–21)

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<sup>63</sup> Wen Mu, an underground seminary trainer, estimates that there are over 300 agencies and churches involved in the movement whether planning or research. There have been at least 80 B2J organizations mainly started by Westerners who have used it as a fund-raising project, causing question and concern how the funds are being used (M. Wen 2011, 1).

Ezra provided Scriptural evidence in the Old Testament (Isaiah 40 - 55) and the New Testament through Jesus' ministry (Luke and Acts) and Paul's ministry, pointing towards Jerusalem and Zion as the culmination.

Christianity is not only a Gospel movement that started at Jerusalem and is centred on Jerusalem but one whose final goal is Jerusalem. The Second Coming of Jesus will bring in the New Jerusalem (E. Jin 2016, 158).

In his conclusion, Ezra writes: 1) The Back to Jerusalem vision is biblical. 2) The Gospel is to spread to all nations first, but the end goal is to return all nations to Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup> 3) We are to avoid the extremes of Zionism and Replacement theology.<sup>65</sup> The evangelisation mandate is for all Christians and not just the Chinese. 5) The Chinese Church must have a healthy pastoral ministry to equip the next generation for missions.

### **5.2.3 Back to Jerusalem Controversy**

The B2J movement is controversial both inside and outside of China. Within the Jesus Leadership Forum, the differences of opinion reflect the division within the house church. Ezra represents the pro-B2J faction in the Rural Networks and the Charismatic Urban Church. Tianming represents the voices that do not support the B2J, including most in the Traditional house church Patriarchs, the non-Charismatic Urban Church, the Reformed churches, and younger contemporary pastors in the cities.<sup>66</sup> Wei's doctoral thesis on 'Mission China 2030' describes the source of the movement coming from two rivers: the B2J Movement and the Lausanne Movement.

The Mission China 2030 movement is like two rivers converging to become a big river. One river originated from the vision of "return to Jerusalem", and the other river originated from the Lausanne Movement (Wei 2020, 83)

Ezra and the pro-B2J faction had planned to host the next *Mission China 2030*

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<sup>64</sup> His biblical missional theology states that the 'reason for going to the ends of the earth is to call the nations back to Zion (E. Jin 2016, 160).'

<sup>65</sup> Ezra has separated himself from Christian Zionism who 'support Israel's war against the Arabic Islamic nations and align themselves with a Jewish nationalistic restoration of modern Israel' and Replacement Theology 'the church is the restoration of Israel (E. Jin 2016, 159).'

<sup>66</sup> The pro-B2J faction included Ezra, T1-Cui, T2-Gao and Daniel. The anti-B2J faction included Tianming, T1-Yuehan and T2-Dai. Zhang Heng would personally side with the pro-B2J faction but for unity halted the Jerusalem conference.

conference in Jerusalem in 2018. Over forty house church leaders had returned from Israel with a vision to host the next conference in Jerusalem. One leader had purchased property near the Mount of Olives to serve as a centre for *Mission China*. Tianming was concerned that the movement would split if the next missions conference were held in Jerusalem. While under house arrest, he drafted a letter to the Jesus Leadership Forum to warn against the Jerusalem conference.<sup>67</sup> To preserve unity, the chair of the Jesus Leadership Forum, Zhang Heng, halted the Jerusalem 2018 conference and averted a split. Three churches under Ezra, T1-Cui, and T2-Gao with the pro-B2J faction held their own *Mission China 2030* conference in Jerusalem with 200 people. T3-Sean with Zion Church attended on behalf of Ezra who couldn't make it (Interview: Long 2017).

Furthermore, the B2J movement has had solid overseas critics, especially on the rural house church movement in the mid-2000s. Criticisms included an unrealistic, exaggerated 100,000 missionary goal, questionable financial and administrative accountability and transparency, 'mercenary' missionaries reliance on overseas funds, lack of quality of missionaries, lack of cross-cultural training and awareness, ethnocentricity with nationalistic aspirations, lack of church readiness, and ministry ineffectiveness (Anderson 2006, 137–38; Chan 2013; E. Jin 2016, 20–22).

Ezra's book *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations* has attempted to provide a biblical foundation for the Chinese indigenous B2J vision and missiology. However, the missiological world has not had a significant engagement or acceptance with the issue so far. Hiebert's fourth 'self-theologising' (and 'self-missilogising') requires 'global dialogue' with other voices for universal truth among other missiologists (Hiebert 1985b,

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<sup>67</sup> I was asked to deliver a letter from Tianming to the Jesus Leadership Forum. On May 5, 2017, Tianming's letter called 'a response to the mission conference in Jerusalem' included the following reasons: 1) the image of Chinese Christianity in Jerusalem would cause future hostilities within the Muslim world that would eventually hinder the beginnings of China's missionary movement. 2) The high cost of a conference in Jerusalem would hinder the future mobilisation of missions within China since we have not seen the fruits of missions yet. 3) the B2J missiology had not been clearly understood, defined, and accepted within China and could cause damage to the unity for missions.

217–19). Ezra points toward the importance of Zion and Jerusalem in the Old and New Testaments. Some missiologists would welcome the focus on the Muslim world, the apostolic passion, martyrdom sacrifice, and the eschatological urgency. Tim Tennent has compared Jonathan Edwards and the Back to Jerusalem eschatology as both had an optimism of the church's expansion in the ends time (Tennent 2007, 240–41). Chris Wright and Luis Bush provide Ezra's book endorsement on the back cover. So far, Ezra's B2J thesis has not had adequate dialogue with missiologists for a broader global missiology acceptance.

Ezra's B2J biblical foundation has received some criticism from within China. Another *Mission China* Beijing pastor Wei has written his doctoral thesis on *Mission China 2030* with a critique of Ezra's usage of Isaiah ignoring the rest of the Old Testament. Wei also includes other arguments against Ezra's B2J missiology. Paul's focus was 'to the ends of the earth' and not to Jerusalem (Wei 2020, 121–30). Wei concludes that Ezra's Zionist theology is just to remedy the situation. The B2J movement only happened because a couple of people had a vision, donations were raised, and missionaries sent; 'to assume that this is from God, lacks a biblical basis (Wei 2020, 129).'

Zion theology is an interpretation of the B2J, but it is not the only one, and it does not necessarily represent the theological foundations of the Chinese movement. As far as the platform for missionary China is concerned, it is hoped that there will be more Bible-based deep theological missiology so that *Mission China* can be pushed forward in a solid and far-reaching manner (Wei 2020, 130).

## **5.3 Contributing Factors**

### **5.3.1 Internal factors**

#### **5.3.1.1 An existing growing church with the explicit objective of expanding to other locations and countries**

Even though the B2J original missionaries never left China due to the political turmoil, their lives were symbols for the next generation to head West towards Jerusalem. Ezra clarified that even before President Xi Jinping's One Belt One Road (One Belt

Initiative) connecting China to the Middle East, Chinese Christians already had the vision to expand the gospel Westward towards that direction.

Before Xi Jinping's One Belt One Road (OBOR), we had already been talking about the Back to Jerusalem and going West... OBOR connects us with the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Europe. And this kind of strategy is very beneficial to God accomplishing His work of going Westward... 'who is willing to go to the Middle East?', Christians will be like, 'yes, I will go', because of their faith (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 17).

The first generation B2J missionary spirituality towards Jerusalem has profoundly inspired Ezra. He personally met Rev. Zhang Guquan and his wife, sister Lude (Ruth), and Grace Ho (He Enzheng).

In fact, I was influenced by the first generation, you know I have written my PhD thesis about this. Most important is that I met seniors from the first B2J generation back in 1991, Rev. Zhang Guquan and his wife, and sister Lude, Grace Ho (He Enzheng). I have met the first generation. That experience is a lifelong influence. Afterwards, even though many theologies are magnificent, it would not affect me since I have met them in person, and I have seen their legend (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 13).

### **5.3.1.2 Motivation**

#### **5.3.1.2.1 Cross Missiology**

Ezra believes that China's unique missiology is the 'theology of suffering' connected to missions. The spirit of sacrifice and suffering is an integrated motivator in their missionary life for both the first and second-generation B2J movement. Ezra states this '[theology of suffering] is not used often in the West'.

First, it is related to the theology of suffering. How do we know? The B2J movement leaders, if you dig into their theologies which I have done before, focus a lot on sacrifice and suffering. This [theology of suffering] is not used often in the West. The first wave or the first generation, including Zhang Guquan, lived out a poor life giving up all personal properties just like living in a monastery. The second B2J wave also had a great spirit of sacrifice. Although they had big goals, which we must give some criticism, we cannot obliterate or ignore their sacrifice, no matter their leaders or how many missionaries they have sent (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 3).

Suffering produces a sacrificial spirit which becomes a motivator for missions in the *Mission China 2030* leaders. Ezra mentions both Tianming and T1-Cui have 'the spirit of sacrificing themselves' because their churches Shouwang Church and Shanghai Wanbang Church were raided, harassed, and banned (CECC Staff 2011; Gospel Herald 2009). The Urban Church leaders have also experienced suffering for the sake of the gospel and realise that the difficult task of missions requires a sacrificial heart.

*Mission China 2030*, people who are part of this all have the spirit of sacrificing themselves for God,

no matter theologically or mentally whether Tianming, including T1-Cui. The core leaders deeply understand this is not an easy duty, but you must prepare yourself for God with a sacrificial heart (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 3).

During my Interview2 with Ezra on June 12, 2017, Beijing Zion Church was still standing as the largest unregistered house church in Beijing. It would only be a matter of time that Ezra would undergo similar attacks from the authorities as his Beijing Zion Church was raided, church members harassed, and the church dismantled the following year in September 2018 (Monitor 2018).

#### **5.3.1.2.2 ‘Jerusalem’ is *Missions China’s* Core Strength**

Ezra warned that the B2J vision is unique to the Chinese church and, therefore, should be respected by the West. Ezra has argued that a Jerusalem-centred core is an even more critical key to *Mission China 2030* than the theology of suffering.

An even more critical DNA of the house church missiology than the ‘theology of suffering’ is the Jerusalem-centred core. *Mission China 2030* has the great hope to bring gospels to the West with Jerusalem at the centre. Not everyone has this, but the primary core strength has this. I have mentioned that *Mission China 2030* isn’t established with sudden inspiration. If it is, it can never resonate. The first wave is nearly the only missionary heritage of the Chinese church, which will never happen again (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 3–4).

#### **5.3.1.2.3 Eschatological Urgency**

The house church always had a robust millennium theology (Hattaway 2003, 108–9, 112). The first generation of B2J held to a millennial expectation to reach as many people before the Lord returns as described in Mark Ma’s prayer. ‘I hope that our Chinese church will with determination and courage hold fast this great responsibility and ... take the Gospel back to Jerusalem (Ma 1947).’

A dialogue on the Second Coming between Ezra and Zhang Heng revealed the importance of eschatology that shaped the sense of responsibility developed from an urgency of the Second Coming. Eschatological urgency turns into a sense of responsibility for missions to head to the remaining most challenging areas in the world without the Gospel. Both Ezra and Zhang Heng have a strong end-times mindset. The imminent return of Christ should compel the church ‘to accomplish our mission at any cost.’

I believe the Chinese mission movement is eschatology and a spiritual mindset. Whether the first wave or second wave, today, we are connected. We don't think it is limited to Jerusalem, but we can go anywhere. The end-times mindset captures us, or we become a group of people who only receive and never give. We must accomplish our mission at any cost... That is the 'power' (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 10).

Ezra believes that the West has lost its apostolic eschatological urgency missions spirit that brought the gospel to China.

The Western mission movement had its height, but the current Western 'mature, balanced' missions do not have this [eschatological urgency] mindset. They have become ordinary, indifferent, and mediocre. We must remind them that our spirit is the same as the Apostolic church. The Apostolic church era believed that Jesus would return soon and we are part of the last moment (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 10).

### **5.3.1.3 Entrepreneur Leadership**

Ezra is a visionary leader who has founded many ministries. He serves as the Senior Pastor of Zion Church, the president of a seminary with 2,200 students called Zion Bible Institute (F. Wang 2022), and the founder of Beijing Pastoral United Prayer Fellowship and Jesus Leadership Forum.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007, Ezra started the *Beijing Pastoral Prayer Fellowship*. The pastoral fellowship met monthly for prayer. When Shouwang Church came under attack in 2011, the *Beijing Pastoral Prayer Fellowship* played an important role with prayer letters. Six churches signed the first letter and by the sixth prayer letter, there were forty-three church signatures (Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 67). In 2008 May 12<sup>th</sup>, the Sichuan Earthquake provided an opportunity for this pastoral network to partner with 150 house churches in an earthquake relief ministry called *Christian Love in China* (Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 68). T2-Job from Wuhan lead this ministry and worked together with Ezra and many others. This ministry was the beginnings of a united effort from churches across China to work together in a local missions.

As the founder and chair of the Jesus Leadership Forum, Ezra oversees *Mission China 2030* and heads *Shalom China*, a pastoral forum of several thousand pastors and leaders. He was ranked #2 behind Tianming as the person who could represent the Church in



China globally (Interview 1 question 8)<sup>68</sup>. Both Tianming and Ezra have played different roles. Tianming was the visionary behind the unity movement of the church for missions with the Lausanne Congress. Ezra was the founding leader behind *Mission China 2030*.

Ezra invited 100 Chinese house church leaders to the landmark *Asia Church Leaders Forum* (ACLF) in Seoul in 2013 (E. Jin 2013; D. Ro 2013). The following Summer in July 2014, Ezra brought together twenty-five leaders in Seoul. *Mission China* leaders led the meetings, set the agenda, operated, and funded their activities, all from the churches in China.

Ezra's demonstrated entrepreneurial leadership as the chair of the *Mission China 2030* conference in Jeju, Korea, on September 27-30, 2016. This conference gathered over 1,000 people and reached a high level of sophistication with contemporary multimedia, promotional videos, onstage visual effects, professional-quality music performance, mission ministry booths, and top-quality worship team and choir.<sup>69</sup>

Ezra is bold, passionate, visionary, and gregarious with a charismatic personality. His high-profiled nature has been controversial among the low-key Traditional and Rural house churches who have decided to avoid him due to security concerns and leadership style. Many traditional and rural leaders have been critical of Ezra and *Mission China 2030* due to its high-profile slogan with little regard to security concerns. Ezra has also criticised being too Korean 'because of the kimchi' (T4-Bai 2017, 6).<sup>70</sup> The Reformed churches, including the Presbyterians and the Reformed Baptist, have not joined *Mission China 2030* due to theological differences, especially with the B2J missiology

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<sup>68</sup> Interview 1, question 8: Who would you want to represent the church in China in a global arena?

<sup>69</sup> Speakers included Doug Birdsall, the honorary chairman of the Lausanne Movement, Rev. James Hudson Taylor IV, the great-great grandson of James Hudson Taylor, Rev. Sang-Bok David Kim, who served as chairman of both the Asia Evangelical Alliance and the World Evangelical Alliance, Dr. Brian Stiller, the Global Ambassador for World Evangelical Alliance, Rev. James Shia, secretary of Chinese Christian Evangelistic Association, and T1-Daniel (ChinaSource Team 2016; R. Wang 2016; World Evangelical Alliance 2016).

<sup>70</sup> Interviews: Wenzhou traditional leader Bai on 5/9/2017 and Anhui rural leader PL on 8/1/2020.

(Interviews: E. Wang 2020; Joshua 2020)<sup>71</sup>. Chapter 9 has a summary of *Mission China* criticisms which are primarily directed at Ezra and Daniel.

#### **5.3.1.4 Available Resources**

Zion Church's General Budget for 2017 was 7.7 million yuan, and Missions spent 1.3 million yuan. Zion Church set up a Missions Training school for 400,000 yuan. This school trains in four-month cycles with ten people (from Zion) in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Another 450,000 goes towards actual missionary support. Another 100,000 is for student ministry, 100,000 seminarian scholarships, 100,000 for *Mission China 2030*. Other mission support includes Chinese students studying in Korean Seminarians 50,000 yuan, North Korea ministry 10,000, *Mission Today Magazine* 10,000, Hao You 10,000, and 50,000 for Short-term missions for 15 people.

The building rent and maintenance expenses before the dismantling of the church were 3 million yuan per year. The Senior pastor salary is 20,000 yuan/month, 15,000 yuan/month for a missionary family, and 3,000 yuan/month for a Campus ministry worker.

In 2017, the Zion Church missions program supported three overseas missionary units with three spouses and three kids from their church and four units from other churches. Of the seven units, four are in Northwest and Southwest China; three are overseas in Pakistan, the Middle East and Central Asia. The Sunday attendance was 1,600 people with 800 members. Zion Church started its mission fund in 2007 and sent out its first two missionaries that year to Northwest and Southwest China (J. Lee 2017). In 2021, Zion Church supported nineteen missionary units; ten units were commissioned in 2018, the year when they were evicted from their facilities (Presentation: F. Wang 2021).

#### **5.3.2 External Factors**

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<sup>71</sup> Interviews: *Redeemer City to City* leader Enoch on 11/12/2020 and Reformed Baptist younger leader Joshua on 12/9/2020.

Ezra mentioned the economic rise and the national status of China, which has opened the door for Chinese Christians to travel. It is like Korea in the 1990s with economic growth and Seoul Olympics in 1988. Korean mission movement exploded in the early 1990s after the economy grew.

With the rise of the economy and the rise of the national status of China, and its defrosting international relationship, more and more Chinese Christians travelled overseas while the Chinese church has an unprecedented awareness of the world. (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 6)

Urbanisation has been one of the main external forces that brought about the rise of Christianity in the cities. ‘Not only has it influenced all kinds of aspects of Chinese society, but the impact on the Chinese Church is excellent because, before 1949, the main force of Christianity in China was in cities (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 1).’

Rural China experienced a great revival in the 1980s to 1990s. Urbanisation brought depression to the villages as most of the young population moved to the cities leaving behind the elderly and children.

However, after 1979, the flame gospel was reignited in China. From the 1980s to 1995, the reviving of Christianity was mainly in the countryside, though it could be observed anywhere. But now, if one goes to many rural churches in China, there is little evidence of reviving anymore. The main cause of this depression is urbanisation brought great damage to the ecology of rural villages. Especially those in the workforce, most of the population, flooded into cities to make a living. As a result, only elders and children were left living there. Even many rural schools were abandoned or shut down. This also influenced the structure of Chinese churches. Unlike many foreigners’ optimistic impression or imagination that our country churches are reviving and growing, rural churches have been shrinking for more than ten years. The rural church revival is an illusion. (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 1)

The revival of the rural house church did not transfer into the cities as urbanisation devastated families with a rigid dual-structure system that did not provide residential permits for rural-urban migrants. These rural migrants became marginalised communities in the cities. As a result, the rural house church lost its momentum and experienced a massive decline in numbers.

Ezra describes a new type of Urban Church with urban intellectuals after 1989 coming to the Christian faith. He attributed Tianming and Beijing Shouwang Church as leaders of this movement. This new Urban Church has become a force for missions.

But thanks to God, a new type of church is rising in urban China... Ever since the Tiananmen Square protest of 1989, a new batch of college students entered the churches, and it was called Urban Churches or ‘new emerging urban churches’ by overseas Christians. These churches have been growing and

growing. Moreover, they have achieved some breakthroughs in recent years. Pastor Tianming for the Beijing church has been dynamically promoting "The City Upon the Hill" and moving the unregistered house church to head towards public worship for the last ten years. The movement demonstrated that Urban Churches are maturing. (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 1–2)

Although the size and numbers Urban Church are not as large as the rural networks, they have a more significant impact with more potential. Ezra believes that urbanisation caused the development of the Urban Church to be the leader of the house church movement.

What is the cause for the development of the Chinese churches? The Urban Church pastors are recognised and accepted by most mainstream groups and Rural Networks. Urban Churches in China all have a house church background. These new churches are even challenging the 30 years' monopoly status of TSPM churches in urban areas. (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 4)

In 2015, Ezra was optimistic that the political environment was behind but ready for reform as China opened to the world. He believed that the political system in China was behind the times as China's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, and financial independence.

The legal system is very behind. Although China has its Constitution, the Communist Party usually intervenes in every aspect of the society, including religion, by governmental administration. The freedom of religion and faith, assembly, speech, financial independence etc., have all been promised in the Constitution while never being fulfilled. They suppressed and tried to eliminate Christianity in China throughout the former thirty years. In the latter thirty years, they switched to establishing an institution, namely the TSPM, to validate the legal identity of the registered churches in the name of this institution. For this reason, the house churches then became a target to attack. (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 9)

In 2018, China's New Religious Regulations under President Xi completely changed the political environment towards a Maoist leftist direction. A new normal for Christianity as the government began a campaign to eliminate all house church activities in China. Beijing Zion Church came under attack on September 9, 2018.

When the government demanded that we install 24 cameras, we said no. On September 9, 2018, we were attacked. It was hard. In 1 month, we lost all our spaces. Even though all the home [offices] were sealed, only the pastor's home remained. One of our minister's homes in Guangdong was closed. In 6 months, we lost 560,000 yuan. (E. Jin 2020b)

The dismantling of Zion Church, the largest house church in Beijing, was reported in Associated Press, Reuters, and South China Morning Post (South China Morning Post 2018; Shepherd 2018a; 2018b; Bodeen 2018). After losing their worship space for

refusing to install cameras, Zion Church moved to a new ministry model called Zion 3.0.<sup>72</sup> Ezra started a pastoral training school called Zion Bible Institute (ZBI), replacing the previous seminary education model. This allowed for students to be involved in local church ministry while under training. He transitioned Zion Church from a mega-church to a multi-site model with worship and centralised through zoom online with elders and co-workers in the homes providing pastoral care (Presentation: E. Jin 2020b).

Ezra and Zhang Heng's optimism of large-scale sending of 20,000 missionaries was based on an open political environment. Without some freedoms, it would be hard to send 20,000 missionaries (E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 16). With the new restrictive era under President Xi, the former optimism of sending 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030 was doubtful.

The arrival of COVID-19 in 2020 brought new multi-dimensions to China's social, political, and religious context. Zoom allowed the *Mission China* movement to remerge into a new prayer movement for missions. Ezra held an online two-day missions conference called *The Blood of the Martyrs: God's Revival* with five thousand in attendance on May 28-29<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Ezra formed another network of 800 plus pastors and ministers who gather weekly Monday morning *Shalom China* for urban pastoral ministry issues afternoon 'Urban Pastoral Ministry Forum'. For a Christmas outreach event in 2020, Beijing Zion Church hosted an online program of over 300,000 people.

### **5.3.3 International Factors**

Ezra is one of the most widely networked Chinese leaders in Korea and North America. Ezra studied in Fuller Seminary from 2002 to 2007. He has connected with the Association of Related Churches (ARC) for church planting and is associated with the

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<sup>72</sup> Ezra divided Zion church development into three phases. Zion 1.0 (2007 to 2014) was the pioneer phase as religious values and systems were formed and a co-worker team established. Zion 2.0 (2015-2018) was a church planting vision and exploration period with Zion Church as the centre planting several satellite churches (Trinity 2009, Tongzhou 2011). Zion 3.0 (2018 to present) is when Zion Church lost its space when it refused to install cameras in its sanctuary.

Lausanne Movement for global missions.

In November 2013, another group of pastors under Ezra's leadership travelled to North America for church planting training from ARC, led by Rev. Greg Surratt at Seacoast Church in Charleston, S.C. The ARC church planting training focused on the practical tools of multi-media for multi-site church planting model. Zion Church has adopted multi-media with online-offline combined services into a new phase of a multi-site church planting model. Ezra claimed that one to two churches are planted each week in different cities across China (Call: E. Jin 2021, 2).

Ezra sees China's attempt to attend the Lausanne Congress as the opportunity that allowed *Mission China* to emerge and participate in an International Leadership meeting at Wittenberg, Germany, in 2017 and at Wheaton College in 2018.

Especially with the Lausanne Congress of 2010, the China church expressed their special commitment and enthusiasm, which have never been seen since the 1960s. That's enough evidence to show that the house churches in China not only understand missions as God's main task, but even more, they are very willing to take responsibility for the mission. So, although our efforts to participate in Lausanne in 2010 were blocked and we did not attend, the mission vision never left China churches... For *Mission China*, the most important is that in the future. When Chinese history is written, it will be revealed. Everyone will know that the 2010 year of the Lausanne Congress gave the church in China an opportunity to bring different groups together with a vision to unify for mission. (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 6)

At the Asian Church Leaders Forum (ACLF), Ezra drafted a Seoul Commitment from the house church leaders.

We commit ourselves to joining hands with the Global Church in world mission. We are determined to take the Lausanne Movement vision, pray faithfully for world mission, and take action mobilisation, mission education and missionary-sending. (E. Jin 2013)

Ezra hopes for a future relationship with WEA. Still, he has seen the leadership meet top tier officials in the TSPM/CCC and considers those politics to divide the church rather than the more appropriate common evangelical spiritual identity and affinity between WEA and the house church.<sup>73</sup>

I think most Christians from house churches of China hold to the evangelical faith. They quite agreed with the vision of many evangelical ministry Institutes represented by WEA, and they see themselves also as a part of this group. They consisted of a big part of it. So, we also keep an eye on this trend of WEA. We have had to communicate with them several times in the past few years. (Interview: E. Jin

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<sup>73</sup> The top tier TSPM and CCC are official part of the Protestant Ecumenical World Council of Churches and are theologically aligned with the Protestant Ecumenicalism. The house churches are theologically evangelical conservatives who align with the WEA and Lausanne.

2015, 21)

During the Lausanne Congress, several high profiled overseas Chinese criticised the house church leaders for not including the TSPM (Wu 2010a; 2010b). During the Asian Church Leaders Forum in Seoul 2013, Rev. Joshua Ting, the General Secretary of CCCOWE, the overseas Chinese leaders apologised to representatives from Mainland China for not effectively supporting the persecuted house church. His action led many to confession and repentance and brought many to tears. During the past two years, the overseas Chinese church and the house church in China were estranged over the *Cape Town 2010* controversies (details mentioned in Chapter 8: under International Factors) (E. Jin 2013).’ Even with this apology, Ezra and many house church leaders in *Mission China* have wondered, ‘What has CCCOWE done in missions (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 18)?’ Ezra’s vision for *Mission China* is to reach the Chinese diaspora, not target overseas Chinese churches (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 20).

Ezra has realised that the non-Western churches in the Majority World have a negative impression of the Western missionary movement due to the former connection to colonialism. During his ten years within the TSPM, the prevalent anti-Western missionary perspective resulted in ‘anti-missions’ which was why he left the official church to start his own house church with missions at the core centre. He hopes that China can be a healing agent between the West and the Majority world.

When we remember the Western missionaries, we only have a heart of gratitude with tears. We hope to be the healing agent between the Majority World [World Christian] church and the West. China is the only remaining church globally with overseas cross-cultural missions as the church’s essential purpose and top priority (Call: E. Jin 2022).

Furthermore, he also believes that China is the only remaining church in the world that has overseas cross-cultural missions as the essential purpose and top priority of the church.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Ezra's profound spiritual impact came from an early meeting in 1991 with the original missionaries from the Back to Jerusalem *Northwest Spiritual Band*. These encounters shaped his sacrificial spirituality and planted a Back to Jerusalem missionary spirit in him. After serving ten years in the TSPM, Ezra moved overseas for a doctoral thesis on the biblical foundation of the Back to Jerusalem. Upon returning to Beijing in 2007, Ezra founded Beijing Zion Church, a house church of urban intellectuals, which eventually grew to be the largest house church in Beijing. After the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010, Ezra brought together house church leaders to attend a mini-Lausanne Congress *Asian Church Leaders Forum* in Seoul. Ezra formed the Jesus Leadership Forum overseeing *Mission China 2030* which hosted several large conferences from 2015 to 2018. He also established *Shalom China*, a broad platform to network and mobilise thousands of pastors and churches.

