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ASSISTING CHINESE HOUSE CHURCHES TO BECOME
GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES

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ASSISTING CHINESE HOUSE CHURCHES TO BECOME GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES

Name Withheld

Read and Approved by:

George H. Martin (Chair)

M. David Sills

J. D. Payne

Date

To Patty

A partner who is greater than I could have ever asked for or imagined, a servant who never tires, and a helper who finds great joy in supporting her husband—I love you.

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PREFACE

God is amazing. Over the past sixty years, in His remarkable sovereignty He sustained the Chinese church in its darkest of times. After the missionaries were expelled in the early 1950s, most missiologists rendered the situation in East Asia to be hopeless. The Communists were in full control, brutally and systematically attempting to eradicate the last remnants of the gospel in China. However, God had an alternative plan, and He prevailed. Over the last thirty years, He has resurrected the church in China and now is transforming the harvest field into a harvest force. It is truly a privilege to consider myself as a servant of the Chinese church.

Upon completion of this project, I have many people to thank for their support and encouragement. Dr. George Martin has been gracious to coach me through this project over the last few years even though we were separated by thousands of miles. I am indebted to Dwight Brown for setting me on the road toward careful biblical study and a passion to shepherd and serve the flock of God. His example and teaching has impacted my life greatly, and I pray that the Lord would extend His grace to me so that I could “imitate his faith” (Heb 13:7). I am thankful for the many instructors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary whose instruction has equipped me to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). I am also grateful for the ministry of Clifton Baptist Church and its passion to partner with me in reaching the nations. It is a wonderful example of a Great Commission church; may God continue to sustain its passion to send out and support missionaries.

I want to especially thank the many missionaries and co-laborers who helped me with this project. From collecting surveys, to sharing experiences and observations, this project would have been impossible apart from their contributions. I also want to thank those who comprise the Chinese house church. Their courage, faith, and determination are an inspiration to me. In their missions endeavors, may God enable them to do far more abundantly than all that they could ever ask or think (Eph 3:20). I especially want to thank my dear friend and Timothy in the faith, Joe. Without him this project would have never happened. I often praise God for the day he brought Joe into my life and look forward to how He plans to use him in the future.

Our children are an incredible blessing from the Lord who daily cause me to reflect on His greatness. I am humbled that God would entrust to me such precious children to raise and disciple. I receive more joy from them than I could ever express and pray they will continue to grow in their love for Christ and for the nations.

My marriage to Patty is the strongest proof in my life that God is real and that the Bible is His holy inspired Word. She daily lives out Philippians 2:3-4 and serves her husband and children with a strength that could only come from above. Human wisdom could never create a relationship so filled with joy and laughter and, should the Lord will, I delight in the prospect of spending the next forty plus years with her laboring for the King.

Name Withheld

Houston, Texas

May 2012

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past sixty years, the phenomenal growth of the church in China is well documented.¹ The first of these thirty years of growth took place in the severest of trials, the last thirty years in a freer, yet still restricted and controlled environment. As Christians in China have seen their freedom and their churches grow, some have been eager to embrace the Great Commission (GC). It is no secret that missiologists all over the world are hoping and predicting that the Chinese house church will accomplish great things in the years ahead.² The Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement, made popular through Paul Hattaway's book,³ has helped some Chinese Christians gain a vision for how God can use them to participate in the GC. Nonetheless, after living in China for over four years, this author questions how widespread this vision for missions truly is. Moreover, plenty of stories make it clear that those who do have a vision for missions in China oftentimes lack proper training, and their results tend to disappoint.

¹For example, see David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003).

²For example, see J. Smith, "China Sending: A Mission force on the Rise" [on-line]; accessed 11 January 2011; available from <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/worldreports/521?pg=all>; Internet. J. Smith is a pseudonym for a leader who serves with Pioneers.

³Paul Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 2003).

Purpose

As denoted by the title, the purpose of this study is to provide a training proposal that will assist the Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and become Great Commission churches (GCCs). However, in order to provide a relevant, effective training proposal, information was gathered to ascertain the current missiology (theology, vision, and action) of modern-day Chinese house churches. From this data, weaknesses in the churches' missiology were discovered and consequently, a contextualized training proposal was developed with the purpose of assisting Chinese house church leaders to transform their churches into GCCs.

Most missiologists, who understand the current situation of the Chinese house church and its missionary efforts thus far, believe the leaders of the house church need this type of assistance. This need does not indicate a deficiency in their faith or a lack of zeal for the Lord, but rather as Kyung Chik Han states, "We Asians do not yet have built into our church life the tradition of the missionary vocation."⁴ Patrick Fung, Overseas Missionary Fellowship International's (OMF) general director, agrees and notes,

Partnership with the world-wide church of Christ will be the key to seeing a vibrant missionary movement among different peoples. There is much to learn from the church in China particularly on suffering. Yet the global church of Jesus Christ also has much to share with the Chinese church: our experience in cross-cultural ministry, mission structures as well as equipping and training of cross-cultural workers.⁵

⁴Kyung Chik Han, "Introduction and Evaluation," in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 113.

⁵Patrick Fung, "China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities," in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 31.

Mission Terminology

Over the past few decades the usage of the words *mission*, *missions*, and recently, *missional* has escalated dramatically. David Horner observes,

A current trend among younger evangelical leaders, one which serves as a badge of relevant thinking and marks them as particularly insightful, is the use of a series of words to describe the purpose and direction of the church. By using the words *mission*, *missions*, and *missional* correctly, a leader can raise his credibility among his peers and set himself apart as one who possesses an advanced level of understanding and expertise on matters related to church vision and emphasis. That is especially true of the word *missional* because it has in recent years come to function as an adjective to describe any church with an intentional kingdom-focused ministry.”⁶

David Bosch remarks that the inflation of the concept of mission has both positive and negative effects.⁷ Of course, the most negative effect is captured by Stephen Neill’s famous axiom: “If everything is mission, then nothing is mission.”⁸ Horner agrees and argues, “We need to distinguish between missions from a biblical perspective and the way the word has come to be used as a catchall expression to elevate, validate, or justify nearly anything people have introduced as a worthy cause for their church, denomination, or agency to embrace.”⁹

As a result of this broadening process, this paper will avoid the use of the word “missional” and “missional churches”¹⁰ and instead speak in terms of “GCCs.” While

⁶David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Change the World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 3.

⁷David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 511.

⁸Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81.

⁹Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, 4.

¹⁰The only exception is when material is being quoted that uses the term “missional.”

using the noun “GC” to serve as an adjective may appear strange, this usage’s strength lies in the fact that it clearly communicates the concept of churches that are obeying the GC as found in Matthew 28:18-20. It conveys the notion of churches that are raising up and sending workers to all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *panta ta ethne*) for the purpose of making disciples. A GCC’s ultimate goal is to spread God’s glory through the sending of cross-cultural missionaries—especially to those places that are destitute of the gospel.

This phrase, Great Commission church (GCC), will be used instead of “missional church,” which *could* be limited only to emphasizing engagement with the non-Christian society in its midst.¹¹ The term GC will also be used in this paper as an adjective to describe various things such as a theology, a survey, an activity, etc.

Background

The author’s interest in this subject flows from the calling God has placed upon his life. In college he began to see God’s plan to gather all the nations before His throne in worship. Through two different short-term mission trips, it became clear that God had called him to serve overseas and to see the gospel spread to every tribe, tongue and nation. However, during his time at seminary, as he was preparing to serve God in China, he became aware of the shift that is occurring (or has occurred) regarding the center of Christianity.¹²

¹¹Although the way Keller describes a missional church does not preclude involvement in cross-cultural missions, he neither emphasizes it nor requires it. Tim Keller, “The Missional Church” [online]; accessed 11 November 2011; available from http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Missional_Church-Keller.pdf; Internet.

¹²See Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

The fact that Latin America, Africa and Asia have been harvest fields during the past few decades has been well documented.¹³ This advance has led to an enormous increase in the number of Christians in these continents, with most of them categorized loosely as evangelicals. Moreover, postmodernism and materialism (among other factors) have ravaged the church in the West, leading to declines in Christian affiliation there. Therefore, in a relatively short time, the church in the global south (or in the majority world) has greatly increased its influence; many believe, as will be demonstrated later, it will play a much more significant role in the future of worldwide Christianity.

As these churches begin to mature, they are playing a bigger part in propagating the faith once for all handed down to the saints. Tobias Brandner observes, “One of the most remarkable events in the past 50 years of mission history is the *internationalization* of mission. Mission is no more a movement from north to south or from west to east; it is originating in all parts of the world and moving in all directions.”¹⁴ As a result, Paul Heibert implores the Western church to “recognize that God is raising up a world church, and that we are no longer the center but partners with churches in other lands.”¹⁵

¹³Jenkins estimates that as of the year 2000 approximately two-thirds of the global evangelical population resides in these areas. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 37, 61-63. However, it is important to remember that the theology held by a significant number of these adherents may not cohere well with traditional evangelicalism. Such questionable theology includes the prosperity gospel, popular religiosity, syncretistic versions of Christianity, Pentecostalism, etc.

¹⁴Tobias Brandner, “Mission, Millennium, and Politics: A Continuation of the History of Salvation from the East,” *Missiology*, 37 (2009): 318.

¹⁵Paul G. Hiebert, “Missiological Education for a Global Era,” in *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 37.

In the first known study of its kind, in 1972, Larson, Pentecost, and Wong attempted to assess how many majority world missionaries existed at that time. They concluded that an estimated total of 3,411 missionaries had been sent from the regions of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.¹⁶ In 1980, according to Larry Keyes, this number had conservatively grown to 13,000.¹⁷ This number almost tripled to 35,924 in 1988.¹⁸ Fourteen years later, Paul Pierson reported, “the estimates for cross cultural missionaries from Asia, Africa and Latin America range from 100,000 to 120,000 today; and it [*sic*] continues to grow. Koreans alone account for 11,500, and it is estimated that over 20,000 Indian missionaries work in cultures and languages other than their own.”¹⁹ Furthermore, in tracking the continued growth into the twenty-first century, in 2009, David Harley reported:

During the last thirty years, the missionary movement within Asia has grown rapidly. Indian churches are now supporting 30,000 missionaries and evangelists . . . South Korea has 16,000 missionaries serving all over the world. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore have sent out significant numbers of cross-cultural workers. Indonesia and the Philippines number their cross-cultural workers in the thousands.²⁰

¹⁶Peter Larson, Edward Pentecost, and James Wong, “Resumé,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 102.

¹⁷Larry Pate and Larry Keyes, “Two-Thirds World Missions: The Next 100 Years,” *Missiology* 21 (1993): 190.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Paul Pierson, “The New Context of Christian Mission,” in *Asian Church and God’s Mission: Studies Presented in the International Symposium on Asian Mission in Manila*, ed. Wonsuk Ma and Julie C. Ma (Manila: OMF Literature, 2003), 14-15.

²⁰David Harley, “Training Asian Missionaries,” in *A Legacy Continues: In Appreciation of James Hudson Taylor III 1929-2009*, ed. Jennie Fung et al. (Hong Kong: OMF Hong Kong, 2009), 68.

The growth in the missionary sending of the majority world has been amazing, to the point that Larry Pate, in 1993, extrapolated data from the previous twenty years and projected that by the year 2000 there would be considerably more non-Western missionaries than Western ones.²¹ According to Michael Jaffarian, Pate's predictions have not yet come to pass;²² nonetheless, there is still much to be thankful for regarding the burden the majority world church feels for reaching unreached people groups (UPGs). Its outreach to the remaining UPGs is especially exciting due to the fact that those sent out from majority world churches are culturally, linguistically and geographically closer to the final frontier of mission work, making them ideal candidates to "finish the task."

Excited by this discovery, and having the blessing of studying at the Ph. D. level in the area of missions, the author began to catch a vision for training Chinese missionaries to bring the gospel to their unreached neighbors. The BTJ project confirmed that the house church in China is indeed interested and excited to play a part in the GC. However, with information being so limited, and the situation from house church to house church being so different, he sensed the need to gather information in order to make a more strategic and specific proposal as to how Chinese house churches could be assisted in their missionary efforts.

Thesis

The thesis of this dissertation is that the majority²³ of Chinese house churches

²¹Pate and Keyes, "Two-Thirds World Missions," 190.

²²Michael Jaffarian, "Are there More Non-Western Missionaries than Western Missionaries?" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 3 (2004), 131.

²³Majority is defined in this paper as greater than 50 percent.

represented in this study are not GCCs. They are not GCCs in the sense that they do not meet at least 7 of the 10 criteria of a GCC,²⁴ exhibiting significant weaknesses in their missiology.

Although Chinese Christians have tremendous zeal to participate in the GC and possess many advantages over their Western brethren in reaching UPGs in the 10/40 window, they fall short of the standards argued for in this paper. Moreover, the research will show that Chinese house churches, to this point, have not been very successful in sending long-term, cross-cultural workers, which is the ultimate missiological goal of a GCC.

Causes of Missiological Ineffectiveness

Brother Mark, who serves as vice-president and general secretary for a BTJ organization, in 2010 described some of the problems that Chinese missionaries, and their sending churches, are currently facing.

The main problems where China missionaries encounter are their capability, training, and financial support. . . . Most of these missionaries are young, with lower education, less professional, language inability, without full training in theology and mission, lack of field support, and finally less financial support due to their poor sending Churches. Many of these missionaries face depression or even casualty in the mission field [*sic*].²⁵

²⁴The 10 criteria of a GCC are presented in Table 2. The rationale for needing to meet 7 criteria in order to be called a GCC is presented in chapter 3.

²⁵Brother Mark is a pseudonym as his real name is being kept anonymous for security purposes. He is also designated as source 1 (S1). From this point forward, all anonymous sources will be designated as S1, S2, etc., and all anonymous missionaries who were interviewed will be designated M1, M2, etc. There are a total of six unnamed sources and twelve unnamed missionaries quoted in this dissertation. Additionally, the reader is alerted to the fact that a number of quotes in this paper will be coming from sources who do not speak English as their first language. As a result, these quotes, always noted with a “[*sic*],” may appear awkward with frequent lapses in the use of standard English. However, without their contributions, this paper would be much more limited in the information it could provide.

Jonathan Lewis observes that this is not just a Chinese problem, but is affecting two-thirds world missionaries everywhere. “Although thousands of cross-cultural [two-thirds world] missionaries are being sent out, many are returning because of financial problems and those related to inadequate training.”²⁶ Chin Do Kham, presenting at the International Symposium on Asian Mission in Manila in 2002, identified inexperience as a leading cause of missiological ineffectiveness. “Asian churches and missionaries do not have a long enough history to learn from. Consequently, they are facing many challenges today.”²⁷

In addition to the hindrances of “capability, training, financial support” and “inexperience,” other challenges that are expected to be identified include government restrictions, familial opposition, unawareness of the unreached people groups (UPGs), obtaining visas, language learning, and practical cross-cultural living skills. Moreover, it will be asserted that a large number of Chinese house churches possess no vision for missions. This assertion does not indicate that they have rejected the concept; rather, that they have not entertained the possibility that God would want them to participate in the GC at this stage in their development.

This hypothesis is humbly shared by a researcher who admires and appreciates a large number of Chinese believers he has had the privilege to learn from and work

²⁶Jonathan Lewis, “Equipping Tentmakers: An Argentine Perspective,” in *Internationalizing Missionary Training*, ed. William David Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 158-59.

²⁷Chin Do Kham, “Partnership Issues and Challenges in Asian Mission,” in *Asian Church and God’s Mission: Studies Presented in the International Symposium on Asian Mission in Manila*, ed. Wonsuk Ma and Julie C. Ma (Manila: OMF Literature, 2003), 44. He specifically identified the lack of coordination between Asian sending agencies, unintended duplication and/or competition, a lack of pre-field orientation, member care, and educational programs for missionary kids.

alongside. The worldwide church should have great respect for these dear brothers and sisters who serve the Lord in the challenging Chinese context. The Christians there have suffered tremendously over the past half century, yet they still continue to honor God and accomplish remarkable things. Some, especially among the larger house church networks, have even been successful in sending missionaries to engage UPGs. However, many believers seem to have very little initiative or vision for such a project. Or, when they are successful in sending missionaries, oftentimes the results are undesirable. The next section will further introduce a few the previously mentioned challenges that are negatively affecting GC participation.

Challenges

There certainly are some good reports and much to be excited about regarding the Chinese house churches and their global ambitions. Nonetheless, due to their context, the churches still face many limitations and hindrances in their efforts to grow in a more missiological orientation. In this section, the author will speculate on some of the more significant challenges he senses are inhibiting the Chinese house churches from fully participating in the GC. Later in this dissertation, the data will describe these challenges in more detail and add others that came to light through the research process.

Government Restrictions

The World Christian Encyclopedia notes that China has been a one-party communist state since 1949.²⁸ The Chinese government's communistic ideology is the

²⁸*The World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vol. 1, ed. David B. Barrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 191.

“product of Mao Zedong’s (毛泽东, máo zédōng) thought, which applies the ideas of Marx and Lenin to the concrete conditions of China.”²⁹ The Communist Party of China (CPC) is the leading political force in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).³⁰ Additionally, the CPC requires that its adherents reject all forms of religion before they join, as its Marxist-Leninist ideology serves as a sort of secular religion.

Since its founding, the CPC has deemed the house church in China to be an illegal institution. In the earlier years, especially under the Mao regime, the government’s goal was to eradicate all religious activity. In more recent times, the government is more interested in restricting, monitoring and controlling, rather than eliminating. The official three-self patriotic movement church (TSPM, 三自爱国教会, sānzì àiguó jiàohuì) is recognized and approved by the government, although it is closely monitored and scrutinized at all times. The house church, on the other hand, has no legal grounds to exist. Therefore, most house church leaders know at any time, for any reason, the local officials can easily disband their beloved churches. These leaders assume the greatest risk when they begin to emphasize missions and evangelism. As long as the church is content to keep to itself, the local officials are often reluctant to cause it any trouble. However, when reports of fast growth, big plans, and extraordinary events are heard in government offices, an unease begins to rise and causes the “keepers of the peace” to suppress and discourage such radical, illegal activities. Therefore, government

²⁹Fredric M. Kaplan, Julian M. Sobin, and Arne J. de Keijzer, *The China Guidebook* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 41.

³⁰National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China, “Constitution of the People’s Republic of China: Preamble” [on-line]; accessed 19 January 2012; available from http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/2007-11/15/content_1372962.htm; Internet.

restrictions are certainly a factor inhibiting the house church from a greater involvement in the GC.

Leadership Training

As a result of being an illegal institution, house churches are very limited in obtaining leadership training. However, finding trained leaders is also a challenge for the three-self church. Su Deci reports that the training of leaders is the primary concern of the official church and the house church.³¹ In 2003, Jonathan Chao noted that for the house church, “the need for training among its volunteer leaders has been the most important need since the early 1980s, when the ministry began to expand through itinerant evangelism. The rate of church growth has far exceeded that of the rate of leadership training.”³² Furthermore, “the need for pastoral leadership became more acute in the 1990s after many churches had been established. Only in China do we have a situation of ‘the flock seeking shepherds.’”³³ Yoo also confirms these findings in his research. In his dissertation published in 2005, 62 percent of the Chinese house church participants noted that leadership training was “the most urgent need of the Chinese house church.”³⁴ Unity among house churches ranked second with 24 percent; scarcity of resources was third with 9 percent, and missions came in fourth with 4 percent.³⁵

³¹Su Deci, “The Church in China Today,” *Chinese Theological Review* 14 (2000): 110.

³²Jonathan Chao, “Need for Pastoral Training Among House Churches in China” [on-line]; accessed 26 October 2004, available from <http://www.cmi.org.tw/english/cmr1567-12.htm>; Internet.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Jong Keol Yoo, “Factors Influencing Leadership Development Strategies” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005) 105.

³⁵*Ibid.*

Chao describes how some house churches are attempting to keep up with their ever-growing congregations.

Large house church groups have developed one year training programs for the young people they train for full time ministry. During the year, a class of 30 students would gather for intensive training on Biblical content, evangelism, prayer and church planting. . . . The graduates are then sent out for local or distant evangelism.³⁶

In addition, multiple underground training centers are led by foreigners. While all these efforts are good, their illegal nature restricts the number of training centers and the number of trainees. Until the CPC lifts the ban on unregistered churches and training centers, it is unlikely that the leadership need will be met. If this is true for pastors, how much more so is it true for missionaries? With a task as complex, costly and difficult as missionary work, the workers absolutely must receive training in order to be effective.

Giving Patterns

In order to support missionaries, money is required. While many people assume the house churches would have plenty of excess money to spend on missionaries,³⁷ since they do not spend it on large buildings, this is not exactly the case. In the first place, house churches often rent apartments that are designated as their meeting places. Such a practice is not free and, including utilities and upkeep, requires a decent percentage of their offerings, similar to many churches in America. Secondly, a

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷In the North American context, J. D. Payne shares, "In our study . . . the majority of the [house] churches, however, used their finances for missions and benevolence (meeting both community needs and needs within the church). One church leader noted that his church usually gave 70-80 percent of their finances to missions and to meet needs. Within missional house churches, it is not uncommon to hear of such large quantities (including higher percentages) being given to these two areas." J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches*, Kindle ed. (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 97.

number of Chinese house churches, especially those that are larger and more established, have paid clergy. Furthermore, for a variety of reasons, it is not uncommon to find house churches that do not disclose how they use their funds. Whether this lack of disclosure stems from ignorance or purposeful deception, is of no consequence; the result is the same. Many believers are not willing to give (or give large amounts) when they do know how the money will be used. Unfortunately, stories abound regarding church leaders who swindle money. Financial accountability and stewardship is an area that deserves attention if the house church seriously intends to play a more significant role in fulfilling the GC. Jacob Thomas agrees and notes that this problem is not just restricted to the Chinese context.

As Asia becomes financially more resourceful it is imperative that local Christians are challenged towards a robust spirituality inclusive of missional commitment and partnership, rather than an inward looking, simplistic spiritualism. . . . Accountability and stewardship of God's resources is also a powerful witness, more so in contexts where corruption is endemic.³⁸

Moreover, although China possesses the world's second largest economy,³⁹ in relationship to per capital income, in 2008 China ranked extremely low at \$2,940.⁴⁰ As a result of low salaries, and a poverty mentality, it is not uncommon to hear pastors lament the lack of giving by Chinese Christians. Due to the fact that the missions enterprise

³⁸ Jacob Thomas, "Equipping and Resourcing of Asian Mission Movements," in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle, (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 145-46.

³⁹ Kevin Hamlin, "China Overtakes Japan as World's Second-Biggest Economy" [on-line]; accessed 11 January 2011; available from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-08-16/china-economy-passes-japan-s-in-second-quarter-capping-three-decade-rise.html>; Internet.

⁴⁰ Europa Publications, *The Europa World Year Book 2010*, 51st ed., vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2010), s.v. "The People's Republic of China."

requires a significant amount of financial resources, this project intends to discover Chinese Christians' perceptions of their own giving.

Organization and Cooperation

Organization and cooperation are necessary aspects of the missionary sending enterprise. While these concepts date back to biblical times, they are most prominently evidenced two-hundred years ago when the modern Protestant missionary movement was launched by various societies (sodalities), rather than just by their local churches (modalities). This cooperation has been viewed as essential because, in order to do missions well, a vast array of resources is necessary. Typically, one local church cannot supply all that is needed in order to ensure a missionary is adequately prepared and supported to serve God effectively on the mission field. Thus, in the Western church's history there is a great tradition of mission societies.

Chinese house churches do have varying degrees of partnerships. Some very large house church networks (家庭教会网络, *jīatíng jiàohuì wǎngluò*) receive attention in the West. These groups have made progress in GC participation and have been successful in setting up missionary training centers, as well as sending out a few cross-cultural workers. However, tens of thousands of small house churches have little to no network or partnership. Additionally, some of them are resistant in cooperating with other house churches due to widespread heresy and authoritarian styles of leadership. Despite the valid concerns, if they choose to reject cooperating with biblical, like-minded churches, these small house churches have almost no realistic way to raise up and send missionaries to the nations.

Methodology

In spelling out the research methodology for this study, it will be helpful to work backward from the ultimate goal of this research. The purpose of this study is to provide a contextualized training proposal that will assist the Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and become GCCs.

However, any evaluation of the Chinese house church must take into account the historical, political, and cultural context from which it has emerged over the past few decades. Therefore, in chapter 2 of this dissertation, a history of the development of the Chinese house church will be presented. After this framework has been established, chapter 3 will define what constitutes a GCC (大使命的教会, dàshǐmìng de jiàohuì).

Defining a Great Commission Church

The presupposition that this author is operating from is that the Bible is God's Word and therefore serves as the ultimate authority in all matters of life and faith. As a result, when attempting to define a GCC, the Word of God will first be consulted. Although it seems impossible to define a GCC in a way that would be agreeable to all Christians, an attempt must be made in order to establish measureable criteria.

In chapter 3, a thorough study of the Scriptures will start this defining process. As verses are explained and linked together, the result will be a short biblical theology of missions. This theology will then be condensed into the 10 criteria of a GCC, found in Table 2. The 10 criteria serve as the ideal and goal for any church. However, chapter 3 will argue that only 7 of the 10 criteria need to be met in order to qualify as a GCC.

Data Collection

After the defining process has been completed, data must be collected that will enable the researcher to understand the current missiology and mission activity of represented Chinese house churches. The data will originate from three distinct sources.

Questionnaire. First, data has been collected directly from house church leaders and members through a questionnaire. Hearing directly from various Chinese believers regarding their hopes, visions, beliefs and current activities related to the GC proved to be an extremely valuable exercise. A survey tool comprised of 29 questions was carefully developed and translated. The questions were formulated with the purpose of learning about the mission theology (宣教神学, *xuānjiao shénxué*), and practice (实行, *shíxíng*) of the represented house churches. In the second half of chapter 3, the researcher will demonstrate how the 29 survey questions are connected to and flow from the 10 biblical criteria of a GCC. Moreover, the “key” questions⁴¹ that will be used for *evaluating* the house church’s missiology will be isolated, and the answers needed to avoid a “weak” assessment will be described. The English version of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1. The Chinese version can be found in Appendix 2.

The survey instrument was developed in late 2010, approved by the ethics committee at the seminary, and subsequently translated by two trusted Chinese house church leaders. The goal of this research project was to get approximately one hundred

⁴¹ Although all of the survey questions will provide helpful information regarding the missiology of the Chinese house church, only select “key” questions will be used for evaluation purposes. This decision was made in order to simplify the evaluation process and prevent the standard from being too high. All such questions are designated with an asterisk in their respective tables in chapter 3. See chapter 3 for more details.

and fifty of these questionnaires filled out. The first avenue for data collection was through theological training centers scattered throughout China. As teachers conduct their classes, they were asked to have their students fill out a questionnaire. Most of these students are either church leaders or aspiring church leaders and are very familiar with the inner workings of their local church. Through these students and church leaders, 88 surveys were obtained. The second avenue for obtaining questionnaire information was through house church relationships in the researcher's city of residence. These believers and their contacts filled out another forty-one. The third and final avenue for data collection was working through other missionaries spread across China. Through their help an additional 23 surveys.

The questionnaires were tabulated and the results reported in chapter 4 with most of the information being presented in figures. A preliminary assessment of the represented house churches regarding their commitment to the Great Commission will be offered based on the answers to the "key" questions.

Published materials. The second source of data consists of published materials. Due to the aforementioned security issues, published information related to the missionary activity of Chinese house churches is sparse. However, the zeal of the house churches and the fact that some of the largest networks' leaders have taken refuge outside of China, have led to an increase in availability of information in the last decade. These items will be carefully considered in chapter 5 and will help the researcher to further elucidate and analyze the survey data.

International missionaries. The third source of data originates from

international missionaries who are working with various house churches across China. Many provided important and valuable information for this project; their names will not be revealed due to the sensitive nature of their work. Because of their extensive knowledge of missions and their familiarity with Chinese house churches, these people are some of the most qualified to provide insight into the missionary efforts originating from mainland China. Again, their observations, also presented throughout chapter 5, were useful to triangulate the survey and publication data. Through the published materials and missionary interviews, the preliminary assessment in chapter 4 will be reevaluated and a final conclusion will be reached regarding the verification or rejection of the thesis.

Parameters of data collection. Up to this point, it has been expressed that information was obtained from Chinese house churches. However, as the phrase “Chinese house churches” is rather broad and demands definition, a narrower description will now be given.

First, Han (汉族, hànzú) Chinese churches that exist in mainland China are the primary target of this study. The Han account for 89.8 percent of the entire population on the mainland.⁴² As a result of this focus, the Diaspora living in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, were not be asked to participate in the study due to the different contexts in which they operate. Moreover, the many different minority groups who live in China were not surveyed. Although it was possible that a minority, who also happened to be a

⁴²Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 214.

house church member, was handed a survey,⁴³ the researcher does not suspect that this occurred.⁴⁴

Second, information was not sought from the official three-self government sanctioned churches (TSPM). Occasionally one will hear reports of missionary activity from these churches, but such reports are not common. This phenomenon is due mainly to the fact that the government is able to watch them more closely and forbids such illegal activity.⁴⁵

Third, leaders of the represented Chinese house churches filled out the majority of the surveys; however, a number of members were also given questionnaires. Obtaining information from both groups enabled this study to gain a more complete picture of the Great Commission theology and practice of the house churches.

Fourth, a special effort was made to get information from all parts of China. Because the author lives in eastern China, approximately 25 percent of the surveys collected are from this part of the country. However, since he has many contacts in the previously mentioned theological training centers, and has relationships with a large number of missionaries, he was still able to acquire data from many different regions.

⁴³In the demographic information section of the survey, identifying one's ethnicity was not requested.

⁴⁴Although minorities comprise 10.2 percent of the entire population in China, the researcher believes that they were not represented in the survey because (1) they are concentrated in the Southwestern and Western parts of China, which were not heavily represented in the study and (2) of those minorities that do live in the cities, very few have been reached and are involved in the church.

⁴⁵The church in China could now be categorized into three different types: (1) the registered and officially recognized three-self church, (2) the unregistered and unrecognized underground house church, (3) a third emerging category is the "state recognized but unregistered 'house church.'" Nanlai Cao, *Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 27. This third grouping is included in this study and due to its unregistered status, still falls into the illegal house church category.

Fifth, each survey participant was asked to identify his or her house church network, if connected to one. This data was collected in order to provide insight into which networks are more active in sending out cross-cultural workers. Moreover, it enables the researcher to compare and contrast the mission activity of networked versus non-networked churches.

Finally, this study did not consider the state or development of the Catholic church in China or any cults that identify themselves as Christians. This list includes Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Eastern Lightening, etc.

Developing a Proposal

The last chapter of this project will describe a contextualized training proposal that will assist Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and become GCCs. The training proposal will be presented through the paradigm of the 10 criteria of a GCC. Based on the data presented in chapters 4 and 5, the proposal will seek to address missiological weaknesses, lead the trainees in exercises designed to help them apply the information, and aid leaders in the development of a comprehensive missiological plan.⁴⁶ This missiological plan, if implemented with dependence upon God, should transform the trainees' churches into GCCs. Also in chapter 6, international missiological partnerships and topics for further research will be briefly discussed.

⁴⁶An overview of the training proposal in outline form is attached as Appendix 4. It identifies the missiological weaknesses of the house church, training goals, and actions steps related to each of the 10 criteria of a GCC.

Conclusion

The Sovereign God who works in mysterious ways is to be marveled at by His saints. Sixty years ago, when all of the foreign missionaries were expelled from mainland China, many missiologists worried that the Chinese church would not survive. However today, the worldwide church is astonished at the growth and perseverance of the church in China and is hoping that the BTJ movement will indeed penetrate some of the most unevangelized areas on the globe. The history of the amazing development of the Chinese house church is traced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHINESE HOUSE CHURCH

Introduction

The Chinese church has stood up! This modification of Mao Zedong's (毛泽东, máo zédōng) famous statement¹ accurately reflects the current state of the church in China. Despite many years of hardship and conflict between the Chinese government and the Christian church, God is currently overcoming the problems of the past and establishing a powerful church in East Asia. The old adage, "one more Christian, one less Chinese,"² may well be losing its place in twenty-first century China.

Ruth Tucker maintains that Christianity came to the Orient in four stages. The Nestorians arrived in the seventh century, the Roman Catholics at the end of the thirteenth century, Francis Xavier and the Catholics reentered in the sixteenth century, and the Protestants led by Robert Morrison in the early nineteenth century.³

¹Chairman Mao made the statement "The Chinese people have stood up!" on October 1, 1949, to announce the newly formed People's Republic of China.

²Gail V. Coulson, *The Enduring Church: Christians in China and Hong Kong* (New York: Friendship Press, 1996), 1.

³Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 165-66.

The first three stages were ultimately unsuccessful due to a variety of reasons.⁴ This chapter will trace the history of the house church in China from the beginning of the fourth stage until the present day. The greatest emphasis will be placed upon the last sixty plus years due to their complexity and significance for understanding the present day church in China. Moreover, this background will provide a necessary foundation for the chapters to follow, which seeks to understand the modern-day missiology of the house church.

The period of time between the beginning of the fourth stage and today will be divided into four main sections. The first division starts in 1807 when Morrison arrived in China. It ends with the beginning of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The next section follows the church through the difficult days under Chairman Mao from 1949 until his death in 1976. The third division begins shortly before the establishment of Deng Xiaoping's (邓小平, *dèng xiǎopíng*) rule in 1978 and lasts until the infamous June 4, 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. The final section looks at the church in China during the last twenty plus years. The transitional years of 1949, 1978, and 1989 were chosen because they all involved momentous events which significantly impacted the church and society.

Three important qualifications need to be made before this historical study commences. First, due to space constraints and the narrow focus of this dissertation, the history and development of the Catholic Church in China will not be addressed; rather,

⁴Most scholars attribute the early failures, especially in regard to the Nestorians, to a "heavy reliance on the patronage of cosmopolitan emperors. When there was a change at the top, they easily came under attack." Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *A Global History of Christians: How Everyday Believers Experienced Their World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 142. However, Zhao Fusan would assert that the primary cause was due to a lack of proper indigenization. Zhao Fusan, *Christianity in China*, ed. Theresa Carino (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1986), 14.

the focus will be on the Protestant house church. Second, although this chapter is focusing on the house church, the state approved three-self church (三自教会, sānzì jiàohuì) will be discussed because of how it shaped and formed the house church. Third, only the mainland Chinese church will be examined. Unfortunately the churches in Taiwan and Hong Kong will be excluded.

Protestant Missions and China (1807-1949)

When William Carey sailed for India in 1792, the great Protestant missions movement began. Fifteen years after this historical event, China received its first Protestant missionary.

Robert Morrison (1807-1834)

““And so, Mr. Morrison, you really expect to make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese empire?” Morrison’s characteristic reply was, ‘No, sir, but I expect God will.’”⁵ This conversation occurred when Robert Morrison, of the London Missionary Society, boarded a ship bound for Canton, which today is known as Guangzhou (广州, guāngzhōu). As the first Protestant missionary in China, Morrison assumed the very difficult task of spreading an illegal religion to a xenophobic people who dispensed plenty of persecution.⁶ Moreover, he was constantly monitored by the East India Company (EIC) “whose officials prohibited any activity that in the least way bordered on evangelism.”⁷ As a result,

⁵J. Herbert Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 212.

⁶Spickard and Cragg, *A Global History of Christians*, 324.

⁷Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 167.

it was necessary for him to keep out of sight most of the time. . . . He lived for a time in a warehouse and carried on his literary work behind closed doors. Starting from scratch, he built up his own Chinese vocabulary as he went along. Later he prepared a grammar and a dictionary. By 1819, he had completed his translation of the entire Bible.⁸

Nonetheless, “he persevered for twenty-five years in China, seeing fewer than a dozen converts, and at the time of his death [1834] there were only three known native Christians in the entire Chinese empire.”⁹ The more pessimistic evaluations of his life assert that “he had no success.”¹⁰ However, his Bible translation work and, while on furlough, mobilization efforts, should be recognized as foundational building blocks that enabled later missionaries to succeed.

As other missionaries came to China, hopes were high that within a few decades a strong viable church would exist in the Middle Kingdom. However, the events, which led to the “unequal treaties” and the Taiping Rebellion, delayed the fulfillment of these hopes and cast a negative light on the gospel for generations to come.

Opium Wars and the Unequal Treaties (1839-1860)

In the early nineteenth century, opium was an illegal substance in China. However, that did not prevent the Chinese people from desiring it and the EIC from providing it. Frustrated, a new Cantonese commissioner of trade confiscated twenty thousand chests of opium from foreign traders and openly burned them.¹¹ Unfortunately,

⁸Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions*, 212-13.

⁹Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 167.

¹⁰Arnulf Camps, *Studies in Asian Mission History, 1956-1998* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 114.

¹¹G. Thompson Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 25.

hungry for profit, England declared war and China was easily defeated. K. K. Yeo comments, “while opium has been commonly used in every culture throughout the centuries as both a legal medicine and an illegal euphoric substance, during the Opium Wars the western powers were guilty of poisoning the soul of China for the sake of silver and gold.”¹²

Subsequently, the unequal treaties of Nanjing (南京条约, nánjīng tiáoyuē) and Wangxia (望厦条约, wàngxià tiáoyuē) were drafted by the EIC (with the help of missionaries) and signed “under duress”¹³ by the Chinese. The first treaty resulted in Hong Kong being ceded to the British, five treaty ports being opened to British residence and commerce, and China being forced to pay twenty-one million dollars in silver to cover the cost of lost opium and the war.¹⁴ Furthermore, “in 1844 the United States forced the Qing (Manchu) government to agree that any concession given to one nation automatically be applied to all.”¹⁵ Therefore, America and France began to enjoy many of the same privileges England had acquired.

Humiliated and embarrassed, China was “often slow or unwilling to comply with the concessions which they had granted.”¹⁶ As a result, in 1856, a couple of small incidents provoked the second war sometimes referred to as the Lorch War (or the Second Opium War). France and England quickly defeated the Chinese and captured the

¹²K. K. Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul: Christianity, Communism, and the Hope of China* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002), 165.

¹³Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic*, 26.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Coulson, *The Enduring Church*, 9.

¹⁶Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic*, 26.

city of Guangzhou. In the unequal Tianjin treaty (天津条约, tiānjīn tiáoyuē) of 1858, “England succeeded in forcing China to make opium trade legal.”¹⁷ Moreover, later treaties procured for foreigners additional ports, permission to travel inland, restitution by the Chinese for the cost of the war, and religious toleration clauses.¹⁸ Such concessions multiplied the number of missionaries in China and gave them an unprecedented freedom in spreading the gospel. However, the locals had a hard time distinguishing between foreign missionaries and foreign diplomats. Therefore, the bitterness that resulted from gunboat diplomacy proved to be a formidable challenge for future missionaries, even until this day.

Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864)

Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全, hóng xiù quán), born in Southern China in 1814, sought to obtain a job with the government in 1837. After taking and failing the civil service exam three times, he suffered a nervous breakdown. During this time, he received a “vision” from the Creator commanding him to “exterminate evil demons [idols that the Chinese worshipped] . . . and lead the Chinese masses to believe in Jesus.”¹⁹

After gaining a large following over the next fourteen years, “the movement took on an antidynastic stance in order to deal with the many and varied problems faced

¹⁷Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 166.

¹⁸Brown, *Christianity in the People’s Republic*, 26; Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 166.

¹⁹Ralph R. Covell, *Confucius, the Buddha, and Christ: A History of the Gospel in Chinese* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 151-52.

by the people. . . . A military code was drawn up with strict religious and moral observances.”²⁰

From 1851 to 1864, this group launched a powerful attack in central China called the Taiping Rebellion. It continued to grow and gain power until Western forces joined with the Chinese to crush this rebellion in 1864. Although it is obvious to twenty-first century believers that this group was a heretical cult and should not be associated with the cross of Christ, the nineteenth century Chinese unbelievers who were hearing the name Jesus Christ for the first time could not make that distinction. Craig and Spickard comment, “because the Taiping Rebellion brought immense suffering to China (upwards of 20 million lives were lost), it did little to enhance the reputation of Christianity in Chinese eyes.”²¹

The unequal treaties and Taiping Rebellion greatly tarnished the Christian faith in East Asia and hindered the establishment of the church. Nonetheless, God was at work through the lives of godly missionaries who took advantage of the new opportunity to preach inland.

Inland Missionaries (1860-1900)

With permission to spread the gospel to the interior of China, many missionaries who had previously been restricted to the coastal areas immediately seized the opportunity. John Livingston Nevius began to make systematic, itinerate preaching tours throughout the Shandong province (山东省, shāndōng shěng). “He traveled on horseback as far as 300 miles south and 200 miles west of Chefoo (which is the modern

²⁰Ibid., 153.

²¹Spickard and Cragg, *A Global History of Christians*, 329.

day city of 烟台, yāntái), keeping in touch with sixty preaching points.”²² In these sixty stations he had approximately nine hundred Chinese in his “parish” and emphasized an indigenous, unpaid leadership.²³

Without a doubt, the most famous inland missionary to China is J. Hudson Taylor (戴德生, dài dé shēng). “His message was always the same: the speedy evangelization of the most populous nation on earth.”²⁴ He founded the China Inland Mission (CIM) which “grew to be the largest mission in China.”²⁵ Taylor’s influence, especially in the area of evangelism, is still strong today, particularly among the house churches. Peter Xu (徐永泽, xú yǒngzé), the well-known founder of the Born-Again House Movement in Henan province, comments,

His [Taylor’s] example was one of single minded passion to see God’s kingdom come. Like a mighty soldier he marched into pioneer areas where the Name of Jesus Christ had never been uttered before. Today the house churches in China have caught that same vision. It is as though Hudson Taylor handed a flaming torch to the Chinese church and asked us to continue the race toward the finish line.²⁶

²²Everett N. Hunt, Jr., “John Livingston Nevius: Pioneer of Three-Self Principles in Asia,” in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald Anderson et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 193.

²³Helen Nevius, *The Life of the Rev. John Livingston Nevius, D.D. for Forty Years a Missionary to China* (New York: Fleming Revell Company, 1895), 421.

²⁴J. Herbert Kane, “J. Hudson Taylor: Founder of the China Inland Mission,” in *Mission Legacies*, 199.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 198.

²⁶Paul Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 6.

Due to these, and other Protestant missionaries, Latourette notes that the Protestant community had grown to approximately 85,000 toward the end of the 1800s.²⁷ Despite this growth, the Christian church was still mostly viewed as a foreign institution that many Chinese reviled. These feelings exploded at the beginning of the twentieth century during the Boxer Rebellion.

Boxer Rebellion (1900)

As noted above, the latter half of the nineteenth century was a humiliating period for the Chinese. As a result of an ever-increasing foreign presence in China, a reactionary movement arose which “laid all the economic, social, and political ills of China at the door of foreigners, particularly Christian missionaries, their converts, and their churches.”²⁸ This reactionary group became known as the Boxers and laid siege to the foreign legation quarter in Beijing for fifty-five days. As a result, over 230 missionaries were killed with 189 being Protestants and 52 being missionary children. Moreover, approximately nineteen hundred Chinese Christians were martyred.²⁹

The targeting of the Christian population was unfortunate since “some missionaries had condemned the opium traffic and . . . had never been part of imperialist or colonialist activity against China.”³⁰ Nonetheless, since the “imperialists had often

²⁷Covell, *Confucius, the Buddha, and Christ*, 186, quoting Kenneth S. Latourette, *The History of Christian Mission in China* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), 371.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 184.

²⁹David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 41-42; Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic*, 37.

³⁰Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 153. Covell goes so far as to say, “Without exception, the missionaries despised opium and all its evil consequences.” Covell, *Confucius, the Buddha, and Christ*, 82.

used the name of Christianity to conquer, the preaching of Christianity had often been dominated by western culture, and the native churches had always been tied to the leadership and control of overseas mission boards.”³¹ Christianity and western aggression were synonymous to many Chinese in the early twentieth century. Although the Boxer Rebellion only lasted a few months before it was defeated by an international coalition of eight nations, the nationalistic spirit was only beginning its ascent.

Nationalism (1900-1949)

In 1911, a revolution erupted that disposed of the foreign Manchu empire, which had ruled China since 1644. Lian Xi notes that “the collapse of the old order [was] owed in part to the missionaries’ introduction of the western ideas of democracy and freedom.”³² Moreover, missionary institutions helped nurture a spirit of nationalism, which played a vital role in twentieth-century Chinese revolutions.³³ Daniel Bays, specifically referring to the Chinese church, adds that “the most important feature of this period [1900-1937] was the growth of the spirit of independence in Chinese Protestant churches. This had barely begun in the nineteenth century, but it was a prominent theme after 1900.”³⁴

May 4, 1919, which came to be known as the May Fourth Movement, most appropriately captures the nationalistic spirit of this period. After World War I,

³¹Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 153.

³²Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 5.

³³*Ibid.*, 5.

³⁴Daniel H. Bays, *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 308.

President Woodrow Wilson acceded to Japanese demands that Japan retain control over the former German concession in Shandong Province. When the news reached China on May 4, 1919, a protest movement arose against Japan, against the warlords and weak government that had failed to defend China's interests, and more generally against the aggression and hypocrisy of the Western powers and the United States. The May Fourth Movement . . . has often been regarded as the beginning of modern nationalism in China.³⁵

As a result of the incompetence of the Nationalist Party (国民党, guómíndǎng), the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established in the 1920s. Over the course of the next thirty years, the CCP continually proselytized the Chinese people and eventually won their hearts. A large reason for the failure of the Nationalist Party was its widespread corruption and partnership with western nations.³⁶ Additionally, Su Deci maintains that the CCP won the nation because of their promise “to deliver the Chinese people from the humiliation and poverty of the past hundred years.”³⁷ In either case, the frail Protestant church, which had grown to approximately 700,000 members (less than 1 percent of the total population),³⁸ now found itself at the mercy of an atheistic, totalitarian regime.

The Church Under Mao Zedong (1949-1976)

Soon after the CCP took control of Beijing, foreign missionaries were basically forced to leave the country. Mark Terry notes that “many tried to stay, but this option did not prove fruitful.”³⁹ Winston Crawley explains why: “Communist policy . . . followed

³⁵Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857-1927* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 185-86.

³⁶Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 62-114; Fusan, *Christianity in China*, 19.

³⁷Su Deci, “The Church in China Today,” *Chinese Theological Review* 14 (2000): 108.

³⁸Coulson, *The Enduring Church*, 32.

³⁹John Mark Terry, “Baptist Missions in the Twentieth Century,” in *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Mission Entering the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jonathan J. Bonk (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 90.

the usual pattern: ‘first toleration with freedom, then toleration with control, and finally active opposition.’”⁴⁰ Furthermore, “missionaries had gradually realized that their presence brought embarrassment and even danger to Chinese Christians. They began to withdraw as exit visas became available.”⁴¹ Raymond Whitehead notes that the advent of the Korean War was the deciding factor that forced all remaining missionaries to leave, “bringing to a close . . . one hundred fifty years of Protestant missions in China.”⁴²

With the absence of missionaries, and the fact that “the Chinese communists viewed religion (especially Christianity) as a foreign imperialist’s ideological tool to exploit common people,”⁴³ the prospects for the church were bleak. In light of these precarious conditions, Deci notes that Chinese Christians had to decide “whether to be deported along with the foreign forces as an alien religion, or to be faithful to God and stay in the land to continue to spread the seeds of Gospel and the Word of eternal life: Chinese Christians were at the crossroads.”⁴⁴

The Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)

On September 23, 1950, a “Christian manifesto” was drawn up and signed by 1,527 church leaders and “supposedly” by 400,000 Protestants from 79 different

⁴⁰Ibid., quoting Winston Crawley, *Partners Across the Pacific: China and Southern Baptists: Into the Second Century* (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1986), 91.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Raymond L. Whitehead, “Introduction: The Life and Work of a Chinese Christian,” in K. H. Ting, *No Longer Strangers: Selected Writings of K. H. Ting*, ed. Raymond L. Whitehead (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 3.

⁴³Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 153.

⁴⁴Deci, “The Church in China Today,” 108.

denominations. Among other things, the manifesto explicitly connected foreign missionary activity and the resulting church in China with imperialism. Therefore, “they [Christian churches and religious organizations in China] must wipe out all traces of imperialistic influence in the church.”⁴⁵ Also, the manifesto called for “the churches to support the common platform of the government.”⁴⁶ Soon after this manifesto was signed, the Three-Self Reform Committee was established and placed under the control of two government agencies: the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) and the United Front Work Department (UFW).⁴⁷ Two years later the name was changed to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement—TSPM (中国基督教三自爱国运动委员会, zhōngguó jīdūjiào sānzì àiguó yùndòng wěiyuǎnhuì).

Taking its mandate from the manifesto, “the original purposes of the TSPM were to eliminate foreign influence, to unite Protestants in one organization, and to promote CCP policies inside the church.”⁴⁸ Yin Wen positively asserts that “the three-self principle enabled the Chinese people for the first time to have a sense of identification, of familiarity and belonging with Christianity, and enabled Jesus Christ . . . to shed the ‘blond and blue-eyed’ image brought by western missionaries.”⁴⁹ The ideas of indigenization and unity should be a positive development from a missiological

⁴⁵Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions*, 221.

⁴⁶Covell, *Confucius, the Buddha, and Christ*, 225.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸Kim-Kwong Chan and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Witnesses to Power: Stories of God’s Quiet Work in a Changing China* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Publishing, 2000), xvii.

⁴⁹Yin Wen, “Chinese Christians’ View of the Bible,” *Chinese Theological Review* 14 (2000): 98.

perspective. However, evangelicals were asking what they were being asked to unify with and what were the CCP policies that were going to be promoted by the TSPM?

Resistance to the TSPM

David Adeney reveals that the early leadership of the TSPM was “extremely liberal in their theology.”⁵⁰ For example, Y. T. Wu, one of the original founders of the TSPM, was criticized for not believing in the “virgin birth, resurrection, ascension and second coming.”⁵¹ Indeed, both Wu and fellow founding member K. H. Ding were both educated at Union Seminary in the early twentieth century and were highly influenced by its liberal, rationalistic theology.⁵² Therefore, the divide between the TSPM leadership and those who resisted it paralleled in many ways the fundamentalist/modernist debate that stormed through western culture earlier in the same century.

Moreover, the TSPM ultimately takes its direction and is submitted to the RAB and UFWD. Being government agencies, their employees must be members of the atheistic CCP and are not permitted to adhere to any religion. Consequently, the TSPM, except in very rare cases, would be taking their ultimate orders from atheists whose convictions are diametrically opposed to Bible-believing Christians. For example, Ho Zhenxiang, the RAB director in 1954, “made it clear that the parts of the Bible he objected to were the Ten Commandments, anything supernatural, and anything about the days leading up to the Second Coming of Christ.”⁵³ Additionally, the TSPM

⁵⁰David H. Adeney, “Division Time in China: To Join the TSPM or Not,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1983): 200.

⁵¹Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 92.

⁵²Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 147.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 154.

emphasized the necessity of political indoctrination within the church. The spiritual life of the church was dying, evangelical ministry was being destroyed, and both the numbers attending the church and the numbers of open churches were decreasing rapidly. It seemed that by using the TSPM to control the church the government was effectively preventing the spread of the Christian faith.⁵⁴

The CCP was never shy about admitting that through political indoctrination, it hoped to reduce and eventually eliminate the role of religion in their society.⁵⁵ Even while reporting on the revival of Protestant Christianity in the 1990s, Zhimin and Zugen conclude that

in the course of human history religion will finally die out, but this will happen naturally only after the long-term development of Socialism and Communism. . . . So, from now on we must work hard to develop the socialist economy, culture, science and technology, and reform and strengthen ideological education . . . in order to gradually eliminate the social and cognitive sources for religion.⁵⁶

As a result of the overarching goal to eliminate the “need” for religion and the liberal theology held by the top leaders of the TSPM, many evangelicals in China could not bring themselves to affiliate with the TSPM.⁵⁷ This was the beginning of the now-famous Chinese house church.

House Church Origin and Development (1949-1966)

In 1958, as independent denominations and churches were

⁵⁴Adeney, “Division Time in China,” 203.

⁵⁵Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 161.

⁵⁶Jiang Zhimin and Yu Zugen, “Excerpts from Reflections while Facing the Cross: An Investigation of the Christianity Fever in China,” *Tripod* 83 (1994): 25.

⁵⁷Other reasons given for why believers do not attend a TSPM church include not one in their locality, dislike style of worship, prefer the home setting, and they desire prayer for a sickness. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 84.

ruthlessly crushed and amalgamated under government control through the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement, . . . the majority of churches had been closed across China under the guise of a campaign for church unity, . . . [and] pulpits became vehicles for CCP propaganda . . . faithful Christians quietly withdrew from the few remaining city churches to meet together for worship in the home. This was the beginning of the now flourishing underground . . . unregistered Protestant house-churches.⁵⁸

Hunter and Chan actually note that although the advent of the CCP's rule in 1949 increased the number of house churches, religious meetings in homes had been a long-standing custom of Chinese Christians.⁵⁹ G. Thomson Brown describes how a house church would form and develop in earlier times:

A Christian family, a few relatives, and friends would begin to meet in one of their homes to read the Bible, pray, and share experiences. The passage to be studied would be copied by hand from the few Bibles available and circulated around the group Often the group would meet at irregular times and in different homes. . . . Occasionally an itinerant lay preacher from a neighboring village would visit the group and there would be special preaching, Bible teaching, and hymn singing. . . . When a group got too big, it would divide into two groups. No provincial or national association linked the groups together.⁶⁰

Although some sympathetic local cadres would permit these independent groups to meet, the majority worked hard to uncover and punish all such “counter-revolutionary” activity. Additionally, many TSPM leaders joined the government in seeking to destroy such unpatriotic endeavors. These TSPM leaders viewed the house church movement as an attempt to “split the church by refusing to acknowledge the official leadership.”⁶¹

⁵⁸Tony Lambert, “The Present Religious Policy of the Chinese Communist Party,” *Religion, State & Society* 29 (2001): 122.

⁵⁹Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 82.

⁶⁰Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic*, 127.

⁶¹Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 87.

