

SAINTS, SUFFERING, AND SANCTUARIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD: JAPAN, KOREA, AND CHINA

Seth Myers on Christian Heroes in Asia

Stories of heroic saints and inspiring sanctuaries abound in the history of the church of Jesus Christ. It is easy and natural to think of the early church in the ancient world and the medieval church in Europe, but we often forget the persecuted church found in the non-Western world. Here we examine stories of saints and their sanctuaries from the cultures of Japan, Korea, and China. Stories of such saints (and their sanctuaries, in often humble form) who struggle against their cultures are just as inspiring as tales from familiar figures such as Paul, Augustine, Constantine, Dante, and Bede the Venerable. Sanctuaries, both ancient and contemporary, are paired with brief overviews of the stories of saints from Asian lands. Our discussion of saints includes some works of Shusaku Endo, whose 1969 novel *Silence* (produced as a film in 2016 by Martin Scorsese) described 250 years of persecution in Japan, the explosion of the South Korean church in the twentieth century, and a

cadre of persecuted Chinese church leaders and preachers, as well as acclaimed Chinese intellectual Lin Yutang's process of conversion as described in his autobiography *From Pagan to Christian*.¹

JAPAN: SACRIFICE, BEAUTY, AND MELTED CHURCHES

The struggle of believers in Japan is achingly portrayed in Shusaku Endo's *Silence*, the story of systematic persecution of Christians during the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603 – 1878). Considered one of the finest novels of twentieth-century Japan and praised by such literary figures as John Updike and the Catholic writer Graham Greene, *Silence* depicts how many (but not all) Japanese Christians survived persecution by openly renouncing their faith while yet clinging to it in private. In his foreword to Japanese artist and writer Makoto Fujimura's review of Endo's work, *Silence and Beauty*, Philip Yancey claims this centuries-long history of hiddenness factors strongly into the well-known Japanese split between one's public face (*tatemaie*) and inner reality (*honne*) that is prevalent in a society riddled by constant pressure towards social conformity.^{2 3} To avoid persecution, torture, and often death, Japanese

¹ *Silence*, directed by Martin Scorsese, featuring Andrew Garfield, Adam Driver, Liam Neeson, and Tadanobu Asano (Paramount Pictures, 2016).

² Philip Yancey, foreword to *Silence and Beauty* by Makoto Fujimura, Digital Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IV Press, 2016), loc. 108.

³ The notion of an Eastern honor-shame society, as distinct from the Western guilt-justification and primitive fear-power driven societies, was in fact introduced by American anthropologist Ruth Benedict's 1946 study of Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

Christians were forced to publicly and annually renounce their faith by dishonoring a brass image of Christ (a *fumi-e*) by stepping on it; the worn image and blackened footprints on such an artifact Japanese inspired Endo to write the novel. Endo's key insight emerges in the prayer of the apostate Priest Rodrigues, as he realizes that God (specifically, Jesus upon whose image he had stepped to renounce his faith) had *not* been silent through his years of guilt but suffered along with Rodrigues's tortured soul, just as he suffered with those who did not renounce their faith and so endured torture. There is a beauty to such silence in Japanese culture, Fujimura claims, citing artists and dissidents throughout Japanese history who registered silent protest over such abuses of power, through such devices as artwork which would blacken as it aged. It is this background of suffering, like the "negative space" offsetting "positive space" in a work of art, which best explains the enduring role of Christianity in a culture and country in which Christians number just 1.5% of the population.⁴

Endo reiterates Christian themes in various other novels, such as *The Samurai* (1980), *Kiku's Prayer* (1982), and *Deep River* (1993). *Deep River*, also made into a 1995 Japanese film and submitted to the Academy Awards for Japan's Best Foreign Language Film, explores the search for an Asian brand of Christianity. The Japanese Christian Otsu struggles with his European Catholic order, declaring "we no longer live in the Middle Ages . . . [but] in a time when we must hold dialogues with other

⁴ "Japan," *Prayercast Ministries*, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://www.prayercast.com/japan.html>.

religions.”⁵ However, it is Otsu’s Japanese nature that causes an even deeper struggle:

After nearly five years of living in a foreign country, I can’t help but be struck by the clarity and logic of the way Europeans think, but it seems to me as an Asian that there’s something they have lost sight of with their excessive clarity and their overabundance of logic . . . it’s because my Japanese sensibilities have made me feel out of harmony with European Christianity. . . . they were most critical of what they saw as a pantheistic sentiment lurking in my unconscious mind. As a Japanese, I can’t bear those who ignore the great life force that exists in Nature. . . . They’ll never be able to understand the import of a verse like Basho’s haiku:

when I look closely
beneath the hedge, mother’s-heart
flowers have blossomed ⁶

Though training but never fully reaching the rank of priest, Otsu reveals deep parallels between the Christian faith and the lives and beliefs of his fellow Asian sojourners. Otsu comforts an army veteran haunted by his survival-driven consuming human flesh of fallen comrades by drawing a parallel between the South American soccer team doing the same while stranded after a plane crash in the Andes, noting that it was a gift of love and ordered by those who were about to die; the

⁵ Shiusaku Endo, *Deep River* (New York: New Directions, 1994), 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

parallel to Jesus's sacrifice is made clear. Otsu argues that the pantheist tendencies of Asian religions are perhaps more than just partial truths (as a Priest describes people of other faiths as "Christians driving around without a license") but similar in some way to Christ's dwelling in the human heart.⁷ Relating his faith to a cynical classmate Mikusa, Otsu claims that his mother taught him that Jesus was "love itself," more than any set of doctrines, and that such love is "the core of this world we live in," is "what the world is lacking" and is why he chooses to follow it with "dumb sincerity."⁸ Such love is rediscovered by a widower seeking his wife's reincarnation when he comes to realize how dismissive and unloving to her he had been throughout his life; his selfishness is countered by the persistent, selfless love shown by various Christian characters in the story. Yet Endo builds bridges of understanding between the faiths, as when he likens compassionate Hindu goddesses with Mary and compares Hindu rites performed in their sacred river Ganges to a washing away of sin and regaining of one's humanity in Christian rites. Persistently Christian in its theme, in *Deep River* Endo dares to compare commonalities across faiths, in the spirit of Leslie Newbigin, missiologist to India, who declared that, "There is something deeply repulsive in the attitude, sometimes found among Christians, which makes only grudging acknowledgment of the faith,