Ezra's contribution to *Mission China* is his ability to grow the house church under a tightened political environment and a national lockdown during the COVID-19 epidemic. He transformed Zion Church from one location in Beijing to a multi-site church planting model in cities across China by adopting a new online and offline house church combining technology, contemporary worship, and a new leadership seminary model for pastors in training to sustain his church growth. The contemporary multi-site house church model has been translated and contextualised into a hostile context for Christianity. This strategy could be a future model for missionary expansion overseas in similar harsher regions.

Ezra founded *Mission China 2030* after the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town 2010. Ezra's Back to Jerusalem missiology is still controversial within China and not widely accepted outside of China. However, more important is Ezra's ability to harness the martyrdom sacrificial missionary spirit and eschatological urgency for missionaries to be sent to difficult areas to reach, especially sending missionaries Westward towards



Jerusalem and the Muslim world. He believes that the B2J movement provides the ‘core strength’ for *Mission China*. Ezra has observed that the current Western church is ‘fragile and weak’, losing its former historic apostolic eschatological urgency that brought the gospel to China. He is grateful for the former Western missionary movement that brought the gospel to China and believes that the Chinese church will continue that same apostolic missionary spirit from the past.

Ezra has observed anti-Western missionary sentiment within the TSPM and in the Majority World Church. He believes that China’s mission movement will be the healing agent between the Majority World and the West. Ezra believes that *Mission China’s* role is to recover the martyrdom spirit and eschatological urgency from the Apostolic age and to remind the Global Church of its missionary heritage and Great Commission mandate. One of Ezra’s most interesting missiological statements could be that ‘China is the only remaining church globally with overseas cross-cultural missions as the church’s essential purpose and top priority.’

## Chapter Six

### Daniel:

#### *Mission China 2030 and the Recovery of the Great Commission*

##### 6.1 History and Background

Daniel was a Korean Chinese Tsinghua University student who encountered Christianity in 1990 through a Korean missionary and the Korean diaspora community at the Chongwenmen *TSPM Church*. Daniel received a Master of Divinity at Singapore Bible College (1993-1996) and returned to pastor Beijing City Revival Church and became President of the Great Commission Seminary in Beijing. He also has received a Doctoral of Ministry (2013-2016) at Logos Seminary and ThM (2004-2006) and a Doctoral of Missions (2014-2018) from Fuller Seminary in Southern CA.<sup>74</sup> Daniel is the author of the *Mission China 2030* vision to ‘send 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030’. As one of the leaders in the Jesus Leadership Forum, Daniel’s responsibility is overseeing *Mission China*, including publishing the *Mission China Today* magazine, directing the 24-7 Prayer Chain Network, and hosting mission research and mobilisation sub-committee forums.

##### 6.1.1 Early Spiritual Roots

Daniel joined the Korean Chinese worship service at *Chongwenwen Church* with Tianming and Ezra. Ezra and Zhang Yongsheng were preaching and leading the meetings at the time. Daniel claimed his first conversion profession was with Ezra at the *Gangwashi Church*. Ezra shared the ‘four spiritual laws’ gospel presentation, and he

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<sup>74</sup> Daniel has written his doctoral thesis in Korean is on ‘A Study on The Leadership Development for The Missionary Movement of China’s House Churches: A Strategic Proposal for *Mission China 2030*. Daniel’s thesis includes a short one-page analysis of *Mission China* leaders in six areas: 1) missiology (Daniel), 2) missions mobilisation (T1-Cui), 3) mission training (T2-Hou), 4) missions sending (Yun Hong Xuan), 5) mission support (Ezra), and 6) mission fieldwork (T2-Pei). Daniel starts with a chapter on the biblical perspective of missionary leadership with the *missio Dei*. He then compares mission leadership from biblical leaders (Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Jesus, and Paul) and a historical perspective with World Missions leaders (William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and Ralph Winters) and six Korean mission leaders (D. Jin 2018).

made a profession but later said ‘it didn’t count.’ Daniel credits his conversion experience to a Korean American Campus Crusade for Christ short-term mission team from Los Angeles. They came to Beijing for fifteen days to share the gospel and led him to a profession of faith (Interview: D. Jin 2020, 1).

I was influenced by several people who have the burden in my heart. The first person is the one who gave me the gospel, a short-term missionary from North America. When he delivered the message to me, he was a patient with leukaemia who almost died in Beijing. He ended up leaving China. Because of a short-term missionary leukaemia patient, I heard the gospel and decided to follow Jesus; thus, I felt I had the gospel debt (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 5).

### **6.1.2 Korean Missionary Influence**

In March 1991, fellow Tsinghua University student Zheng Yi invited Daniel to join Korean missionary Lee’s weekly discipleship training.

The second person [who influenced my missions burden] was a Korean missionary who trained me and coached me so that I was able to grow and dedicate myself. When he left Korea, the same thing for this Korean missionary, he told his parents, “I was looking for my grave”. He came to China with a heart to die in China. He [and his wife Sarah] didn’t have children for seventeen years, and they offered themselves. Therefore, their testimony had a great impact on me. So, I thought if they love China, can we who were born and grew in China not love China? When they came to China for missions, I again sensed in debt of the gospel (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 5).

Lee was a missionary sent from the Korean Holiness Church to Beijing in 1989 who disciplined Daniel and Tianming. His first disciples were Zhang Yongsheng (who led Tianming to faith) and Che. The second group was Tianming and Zhengyi. The third class in 1990 included Daniel, Song Mingdao, Han Hui, Cui Yong. The weekly discipleship material eventually became the New Life and New Living series adopted by Tae-Woong Lee from the Korean Missionary Training Centre.<sup>75</sup> Daniel remembered Lee as ‘an excellent missionary, outstanding and bearing much fruit, and his influence had a significant impact on these ‘spiritually hungry’ students. From the group of Korean Chinese students, five were called into full-time ministry. In 1992, Lee invited Daniel and the five to be in the first class of full-time ministry seminary students, eventually becoming the Great Commission Seminary. Tianming dropped out of the course to plant

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<sup>75</sup> In his doctoral dissertation on *Mission China 2030*, Daniel used Korean missionary trainer Tae-Woong Lee as an example from the Korean church for leadership development in missionary training (D. Jin 2018, 68–69).

a church in 1992, but Daniel remained with Lee and graduated from the first class. Daniel remembered the early days of spiritual warfare. After a time of fasting and prayer, four students left the Korean missionary Lee:

It was spiritual warfare with several students leaving. After fasting and praying for forty days, one student received a vision from God, but Missionary Lee and several others didn't believe it was from God. So there were different opinions. I never left, and I'm still with the *Great Commission* ministry [started by Lee]. Four out of ten students separated in 1993... [Patriarch] Yuan Xiangcheng tried to mediate, but still, half the group left. We were all young in our faith (Interview: D. Jin 2020, 2).

Another conflict in 2003 resulted in another separation between missionary Lee and his students. During the transition, there was a sharp difference of opinion on the handing over of the Great Commission Seminary to Lee's disciples. As a result, his former student, T2-Hou, left to start Olive Tree Seminary. Daniel returned from his studies in North America in 2006 to restart the Great Commission Seminary.

Daniel claimed that the missionary Lee and his wife had the most significant early spiritual influence by introducing the faith and discipleship training and establishing a seminary. Lee met weekly for discipleship when they were longing and thirsty for spiritual things. The Korean missionaries were influential in the early discipleship training phase. Still, they had a lesser role as the young disciples transitioned into full-time seminary, which relied on theologically trained teachers from overseas.<sup>76</sup>

Daniel also had Korean church influence from a three-month internship in 1997 with a Korean Holiness Church in Seoul.

I went to Korea interned at a church with the Senior pastor. An Associate pastor took me to visit all the mega-churches and to the early dawn morning prayer, pastor meetings, visitations in the afternoon to evening service, elders board, financial budgeting... I returned in 1997 to establish Beijing Revival Church (Interview: D. Jin 2020, 4).

### **6.1.3 Overseas Chinese influence**

Daniel is also one of the few Beijing pastors who spent significant time in an overseas Chinese church in Singapore and Southern CA. He has had a close relationship with Chinese mission leaders Rev. Thomas Wang (founder of Great Commission

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<sup>76</sup> Missionary Lee started the International Academy of Beijing in 2003-2004. However, due to a crisis of faith, he eventually left the ministry and the school closed.

International) and Rev. Cyrus Lam (founder of Go International). He learned pastoral church models from overseas Chinese Presbyterian Church in Singapore during his seminary studies (1993 to 1996)

I first learned from a historical Singapore Chinese church of 1,500 for three years with children's Sunday school, youth ministry, discipleship training, deacon board, worship service... I learned from very mature churches, a Presbyterian Church in Singapore (1993-96) with a 100-year history (Interview: D. Jin 2020, 4).

#### **6.1.4 The *Great Commission* Network**

Daniel is part of a network of churches under the name of the *Great Commission* started by Lee's ministry in the early 1990s. Daniel served as the President of the *Great Commission Seminary* and is connected to a network of pastors and churches across China.

In 1993, about 20 intellectuals who offered themselves to God and some preachers from local churches gathered over one week, studying the Bible, praying, and joining spiritual retreats. We saw God's will for the Church in China in such a retreat. God wanted to motivate more churches to be involved in the Great Commission. By studying Ezekiel 1, Philippians, II Timothy and Acts, this fellowship was established; in another aspect, a strategy of the *Great Commission* was formed. Since then, till now, we are still continuing (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b, 1).

On June 24, 2012, during the *Great Commission* annual meeting, the network reported 758 meeting points in Beijing, Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, and other places. There were 24 pastors, more than 77 preachers, 21 elders, about 168 deacons, and the number of believers was 18,315 with a total annual contribution of more than 7.88 million yuan (D. Jin 2017, 108).

#### **6.2 Missiological Concepts**

Daniel summarised his missiology into five points: 1) the B2J movement, 2) the theology of the Cross, 3) the Triune mission of God, 4) the Kingdom of God, and 5) the Great Commission. The first two points have been described as part of Chinese missions history with the B2J Movement and the theology of the Cross already been covered by Zhang Heng (Chapter 3) and Ezra (Chapter 5). Daniel has some unique insights on the last three points, combining the *missio Dei's* contemporary missiology and holistic missions with the traditional Great Commission mandate.



### 6.2.1 Recovery of the Great Commission

Daniel's last and probably most significant missiology insight is the 'Great Commission missiology', which is the recovery of the traditional understanding of missions. The traditional understanding of missions as defined by Bosch as 'the sending of missionaries to a designated territory... (Ohm 1962, 52f; Bosch 1991, 1)'

'We need to study the Great Commission again regarding China's missionary movement (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).' In a workshop on *Mission China 2030* at the Chinese Missions Conference in San Francisco, Daniel shared an important reminder: 'a Church that ignores the Great Commission does not touch the heart of God (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b, 1)'.

I feel we should follow and obey Jesus's Great Commission seriously. Scriptures on the Great Commission include Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-48 and Acts 1:8. We can see what Jesus wants us to do when following the Great Commission. First, we should identify our vision of mission, which is to see the trend of the Great Commission movement. In such a historical movement, we need to orientate Chinese churches to pray, evangelise and make disciples for the Great Commission. Our churches need to be established and grow (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b, 2).

As a seminary student in Los Angeles (2004 to 2006 and 2014 to 2018), Daniel noticed the 'Missional Church' in North America (Guder and Barrett 1998) and the church in Korea losing the traditional understanding of overseas cross-cultural missions. Ed Stetzer's article in *Christianity Today*, 'Five Reasons why Missional Churches Don't Do Global Missions – and How to Fix it' (Stetzer 2009), possibly affirmed Daniel's observation.

When I studied Missiology in America, including observing the moving direction of the Korean Church's Missiology, they seemed to think emphasising the Great Commission was outdated. The Great Commission was taken seriously by the American Church a hundred years ago. Now the trend is a Missional Church. However, I see churches that are missionary focused only can easily be attracted to local missionary ministries only, with no emphasis on mission overseas cross-cultural missions (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 2).

Daniel is concerned that the more recent broader definitions of missions, including the recent inclusion of creation care and the environment from missiologist Chris Wright

(Wright 2006; Lausanne 2011), could distract from cross-cultural overseas missionary sending.<sup>77</sup>

The theology of the Great Commission includes Jesus Christ as the model, His commands, and His assignment, as well as missionary strategies. The Great Commission can help us disregard a lot of tests along the way. Especially recently, some Missiology started to pay close attention to creation, or even the world being created, such as protecting the environment. It is beneficial at some level, but it can also easily distract the focus (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3).

According to Daniel, his ‘theology of the Greatest Commission’ is closer to David Hesselgrave’s ‘Prioritism theology’ defined as ‘the mission is primarily to make disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive (Hesselgrave 2005, 121).’

In the ‘theology of the Greatest Commission’, the core should be laid on Jesus Christ’s gospel, including sharing the gospel, discipleship training, establishing churches, training workers, and mobilising such a ministry continuously. Therefore, establishing such a ‘theology of the Great Commission’ is necessary for the Chinese missionary movement. The Chinese church needs to pay more attention to overseas missions to deliver the message that we will do missions, not to emphasise local social care or environmental protection (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3–4).

Daniel’s ‘Great Commission’ missiology includes spreading the gospel, discipleship training, establishing churches, and training workers in a cross-cultural context. Social concerns and environmental issues are good but could be a distraction.

Other house church leaders have similar views on the role of the Great Commission. Still, they include a more comprehensive definition than supporting and sending missionaries as they are not ready to send out their missionaries yet. Traditional house church leader T1-Yuehan also affirms Daniel’s understanding of the Great Commission. After the Open Reforms with China opening to the world, the house church pastor’s mission vision expanded worldwide. In the 1980s, the church was more focused on local evangelism, but the growth of China’s economy allowed the church to travel. The house church gained a deeper theological understanding of the Great Commission as an overseas cross-cultural mission (Interview2: T1-Yuehan & T2-Dai 2016, 2).

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<sup>77</sup> Chris Wright emphasised a holistic mission that includes the redemption of the created order. God’s mission is to reclaim the world. ‘Fundamentally, our mission in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation (Wright 2006, 23).’ Wright has also included redemption of creation in the Lausanne Cape Town Commitment in Part I, sec 7 ‘We love God’s world (Lausanne 2011)’.



T1-Yuehan and his wife T2-Dai emphasised the importance of the traditional house church definition of ‘salvation of souls’ but understood the limitations of the traditional view of just saving souls and church planting at the expense of neglecting the community's needs.

Additionally, in our traditional church at home, church planting focuses more on the salvation of souls. Being the pioneer, moving from a rural to an urban area or something else, whatever the motivation is, evangelisation becomes the primary metric. It cannot be a so-called holistic gospel but more focused on the salvation of souls, which also has positive significance. Those who are saved develop a group that gradually forms a church. This is also regarded as a kind of church planting. However, the shortcoming is the lack of social concerns, which means blessing the whole community. So, traditional church planting has its meaning and limitations (Interview2: T1-Yuehan and T2-Dai 2016).

Daniel and other house church leaders in *Mission China* prioritised the salvation of the souls and church planting. They have also understood the shortcomings of the lack of social concerns of the holistic gospel.

### **6.2.2 Triune *missio Dei* and Holistic Ministry**

Daniel has also understood the importance of *missio Dei* (mission of God) of the Triune God. Daniel’s understanding of the *missio Dei* appears to come from Tim Tennent’s book *Invitation to World Missions: a Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*. ‘Missions should never be conceptualised apart from the *missio Dei* (Tennent 2010, 59).’

I hope the Chinese Church’s ‘theology of mission’ is a missionary movement established on the Triune God. A mission with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; let the mission with the Triune God become the missionary model for today’s Chinese Church. The Chinese church participates in God’s mission but not just accomplishing a church ministry. It is to engage in the missionary movement led by the Triune God and ran through the entire human history. God is the Lord of the mission, and God has His blueprint; in His eternal plan, there is a part for the Chinese church. Therefore, the Chinese church must seek God’s plan and get involved in it (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).

His doctoral thesis combined *missio Dei* and leadership development comparing *Mission China 2030* with biblical and historical movements in missiology, missions mobilisation, missions training, missionary sending, missions support and missions field. In his conclusion, Daniel’s suggests a six-step strategy incorporating the *missio Dei* vision with *Mission China* Leadership Development.

The first step is the vision of *missio Dei*. The second step is leadership development for mission leaders. The third step is the promotion of the passions for mission adherents. The fourth step is the development of the organisation of the missionary movement. The fifth step is ensuring of resources of the missionary movement. The sixth step is preparation for the reproduction of the missionary movement (D. Jin 2018).

Daniel has used the term *missio Dei* as his theoretical framework in his thesis adopting evangelical missions as a core priority rather than the ecumenical criticisms of the one-way Western missionary movement.<sup>78</sup> Daniel's missiology includes holistic elements that address the dangers of the Fundamentalist narrow-mindedness, self-centred, and individualism. His 'Kingdom Mindset' challenges the Chinese church to focus on the world's needs.

In the past, often we paid more attention to the church ministries, but when God became flesh through Jesus Christ, the ministry being implemented and the gospel being unfolded is the gospel from the Kingdom of God, is the message from God's kingdom... Chinese are more likely to be narrowed-minded, self-centred, and individualistic... Everyone focuses only on their own church's needs and minds their own business but fails to see the holistic development of God's kingdom, which will become the stumbling block in the Chinese church's unity and mission. All in all, the Chinese church needs to develop a kingdom mindset (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1–2).

Daniel's adoption of the *missio Dei*, 'Trinitarian missiology', 'Kingdom Mindset', and holistic ministry addresses the problems of the Fundamentalist narrow-minded church-centred ministry with a lack of concern for the world in the Chinese church. At the same time, he has observed a lack of evangelism and church planting in the holistic gospel and the loss of missionary sending in the contemporary North American 'missional' church. Daniel wrestles with the tension of the problems of both sides and believes in the recovery of the Great Commission as primary while not neglecting holistic ministry. Daniel and the *Mission China* leaders have not yet fully developed their own deep missiological convictions on the more contemporary *missio Dei* and holistic gospel concepts.

### **6.2.3 Back to Jerusalem**

Daniel also mentioned two distinctive Chinese theological reflections: the B2J and the 'theology of the cross'. Daniel's B2J missiology has a connection with Andrew Walls and World Christianity scholars. He sees China as part of the historical and sociological

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<sup>78</sup> David Bosch's describes the *missio Dei* as replacing the traditional understanding of 'missions' as a one-way traffic, from the West to the Third World is over. Every church everywhere is understood to be in a state of mission. The scope of 'mission' is broaden from the traditional one-way sending of evangelism and church planting to include Christian involvement with social justice and social responsibilities (Bosch 1991, 400–408).

study of the general trajectory of the centre of Christianity generally moving Westward.

*Mission China* and the B2J movement fulfil the direction of the gospel heading Westward.

When the Chinese church launched this missionary movement, it needed a theology of mission based on the Scripture, inherited from history, and suitable to the environment. In the past decades, the Chinese church has developed two distinct theological characteristics in the theology of mission. One is B2J Movement, a movement with the theology of evangelical history movement. What is the trend of this evangelical movement? The gospel started from Jerusalem, then to all Judea, Samaria, Antioch, and then to the Mediterranean coast, to Europe, then from Europe to North America, and then from North America to Asia. There is a historical trend in spreading the gospel, and this trend seems to go through Asia to go back to Jerusalem. From this perspective, the Back to Jerusalem Movement has its historical inheritance traits (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).

Daniel also used biblical support to show a future B2J movement, pointing to Romans 11:25-26 when ‘all Israel will be saved after the ‘total number of Gentiles’ come to faith, including the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist world.

Romans 11: 25-26 ... also foresees the future missionary movement in Jerusalem among the Israelites. And “the full number of the Gentiles” includes the surrounding Muslim countries, Hindi, and Buddhism countries. Among the unreached people around the world, the mission will continuously happen. And one day, when the total number of the Gentiles has come in, all Israelites will be saved, and the gospel will bring a great revival among them. In the Old Testament theology, you can see some level of the skeleton layout, such as yearning for the pilgrimage and all people returning to Jerusalem (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).

Daniel’s B2J theology primarily comes from his understanding of the Bible rather than from the vision of Simon Zhao or the original *Northwest Spiritual Band*. He is not a strong advocate of the B2J movement as he has not mentioned meeting Simon or the *Northwest Spiritual Band*. Daniel follows the stronger personalities of Ezra, T1-Cui, and T2-Gao, who are passionate about B2J.

#### **6.2.4 ‘Cross Missiology’: Persecution and Missions**

The second distinctive indigenous missiology is the ‘theology of the cross’. Daniel agrees with Ezra that the martyrdom spirit, ‘be willing to be a martyr’ with the sacrificial laying down of life for others, is the core strength of a missionary movement. The suffering church has become the ‘core strength’ of the missionary movement for *Mission China*.

‘Theology of the cross’ is in the churches of Chinese. In the past 60 years, amid political persecution, hardship, and poverty, the Chinese church predecessors went on the path of the cross with the Lord, which in turn deepened the root of the Chinese churches so that they could grow. This is the path following Christ. This is also the path that the Early Church has taken... The mission requires us to take up the cross to follow the Lord, pay the price, sacrifice ourselves, and be willing to be a martyr.

Especially going into the Muslim districts, a mindset of willing to be a martyr is necessary (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).

### **6.2.5 Last Baton Analogy**

In his missions research, Daniel found out that during the rise of the Korean and North American missionary movement, they also used the ‘Last Baton’ analogy to describe the unique calling of their nation in evangelisation.

Speaking of taking the baton, what’s interesting is that my thesis was about comparative study of mission mobilisation... China, South Korea, and America have very different backgrounds, but there’s one common thing; we all want to declare that we will take the last baton of evangelisation (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b).

Other *Mission China* leaders have avoided using the ‘Last Baton’ analogy. Zhang Heng calls the analogy a little too self-centred (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 8). T2-Pei has criticised how the previous B2J movement has used this analogy. ‘I couldn’t identify with the previous Back to Jerusalem movement, especially their expression of being the Last Baton, saying that Chinese is running for the last baton (Interview: T2-Pei 2017, 7).’ Daniel realised that China is not the Last Baton and concluded that ‘eventually, we found there is more than one last baton. We can take the last baton together at the same time.’ This attitude goes beyond the Sinocentric mindset and will be helpful for cooperation with the international church. Yet Daniel, Zhang Heng, and Ezra have also mentioned a special calling for the Chinese church ‘to rise to take the baton. There is an opportunity for the Chinese Church now (Interview: D. Jin 2015b, 7).’

### **6.2.6 Missiology Summary**

In summary, Daniel holds to the traditional understanding and definition of missions of missionary sending with some influences from *missio Dei* and holistic mission. Daniel believes that *Mission China* should ‘Recover the Great Commission’, which has, in his opinion, been lost in the current North American and Korea church, which focuses on local missions and social concerns with the abandonment of the overseas cross-cultural ‘missionary sending’. However, Daniel has adopted *missio Dei* and understands holistic missions. He critiques the shortcomings of the traditional Fundamentalist, narrow-

minded self-centredness in the Chinese church that only cares for the salvation of souls and church growth while neglecting the needs of the community and the world. Daniel holds to Hesselgrave's 'Prioritism', where evangelism and discipleship of the Nation are prioritised over holistic concerns. He has also embraced the indigenous Back to Jerusalem missiology from Ezra (Chapter 5) and the 'theology of the cross'. These provided *Mission China* with a symbolic guide towards the Muslim world and inspired a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit for the difficult missionary task.

### **6.3 Missions Activities and Strategies**

In the Jesus Leadership Forum, Daniel and T1-Yuehan have been designated to implement *Mission China* activities. As the head of sub-committee MC0, Daniel was responsible for the overall missions mobilisation of *Mission China*, including training, research, publication, training, and prayer.

#### **6.3.1 Missions Training**

One of Daniel's contributions to *Mission China* is his focus on missions education through his *Great Commission Seminary*, where he established the first Masters in Missions. With all his *Mission China 2030* mobilisation activities, Daniel continued to be the President of the *Great Commission Seminary*, believing that all church activities, including evangelism, discipleship, church planting and theological education, should emphasise missions.

The workers for the Great Commission need to be trained. The theological education needs to be conducted because China is so big, and workers are needed everywhere. We can't train our workers in traditional theological education, so we adopt intense training (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b, 3–4).

#### **6.3.2 Missions Publication**

Daniel is the founder and Senior Editor of *Mission China Today* magazine, a quarterly magazine publishing missions articles every three months. The magazine's first issue was launched in October 2015 for the first *Mission China 2030* conference in Hong Kong. Magazine articles included 'Undertaking the Great Commission to the ends of the Earth' by Thomas Wang. He reminded the Chinese Church of the kingdom and global missions

mindset, a gospel and cultural mandate prioritising missions education. Other articles included ‘The Foundation of Missions: the Universality of the Bible’ by Anguo Lin, ‘Inherit the First Task [of missions]; Carry Forward to Greater Heights’ by Philip Chen, and ‘One Belt, One Road: Economic Belt’ by Joshua Guo (D. Jin 2015d).

### **6.3.3 Missions Platform**

‘What’s the next step that *Mission China*?’ Daniel responded with the importance of developing a national platform to bring all the missions activities under one united leadership.

The first most crucial thing to better this movement is a united leadership group. Therefore, building a Christian leadership council with a covenant is an essential step. A core leadership team must lead an effective and functioning framework. In such a framework, there must be platforms for connection, which will require unit various ministries, including sharing the missionary vision, mobilising missionary prayers, establishing a mobilisation conference, or ministries of literal publicity, mission society, theology of missions, and following up with missionary care. (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 4).

Many house church networks already sending missionaries have not accepted this national platform mindset. The rural network with the most missionaries on the field has not joined a national platform; ‘we are afraid of connecting with them (*Mission China 2030*) too much. There is no heart obstacle, just one obstacle; the security (T4-Paul 2020, 1).’ The *Mission China* national platform is still at the beginning stages of connectivity with the Urban Church and other house churches in the mobilisation phase of missions. Daniel has brought together over twenty house church leaders for monthly missions seminars.

### **6.3.4 Missions Prayer and Revival**

The arrival of COVID-19 in early 2020 brought new multi-dimensional to China's social, political, and religious context. During COVID-19, online zoom technology opened further social interaction for the house church to circumvent previous restrictions. Zoom allowed the *Mission China* movement to remerge into a new movement of prayer and revival for missions. Daniel has been at the forefront with a ‘Century of Prayer and Missions’ 24-hour prayer chain with thirty-one different house churches networks who

have adopted a day out of the month to pray 24-hour for missions. Several hundred have been meeting every day for prayer in this prayer network.

Prayer and revival are the support lifeline for the missionary movement. However, most important is to recruit qualified missionaries to the field. Daniel stated that ‘Revival is the prelude of the missionary movement’; a prayer revival movement is essential.

And missionary churches, churches are the base and the rear supply for missions. If the church has not revived, the front-line missionary work will be weak; If the Church fails to provide continuous support, the front-line service will quickly fail. I say this a lot, the revival movement is the prelude to the missionary movement, and then *the prayer movement is the prelude to the revival movement. Therefore, we need a prayer movement to have a revival movement and then have a missionary movement* (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3).

## **6.4 Contributing Factors**

### **6.4.1 Internal Factors**

#### **6.4.1.1 An existing growing church with the explicit objective of expanding to other locations and countries**

Daniel’s most obvious expansion objective is revealed in his *Mission China 2030* vision ‘to send 20,000 missionaries by 2030’. Daniel believes that before China is considered a missionary-sending country, they would need first to clear the ‘gospel debt’ and send out at least the number of missionaries that have come to China. From his research, Daniel estimated that around 20,000 foreign missionaries have come to China.

