

A Passion for a Greater Vision—the Role of Leslie T. Lyall in the History of the China Inland Mission/Overseas Missionary Fellowship

by

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I. The Life and Work of Leslie T. Lyall

Leslie Lyall was born in Chester, England in 1905. The son of a Scottish evangelist, he spent his early years travelling with his father to many places outside England. His father brought him to India, America and Australia in a whirlwind of revival meetings. As a young child, he saw with his own eyes the dramatic conversion of many people at these revival meetings. When he was five years old, his father died suddenly, and he was separated from his mother for many months after the death of his father. Murray Watts commented in Lyall's obituary, "As a result of such a traumatic experience, Lyall's life was to be marked by depression as well as extraordinary faith, and constant anguish of separations as well as a pioneering courage".¹ Indeed, his family background and childhood experiences materially impacted Lyall's life as we shall explore in this paper.

Lyall's mother married again to Arthur Watts, the founder of the Kingsmead School in Holylake. Arthur Watts was a gifted mathematician whose dream was to establish a Christian school where the environment would be ideal for learning well, playing good games and keeping physically fit. The school was a base for Lyall for at least half a century. From Kingsmead, he went on to St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate, and then to Emmanuel College, Cambridge. While at Cambridge, he was actively involved in the student ministry along with J.B. Philips, who was later to become famous for his paraphrase of the New Testament. In 1928, Lyall played a vital role in the establishment of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, which had a powerful effect on the promulgation of Christianity in the universities and colleges in Britain and elsewhere. In fact, his experiences in the student ministry in England had significant impact on his ministry among the university students in China especially during the post-war period.

¹ Murray Watts, "Obituary: Leslie Lyall," *The Independent*, February 24, 1996, accessed July 31, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-leslie-lyall-1320763.html>.

In 1929, the CIM, founded by Hudson Taylor more than 60 years previously, appealed for 200 new workers. Lyall answered the call and arrived in China in that same year. He remained in China for more than twenty years until he was forced to leave by the Communists in 1951. In 1952, he took charge of the recruitment and training of new candidates for the Overseas Mission Fellowship (OMF) in other East Asian countries. At the same time, he began to write extensively on the church history of China. Outside China, he also initiated study groups focused on the church in China under Communist rule.

In 1936, Lyall married Kathryn Judd, also a CIM missionary. They had a son and three daughters. Kathryn died in 1988 and Lyall in 1996.

1. The Forces Shaping the Life and Work of Leslie Lyall

1.1 Missions and Colonialism in the 19th and 20th century

Leslie Lyall was born at the turn of the 20th century. The 19th century was known as the “Protestant Era”, an age dominated by evangelicalism. In Britain, evangelical Christians exercised great influence at the highest levels of government and commerce. Moreover, it was also a period of great revival both in Britain and the United States. This was particularly true of the years from 1857 to 1860. As a result of this revival, at least one million converts were received into the church in the United States alone.² Likewise in the British Isles, another million members were added to the church.³ The greatest impact was on missionary activities. Kenneth S. Latourette wrote, “Never before had Christianity or any other religion had so many individuals giving full time to the propagation of their faith. Never had so many hundreds of thousands contributed voluntarily of their means to assist the spread of Christianity.”⁴ Many new missionary societies sprang up including the CIM founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865. These missionary societies were to spread the Christian faith worldwide. China, the largest unreached mission field in the world in the 19th and early 20th centuries, would naturally become the most strategic mission field for almost all missionary societies.

Alongside these missionary activities, the 19th and early 20th centuries also saw significant

² A. M. Renwick A. M. and A. M. Harman, *The Story of the Church* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, Mowbray, 1990), p.192.

³ Ibid., p.193.

⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America: A.D. 1800 - A.D. 1914* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1941), p.443.

colonial and commercial expansion by Western countries. Politically, the 19th century witnessed revolutions and social upheaval in Europe, although it was a period of relative peace in the rest of the world. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, Western nations, particularly Britain, through scientific and technological advances, quickly became world powers. With such power, came the urge to conquer. Colonialism and imperialism were well on their way to becoming state policies of many Western nations.