⁷ Endo, *Deep River*, 122.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

godliness, and the nobility to be found in the lives of non-Christians.”⁹

Further stories of Christians struggling heroically for the soul of Japan abound. Novelist Ayako Miura retells the story of Masao Nagano, an unpretentious but high-ranking railway employee and founder of a Young Railwaymen’s Christian Association, in her 1968 novel *Shiokari Pass*.¹⁰ Renowned for his integrity and compassion, despite living in a Buddhist-Shinto culture hostile to Christians, Nagano made the ultimate sacrifice of his life to prevent a runaway train, saving scores of lives in the process. Revered decades after his death, his sacrifice inspired the conversion of many railway employees and townspeople in the town of Asahikawa in Hokkaido, Japan; the story was also made into a film. Another life’s worth of Christian service in Japan, that of architect William Merrill Vories, is chronicled in YWAM Founder Loren Cunningham’s *The Book That Transforms Nations*. Vories arrived in Japan determined to win souls for Christ in 1905, choosing a village so remote it would not appeal to formal missionaries (Omi-Hachiman, now called the Shiga Prefecture) to take a job teaching English. Vories housed the converts he made in his small home since their families would force them to leave home. Vories eventually built dormitories for such converts

⁹ Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1989), 180.

¹⁰ Like Endo’s *Silence*, the popularity of the book inspired a film version; thus, Ayako Muiri, *Shiokari Pass*, translated by Bill and Sheila Fearnough (Singapore: Overseas Missions Fellowship, 1987) inspired the 60 minute feature, filmed in Japan, *Shiokari Pass*, produced by Kiyoshi Nagasim and William F. Brown (Worldwide Pictures, 1978) in VHS format and also available on Youtube.

who suffered persecution from the press and even baseball bats. Vories decided to draw on his training as an architect and started a firm that built over 2800 structures that could withstand Japan's frequent earthquakes. Operating by Christian principles and love, Vories's firm flourished, though the Omi Brotherhood he formed with it took only minimal salaries and poured the excess into evangelistic and humanitarian efforts. They later branched into becoming a premier supplier of Mentholatum ointment in Japan, with each jar advertising a correspondence course to learn more about Christ; Vories's influence on integrity in Japanese manufacturing practices also was renowned. After World War II, Vories aided General MacArthur in the reconstruction of Japan and was instrumental in such humane reforms as equality of the untouchables lower class, the Eta. As Cunningham summarizes the state of modern Japan, he cites the Biblical foundation of the highly moral Japanese culture as a case of "partial obedience, partial blessing." While Japan has its own social pressures, social and economic successes owe a debt to Christian practices introduced by people like Vories.

Saints in contemporary Japan battle the same spiritual odds as Nagano and Vories but can draw on insights from Fujimura and others. As an artist, Fujimura advises the Japanese church to draw on the historic Japanese preoccupation with beauty, evident in its landscape art, aesthetically manicured gardens and tea houses, and refined Noh theater, to adorn the gospel. Even the popular Japanese aesthetic of *wabi sabi*, finding beauty in aging and even dying things, can point towards the beauty of Christ's living sacrifice (especially as an

alternative to the Japanese ritualistic honor suicide, *seppuku*; Fujimura cites a Japanese Nobel Prize winner, one of several intellectuals who committed suicide, as stating, “The Japanese sense of beauty . . . is always connected with death.”^{11 12}

Both the male and female aspects of the image of God can be utilized in reaching the Japanese soul. Yancey cites Endo in stressing the important roles of beauty and love, especially a maternal type of forgiving and approval-bestowing love, which appears silent in a nation known for authoritarian male figures.^{13 14} However, the traditional emphasis of Western missionaries on the fatherhood of God can yet be effective, as Inazo Nitobe argues in his 1905 classic *Bushido: The Samurai Code of Japan*. The traditional Japanese ethos of honor, loyalty, and courage, a largely male warrior code, can provide a nurturing soil for Christian virtues and truths. Nitobe optimistically claims that whereas “Bushido laid particular stress on the moral conduct of [traditionally, male] rulers and public men and of nations . . . the ethics of Christ, which deal almost solely with individuals . . . will find more practical application as individualism . . . grows in potency.”¹⁵

¹¹ *Wabi* refers to things that wear away, and *sabi* is a term for rust; together they can evoke the Buddhist notion of impermanence.

¹² Makoto Fujimura, *Silence and Beauty*. Digital edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IV Press, 2016), Loc. 919.

¹³ Philip Yancey, foreword to *Silence and Beauty* loc. 182.

¹⁴ For examples of male authoritarianism in Japan, see secular author Haruki Murakami’s 2011 novel *1Q84*.

¹⁵ Inazo Nitobe. *Bushido: The Samurai Code of Japan*. Digital edition. (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2019), 168. Special thanks to Riz Crescini for alerting me of the pastor Satoru Nakanishi’s

What sanctuary can we assign to these saints of Japan? We take our cue from Fujimura's discussion of Endo's *Silence*. In the foreword to Fujimura's *Silence and Beauty*, Yancey mentions that when the second atomic bomb detonated over Nagasaki in World War II, it exploded directly above Japan's largest congregation of Christians observing mass, resulting in the death of more Christians than in the previous three and a half centuries of persecution, which began in 1597 when twenty-six Christians were marched to Martyr's Hill in Nagasaki and crucified.¹⁶ It was a stunning reversal from the arrival of the faith on Japanese shores with Francis Xavier in 1549, which grew into a church of 300,000 in the land which Xavier claimed was "the country in the Orient most suited to Christianity" (although in Endo's novel *Silence* describing faith in Japan, he referred to the country as a swampland where the faith goes to die).^{17 18} Nevertheless, Nagasaki's path to recovery exhibited the same faith that had made it a Christian stronghold. Nagasaki rebuilt its churches and community infrastructure, welcoming outsiders and even the foreign forces who were once their enemies; thus, the Nagasaki war memorial features a melted-down church. Hiroshima, by contrast, focused its recovery efforts on commerce, building modern shopping malls and a

lecture "Christianity and Bushido – the Soul of Japan" available online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBeye91DZwQ>.

¹⁶ Philip Yancey, foreword to *Silence and Beauty*, loc. 61.