We say that we are entering the *Mission China* stage, but if we have not yet paid our debt, we will be embarrassed to say that. Therefore, to proudly say that we have entered the Mission China stage, we must first clear our debt. So, this is the lower-end aim, not the upper limit. I didn’t think so many workers would agree to it when it was brought up. 20,000 is still a realistic target. For many church leaders, this is a very doable goal (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 4).

The ‘20,000 missionaries’ goal has also been influenced by the Korean missionary movement with their goals and numbers. Daniel calculated the 20,000 due to its practicality. Using the Korean church experience compared to 100 missionaries in 1980 to 20,000 missionaries in 30 years, the Chinese church could aim for the same goal; ‘So this is the lower end aim, not the upper limit...’

A number is just a general number, but on the one hand, it is based on the calculation; on the other hand, it is referenced to the Korean Church’s experiences. The Korean Church sent 100 missionaries to 20,000 missionaries from 1980 – 2010. During the 30 years, they sent 20,000 missionaries. It got me thinking and using that as a reference for the Chinese church; I personally calculated tentatively the Chinese church owes 20,000 missionaries until 2010 (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 4).

Daniel readily admits that the number is not based on the Bible, other than the sense of ‘gospel indebtedness’, but a strategic goal. Ezra has also used the Korean Church as a barometer for comparison.

They declared in the first Korean World missionary conference in Wheaton in 1988...When there were 200 missionaries, they mentioned a goal of 10,000 [missionaries by the year 2000]. At that time, no one thought they could make it. But the missionaries and the missionary leaders declared it by God’s grace. If we want to do it and try hard, with the church scale we have now. Maybe we can reach 20,000 in 15 years. So, it depends on God whether it’s going to accomplish or not. But, according to Korean churches’ experiences, they thought it was possible (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 4).

The number of 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030 has been one of the most controversial and divisive elements in *Mission China*. In the top tiers of fifteen *Mission China* leaders in the *Jesus Leadership Forum* and the MC sub-committees, most support the 20,000 goals, including Daniel, Ezra, Zhang Heng, T1- Cui, T2-Gao, T2-FB, T2-Job, and T2-Pei. Three out of the fifteen leaders are against the 20,000-goal, including Tianming, T1-Yuehan and T2-Lydia, reflecting the negative feelings from the Traditional Church and younger leaders.<sup>79</sup>

Due to the criticisms, the Jesus Leadership Forum have downplayed the original ‘unrealistic’ goal of sending 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030 and removed 2030 from *Mission China*. *Mission China 2030* is now just *Mission China*. The new watchword is ‘Mission China: A Century of Missions’, reflecting a more widely accepted statement of an overarching missions movement coming from China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The removal of the goal is like the B2J Movement (BacktoJerusalem.com). Rural house church leaders first shared the original goal of 100,000 missionaries and widely circulated overseas in the mid-2000s through Paul Hattaway and the Heavenly Man (Hattaway 2003, 97; Yun and Hattaway 2002, 285). The B2J (outside China) website, at one point in 2003, stated a goal to raise 200,000 missionaries within ten years. The goal was reduced to 100,000 in 2006 (Chan 2013, 79 FN15). The 100,000-missionary goal has

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<sup>79</sup> The pro-20,000 and anti-20,000 goal position come from my multiple conversations and personal knowledge of each leader.



been removed from the website but is still mentioned in the promotion video. What is highlighted on the website is not the numbers but the first success of the first thirty-six B2J missionaries sent to a Buddhist country in March 2000. These first Chinese missionaries have ‘faithfully preached the gospel throughout China for years, establishing churches and seeing more of God’s power manifested through their ministries each month than most Christians see during their lifetimes (B2J Staff 2020).’

Criticisms of exaggeration and inflation for motivational results are echoed in mission history with the example of the North American John Mott, Arthur Pierson, and the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM). Pierson’s goal in 1891 was 50,000 missionaries needed in the next twenty-five years with the SVM watchword: ‘the evangelisation of the world in our generation’ (Robert, Dana Lee 1986, 147). German missiology Gustav Warneck was critical of John Mott and the SVM’s watchword.

The mission command bids us "go" into all the world, not "fly." The kingdom of God is not like a hothouse, but like a field in which the crop is to be healthily grown at a normal rate. Impatient pressing forward has led to the waste of most patient toil, and more than one old mission field has been unwarrantably neglected in the haste to begin work in a new field. (Warneck 1900, 415).

Warneck’s criticism was against ‘the hurried proclamation of the gospel militated against the pattern of the ecclesiology of the apostolic period... and its premillennial orientation, the SVM made a serious eschatological error... he was willing to relent somewhat because he saw the in the early church the motivational value which had come from the expectation of the Parousia (Harder 1980, 147).’

Whether the SVM was theologically flawed or not, the motivational value of a seemingly unattainable watchword, or the thought behind it, appears to have been effective. By the 1920s, the SVM was credited with sending around 20,000 missionaries (Beahm 1941, 234). ‘In contrast, Continental Europe produced few volunteers (Harder 1980, 143).’ The watchword was symbolic of the optimism and exuberance of the pre-World War I generation as the SVM ‘did not so much produce the watchword, as the watchword – or rather the thought behind it – helped to bring into being the SVM (Robert,

Dana Lee 1986, 146).’ The North American missionary numbers reached above 50,000 several generations later in 2008, peaking at 50,151 North American missionaries, including tentmakers (Wilson and Siewert 1986, 55).

Daniel estimated 2,000 missionaries serving overseas pre-COVID-19 (D. Jin 2021). Even if the 20,000 Chinese missionary goal is not reached by 2030, what may be remembered are the sending several thousands of Chinese missionaries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of mission history. The critics of the ‘unrealistic’ goals of tens of thousands with *Mission China 2030* or hundreds of thousands with the B2J movement served a purpose to provide balance but would likely be forgotten.

#### **6.4.1.2 Motivation**

Daniel refers to Paul’s ‘indebtedness,’ which compels him to preach the gospel in Romans 1:14-15 ‘I am obligated (indebted) both to the Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.’ The ‘gospel debt’ comes from Paul’s gratitude of being called to be ‘an apostle set apart for the gospel of God, ... Through him, we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith (Romans 1:1, 5 NIV). Daniel has estimated that around 20,000 missionaries have come to China since missionaries first entered over 200 years ago. ‘If the church in China is to enter into a *Mission China* stage’ from a mission receiving to a mission sending country, then ‘we have first to clear our debt’.

It is based on the mindset of ‘payback’ too that we owe the ‘gospel debt’, the Bible did not say that we must calculate how many debts we owe. But when I saw that verse, I saw myself as a debtor of the gospel. From this perspective, I started to pray back in 2000, when we were entering into the new century, and then God gave me this thought, “now that you say the Chinese church is the debtor, then calculate how much you have owed?” from then I start to think and roughly calculated how much debt we the Chinese church owe (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3).

Tianming cautions against using the ‘gospel debt’ as a motivator due to nationalistic concerns (Chapter 4.2.5: Nationalistic Concerns).

China's motivation for mission is a long process that did not start overnight. Daniel summarises the burden of missions coming from the Chinese church in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, even before the *B2J Northwest Spiritual Band*.

God's timing allowed the missionary movement to rise. In the early 20th century, God gave some leaders in the Chinese church the burden of mission, including Limei Ding, Fuming Yao, Zai Wang, who mobilised the mission to Southeast Asia. Later the *Northwest Spiritual band* brought the gospel to Northwest China, and through them, we can see that God wanted the Chinese church to become missionary churches. However, it was not developed into a national-wide movement (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 2).

The 1950s were not suitable for missions during a period of constant repression. However, in the 1980s, the Open Reforms brought about a local missions movement among the rural churches. In the 1990s, the Urban Church emerged with Korean missionary influence and many decades of accumulated ministry experience and theological preparation.

In the 90s, urban house churches started to emerge. Back then, it was all on a small scale. Still, among these urban churches, especially the pastors and ministers in their 20s, after nearly two decades approaching their 40s and 50s, they have gradually accumulated ministry experiences and theological preparation. At the same time, many missionaries entered China and planted the seeds of missions because of the Open policy. With the rural church's network missionary spirit, the urban churches were influenced by the Korean missionary movement's missionary DNA (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 2).

The Lausanne Congress in 2010 came at the right time, which provided the church with an opportunity to mobilise the churches for missions.

In the meantime, the Lausanne Conference focused on unity and mission to China; so, it is all God's will and excellent plan. Why now? One reason is God's will. The other is that the Rural networks developed enough to move toward missions overseas; the urban church has also matured enough to do missions. Lastly, the leaders have grown gradually via decades of experience to mobilise unity and missionary movement. If they were a bunch of young adults in their 20s, it might be challenging to mobilise such a movement, but leaders in their 40s or 50s are mature, influential, and entrusted to push this movement forward altogether (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 2-3).

#### **6.4.1.3 Entrepreneur Leadership**

Daniel is an entrepreneurial leader with various leadership experiences as a church planter, senior pastor, church network leader, seminary president, magazine founder and editor, and missions mobiliser. Daniel also has leadership experience as the Beijing City Revival Church pastor and President of the *Great Commission Seminary*. He is one of the Jesus Leadership Forum board members and serves as the primary leader of the *Mission*

*China 2030*, the Executive Director of Mission China Today Magazine, and leads the 24-7 the Missions Prayer Chain of several hundred who meet daily to pray for missions.

The church he founded called the Beijing City Revival Church in 1997 has planted several churches in Beijing and other cities of China, including Rongyao Church in 1997, Tongzhou Church in 1998, Enjia Church in 2003, Putayuan Church in 2007, Benpao Church in 2008, Jiecaizhong Church in 2008 and Qingchengtang Church in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia in 2015.

Locally, we started to plant new churches rather than gathering points. We sent out a couple to Hohhot to plant churches with several believers over there. We also supported a couple who had just graduated from seminary to plant a church in Xi'an. They started by sharing the Gospel with strangers and formed a church of 20 people this past year. Our goal is to plant 20 churches and 20 gathering points by 2020. As long as we have workers, we will plant churches (Interview: D. Jin 2015a, 4).

Daniel is a visionary leader who first shared the *Mission China 2030* goal 'to send 20,000 missionaries by 2030'. He also has academic credentials with a Bachelor of Divinity from *the Great Commission Seminary* in Beijing, a Master of Divinity from Singapore Bible College, a doctorate in ministry from Logos Seminary, a master's in theology and a doctorate in missiology from Fuller Seminary. Daniel oversees *Mission China*, including 'missionary research, prayer, mobilisers, training, sending, missionary base, and a missionary factory'. Some have questioned the practicality of his big vision.

To send 20,000 missionaries, we need at least 200,000 dedicators, and these people will come from different missionary movement conferences... However, the Chinese church needs a missionary society to send workers. We can rely on missionary societies overseas and some local Chinese missionary societies to help Chinese missionaries serve overseas. To send the 20,000 missionaries, we need at least 200 mission societies, which is a challenge to the whole Chinese church missions (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3).

#### **6.4.1.4 Available Resources**

Daniel was the former Senior pastor of Beijing City Revival Church before heading overseas for his doctoral studies. On his return to Beijing in 2019, he became a missions staff supported by the church and the President of the Great Commission Seminary. The Beijing City Revival Church Annual General Budget in 2015 was 3,000,000 RMB. The missions budget was 450,000 RMB, equal to 15% of the General Budget. The building facilities budget was 1,050,000 RMB, and the pastoral staff budget: 750,000 RMB. The

church has a Sunday attendance of 700 in 12 locations with eight full-time pastoral staff. This church is in a Shen Zhou network of churches. From 2011 to 2016, the Shen Zhou network claimed 758 church meeting points, 24 pastors, 77 evangelists and ministers, 21 elders, 168 deacons with a total of 18,315 people with an annual budget of 7,880,000 RMB (D. Jin 2017, 108–9).

Daniel's Great Commission Seminary has three units that have been sent from the class of 2010. One unit has been six years in Northwest China, one unit in Southwest China, and one unit in Central Asia.

#### **6.4.2 External Factors**

Daniel recognised the vital role of China's economic development, listing how China surpassed France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan to be the second-largest economy in the world. China will rank first in the total GDP and not necessarily by the average income. He believes that from the perspective of salvation history, God used the development of the economy in preparation for world missions. A growing economy also has implications for the church housing costs.

Considering the whole GDP, the total amounts of economies are the most. Of course, we have experienced a change in our income for those in mainland China. Compared to our gain twenty years ago, our current income has increased more than two times. The housing price is also incredibly high. So, in ten years, many people get rich due to the rising cost. From the perspective of salvation history, the development of the economy prepared the church for the missions (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b, 9).

In a question about the challenges of urbanisation, Daniel mentioned that heavy workload, career stress and busy schedule, fast past and high living and housing expenses, and health issues. The high housing expenses impact the urban church and find a proper location for worship, with rent doubling in three years. Christianity's greatest challenge and mission are that urbanisation brought about secularisation temptations and ethical issues.

Christians who live in the city have higher working stress, faster pace of life, inflating prices, accelerating housing prices, time pressure, challenges for health (because of the deterioration of city environment), and the increasing disengagement between people due to urbanisation (Interview: D. Jin 2015a, 1).

When asked, 'Is it possible to mobilise a missionary movement under the current political context?' Daniel responded first with a spiritual answer: 'No matter when God is in the mission, and God's people must follow His footsteps. Whether the environment is harsh or loose, we all must do missions. Missions are not based on the environment... As long as there are churches, you have to go for missions.' This positive mindset is common in the house church as the church grows and is still active under increased political pressure. Daniel believes that a church of only 20 or 200 should be involved in missions. When his church was only 20 people, they supported missionaries to Kazakhstan. When the church is 200, people still 'believe that our church is too weak to participate in missions. Therefore, some negative or impossible thoughts can be raised whenever (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 4).' From the house church experience of persecution, Daniel looks beyond the external factors to see God at work. He has seen the church often come alive under increased political pressure.

Therefore, this movement is not because of us but because God has put the burden in our hearts. *The Chinese house church movement is still active even under increased Chinese political pressure.* I disagree that today's Chinese political environment is unsuitable for missions, so we should not mobilise missionary movements. ...When God is at work, He could use several people to influence the whole group, just like a bit of yeast leavens the entire dough. Isn't this a movement? A mustard seed can grow into a big tree that enables many birds to rest on it. Isn't this a movement? Therefore, inside the Christian core beliefs, there is the DNA of Jesus on the move (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 4).

The challenge in the political environment is to raise mission awareness for local pastors whose priorities are building a healthy church versus sending out missionaries. How do pastors balance the priorities between the local church needs and the overseas missions? In a persecuted environment, the church is faced with spiritual survival needs and often has no spiritual energy and human resources to dedicate to ministry elsewhere.

Daniel shared the challenge he faced with convincing even the pastors from his own Beijing Revival Church. Most pastors are often in survival mode to meet congregational needs. The immediate congregational needs and local mission opportunity distracts from world missions.

One of our ministers declared, 'In the next three years, we will not do any missions.' I was astonished. What had happened? I was planning on appointing him as the Senior Pastor to focus on mission

mobilisation. He can't be the Senior pastor. *The essence of the church is missions!* How can you say 'because the believers haven't grown spiritually, churches won't do missions? We don't do missions because the gospel hasn't been localised yet?' Just because there are many needs around us to be met, should we ignore the needs far away? To some degree, it makes sense. But that's not what the Bible says. If we had to wait until the whole of Jerusalem is evangelised before we send missionaries, we wouldn't have heard the gospel today. God's (overseas) missions must be ongoing with a local ministry. Therefore many areas are needed to bring awareness of the mission in the Chinese Church (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b).

There are some advantages from the more recent attacks on the house church from the new Religious Regulations in 2018 as churches lost their worship space. The added pressure was a blessing in disguise as the rent costs had sky-rocketed due to urbanisation. Furthermore, COVID concerns changed the dynamics of a need for a large worship church experience. The house church returned underground to a smaller house ecclesiology with modern technology. This new house church model is good preparation for a low cost, high commitment, high quality, and increased security concerns for the mission field in hostile environments.

### **6.4.3 International Factors**

#### **6.4.3.1 Partnership instead of Integration**

Daniel's international exposure is through his overseas education in Singapore and North America. He also has strong connections in Korea. His wife is from Taiwan and has family connections there as well. Daniel was also part of the top twenty China Lausanne Committee and believes that the '*Mission China 2030* Movement was the fruit directly born from the Lausanne Movement (Interview2: D. Jin 2016).'

The Lausanne Congress in 2010 provided an opportunity for 230 house church leaders from different streams to work in unity for missions. Daniel acknowledges that the '*Mission China 2030* movement was the fruit directly born from the Lausanne Movement (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 5–6).'

I think the fundamental essence of the Lausanne Congress can be summarised in two words: unity and missions. Therefore, these two are also the most significant contributions the Lausanne congress has given to the Chinese church. One is unity. A large-scale agreement was facilitated for the house church for the first time in sixty years in preparation for the Congress. Therefore, this is one of the Lausanne Congress's greatest contributions to the entire Chinese house church... Secondly, the contribution of missionary vision and strategies... Because of the leadership network formed since the Lausanne movement, Mission China's vision delivered at the 2013 Asian Church Leaders Forum became many church leaders' common mission and direction, facilitating the *Mission China 2030* movement. In

2015, the second conference was held in Jeju Island; therefore, we can say that the *Mission China 2030 Movement was the fruit directly born from the Lausanne Movement* (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 5–6).

Daniel mentioned some of the negative impacts of the government preventing the 200 leaders from attending the Lausanne Congress (Lim 2010; Lausanne 2010). The criticisms from some overseas leaders on the house church were misplaced for not inviting the TSPM. Daniel believes that these criticisms were ill-informed and caused harm to the house church already under attack by the government. His message to the global church is to pray and be a companion, a coach, a mission partner as China is in the infant stage of missionary sending. He is concerned that the global church could take away the human resources within China to expand their ministries and requests that China grows as a child in this area. He also recognised that China ‘might be immature with many failures, but hopefully, the church overseas can respect the Chinese church (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 6).’

Daniel, Ezra, and Zhang Heng believe that raising China’s own indigenous missions movement is the priority over joining an existing international missions world as proposed by Tianming. Tianming believes China should be ‘integrated’ into the global missions world before introducing its own indigenous movement. Daniel is worried that the overseas missions movement could overpower the Chinese church at the infant stage of missions. He is worried that international mission organisations could divide China’s resources and potentially slow down the early stages of a missions movement. The key world for Daniel is ‘partnership’ with the global missions movement assisting China in its missionary journey.

I hope the church overseas does not treat the Chinese church as a tool for expanding its power or the marketplace for recruiting more people with talents but treasures the rise of the missionary movement in this land... The most worrying part is that different forces from overseas will divide up the Chinese church’s human resources, church resources, and so on to develop their organisational ministries or expand their denominations, which are all not favoured by God... In the *Mission China 2030 Movement*, all the churches are missionary partners. Similarly, we hope all the churches overseas can become partners to fulfil God’s mission (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 6–7).

#### **6.4.3.3 Diaspora Groups**



Daniel is the only one of the four Beijing pastors who has mentioned the advantages of a large-sized population of overseas Chinese diaspora around the world.

We, Chinese people, have a good-sized population and are also spread worldwide, which formed a network of Chinese churches. The breadth of the Chinese church has an advantage that no other nation can compare. Chinese can adapt to the environment very well no matter where they are (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b).

Daniel has been in close contact with overseas Chinese leaders in Singapore, Taiwan, and the overseas Chinese in North America. Overseas Chinese leader Thomas Wang assisted Daniel's Great Commission Fellowship and seminary. Daniel's wife is from Taiwan, and he has a partnership with China Evangelical Seminary in Taiwan. He has studied overseas in Singapore for three years and served in overseas Chinese churches in Los Angeles while in seminary at Fuller and Logos Seminary. Compared to Ezra and Tianming, who are sceptical of the benefits from partnering with overseas Chinese, Daniel sees the advantage of working with the overseas Chinese church. Daniel quotes overseas Chinese leader, the late Cyrus Lam, the founder of Go International, on the importance of the Chinese diaspora for world missions.

Cyrus Lam (Lin Anguo) often said that the overseas Chinese is a vital bridge [for China] in world missions. There are 8,000,000 overseas Chinese. 5,000,000 in Asia, 1,000,000 in America, 800,000 in Europe and 300,000 in Africa, 80,000 in the Middle East, 100,000 in the Pacific and the Atlantic. Through CCCOWE, God connected the Chinese. Many churches were brought together by mission conferences and evangelical conferences every five years from 1976 to 2011; therefore, this is a mission platform that God will use (Seminar: D. Jin 2015b, 11–12).

Daniel considers the overseas Chinese Church through CCCOWE (Chinese Christian Council of World Evangelism) as an essential bridge for China the world in missions. Tianming and Ezra believe CCCOWE has not done much for *Mission China* and would not be a spiritual force to learn or work with in the future. Daniel regards the Overseas Chinese church as an essential strategic partner in world missions.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Daniel is the originator of the *Mission China 2030* vision 'to send 20,000 missionaries by 2030'. The reason for the number is because of the 'gospel debt' the Chinese church owes to the world for the estimated 20,000 missionaries who came to China with the

gospel. As the primary leader of *Mission China* under the Jesus Leadership forum, Daniel's missions responsibilities include mobilisation, research, a publication with the quarterly *Mission China Today* magazine, and a 24-7 missions prayer chain. In November 2022, he led a *Mission China* conference on zoom with several thousand in attendance. Daniel has global exposure and academic credentials with three graduate seminary degrees from Singapore and North America. He is most open among the four Beijing pastors to partner with CCCOWE and the overseas Chinese churches through his years living overseas.

Daniel's missiology includes multiple missiological concepts learned from his academic training and global exposure. 1) the B2J movement, 2) the theology of the Cross, 3) the Trinitarian *missio Dei*, 4) the Kingdom of God, and 5) the Great Commission. Daniel is concerned of an inward church-centred Chinese church mindset that has neglected the needs of the world. He advocates for a Trinitarian *missio Dei* with 'Kingdom mindset' and holistic ministry. However, he is more concerned about the loss of the missionary movement from the West. My analysis is that Daniel and the *Mission China* leaders hold to Hesselgrave's *Prioritism* theology with evangelism and discipling the nations prioritised over the social concerns of *Holism*.

Daniel's missiological contribution is his advocacy for the recovery of the Great Commission and his *Mission China 2030* vision. Daniel advocates the recovery of the 'Great Commission' as an essential command in Scripture for all churches to obey. He has noticed that the 'Great Commission' is missing in the contemporary 'Missional' churches in North America and Korea and advocates for its return. Church pastoral issues, congregational needs, survival mode, and local missions have replaced church concerns for world missions. 'The essence of the church is missions'.

Daniel's 20,000 missionary goal-driven vision can be compared to the Korean missionary movement in the 1990s to send 10,000 missionaries by the year 2000 and the

optimism of the North American Student Volunteer Movement with the watchword; ‘the evangelisation of the world in our generation.’ Critics have claimed his vision is not biblical, too Korean, unrealistic under China’s political context and divisive for the overall *Mission China* movement. Even though *Mission China* has removed the original 20,000 missionary goal from their vision, the overarching theme coming from Beijing leaders is a missionary movement on the rise in China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Daniel and the other *Mission China* leaders may be unrealistic under the overall tightening political context; nevertheless, a sense of destiny and momentum permeates the movement reflecting the optimism seen in the previous North American Student Volunteer Movement.

## Chapter Seven

### Analysis of Four Beijing Pastors

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter attempt to analyse and synthesise the four pastor's perspectives in Chapters three to six to answer the main research question and two sub-questions: What is unique about *Mission China* from the perspective of four Beijing pastors? The missiology highlighted comes from the four pastors synthesising their similarities as well as providing some of their differences. The interviews of the forty individuals familiar with *Mission China* along with my own participation.

Sub-questions:

- What are the spiritual characteristics and the distinctive missiology?
- What are the internal, external, and international contributing factors and challenges?

#### 7.2 Spiritual Roots

Several characteristics have emerged from analysing the spiritual roots of the four Beijing pastors historical backgrounds. Their early spiritual influences have come from a combination of Korean missionaries, American English teachers, indigenous church patriarchs, and personal encounters with God.

##### 7.2.1 Korean Missionaries Laid the Foundation

Korean missionaries had the most significant early influence on the formation of the Urban Church pastors, their spiritual traits, and their missionary DNA. Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel were all discipled by Korean missionaries. A generation of disciples of Korean missionaries eventually became some of the most significant pastors of the Urban Church in Beijing. Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel are known for some of the traits of Korean Christian spirituality, including faith, courage, vision, sacrifice, prayer, strong pastoral

leadership, pastoral care, tithes and offering, and a solid commitment to the local church.<sup>80</sup> The Korean missionaries also implanted in them a missionary DNA. Ezra shared how he struggled through the tension of pastoring in the TSPM church with an ‘anti-missionary’ position but at the same time was discipled by a Korean missionary. Ezra eventually left the TSPM to start a house church with a missionary DNA (Seminar: E. Jin 2020). Daniel shared about how he established Revival Church in 1997 after a 3-month internship at a Korean Church in Seoul where he ‘attended early dawn morning prayer, pastoral meetings in the morning, visitations in the afternoon to evening service, elders board, financial budgeting (Interview: D. Jin 2020, 4).’

### **7.2.2 American Teachers Influenced a Younger Generation**

As China opened to the world after the Open Reforms in the 1980s and the 1990s, China’s cities were open to foreigners and foreign influences. American teachers arrived on Chinese university campuses teaching English and introducing students to modernity, the West, and Christianity (Stark and Wang 2015, 83; Fulton 2015, 10; Chan 2019, 119). The government knew the American teachers were Christians, but they noticed that they received a low salary, not even enough to pay for their airfare. Compared to the non-Christian American teachers, the Christians did not engage in immoral sexual activities. The authorities knew these English teachers were Christians but had them sign an agreement to not openly share the gospel. They were less concerned about private conversations, prayer and bible studies in the homes (T. Jin 2020b).

My interviews with *Mission China* younger leaders T3 and T2 especially demonstrate the influence of American teachers. In the T2 and T3 leaders, American teachers had a spiritual impact (eleven out of nineteen interviewed) in conversion, spiritual maturity, or

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<sup>80</sup> Bong Rin. Ro, former General Secretary of Asia Theological Association, listed several of these Korean church strengths to compare with the Chinese church. ‘The strength of the Korean Church even today is mainly due to 4 things: 1) Early dawn prayer meetings and Prayer mountains. 2) Emphasis on Sunday as a day of worship and for church activities. 3) Emphasis on tithing-Korean Church has money. 4) Emphasis on missions (B. R. Ro 2021).’

missions influence. Americans were also involved with three top-tier leaders (See Appendix I: Table: Early Spiritual Influences on Mission China leaders).<sup>81</sup>

T3-Water, a youth minister at Shouwang Church, claimed that American teachers had the most significant spiritual impact in her life. Her English teacher at Beijing Language and Culture University was a couple from America who came as English teachers who opened their home for fellowship and Bible study. They led her to Christ and were Christian role models. Water describes the early spiritual ‘life on life’ influence:

At first, they were just there as friends. I wanted to know about different cultures. I tried to communicate with other people and languages and naturally became friends. They came to China with love until later, but they invited us into their house as we became friends. I observed how they raised their children and lived their lives. It was subtle and gradual. Of course, they would lead Bible studies, and I brought my friends. It was more life on life... I would say American missionaries had the most significant impact on my life (T3-Water 2019, 1).

Tianming provided further insight into the differences between the Korean missionary and the American teacher. The Korean missionaries, who came as ordained pastors, influenced the Urban Church pastors, while the American teachers impacted the congregation members (T. Jin 2020b).