Punishment tended to be very severe and without any due process of law. Soon after the CCP took control of China, Simon Zhao and his bride of four months were entering Xinjiang Province to conduct evangelistic activity. He relates the story:

My beautiful bride had just found out she was pregnant! We were both arrested and imprisoned. Life in the prison was difficult and my wife suffered a miscarriage. In the early months of my imprisonment in 1950 I saw my beloved wife twice from afar, through the iron bars on my window. Then I never saw her again. By the time I was released many years later [thirty-one years] my precious bride was already long dead.⁶²

Nonetheless, the persecution administered during the early years of New China could not compare with the horror, which would be unleashed during the infamous Cultural Revolution.

Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)

Tony Lambert poignantly describes the tension which existed in the CCP regarding religious policy. “CCP ideologues argued whether religion should be controlled and manipulated and allowed to die out naturally (the ‘soft’ line) or completely suppressed as having no right to exist in the new socialist society (the ‘hard’ line advocated by the extreme leftists). By the late 1950s the leftist line had won the argument.”⁶³

The Cultural Revolution was Mao’s attempt to wipe away all former vestiges of society that hindered the progress of New Socialist China. On August 18, 1966, untrained teenagers all across China were enlisted *en masse* to

smash up the four olds – defined as ‘old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits.’ Following this obscure call, Red Guards [the untrained teenagers]

⁶²Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 55.

⁶³Lambert, “The Present Religious Policy,” 122.

all over China took to the streets, giving full vent to their vandalism, ignorance, and fanaticism. They raided people's houses, smashed their antiques, tore up paintings and works of calligraphy. Bonfires were lit to consume books. Very soon nearly all treasures in private collections were destroyed.⁶⁴

The church under attack. During this revolution “the last few churches were desecrated and closed. For thirteen years all religious expression was ruthlessly persecuted. Bibles were burnt and even possessions of a cross or a Christmas card could lead to severe beating and labour camp. There were many martyrs.”⁶⁵ Even the TSPM did not escape the horror of this decade as their government-controlled churches were closed and their leaders were persecuted. At the end of this decade “it seemed that religions, including Christianity, disappeared from China. Their total destruction was an ideal promoted by Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and a leading figure in the Cultural Revolution, who confidently announced that religion was dead.”⁶⁶

The church resilient. Although the chaos and terror did suppress the activity of the church, it could not exterminate it. “During the traumatic days of 1966-1976, worship in homes – if possible at all – was all the believers had. Many new believers came to know the Lord in just such circumstances.”⁶⁷ Moreover, despite the fact that

⁶⁴Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 284.

⁶⁵Lambert, “The Present Religious Policy,” 122.

⁶⁶Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 1.

⁶⁷Britt Towery, *Christianity in Today's China: Taking Root Downward, Bearing Fruit Upward*, 3rd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2000), 57.

most church buildings were either destroyed or converted into factories, believers continued to worship secretly in their own homes.⁶⁸

The church prepared for tremendous growth. Bi Ming recognizes the paradox of the Cultural Revolution. “The complete suppression of religion during the Cultural Revolution might have caused an *inverse reaction* once the church was able to function again. The more Christians were oppressed the more they formed a self-reliant and united community. This was not at all what the advocates of the Cultural Revolution had originally intended.”⁶⁹ Spickard and Craig point out the indigenization which took place as a result of the suffering. “Through this baptism by fire, late twentieth-century Chinese Christians succeeded in doing something that none of the predecessors had done in twelve centuries – convince their fellow citizens that Christianity had become Chinese.”⁷⁰

Paul Hattaway lists the following ways in which “Communist authorities, despite their efforts to demolish Christianity, actually paved the way for the rapid spread of the gospel.”⁷¹

1. Much of China’s idolatry was removed during the Cultural Revolution . . . creating a spiritual void in the hearts of hundreds of millions of people.
2. Mandarin was adopted as the official language of China and is now used in all education and media. Formerly there were thousands of dialects that made communication of the gospel problematic.

⁶⁸Coulson, *The Enduring Church*, 28.

⁶⁹Bi Ming, “Christianity Fever in China,” *Tripod* 83 (1994): 9.

⁷⁰Spickard and Cragg, *A Global History of Christians*, 447.

⁷¹Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 123.

3. Large-scale literacy projects were undertaken, resulting in multitudes of people being able to read God's word for the first time.
4. Control of the media resulted in a hunger and respect for the printed word. Christian organizations have taken advantage of this, printing tens of millions of Bibles and Christian books, while radio ministries were quick to broadcast the gospel by short-wave radio into China. Millions of Christians in China trace their salvation to radio ministry.
5. During the excesses of the Cultural Revolution people were forced to denounce their wrongdoings and reform their lives. The 'culture of confession' this created makes it much easier for people to repent and confess their sins to God when they hear the gospel.⁷²

In 1976 Chairman Mao died and the "gang of four" was arrested soon thereafter.⁷³ These events marked the end of the most trying of times for the church in China. Moderate Deng Xiaoping replaced Mao and paved the way for the restoration of the church.

The Church Under Deng Xiaoping (1976-1989)

The era of Deng shifted the focus of New China away from Maoist ideology and toward economic improvement. The goal of destroying the "Four Olds" was replaced with the pursuit of the "Four Modernizations – industry, agriculture, science and technology – and national defense."⁷⁴ Deng Xiaoping's conviction that "getting rich is glorious"⁷⁵ led China to embark "on a policy of economic modernization involving an

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³The gang of four consisted of Mme Mao, Zhang 'the Cobra,' media chief Yao, and Protégé Wang. Chang states that Mao hand selected this group to take power after he died, especially in opposition to Deng Xiaoping. "This was Mao's own gang, who represented his true policy." Jung Chang, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 2005), 614.

⁷⁴Tony Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1994), 27.

⁷⁵Jasper Becker, *The Chinese* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 65.

‘open door’ policy with closer ties with western countries, especially the United States.”⁷⁶

The church stood to benefit from these renewed relationships with the West.

The TSPM Restored

Although Deng took control in 1978, the first detailed religious policy did not appear until October of 1979. This statement, which appeared in the *People’s Daily*, explicitly affirmed the 1952 Chinese constitution’s provision for religious freedom, “so long as it does not hinder production or violate social order.”⁷⁷ Moreover, Lambert comments, “The basic reason for the about-turn was again stated to be the need ‘for better uniting the masses of believers and patriotic personages of religious circles, mobilizing all positive elements and making contributions towards the Four Modernizations.’”⁷⁸

After the TSPM was restored, its first priority was to help “pastors negotiate with the government for return of confiscated church property.”⁷⁹ Slowly and consistently, Three-Self churches were reopened all over China. During this period, the China Christian Council (CCC) was formed. “The CCC works at national, provincial, and local levels to promote unity among Protestants. Its 10 commissions deal with administration, rural work, women, music, international relations, ministry to ethnic minorities, theological education, and Bible printing.”⁸⁰ For an organizational chart of the Christian religious system in China, please consult Appendix 3.

⁷⁶Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, 27.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁰Coulson, *The Enduring Church*, 37.

Anxiety abounded and many wondered if believers would return to the above-ground churches and risk identifying themselves as Christians. However, this anxiety was somewhat unfounded as reopened churches were oftentimes filled to capacity. “In some urban churches, video equipment transmits the service to overflow rooms for those arriving too late to find seats in the sanctuary. It is not unusual for rural Christians to travel several hours to attend a worship service. They are disappointed when the sermon is less than an hour!”⁸¹ However, the overflow crowds can be explained, to some degree, by the lack of churches available for worship. In 1993, Hunter and Chan wrote “the six thousand TSPM churches are a very small number given the huge size of China.”⁸²

Regarding the leadership of the restored TSPM, David Adeney reports that they “have realized that the vast majority of believers in China are evangelical. One of them even joked, ‘If we [the TSPM leaders] preach in the churches, nobody will come to hear us.’”⁸³ The leadership, he proceeds to explain, is not exclusively liberal in their theology.

Within the TSMP there are several subgroups. First, there are the top leaders who formerly were leaders in the movement in the 1950s Some of them actively persecuted evangelicals during the first decade of the communist regime. For this reason many Christians are afraid to associate with them A second subgroup consists of pastors who were active in the Three-Self Movement in the past. Some of them at one time betrayed other Christians, but they also passed through suffering during the Cultural Revolution and may indeed have been restored spiritually. Some of them are indeed true evangelicals. . . . A third subgroup are people who have had contact with the house churches during the Cultural Revolution. Now that the open churches have appeared they feel that they can have the most influence if they will work

⁸¹Ibid., 33.

⁸²Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 82.

⁸³Adeney, “Division Time in China,” 200-01.

through the Three-Self Movement. . . . The pastoral team in each official church is very mixed.⁸⁴

One can deduce that the leaders of the TSPM churches are consistently inconsistent, making it very difficult to predict what message will be shared from the pulpit from one church to the next.

Explosion of the House Church

While the official TSPM churches were reopened and filled to capacity, the house church movement was experiencing a revival of sorts. In 1980 at the Third National Christian Conference, Bishop Ding admitted that “the great majority of believers hold worship in homes.”⁸⁵ With unprecedented religious freedom, and almost no official churches to attend, house churches were multiplying everywhere. An unnamed minister calls 1980-81 the golden era for the Wenzhou house church.⁸⁶ Some reasons, related to the persecution of the Cultural Revolution, have already been listed explaining the growth of the church. However, especially among the rural house churches, there are many more factors that have been identified distinct from suffering.

1. Healings and miracles play a prominent role, especially in rural areas, for attracting people to the faith. Many who claim to have been healed go on to experience a genuine and doctrinally sound faith.
2. Christianity is novel in many parts of China.
3. The Cultural Revolution marred the image of the CCP forcing many to seek the answers of life elsewhere.
4. There is a general lack of rationalism and naturalism in rural areas.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, 44.

⁸⁶*The Cross: Jesus in China*, prod. and dir. by Yuan Zhiming, 240 min., China Soul for Christ Foundation, 2003, DVD.

5. The network of support, encouragement, and comfort which Christianity provides in this life, and the expectation of eternal life in the next, is a factor.
6. The Christian faith is very practical.⁸⁷

Unfortunately, this golden era did not last very long. The CCP and the TSPM made it a top priority to reestablish their churches in order to end house church meetings. Knowing this feat would be difficult to accomplish, the pendulum swung to the left for a few years.

Continued Persecution (1982-1989)

With the house church movement growing uncontrollably, the CCP knew something had to be done. At the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee ‘Document 19’ was produced. This document called the CCP back to their goal of propagating atheism as the ultimate solution to the religious revival. However, it also addressed the house church issue. Aikman writes, “one of the prime reasons for Document 19 was to cope with China’s burgeoning house churches. ‘As for Protestants gathering in homes for worship services, in principle this should not be allowed,’ but a tagline added, ‘yet this prohibition should not be too rigidly enforced.’”⁸⁸ The qualification was mainly appease the reasonable complaints of some, like Bishop Ding, who reminded the CCP that the restoration of the TSPM churches has progressed far too slowly and that a huge number of Protestant believers did not have the option of attending an official church.

Using Document 19 as a springboard,

⁸⁷Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, 113-14.

⁸⁸Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 165.

the authorities, often assisted by the more subservient elements within the TSPM and CPA, launched a crackdown in the form of a ‘campaign against spiritual pollution.’ Many Christians were arrested and imprisoned. The campaign was brought to an abrupt halt, probably because Deng and other Party moderates did not wish to endanger the economic reforms or allow the ‘leftists’ to reassert control. There followed several years of relative relaxation until in 1987 another ‘anti-bourgeois liberalisation campaign brought pressure on unregistered Christians. However, the general climate was one of openness until the crushing of the student movement on 4 June 1989.⁸⁹

The Church After Tiananmen (1989-present)

The massacre of three thousand students and demonstrators at Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, sent a clarion call to China and to the rest of the world. Modernization and economic liberalization do not necessarily go hand-in-hand with democracy. James Miles describes the origin of this important event.

The antigovernment protests of 1989 . . . arose out of a conflict between the fast growing aspirations of the urban population and the conservatism of an inward-looking leadership, which in many respects still operates like the imperial court of old. The demonstrators in Tiananmen Square wanted an end to corruption, a press that was free to report on real problems, and a government that listened and responded to concerns about everything from inflation to political representation. Deng’s economic boom has done little to address these concerns.⁹⁰

What role did the church play in the demonstrations on that eventful day?

Lambert points out that, “it is ironic that it was TSPM leaders, and students in the TSPM-controlled seminaries, often regarded as subservient to the government, who were most active in supporting the student protests, while the bulk of the house-churches, regarded overseas, and often by the Chinese authorities, as dissidents, stood aside.”⁹¹ Although the

⁸⁹Lambert, “The Present Religious Policy,” 123.

⁹⁰James A. R. Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 4.

⁹¹Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, 211.

events of June 4, 1989, were neither initiated by the church, nor specifically about religious freedom, they did have an immediate impact on the church.

Impact of Tiananmen Square on the Church

Hunter and Chan write that “after June 1989 the main objective of the central Party leadership was to reassert stricter control over society in the field of politics and ideology.”⁹² “Overnight the political pendulum swung sharply leftwards, shattering the power of the reformists. . . . In this atmosphere of repression and renewed emphasis on ideological rectitude and Marxist indoctrination, the church is viewed as a dangerous ideological competitor by the doctrinaire Party leadership.”⁹³ To accentuate this delicate situation, it is important to remember what was occurring at this time to the communist nations in Europe. A classified document circulated in the CCP, dated September 23, 1991, attempted to analyze the factors which led to the disintegration of the USSR. “The factors it listed ranged from the criticism of Stalin and Lenin and the easing of government controls over art and literature to ‘religious fever’. It said Christian and other religious groups in the Soviet Union ‘all have a very anticommunist tint.’”⁹⁴ As a result, the CCP expended considerable effort in restraining and controlling the church’s activities over the next few years, especially among the house churches.

Legislation. In 1991, the CCP issued Document 6 which, “reinforced the restrictions spelled out in Document 19 of 1982 and reiterated the demand that any

⁹²Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 96.

⁹³Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*, 216-17.

⁹⁴Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen*, 72.

religious activity in China be registered at the local level.”⁹⁵ This law was apparently designed to soften the qualification in Document 19 that said prohibition of unregistered house churches “should not be too rigidly enforced.”

In 1993, President Jiang Zemin asserted that China needs to “make religion adapt to socialist society. Cadres in the UFWD, and RAB, and the Three Self were ordered to think of ways to execute this policy. . . . [As a result] throughout the mid-1990s there were repeated waves of assault on house church networks—arrests, imprisonments, and beatings. Again and again, unregistered groups were told to register or face arrest.”⁹⁶

Finally, in 1994, Prime Minister Li Peng issued Decrees 144 and 145. These decrees served to “tighten control over the religious activities of foreigners within China, forbidding them to make converts.”⁹⁷ Aikman adds that decree 144 was “aimed at cracking down on the growing number of foreign Protestant Christian pastors and teachers involved with the rapidly expanding house church networks in China.”⁹⁸

Growth and demography of the church. Besides the leftward movement of the government, what other changes did the churches notice? Aikman reports, “across China, urban-based house churches and legal ‘open’ churches began to notice a new development: hundreds of students, previously uninterested in religion, were coming to

⁹⁵Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 171.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 172.

⁹⁷Lambert, “The Present Religious Policy,” 125.

⁹⁸Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 171.

church or wanting to discuss the Christian faith.”⁹⁹ Ron Wilson also notes this trend, writing, “at first [in the early 1980s] mostly older people attended, but now young people pack out many churches. Intellectuals, by their nature a skeptical segment of the population, have increasingly shown interest in the gospel.”¹⁰⁰ As recently as 2011, Liao Yiwu, who is not a Christian but a Chinese social rights advocate and critic of the Communist party, had the following commentary about urban Christianity in China today:

Many new converts are highly educated and well-off professionals or retirees. They have embraced Christianity the way they do Coca-Cola or a Volkswagen—believing that a foreign faith, like foreign-made products, has better quality. Many younger urban Christians have been throwing themselves at the feet of Jesus because it is considered hip to wear a cross and sing a foreign-sounding hymn.¹⁰¹

Additionally, since Tiananmen Square, Christianity seems to be gaining more support from leadership in the government, leadership in the TSPM, and in the general populace.

[A]s Chinese society rapidly evolves and advances, the CCP’s policies on religion appear increasingly out of touch and old-fashioned. At grass-roots level the more liberal cadres turn a blind eye to the growth of mainstream Christianity. . . . The perception of Christianity at the grass-roots level among the general population has changed from one of complete hostility in the days of Mao to one of appreciation and interest. . . . Large numbers of Christians working within the TSPM . . . are totally disillusioned with the system of control . . . maintaining close links with the house-churches.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ron Wilson, *Changing China: Opening Windows to the West* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1997), 82.

¹⁰¹Yiwu Liao, *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), xx.

¹⁰²Lambert, “The Present Religious Policy,” 128.

Numbers. Counting Christians in modern day China is extremely difficult and numbers vary widely. Albert Au-yeung of *China Daily* in August of 2004 reported that the “congregations at [almost exclusively TSPM] Protestant churches across China are increasing annually by 500,000 to 600,000, with the number of worshippers surpassing 16 million gathering in more than 50,000 churches and other places of worship.”¹⁰³ Lambert reported in 2002 that due to poor data generated by the TSPM, he feels that it is not unreasonable to place that number closer to twenty million.¹⁰⁴ TSPM officials do recognize that Protestants exist outside the official church (i.e. other places of worship); however, they are always quick to report them as an insignificant, small minority.

Paul Hattaway, accounting for those in both the official and unofficial churches, believes in 2003, “a figure of between 80 million and 100 million Protestants to be realistic.”¹⁰⁵ Lambert, after adding his house church estimates to his previous TSPM figure, concludes that 60 to 75 million would be the best estimate.¹⁰⁶

Bold Initiatives by the House Church (1998-Present)

As the house churches continue to enjoy tremendous growth and success, despite consistent persecution, they have become bolder in their efforts for recognition

¹⁰³Albert Au-yeung, “Rapid Growth in Protestant Faithful,” *China Daily* [on-line], accessed 28 October 2004, available from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-08/10/content_363682.htm; Internet.

¹⁰⁴Tony Lambert, “Counting Christians in China: A Cautionary Report,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27:1 (2003): 7. At that time the official figure was fifteen million.

¹⁰⁵Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 12.

¹⁰⁶Lambert, “Counting Christians in China,” 10.

and legal acceptance. Surprisingly, they have achieved legal acceptance on a local government level in some areas.

Hunter and Chan do not feel the term “house church movement” is an appropriate term to describe this phenomenon any longer.

Some of the larger groups . . . have constructed large church buildings that rival those of the official church. Some meet in the open or in large halls, particularly in the countryside, and quite commonly attract congregations of several hundred people. Others have established theological training procedures . . . that can be quite sophisticated and may be taught by highly qualified staff from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and other countries.¹⁰⁷

Consequently, Hunter and Chan prefer the term “autonomous Christian communities” since these churches do not accept the authority of the TSPM and their size and complexity has eclipsed any individual household.¹⁰⁸ Regardless of the designation, one can see how this phenomenon has developed from the early days of Mao.

Social ministries. Jonathan Chao of China Ministries International, before his death in 2004, reported some exciting developments regarding a few house churches in Henan.

They are beginning to emerge from underground worship to neighborhood services above ground, such as care for the poor, orphans, widows, and the elderly in their neighborhood. . . . For this the believers are deeply respected. The church is entering into the society and truly functioning as light and salt. . . . The local government is beginning to recognize these house churches as good and legitimate churches and is offering protection for them.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 81.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Jonathan Chao, “The Changing Shape of the Church in China (1979-2002) with Reference to the House Churches in Henan” [on-line]; accessed 26 October 2004, available from <http://www.cmi.org.tw/english/cmr155-12.htm>; Internet.

Partnership with the TSPM. Remarkably, some house churches have begun to work with the official church in various areas. Despite the abundant evidence that the house church has been persecuted by the TSPM, it is wrong to assume that all in the TSPM seek to subvert those in their ‘rival’ institution. “Relations between Christians from official and unofficial circles are highly complex.” At the extremes, some TSPM leaders do seek to suppress house church adherents, and many house church members are quick to call TSPM officials the “anti-Christ” or simply hypocrites. Nonetheless,

between these extremes is the grey area where the majority are situated. For example, many TSPM pastors have more sympathy for the autonomous leaders than for their own hierarchy, and take opportunities to protect them. On the other hand, many house church members have no particular objection to the official church, but either have practical difficulty in attending services there, or they seek something more or something different.¹¹⁰

Southern Baptist Britt Towery speaks of one such partnership in Nanjing. New Testament Professor Zhao Zhien of the Nanjing Theological Seminary,

speaks regularly in the open churches and in the house churches or meeting points. His experience was refreshing to me [Britt Towery] as he told of the way both the open churches and the house churches worked together in and around Nanjing. There were too few churches re-opened which caused many of the people to continue worshipping in homes.”¹¹¹

Moreover, Aikman shares that it is not uncommon to find TSPM pastors receiving undisclosed theological training at house church seminaries.¹¹²

Push for official recognition. In August of 1998, a dozen of the most influential house leaders came together in order to draft “A United Appeal of the Various

¹¹⁰Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 87.

¹¹¹Towery, *Christianity in Today’s China*, 73-74.

¹¹²Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 121.

Branches of the Chinese House Church” to send to the West and to their own government. The document basically asked for the CCP to stop persecuting house church members and allow them to legally meet in an “unregistered manner.”¹¹³

More importantly, in November of that same year, the same groups met together in order to determine a doctrinal statement that they could all agree upon. The goal was to share this statement with the government in order to prove that they are not a ‘cult’ and have no aspirations to subvert the government. Moreover, they included a lengthy apologetic for why they refuse to register with the TSPM. Although the different house churches were diverse in their theological positions, due in large part to the help of Jonathan Chao who served as their moderator, they were able to publish a document that they could all sign.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, the government did not care to respond to or comment on these documents, except by continuing to harass these unregistered believers.

Global missions. A more recent development is that various house church networks are not content to enjoy God’s blessing in their homeland; they want to be a blessing to the nations. The subsequent chapters of this paper will focus on this exciting development give a detailed description of their efforts to be involved in the GC.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the Chinese house church has stood up, the harsh reality is that an atheistic government and an evangelical body of believers have diametrically

¹¹³Ibid., 90-92.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 93-95.

opposing worldviews. As much as the CCP wants to claim that they provide “genuine” religious freedom, they cannot consistently deliver it because they know it is a threat to their foundation. Moreover, as much as the house church leaders want to describe their organizations as non-political, the Christian worldview does not allow them to completely divorce theology from politics. As K. K. Yeo succinctly notes, “in reality the spheres of influence in theology and politics always interact with each other.”¹¹⁵ Up to this point, the clash of these mutually exclusive worldviews in China has resulted in substantial suffering on the part of the house church, yet at the same time, it has produced amazing, supernatural growth.

Locked in this battle for survival over the last fifty years, one can understand how these Chinese house churches have struggled to become a GCCs. The historical, political, and cultural context described in this chapter has made it difficult for underground Chinese believers to see and respond to the needs of the surrounding UPGs.¹¹⁶ However, the times are slowly changing and now the question is, in the midst of such a difficult, yet slowly improving environment, can the Chinese House Church take the next step in its maturity and play a prominent role in the worldwide missions movement?

¹¹⁵Yeo, *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul*, 17.

¹¹⁶In many ways their situation is comparable to the sixteenth century reformers. Regarding the reformers and their perspective on foreign missions, George Peters notes, “No one of them was so blind that he did not see the evangelistic implications of the Christian gospel and salvation experience. All of them, however, seem to have been so preoccupied with their immediate needs and pressures that time was not available to make a systematic and convincing presentation of the foreign missionary cause.” George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 214.

CHAPTER 3

A GREAT COMMISSION THEOLOGY, CHURCH, AND SURVEY

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to defend the assumption that the 29 question missions survey will enable the researcher to ascertain if the represented house churches are GCCs. This assumption is made because the questions were drawn directly from the 10 criteria of a GCC, which will be explained in this chapter. The 10 criteria were developed from the author's personal biblical theology of missions, which will now be discussed.

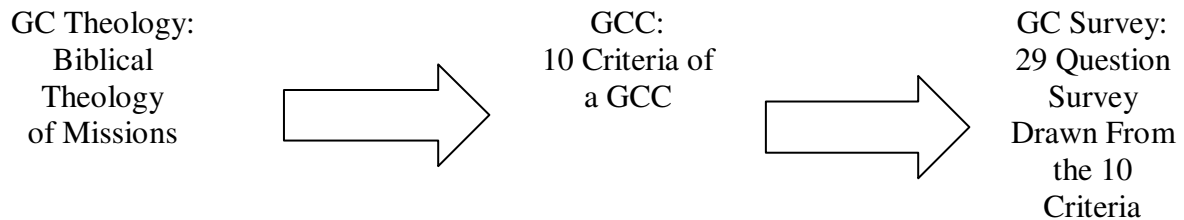


Figure 1. Origin of the house church survey

Although large books have been written to explain and unpack a comprehensive biblical theology of missions,¹ space does not allow this luxury. Nonetheless, a simple biblical theology of missions can provide the foundation needed to establish measurement criteria. The criteria, in turn, will serve as the foundation for the questionnaire that was used in this study of the Chinese house church.

A Great Commission Theology

In the development of a biblical theology of missions, clarity is paramount. A biblical theology of missions is one's understanding of the mission that God has entrusted to His people and includes how they are to carry it out. Justice Anderson similarly defines missiology in the following manner: "It describes the dynamic result of a fusion of God's mission with man's nature. It is what happens when redeemed mankind becomes the agent of God's mission; when God's mission becomes the task of God's elected people."²

One's GC theology should be primarily derived from the Scriptures with important contributions from the social sciences.³ Because this section is such a cursory

¹For example, David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991). Andreas Kostenberger, and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001). Charles E. Van Engen, *Mission-on-the-Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996). George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972). Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

²Justice Anderson, "An Overview of Missiology," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Mission*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 2.

³As the study of missions involves the transmission of the gospel from the Biblical culture through the disseminating culture into a receiving culture, social sciences such as history, linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies, among others play an indispensable role. However, the conclusions reached through social sciences should always be submitted to the highest authority, which is the word of God. See D. A. Carson, "Church and Mission: Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon," *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 3 (1984): 213-57.

look, some important topics that could have been addressed will not be discussed,⁴ saving space for those issues that are most likely to assist the Chinese house church in its missionary efforts.

The Mission of God as Expressed in Two Covenants

From the first chapter in the Bible, God is unmistakably seen as good and glorious. He is the omnipotent creator God who does not act whimsically or capriciously; rather, He is very deliberate and purposeful in all that He does. As the apostle Paul stated in Ephesians 1:11, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” A few simple truths can be ascertained from the Ephesians 1:3-11 passage. First, God has a plan. Second, this plan was developed in eternity past, even before the world was created (Eph 1:4). Third, God is active in bringing about the realization of His plan. More accurately, He “works out everything” in order to ensure His will is accomplished, or rather, to stay closer to the words of Scripture, He works out everything to conform to the purpose of His will (Eph 1:11).

What is the purpose of God’s will? Namely, that His glorious grace would be praised (Eph 1:6) as he brings “all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” (Eph 1:10). In First Corinthians, Paul similarly asserts that God’s will is to “put all his enemies under his [Christ’s] feet,” (1 Cor 15:25) so that afterwards God the

⁴Broader systematic topics such as theology proper, the atonement, the resurrection, eschatology, etc. although important, are outside the somewhat narrow focus of this GC theology. Moreover, as the Chinese house church has strong fundamentalist leanings (see chap. 5), these areas do not typically present problems for it. Additionally, specific missiological topics such as the kingdom of God, holistic ministry, justice, etc., are too specialized to be included in this GC theology overview.

Father might be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). Christ is currently reigning with all authority (1 Cor 15:25; Matt 28:18), “yet at present we do not see everything subject to him” (Heb 2:9). Currently, through the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor 15:14; Matt 28:19), the Father is extending Christ’s rule (Ps 2:8; 110:2), and gathering the people of God together as Christ’s future army (Ps 110:3).⁵ This gospel will be preached to all nations (Matt 24:14, Rev 5:9) and then the end will come when Christ destroys every last “dominion, authority, and power” (1 Cor 15:24) that refuses willful submission to Him. At that time the Father will, once for all, make the enemies of Christ a “footstool for His feet” (Ps 110:1). However, despite the aforementioned verses, the mission of God did not originate in the New Testament, but with the triune God in eternity past⁶ and was first revealed through the Abrahamic Covenant.

Abrahamic Covenant. Shortly after calling Abram to leave his country, God promised to make him into a great nation (Gen. 12:2). Regarding this verse, Johannes Verkuyl admits that “the ‘God of the whole earth’ seems at first glance to narrow his

⁵One can also understand this process as the expansion of God’s kingdom on earth (Matt 6:10). Through faith and repentance, Christ’s enemies are converted and made willing subjects in His kingdom (Mark 1:14-15, Col 1:13, Rom 5:6-11). Also, in Acts 2:34-35, Peter quotes Ps 110:1 and displays this paradigm of Christ’s reign being enlarged as His enemies are subdued through the preaching of the gospel. His converted enemies are not His footstool, but comprise His army, willing to destroy Christ’s unrepentant enemies at the second coming.

⁶In Eph 1:4, Paul mentions that God chose us to be in Christ “before the creation of the world.” Moreover, in Titus 1:2, the Christian’s sure hope of eternal life is grounded in God’s promise made “before the beginning of time.” Mounce comments, “Paul follows with two descriptions of the Christian hope, both balancing each other and showing why the Christian hope is secure. The first is that before time, in the eternal purposes of God, God promised that it would be so. Paul’s second reason (v 3a) will be that what was promised has now been revealed in the proclamation of the gospel.” W. D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 2002), 380.

interests to the private history of one family and tribe only.”⁷ However he continues, “Nothing could be farther from the truth. . . . God’s election of Abraham and Israel concerns the whole world. He deals so intensely with Israel precisely because he is maintaining his personal claim on the whole world.”⁸ This claim on the world is discovered in Gen 12:3, when God humbles Abram by revealing His global intentions; namely, that all people on earth will be blessed through him. From verse 7 of this important chapter, it is further revealed that the blessing will flow to all the nations through Abraham’s “seed” or “offspring.”

The Abrahamic Covenant was an act of grace whereby God promised to bless the nations through the patriarch. This covenant is never abrogated (Gal 3:15), nor is it set aside by later covenants (Gal 3:17), but continues into the time of Christ and is clarified in the New Covenant.

New Covenant. Later in salvation history, the biblical testimony reveals more clearly that the promised blessing of God was spoken to Abraham “‘and to [his] seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ” (Gal 3:16). Jesus Christ, the seed, came and shed His blood to establish the New Covenant (Matt 26:27) and bring this blessing to the Gentiles. In the Matthean account, Christ explicitly says that this New Covenant is for *many*. This language echoes back to Isaiah when the suffering servant “will sprinkle *many* nations,” (52:15) and, “will justify *many*, and he will bear their iniquities” (53:11).⁹

⁷Johannes Verkuyl, “Biblical Foundation for the Worldwide Mandate,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), A-50.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Wright, *The Mission of God*, 350. Also see Mark 10:45, “. . . give his life as a ransom for *many* [emphasis mine].”

The terms of entering the New Covenant do not consist in obedience to Jewish rituals, but merely faith (Gal 3:6-9). Therefore, the “many” characterized in Matthew and Isaiah’s accounts are those who place their faith in the efficacious blood of God’s sacrificial Lamb. Through Christ and the New Covenant, the blessing of Abraham will venture beyond the borders of Israel and “come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith [they] might receive the promise of the Spirit” (Gal 3:14). Christopher Wright asserts,

All of the covenants . . . had dimensions and expectations that looked beyond the boundaries of Israel alone, recognizing that YHWH as the covenant God of Israel was also the sovereign God of all the earth and all nations. It is not surprising, then, that the idea of a new covenant would likewise bring those wider missional hopes into view. . . . Through him [Christ] the promised new covenant had been inaugurated, along with mission to the nations as its inescapable corollary.¹⁰

At this point of salvation history, God created the church and gathered His New Covenant people in it. The mission of reconciling all things to Himself in order to give Christ the supremacy in all things (Col 1:18, 20) was entrusted to the church. God will continue to work through it until men from every tribe, language, people, and nation have been purchased by the blood of Christ (Rev 5:9).

The Mission of God as Carried Out by the Church

In the preceding section, the mission of God was explained and highlighted by the Abrahamic and New Covenants. It can rightly be called the *mission* of God, with the singular emphasized. However, the the church’s activities in carrying out this mission can

¹⁰Ibid.

rightly be called *missions*, with the plural emphasized.¹¹ Additionally, the word *missional* has been purposely avoided and replaced with the term GC. The term GC is oftentimes used in this paper as an adjective describing a theology, church, Christian, etc. that is engaged in understanding, explaining, and participating in the spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. This section will explore how to think biblically about the church's task to complete the mission of God.

Through local church intentionality and cooperation. The GC has been given to the church universal, but this invariably means that it has been given to each and every local church. Although the Antioch church in Acts 13 was only a few years old, and most likely did not possess a large membership, it wholeheartedly embraced its role to participate in the GC. Even though, as Ajith Fernando observes, “there must have been much more work to be done in Antioch,”¹² it was quick to obey the Holy Spirit's call to missions involvement. Paul and Barnabus were sent away who, no doubt, exercised considerable influence and played a key role on the local ministry team.¹³ The church in

¹¹So Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 25. Bosch has a similar distinction when he says, “We have to distinguish between mission (singular) and missions (plural). The first refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God's mission), that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world. . . . Missions (the *missions ecclesiae*: the missionary ventures of the church), refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places or needs, of participation in the *missio Dei*.” Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

¹²Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 374.

¹³F. F. Bruce comments, “It is perhaps worth noticing that the two men who were to be released for what would nowadays be called missionary service overseas were the two most eminent and gifted leaders in the church.” F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed., Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 246.

Antioch¹⁴ was not passive toward its role in the GC, but was intentional as it sought the Lord's will through prayer, fasting, and fervent worship. James D. G. Dunn agrees and says, "That it [the worship service] was accompanied by fasting suggests both a sense of loss at the departure of Jesus (Luke 5:34-35) and *a disciplined seeking out the will of the Lord* [emphasis mine] (Neh 1:4; Luke 2:37)."¹⁵

God's plan is that each local church would assume its own individual responsibility in fulfilling the GC, following the example of the church at Antioch. Darrell Bock ponders, "God loves churches that look beyond their own needs. One wonders where the church today would be if Antioch had not been led to look beyond its own community and city limits to do evangelism."¹⁶ The Lord's design is that church leaders would be intentional in calling their members attention to the needs of the world, regardless of their size or scarcity of their resources. Additionally, as the house church in China slowly matures and in some cases stagnates a bit, Brother Yun accurately observes, "The best way for the Chinese church to remain strong is to keep it motivated to reach out to the nations of the world."¹⁷

Since foreign missions is such a complex and costly venture, local churches

¹⁴Some commentators believe that when Luke says in v. 3, "While *they* were worshipping the Lord . . .," the "they" is referring to the leaders mentioned in vv. 1 and 2. For example, Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 393. More believe Luke is indicating that the whole church was engaged in congregational worship. See Fernando, James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Narrative Commentaries (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 173, or Darrell Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 439.

¹⁵Dunn, *Acts*, 173.

¹⁶Bock, *Acts*, 440.

¹⁷Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man: The Remarkable True Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun* (London: Mill Hill, 2002), 289. David Horner agrees and says, "Missions has been recognized as a key to congregational health." David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Change the World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 29.

should be willing to cooperate with other like-minded churches. Certainly one can see many churches financially supporting the apostle Paul in his ministry.¹⁸ Furthermore, in order to send effective cross-cultural workers, churches should work together in order to provide missionary training. This training could be provided by a number of church leaders, or more ideally through a seminary or specialized missionary training school. A larger pool of partnership is necessary since in most cases, especially in the Chinese context, it is unlikely one church could adequately train a future missionary.¹⁹ Moreover, this partnership should continue to operate after the missionary arrives on the field, looking out for the missionary's emotional, financial, physical and spiritual well-being.

Through sending missionaries. If the church's mission is to make disciples of all nations, then it makes sense to conceive of a role within the church that is responsible for making this happen. The present-day church has designated this role by the title of "missionary." However, it is important to note that this exact term is not found in the Scriptures. Not being found in the inspired text, one is correct to ask, why would the present-day church use this term and where does it come from?

¹⁸2 Cor 8:1-4; 11:8-9, Acts 18:1-5, Rom 15:26, 1 Cor 16:1-2, Phil 4:15-19. In these passages, churches are partnering with Paul as he provides financial relief to the poor saints in Jerusalem, and expands his missionary work. While working among the Corinthians, Paul actually received support from other churches (2 Cor 11:7-9) striving to avoid the appearance of monetary gain as his motivation. Moreover, it is clear that various churches that had a relationship with Paul occasionally provided him with missionary assistance (Phil 4:18, 2 Cor 7:5-7). See chap. 6 under the subheading "Financial support" for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁹Such missiological training should include biblical, cultural, and linguistic studies, as well as mission strategy and history courses. Furthermore, there should be a very practical component whereby they can obtain and practice basic missionary skills and learn how to live in another culture.

The English word “mission” is derived from the Latin word *missio*. Similarly, the verb “to send” can be expressed as *mitto* (see John 20:21 in the Latin Vulgate).²⁰ Of course, a “missionary” is one who is *sent* on a *mission*, thus the obvious connection with these Latin words. However, it is still important to inquire, how are these Latin words related to the Greek New Testament? In the Greek language, “to send” is often translated as ἀποστέλλω (*apostello*).²¹ This word is the verbal form of “apostle” (ἀπόστολος, *apostolos*) which, when found in the New Testament, refers to a delegate, envoy, messenger, or perhaps missionary.²² Müller adds that “the envoy has full powers and is the personal representative of the one sending him.”²³ Therefore, ultimately, the English word “missionary” originated with the concept of “apostle” from the New Testament.

The word “apostle” is used many times in the New Testament. In the gospels, “apostle(s)” exclusively designates those twelve men whom Jesus chose out of His disciples for special training and service.²⁴ Next, in the book of Acts, the term again refers to the twelve,²⁵ yet with one important exception. Luke clearly designates Barnabas and Paul as “apostles” in 14:4 and 14:14. In Ephesians 2:20 and 3:4-6, the word

²⁰Charlton Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* (New York: American Book Company, 1915), s.v. “mitto.”

²¹As found in John 20:21. “To send” can also be translated as πέμψω (*pempō*), as in John 13:20.

²²Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “ἀπόστολος.”

²³D. Müller, “Apostle,” “ἀποστέλλω,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 1:127.

²⁴This statement has only one exception. In Luke 11:49, Jesus makes mention of the prophets and apostles whom the Pharisees killed in the Old Testament. Here the word apostle is clearly a synonym for prophet.

²⁵With Matthias replacing Judas in Acts 1:26.

“apostles” (and “prophets”) is used to designate a distinct group of men who are responsible for receiving revelation regarding the “mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations” (Eph 3:4-5). This group is understood to include the twelve, but certainly adds Paul (3:4) and most likely others who were eyewitnesses of the risen Christ.²⁶ Finally, we see other believers such as Andronicus, Junias, and Epaphroditus, being called “apostles” in the epistles (Rom. 16:7, Phil. 2:25, Gal. 1:19, 2 Cor. 8). Scripture never records these “apostles” as being eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, nor are they used to receive revelation from God, but as Dent comments, they “fulfilled the Great Commission as pioneer church planting missionaries do today.”²⁷

Barnabus is the best example of a “missionary apostle” (or “pioneer church planting missionary”) found in the Scriptures. He is clearly designated as an “apostle” in Acts 14:14, but has no role to receive revelation from the Lord. However, he was sent out by the Holy Spirit from the church in Antioch for the work that the Lord had called him to do (Acts 13:1-3). This work was clearly the proclamation of the gospel in areas where Christ was not yet known and the establishing of local churches (Acts 13-14). Such is the work of modern-day missionaries.

To summarize the above findings, the New Testament “apostle” was one who was sent out for the purpose of spreading the faith and planting new churches. Moreover,

²⁶Specifically, one of the “others” that the author is thinking of is James, the Lord’s brother. Although there is not space for a detailed defense of this position, one can notice that he did see the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:7), rose to a position of prominence in the early church (Acts 15:13-21), and was recognized by the early church to have written an inspired epistle.

²⁷Dent, *The Ongoing Role of Apostles in Missions*, 924-25. In addition to Andronicus, Junias, and Epaphroditus, Dent also includes Barnabus (Acts 14:4), Apollos (Acts 18:24-19:1), Silvanus/Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1; 2:6-7), and the apostles of the churches (2 Cor 8:23) to be church planting missionaries. Ibid., 791-979.

some “apostles” also served the church by receiving revelation from God and writing it down. Dent considers those who were used to write the Bible a “unique, one-time gift of God to the church.”²⁸ However, he designates those who were only involved in church-planting as “missionary apostles” or “pioneer church planting missionaries.”²⁹ Regarding these “missionary apostles,” Dent argues for their perpetual existence within the church. “There is no scriptural basis for believing that missionary apostles were God’s gift for just one generation.”³⁰

George Peters concurs with the conclusion that the function of “missionary apostle,” as conceived by Dent, continues to exist in the church today. Yet, he believes these individuals are called “evangelists.” “A careful study leads to the conclusion that a New Testament evangelist is an apostle, fully responsible for the apostolic function minus the apostolic office and original authority.”³¹ However, in collapsing the apostolic gift into the evangelistic gift, Peters loses the distinction that Paul intended when he authored Ephesians 4:11. Moreover, he loses the evangelist/missionary distinction that is widely utilized by Christians today.

The modern-day usage of the term “missionary” is most often used to designate those Christian workers who cross cultures, and oftentimes national borders, in the proclamation of the gospel. John Piper represents this position, saying, “Missions has the unique task of crossing language and culture barriers to penetrate a people group and establish a church movement; but evangelism is the ongoing task of sharing the gospel

²⁸Ibid., 134-35.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 247.

among people within the same culture.”³² C. Peter Wagner agrees when he says, “missionaries are those sent to spread the gospel across-cultural boundaries.”³³ More recently Jacob Thomas, writing about the Asian context, unhesitatingly connects the concept of missions with crossing cultures. “The term Asian Mission Movements (AMMs) refers to various Asian churches, mission structures, indigenous mission organizations, and alliances that seek to spread the gospel cross-culturally, both within and beyond national boundaries.”³⁴ When the term “missionary” is used in this paper, it will always include this aspect of crossing cultures.

In conclusion, the modern-day concept of “missionary” comes from the New Testament concept of “apostle.” “Missionaries” (or “missionary apostles”) do not assume the function of an “apostle” in the sense that they are to receive revelation from the Lord; rather, they are crossing linguistic and cultural barriers in order to promote the spread of the gospel. Church leaders should be intentional about identifying those in their congregations who are gifted in this way.

Through biblical motives for sending. The Scriptures give numerous reasons why the church should send missionaries to spread the gospel. At various times in Christian history, believers have been driven by different motivations (or paradigms) to

³²John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Eugene, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 230.

³³C. Peter Wagner, “Full Circle: Third World Missions,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 62.

³⁴Jacob Thomas, “Equipping and Resourcing of Asian Mission Movements,” in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 130-31.

fulfill the GC.³⁵ However, the most dominant biblical theme that should motivate the people of God to do missions is the spreading of God's glory and fame.

The theme of God seeking to spread His glory is first discovered in the creation account. In Genesis 1:26, Moses records that God created man *in his image*. Additionally, this first chapter reveals everything that God made was "very good" (Gen 1:31), thus implying the goodness of its Creator. However, in Genesis 3, mankind fell into sin and "lost" the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Nonetheless, God pursued mankind and sent His Son to enable those who believe to recapture and reflect this original glory. Paul, speaking to the believers in Corinth says, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). When the peoples of the earth believe the gospel, their lives are changed, and they begin to spread and reflect the glory of God. This process is how "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14).

The spreading of His holy and glorious name is the foundational goal that motivates everything God does. In Ezekiel 36, the Israelites find themselves in exile. Through their sin and disobedience, they had failed to reflect and spread the glory of the true God, thus causing the nations to profane God's holy name (Eze 36:23). God promised to bring the Israelites out of exile, but for what reason? "I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations

³⁵In David Bosch's famous work *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, he identified the following six paradigms: (1) The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity, (2) The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period, (3) The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm, (4) The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm, (5) The modern Enlightenment paradigm, (6) The emerging ecumenical paradigm. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations” (Eze 36:22-23). Yahweh is clearly concerned to vindicate the glory of His name so that “the nations will know that I am the LORD . . . when I show myself holy through you before their eyes” (Eze 36:23). These verses provide the GCC with a God-centered motivation for missions. John Piper articulates this truth well, saying, “Unless we take our starting point from the sovereign majesty of God and his ultimate allegiance to his own glory above all else, our missionary theology and strategy and motivation will become human-centered and will in the end degenerate into a powerless sentimentality.”³⁶

God’s concern with how the nations regard His name is proof that He is a missionary God. Similar to the Ezekiel passage, in Malachi 1, the Israelites are rebuked for offering defiled food and thus dishonoring Yahweh. God’s primary concern in this offense is, if His own people treat Him with contempt, how will His name be seen as “great among the nations” (Mal 1:11), or even “feared among the nations” (Mal 1:14). He is a great king (Mal 1:14) and His people are the primary means through which He will demonstrate this truth to the world. As a result, God’s glory and the hallowing of His name (Matt 6:9) should serve as the primary motivating factor in the church’s missionary activities.

Second, a desire to please God, and its corollary, should drive the church to do mission work. In 2 Corinthians 5:11, Paul says that the fear of the Lord is a motivating factor in his efforts to persuade men to follow Christ. This phrase, “fear of the Lord,”

³⁶Philip Hopkins, *God’s Desire for the Nations: The Missionary Theology of John Piper* (Gonzales, FL: Energion Publications, 2010), 73-74, quoting John Piper, “A Pastor’s Role in World Missions” [on-line]; accessed on 3 March 2004; available from <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/a-pastors-role-in-world-missions>; Internet.

should be understood in two different senses. In the first sense, in verse 10, Paul mentions that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” The “we” in verse 10 refers to Paul, Timothy, and the Corinthian believers. Since believers fear displeasing their Lord and do not want to suffer a rebuke for being disobedient to the GC on judgment day, they will seek to persuade men. Such a spiritual disposition is positively described in verse 9 when Paul says, “So we make it our goal to please [the Lord], whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”

The third motivation to do missions is also drawn from Paul’s “fear of the Lord” motif in verse 11. Paul knows that the Lord is fearful, especially for the unevangelized who must hear the gospel and call out to Christ in order to be saved (Rom 10:13-15). Because Paul loves his neighbors, he wants them to avoid the horrifying fate described in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: “He [Jesus] will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.” As a result of such a terrifying prospect, the fear of the Lord compels him to evangelize. Ralph Martin comments,

One idea that Paul probably meant to convey with his use of *πείθομεν*, “we persuade,” is that he seeks to convince the Jews and Greeks alike to accept God’s salvation. The missionary idea in the verb is also remarked on by other writers (Windisch, Prümm). From 5:9–10, it would be hard not to see Paul as motivated to take the Gospel to the world (see Acts 18:4; 19:8, 26; 26:28; 28:23). This makes even more sense in light of Paul’s thesis of reconciliation (5:18–20) in that he believes himself to be an instrument of reconciliation. In light of judgment day, Paul presses on to evangelize.³⁷

³⁷Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 119.

This concern for the lost is antithetical to the sin of ethnocentrism found in the story of Jonah. Daniel Timmer summarizes, “The book condemns an attitude of Israelite superiority and even establishes that it is possible for those who number themselves among God's people to be diametrically opposed to such indiscriminate grace, and thus hardly his followers.”³⁸

A fourth motivating factor should be the love that God has for His children in Jesus Christ. Paul remarks in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 that the love of Christ compels him in his apostolic ministry.³⁹ This great love of God is primarily demonstrated through the death of Christ for sinners (Rom 5:8). Paul considered himself the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim 1:15-16), and yet still found mercy was available to him because of the incomparable love of Christ (John 15:13). This love was a great motivating factor in Paul’s life and should compel the church to do missions.

Fifth, the return of Christ has often served as a motivating factor for the church to go make disciples. Many read Matt. 24:14 as teaching that the prerequisite of Christ’s return is that the gospel must be first preached to all the nations (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), or people groups (as ἔθνεσιν could be rendered). Throughout their short history, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) denomination has strongly motivated their people to “bring back the King” through this interpretation. John F. Soper aptly explains this position on his denomination’s website: “The whole focus of the New Testament’s teaching about the return of Christ can be summarized in two simple propositions: first,

³⁸Daniel C. Timmer, “Jonah and Mission: Missiological Dichotomy, Biblical Theology, and the *Via Tertia*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 170.

³⁹In this section of Scripture, Paul is identifying godly and biblical motives for missionary work in order to refute some in the church who had impugned him with impure motives (2 Cor 3:1-3; 10:1-18).

because Christ is coming, we need to be ready...; and, second, because Christ is coming, we need to finish the task He has given us—the preaching of the gospel.”⁴⁰ The church should be faithfully attending to its missionary task in preparation for the second coming of Christ.

By embracing a biblical soteriology. The New Testament could not be any clearer when it says about Jesus, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It is through the blood of Jesus that God has determined to reconcile men to Himself (Col. 1:20). Men stand guilty before this Holy God (Rom 3:10-20) and Jesus is the only mediator between the two parties (1 Tim 2:5). Although most evangelicals are willing to assent to these teachings, some shy away from the necessary (and biblically supported) inference regarding those who have not heard the gospel found in Romans 10.

A. T. Pierson calls Romans 10 “the unparalleled missionary chapter of the Bible.”⁴¹ In verses 13 through 15, the apostle Paul carefully lays out a logical chain of events regarding salvation. Starting in reverse order, since the culmination of the series is expressed in the first event, the first step is for a preacher to be sent (10:15). Second, this sent one will preach the gospel to non-Christians (10:15). As a result of his preaching,

⁴⁰John F. Soper, “Jesus our Coming King” [on-line]; accessed 11 January 2011; available from <http://www.cmalliance.org/about/beliefs/coming-king>; Internet. Although there is an unmistakable correlation between the return of Christ and all nations hearing the gospel, it is not necessary to draw the inference that the church can hasten the second coming or determine its date. On the contrary, Jesus remarked to his disciples that “it is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). The verb “has set” (ἔθετο) is clearly found in the aorist tense indicating past, punctiliar action.

⁴¹Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 55-56, quoting A. T. Pierson, “The Market for Missions,” in *Missionary Sermons: A Selection from the Discourses Delivered on Behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society on Various Occasions* (London: 1925), 185.

they will hear the gospel (10:14). The next step is for the hearers to believe (10:14). Believing in the Lord will always result in calling upon His name (10:14), or crying out to him for mercy. Finally, it is the one who calls on the name of the Lord who will be saved (10:13). From this carefully laid out chain of events, Paul asserts that one *must* hear the gospel in order to be saved. Tom Schreiner agrees,

What is communicated in Rom. 10:14-15 and 17 is a principle that applies equally to both Jews and Gentiles: the steps of the chain must be realized if people are going to call on the Lord and be saved. We should note here the implication of this principle for contemporary missions, even though this is not the primary issue Paul addresses. We have already seen that Paul does not contemplate the possibility that people will be saved by responding positively to natural revelation (see the exegesis and exposition of 1:18-32). All people without exception reject the revelation of God heralded in nature and turn to idolatry. Romans 10:14-17 verifies this interpretation, for it excludes the idea that salvation can be obtained apart from the external hearing of the gospel.⁴²

Clear as this teaching appears to be, not every Christian agrees with this conclusion. Although this might be characterized as an oversimplification of their position, objectors to the exclusivist view tend to hold as a foundational principle the following statement by Charles Kraft.

God holds people accountable for what they know, rather than for what they don't know (Rom. 1:32; 2:14-16). I believe, therefore that we can assume that those whose understanding of God's message today is more like Abraham's than like ours will be held accountable for the response they make to the message as they understand it.⁴³

Ultimately this argument leads to the conclusion that it would be unfair for God to condemn sinners for not believing a gospel they never heard. Harold Netland divides this

⁴²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 567-68.

⁴³Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, rev. 25th anniv. ed., (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 180.

group into two perspectives. First is the “wider hope” perspective⁴⁴ which expects “large numbers of those who never hear the gospel to be saved.”⁴⁵ Second, is the “agnostic” perspective which Netland describes in the following manner:

Many evangelicals . . . adopt a modest agnosticism regarding the unevangelized, refusing to speculate about how God might deal with them and leaving the matter in the hands of God. Others are willing to admit in principle that God might indeed save some who have never explicitly heard the gospel but add quickly that we simply do not know whether this occurs at all or, if so, how many might be saved in this manner.⁴⁶

While this author does respect many of the “agnostic” evangelicals, and will admit that this line of argumentation does resonate with human conceptions of fairness, he finds the argument to be rejected by Scripture.

Many have attempted to use Psalm 19 and Romans 1 to demonstrate that natural revelation is sufficient to provide salvation to the unevangelized. Nevertheless, the evidence they provide is completely lacking, and in fact, these very passages only serve to defeat their argument. Paul’s main point in Romans 1:18-20 is that all people stand condemned and are without excuse on judgment day *because of* nature revelation; namely, that God made his divine nature (θειότης) and eternal power (αἰῶνιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις) known to all. Nobody will be able to stand before Him on judgment day and with a clear conscience declare, “I had no idea you existed or required anything from

⁴⁴Clark Pinnock and John Sanders are listed as representing this position. John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992). Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

⁴⁵Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 321.

⁴⁶Ibid. Other evangelicals that Netland places in this category include J. I. Packer, *God’s Words: Studies of Key Bible Themes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981); John Stott, *The Authentic Jesus* (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1985); Christopher J. H. Wright, *What’s So Unique About Jesus?* (Eastbourne, England: Monarch, 1990).

me.” Rather through nature’s light they were certain that a Creator God existed to whom they were accountable, yet they chose to suppress this truth due to their sin (Rom 1:20).

All men are sinners and as such stand condemned before God. Their only hope is the gospel of Jesus Christ which they must hear in order to be saved (Rom 10:13-15). The heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19:1), but do not sound forth the salvific gospel message (1 Cor 15:3-4). A GCC will embrace biblical soteriology and be compelled to send missionaries because apart from the gospel, there is no hope for those who have not heard.