¹⁷ Fujimura, *Silence and Beauty*, loc. 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, loc. 170.

baseball stadium.¹⁹ The melted-down church at the Nagasaki memorial shows a more communal and humane path forward for Japan and is thus a fitting candidate for the Japanese sanctuary.

However, since the melted-down church of Nagasaki is over seventy years old, we pair it with a more contemporary snapshot of the Japanese church, a small fellowship of twenty-five to fifty believers, which is typical in a land with so few Christians.²⁰ Together, these two churches represent the endurance of Japanese believers through centuries of persecution, sacrifices which merit the claim of beauty as much as anything found in Japanese culture, and thus provide an aesthetic model for winning souls today.

SOUTH KOREA: BIBLES, SACRIFICE, AND A PRAYER MOUNTAIN

If Japan showcases the difficulty of planting the Christian church in Asian soil, the story of South Korea shows what astounding successes may yet be gained, despite a history like that of Japan, fraught with hundreds of years of struggle and persecution. The Joseon Dynasty ruling Korea (1392 – 1897) was described as “The Hermit Kingdom” due to its insularity, which included persecution of Christians. Catholic missionaries arriving in 1784 endured persecution and martyrdom, as

¹⁹ Fujimura, *Silence and Beauty*, loc. 2732.

²⁰ Hiroshi Suzuki, “Why Are Japanese Christians So Few?” (lecture, International Friendships Incorporation, Columbus, OH, June 26, 2002), accessed Jan. 24, 2022, <https://icu-hsuzuki.github.io/science/gospel/ifi200206.pdf>. Yancey also claims that the average size is less than thirty, Philip Yancey, foreword to *Silence and Beauty*, loc. 170.

did native Korean believers, 10,000 of whom were massacred in 1866; a year before, the missionary Robert Thomas managed to throw a bundle of Bibles into a crowd before he was beaten to death.²¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Korean believers numbered 42,000, or one-half of one percent of the population. But today, estimates of the Christian population in (South) Korea range from one third to over 40%, and until recently ranked second worldwide (trailing only the United States) in its per capita sending of missionaries.²² How did this occur? It was largely the result of small group Bible studies and prayer.

In many countries, literacy has been historically limited to the small numbers of the educated classes; in Korea it was no different, as only the ruling class could read complicated Chinese characters. In the fifteenth century, however, Korean King Sejon had a vision that his people were so poor because of their inability to read; thus, he had a simplified phonetic system, *hanguel*, developed, but it was rejected by court scribes who perceived it as a threat. However, hundreds of years later, in 1876, a Korean converted by Scottish missionaries in Mongolia, Suh Sang-Yoon, helped translate the New Testament into Korean using the *hanguel* script. Getting the Bible into the hands and hearts of the Korean commoner made for tremendous growth of the faith: churches fill with hundreds of thousands at 5 a.m. for

²¹ Loren Cunningham, *The Book That Transforms Nations* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2007), 74.

²² Melissa Stefan, "The Surprising Countries Most Missionaries are Sent From and Go To," *Christianity Today*, July 25, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday/news/2013/july/missionaries-countries-sent-received-csgc-gordon-conwell.html>.

daily study and prayer, all-night prayer meetings, and retreats for prayer and fasting are common in South Korea today.²³ As evangelist Billy Kim once remarked,

Some people ask me why the Korean church has experienced revival. The Korean church has been marked as a praying church. Most Korean churches have early morning prayer meetings. My church has early morning prayer meeting at 4:30 a.m.

When I get to heaven, I have to look up whoever came up with that idea and thank him!²⁴

The Korean church's practice of daily spiritual discipline follows their long history of persecution, even as recently as in the twentieth century. Soon after Suh Sang-Yoon's Bible translation in the late nineteenth century, the Japanese brutally occupied Korea for thirty-six years to begin the twentieth century, outlawing public use of the Korean language, which survived in the *hanguel* translations of the Bible by the persecuted, underground church. The Korean civil war, a three-year affair begun by North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in 1950, left five million dead or missing (half from the civilian population) and the country in poverty. In a mere generation, however, South Korea miraculously

²³ Cunningham, *The Book That Transforms Nations*, 78.

²⁴ Billy Kim, "A Workman Must Have Compassion" delivered at Moody's Founders Week 2009, replayed on *Today in the Word* March 1, 2013. Available at <https://www.moodyaudio.com/products/workman-must-have-compassion>. See also Billy Kim, *The Life of Billy Kim: From Houseboy to World Evangelist* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015).

rebounded to become one of the vaunted economics “Tigers of Asia,” owing in no small part to the skills and literacy of its population, its illiteracy rate an astounding .002%, and its status as “the most wired nation on earth” owing to its continuing efforts to provide education to the populace, a heritage of initial efforts to make the Bible available to all.²⁵

Quite unlike Japan, South Korea is known for its huge churches. Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul is the world’s largest single congregation at 700,000, and ten of the world’s eleven largest megachurches are also in Seoul.²⁶ As Billy Kim explained

I asked Dr. Young He Cho [pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church] on the way to a church growth seminar in Japan: “How come you have such a big church?”

He said: “How many hours a day do you pray?” I counted 45 minutes a day. He said he prays 5 hours a day. I have no argument – when man prays 5 hours a day, God is going to bless his ministry.

If the American church is going to have revival, it must change its prayer life. Every major miracle comes through hard prayer of Christian people.²⁷

²⁵ Cunningham, *The Book That Transforms Nations*, 78.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Billy Kim, “A Workman Must Have Compassion,” 2009.

As a testament to Kim's point on the vital role of prayer, the Osanri Prayer Mountain was established in 1973 by the Yoido church near the demilitarized zone in South Korea. The retreat center can accommodate twenty thousand people in its dozen chapels and conducts four worship services daily. The Osanri Prayer Mountain retreat is thus a suitable symbolic sanctuary for the Korean church, its massive size a testament to the large numbers of Korean believers converted through disciplined Bible study and prayer in much more humble, and often persecuted, venues.

CHINA: PERSECUTION, PERSISTENCE AND A HOME CHURCH OF 100 MILLION

“The more persecution, the more the church grows” – Chinese Church “Patriarch,” Samuel Lamb²⁸

China is home to over 100 million believers, the vast majority worshipping in non-state sanctioned house churches.²⁹ China was most notably first infiltrated by the Christian faith from zealous followers of Nestorius, a bishop of Constantinople (circa 390-451 A.D.) deposed in

²⁸ David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing* (Washington, D.C. : Regnery Publishing, 2003), 64.