### **7.2.3 Indigenous Patriarchs were a Separate Movement**

The house church Patriarchs provided a spiritual model for the Beijing pastors but came from a different spiritual movement.<sup>82</sup> The Patriarchs who suffered over twenty years in prison served as an example of piety, faith, and perseverance. However, they could not influence the next generation in ecclesiological ministry models or pass on a missions spirituality. An example of the separation between Zhang Heng’s CGF and one of the Patriarchs was over the missionary evangelistic passion of the rural house church. Beijing Patriarch Allen Yuan reprimanded Zhang Heng and the CGF for sending evangelists across China. ‘Yuan thought that we should quiet ourselves to settle down. So yeah, he criticized us (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 13). Instead, the

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<sup>81</sup> Results from Interview1 question #3 on 25 *Mission China* leaders: ‘Who influenced you the most in your spiritual growth?’

<sup>82</sup> The house church Patriarchs include Wang Mingdao, Allen Yuan (Xiangcheng), Moses Xie (Moshan), Samuel Lamb (Xian Gao Lin), and Tianen Li (Aikman 2003, 47–71) as well as others.

missionary spirit that influenced the Henan house church came from Simon Zhao and the B2J Northwest Spiritual Band (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 13–14). Kalun's research on the explosive growth of the rural house church movement in the 1980s affirmed a separation from the influences of the Traditional Patriarchs. He attributed the rural church growth to government religious policies that removed Chinese folk religion and homogenous rural community rather than the influences of the Patriarchs (Leung 1999).

The Patriarchs also provided a spiritual model for the young Beijing intellectuals for the Urban Church. The spirituality of the older generation grounded Ezra's faith and kept him from permanently moving overseas. Ezra observed from his peers that those trained by missionaries in the early days but did not encounter the older Chinese church spiritual leaders would eventually waver in their faith or leave China to minister overseas (Interview: E. Jin 2020c, 1). Daniel shared how the Patriarch Yuan was important during critical moments by providing spiritual advice when they were young Christians (Interview: D. Jin 2020, 3). Yuan performed Tianming's wedding ceremony, and Xie conducted his ordination. Tianming claimed that the life examples of Wang Mingdao, Song Shanjie (John Sung), Nee Tuoshen (Watchman), and Jia Yumin had a profound spiritual influence on the house church (Interview: T. Jin 2018b, 3–4).

Tianming asserts that the Urban Church and the Patriarchs were separate movements. Tianming claimed that the Patriarchs did not influence his uncompromised stance or missions (Chapter 4: Tianming). The Patriarchs provided an example of a faithful witness under persecution but could not pass on a missionary spirit. The Rural house church and Urban Church are separate movements with a 'cross missiology', a sacrificial martyrdom spirituality for missions coming from their persecuted context.

### **7.3 Missiological Distinctives**

Five mission concepts have been highlighted that I believe represents the views of the four Beijing pastors: 1) revival and the supernatural mission, 2) ‘cross missiology’: the martyrdom missionary spirit emerged from the context of suffering, 3) ‘City on a Hill’: urban intellectuals and cross-cultural missions. 4) B2J Movement: eschatological urgency and burden westward, 5) and the recovery of the Great Commission.

### **7.3.1 Revival and the Supernatural Mission**

*Mission China* leaders have attributed a movement from God preceded a missions movement. Indigenous church evangelists and leaders prepared the way for a church revival. The B2J movement in the 1940s, the rural church in the 1980s, and the Urban Church in the 1990s began with spiritual encounters among a few indigenous leaders who catalysed a revival, church growth, local evangelistic outreach, and missions.

Mark Ma received a B2J vision from the Lord. ‘On November 25, 1942. As he was praying, Ma saw ‘the Northwest territories with burdened souls with the need to bring the gospel to Jerusalem’ and that God had especially reserved the hardest task of missions for the Chinese (Ma 1947; Aikman 2003, 197). The B2J vision was affirmed by Grace Ho and Rev. Zhang from the *Northwest Spiritual Band*. As a result, revival broke out at the seminary. Several dozens of young people offered their lives as missionaries heading West and landing in Xinjiang province in Northwest China.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, during the Cultural Revolution, the Henan church was at its lowest point with no missionaries. The church almost died but was kept alive by a few semi-literate women traveling evangelists.

All its activities were driven underground. Nonetheless, God preserved a remnant of a few faithful believers, who continued to meet in secret during those dark years. No pastor remained to shepherd the flock, and so elderly, uneducated women led most of the meetings. In many places, the flame of the gospel was kept alive by small groups of illiterate women (Hattaway 2009, 111).

In the 1980s, the conversion experience in rural China included miraculous healings, casting out demons, and transforming people’s character. ‘Many of them could echo the Mount Carmel experience of a powerful encounter between this new God and the deities



of the past. Once people experienced this new religious reality, they would immediately introduce it to their relatives and friends (Chan 2019, 110).’ The unusual signs and wonders caused whole communities to faith (Hattaway 2009, 170). Henan experienced a tremendous indigenous revival accompanied by persecution with signs and wonders. From a few faithful rural peasants, Henan ‘has the largest number of Christians and is the centre of the greatest and most sustained revival of Christianity, which has lasted more than 30 years (Hattaway 2009, 1).’ The Protestant church in the rural areas of central and coastal provinces such as Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Shandong experienced phenomenal growth in both the TSPM and the house church (Chan 2019, 110). Zhang Heng was also miraculously healed at his conversion and has claimed to receive a B2J vision from the Lord. He travelled from village to village, leading thousands to faith and planting hundreds of churches (E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 6; H. Zhang 2018). Zhang Heng believed in the necessity of a particular order before mission sending. A revival was the church's first step in rural Henan before church planting and missions.

In 15 years, church planting in mainland China and the revival of the churches will multiply the numbers. So, until then, 20,000 missionaries can be achieved. Not only the number of missionaries, but the most important thing is also to bring revival to churches... The main goal is to move the whole church to revive the Chinese church. After revival, we can send people out (E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017).

In the 1990s in the Urban Church, Tianming had a unique spiritual experience with the Holy Spirit led him into full-time ministry and gave him the vision and encouragement to plant a new church to reach urban China with a ‘City on a Hill’ (Interview: T. Jin 2018b, 2). In the early 1990s, when there were no other models, Tianming’s Shouwang church became the first contemporary Urban Church for intellectuals, students, and young professionals. His spiritual calling gave him the courage to face attacks from authorities. Shouwang Church opened the door for a movement of churches in the cities to flourish in China, which paved the way for the church to impact society and begin a missionary movement. The Beijing Urban Church grew in the 1990s and 2000s with pastor Tianming

with Shouwang Church, Ezra with Zion Church, Daniel with Revival Church, and many others.

As seen with the Moravians, the Great Awakenings and the Western missionary movement, and the Korean church revivals and missions movement, China's missionary movement comes from the rural house church revivals in the 1980s and 1990s, the Urban Church in the 1990s and 2000s. China leaders understand that the essential factor behind *Mission China* was a revived church.

And also, missionary churches, churches are the base and the rear supply for missions. If the church has not revived, the front-line missionary work will be weak; If the church fails to provide continuous support, then the front-line service will quickly fail. I say this a lot, the revival movement is the prelude of the missionary movement, and then the prayer movement is the prelude of the revival movement. Therefore, we need a prayer movement to have revival and missionary movement (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3).

### **7.3.2 Cross Missiology: Suffering Martyrdom Missionary Spirit**

In the past, suffering protected the church from compromise with the examples of the Patriarchs. The Traditional house church understood 'suffering as an opportunity to witness' in society to defend the gospel as seen in the Early Church.

Suffering served as a strategic means for advancing the gospel. Specifically, it will be shown that the public context of persecution allowed Christians the opportunity to witness their faith verbally and to clarify and defend the gospel (Smither 2014, 49–59).

T1-Yuehan used an analogy of a football team to describe the different roles of the Traditional Patriarchs, the Rural Networks, and the Urban Church. The Patriarch elders were the defensive full-backs and goalie to protect the church and stop the opponents from scoring on the traditional house church team. The Rural Networks were the mid-fielders who advanced and spread the gospel across the whole field. The Urban Church were the forward strikers who scored points for the team. 'We really need all of them because we might score few goals if we play alone in ministry, but we can't eventually win the game (Interview: T1-Yuehan and T2-Dai 2016, 14).'

The Rural and Urban churches have brought a new dimension to suffering different from the Traditional house church understanding. For the Rural and Urban churches, suffering and persecution was tied to missions. Zhang Heng and Ezra have been

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influenced by Simon Zhao and the *B2J Northwest Spiritual Band*, who sacrificed and suffered for their faith and vision to bring the gospel Westward towards Jerusalem. Suffering provided the ‘core strength’ of a sacrificial missionary spirit for a missionary movement.

This ‘theology of the cross’ needs to become the ‘core strength’ of the missionary movement overseas for Chinese churches in the future. Missions require us to take the Cross to follow Lord, pay the price, sacrifice ourselves more, and be willing to be a martyr. Especially going into the Muslim districts, a mindset of willing to be a martyr is necessary (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the rural house church experienced a revival under intense persecution and launched a missions movement to cities in China. In 1993, mass arrests of house church believers took place in Henan as a gathering of more than five Christians in one place would be considered illegal (Hattaway 2009, 185–86). In 1994, the Henan CGF sent out the first team of seventy young evangelists in a ‘Dare to Die’ Brigade campaign (Shen 2014, 112). In September 1996, Zhang Heng was arrested with several CGF leaders including founder Jianguo Feng. Zhang Heng served two years in prison and was released in August 1998. The following year in September 1999, Zhang Heng and the CGF leaders commissioned thirty couples in a ‘Migration Missions’ campaign to the cities (Shen 2014, 129, 179). The first CGF overseas missionaries were sent to Pakistan in 2002 (H. Zhang 2021b).

For the Urban Church, Tianming left the pastorate of Shouwang Church to start *Call from All Nations* in April 2018 while he was still under house arrest (April 2011 to October 2020). Ezra commissioned ten missionary units the same year authorities banned and dismantled the Zion Church in August 2018 (Shepherd 2018a). *Mission China* leaders are not waiting for a more suitable time in a more favourable environment. These pastors have harnessed the church’s sufferings to produce a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit. While a growing political tightening environment with their churches came under harassment and attack, these pastors have stood their ground as faithful witnesses and started a missionary sending movement during a time of persecution.

The 'cross missiology' is defined as a sacrificial martyrdom spirit for missions that emerges from a context of suffering. An example of the 'cross missiology' comes from Jesus's disciples, who demonstrated a martyrdom missionary spirit right after the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus' final words to his disciples were a missionary command to go to the world in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) and 'you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all of Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world' (Acts 1:8). The disciples were under a persecuted church context, which explains why 'some doubted' (28:17) even after witnessing their Lord's resurrection. Under an oppressive regime Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:57-58), James was executed (Acts 12:2), Peter was arrested and imprisoned (Acts 12:3) and 'a great persecution broke out on the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1).' At Pentecost, while the disciples huddled in a room, the Holy Spirit descended, and the disciples' lives changed transformed with boldness. Peter's evangelistic spirit was demonstrated by preaching to the Jews who had just crucified his Lord (Acts 2:14-40). During Peter and John's trial in the Sanhedrin, the authorities 'When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).' The missionary martyrdom spirit was birthed among a few people from a movement of God under a persecuted context resulting in an evangelistic and missionary impulse among these disciples to spread the faith to the world. The Antioch church commissioned the first missionaries Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13) as the Christian faith spread throughout the Roman empire and the known world. The New Testament epistles were mainly written by the Apostle Paul in prison and the Apostle John in exile. The suffering church in missionary with a missionary zeal is a repeat of the book of Acts with apostles.

### **7.3.3 City on a Hill: Urban intellectuals and Cross-cultural Missions**

The Traditional house church culture started as an underground movement to avoid persecution. Worship services comprised a smaller group of invitation-only committed believers in a house church. The fear of the security apparatus forced the church to as a covert operation. The house church culture was hidden, secretive, and mysteriously enclosed in a marginalized community.

Tianming and Shouwang Church created a new 'house church' culture from a 'City on a Hill' (Matthew 5:14-16) missiology to reach the urban intellectuals at the heart of mainstream Chinese society. 'The church is a city on a hill, and should be not hidden, the church is a light on a lampstand', and must be placed to be seen by this generation (T. Jin 2008, 40).' This new vision required boldness to challenge the external political environment and religious policy laws. In 2005, Shouwang Church transformed itself from an underground house church 'rising to the surface' *fu chu shui mian* (浮出水面) to be a visible public witness to society. Tianming's ecclesiology broke with the hidden traditions of the house church to challenge the restrictive religious laws. Shouwang Church became the first unregistered 'house church' in the heart of Beijing to conduct worship services, an open and public worship service of up to 1,000 people. This move catalysed the house church movement across China to move from the homes into public office spaces. Shouwang Church was a direct challenge to the existing political power structures drawing mixed opinions of respect and criticism. To isolate Shouwang Church, the government targeted Tianming and the Shouwang leadership by placing them under house arrest. In contrast, other house churches in Beijing operated with relative freedom.

Tianming believed that a church is ready for cross-cultural missions when Christianity has first overcome the challenges of influencing its own culture and society. 'If you cannot influence your society, you cannot bring changes to people in other cultures; the spiritual power you have is not enough (T. Jin 2016b).' He compared the Urban Church in China with the Antioch Church (Acts 11-13). The Antioch Church had already

influenced its society, developed a healthy team leadership structure, produced sacrificial believers with indebtedness of the gospel, and possessed a spiritual burden for the world.

The significance of reaching Chinese intellectuals in mainstream society before sending overseas cross-culturally missionaries is that with an highly educated with professional talent, resources, global awareness and cultural adaption, Urban Church missionaries are able to reach other culture elites similar to the strategy of Matteo Ricci and the Jesuits or the Korean Missionaries who targeted Peking University and Tsinghua students who are the future movers and shakers of Chinese society.

#### **7.3.4 Back to Jerusalem: Controversial but Essential ‘Core Strength’**

*Mission China’s* unique and controversial missiology is B2J. Zhang Heng attributes martyrdom spirituality, eschatological urgency, and evangelistic zeal to the original B2J *Northwest Spiritual Band* (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 1). Ezra has written the biblical foundation for the *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations* (E. Jin 2016). Daniel sees the B2J movement as the final step in fulfilling a biblical prophecy in Romans 11:25-26,

The gospel started from Jerusalem, then to all Judea, Samaria, Antioch, and then to the Mediterranean coast, to Europe, then from Europe to North America, and then from North American to Asia. There is a historical trend in spreading the gospel, and this trend seems to go through Asia to go back to Jerusalem (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 1).

The B2J missiology has been a divisive issue within the Jesus Leadership Forum and the house church. Tianming, T1-Yuahan and Wei are critics of the B2J movement. Most of those in the house church who hold an anti-B2J stance is from the Traditional house church, younger leaders, and the Reformed Churches. Furthermore, this indigenous B2J missiology has not yet passed the ‘global dialogue’ test of ‘self-theologising’ for universal biblical truth.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Self-theologising ‘requires the formation of an international hermeneutical community that together works and dialogues toward theological truth... Though churches have a right to interpret the Bible for their particular contexts, they also have a responsibility to listen to the greater “international” church to which they belong (1985, 217). It was out of this global dialogue that Hiebert envisioned the development of a biblically-based, supracultural, historical, Christological, and Spirit-led “transcultural theology” or 194

Nevertheless, the suffering and martyrdom of the original B2J missionaries provided the core missionary motivation for both the rural missions movement in the 1990s and most of the *Mission China 2030* leadership. The B2J movement is China's first and only indigenous missiology that catalysed the church with a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit. The B2J movement has contributed the 'core strength' for the burden and responsibility of a mission. They want to mobilize missionaries to go to the most challenging unreached regions in the Muslim world. They are also concerned that the contemporary Western missiology comes from a spiritually weakened church without a sacrificial martyrdom missions spirit of the past.

Ezra's assessment is the Western missionary movement had 'great times in the past, but today's Western missionary... does not have it [eschatological urgency and sacrificial spirit for missions]. They are just ordinary. We must remind them that they are not as great [compared to their past], but our spirits are the same as the Apostolic church (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 8).'

My analysis of the significance of Back to Jerusalem is not the 'Jerusalem-centred' missiology but that the movement has inspired the Chinese church with a missionary spirit and 'core strength' to compel young missionaries to sacrificially give their lives to go to difficult and hard-to-reach regions, especially to the Jewish and Muslim world and unreached peoples.

### **7.3.5 The Recovery of the Great Commission**

The uniqueness of *Mission China* pastors' missiology is that they consider overseas cross-cultural missions as primary. Tianming received a Macedonian Call (Acts 16:9) to mobilize the Chinese church to the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). His missiology is based on the definition of 'all nations' *panta ethne* (Matthew 28:19) to mean different

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"meta-theology" that would compare theologies, explore the cultural biases of each, and seek to find biblical universals (Rochelle and Nichols 2009, 211–12; Hiebert 1985b, 217–19).

racess, ethnicities, tribes, languages rather than more people of the same race. Tianming has stated that the Han Chinese in mainland China have been evangelised with a Chinese church in virtually every city, town, and village. Christianity has also reached different sectors in society, including intellectuals and the elite in the cities. While there is still much work among the Han Chinese, the priority of missions for the Chinese church should be on other ethnicities outside of China (T. Jin 2018a, 6–8). Tianming’s *Call from All Nations* ministry has also assisted twenty missionary candidates (T. Jin 2021b).

Daniel’s goal of *Mission China 2030* was to send 20,000 cross-cultural missionaries by 2030. Daniel’s Great Commission missiology prioritises missionary sending as the church’s central purpose. ‘I feel we should follow and obey Jesus’s Great Commission seriously. Scriptures on the Great Commission include Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-48, and Acts 1:8 while incorporating the kingdom elements of the contemporary *missio Dei* and holistic missions. Daniel has adopted Hesselgrave’s *Prioritism* theology (Hesselgrave 2005, 121), where evangelism, discipleship, church planting take precedent over creation care and social concerns (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 3–4).

Ezra considers *Mission China 2030* the third Chinese missionary movement. The *Mission China* missiology recovers the centrality of the Great Commission lost in the West. Due to the anti-missionary post-colonial sentiment within the TSPM, the non-Western Majority World, and World Christianity, Ezra believes that China’s mission movement will be the healing agent between the non-Western Majority World and the West. Ezra believes that *Mission China’s* role is to recover the martyrdom spirit and eschatological urgency from the Apostolic age to remind the West and Global Christianity of its missionary heritage and Great Commission mandate. Ezra’s Zion Church commissioned an additional ten missionary units in 2018 for a combined nineteen units from one church of around 1,600 people (F. Wang 2021)



Zhang Heng's 'congregational transition' campaign has paved the way for the thousands of churches in the CGF network to be a missionary sending base. Beijing Zaidao Church of 600 people send twenty-one missionaries in twelve units in nine countries; Afghanistan, Albania, Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, Israel, Myanmar, Uganda and the U.S (Text: Zhang 2021b). See Table 7.1 'Beijing Missionaries Commissioned' for a tabulation of missionaries from the four Beijing pastors.

*Mission China's* overseas cross-cultural priority emphasis is a significant distinction from the missions from overseas Chinese churches that have primarily focused on reaching the Chinese diaspora worldwide. The four Beijing leaders understand missions as the Great Commission mandate with a return to the traditional understanding of the Great Commission; the intentional sending of missionaries to a designated territory (Bosch 1991, 1). The traditional understanding of the sending of missionaries to a designated territory undertaking missionary activities of propagation of the faith, expansion of God's reign, conversion, and planting churches by a missions agency to a geographic area in the non-Christian world 'mission field' (Bosch 1991, 1–2; Ohm 1962, 52f; Müller, Gensichen, and Rzepkowski 1987, 31–34).

'Since Carey, the appeal to Matthew 28:18-20 has always been prominent in Protestant missions... such famous figures as Robert Morrison (1792-1834) and Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), who explicitly stated that it was primarily because of obedience to Christ's command that they had gone to the mission field... This happened, for instance, at the famous Mt. Hermon student conference of 1886, which was to be the beginning of the Student Volunteer movement (Bosch 1991, 340–41).'

The Beijing pastors have also noticed a decline in the traditional missionary sending in North America. During a month-long Church Planting training in New York City with Tim Keller, Tianming questioned why Redeemer Church didn't send missionaries. Ezra mentioned the same concerns to Chinese seminarians during their visit to Bill Hybels at

Willowcreek Church, stating, ‘we can learn from Daniel also noted from his seminary studies in America that the ‘Missional Church’ movement considered the Great Commission mandate as outdated (Interview2: D. Jin 2016, 2).

**Table 7.1: Beijing Missionaries Commissioned**

Leader	Type	Church	Total Missionaries	Overseas Unit	Local Unit	Areas of service
Zhang Heng	Rural/Urban	Zaidao Church	21 (2021)	12 (2017) 9 (2021)		Afghanistan, Albania, Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, Israel, Myanmar, Uganda, USA
Tianming	Urban	Shouwang Church	15 (2017)	6 (2017) 3 (2021)		Kenya, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand
Ezra	Urban	Zion Church	6 (2017) 19 (2021)	3 (2017) 16 (2021)	3 (2017) 3 (2021)	Gansu, Yunnan, Pakistan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan
Daniel	Urban	Great Commission Seminary	2	2		

## 7.4 Contributing Factors

### 7.4.1 Internal factors

#### 7.4.1.1 Existing growing church to expand to other locations and countries

The house church experienced a revival in rural China of Wenzhou in the 1970s, in Henan in the 1980s, and in Anhui in the 1990s (Shen 2014, 175). In the 1990s, the *China Gospel Fellowship* leadership commissioned hundreds of evangelists in ‘dare to die’ (1994) and ‘migrant missions’ (1999) campaigns with one-way train tickets to plant churches across major cities. Today, Zhang Heng has estimated the CGF to be four million. He also estimates that there are around 20 million believers total in the five large Rural Networks (Interviews: Zhang and T2-LG 2017; Zhang 2021a).<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> According to the current CGF leader Xia, these numbers are highly inflated from a previous era under Zhang Heng’s leadership (Xia 2022).

The political turmoil after 1989 witnessed many Chinese intellectuals turning to Christianity. The Urban Church emerged from intellectuals and professionals in society and translated the Christian faith into mainstream culture. Tianming led Shouwang church as a ‘City on a Hill’ from an underground church to become a visible witness in society. A new urban church movement witnessed thousands of people converted and baptized, churches planted and expanding in virtually all sectors of Chinese culture, penetrating a different stratum of elite and mainstream culture in the Universities, academia, businesses, artists, writers, and musicians in contemporary popular culture (Aikman 2003, 245–163; Fulton 2015). The Christian faith has provided answers to the meaning of life and offered an alternative moral foundation. The church has provided a loving community during socio-political turmoil (Sun 2009; Kan, Vicky W. 2013, 75–87). In Beijing alone, the four pastors have an estimated 300,000 Christians worshipping in 2,000 to 3,000 churches.<sup>85</sup>

The missions movement from the four pastors comes from the fruit of the rural house church revival and urban church growth. *Mission China* is still in the initial stages of vision casting, conferences, prayer, publication, and online seminars. However, they have already sent out more than forty missionaries between the four Beijing leaders.

#### **7.4.1.2 A theology of mission that includes the needed motivation for expansion**

My analysis of the motivations for missions in the Beijing leaders come from a combination of the persecuted church context and China’s economic and geopolitical national rise in the world. The ‘cross missiology’ missionary martyrdom spirituality in Zhang Heng and Ezra came from the examples of B2J missionaries. Through the sufferings of the house church sufferings, they experienced precious love from God and, out of gratitude, felt compelled to share this love with others (T. Jin 2018b, 1).

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<sup>85</sup> Interview1: Questionnaire #21 ‘What is your best estimate of Christians in your city? How many churches?’

Tianming’s ‘City on a Hill’ is to reach the heart of Chinese society in preparation to influence other cultures in world missions. The key motivation for house church leaders to join the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010 was to join an evangelical community for the church's unity in missions. However, the desire for unity came also from joining others in the face of a more significant threat under an unfriendly political environment, along with a desire to be recognised by the global church. Daniel’s *Mission China 2030* vision and gospel indebtedness motivation comes from a more significant Chinese burden and responsibility for world missions. Missions motivation may include some nationalism with China's geopolitical and economic rise. The rise of China’s status in the world with churches coming from Beijing

#### 7.4.1.3 Entrepreneurial Leadership

The four Beijing leaders are all entrepreneur leaders who have pastored churches. They have graduate degrees from the top Universities in China and seminaries in North America. The combination of four Beijing leaders provides a strategic alliance between the Rural networks and Urban Churches.

**Table 7.2: Beijing Leaders Education**

<b>Leader</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Undergrad</b>	<b>Doctoral degrees</b>
Zhang Heng	Beijing	None	Gordon-Conwell D. Min.
Tianming	Beijing	Tsinghua Univ.	None
Ezra	Beijing	Peking Univ.	Fuller D. Min.
Daniel	Beijing	Tsinghua Univ.	Fuller D. Miss.

An analysis of the four Beijing leaders and the *Mission China* leadership include:

The four Beijing leaders provide the overall leadership for *Mission China*. Beijing is the central hub for *Mission China*. While the rural and traditional churches are larger, they cannot lead a national campaign like the Beijing leadership. The church's future leadership in China will come from Beijing and these four leaders. These four Beijing

pastors are all very accomplished and have established multiple ministries wearing multiple positions, including church pastorate, network leadership, seminary president, missions agency directorship, publication editor and movement leadership. However, the organizational structures are confusing and messy, with different opinions and perspectives.

The four Beijing leaders are current or former pastors. A pastor-led missions' movement has advantages with local church involvement, financial sustainability, and a potential pool of missionaries. Pastors inspired a passion for an overall church momentum in missions. They mobilized over a hundred other pastors and churches while connecting with the international global church. They fully funded and operated four conferences in consecutive years. My analysis is that a pastor-led, as opposed to a mission leader-led missions movement, is preferable in the beginning stages, especially under a tight political context. These entrepreneur pastors had the vision and started a momentum in missions. The transition to *Mission China* as a movement from pastors to full-time mobilizers will be natural as more organizational structure is needed.

The strength of *Mission China* comes from the calibre of younger leaders who are globalized from a local context of the Urban Church. They are bi-lingual with graduate degrees from the West and can operate both in an English-speaking global context and Chinese-speaking local context. They provide youthful energy, globalized culture, creativity, technological expertise, connection to the younger generation and the English-speaking world. The younger leaders in *Mission China* come from the Urban Church. Most of these leaders have master's level seminary degrees in North America (See Table 7.3 Younger Leaders Education). They are fluent in English and can operate comfortably in global and local contexts. These younger leaders run the actual conferences and activities using creative media and technology to reach the modern globalized youth

culture. In August 2020, younger leaders successfully organized the second *Mission China* Student Mission conference online, with over 1,200 students registered.

**Table 7.3: Younger Leaders Education**

<b>Leader</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Seminary / Grad School</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Year</b>
AmyJ	Beijing	Wheaton College Grad School	MAIS	2020
AmyK	Shanghai	Gordon-Conwell Theological Sem.	MAR	2010
DF	Shanghai	Wheaton College Grad School	MAIS	2011
Jiang	Shanghai	Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	MDiv.	2014
Joy	Beijing	Moody Bible College	MDiv.	2016
Sean	Beijing	Gordon-Conwell Theological Sem.	ThM.	2019
Water	Beijing	Regent College	MDiv.	2017

#### **7.4.1.4 Available Resources**

There is a significant difference between China’s urban and rural income levels. Areas in rural China are still in poverty, with the rural household disposable income (14,617 yuan/year) one-third of the urban household (39,250 yuan/year). The lack of financial ability has caused the CGF to experience high 50% attrition rates in the first wave of overseas cross-cultural missions sent in the mid-2000.