Politics, commerce and missions inevitably developed close ties over the course of history. Missionaries often depended on merchants such as the Great East India Company, for travel, mail and other logistic support. Merchants were, in turn, supported by their governments. In the 19th century, missionaries were able to enter into China because of the unequal treaties imposed on her after the Opium Wars. At the time, all Westerners in China, including missionaries, enjoyed privileges and protection prescribed by these unequal treaties. Missionaries often served their governments and the merchants as interpreters or diplomats.⁵ Thus, it was inevitable that the Chinese would come to consider missionaries as tools of imperialism, “following the flag,” aiding colonial and imperialistic schemes.

As a CIM missionary, Lyall faced these tensions throughout his entire career in China. It is interesting to study the way in which the CIM responded to such tensions. On the one hand, CIM missionaries tried to dissociate themselves from their governments and identify with the local Chinese. They adopted the practice of wearing Chinese dress as their general policy and petitioned their government against the opium trade. On the other hand, they also made full use of the unequal treaties to penetrate into inland China. Many CIM mission strategies were shaped by this ‘mission/colonialism dilemma’ as we shall see in the following paper.

1.2 The Political Situation in China

The life and work of Lyall was much influenced by the political situation in China in the 20th century. After the Boxer Uprising and the subsequent signing of the Boxer Protocol in 1901, the church had greater opportunity to penetrate further inland to preach the Gospel. In general, the Chinese were receptive of Western religion and thought, resulting in a three-fold growth of the church in the following decade. However, beneath the surface, Chinese hostility and indignation against the West, and against missionaries, continued to build for another fifty years until the

⁵ George A. Hood, *Neither Bang nor Whimper: The End of a Missionary Era in China* pp. 2-3.

Communists successfully expelled all the “foreign devils” from China in the early 1950s. Historically speaking, this was an inevitable conclusion. The Western powers did stop short of colonizing China. However, China found herself betrayed by her Western allies after the First World War when the Paris Peace Conference gave German rights in Shandong Province to Japan. In 1917, China had entered World War I on the side of the Allied Triple Entente on the condition that all German spheres of influence, such as Shandong, be returned to China. After the war, the Western Allies turned a deaf ear to Chinese demands, giving all the German rights to Japan instead. This stirred up Chinese nationalistic feelings that were the catalyst for the May Fourth Movement. On the morning of May 4th, 1919, student representatives from thirteen different local universities met in Beijing to protest against the granting of Shandong and other former German concessions to the Japanese. When the student protesters were arrested, jailed and severely beaten, the entire country was roused to join the protest. The Chancellor of Peking University (Beijing University), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培 1868-1940), resigned in protest. Newspapers, magazines, citizen societies and chambers of commerce offered support to the students. Patriotic merchants and workers also joined the protest. A general strike of merchants and workers nearly devastated the entire Chinese economy. Though the Chinese Government was forced to release the student representatives, Japan nevertheless retained control of the Shandong Peninsula and the islands in the Pacific. Yet the partial success of the movement exhibited the ability of China’s social classes across the country to successfully collaborate given proper motivation and leadership. The seeds for the development of the political movements in the following decades were sown.

The anti-Christian movement of the 1920s followed the May Fourth Movement. The intense nationalism generated by the May Fourth Movement was first directed at the foreign governments which had wronged China at Versailles, and secondarily, at the Chinese Government for its inability to protect its citizens and the nation’s sovereignty. In the 1920s, the protests targeted Christianity - its institutions, its believers and especially the missionary movement. While the Boxer Uprising had mainly affected North China, the anti-Christian movement affected all of China. Moreover, this anti-Christian movement was initiated and led by intellectuals and university students instead of the peasantry as in the case of the Boxer Uprising. These intellectuals were very much concerned with what was perceived as the missionaries’ control of the education system of modern China. They contended that Christianity was superstitious, unscientific and no longer respected in the West, and that Christian schools in China did not pay enough attention and respect to traditional Chinese culture, being more

interested in importing and imposing Western culture on the students. The missionaries had invested a great deal of money and resources on building up modern educational institutions in China, and the anti-Christian protests threatened all of these efforts. Initially, the CIM was comparatively less impacted than other mission agencies because education was not a priority on her agenda.⁶

However, as this anti-Christian movement developed into its second phase in 1924 - 1925, the situation changed. A cataclysm more powerful than the relatively uncoordinated anti-Christian propaganda of 1922 engulfed a substantial part of the Protestant world including the CIM. Several forces were at work on this occasion. The political arena was more charged. Both the Guomindang and the Communist party started to use the issue of imperialism for purposes of political mobilization. Their attacks on the Christian church were more violent and organized. In this, many historians suspected that the Soviet Union was at work behind the scenes.⁷