²⁹ A 1998 estimate claimed 10 million in the state sanctioned Three Self church, 80 million in the independent Protestant house churches, and 10 to 12 million in the Catholic church. More recent estimates place the number as high as 30 million in the Three Self church and 115 million Protestants in total, augmented by a further 10 to 12 million Catholics. Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 91; Eleanor Albert, “Christianity in China,” Backgrounder at Council on Foreign Relations, October 11, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/christianity-china>.

431 over issues of the dual nature of Christ. Nestorius's followers regrouped in Persia and proceeded to spread Christianity along the Silk Road, a trade route through Central Asia; in 635 A.D., they visited the emperor of the Tang Dynasty solely to introduce the Christian faith to China. The Nestorians found a China, however, which had harbored the idea of a creator God since its earliest dynasties. King Yu of China's founding Xia Dynasty (2205 B.C. - 1765 B.C.) attributed his skill at irrigation and ability to solve the problem of China's flood plain to the favor he received by honoring Shang-Di, the God of Heaven, with annual sacrifices. Men with virtue and wisdom were sought as rulers (in no small part due to Confucius's legacy) throughout the subsequent Shang (1765 B.C. - 1122 B.C.) and Zhou (1121 B.C. - 249 B.C.) dynasties. Shang-Di was considered an all-powerful, all-knowing supreme deity who controlled rain, harvests, outcomes of battles, and could bestow Heaven's Mandate (*Tian Ming*) on the righteous to overthrow corrupt rulers.³⁰

Popular awareness of Shang-Di often waned but never disappeared entirely. Under Zhou rule, only the emperor, the Son of Heaven, was considered worthy to worship Shang-Di. Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.) paid homage to the divine, declaring that the wise man "is in awe of the Decree of Heaven," though he admitted that he could hardly comment on the afterlife since he knew so little of this life.³¹ Awareness of Shang-Di devolved

³⁰ Davy Tong and Raymond Paul Petzholt, *The True Spiritual Roots for All Chinese* (Berkeley, CA: Chinese Resource Ministry, 2015), 9-30.

³¹ Confucius, *The Analects*, translated by D.C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), Analects XVI.8, XI.12.

further in the brief Qin (Chin) Dynasty (221 B.C. - 206 B.C.) as the emperor erected altars to four different Di's (White, Green, Yellow and Red; he also ordered Confucian scholars to be buried alive), Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C. - 220 A.D.), added a fifth, Black, Di to be worshiped. Reforms of the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644 A.D.) returned worship to just one Shang-Di and caused the ancient altar, the Temple of Heaven, to be reconstructed in Southeast Beijing in 1420 A.D; sacrifices continued throughout the Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1912), with Emperor Kang-Xi (1661 A.D. – 1722 A.D.) even declaring that sacrifices thus offered were not made to ancestors or spirits, but to “the Lord and Creator of all things.”³²

Christian missions, however, persisted in winning converts amidst recurring setbacks. For 150 years after the Nestorian delegation in 635 A.D., the church thrived, though the rise of Muslim armies in the 8th and 9th centuries reduced their access to the Silk Road, and the Nestorian church had begun to wane by the time of the Mongolian invasions of the 13th century, hastened by the anti-foreign sentiment of the Ming Dynasty. In 1266 A.D., Marco Polo did receive a request from Kubla Khan for 100 Christian missionaries, but Rome ignored it. Francis Xavier, protégé of the Jesuit Order founder Ignatius Loyola, died in 1552 A.D. awaiting permission to enter China after a life of mission work across Asia. The call was finally taken up by the talented Mateo Ricci in 1582. Donning the robes and customs of the Chinese, Ricci claimed more than a thousand converted Chinese Catholics, a number that rose to five thousand just five

³² Tong and Petzholt, *The True Spiritual Roots for All Chinese*, 49.

years after his death. By 1723, there may have been as many as 300,000 Chinese Christians, but infighting between the Jesuits and other orders in China took its toll.³³ As Catholic missions faded in effectiveness, nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries translated Bibles and won converts. Among these converts was Hong Xiuquan, who promoted piety for Shang-Di among his “Society of God Worshippers;” Hong rebelled against Manchu rulers, however, and his belief that he was called by God to cleanse China, when coupled with his eventual claim that he was, in fact, the younger brother of Jesus, led to civil war (the Taiping Rebellion) from 1850 to 1864 and the loss of 20 million lives. Returning to the gospel call, Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in 1865 and claimed 641 missionaries in China by 1895. However, the association of missionaries with Western economic and military power often roused anti-western sentiment which led to persecution; 230 missionaries were killed when the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 laid siege to the foreign quarter of Peking for fifty-five days. Despite warring between Nationalists and Communists in the period from the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 to the victory of Mao Zedong’s Communist forces in 1949, the church grew to approximately 3.2 million Catholics and 930,000 Protestants and led to over 400 Christian-founded schools and 538 hospitals, with as many as 40 percent of all trained physicians in China likely to have been trained in Christian-founded schools.³⁴ However, upon taking power, the Communists expelled foreign

³³ The account in this paragraph comes from Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*.

³⁴ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 52.

missionaries from China, which is where our story of modern Chinese saints and their sanctuaries begins.

The Modern Chinese saints we examine fall into one of three categories: the persecuted saint, the philosophical saint, and the preaching saint, often with significant overlap. We begin with the persecuted saint. In *Jesus in Beijing*, journalist David Aikman presents such groups of Chinese believers as “patriarchs,” “uncles,” and “aunts, nephews and nieces.” Patriarchs include Wang Mingdao, born during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Raised in a destitute but Christian family (his father committed suicide in fear of the Boxers), Wang led a simple, pious life and hosted Bible studies which led to Wang taking up preaching, exhorted believers to righteous living, an unpopular message, “I prefer to be attacked by men than to call forth the wrath of God,” as he explained.³⁵ Wang resisted joining the North China Christian Federation of churches organized by the Japanese during their occupation, starting his own independent church in Peking in the 1920s. Wang advocated that Chinese churches be completely independent of foreign influences (predating the principles of the nationalistic Three Self Patriotic churches established by the Communists later, namely self-support, self-propagating, and self-governing). Wang refused to join the Three Self churches organized by the Communists, resulting in his arrest of both Wang and his wife Debra in 1955. Wang relented after a year and was released but could not bring himself to preach at the Three Self churches, leading to his re-imprisonment and (often daily) physical torture for a life term, though he was