Zhang Heng decentralized the *China Gospel Fellowship* from a lay-led house church network to an association of independent larger congregations. The larger congregation was more conducive for planting churches and sending missionaries. In 2015, Zaidao Church annual budget was 1.5 million yuan and 10% missions 150,000 yuan. In 2021, the annual budget doubled to 3 million yuan, with the missions budget increasing six times to 1 million yuan (H. Zhang 2021e).<sup>86</sup> Zaidao Church sent twenty missionaries in twelve units to Afghanistan, Albania, Cameroon, Cuba, Israel, Myanmar, and Uganda,

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<sup>86</sup> Text: Zhang Heng on Oct 29, 2021.  
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including two families to Canada and the U.S. for seminary studies who stayed in North America to minister the Chinese diaspora.

In 2017, Zion Church's General Budget was 7.7 million yuan, and the Missions Budget was 1.37 million yuan, sending a total of ten units with four overseas (J. Lee 2017). In 2018-2019, they commissioned another ten missionary units overseas (F. Wang 2021). In 2017, Shouwang Church General Budget was 2.4 million yuan with a Missions Budget of 500,000 yuan, sending fifteen missionary units with three units serving overseas (T. Jin 2017b). In 2021, three missionary units remained with a family and a single in Kenya and a family in Jordan. Two single ladies returned from Kyrgyzstan. Tianming's Call from All Ministry has mentored twenty younger missionary candidates.

The four large mission conferences expenses total was 8.8 million yuan; 1.4 million yuan in Hong Kong in 2015; 2.4 million yuan in Jeju 2016; 3.9 million yuan in Chiangmai 2017; and 1.2 million yuan in Singapore 2018 (Wei 2020, 174).

#### **7.4.1.5 Analysis of Internal Factors**

The internal factors support *Mission China* as a potential missionary movement. Both rural and urban China have an existing growing church with the explicit objective of expanding to other locations and countries. The motivations include pietism and suffering, martyrdom spirit, indebtedness, the Great Commission mandate, areas of greater need, nationalism, burden and responsibility, and humiliation and shame. The unique motivations to China's context include suffering caused a more profound experiential love of God which compelled. The *Northwest Spiritual Band* B2J movement sacrificial martyrdom spirit has been inspirational. Motivations of 'manifest destiny' and nationalism accompanied China's geopolitical and economic rise.

The four Beijing leaders provide the overall leadership as Beijing serves as a central leadership hub for *Mission China*. The four Beijing leaders are all very accomplished and led and established multiple ministries. One of the most distinctive traits of the

Beijing leaders have been local church pastors and led the *Missions China* movement from the perspective of the local church. Persecution has helped develop spiritual boldness to address the hardship. These leaders would most likely push forward with their vision and plan as they navigate the challenges of the new religious restrictive environment. The strength of *Mission China* also comes from the calibre of younger leaders who are globalized from a local context. They are bi-lingual with graduate degrees from the West and can operate both in an English-speaking global context and Chinese-speaking local context. The Urban Church has the financial ability coming from an urbanized context with congregations from the middle to upper class.

## **7.4.2 External Factors**

### **7.4.2.1 A society with liberty to establish voluntary associations and with existing models of voluntarism**

Due to government oversight on NGO activity, *Mission China* leaders cannot register and operate a legal entity as a civil society organization. The inability to create legal sodality structures hinders the trust factor for inter-church partnerships and results in a weak missions agency parachurch. The Rural Large networks have sodality structures due to their centralised networks. The independent Urban Churches have a more challenging time establishing a parachurch missions sodality. Tianming started a Beijing *Missions Connector* to provide a sodality structure for Beijing churches to send missionaries.

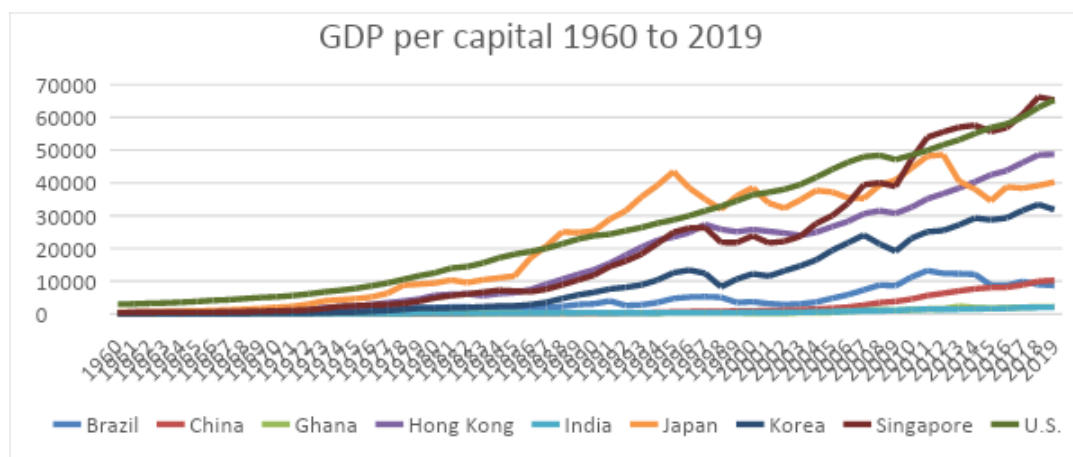
### **7.4.2.2 A growing economy in society and resources available for mission initiatives**

Economic growth is the most significant external factor for *Mission China*. China's economy provides the financial resource for the Urban Church to send missionaries. China's overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is now the second largest in the world. The Centre for Economics and Business Research China has projected China to overtake the US as the world's biggest economy by 2028 (*BBC News* 2020).



China’s large population size, the average living standards are still low, with the GDP per capita \$USD (average income per person) at \$10,262 in 2019. China’s per capita income surpassed the third world developing nations in the Global South: Ghana (\$2,202), India (\$2,104) and Brazil (\$8,717) but still behind Korea (\$31,846), Japan (\$40,246), Hong Kong (\$48,713), Singapore (\$65,233) and the U.S. (\$65,297). On a national average, China’s GDP per capita is closer to Latin America in the Global South than Korea in the Global East. However, Beijing and Shanghai GDP per capita average of \$23,264 in 2019 is more comparable to Korea and East Asia (See Table 7.4: GDP per Capital (1960 to 2019)).

**Table 7.4: GDP per Capita \$USD (1960 to 2019)**



<b>U.S.</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>Korea</b>
\$65,297	\$65,233	\$40,246	\$48,713	\$31,846
<b>Beijing/Shanghai</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Ghana</b>
\$23,264	\$10, 262	\$8, 717	\$2,100	\$2,202

(Source: World Bank)

The ‘Global South’ term describes a non-Western, less-resourced third-world (Jenkins 2011, 3).<sup>87</sup> However, China combines both Global South and Global East characteristics.

With an income per capita averaging over \$23,000, Beijing and Shanghai should be

<sup>87</sup> Jenkins in his book the Next Christendom uses the Brandt Commission to portrayal of the global North to include Europe North America, Japan and the global South to include the remaining countries ‘by no means all of which are in the Southern Hemisphere. In this context, the term “South” is characterized less by geographical location than by relative access to wealth and resources (Jenkins 2011, 3).

categorized with the developed countries in the Global East.<sup>88</sup> The Rural churches from Anhui (\$8,465) and Henan (\$8,160) provinces would closely align with less-resourced missionary movements from the Global South.

In summary, China's economic rise has geopolitical and national status influences that provide *Mission China* with disabling income, access to travel, and exposure to the world. It also encourages psychological confidence. Beijing has produced pastors with a large vision with grander plans coming from a large country with enormous resources to influence the world.

#### **7.4.2.3 Social Factors: Urbanization and Globalization**

China's urban population is divided into the nominal urban population (everyone who resides in urban areas) and official urban hukou residents (middle-class consumers with residence permits with access to complete social services). The two-tier rural migrants and urban middle-class system describe the two different types of churches coming from *Mission China*; the rural churches under Zhang Heng compared with the Urban Churches with Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel. The challenges of the rural house church included a monoculture, authoritarian leadership, high turnover, and limited financial resources (Huang 2012; Yuan 2015; 2020).

The urban globalized modern middle-class intellectuals and the pre-modern rural migrants have different characteristics (See: Table 7.5: Urban Middle-class and Rural Migrant Characteristics). The urban middle-class are educated white-collar professionals and academics with global sophistication, higher education, and financial resources. Urban churches are more theologically trained and lean more on Reformed theology. The rural migrants have a deep and simple faith emphasizing prayer and the inner spiritual

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<sup>88</sup> Dr. Fenggang Yang has proposed a new Global East category to describe religion and Christianity due to cultural and economic East Asia distinctives from the less resourced Global South (Yang 2018, 3). Beijing and Shanghai and other metropolitan cities of a higher income would align economically closer with the four little tigers or dragons of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore (Midgley 1986; Vogel 1991; Hamilton 1983).

life. They trust spiritual leadership, have experienced hardship and suffering, and are more willing to sacrifice and give their all to missions. In general, they were more charismatic and would rely on the Holy Spirit as many experienced miracles in the countryside (J. C. Ro 2013, 307).

**Table 7.5: Urban Middle-class and Rural Migrant Characteristics**

<b>Urban middle-class</b>	<b>Rural Migrants</b>
Transparency, Accountability	Trust in Spiritual Leadership
Vision, Mission and Core Values	Faith and internal spiritual life
Strategic and Theological	Prayer and Passion
Character maturity and experience	Sacrifice and Obedience
Excellence and Professionalism	Simple, Inexpensive, Easy

China’s external factors influencing *Mission China* include:

First, urbanization paved the way for the rural churches to catch a mission vision to bring the gospel to the cities. The rural church followed the path of urbanization in their migration missions strategy. Second, urbanization paved the way for the rise of the Urban Church among intellectuals and professionals. Students from the countryside moved to the cities to study at the Universities, including Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel. China’s urbanization and political upheaval after 1989 laid the foundation for Chinese intellectuals who were looking for more profound answers to the meaning of life. Third, globalization influenced the Urban Church as it penetrated elite and mainstream sectors of urban Chinese society. These urban intellectuals, professionals and cultural elites adopted contemporary globalized culture rather than indigenous Chinese characteristics. Reaching urban China required more contemporary ecclesiology structures and strategies, quality preaching and contemporary worship rather than adopting traditional ‘indigenous’ Chinese cultural elements (J. C. Ro 2018).

In summary, urbanization paved the way for the rural church to migrate to the cities and contributed toward the rise of the Urban Church. These urban intellectuals, professionals, and cultural elites adopted contemporary globalized culture rather than the

rural pietists' indigenous characteristics. Urbanization also brought together the Urban Church and the Rural migrant church in preparation for *Mission China*.

#### **7.4.2.4 Political Factors**

China entered a new era of political tightening with religious restrictions in 2018. New Religious Affairs Regulations<sup>89</sup> were announced in September 2017 and enacted in February 2018 (Introvigne 2019b), which resulted in attacks on churches across China (Jackson 2019). A new 'Bitter Winter' era had dawned with all religious activity that would require government approval. A period of openness during President Hu and President Jiang had ended (Pittman 2019). The State Administration for Religious Affairs was dissolved, and the United Front Work Department, known as one of the strictest organs in the party, took responsibility for religious affairs (Schirmacher 2018). A national campaign intended to reduce the house church to zero. As a result, all public house church locations were closed (Shepherd 2018b; Introvigne 2019a).

In April 2018, Ezra's Zion Church facilities were forcibly closed, the church name on walls was scrubbed, and all equipment was confiscated in August 2018 (Webber 2018; Cheng 2018). Police officials forcefully arrested preachers in their homes, sometimes halfway through their Sunday services. Congregation members were forced to give out their IDs, after which police would often harass church leaders and their congregations. Christian believers lost their jobs or had been kicked out of their rented apartments without any reason or notice (Y. Wang 2018). The overall environment came under stricter government control and surveillance. Wang Yi was arrested, and the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu was closed on December 9, 2018 (Shellnutt 2018) and

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<sup>89</sup> The new Religious Affairs Regulations (宗教事务条例) #686 released on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 under sanction of the State Department (国务院) signed by Premier Li Keqiang encompassed complete control over all religious organizations, education, location, personnel, activities and funds with no grey areas for non-sanctioned religion. Chapter 2, Article 7 to 10: All religious organisations must be approved. Chapter 3, Article 11 to 18: All religious education must be approved. Chapter 4, Article 19 to 35: All religious locations must be approved. Chapter 5, Article 36 to 39: All religious personnel must be approved. Chapter 6, Article 40 to 48: All religious activity must be approved. Chapter 7, Article 49 to 60: All religious funds must be reported and approved (K. Li 2017).

sentenced to nine years in prison (Mozur and Johnson 2019b). Tianming acknowledged that the open era of the Urban Church under Shouwang Church's banner 'City on a Hill' had come to an end (T. Jin 2018c).

After the *Mission China* conference in Singapore in December 2018, large conferences overseas also ended. *Mission China* activities came to a halt for restructuring for the dust to settle. The attendance numbers were significantly lower, down to 180 compared to the height of over 1,000 in 2016.<sup>90</sup> The movement had run its course with four large conferences.

*Mission China* leaders have been optimistic before and after the political tightening. Tianming and Ezra's attitude was to continue their mission no matter how they treated the church.

'I want to say that no matter how the Chinese government treats the Chinese church's missionary movement, it will not be in the way so much. Because essentially, they can't change Chinese churches to go for missions. (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 16).'

Acts tell us that the church in Jerusalem was greatly persecuted, which just became an opportunity for many of them to "go preaching everywhere". Nowadays, the Chinese church is not persecuted at the time when the gospel is just introduced, and the faith has not yet settled. Still, the political power oppresses it because the church's growth has had a broad impact on society. Does this prove that the time for the church in missions is now mission? (T. Jin 2018a)

Zhang Heng is an optimist who believes that the political environment will soon change and open the house church to be legalized. He is the most optimistic among the Beijing leaders, with few holding his position. Ezra has warned that China could be the third totalitarian government in history that threatens the world order after Germany under Hitler and the Soviet Union under Stalin. The Chinese government has the most advanced technology with economic development and military for geopolitical power to eliminate illegal house church activities, including global missions within China and abroad (E. Jin 2021).

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<sup>90</sup> The *Mission China* conference in Singapore in 2018 had only 180 from mainland China in attendance compared to 850 in 2015, 1034 in 2016, 900 in 2017 (Wei 2020, 173).

Whether China opens or closes, the political environment prepared *Mission China* house church leaders to find creative strategies to send their missionaries into similar political environments of pressure and persecution. The political climate has shaped their missions strategies as they are more aware and prepared for persecution at home and on the field. At home and on the field, the two-sided persecution would be an added challenge unique to China but can be a model for other churches in persecuted contexts. There will be new ways of operation for a missionary sending nation in a persecuted context. New models will be developed that will differ from the West or the Global South.

China is like a desert. We can't build tropical trees in the desert, but cactus. Both are life, but we need to adapt structure, method, ... but a big challenge. Fundraising, organization, personnel, system, we cannot borrow a copy from the Western world and need to do it in a Chinese context. Especially pressure from the political side, an underground method like we did in house church before, how to be more practical, do training outside China, Nepal, Thailand, and we can have mobilized conferences and summits for senior leaders outside of China, like what we did with MC2030 strategically. We need to pay more than the Western world because we are underground. Like in Mt Everest, without oxygen, even if we move one step, we will need more resources with lots of waste, collateral cost with last-minute changes of cancelled hotels, airfares, and last-minute changes (Interview: Liu and Jin 2019, 3).

#### **7.4.2.5 COVID and a missions prayer movement**

Persecution ended large-scale events and forced *Mission China* to go back underground. With the arrival of COVID in 2020, the Beijing leaders transitioned missions activities online through an online prayer movement. Thousands of church leaders joined in several zoom events broadening the connections.<sup>91</sup> T2-Lydia estimated that 'if 5% of the house church were involved with Lausanne, 40% are with *Mission China*'.<sup>92</sup>

As seen previously, persecution has helped grow and spread the gospel in different forms but in an organic grassroots manner. A tightened environment forced the church to go deeper in their faith in God which developed boldness for future missionary sending. *Mission China* came to a halt but re-emerged as a broader prayer movement during

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<sup>91</sup> Webinar on May 30, 2020 with 5,000 people.

<sup>92</sup> Phone conversation with T2-Lydia on December 5, 2020.

COVID. Daniel started 24 hours a day, seven days a week prayer chain called a United Prayer Altar with a 100-year campaign called a ‘Century of Prayer and a Century of Missions’.

#### **7.4.2.6 Analysis of External Factors**

Underground voluntarism models have resulted in underdeveloped and unhealthy mission agencies and parachurch organizations. These organizations must figure out how to raise funds and support the missionaries while maintaining financial transparency and oversight without a legal entity inside China.

China’s economic, geopolitical, and national status rise provided *Mission China* with disposable income, access to travel, exposure to the world, and confidence. Beijing and Shanghai income per capita has almost caught up to Korea. *Mission China* leaders have a bold vision with grand plans coming from a large Christian population with global missions resources.

Urbanization paved the way for the rural church to migrate to the cities and contributed toward the rise of the Urban Church. Globalization reached the elite and mainstream sectors of urban Chinese society. These urban intellectuals, professionals and cultural elites adopted contemporary globalized culture rather than indigenous Chinese characteristics from the pietist rural migrant churches.

President Xi enacted the New Religious Regulations in 2018 and started a national campaign to reduce the house church to zero. *Mission China* activities came to a halt with the closure of the high profiled conferences. Beijing church leaders are still optimistic. A new creative way of operations will be developed with increased costs and challenges under this new tightened environment. COVID ushered in an online mission and prayer revival. *Mission China* has re-emerged to involve a broader support base with a renewed momentum.

#### **7.4.3 International Factors**

Beijing leaders all consider the Lausanne Congress in 2010 as the primary catalytic contributor for the start of *Mission China*. The preparations for the Lausanne World Congress in Cape Town in 2010 provided an opportunity for the different streams of the house church to join in a unified platform for missions. Tianming (Urban), Zhang Heng (Rural) and T1-Yuehan (Traditional) brought together a China national committee of twenty leaders. The China Lausanne Committee then selected 230 church leaders to invite to the Congress and raised \$1 million and provided scholarships to a hundred leaders from neighbouring countries to attend. Even though the Chinese delegation was prevented from attending (Lim 2010), Lausanne provided the platform for Ezra to form the Jesus Leadership Forum for *Mission China* following the Congress.

The Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010 catalysed the house church for global missions. The Lausanne Covenant provided a unifying evangelical statement of the faith supplied distinctive missiology. The preparations for attending the Congress provided the church with an opportunity to work together and grow in maturity. The re-attachment to the global church family is significant since the house church had felt neglected under persecution (H. Zhang 2015; E. Jin 2015; T. Jin 2016a; D. Jin 2015a).

Although no official survey has been conducted, the estimated number of Overseas Chinese missionary numbers appears to have declined, as seen with Singapore.<sup>93</sup> A distinction between mainland China's house church and the Overseas Chinese churches is the emphasis on cross-cultural missions. From many years of anecdotal observation, the Overseas Chinese church primarily focuses on the Chinese diaspora and less on overseas cross-cultural.<sup>94</sup> The four Beijing leaders are divided over the Overseas Chinese church. Ezra and Tianming see no contribution from the overseas Chinese, while Daniel

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<sup>93</sup> Between 2009 and 2019, Singapore saw a decrease of full-time career missionaries from 493 to 329; 'this is in line with the downward trend reported in NMS 2014 (Singapore Centre for Global Missions 2019).

<sup>94</sup> James Hsia, Executive Director of Chinese Christian Evangelical Association, pointed out that overseas cross-cultural missions is the weakest point of Taiwan's churches (Herald 2011).



and T2-Hou see some positive contribution.<sup>95</sup> Compared to *Mission China*, the Chinese diaspora and minorities with China are part of the overall missions. Still, cross-cultural missions to unreached peoples and regions of the world appear to be a priority.

Ezra asked, ‘What has CCCOWE (Chinese Coordination Council of World Evangelisation) been doing?’<sup>96</sup> Ezra’s question implied that the Overseas Chinese churches had not done much in global missions (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 18). Tianming believes that the Overseas Chinese influence on the *Mission China* movement has been almost non-existent.

We have to look at this objectively. The Lausanne Movement provided *Mission China's* platform, which developed into an independent movement launched by the indigenous mainland Chinese church. The Overseas Chinese church did not assist nor financially support *Mission China* but was only invited as participant speakers in a limited manner. Some even spoke against it (T. Jin 2021a).

Zhang Heng sees the importance of unifying the Overseas Chinese church as a significant positive development for the future of *Mission China*. He believes that *Mission China* would unite the mainland and the overseas Chinese churches by igniting them towards missions.

Unity-missions is very important. The missionary movement means not only you send out missionaries, but you mobilize others to send out missionaries. I suggested that we mobilise them for Chinese churches overseas and ignite their heart for missions, like passing on their visions and walking alongside them. (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 17)

In summary, international factors strongly influencing *Mission China* include the Lausanne Movement, which provided an evangelical identity and unifying platform for mission activities. However, the overseas Chinese diaspora and CCCOWE have been disappointing for *Mission China* and the house church movement in general as not contributing to Mission China. The perception is that the overseas Chinese have sided with the TSPM over the house church, especially with the Lausanne Congress.

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<sup>95</sup> Both Daniel and T2-Hou have been influenced by overseas Chinese leaders Thomas Wang and Cyrus Lam with Go International (Hou 2017).

<sup>96</sup> Overseas Chinese leaders founded CCCOWE in 1976 after the first Lausanne Congress in 1974 to facilitate world evangelism for the Chinese Church worldwide. CCCOWE has been meeting every five years for nine consecutive congresses.

## 7.6 Conclusion

Early spiritual influences on the four Beijing pastors have shaped the urban church and its missional characteristics. The Korean missionaries laid the initial foundation of faith through discipleship and seminary training. The American teachers influenced a younger generation through friendship evangelism on the University campuses by connecting the Christian faith to modernity. The indigenous house church patriarchs who served over twenty years in prison inspired an uncompromising persevering faith and deep-seated piety but did not provide ecclesiastical ministry models or missionary spirit.

The missiological distinctive from these four Beijing pastors are summarised into five categories. 1) Revivals and the supernatural in rural and urban China are the fuel to missions. 2) The ‘cross missiology’ with persecution produced a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit. China was the first church to launch a missionary movement from a persecuted context. 3) ‘City on a Hill’ transitioned the house church from an underground movement to become a public witness in society. Missions from urban intellectuals in mainstream society are a precursor of the kind of missionaries who can reach influencers in other cultures. 4) The controversial B2J movement inspired a generation of church leaders with an urgency and missions burden for the Jewish and Muslim world. 5) The recovery of the Great Commission mandate and the priority of overseas cross-cultural missions became the prime directive for *Mission China*. What is probably the most bold statement is Ezra’s claim that China is the only remaining church in the world with overseas cross-cultural missions as the church's essential purpose and top priority.

The greatest challenge to *Mission China* has been the tightening political environment. The religious landscape started to deteriorate with the new Religious Affairs Regulation in 2018. A national campaign to eradicate the activities of the house church has ushered in persecution not seen since the Cultural Revolution. However, the Beijing pastors have not changed their overall vision and determination. The ambitious goals of 20,000

missionaries by 2030 have been removed. The *Mission China* vision transitioned into a century long one-hundred-year vision of a missionary movement coming from China. In 2020, COVID, church and mission activities moved online as a missions prayer movement continues to build in momentum.

Most of the other *Mission China* leaders are preparing and expecting for a political tightening with increased persecution to come. The ongoing pressure provides opportunities for *Mission China* leaders to explore creative home and field covert operations models unique to China's restrictive context. The Beijing pastors are still optimistic and have developed characteristics of tenacity, perseverance, and boldness. They have a pioneering spirit forged through years of persecution and interpret the new political environment challenges as preparation for future growth. Persecution has also forced them to become more subdued and less triumphant.

My final analysis is that *Mission China's* most significant contribution to World Christianity could be the 'cross missiology', City on a Hill, and the recovery of the Great Commission mandate. As a persecuted church under its government's attacks, China's recovery of the Great Commission does not have the accompaniments of Western Christendom, imperialism, and colonialism. China's 'cross missiology' parallels the first generation of Jesus's disciples who received the Holy Spirit under the threat of persecution and boldly preached the gospel and spread the faith to both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman Empire. At the same time, the two-sided persecution from home and field has forced the church to find creative means to send CSN (Creative Sending Nation) missionaries. While being attacked by its government at home, they are better prepared for hostile forces in the field where the harshest areas are unfriendly to the Christian faith and its mission. China provides a new missions model coming from the persecuted church.

Furthermore, *Mission China's* 'self-missionisation' process reflects a missionary movement emerging from a centre of economic and geopolitical power with a church of urban intellectuals in the Global East. The missionary movement from urban China will have more similar Global North and Global East characteristics from a developed country context than the missions movement coming from poorer countries in the Global South. China's financial strength and global access will open doors to opportunities previously witnessed in mission history. The type of missionaries coming from Urban China will have the ability to reach other movers and shakers of other cultures.

Finally, the recovery of the Great Commission mandate points to the traditional understanding of missions as seen with the old-aged Western and more recent Korean missionary movement. *Mission China* will be leading in the recovery of overseas cross-cultural missions to unreached peoples and regions as the prime directive of the church.

## Chapter 8:

### Comparison with Contemporary Theology

#### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter compares several topics from contemporary theologians with the four Beijing pastors' missiology. Four topics have been selected from contemporary theologians: 1) a suffering God; 2) the positivity of suffering; 3) the theology of hope; and 4) a nohandles cross and recommendation for a moratorium on missions. These missiological themes from contemporary theologians will be compared with the missiology from the Beijing pastors in Chapter 7.

The first topic of comparison is Paul Fiddes' theological writings on the 'suffering of God'. In *The Creative Suffering of God*, Fiddes summarises several positions on the suffering of God and includes the chapter 'Why believe in a suffering God?' (Fiddes 2002, 16–45). The second topic is on the 'positivity of sufferings' from Catholic theologian Karan Kilby's chapter on the writings of Julian of Norwich and Hans Urs von Balthasar in her book *God, Evil, and the Limits of Theology* (Kilby 2021, 121–37). The third topic is Jürgen Moltmann's eschatology from his book *Theology of Hope* (Moltmann 1993c). Moltmann's 'theology of hope' will be compared with eschatological urgency from the B2J movement. The final topic is a 'cross with no handles' and offers recommendations for a moratorium on Western missions from Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama in *No Handle on the Cross: an Asian Meditation on the Crucified Mind* (Koyama 2011). Koyama's missiological perspective will be compared with *Mission China's* 'recovery of the Great Commission'. The final section in this chapter includes my own insights from analysing the various voices of contemporary missiology with the four pastors in *Mission China*. I have also included some general comparative insights

from evangelical scholars Scott Sunquist and Tim Tennent, who serve as bridges with Andrew Walls and ecumenical theologians in the field of ‘World Christianity’.

### **8.2 A ‘Suffering God’ by Paul Fiddes**

Fiddes explores the importance of a ‘suffering God’ from the perspective of God’s love and empathy for a suffering world. He uses an entire chapter to answer the question, ‘Why believe in a suffering God?’ First, God’s suffering signifies his love for the world; ‘Truly personal love, will involve the suffering of one who loves; the world being what it is, love must be costly and sacrificial (Fiddes 2002, 17)’. Second, God’s suffering places Jesus and the cross at a central place in the world. ‘For we must move on to affirm that the cross is an actualization in our history of what is eternally true of God’s nature. If indeed God suffers in the cross of Jesus in reconciling the world to himself, then there must always be a cross in the experience of God as he deals with the world which exists against him (Fiddes 2002, 29).’ Third, God’s suffering provides humanity comfort in that we know God suffers too and understands our situation from within. Furthermore, there is a conviction that forbids any theological argument that God directly causes suffering (Fiddes 2002, 32). The fourth reason is that a suffering God provides an overall picture of the world we work in today (Fiddes 2002, 37).