The incident on May 30th 1925, proved entirely pivotal to missionary activity in China. That date marked a nationwide series of strikes and demonstrations precipitated by the killing of a dozen labor demonstrators by British police in Shanghai. This was the largest anti-foreign demonstration China had yet experienced, and it encompassed people of all classes from all parts of the country. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) greatly benefited from this anti-imperialist sentiment and its membership increased from several hundred to 20,000 immediately after this incident. Their attacks on Western missionaries escalated in frequency and degree of violence. J.E. Williams, the vice-president of Nanking (Nanjing) University, was shot and killed on campus by revolutionary troops in early 1927. Several other missionaries were also killed. Christian venues, including churches and landmarks were damaged. Christians were harassed and attacked. The situation inland was even worse. As a result, all but a handful of missionaries fled to the coast, mainly to Shanghai. Many foreign consuls ordered the evacuation of their citizens. Over two thousand missionaries were repatriated; some took furlough; some never returned to China. This became known as the great evacuation in Chinese church history. In direct contrast to the strategy of other mission agencies at this time, the CIM called for 200 new missionaries to China instead of evacuating their missionaries out of China. The General

⁶ Jonathan Tien-en Chao, *The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919-1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movements in Modern China*, a Ph.D dissertation in the University of Pennsylvania, 1986. p. 138-140.

⁷ Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-1928* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Cross-Cultural Publications, 1988), p.169.

Director, D.E. Hoste, realized then that the survival and development of the Chinese church depended on the local Chinese themselves instead of on foreign missionaries.⁸ He was one of the main architects of the principles of self-government, self-support and self-propagation in the indigenous Chinese churches. In order to achieve this goal, they needed more trainers and equippers instead of evangelists. The period of “scaffolding” or “laying the foundation of the Chinese church” in the previous decades was replaced by the period of “building” the Chinese church during a chaotic time. Therefore, the CIM looked for more educated and theologically equipped workers. Lyall, a Cambridge graduate, was exactly the kind of worker that D.E. Hoste had in mind. Thus, in 1929, Lyall joined the CIM “tribe” along with 200 other missionaries from Britain, Canada, Australia, USA and other European countries.

The civil war between the Guomingdang and the Communists in the 1930s also impacted the development of the ministry of the CIM. The Communists inflicted damage and destruction on Protestant churches during their “Long March.” In 1934, an attractive young couple, John and Betty Stam, were beheaded by the Communists in a small city in Anhui Province. They were graduates of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago who had come to serve in China. The Communists also killed some local Chinese Christians who had pleaded for the foreigners’ lives. This tragedy had tremendous psychological impact on all the missionaries in China. Paradoxically, the same story also motivated many young people to go specifically to that mission field. Therefore, we observe a very interesting phenomenon in the 1930s. On the one hand, the dangerous situation in China, coupled with the Great Depression in the West caused the number of missionaries in China to drop significantly. In 1924, there were 7663 missionaries across all organizations in China. This number dropped to 3113 in 1928, rebounding to 6020 by 1936. During the same period, the number of missionaries of the CIM increased significantly. The campaign to add 200 new missionaries by Director Hoste was amazingly successful. The number of ordained church clergy in China, across all organizations, increased by 72% in the 1920s and 61% in the 1930s.⁹

The Sino-Japanese War had tremendous impact on both the Chinese church as well as on CIM ministry. Many prestigious Chinese universities moved to the west during the war. Houghton, the General Director, decided on a drastic change in the strategy of the CIM. The CIM extended

⁸ Patrick Fung (馮浩鑾), *Live to be Forgotten – D E Hoste*, p.32.

⁹ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: a History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, p.157.

its ministries to Chinese students, especially university students. Houghton assigned Paul Contento, David Adeney, Leslie Lyall and others to work among the students in free China. Miraculously, within six years, the Chinese Inter-Varsity Fellowship had become the largest in the whole world! After the War, while Adeney worked with Calvin Chao (Zhao Junying 趙君影, 1906-1996) in Nanjing in the Chinese Inter-Varsity Fellowship, Lyall labored with Wang Mingdao in Beijing among the university students there. Their impact was far-reaching both within and without China as we shall explore in Chapter Five.