Through assessing other religions biblically. It should be abundantly clear from the preceding discussion that Jesus Christ is the only way for sinful men to be reconciled to the Father (John 14:6). Therefore, the other religions in the world are inadequate to provide salvation to lost mankind because they are neglecting the Savior of the world. Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Animism, and the others, in their various ways, attempt to solve the problems of men, but Christianity alone accurately identifies *the* problem man faces (his separation from God due to sin), and then provides the only solution (Jesus Christ crucified for our sins).

Nonetheless, this truth has led missionaries in the past to needlessly disparage false religions. Herbert Kane laments, “They were unnecessarily negative in their attitude towards these religions and often preached against idolatry in terms that were quite offensive to the listeners. The same truths could have been expressed in less abrasive terms.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷J. Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 162.

A better strategy can be found in the book of Acts. In an effort to build bridges with people of other faiths, the missionary can affirm “that even nonbiblical religions here and there retain valid insights on the basis of general divine revelation.”⁴⁸ Paul provides us with a striking example on Mars Hill when he favorably quotes Aratus, the Stoic poet, saying, “we are his offspring” (Acts 17:28). In spite of such bridge building efforts, the church must be careful not lose the exclusivity of the gospel which includes “the offense of the cross” (Gal 5:11). As the church seeks to accomplish the GC, it must not flinch at the insults hurled at it by offended religious adherents. A conversion to Christianity and away from false religions is a part of accomplishing the mission of God.

Through Great Commission prayer. The church must realize that apart from a prayerful dependence on the sovereign Lord, it has no hope of successfully moving forward to fulfill the GC. Ephesians 6:12 declares that our enemy is not “flesh and blood,” but the “powers of this dark world” and “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Therefore, as the church sends missionaries to the nations, both parties should praying in the Spirit at all times (Eph. 6:18). In Ephesians 6:19, Paul appeals to the church for prayer support so that he might declare the gospel fearlessly and clearly. This manner of fervent, continual prayer will arise from a church that is convinced only God can grant repentance (2 Tim. 2:25) and open unbelieving hearts to respond to the gospel (Acts 16:14). Regarding the church’s GC prayer ministry, David Bryant astutely observes,

⁴⁸Carl F. H. Henry, *God Revelation, and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 367.

When all is said and done—when all the best laid mission strategies of the Church are set in motion—prayer remains the major way for us to penetrate every human barrier in the world that keeps out the Gospel. After all, prayer penetrates the two ultimate barriers every time: The darkened hearts of sinners and the resistive powers of Satan.⁴⁹

Additionally, it is important to note that Paul and Barnabas were called to missionary work while fasting and praying (Acts 13:2-3). Even though the specific content of their prayer is unknown to the reader, one can argue that a prayer's answer typically has a strong correlation with the request. It is not a stretch to speculate that Paul and Barnabus, along with the church in Antioch, were praying for the nations. Moreover, knowing Paul's ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not yet known (Rom 15:20), it seems even more likely that they were asking God to raise up laborers to send out to the unevangelized.

By holding a high view of Scripture. John Stott authored the first article in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* and began with the great line, “Without the Bible world evangelization would be not only impossible but actually inconceivable.”⁵⁰ He continues with the astute observation that “the degree of the church's commitment to world evangelization is commensurate with the degree of its conviction about the authority of the Bible.”⁵¹ The Bible is a missionary document and evidences the fact that God is a missionary God. The Bible's existence is proof that

⁴⁹David Bryant, “Obey the Vision through Prayer,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), D-300.

⁵⁰John Stott, “The Bible in World Evangelization,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), A-3.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

Yahweh is not content to let His creatures drown in their sin, but is seeking reconciliation with them. Christopher Wright begins his masterful project with the thought provoking sentence, “Mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as of the biblical basis of mission.”⁵²

A GCC will hold a high view of Scripture and eagerly obey the command of their Lord to take the gospel to the nations. Moreover, it will not merely view the Bible as a textbook to be mined for systematic doctrines. On the contrary, it will embrace the entirety of God’s word as one unified message and know how to read it missiologically.

In Acts 15:16-18, James evidences a missiological hermeneutic. He breaks out of his Jewish ethnocentrism and reads the Old Testament as it was designed to be understood; namely, that from the beginning God intended to bless the Gentile nations and bring them to be one with His people. This intention of God is the “mystery” that Paul referred to in Ephesians 3:5, and the truth that many Jews could not accept.

The basis for the composition of the church according to Ephesians centers on a cosmic secret that was part of God's eschatological plan laid “before the foundation of the world” (1:4). This cosmic secret is the “mystery” (*mystērion*, Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19) that accorded divine recognition to Gentiles as fellow heirs and co-partakers of God’s promise with Israelites who have followed Jesus Christ (3:6). The church exists truly as it is composed as the one Body of Christ in which Gentiles have been united with the Jews as a public display of the grand redemptive purpose of God (Eph. 3:1-13).⁵³

A missiological reading of the Bible will always seek to understand individual passages in light of the overall message. Despite the fact that the Bible contains 66 books, 40 different authors, 3 unique languages, and 2 dispensations; it has only one ultimate

⁵²Wright, *The Mission of God*, 29.

⁵³Sunday Babajide Komolafe, “Christ, Church, and the Cosmos: A Missiological Reading of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians,” *Missiology* 35 (2007): 274.

purpose: that God would receive glory as He accomplishes His plan of reconciliation with his wayward creation through His Son.

By knowing church and missionary history. Although the church is built upon an infallible foundation (the Holy Scriptures), it is not an infallible institution. Tainted by the sin of mankind, it has committed many offenses since its beginning. One only needs to recall the crusades to know the depths of error it can sink into. Moreover, the church's missionary endeavors have not been free from accusation. Herbert Kane lists the following items to be typical missionary mistakes committed over the past two centuries: (1) missionaries had a superiority complex, (2) they took a dim view of "pagan" religions, (3) they failed to differentiate between Christianity and Western culture, (4) they exported denominationalism, (5) they failed to encourage the indigenization of Christianity, (6) they were paternalistic, (7) they were unwise in their use of Western funds, (8) they were too closely identified with the colonial system.⁵⁴ As those who ignore history are bound to repeat it, the church should learn from its past mistakes in order to better serve Christ in the future, especially in respect to missions.

Despite its failings, the history of the church is replete with examples of godly men and women of whom it can be said, "the world was not worthy of them" (Heb 11:38). Erwin Lutzer also exhorts us to not forget the role of the sovereign God as missionary history is considered. "We can profit from history not simply to be motivated by the courage of those who have gone before us, but also to be encouraged by those special evidences of God's providence that inspire us to be faithful to the Great

⁵⁴Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*, 161-64.

Commission in our time.”⁵⁵ The tremendous sacrifices made by a multitude of missionaries, which have been recorded over the centuries, should not go unheard. They should inspire believers to trust in the Lord of the harvest who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). Moreover, in the context of the emerging missionary movement in the majority world, the history of God’s faithfulness to His missionary servants should inspire those involved to greater missionary involvement as they seek to “consider the outcome of their [missionaries] way of life and imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7).

Through contextualization. One of the greatest insights that the missiological community has gained in the past few decades is that it is difficult, yet important, for the missionary to realize the impact of his cultural grid upon his interpretation of the Bible.⁵⁶ Paul Hiebert writes about a time when Western missionaries crossed cultures in a paternalistic way and “assumed that their own theology was wholly biblical and that it was not biased by their cultural and historical contexts.”⁵⁷ As a result, the missionaries had very little respect for other cultures, seeing their own as the standard for

⁵⁵Erwin Lutzer, “Providence, History, and Evangelical Missions,” in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), x.

⁵⁶Charles Kraft explains, “The fact that we are in a different sociocultural context from that in which the original [biblical] events occurred causes problems, for our perception and our interpretation are affected by that different culture. We learn as part of our cultural conditioning a set of ‘interpretational reflexes’—a set of habits in terms of which we automatically interpret whatever happens. . . . We need to develop hermeneutical techniques for getting beyond these reflexive interpretations into as close an approximation as possible to the perception of the original participants. . . . We who are not a part of the biblical cultures cannot *trust* our interpretational reflexes to give us the meanings that the original authors intended. What are to us the ‘plain meanings’ are almost certain to be the wrong meanings unless the statements are very general.” Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 102. Of course, this truth has obvious application to cross-cultural missionary work.

⁵⁷Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 46.

righteousness and others in need of a complete change. This attitude unfortunately developed a civilizing mentality within the minds of the missionaries and hindered them from preaching a contextualized message that was easier to understand and receive.⁵⁸

What is contextualization, and, by extension, a contextualized theology? D. A. Carson may have the most simplistic definition of contextualization, yet it is extremely helpful. “Contextualization goes beyond this [indigenization and the three-self description] to include the notion that the church is doing its own theology in its own context.”⁵⁹ Essentially, Carson is saying that the church is reading the Scriptures in light of its sociocultural context and attempting to answer basic existential questions such as: (1) Who is God?, (2) Who am I?, and (3) What does He want from me? While the answers to these questions, asked in different cultures, will never contradict one another, they will have different emphases. However, Carson’s greatest contribution to the discussion is found in how he distinguishes different kinds of contextualization. “Broadly speaking there are two brands of contextualization. The first assigns control to the context . . . the second assigns the control to Scripture.”⁶⁰ Carson is contending that all contextual models will either regard Scripture as having the final authority, or culture. The church that desires to please its Lord will assign control to Scripture as it

⁵⁸Albert Widjaja argues that the discussion about developing contextualized theologies is “a constant quest to live with the Gospel in a deeper way.”⁵⁸ It “seeks to be genuine in its commitment to the demand of the Gospel, seeks to be original in its perception of the challenges of the world in the light of the Gospel. It attempts to be relevant to the society, yet faithful to its Lord.” Albert Widjaja, “Beggarly Theology : A Search for a Perspective Toward Indigenous Theology,” *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 14 (1973): 40. Widjaja used the term “indigenous theology” due to the fact that this was published in 1973, before the term contextualization replaced it.

⁵⁹D. A. Carson, “Church and Mission: Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon,” *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 3 (1984): 220.

⁶⁰Ibid.

contextualizes the Christian message, yet still views the Bible to be the final arbiter of all truth.

GCCs should not view the UPG's culture as intrinsically evil, but should employ Hiebert's critical contextualization model⁶¹ to discern its positive, neutral and negative elements. A biblical view of culture recognizes that the multifarious expressions of civilization, which are found around the world, ultimately exist because of God's action at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11). The GCC's goal is not to civilize or spread its own culture, but to contextualize the gospel in order to avoid erecting unnecessary barriers to the gospel (1 Cor 9:19-23). As McGavran is famous for saying, "Men like to become Christian without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."⁶² As a GCC participates in the mission of God, it will acknowledge cultural diversity as God given and strive to contextualize ideas and methods.

A Great Commission Church

Again, it should be emphasized that the preceding biblical theology of missions was not intended to be a complete treatment of the subject. Rather it was an overview of the most important elements with the purpose of establishing GCC evaluation criteria. Therefore with this necessary foundation having been laid, the researcher is prepared to ask and answer the question, what is a GCC? The simplest definition is that a GCC is one that is participating in the cross-cultural spread of the gospel. However, based on the biblical theology argued

⁶¹Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 88-89.

⁶²Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 46.

for in this chapter, a more specific, measureable set of criteria can be established. The goal of this project is to assist Chinese house churches in becoming GCCs that will be effective in spreading the gospel across cultures and meet the criteria displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The 10 criteria of a Great Commission church

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Longs to see all the peoples on the earth hallowing God's name (Matt 6:9-10, Hab 2:14, Mal 1:14, Rev 5:9).2. Sees mankind as utterly lost and without hope apart from the gospel (Rom 3:10-20, 10:13-17, Eph 2:1-3).3. Takes responsibility to be involved, regardless of their size, resources, or sacrifices that must be made (Acts 13:1-3, Matt 28:18-20).4. Is a prayerful church, seeking to inform its members of the worldwide situation and needs (Acts 13:1-3, Eph 6:10-20).5. Reads and preaches the Word of God from a GC perspective (Acts 15:13-21).6. Is willing to cooperate with like-minded evangelicals to accomplish the GC (2 Cor 11:8-9, Acts 18:1-5, Rom 15:23-29).7. Is actively praying, seeking to identify gifted people to equip and send, in a way suitable to their gifting (Acts 13:1-3, 1 Cor 12:28, 2 Tim 2:2).8. Upholds missionary heroes to inspire church members and provide for them an example to follow (1 Cor 11:1, Heb 13:7).9. Understands how to support missionaries and is actively seeking to do so (Phil 4:14-15, 2 Cor 7:5-7, Acts 18:5).10. Sees diversity in cultures as God given and understands the need to contextualize ideas and methods (Gen 11, Acts 17:16-34, John 1:1). |
|---|

In order to appraise the missionary nature of the participating house churches, the questionnaire must obtain information that can be compared with the 10 criteria listed above. With the criteria being established, it is time to explain the Chinese house church questionnaire.

A Great Commission Survey

The thesis of this dissertation is that the majority of Chinese house churches represented in this study are not GCCs. They are not GCCs in the sense that they do not meet at least 7 of the 10 criteria of a GCC. However, in order to test this thesis, relevant missiological data was collected from house church believers. The data was derived from a 29 question GC survey that was developed from the author's theology of missions and, more particularly, from the 10 criteria of a GCC.

In order to demonstrate the connection between the criteria and the survey questions, ten different tables will display one individual criterion and its corresponding question(s). A rationale will be provided discussing how the data derived from the survey question(s) will elucidate the house church's missiology related to the specific criterion. Finally, the researcher will provide an "answer assessment."

Evaluative Function of the Survey Data

The answer assessment will describe the response needed in order for the participant (and his represented church) to avoid a "weak" missiological rating under that criterion. For example, question 7 is asking, "Besides sending missionaries, in what ways is your church participating in the GC?" This question is related to criterion 3, "Takes responsibility to be involved regardless of their size, resources, or sacrifices that must be

made.” A strong answer would include at least prayer and financial participation. Of course, a weak answer would exclude one or both of these items. Each criterion will have an answer assessment; therefore, the collective churches are evaluated ten times. The evaluations consist of being labeled weak in relationship to a certain criterion, or not weak.

However, it needs to be clarified that each one of the 29 questions will not be used to measure the strength or weakness of the participant’s missiology. For example, the third question on the survey, which is also linked to criterion 3, asks the participant if his local church has raised up and sent a missionary. While the answer to this question is crucial for understanding the modern-day Chinese house church’s participation in the GC, an affirmative answer is not necessary in order to avoid a weak rating.⁶³ A number of questions fall into this classification, called “non-key” questions, and they will not affect the final assessment of the collective house churches. This distinction in questions is intended to simplify the evaluation process and prevent the standard from being absurdly high.⁶⁴ The standards established in the “answer assessment” section will be used in chapter 4 to give a preliminary determination about whether or not the majority of represented churches are GCCs.

In order to be considered a GCC, the represented church must not be rated weak in more than three criteria. Although this 7 out of 10 standard may sound arbitrary,

⁶³I believe that the raising up and sending of a cross-cultural missionary is the *goal* of a GCC, and not the *prerequisite*. It is likely that in the Chinese context there are a number of house churches that have not matured to the point of actually sending a missionary, but can still be considered a GCC because they have the goal of sending a missionary and are actively and intentionally pursuing the fulfillment of this goal.

⁶⁴All “key” questions used in the formal evaluation, like question 7, are designated with an asterisk in their respective tables.

it was chosen for three reasons. First, an objective standard was needed for evaluation purposes. Second, the researcher is convinced that a church exhibiting no weaknesses in relationship to the 10 criteria is a rare phenomenon—especially in the context of the emerging missionary movement of the Chinese house church. Third, if a church is not rated as weak in more than 3 criteria, it is deemed not weak (acceptable or possibly strong) in 7 or more criteria. This situation would indicate that it does have a general desire and vision to fulfill the GC, but has not yet fully developed some aspects of its participation.

For example, a church might long for a UPG to hallow God's name (criterion 1), is praying toward that end (criterion 4), and recognizes that the UPG is without hope apart from Christ (criterion 2), etc. However, the church is found to be weak in two areas: namely, it is not actively encouraging its people to go (criterion 7), and is unaware of how (or unwilling) to enter into a missiological partnership (criterion 6). How should this church be evaluated? While there is no exact science to this methodology, if a church meets the standards of 7 or more of the criteria, the researcher concludes that it is a GCC and will most likely eventually meet the standard of all 10.⁶⁵

Demographic Information

The questionnaire begins by asking for the following information:

No Name Necessary.

What part of China do you serve in (province)? _____

What group/denomination/network are you affiliated with (if any)? _____

Are you a leader in your church? _____

⁶⁵Additionally, there is no criterion which is considered fundamental to a GCC. In other words, a church cannot disqualify itself from being a GCC by exhibiting weakness in any one criterion.

These questions are listed at the beginning in order to obtain demographic information. For obvious security reasons the participants were not asked to identify themselves.

Criterion 1–Question 1

The first component of question 1 serves a preliminary purpose; mainly to determine what the participant’s definition of a missionary is. In the Western Christian tradition, a missionary is typically a “sent out” one. More specifically, missionaries are sent out by a church (or an association of churches) to cross cultures with the purpose of leading “the peoples to hallow God’s name.” The missionary will typically be involved in the primary activities of evangelism and church planting. However, he can also serve in more indirect, supporting roles such as aviation, Bible translation, medical missions, theological education, etc.

In the 2003 ABC Chinese-English dictionary, the term missionary is translated from 宣教士 (xuānjiàoshì).⁶⁶ Additionally, 传道士 (chúandàoshì) is translated preacher, missionary, or evangelist.⁶⁷ As is obvious in the two translations, there is a lack of precision in the use of these words. However, most mission books that have been recently translated into Chinese use the former term 宣教士(xuānjiàoshì).⁶⁸ Additionally, in the researcher’s discussions with house church leaders, 宣教士(xuānjiàoshì) always includes

⁶⁶John DeFrancis, ed., *The ABC Chinese-English Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), s.v. “宣教士.”

⁶⁷Ibid., s.v. “传道士.”

⁶⁸The most notable example is Sharon Chan, ed., 普世宣教运动面面观 [Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader], Simplified Chinese ed. (Hong Kong: Great Commission Center International, 2008).

Table 1. Missionary sending motivations

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
1. Longs to see all the peoples on the earth hallowing God's name (Matt 6:9-10, Hab. 2:14, Mal. 1:14, Rev. 5:9).	1. How do you define a missionary? *What is the main motivation for sending missionaries?

the notion of crossing-cultures. As a result, 宣教士(xuānjiàoshì) was used to translate the word missionary on the survey.

The second component of question 1 will provide a first glance into the missiologies of the represented house churches. The various answers to the “main motivation for sending” question can be compared to the biblical motives mentioned earlier in the theology section, thus enabling the researcher to assess how God-centered the church is. A love for one's neighbor expressed through alleviating human suffering and correcting social injustice are appropriate secondary motivations; nevertheless, the main motivation should be the hallowing of God's holy name.⁶⁹

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the respondent needs to identify a God-centered motivation for doing missions. Ideally, this would be represented as the glory of God, but other acceptable answers could include hallowing His name, spreading His fame, compelled by His love, or obeying the GC.

⁶⁹The other motives mentioned in the theology of missions included a fear of displeasing God, the fearful fate of the unevangelized, the love of God for His children, and the second coming of Christ.

Criterion 2–Question 2

The connection between question 2 and biblical criterion 2 is perspicuous.

Churches that believe people can be saved apart from the gospel will inevitably lose their motivation for sending missionaries.

Table 2. The spiritual condition of mankind

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
2. Sees mankind as utterly lost and without hope apart from the gospel (Rom. 3:10-18, 10:14-17, Eph. 2:1-3).	2. *Do people need to hear and believe the gospel to be saved? *Can people be saved apart from Jesus Christ? *What if those people have never heard the gospel?

This danger is especially acute in China, where the Christian faith is embraced by a minority of people. Adherents of other religions and ideologies are generally offended by and resistant to evangelistic efforts. Persecution, in this context, is not uncommon, and if the church is not convinced of the hopelessness of the unevangelized apart from faith in Christ, evangelism and missions will be purposely avoided.

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the participant needs to affirm that people must hear and believe the gospel in order to be saved. Moreover, those who have never heard the gospel will perish because there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ.

Criterion 3–Questions 3 through 8

The next set of questions examines the GC history and current activity of the house churches being surveyed. Questions 3 and 4 are attempting to find out if the house churches have been successful in actually sending a missionary.

Table 3. Assumption of Great Commission responsibility

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
3. Takes responsibility to be involved, regardless of their size, resources, or sacrifices that must be made (Matt. 28:19).	3. Has your church raised up and sent any missionaries (circle one)? Yes / No / Don't Know. 4. If yes, how many? 5. If no, why not? Circle all that apply (1) Security, (2) Nobody has the call, (3) Not enough money, (4) They are needed here, Other: 6. Would you say the Christians at your church typically tithe? What percentage of Christians at your church would you guess tithe? What is the average percentage that church people give? If you don't know, please simply say 'I don't know'. 7. *Besides sending missionaries, in what ways is your church participating in the GC? 8. In your opinion, what are the biggest factors hindering the Chinese house church from greater missions involvement?

If the survey participant records that his house church has not sent a missionary, question 5 is seeking to determine why.⁷⁰ In the event that a scarcity of funds is to blame, question 6 is striving to understand the giving patterns of church members. Are there no funds for missionaries because God's people are not giving or are they

⁷⁰Occasionally throughout this survey, "closed-ended questions" were asked "when the relevant answers to a given question are relatively clear." Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 10th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004), 245. These questions are also a way to respect the participant's time and make the survey quicker to fill out.

giving but the percentage they donate is much lower than ten percent?⁷¹ Obviously, this could be hard for many people to answer, so they have been given the option of simply saying, “I don’t know.”

Question 7 asks an open-ended question to ascertain if the respondent’s church is bearing its responsibility to be involved in missions, apart from the actual sending of a missionary. One must not conclude that a church is missiologically weak simply because it has failed to send out a missionary. There are a number of ways that a church can participate in the GC. The two *primary* methods are through financial and prayer support, and these two methods will form the basis of evaluation for this criterion.

Question 8 concludes the data gathering related to criterion 3 by asking another open-ended question; specifically, what is hindering the Chinese house church from sending missionaries? This question is moving away from analyzing the participant’s local church, and asking him to share about his perception of the Chinese house church in general. The answers will hopefully shed more light on the reasons why the Chinese house church may not be assuming its responsibility to be more involved in missions.

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion the Chinese believer needs to indicate that his local church is participating in the GC through prayer support and financial donations.

⁷¹This author agrees with J. D. Payne’s position on tithing. “It is my conviction that though the tithe was established in the Torah (even before the law was given, Genesis 14:20; 28:22), it should be a starting point for followers of Jesus and should be given out of love and not compulsion.” J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches*, Kindle ed. (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 100.

Criterion 4—Questions 9 and 10

Questions 9 and 10 flow from the biblical criterion related to prayer. Previous research has attested to the fact that the Chinese house church is famous for its fervency in prayer. Lawrence and Wang describe the house church’s prayer life as earnest and widespread. “It appears that the distinguishing feature of the present-day church growth in China is the disciplined prayer life of every believer.”⁷² Although Lawrence and Wang depict the Chinese believers praying for millions of lost souls in China, nowhere do they mention prayers for the UPGs outside of China. Question 9 is attempting to discern the frequency of prayer offered for specific missionaries, countries, and for the spread of the gospel around the world.

Table 4. A praying church

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
4. Is a prayerful church, seeking to inform its members of the worldwide situation and needs (Acts 13:1-3).	9. How often does your church pray for: *The gospel to reach all peoples? *Specific missionaries? *Specific countries? every week, once per month, once per year, never 10. How often does your church inform you about the status of Christianity around the world? For example, the small percentage of Christians in the Middle-East and the persecution that many Christians face? every week, once per month, once per year, never

Chapter 5 will share that some sinologists believe the Chinese people to be a very ethnocentric people. The name of their country in the Chinese language is literally translated “middle-country” (中国, zhōng guó), evidencing that they have historically seen

⁷²Carl Lawrence, and David Wang, *The Coming Influence of China* (Artesia, CA: Shannon Publishers, 2000), 38.

themselves as located in the center of civilization. Moreover, very few Chinese people have had the opportunity to travel and experience another culture. These realities merely add to their lack of awareness regarding the spread of the gospel around the world.

Therefore, question 10 seeks to understand if the house church is leading people to pray in an educated and informed way. Prayer practitioners believe it is axiomatic that the more informed and prayerful Christians are regarding the spiritual needs of the world, the greater of a burden they will develop for reaching these regions. Jason Mandryk shares, “Praying for the nations can have significant personal consequences as well—for countless missionaries, their first step on the path toward Christian service began with prayer and resulted in their obedient response to God calling them to be answers to their own prayers.”⁷³

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the respondent needs to indicate that their church prays for each of the above items in question 9 at least once per month.

Criterion 5–Question 11

Biblical criterion 5 is seeking to measure if the house church leaders are reading the Word of God through a missiological lens. Ideally, these pastors would have a thoroughly developed theology of missions that informs their study of the Scriptures and weekly preaching. However, this missiological reading and preaching of the Bible is

⁷³Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), xxiv.

Table 5. Missiologically reading and preaching the Bible

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
5. Reads and preaches the Word of God from a GC perspective (Acts 15:16-18).	11. *How often do you hear about missions and spreading the gospel to the world in church sermons? *Or, if you are a pastor, how often do you include this in your sermons? every week, once per month, once per year, never

a difficult task for those who, oftentimes, are not able to receive even the most basic theological training. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that if the pastors include some element of world missions in their sermons on a monthly basis, the missionary activity of the church would increase.

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the participant need to answer that they hear about missions on a monthly basis, at least. In the event that the participant is a preacher, he needs to include some aspect of the GC in his sermon on a monthly basis.

Criterion 6–Questions 12 through 14

Although question 12 is not directly related to cooperation or partnership, it is designed to lead the Chinese believer to consider how costly it is to support an international missionary. The researcher’s hypothesis is that most house churches, which are not involved in large networks, cannot individually support a missionary. Moreover, it is likely that they do not even have a good estimate of how costly missions can be.

Table 6. Willingness to cooperate

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
6. Is willing to cooperate with like-minded evangelicals to accomplish the GC (Acts 15, Rom 15:23-29).	<p>12. In your opinion, how much would it cost to financially support a missionary in another country every year (including transportation costs, and their ministry budget)?</p> <p>13. Is your church able to financially support a missionary at this time? If yes how many? *If not, would you be willing to partner with another house church to send a missionary? *What conditions would this other house church need to meet in order to partner with you?</p> <p>14. Can foreigners in China help the Chinese Church raise up and send missionaries? If so, what is the best way foreigners can help?</p>

Question 13 is seeking to confirm or deny the aforementioned hypothesis. In the event that a house church is unable to support an international missionary, this question inquires if it is willing to partner with another church in order to send one. If the willingness is present, the fourth component of question 13 asks, what conditions would they establish for such a partnership? It has been the researcher's experience that Chinese house churches can be somewhat sectarian due to their concerns regarding heresy, domineering leadership, and security concerns.⁷⁴

The last question related to criterion 6 is designed to obtain an emic perspective on the role that foreigners can play in the BTJ movement. House churches in the past have expressed a desire to work with foreigners, but not necessarily for the purpose of missions. Furthermore, problems in the past have occurred due to a discrepancy between what the house church perceives it needs and what the foreigners

⁷⁴This assertion is based on numerous conversations I have had with Chinese house church leaders and fellow missionaries, but is not on any particular interview.

are willing to offer. Learning the perception of the house church will better enable foreigners to serve in a manner consistent with the expectations and desires of Chinese house church leaders.

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the respondent needs to affirm its church's willingness to cooperate with other churches to fulfill the GC. Although many conditions for partnership could be identified, the church in question should, at a minimum, examine its partner's theology before an agreement is made.

Criterion 7--Questions 15 through 19

Criteria 7 is attempting to measure GC intentionality within the house church. Regarding such churches, J. D. Payne helpfully writes, "They believe if they cease to be intentionally and regularly involved in evangelism, then they cease to be a church. Missional churches obey our Lord's command to 'go' into all the world rather than waiting for unbelievers to come to their church gatherings."⁷⁵

Viewing the Antioch church as a model (Acts 13:1-3), a GCC will follow in its footsteps by actively praying and seeking to identify gifted people to equip and send in a way suitable to their gifting. Therefore, questions 15 and 16 are attempting to discover what qualifications exist for becoming a missionary, and how broadly Chinese believers can conceive of the missionary's role. Such considerations will affect the church leaders as they seek to discern the Lord's will for their church members.

⁷⁵ J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches*, Kindle ed. (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 8-9.

Table 7. Intentionality

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
7. Actively praying, seeking to identify gifted people to equip and send, in a way suitable to their gifting (Acts 13:1-3, 2 Tim. 2:2).	<p>15. What qualifications does one need to be a missionary?</p> <p>16. What kind of activities could be considered missionary activity (circle all that apply)? (1) Translation work, (2) Medical care, (3) Starting businesses, (4) Caring for orphans, (5) Evangelism, (6) Teaching a foreign language, (7) Preaching, (8) Improving living conditions (water, food, etc.), (9) Church planting, (10) Working a common job</p> <p>17. *On a scale of 0 to 10, how intentional is your church regarding sending missionaries? 0 2 4 6 8 10 No intentionality Very Intentional</p> <p>18. Do you (as a pastor) look for potential missionaries in your church and encourage them to serve the Lord in this way, or do you wait for them to come to you? If you are not a leader in the church, has your pastor ever encouraged you or anyone you know to pursue missions?</p> <p>19. *Does your church have a plan or goal to raise up a missionary(s) by a certain time right now? *If yes, what is that plan?</p>

If the qualifications for serving as a missionary are too high,⁷⁶ then it is likely that nobody in the congregation will be encouraged by the leaders to pursue this calling. Likewise, by way of example, if the church leaders have no concept of a medical doctor using his skills for the furtherance of the gospel, then they will not be intentional about approaching a doctor to consider missionary work.

Questions 17 through 19 seek to measure intentionality more directly. The participants are asked in question 17 to give a self-assessment regarding their church's level of intentionality in missions. Questions 18 and 19 attempt to obtain objective

⁷⁶For example a seminary degree, fluent in another language, previous experience in working with that particular people group, etc.

information that will shed light on the accuracy of the participant's self-assessment in question 17. In other words, if a house church leader rates his church as a 9/10 on willingness, yet never encourages members to consider going to the nations, the self-assessment would be called into question. In the same way, if a survey participant rates his church a 9/10 and says the church has a plan to send a missionary, but the plan has no specifics, the intentionality of the church would be seen as lacking.

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion the represented house church needs to score at least a 7/10 on intentionality. Moreover, they should have a plan with some specific details on how they are seeking to raise up a missionary. Specific details should include a timeframe, a targeted people group, and a basic strategy.

Criterion 8—Questions 20 through 22

These next three questions are related to missionary heroes. In Hebrews 11, the author presents a “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1) so that his readers “will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb 12:3). In a similar way, personally knowing missionaries and teaching on their lives should inspire Chinese believers to imitate their faith (Heb 13:7).

Ruth Tucker discloses her ultimate hope in authoring *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*:

Who were these missionaries who sacrificed so much to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth? Were they spiritual giants who gloriously overcame the obstacles they confronted? No. they were ordinary individuals, plagued by human frailties and failures. . . . It is hoped, then, that this book will not only inform and instruct but also inspire readers to be willing to be used of God in this, the greatest cause [the Christian missionary movement] in all human history.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 16.

Table 8. Missionary heroes

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
8. Upholds missionary heroes as an inspiration for them and an example to follow (Heb. 13:7).	<p>20. How many Chinese missionaries do you personally know that are serving the Lord right now in another country? In China?</p> <p>21. What missionary (past or present, Chinese or foreign) do you most respect and appreciate? Why?</p> <p>22. *Has your church ever taught about the life of a missionary before? Yes / No</p>

Question 20 is exploring if the house church has a relationship with a current missionary. Personal relationships of this nature are likely to foster a vision for missions among the congregation. The next question seeks to assess if there are any missionaries, past or present, whom the participant respects and why. Essentially, this question is asking if the participant has a missionary hero and what is it about this missionary that has impressed him. Lastly, question 22 desires to know if their church has ever taught on the life of a missionary. Since this is the most straightforward way to uphold a missionary hero, the data derived from this question will be used in assessing if the church meets the standard of criterion 8.

These three questions are also subtly trying to encourage the house church leaders who participate in this survey to incorporate this practice into the life of their church. It is unfortunate that the church in China has virtually no *Chinese* missionary heroes to admire. They have many pastors and evangelists who have served as an inspiration to many, but at this point in history, there has been only one biography written describing the life of a Chinese missionary.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Wáng, Ruì Zhēn. 神國俠侶—西域宣教傳奇 [Silk route mission: Story of a heroic couple] (Taipei, Taiwan: Campus Evangelical Fellowship, 2005).

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, an affirmation that the church has previously taught on the life a missionary is needed.

Criterion 9–Questions 23 through 25

Not only do missionaries need to be raised up and sent, but they also need to be supported by their sending church(es). Therefore, the questions 23 and 24 will discern if the house church members understand how to support missionaries, both before and after departure, by asking them to list the various needs of a missionary.

Question 25 is seeking the participant’s opinion related to the greatest struggle(s) of a missionary. The anticipated answers will probably be similar to what a westerner would give; therefore, a few possibilities were provided for them to circle. However, “Other” was also listed as a choice in order to give the participants the freedom to deviate beyond the expected answers.

The ninth criterion states that a GCC “understands how to support missionaries and is *actively seeking to do so*.” However, questions 23 through 25 have focused on the “understanding” aspect and neglected the “actively seeking to do so” component. The reason for this neglect is because this aspect has already been measured to some degree in criterion 3 in question 7,⁷⁹ and the researcher was attempting to avoid redundancy. As a result, the answer assessment for this criterion will only measure a church’s “understanding,” and not its “activity seeking.” Nonetheless, the data from questions 23 through 25 will be compared with the data from question 7 to give a more complete picture on how active the churches are in supporting missionaries.

⁷⁹Question 7 asks, “Besides sending missionaries, in what ways is your church participating in the Great Commission?”

Table 9. Missionary support

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
9. Understands how to support missionaries and is actively seeking to do so (Phil. 4:18, 2 Cor. 7:5-7).	23. *What does a missionary need from the home church before they are on the mission field? 24. *What does a missionary need from the home church after they are on the mission field? 25. In your opinion, what are some of the biggest struggles that missionaries face? (1) Language, (2) Money, (3) Culture Shock, (4) Loneliness, (5) Persecution, (6) Other:

Answer assessment. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the participant needed to identify training, financial and prayer support as the needs of a missionary before leaving for the field. Moreover, he should note the needs of finances and prayer after arrival. On-field training was not made a requirement due to the logistical difficulty of a small church providing it.

Criterion 10–Questions 26 through 29

The last set of questions is mostly ascertaining the participants’ view of the relationship between Christianity and culture. It is seeking to discover their awareness, or lack thereof, of how their own Han culture differs from that of other peoples, and the implications for ministry.

In question 26, the participant is asked to rate *how different* it is to minister in a foreign country as compared with China. The rating system is on a 10 point scale with 0 indicating “exactly the same” and 10 denoting “completely different.” This measurement will give insight as to *how much* Chinese Christians feel the need to contextualize their ideas and methods. Although the answer to this question could vary based on the mission

Table 10. Perspective on contextualization

Biblical Criterion	Related Question(s)
10. Sees diversity in cultures as God given and understands the need to contextualize ideas and methods (Acts 17:16-34, John 1:1).	<p>26. *In your opinion, is ministering and preaching the gospel in China different from ministering in another country (such as India or Iran)?</p> <p>0 2 4 6 8 10</p> <p>Exactly the same Completely Different</p> <p>27. *When a person comes to Christ, how should they relate to their old non-Christian culture?</p> <p>Completely leave it, Discard only sinful/idolatrous aspects, No need to change</p> <p>28. *Do you think it is 1) unnecessary, 2) helpful, or 3) necessary to understand another culture's religion before you share the gospel with them? Please explain why.</p> <p>29. Do you think ethnic minorities in China are willing to hear the gospel from Han Chinese? Do you think they would be more open to hearing it from a Foreigner? What about other countries in Asia?</p>

field chosen, when one is crossing cultures, there will always be some adaptation and contextualization needed.

Question 27 exists in light of the mistakes made by earlier Western missionaries. Many of the pioneer missionaries took an extremely negative view toward the local culture, calling new converts to completely leave the old and embrace a new “Christian” culture. However, the “Christian” culture was typically the Western culture, as the missionary was unable to distinguish the two in his mind.

Question 28 is moving beyond the larger category of culture and into the narrower one of religion. The participant is to share how a missionary should engage his new culture with the gospel, specifically in relationship to its religious beliefs. The

answer to this question, including the rationale provided, will enable the researcher to compare the participant's methodology with the apostle Paul's Mars Hill methodology.

Finally, with question 29, specific information is sought regarding the ethnic minorities in China and their openness to Han Chinese missionaries. When Chinese Christians think of mission work, they often immediately think of reaching the minority people groups in mainland China.⁸⁰ Because the Han people are geographically, culturally and linguistically closer to these minority people groups, it makes sense for them to reach out to the minorities in China. However, there is some troubled history between these minorities and the Han majority. Patrick Fung shares about the the current situation.

It has been encouraging to see the signs not only of numerical growth but also spiritual growth particularly the passion to reach out to the minority peoples. While great animosity occurred in the past between the Han and some of the minority peoples, it is encouraging to know some of the house churches are starting outreach activities among the minority peoples.⁸¹

As a result, some local believers feel that the minority groups are not very open to them or the gospel they bring. Through this final question, the researcher desires to hear these participants' opinions related to the openness of the minority groups toward Han Chinese missionaries. Furthermore, their thoughts related to China's neighboring countries and their openness toward Han Chinese Missionaries would provide valuable insight as well.

⁸⁰As of the time of writing, the author has had the opportunity to teach an undergraduate level Introduction to Missions class in an underground Chinese seminary three times. In these three classes that involved approximately 80 people altogether, their first conception of missions is typically to the unreached minority people groups inside of China.

⁸¹Patrick Fung, "China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities," in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 18.

Answer assessment. In order for the house church to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, three conditions must be met. First, the average of the collective answers to question 26 should land between 3 and 8. A score of 1 to 2 assumes that the culture is too similar and that the people are not offended by the missionary's methodology or confused by his message. A score of 9 to 10 leads a church dangerously toward radical contextualization where the Bible no longer is the authority and the surrounding context determines truth.

Second, a majority of the participants should answer question 27 with the option, "Discard only sinful/idolatrous aspects." The third condition is the majority should respond to question 28 by selecting, "it is necessary to understand another culture's religion before you share the gospel with them."

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a GC theology that formed the 10 criteria of a GCC. These 10 criteria were then used to construct a Chinese house church GC survey. The collected data will now be presented in chapter 4 in order to test the original thesis; namely, that the majority of Chinese house churches represented in this study are not GCCs.

CHAPTER 4

AN EVALUATION OF THE HOUSE CHURCH'S MISSIOLOGY AS KNOWN THROUGH THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In 2011, a GC questionnaire was disseminated to believers all over China with the purpose of evaluating the missiology of their house churches. The questionnaire was explained in the previous chapter and linked to the 10 criteria of a GCC. Through evaluating the responses given by Chinese house church members and leaders, a preliminary assessment will be made to determine if a majority of the represented house churches are GCCs.

Questionnaire Data

The format of this chapter will follow the subsequent framework. The demographics of the survey participants will be discussed first. Due to security concerns, extensive demographic information was not collected. Second, data from the questionnaire will be presented, divided according to the 10 individual criteria. Most of the data will be represented by a figure or a chart to maximize clarity. Third, a brief analysis of each criterion's data will ensue, assessing if a majority of the collective house churches represented are weak in relationship to the corresponding criterion. Fourth, after this analysis has been repeated ten times, a preliminary assessment will be made regarding the status of the majority of Chinese house churches in regards to GC

participation. Finally, the weaknesses of the house church's missiology will be summarized at the end of this chapter.¹

Demographics²

Typically in a research project of this nature, extensive demographic information would be gathered. However, due to the illegal nature of the Chinese house church, and the dangers of recording too much written information, a minimal amount of demographic information was sought.

Location. Nineteen of the thirty-two administrative regions in China (over 61 percent) were represented in this study.³ Many of the regions which did not produce any survey data tended to be located in the Western part of the country, which have smaller populations as well as very few Christians.⁴ The greatest number of surveys, 27 percent, were completed by believers who live in the Eastern province of Shandong (山东, shāndōng). Second, house churches from the Southeastern province of Zhejiang (浙江, zhèjiāng) produced 18 percent of the completed surveys. Jilin (吉林, jílín), found in the Northeast section of China, generated 14 percent of the survey data. Third, the Galilee of

¹Because the purpose of this dissertation is “to provide a training proposal that will assist the Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological *weaknesses*,” the strengths of the Chinese house church, though there are many, will not be specifically highlighted.

²To save space, the questionnaire was not reprinted throughout this chapter. The questionnaire is found in Appendix 1.

³The Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook: China” [on-line]; accessed 13 December 2011; available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>; Internet. The 31 divisions excludes Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. It includes 22 provinces (Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Zhejiang), 5 autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Xinjiang Uygur, Tibet), and 4 municipalities (Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai, Tianjin).

⁴Such as Qinghai, Gansu, Tibet, or Ningxia.

China, Henan (河南, hénán), which is located in central China, produced 7 percent of the 152 surveys. Approximately 10 percent were derived from the Western or Southwestern parts of China. Although this total is relatively small, it is acceptable since the vast majority of Christians live on the Eastern seaboard of China. Finally, the remainder of the participants live scattered throughout various parts of the country or did not feel comfortable disclosing their location.



Figure 3. Map of China and its administrative areas⁵

⁵Mission Info Bank, “China: Administrative Areas” [on-line]; accessed 10 February 2012; available from http://www.missioninfobank.org/library/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=2648; Internet.

Network. It appears from the data that the vast majority of respondents were unwilling to reveal specific information about their church partnerships. This is understandable as the larger networks tend to be targeted by the government and receive greater harassment. It stands to reason that if they record on paper how their network is participating in missions, it poses a security threat.

As a result, 66.4 percent of all participants vaguely identified themselves as either Protestant, evangelical, house church affiliate, or fellowship affiliate. An additional 15 percent left the space blank or simply put “I do not know.” The remaining responses varied widely with a negligible percentage of answers including Presbyterian, Baptist, Chinese, among others. As a result, it is not possible for this survey to identify which networks are more or less involved with GC activities.

Leadership status. The expectation of this study was that since most of these questionnaires were being collected in a seminary environment, the majority of respondents would be leaders in their local churches. However, this assumption proved to be erroneous. Of the 152 participants, 94 (62 percent) identified themselves as non-leaders with 58 (38 percent) acknowledging themselves to be leaders. Does this fact limit the data? This researcher is convinced it does not for the following reasons.

First, of the 62 percent who did not claim to be leaders, the majority of them are preparing to lead churches in the future and currently serve in some important capacity (such as a “fellow-worker,” 同工, *tónggōng*) in their local church. Second, within the Chinese house church there is a very clear division between the leader of the church and the congregation. As a result, even though many “fellow-workers” cannot rightfully claim to be an “official leader” in the church, they are very well informed and work

closely with the leader(s). Third, one could easily argue that the data obtained by the non-leaders is more objective since any undesirable answers (such as, “this church has never sent a missionary”) would not be a poor reflection upon their leadership.

Criterion 1–Question 1

Question 1 is divided into two components. The first component asks the participant to define the word missionary (宣教士, xuānjiàoshì). Over 70 percent of the responses included the belief that a missionary is one who is “sent out” for the purpose of sharing the gospel. As discussed in the preceding chapter, this definition accords well with the Greek verb ἀποστέλλω. However, it was also noted in chapter 3 that the word missionary is mainly used to designate those Christian workers who cross cultures and oftentimes national borders to spread the gospel.⁶ Surprisingly, only 35.1 percent of respondents included some notion of crossing cultures in their definition. Other concepts mentioned in their definitions included church planting (20.4 percent), one called by God (28.9 percent), and some remarked that every believer is a missionary (4 percent).

The second component of this question inquired as to the main motivation for sending missionaries. In the biblical theology of missions, it was argued that the glory and fame of God should be the primary motivation for mission work. Other secondary motivations included our love for mankind, the fear of God, the return of Christ, and the lostness of the human race.

⁶As C. Peter Wagner said, “missionaries are those sent to spread the gospel across cultural boundaries.” C. Peter Wagner, “Full Circle: Third World Missions,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 62.

Although only 14.1 percent explicitly listed “glorify God” as their answer, more than 70 percent of the reasons given could be classified as God-centered. These answers included obedience to the GC (38.6 percent), fulfilling God’s calling (9.8 percent), being compelled by God’s love to share the gospel (8.2 percent), and the spreading of His kingdom (1.1 percent). The more man-centered responses included to save lost people (26.1 percent) and to repay the debt that the Chinese church owes to foreigners (1.1 percent).

Criterion 1 data evaluation. More than 50 percent of the respondents gave a God-centered motivation for sending a missionary. Therefore, a majority of the represented churches are not exhibiting a missiological weakness in this area. Nonetheless, tightly connecting obedience to God (38.6 percent) and fulfilling His calling (9.8 percent) *in order to* glorify Him and spread His fame would improve the Chinese house church’s missiology in this area. Moreover, defining a missionary as a cross-cultural worker would crystallize the nomenclature and avoid confusion.

Criterion 2–Question 2

The survey’s second question is split into three different, but very similar, components. The goal of question 2 is to discover the participant’s view regarding the fate of the unevangelized. In the first two components of question 2, the responses were extremely unified and biblically sound. Almost 98 percent answered that people must hear and believe the gospel in order to be saved. Likewise, just over 96 percent believe that lost people cannot be saved apart from Jesus Christ. These answers cohere well with the exclusivist (or restrictivist) position argued for in chapter 3. However, the third

question reveals some inconsistency among Chinese believers in relationship to this doctrine. When asked, “What if those people never heard the gospel?” a surprising 27 percent of respondents waffled and stated that God will decide their fate based on their conscience. The word waffled is intentionally used because the first component of this question is almost identical to third component, yet the answers deviate.

Criterion 2 data evaluation. Although it is disappointing that more than a quarter of the participants believe that God will judge the unevangelized according to their conscience, the majority hold to the exclusivist position and thus exhibit no significant missiological weakness in this area. However, for training purposes, it is helpful to know that 27 percent of the participants have a difficult time embracing this exclusivist position. This fact gives warrant to ask and discuss the question, why are Chinese Christians affirming one must hear and believe the gospel to be saved, yet many of these same Christians believe that the unevangelized will be judged based on their conscience?

This tension could be originating from the fact that many people view the restrictivist position as cruel or harsh.⁷ In the Asian context, the ancestors of many modern-day believers never heard the gospel, thus making the doctrine emotionally distasteful to some of them. Additionally, it is possible that the 27 percent agree with Charles Kraft when he claims that general revelation is not to be distinguished from

⁷John Sanders teaches, “Many have been driven to universalism, or even away from the faith, due to the *harshness* [emphasis mine] of the restrictivist teaching that God justly damns all the unevangelized because they are sinners.” Gabriel J. Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders, *What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 25-26.

special revelation insofar as the “information itself” is concerned and therefore, is “not deficient, even as a basis for salvation.”⁸

Romans 2:14-16 was cited by many survey participants as textual proof that God will judge those who have not heard the gospel based on their conscience. While this understanding of the text is accurate, it is unfortunate that some would then conclude that God would *save* people based on their conscience. Such an interpretation could not be further from Paul’s intention.

In this section of Romans, Paul is defending his main point that Jews and Gentiles both are guilty before God. Jews stand guilty because of the Mosaic Law that they have continuously violated (2:12-13). Gentiles are guilty because when they “by nature do what the law requires” (2:14) they demonstrate that the “work of the law is written on their hearts” (2:15). In other words, God has given them a conscience which functions in a manner similar to the written Mosaic Law. Even though the Gentiles did not participate in the Mosaic Covenant, they know right from wrong as their consciences regularly accuse them of their guilty actions (2:15). John Calvin comments, “Ignorance is in vain pretended of the Gentiles, seeing by their deeds they declared themselves to have no small rule of righteousness.”⁹ God, who knows all secrets, will judge the Gentiles based on their conscience (2:15-16) and this judgment will not result in salvation. The argument of Paul climaxes in chapter 3 when he says, “Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who

⁸Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, rev. 25th anniv. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 171.

⁹John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 48.

understands, no one who seeks God” (Rom 3:9-11). Moreover, “no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin” (Rom 3:20).

Therefore, the conscience, according to Paul, is not a means whereby the unevangelized can be declared innocent; rather, it is God’s method of convicting men of their sin. As a result, when his judgment is meted out on the last day, God will be recognized as fair and just in his condemnation of sinners. This discussion on the role of the conscience and the limits of natural revelation should be included in the training proposal.

Criterion 3–Questions 3 through 8

The third question takes a step away from theology and toward the practice of missions. Twenty-eight participants (18.4 percent) indicated that their church had sent a missionary. Regarding these churches, question 4 revealed that they typically have sent one or two missionaries. However, it is important to dig deeper to discover how these 28 respondents defined a missionary. Since there was a wide variety of definitions given in question 1, there is no guarantee that the “sent out ones” were actually cross-cultural missionaries. The possibility exists that the “missionary” they were referring to is someone who moved to a nearby city for work and was prayed over before leaving.¹⁰

¹⁰The data is a bit limited here. In two cases, a respondent shared that his church has sent 100 missionaries. Additionally, another respondent said his church has sent 70, and finally another said 50 per year. Other than these anomalies, the number of missionaries sent was an extremely low number or none at all. It seems unlikely that one house church has sent such a large number of cross-cultural missionaries. Therefore, we are left with two likely possibilities. Either the person was saying his church *network* had accomplished this feat, or his definition of a missionary is so loosely defined that just about anyone who shares the gospel could be considered a missionary. The first possibility is unlikely since, as will be stated in chap. 5, some sinologists believe that the *total* number of Chinese cross-cultural missionaries is only a few hundred.

The data reveals that 16 (10.5 percent of all participants) of these 28 explicitly included the concept of crossing cultures in their missionary definition. Therefore, at least 10.5 percent of the churches represented in the study have sent a worker to evangelize in another culture.

Question 5 is addressing those churches that have yet to send a missionary. Figure 4 identifies the reasons for their failure to send. Almost one-half of the respondents believe that missionaries have not been sent because nobody in their congregation has received the call to go.

While this reality is possible, it is more likely that the congregation has never been challenged to consider missionary work. Moreover, a proper understanding of the call to the mission field may be missing as well. These speculations are based on the fact that the vast majority of churches have never sent a missionary (at least 81.6 percent and possibly up to 89.5 percent). Additionally, Figure 15 will show that 75 percent of all respondents do not personally know an international missionary. If the missionary call and vocation is not a well established aspect of their church life, then it would not be unusual for them to have a poorly developed understanding of these two concepts.

The conjecture above is also supported by the 15.8 percent who *wrote in* that their church has not sent a missionary because it has no vision for doing missions.¹¹ Regarding this point, Samuel Chiang who has been working with the church in China since 1991 states,

¹¹For a mostly close-ended question that offered four possibilities, this 15.8 percent tally under “other” is a very significant amount.

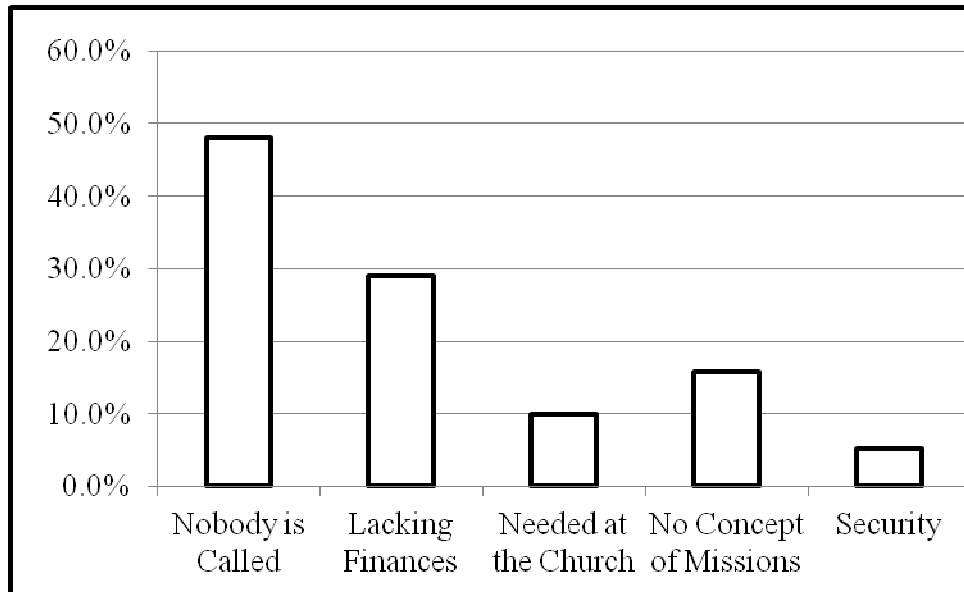


Figure 4. Reasons given for why no missionaries have been sent

The origin of the ‘Back to Jerusalem’ vision came to several groups of people in China, and is well documented in Aikman’s book. However, Hattaway’s *Back to Jerusalem* gives the impression that the entire house church movement, especially in the rural areas, is imbued with the ‘Back to Jerusalem’ vision. I do not believe this is really the case.¹²

Despite the impression given in his book, Hattaway, in fact, does not claim that “the entire house church movement . . . is imbued with the ‘Back to Jerusalem’ vision.” While he is encouraged by the direction of house church believers, he realizes that there is a lot of vision casting that still needs to be done. In responding to the questions, “How well prepared are BTJ missionaries?” and “How missional is the typical house church in China?” he answers,

It is a really mixed bag. There are some outstanding trainings taking place which give excellent cross-cultural, linguistic and other training for workers. On the other hand there are those who go with no preparation at all except a lot of zeal, and they fail and come back disillusioned. We know of teams of

¹²Sam Chiang, review of *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the GC*, by Paul Hattaway, *Connections* 4 (2005): 46.