For Fiddes, ‘mission’ is not going or sending to an area without the gospel, as understood by the Beijing pastors. The ‘mission’ of God is encompassed in the *missio Dei* with God’s love and concern for the world. God has made the world as it is and chooses to suffer with it, demonstrating a deep, costly, and sacrificial love for the world. ‘Mission’ is open friendship with those who are quite unlike it in order to share fellowship with a crucified Christ (Fiddes 2002, 31).

For the Chinese house church pastors, their experience of suffering has led them to hymns and prayers to a ‘suffering God’ who identifies with his suffering people. The ‘theology of the cross’ is the experience of preciousness and closeness with God during trials and weakness. One of many examples is a hymn called ‘Grace Full of Tears (of Gratitude)’ by prolific songwriter Ruth Lü (Xiaomin), who combines suffering and the ‘way of the cross’.<sup>97</sup> Jesus’ suffering with his nailed-marked hands holds the hands of the suffering church through the harsh and bitter road.

*Tears of gratitude can't stop flowing  
It's not enough to say what's in my heart  
A pair of nail-marked hands knock on the long-closed door  
A soft voice took our hearts away*

*Knowing that this way is the way of the cross  
It's windy and rainy, it's hard and bitter  
The Lord's loving hand is always holding my hand  
There's no reason not to go down the road.*

The house church identification with Christ in his suffering led them one step further from a deeper piety to world missions. Suffering cultivated an inner life through an identification with Christ’s suffering. Beijing pastor T2-Pei shared how the ‘way of the cross’ experience brought the Chinese church closer to God.

The way of the cross... is saying that Chinese churches are always being nurtured by God and are holding hands with God. Chinese churches have a characteristic which emphasises inner lives (T2-Pei 2017).

Suffering produced an inner spiritual life which then provided the strength to endure more suffering. This inner faith and the identification with Christ during suffering brought about immense comfort through Christ’s example. By overcoming difficulties, house church Christians experienced indescribable joy. This joy exuberates into an evangelistic fervour for missions with the strong urge to share this precious love with others.

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<sup>97</sup> Ruth Lü (Xiaomin) is a prolific house church hymn writer of some 1,800 songs from the Henan province of Zhang Heng. She composed this hymn and many others (Aikman 2003, 108–11).

The sufferings of the Chinese house church have led it into a deeper pietism, evangelistic passion, and sacrificial missions. Zhang Heng and the rural house church's experience of poverty and persecution in the 1990s propelled missionary evangelists to spread the gospel across China. Tianming's description of the motivation behind mission fervour, as observed in Watchman Nee, is a desire to share the gospel from an experience of God's precious love. 'Missions' was not from a command of the Great Commission but a response of love that overflowed from inward piety. Ezra's missionary passion came from his early contact with the original Back to Jerusalem Northwest Spiritual Band, who sacrificed their lives in their mission journey towards Jerusalem. Pietism, nurtured under persecution, was an essential ingredient of the Chinese house church to follow the suffering example of Jesus, which propelled it to a love of evangelistic expansion within China and missionary sending to the world.

The Chinese would resonate with Fiddes's chapter on 'Why believe in a suffering God'. The Beijing pastors would agree with Fiddes on his four reasons, including 1) God's suffering signifies his love for the world; 2) His suffering places Jesus and the cross at a central place in the world; 3) God's suffering provides humanity comfort in that we know God understands our situation, and 4) a suffering God provides an overall picture of the world we work in today. The difference between the Chinese pastors and Fiddes is the final outcome of a suffering God. For Fiddes, the 'mission' of a suffering God is friendship, identity, and solidarity with those who are suffering. For the Chinese pastors, who are also bearers of suffering, their goal is to follow the 'way of the cross' in 'missions' to bring the good news of salvation to those who do not know this suffering God.

### **8.3 The 'Positivity of Suffering' by Karen Kilby**



Another interesting topic of comparison is the ‘positivity of suffering’. Catholic theologian Karen Kilby compares the works of Julian of Norwich and Hans Urs von Balthasar to probe the relationship between suffering and love.<sup>98</sup> In Julian’s *Revelations*, she writes:

I longed eagerly to be on my deathbed so that... I might myself believe I was dying... I longed to have in this sickness every kind of suffering both of body and soul that I would experience if I died... remember and feeling his Passion; for I wanted his pains to be my pains (Norwich, Watson, and Jenkins 2006, chap. 2, 3).

God grants her wishes at the age of 30, and Julian becomes deathly ill, lingering to the point of death, experiencing a loss of blood and the pain of Christ. Julian prays for the experience of suffering and graphically details the passion and sufferings of Christ. Kilby then compares Julian with Balthasar, who considers suffering *intrinsically* positive.

In Balthasar, then, we find a blurring the distinction between love and loss, love and suffering at every level of his thought, so that suffering takes on the aura of something *intrinsically* positive. Suffering and loss work their way into the very centre of the Christian vision (Kilby 2021, 128).

Kilby is hesitant to agree with Balthasar’s view of suffering as intrinsically positive. As a first principle, she concludes that ‘suffering and loss are to be avoided, fought against, resisted. We ought never to aim for them, on this account, never consider them a goal. And it follows that we also cannot aim for this pattern of life (Kilby 2021, 136).’ Kilby concludes that seeking ‘suffering and loss’ would point to ‘something gone wrong’ if it leads to the confirmation of one’s authenticity and not necessarily the fulfilment of one’s mission.

Actively to seek a life of suffering and loss, then, to dwell upon these things as things to be desired and sought, would be to misunderstand both the fundamental nature of the suffering and loss themselves ... – and also to misunderstand the nature of the Christian life (Kilby 2021, 137).

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<sup>98</sup> Is it a positive embrace of suffering and loss, understood as ultimately bound up together with love, or a positive overcoming of suffering and loss, understood as that which cannot most fundamentally touch love? (Kilby 2021, 137).

In contrast to Kilby's view, the Beijing pastors view suffering and even martyrdom as necessary for the witness and expansion of the gospel. For Kilby and the Catholic mystics, their perspective on suffering is an individualised purpose or goal to know Christ and his suffering. For the Beijing pastors, suffering includes a purpose for a deeper piety, but also involves a greater purpose for the expansion of the gospel in missions.

Daniel and Ezra both have stated the necessity of suffering and possibly martyrdom to accomplish the greater purpose of missions. For Daniel, missions to the Muslim world 'require us to take up the cross to follow the Lord, pay the price, sacrifice ourselves, and be willing to be a martyr (Interview 2: D. Jin 2016, 1).' For Ezra, the spiritual power for missions is the ability to bear any cost required for the task. 'We must accomplish our mission at any cost... That is the 'power' (Interview 2: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 10).'

Suffering and martyrdoms of the past have been seen as God's purpose in highlighting the essential truths of the gospel under an atheistic communist oppressive regime. Suffering brought them to a close identification and relationship with Christ in his sufferings, which in turn compelled them to share this experience with others with evangelistic missions fervour. Courage and perseverance gained under suffering were also essential traits for Chinese missionaries sent to hard regions that would require suffering and loss. The Chinese house church leaders probably would agree with Balthasar's understanding of suffering as intrinsically positive.

The concept of suffering and even martyrdom for a greater cause is immersed in church history and in Chinese history. The Western usage of the word *martyr* is always understood to include the idea of being a 'witness' for the faith with the less Chinese equivalent of this concept. Martyrdom was mostly understood negatively in traditional

Chinese society; a dead son could no longer carry out the sacrifices for the family or his ancestors (King 2015). However, sacrifices and even death are tied to a greater cause in ancient Chinese folklore. One example is a sacrificial suicidal death tied to the greater good of honesty and loyalty. Chinese poet-statesman Qu Yuan (340 B.C.-278 B.C.), a loyal minister, was banished by the king due to corrupt officials who slandered his name.<sup>99</sup> Qu became a national hero of social idealism and unbending patriotism under the People's Republic of China after the 1949 Communist victory. A high-school Chinese textbook from 1957 began with 'Qu Yuan was the first great patriotic poet in the history of our country's literature (Zhang 1957).' As the CCP faced an increasing number of deaths in the wars against Japan and the Kuomintang, they began to promote the cult of the red martyr. In the 1950s, martyrs were honoured in the revolution with commemorative practices with the Martyrs' Memorial Day and the building of a national cemetery (Hung 2008). Even before the Communist takeover, the willingness to suffer and die ('Dare to Die') for a cause was seen in the Xinhai Revolution when many Chinese revolutionaries became martyrs in the battle against the Qing dynasty. Dr. Sun Yatsen and Huang Xing promoted the 'Dare to Die' student corps to fight against Qing dynasty rule. Huang said, 'We must die, so let us die bravely'. Suicide squads 'were formed by Chinese students going into battle, knowing that they would be killed fighting against overwhelming odds (Hsüan 1975, 657).'

For Zhang Heng and the CGF network, this same 'Dare to Die' phrase was used to send young people on a mission to the cities with a willingness to die for the gospel (Shen 2014, 111–14). While Kilby considers seeking suffering as 'something has gone wrong',

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<sup>99</sup> Qu Yuan drowned himself as people rushed to the river to rescue their beloved minister by throwing packets of steam rice dumplings to prevent fish from eating his body. Every year during the Duanwu or Dragon boat festival, Chinese families gather to eat these rice dumplings in memory of Qu Yuan.

China's house church's pietistic roots include a desire to be martyred for the love of the saviour. Zhang Heng shared his conversion experience in rural Henan on how people 'wanted to be martyrs' to spread the gospel.

At that time, a lot of people wanted to be martyrs. Believing in God is spreading the gospel, which in turn is being His martyr, and serving to be martyred (Interview 2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 1).

Tianming has not welcomed suffering. However, he realised that he had the same 'be loyal until death' spirit (致死中心) (Rev. 2:10) of Yuan Xiangcheng (Interview: T. Jin 2020a). From his own spiritual journey, he had already adopted the same non-compromising 'house church stance' *jia ting jiaohui lichang* (家庭教会立场) as Wang Mingdao. Yuan Xiangcheng and Wang Mingdao were both arrested for refusing to join the state-controlled TSPM church and as a result imprisoned for 25 years for their faith (Interview: T. Jin 2020b).

Did Tianming intentionally welcome persecution, knowing that his bold stand would invite further attacks? My conjecture is that Tianming believed that his 'City on a Hill' vision - for the house church to be a public witness in society, would have a positive outcome for Shouwang Church. However, his direct confrontational approach contributed to Shouwang Church's registration failure and to his house arrest. Holding on to a strong conviction, which other house church leaders felt unnecessary, led to more suffering. I believe Tianming was prepared for the most likely scenario of an all-out assault on Shouwang Church. Like the house church patriarchs who did not join the TSPM but served twenty-plus years or died in prison, they stood firm on their convictions and trusted God. Not surprisingly, although Tianming's 'City on a Hill' vision did not materialise through Shouwang Church, his vision was still accomplished through thousands of other house churches. Furthermore, his involvement with the Lausanne Congress prepared a unity platform for Ezra, Daniel, T1-Yuehan, T1-Cui, and others to launch *Mission China*

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2030. On the one hand, his uncompromising convictions resulted in his decade house arrest and an all-out assault on Shouwang Church, but on the other hand, he witnessed the emergence of the Urban Church in the cities among intellectuals and influencers and the launch of a missions movement. In short, the sacrifices of Tianming and Shouwang Church opened the door to an Urban Church movement that expanded with thousands of churches rising to the surface as a public witness in society and resulted in an overseas cross-cultural missions movement from China to the world.

I realise that the concern of an ‘unrealistic’ optimism of the house church pastors appears to make light of the situation by sugar-coating hardships and could be a temptation to reinterpret history to justify their situation. However, the pastors would affirm that suffering produces a bold spirituality necessary for spiritual breakthroughs in church ministry and missions. Therefore, they would be willing to suffer and even welcome it for the sake of the expansion of the gospel. While the ‘willingness to suffer for spiritual breakthrough’ is not necessarily within all or even most house church Christians, this type of sacrificial mission spirituality is pervasive within the house church leaders and among the four Beijing pastors.

For Tianming, the overcoming of persecution was a crucial first step in determining the church's readiness for overseas cross-cultural missions. Only when the church had overcome persecution coming from its own culture and power structures could it effectively be ready for missionary impact in other cultures. In other words, to influence other cultures, one must first be able to influence their own culture first (T. Jin 2016).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> There are some parallels between China's Urban house church and the early church under Diocletian in 300 A.D., just before the Constantinian era. The church came under persecution because it was a threat to the Roman pagan religion. The Diocletian persecution was intended to curb the growth and influence of Christianity, which had reached close to 6 million Christians by the year 300 AD; 10% of the Roman Empire's total population (Hopkins 1998, 191). In other words, a church that did not threaten the existing power structures would have less reason to be persecuted. After 200 years of Christianity in China, the

China's readiness for global missions was due to the church's impact on its society and the ability to courageously face persecution from the authorities. For these reasons, he believed that the Chinese house church, especially the Urban Church, had passed the test of readiness for overseas cross-cultural missions (Interview2: T. Jin 2016b, 2).

Why is embracing the 'willing to suffer' important for *Mission China*? A simple answer is that a bold spirituality is necessary for an evangelistic spirit to go to difficult regions that require suffering and sacrifice. Missionary martyrdoms are now inspiring Protestant house churches to prepare for their missionary martyrs. In preparation for a missionary movement coming from China, Ezra hosted a webinar called 'Blood of the Martyrs: God's Way of Revival' in memory of the nearly 200 Protestant missionaries and children who died during the Boxer Rebellion, with several thousand in attendance (Mission China 2020). In 1900, at least 189 Protestant missionaries and 500 native Chinese Christians were murdered during the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>101</sup> The phrase 'The Year of the Great Martyrdom' was recorded on a burial stone of one of the first Chinese Protestant Christians, Song Hoot Kiam (1830–1900), who died in the same year as the Boxer Rebellion (Song 2020).

Ezra believes that the sacrificial 'core strength' of *Mission China* is missionary martyrdom. He is preparing the Chinese church for missionary martyrs. China experienced their first two missionary martyrs with the killing of two young Chinese in Pakistan. While Chinese Christians have been martyred for their faith within China, this

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church finally has penetrated the heart of urban China, and, in Beijing, the centre of the political, cultural, and intellectual powers.

<sup>101</sup> In a book published in 1901 called *Martyred Missionaries of the China Inland Mission: With a Record of the Perils & Sufferings of some who Escaped*, Marshall Broomhall combines the two words 'martyr' and 'missionary'. The highest loss of missionaries that year came from China Inland Mission, with 58 adult missionaries and 21 children (Broomhall 1901; Forsyth 1904). Even before 1900, there were other martyrdoms related to the anti-foreign sentiment in China, including the eleven Anglican missionaries and their children who were murdered in 1895 (Welch 2005, abstract).

would be the first time mainland Chinese Christians have been killed on foreign soil in a mission to another culture (Reuters 2017). Hymn writer Xiao Min writes a hymn named ‘Blood of Missionaries is Shed in the Right Place’ to honour two Chinese, Meng Li-Si and Li Xinheng, who were kidnapped and killed by the Islamic State in Pakistan on May 24, 2017. Below are the lyrics:

*The blood of missionaries is shed in the right place  
Their touching stories are spread in the world  
The closest kin feel extremely sad  
The Lord will comfort them, turn grief into power  
Look at their faces that were beautiful and serene  
At young age, the golden time  
They devoted their lives  
My heart can't be calm  
My tears flow  
I'm ready to be a martyr  
And walk on the road of evangelisation in the West  
Your blood shall not be bled in vain  
Instead, will be the power in that place  
Pakistan, wait for us  
The Chinese church will keep on heading to you  
- Translated by Karen Luo  
(R. Wang 2017).*

As the hymn states, house church Christians are preparing for martyrdom. Martyrs are the ‘power’ that fuels the missionary spirit of the Chinese house church towards Pakistan. ‘I’m ready to be a martyr and walk the road of evangelisation in the West (of China). Your blood shall not be bled in vain. Instead, (your martyrdom) will be the power in that place. Pakistan, wait for us. The Chinese Church will keep on heading to you (R. Wang 2017).’

#### **8.4 Eschatology: the ‘Theology of Hope’ by Jürgen Moltmann**

Another interesting comparison is the eschatology of Moltmann’s ‘theology of hope’ and the Back to Jerusalem eschatology of Ezra and Zhang Heng. Throughout his theological career, Moltmann consistently engaged with historical events and social movements: the Jewish holocaust, the nuclear threat, liberation theology, the civil rights

movement, feminism, and the ecological threat (Chester 2006, 5).<sup>102</sup> In the midst of a world of chaos, tragedy, and despair, Moltmann asserts that eschatology, the doctrine of Christian hope, is the framework dogma making Christianity credible and relevant to the modern world. In his book *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann describes eschatology as ‘the characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole church’ (Moltmann 1993c, 316). Eschatological hope is not merely ‘a proclamation of faith and hope, but also historic transformation of life’ (Moltmann 1993c, 330).

The eschatology of the Chinese house church has historical roots in millennium theology (Hattaway 2003, 108–9, 112). The house church holds to the end-time eschatological urgency at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the North American missions movement (Johnson 1988). Moltmann’s eschatology encourages a ‘*theology of hope*’ under chaos, evil and injustice amid two world wars. Whereas in the light of the imminent return of Christ, Beijing pastors Ezra and Zhang Heng have an end-times eschatology that includes an urgency with missions to the Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. ‘I believe the *Mission China* movement is eschatology.... The end-times capture us.’ (Interview 2: E. Jin, Zhang, and Lydia 2017, 10).

A clear distinctive implication of the eschatology of Zhang Heng and Ezra is the priority of the salvation of Arabs and Jews over social concerns. Instead, Moltmann rejects this kind of escapist eschatology that is only concerned with the individual's future beyond this world at the expense of social concerns. ‘This theology threatens to become a religious ideology of romanticist subjectivity, a religion within the sphere of the individuality that has been relieved of all social obligations.’ (Moltmann 1993c, 316).

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<sup>102</sup> Moltmann was born in 1926 into a secular German family and became a Christian as a prisoner of war in England. He served as a pastor for five years before entering the academic world as a professor of Systematic Theology.



While contemporary missiology is holistic with primary concerns of caring for the poor and addressing social injustices, the Chinese pastors come with 'Prioritism' theology. The Beijing pastors hold to 'Prioritism' and not 'Holism' theology, according to the definition by David Hesselgrave: 'The mission is primarily to make disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive.' (Hesselgrave 2005, 122). Although house church missions have been involved in social responsibilities, including earthquake relief, helping poorer regions, and medical missions, the primary concern is to save souls and plant churches. The revivals and expansion of the house church in China have been primarily through evangelism and church planting. Their concerns are for the Jews and Arabs peoples and for unreached people groups. The Beijing pastors themselves have been involved in local pastoral ministry or theological education. However, as they head to the mission field, Chinese missionaries have been exploring holistic methods with refugees, education, business as missions, prison ministry, medical missions, and other areas of social concerns. I believe it will only be a matter of time before they become more involved in holistic ministries while still holding to the 'Prioritism' theology.

Due to their view of eschatological urgency, Ezra and Zhang Heng are primarily concerned with the salvation of souls and the planting of churches. They have been influenced by the first generation of B2J *Preach to the Gospel Everywhere* and Northwest Spiritual Band, who held to a millennial expectation to reach as many people as possible before the Lord returns.

Zhang Heng received a Back to Jerusalem vision from the Lord, believing that before Christ's return, two occurrences will happen: salvation first among the Arabs and then the Jews. 'Back to Jerusalem is the salvation of all Israel and the Arab world. From the

strategic outlook of gospel development from Paul's age to today's Chinese revival, time is the Arab world...the Arab world is the most difficult one and meant for the Chinese to bear.... If we want to bring the gospel back to Jerusalem, we must do missions in the Arab world. Only when the Arabs believe can we go to Jerusalem.' (Interview 2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 7) He believed that the return of the Lord only could happen after the 'the full number of Gentiles has come in and, in this way, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25). His B2J eschatology has shaped his missiological priorities. He considers the Arabs the final frontier of Gentiles who need salvation. 'If you cannot fill the number of Gentiles being saved, you can't go to Jerusalem, and the Lord can't return.' (Interview 2: Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 7)

### **8.5 'No Handle Cross' and a 'Moratorium on Missions' by Kosuke Koyama**

In *No Handle on the Cross*, Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama compares the 'cross without a handle' to the 'lunch-box with a handle'. The cross is a 'heavy, badly-shaped, demoralising object to take along as we follow him! Will it not slow down our pace?' Koyama speaks on behalf of the low-resource countries in the Global South that have creatively adapted to their cultural and socio-economic context. The Global South church follows the way of the cross 'without handles (resources)' that promotes a 'weaker', humbler faith.

Koyama's 'lunch box with handles', on the other hand, is equated with Western abundant resources and 'symbolises resourcefulness, spiritual and mental energy, high-powered substantial theology, good honest thinking (international and technological), careful planning and a sacred commitment to our faith.' (Koyama 2011, 1–2) Koyama compares the crusading mind of the Western missionary movement with resourcefulness that 'does not seek help from others. They know exactly what to do. They have "better

ideas”. “They have better strategies” which have resulted in the ‘impoverishment of native participation in the mission of God.’ (Koyama 2011, 5) As a result, Koyama advocated for a ‘moratorium on missions’.

I am convinced of the need of a moratorium. I have seen the crippling effects upon the indigenous churches’ sense of responsibility in the traditional system of mission... Moratorium expresses a desire on the part of the churches in Asia to be temporarily free from the ‘constant love and care’ of the Western church. (Koyama 2011, 5–6)

Koyama’s negativity towards the Western missionary movement is a common theme among some Global South Christian leaders. Bosch summarises the pervasive negative perception among indigenous leaders of the formerly colonised regions who are calling for a moratorium on missions. ‘Mission appears to be the greatest enemy of the gospel. Indeed, “the most missionary service a *missionary* under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home!” (Bosch 1991, 518; Nacpil 1971, 79).’ In 1971, the United Methodist Bishop from the Philippines Emerito Nacpil depicted mission ‘as a symbol of the university of Western imperialism...the people of Asia do not see the face of the suffering Christ but a benevolent monster...mission is dead, and the first thing we ought to do is to eulogise it and then bury it (Nacpil 1971, 78–79).’ That same year, speaking in New York and Milwaukee, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Rev. John Gatu of Kenya, suggested a moratorium on Western missionary involvement in Africa (Bosch 1991, 518). Third World church leaders for decades have advocated for the continued importance of the moratorium: ‘Moratorium was not a new idea that was suddenly thought up by a few Third World theologians; instead these theologians were expressing a sensitivity that had been growing in Third World churches around the world (Lines 1998, 2).’

On the one hand, Koyama’s ‘cross without handles’ parallels China’s rural missions as described by Zhang Heng in Chapter 3, coming from poorer contexts that relied on

simple faith one-way tickets, the Holy Spirit, and Pentecostal experiences. They were involved in low-cost grassroots ministry among the poor and marginalised. They adopted bi-vocational tentmaking and other self-sustaining models and often relied on overseas funding and diaspora groups for funding partnerships. They have struggled with a lack of funding, training, member care, global awareness, systems, and structures. One major distinction between the rural house in China and Koyama is that with few resources, the rural house church networks were able to send overseas cross-cultural missionaries to the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia. Another difference is Koyama's negative perception of the Western missions movement compared to the Beijing house church pastors who view the West missionaries in a positive light. Koyama, the TSPM church, and ecumenical World Christian scholars associate the Western missionary enterprise with the perpetrators of injustice through colonialism and imperialism. They also have witnessed Western church domination with their 'constant love and care' crippling the indigenous churches' sense of responsibility (Koyama 2011, 5–6).

The perspective of the Beijing pastors on Western missionaries comes primarily from a positive impression with a heart of gratitude and respect. Ezra shared that 'when we remember the Western missionaries, we only have a heart of gratitude with tears (Call: E. Jin 2022).' They [Western missionaries] 'suffered and paid the price with blood (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 1).' Tianming credits the Western missionaries for establishing the church in China (Presentation: T. Jin 2017a, 1).

For Daniel, the 'gospel debt' to send missionaries is based on the sacrifice of primarily Western missionaries to China. Before the Chinese church can consider itself contributing to world missions, it needs to first lay down the same number of lives for

others. China owes a 'gospel debt' of 20,000 missionaries who sacrificed their lives to China for the gospel (D. Jin 2015).

Ezra has observed Koyama's anti-Western missionary sentiment in the official TSPM Church, which is also the pervasive view coming from the Chinese Communist government. 'The TSPM churches were established originally with an 'anti-mission' position. They have deep spiritual bondage as they see mission as a cultural invasion tool of imperialism. Therefore, sadly to say that anti-mission is in the DNA of TSPM churches as anti-mission is how they determined their own identity (Interview: E. Jin 2015, 5).' Ezra left the TSPM to establish a house church with global missions as a central purpose. He longs for the West to return to its spiritual heritage with the climax of the past missionary movement. He sees the decline of Western Christianity and the weakening of the missionary movement as a deep concern. Instead of recommending a moratorium on missionaries, he separates the problems of Western imperialism from its missionaries. For Ezra, missions come from the Bible and from church tradition back to the early apostolic church. He yearns for the Western missionary movement to return to its previous glorious days (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017, 7).

Ezra also believes that the Chinese church can serve as a bridge to heal the division between the West and the Majority World church. 'We hope to be the healing agent between the Majority World church and the West (Call: E. Jin 2022).'

Global South churches are still in the second phase of the 'Missionisation Cycle': indigenisation, contextualisation and 'self-theologising'. though Japan is a country in the well-resourced Global East region, the Japanese church is still in the indigenisation phase with a small Christian population of 1.9 million Christians, 1.1% of the total population (Government of Japan 2019, 35). The house church in China, with a large-sized 55 to 60

million Christians in a growing economy, has transitioned into the third phase of 'self-missionisation' in the 'Missionisation Cycle'. China's house church leaders are reaching out beyond their local indigenous context and preparing for global expansion in the next century. China's economy and geopolitical power place the church in a separate category, different from the less-resourced countries in the Global South. Sociologist Fenggang Yang has proposed a new category for religion and Christianity in China and other developed countries in East Asia called the 'Global East' (Yang 2018).

Would Koyama categorise the church in China with resources as the lunchbox 'with handles' or a cross 'without handles'? The house church is a combination of both the cross and the lunchbox. On the one hand, China's house church is still considered in the 'weak' category as a church under political persecution without legal recognition, with churches harassed, banned, and leaders threatened and detained. They do not have the political powers of a Chinese government to open doors for their church activities. However, China's urban house church has reached the top echelon of Chinese society and is full of 'resources' both spiritually and economically. It has the spiritual strength as well as the economic base coming from a rising geo-political power in the Global East. As the church in China develops under a growing economy with urbanisation and globalisation, it possesses more and more 'resources' to fuel its church and missions movement. If President Xi continues in the general trajectory of a crackdown on Christianity, the church will be forced to the margins, to become a church without 'the handles'. China is in its own category, uniquely positioned in the Global East, having a cross 'without handles' due to persecution under difficult circumstances of the Global South as well as possessing some of the resources and global access of the Global North.

## **8.6 Final Thoughts on *Mission China* Distinctives**

In this section, I will share some of my final thoughts on the distinctive missiological concepts and issues coming from *Mission China*.