The civil war in 1949 and the subsequent victory of the Communists put a sudden end to missionary activities in China. All missionaries were expelled by the new Chinese regime, and 140 years of mission endeavors ended abruptly. The CIM was forced to change her vision and strategy by expanding her ministries into East Asia. Lyall played an important role in this change.

1.3 The Theological Conviction of Leslie Lyall

Lyall was brought up in an evangelical environment. In the early twentieth century, British and American churches were engaged in a fierce theological conflict. There were two camps: the evangelicals and the liberals. The issue concerned the authority of the Bible. The evangelicals believed that the Bible was the Word of God, infallible and inerrant. The liberals believed that the Bible only contained the Word of God. According to the liberals, many of the Biblical stories were not historical, but mythical. It was up to science to determine their veracity. In terms of the church mission, evangelicals believed that the main purpose of the Christian mission was to share the Gospel of Jesus. However, the liberals believed that the evangelicals were too narrow in their approach, and that the Christian church had a broader mission to help this world be a better place morally, physically, economically and politically. Lyall and the CIM belonged to the evangelical camp. This battle between the evangelicals and liberals continued on Chinese soil, first among the missionaries in the early twentieth century and later among the local Chinese churches.¹⁰ Likewise, the conflict between Wang Mingdao and the YMCA leaders of the Three-Self Church in the 1950s was more theological than political in nature according to Wang.¹¹ Lyall himself was actively involved in this ideological battle. In the 1920s, many

¹⁰ Ying Fuk-Tsang (邢福增), *Zhongguo Ji Yao Zhu Yi Zhe de Shi Jian yu Kun Jing Chen Chonggui de Shen Xue yu Xhi Dai* (中國基要主義者的實踐與困境：陳崇桂的神學思想與時代 *The Praxis and Predicament of a Chinese Fundamentalist Chen Chong-Gui* (Marcus Cheng) *Theological Thought and His Time*) (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 2001), p.24.

¹¹ Wang Mingdao, *我們是為了信仰!* (*Wo Men Shi Wei Le Xin Yang!*) (Xianggang: Ling Shi Ji Kan She, Vol.114,

evangelical students at Cambridge University were seriously concerned that the then Student Christian Movement (SCM) was promoting an overly liberal view of Christianity. These students withdrew their affiliation with SCM to form the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF). Lyall was one of the main leaders of this movement. From that point on, these two groups were at odds with each other and inevitably such discord spread to the Chinese Church as well.¹² In China, the CIM and other conservative mission societies were not aligned with the National Christian Council, viewing it as being too liberal in its theology. These conservative mission societies withdrew to form the Bible Union of China.¹³ When Lyall returned to Britain, he found himself engaged in a constant debate with the more liberal scholars who were much more sympathetic and positive toward the Three-Self Patriotic Church in China.¹⁴

Lyall's perspective on history was much influenced by his theology. As a follower of the Reformed tradition, he believed in the sovereignty of God in history. To him, history was not just a series of random events, but a manifestation of God's sovereign plan in this world. He wrote, "It is impossible to understand the situation in China unless we see it as the sphere of a mighty conflict between two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and that of Satan...(it is) the cosmic conflict in which the universal church is locked in mortal combat with the demonic powers opposed to Christ and His Kingdom."¹⁵ With such a conviction, he saw himself and fellow-missionaries as soldiers for Christ. Again he wrote: "One thing is certain: the sheer power and momentum of the present movement of God's Spirit in China are beyond the power of man to halt. No one can foresee the political and social changes which may take place during the next decade, what direction the church will take or what persecution it may endure, but one thing is sure - the risen Lord according to His promise will not cease to build His Church: "I will build My Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."¹⁶

Such belief enabled him to develop a strong passion for and great boldness to serve in China despite his traumatic childhood experiences that resulted in his fear of separation from his family. Lyall's words about Hudson Taylor may be equally well applied to Lyall himself. "Never

1955), p.35.

¹² Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian missions in China*, p.769.

¹³ Daniel H Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, p.106.