Chinese missionaries who have been serving successfully in foreign Muslim countries for a number of years. They are a shining example to others back in China. At the moment, however, *most house church believers in China don't have a clue about missions or the BTJ vision* [emphasis mine]. It is slowly changing, however, as the vision spreads and more resources are available.¹³

When Hattaway says “most house church believers in China don't have a clue about missions or the BTJ vision,” he confirms the vantage point of the 15.8 percent who explicitly shared this reason. Although Hattaway did not quantify the term “most,” it would appear to exceed the 15.8 percent figure derived from the survey. This researcher would strongly side with Hattaway's assessment and conclude that the respondents did not identify this reason more often because it was not one of the four provided options.

A surprisingly low number of respondents (5.3 percent) identified “security” as a reason for not sending missionaries. In the Chinese house church context, “security” is indicating problems with the government. Hattaway testifies in his book *Back to Jerusalem* that the house church is willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel and will not let the government hinder the people from obeying God.¹⁴ This testimony is verified by the low number of respondents who selected this option. Brandner adds, “They [Chinese house church believers] understand that the spread of the gospel was linked to a history of persecution, and they interpret their own political persecution as their participation in the history of God.”¹⁵ In fact, the respondents were almost doubly concerned with the lack of leadership in their local church and how these potential missionaries were needed at home (9.9 percent).

¹³Paul Hattaway, e-mail to author, 25 October 2011.

¹⁴Paul Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the GC* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 106.

¹⁵Tobias Brandner, “Mission, Millennium, and Politics: A Continuation of the History of Salvation from the East,” *Missiology* 37 (2009): 319.

Finally, almost 30 percent believe that a lack of finances is preventing them from sending out missionaries. Assuming monetary considerations would be a concern for the Chinese house church, the author explored these believers' perceptions of house church giving in question 6.

The researcher assumed that information on financial matters within the house church might be difficult for the participants to provide. However, because money is such a vital component of the missions endeavor, an attempt had to be made to acquire data in this category. In the first component of question 6,¹⁶ approximately one-third of the respondents said the Christians in their church typically tithe, whereas the other two-thirds believed they do not, or declined to answer.

However, in the likely event that the participants believe only *some* in their church tithe, the survey proceeded to ask, "What percentage of Christians at your church would you guess tithe?" Approximately 50 percent of all participants declined to guess selecting "I do not know" as their answer. This response is fair as very few people in the American church are privy to this kind of information as well. However, the other half of the respondents did feel comfortable in estimating. Figure 5 displays their responses.

On the high end, 26.1 percent of estimating respondents believe that 0-10 percent of their fellow church members tithe. On the other end of the spectrum, only 5.8 percent believe that 91-100 percent of their fellow church members tithe.¹⁷ Furthermore, of those who estimated, 58 percent believe that 30 percent or less of house church

¹⁶The first component of question 6 asks, "Would you say the Christians at your church typically tithe?"

¹⁷Question six is assuming that anyone giving over 10 percent of their income would also be included in this tithing group.

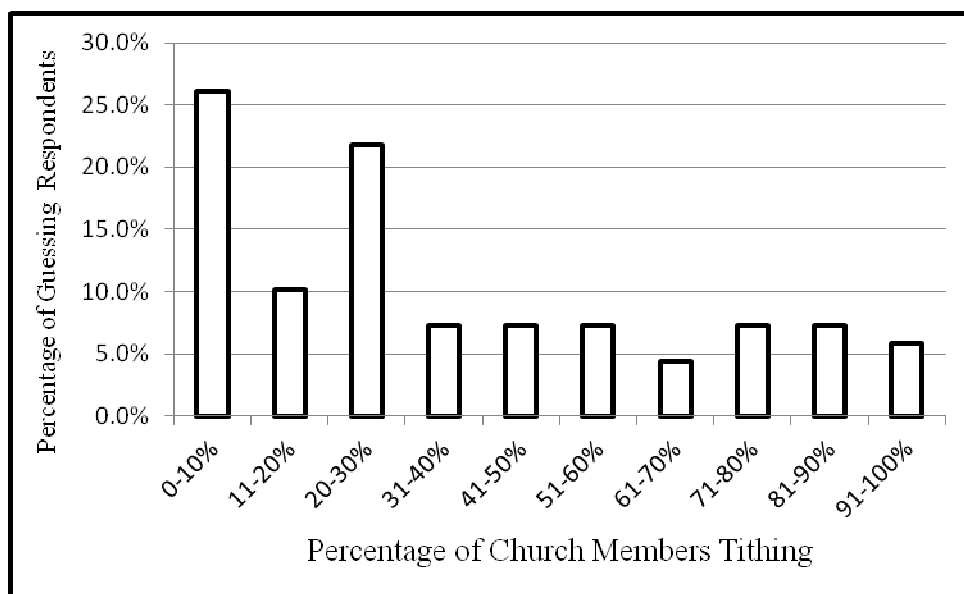


Figure 5. What percentage of Christians at your church would you guess tithe?¹⁸

members tithe. Put another way, the majority of the estimating participants believe that at least 7 out of 10 church members are not tithing. An attempt to be even more specific was made in the third component of question 6 by asking, “What is the average percent that people give?” However, 84 percent of respondents replied ‘I do not know.’ Therefore, this last question is unhelpful.

Although this financial data does not provide any crystal-clear insight into the giving patterns of Chinese Christians, it does give the overall impression that tithing is not practiced by the majority. This impression does support the findings of Brother Mark who notes, “Until now, we do not observe good tithing in China Church, with only some

¹⁸To make the data easier to process, the “Percentage of Church Members Tithing” responses were grouped into 10 percent increments. Therefore, if one participant guessed “5 percent of church members tithe,” and another guessed “8 percent,” both responses were tallied in the 0-10 percent range.

exceptions in the cities [*sic*].”¹⁹

Questions 7 is the “key” question under criterion 3 and provides the most measureable data concerning whether the house church is bearing its individual responsibility to participate in the GC. The question is classified as open-ended, allowing the participants to describe freely how their church is doing missions apart from sending missionaries.

Almost one-half of the respondents documented that local evangelism was their church’s primary means of GC participation. Local evangelism does indeed contribute to fulfilling the GC insofar as it makes disciples and leads to new members who *might* be called to go to the nations. However, if the church does not have a vision for cross-cultural work, it is unlikely that its local evangelism will contribute to the UPGs, or all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) hearing the gospel.

It is unfortunate that such a small percentage of churches are praying for (13.9 percent) and financially supporting (5.7 percent) missionaries. The training proposal that this project will present is aiming to change this current reality. It is possible that financial support was mentioned sparingly due to the fact that Chinese missionary societies are relatively new and many mainland Chinese believers may not know about them.²⁰ In the event that they do know about them, apart from a close relationship with those who run the society, skepticism would most likely hinder them from donating.

¹⁹ Brother Mark was previously mentioned in chap. 1 as S1. He has been involved with the BTJ movement for years and serves as vice-president and general secretary for a BTJ organization.

²⁰For example, the Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission (BTJGM) organization.

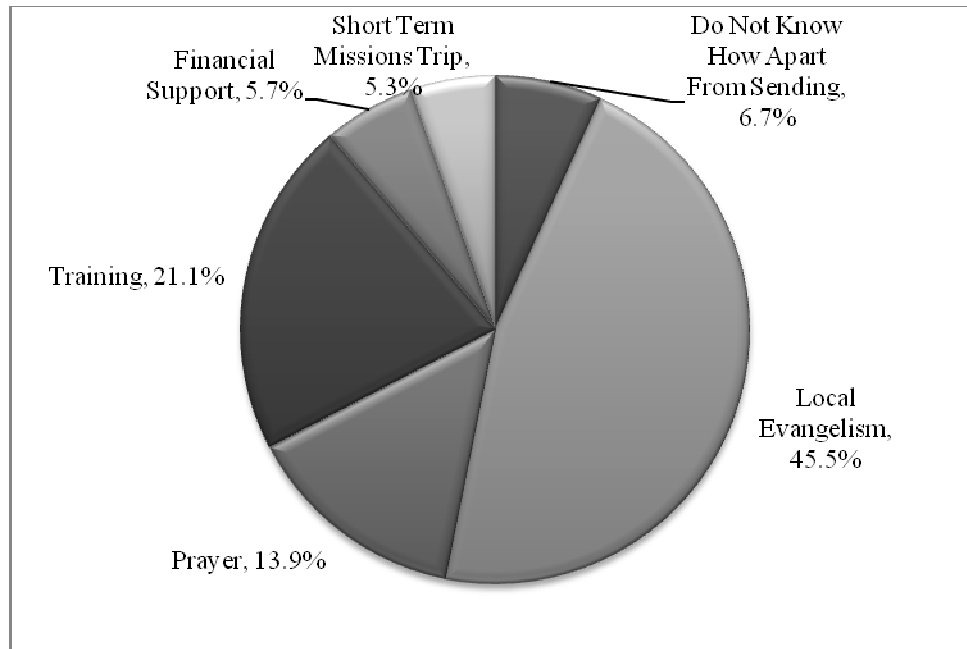


Figure 6. Besides sending missionaries, in what ways is your church participating in the GC?

Therefore, if they are not personally supporting a missionary whom they know well from their home church, the outlet for financially giving to missions, as far as they are concerned, is essentially non-existent.

Question 8 is very similar to question 5,²¹ yet seeks the believer's opinion on the Chinese house church in general, and not just his own local church. Because the respondents were able to identify more than one hindrance, the percentages in Figure 7 add up to more than 100 percent (the vertical axis is measured in terms of percentage of respondents who identified a particular hinderance).

²¹ Question 5 – Why has *your* church has not raised up and sent missionaries? Question 8 - In your opinion, what are the biggest factors hindering *the* Chinese house church from greater missions involvement?

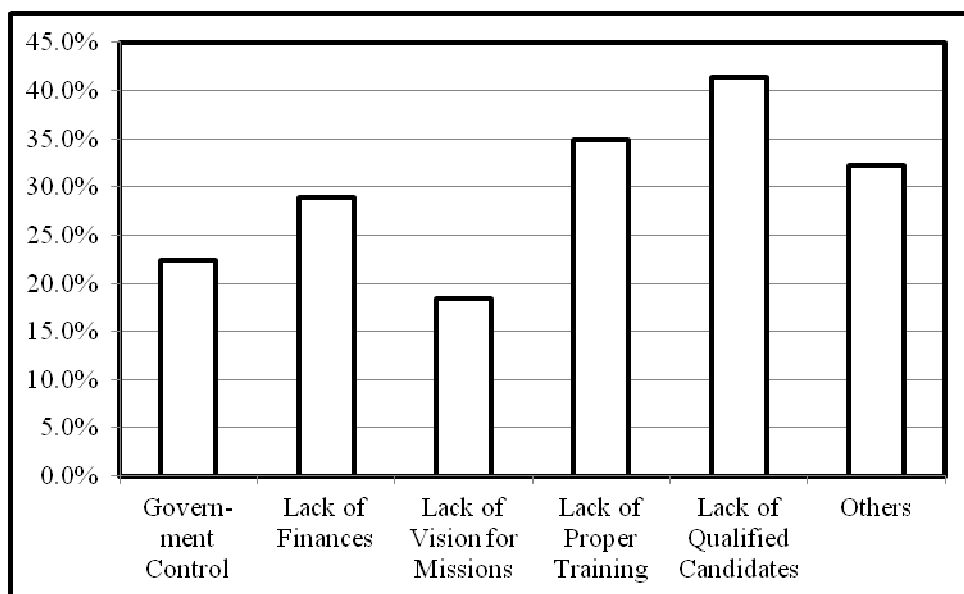


Figure 7. In your opinion, what are the biggest factors hindering the Chinese house church from greater missions involvement?

Clearly, the church members believe a lack of qualified candidates is the most significant hindrance to the forward progress of the missionary effort. However, it is also interesting to note that 35 percent of the respondents identified a lack of proper training as the second greatest hindrance. These two issues are closely connected as qualified candidates might be in scarce supply *because* missiological training is not available. In Chinese culture, exams and credentialing/licensing procedures are an important part of life. Therefore, if a missionary has not had proper training and credentials, others may not have confidence in his abilities.

Furthermore, in attempting to connect this data with question five, it is probable that the *call* of God to missionary work is also closely connected with one's ability to obtain proper training and qualifications. This perspective differs widely from the one held by the house church leaders in *Back to Jerusalem*. Regarding qualifications

for missionaries, they say, “A missionary only needs to be someone who loves the Lord Jesus and has a passion to reach the lost world for him. That is the only qualification for missionary service.”²² If the house church as a whole held to this perspective, then one would expect the answers to question 8 to look very different.

On question 8, respondents who recognized a lack of finances and vision to be a hindrance to the missionary movement, remained virtually the same as question 5. However, it is interesting to note how Chinese Christians perceive government control to pose a greater problem for the house church as a whole (22.4 percent), compared to their local church (5.3 percent). In other words, these respondents are saying the government is not hindering their local church from sending missionaries, but government interference is more of a problem for other churches. This perception indicates that either security problems in their localities are significantly less as compared with the rest of the nation, or that Chinese Christians perceive the government’s interference to be a bigger problem than it really is. As harassment from the government tends to be focused upon higher profile networks and leaders, this researcher believes that the former is true, not the latter.

Before the discussion on question 8 is concluded, it is interesting to note some of the “other” responses. Over 5 percent of participants noted that familial opposition was a hindrance to sending missionaries. In Chinese culture, the children typically serve as the caretakers, and means of financial support, for retired parents. It follows that many parents, especially unbelieving parents, are vehemently opposed to their children leaving their city and serving as a missionary where the income is unstable. The author has

²²Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 110. They quote Mark 16:15 as support for this view.

personally heard a few Chinese college students share how God helped them to overcome their parent's opposition in order to serve as short-term missionaries.

Another 12.5 percent of respondents noted that “culture and tradition” limit their ability to be involved in the GC. Most likely, “culture and tradition” includes the previously mentioned parent/child relationship, yet it would also extend beyond it. Additionally, some indicated that the local church is more important than missions. Unfortunately, they have established a dichotomy, which is unbiblical and unhelpful.²³ Finally, another 11.2 percent lamented that a lack of cooperation among house churches is a factor inhibiting missionary activity.

Criterion 3 data evaluation. In order to set the standard at a reasonable level, the participants needed to indicate that their local church is participating in the GC through prayer and financial support. However, in both aspects, a small minority is taking responsibility to be involved (13.9 percent and 5.7 percent respectively). Therefore, the house church is exhibiting considerable weakness related to criterion 3.

Other weaknesses of importance include a low number of churches that have actually sent a missionary (10.5 percent to 18.4 percent), the lack of a vision for missions (at least 15.8 percent, possibly much higher), possible confusion regarding the call of God to missions, a lack of properly qualified and trained workers for the mission field, and poor giving patterns.

²³This problem is certainly not limited to the Chinese context. Twelve years ago, George Barna was attempting to identify the different habits of highly effective churches. He said, “In recent years Americans have shown greater interest in investing in local or national needs than in sending money and people overseas Highly effective churches often attract people who prefer funding local ministry efforts to global activities, but those views are challenged through the teaching and activities of the church.” George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 123-24.

A considerable strength of the house church is its willingness to disregard security problems and threats from the government. It has a long history of faithfulness to God despite the opposition it has faced, and in the area of missions, it also does not appear to be intimidated.

Criterion 4—Questions 9 and 10

The fourth criterion of a GCC is that it will be a prayerful church. These next two questions are intended to discover if Chinese house churches pray in a manner that contributes to fulfilling the GC.

Question 7 already provided insight into the house church's GC prayer habits, when only 13.9 percent noted their church was participating in the GC through prayer. Figures 8, 9 and 10 display the data obtained from the three components of question 9. Figure 8 begins by showing how often these house churches pray for the gospel to reach all peoples. This prayer focus appears to be a well established practice within their churches as denoted by the 63.2 percent who replied they do this every week. However, it is curious that only 13.9 percent recorded that their church is participating in the GC through prayer. The likely explanation is that house church believers do not view prayer as a "real" means of fulfilling the GC.

Figure 8 reports how often these churches pray for specific missionaries. Under the "praying once per week option," the percentage drops by more than half when compared to Figure 7 (from 63.2 percent to 28.3 percent). This decline is not surprising since the data has already shown that only 10.5 percent to 18.4 percent of represented

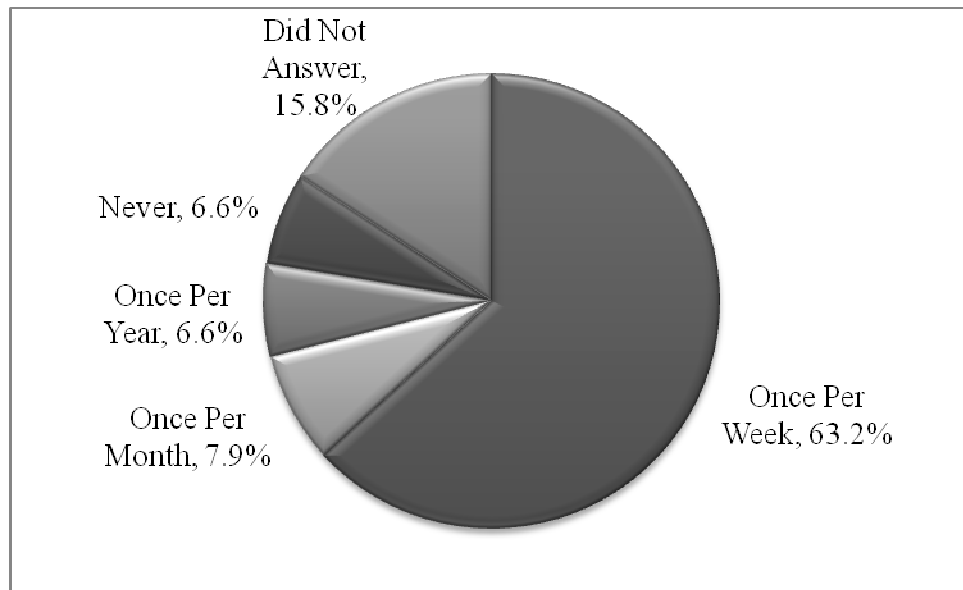


Figure 8. How often does your church pray for the gospel to reach all peoples?

churches have sent a missionary.²⁴ Figure 9 points out that almost 30 percent of the churches represented never pray for a specific missionary; another 17 percent did not answer this question, which leads one to assume a “never” response. If this assumption is correct, then almost half of the respondents’ churches never pray for a missionary by name.

²⁴Additionally, as will be reported in question 20, only 25 percent of respondents personally know an international missionary.

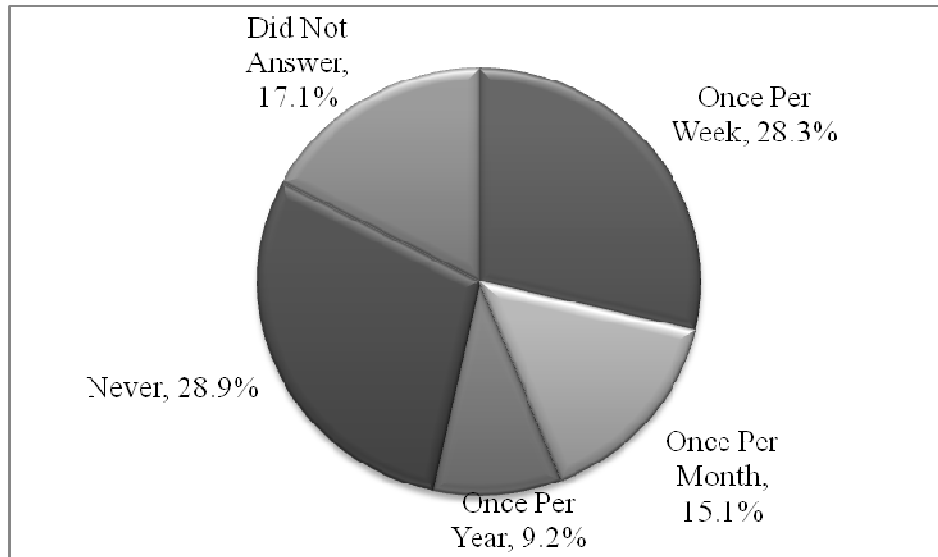


Figure 9. How often does your church pray for specific missionaries?

Figure 10 discloses information concerning prayers offered for specific countries. This data, along with the data from question 10 (represented in Figure 11), will disclose the burden (or lack there-of) the Chinese church has for the world.

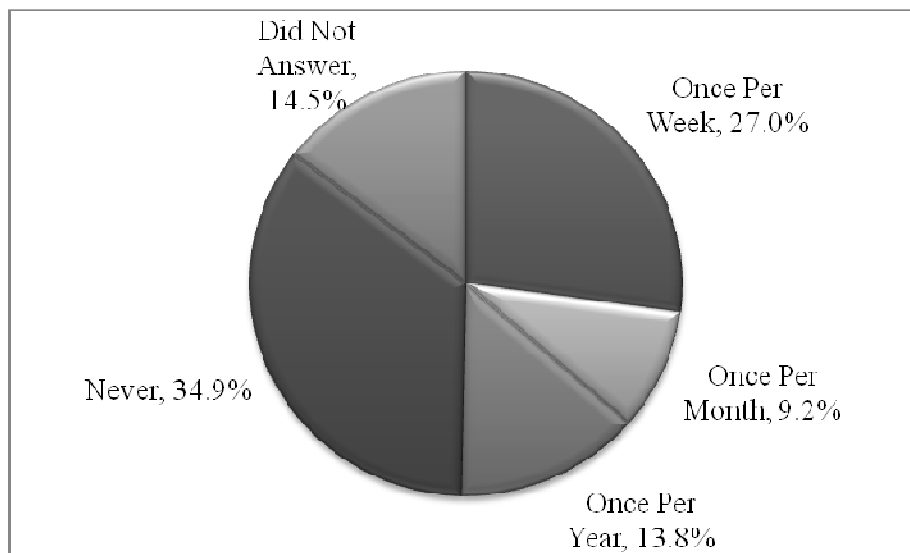


Figure 10. How often does your church pray for specific countries?

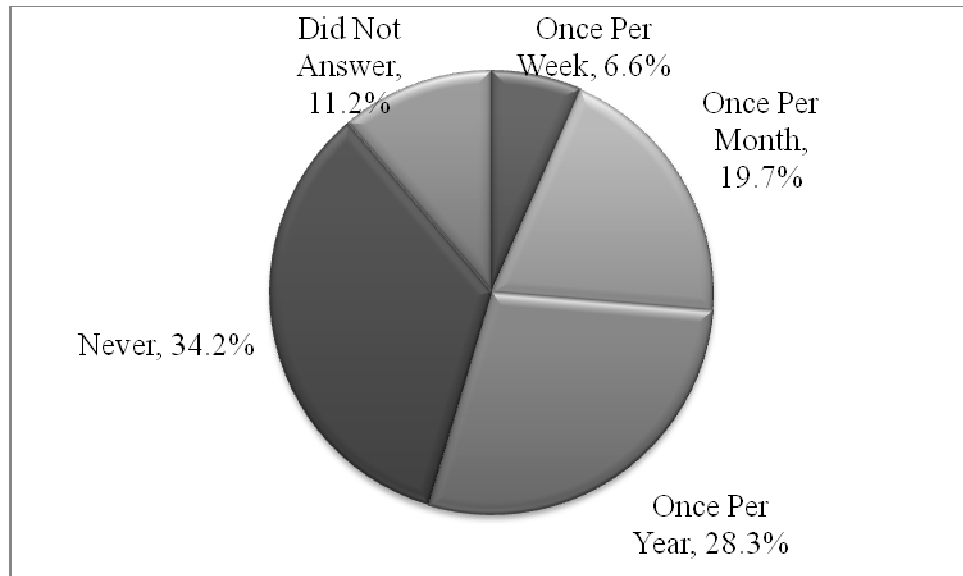


Figure 11. How often does your church inform you about the status of Christianity around the world?

Unfortunately, the house churches represented seldom pray for the countries of the world (63.2 percent once per year, never, or did not answer). In addition, Figure 11 demonstrates that they also seldom inform their congregants about the status of Christianity around the world (73.7 percent once per year, never, or did not answer).

The monocultural nature of the Chinese context most likely contributes greatly to this weakness. Rarely do Chinese Christians travel to other countries and most have no personal contact or experience with people from other cultures.

Criterion 4 data evaluation. In order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, a majority of the respondents needed to indicate that their church prays for each of the three components in question 9 at least once per month. However, the only item that met this standard was the first question related to praying for the gospel to reach all peoples (71.1 percent). On a monthly (or more frequent) basis, a minority of churches are

praying for specific missionaries (44.8 percent) and specific countries (36.8 percent). Therefore, the area of GC prayer is a decided weakness for the house church.

Criterion 5–Question 11

The next question employed the same four possible answers as question 9. However, it is seeking to measure if the house church is reading and preaching the word of God through the lens of the GC.

The results from this question are mixed, as displayed in Figure 12. Almost half of the participants noted that they hear about missions on a weekly or monthly basis (46.7 percent). However, more noted that the GC is very infrequently brought up in a Sunday sermon (53.3 percent once per year, never, or did not answer).

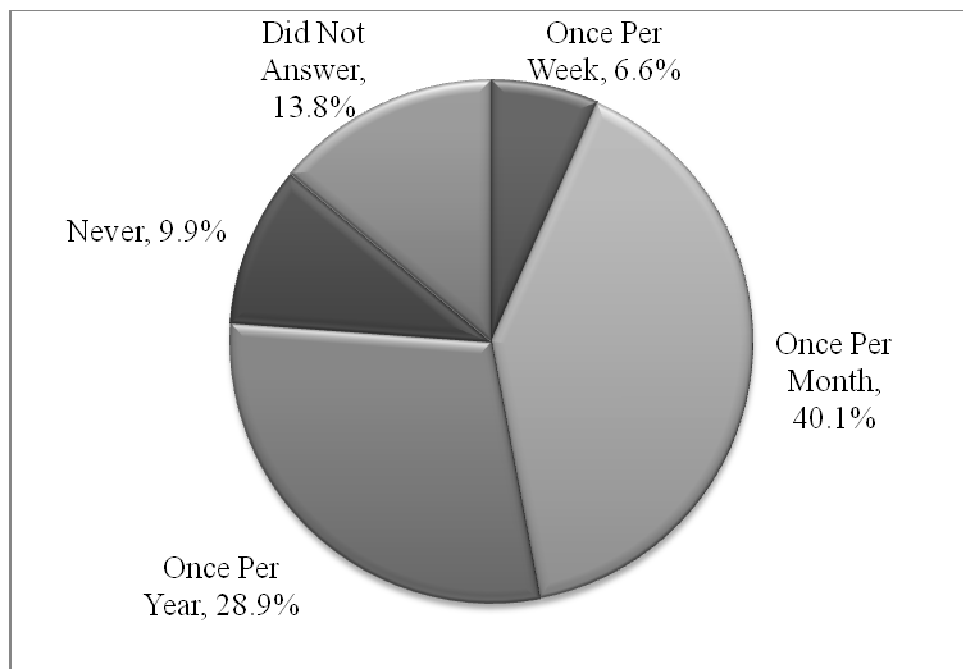


Figure 12. How often do you hear about missions and spreading the gospel to the world in church sermons?

Criterion 5 data evaluation. Although the house churches were close to meeting the standard for the fifth criterion, they did not. A majority of participants indicated that they do not hear about (or preach about) missions on a monthly basis. Despite the fact that 46.7 percent do hear about missions on at least a monthly basis, which is close to a majority, this researcher would love to see the percentage well above the low 50 percent standard established. Therefore, this criterion will be given proper attention in the training proposal. Additionally, a missiological reading the Bible will be defined as more than just including some statement about the GC in a sermon on a monthly basis.

Criterion 6–Questions 12 through 14

The sixth criterion of a GCC is measured by its willingness to cooperate with like-minded evangelicals in order to accomplish the GC. Question 12 addresses the cost of financially supporting an international missionary. The purpose in asking this question and linking it with criterion 6 is to cause the participant to consider the costs associated with sending and supporting an international missionary. The assumption behind question 12 is that many house church members have never considered the significant amount of money it would cost to participate in international missionary work. In answering this question, the researcher desires for Chinese believers to realize the necessity of cooperation in the missions endeavor.

Despite the aforementioned aspirations, the data derived from question 12 is extremely limited because the question was too vague. Thirty-one percent of respondents had no idea how to answer this question, and 12 percent did not give a cost estimate,

noting that it would vary greatly depending on the mission field targeted.²⁵ Sending a Chinese missionary to Japan would be much more expensive compared with sending him or her to Pakistan. Moreover, many other variables are involved, which could dramatically affect the cost. In retrospect, the question would have been more useful if a single location had been specified, as well as defining other parameters, such as: (1) Will he serve as a tentmaker or a fully-supported missionary? (2) Would he need startup capital for a new business? (3) How often would he be offered furloughs and specialized trainings? (4) How and where will he receive medical care? Etc.

Despite these limitations, 57 percent of the participants did attempt to estimate how much it would cost to support an international missionary, including transportation costs and ministry budget. Over 24 percent of the participants speculated that it would cost ¥50,000 (\$7,936) per year or less.²⁶ This figure is extremely low, especially when one considers that the price of international air travel to and from China is equivalent to flying in and out of developed nations. The most common response was that it would cost more than ¥100,000 (\$15,873) per year. While this estimate is higher, it is still far less than what the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) spends to support North American missionaries. In August of 2008, it reported that the average cost is \$72,382 (¥456,000) per year.²⁷ Other Western missionary organizations researched are very close

²⁵It appears likely that the 31 percent did not provide a guess, also because of the cost variation issue.

²⁶The exchange rate at the time of calculating was \$1 = ¥6.30.

²⁷Daryl Anderson, "Understanding Missionary Support," *Evangelical Free Church of America* [on-line]; accessed 12 September 2011; available from <http://www.efca.org/files/document/reachglobal/understanding-missionary-support-8-08.pdf>; Internet.

to this figure as well. Therefore, even the ¥100,000 (\$15,873) per year figure appears to be low, but the data is limited and strong conclusions cannot be reached.²⁸

Question 13 asked the participants to comment on whether their church is able to financially support a missionary or not. Thirty-eight percent of the participants answered that “they did not know,” or did not provide any answer. Among those who ventured to speculate, 33.6 percent indicated that their church is able to support a missionary at this time, while 66.4 percent said they could not. These results suggest that missiological cooperation is necessary for at least two-thirds of the Chinese house churches represented in this study. Moreover, if any credence is given to the cost estimates in question 12, it is likely that a portion of the 33.6 percent who believe their church can support a missionary are underestimating the annual support required. As a result, they are likely overestimating their church’s ability to send a missionary.

Only 2 percent of those who responded to question 13 signified their church was not willing to cooperate with other house churches to send a missionary. Therefore, the vast majority of Chinese house churches are willing and interested in forming partnerships. However, a wide variety of qualifications were listed as necessary before a partnership could be established. These qualifications included a similar vision, burden, theology, humility, a good reputation, a clear calling to do missions, an established plan, sufficient financial resources, and a love for God.

In completing the data acquisition related to criterion 6, question 14 is seeking to understand how Chinese believers see a partnership with foreigners fitting into their future missiological plans. Of the 141 responses received from this question, 96.5 percent

²⁸Another factor to be considered is the differences in the perceived needs of Western and Eastern missionaries.

of them believe foreigners can help the Chinese house church do missions. The two primary ways that foreigners can assist is through training (72.8 percent) and through donating money and/or resources (25.4 percent). Specifically, the type of training mentioned included language learning, understanding other cultures, mission strategy, and basic biblical discipleship.

Criterion 6 data evaluation. In order to avoid a weak rating under this criterion, a majority of participants needed to express their church's willingness to cooperate with another church, listing similarities in theology as a condition. The vast majority are willing to partner, but only 26.3 percent included theology as a condition of collaboration. It is possible that the respondents were assuming the theology of the partnering house church would be similar to theirs; however, that is an assumption that could prove to be deadly to the future mission and partnership. Unfortunately, the data reveals this area to be a weakness for the Chinese house church.

Having a vision for missions was listed as the top condition for missiological partnership, mentioned by over 60 percent of the participants. This condition was most likely the biggest concern for the participants because finding another house church with a vision for missions is rare.

Criterion 7--Questions 15 through 19

The next set of questions will measure the house church's intentionality in participating in the GC. Question 15 is open-ended and begins by asking for the qualifications of a Chinese house church missionary.

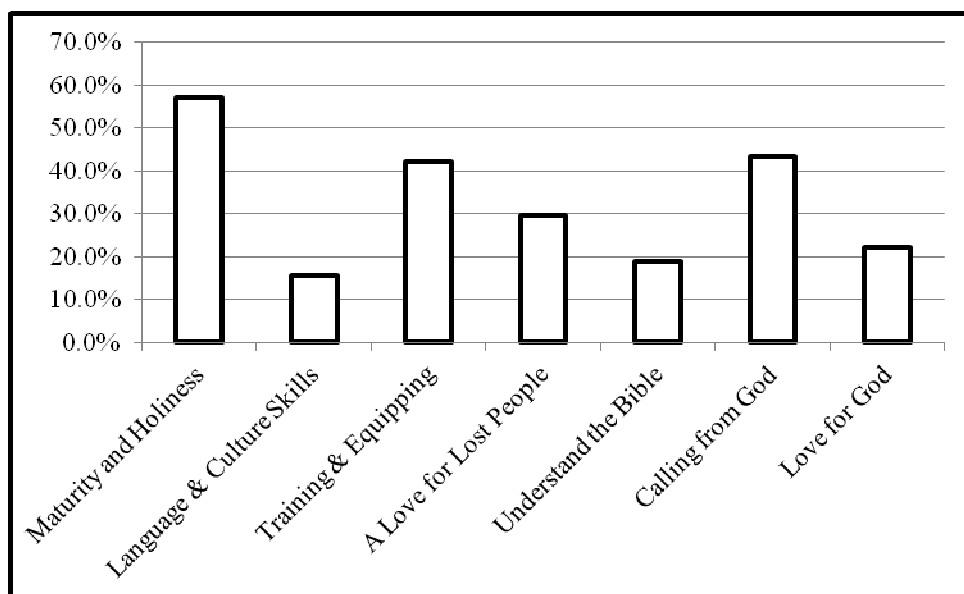


Figure 13. What qualifications does one need to be a missionary?

Spiritual maturity/personal holiness was indicated to be the most important qualification with 57.2 percent of respondents noting it. God's call ranked second at 43.4 percent, while training and/or equipping came in a close third at 42.1 percent. These answers reflect good missiology and should guide the church leaders to seek out those members who meet these qualifications as well as developing these qualities in other members.

Question 16 is assessing how broadly these believers can conceive of the missionary's role. Figure 14 indicates that Chinese house church members and leaders can envision various professionals using their skills and experiences as a missionary platform. As a result of this awareness, church leaders should be intentional about approaching various professionals in their congregation and encouraging them to consider using their skills on the mission field. As a close-ended question, the most helpful observations will arise from comparing the percentages of the different roles.

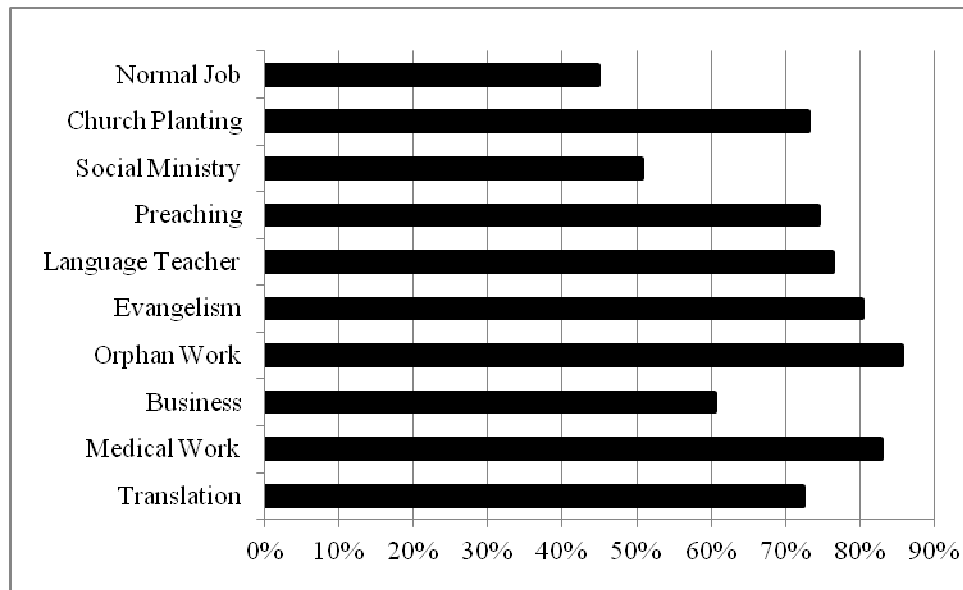


Figure 14. What sort of activities could be considered missionary activity?

Interestingly, social ministry, business, and working a normal job were ranked the lowest among the options. These results reflect the “fundamentalist” influence that originated from twentieth century Western missionaries.²⁹ That influence is still alive in Chinese house churches today, and apparently is leading them to eschew social ministry as a means of doing missionary work.

Moreover, there is a decided preference for “real” ministry such as “church planting” and “evangelism,” compared to “working a normal job.” However, this aspect of the question could have been confusing to the participants as the phrase “working a normal job” could be interpreted in different ways. Some may have viewed it in the light of tentmaking and thus selected it; while others might have considered this situation to

²⁹Chapter 5, under the heading “the irrationality of the vision,” will discuss this fundamentalist perspective.

involve a believer transferring overseas with his company, and thus did not see any missiological significance.

Question 17 was intended to be much more direct in its measurement of intentionality. In the English version, it asks on a ten point scale, how intentional (有意的, yǒuyì de) is your church in sending missionaries? However, the translation of this question was not exact and instead asked, how willing (愿意的, yùanyì de) is your church to send missionaries? Although measuring a church's willingness is not the same as measuring its intentionality, the data still gives the researcher an idea of the house church's attitude toward sending missionaries. With 10 ranking as the highest degree of willingness and 0 representing an unwilling disposition, the average of all 152 participants resulted in a 6.2 for the group. Therefore, the group as a whole perceives its churches as only moderately willing to participate in the GC. Since intentionality can be understood as willingness plus taking initiative to accomplish something, it is safe to conclude that the intentionality of these churches is less than 6.2.

Since both leaders and non-leaders participated in this study, question 17 is an ideal question to isolate their perspectives on the church. Leaders gave their churches an average score of 6.8, whereas the non-leaders' average only amounted to a 5.9. The next question will shed more light on this discrepancy.

Question 18 attempts to measure the intentionality of the pastor in encouraging the body to consider missions. Thankfully, this question was not subject to the same translation error as the one above and is worded clearly so as to assess the pastor's active or passive nature. Almost two-thirds of the participants marked their pastor as being active in looking for potential missionaries to send out, while only one-third labeled their

pastor as passive. However, the division of this data has a similar result to that of question 17. Eighty-six percent of the leaders identified themselves as being intentional in seeking out missionaries, whereas only 62 percent of the non-leaders believed their pastors were intentional in this area.

In evaluating questions 17 and 18 together, the obvious conclusion is that the leaders view themselves and their churches to be more intentional in missions than their congregations do. There are a number of possible explanations for this discrepancy. The first and most likely explanation is that the pastor has a vision for missions, yet has failed to pass this vision along to the congregation. The second explanation is that the leaders are afraid of “losing face” and confessing that they are passive in the missions endeavor when the obvious “right” answer is that they should be active. A third possibility is that the non-leader survey participant is unaware of his pastor’s intentionality toward other church members and therefore, gave his church a low score.

Finally, question 19 asks the participant if his church has a specific plan to raise up a missionary, and if so to disclose that plan. Just under one-third (31.6 percent) indicated they already had a plan. This percentage was surprisingly higher than what the researcher expected, leading this researcher to view it with some skepticism.³⁰

First, this skepticism is based on how loosely many of the participants defined the concept of missionary. The definition provided by 65 percent of respondents included no element of crossing cultures. As a result, it is likely that what some of them would consider a missionary would not meet the cross-cultural standard established in this paper.

³⁰David Horner estimates that the best-case scenario has only 20 percent of Southern Baptist churches identified as missionary sending churches, with the real percentage likely lower. Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, 21.

Second, the Chinese culture is heavily influenced by the notion of “face.” A simple understanding of this phenomenon is that Chinese people desire to avoid embarrassment at all costs. Therefore, if they can give the expected answer and avoid sharing something that will reflect poorly upon them, they are inclined to do so. Even though 31.6 percent indicated that they had a plan to send a missionary, when they were asked to describe the plan, very few respondents were able to share specific information.³¹ Additionally, only 3 percent of those who mentioned a plan made any explicit reference to another country or culture. These plans are not very specific and reveal that it is possible they were sharing the correct answer, “yes, we have plan,” even though their church does not in fact have a plan to send a missionary at this time.

Criterion 7 data evaluation. Chapter 3 stated that in order to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, the house churches needed to score a 7 or higher on intentionality. However, they scored a 6.2 on willingness. Despite the translation problem, this figure appears to be a significant miss and evidences weakness. Moreover, to meet the standard, the churches needed a plan to send a missionary with some details on how they will achieve this plan. However, only 31.6 percent had a plan, and the details were extremely limited. Once again, weakness is confirmed in this area.

In a positive light, the respondents identified the most important qualifications of a missionary in question 15. Moreover, the majority of the participants could conceive of a professional taking his skills to another culture and using it for the spread of the gospel. However, according to the non-leaders’ responses in question 18, the leadership

³¹Some responses included, “send a missionary in 3 years,” “build schools,” “train members to share the gospel,” “teach in Sunday school,” “send them to seminary.”

within the house church should be more active and intentional in challenging their members toward mission work.

Criterion 8–Questions 20 through 22

These next three questions will gauge if missionary heroes are being upheld as examples for the house church believers. Therefore, the participants were asked if they personally knew of any modern-day Chinese missionaries (question 20), which past, present, Chinese or foreign missionary did they most respect? (question 21), and has their church ever taught on the life of a missionary? (question 22).

Figure 15 indicates that more than one-half of all respondents do not personally know a missionary. This data point is not terribly surprising given the information already obtained to this point in the survey.

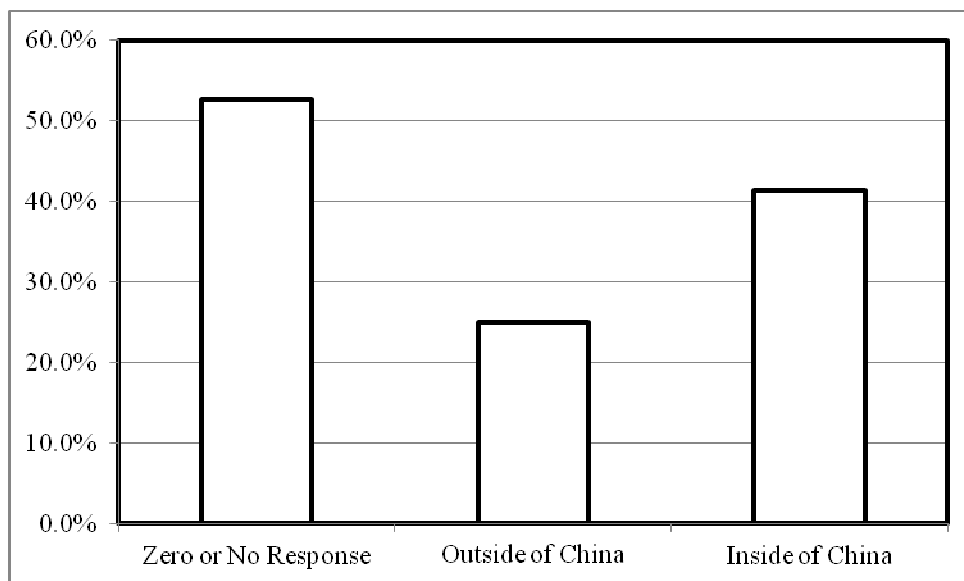


Figure 15. How many Chinese missionaries do you personally know who are serving the Lord right now in another country? In China?

Twenty-five percent personally know Chinese missionaries who are serving in another country, and 41.4 percent know Chinese missionaries who are serving inside China. Question 21 unsurprisingly revealed that Hudson Taylor (戴德生, dài dé shēng) was overwhelmingly mentioned as the most respected and appreciated missionary. More than 60 percent identified him as their most respected missionary, mainly because he and his family made so many sacrifices so that China would know the gospel.³² The missionary who received the second most number of votes was Robert Morrison (马礼逊, mǎ lǐxùn), who was mentioned by 17.1 percent of all participants. Therefore these two nineteenth century missionaries to China account for more than 75 percent of all votes.

Although it is good for these Chinese brothers and sisters to respect and appreciate these men, it is unfortunate that both are foreigners and that a Chinese missionary has not risen to this distinction. John Sung (宋尚杰, sòng shàngjié) came in third with only 5.9 percent mentioning him. John Sung was born in Fujian, China (福建, fújiàn) and did many tremendous things for the Lord; however, he was more of an evangelist than a missionary. This fact could explain why so few participants noted him.

Outside of these three men, approximately twenty other missionaries were mentioned, but all with very few votes. Most of them were modern day foreigners with whom the participant had a relationship

Over half (54.6 percent) of all respondents stated that their church had previously taught on the life of a missionary. The hypothesis behind question 22 is that a strong correlation exists between those churches that uphold missionary heroes and those that actually send missionaries. To test this hypothesis, the researcher sorted out the 28

³²For those who gave a reason as to why they selected him, this was the typical answer.

respondents who claimed that their church had sent a missionary in question 3, and analyzed how they answered question 22. The hypothesis was verified when 23 of the 28 missionary sending churches (82.1 percent) had previously taught on the life of a missionary. This significant increase indicates there is a strong correlation between the upholding of missionary heroes and the sending of missionaries.

Criterion 8 data evaluation. The fact that a majority of the churches represented have previously taught on the life of a missionary establishes that they are not considered weak regarding this criterion. Nonetheless, the 50 percent standard is again recognized to be relatively low and there is plenty of growth that the house church could attain to in this area. Thankfully, there are many missionary biographies available to Chinese pastors that could help them share these stories and cast a vision for missions in their churches.

Criterion 9–Questions 23 through 25

A GCC understands how to support missionaries and is actively seeking to do so. Question 23 asks the open-ended question, what does a missionary need from the church before he departs for the field. Figure 16 demonstrates that the participants understand the missionaries' needs to primarily be training/equipping, financial support, prayer, and spiritual support. Although only a few listed “understand their new culture,” it is very possible that the participants assumed that this need would be met through the training.

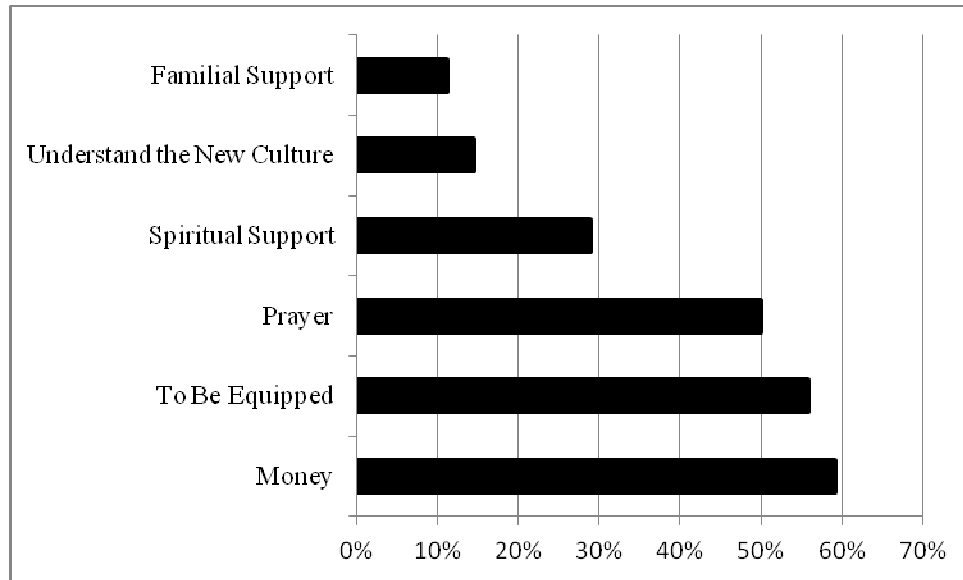


Figure 16. What does a missionary need from the home church before they are on the mission field?³³

Question 24 is exactly the same, except it is focusing on the missionary's needs after arriving on the field. Figure 17 represents the data for this question. The responses are quite similar with money again being listed as the most common answer (76 percent). However, prayer (64 percent) and encouragement (47 percent) became much more important as compared to Figure 16. Moreover, the most significant drop occurred in the area of training/equipping (from 55 percent to 12 percent). This drop is understandable as many assume training is done before one begins his work, and then will learn everything else "on the job." However, many Western mission organizations have realized that some of the most effective training occurs after a missionary has gained some experience.

³³Other responses not included on Figure 15 included a co-worker, a retirement fund, and an opportunity to gain experience.

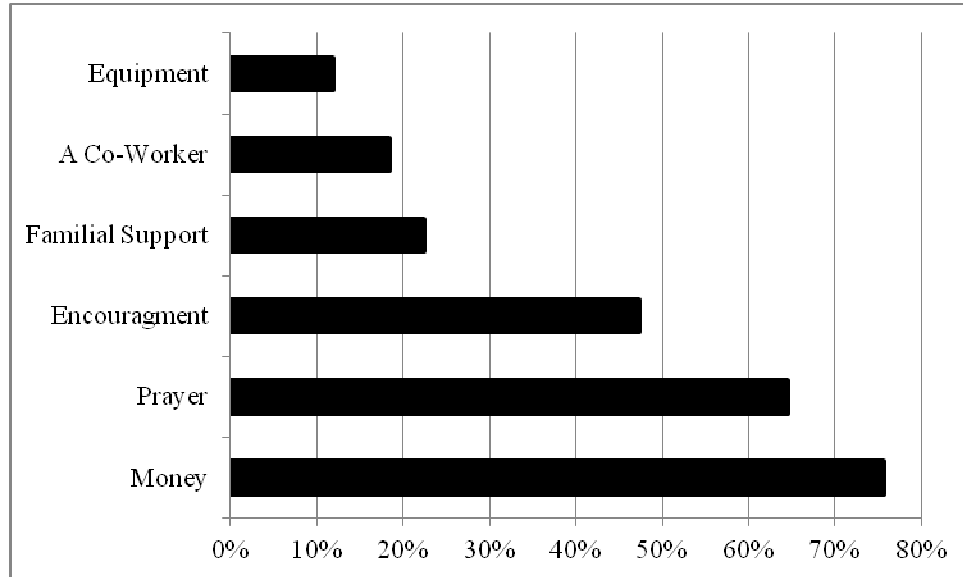


Figure 17. What does a missionary need from the home church after they are on the mission field?³⁴

Question 25, asked the participants to share what they believe to be some of the biggest struggles that missionaries face. The researcher then offered, in close-ended form, five common struggles from which they could choose,³⁵ with the option of writing in others. Figure 18 shows that the participants selected culture shock (57.2 percent) and loneliness (52.6 percent) as the two greatest struggles. However, the write-in option once again shows the importance of familial support in the Chinese context. Although it only amassed 5 percent of the vote, if the researcher had provided familial support as one of the choices, it most likely would have received many more votes.

³⁴Other responses which were mentioned included a co-worker, retirement fund, an opportunity to gain experience.

³⁵The five options provided are language, money, culture shock, loneliness, and persecution.

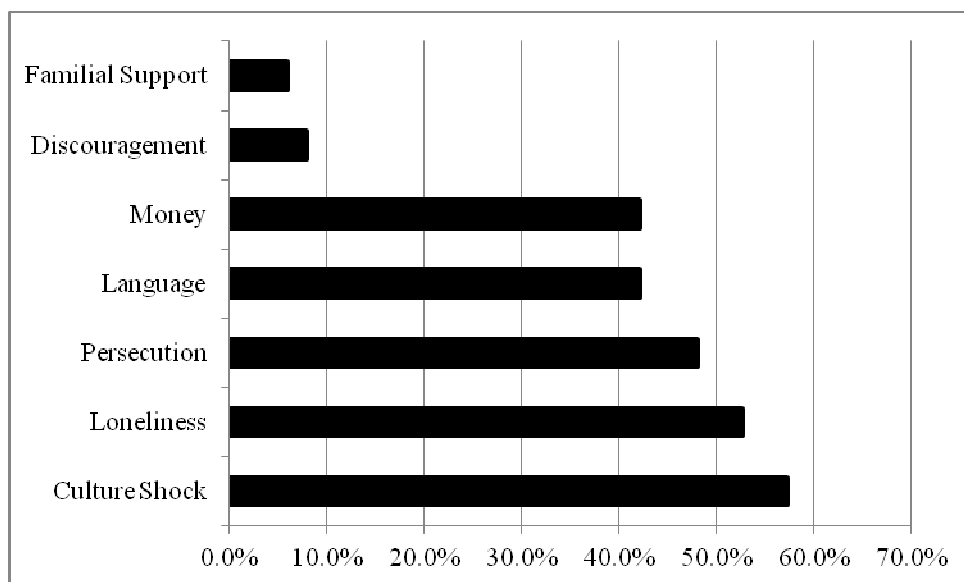


Figure 18. What are some of the biggest struggles that missionaries face?

Criterion 9 data evaluation. As stated in chapter 3, the participant needed to mention training, financial and prayer support as the needs of a missionary before he leaves for the field. Moreover, the needs of finances and prayer should be noted after the missionary's arrival in order to avert a weak rating in this area.

A majority of participants identified training (56 percent) and financial support (59 percent) as missionary needs before he leaves for the field. However, exactly half identified prayer support as a need (76 out of 152). Although this is not a majority, 29 percent noted that the future missionary would need "spiritual support" before leaving. This phrase was not defined by the participants, but the researcher is assuming it must include prayer support. Therefore, a majority of participants believe that prayer support is needed before departure.

Moreover, 76 percent noted that a missionary needs financial support after arrival and 64 percent mentioned prayer support. Therefore, the house church did not receive a weak rating under this criterion.