³⁵ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 50.

released in 1980 (his wife served a fifteen-year term). Another “Patriarch,” Allen Yuan, found that Christ “revealed himself into my heart” after first investigating Confucianism and Buddhism.³⁶ Yuan attended seminary (thus disappointing his family) and was arrested during Mao’s persecution in 1958, serving twenty-one years in a chilly North China prison before his release in 1980; he knew only five Christians during this time. As with Wang, his time in prison was particularly harsh during the Cultural Revolution years (1966-1971); upon release, he served by leading Bible studies and prayer meetings in his home and baptisms in the countryside. Yuan related that “persecution is the growing pain of the church. It is good for the church.”³⁷

“Uncles” and “Aunts” of the Chinese church, a generation younger than “Patriarchs” (and often disciplined by them), include several who also served prison terms while yet managing to actively evangelize and disciple, often while still in prison. Many can be found in Henan Province (its name meaning that it is just south of the Yellow River), home to some of the world’s most rapidly growing churches. Such growth owes to itinerant preachers as well as the fifty plus churches planted by Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission; Guan Zhuang village of two hundred souls illustrates this, as it saw the number of Christians grow from just six in 1960 to one hundred seventy (all but three families) thirty years later.³⁸ Stories of answered prayers and outright

³⁶ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 59.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

miracles are common in such conversions.³⁹ The Henan region has been described by Communist bureaucrats as infected with “Christianity fever” and by Christians as the Bethlehem of China; Fangcheng County in the Henan Province, with its network of five million Christians, shows why.⁴⁰ Zhang Rongliang, born in 1950, intelligent yet uneducated, is a key leader in the Fangcheng network. Denounced by the very elders in his own church during the “Gang of Four” persecution in 1974 (though unsuccessfully targeted for retraining by communists upon seeing his leadership skills), Zhang served a seven-year prison term in a Henan province labor camp. As a prisoner charged with tending pigs, Zhang managed to set up churches in the countryside around the prison camp alongside fellow prisoner and ministry partner Feng. Upon release, Zhang continued in church planting and planning, encouraging and aiding other converts such as the youthful Ding Hei.

“Aunts” of the Chinese church include leaders such as Sister Ding (Ding Hei) and the musical composer Sister Ruth (Lu Xiaomin). Leadership by women in the Chinese church would seem to be natural, given that estimates indicate that women constitute as high as 80 percent of the Chinese church; Aikman offers that men are more concerned with careers while women are “more willing

³⁹ Lee Strobel cited studies indicating that answered prayers factored in as high as 50 percent of Chinese salvation stories, while discussing his then upcoming book *The Case for Miracles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018) at Houston Baptist University, Weekend course on evangelism, February 16-18, 2017. Ryan Grube, Carla Alvarez and Sam Sol can testify, Sam floating there the unique missions’/evangelization theory: “Christians are like zombies: we’re undead and out to get people.”

⁴⁰ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 77.

to ask questions, more serious about life, more open and vulnerable about their personal thoughts.”⁴¹ Described as “the Madeleine Albright of China’s house church,” Sister Ding is a striking, intelligent church planner in the underground Wuhan fellowship, but when Zhang first met her, she was in need of a home and a fellowship.⁴² Born in Fangcheng County in 1961, Ding came to faith at the age of thirteen upon encouragement from her mother (who came to faith after visiting a secret house church as well as experiencing healing prayer) and from an older woman who warned her that “if you believe in Jesus, you will go to heaven; if you don’t, you will go to hell.”⁴³ The only Christian in her middle school, within six months, Ding had a fellowship of forty believing fellow students meeting secretly after school. Ding coveted scriptures when she could find and copy them or even an entire Bible; her non-Christian father would often beat her when he found her with such materials. At age twenty, she felt led in a vision that it was time for her to move on (forsaking the medical career she was expected to pursue) and left home to spend several years in Zhang’s Fengcheng fellowship. She was involved in the Fengcheng fellowship’s increasingly open meetings (eventually serving a three-year prison term for such defiance) but claims that “it was during my time in prison that the Holy Spirit taught me the most.”⁴⁴ She learned not just how to suffer but how to organize,

⁴¹ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 98.

⁴² *Ibid.* 99.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

rapidly becoming chosen to be cell-block leader for 189 fellow prison mates. Ding has since spoken inspiringly at many church conferences in China and abroad. “She has amazing testimonies” and is “a tremendous source of history” are said of her.⁴⁵ One disciple of hers, Lu Xiaomin or “Sister Ruth,” converted from a Muslim background at age nineteen. Lu was an average student (unlike Ding) but discovered a rare musical talent for composition, despite not having finished middle school. Her songs have been used by traveling evangelists, even if only to rescue themselves from their own discouragement, and number nearly a thousand by now. Lu composed some songs during stints in prison, helping her convert cellmates; her songs are sung throughout China, leading to her description as the Fanny Crosby of China.⁴⁶

Lottie Moon (1840 - 1942), a missionary from the American South, is a precursor to these Chinese “Aunts,” and is more than deserving of a brief mention, as she further demonstrates the vital role of women in ministry generations before the modern era of gender equality. Her years in China coincided with those of Hudson Taylor (1832 - 1905) and preceded those of Olympic track star Eric Liddle (1902 - 1945, whose story is told in the 1980 film *Chariots of Fire*, forsook a promising career in athletics for missions service in China, serving as minister, teacher and athletic coach before dying at the age of 43 in a Japanese internment camp); the stories of each may be found in a YWAM Press series *Christian*

⁴⁵ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 107.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

Heroes: Now and Then.^{47 48 49 50} Due to Charlotte Moon's family's inheritance of a Virginia estate (neighboring Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, once owned by her uncle), her family provided college educations for all her siblings; "Lottie" thus was in the first class of women in the entire American South to obtain a Master's Degree (in Liberal arts, including language study), and as she was first in her class, was declared the most educated woman in the South."⁵¹ The young Lottie found religious talk distasteful, as she grew up amidst constant family table disputes between denominations. When she finally attended a church meeting only to find something to mock, she was instead truly impressed by the message and shortly thereafter became a Christian. After four years of teaching, Lottie felt the call to serve as a missionary in China a rare event for a single woman in the 1870s, and followed her sister and a fellow female teacher in 1873 to China, serving first at a school in the coastal city of Tengchow, just north of Shanghai, targeting young girls who typically had no opportunity for education. Despite persistent harassment as foreigners, Lottie found the local Chinese eager to see white people for the first time, with small groups often

⁴⁷ *Chariots of Fire*, directed by Hugh Hudson (20th Century Fox, 1981).