¹⁴ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China* , pp.144-145.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

physically robust, he was during part of his adult life an invalid or semi-invalid. His background was humble. But soon after his conversion he made the tremendous discovery that faith in God is a solid fact of life, his life was transformed by the living faith which links man's weakness with God's almighty power. Later he became convinced that God wanted him to go to China as a missionary."¹⁷

Some scholars question Lyall's "biased" view of history and therefore ignore his contributions to Chinese church history. However, Dr. James H. Taylor, himself a historian, said in the forward to Lyall's book *God Reigns in China*, "I know no one who has been a more faithful China-watcher or who has grasped the complexities of the situation more clearly than Leslie Lyall ... His book tells us a clear and reliable account."¹⁸

2. Lyall's Work in China

2.1 The Call to China

Unlike Hudson Taylor, Lyall did not receive any dramatic vision or audible voice from heaven compelling him to go to China. His decision to go was a very natural process. He wrote, "(The call of God) was a trend of a lifetime, not the emotion of a moment."¹⁹ From Lyall's writings, we can trace at least five reasons why he went to China as a missionary. First, his family background played a significant role. From early childhood, he had been exposed to different cultures when his evangelist father brought him to Australia, the USA and India for revival meetings. He was very much used to this type of missions. He said, "Dedicated as a child to God by a missionary father for service abroad should the call come, I enjoyed from the first the unspeakable privilege of a praying, Bible-loving, missionary-hearted home. God took my father when I was but five, since when a mother's influence and self-sacrifice lie behind much that follows."²⁰

Second, his personal experience in Strasbourg was very important to his calling. In 1922, he was alone on holiday abroad in Strasbourg. Through the reading of James McConkey's *The Surrendered Life*, he came to realize his spiritual poverty and surrendered to God all his talents,

¹⁷ Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible; the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965*, p. 32.

¹⁸ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.11.

¹⁹ "The First Party of the 'Two Hundred.' Personal Testimonies of New Missionary Recruits," *China's Millions* 55 (1929): p.153.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.153.

time and future. He wrote, “From earliest years my chief interest had been in China, and my hope had always been to live my life to God there. Now, following my Strasbourg experience, through a number of Swanwick Conferences, God began to lay the burden of China’s needs more heavily in my mind.”²¹

Third, Hudson Taylor and his story drew the young Lyall to join the CIM. He was deeply impacted by Taylor’s fearless spirit toward what Lyall saw as an impossible mission, Taylor’s unshaken faith in the power of God and his dedication to the Chinese people. Lyall’s admiration showed through vividly in his book *A Passion for the Impossible - The Continuing Story of the Mission Hudson Taylor Founded*.²²

Fourth, the Cambridge Seven definitely had a significant impact on Lyall. The Cambridge Seven included C.T. Studd - the great amateur bowler, who played for England against Australia on several occasions, Stanley Smith - stroke of the Cambridge boat, Montague Beauchamp - heir to the baronetcy and stroke of one of the trial eights, William Cassels and Arthur Polhill Turner - theological students at Ridley Hall, Cecil Polhill Turner - officer in the Second Dragoon Guards and his friend, D.E. Hoste of the Royal Artillery. In 1884, these seven banded together and announced that they were going to China as missionaries with the CIM. So unusual and even startling an event captured both the headlines and the public imagination. The University was staggered. So was born the “Cambridge Band”. Lyall quoted Dr. Eugene Stock of the Church Missionary Society:

The influence of such a band of men going to China as missionaries was irresistible. No such event had occurred before, and no such event of the century had done so much to arouse the minds of Christian men to the tremendous claims of the mission field and nobility of the missionary vocation. The gift of such a band to the China Inland Mission was a just reward to Mr. Hudson Taylor and his colleagues for the genuine unselfishness with which they had always pleaded the cause of China and the world and not only of their own particular organization.²³

Without doubt, the amazing story of these seven young men left a deep impression on another young graduate from Cambridge.

²¹ Ibid., p.153.

²² Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible; the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965*, p. 31.

²³ Ibid., pp.54-55.