However, the researcher admitted in chapter 3 that this assessment is only measuring the “understanding” and not the “actively seeking” component of criterion 7. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to ask the participants a specific question related to the “actively seeking” component. Nonetheless, working with the available data, when the answers from question 7 are included, the house church seems to be lacking in its practice of actively seeking to support missionaries. This lacking assessment is due to the fact that apart from sending missionaries, only 5.7 percent of represented churches are participating in the GC through giving. Therefore, house churches appear to understand the needs of the missionary, but are not actively seeking to meet them.

Criterion 10–Questions 26 through 29

The last set of questions is evaluating the participant’s awareness of the need for contextualization. Question 26 asked him to rate on a scale, from 0 to 10, how different is it to minister and preach the gospel in another country compared to China. Zero represented “exactly the same” whereas 10 represented “completely different.” The average score was 6.8, which reflects a healthy awareness of needed adaptation, while avoiding “radical contextualization.”

Question 27 is asking how a new Christian should relate to his old culture. Figure 19 shows the vast majority of responses (81.6 percent) believe a middle ground is the most appropriate course of action, demonstrating a healthy view of Christ and culture. The middle ground is defined as “discarding only sinful and/or idolatrous aspects of culture,” and embraces the fact that the cultures of the world originally flowed from God’s action at the tower of Babel and that they are not irredeemably sinful.



Figure 19. When a person comes to Christ, how should they relate to their old non-Christian culture?

Similarly, in question 28, 89.5 percent of respondents selected “it is necessary to understand another culture’s religion before the gospel is shared with them,” with another 7.2 percent choosing “it is helpful.” Of those who gave a rationale for their answer, 50.4 percent stated, “the more we know about the local people and their religion, the easier it will be to share Christ with them in a way that they can accept.” In a comparable rationale, 25.2 percent specifically pointed out that building bridges to the gospel is made possible through a deep understanding of their religion. These answers reflect very well on the house church’s understanding of contextualization. Figure 20 portrays all of the different reasons given when answering question 28.

Question 29 is broken up into three different components. The first component is asking about the mainland Chinese ethnic minorities’ (少数民族, shǎoshù mínzú)

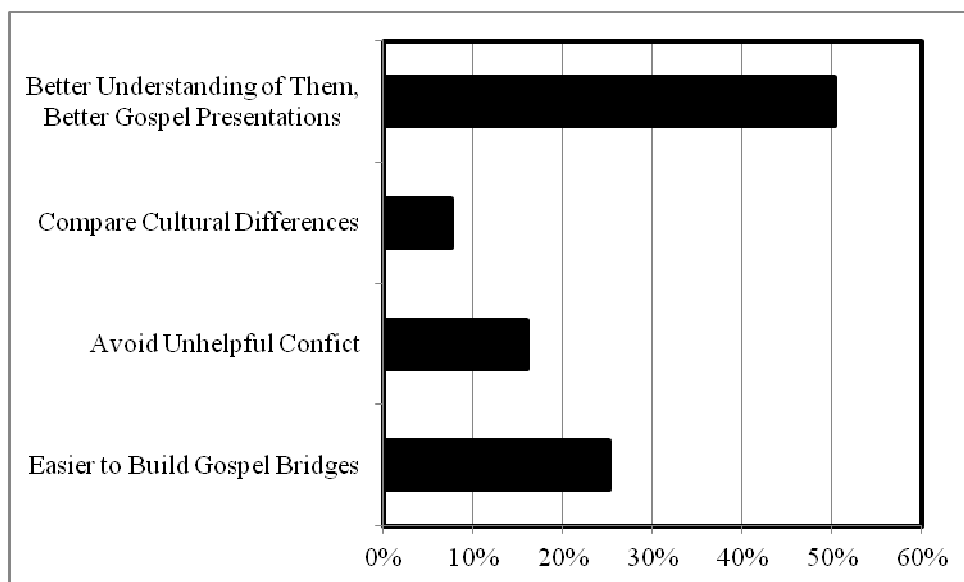


Figure 20. Why is it necessary to understand another culture's religion before you share the gospel with them?

willingness to receive the gospel from Han missionaries. Figure 21 gives the various responses to this question and reflects an optimistic attitude on the part of house church believers.

It is very likely that more than one-third of participants responded with “it depends,” “I do not know,” or did not even answer because this is a very broad question. Its broadness consists in the fact that there are fifty-five officially recognized minority groups living within China's borders,³⁶ and their views on the Han majority vary significantly. Although most of the minorities have encountered a degree of suffering as a result of living in a predominately Han culture, some have experienced unthinkable

³⁶Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 214.

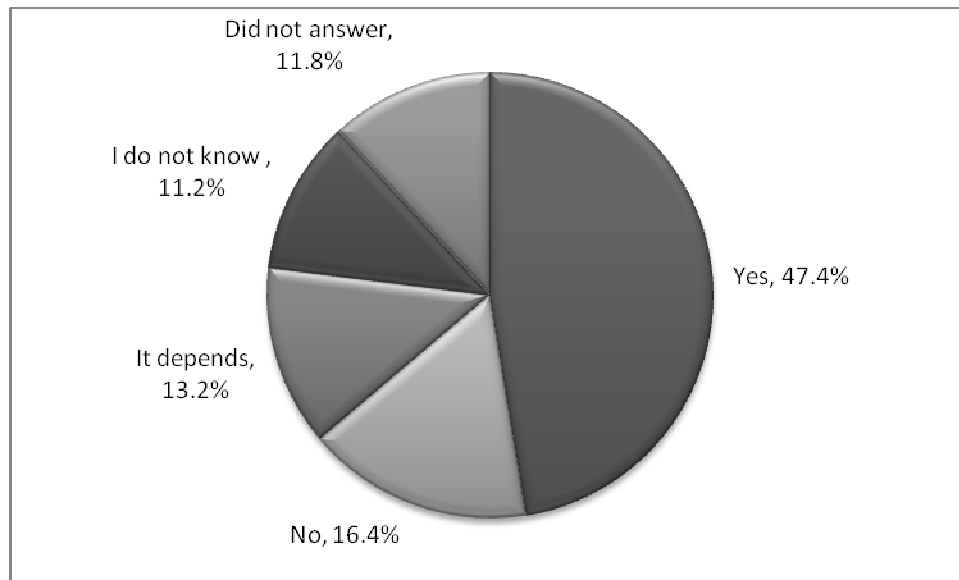


Figure 21. Do you think ethnic minorities in China are willing to hear the gospel from Han Chinese?

atrocities. Therefore, it is understandable that the more mistreated minorities, such as the Tibetans (藏族, zàng zú), would not be very welcoming to Han missionaries. However, the Hui minority (回族, huì zú) have a much better relationship with the Han people and are not as suspicious and distrusting. Nonetheless, almost 50 percent of the participants believe that the ethnic minorities in China are willing to receive the gospel from Han missionaries. Meg Crossman shares this same optimism and noted,

Where there have been breakthroughs, the keys have been those experienced in great movements down through the centuries: humility, meekness, and the ability to hear God's voice. . . . However unadorned and down-to-earth they [Han believers] may seem, these crucial factors have made Han believers effective. In spite of being simple rural people with little education, they have answered the question, 'Yes! Even the Han church is capable of reaching the minorities.'³⁷

³⁷Meg Crossman, "Minority Groups in China: Can Han Christians Reach Them?" in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 295.

However, Tony Lambert's research has not given him the same impression.

In human terms, they have seen few if any converts among the Muslims. Strong pressure from the local Islamic community, and also from the communist authorities who forbid Christian outreach by the numerous Han Christian community to their Uygur neighbors, means that so far only a few individual Uygurs have been saved. Some Han evangelists have moved to Xinjiang but have found learning the language and adapting to the local culture daunting.³⁸

The second component of question 29 is seeking their opinions regarding the minority group's willingness to hear the gospel from a foreigner. The third extends this same question to the various countries in Asia that surround China. Figure 22 reveals that Chinese believers perceive minorities and other Asian peoples are slightly more open to foreigners bringing the gospel.

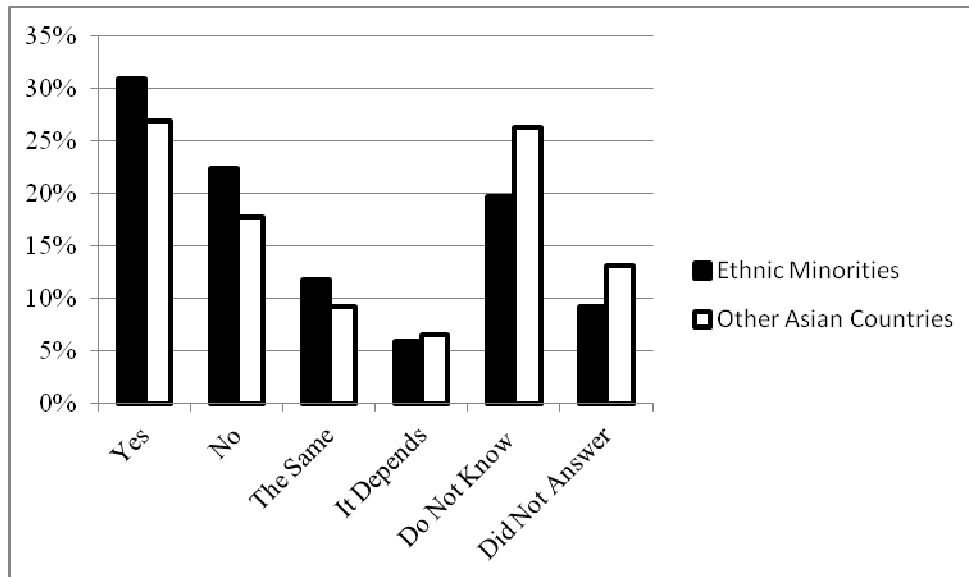


Figure 22. Do you think the ethnic minorities in China, and other Asian Peoples would be more open to hearing the gospel from a foreigner?

³⁸Tony Lambert, "Back to Jerusalem: A Moving History," *China Source* 8 (2006): 14.

These percentages are almost exactly the same which is why they were included in the same chart. This data is limited and further research would be helpful to determine more specifically which minorities and Asian peoples would be most appropriate for foreigners to target and which ones should be reserved for the Han missionaries.

Criterion 10 data evaluation. In order for the house church to avoid a weak ranking on this criterion, three conditions must be met. First, the average of the respondents to question 26³⁹ should land between 3 and 8. Indeed, the average was 6.8 and the first standard was met. Second, a majority of participants should answer question 27 with the option, “Discard only sinful/idolatrous aspects.” As over 80 percent chose this option, again the church meets the standard. Finally, a majority should respond to question 28 by selecting, “it is necessary to understand another culture’s religion before you share the gospel with them.” Close to 90 percent circled this answer and as a result, the data is not revealing any weaknesses in the house church’s understanding of the need for contextualization.

Despite the data just discussed related to criterion 10, contextualization is an area that is much easier to affirm with one’s words, yet much harder to practice. It will be interesting to interact with published materials and missionaries in chapter 5 to hear how others are assessing the Chinese church’s contextualization efforts.

³⁹Question 26 - In your opinion, is ministering and preaching the gospel in China different from ministering in another country (such as India or Iran)? Rate from 0 to 10.

Preliminary Assessment and a Summary of Revealed Weaknesses

Now that the survey results have been presented, this concluding section will offer a preliminary assessment of the Chinese house church, and summarize its missiological weaknesses.⁴⁰ However, the *preliminary* nature of this assessment is emphasized because the researcher has yet to disclose the data found through published materials and various interviews. The questionnaire data is the primary data, but needs to be verified by outside sources in order to confirm its reliability. This verification is especially necessary since the survey data is purely emic and the publication/interview data is mostly etic.

Preliminary Assessment

Chapter 3 defined a GCC as one that is not rated weak in more than 3 of the 10 criteria. However, the collective churches represented in the survey were rated weak in 5 of the 10 criteria. Therefore, the preliminary assessment confirms the thesis that the majority of Chinese house churches in this study are not GCCs.

The missiology of the house church was regarded as weak in criteria 3 through 7, while criteria 1, 2, 8, 9, and 10 were not seen to be weaknesses. An analysis of the two groupings will quickly reveal that the weaknesses of the house church (criteria 3 through 7) are mostly related to action and doing, whereas the non-weaknesses (criteria 1, 2, 8, 9, and 10) are mostly related to thinking and believing. The verbs associated with the first

⁴⁰If the house church avoided a weak assessment in relationship to one criterion, it is not therefore automatically deemed “strong” in that area. A rating of “non-weakness” could indicate strength, or could indicate the missiology is only “acceptable.” Therefore, the researcher will still use some data from some “non-weak” areas to influence the training and strengthen the house church in some of these “non-weak” areas.

group are as follows: (3) Takes responsibility, (4) Pray and informs, (5) Read and preaches, (6) Willing to cooperate, (7) Actively praying, seeking to identify. Out of these five, only criterion 6 is more related to one's head or volition. However, those areas of non-weakness revolve mostly around doctrines and theories to be believed. The verbs associated with the second group are as follows: (1) Longs to see, (2) Sees mankind as lost, (8) Upholds missionaries, (9) Understands . . . and is actively seeking, (10) Sees diversity . . . understands the need to contextualize. The two exceptions in this group are "upholds missionaries" and "activity seeking." However, it was already shared in chapter 3 that the "actively seeking" element in criterion 9 was not measured by the survey so as to avoid redundancy.

Therefore, the majority of represented Chinese house churches are missiologically weak, yet these weaknesses are mostly found in the actual practice of missions and not in mission theory. This distinction should be remembered as the next chapter will survey the house church's missiology as known through publications and interview. However, a quick summary and review of the weaknesses of the house church's missiology would better prepare the reader for the upcoming material.

A Summary of Weaknesses to Inform the Training

Criterion 3. The Chinese house churches represented in this project are not bearing their GC responsibility. Only 13.9 percent indicated participation through prayer, and even less, 5.7 percent, are involved through financial donations. Finances are lacking as tithing does not appear to be a widespread practice of Chinese Christians. Finally, only

10.5 percent to 18.4 percent of churches have sent a missionary, and at least 15.8 percent (and possibly much more) admitted they have no vision for missions.

Moreover, familial relationships were found to be an inhibiting factor in missions participation. Church leaders must help the congregation to value the call to the mission field, even when it results in a child moving far away and parents sacrificing their expected means of support.

Criterion 4. Although house churches do have a burden for prayer, they have not developed a burden to pray for the missionary outreach of the Chinese house church. On a monthly (or more frequent) basis, only 44.8 percent pray for missionaries and 36.8 percent pray for specific countries. Moreover, only 26.3 percent of the participants' churches inform their congregations about the status of Christianity around the world.

Criterion 5. Fifty-three percent of the respondents said the sermon includes something about world missions once a year or less frequently.

Criterion 6. House churches are willing to cooperate with other churches, but only 26 percent noted that similar theology is a prerequisite.

Criterion 7. Almost half of the participants noted that their churches have not sent a missionary because nobody has been called. Qualified church members are lacking. Moreover, questions 17 and 18 indicated that the house church and its leaders are weak in seeking out the called. Finally, only 31.6 percent have a plan to raise up and send a missionary, and these plans lack specificity.

A Summary of Non-Weaknesses to Inform the Training

Criterion 1. Only 35 percent included the concept of crossing cultures in their definition of missionary. Moreover, although the majority listed God-centered motivations for missions, the concept of obeying the GC was not tightly connected to glorifying God and/or spreading His fame.

Criterion 2. Although almost every respondent said people must hear and believe the gospel to be saved, and that apart from Jesus there is no salvation, a surprising 27 percent of all respondents said that God will decide the eternal destiny of those who have not heard the gospel based on their conscience.

Criterion 8. A slim majority of house churches (54.6 percent) have taught on the life of a missionary before; however, this percentage could rise significantly.

Criterion 9. Despite the fact that house churches understand how to support missionaries, the limited data from question 7 indicates that they are not actively seeking to do so, especially in regards to finances. Moreover, the house church does not see on field training as needed (12 percent) after arriving on the mission field.

Criterion 10. From the survey data, the Chinese church did not reveal any weaknesses related to contextualization.

CHAPTER 5

AN EVALUATION OF THE HOUSE CHURCH'S MISSIOLOGY AS KNOWN THROUGH PUBLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Is the modern-day Chinese house church a GCC? The data collected and reported in chapter 4 tentatively affirmed the thesis that the majority of Chinese house churches represented in this study cannot be considered GCCs. At the end of the previous chapter, the weaknesses of the house church's missiology were listed according to each of the 10 criteria. This chapter's goal is to describe the Chinese house church's recent missionary efforts¹ in order to verify or modify the conclusions reached in chapter 4.

The bulk of this chapter will describe the Chinese house church's Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement. Then, a short section on "other missionary efforts" will follow. These "other" efforts have no relationship to the BTJ vision and therefore, are placed under a different heading. Finally, the last section will provide an evaluation of the missiology discovered in this chapter. Weaknesses exposed in the present chapter will be recalled and compared to the weaknesses discovered in chapter 4. Afterwards, the researcher will be ready to propose a contextualized training in chapter 6 that will assist house churches to eliminate missiological weaknesses and become GCCs.

¹Recent missionary efforts, as used in this chapter, include the past twenty years (1992-2012), with a greater emphasis on the last ten years.

History of the BTJ Vision

As God has been at work, growing and expanding the house church in China, there has been a stirring among some prominent modern-day house church networks² to take this blessing and spread it to the nations. This stirring has come to be known as the Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement and/or vision (传回耶路撒冷运动, *chúanhúi yēlùsālěng yùndòng*).³ Reverend Chan Kim-kwong, the Executive Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, more specifically describes it as such:

This project regards this mission by the Chinese as the last baton of global mission movements when the gospel traveled from the West to East through Western missionaries and should now be carried back by Chinese missionaries to where it had originated in order to complete the mission mandate of preaching the gospel to the whole world.⁴

Timothy Tennent clarifies that “the BTJM [Back to Jerusalem Movement] is not a structured, defined, organized movement operating under a single bureaucratic umbrella. Instead it is more of a vision statement that many Chinese Christians have identified with, and yet which provides no formal connection among its adherents.”⁵

Meg Crossman shares that this movement’s intention is to “not only reach other countries, but also reach the *ethne* within their [Chinese house church believers]

²Paul Hattaway shares that six or seven different networks are involved with each one consisting of “millions of believers.” Tim Stafford, “A Captivating Vision: Why Chinese Churches May Just End up Fulfilling the Great Commission,” *Christianity Today*, 1 April 2004, 86.

³Paul Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 23-43.

⁴Chan Kim-kwong, “Chinese Christianity and Global Mission,” *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 6.

⁵Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 238.

own borders.”⁶ Additionally, the house church leaders state that their vision also includes reaching “the North Asian countries of Japan, North Korea, and Mongolia.”⁷

Vision Captured

This original missionary vision was received by Chinese believers approximately ninety years ago.⁸ Hattaway reports that the Jesus Family in the Eastern province of Shandong (山东, shāndōng) was the first group to capture the BTJ vision.⁹ They received this call in the 1920s; however, at that time, it was not called BTJ but rather the Northwest Spiritual Movement. Simon Zhao was the leader of this movement, and one day, during a prayer meeting in the city of Shenyang (沈阳, shēnyáng), he received a vision to take the gospel to the Western province of Xinjiang (新疆省, xīnjiāng shěng) and beyond.

Stunningly, not long after this vision was received, it was also given to other Christian groups found in various parts of China.¹⁰ In the southern city of Nanjing (南京, nánjīng), Zhao met other believers who felt the same call from the Lord. In the early 1940s, God gave a clear call to Mark Ma, the vice-principal of a small Bible institute in Shaanxi province (陕西省, shǎnxī shěng) to carry “the gospel outside China’s borders into

⁶Meg Crossman, “Minority Groups in China: Can Han Christians Reach Them?,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 286.

⁷Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 81.

⁸*Ibid.*, 23.

⁹*Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰Lambert estimates five or six different indigenous Chinese groups all received this call in the 1940s. Tony Lambert, “China and the 21st Century Missions,” in *A Legacy Continues: In Appreciation of James Hudson Taylor III 1929-2009*, ed. Jennie Fung et al. (Hong Kong: OMF Hong Kong, 2009), 50-51.

the Islamic world, all the way back to Jerusalem.”¹¹ They were originally called the “Preach Everywhere Gospel Band” (遍传福音团, biànchuán fúyīn tuán), but agreed that “the English name of the movement should be the ‘Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band.’”¹² On May 15, 1946, a constitution was established and officers were elected, thus formalizing this band into an organization. They received funds from all over China, and in 1947, despite a raging civil war, seven missionaries left for Jerusalem planning to pass through Xinjiang province first. However, disaster struck when they were met by government officials in Xinjiang and were ordered to return to Shaanxi. Realizing that these officials could not be persuaded, they decided to spend the winter in the nearby city of Xining (西宁, xīníng), hoping another opportunity to leave would present itself. However, in 1949 the Communists took control of China and a huge wave of persecution was unleashed upon the church. As a result, this small band never made it out of the country, much less to Jerusalem.

Aikman notes that in the 1940s “an estimated 20,000 Chinese believers were scattered in more than one hundred Jesus Family groups throughout the country, all of them believing that were called to bring the Christian message from China into the

¹¹Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 40.

¹²Ibid., 26. In reference to its designation as a Band, Kim explains, “This mission endeavor in form of a Spiritual Band or spiritual fellowship was rather popular at that time as Chinese Christians generally thought that a Spiritual Band was spiritually superior to conventional mission groups since conventional mission groups often relied on regular church or denominational support. Further, it was also a reaction against foreign missionaries by the Chinese Christians as most of the missionaries got rather generous financial support from their home Board or Churches, and they lived usually in luxury compared to ordinary Chinese church workers who got a very meager salary from their missionary bosses.” Chan Kim-kwong, “Mission Movement of the Christian Community in Mainland China: The Back to Jerusalem Movement” (paper prepared for the Seoul Consultation, Study Commission IX, Seoul, Korea, March 2009) [on-line]; accessed 22 July 2011; available from http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/pdf/Kim-Kwong_percent20Chan_percent202009-2-28.pdf; Internet.

heartland of Central Asia.”¹³ However, similar to the fate of the Bible school missionaries, the Jesus Family group was also detained in Xinjiang and not permitted to leave the country. Later they were arrested and carried off to prison camps.¹⁴ As a result, none of the original recipients of this vision ever made it out of China.

Vision Recaptured

Although the vision, as well as the entire church, was suppressed during the quarter century that Mao ruled China (1949-1976), it was never completely extinguished. Author Paul Hattaway remarks that he first heard about this vision in the 1980s shortly after arriving in China; however, he did not know the meaning of the phrase “Back to Jerusalem.”¹⁵ Apparently the vision was most powerfully recaptured when Simon Zhao reluctantly traveled to Henan (河南, hénán) in the early 1990s at the request of the house churches there. “When he ministered to our churches in Henan it was very powerful and a fire was lit in the heart of everyone who heard him. Many tears flowed and thousands of believers were touched and received the vision for missionary work.”¹⁶

Yalin Xin describes how the Word of Life (WOL) movement became involved with the BTJ movement over the last two decades.

Throughout the 1990s, the WOL community continued to grow and spread outward, feeling called to be ambassadors of the “Great Commission.” It established house churches across the country and its network touched every province in China with the gospel. Today, the WOL has even crossed the national boundaries and has established churches, training schools, and

¹³David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 196.

¹⁴Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 46.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, ix.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 50.

fellowships overseas, contributing its part in following the biblical mandate of spreading the gospel toward the ends of the earth. It is one of the primary participating house church networks in the Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) movement. In recent years, evangelistic teams have been sent outside of China as part of the movement, channeling the seeds of revival from China to neighboring countries. Peter Xu has been on frequent speaking tours in the U.S. and other countries, appealing to the churches in the west to join hands with the Chinese house churches in fulfilling the Great Commission and bringing the gospel back to Jerusalem. Selected believers from the WOL community have been sent to the newly-set-up training centers in neighboring countries in preparation for the BTJ movement.¹⁷

This vision has a special burden for the Muslims who live all throughout Asia, especially along the Silk Road Corridor (see Figure 22). Tobias Brandner comments, “I repeatedly met Chinese Christians, inside and outside China, who shared a burden for the Muslim world. I found out that house church leaders gather every year for an all-Chinese Prayer Convocation focusing on Israel and its Arab neighbors, and that Chinese Christian groups organize prayer walks along the Silk Road.”¹⁸ In recent years, house church leader Zhang Rongliang has also been a part of the recapturing of this vision. He believes that God has specially chosen the Chinese church to reach the Muslim nations, and reasons as follows: “Chinese people are more suitable than Americans to go to the Muslim world. Muslims prefer Chinese to Americans. They don’t like Americans very much. The Chinese government supports [Middle Eastern] terrorism, so the Muslim nations support China.”¹⁹ Other reasons motivating the Chinese believers to embrace and run with this

¹⁷Yalin Xin, “Inner Dynamics of the Chinese House Church Movement: The Case of the Word of Life Community,” *Mission Studies* 25 (2008): 159.

¹⁸Tobias Brandner, “Mission, Millennium, and Politics: A Continuation of the History of Salvation from the East,” *Missiology* 37 (2009), 317.

¹⁹Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 202.

vision will be shared later under the heading “Assumptions and Motivations Driving the Vision.”

Participants

Tony Lambert reports that this “vision for missions and cross-cultural evangelism is gripping many Chinese Christians, mainly in the house-churches but also, in some cases, in officially-registered churches and seminaries.”²⁰ He is careful to note that “it is not the property of any one leader or particular church grouping, and is interpreted in different ways.”²¹ Nonetheless, most casual observers would regard Brother Yun as the de facto leader²² due to his association with Paul Hattaway who authored the book *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete The Great Commission*.²³ Additionally, the BTJ website is essentially a collection of various video clips of Brother Yun explaining the vision and enjoining believers around the world to support their cause.²⁴ However, many of the ‘patriarchs’ of the Chinese house church movement have openly protested the idea that Brother Yun

²⁰Lambert, “China and the 21st Century Missions,” 49.

²¹Ibid., 50. Yi Du Kam, who has extensive Chinese ministry experience and now works with multiethnic teams in China, agrees and says, “Although many times in the last several years Brother Yun, known as the “Heavenly Man,” may have been introduced as a spokesman for BTJ or the China church, there is now open recognition that he does not represent either one in any official capacity, and that such representation in the past was incorrect.” Yi Du Kam, “Beyond ‘Back to Jerusalem,’” *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 1.

²²Hattaway writes, “God took Yun out of China in 1997 so that he could work to facilitate the Back to Jerusalem vision.” Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 53.

²³Peter Xu Yongze and Enoch Wang are the other two house church leaders who contributed to this book.

²⁴The Back to Jerusalem website is <http://backtojerusalem.com>. This is not to be confused with the Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission website (www.btjgm.org) or the Silk Road Missions website (<http://silkroadmissions.com>), both of which were founded by Peter Xu Yongze.

should be regarded as the leader of this movement and have rejected many of the popular (and in their opinion, most likely exaggerated) claims he has made about the BTJ ministry. This disagreement has caused no small amount of controversy, which has yet to be resolved.²⁵

Brother Yun is affiliated with the Word of Life Movement, which is also called the Born Again Family.²⁶ Other specific networks that are known to be involved include the China Gospel Fellowship (also known as the Tanghe fellowship 唐河团契, tánghé tuánqì) and China for Christ Fellowship (also known as Fangcheng fellowship (方城团契, fāngchéng tuánqì)).²⁷ Paul Hattaway includes the Nanyang Church (南阳教会, nányáng jiàohuì) as a participant in the BTJ movement when he details, “Missionaries from Nanyang now work in at least a dozen other countries, and the area has produced some of China’s outstanding Christian leaders of the 20th and 21st centuries.”²⁸

Brother Mark adds the following participants: YinShang Church, the Wenzhou Gospel Group, the City Revival Church, the Timothy Fellowship Church, the Qorlet Church, the Xian Glory fellowship, the China Muslim Christian Fellowship, the North-West Church, and others.²⁹ Finally, he notes many churches have sent missionaries to

²⁵Sam Chiang, review of *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission*, by Paul Hattaway, *Connections* 4 (2005): 45-46.

²⁶Yalin Xin, *Inside China’s House Church Network: The Word of Life Movement and Its Renewing Dynamic*, (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2009), 87. The Chinese government uses the name full-scope church (全方位教会 *quán fāng wèi jiào huì*) which expresses the fact that they have conferences all over China. Xin, “Inner Dynamics of the Chinese House church Movement,” 158.

²⁷Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 193-96.

²⁸Paul Hattaway, *Henan: The Galilee of China* (Carlisle, UK: Piquant, 2009), 216.

²⁹Brother Mark is a pseudonym for the previously mentioned S1.

reach UPGs within China, especially focusing on the Western part of China.³⁰

Patrick Fung reports that networks in the Northeast and from the Southwest are involved and have sent workers as well. It is exciting to note that he also shared: “churches in one major area are also actively involved in cross-cultural work particularly in the North East among the Chaoxian [North Korean] people.”³¹

Recent Implementation of the BTJ Vision

The last ten years has seen a flurry of activity as these house church leaders have begun to implement the vision from above. In what follows, the numerical goals, training, strategies, finances and conferences of the BTJ movement will be discussed.

Numerical Goals

The house church leaders that are seeking to implement this vision originally believed, in 2003, that God called them to send two-hundred thousand missionaries (approximately twenty percent of their estimated full-time pastors) to the surrounding Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist nations.³² Since that time, they have reduced this goal to

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Chaoxian is the Chinese word for North Korea (朝鲜, cháoxiǎn). Patrick Fung, “China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities,” in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 13. The CCCOWE (Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelism) would seem to be a logical participant that should be listed here. Although they are most likely involved in BTJ sending activities from the mainland, they do not make mention of this anywhere. CCCOWE states, “Its mission is to provide individual believers, churches, and the Chinese Church as a whole, with assistance to fulfill the Great Commission.” CCCOWE, “An Introduction” [online]; accessed 10 January 2012; available from <http://www.cccowe.org/eng/content.php?id=9>; Internet.

³²Kim, “Mission Movement of the Christian Community,” 68.

one-hundred thousand workers. They also wanted to accomplish this enormous goal “in honor of the Morrison bicentennial in 2007.”³³

Unfortunately (but expectedly), it appears that five years after this goal was to be realized, it still has not been achieved. Their sending activity dates back to the year 2000, when the first set of thirty-nine missionaries were scheduled to arrive at their various destinations. However, thirty-six of these were immediately arrested by the Chinese government, even before they could exit the country.³⁴ This episode is just one example of the different types of hindrances the house churches face as they seek to fulfill the vision.

In April of 2004, Hattaway estimated that a little less than one thousand five hundred cross-cultural missionaries had left China, although he admitted, “It’s a little difficult to gauge, because many of them come and go.”³⁵ More recently, even though there have been no official numbers reported, a video produced in 2010 and published on the BTJ website, reported that “thousands” have been sent out.³⁶

In an interview dated September 16, 2011, a Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission (BTJGM) contact stated that it is impossible to guess how many have actually been sent out, although, he did add “many” have returned to China due difficulties and

³³Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 195.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵Stafford, “A Captivating Vision,” 86.

³⁶Back to Jerusalem, “Back to Jerusalem, Program 955-W” [on-line]; accessed 6 July 2011; available from <http://www.backtojerusalem.com/video/btj955-W.html>; Internet. The 2010 date was obtained by a personal email sent from the BTJ website to the author on 5 August 2011.

trials.³⁷ This BTJGM ministry has recently partnered with TEAM International and has the aspiration of sending three-hundred missionaries from China to various locations along the Silk Road. Their strategy is to establish seventy-five mission centers in fourteen different countries, “igniting a missionary movement fueled by the Chinese Church that spreads all the way Back to Jerusalem.”³⁸

Brother Mark, at a recent Asian Mission Consultation, estimated a much lower number of sent missionaries. “Presently there are less than 100 missionaries sent out from China, but more than 200 are having [*sic*] their internship in western part of China preparing to be sent out from the countries.”³⁹ His numbers, however, were similar to estimates made by another missionary who served the Chinese church for more than two decades, dealing extensively with the BTJ movement.⁴⁰ Tony Lambert is also skeptical of the large numbers being reported by the more well-known BTJ names. He observed in 2009,

The passage of time has revealed that this movement was much more in evidence overseas than in China itself. The reality is that there are hardly any house-church evangelists in Xinjiang poised to cross over into Kazakhstan and head further west. In fact, experienced overseas Chinese Christian workers in Kazakhstan observe that there is far more evidence of movement into Xinjiang from the small Uyghur church in Kazakhstan than the other way around. The vastly inflated statistics once freely bandied about are rarely heard now. Opposition from respected house-church leaders within China to these inflated

³⁷Their return was specifically due to a lack of training related to language and culture. Scarcity of financial resources was another reason given. Name is kept private for security reasons, Contact at the Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission, interview by author, 16 September 2011, Houston, TX. This individual is designated as S2.

³⁸Back to Jerusalem 300 Project, “The Mission” [on-line]; accessed 1 January 2012; available from <http://btj300.org>; Internet.

³⁹Brother Mark is S1.

⁴⁰Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 1 December 2011, Houston, TX. This missionary estimated that anywhere from 150 to 300 missionaries had been sent. This missionary is designated as M1.

claims has encouraged in-depth research to discover the real truth concerning China's growing missions movement.⁴¹

He continues,

There is little evidence of large numbers leaving China to engage in evangelism overseas, in Muslim nations or elsewhere. The major house-church networks can muster at most a few hundred, mainly young people, for some kind of missions training. One network claiming two million members has such a training centre with 50 in training; another larger network has about 100 in training. This is very encouraging but is far from the claims made some years ago.⁴²

He believes that "the main work of ongoing evangelism, both to Muslims in China and beyond its borders, is being done anonymously by house church members in China who make no appeals for money."⁴³ So, accurately determining how many missionaries have actually been sent by the BTJ movement shows itself to be a very difficult task.

Training

The leaders of the BTJ movement are quite zealous to accomplish the vision. Regarding qualifications for missionaries they say, "A missionary only needs to be

⁴¹Lambert, "China and the 21st Century Missions," 50. Tony Lambert is probably the most well known modern day Sinologist. He is the author of a number of books including *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* (1994) and *China's Christian Millions* (2006).

⁴²Lambert, "China and the 21st Century Missions," 51. This representation has been affirmed by a number of missionaries the author has had personal contact with and is clearly the majority opinion. In 2010, Patrick Fung agrees and says, "The number of cross-cultural workers being trained throughout China, though unverifiable, is probably in the range of hundreds not thousands." Fung, "China and beyond," 14. However, occasionally one will hear a dissenting voice, such as Howard Brant when he says, "The Back to Jerusalem Movement has been the matter of much debate within the Chinese Diaspora. Some think the story is overblown. All information that we have is that the movement is alive and well. We were [*sic*] personally acquainted with the one writing the teaching materials for this movement and his report is that there are thousands of training centers (many of them in house churches) preparing missionaries for this movement." Howard Brant, "Seven Essentials of Majority World Emerging Mission Movements," in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 40.

⁴³Lambert, "China and the 21st Century Missions," 51.

someone who loves the Lord Jesus and has a passion to reach the lost world for him. That is the only qualification for missionary service.”⁴⁴ Nonetheless, they still affirm the importance of sending experienced, mature Christians. “It would be foolish for an army to send its youngest, most inexperienced soldiers to the front line of a battle. In the same way, we will be sending our best equipped, most experienced workers to the front lines.”⁴⁵

The first thirty-nine missionaries who were recruited all met the following criteria. First, they had been in leadership positions within the house churches for at least ten years. Second, they had suffered much hardship for the kingdom. Third, their ministries had already produced much fruit over time.⁴⁶ As a result of these two different standards, it is a bit difficult to know what these leaders believe are the true qualifications for missionary service.

The house church leaders interviewed by Hattaway believe in the importance of missiological training. They reported that their areas of training include

1. How to reach across cultural and other barriers.
2. How to reach specific groups, for example Muslims and Buddhists. They say, “the Lord is asked to reveal his strategy for each worker.”
3. How to witness, suffer and die for the Lord.
4. How to escape from imprisonment.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 110. They quote Mark 16:15 as support for this view.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 82-83.

Although they admit that “this is not a ‘normal’ seminary or Bible college,” they argue that “nothing less is required if we are to break down the walls that keep Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists from knowing the sweet presence of Jesus.”⁴⁸ Nonetheless, many familiar with the movement question the effectiveness of this training and are not convinced it is comprehensive enough. A more detailed evaluation of the house church’s missionary training efforts will follow under the heading, “Hindrances to the Fulfillment of the Vision.”

Strategy

The BTJ movement, to some degree, has considered the importance of missionary strategy. This section will discuss their strategy in terms of location, types of missionaries, the importance of teams and prayer.

Locations. The leaders note that “more than ninety percent of the remaining unreached people groups in the world live along the Silk Road and in the nations surrounding China. Two billion of the earth’s inhabitants live and die in this area, completely oblivious to the good news that Jesus died for their sins and is the only way to heaven!”⁴⁹ Therefore the movement is focusing their activities on these peoples

Classification of workers. They classify their workers as either short term or long-term missionaries. Both play an important role in the BTJ vision.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., 80. See Figure 22 for a map of the Silk Road.



Figure 22 – The Silk Road and related trade routes⁵⁰

The first kind [of worker] will leave China for relatively short periods, up to a year at a time. They will preach the gospel and serve the Lord however he directs for a time, before returning to China to await the next command from the Lord. The second kind of workers will be like Abraham. They will move from their homes and relocate to wherever God shows them and will not come back to China unless the Holy Spirit directs them to.⁵¹

Teams. Moreover, the leaders believe the New Testament model is to send teams of workers for fellowship, encouragement, sharing of resources and accountability purposes. In addition to missionaries, the extended team is comprised of leaders, trainers, intercessors, and facilitators who are supporting them from China. Finally, a team of pastors will be recruited to care for the spiritual and physical needs of the workers.⁵²

Prayer. Timothy Tennent, as he compared Jonathan Edwards' mission theology to the house church's, noticed that in both cases prayer occupies a prominent

⁵⁰The Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education, "The Silk Road and Related Trade Routes" [on-line]; accessed December 13, 2011; available from <http://www.silkroadproject.org/tabid/177/default.aspx>; Internet.

⁵¹Ibid., 82.

⁵²Ibid., 83.

role. “As with Edwards, the Chinese place great emphasis on the role of prayer and fasting. They pray for the progress of the gospel in China, the tearing down of the spiritual strongholds of Islam, and remarkably, that Bible schools and seminaries in the West will remain faithful to the Word of God.”⁵³

Finances

Regarding the financial aspect of this movement, the leaders appear to be implementing a model similar to that of their favorite missionary, Hudson Taylor. Freely admitting they that they do not know where the finances will come from to support all these missionaries, they cling to the axiom believed by the early China inland missionaries, “God’s work, done in God’s way, will never lack God’s supply.”⁵⁴ Therefore, their model could broadly fall under the category of faith missions.

However, there does not seem to be an emphasis upon individual units raising their personal support. Possibly, Watchman Nee’s (倪柝聲, ní tuòshēng) teaching on finances in his book *The Normal Christian Life* has influenced them significantly.⁵⁵ In relationship to finances, Nee states, “What men consider of supreme importance, the apostles regarded of least importance. In the early days of the Church, God’s sent ones went out under the constraint of divine love. Their work was not just their profession . . .

⁵³Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 246.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 88.

⁵⁵Watchman Nee’s influence upon the Chinese house church today continues to be very strong. Lam Wing-Hung, Research Professor of Church History and Chinese Studies at Tyndale College and Seminary said, “The Local Church movement which he [Nee] founded also spread overseas, especially after the establishment of the Communist regime in 1949. Through his itinerant preaching and voluminous literature work, Nee greatly influenced the conservative wing of the Chinese church. The theological vocabulary he formulated has become an important ingredient in today’s Chinese theology.” Lam Wing-Hung, “Watchman Nee,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* [on-line]; accessed 9 December 2011; available from <http://www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/n/ni-tuosheng.php>; Internet.

no question arose in their minds concerning the supply of their temporal needs.”⁵⁶ At the present time, the BTJ leaders have not (and perhaps do not feel the need to) published any plan as to how they will support their missionaries once they are on the field.

In contrast to the Western missions model, the default methodology of the Chinese house church to this point has been to send missionaries as tentmakers. Tennent mentions, “The Chinese church envisions most of these workers to be self-supporting, using their talents and vocations to relocate all along the ancient Silk route. It will help them to blend into the culture without suspicion and sidestep the financial and administrative challenges that often hamper mission organizations.”⁵⁷ Kim surveyed a number of BTJ missionaries in training and found that they expected to go as students, tourists, businessmen, agriculture workers, beauticians, shopkeepers, and contract workers.⁵⁸ Additionally, the Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission (BTJGM) website includes tentmaking options such as opening Chinese restaurants, English and Chinese schools, personnel agencies, and vocational training.⁵⁹

The BTJGM website contact was very open about the large number of missionaries who have returned home due to funding issues. He said they have contemplated making changes that would direct them away from the tentmaking model. Currently, BTJGM is considering a plan whereby missionaries would receive their

⁵⁶Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, 2nd ed. (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1980), 139. In fact, Nee goes so far to argue that Christian workers have a need for an “unsettled income because that necessitates intimate fellowship with God, constant clear revelation of His will, and direct divine support” (140-41).

⁵⁷Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 240.

⁵⁸Kim, “Mission Movement of the Christian Community,” 73.

⁵⁹Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission, “Projects” [on-line]; accessed 11 September 2011; available from <http://www.btjgm.com/projects.html>; Internet.

support from four different sources: (1) Their local church, (2) A collective BTJ fund, (3) The missionaries' own personal contacts and supporters, and (4) Foreigners.⁶⁰ This plan has not been implemented yet, and is still being discussed.

Even though the house church leaders did not ask for foreign funds in the BTJ book, they were abundantly clear that the needs were great and that foreigners were welcome to contribute. This subtle desire for foreign funds, along with the unpublished nature of their contributions and the exaggerated number of workers sent, has been of great concern for Tony Lambert.⁶¹ It does appear to be the case that a large amount of funding is coming from the Western nations. One BTJ foundation in Europe had over \$500,000 donated to their ministry between the dates of January 1, 2003 and June 21, 2004. The majority of this money was carried into China by hand and used for BTJ missionary training and sending. This was before the attack on Brother Yun, after which the "donations slowly dried up."⁶²

⁶⁰Name is kept private for security reasons. Contact at the Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission, interview by author, 16 September 2011, Houston, TX. This individual is S2.

⁶¹Lambert does appreciate many BTJ workers that fit the following profile. "Those I have met in China who are most serious about mission, adamantly reject the naive triumphalism that has gained adverse publicity overseas and drawn the attention of both the Chinese government and certain Muslim governments. They eschew publicity, and in striking contrast to publicists overseas, insist that God will provide the necessary funding from Chinese Christians within China. I believe they are the authentic successors to the original pioneers, and their quiet work will bear ultimate spiritual fruit." Tony Lambert, "Back to Jerusalem: A Moving History," *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 14.

⁶²Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 13 October 2011. This missionary is designated as M2. To read more about the controversy surrounding Brother Yun and an attempt to clear his name, see Paul Hattaway, "An Open Letter Regarding 'The Heavenly Man'" *Asia Harvest* [on-line]; accessed 10 February 2012; available from <http://www.asiaharvest.org/pages/news050705OpenLetterBrotherYun.html>; Internet.

Conferences

In *Back to Jerusalem*, Hattaway reported on the first ever BTJ conference held in Paris in the winter of 2003. Brother Yun was the keynote speaker and “more than five hundred people made the decision to commit their lives to the Lord of this mission.”⁶³ Moreover, Hattaway mentioned that many more similar meetings were planned in Europe and all over the world.⁶⁴

Another group, similar to BTJ, has started holding bi-annual Chinese mission conferences. In 2004, the first ever Back to Jerusalem Movement (BJM)⁶⁵ conference was held in San Francisco, and its goal was to unite with other like-minded individuals in order to coordinate the vision. BJM is indistinguishable from BTJ, except they appear to be attempting to separate themselves from Brother Yun and the movement he represents. BJM is led by Thomas Wang who is the founder of The GC Center International located in California.⁶⁶

The second BJM conference was held in 2006 in Hong Kong. “The aim of the conference this time is to address the challenges and opportunities of cross-cultural missions and to find out an efficient and workable plan.”⁶⁷ The third conference formulated the ‘Back to Jerusalem Movement’ Action Statement, which describes the

⁶³Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 98.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵In an email, Paul Hattaway shared that there are numerous (“dozens”) ministries in the West that claim to represent the BTJ movement. Paul Hattaway, e-mail to author, 11 October 2011.

⁶⁶Great Commission Center International. “Founder” [on-line]; accessed 2 December 2011; available from http://www.gcciusa.org/Founder_EN.html; Internet.

⁶⁷Eunice Or, “Back to Jerusalem Movement 2nd Int'l Conference Held in Hong Kong” *The Gospel Herald* [on-line]; accessed 7 August 2011; available from <http://www.gospelherald.net/article/mcat/1496/back-to-jerusalem-movement-2nd-intl-conference-held-in-hong-kong.htm>; Internet.

vision, mission, and the actual plans of action.”⁶⁸ Finally, the fourth conference was held in 2010 in Jerusalem. At this conference approximately one hundred “co-workers” from mainland China and other localities were able to arrive at the following “common understandings with regard to BJM:”

1. The good news must be shared with all the nations.
2. God has blessed the Chinese church, and it must bear its responsibility to spread the gospel.
3. Chinese believers should repay the debt to the descendents of Ishmael and Issac and other unreached people groups living along the Silk Road corridor.
4. That the gospel of peace alone can enable these estranged people group to reconcile.
5. The spiritual struggle will increase as the gospel is brought to Muslims and Jews.
6. The unreached people groups inside of China should also be a high priority.
7. Cooperation among like-minded churches and mission agencies is essential and brings the maximum glory to God.⁶⁹

The fact that biannual conferences are being held by a group seeking to promote the missiological advance of the Chinese house church is a very positive sign. Those leading these conferences appear to have good missiology and are addressing some areas of weakness.

The Vision’s Rationale and Irrationality

When facing so many challenges in their own country, many people wonder,

⁶⁸Luke Leung, “Third Back to Jerusalem Movement Conference: Advancing in Action” *The Gospel Herald* [on-line]; accessed 7 August 2011; available from <http://www.gospelherald.net/article/mcat/44256/third-back-to-jerusalem-movement-conference-advancing-in-action.htm>; Internet.

⁶⁹Great Commission Center International “A Declaration of The Fourth International Consultation of the Back to Jerusalem Movement, BJM IV” [on-line]; accessed 14 November 2011; available from http://www.gcciusa.org/Chinese/b5_publications/GCB/2010/Aug/P22.pdf; Internet.

why are the Chinese so motivated to take the “gospel baton” from the West and carry it back to Jerusalem? The house church leaders respond simply, “Once saved, they [Chinese believers] have a burning desire to witness and reach the lost. When they read Jesus’ words, they have a desire to take the gospel to every nation.”⁷⁰ However, there appears to be plenty of other rational explanations for the existence of the vision.

The Rationale Driving the Vision

Embedded within this vision are a number of assumptions and/or convictions that are driving this movement. Kim nicely summarizes some of these assumptions as follows:

1. Politically China has no major enemies thus making it easier for their missionaries to gain access to many of these Muslim and Buddhist countries to their West.
2. The Chinese house church adherents are accustomed to suppression and persecution. This makes them ideal candidates to work in restricted countries where persecution is the norm.
3. The ecclesial form of the Chinese house church has left them with a church that is simpler to operate, more flexible, and cost-effective. This is of course carries a great advantage in hostile countries over the elaborate liturgical, diaconal and institutional structures of many Western churches.
4. Numerically, although the percentage of Christians in China is low compared to Western countries, the number of ready workers is tremendous due to the sheer population of China.
5. Economically, the Chinese missionaries are much closer to these Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu countries, thus enabling them to maximize missions’ giving and send a far greater number of workers.

⁷⁰Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 95.

6. The BTJ leaders believe that Chinese Christians are spiritually prepared and willing to suffer for the gospel. They are even willing to suffer martyrdom in order to break open the stronghold of the Muslim countries.⁷¹
7. Western missions has been relatively fruitless in the Muslim countries, especially in the North Africa Middle East (NAME) region. Therefore, to have thousands of Chinese missionaries operating in this region is very attractive to those Westerners frustrated by years of rejection and discouragement.
8. Western and Eastern Christians working together in the Middle East will help check the growth and spread of Islam around the world.⁷²

Additionally, Michael Tai, of Cambridge Chinese Christian church, recognizes that the Chinese people do not have a history of religious conflict that hinders their witness among the nations. Specifically he remarks, “Untainted by the crusades, persecution of Jews, European Wars of Religion, Spanish Inquisition or colonialism, the Chinese have a historic opportunity to present the gospel with a fresh face.”⁷³

David Oleson and Enoch Wan observe that despite some cultural and historical barriers which could hinder the Han Chinese’s witness to the Tibetans, “Chinese families are best suited to take the gospel to Tibet. They have no visa problems, can travel and live in Tibet very economically while supporting themselves with a small business.”⁷⁴ Additionally, a huge benefit of sending Chinese missionaries to some restricted-access Asian countries (such as Tibet or North Korea) is the fact that the Chinese can blend in

⁷¹Brother Yun even suggested that he is prepared to accept 10,000 Chinese martyrs in the first decades of BTJ in order to crack open the Gospel door to the Muslims. Stafford, “A Captivating Vision,” 84.

⁷²Kim, “Mission Movement of the Christian Community,” 73-74.

⁷³Michael Tai, “The Chinese are Coming” [on-line]; accessed 2 July 2011; available from http://www.360doc.com/content/08/0620/00/61857_1352216.shtml; Internet.

⁷⁴David Oleson and Enoch Wan, “Majority World Harvest Among Tibetan Buddhists: Historical Review, Ethnographic Overview, and Dynamic Development,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 171.

very well with the locals, unlike Caucasian Westerners. Bach and Martin note that the Chinese workers in North Korea have a much easier time gaining access into the country and attract much less attention once they are inside. They are accomplishing things in North Korea that most other missionaries simply cannot do.⁷⁵

In Addition, Kim observes that, historically speaking, a country's economic expansion often provided greater opportunities for missionary activity. He asserts that the situation today in China

is somewhat similar to the religious (Christian) Awakening movements in the USA and England during the 19th century which coupled with the global market expansion of the Western nations, resulted in the largest Christian mission movement in history; . . . [the situation today in China] also resembles the contemporary strong impact by the Korean Christianity on world Christendom during the past three decades as Korean's global economic activities have been increasing and Korean Christian grown has achieved at a phenomenal scale [*sic*].⁷⁶

China's rapid economic growth indeed bodes well for the missionary aspirations of the house church. To cite one example, Lambert shared,

I met a well-educated and articulate theological graduate in Wuhan who had a carefully-thought-out plan for mission which involved using China's new-found economic and diplomatic influence to foster good relations with nations in Central Asia, thus providing a platform for Mainland Chinese Christian businessmen to share the gospel there.⁷⁷

Finally, in 2008, a number of Chinese college students traveled to a Central Asian country to preach the gospel. They were there for two years as language students and realized their collective testimony was powerful because the local Muslims were not

⁷⁵Eugene Bach and Martin Luther, *Back to the Jerusalem of the East: The Underground House Church of North Korea* (Blountsville, AL: Back to Jerusalem, 2011) 109.

⁷⁶Chan Kim-Kwong, "Missiologial Implications of Chinese Christianity," in *Religious Pluralism in the Diaspora*, ed. P. Pratap Kumar (Boston: Brill, 2006), 82.

⁷⁷Lambert, "China and the 21st Century Missions," 49.

expecting them to be Christians. These missionaries were able to shatter the stereotype that Christianity is a Western religion, which is a significant barrier for Muslims in that part of the world.⁷⁸ Also, the Chinese young people discovered that there is a tremendous amount of interest in learning the Chinese language in Central Asia. This provided an open door to building relationships which often led to spiritual conversations.⁷⁹

The Irrationality of the Vision

The BTJ movement also has plenty of skeptics. They consist of a wide range of people from conservatives to liberals⁸⁰ and foreigners to locals.

Conservatives. Earlier it was noted that although Tony Lambert is positive toward the missiological aspirations of the house church, he is unimpressed with some of the higher profile leaders. His concerns are related to these leaders seeking foreign funds, making irrational, irresponsible goals, and reporting unverifiable numbers.

Kim, despite the fact that he is coming from an evangelical perspective, does have some concerns about the timing and motivation of the BTJ movement. He believes that

the urgent needs of the Christian Churches in China seem to be religious formation, and leadership consolidation. Currently the Christian community in China is facing challenges from various Cults, extremist teachings, and

⁷⁸Xiao He, 2009, *Chinese Missionaries*, 19 min. Computer video file, clip at 12:30.

⁷⁹Ibid., clip at 13:40. Xiao He remarked that 20 percent of the students at her university were learning Chinese.

⁸⁰Though there is not space to carefully define the terms “conservatives and liberals,” the general idea is that those quoted as conservatives are biblically based and committed to evangelism, whereas liberals are not. These distinctions were made through these author’s writings and/or the organizations they are associated with.

leadership in-house fighting . . . the Churches in China needs all its pastoral labor merely to maintain a stable development of the Churches in China [*sic*].⁸¹

Kim argues that Christian workers are needed in China at the present time, and if they leave, various challenges will threaten the growth and stability of the house church.

Wen Mu, a seminary president involved with theological education in China, divides the Chinese church into four broad categories: charismatics, evangelicals, conservative fundamentalists, and three-self churches. He characterizes the charismatics' response to BTJ as enthusiastic, the evangelicals' as non-committal, the fundamentalists' as opposed, and the three-self churches' as cold. Echoing the concerns above, the fundamentalists claim BTJ has become a fund-raising scheme and has taken the focus of ministry away from the needs of China. Additionally, they would add that "the BTJ movement has no biblical basis" and that "some over-zealous responses to BTJ result in high-profile publicity for the house church, endangering their ministry."⁸² Unfortunately for the BTJ movement, Mu estimates that "by and large, most Chinese house churches are conservative fundamentals [*sic*], accounting for as much as seventy to eighty percent of these churches."⁸³ If Mu is correct that up to eighty percent of the house churches are opposed to international missions because it takes the focus away from China, a weakness has been revealed that should be addressed by Acts 1:8.