⁴⁸ Janet and Geoff Benge, *Lottie Moon: Giving Her All for China* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2011).

⁴⁹ Janet and Geoff Benge, *Hudson Taylor: Deep in the Heart of China* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 1998).

⁵⁰ Janet and Geoff Benge, *Eric Liddle: Something Greater Than Gold* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2011).

⁵¹ Benge, *Lottie Moon*, 41.

growing to sizable crowds as she explained the Christian faith. Her correspondences with the Baptist Missions agency which sponsored her helped promote awareness of the *need for* missionaries (men and women alike) as well as the *needs of* missionaries (leading to the concept of a furlough once every ten years); she pleaded “Could a Christian woman possibly desire higher honor than to be permitted to go from house to house and tell of a Savior to those who have never heard His name?”⁵² Simple acts of daily compassion and friendliness made Lottie beloved, from introducing sugar cookies to caring for the destitute and starving, she explained that “we need to make friends before we can make converts.”⁵³ One such convert, the elderly Li-Qin who was moved by the singing at meetings led by Lottie, received cruel treatment by his family on learning of his conversion. They hired his nephew to read Li-Qin’s English Bible to him, hoping to convince Li-Qin of the foolishness of his faith; instead, the nephew Li Show-ting himself became curious and converted, and later became a Bible scholar, teaching and preaching across North China and baptizing over ten thousand believers. Moon spent her life teaching and opening schools in China, while crusading at home for more missionaries to follow her. She fled to Japan during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 in which over 32,000 Chinese Christians and 230 missionaries and family members were slaughtered, returning and serving until 1912, a year after the Chinese Republic overthrew nearly 300 years of Manchurian Dynasty rule. By December 1912, her fellow missionaries

⁵² Benge, *Lottie Moon*, 67.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 129.

voted to return the 72 year old to America, partly due to her habit of giving her own meals away to starving children and wasting away to a mere fifty pounds; she passed away on Christmas Eve, 1912 on ship before reaching Japan, reciting the words to “Jesus loves me,” a song she had taught to thousands of Chinese. Though a memorial of her holding a Bible and a torch was erected on her Virginia family grounds where her ashes were buried, a living memorial of the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions was instituted by the Southern Baptist organization in 1918, and continues to this day. Even more telling is the empty luggage trunk she took on her return trip home: it felt unseemly to travel without it, but she had given away all she had to China.

While China itself is a vast mission field for the Chinese church, its ambitions to spread the gospel extend beyond the border. Given their long history with persecution, Chinese Christians feel they are in a unique position to take the gospel to the Islamic nations of the Middle East, where persecution is the norm. The vision for China to supply 100,000 missionaries for global evangelization surfaced in a forum of American, Korean, and Chinese church leaders in a hotel outside of Beijing in 2002; by contrast, the United States supports 40,000 to 50,000 missionaries.⁵⁴ But this idea of Chinese missions is nearly a century old, born in the Northwest Chinese Shandong province in the 1920s by a Christian group calling themselves the “Jesus Family.” Members were encouraged to sell their possessions and preach in nearby towns and villages, despite the scorn and beatings they

⁵⁴ Bengel, *Lottie Moon*, 195.

often invited. During World War II, many seminaries and missionaries relocated to the Northwest China region and were inspired to take the gospel beyond the border. One such individual was Mark Ma, who felt the call towards Muslim lands during prayer one evening in 1942; resistant, Mark was soon encouraged to find that eight others had felt a similar calling. It fit with the historical trend of the gospel moving westward, from Jerusalem to Antioch to Europe to America to the Far East, but brought the route full circle, heading from China back to Jerusalem! Ma argued with God about such a mission but felt God replying to his concerns about the hardness of Muslim hearts with “even you Chinese are hard enough, but you have been conquered by the gospel” and “I have kept for the Chinese church a portion of the inheritance,” a people group to win with whom Western missions had struggled.⁵⁵ Ma pastored Chao, who had a vision in his youth of a piece of paper with the word “Mecca” on it, and who later organized a “Back to Jerusalem” group to evangelize Muslims in China’s western provinces as a stepping stone to the Middle East, including not just Western Chinese provinces as Tibet and Xinjiang, but countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Palestine. “Aunt” Sister Ruth, the musician described above, claims the greatest task of the church to be taking the gospel to “Arabia” and admits to dreams of preaching in Africa.⁵⁶ Finally, Simon Zhao deserves mention, as one of several of Chao’s followers arrested while trying to cross into Soviet Central Asia in 1948. Many jailed with him died in

⁵⁵ Bengé, *Lottie Moon*, 198.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

prison, though Zhao served forty years before being released in 1988, with the appearance of “an ancient sage, with a long white beard and white hair” as he continued to promote the “Back to Jerusalem” vision with many Henan churches before his death in 2001.

There are many competitors to faith in Christ in China beyond the recent addition of the ideology Karl Marx and the Communists: the moral teachings of Confucius, the mystical claims of Taoism, and the philosophy of the Buddha together form a cultural and religious backdrop across most of Asia, including Japan and Korea discussed previously. Ancestor veneration is also common in these cultures, a practice Matteo Ricci sought to respect though others (non-Jesuit Catholic orders) regarded it as pagan ancestor worship. In the spirit of Ricci, missionaries and Christian intellectuals have sought to integrate Chinese culture and Christianity. This is possible even at the level of language, as Chinese ideograms (and adopted in Japanese) for such words as beauty, goodness, and righteousness all use the symbol of a sacrificial lamb to convey the respective meanings, a natural segue to Christ as the lamb of God.⁵⁷
⁵⁸ ⁵⁹ Other Chinese word ideograms point towards an ancient understanding of the Creator, even including a triune Godhead.⁶⁰ But the real challenge to the Christian

⁵⁷ Ethel R. Nelson, Richard Broadberry, and Samuel Wang. *The Beginning of Chinese Characters* (Dunlap, TN: Read Books Publisher, 2001), 170.