Last, but not least, was the call by D.E. Hoste in the late 1920s for two hundred new missionaries for China. The 1920s was a black decade for missionary activity in China. Anti-foreign sentiment gathered strength especially after the incident of May 30th 1925 when a dozen demonstrators were shot dead by British police in Shanghai. The anti-Christian movement, precipitated by the Communists, inflicted much damage upon the Christian community. The kidnapping and killing of missionaries and Chinese Christians were not uncommon. Missionaries were vilified everywhere. Lyall quoted Bishop Cassels before his death in 1925, “We came in the steps of Him who was despised and rejected of men. Perhaps this is one of the lessons we have to learn at a time when extraordinary and bitter hatred is being stirred up against us.”²⁴ The CIM suffered great loss as a result of this chaos. Her mission premises were occupied, looted and often destroyed. The Hudson Taylor School in Szechwan was entirely destroyed and would be rebuilt at great cost. The language school in Yangchow was wrecked. The hospital in Kaifeng was a total loss. The human losses were even more painful. A number of missionaries and their family members were shot dead or kidnapped. Missionary doctors like Dr. Whitfield Guinness, contracted typhus from the Chinese soldiers he treated, and died. At a time when fully half of the total force of foreign missionaries in China left the country never to return, Director D.E. Hoste issued a call for 200 new CIM missionaries to come to China to fight this spiritual battle because he saw this as a golden opportunity for the Chinese church to grow. As a soldier who specialized in strategy, he realized that this was not the time to retreat, but a time to advance. At the end of the 1920s, CIM had 1185 missionaries, 4000 Chinese workers, 72133 communicant members, 1287 organized churches, 6000 children receiving education from 280 CIM schools and 6000 children attending Sunday school each week. The church was still growing. In a single year (1925) 4577 individuals dared to make a confession of Christ through baptism. In 1928, the three Bible Societies together sold 11,453,783 copies of the Bible.²⁵ Hoste saw that it was a critical time to recruit more qualified workers to China to train and equip local Chinese leaders to build up the indigenous Chinese church. Lyall responded to this call and joined the CIM ranks in 1929. He wrote, “At Swanwick, 1928, the thought continually in my mind was: What am I waiting for? Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go ... and the time to offer had come.”²⁶ By the end of 1929, thirty-five of the two hundred were in China. Fifty-five more followed in 1930, and 117 in 1931, for a total of 207.

²⁴ Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible; the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965*, p. 92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 96.

²⁶ "The First Party of the 'Two Hundred.' Personal Testimonies of New Missionary Recruits," *China's Millions* 55 (1929): p.153.

2.2 Lyall's Ministry in China before the War (1930-1936)

2.2.1 The General Situation of the Chinese Church in the early 1930s

Charles Dickens' words in *A Tale of Two Cities* perhaps best describe this period as far as the development of the Chinese church is concerned:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.²⁷

On the one hand, Guomindang, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石 1887-1975), succeeded in its North Expedition and was able to set up its new national government in Nanjing. In general, the Nanjing Government proved much less radical in its attitude towards foreigners and Christianity than the Qing government before. Furthermore, in 1931, the Premier himself was baptized into the Methodist Church and missionaries were optimistic about the future of the Chinese Church. In fact, the CIM made great progress in its ministry during this period. In 1932, there were 1326 missionaries, 18 new stations were opened, and several thousand were baptized including opium addicts, soldiers, Buddhist devotees and prisoners.²⁸ On the other hand, in 1927, the National Government began to purge the Communists resulting in the civil war that lasted until 1936. These red soldiers together with bandits presented the greatest threat to the missionaries. In 1930, three Finnish associate missionaries were murdered and numerous Christians died as a result of Communist ill-treatment. In July 1930, the Communist army captured Changsha in Hunan and sacked the city, taking over the CIM Bible Training Institute as their temporary headquarters.²⁹ The most dramatic example of martyrdom in China mission history occurred in 1934. An attractive American couple, John and Betty Stam, missionaries of the CIM were beheaded publicly by the Communists in Qingdeh, Anhui while their three-month old baby was miraculously saved by a local pastor and spirited to safety at a nearby

²⁷ Charles Dickens and Mike Poulton, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Nick Hern Books, 2014), p.1.

²⁸ Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible; the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965*, p.101.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 106.

mission station. This story gained much publicity, and paradoxically motivated many more young people to go to the mission field.³⁰ Many other CIM missionaries were also martyred or kidnapped by the Communists during this dangerous period.³¹ R.H. Glazier, a CIM missionary wrote: “During the first half of 1937, I took part in eight special evangelistic campaigns. Three of these places in the south of Kiangsi had been under Communist control for several years and were hardly recovered. Ruined and abandoned houses, piles of debris not yet removed from some streets bore evidence of havoc that had been wrought. The churches in these places suffered much, some died or were killed, others left and never returned.”³²