Hattaway adds some Western missionary leaders to this list of doubters. He lamented that after the book *Back to Jerusalem* was published, "some mocked and

⁸¹Kim, "Missiological Implications," 92.

⁸²Wen Mu, "The Present and the Future of the BTJ Movement: A View from the Church in China," *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 11.

⁸³Ibid.

ridiculed the vision, including many mission leaders who were quick to point out the Chinese Christians are ‘uneducated peasants.’”⁸⁴ Moreover, he noted some mission organizations felt threatened by the vision’s core message because “these organizations are still trying to send foreign missionaries IN to China, so the announcement that the Chinese church was planning to send large numbers of missionaries OUT of China challenged their existence.”⁸⁵ Hattaway interpreted their resistance as a self-preservation instinct. However, if one wants to be charitable and give these organizations the benefit of the doubt, it is easy to understand their concern for the billion plus people still in China who have yet to embrace the gospel; not to mention the challenges the Chinese church is facing, as noted by Kim.

Finally, Kim is concerned that “the BTJ movement as it currently stands seems to be based more on Sino-centric wishes, current global marketing trend, and proactive millenarianism . . . rather than on serious theological reflections and critical missiological considerations.”⁸⁶ He is concerned that the Chinese are motivated to finish the task for the glory of China, rather than for the glory of God. More specifically, his concern is that the Chinese church is competing with the Korean church to complete the GC, while simultaneously seeking to absolve the Western churches of their self-imposed ‘white man’s burden’ to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. If he is accurate in his

⁸⁴Paul Hattaway, “Back to Jerusalem update,” *Asia Harvest* 99 (2009): 6.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 95.

assessment of the Chinese house church's motives, the Chinese house church would do well to heed his call to repentance.⁸⁷

Liberals. Samuel Pearson, writing for the Amity News Service,⁸⁸ reviewed Aikman's book *Jesus in Beijing* in 2005, and had the following problems with the BTJ movement:

I do not know how seriously to take these claims (referring to sending 100,000 missionaries by 2007). I have asked numerous Christians in the Nanjing area, from both registered and unregistered churches, and only one claims even to have heard of the Back to Jerusalem movement. Yet if it is more than a pious hope, I cannot imagine anything better calculated to deepen Muslim hostility toward Christianity, to complicate Chinese diplomacy on its western border, to bring the threat of terrorism to China, and certainly to complicate the lives of all Chinese Christians. This is a mission we do not need right now, and those who think otherwise, including the individual who explained to Aikman that Muslims do not convert because they do not like Americans but that when the Chinese missionaries come they will be received with open arms, are living in an extraordinarily dangerous dream world.⁸⁹

Pearson's political concerns take a priority over his missiological aspirations. It is difficult to imagine that he is an evangelical from the above quote; however, he does raise real problems that could result from a successful BTJ movement. Moreover, he poignantly elucidates the truth that although Chinese Christians do not have the same

⁸⁷In his review of Tobias Brandner's article entitled "Mission, Millennium, and Politics," G. Wright Doyle agrees with Kim in his concern about a mission driven by Sino-centric wishes. "Just as Israel and the West, including America, tended towards pride, producing concepts like 'manifest Destiny' and the 'White man's burden,' and justifying ministry from a position of power, so the same shift can be seen in the BTJ movement." G. Wright Doyle, review of "Mission, Millennium, and Politics: A Continuation of the History of Salvation from the East" [on-line]; accessed 1 September 2011; available from <http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/christianity-in-china/article-review-of-mission-millennium-and-politics-a-continuation-of-the-history-of-salvation-from-the-east.php>; Internet.

⁸⁸The Amity Foundation is a division of the Chinese Christian Council that overseas and manages the affairs of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), otherwise known as the state church.

⁸⁹Samuel Pearson, "Jesus in Beijing Review" *Amity News* [on-line]; accessed 9 August 2011; available from <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1506>; Internet.

initial barriers as Westerners in doing Muslim evangelism, they still will find Islamic adherents to be highly resistant to Christianity. In fact, unrealistic expectations of fruitful ministry have been a huge source of disappointment for many BTJ missionaries. They have seen God work in tremendous ways in their culture and expect Him to do the exact same thing within a resistant UPG. A foreigner who has trained Han missionaries for a number of years shared the following helpful advice:

They [the house church networks] also need to learn the basics of how to support (as a network) their missionaries . . . beyond prayer . . . and how to not get discouraged after a short while when they are not seeing fruit in a resistant culture. The DESIRE to send/go is there, but the experience and expectations are so out of balance that the networks and missionaries get so frustrated when they go to a resistant country/people group and don't see results that they pack up shop and return home.⁹⁰

Therefore, missiological training should encourage future missionaries to have a genuine, optimistic, and hopeful faith, which is balanced-out by realistic expectations for highly resistant peoples.

The Chinese Theological Review is also a means whereby the TSPM shares their view of Christianity and how it is (or should be) contextualized for the People's Republic of China (PRC). The contributors always have some connection with the state church and can vary widely in their theological orientation. In volume 20, published in 2007, Cao Shengjie (曹圣洁, *cáo shèngjié*) the president of the China Christian Council, wrote an article entitled "Mission in the Chinese Church." She offered the following thoughts on BTJ.

In the past dozen years, some international church groups have spread the idea that in Asia and the Middle East there are still a lot of "unreached peoples," (meaning those who have not received Christian faith). They

⁹⁰Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 17 October 2011. This missionary is designated as M3.

advocate concentrating their strength for a “mission drive” directed at atheists and Muslims and have even said that the path of mission will move along the “Silk Road” that passes through China to return to Jerusalem. In their eyes, this is the only way to bring about the “fullness of time,” so that the Lord will come again soon. The Bible says “...no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). Yet, this plan for a return to Jerusalem is merely the result of some people making their own interpretation of a “prophecy.” There is no biblical basis for it. Even less is there a mention of the Silk Road in the “fullness of time.” So much conflict and antagonism has grown up between the Israelis and the Arabs in the Middle East and the manipulation of religion for terrorist purposes has caused so much physical harm to innocent people. If the people I have been referring to put their plan for “evangelism” into practice, I fear there will be even more bloody conflict among religious believers. Can this be in accord with God’s love for humankind and God’s gift of peace to humanity?⁹¹

Cao gives two main reasons why this return to Jerusalem is not a part of God’s plan for the Chinese church. First, she argues that the BTJ vision (or prophecy) cannot be found in the Bible (“there is no biblical basis for it”); therefore, those who engage in such activities are mistaken and not submitting themselves to God’s will as it is revealed in the Scriptures. This is the same argument she uses concerning evangelism along the Silk Road in bringing about the fullness of time. Second, she is concerned that evangelizing Muslims, at least in this manner, will lead to “more bloody conflict among religious believers.” Since God loves humankind and gifted us with peace, any such evangelism is unquestionably rejected as opposed to God’s will.

Even though no specific BTJ prophecy exists in the Bible, a number of Scriptures declare that God’s will is for the nations to know Him (Matt 28:18-20). Moreover, Cao shows herself to be of the liberal theological persuasion when she esteems love and peace over evangelism. Such a worldview has no ability to understand or receive Jesus’ saying, “do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did

⁹¹Shengjie Cao, “Mission in the Chinese Church,” *Chinese Theological Review* 14 (2007): 12.

not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household’” (Matt 10:34). Moreover, Cao Shengjie’s worldview has no room for the Western missionaries and early Chinese Christians who courageously shed their blood so that she could know and embrace the faith that she values and is writing about today.⁹²

Hindrances to the Fulfillment of the Vision

Because the missions enterprise is such a vast undertaking, there are many obstacles that the movement is currently facing and must overcome. Listed below are the challenges which are obstructing the forward progress of the BTJ vision.

Government Interference

The BTJ movement is completely underground and does not have the approval of the Chinese government. Although no specific laws forbid the sending of Chinese missionaries,⁹³ it is not a stretch to postulate that the Chinese government does not look favorably upon the exportation of religion. Lambert, in lamenting the highly publicized nature of BTJ in the Western nations, commented: “the publicity and fund-raising was drawing hostile attention from both the Chinese and some Arab governments.”⁹⁴ Moreover, as was mentioned earlier, of the first thirty-nine missionaries to be sent in the year 2000, thirty-six were immediately detained and arrested by the Chinese authorities.

⁹²Cao Shengjie actually goes so far as to label BTJ an invention of American evangelicals. Brandner, “Mission, Millennium, and Politics,” 329.

⁹³Kim, “Missiologial implications,” 81.

⁹⁴Lambert, “China and the 21st Century Missions,” 50.

The reason for such opposition is not owing to a government that is seeking to eliminate all vestiges of religion. That vantage point is occasionally found within some departments, but at the present time, most officials are primarily concerned with the economic development of their fast growing country. It stands to reason that if rogue Chinese missionaries are causing international political friction between various Middle-Eastern countries and China, the government will not look favorably upon this. Given China's recent thirst for more oil⁹⁵ and the abundant supply found in the Middle-East, this concern is all the more founded. Kim reasons that although the Chinese government has no direct authority over Chinese living in foreign lands, it "will probably use administrative measures to tighten the activities of the Christian groups in China who are the bases of the BTJ movement."⁹⁶ This speculation could explain why, in October of 2010, NPR reported that up to two-hundred and thirty Chinese pastors were forbidden to attend the Lausanne missions conference in South Africa,⁹⁷ and in April of 2011, at least ten pastors were imprisoned for having attended it.⁹⁸

Even though the government does provide significant challenges for the BTJ movement, the house church has typically done an excellent job of being cautious, yet

⁹⁵Simon Hall, "China's Thirst for Oil at All-Time High," *The Wall Street Journal* [on-line]; accessed 14 February 2012; available from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703954004576090250923792020.html>; Internet.

⁹⁶Kim, "Missiological implications," 91.

⁹⁷Louisa Lim, "Beijing Blocks Travelers To Christian Conference," *National Public Radio* [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130540715>; Internet.

⁹⁸Christian Examiner Staff Report, "10 House church leaders jailed on 'suspicion of fraud' due to Lausanne connection," *The Christian Examiner* [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2011; available from http://www.christianexaminer.com/Articles/Articles percent20May11/Art_May11_17.html; Internet.

faithful to its Lord. It has years of experience in dealing with the CCP and has seen tremendous growth.

Lack of Training and Field Preparation

Some missiologists have observed that the relatively mono-cultural mainland Chinese environment leaves potential Han missionaries in desperate need of cross-cultural training.⁹⁹ However, obtaining this type of training has been a significant challenge for the Chinese house church.

Ethnocentrism. David Aikman, referring to an interview with Eric Watt, the president of Reaching Unreached Peoples, discusses the importance of cultural training when he remarks, “Chinese . . . can sometimes be even more culturally crass than Americans. He [Watt] cites the case of a Chinese evangelist in a Muslim region of China who invited his Muslim neighbors to a banquet, featuring pork, to celebrate the establishment of a new Christian community.”¹⁰⁰ Another mission leader confided in the author that a BTJ missionary-in-training had plans to open a pork processing plant in a Central Asian Muslim country. When the concern was brought up that Muslims do not eat pork, the hopeful Chinese missionary replied, “They’ll like it when they try it!”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Julie Ma has noticed this phenomenon present among Korean missionaries as well, but notes it is not an insurmountable barrier. “Those who come from a mono-cultural setting like Korea find it difficult to adapt and adjust to a new culture. One can conjecture that their firm commitment to mission enables them to overcome cultural differences and daily challenges.” Julie Ma, “A Critical Appraisal of Korean Missionary Work: Challenges for Western and Global South missionaries,” in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 88.

¹⁰⁰Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 204.

¹⁰¹Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 11 August 2011, Louisville, KY. This missionary is designated as M4.

Lambert states that “strong ethnocentrism means that even Christian Han Chinese may unconsciously look down on the groups they are working among and consider them ‘backward,’ in much the same way as some Western missionaries have had colonialist attitudes.”¹⁰²

Culture shock. Additionally, encountering new cultures for the first time can lead to other problems. Douglas Rutt has observed that majority world missionaries encounter culture shock, even when crossing to their near-culture people groups.¹⁰³ Such culture shock can lead to a quick resignation if the missionary is not adequately prepared for it. Xiao He and her fellow short-term missionaries confessed how their struggle with the food, culture, and call to worship from the Mosque caused them to consider returning early.¹⁰⁴ Thorough missiological training is needed to prepare these zealous Han Chinese servants for success on the mission field.

Condensed missiological training. Previously it was reported that the house church leaders believe in the importance of missionary training and preparation. However, compared to Western training programs, the typically BTJ program is quite different and

¹⁰²Lambert, “China and the 21st Century Missions,” 52.

¹⁰³Douglas Rutt, “Global Mission Partnership: Missiological Reflections After Ten Years of Experience,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 63. The example he cited was a Brazilian family moving to Panama to do mission work.

¹⁰⁴Xiao He, 2009, *Chinese Missionaries*, 19 min. Computer video file, clip at 3:52.

covers a significantly smaller number of subjects in a shorter period of time.¹⁰⁵ For example, Peter Xu detailed the following training program for Word of Life church missionaries. “[Back to Jerusalem] classes last about four months and teach subjects such as cross-cultural communication, foreign language learning, a history of missions and how to cooperate with overseas churches.”¹⁰⁶

Many who have researched and examined the BTJ training programs have concerns as to the adequacy of such training.¹⁰⁷ For example, one prominent Asian seminary president has indicated that among the majority of Chinese house churches, the zeal for missions is evident, but the lack of training is a major problem. He remarked that their missionary training usually consists of only Biblical studies. This training provides the missionaries with a decent biblical foundation; however, it leaves them largely unaware of the complexities involved with cross-cultural communication, contextualization and living in another country.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵Some of these topics include Mission History, Theology of Missions, Anthropology, Ethnographic Research in Missions, Mission strategy, Contextualization, World Religions, etc. The author is aware of his Western heritage and his bias or tendency to affirm his experience as the standard. However, the Western training model is not being held up as a norm because it is Western, but rather because of the Western church’s long history and experience with missions. This has produced a training model which, although not perfect, is helpful for adequately equipping and preparing God’s servants for cross-cultural ministry and has resulted in tremendous fruit. It also has the benefit of many years of research and case-studies which have helped mold the different elements present today.

¹⁰⁶Paul Hattaway, *Henan*, 234. Due to the size and resources commanded by the Word of Life network, it is my opinion that they have one of the better missionary training programs found in mainland China.

¹⁰⁷This is apparently a problem for most all majority world missionary movements. “What we have seen in our circles is that there is precious little preparation of a Missiological nature for those missionaries coming from the majority world. While typically they have a thorough theological education at a residential seminary, most have had almost no orientation in cross-cultural ministry, linguistics, mission strategy, mission history, and theology of missions.” Rutt, “Global Mission Partnership,” 63.

¹⁰⁸Seminary president (name kept private for security reasons), interview by author, 6 January 2011, Asia (country kept private for security reasons). This individual is designated as S3.

The lack of missiological training centers. Another contact, who has researched the missionary movement of the Chinese church for the past two decades, also lamented that the available training programs are simply not adequate. Most programs only include one missions course in the span of 2-3 years. He estimated that in all of China, there are 6-10 meaningful training institutes that have suitable courses and assignments.¹⁰⁹ Brother Mark's estimates in 2010 are even lower. He notes:

Only with the help of foreign mission agencies, presently there are 3 or 4 proper Mission Schools established in China which accommodate less than 70 students. Apart from these fulltime mission schools, there are some Mission Classes, only in regular basis, designed for pastors to create awareness in mission. Probably we have to wait for some more years before we can see China Church sending out properly trained missionaries [*sic*].¹¹⁰

The BTJGM website contact recognized some of these shortcomings and said that Western missionaries could really provide a great service to BTJ, specifically through giving them anthropological and cultural training.¹¹¹

Poor field preparation. Moreover, in other situations, a lack of foresight and

¹⁰⁹Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 1 December 2011, Houston, TX. This missionary is M1.

¹¹⁰Brother Mark is S1.

¹¹¹This section is not meant to characterize the BTJ training centers as completely void of relevant Missiological topics or naïve about Islam. The actual training received can vary quite widely from location to location. Meg Crossman shares, "the Han have very little specific training as to *how* to reach minorities, yet the believers are inventive as well as practical. They saw their lack and now have created training options that prepare their workers to be more effective. Some Muslim background believers have come to give them training on how to reach Muslims. This same style of training occurs when former Buddhist monks from within China offer the house churches the kind of focused training they need." Crossman, "Minority Groups in China," 291.

planning has resulted in hardships for BTJ missionaries.¹¹² For example, the seminary president shared how approximately seven years ago, a host of single young women were sent out by a network to different regions of the Middle East. Unfortunately, they had been given no plan for obtaining visas and lacked financial resources to get short-term tourist visas. They spent the majority of their time trying to find a way to stay in the country and had no time to learn the language, or share their faith. After a short time, many were exhausted and settled for low paying jobs that forced them to work a lot of hours. Sharing the gospel failed to be a priority, as survival become the foremost concern in their lives. He remarked that there are other such stories and summed up this strategy as migration, not missions.¹¹³ These problems are resulting from a lack of cross-cultural experience among the BTJ leaders.¹¹⁴

The resulting attrition. Brother Mark, S1, also notes various hardships faced due to a lack of training and adequate preparation.

The main problems where China missionaries encounter are their capability, training, and financial support Most of these missionaries are young, with lower education, less professional, language inability, without full training in theology and mission, lack of field support, and finally less financial support due to their poor sending Churches. Many of these missionaries face depression or even casualty in the mission field [*sic*].¹¹⁵

¹¹²One missionary who has worked with BTJ for approximately a decade shared that it is the ‘mundane’ issues that cause so many of the BTJ missionaries to leave the field and return home. The biggest issue is obtaining a visa, but also extends to food, language, health-care, education for children, and just day-to-day problems that comes from living in a foreign culture. Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 4 October 2011, Virginia. This missionary is designated as M5.

¹¹³Seminary president (name kept private for security reasons), interview by author, 6 January 2011, Asia (country kept private for security reasons). This source is designated as S3.

¹¹⁴The leaders themselves acknowledge this when they say, “You must remember that almost no one in our churches has ever been outside China, so simply thinking about how to get there has been a major step.” Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 96.

¹¹⁵Author and source kept anonymous due to security concerns.

The result of inadequate missiological training is a high attrition rate. Wen Mu has observed this to be true in the BTJ movement, especially among the more charismatic groups. “Since these charismatic churches are sending the workers out in haste, many missionaries receive very little training in cross-cultural ministry. The casualty rate of these workers is very high.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, Patrick Fung notes, “There have been individual examples of missionaries sent out from China to the Middle East in the past few years, but attrition rate has been high because of lack of training and preparation and mission structures.”¹¹⁷ Finally, another Chinese missions professional who works mostly with Diaspora Chinese, expressed her disappointment that “as we note the Chinese churches’ increasing involvement in cross-cultural worldwide missions, we also need to recognize that few Asian missionaries have served for more than 20 years. Due to poor preparation and lack of training, a large number of missionaries do not continue after their first term; some even leave after one or two years.”¹¹⁸

Finally, a missionary who has been training mainland Chinese missionaries for years estimated that “a large majority [of Chinese missionaries] return back to China after

¹¹⁶Mu, “The Present and the Future of the BTJ Movement,” 11.

¹¹⁷Fung, “China and beyond,” 15.

¹¹⁸Loun Ling Lee, “Toward a Maturing Chinese Mission” *Encounters Mission Ezine* 9 (2005) [on-line]; accessed 10 August 2011; available from http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/chinese_mission3_09.pdf; Internet. When this online article refers to ‘Chinese churches’, it is mainly referring to non-mainland Chinese missionaries, which is outside the scope of this study. However, it is clear that if Chinese missionaries from Hong Kong and Taiwan (which are much more culturally diverse than the mainland) are having difficulty crossing cultures, then this is all the more true for Chinese mainland missionaries. Moreover, due to the religious freedom afforded in these areas, their training methods are much more developed than those on the mainland. This is not a new problem either. In 1976, Chaeok Chun alluded to “the fact that many Asian missionaries are returning from their fields does point to this lack [in maturity], in addition to other practical reasons for their returning.” Chaeok Chun, “An Asian Missionary Commenting on Asian Mission,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 120.

a short period of time,” which he later qualified as within the first two years.¹¹⁹ From his conversations with house church network leaders, their two primary reasons for returning stem from “their inability to minister effectively cross culturally AND from a disconnect from their sending fellowship.”¹²⁰ This inability is traced back to a training model where they “receive a large amount of theological training . . . but have very limited opportunity for learning the ‘hands on . . . how to . . . nuts and bolts’ [*sic*] of missions. As a result, they often are either afraid to go or they do go but often return or stagnate from ineffectiveness.”¹²¹

Lack of Qualified Workers

The nations targeted by the BTJ movement include some of the most resistant UPGs. While the Buddhist peoples tend to be indifferent to the gospel message, the Muslims are typically strongly opposed to the gospel and foreign missionaries. As a result, Christian workers in the Middle East have stressed that incoming missionaries should strive to possess a professional status and have an in-depth understanding of Islamic culture.¹²² The work that remains among these UPGs requires well-trained missionaries who understand the complexities of cross-cultural work.

Despite these facts, the BTJ spokespersons continue to exclusively emphasize

¹¹⁹Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 17 October 2011. This missionary is M3.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Anonymous, “Interview from the Land of the Pharaohs,” *Back To Jerusalem Bulletin* 2 (December, 2004): 7-8. This author is designated as S4.

the Chinese missionary's spiritual vitality and ability to endure suffering.¹²³ Though these are commendable traits, they do not ensure that the missionary will understand how to "become all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:19-23). Kim, after visiting a number of BTJ centers, was quite concerned about the workers who were being trained.

This writer's personal observation with many BTJ trainees was that they are mostly young people from 20 to 25 years of age with an average education of junior school to senior high school. Only a few have some college education. Most of them come from rural areas with little experience in city life, and almost none had any cross-culture experience outside of China prior their joining the program for training. Almost all lack any professional skill [*sic*].¹²⁴

This portrait is quite different from the "experienced and seasoned" standard mentioned by the house church leaders in Hattaway's book. This is why some have mocked the movement, saying it consists of mainly "uneducated peasants." Tony Lambert agrees with Kim's assessment and adds,

Most of these Christians, highly effective in their own rural setting in Henan and other parts of rural China, flounder when they seek to work in the growing megacities within China itself. If they struggle to survive spiritually in Shenzhen or Shanghai, how much more difficult it would be to live in Cairo or Istanbul, let alone Riyadh or Tehran!¹²⁵

Another missionary, who taught English to BTJ trainees, had many of the same concerns. She remarked that all fifteen of her trainees were under the age of twenty. Moreover, most of them did not end up going to the mission field because they were not

¹²³Paul Hattaway shares, "it's more than the quantity of missionaries-it's the quality. In my opinion, the kind of Christianity that God has instilled in Chinese believers allows them to impact the Islamic and Hindu and Buddhist worlds in a way that most other Christians cannot." Stafford, "A Captivating Vision," 85.

¹²⁴Kim, "Mission Movement of the Christian Community," 75.

¹²⁵Lambert, "China and the 21st Century Missions," 50.

ready for missionary work “on many levels.”¹²⁶ A co-worker of this missionary added that most of the trainees did not have a high school degree, much less a clear call to the mission field and only a small percentage ended up being sent. Moreover, among those who were sent, the vast majority stayed for two years or less, with a miniscule amount staying after finding a job. There are no “career [missionaries] as in supported by the home people.”¹²⁷ She later remarked that the majority of their support came from the foreign missionaries who trained them.

One twenty year veteran missionary in China shared that, in his experience with BTJ, the biggest hindrance to progress was a lack of qualified trainees. He mentioned that the BTJ training center in his area experienced significant problems with nepotism.

We trusted local leaders to select qualified candidates for the missionary training. Our expectation was that they would select believers that were called and eager to go to the field. However, half-way through the training we learned many of them were not called. They were there because their ‘uncle’ told them to come. Or they saw it as another chance to get some good training.¹²⁸

As a result, a number of the trainees were sent home and never made it to the mission field.

Brother Yun answered the question, “Has the [BTJ] vision reached the ordinary believers in China yet?” with the reply, “Gradually, over the last several years, the Back to Jerusalem movement has gathered momentum so strong that more of the

¹²⁶Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 16 September 2011, Houston, TX. This missionary is designated at M6.

¹²⁷Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 17 September 2011. This missionary is designated at M7.

¹²⁸Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 19 February 2011, China. This missionary is designated at M8.

church must be sent outside China soon. They must let some steam off before they explode!”¹²⁹ While Brother Yun’s zeal and passion for this vision should be commended, one wonders if he is speaking too broadly here. He certainly can represent some house churches in Henan or in other locations with which he has close ties, and others that he may have close ties with, but how many of the approximate 100 million believers in China can he really speak for?¹³⁰ It was noted earlier in this chapter that Samuel Pearson, after asking numerous Christians from registered and unregistered churches about BTJ, could find only one who had even heard of the vision. Moreover, this is in the city of Nanjing, which in 2010 had approximately four and a half million people,¹³¹ indicating around 315,000 Christians.¹³² Due to the difficulty that many BTJ centers are experiencing in recruiting qualified workers, the reports of some who have investigated BTJ training centers, and the great disparity between the goals of the movement (100,000 sent by 2007) and the actual results (hundreds or possibly thousands sent as of 2011), it is obvious that there is a definite lack of qualified workers in the movement, and that the vision has not been embraced as widely as reported.

This is not to say, BTJ missionaries (or any missionary) must have an advanced degree in order to succeed or be qualified to serve, but rather that the work is

¹²⁹Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 96.

¹³⁰Estimates of the number of Christians in China can widely vary from 20 to 230 million. Hattaway, after surveying many different attempts to accurately depict the number of Christians in China, settles on more than 7 percent of the population. Paul Hattaway, “How many Christians are there in China?” *Asia Harvest* 106 (2010), 8.

¹³¹Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 239.

¹³²This is using the 7 percent ratio Hattaway established, which is conservative due to the fact that Nanjing has the largest seminary in China and a long Christian history. Additionally, Mandryk in the 2010 *Operation World* places the Christian population in the Jiangsu province at 9.2 percent. *Ibid.*

complex and the more missiological training they can receive, and the stronger their personal calling is, the more likely they are of having a long-lasting, fruitful ministry. This lack of qualified workers, again stresses for the need for training church leaders to help their churches become GCCs.

Language Barriers

Learning the language of the host culture is extremely difficult, costly, and time consuming. As a result, some missionary strategies actually regard a strong emphasis on language learning to be unnecessary, believing such an emphasis pulls the missionary away from evangelism and other ministry activities. Such a strategy desires immediate ministry results, possibly at the cost of good language acquisition.¹³³ The language barrier is significant for the BTJ missionaries due to the fact that very few Chinese citizens are bilingual. Moreover, if they are bilingual, the vast majority of these have studied English, which is not the mother tongue of the UPGs along the Silk Road. Therefore, the language barrier must be overcome if BTJ is going to accomplish its vision.

However, to this point, it appears that Chinese missionaries have been reluctant to, or had little success in, learning the UPGs' languages. Regarding the minority groups in their own country, Meg Crossman notes, "Generally speaking, most of the workers have *not* learned the languages of the minority groups."¹³⁴ Miriam Adeney agrees as she

¹³³David Garrison calls this damaging process "sequentialism," where the missionary takes each task in sequence (for example obtaining language first, then developing relationships, which leads to witnessing, etc). "They [CPM type missionaries] insist on witnessing from day one, even before the language is mastered." David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 244. Although witnessing should be emphasized early on in the missionary's career, such a perspective can lead to a minimizing of the importance of language acquisition, which has been known to hinder effective long-term ministry and lead to early resignations and deep frustration on the part of cross-cultural workers.

¹³⁴Crossman, "Minority Groups in China," 291.

quotes a missionary with over a decade of experience in Western China: “For thirty years house church Christians have served in Northwest China. Yet scarcely any has learned the local language. To the indigenous people, these Chinese missionaries appear to be just one more arm of the imperialistic Han.”¹³⁵ Since the Han missionaries can communicate with some of these minority groups using Mandarin, they feel learning the new language is a waste of precious time when they could be sharing the gospel. However, this strategy does have its disadvantages, as Adeney pointed out.

Numerous missionary colleagues have observed the tendency for Han missionaries to arrive at another country, only to quickly identify with the Chinese Diaspora there and serve as their pastor. Most expatriates can understand this phenomenon as it is much less taxing to spend time with those who share one’s own cultural and linguistic background. Moreover, in such a setting, spiritual fruit can be produced much more quickly. Gravitating to the Diaspora will typically be a great temptation for Chinese missionaries due to the fact that their mission field will usually have a community of Chinese already living there. While the missionary might have an effective ministry among the Diaspora there, the UPG will not be reached. Kim has noted the following characteristics among newly developed Chinese Diaspora Christian communities in emerging markets (outside of China):

1. More ethno-centric than ecumenical in spirit.
2. Diasporic growth rather than cross-cultural growth.
3. Most of these Christian merchants are in survival mode-both business wise and spiritual wise.

¹³⁵Miriam Adeney, “Trends in Asia: Implications for Mission,” *Mission Round Table: The Occasional Bulletin of OMF Mission Research* 1 (2005): 4.

4. Ambivalent to antagonistic to local community with similar reciprocity.¹³⁶

Michael Tai has also noticed this tendency and astutely observes, “Chinese churches have so far done little in cross-cultural missions. Chinese missions by and large consist of missions to Chinese. Missionaries from Taiwan go to Thailand not to reach the Thais but the Chinese minorities there. For the Chinese missions means reaching the Chinese in other parts of the world.”¹³⁷ He makes a strong appeal for the Chinese missionaries to make language and cultural acquisition their top priority during the first two years of service.

The missionary’s goal is to integrate himself into local community and this means reading current affairs and popular culture too. Admittedly European grammar and phonetics pose a stiff challenge to Chinese speakers, and what takes an Indian learner six months to master, may take a Chinese up to two years. But if European missionaries study Chinese, surely Chinese missionaries can make the same commitment to mastering Europe’s languages. Even Koreans who face greater difficulty with European languages do not shrink from the challenge.¹³⁸

Funding

Monetary issues are currently one of the more significant challenges that the house church leaders need to overcome. Listed below are a variety of financial factors that are hindering the fulfillment of the vision.

High cost of missions. Kim states the obvious when he says, “The ability to send cross-culture missionaries to foreign places requires a huge pool of resources,

¹³⁶Kim, “Missiological implications,” 87. Only his observations that were relevant to this study were included. Also, these observations were specifically in reference to businessmen (primarily from Wenzhou) who are seeking to spread their faith as a secondary purpose.

¹³⁷Tai, “The Chinese are Coming,” 21.

¹³⁸Ibid., 22.

money, personnel, training, and supporting structure.”¹³⁹ For example, one large North American mission agency, in 2011, had an annual budget of \$308,500,000, which supported almost 5,000 full time units.¹⁴⁰ These rough figures do not even account for hundreds and thousands of volunteers who raise their own support to participate in short-term trips, in addition to paid missions pastors, a multitude of mission volunteers, etc.¹⁴¹

Relative poverty of Chinese believers. As already mentioned, China has the world’s second largest economy. In relationship to per capital income, in 2008, China ranked extremely low at \$2,940.¹⁴² This figure amounts to an average income of under \$300 per month.¹⁴³ However, the cost of doing missions is still quite high, especially when the missionaries are sent to a more developed country like Japan.

Poor giving patterns. Moreover, raising funds for missionary work can be especially difficult among house church believers who may not have great giving habits. Michael Tai, who is hoping to recruit mainland Chinese to serve in Europe, clearly articulates how finances are hindering the sending of mainland Chinese missionaries:

Chinese churches balk at spending up to ten times more to send a missionary to Europe compared to what they pay their senior pastor. They often equate poverty with spirituality. Low wages, they believe, are the best

¹³⁹Kim, “Missiological implications,” 87.

¹⁴⁰International Mission Board, “Fast Facts” [on-line]; accessed 3 October 2011; available from <http://www.imb.org/main/page.asp?StoryID=4452&LanguageID=1709>; Internet.

¹⁴¹For example, fund raising, organizing mission conferences, sending supplies and resources, serving as prayer advocates, handling miscellaneous financial affairs, etc.

¹⁴²Europa Publications, *The Europa World Year Book 2010*, 51st Ed., vol. 1, (London: Routledge, 2010), s.v. “The People’s Republic of China.”

¹⁴³Although, the author would note that significant inflation has been observed in China from 2008-2012, and the average salary now is significantly higher—most likely fifty percent higher.

test of motives; they reason that a pastor who works for a minimal salary proves he is not there for the money. Such thinking must change before the Chinese are ready to send missionaries to Europe.¹⁴⁴

Although sending a fully-supported missionary to a Silk Road country is much more economical (as compared with Europe), it still requires the church to pay three to five times what it pays the senior pastor. Brother Mark, also, was not extremely positive regarding the financial stewardship of Chinese Christians; however, he was hopeful for the future.

I would say most of the Christians in China are belonged to the lower classes in the society. Until now, we do not observe good tithing in China Church, with only some exceptions in the cities. Nevertheless, we can foresee a good future in financial contributions among Christians, by then we can encourage more mission and sending works [*sic*].¹⁴⁵

In an interview with the BTJGM staff member, he remarked that the rural house churches typically cannot afford to send missionaries; however, the believers in the cities have better giving habits. Nonetheless, these city churches are not always so disciplined with designated giving, oftentimes using mission funds for emergencies that may arise.¹⁴⁶

When money is raised to send missionaries, it is not uncommon for the funds to cover transportation expenses alone. Pastor Lin (林安国, lín ān guó), the director for Gospel Operation International for Chinese Christians in California, laments that most BTJ missionaries he has had contact with only receive an airplane ticket. As a result

¹⁴⁴Tai, "The Chinese are Coming," 28.

¹⁴⁵Brother Mark is S1.

¹⁴⁶Name is kept private for security reasons, Contact at the Back to Jerusalem Gospel Mission, interview by author, 16 September 2011, Houston, TX. This individual is S2.

when they arrive on the mission field, their daily needs are not met.¹⁴⁷ L. K. Chiu, who is involved in training mainland Chinese for cross-cultural work, related the following heartrending story, which poignantly illustrates Pastor Lin's concern.

Not too long ago, I met with a brother in Beijing who shared with me his missionary expedition. This young man was sent by his church network as a missionary to Tibet with only a one-way ticket in his pocket and a heart full of passion and love towards the people. He spent almost a year there without prior training or support of any sort, and very soon he found himself begging for food on the streets of Lhasa in order to stay alive. This is just one of many sad stories in the recent history of missionary endeavors among the house churches in China. In my personal interactions with different house church network leaders, I can testify that a situation like this is definitely not intentional; rather, it is a painful reality when facing the lack of resources and expertise for cross-cultural missionary training.¹⁴⁸

Lack of responsible planning. When asked how the BTJ movement hopes to fund their missionaries, the answer is typically vague and spiritualized. Hattaway reports, "From what I've seen, they don't really have any structured plan how they are going to financially support these workers." He continues, "they're not looking for handouts from the West, that's for sure. They're looking for the hand of the Lord. But they don't really plan and strategize financial matters like we do in the West. They just believe that if they're called by God to go somewhere then God will provide. And he does."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷Lin An Guo, "Back to Jerusalem-A Stunning Vision," Blog [on-line]; accessed 11 September 2011; available from <http://hi.baidu.com/pippasong/blog/item/2605c81350f6ac0c203f2e68.html>; Internet. In chinese, translation author's own.

¹⁴⁸L. K. Chiu, "A Piece of the Puzzle: Training Mainland Chinese to be Cross-Cultural Missionaries," *China Source*, no. 1 (2006): 8.

¹⁴⁹Stafford, "A Captivating Vision," 86. It is encouraging to hear G. Wright Doyle in March 2010 note that the criticisms of BTJ "seem to have been taken seriously by its leaders in recent years, resulting in significant adjustments and improvements in what was, admittedly, a rather naïve strategy." Doyle, "Mission, Millennium, and Politics," Internet.

Unfortunately, it appears that this “God will provide” mentality is greatly hindering the BTJ movement. Hattaway asserts that God always provides. However, why is it that only a tiny fraction of the original missionary sending goal has been reached? Moreover, why are there a number of stories that missionaries are returning early due to funding issues? A lack of responsible financial planning is creating horrendous problems for the well-intentioned, yet naïve house church missions movement.

Dependency on Western funds? In the quote above, Hattaway reported that the BTJ leaders are not looking for handouts from the West, but this assertion does not seem to be the case. The house church leaders have made it abundantly clear that they are willing to receive Western funds for their operations, and one could argue this is the primary purpose of their English websites and television program. “Dozens” of BTJ ministries are operating in the West raising significant funds for Chinese missionaries. A large percentage of what has been accomplished through the BTJ movement is the result of cooperation with foreigners and the resources they are providing.

Seeking foreign resources for BTJ work is not an incriminating activity and there are some ways the affluent Western church can contribute financially that will help, and not hinder, the BTJ vision. However, the Chinese house church must learn from the past and avoid dependency on foreign funds at all costs. Its primary source of funding should be the one-hundred million Chinese Christians who, when they catch a vision for missions, can do more than they ever dreamed or imagined.

Transparency and accountability missing. Financial transparency and accountability are extremely important, especially when the funds are flowing from

Western nations to the majority world. Regarding Western funds being given to BTJ, Yi Du Kam has noted, “To date, very little accounting has been given publicly. This issue has been a major stumbling block for the movement.”¹⁵⁰ Lal Senanayake observed,

It is not unethical to receive or to raise foreign funds for a ministry where it is not possible to raise funds locally because the church is small and/or poor. The problem lies where these monies have not been properly accounted for, to any donor organizations or to any responsible local governing body. This inconsiderate, unaccountable giving and receiving of foreign funds contribute hugely to financial corruption among Christians.¹⁵¹

Unfortunately, not a single BTJ organization in the West is a part of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) organization, nor had information available on ministrywatch.com.¹⁵² The backtojerusalem.com staff commented that their organization cannot participate due to the ECFA’s requirements for public disclosure, stating it would result in security concerns.¹⁵³ While this reasoning may sound legitimate, the ECFA does work with many organizations that are doing clandestine work in restricted countries; therefore, it does not seem to be a valid fear. Moreover, www.backtojerusalem.com’s financial statements are nowhere disclosed, and were not sent privately to the author despite multiple requests. This observation is neither

¹⁵⁰ Yi Du Kam, “Beyond ‘Back to Jerusalem,’” *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 2.

¹⁵¹ Lal Senanayake, “Social Factors influencing Christian Corruption,” in *A Different Perspective: Asian and African Leaders’ Views on Mission* (Sydney: OCA Books, 2006), 92. The author can attest to the fact that corruption and greed are rampant in Chinese culture. Therefore people, including house church believers, tend to be very careful about financial contributions. Even in the church, stories abound of leaders who misappropriate funds for personal gain. It is not uncommon for the Sunday offering to go unreported or for the allocations of received funds to be kept private among the leadership.

¹⁵² This website’s mission is “Educating and Empowering Donors to Support Christian Ministries.”

¹⁵³ BTJ website contact, interview by author, 12 November 2011, Houston, TX. This individual is designated as S5.

an attack upon this organization, nor an accusation of wrongdoing; rather, it illustrates the lack of transparency and accountability that is hindering the BTJ vision.

Other Missionary Efforts

Not all the missionary activity in the Chinese house church is connected to the BTJ vision. The discussion below is an effort to portray the various types of missionary activity which are occurring among the Chinese house church today, outside of the BTJ movement.

House Church and Mission Agency Partnership

In 2000, a mission agency partnered with a house church network in order to send out trained and adequately supported missionaries to a UPG in Southern China.¹⁵⁴ The network was responsible for selecting the missionary candidates, and the agency was responsible for training them. It is important to note that these missionary candidates were also from a minority group that is considered a cousin group¹⁵⁵ to the UPG targeted. The mission agency and the house church network cooperated to ensure the missionaries' living expenses and needs were met.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴This information was obtained through a personal conversation in 2009 and then verified through an email. Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 25 August 2011. This missionary is designated as M9.

¹⁵⁵Linguistically and culturally, these two groups are very similar with one most likely originating from the other.

¹⁵⁶Regarding the support of the workers, the missionary shared, "we [the mission agency] provided for the men going out 2x2 housing, travel and small stipend (less than they would get staying at home) for a 2 year term. We provided a small supplement to the churches to provide fertilizer for their families back home to increase their farm output to replace the loss of the husband working the field. The HOUSE CHURCHs were to help them with other needs and to provide help on the farm." Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 25 August 2011. This missionary is M9.

After establishing “clear criteria for spiritual maturity and church planting skills,”¹⁵⁷ and completing a two-week training, the agency was disappointed that the first group of trainees did not meet their standards and were sent back home. The second group was much more qualified, and they were ready to be sent after being trained in the agency’s “best practices.” The missionary overseeing this project later lamented that in this training the students were given too much information, “almost a full seminary curriculum in two weeks!”¹⁵⁸ However, this information was taught with a goal to promote church planting movements (CPM). Therefore, the applications of the classes typically terminated in evangelism training, discipleship methods, and church planting techniques. The newly trained missionaries were then sent, with great hopes for success.

Regarding language, the missionary shared, “The house church partners did use mandarin initially but started learning the local UPG language quickly since they were ‘cousin’ PGs. Being sent from another people group that was ethnically and linguistically similar went a long way toward helping them be accepted.”¹⁵⁹ In the first few months, these thirty-three missionaries were able to plant fifteen to twenty churches. This was a remarkable feat for such a resistant area. However, after a few months, this group of missionaries began to suffer considerable persecution. Some were beaten and other imprisoned. At one point, when the persecution was at its greatest, the missionaries were pulled out for approximately three months. After things quieted down, the missionaries were asked to go back to their place of service. Unfortunately, but

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸Ibid. The missionary later clarified that the seminary training included an overview of OT, NT, systematic theology, church history, and hermeneutics.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

understandably, only eight were willing to return. The missionary shared, “We learned through time that this is a pretty typical winnowing ratio in difficult areas – about 20-25 percent stick with it.”¹⁶⁰

The entire partnership lasted about three years (the initial agreement was for two years). Through this experience the missionary had the following impressions and suggestions for future work. First of all, he was disappointed because the house churches did not uphold their part of the financial obligation. Why did they renege?

Out of sight, out of mind. They forgot that they men were sent out and didn’t take up a collection to care for their families – not all but most churches neglected them. Part of this was my fault: I could have waited 6-12 more months to let the sending churches 1) develop the vision deeply throughout their network (not just a leadership vision) and 2) take up collections for the families.¹⁶¹

Secondly, although he remarked that these indigenous missionaries were trained well and received the training well, the two week session was not sufficient for them “to deconstruct old ways of doing things. It took on average 6-12 months of them practicing these new patterns and being re-trained each 3 months to completely make the switch-over to CPM ways. Later CPM catalysts that transitioned into the work adopted these patterns more quickly because it was now the ethos and accepted way to do things.”¹⁶²

Finally, he noted that “we had a much harder time with Han Chinese partners that later joined our work. They had to do more intentional incarnation.”¹⁶³ Therefore, at

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Ibid.

least in this instance, the Chinese minority group believers were much more effective in reaching another Chinese minority group, as compared with the Han.

House Church Missionary Activity among Chinese Minority Groups without Partnerships

This author would venture to say, when the Chinese believers think about missions, they typically first think of reaching the fifty-five minority people groups living within China.

There is a growing appreciation of the fact that China is a wonderful multi-ethnic nation, with over 400 different people groups which provide a training-ground for cross-cultural missions. With the exception of the Lisu, some Miao & Yi groups, and some other minorities in south West China, the vast majority of these minority peoples either have no church at all or only a small number of Christians.¹⁶⁴

Some house churches will take mission trips to a minority group location (mostly Northwest, Southwest, and central China) for the purpose of sharing the gospel and planting churches. For example, one pastor, who took the author's Introduction to Missions class, regularly takes about ten people to Southern China to minister to the Southern Zhuang people group (南壮族, nánzhuàngzú). Asia Harvest estimates that, of the four million Southern Zhuang, only about six thousand would claim any sort of Christian affiliation.

Because this pastor's church is in the North, it takes them over forty hours by train to arrive at this "foreign" mission field. They are also confronted with a language barrier since the Southern Zhuang people have their own language. However, since the Zhuang youth have learned Mandarin Chinese in their schools, they often translate for the

¹⁶⁴Lambert, "China and the 21st Century Missions," 52.

adults. Their missionary activity primarily consist of teaching the local believers and evangelizing their neighbors. The pastor noted that they have been doing this every summer for a few years.

As of today, very few in this people group have embraced the gospel.

Operation China reports,

The Southern Zhuang, because of their linguistic diversity, have no Scriptures, recordings, or Jesus film. Little has changes since this 1922 report describing Guangxi (the province where most Southern Zhuang live): ‘There are 58 cities, 700 market towns, and over 17,000 villages, all teeming with human lives for whom no effort whatever is being put forth.’¹⁶⁵

With the growth of the Chinese church over the last 30 years, and the missionary efforts of the church just described, there is great reason to hope for a strong, viable church among the Southern Zhuang, and other Chinese minority groups in the coming years.

College Students Partnering with a Mission Organization and their House Church

As is the case in America, many of the largest universities in China have Christian fellowships; yet, they are underground and not officially recognized by the government. The students will typically meet weekly in their fellowship (团契, tuánqì) with some also faithfully participating in a church on Sunday morning. Moreover, some Christian students will be challenged to take a short-term missions trip (短宣, duǎnxuān) to an international destination such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, or another country that is near China’s border. These trips typically last one to two years and require the student to

¹⁶⁵Paul Hattaway, *Operation China* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 573.

raise, by Chinese standards, a significant amount of money.¹⁶⁶ In regards to moving the house church toward a more missiological orientation, the impact of this missionary activity has been mixed.¹⁶⁷ First of all, the house churches tend to resent the appeals for money. The churches in China, at least in the recent past, have not been terribly affluent. As a result, many church members are not comfortable with someone coming to ask them for money that will not be used directly for the welfare of the church. They are simply not accustomed to this appeal for money and do not know how to interpret it.

Second, the amount of money that is being requested seems excessive to a congregation that is unfamiliar with the high cost associated with missions. Westerners do not ordinarily face the same phenomenon since they are typically traveling from a very expensive country to a developing country where their funds can go much further. However, when the college students are asking for an amount of money that will almost triple what the local pastor earns, it strikes the brothers and sisters as wasteful and improper.¹⁶⁸

A third negative impact of these short term trips is that the congregation often perceives these young people as being unqualified to minister and are most-likely more

¹⁶⁶In a recent trip, a group of single students were asked to raise ¥85,000 (\$13,492) each, for a one-year trip. Compare this to the average Chinese salary in the author's city of ¥30,000 (\$4,762) per year, which is probably a little above what a fully supported house church pastor might earn.

¹⁶⁷This information was obtained through the testimony of three missionaries and one house church leader. Names are kept private for security reasons, interview by author, 3 April 2009, Asia. These four individuals are designated as M10, M11, M12, and S6.

¹⁶⁸This is not the author expressing his opinion on this subject, but rather trying to communicate the perspective which has been shared in various conversations. It is the opinion of this author that even in America, the missionaries and their agencies tend to seldom share the complete cost of supporting a missionary unit for fear of how the congregation might react. I do wonder what an American congregation would say if a missionary came to them clearly revealing his need for \$150,000 per year to minister in Japan, when their pastor only earns \$75,000 per annum.

interested in travelling, rather than missionary work. Again, these types of comments can arise out of a general ignorance of how missions works, or possibly it comes from a real aversion to the high cost of the missionary endeavor. Or even worse, the congregation has witnessed young college kids taking these trips and is unimpressed with the results.

Additionally, it is not terribly uncommon for some of these college students to only be marginally associated with the church, while spending most of their time with the on-campus fellowship. This phenomenon is well known in America as many university fellowship adherents have a difficult time transitioning to a healthy and active church life after graduating from college. If the short-term missionary is only loosely associated with the local church, it is certainly understandable why the congregation would react negatively to his request for financial support.

Finally, the mission trip will not typically result in new church plants or other lasting or ongoing work. Ordinarily, the missionary will be effective in learning the new culture, sharing the gospel a number of times and seeing a few come to faith. However, they do not have the experience, or sometimes even the vision, for planting churches that will sustain the new believers long after they are gone. As a result, some Chinese Christians would view such a trip as a bad investment. It should not be surprising that a decent percentage of giving to these college students actually comes from foreigners who are living in China, or from American Christians who hear about these trips and can contribute through mission organizations.

Given all the negative comments above, does any good come out of these short term mission trips? Two primary benefits are to be gained from these trips. The first is that the short-term missionary gets firsthand experience the mission field and God's work

in his life. This experience usually has a tremendous impact upon their lives and their overall future participation in missions.¹⁶⁹ This in turn has an impact on the churches they share with when they return. Secondly, it would be a mistake to say a few new believers in a hostile, restricted country is insignificant. We should celebrate any work that is done in these barren lands because, as was reported earlier, ninety percent of the remaining UPGs in this world are located along the Silk Road. The problem in the above scenario is not the idea of a short-term mission trip. Rather, the problem centers on the missionary's qualifications, his shallow relationship with the church, and a lack of experience with and vision for short-term trips.

Tentmakers

Without question, the Chinese house church believes the only way it can achieve its missionary goals is through the tentmaking model. In the 2002 Beijing forum, Tennant notes that the house church leaders emerged with the goal of mobilizing 100,000 missionaries. Regarding support he said, "The Chinese church envisions most of these workers to be self-supporting, using their talents and vocations to relocate all along the ancient Silk Route."¹⁷⁰ The leaders believe they do not have the funds to fully support the number of missionaries they envision sending to the nations. This model has already been used by a countless number of Chinese Christians as they have moved to restricted access countries to serve as businessmen, agricultural workers, beauticians, shopkeepers,

¹⁶⁹For example, all three students in the "Chinese Missionaries" video with Xiao He were deeply impacted by the need for the Chinese church to send missionaries to the country where they served. Two of them remarked that they personally want to return, while one feels called to be a mobilizer in China.

¹⁷⁰Tennant, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 240.

contract workers, as well as in many other positions. The Chinese city most well known for its Christians going to the nations is Wenzhou (温州, wēnzhōu).

Wenzhou international businessman model. The expansion of the Chinese economy has provided ample opportunities for Chinese businessmen to travel abroad and grow their businesses. No locality inside China has benefitted from this trend more than the prosperous city of Wenzhou. Approximately 98 percent of its GDP is generated from private businesses, whereas the national average is 50-60 percent.¹⁷¹ In 2007, the per capita income in this city was double the national average.¹⁷² The people of Wenzhou “are entrepreneurs by tradition . . . further, Wenzhouese carries their age-old tradition as itinerant merchants wherever there is business opportunity; Wenzhou merchants had been doing business in Europe since the 1800s! [*sic*]”¹⁷³

Wenzhou had no Christian presence until 1867, when George Scott of the China Inland Mission (CIM) came with the good news.¹⁷⁴ Since that time, the gospel has had an amazing impact upon this city, to the point that it is known throughout the country as China’s Jerusalem.¹⁷⁵ “They have the highest percentage of Christians among all municipalities in China with official estimates ranging from 700,000 to 1 million (10 percent to 15 percent of population) and unofficial claims at least 1.5 million (20

¹⁷¹Kim, “Missiological implications,” 82.

¹⁷²Nanlai Cao, *Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 16.

¹⁷³Kim, “Missiological implications,” 82-83.

¹⁷⁴Lambert, *Back to Jerusalem*, 183.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 181.

percent).”¹⁷⁶

This combination of a strong Christian influence and a tendency toward itinerant business has led to the spread of the gospel in all directions. Kim estimates that

at any given time, there are at least 1 million, possibly as many as 2 million Wenzhounese who are living as either internal migrants in China or migrants overseas doing business As many of them are Christians they often establish Christian gatherings among themselves in new places for worship where hitherto there wasn’t any Christian presence [*sic*].”¹⁷⁷

Regarding the Wenzhou businessmen, Nanlai Cao adds, “Many Christian entrepreneurs give their wealth to the church and spread faith as they travel across China.”¹⁷⁸

Nonetheless, the above is not always the most effective missionary strategy, or in many cases, is not a missionary strategy at all. Many of the Wenzhou businessmen are primarily going out to earn a profit. The locals’ attitude toward these men (and their religion) of course depends upon the benefit brought by the Wenzhou businessmen. As it has been already noted in this chapter under the heading “language barriers,” oftentimes the locals develop an ambivalent to antagonistic relationship to the foreigners. Kim noted that there appears to be a growing hostility toward Chinese entrepreneurs in foreign lands. This hostility is mainly due to the competitive advantage they enjoy based on the cheap labor available to them in China, as well as their country’s currency policies.¹⁷⁹ Kim provided recent examples of Chinese merchants who suffered from violence, government

¹⁷⁶Kim, “Missiological implications,” 83.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Cao, *Constructing China's Jerusalem*, 17.

¹⁷⁹Many, if not most, argue that China has been intentionally suppressing the value of the RMB (元, yuán) in order to make their exports cheaper in foreign lands. See John Ydstie, “US China leaders to Focus on Economic Frictions,” *KPBS News* [on-line]; accessed 8 June 2011; available from <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2011/jan/18/us-china-leaders-focus-economic-frictions>; Internet.

interference, and looting in America, Spain, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, and Bucharest.¹⁸⁰

Such instability and Sino-phobic sentiments pose a threat to this mission strategy and must be considered before naïvely embarking upon a missions endeavor.

An Evaluation of the House Church's Missiology

This chapter has described the recent missionary activity of various Chinese house churches, especially in connection with the BTJ movement. Now the resultant data will be referenced in order to evaluate the missiology of the house church as known through publications and interviews. First, data will be highlighted that will verify or modify the conclusions reached previously in chapter 4. Afterwards, data from this chapter that reveals new insights about the missiology of the house church will be accentuated.¹⁸¹

Data Related to the Conclusions Reached in Chapter 4

Related to criterion 3. In the survey, financial giving was exposed to be a weakness for the represented house churches. The data in chapter 5 verified this information. A lack of financial resources was found to significantly hinder to the forward progress of the BTJ vision. The Chinese house church believers desperately need to grasp a vision for how their “unrighteous mammon” can be used by God to make an eternal difference in the lives of the unevangelized.

¹⁸⁰Kim, “Missiological implications,” 84-86.