### **8.6.1 Revival and Missions**

For Fiddes, the combination of joy, love, and the suffering of Christ resonates with a ‘suffering God’. Suffering has allowed for the creation of an inner piety of love and joy through closeness and identification with Christ’s suffering. Both Fiddes and Kilby have surrounded their writings on suffering with the depths of inner piety primarily focused on an individual relationship with God. What is distinctive of the Beijing pastors is how suffering and inner piety catalysed a revival in the house church which resulted in a mission movement. The house church experienced a precious love of the Lord during persecution and hardship, which compelled an evangelistic passion for sharing the good news of a suffering Saviour to a suffering world. This evangelistic fervour has been carried over to a missionary spirituality with a ‘cross missiology’ to reach others beyond China.

### **8.6.2 Cross Missiology: A Rare Phenomenon**

My analysis points to the distinctive ‘cross missiology’ defined as a martyrdom missionary spirit emerging from the context of suffering. The ‘cross missiology’ is a rare phenomenon in mission history and is China’s house church’s most distinctive feature. For most of the latter half of the first three centuries, the Early Church expansion did not directly result in a missionary movement. Alan Kreider's book *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* contends that the Early Church grew out of patience and not evangelism. There were no accredited evangelists, iconic missionary heroes or heroines, works on evangelism, or missionary societies (Kreider 2016, 10).

Both the Catholic and Protestant missionary movements were launched under empires that supported their missions' endeavours. The Jesuits under Ignatius of Loyola established the Society of Jesus, approved by Pope Paul III in 1540. The Protestant missionary movement with William Cary and Adoniram Judson in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Western missionary enterprise emerged from a free context of Christendom accompanied by colonialism and the revivals of the Great Awakenings. The closest missionary movement to 'cross missiology' characteristics is the Moravian missions movement. Bohemian refugees fleeing persecution formed a pietist community under Count Zinzendorf in Herrnhut, Germany. The first Moravian missionaries in the 1730s had similar themes of piety, suffering, and missions. However, Moravian spirituality from German pietism did not originate from a context of suffering, but from a renewal movement within the German Protestant church (Shantz 2013, 7). Moravians also had support from their government and influencers of society. The first Moravian missionaries were supported by the monarchy and influencers of society. They travelled on Dutch ships initially into Dutch colonies. The official language of St. Thomas, the destination of the first Moravian missionaries, was Dutch. Even so, missionaries eventually learned Creole to minister among the Black slaves (Hutton 1923, 15, 27, 29). While persecution did not launch a Moravian missionary movement, the deaths of their first missionaries inspired the next generation of young missionaries to follow, which resulted in many more missionary deaths (Hutton 1923, 48).<sup>103</sup>

Other Majority World missionary movements in Africa, Latin America, and even Korea emerged primarily from contexts of a revived church under a free political society

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<sup>103</sup> On the island of St. Thomas, there were 160 missionary deaths in fifty years (1732-82) with many deaths in other fields. St. Croix witnessed twenty-two deaths in two years (1733-35). Fifty missionaries died in Suriname within a year of arrival. Tranquebar and Nicobar Islands saw forty-six missionary deaths in thirty-seven years (Hutton 1923, 166).



and a legal church. Other regions of the persecuted church in the Majority World have yet to witness a missionary movement. India's cross-cultural missions within their own country started under a more democratic, free India. The recent persecution under the rise of Hindu nationalism has coincided with the dampened cross-cultural missionary momentum launched decades earlier under more favourable external conditions (Singh 2017).<sup>104</sup> The persecuted church in Iran has witnessed recent fast church growth but has yet to witness a missions movement (Garrison 2014; Casper 2020; Zylstra 2021).

The 'theology of the cross' must connect suffering not just to those who are in need but also to the evangelist and the missionary. The cost of conversion comes from both the converted and the one converting. 'Missionaries sell their belongings to travel across borders and across the world to tell people about the Kingdom of God. Many sacrifice careers, family relations, or their lives so that others may hear of Jesus... Evangelism will require a change in priorities, a change in location, a change in calendar – it will mean taking up the cross of Christ (Sunquist 2013, 330).' What is the loss of a gospel without a cost, a church without the sacrificial servant missionary? Jesus' word states, 'Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24). The messenger of the cross comes with a powerful method of sacrifice and suffering, starting with the example of Christ. A gospel without a cost and a church without sacrificial missionaries will ultimately lose the spiritual transforming power that accompanies the message of the cross. 'The missionary is called to die. It is a profound and deep mystery that God has woven into the fabric of redemption

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<sup>104</sup> According to the All-India Christian Council, an attack on Christians was recorded every 40 hours in India in 2016. Crimes against Christians increased by 60% from 2016 to 2019 (Mathew 2020).

(Sunquist 2013, 409).’ *Mission China* will remind the global church that the sacrificial nature of the cross is not just in its message, but in its messenger, the missionary.

Contemporary theologians are primarily re-examining missiology from a post-colonial mission perspective. Fiddes, Moltmann, and Koyama have surrounded their writings on a ‘weaker’, less-resourced gospel coming from a crucified Christ in the Majority World to address the abuses of the former colonial Western missions coming from centres of power. Living in a free society allows them to contemplate missional issues related to social concerns, sufferings among the marginalised, and societal injustices. The Beijing pastors come from a persecuted context with newly acquired resources from China’s urbanisation and globalisation. Their political situation prevents them from influencing systematic societal structural change under an authoritarian government. Their missiological issues surround strategic and creative ways under their persecuted context to church-related activities with evangelism, discipleship, prayer, church planting, church growth, and mission sending.

### **8.6.3 Persecuted Church Characteristics**

Due to the recent political tightening, house church activities have moved online and offline back into the homes. While there is no certainty, the expectation is that the political tightening will continue for the foreseeable future. One danger is to assume that persecution automatically contributes to the growth for the church. This line of thinking can be overstated and oversimplified. There are examples in church history of persecution virtually eliminating the church.<sup>105</sup> Even during the Communist take-over in the 1950s and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the church was forced underground and was

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<sup>105</sup> Japan Shogun Tokugawa’s persecution of the Catholics in the 16<sup>th</sup> century eliminated the church altogether.

dormant for a couple of decades. The church exploded in growth only after the change in external factors of Deng Xiaoping's Open Reform policies in the 1980s. The possibility of the recent political tightening to halt the missionary momentum for decades is a realistic scenario.

New missiological insights from the Chinese church will need to uncover creative ways for ministry strategies and spiritual breakthroughs not yet discovered by the missionaries coming from free societies. In the next phase of missions, creative methods are necessary to send missionaries to 'Creative Assess Nations' (CAN countries) with hostile governments or other religions. Many practical issues have emerged from China's persecuted context for field missionaries under similar restrictions. A new terminology called 'Creative Sending Nation' (CSN) describes China as a missionary-sending country that needs to find creative ways to send missionaries. I have listed a few among many new missiological issues facing *Mission China*:

- 1) the experience of low-key activities that are simple, organic, flexible, and less formal,
- 2) the appropriate forms and size of house churches are small enough to be under the radar but provide worship, pastoral care, fellowship, specialised ministries, and missions,
- 3) the appropriateness of fleeing or withstanding persecution "should the pastor be the last person to run under attack or to stand ground and face the consequences?",
- 4) the experience of knowing what to do when pastors are arrested or when physical worship spaces are confiscated,
- 5) the appropriate response of the missionary when local churches come under attack,
- 6) the tenacity, perseverance and even optimism required for missions,
- 7) the role of suffering in the advancement of the gospel,
- 8) the courage to go to prison and even be willing to die for the gospel,
- 9) the ability to see spiritual breakthrough issues behind what is on the surface,
- 10) the oversight of finances with transparency and accountability without a legal entity,
- 11) the appropriate forms of church governance without legality,
- 12) the ability to raise funds for the ministry under persecution,
- 13) the training of co-workers and pastors without residential schools and qualified teachers,
- 14) the bi-vocational self-supporting tentmakers and fully supported missionaries,
- 15) the need to provide pastoral and member care for co-workers,
- 16) the experience of conducting children and youth ministry without physical space,
- 17) the renting or purchasing space for worship without a legal entity,
- 18) the balance being indigenous and globalised to reach a younger generation,
- 19) the education and member care of Chinese missionary kids, and
- 20) the appropriate handling of the death of a Chinese missionary on the mission field with no legal entities.

China's persecuted church missionary characteristics and creative methods will be a model for future mission movements and activities coming from a persecuted context.

#### **8.6.4 Post-colonial Missions versus the Recovery of the Great Commission**

My analysis of a final distinctive of *Mission China* from contemporary missiology and the field of World Christianity is the priority of the Great Commission. Beijing pastors have noticed the decline of missionaries sent from North America. World Christianity scholars and contemporary missiologists have 'given up' on the Western missionary overseas cross-cultural sending model of the Great Commission. Walls claims, 'In fact, Jesus gave no special commission for overseas missions. He gave only one commission. The words are not only or especially about overseas missionaries (still less about the duty of supporting them) (Walls 1996, 48).' Bosch believes that the *missio Dei* and the Ecumenical Missions paradigm in post-modernity replaces the Western Missionary paradigm in the Enlightenment era (Bosch 1991, 349–62). A proposed new post-colonial mission era embraces new mission themes of racial righteousness, reconciliation, restoration of justice and equality, holistic ministry, and partnership with indigenous leaders rather than paternalism as the primary mission of the church in a post-colonial age (Tizon 2018, 54).

Two evangelical seminary presidents ordained in ecumenical denominations, Scott Sunquist and Tim Tennent, both have adopted the Trinitarian *missio Dei* missiology.<sup>106</sup> In his book, *Understanding Christian Mission*, Sunquist summarizes the contemporary missiological themes (Chapters 9 to 13) after his trinitarian theological framework

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<sup>106</sup> Scott Sunquist is the president of the evangelical Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is ordained in the ecumenical Presbyterian Church USA. Sunquist's *missio Dei* missiology is covered in *Understanding Christian Mission* (Sunquist 2013, 177–269). Tim Tennent, president of the evangelical Asbury Seminary, studied under Andrew Walls at the University of Edinburgh, and was ordained in the ecumenical United Methodist Church. Tennent's *missio dei* missiology is in *Invitation to World Missions: a Trinitarian missiology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Tennent 2010).

(Chapters 6-8). Chapters 1-5 cover the history of missions, with the last section on post-colonial missiology. The Western missions period (1842 to 1948) has now entered into a new postcolonial mission era, from 1948 to the present. Sunquist's missiology is primarily centred on the local church on mission instead of a missionary sending church. He starts with the definition of the local church and the practice of Christian life in the local church. Sunquist's focus on the missionary nature of the church has been a common theme borrowed from ecumenical theologians Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann (Sunquist 2013, 277–78; Flett 2010; Moltmann 1993b).

Sunquist's contemporary missiology appears to be in a different era, with the Beijing pastors who have prioritised sending missionaries to unreached peoples and the urgent eschatology of saving the Jewish or Arab peoples. For Sunquist, the zenith of the modern missionary sending movement in the West reached its peak from 1842, the end of Opium War, to 1948, the end of World War II (Sunquist 2013, 14). Missions began to decline in the 1960s with the integration of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches. Sunquist's missiology aligns within the World Christianity of Walls. A new postcolonial mission has replaced the older Western missionary movement. The contemporary Western church must partner as equals with the local church everywhere in a global community to serve in mission to the world.

The church does not so much have a mission – as if the church somehow existed prior to its task – rather it is mission as such; indeed, as the phrase goes, the church of Christ does not so much have a mission as the mission of Christ has a church (Sunquist 2013, 15–16; Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 8).

Tim Tennent, president of the evangelical Asbury Seminary, is more nuanced than Sunquist. As a former pupil of Walls, Tennent adopts many similar themes from Walls with the collapse of Western Christendom and the West-to-the-Rest missionary movement, a post-modern church, the changing face of Global Christianity with the rise of the church in the Majority world, global Pentecostalism, and the need for a deeper

ecumenism partnership (Tennent 2010, 18–54). However, Tennent includes the missionary sending of the West as part of overall missions from multiple centres of the world (Tennent 2010, 33). He considers the notion for a moratorium on missions as the loss of the central biblical mandate to evangelise and plant new churches (Tennent 2010, 55).’ Tennent still believes in the continued role of Western missionaries who have a servant spirit. In my interview with Tennent at Asbury Seminary on Feb 22, 2023, he used his daughter as an example who was serving as a missionary with an indigenous tribe in Africa. His daughter, a Western missionary, was far more welcomed by the tribal people than the surrounding East Africans who had conquered the original indigenous tribe.

In comparison to a contemporary missiology who advocate for a new post-colonial missiology, the Beijing pastors (and Tim Tennent) consider a missionary sending church essential to the Great Commission. In general, the Beijing pastors believe that the former Western missionary movement, with all of its problems, is still the best example of the Great Commission. Ezra believes that the decline of the Western missionary movement is due to the overall decline of the Western church and not due to flawed missiology. The Beijing pastors are grateful to the traditional Western missionary movement. Unlike the TSPM and churches in the postcolonial Global South, the house church is less concerned about the Western missionary connection to colonialism. Furthermore, Western missionaries were removed over 70 years ago during the Communist takeover. Ezra believes that China can be ‘the healing agent between the Majority World church and the West.’ *Mission China*’s role is to recover the martyrdom spirit and eschatological urgency from the Apostolic age and remind the West and global Christianity of its missionary heritage (Interview: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017). Ezra also considers ‘missions’

(宣教) as the ‘essential purpose and top priority’ of the church in China. ‘China is the only remaining church globally with overseas cross-cultural missions as the church's essential purpose and top priority (Call: E. Jin 2022).’ The Moravian church had a similar ‘top priority’ for missions which included suffering and sacrifice. Due to the suffering cross of Christ, the pietist Moravians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century adopted missions as the ‘most important work of God (Randall 2006, 210).’

One may question the wisdom of prioritising overseas cross-cultural, especially when China is still the country with the largest number of 1.2 billion non-Christians in the world. Furthermore, the political tightening implemented in 2018 appears to be in place for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, there appear to be some positive signs of growth. Even during the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020 and 2021, Zhang Heng’s church continued to support 19 missionaries in 9 countries. In November 2022, Tianming released the first issue of the ‘Journal of Chinese Missions’, with 13 articles and 197 pages, through a network of Chinese mission organisations. His *Call from All Nations* is supporting several dozen units overseas. Under Ezra, Zion Church continues to grow with a new church plant every week and training up to 2,200 seminarian students through their online Zion Bible Institute (F. Wang 2022). *Mission China* prayer movement and online mission conference activities continue to expand under Daniel. In November 2022, the most recent *Mission China* online conference drew more than 3,000. *Mission China's* activities under the leadership of these Beijing pastors only appear to be growing in momentum despite the challenges.

### **8.7 Conclusion:**

Four topics have been selected from contemporary theologians: 1) a suffering God by Paul Fiddes, 2) the ‘positivity of suffering’ by Kathy Kilby, 3) the ‘theology of hope’ eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann, 4) and a ‘cross without handles’ and a moratorium on missions from Kosuke Koyama. My analysis from the comparison of the four Beijing pastors and contemporary missiology is that *Mission China* has entered the third ‘self-

missiological' phase, to produce its own unique contribution to global Christianity. In my final analysis, I have identified several unique contributions of *Mission China*, which include 1) revival and supernatural piety nurtured under suffering were key motivation for missions; 2) a suffering martyrdom missionary spirit (called the 'cross missiology') provided an essential core strength for missions with an eschatological urgency, and a pointer toward the Jewish and Muslim world came from the Back to Jerusalem movement; 3) creative methods of operation for difficult mission fields have emerged from their persecuted context; and finally 4) instead of post-colonial contemporary missiology, the cross-cultural missionary sending to the unreached is the top priority of the Great Commission mandate coming from the Apostolic age.



## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

In gathering the distinct insights and experiences of the four pastors — Zhang Heng, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel --- this analysis not only examines their spiritual influences, missiology, and mission activities but also provides their perspectives on mission mobilisation in China. According to the research question, the study analyses the significance of *Mission China* from the perspective of the pastors leading a missions movement from the heart of urban China. In conclusion, this final chapter answers two sub-questions: How does Mission China impact missiology and global missions? What is the trajectory of Mission China?

Chapters Three to Six explored the Beijing pastors' unique spiritual backgrounds and missiology. Chapter Seven analysed the four Beijing pastors and *Mission China* and identified several missiological concepts. First, revivals preceded and fuelled missions. Second, a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit from suffering was the core strength. Third, the controversial Jerusalem-centred B2J indigenous missiology provided eschatological urgency and attention to the Jewish and Muslim world. Fourth, the 'City on a Hill' vision of Shouwang Church broke the traditional barriers of an underground house church to become a public witness in society. Fifth, the prioritised overseas cross-cultural missions recovered the Great Commission mandate.

Chapter Eight compared *Mission China* missiology with several missiological concepts from contemporary theologians: 1) a 'suffering God' from Paul Fiddes, 2) the 'positivity of suffering' from Karen Kilby's writings on Julian of Norwich, 3) the eschatological 'theology of hope' from Jürgen Moltmann, 4) and 'no handle cross' with a proposal for a 'moratorium on missions' by Kosuke Koyama.

### 9.1 Key Findings

#### 9.1.1 The 'Positivity of Suffering'

From the writings of Julian of Norwich and Balthasar, Catholic Theologian Kilby offers insight with her first principle on how suffering and loss are to be avoided, fought against, and resisted (Kilby 2021, 136), contradicting the belief of Chinese missionaries. However, it is the ‘positivity of suffering’ that further expands the heart and passion that missionaries need to have to evangelise.

A key motivator for *Missions China* is the inner piety that was nurtured under suffering. For the pastors in Beijing, suffering and martyrdom under atheistic Communism are seen as necessary elements for the expansion of the church in highlighting the essential truths of God’s purpose. In identifying with the Lord’s own experience of suffering, followers of Christ feel drawn to share this experience in ‘mission’ with others. With sacrifice, courage, and perseverance strengthened by suffering, Chinese missionaries develop core traits necessary to evangelise unreached parts of the world.

### **9.1.2 Cross Missiology: A Martyrdom Spirit for Missions**

With suffering for the gospel, a martyrdom or willing-to-die spirit for missions warrants a new terminology called *cross missiology*. Dr. Jin believes that ‘missions require us to take up the cross and follow the Lord, pay the price, sacrifice ourselves, and be willing to be a martyr. (Interview: D. Jin 2016, 1).’ *Cross missiology* emerged from Simon Zhao of B2J, who served the rural house churches and was sentenced thirty years in prison. It is through the persecution of the house churches in China that led to the birth of the martyrdom spirit in local missionaries.

In the Early Church, *cross missiology* originates with the Apostles after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. There are multiple accounts throughout Scripture that offer examples of *cross missiology*. In Acts 13:2-3, Paul and Barnabas, the first commissioned missionaries, were sent from the Antioch church to spread the gospel to as-yet-unreached cities, leading to multiple experiences of persecution. Paul was

eventually arrested in Jerusalem and sent to Rome to be executed. Stephen, Peter, and James were other missionaries who experienced martyrdom and suffering for the gospel.

### **9.1.3 ‘Creative Sending’ from the Persecuted Church**

China’s missionary movement, coming from the persecuted church, is probably the first in modern church history. The West, along with Korea as a more recent missionary-sending country, has churches in free societies that can mobilise their missionary forces to unreached peoples and countries. The still more recent Newer Sending Countries from low-resource regions in the Global South have primarily sent out ‘missionaries’ within their own country using low-cost methods through bi-vocational and Business as Mission models, or through migration through their diaspora.

China’s house church is the first intentional overseas missions movement coming from a persecuted context in modern church history. Missions mobilisation from churches not yet legal includes a new set of missionisation strategies and missiological issues to address. *Mission China* will produce another type of missionary that has both the developed Global North and the developing Global South characteristics. China’s rural house churches have similarities with the less-resourced Global South, while the Urban Church appears to have Global North characteristics. Chinese missionaries from the rural networks still lack finances due to their limited ability to raise funds. The bi-vocational model adopted by the rural networks may temporarily solve funding issues but may reduce ministry effectiveness. China’s Urban Church will have more financial resources, talent, global awareness, language and cultural adaptation abilities, and professional skills.

As ‘Creative Access Nations’ describes countries that do not welcome missionaries, a new term ‘Creative Sending Nations’ describes missionary-sending countries with churches that are not legal. Creative Sending Nations will continue to discover new creative solutions to mobilise, recruit, select, train, and send missionaries in a persecuted

church context. Creative methods and mission strategies at home also provide a training ground for more challenging areas hostile to the Christian faith.

#### **9.1.4 Urban Intellectuals are well suited for Cross-Cultural Missions**

Why is China ready for a missionary movement? For Tianming, the church in China is ready for global missions due to the church's 'City on a Hill' impact on urban intellectuals in mainstream society. After 200 years of Christianity in China, the church has finally penetrated the centre of China at the heart of Beijing. The Urban Church emerged from a marginalised underground movement to become visible in mainstream society. Tianming considers persecution as evidence of the spiritual strength of the church in China.

The Diocletian Persecution in 300 AD, just before the Constantinian era, demonstrated the spiritual strength of the church in society, as it was a threat to the Roman pagan religion. The purpose of persecution in the Rome Empire was to curb the growth and influence of Christianity, which had reached close to 10% of the total population (Hopkins 1998, 191).

The Urban Church's ability to overcome adversity from suffering to become a 'City on a Hill' among China's elite and mainstream society demonstrates the church's spiritual maturity. The ability to reach China's mainstream Han Chinese culture and endure persecution from existing power structures validates its readiness for the next, harder challenge of overseas cross-cultural missions. According to Tianming, 'If you can't influence your own culture, how can you influence another culture? The spiritual strength is not enough (T. Jin 2016b).'

#### **9.1.5 Back to Jerusalem Eschatological Urgency towards the Middle East**

The Back to Jerusalem (B2J) movement has been essential as an inspirational vision but controversial among the four pastors and the overall house church movement. For the sake of a unified movement of missions, the Beijing pastors and the other leaders in

*Mission China* have agreed to withhold their differences to work together. According to Ezra, the B2J movement catalysed three missionary movement waves. In the 1940s, the original B2J pioneer missionaries headed West with seven martyrs in Northwest China. This first wave inspired a second wave, the rural networks, including CGF. They also influenced Ezra in a third wave, with the launching of *Mission China 2030*.

The original B2J missionaries instilled in future generations an eschatological urgency, a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit, a Jerusalem-centred missiology, and a heart for the Muslim world. The B2J movement is China's first indigenous missiology to produce a burden and responsibility of a Chinese mission for the world. *Mission China*'s core strength comes from Ezra and other B2J leaders. At the same time, the Jerusalem-centred missiology has alienated others. Tianming and other non-B2J leaders have connected to a broader *Mission China* segment of the house churches. *Mission China* is the coming together of two streams into a river: the indigenous B2J (*Mission China 2030*) and the Lausanne Movement (Wei 2020, 83).

Ezra's *Back to Jerusalem with All Nations* missiology provides biblical support for the centrality of Jerusalem. While going to the nations, the church also should be responsible for bringing the nations to Jerusalem. He advocates following in the footsteps of the Back to Jerusalem pioneers; 'Inspired by their vision; we will head toward Jerusalem (E. Jin 2016, 163).

As an indigenous theology that has emerged from China's context, Hiebert's fourth-self 'self-theologising' principle encourages younger churches to assume the right to read and interpret Scripture for themselves and in their particular contexts. On the other hand, China's B2J leaders have the responsibility to dialogue with the global church to ensure that their indigenous theologies are 'biblically-based, supra-cultural, historical, Christological, and Spirit-led (Hiebert 1985a, 217).' As the international community challenges the B2J, the global church also should listen to an underlying message from

China. The B2J missiology brings attention to an eschatological urgency, a martyrdom missionary spirit, a pointer towards Jerusalem, and a heart for the Jews and Muslims of the Middle East.

#### **9.1.6 The Recovery of the Great Commission**

The Beijing pastors have noticed the decline of missionaries sent from North America as the Great Commission is increasingly considered outdated (D. Jin 2016). As contemporary World Christianity scholars move away from the traditional missionary paradigm, Japanese theologian Koyama and others have recommended a moratorium on missions. A post-colonial missiology has replaced the old paradigm of the traditional understanding of the Great Commission.

The Beijing pastors and *Mission China* are recovering the Great Commission Biblical mandate, as seen previously in the former Western missionary movement. Ezra has assessed that the Western missionary movement lost its greatness a hundred years ago. Western Christianity's decline is evidenced in the waning of missionary sending. Ezra has sensed that *Mission China* will remind the West of their historical missionary movement roots (Interview2: E. Jin, Zhang, and T2-Lydia 2017). Ezra considers overseas cross-cultural missions as the 'essential purpose and top priority' of the church in China. What he has observed is that China is the only church in the world with this priority (Call: E. Jin 2022).

#### **9.1.7 Evangelical unity in Global Missions through Lausanne**

The Lausanne Movement provided an opportunity for the house church to identify and be aligned with global Evangelicalism. The Lausanne Movement was a global missions evangelical community with the Lausanne Covenant as its foundational missiological statement of faith. The Lausanne Congress allowed for house church evangelical Christian leaders to unify under a global evangelical family with a common evangelical theology. The four Beijing pastors convened a coalition of pastors and church

leaders to join the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010 under the theme: ‘unity for missions’. They affirmed the Lausanne Covenant, which provided theological clarity for unity. Even though these leaders were prevented from joining the Congress, a missions movement emerged under *Mission China 2030* (later called *Mission China*).

### **9.1.8 Korean Missionary Contributions**

Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel have attributed their spiritual foundations to Korean missionaries. These missionaries should be recognised as important to the early development of the Urban Church in Beijing that gave birth to *Mission China*. Even though *Mission China* has become a fully Han Chinese movement, the Chinese Urban Church pastors have learned from the Korean church. Korean missionaries disciplined them and provided a missionary spiritual foundation. The explosive Korean church growth in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a vision-oriented optimistic missionary movement in the 1990s. The Korean church relied on prayer, faith, tithes and offering, local church commitment, and full-time ordained pastors to build their churches and support their missions. Shouwang Church and CGF transitioned from a small house church model to become larger congregations with full-time ordained pastors, full-service church ministries, tithes and offerings, and church budgets to provide a base of support for missions. The Urban Church in China has an ecclesiastical foundation for missionary-sending like the Korean church.

### **9.1.9 Are missionaries still needed where established indigenous churches exist?**

The Urban Church in China was reached by a new wave of missionaries from Korea, America and some overseas Chinese who arrived after the 1990s. The existing indigenous Chinese church was not able to reach a younger generation of Chinese intellectuals in the cities. This indigenous Chinese church was a product of Western missionaries more than 200 years ago, which resulted in a vibrant house church from rural, traditional house churches in the cities and the TSPM. Are missionaries still needed where indigenous

national churches are in existence? China's Urban Church spiritual roots come from a newer wave of Korean and American missionaries instead of the existing established national Chinese church. This warrants further discussion and further research among World Christianity and contemporary theologians who advocate for the end of missionary sending to regions with indigenous established national churches.

#### **9.1.10 Urban China with Global East socio-economic characteristics**

Majority World and China are divided into two different socio-economic categories. The Global South's less resourced countries are closer to China's rural house church missions movement. In contrast, the economic conditions in Urban China, especially Beijing and Shanghai, are closer to Korea.<sup>107</sup> The economic differences between the less developed Global South and the more resourced Global East megacities impact the churches' missions movements coming from their respective regions.

China's rural house church missions come from a less-resourced context similar to the missions from the less-resourced countries in the Global South. China's rural missions come from poorer contexts. These missions relied on simple faith, one-way tickets, the Holy Spirit, and Pentecostal experiences. They were involved in low-cost grassroots ministry among unreached peoples and holistic social concerns for the poor and marginalised. They have adopted bi-vocational tentmaking and other self-sustaining models, relying on overseas funding and diaspora groups for funding partnerships. They integrated migration with the wealthier congregations in the Global North as part of the mission. Pentecostal churches and international mission agencies have become a critical global entity with partnering components.