⁵⁸ Samuel Wang and Ethel R. Nelson, *God and the Ancient Chinese* (Dunlap, TN: Read Books Publisher, 1998), 205.

⁵⁹ Fujimura. *Silence and Beauty*, loc. 968.

⁶⁰ Wang and Nelson, *God and the Ancient Chinese*, 22.

faith lies in confronting the claims of Confucius, Lao-tze (the founder of Taoism, who lived at the time of Confucius in the sixth century B.C.), and Gautama Buddha (who lived in India, 557 – 477 B.C.). The “Patriarch” Allen Yuan considered all these alternatives before heeding the call of Christ, but we can see how Christ answers these figures by considering the Chinese intellectual Lin Yutang. Yutang was raised in a Christian home in Fujian province in the mountains of Southeast China but found that he knew more Bible stories than he did of his own culture, so he delved headlong into his Chinese roots before finally rediscovering his Christian faith. Yutang’s autobiography, *From Pagan to Christian* (1959), offers an insight into the conversion of the Chinese mind in the same way that Oxford-trained C.S. Lewis’s autobiography *Surprised by Joy* explains the capture of a Western mind.

As a Professor of Literature in both China and America, Yutang wrote for popular audiences (both East and West) on Chinese culture, philosophy, literature, and art, and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in both 1940 and 1950. Yutang began graduate school at Harvard before finishing his dissertation on Chinese Philosophy at the University of Leipzig in Germany. In *Pagan to Christian*, Yutang shows how he grappled with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism before finding that “the teachings of Jesus are admittedly in a category by themselves, unique and of a strange beauty, teaching something which is not found in other religions.”^{61 62}

⁶¹ Lin Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1959), 65.

⁶² A more comprehensive summary of Yutang’s *From Pagan to Christian* can be found at

Yutang dignifies key insights of Chinese culture, often relating them to Western thought along the way. He praised the rites of ancestor veneration, resurrected by Confucius, who cast them as “the highest achievement of filial piety” in accord with the Chinese proverb “when you drink water, think of its source.”⁶³ Confucius’s main concern was with moral behavior by man which could enable him to live in harmony with society, or in short, with a moral universe; his concern for *li* (righteousness) and *ren* (humaneness), in fact, makes Confucius “still the most terrible underground leader in Red China, for the sentiments nourishing revolt are Confucian,” Yutang claims.⁶⁴ But adherence to the rational, moral code of Confucius does not ultimately quench one’s thirst, Yutang claims, as “man has feelings and not unreasonable dreams.”⁶⁵ Instead, Yutang likens the Romanticism of Taoism, with its “lurking desire to explore the beyond, to take a daring leap into the dark void and ask a question or two of God Himself,” to that of American Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson in their revolt against the naturalism of the European Enlightenment.⁶⁶ Yutang likens Laotze’s mystical paradoxes, such as “to yield is to be preserved whole” and “to be bent is to become straight” to Jesus’s claims, such

<https://www.narnianfrodo.com/2020/02/03/from-confucian-taoist-pagan-to-christian-story-of-philosopher-lin-yutang/>.

⁶³ Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian*, 38.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

as “He who loses his life will find it.”⁶⁷ The unseen moral order, assumed by Confucius but celebrated by Laotze, is the Tao, a pervasive but illusive and universal force. Yutang likens Laotze’s mystical insights to those of Pascal, who declared that “the heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing.”⁶⁸ Laotze (and his philosophical, Taoist heir, Chuangtse) and Pascal alike “began with a searching inquiry into the cause of life, with something like despair” and a feel for “the pathos of life;” both despaired the inadequacy of human language to express the answers.⁶⁹

The Taoist insights of Laotze presage those of Gautama Buddha, though Yutang claims that Taoism quickly degenerated into occultism and magic rather than spiritual insight. Of the “dissolving mist of Buddhism,” Yutang claims that all its paradoxical teachings aim to release one’s mind and ego from the bondage of material existence and realize a greater universal and loving self which becomes an act of “cosmic pity.”⁷⁰ One problem, however, remains for the Buddhist: sin. Rationalistic European philosophers tried to rationalize around it while Buddhists sought to simply escape it by eradicating all desires, but it is in finding in such desires of the human heart the trace of nobility and reverence that is the way of true religion, Yutang argues.

⁶⁷ Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian*, 117.

⁶⁸ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), fragment 142, p. 35. This translation reads more prosaically as “We know truth not only by means of the reason but by means of the heart.”

⁶⁹ Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian*, 136.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

Just as “the weapon of science is the microscope,” so is “the weapon of religion the still small voice of the human heart” and the “intuitive capacity to guess at the truth.”⁷¹ Noting the rarity of actual atheists today (and finding only one Chinese philosopher who claimed to be a materialist), Yutang declares that, “I believe the instinct to worship something is in every man [and] society.”⁷² It is in Jesus that Yutang finds the best teachings for knowledge of God, from “He that has seen me has seen the Father” to “these things I command you, that you love one another;” “where others reasoned, Jesus taught, Jesus commanded,” transcending the “the self-limitation of Confucius, the intellectual analysis of Buddha, or the mysticism of [Laotze’s Taoist heir] Chuangtse.”⁷³

Other Chinese Christians combine the philosophical approach of Yutang with the passion of persecuted patriarchs. Li Cheng, a scientist-turned-evangelist, shows how one’s learning in science and philosophy can serve one’s passion to proclaim the gospel. Raised in China but earning his doctorate from Michigan State in 1987 then conducting medical research at American universities, Cheng outgrew his initial atheism and made a career of showing how science and philosophy point towards God, not away from Him. Over a million copies of Cheng’s *Song of A Wanderer: Beckoned by Eternity* have been printed in Chinese, and he cut short his career in science to minister full time, often to Chinese students in

⁷¹ Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian*, 179.

⁷² *Ibid.* 221.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 225.