¹⁸¹In order to help the reader see a concise overview of the weaknesses related to each criterion, they have been listed in Appendix 4.

Related to criterion 7. In the previous chapter, almost half of the participants noted that their churches have not sent a missionary because nobody is called. Moreover, the survey data revealed that the number of church members qualified to serve as a missionary is very small. This problem was repeatedly expressed in the present chapter. BTJ trainees were generally described as young, having no specific call to missions, lacking professional skills, lacking educational credentials, and devoid of cross-cultural ministry experience.

One should not assume that God has failed to bless the Chinese people with potential missionaries. Rather, the root problem is that the churches are not producing “world Christians.”¹⁸² Moreover, they are not producing world Christians because they are not GCCs. If the house church leaders implement the plan suggested in chapter 6, the BTJ training centers should no longer be lacking highly qualified and called individuals.

Related to criterion 9. Although chapter 4 rated criterion 9 as a non-weakness, this preliminary assessment must be modified. The survey participants were affirmed that they understood the needs of a missionary to be financial and prayer support, as well as pre-field training. However, the questionnaire was deficient because it did not adequately measure if the house church was “actively seeking” to support missionaries. A tentative conclusion was reached in chapter 4 that even though the house church understood how to support missionaries, it was not actively seeking to do so in the area of finances. Chapter 5 provided some stories that confirmed this assessment. There were missionaries

¹⁸²David Bryant notes, “World Christians are day-to-day disciples for whom Christ’s global cause has become the integrating, overriding priority for all that He is for them.” David Bryant, “What it Means to be a World Christian,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), D-306.

who were sent without their daily needs being provided for, and there were churches that reneged on their promised financial support because they forgot about the missionaries.

The data from chapter 5 also revealed a new limitation in the questionnaire under criterion 9. Although the data demonstrated that training was noted as a need for missionaries, the survey did not ask *what content* should be included in the missionary training program.

In chapter 5, there were examples of BTJ missionaries who received no training. These were tragic experiences that did not end well. However, even when training was provided, it oftentimes consisted primarily of biblical studies and eschewed missiological studies. Moreover, some missionary training centers were criticized for being too short, while others failed to teach the “nuts and bolts” of everyday missionary living. The basic components of missiological training should be taught in a GCC training. It will be included under criterion 7, which deals with identifying gifted people to equip/train.

New Missiological Weaknesses Discovered in Chapter 5

Related to criterion 1. The present chapter discovered the tendency for Han missionaries to gravitate to the Diaspora Chinese after they arrive on the mission field. If the missionary truly “longs to see *all peoples* hallow God’s name,” then he should not be drawn away to Diaspora ministry. On the contrary, he must be intentional in reaching the UPG and adapting to its culture. This adaptation must include a commitment to learning the new language, even when English or Chinese can be used to communicate. Moreover,

the wise missionary will seek to recruit and mobilize the Diaspora Chinese for ministry purposes.

Related to criterion 3. Seventy to eighty percent of house churches were described as opposed to international missions because it takes the focus off of the needs of China. However, Acts 1:8 leads the church to strategize in reaching beyond national borders to the ends of the earth.

Related to criterion 9. The research indicated that some Han missionaries have grown extremely discouraged when they did not see immediate spiritual fruit. The highly resistant nature of the UPGs along the Silk Road should be emphasized in order to give future missionaries realistic expectations and a desire to persevere. Moreover, a GCC will be aware of inevitable discouragement and seek to support the missionary emotionally when he is tempted to “pack up shop and return home.”

Chapter 5 also revealed some problems associated with majority world churches receiving foreign funds. Although it is not necessary for the house church to reject all foreign contributions, strict accountability and transparency should be assiduously practiced. Moreover, a special effort needs to be made to ensure dependency is not created when outside funds are being received so that Chinese believers will take personal financial responsibility for fulfilling the GC.

Also related to finances, it was discovered that church leaders have generally been negligent in making responsible plans for funding missionaries. Moreover, church members were found to be reluctant to support their full-time ministers well (1 Cor 9:14).

Related to criterion 10. Chapter 5 quoted a number of experts who expressed a concern about the ethnocentric nature of the Chinese people. Moreover, a couple of stories were relayed which evidenced this phenomenon. A proper understanding of one's own culture (and its expression of the Christian faith) and how it is different from the UPG that he is targeting, is essential to the missionary task. A GCC will be aware of its ethnocentric tendencies and seek to obtain anthropological training for its missionaries before they are sent. In this manner, the church and its missionaries will be better prepared to contextualize its message and methods for the sake of the gospel.

Conclusion

A thorough investigation of the data originating from publications and interviews verified the findings in chapter 4 that the majority of Chinese house churches being analyzed cannot be considered GCCs. Moreover, the data in chapters 4 and 5 yielded many insightful missiological weaknesses that will significantly inform the contextualized training proposal in next chapter. As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of the training proposal is to assist Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and to become GCCs.

CHAPTER 6

A MODEST PROPOSAL AND TOPICS FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Now, an attempt will be made to draw together the data that has been obtained in order to provide a contextualized training proposal for Chinese house churches. This proposal will assist the Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and become GCCs. Because this training will be typically be taught by international missionaries who are serving the house church, a section on international missiological partnership has been included at the beginning. In the subsequent section, the training proposal will be presented in connection with the 10 criteria of a GCC. Oftentimes, the teaching will begin by sharing a portion of the biblical theology of missions found in chapter 3 (although that material has not been reproduced in the present chapter, but only referenced). In addition, based on the data obtained from chapters 4 and 5, the proposal will seek to address the missiological weaknesses of the Chinese house church. Moreover, other material will be included as it is deemed helpful to strengthen the missiology of the house church. After each criterion's training material has been taught, an exercise will be conducted that aims to help the leader apply the teaching to his situation.¹ The 10 exercises put together will result in a comprehensive missiological plan that, if implemented through dependence upon the Holy Spirit, will

¹In order to help the reader concisely see an overview of the training proposal, the weaknesses, goals, and action steps related to each criterion has been listed in Appendix 4.

transform the churches into GCCs. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a few suggestions for further research.

International Missiological Partnership

It is important to first ask the question, how is the concept of partnership being defined? Luis Bush accurately and simply defines partnership as “an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship, and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.”² Foreigners, especially Westerners, have not been slow in expressing their desire to partner with the Chinese house church in the area of missions. Furthermore, as noted in chapter 4, the Chinese believers expressed their conviction that foreigners could be especially helpful in assisting the house church’s missiological efforts, mostly in the area of training (72.8 percent), as well as in supplying resources and financial assistance (25.4 percent). However, partnerships can be extremely difficult to forge and maintain because divergences in theology, vision, cultural backgrounds, attitudes, goals, resource allocation, etc., can cause major problems. In fact, some of the initial experiments have created examples from which to learn. Douglas Rutt shares,

Our early attempts to form global, strategic alliances by having our U.S. missionaries working side-by-side with majority world missionaries were less than satisfying, to say the least. The reality is that we struggle with missionary-to-missionary tension and conflict even when the people involved come from the same cultural background. When you throw in all the potential cross-cultural faux pas, miscues and misunderstandings, the likelihood of friction and stressed-out relationships is magnified many times over.³

²Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz, *Partnering in Ministry: The Direction of World Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 46.

³Douglas Rutt, “Global Mission Partnership: Missiological Reflections After Ten Years of Experience,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 66.

Nonetheless, Robin Thompson maintains that there is greater value in international missiological partnership than merely doing missions with co-workers who are from one's own culture.

Is it worth going beyond our own structures and cultures to spend the time and effort to understand and work with people of other backgrounds? Don't we have enough to do already? There will be misunderstanding and tensions. We will have to spend time to sort these out. We will have to say "sorry", not once but many times. Is it worth the effort? Why not work separately in our own cultural and social groups? . . . Partnership will involve us in extra effort, extra cost. But it will double or triple our effectiveness in mission. . . . God intends the gospel not only to be received by people of every colour and race and tribe and language, but also to be carried by them. This will be a demonstration of the universal lordship of Christ.⁴

Thompson's view sounds good on paper, is doable, and has its advantages; however, it requires very humble servants and appropriate training in order to make it work. As the global church seeks to partner with the emerging missionary movement of the Chinese house church, the important factors of theology, attitude/character, and goals/expectations need to be considered beforehand.

Theology

What one believes about God and His mission will impact every action that is performed and every decision made. As a result, it is important to ensure that before a partnership is formed, both parties' theology conforms to the "faith that was once for all delivered to all the saints," especially as it relates to "our common salvation" (Jude 3). Agreement on every iota of doctrine is not necessary; rather, the core beliefs of both organizations should be in substantial agreement, to the point that the truth being

⁴Robin Thompson, "Asian Mission Movements from South Asian Contexts," in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 45.

propagated can be affirmed and celebrated on both sides. Key areas of doctrine to weigh carefully consist of soteriology, bibliology, and ecclesiology.

Attitude and Character

Believing biblical theology should lead to exemplary character; however, this is not always the case. In the past, Westerners partnering with young emerging churches have not always displayed the humility and servant-mindedness of Christ. Kang-San Tan is brutally honest when he remarks, “The vast majority of newer Asian churches may no longer be interested in partnering with Western agencies that ‘use’ Asians as some exotic display to fulfill their own agendas.”⁵ He draws upon the model of Christ found in Philippians 2 as a paradigm for missionaries and their organizations to follow.

Westerners are well known for having an abundance of material resources. This profusion, as viewed by majority world churches, has occasionally led to a prideful and paternalistic attitude.⁶ Such an attitude has no place in the church and certainly not in missiological partnerships.

Tan does an excellent job describing the current strengths of both the Eastern and Western churches. “Western partners may contribute mission expertise and funding resources while the Asian partners contribute local field knowledge, passion and growing missionary force.”⁷ If there is truly going to be genuine partnership, both parties must

⁵Kang-San Tan, “Who is in the Driver’s Seat: A Critique of Mission Partnership Models Between Western Missions and East Asian Mission Movements,” in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 54.

⁶Gailyn Van Rheen, “Money and Mi\$\$ion\$,” *Monthly Missiological Reflection #2* [on-line]; accessed 3 January 2012; available from <http://www.missiology.org/?p=278>; Internet.

⁷Tan, “Who is in the Driver’s Seat,” 55.

recognize the other's strengths and agree that more, not less, can be accomplished as they work together.

Moreover, Western missionaries need to listen humbly to majority world churches when attempting to help them establish missions programs. The Western paradigm has evolved over the span of two hundred years; its large and complex nature cannot, and should not, be immediately reproduced in these emerging mission movements. Ralph Winter's comments from thirty-five years ago are still very appropriate today:

In general, American missions are a very elaborate end product of a massive century and a half of institutional development. . . . Quite obviously missions, United States style, are out of reach to the Third World churches. . . . The economic gap is so great that the only possible solution is for autonomous younger missions to enter the picture on their own and be able to do things their own way.⁸

Although, it is true that the "United States style" is out of reach for most majority world churches, Winter goes too far in suggesting that the only solution is for the younger missions to "enter the picture on their own" and "do things their own way." While this is possible and is happening to some degree, the far wiser course of action is to benefit from the experience of others, learn from their mistakes, and tailor one's own missionary programs to fit one's context.

Just as the paternalistic attitudes of Western organizations are harmful when seeking to establish missiological partnerships, the majority world churches expecting a blank check in order to rush off into their new missions enterprise is equally damaging.

⁸Ralph Winter, "The Planting of Younger Missions," in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 54-55.

Chua Wee Hian accurately describes how dependency can be the unintended result of poorly thought out partnerships.

No Asian Christian is moved to give sacrificially when he knows that the bulk of the support is from the West. Why should we Asians support our pastors and pay to maintain our buildings when a distant mission board will meet all our bills? Financial dependence robs us of our dignity. It creates a spirit of dependence and weakens the sense of stewardship.⁹

Therefore, assessing theology and character is paramount before forging a missiological partnership. A “trusting relationship” can only be built if there is respect for another’s attitude and character. After this respect has been earned and the theology has been evaluated, it is equally important to evaluate the goals and expectations possessed by the potential partner.

Goals and Expectations

Bush’s definition of partnership includes that the parties should “fulfill agreed-upon expectations.” This expectation assumes that both groups have clearly thought through their own goals and expectations. Next is the crucial step of communicating these goals and expectations with the other party. As they honestly dialogue about the future, a decision must be made determining whether the visions held by the two groups are similar enough to strike a partnership. This process requires plenty of advance planning, humble listening, and prayerful decision making, especially when people of different cultures are working together.

In the event that international missionaries are partnering with the Chinese church in order to train and equip Chinese workers, Kam rightly insists that “all the plans

⁹Chua Wee Hian, “Encouraging Missionary Movements in Asian Churches,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 20.

should have an exit strategy whereby, eventually, the China church [*sic*] can take over the ministry.”¹⁰ Kam’s missiology is excellent as his plan proactively establishes a time when the locals can accomplish the training and sending completely on their own. The timing and circumstances of this shift should be discussed when the goals and expectations are being established.

Proposal

As stated in chapter 1, this training proposal is designed to help Chinese house churches to construct a plan to better participate in missions by becoming GCCs (or in some cases become more committed to the GC). The manner in which these house churches will be transformed into GCCs is through training their leadership. David Horner boldly declares, “The preponderance of evidence leads me to conclude that the missions direction of our churches rises or falls through the leadership of the pastor.”¹¹ Moreover, he insightfully relates a church’s health and involvement with the GC.

When there has been a consistent move to fulfill the Great Commission in the life of the church, and missions has been recognized as a key to congregational health so that God’s name is most glorified, even the usual detractors fall silent in the face of strategic, comprehensive missions strategies in the local church.¹²

Pastors and other church leaders will be invited to a three day training whereby they will be taught the information below. The three day training is appropriate for the Chinese context since many holidays last three days and the house church leaders already

¹⁰Yi Du Kam, “Beyond ‘Back to Jerusalem,’” *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 3.

¹¹David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Change the World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 29.

¹²Ibid.

have an established practice of attending trainings during these times.

The training will be oriented around the 10 biblical criteria of a GCC as found in chapter 3. The first day will walk through the first 3 criteria, the second day criteria 4 through 7, and the last day criteria 8 through 10. The desired goal of the training is that the leaders would come away with a plan for their local church to participate in the GC. Although the initial step for most churches will probably not be sending a missionary overseas, this goal will be an expected part of their long-range plan.

Day 1 - Criterion 1

The first criterion of a GCC is that it longs to see all the peoples on the earth hallowing God's name. In this section of the training, the content in chapter 3 under the headings "the mission of God as expressed in two covenant" and "biblical motives for sending" should be taught. However, based on the data in chapters 4 and 5, the following elements should also be contextualized for the Chinese house church.

Missionary. The trainer needs to emphasize the cross-cultural nature of missionary work (Acts 1:8). In the survey, only 35 percent of the participants included the concept of crossing cultures in their definition of a missionary. In order to avoid "everything becoming missions" and a lack of clarity regarding the GC, it is important to carefully define this word and emphasize the cross-cultural nature of it. Sending missionaries to enter UPGs and exalt the glory of God is the goal of a GCC (Isa 12:4).

Motives. Believers need to be God-centered in their thinking. A God-centered perspective in life will inevitably lead to the passionate pursuit of God being glorified among the nations. Tom Telford quotes the following Bethlehem Baptist church

conviction regarding missions: “A God-centered theology must be a missionary theology. If you say that you love the glory of God, the test of your authenticity is whether you love the spread of that glory among all the peoples of the world.”¹³ Obeying Christ’s GC and fulfilling His call are God-centered motivations. However, the trainer should emphasize that the ultimate purpose of obeying Christ’s commands and call is to *glorify Him* (1 Cor 10:31).

A love for lost mankind and the desire to grab the baton to fulfill one’s own responsibility in global evangelization are not wrong motivations; however, they should not be seen as primary. If one goes to the mission field because he pities lost men, the results could be disastrous. If he finds that the locals are extremely resistant and unlovable people, major discouragement will set in. Even worse, the motivation to reach the unevangelized can be lost at such perilous times because they truly are very unlovable.

On the contrary, “Christians are called to taste the glory of God, enabling them to reflect God’s glory to the world. This desire for God—to be with him, to reflect his glory, and to perceive life beyond these human bounds—is the core of Christian motivation.”¹⁴ This core, God-centered motivation, will never be lost because God will never fail to be glorious. He is always worthy of the missionary’s service and will be glorified regardless of the response of the UPG.

The trainees must also be encouraged to test their motives for missions. Are they driven by a desire to bring honor to the church in China? Do they want to race and

¹³Tom Telford, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches: Strategies to Help Your Church Get Into the Game* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 21.

¹⁴Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 173.

compete against other missionary sending countries? Or, even as Tan warned, are their motives stemming from “Asian ethnocentrism, which claims that this is the Asia Pacific Century, and that leadership in mission belongs to the Asian church”?¹⁵ If these questions expose impure motives, then they should turn to God and embrace the glorification of His name as their primary motivation.

UPG focus. The house churches should prayerfully adopt a UPG. Robin Thompson shares the following possibility:

‘Adopt-a-People’ is a powerful way for a local church to be involved effectively and strategically in world mission—in partnership with others. In India this is called ‘Serve-a- People’. . . . It provides information about unreached groups and about churches, agencies and individuals that are seeking to reach them. A local church or fellowship commits itself to pray specifically for the needs of that group; to find out about the Christian workers there and encourage them; to seek to send workers from their church. They commit themselves to serve the people of that group through prayer, giving, sending or going.¹⁶

Additionally, due to the fact that previous Han missionaries, after arriving on the field, have lost their vision for reaching UPGs and worked exclusively with the Chinese Diaspora, the trainer should warn the church leaders of this tendency. Paul’s example in Romans 15:20 should be upheld when he says, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.” The mission objective cannot change because it is difficult to learn the language or adjust to a new culture. Moreover, if the entire church is praying for the UPG, this will be an encouragement for the missionary to persevere in working with it.

¹⁵Tan, “Who is in the Driver’s Seat,” 52.

¹⁶Thompson, “Asian Mission Movements from South Asian Contexts,” 47.

Exercise. The trainees should break into small groups and corporately discuss and answer the following questions. This exercise will help them to discern if they are more God-centered or man-centered in their thinking and ministry.

1. When teaching about sin, is the focus more on how it hurts man, or offends God?
2. When praying for others to be saved, is the primary goal for the unbeliever to get to heaven, or for God to receive the glory, worship and honor that He deserves?
3. Should people worship and praise God *mainly* because of what He does for them, or because of who He is?

After this first exercise is completed, the house church leaders should develop an outline for their second sermon on missions, to be preached on the second Sunday after their church's mission emphasis month begins.¹⁷ The sermon should share the biblical motivation for missions. Finally, they should individually and prayerfully consider: If their church was to target an UPG, which one makes the most sense and why?¹⁸ However, they should not make a decision at that moment, but invite their congregation to be a part of God's leading during the missions emphasis month. After 15 minutes, they should share their thoughts with the group.

Day 1 – Criterion 2

The second criterion emphasizes the doctrine of man's depravity; namely, that a GCC will understand mankind to be utterly lost and without hope apart from the gospel.

¹⁷The first sermon is described under criterion 5. The churches will be encouraged to have a missions emphasis month. It should begin as soon as possible after returning from the training.

¹⁸The trainer should come with a list of UPGs and data to describe their location, religion, percentage of Christians, etc. This list should be distributed to all of the trainees for them to take back to their churches.

Due to its strong fundamentalist background and influence, the house church seems to understand this doctrine fairly well. Therefore, a small amount of time could be spent on this criterion. This portion of the training should include the material shared in chapter 3 under the heading, “by embracing a biblical soteriology.”

Crucial differences between natural and special revelation, and their respective abilities, should be explained. Key passages like Psalm 19, Romans 1:18-20, and Romans 10:13-17 can reveal the salvific impotence of natural revelation, and moreover, how it renders all men without excuse. The discussion on Romans 2:1-16, started in chapter 4, should be developed further into a full exposition of this important passage. The exposition will assist Chinese believers in seeing how the conscience of man is not a means of salvation for those who have not heard; rather, a tool that God uses to demonstrate that all men have violated His will, even though they have never encountered His written law.

Additionally, since the house church loves and respects Hudson Taylor so much, it is appropriate to share with them how the exclusive nature of the gospel affected his life. Over one hundred years ago, in reference to China and her surrounding areas, he pleaded with British believers:

Do you believe that each unit of these millions [Chinese people] has a precious soul? And that ‘there is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby they must be saved’ than that of Jesus? Do you believe that He alone is ‘the Door of the sheepfold’; is the ‘Way, the Truth, and the Life’? that ‘no man cometh unto the Father but by Him?’ If so, think of the state of these unsaved ones; and solemnly examine yourself in the sight of God, to see whether you are doing your utmost to make Him known to them.¹⁹

¹⁹Hudson Taylor, “China’s Spiritual Need and Claims,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), B-112.

Because Hudson Taylor believed the Scriptures and that one must hear the gospel and respond in faith in order to be saved, he was compelled to launch one of the greatest mission movements in the history of the church.

Exercise. The house church leaders should gather into small groups. Have them discuss the question, “If it were true that people could be saved apart from the gospel, what would the consequences be on the missionary movement?” Next, the trainees should review the verses just taught and discuss in small groups if there are any other verses in the Bible that would lead them to another conclusion. Afterwards, the groups can discuss their findings with the trainer. Finally, each trainee should develop another sermon outline, which will be the third sermon during missions emphasis month. The message of the sermon should be the hopeless state of the unevangelized apart from believing the gospel.

Day 1 – Criterion 3

The third criterion of a GCC is the responsibility it will assume in order to be involved in missions, regardless of its size, resources, or sacrifices that must be made. Since many Chinese house churches have no vision for missionary work and feel they are too small and inadequate to make a difference, this portion of the training will attempt to cast a vision for them and encourage them to embrace God’s mission.

Biblical mandate. These house church leaders will be exhorted to bear their missions responsibility because it is the Lord’s command and their privilege (Matt 28:18-20). As a result, this training session will emphasize the non-negotiable nature of

missions involvement. It will also help these house church leaders to think through logistical questions such as where, who and how.

China and beyond. Wen Mu asserts that 70-80 percent of Chinese house churches should be classified as fundamentalists. He reports that they were opposed to BTJ for various reasons, with one of them being, “They [the fundamentalists] want to concentrate on missionary work within China first. They believe the church is not ready to take on overseas work.”²⁰ While missionary work within China is important and should be seen as a priority, they are erecting an unnecessary dichotomy. Moreover, this dichotomy is harmful to the spiritual life of the church, and also is in opposition to the pattern set by Jesus and the apostles.

Nobody argues that the gospel work in Jerusalem was completed when Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It certainly was not the case that the Jerusalem church had developed into a mature, stable and prosperous mother church that was able to plant churches to the ends of the earth. Second, many commentators believe that God used persecution in Acts 8:1 as a means to scatter the disobedient, static Jerusalem church outside of their city.²¹

Additionally, Paul, in his letter to the Romans, said he was eager to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.²² However, what was the context of the church in

²⁰Wen Mu, “The Present and the Future of the BTJ Movement: A View from the Church in China,” *China Source* 8, no. 1 (2006): 11.

²¹For example see Don Richardson, “The Hidden Message of ‘Acts,’” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), A-111.

²²Romans 15:20.

Rome at this time? Richard Hays astutely comments, “Romans seeks to sketch a comprehensive framework [of how God’s saving designs have embraced Jews and Gentiles] within which Paul can appeal for harmony among the Christians in Rome, and for their support of his longer-range missionary plans.”²³ Paul had never met the church in Rome, but felt the need to provide the believers there with a theological basis for ethnic unity within the church. Moreover, he ultimately wanted their support for his mission to Spain (Rom 15:24). Once again, there is not a dichotomized view of ministry whereby a church makes sure it is faultless and its region is “reached” before considering how it may participate in the spread of the gospel. Rather, a both/and mentality is evidenced whereby the church is exhorted to grow spiritually as it reaches out to its “Jerusalem” *as well as* its “Samaria, Judea, and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)

Who is to participate? Every church is expected to participate in the GC. The survey showed that only a small percentage had actually sent missionaries (10.5 percent to 18.4 percent); however, there are many ways a church can be involved apart from sending a missionary. The trainer needs to emphasize that prayer is a genuine means of GC participation and should be practiced by all. Moreover, the church leaders should provide a means for their people to give financially to missions.²⁴ However, the congregation will not pray and give until it catches a vision for missions.

²³Richard B Hays, “The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age,” in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives on Biblical Theology*, eds. A. Andrew Das and Frank J. Matera, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 131. The emphasis on ‘harmony’ reflects the idea that some degree of division is present among the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome (11:17-21, 14:1-15:13). See James Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Vol 38 of *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), lvii, also, Mark Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1992), 202-06.

²⁴The training under criterion 4 will further develop the need for GC prayer, and the training under criterion 9 will discuss financial support of missionaries.

The church leaders should cast the missionary vision to the entire congregation so that each member can realize how he or she can be a part of reaching the UPGs.

Howard Brant, in discussing some of the problems encountered by the pioneer Latin American missionary sending agency COMIBAM,²⁵ remarks, “COMIBAM leadership recognized a fundamental mistake had been made. They were going around the local church bodies and sending missionaries without their full involvement and backing. The mission movement was seen as coming out of COMIBAM rather than the local churches.”²⁶ This is the same problem the “house church and mission agency partnership” encountered in chapter 5. When asked why the church failed to support their missionaries as they had promised to, the mission agency representative answered, “I could have waited 6-12 more months to let the sending churches 1) develop the vision deeply throughout their network (not just a leadership vision) and 2) take up collections for the families.”²⁷

The ability of these house church leaders to turn their churches into GCCs hinges on whether or not the *membership* will embrace the missiological vision.²⁸ Thirty five years ago, Kyung Chik Han, a seasoned Korean pastor, remarked, “It seems to me that the chief problem is our lack of quality personnel for missionary service. We Asians

²⁵COMIBAM is an acronym for a Latin America missionary sending organization. Their Web site is <http://www.comibam.org/indexcomibam.html>.

²⁶Howard Brant, “Seven Essentials of Majority World Emerging Mission Movements,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 43.

²⁷Unnamed missionary, e-mail to author, 25 August 2011. This missionary is M9.

²⁸In question 8, what are the biggest factors hindering the Chinese house church from greater missions involvement?, 11.2 percent noted that “the church is not willing to follow the leadership in missions involvement.”

do not yet have built into our church life the tradition of the missionary vocation.”²⁹

Where the Korean church was thirty-five years ago is where the Chinese church finds itself today. The majority of Chinese believers have no concept of the missionary vocation. However, in thirty-five short years, the Korean church has become the second largest missionary sending force in the world. May God do a similar work of grace in the PRC for His glory.

Sacrifices. If the house churches are to become serious about participating in the GC, plenty of sacrifices will need to be made. Some of these, such as financial sacrifices, will be discussed later; but at this point it is appropriate for the trainer to challenge the church leaders to call their people to love God above all else, and this includes their own family members. Familial relationships are extremely important in Chinese culture and the concept of children moving to another city for any reason is difficult for parents to accept. This difficulty is why, in the survey, 5 percent of the participants noted that familial opposition was a hindrance to sending missionaries and 12.5 percent³⁰ thought their culture and tradition is also a hindrance.³¹

²⁹Kyung Chik Han, “Introduction and Evaluation,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 113.

³⁰The relatively low percentages can be explained by the mostly “closed-ended” nature of question 5 that influenced the responses in question 8. The researchers guess is that most participants select one of the four options provided, with only a very small number taking the time to actually think through other options and writing those in. Therefore, the 5 percent and 12.5 percent appear significant.

³¹“Culture and tradition” is being interpreted as including familial relationships and therefore the percentage could be as high as 17.5 percent.

Scriptures such as Luke 14:25-27³² should be taught in light of the call to missions work. Jesus’ radical teaching that one must hate (μισέει) “his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life” in order to be His disciple should be used to challenge families as they struggle with their loved ones leaving for the mission field. It is striking that the idea of hating one’s parents, even expressed as a hyperbole, was so unthinkable to the Chinese translators of the Bible, that the Chinese Union Version of the Bible refused to translate μισέει as hate (恶, è).³³ Instead they translated Jesus’ words as saying, “If your love for me does not surpass your love for your father”³⁴ This further illustrates the importance and sanctity of the parent and child relationship in Chinese culture. As the Chinese house church continues to move forward to participate in the GC, sacrifices will need to be made and church leaders need to be proactive in helping future missionaries and their families embrace the value and honor of the missionary calling.

This process of challenging families to embrace the sacrifices involved in fulfilling the GC becomes even more difficult when the situation involves unbelieving parents. The concept of a missionary, as found in the not so distant past Chinese culture, is a dreadful one. Yiwu Liao shares the stereotype he was taught as a young man in an unbelieving home. “I grew up in the era when Western missionaries were portrayed as ‘evil agents of the imperialists,’ who enslaved the Chinese mind, killed Chinese babies

³²Mark 10:29-31 is also very appropriate.

³³As used in the Chinese Union Version referring to Esau in Romans 9:13.

³⁴Translated by the author. The Chinese Union Version says, “若不爱我胜过爱自己的父母,” ròu bù ài wò shèng guò ài zìjǐ de tiānfù.

and ruined indigenous cultures.”³⁵ In such a situation, prayer, a lifestyle witness, and gently speaking the truth in love (2 Tim 2:24-26) are the primary means for destroying erroneous stereotypes.

Additionally, those who sense the call of God to the mission field “must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Despite familial pressure and threats, God’s called out ones must demonstrate that the Lordship of Jesus has complete reign in his or her life by following Christ’s leading.

Exercise. The house church leaders should break into small groups and ponder the biggest hindrances that are keeping their church members from embracing this missiological vision. Next, they need to outline a strategy that will help these members to overcome their resistance. As a part of this strategy, the pastor should seek to form a missions committee in his church to promote the adoption of the vision among the congregation. The committee should be created during missions emphasis month, after the second sermon is preached.

Day 2 – Criterion 4

A GCC is a prayerful church, eager to inform its members of the worldwide progress of the gospel and the needs of the global church. It was in a worship service and prayer meeting that the first missionaries were called and commissioned (Acts 13:1-3). In this intimate setting, where God was delighting in the service and worship of His people, He was pleased to reveal His specific will and calling for Paul and Barnabas. Bock observes, “Here is a church that has seen the need to reach out to the world as its

³⁵Yiwu Liao, *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), xviii.

members draw near to God. Their heart has become wedded to God's calling as a result. . . . Prayer and spiritual forces work together in this text and play a role in guiding the church."³⁶

Therefore, this fourth criterion is highlighting the important role that prayer plays in a church's missiological strategy. Prayer will connect the GCC to the heart of God, who is seeking worshippers (John 4:23), and wills that one of every tribe, tongue, and nation come to know Him (Rev 5:9). This passion to gather worshippers before His throne will be caught by those who spend time with this missionary God.

Thankfully, many house church leaders already have a passion for and an established habit of prayer. Timothy Tennent testifies, "One of the distinguishing marks of a true revival is a deep burden for those without Christ and an increased fervency in prayer. The Chinese house church and the BTJM are both characterized by prayer."³⁷ However, the survey discovered that house churches do not have the custom of praying for specific missionaries. Almost half of all respondents did not answer this question or said they never pray for specific missionaries. Another 9.2 percent noted they pray for specific missionaries only once per year.

Approximately the same high percentage of respondents (approximately 50 percent) mentioned they do not pray for specific countries; moreover, a higher percentage shared they do not inform their congregations about the status of Christianity around the world. It appears that they are not opposed to praying for the global church, but are

³⁶Darrell Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 439.

³⁷Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 245.

exclusively focused on their own Jerusalem, to the extent that they have never considered such a practice. This situation could also be explained by the fact that 75 percent of all respondents did not personally know an international missionary, and if they did have a missionary hero, it is a nineteenth century foreigner. Therefore, in this section of the training, they must be exhorted to develop this type of global prayer focus.

The first step is helping these leaders know about the progress of the gospel around the world. The UPG list obtained in the training is their primary resource for information in this area. Additionally, on the Internet they can research and quickly discover everything they would need to know in order to pray for the surrounding Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist countries.³⁸ They can lift up the believers living in these countries and pray for God to strengthen them (Acts 4:24-32) to fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:18-20).

Second, these house church leaders could inquire among nearby churches to discover if there are any believers who have previously traveled out of the country and participated in mission work. These believers could share about the situation of the global church and provide prayer insights.

The ideal situation is for a Chinese missionary to come and share about the countries he has visited and how to pray for the people there. If the church does not personally know any Chinese missionaries, they could attempt to subscribe to a missionary's electronic newsletter, and receive information in that manner. Furthermore, security permitting, a foreign missionary could visit their church. Since foreigners typically have more exposure to other countries, they could help the Chinese brothers and

³⁸They can use a Chinese online encyclopedia such as Baike. Found at <http://baike.baidu.com>.

sisters have a more in-depth understanding of various UPGs. Also, the church can prayerfully look forward to the day when their own Chinese missionary comes back to them on furlough to report on what God is doing in distant lands (Acts 14:27-28).

Special seasons of focusing their prayers on global concerns could be an effective means to form a heart for missions within the church. This effort would consist of a weekend where extended times of prayer and fasting for the nations are accompanied by a sermon on missions.

Exercise. The trainer will introduce the class to a UPG of his choice. Ideally, a video of the people carrying out their daily lives and participating in their false religion should be viewed. After a number of prayer concerns have been listed for this UPG, the class should spend some time praying for this people group. Afterwards, the trainees should schedule a GC prayer weekend to occur after the first two missionary sermons are preached.

Day 2 – Criterion 5

If a church is truly going to have a heart for cross-cultural ministry, the pastor must lead his people in seeing this priority as a major theme throughout the scriptures. In other words, missions can neither be relegated to a special focus on the first Sunday of some particular month; nor a peripheral ministry that is also vying for their money and attention. Rather, missions is a central theme of the Bible that flows from the heart of God as He works out all things in accordance with His eternal plan. This plan is to spread His glory to the ends of the earth and gather new worshippers from each and every people group. Christopher Wright agrees and teaches his students this truth.

I wanted them to see not just that the Bible contains a number of texts which happen to provide a rationale for the missionary endeavor but that *the whole Bible is itself a 'missional' phenomenon* . . . with its center, focus, climax, and completion in Jesus Christ. . . . Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is, in that much-abused phrase, 'what it is all about.'³⁹

The primary way a pastor can lead his people in this regard is through preaching the Word of God from a GC perspective. This training session will give the church leaders Scriptural examples that evidence how the apostles read the Old Testament from a GC perspective.

Acts 15. The first church council occurs in Jerusalem (Acts 15). Hiebert describes this chapter as “the minutes of a missions conference.”⁴⁰ The major controversy being discussed is the role of the Mosaic Law in the New Covenant. The Judaizers maintained that the Gentile converts must keep the Mosaic requirement of circumcision in order to obtain the salvation of Christ (Acts 15:1) and be admitted into the New Covenant. The Pharisees were even more demanding, insisting that the Gentiles must be required to obey the entire Mosaic code (Acts 15:5).

Peter begins the apostle’s collective rebuttal by testifying of his experience in Acts 10 with the household of Cornelius. He emphasized that the giving of the Holy Spirit to those Gentiles is proof of God’s acceptance (Acts 15:8) and that God had purified their hearts through faith (15:9), saving them by His grace (15:11). Next, Paul and Barnabas testified to God’s amazing work among the uncircumcised Gentiles in their

³⁹Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.), 22. He uses Luke 24:46-47 as support for this view. Ibid., 45.

⁴⁰Paul G. Hiebert, “Missiological Education for a Global Era,” in *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 38.

ministry as well. Finally, James stood up and gave the answer, which settled the issue since he quoted Holy Scripture to support the experiences of the apostles.

In verse 15, James begins by saying “the words of the prophets are in agreement with this.” The “this” is referring to verse 14, namely, that through Peter’s experience, God demonstrated His willingness to take from the Gentiles a people for himself. James is attempting to demonstrate to the Judaizers that their fundamental error is that they are not reading the prophets correctly. They are reading the Old Testament from an egocentric point of view, rather than from a missiological point of view.

Käsemann contends that Judaism, at this time, was extremely ethnocentric and held a very particularistic view of God that separated his role as Savior from that of Creator and Judge.⁴¹ In other words, he argues that second temple Judaism would have granted that God was the Gentiles’ Creator and Judge, but in the context of justification and salvation, God could not properly be called their God (not until they submitted themselves to the Mosaic Law). Therefore, no salvation existed outside the Mosaic Covenant, and the Jews were not going to make it easy for the Gentiles to enter. N.T. Wright confirms this thesis, stating that although God had “called Israel to be the light to the nations, the teacher of the foolish, the guide to the blind . . . the covenant people have become part of the problem, not the agents of the solution.”⁴² Instead of having a ‘God-for-us-for-them’ paradigm, Israel swelled in national pride and adopted a ‘God-for-us-against-them’ perspective. It was this very egocentric, non-missiological perspective that

⁴¹Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 104.

⁴²N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 29.

James and the apostles are attempting to refute at the Jerusalem council.⁴³ They were interacting with a Judaism that had developed a particularistic, “Jonah-like” attitude and had difficulty seeing the Gentiles as candidates for God’s mercy, apart from their complete conversion to Judaism first.⁴⁴

However, the “prophets” were those who convinced James (in addition to the experiences of the apostles) that the Judaizers’ case could not stand up to the scrutiny of Scripture. Although the bulk of what James said came from Amos 9:11-12, W. Edward Glenny is quick to note that James’ use of the Old Testament was a paraphrase which included ideas from a number of different prophetic texts.⁴⁵ While the Judaizers were reading the prophets to confirm their ethnic superiority, in Amos 9:11-12, James saw “the purpose for the Lord restoring and rebuilding the dynasty/kingdom of David (9:11) is ‘so that’ (ὅπως plus the aorist subjunctive) Gentiles may seek the Lord and be his people.”⁴⁶ James read the Scriptures from a missiological point view, seeing the blessing, which God bestowed upon the Jews as a means to bless the nations and enable both Jews and Gentiles to become one people of God (Gen 12:1-3).

Galatians 3. With a similar theological debate and argument, in Galatians 3,

⁴³Paul also contended with such a perspective in Romans, Galatians and Philipppians.

⁴⁴The reluctance of the apostles to take the gospel to the Gentiles in the first 10 chapters of Acts demonstrates the power that this paradigm had exerted on Jews everywhere, including the early disciples of Jesus.

⁴⁵These texts would include Hosea 3:5, Zechariah 2:14-17, 8:3, 22-23, Jeremiah 12:15, and Isaiah 45:21. W. Edward Glenny, “Gentiles and the People of God: A Study of Apostolic Hermeneutics and Theology in Acts 15, ” (paper prepared for the Dispensational Study Group of the National ETS Meeting, Washington D. C., November 2006) [on-line]; accessed 4 January 2012; available from <http://ntresources.com/documents/Amos9inActs15b.pdf>; Internet.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Paul announces to the Judaizers that they have failed to understand the true purpose of the Mosaic Covenant and erred in giving it the priority over and against the Abrahamic Covenant. The central motif of this epistle is that men are justified by faith and not by the works of the law (Gal 2:16, 5:3-5). In chapter 3, Paul is calling them to remember that they received the Holy Spirit through faith, not the law, and that their forefather Abraham was also justified by faith (3:6). Anticipating their response to be, “Why was the law then established?” Paul replies that the law was given “because of transgressions” (3:19) and “was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (3:24). Therefore, the Mosaic Covenant was a temporary measure that did not supersede the Abrahamic Covenant (3:17), but rather led the Jews (and Gentiles!) to realize their sin and place their hope and faith in the Seed, Jesus Christ (3:16). Here, Paul is presenting a missiological reading of the Old Testament that understands the plan of God to bless the nations through Abraham’s Seed, and to redeem a people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

In the survey, approximately half of the respondents said the Sunday sermon in their house church includes something about world missions only once a year, or never. This infrequency is unlikely to inspire the congregation to passionately pursue participating in the GC. The weekly sermon has enormous potential to cast the missiological vision that the Scriptures set forth so many years ago. Each sermon can and should include some reference to the GC if the pastor is reading and preaching the Word of God through a missiological lens.

Exercise. The church leaders should spend fifteen minutes developing an outline for a Sunday sermon. The message should be based on the Abrahamic Covenant

(Gen 12:1-3) and Paul's understanding of its relationship to Christ and the New Covenant (Gal 3:6-29). The goal of the sermon is to demonstrate the overall missionary plan of God to bless the nations and redeem one of every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 5:9). The content learned during criterion 1, which was based on "the mission of God as expressed in two covenants," should significantly inform the development of this sermon. This sermon should be the first one preached, kicking-off missions emphasis month. Afterwards, they should spend fifteen minutes sharing with each other their outlines.

Day 2 – Criterion 6

Because missions is so costly on a number of different levels, the sixth criterion of a GCC is a willingness to cooperate with like-minded evangelicals to participate in the worldwide spread of the gospel. This cooperation is needed in China as over 66 percent of the survey participants who answered this question revealed that their house church cannot individually support a missionary at this time; however, the vast majority said they were willing to partner under various conditions. For these small house churches, the challenges of participating in the GC are numerous. They need to, from scratch, "establish administrative organizations, develop missionary training centers, build up financial structures, and cultivate leadership,"⁴⁷ albeit on a smaller and more flexible scale compared to many highly institutionalized western organizations. Moreover Tan adds the following needs in current Asian mission movements:

The need to mobilise the local church for long term missions • Lack of role models of effective career missionaries • Need of more examples of responsible, sending churches • Inadequate sending structures (candidate

⁴⁷Richard R. Cook, "The Great Commission in Asia," in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 157.

screening, missionary preparation, field leadership, member care). In particular, member care is still lacking when compared to the level of care provided by International Missions. • Lack of Asian missionary trainers • Lack of community based training centres • Need to develop creative ways in mission among restricted contexts • Need for field research on Asian missions.⁴⁸

These are just a few of the reasons why partnerships should be a priority for Chinese house churches seeking to get involved in world missions.

The New Testament evidences a number of missiological partnerships, for example, between Paul and the Roman church. Even though Paul had never been to this church before, he wanted to partner with them in order to bring the gospel to Spain (Rom 15:23-29). Ben Witherington comments on this verse:

Paul has spoken similarly in 1 Cor. 16:6b, where he says he hopes that the Corinthian Christians will be able to ‘help me on my journey,’ a round-about way of asking them to provide traveling funds and resources to enable him to make it to the next destination. To judge from texts like 1 Macc. 12:4 and 4 Esd. 4:47, this could entail anything such as food, funds, letters of introduction, and transportation, and it became a regular practice in the early church (cf. Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; 2 Cor. 1:16; Titus 3:13; 3 John 6).⁴⁹

Local partnerships. Each church needs to carefully think through what prerequisites ought to be in place before a partnership can be formed with others. While these conditions might vary from church to church, a correct understanding of the one gospel (Gal 1:6-9, 1 Cor 15:3-4) must be a non-negotiable core of any set of conditions.

The ecclesiology of a potential partner should also be carefully evaluated since the missionary will be aiming to plant new churches. This ecclesiological evaluation should assess the other party’s view of the irreducible ecclesiological minimum,

⁴⁸Tan, “Who is in the Driver’s Seat,” 54.

⁴⁹Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 363.

ecclesiological ideals, leadership positions, mode of baptism and gender issues. If these topics are glossed over at the beginning, it will cause considerable friction later on and could be fatal to the mission.

Other prerequisites should be discussed and debated by the church leaders who are in attendance at the training. They are in a better position to understand the issues that are extremely divisive to Chinese house churches and potentially harmful to a missiological partnership. Moreover, this discussion will be a good exercise for them to solidify the teaching on the sixth criterion.

Partnership with foreigners. Chapter 4 demonstrated that the Chinese house churches believe foreigners can help them in the missions endeavor. The areas where foreigners can be most supportive include prayer, training, supplying resources, and receiving Chinese missionaries who are new to the field.

Apart from abiding in Christ, nothing can be accomplished (John 15:5). The missionary movement of the Chinese house church desperately needs the strength, power and wisdom of God; these needs can only be met through prayer. Yi Du Kam, in pondering how foreigners can partner with the Chinese house church in the BTJ movement, succinctly states, “It is entirely possible that the most effective ministry for the Western Christians is that of prayer.”⁵⁰ Though through human eyes the ministry of prayer may not seem to accomplish much, through the spiritual eyes of faith one knows that prayer is the means that God uses to accomplish His eternal plan to reach the nations.

⁵⁰Kam, “Beyond ‘Back to Jerusalem,’” 3.

Enoch Wan and David Oleson regard education and training as a strategic way for foreigners to assist the BTJ movement. “Basic theological training should continue to be an emphasis of the western mission boards.”⁵¹ Patrick Fung believes the experience that foreign missionaries bring can be an invaluable resource for future Han missionaries. “Role models are very important. This is an area where God’s people from outside China can play a role through sharing of experiences in cross-cultural mission work.”⁵² Kang-San Tan, in lamenting the lack of missionary training centers in Asia, is more forthright about this role when he says,

Some mission leaders from Asia may even assert, ‘We don’t need more Western evangelists. Rather, we need more theologians and missionary trainers’. The leadership of these training centres must be under national leadership, but foreign partners can be part of the team, contributing specialties in the areas of missiology, religious studies or historical studies.⁵³

At a missions conference held in the last couple of years, one Chinese leader who is well acquainted with the house church’s missionary endeavors unapologetically stated,

I believe, in the near future, there will be more and more proper Mission Schools established in China. But no matter how strong is the strength of China Church, at least within the next two decades, these mission schools still need foreign experts or trainers to come in to help in order to run the whole program effectively [*sic*].⁵⁴

⁵¹David Oleson and Enoch Wan, “Majority World Harvest Among Tibetan Buddhists: Historical Review, Ethnographic Overview, and Dynamic Development,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 172.

⁵²Patrick Fung, “China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities,” in *Understanding Asian Mission Movements: Proceedings of the Asian Mission Consultations 2008-2010*, ed. Simon Cozens, Jonathan Ingleby, and Kang San Tan, Kindle ed. (Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books, 2011), 15.

⁵³Tan, “Who is in the Driver’s Seat,” 60.

⁵⁴Speaker, paper, and conference not revealed due to security concerns.

Timothy Park recounts the early days of the Korean mission movement and notes, “The missions committee of the early Korean church comprise [*sic*] of both the Korean and the western missionaries. The western missionaries mentored the Korean missionaries and helped them to enter into the new mission fields.”⁵⁵ It appears that this partnership formed by western missionaries and the Korean church was helpful to propel a tremendous missionary movement that has continued until this day. It seems likely that foreigners could help the Chinese house church in a similar way.

Regarding resources in Asia, Ken Gnankan asserts that “library resources are a desperate need. The West could loan some of its abundant resources, could it not?”⁵⁶ It is amazing that this 1996 publication appears so dated in 2012. While a scarcity of resources has been a major problem in the past, a number of initiatives recently have emerged for the purpose of solving this issue. The Internet has become the primary solution, especially for foreigners seeking to support the church in restricted access countries. Multiple websites have made it their goal to provide majority world churches with the resources they need.⁵⁷ Additionally, in missiological training, resources are

⁵⁵Timothy K. Park, “Missionary Movement of Asian Churches,” in *2010 East-West Mission Forum: Missionary Movement of the Non-Western Churches*, ed. Timothy K Park and Steve K. Eom (Pasadena, CA: East-West Center for Missions Research and Development, 2010), 81.

⁵⁶Ken Gnankan, “The Training of Missiologists for Asian Contexts,” in *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 115.

⁵⁷On such example is Third Millennium Ministries. They say, “Our goal is to provide Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by publishing and globally distributing a free multilingual, multimedia, digital seminary curriculum.” Third Millennium Ministries. “Home Page” [on-line], accessed 5 January 2012, available from <http://thirdmill.org>; Internet.

slowly being translated into simplified Chinese and becoming available for use there.⁵⁸

Finally, as western, Korean, and even some Diaspora Chinese missionaries can be found in various countries along the Silk Road, these workers can provide a great ministry of hospitality to the newly arriving mainland Chinese missionaries. Wan and Oleson again state, “Western missionaries who are co-located with incoming Chinese missionaries need to establish (albeit clandestine in some areas) a collegial relationship with their fellow gospel workers.”⁵⁹ This model assumes the missionaries would be able to communicate and would have similar ideas regarding how to operate in a hostile, restricted context; otherwise, it could do more harm than good. This is a strong argument to give Chinese Diaspora the priority when it comes to partnering with Han missionaries outside of China.

Exercise. The leader(s) of each house church should identify their prerequisites for missiological partnership. Then they should brainstorm a number of questions they would want to ask their potential partner before entering into an agreement with them. Finally, they should list a few churches they sense could be potential partners and make a commitment to meet with them after the training.

Day 2 – Criterion 7

A GCC will be actively praying, seeking to identify gifted people to equip and send, in a way suitable to their gifting. This seventh criterion implies it will not be a

⁵⁸For example, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* was recently translated into simplified Chinese. This volume is exciting because it contains a number of original articles written by Asian missiologists for the Asian context.

⁵⁹Oleson and Wan, “Majority World Harvest Among Tibetan Buddhists,” 172.

passive church, but a church with a vision to engage UPGs with the gospel. The content from chapter 3 under the sub-heading, “through local church intentionality and cooperation,” should be taught at this time.

The ultimate goal of a GCC is to spread the glory of God through sending cross-cultural missionaries. The best way that a church can be intentional about raising up and sending workers is through helping its members in the following three areas: (1) teaching clear and biblical principles regarding a call to the mission field; (2) through establishing standards for missionary applicants; (3) through offering missionary training.

Calling. It has already been established that the mission of God to redeem the nations has been given to the church. The church has been “called” to bring glory to God through completing the GC. This is its *raison d'être*. As the church is composed of individuals who know and love God, they are *all*, therefore, “called” to be a part of the missionary endeavor, and not just the leadership.⁶⁰ As Bosch explains,

In the New Testament dispensation the Spirit (just as the priesthood) has been given to the whole people of God, not to select individuals. ‘The clergy, then, come *from the community*, guide it, and act *in Christ’s name*.’ For it is the *community* that is the primary bearer of mission.⁶¹

Therefore, the individuals in the community are to fulfill their call to missions through praying, giving, mobilizing, and going. By this point in the training, the importance of prayer has already been discussed. The aspect of giving will be evaluated on day 3 when discussing the ninth criterion. Therefore, the group will now explore how

⁶⁰This is just a very cursory glance at this topic. For a detailed, biblical analysis, see M. David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God’s Plan For the World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).

⁶¹David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 472, quoting Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic- Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 303.

a pastor can mobilize the called out ones in his church to go to the mission field by noticing things that indicate they are called to go. This area of individual calling is especially important due to the fact that almost half of the participants in the survey noted that their churches have not sent a missionary because nobody has been called.

Hudson Taylor, as a sixteen year old, remembers his calling to the mission field with the following statement:

Well do I remember, as in unreserved consecration I put myself, my life, my friends, my all, upon the altar, the deep solemnity that came over my soul with the assurance that my offering was accepted. . . . For what service I was accepted I knew not; but a deep consciousness that I was no longer my own took possession of me, which has never since been effaced.⁶²

Far from being some supernatural vision from heaven, this is simply the historic missionary obeying the words of the apostle Paul when he entreats Christians to “offer [their] bodies as living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1) so that through the transformation of their lives “[they] will be able to test and approve what God’s will is” (Rom 12:2). Each and every believer should see this type of Christianity as normative. Christians have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, and therefore, should honor Him with their bodies (1 Cor 6:19-20). They should refrain from calling Him Lord if they refuse to do what He commands (Luke 6:46); namely, to make disciples of all nations. Each and every believer should play a part in fulfilling GC, and more specifically should be willing to go, if indeed they discern that to be the will of their Master.

In addition to this call to self-abandonment, the house church leaders must remember to address the parents and exhort them to release their children to the Lord for

⁶²Hudson Taylor, “The Call to Service,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), B-104.

possible mission work. Following the principle that was learned from Hannah, each and every parent should “give him [their child] to the LORD for all the days of his life” (1 Sam 1:11). The parents should first seek the Lord and His kingdom and trust that their Heavenly Father will provide for all of their needs when they retire (Matt 6:25-34).

After the people of God have expressed their willingness to go, the next step is to discern their gifting. The Holy Spirit has bestowed upon each individual Christian a spiritual gift for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). Although missionary work can be conceived of in a very broad manner, typically there is a heavy emphasis on evangelism and church planting. As a result, some gifts are much more conducive to this type of missionary work, such as apostleship,⁶³ evangelism, teaching, and leadership (Eph 4:11-13, Rom 12:7-8). These gifts can manifest themselves in the lives of believers in their local church as they display a passion for the lost, an ability to converse with strangers easily, a desire to understand and share the Word of God, the ability to influence and lead people, etc. Chinese house church leaders should give their members opportunities to minister, and thereby help them to discover how God has gifted them for service.

As already discussed, a GCC is a praying church that informs its congregation about the status of UPGs around the world. However, as God’s people hear about the needs and the lack of a gospel presence amidst the perishing UPGs, those with a missionary call will develop a burden for the lost. This burden will translate into a passion and desire to do something to change the situation. As David Sills remarks, using Psalm 37:4 as a background, “When God calls His child to live the life of a missionary,

⁶³Please refer back to chapter 2 for the discussion on the ongoing gift of apostleship in the modern-day church.

He gives him the desire with the calling.”⁶⁴ Therefore, the wise pastor will help those who are walking with God know how they are to serve by simply asking them, “What do you desire to do?”⁶⁵ The missionary call based on a holy desire to honor God and reach the nations is a great foundation for long-term ministry. Guilt is not. Leaders should avoid causing their members to “feel that if they do not surrender to missions, they are sinning or wasting their lives,” but rather emphasize “the highest and best use of anyone’s life is to do exactly what God leads them to do in the places where He leads them to do it.”⁶⁶

The church leadership should also evaluate the candidate’s spiritual maturity, growth trajectory, familial relationships, understanding of the Scriptures, ability to persevere through trials, adaptability, etc. before giving their blessing. Of course, Western organizations have a highly developed system of screening applicants, which has proven helpful for minimizing attrition rates. The church leaders should think through the various elements that would be important to probe in a Chinese context before confirming a missionary’s call with the church’s blessing. Finally, Sills offers these final thoughts for church leaders dealing with various issues related to the missionary call:

I have never heard two calls to gospel ministry that are identical or two calls to missionary service that are the same. God seems to call some to a particular kind of missions service, others to a people group, others to a region, others to a country, others to a city, and others to a life purpose (such as rescuing young girls from prostitution) or some combination of these. With married couples, rarely does God call both spouses at the same time and they

⁶⁴M. David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God's Plan for the World*, Kindle ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 333.