The Global South and China's rural house church experienced a high attrition rate. Beyond just a lack of finances, other concerns of the rural missions movement included

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<sup>107</sup> The GDP per capita PPP is \$30,335 Beijing, \$32,684 for Shanghai and \$36,002 for Seoul Korea (Parilla 2015).



a shortage of qualified workers, lack of accountability and transparency on financial and administrative matters, and ethical issues with the law, both in China and in the mission field (Chan 2013, 78). However, the rural migrant evangelists who moved to the cities started in the margins of society. These rural migrant churches struggled for a time, but slowly adjusted to becoming financially viable congregations. Zhang Heng is in the process of transitioning the CGF network of 10,000 house churches to become larger independent congregations with a stronger missionary sending base.

Three of the Beijing pastors, Tianming, Ezra, and Daniel, have led Urban Churches with congregation members of college-educated white-collar professionals and academics from mainstream society. Urban churches combine indigenous, globalisation and urbanisation influences (J. C. Ro 2013,). These churches have the financial ability to support career missionaries who can focus on full-time language studies, cultural training, and ministry activities. Missionary candidates recruited from the cities would be college-educated instead of the semi-literate missionaries coming from rural communities. ‘In the past, rural churches boasted great faith in mission ministry; today, the Urban Church has human talent and financial resources (T. Jin 2016a).’

China’s Urban Church ministries require higher financial resources, higher education, and specialised professional skills. Missionaries could be sent to higher-cost distant and obscure unreached tribal groups. Missionaries with specialised professional credentials could minister to the disabled, elderly, orphans, earthquake victims, and the marginalised. Highly educated personnel could be sent to universities for campus ministry outreach or academia to reach intellectuals. Missionaries could live in high-cost megacities to reach mainstream society in the marketplace, hospitals, and media, as well as scientists, artists, and government employees. Seminary graduates could be involved in pastoring Urban churches and leadership training. Missionaries holding higher seminary degrees could be active in theological education. Some Urban China missionaries with English-speaking

abilities have joined international missions agencies (T3-DF 2016; T3-Joy 2016; T5-Maria 2016).

Urban China and Korea missions models are distinct from the less-developed Global South, with a closer resemblance to the traditional missionary-sending of the Global North (West). *Mission China* provides evidence for a new 'Global East' religious category proposed by Yang to separate China, Korea, and East Asia from the Global South. 'Geographically speaking, how can it be appropriate to group South Korea and China into the Global South? Both are obviously in the northern hemisphere... Socially and economically, these countries are developing or fast-developing (Yang 2018, 3).' Could Yang's proposed new 'Global East' category define *Mission China* and Korea missions movements and delineate East Asia from the Global South?

#### **9.1.11 House Church and the TSPM in the 'Missionisation Cycle'**

After analysing the four Beijing pastors, *Mission China* joins other Majority world missions movements in entering the third phase of 'self-missionisation' as mentioned in my theoretical framework of Ekström's 'Missionisation Cycle'. The three phases of the 'Missionisation Cycle' match *Mission China* leader's division of mission history into three timeframes: 1) Translation phase: 'Missions to China' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 2) Contextualisation and 'self-theologising' phase: 'Mission in China' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and 3) 'self-missionisation and self-missiologicalising' phase: 'Missions from China' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Mission China* reveals the different church development and maturation in the 'Missionisation Cycle' between the house church and the TSPM. The difference was not just legal status and a theological understanding of the head of the church but also their missiological position and conviction on global missions. These differences inform the different stages of development in the 'Missionisation Cycle' and overall trajectory. While the TSPM church leaders are still solely in the second Contextualisation and 'self-

theologising' phase with the promotion of the 'Five-Year Sinicisation Campaign (Du 2017)', the Beijing pastors in *Mission China* have entered the third 'self-missionisation' phase with the championing of global missions.

## **9.2 What is the Trajectory of *Mission China*?**

The overall political environment is returning to Maoism under President Xi's leadership. The political tightening from the New Religious Regulations enforced in February 2018 forced the closure of Zion Church and Shouwang Church and house churches across China. These harsh measures of persecution have not been seen since the Cultural Revolution (Introvigne 2018; Y. Wang 2018). The Chinese government has advanced technology and resources sufficient to eliminate all house church activities. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the government announced that all online religious activities not sanctioned by the authorities will be banned (A. Wang 2021).

*Mission China* leaders are sensing a further tightening with more restrictions and persecution on the horizon. The other Beijing leaders are prepared for the worse but are still moving forward with a bold vision and a martyrdom missionary spirit. The tighter political environment most likely will slow down the momentum or halt the movement for a time.

The Beijing pastors have witnessed the church's growth under the harshest conditions. They have learned perseverance from the house church patriarchs' sufferings and understand that God's purposes may not be accomplished within their lifetime. The Beijing pastors will continue to see creative methods to send and support missionaries to harsh fields that will require innovative approaches, boldness, and perseverance. A slower growth allows for *Mission China* to mature in structural development in preparation for a missionary movement to come.

The missionary momentum in China continues to grow under the tightening conditions and the arrival of COVID. Zhang Heng's Beijing Zaidao Church already has

commissioned twenty-one missionaries to nine countries. Zhang Heng's *China Gospel Fellowship* network of 10,000 churches has the potential to send thousands of missionaries (Chapter 3). Tianming has recruited and trained more than 30 missionary candidates and continues to teach daily on topics related to global missions. He started a fellowship of mission leaders who produced the first issue of *the Journal of Chinese Missions* in November 2022 (Chapter 4). Since the dismantling of Beijing's Zion Church, Ezra has decentralised and multiplied, with a multi-site model of a new church plant every week (Chapter 5). Furthermore, Zion Church commissioned ten missionary units the same year the church was banned (Interview: Wang 2021). Daniel's 24-hour, 100-year missions prayer chain has been running non-stop for over three years since February 2020. In November 2022, *Mission China*, under Daniel's leadership, hosted an online conference with several thousand in attendance and hundreds of mission commitments. This was the largest attendance of *Mission China* since its inception, pointing to continued momentum even with government religious policy and COVID restrictions. Furthermore, China's indigenous missions movement is broader than the four Beijing pastors and the *Mission China* network of churches.

Even with growing restrictions, my assessment of the general trajectory of *Mission China* is still an upward growth of missionaries sent in smaller numbers under increased oppression and restrictions. The mass movement of thousands of missionaries would be an unlikely scenario unless there is a change in the external political environment. *Mission China* leaders are expecting further tightening under the current regime but are nevertheless generally optimistic and preparing for the difficult road ahead.

### **9.3 Conclusion**

The key findings for *Mission China* include 1) a 'positivity of suffering' resulting in missions, 2) a sacrificial martyrdom missionary spirit emerging from a persecuted context ('cross missiology'), 3) new 'creative sending' missions under a persecuted sending

church, 4) Urban intellectuals ready for cross-cultural missions, 5) a pointer towards Jerusalem with eschatological urgency from Back to Jerusalem, 6) the recovery of the Great Commission mandate, 7) Evangelical unity in global missions, 8) Korean missionary contribution, 9) 'Are missionaries still needed with an existing indigenous church?', 10) Global East socio-economic characteristics, and 11) the house church in contrast to the TSPM in the 'Missionisation Cycle'.

The trajectory of *Mission China* is a growing prayer and missions mobilisation movement along with an increased number of missionaries sent under expected political tightening and increased persecution. A mass missionary sending force is not expected unless there is a political change with an open, free environment for more operational space.

The Beijing pastor's optimism under the realistic hostile political context reflect the unique characteristic of *Mission China*. China's contribution to global missions is a missionary movement coming from an experience of suffering, sacrifice, and martyrdom. *Mission China* will become a future missions paradigm with new methods and missiology coming from a persecuted church. They carry the mantle of the missionary spirit that recovers the Great Commission mandate lost in the West. Whether flawed, unrealistic, or prophetic, the Beijing pastor's understanding of missions is the historic, sacrificial sending of missionaries to unreached regions of the world. They challenge contemporary post-colonial missiology with the conviction that the Great Commission mandate is not 'outdated' but should be the Church's primary purpose which originated from the martyrdom missionary spirit of the Apostolic age.

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## INTERVIEWS & PRESENTATIONS

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### **Tianming**

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### **Ezra**

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## APPENDIX I

**Table: Early Spiritual Influences on Mission China Leaders**

C=Conversion; S= Spiritual Influence; M=Missions Influence

### Tier 1: Top Tier Leaders

	TM	Ezra	Daniel	Fang	Cui	ZH
Korean Diaspora	C				C	
Korean Missionary	S	S	C S		S	
American teacher		C		S M		M
Overseas Chinese			M			
House Church		M	S M	C S	C M	C S M

### Tier 2: Second Tier Leaders

	Dai	FB	Gao	Hou	Job	John	LG	Lydia	Pei
Korean missionary				S		C S	C		S
American Teacher	S M	C S M			C S M		M	M	
Overseas Chinese				M				C S	
House Church	C		C S M	C S M		M	S		S M
Three-Self									C S

### Tier 3: Younger Leaders

	AJ	AK	DF	Jet	Jian g	Josh	Joy	Sean	Wate r	Zhao
Korean missionary								S		
American Teacher		C S	S M	S M	S M		S M	C S	C S M	
Overseas Chinese						S				
Local house church	C S M	S M	C S M	C S M	C S M	C S M	C S M	S M	S M	C S M
Church	Urba n	Trad .	Trad .	Urba n	Trad .	Urba n	Urba n	Urba n	Urba n	Urba n
City	BJ	SH	SH	BJ	SH	BJ	BJ	BJ	BJ	SH

## APPENDIX II: Interview1 Questionnaire

### Interview I Questionnaire

#### Personal Information (5 minutes) 个人信息 (5分钟)

1) What schooling did you complete? 您的学历为?

- Junior High 初中       High school 高中       Junior College 大专  
 University 大学 \_\_\_\_\_ degree 学位 \_\_\_\_\_ Year 年份 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Graduate 研究生 \_\_\_\_\_ degree 学位 \_\_\_\_\_ Year 年份 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Seminary 神学院 \_\_\_\_\_ degree 学位 \_\_\_\_\_ Year 年份 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other 其他 \_\_\_\_\_ degree 学位 \_\_\_\_\_

2) How did you come to Christ? 您是如何信主的?

- Family member 家人 (Parents 父母, Aunt/Uncles 阿姨 / 叔叔, Siblings, 兄弟姐妹 \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Friend 朋友 (Home 家乡的朋友, Work 工作上的朋友, Classmates 同学, \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Three-Self Church 三自教会 \_\_\_\_\_  
 House Church 家庭教会 (Traditional 传统家庭教会, Rural or Urban 农村教会 / 城市新兴教)  
 Foreigner 外国人 (If so,...)  
 Missionary/Pastor 宣教士 / 牧师       English Teacher 外教  
 Business 商人  NGO 非盈利机构  
 American 美国人       European 欧洲人       Korean 韩国人  
 Overseas Chinese 华人华侨  
 Other 其他 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Overseas 海外信主 (Location 地点: \_\_\_\_\_ Who: 谁带你信主 \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Other 其他方式:

Book 书籍, Radio 福音电台, Literature 文学作品, Bible 圣经, Prayer 祷告, \_\_\_\_\_)

3) Who influenced you the most in your spiritual growth?

谁在你的信仰成长过程中具有最重要的影响?

- Family member 家人 (Parents 父母, Aunt/Uncles 阿姨 / 叔叔, Siblings, 兄弟姐妹 \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Friend 朋友 (Home 家乡的朋友, Work 工作上的朋友, Classmates 同学, \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Three-Self Church 三自教会 \_\_\_\_\_  
 House Church 家庭教会 (Traditional 传统家庭教会, Rural or Urban 农村教会 / 城市新兴)  
 Foreigner 外国人 (If so,...)  
 Missionary/Pastor 宣教士 / 牧师       English Teacher 外教  
 Business 商人  NGO 非盈利机构  
 American 美国人  European 欧洲人  
 Korean 韩国人  Overseas Chinese 华人华侨  
 Other 其他 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Overseas 海外信主 (Location 地点: \_\_\_\_\_ Who: 谁带你信主 \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Other 其他方式:

Book 书籍, Radio 福音电台, Literature 文学作品, Bible 圣经, Prayer 祷告, \_\_\_\_\_)

4) Who would you consider China's Spiritual Patriarchs (Pillars of the church)?

您认为以下哪位 ( 哪几位 ) 是中国的属灵伟人 ( 教会的柱子 ) ?

Wang Mingdao 王明道      Xie Moshan 谢模善      Lin Xiangao 林献羔      Li Tianen 李天恩

Song Shanjie 宋尚节      Watchman Nee 倪柝声      Yang Xinfei 杨心斐      袁相枕

Others 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

Church and Ministry (10 minutes) 教会和事工 ( 10分钟 )

5) Which stream would you most identify with? 您更认同哪一个群体 ?

Rural Networks 农村团队      Traditional 传统家庭教会      Emerging Urban 新兴城市教会

6) What region/city are you from? 您来自哪个地区 / 城市 ? \_\_\_\_\_

7) What region/city is your ministry in? 您在哪个地区 / 城市服侍 ?

Wenzhou 温州      Henan 河南      Anhui 安徽      Beijing 北京      Shanghai 上海

Chengdu 成都      Xian 西安      Xiamen 厦门      Wuhan 武汉      Tianjin 天津

Other City: 其他城市 \_\_\_\_\_

8) Who would you want to represent the church in China in a global arena?

您认为以下哪位 ( 哪几位 ) 可以在普世教会的层面代表中国教会 ?

Tianming 金天明      Fang Laoshi 方之江      Zhangheng 张恒      Mingri 金明日

ChenXiaoHu 陈小虎      Zhao 赵      Cuiquan 崔权      Zhangrongliang 张荣亮      Gaozhen 高

真      Shengfeng 李圣风      Huanglei 黄磊      申义平      冯建国      徐永泽      缪志彤      王怡

Others 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

排序 Top #1 \_\_\_\_\_ #2 \_\_\_\_\_ #3 \_\_\_\_\_

9) When did your current church/ministry start?

您现在服侍的教会 / 事工始于什么时候 ? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of people attend? Describe the people in your congregation

请描述您所服侍的群体 / 来您教会聚会的会众 ( 填写百分比 )

\_\_\_\_\_ % Male 男      \_\_\_\_\_ % Female 女

\_\_\_\_\_ % White Collar 白领      \_\_\_\_\_ % Migrant Workers 民工

\_\_\_\_\_ % Students 学生      \_\_\_\_\_ % University graduates 大学毕业生      \_\_\_\_\_ % Returnee 海归

\_\_\_\_\_ % 20-35      \_\_\_\_\_ % 35-50      \_\_\_\_\_ % 50-65      \_\_\_\_\_ % 65+

\_\_\_\_\_ % Post-Modern 后现代      \_\_\_\_\_ % Single 单身      \_\_\_\_\_ % Married 已婚      \_\_\_\_\_ % w kids 有孩子

\_\_\_\_\_ % Believers 信徒      \_\_\_\_\_ % Seekers 慕道友      \_\_\_\_\_ % Own car 有车      \_\_\_\_\_ % Own home 有房

11) How long have Christians in your church been believers?

您教会的信徒信主时间长度为 : ( 填写百分比 )

Believer <1 yr \_\_\_\_\_ % 1-2 yr \_\_\_\_\_ % 3-5 yr \_\_\_\_\_ % 5-10 yr \_\_\_\_\_ % 10+

信主 <1 年 \_\_\_\_\_ % 1-2 年 \_\_\_\_\_ % 3-5 年 \_\_\_\_\_ % 5-10 年 \_\_\_\_\_ % 10+

How many people attend weekly? 每周参加聚会的人数为 ? \_\_\_\_\_

How many services per Sunday? 每个主日有几堂崇拜 ? \_\_\_\_\_ How many meeting points? 有几个聚会点 ? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are people coming to your church/ministry? What is unique/different about your church?

为什么人们去您的教会 / 事工？您的教会的特点 / 优势是什么？

- Spiritual Hunger 属灵的需要    Preaching/Teaching 讲道 / 教导    Worship 崇拜  
Community/Fellowship 群体 / 团契    Love/Warmth 爱心 / 关怀    Moral Teaching 道德教导  
Receive Spiritual Strength 属灵上得力    Children 孩童  
Personal Crisis 个人的危机和难处    Outreach 传福音  
Dating/Looking for Love 约会 / 找女朋友    Practical Help 实际的帮助  
Belonging (Returning Home) 归属感 (回家的感觉)

Other其他: \_\_\_\_\_

排序Top #1 \_\_\_\_\_ #2 \_\_\_\_\_ #3 \_\_\_\_\_

How many pastors and staff? 牧者同工团队有多少人？(填写数字)

\_\_\_\_\_ FT paid Pastors 全职受薪牧师 \_\_\_\_\_

Non-paid Pastoral Staff 不受薪教牧同工 \_\_\_\_\_

Non-Pastoral Staff 其他同工 \_\_\_\_\_

What is your church annual budget? 教会全年的预算为多少？ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ % Staff 薪水    \_\_\_\_\_ % Building 会堂

\_\_\_\_\_ % Ministry 事工    \_\_\_\_\_ % Missions 宣教

Urban China Context (15 minutes) 城市处境 (15分钟)

What key negative factors in society contribute to the growth of Christianity in urban China? What is lacking that Christianity fills? What problems does Christianity answer or solve? 在中国的城市当中，有哪些社会中关键的负面因素，促进了基督教的成长和发展？基督教信仰填补了怎样的缺失？基督教信仰回答或解决了怎样的问题？

- Moral Vacuum 道德真空    Empty Heart 心灵空虚    Corruption 腐败  
Searching for Meaning 对意义的寻求    Personal Failure 个人的失败    Career Stress 事业的压力  
Marriage Breakdown 婚姻的破裂    Injustice 社会的不公平    Displacement 离开家乡  
Lack of Community 没有社区 / 群体    Societal Breakdown 社会的乱象  
Disillusioned w Atheism 无神论的破灭    Environment 环境  
Lack of Job Security 没有工作安全感    Urbanization 城市化进程

Others 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

排序Top #1 \_\_\_\_\_ #2 \_\_\_\_\_ #3 \_\_\_\_\_

What positive factors does Christianity provide that is attractive in urban China?

基督教信仰在城市中提供了哪些积极的因素？

- Uncovers Truth 揭开真理    Fills Heart Meaning 满足人心对意义的寻求  
Belonging/Community 给人归属感 / 群体  
Child Raising 抚养孩子    Love and Marriage 恋爱和婚姻  
Provides Moral Compass 提供道德指向  
Popular/Trendy 流行    Western/Foreign 西方 / 外国的

Associated with Modernity与现代化有关

Honesty诚实                      Authenticity 真实可信

Hope for the future对未来的盼望                      Practical help实际的帮助

Loving爱心                      Concern for others 对他人的关怀

Others其他: \_\_\_\_\_

排序Top #1 \_\_\_\_\_ #2 \_\_\_\_\_ #3 \_\_\_\_\_

What major events recently in history have caused this attraction to Christianity?

您认为是因着怎样的历史事件使得基督教信仰变得有吸引力？

What are the challenges of Christians in the urban cities?

对于居住在城市的基督徒而言，有哪些挑战？

21)What is your best estimate of Christians in your city? How many churches?

您认为所在的城市基督徒的人数为多少？有多少间教会？

Urban Church Planting (20 minutes) 城市植堂 (20分钟)

Mission China (40 minutes) 宣教中国 (40分钟)

23) Tell me about China's missions movement? What is Mission China 2030?

(Further clarification questions would be asked about the following topics)

请分享一下中国的宣教运动。什么是“2030 宣教中国”异象？

(可以在接下来的问题中将进一步阐释)

24) What is your opinion of the Lausanne movement and its contribution (negative or positive)? What is your view of Cape Town 2010 and ACLF 2013 in Seoul?

您对洛桑运动以及其影响（正面贡献还是负面影响）的看法是什么？您对2010年开普敦会议以及2013年首尔的亚洲教会领袖论坛的看法是什么？

What message would you like to say to the global church? What do you believe China's role is in the global mission movement? 您想对普世教会说些什么？您认为在普世宣教运动中，中国教会的角色会是什么？

**APPENDIX III:****Whom would you want to represent the church in China in a global arena?**

Interviewed	First	Second	Third
<b>AbrahamJ</b>	Tianming	T1-Yuehan	Zhang Heng
<b>AmyJ</b>	Tianming	T1-Yuehan	T1- Cui Quan
<b>AmyK</b>	Tianming	T1-Yuehan	Wang Yi
<b>Carl</b>	Tianming	Ezra	T1-Yuehan
<b>Cui</b>	Ezra	T2-Job Huang Lei	Tianming
<b>Daniel</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	Ezra
<b>Donna</b>	Ezra	Zhang Heng	Wang Yi
<b>Ezra</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	T1- Cui Quan
<b>Fang</b>	Tianming	Wang Yi	Ezra
<b>Jet</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	T1-Yuehan
<b>Job</b>	Tianming	T1-Cui Quan	Ezra
<b>Joshua</b>	Tianming	Daniel	Wang Yi
<b>Joy</b>	Tianming	Wang Yi	Zhang Heng
<b>LG</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	Ezra
<b>Lydia</b>	Ezra	Zhang Heng	Tianming
<b>Pei</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	Ezra
<b>SD</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	Ezra
<b>Shao</b>	Tianming	Fang	Zhao Zhangchao
<b>Tianming</b>	Tianming	Ezra	Shen Yiping
<b>Water</b>	Tianming	Zhang Heng	Wang Yi
<b>Winston</b>	Tianming	Wang Yi	Gaozhen
<b>Allison</b>	Tianming	Wang Yi	Gaozhen
<b>Zhang</b>	Tianming	Ezra	Zhang Rongliang
<b>Zhu</b>	Tianming	Zhao Zhangchao	T1-Yuehan



APPENDIX IV

Table 1: China, Brazil, Ghana, India, Korea Comparison

	China	Brazil	Ghana	India	Korea
<b>Christian %: (Catholics &amp; Protestants)</b>	7% <sup>108</sup>	81%	71%	4.8% <sup>109</sup>	32%
<b>Evangelical %</b>	6.6%	31%	40%	2.1%	18%
<b>Evangelical #:</b>	60 - 90 million	65 million	13 million	30 million	9 million
<b>Missionaries:</b>	2,000 (95%overseas)	15,000 (36% overseas)	750	7,500 (5% overseas)	22,259 (95% overseas)
<b>Worldview:</b>	Atheism Communism Buddhism Daoism Confucianism Folk religion	Catholicism Animistic ethnic indigenous peoples	Animist ethnic	Hinduism	Non-religious Buddhism Confucianism Shamanism Folk religion
<b>Missionary influence</b>	Korean, American	American, Britain, Sweden	Britain, German	British	American
<b>Spiritual Characteristic</b>	Evangelical non-Pentecostal	Pentecostal	Pentecostal	Pentecostal	Evangelical non-Pentecostal
<b>Missiology</b>	*Revival *Cross miss. *B2J *City on Hill *Great Commission *Prioritism	*Revisionist Holistic	*Restrain Holistic *Supernatural *Faith Mission *Prosperity Gospel	*Restrained Holistic *Local UPG	*Great Commission *Prioritism *Full support missionaries *Harvest Theory
<b>Missionisation</b>	*MC0 prayer mobilisation *MC1 Missional church *MC2 Minority UPG *MC3 Diaspora *MC4 Overseas cross-cultural	*Evangelisation *church planting *revitalisation *compassion & social justice *theological & missions education *Bible translation <sup>110</sup>	*Local UPG *Migration *bi-vocation *tentmakers *BAM *evangelism *Pentecostal worship centres *Lay leaders *ministry to disable *medical evangelism *media missions *diaspora *Muslim <sup>111</sup>	*Local UPGs *holistic Caring for sick, poor *Church planting *Bible translation *proclaim gospel *liberation oppressed *literature distribution *leadership training *slums <sup>112</sup>	*Evangelism *discipleship *church planting, *seminary education *Relief work *medical missions *education *1040 Window *Religious Blocs *UPGs <sup>113</sup>

Data source: (Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing 2020; Johnson et al. 2020; Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing 2020; Pew Research Centre 2013; Limpic 2005; Religionfacts.com 2021; Johnson, Ross, and Lee 2009; Korea Research Periodic Survey 2020; Korean World Mission Association (KWMA) and Hong 2021; Religionfacts.com 2021).

<sup>108</sup> Chapter 2, p. 8, FN2.

<sup>109</sup> (Johnson, Ross, and Lee 2009)

<sup>110</sup>(Ekström 2011; Fulanetto and Lidorio 2017)

<sup>111</sup> (Ekström 2011; Ghana Evangelical Missions Association 2021)

<sup>112</sup> (Ekström 2011)

<sup>113</sup> (J. Y. Cho 2007)



**APPENDIX V**

**'Missionisation Cycle'**

**Table 1: Traditional House Church**

19 <sup>th</sup> Century	20 <sup>th</sup> cent.	1950	1980	2010
<i>Translation</i>	<i>Contextualisation</i>		<i>Missionisation</i>	
Western <i>Spiritual Band</i> Missionaries	->	Indigenous Church	-> B2J <i>Preach Gospel Everywhere and Northwest</i> (1947 to Xinjiang, Northwest China)	
<i>Contextualisation</i>				
		Indigenous Church	->	1) TSPM Re-opened 2) House Church <b>Traditional House Church</b> in coastal cities; Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang (Wenzhou), Fujian, Guangdong...
<i>Missionisation</i>				
<b>*Lausanne 2010</b>				

**Table 2: Rural House Church**

19 <sup>th</sup> Century 2020	20 <sup>th</sup> cent.	1980	1990	2000	2010
<i>Translation</i>	<i>Contextualisation</i>				
Western Missionaries	->	Indigenous Church	-> <b>Rural House Church</b> (Revival Henan, Anhui)		
<i>Missionisation</i>					
			*B2J Simon Zhao released from prison (1988) *Dare-to-Die Team (Migrant Mission to cities 1994)	*Born-Again (Thailand, Phil., Pakis 1990s)	*Wanjun (20 to 30 people to Nepal, Pakistan 1999) *CGF (Pakistan 2002; Egypt 2004)
<i>Contextualisation</i>					
<b>Migrants Mission to Urban China</b>					
*Beijing Zaidao Church (2007) “Congregational Transition”					
<i>Missionisation</i>					
<b>*Lausanne 2010</b>					
*Church Plants (2012) *Missionaries sent (2013)					

Source: (Chapter 3: Zhang Heng; Interviews: Zhang 2021b; 2021c; 2021d)

APPENDIX V (cont)

Table 3: Urban Church

1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
<i>Translation</i>						
Korean missionaries -> (& American teachers)			<b>Urban House Church</b>			
<i>Contextualisation</i>						
*Beijing Shouwang Church (1993) “City on a Hill”						
*Beijing City Revival Church (1997)						
*Beijing Zion Church (2007)						
<i>Missionisation</i>						
*Beijing Zion Church support missions (Gansu, Yunnan 2007)						
*Sichuan Earthquake (2008)						
* <b>Lausanne (2010)</b>						
<i>(Unified all 3 house church streams for missions)</i>						
*Asian Church Leaders Forum (2013)						
*Jesus Leadership Forum (2013 & 2014)						
*Beijing Zion Church overseas (Pakistan 2014)						
* <i>Mission China 2030</i> (2015 to 2018)						
*Beijing Shouwang Church (Africa 2017)						
*Beijing Zion sends 9 units (2018)						
*Tianming: <i>Call from All Nations</i> (2018)						
*COVID-19 hits; Zoom opens						
*Daniel: 24-7 Prayer Chain (2020)						

Source: (Chapter 4: Tianming; Chapter 5: Ezra; Chapter 6: Daniel; Interviews: J. Lee 2017; T. Jin 2017)