America.⁷⁴ China Outreach Ministries, headquartered in Pennsylvania, similarly ministers to the nearly 400,000 Chinese students at campuses in the United States.⁷⁵ Their book, *China in Our Midst: Reaching Chinese International Students in America*, written by former and current Presidents of the organization Glen Osborn and Daniel Su, teaches that “there is a strong dissatisfaction with the materialism or money-seeking milieu prevailing in China today” among converts, and that such Chinese intellectuals seek “the right values to promote human existence.”⁷⁶ Key factors in such conversions include the contact and influence of Christians, a desire for truth, Bible study, and sensing the reality of God.⁷⁷ One student stated that “I want to be like Christians to be able to love others.”⁷⁸ Osborn and Su cite Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, as claiming that “America’s long term influence on China comes from playing host to the thousands of students who come from China each year, some of the ablest Chinese scholars and scientists. They will be the most powerful agents for change in China.”⁷⁹ China Outreach Ministries is active on fifty American campuses, often

⁷⁴ Li Cheng, *Song of a Wanderer*, translated by Pak Shem (Paradise, PA: Mainland Chinese Literature Ministry of Ambassadors for Christ, 2012), i.

⁷⁵ Glen Osborn and Daniel Su, *China in our Midst: Reaching Chinese International Students in America* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Chinese Outreach Ministries, 2016), 1.

⁷⁶ Osborn and Su, *China in Our Midst*, 27.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

coordinating with local churches to provide friendship partner families to students, who otherwise rarely will even step foot in an American home during their years of study here.

Another contemporary Chinese saint to consider is the renowned Brother Yun. Like Watchman Nee (1903 – 1972, who founded house churches and trained Christians and church leaders throughout China, his teachings filling nearly twenty published books, but spent the final fifteen years of his life in prison), Yun was familiar with persecution. Born in 1958, Yun ministered in and out of prison (often accompanied by miraculous deliverances) while providing leadership to house churches and promoting the Back to Jerusalem missions movement. Yun escaped China in 2001 and has focused his efforts on evangelization on the countries between China and Israel, the least evangelized nations in the world today. His autobiography *The Heavenly Man* received the Christian Book of the Year in 2003 by UK Christian Booksellers, though it is an insight from his devotional *Living Water* that exemplifies his passion. In a message on repentance, Yun tells of the Norwegian missionary Marie Monsen, a single woman whom he declared as “one of the greatest missionaries to China.”⁸⁰ Monsen’s “fervency and uncompromising message put her at odds with her missionary society,” teaching repentance from sin and total commitment to the cause of Christ. Yun relates that “On occasions the holy anger of God came upon Marie Monsen, and she often convicted her fellow missionaries and the Chinese church leaders

⁸⁰ Brother Yun, *Living Water* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008), 15.

of their lukewarm commitment and secret sins.”⁸¹ However, since she challenged so many of the Henan Christians in the pre-Communism era (1920s and 1930s), “they were better able to withstand the storms of persecution that buffeted the church throughout the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s.”⁸²

While Yun exemplifies the persecuted preacher of modern China, intellectuals in the mold of Lin Yutang (or “cultural Christians”) can still be found. *Jesus in Beijing’s* David Aikman cites a number of artists, writers, and academics promoting the gospel in China. Writer Liu Xiaofeng has produced books addressing philosophy, Chinese history, aesthetics, and theology for young readers across China, while novelists such as Lao She, Xu Dishan, Bing Xing, and Mu Dan fuse a strong “Christian coloration” in their works.⁸³ Artist Yu Jiade (born in 1939) paints Biblical scenes with a traditional Chinese style, after years spent painting pictures of a heroic Chairman Mao for the government.

The chronicle of China’s many saints, typically persecuted but thriving in their service to the Christ, his gospel, and their fellow Chinese comes to an incomplete close. Their example for the global church can only inspire, and en-courage, as the Patriarch Allen Yuan noted, “persecution is the growing pain of the church. It is good for the church.”⁸⁴ The house church, often meeting in homes but also existing as independent

⁸¹ Yun, *Living Water*, 16.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 254.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 58.

church buildings and numbering a million members, would make sense as the “Sanctuary” for these “Saints;” however, just as strong a candidate for a sanctuary would be the prison, as Sister Ding related, “it was during my time in prison that the Holy Spirit taught me the most.”⁸⁵ The Chinese church, persecuted, defiant, persistent if not defiant, and committed to spreading the gospel both within and outside China’s borders, is an inspiration for the global church, Western and otherwise.

CONCLUSION

The stories of steadfast persistence of believers from Japan, South Korea, and China can “en-courage” Christians worldwide, whether in enduring persecution or in becoming inspired to help carry the gospel to such distant and spiritually dark lands.⁸⁶ As the gospel encounters each such culture, we see how it quenches the spiritual thirst only teased by native cultures and their religions: the tragic Japanese appetite for beauty, the Korean yearning for dispensing truth to the masses, and the enduring Chinese awareness of a Heavenly Sovereign and appetite for His humane rule are all both humbled and exalted when they encounter the enigmatic figure of Christ. Just as G.K. Chesterton declared of the ancient world that “the limits that paganism had reached in

⁸⁵ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 105.

⁸⁶ I emphasize the “giving of courage” aspect of the otherwise common term “encourage,” noting C.S. Lewis’s own privileging of courage: “courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point. . . . A chastity or honesty, or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful till it became risky,” in C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperOne, 2017), letter 29, 161. I credit Jason Monroe for pointing out this passage to me.

Europe were the limits of human existence,” so did he continue on to claim that “at its best it had only reached the same limits elsewhere. The Romans did not need any Chinamen to teach them Stoicism.”⁸⁷ The gospel’s advocates across these Asian nations have shown us all how to endure, with God’s grace and power, all manners of deprivation for the sake of the spread of the gospel. The joy appointed them reminds one of the joy that so surprised C.S. Lewis (in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*), though he found that all its “value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring,” Christ, or Love, Himself; earthly joys were merely hints and signposts of one’s heavenly journey.⁸⁸ ⁸⁹ Such Joy is often restored in such humble sanctuaries as the persecuted and small home churches of Japan and China, or the prayer meetings and mountains of South Korea, or even in Chinese prisons. The result is what Chesterton termed “the Church Militant . . . a fighting architecture,” so that “all its spires are spears at rest; and all its stones are stones asleep in a catapult.”⁹⁰ Suffering and sanctuary are indispensable to the saints of this church; as Chinese church Patriarch Allen Yuan declared, “persecution is the growing pain of the church.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Press, 2014), 157.

⁸⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: HarperOne, 2017), 269.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁹⁰ G.K. Chesterton, “The Architect of Spears” in *In Defense of Sanity: The Best Essays of G.K. Chesterton*, edited by Dale Ahlquist (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 7.

⁹¹ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 58.

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