⁶⁵Ibid., 344.

⁶⁶Ibid., 790-94.

frequently consider the missionary call because of completely different motivations. Missionary callings, like snowflakes, are each unique.⁶⁷

Standards for missionaries. The house churches would be wise to establish appropriate standards for their prospective missionaries before they are sent. These standards should be based upon the Word of God, as well as other considerations relevant to the missionary vocation.

As noted above, the applicant must sense a call from God based on the various factors listed. One cannot affirm a simplistic vantage point that says, “a missionary only needs to be someone who loves the Lord Jesus and has a passion to reach the lost world for him. That is the only qualification for missionary service.”⁶⁸ Even though such qualities are a tremendous beginning and indispensable to the missionary vocation, they are not enough.

Clear and biblical standards of Christian maturity need to be established from passages like Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-12. Although these are qualifications for elders and deacons, they are intended to measure one’s spiritual maturity, and therefore, should be used in the evaluation of a missionary candidate. This practice is not intended to limit the number of missionaries sent, but rather to maximize the chances for success once the missionary arrives on the mission field.

The research gathered has revealed that the standards used by Chinese house churches are often quite low or non-existent. Kim has the following concerns about the motivations of some rural Christians who hear about the BTJ movement. “Should an

⁶⁷Ibid., 368-73.

⁶⁸Hattaway et al., *Back to Jerusalem*, 110. They quote Mark 16:15 as support for this view.

opportunity arise for these rural Christian to serve overseas, as ‘missionaries’ and all are paid for by mission agencies, there would certainly not be any shortage of applicants.” He proceeds to describe the selection process that the trainees went through “as intensely competitive among applicants.” As a result, he asked the logical question, “How can the selection process be able to check the motive of the mission candidates to screen off those who just want a free ticket out of China.”⁶⁹

Moreover, in addition to spiritual maturity and godly motives, the potential missionaries should have some experience ministering in their current context. Cross-cultural experience would be ideal, but at the very minimum they should be able to demonstrate some measure of faithfulness and fruitfulness in a church supervised ministry.

The type of missionary who is now being considered is a career, long-term missionary. Therefore the church leaders should set forth the expectation that the candidate would make it his desire to minister among his or her people group for an extended period of time. Although church leaders cannot assume the role of God and tell candidates how long they must stay, they can emphasize the large investment of time and money that is being poured into the mission. If the appointed missionary abruptly ends his or her mission after a short time, most of what was invested will be in vain. Therefore candidates should count the cost and plan to, Lord willing, stay among their people groups for lengthy periods of time.

⁶⁹Chan Kim-kwong, “Mission Movement of the Christian Community in Mainland China: The Back to Jerusalem Movement” (paper prepared for the Seoul Consultation, Study Commission IX, Seoul, Korea, March 2009) [on-line]; accessed 22 July 2011; available from [http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/pdf/Kim-Kwong percent20Chan percent202009-2-28.pdf](http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/pdf/Kim-Kwong%20Chan%202009-2-28.pdf); Internet.

Training. Up to this point, the importance of missionary training has been repeatedly emphasized.⁷⁰ It was encouraging to learn that the majority of survey participants also value missiological training, with 40 percent indicating that a lack of training and properly qualified candidates are hindering their house churches from sending missionaries.

The leadership of the house churches can and should provide a portion of this missiological training. They could take some of the more applicable points from this GC training and pass it along to those preparing for the mission field. However, the leaders should also help future missionaries search for other training opportunities as well. Although missiological training programs are not abundant in China, they do exist and hopefully the foreigners working to train these house church leaders can recommend some good options.

Such missiological training should include biblical, cultural, and linguistic studies, as well as mission strategy and history courses. Furthermore, there should be a very practical component whereby they can obtain and practice basic missionary skills and learn how to live in another culture. Obtaining training restricted only to biblical studies is regarded as incomplete and will hinder the missionary's ability to personally adapt to the new culture and contextualize the gospel.

Moreover, the data shows that in questions 23 and 24, the Chinese believers think that people need missiological training before they go to the mission field, but not after they arrive. However, many Western mission organizations believe some of the best

⁷⁰The author regrets that there is neither space nor time in this paper to develop a fully contextualized training program for future Han missionaries. Hopefully this paper has provided some helpful insights that will encourage another to develop this needed program.

training occurs after the worker has been on the field for a period of time. Therefore, the house churches would increase the effectiveness of their missionaries if they can somehow provide them with ongoing training after arriving on the field.

Finally, since the dominant paradigm for Chinese missions right now involves sending tentmakers, the sending church leaders must take the responsibility to ensure that the missionaries' tentmaking skills are in demand in their desired places of service. Moreover, they should research visa possibilities before the missionary arrives, instead of letting them find out the hard way that their original plans are impossible to follow after living in country for a number of days.

Exercise. The leaders should develop a list of missionary qualifications and explain why they were chosen. Afterwards they should share their list with the group and revise their list as they learn from their fellow trainees.

After the qualifications have been established, the leaders should prayerfully contemplate who in their church might be called to missions. The names should be written down with the pastor seeking direction from God regarding how to proceed in counseling these individuals. The above teaching on the call of God should be considered when pondering different individuals.

After the missions committee has been established, the pastor should work with it, and eventually the entire congregation, to plan a short-term missions trip. The trip should be planned within the year, and would ideally have the church's adopted UPG as its destination.

The trainees should also share with the group any missiological training opportunities they are aware of. If the trainer is aware of some missionary training

schools, he could share this information at this time. Through such training institutions, the churches can supplement their limited ability to train workers for the mission field.

Day 3 – Criterion 8

Churches that are eager to participate in the GC will motivate their people by upholding missionary heroes as an inspiration and an example to follow. Although this criterion was not judged to be a weakness, the data indicates that the Chinese house church could still grow in this eighth criterion. Seventy-five percent of all respondents did not personally know an international missionary, and if they have a missionary hero, it is a nineteenth century foreigner. In addition, 40 percent of all respondents shared that their church has never taught on the life of a missionary. This lack once again supports the belief that a large percentage of house churches have no current vision for missionary work.

In order to help these leaders turn their churches into GCCs, they should be encouraged to teach about the lives of famous missionaries. This would be especially appropriate in a Sunday school setting, for either children or adults. Resources are available in mainland China that will enable them to do this. A number of books have been translated from English into simplified Chinese and are available for these pastors to purchase online.⁷¹ Although these English biographies are all tremendous stories, it would be more ideal for the house church leaders to obtain biographical stories of Chinese missionary heroes. It is unfortunate that C. Peter Wagner's assessment thirty-five years ago still rings true.

⁷¹These biographies include Hudson Taylor, Robert Morrison, Jim Elliot, David Livingstone, Eric Liddell, and Don Richardson. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* has also been translated into Simplified Chinese, however it is difficult and expensive for house church leaders to acquire.

Names like Hudson Taylor and David Brainerd and Robert Moffat are well known in missionary history. But Josua Mateinaniu, Joesph Merrick, Kee Pung Lee, and Ini Kopuria should take a place with them when the real, worldwide history of missions is written. Most of the protagonists of our missionary biographies still have white feet.⁷²

Currently, very few biographies of Chinese missionaries exist. John Sung could loosely be known as a missionary hero.⁷³ Also, the seventy year old story of Mecca Chao and his wife traveling to Western China to reach the Muslims is recorded in another book.⁷⁴ In addition, the simplified Chinese edition of *Perspectives* contains a number of Chinese evangelists whose lives are highlighted. All of this is a small beginning, but the heroic stories of Chinese missionaries, that will have the greatest impact on the Chinese house church, are being lived out today; the church can only hope that they will be recorded so that Chinese believers can imitate their faith (Heb 13:7) and follow their examples as they follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1).

The church can also benefit from the mistakes that previous missionaries have made. The eight common mistakes shared in chapter 3 that were committed by cross-cultural workers over the past two-hundred years should be reflected upon.⁷⁵ Regrettably, many of these same mistakes continue to be made today.

⁷²C. Peter Wagner, "Full Circle: Third World Missions," in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 65.

⁷³Leslie T. Lyall, *A Biography of John Sung* (Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2004).

⁷⁴Ruì Zhēn Wáng, 神國俠侶—西域宣教傳奇 [Silk route mission: Story of a heroic couple]. Taipei, Taiwan: Campus Evangelical Fellowship, 2005.

⁷⁵The eight common mistakes are: (1) missionaries had a superiority complex, (2) they took a dim view of "pagan" religions, (3) they failed to differentiate between Christianity and Western culture, (4) they exported denominationalism, (5) they failed to encourage the indigenization of Christianity, (6) they were paternalistic, (7) they were unwise in their use of Western funds, (8) they were too closely identified with the colonial system. J. Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 161-164.

To promote the overall advance of the Chinese house church missions movement, future Asian missionaries desperately need to keep journals, recording their problems, solutions, trials, victories, etc. Chaeok Chun, as Asian missionary in Pakistan for over a decade, said, “Asian missionaries on the whole are in their pioneering stage and have no former pattern to follow. They are actually making a kind of pattern for the coming generation of Asian missionaries.”⁷⁶ Consequently, the testimonies of the early Chinese pioneer missionaries would tremendously benefit the future ones who follow.

Finally, the church leaders should be exhorted to hold up the heroic examples of famous single female missionaries like Amy Carmichael and Lottie Moon. Mrs. Pak, could also serve as a great modern-day example of courage and self-sacrifice in her ministry to the North Koreans. She smuggled in supplies and aid for the poor in North Korea while preaching the gospel and distributing biblical materials. She has been imprisoned both in China and in North Korea, yet continues her clandestine work for the sake of those who have not heard.⁷⁷

Exercise. The trainer should share a fifteen-minute biography with the group, modeling the missiological benefits of sharing a missionary’s story. Each church leader should take one minute and share with the group who his missionary hero is and why. A list of missiological resources will be handed out and the church leaders will be encouraged to obtain some to share with their congregations. The trainees should choose the fourth Sunday during missions emphasis month to share the inspirational story of a

⁷⁶Chaeok Chun, “An Asian Missionary Commenting on Asian Mission,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 122.

⁷⁷Eugene Bach, and Luther Martin, *Back to the Jerusalem of the East: The Underground House Church of North Korea* (Blountsville, AL: Back to Jerusalem, 2011), 86-88.

missionary hero. Finally, they should share about any missionary resources not on the list that would inspire the represented churches to more GC involvement.

Day 3 – Criterion 9

The ninth criterion of a GCC is that it understands how to support missionaries and is actively seeking to do so. Howard Brant underscores the importance of church support within a majority world context.

During the early years of this movement [COMIBAM] (started in 1987) there was an unusually high attrition rate. Leadership found one of the most significant variables was that missionaries who came from strong sending churches seemed to be able to survive the storms of the mission field, but that who did not were found ‘weary in the way.’⁷⁸

Prayer and training support have already been discussed. Now the focus will shift to how a church can financially and emotionally support its missionaries.

Financial support. Brant specifically addresses the financial support and asserts, “Creating and maintaining a sustained income stream for emerging missions is probably the greatest challenge of the emerging mission movement.”⁷⁹ If the Chinese house churches were currently achieving their goals and sending a multitude of missionaries who were accomplishing great things, then their naïve and simplistic attitude toward missionary funding could be excused. However, Wan and Oleson consider the lack of an operational funding system a significant challenge for Han missionaries.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁸Brant, “Seven Essentials,” 42-43.

⁷⁹Ibid., 50.

⁸⁰David Oleson and Enoch Wan, “Majority World Harvest Among Tibetan Buddhists: Historical Review, Ethnographic Overview, and Dynamic Development,” in *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, ed. Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 171.

evidence points to the fact that the current funding strategy, as it is being employed by Chinese house churches, has greatly hindered the achievement of their vision. Jonathan Lewis observes that this is not just a Chinese problem, but is affecting two-thirds world missionaries everywhere. “Although thousands of cross-cultural [two-thirds world] missionaries are being sent out, many are returning because of financial problems and those related to inadequate training.”⁸¹

Biblically, there is no requirement that missionaries must be fully financially supported by the sending church. In Acts 13, the reader is not told how Paul and Barnabas will obtain their livelihood. It is certain that they did not receive full support from the church in Antioch throughout their missionary careers, as later on Paul is found to be a tentmaker in Corinth (Acts 18:3). In the case of Corinth, a principle is employed by Paul that missionaries and their sending churches would be wise to follow. Paul was actually glad to refrain from accepting funds from the Corinthians so that he could avoid any appearance of mixed motives (1 Cor 9:14-18); instead, he received support from other churches (2 Cor 11:7-9). Moreover, it is clear that various churches that had a relationship with Paul occasionally provided him with missionary assistance (Phil 4:18, 2 Cor 7:5-7).

Despite the lack of a mandate for local churches to fully support its sent out ones, Paul is clear that “the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14). This enables Christian workers, including missionaries, to give their full attention to the gospel ministry and thus expand the kingdom of God at a faster rate. This principle is best illustrated in Acts 18. In verses

⁸¹Jonathan Lewis, “Equipping Tentmakers: An Argentine Perspective,” in *Internationalizing Missionary Training*, ed. William David Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 158-59.

3 and 4, Paul is seen making tents as a means to securing income, with his preaching ministry occurring on the Sabbath. However, when Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia, “Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching” (Acts 18:5). Paul was able to give up his tentmaking responsibilities because “the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed” (2 Cor 11:9). Witherington agrees with this interpretation.

We may deduce from 2 Cor. 11:9 and Phil. 4:14-15 that Timothy and Silas brought not merely good news with them from Macedonia but also funds, which allowed Paul to forgo working with his hands, at least for a while, and concentrate on ministry in the synagogue and elsewhere.⁸²

In reference to this Macedonian gift, Paul even goes so far as to use hyperbole saying, “I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you” (2 Cor 11:8). Based on all of these Scriptures, Chinese house churches should reassess their current tentmaking strategy and explore fully supporting the missionaries they send out. However, at this point one might be tempted to ask, is the author arguing that tentmaking is ineffective?

The tentmaking strategy, as was demonstrated above, dates back to biblical times and has been used effectively to spread the gospel. Colin Grant, in reference to the Moravians notes, “Most of the early missionaries went out as ‘tentmakers,’ working their trade . . . so that the main expenses involved were in the sending of them out.”⁸³ Jonathan Lewis adds, “There is no doubt that many of the advances made by Christianity before

⁸²Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 548-49.

⁸³Grant, “Europe’s Moravians,” B-75.

the modern era were accomplished by ‘non-professional’ or ‘lay’ missionaries.”⁸⁴ He believes the tentmaking model possesses four main advantages.

First, the tentmaking model provides understandable roles for missionaries that will eliminate suspicion on the part of the locals. Second, the impoverished nature of the churches that are sending majority world missionaries makes this model necessary. Third, there are many government restrictions in the countries of origin and destination, especially in regards to the transfer of funds. Fourth and finally, most of the UPGs live in countries that are weary of foreign influence and do not hand out visas easily. This restrictive posture makes it difficult for missionaries to enter their countries unless they have a skill or service that is needed.⁸⁵

All these tentmaking advantages do apply to the Chinese house church context. As a result, the tentmaking strategy should be employed in many situations. However, it behooves the Chinese house church to modify their current model by increasing its awareness of the tentmakers’ needs after he or she arrives on the field.⁸⁶ Such a modification would enable the church to better identify significant financial trials that the tentmaking missionary might encounter with the purpose of cheerfully providing financial assistance when it is needed.

⁸⁴Lewis, “Equipping Tentmakers,” 153.

⁸⁵Ibid., 154.

⁸⁶Many tentmaking organizations in the West have their workers raise support in addition to their local salary. This includes organizations like the English Language Institute of China (ELIC), the International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS), among others. This is due to the fact that oftentimes a tentmaker’s salary is unable to cover the various ministry costs associated with missionary work, as well as a Westerner’s perceived needs. Such costs include missionary training, transportation, literature for distribution, language learning classes, vacations, etc.

Under the third criterion of a GCC, it was taught that the church leaders need to ensure that the entire congregation catches a vision for sending workers to the UPGs. Likewise, the entire congregation should understand the financial cost of doing missions correctly and commit themselves to joyful giving (2 Cor 9:6-8). They should be challenged to give sacrificially, believing that in doing so they are obtaining heavenly treasure that moth and rust will not destroy (Matt 6:20). However, the church leaders must first realize their responsibility to transparently channel all funds to their designated accounts and practice strict financial accountability (2 Cor 8:19-21). One international missionary, who has worked with BTJ leaders for a number of years, shared that this is an area of tremendous concern. He recalled being a part of a recent meeting where high net worth Chinese Christians were being encouraged to give a substantial amount of money to fund BTJ missionaries. Although the wealthy Christians were supportive of the vision, and some even pledged to give one million Chinese dollars (about \$150,000), afterwards, this missionary was convinced that no money was ever given. In his opinion, this was due to the vast amount of corruption and mistrust that is prevalent in Chinese culture and its institutions.⁸⁷

Regarding the controversial role that foreigners have been playing in the BTJ movement, Brant astutely shares,

The prevailing theory is that the more affluent nations need to propel this giant forward with outside funding. In our opinion, unless this paradigm is challenged and changed, at both ends, no long lasting change will result. The West can and should contribute in appropriate ways. But the needed income for the emerging missions movements will only become sustainable as their leaders develop internal systems that generate core funds.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Unnamed missionary, interview by author, 4 October 2011, VA. This missionary is M5.

⁸⁸Brant, "Seven Essentials," 50.

While a full discussion of this complicated topic is not permitted because of space constraints, Gailyn Van Rheenen provides a simple, yet well articulated, set of questions that should guide any BTJ and foreign financial partnership. He argues that before money is accepted or given, both parties should ask:

1. Are missions resources used to maintain local churches or to plant new ones?
2. Does support create unhealthy dependence or encourage national church initiative?
3. Are national church leaders ethically, morally, and spiritually responsible to other national church leaders who understand their culture?
4. Do supported national leaders expect to be supported by their own people in the near future?
5. Are national leaders supported on a level consistent with the local economy or on the economic level of members of the supporting church?
6. Does the support of one national leader create jealousy because other equally qualified people are not supported? Who determines who is qualified or not?
7. Does support unknowingly create hierarchies so that churches and institutions are controlled by the West rather than by local Christian leaders?⁸⁹

The core principle behind most of these questions is, does the foreign money create dependency and weaken indigenization? The majority world missions movement would be better off using its own resources to send fewer missionaries, compared with using foreign resources to send more missionaries. As Chua Wee Hian astutely remarked earlier, “Financial dependence robs us of our dignity. It creates a spirit of dependence and weakens the sense of stewardship.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹Gailyn Van Rheenen, “Money and Mission (Revisited): Combating Paternalism,” *Monthly Missiological Reflection #13* [on-line]; accessed 3 January 2012; available from <http://www.missiology.org/?p=247>; Internet.

⁹⁰Chua Wee Hian, “Encouraging Missionary Movements in Asian Churches,” in *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents*, ed. Marlin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 20.

Summarizing this section on financial support, there are two basic principles that the house church must apply to its sending paradigm. First, whether the missionary is a tentmaker or a full-time worker, his or her financial needs must be met. Such needs not only relate to daily living expenses, but also to the finances needed to support the ministry. Financial pressures and stresses have led many majority world missionaries to leave the field. Second, any financial assistance from foreigners must be carefully accepted and designated. Foreign funds should be directed to one-time expenses in order to avoid creating dependency. Also, they should be used to encourage local giving, and not replace it.

Spiritual and emotional support. The congregation needs to sustain its vision for missions and not forget its sent out workers. Missionaries on the field need comprehensive support, which includes spiritual and emotional, in addition to financial, medical, educational, prayer, etc. This needed emotional/spiritual support is particularly important for Chinese churches and missionaries who may not realize their need for member care. Lee astutely notes,

Personal care, e.g. time for annual vacation is provided; emphasis on maintenance and growth of personal spiritual life. Asian churches may at times impose on missionaries a Confucian work ethic – one that promotes hard work at the expense of rest and renewal – as exemplified by Chinese missionary heroes such as John Sung, Watchman Nee and Wang Ming Dao.⁹¹

Even though a missionary can be prepared for the reality of culture shock during pre-field training, it will still be difficult when he actually encounters it. A GCC will anticipate this challenge and help the missionary through this time by “being there”

⁹¹Loun Ling Lee, “Toward a Maturing Chinese Mission” *Encounters Mission Ezine* 9 (2005) [on-line]; accessed 10 August 2011; available from http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/chinese_mission3_09.pdf; Internet.

for him. Though not physically present, the church can minister to the emotional and spiritual needs of the worker through email, phone calls, skype, care packages, and possibly even a short-term missions trip. The Corinthian church provides an excellent example of a church giving emotional support to the apostle Paul. While in Macedonia, Paul described himself as harassed, full of conflicts and fears, and downcast (2 Cor 7:5-6). Yet, through the sending of Titus, God comforted the apostle so that his joy was greater than ever (2 Cor 7:7).

This support will be especially necessary in areas where the church does not yet exist. Hopefully in these most destitute of places, a team will be sent, instead of just one family or one unit. The ideal situation is that each team would have one worker who has some pastoral experience to help the other teammates through their difficult times. However, even in these situations, missionaries can derive great benefit from a safe person in their sending church in whom they can confide and receive council. Such a person can be especially helpful when the missionary teammates are quarreling amongst themselves. Michael Tai notes that this quarreling can be particularly common among Chinese teams. “Team members should practice an ethos of looking out for one another and guard against self-reliance, competition and jealousy. Hierarchy has deep roots in Chinese culture and Chinese can be fiercely competitive, title conscious and humble in a wrong way.”⁹²

The Chinese missionary movement is targeting some of the most resistant people groups remaining on the earth. As discovered in chapter 5, many Chinese missionaries have had their expectations of a people movement to Christ crushed when

⁹²Michael Tai, “The Chinese are Coming” [on-line]; accessed 2 July 2011; available from http://www.360doc.com/content/08/0620/00/61857_1352216.shtml; Internet.

they realized the fierce resistance of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. This reality has left them discouraged and led to a high attrition rate. One can imagine how difficult it is for Han missionaries (and their sending churches) to see very little response to the gospel, considering the harvest field they have been living in for the better part of three decades. Therefore, the future missionaries should be prepared for heavy resistance in order to strip away naiveté and provide realistic expectations. Such expectations should enable the missionary to faithfully serve long-term in a place where they might see very little external, visible fruit.

However, this vision should be balanced-out with a triumphal theology of missions in order to generate confidence and hope in the hearts of God's people. George Martin commented on Romans 15:21⁹³ that Paul received great encouragement from the truth that his work would not be unfruitful. "Although he [Paul] ventured out into unknown waters, although he ventured beyond the synagogues and preached where there were no biblical foundations, he knew the gospel would be heard and believed."⁹⁴

The church should emotionally support the missionary during his discouraging times with verses like Habakkuk 2:14 and Revelation 5:9. The truth provided by these verses can comfort the missionaries and cause them to remember that their labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58), and that God will eventually redeem people from their UPG. Especially noteworthy is Psalm 2, which depicts the hostile nations as future subjects in the Messiah's kingdom and as fragile pottery that will be dashed (Psalm 2:9).

⁹³“Rather, as it is written: “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand” Romans 15:21.

⁹⁴George Martin, “Missions in the Pauline Epistles,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Mission*, eds. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 95.

Finally, short-term mission trips can be a valuable, strategic part of any missionary endeavor. The participants of a short-term trip can benefit the long-term workers by helping them obtain contacts, prayerwalking, bringing ministry resources, doing evangelism, passing out tracks, leading Bible studies, preaching, doing research in nearby villages, and ministering to the long-term workers.⁹⁵ Of course, many of these activities require the ability to speak the local language, or the use of an interpreter; however, some activities do not have a language requirement, and if the short-term team is well trained, God can use them to do many wonderful things. Additionally, it is typically through such a trip that God will call new career workers to the mission field, and reignite the sending church's passion for missions.

Exercise. Trainees should discuss which method of missionary sending is most appropriate for their church right now—tentmaking or fully-supported. Additionally, they should discuss (especially if they are partnering with another church) the best way to collect and distribute missionary funds how they can uphold the principles of transparency and accountability. Finally, they should aim, with the support of their congregation, to begin a missionary fund. The money placed into this fund will be strictly used for missionary work.

Day 3 – Criterion 10

The tenth and final criterion is that a GCC will see the diversity expressed in different cultures as God given, and understands the need to contextualize ideas and methods. In this training session, much of what was written in chapter 3 under the sub-

⁹⁵For a biblical example of ministering to the missionary, see 2 Cor 7:5-7.

heading “through contextualization,” should be shared. Included should be a discussion on the Tower of Babel (Gen 11), the good, neutral, and evil aspects of culture, and the danger of ethnocentrism (Jonah 1-4).

One of the biggest hurdles for Chinese missionaries in contextualizing the gospel is the monocultural setting in which they have been raised. As a result, they will tend to view everything they believe and the manner in which they practice their faith as normative and required. Therefore, in order to be effective cross-cultural witnesses, they desperately need good, biblical, anthropological training. Such training will enable them to understand their own worldview and how it differs from the peoples around them. From such comparisons they will be challenged to return to the Scriptures in order to distinguish biblical beliefs and practices from cultural ones. For example, Michael Tai identifies various cultural differences that exist between Europeans and the Chinese.

To avert misunderstanding, the Chinese will need to learn European norms from the earliest stages of training and acculturation. Europeans value personal grooming more than Chinese. Russians wear shoes when they go out but the Chinese are quite happy going around in flip-flops. Chinese have a sophisticated culinary culture but surprisingly few table rules. Europeans are taught not to speak with a full mouth or to shut their mouth when chewing, but not the Chinese. For Europeans it is rude to slurp and burp or to rest the elbows on the table, but not the Chinese. Europeans look someone in the eye when talking but many Asians avoid eye contact especially when speaking to a senior person. Europeans are comfortable with differences of opinion but the Chinese behave deferentially toward those of superior rank and avoid making someone lose face through open contradiction.⁹⁶

It is important to notice that all these behaviors listed cannot be considered sinful, but rather culturally inappropriate. If the Chinese missionary is not aware of the cultural norms of the people they are trying to reach, they will fail to become “all things to all men” (1 Cor 9) and place unnecessary stumbling blocks before the unbelievers they are

⁹⁶Ibid.

working among. Additionally, if local Christians in the UPG cause the Chinese missionary to lose face through open contradiction, without proper training the Chinese missionary will interpret their actions as sinful and unchristian.

Therefore, as it was pointed out by a missionary in chapter 5, Han missionaries especially need to be trained in the concept of incarnational ministry. Scripture passages like John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:5-11, and 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 can provide guiding principles from the life of Jesus Christ as He “crossed-cultures” in order to minister to mankind. Moreover, Acts 15:20-16:5, 17:16-34, and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 are useful for displaying Paul’s core convictions regarding contextualization and how it was fleshed out in his ministry. Through careful exposition of these passages, Chinese house church leaders can train their future missionaries to avoid erecting unnecessary barriers for the UPGs coming to faith.

Encouragingly, 89.5 percent of respondents believe that it is necessary to understand another culture’s religion before the gospel is shared with them. As a result, missionary trainees should obtain apologetic training before they are sent. Many fine books have been translated into Chinese, which can equip these cross-cultural workers to know how to give an answer for the hope that they have (1 Pet 3:15).⁹⁷

In addition to gaining an understanding of other religions, the Han missionary must also understand the other culture’s view of Chinese people. This understanding is particularly important for missionaries who are being sent to the ethnic minority peoples within China. According to many of these minority groups, the Chinese people have oppressed them over the years and robbed them of their sovereignty, dignity, and

⁹⁷The trainer should provide a list of apologetic resources that are appropriate for missionary work along the Silk Road.

multiple freedoms.⁹⁸ The feelings of resentment can run quite deep and, unfortunately, the Han missionary will be completely oblivious of this negative disposition due to his or her inability to receive objective news. “The only news and information the average Chinese receives is filtered by the government to present what it wants the people to hear. Thus, the Chinese house church missionary does not know that Tibetans dislike them.”⁹⁹

Exercise. The students should break into small groups and discuss how cultural sensitivity is important when ministering cross culturally. For example, they should provide examples of how foreign missionaries in China, through cultural insensitivity or ignorance, have offended Chinese Christians and thus damaged their witness. Afterwards, the trainees should consider the various ways in which Chinese missionaries might unintentionally offend the people they are trying to reach.

Areas for Further Research

This research project has sought to understand the modern-day context of the Chinese house church so as to develop a training proposal that will enable house churches to become GCCs. Although a large amount of information was processed and factored into the training proposal, there are still a few areas that could be researched, which would assist these house churches participate in missions.

⁹⁸For example, Wan and Oleson quote a recent *Times* article regarding the restriction of a religious freedom in Tibet. “Recently the government announcement [*sic*] that all *tulkus* (reincarnated holy men) must obtain government approval before they can reincarnate.” Oleson and Wan, “Majority World Harvest Among Tibetan Buddhists,” 171, quoting “China Tells Living Buddhas to Obtain Permission Before They Reincarnate” [on-line]; accessed 9 January 2012; available from <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tol/news/world/article2194682.ece>; Internet.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 172.

Minority Group Outreach

The questionnaire attempted to discover if the minority groups within China were open to hearing the gospel from Han Chinese missionaries. However, because there are so many different minority groups with different histories and experiences with the Han Chinese, the information obtained was insufficient to make strategic decisions regarding allocation of human resources. Through researching ethnographies, people group profiles, and recent encounters with Han Christians, one could assess a people group's overall view of the Han and predict the level of resistance a Han missionary might expect to find there. Ultimately, the church wants to be fervent in prayer and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, but it should not be so unwise as to ignore the UPGs attitudes and dispositions that were formed in recent history.¹⁰⁰

Korean Missionary Movement

In the past thirty years, the Korean church has risen in prominence and is the second largest missionary sending country in the world.¹⁰¹ Much has been written about this startling movement, and the Chinese church would be wise to study this phenomenon and seek to replicate those elements that are appropriate for its context. However, further research on the similarities and differences between the two contexts would help the

¹⁰⁰The example that this author is considering is Timothy in Acts 16. Although the Jerusalem council just concluded that a Gentile does not need to submit to the Mosaic Law (i.e. circumcision) in order to be recognized as a part of the New Covenant people, Paul had Timothy circumcised "because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:3). In this case, Paul believed that Timothy, as an uncircumcised Gentile believer, would be hindered in his ministry due to his uncircumcised status. Instead of maintaining that the Jews in the area should listen to Timothy because "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value" (Gal 5:6), Timothy underwent the procedure to avoid erecting unnecessary barriers from these Jews hearing the gospel.

¹⁰¹Timothy K. Park, "Missionary Movement of Asian Churches," in *2010 East-West Mission Forum: Missionary Movement of the Non-Western Churches*, ed. Timothy K Park and Steve K. Eom (Pasadena, CA: East-West Center for Missions Research and Development, 2010), 72.

Chinese believers tremendously. Since the young Korean missionary movement was mentored by experienced Western missionaries, this aspect of the data could prove especially useful for foreigners seeking to help the Chinese house church.

Feedback from Current BTJ Missionaries

A decent number of BTJ missionaries have already been sent out with many still serving on the mission field. It would be tremendously helpful for them to share first-hand accounts of their experiences. These interviews should seek to discover the adequacy of their training, their financial situation, their greatest struggles before their departure, just after arriving, and one year after arrival, the responsiveness of their UPG, etc. Through such interviews, data could be obtained that would enable Chinese house churches to become better equipped in preparing and sending missionaries.

Actual Costs of Sending Han Missionaries

As house churches plan and prepare to send missionaries, it would be helpful for them to have an estimate of how much other Chinese churches are spending to support their current missionaries. Moreover, it would be beneficial to know what costs these other churches are covering, and what the missionary is expected to provide for himself. Finally, ascertaining the missionary's perception related to the support he is receiving compared to his needs would help house churches with missionary financial planning.

Missionary Hero Sunday School Curriculum

In order to further establish the missionary vocation in the life of the Chinese church, a missionary Sunday school curriculum should be developed and distributed to

churches all across China. The author is doubtful that this type of curriculum already exists. In the event that it does not, foreigners could partner with Chinese Christians to develop a flexible curriculum that could be used for children and adults. The biographies of numerous foreigners have already been translated into Chinese and would be easy to obtain. However, extensive research would be required to acquire information on recent Chinese missionaries. The goal would be to inspire the Chinese church, hoping that the curriculum “will not only inform and instruct but also inspire readers to be willing to be used of God in this, the greatest cause [the Christian missionary movement] in all human history.”¹⁰²

¹⁰²Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 16.

APPENDIX 1

CHINESE HOUSE CHURCH QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH

Agreement to Participate

The purpose of the research that you are about to participate in is to provide a training proposal that will assist the Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and become GC churches. This research is being conducted by Name Withheld for purposes of writing his Ph.D dissertation. In this research, you will be asked to answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By completing this Chinese House Church Questionnaire, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- ☐ I agree to participate
☐ I do not agree to participate

No Name Necessary.

What part of China do you serve in (province)? _____

What group/denomination/network are you affiliated with (if any)? _____

Are you a leader in your church? _____

Theology (#1 and #2)

1. How do you define a missionary? What is the main motivation for sending missionaries?

2. Do people need to hear and believe the gospel to be saved? Can people be saved apart from Jesus Christ? What if those people have never heard the gospel?

Taking Responsibility (#3)

3. Has your church raised up and sent any missionaries (circle one)?

Yes / No / Don't Know

4. If yes, how many? _____

5. If no, why not? Circle all that apply

1)Security 2)Nobody has the call 3)not enough money 4)They are needed here

Other: _____

6. Would you say the Christians at your church typically tithe? What percentage of Christians at your church would you guess tithe? What is the average percentage that church people give? If you don't know, please simply say 'I don't know'.

7. Besides sending missionaries, in what ways is your church participating in the Great Commission?

8. In your opinion, what are the biggest factors hindering the Chinese house church from greater missions involvement?

Prayer (#4)

9. How often does your church pray for:

The gospel to reach all peoples? Every week, once per month, once per year, never

Specific Missionaries? Every week, once per month, once per year, never

Specific Countries? Every week, once per month, once per year, never

10. How often does your church inform you about the status of Christianity around the world? For example, the small percentage of Christians in the Middle-East and the persecution that many Christians face?

Every week once per month once per year Never

GC Bible Reading/Teaching (#5)

11. How often do you hear about missions and spreading the gospel to the world in church sermons? Or, if you are a pastor, how often do you include this topic in your sermons?

Every week once per month once per year never

Cooperation (#6)

12. In your opinion, how much would it cost to financially support a missionary in another country every year (including transportation costs, and their ministry budget)?

13. Is your church able to financially support a missionary at this time? If yes how many? If not, would you be willing to partner with another house church to send a missionary? What conditions would this other house church need to meet in order to partner with you?

14. Can foreigners in China help the Chinese Church raise up and send missionaries? If so, what is the best way foreigners can help?

Intentionality (#7)

15. What qualifications does one need to be a missionary?

16. What kind of activities could be considered missionary activity (circle all that apply)?

Translation work	Medical care	Starting businesses
Caring for orphans	Evangelism	Teaching a foreign language
Preaching	Improving living conditions (water, food, etc.)	
Church planting	Working a common job	

25. In your opinion, what are some of the biggest struggles that missionaries face?

Language Money Culture Shock Loneliness Persecution

Other: _____

Respects other cultures and sees the need for contextualization (#10)

26. In your opinion, is ministering and preaching the gospel in China different from ministering in another country (such as India or Iran)?

0 2 4 6 8 10

Exactly the same

Completely Different

27. When a person comes to Christ, how should they relate to their old non-Christian culture?

Completely leave it, Discard only sinful/idolatrous aspects, No need to change

28. Do you think it is 1) unnecessary, 2) helpful, or 3) necessary to understand another culture's religion before you share the gospel with them? Please explain why.

29. Do you think ethnic minorities in China are willing to hear the gospel from Han Chinese? Do you think they would be more open to hearing it from a Foreigner? What about other countries in Asia?

APPENDIX 2
CHINESE HOUSE CHURCH QUESTIONNAIRE
IN CHINESE

参与同意书

你将填写的这份问卷调查是为了完成一份研究方案而设计的。这份研究方案是关于帮助中国家庭家教会通过转变为宣教的教会(或是更具有宣教性的教会)从而更好的参与到大使命中。老师将会根据这次调查来完成他的博士学位论文。在调查问卷中,你会回答如下的这些问题。你所提供的任何信息都将被严格保密,你的姓名决定不会被泄露,也不有任何人通过你的回答来推测你的个人信息。参与这次调研是完全自愿的,你可以在任何时候自由的退出这次调查。

请你完整回答这份家庭教会调查问卷,并且在**下面的两个选项中选择**一个,在你完全了解知情的前提下,是否同意此次调查使用你的以下答案。

- ☐ 我同意参与
☐ 我不同意参与

匿名问卷。

你在中国的哪个区域(省份)服侍? _____

请填写你属的教派或团体? _____

你是教会的领导者吗? _____

1. 你是怎样定义宣教士的? 差派宣教士的主要动因是什么?

2. 人们需要听到并且相信福音才能得救吗? 一个人没有耶稣可以得救吗? 如果这些人从来没有听过福音呢?

3. 你们教会培养并差派过宣教士吗(圈出一个答案)? 有/ 没有 / 不知道

4. 如果答案是“有”的话,有几个? _____

5. 如果答案是“没有”的话，为什么没有？ 圈出所有的可能原因
 1) 安全问题 2) 没有人被呼召 3) 资金不足 4) 我们的教会更需要他们
 其他原因： _____

6. 你们教会的基督徒们都乐于十一奉献吗？你估计你们教会基督徒缴纳十一奉献的百分比是多少？你们教会会众的奉献占其个人收入的平均比例是多少？
 如果不知道的话，请回答“我不知道”就行。

7. 除了差派宣教士以外，你所在的教会还在哪些方面参与大使命的事工？

8. 在你看来，拦阻中国家庭教会投身于大使命事工的最主要因素有哪些？

9. 你们教会在以下各项的祷告频率：
- | | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| 传福音给每一个人？ | 每周一次 | 每月一次 | 每年一次 | 从来没有 |
| 特定的宣教士？ | 每周一次 | 每月一次 | 每年一次 | 从来没有 |
| 特定的国家？ | 每周一次 | 每月一次 | 每年一次 | 从来没有 |
10. 你的教会常常帮助你了解世界各地基督教发展状况吗？比如说，中东地区基督教的规模很小，或是许多基督徒正在面临的迫害等？
 每周一次 每月一次 每年一次 从来没有
11. 在教会证道时，你会多久听到一次关于宣教和向全世界传福音的宣讲？或者，你是位牧师，在你的证道信息中会多少次提到这方面的内容？
 每周一次 每月一次 每年一次 从来没有
12. 在你看来，支持一位跨国宣教士每年的财务费用是多少（包括差旅费用以及他们的事工费用）？

13. 你们的教会现在可以在财务上支持宣教士吗？如果可以的话，能支持几个呢？如果不可以的话，你愿意和其他的家庭教会合作来差派宣教士吗？跟你合作的那间家庭教会需要具备哪些条件？

14. 在中国的外国人可以帮助中国教会培养并差派宣教士吗？如果可以的话，那么外国人最好在哪些方面提供帮助？

15. 一们宣教士需要具备什么样的资格？

16. 哪一些活动可以被称为宣教士活动(圈出所有可以应用的)?

翻译工作	医疗援助	经商
关怀孤儿	布道会	教授外语
讲道	提高生活条件（饮水，事物等）	
植堂	从事正常的工作	

说明:_____

17. 以 10 分为满分，你们教会对于差派宣教士的意愿度是多少？

0	2	4	6	8	10
一点都不愿意			非常热衷		

18. 你（作为一位牧师）是在你们教会中发现有潜质的宣教士并且鼓励他们在这方面服侍神呢，或是你在等着他们来找你？如果你不是教会的领导者，你的牧师是否曾鼓励你或其他你认识的人去致力于宣教的使命吗？

19. 你们教会现在是否有在一定时间内培养宣教士的计划或目标？如果有的话，你们的计划是怎样的？

20. 你认识多少个中国宣教士现在正在其他国家服侍主？在国内的呢？

21. 你最尊敬最欣赏是哪一位宣教士（过去或现在，中国的或外国的都可以）？为什么？

22. 你们教会教导过关于宣教士生活的知识吗？

有 没有

23. 在宣教士走进禾场前，他们需要从母会获得的帮助有哪些？

24. 一个宣教士进入禾场后，他需要从母会得到哪些支持？

25. 在你看来，宣教士面临的挑战有哪些？

语言 资金 文化冲击 孤独 迫害
其他：

26. 依你看来，在中国传福音与其他的国家不同吗（比如说印度，伊朗）？

0 2 4 6 8 10
完全一样 完全不同

27. 当一个人成为基督徒后，他应该怎样处理与原先的非基督徒文化的关系呢？

完全遗弃 只是遗弃罪/偶像崇拜的一方面 没必要改变

28. 你觉得在向人们传福音之前了解他们的宗教文化是 1) 没必要 2) 有帮助的
3) 有必要的？你能解释一下为什么呢？

29. 你觉得中国的少数民族愿意从汉族人那里听到福音吗？你觉得他们会更愿意
从外国人那里听到福音吗？ 其他亚洲国家的人呢？

APPENDIX 3

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH IN CHINA

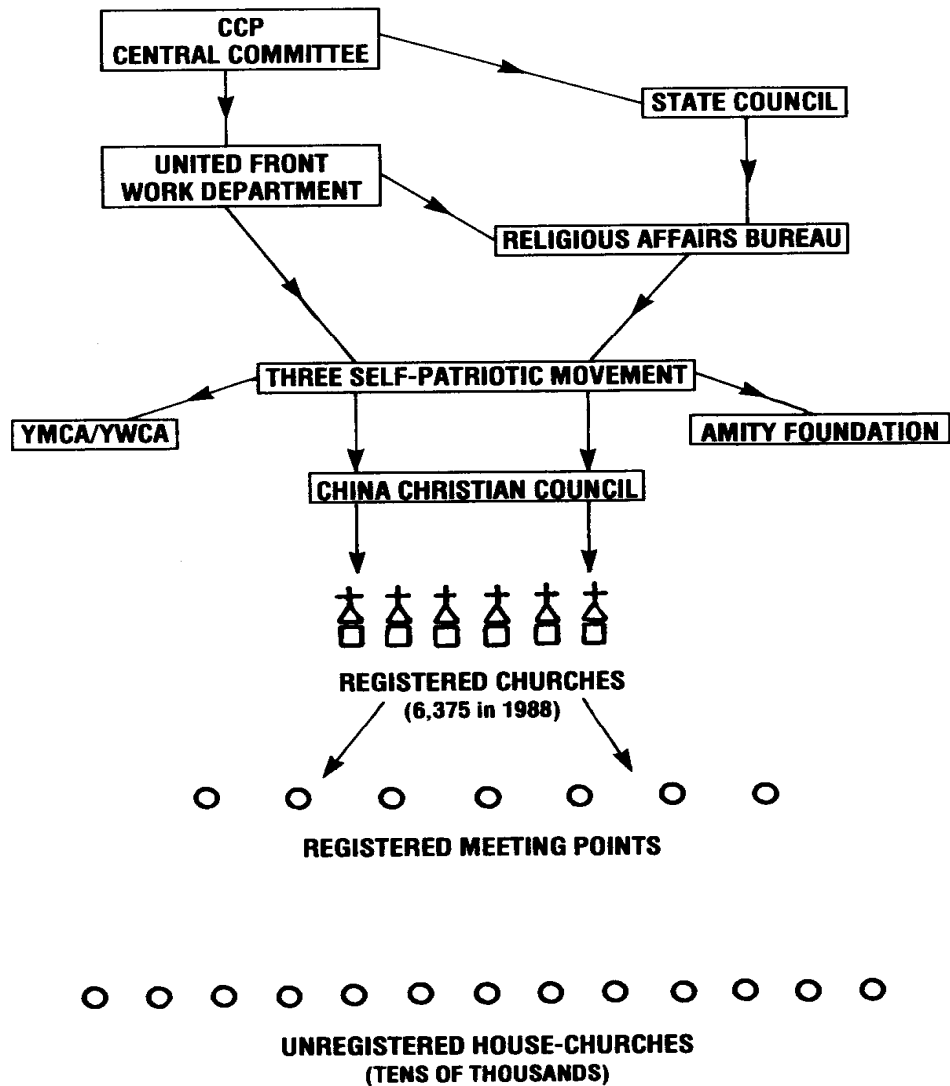


Figure A1. Organization of the church in China.
Source: Tony Lambert, *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church*
(Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1994), 33.

APPENDIX 4

Table A1. OVERVIEW OF THE GREAT COMMISSION
CHURCH TRAINING

<i>Biblical criterion</i>	<i>Weaknesses from chapters 4 and 5</i>	<i>Goals for trainees</i>	<i>Action steps</i>
1. Longs to see all the peoples on the earth hallowing God's name	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only 35 percent of the survey participants included the concept of crossing cultures in their definition of a missionary 2. Need to connect obedience to the GC as a means to Glorify God 3. Tendency to gravitate to the Diaspora 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand and embrace a biblical basis for missions 2. To understand and embrace a biblical motivation for missions 3. To understand the missionary as a cross-cultural worker 4. To develop a special burden for UPGs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore if they are more God-centered or man-centered 2. To develop missionary sermon #2 on the biblical motivation for missions 3. To ponder which UPG makes sense for them to target and why (should ultimately be done with the congregation)
2. Sees mankind as utterly lost and without hope apart from the gospel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over 27 percent rejected the exclusivist position saying God will judge the unevangelized based on their conscience 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand and embrace the doctrine of man's depravity from the verses listed 2. To understand and embrace the exclusivist/restrictionist position on the fate of the unevangelized 3. To understand the limitations of natural revelation and man's conscience (Ps 19, Rom 1:18-20, 2:14-16) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss, "if people could be saved apart from the gospel, what would the consequences be on missionary work?" 2. Discuss why the trainees struggle embracing the exclusivist position 3. Develop missionary sermon #3 on the unevangelized. Preach it on the third Sunday they return

<i>Biblical criterion</i>	<i>Weaknesses from chapters 4 and 5</i>	<i>Goals for trainees</i>	<i>Action steps</i>
3. Takes responsibility to be involved, regardless of their size, resources, or sacrifices that must be made	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chinese believers do not see prayer as “real” GC participation 2. Most Chinese believers are not financially contributing to missions; few are tithing 3. Families pose a problem for sending missionaries 4. Many, especially the fundamentalists, have a “China first,” “world second” mentality 5. Many house churches have no vision for missions and have not sent a missionary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand and embrace the responsibility of every local church to participate in missions 2. To understand and embrace the responsibility of every Christian to participate in missions 3. To understand and embrace the need to consider all four locations from Acts 1:8 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In small groups list the biggest hindrances that are keeping church members from embracing a GC vision 2. Outline a strategy to help church members overcome these hindrances 3. Create a missions committee in the church after the second missions sermon
4. Is a prayerful church, seeking to inform its members of the worldwide situation and needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The prayers are not missiologically oriented 2. Very few churches are informing their people of the worldwide situation of the church and the spread of the gospel 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand that the first missionaries were called in a prayer service 2. To understand prayer will increase our passion for God and the nations 3. To understand specific prayer for missionaries and nations will promote a GC vision 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have the trainer model a prayer time for a UPG 2. Plan a weekend GC prayer focus for their church after the first two missionary sermons

<i>Biblical criterion</i>	<i>Weaknesses from chapters 4 and 5</i>	<i>Goals for trainees</i>	<i>Action steps</i>
5. Reads and preaches the Word of God from a GC perspective	1. Less than half are including something about the GC on a monthly (or more frequent) basis	1. Develop an outline of missionary sermon #1 on the biblical basis for missions 2. To understand missions is a central theme of the Bible and every text should be read with it in mind 3. Demonstrate how the apostles model reading the OT missiologically in Acts 15 and Galatians 3	1. Develop a sermon outline #1 from Gen 12:1-3 and Gal 3:6-29. The goal of the sermon is to demonstrate the overall missionary plan of God to bless the nations and redeem one of every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 5:9). To be preached the first Sunday after they return
6. Is willing to cooperate with like-minded evangelicals to accomplish the GC	1. The conditions for cooperation are few, especially regarding theology	1. To understand the complexity of sending missionaries and thus the need for cooperation 2. To understand the cooperation/partnerships in the Bible 3. To understand important considerations before partnering 4. To consider how to partner with local churches and foreign churches	1. To list prerequisites for missiological partnership 2. Brainstorm questions for a potential partner 3. To list a number of churches that might partner with them and make a plan to meet with that church

<i>Biblical criterion</i>	<i>Weaknesses from chapters 4 and 5</i>	<i>Goals for trainees</i>	<i>Action steps</i>
7. Is actively praying, seeking to identify gifted people to equip and send, in a way suitable to their gifting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Few in the church feel called, or few understand the call to the mission field 2. Very few church members are qualified to be missionaries, many trainees are young, uneducated, etc. 3. Leaders should grow in intentionality 4. Plans to send missionaries lack specificity 5. Training needs to be specifically geared toward missionary work, not too short in duration, and practical 6. On-field training is not seen as important 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand biblical principles regarding a call to the mission field 2. Understand appropriate standards for missionary applicants 3. Motivate them to be intentional in challenging people to serve in missions 4. Understand the need for missionary training 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a list of missionary qualifications 2. Develop a list of possible missionaries from their churches 3. After the missions committee is established, work with it and the church to plan a short-term missions trip within 1 year 4. Share any missiological training opportunities they know of
8. Upholds missionary heroes to inspire church members and provide for them an example to follow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only a slim majority has taught on the life of a missionary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To be encouraged to teach about the lives of famous missionaries 2. To understand the 8 common mistakes of past missionaries in order to not duplicate them 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trainer models teaching on the life of a missionary by sharing a fifteen minute story with the class 2. Each trainee will share his or her favorite missionary hero and why. 3. Obtain a list of missiological resources and choose a missionary story to share with their church as sermon #4

<i>Biblical criterion</i>	<i>Weaknesses from chapters 4 and 5</i>	<i>Goals for trainees</i>	<i>Action steps</i>
9. Understands how to support missionaries and is actively seeking to do so	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor giving habits, missionaries lacking financial support 2. Careful to avoid dependency with foreign funds 3. Need to emphasize transparency and accountability with all funds 4. Han Missionaries get discouraged from a lack of fruit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand the biblical basis of both tentmaking and fully-supported missionaries and the pros and cons of each 2. To ensure the financial stability and well being of any missionary they send 3. To understand the danger of becoming dependent on outside funds and the need for transparency/accountability 4. To recognize the various ways they can emotionally and spiritually support missionaries 5. To understand the value of short-term mission trips 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss in small groups which paradigm of sending (tentmaking or full support) is most appropriate for their church right now 2. Discuss the best way to collect and distribute missionary funds and how to do it with transparency and accountability 3. Begin a designated missionary fund
10. Sees diversity in cultures as God given and understands the need to contextualize ideas and methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chinese tend to be ethnocentric due to their monocultural context 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand a biblical perspective on culture 2. To be weary of undetected ethnocentrism, and how their own culture has affected their view of the Bible and world 3. To understand the incarnational principle 4. To be aware of the UPG's perspective on the Han Chinese 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss how foreigners have offended them and how their missionaries could unknowingly make some of the same mistakes 2. Discuss how a foreigner's culture has affected the foreigner's theology and methodology from a Chinese believer's point of view

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ABSTRACT

ASSISTING CHINESE HOUSE CHURCHES TO BECOME GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES

Name Withheld, Ph.D.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012

Chairperson: Dr. George H. Martin

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a training proposal that will assist the Chinese house churches in developing a plan to address their missiological weaknesses and become Great Commission churches. The thesis of this dissertation is that the majority of Chinese house churches are not Great Commission churches. Chapter 1 will give an overview of the project, which includes the methodology used.

Chapter 2 describes the origin of the house church in China, with special attention being given to the historical and political factors that shaped it. With this background information in place, the reader will be better able to understand the modern day situation of the Chinese house church.

Chapter 3 will provide a rationale for the Great Commission survey that was used to collect data. First, a biblical theology of missions will be developed. From this theology, the ten criteria of a Great Commission church will be established. Finally, these ten criteria will inform the twenty-nine question survey that will be used to obtain measurable data.

Chapter 4 will describe the data collected by the questionnaire. The twenty-nine questions will be grouped according to their corresponding Great Commission church

criterion. The data will be immediately assessed to form a preliminary conclusion regarding the nature of the majority of Chinese house churches regarding their Great Commission involvement.

Chapter 5 will use published materials to describe the recent missionary efforts of the house church in China, with special attention being given to the Back to Jerusalem Movement (BTJ). This chapter will also depend upon various interviews that the author has conducted to supplement the scarcity of resources in this sensitive area. The goal is to verify or modify the conclusions reached in chapter 4. The chapter will finish by listing the missiological weaknesses of the modern-day Chinese house church.

Finally, chapter 6 is a contextualized training proposal designed to assist Chinese house churches to become Great Commission churches. The training will lead church leaders to develop a plan for their local church that will strengthen its missiology and enable it to more effectively participate in the Great Commission.

VITA

Name Withheld

PERSONAL

Born: March 1, 1970, Houston, Texas
Parents: Alan and Joy
Married: Patty, December 11, 1997
Children: Meili (April 22, 2001)
Lance (August 2, 2005)
Josh (June 29, 2007)

EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Houston High School, Houston, Texas, 1988
B.A., Texas University, 1992
M.Div., Baptist Seminary, 2003

MINISTERIAL

Short-term missionary, Philippines, Indonesia, 1993, 1995
Youth Pastor, Baptist Church 1997-2003
Missionary to East Asia 2009-present

ACADEMIC

Assistant to Dr. Masters, Boyce College, 2005-2006
Garrett Fellow to Dr. J.D. Sutherland, SBTS, 2004-2005
Adjunct Professor, International Consortium Theological Studies, Spring 2010-present