The paradox is that despite such chaotic and unfavorable conditions for missionary activity, this period also marked great revival and rapid development especially among independent Chinese churches. Marie Monsen of Norway, a close associate of the CIM, had a very successful ministry in the 1920s. She travelled widely in North China, exposed sins in the churches in unvarnished terms and called for thorough repentance at these revival meetings. She started a movement of cleansing and renewal in the Chinese Church.³³

In 1926, the Bethel Band (伯特利佈道團) of Shanghai continued this revival momentum. Their leader was a junior Post Office official called Andrew Gih (Ji Zhiwen 計志文, 1901-1985). After a number of successful revival meetings in Shanghai and other coastal cities, the Bethel Band moved inland to preach repentance, the new birth and holiness in the cities and rural areas. Several of its members were talented musicians and a new chorus featured prominently in their campaigns. Wherever they went, people came and believed in Christ. The churches had never known anything like this and there was a true revival throughout the northern part of China resulting in rapid growth of the Chinese church. The most influential person in this period was a brilliant young Chinese scientist called Dr. John Sung (Song Shangjie

³⁰ Howard Taylor, *The Triumph of John and Betty Stam* (Philadelphia: China Inland Mission, 1935). This book gives a very detailed narrative of this story.

³¹ F. Robert H. Glover, “Shall Suffering and Danger Halt Our Missionary Work?” *China Millions* May 1930: 67-68; Nina Glommell, “Our Capture by Communists,” *China's Millions* Sept. 1930: p.141-142; James Stark, “Our Shanghai Letter,” *China's Millions* 56 (1930): p.110-112.

³² Leslie T. Lyall, *The Clouds His Chariot: the Story of 1937* (London: China Inland Mission, 1930), p.20.

³³ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.31.

宋尚節, 1901-1944). Sung received his Ph.D in chemistry from Ohio State University but gave his life to serve as a preacher in China. He joined the Bethel Band in 1931. With Sung on board, the Bethel Band travelled over 50,000 miles, visited 133 cities, and held almost 3400 revival meetings from 1931-1935. Lyall described him in this way:

None of us who were present when John Sung visited Hongdong (洪洞縣) with the Band in 1933 can forget the spiritual power which accompanied his often dramatic preaching: missionaries and Chinese alike kneeling together in humble repentance for sin and spiritual failure and seeking God's fullness of blessings. Before the outbreak of war with Japan in 1937, Sung travelled to Taiwan, Java, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma and Thailand, speaking in evangelistic and revival meetings and holding intensive Bible teaching courses. When, twenty years later, I travelled through these same countries, it was evident that almost all the truly spiritual leaders there were people who had come into a living experience of Christ as a result of John Sung's ministry. He had left behind a profound and lasting impression on the churches everywhere in Asia long after his death in 1944. Christians remembered him with both awe and affection.³⁴

Along with revival, this period was also marked by the rise of many indigenous Chinese churches. Among these churches, three were outstanding: the True Jesus Church (Zhen Yesu Jiaohui, 真耶穌教會), The Jesus Family (Yesu Jiating, 耶穌家庭), and the Little Flock, also known as The Assembly Hall (Juhuichu 聚會處) or The Local Church (Difang Jiaohui, 地方教會). Their founders, Paul Wei (魏保羅, 1877-1919) of the True Jesus Church, Jing Dianying (敬奠瀛, 1890-1957) of the Jesus Family and Watchman Nee of the Little Flock, were heavily influenced by foreign missionaries early in their ministries, yet their churches were wholly independent, not needing any foreign assistance. Of these three indigenous churches, the CIM was uneasy about the True Jesus Church and the Jesus Family for there existed significant theological differences. However, the CIM was closely affiliated with Watchman Nee though many CIM missionaries had reservations about his ecclesiology (the doctrine

³⁴ Ibid., p.33.

of the church).

It is within such a historical context that Lyall entered into the mission field in China.

2.2.2 The Language School

Initially, Lyall was involved in two main areas of service: namely, the Chefoo School and the ministry in Shanxi (Shansi). Before he was assigned to fill a teaching gap at Chefoo for sixteen months,³⁵ he had spent six months in language learning after arriving in China in 1929. The CIM required all missionaries to spend six months learning the Chinese language at the language school. The CIM also required all its missionaries to remain unmarried for at least two years in order to devote themselves single-mindedly to the study of the Chinese language and to adaptation to the Chinese culture; the language schools were therefore segregated by sex. The school for male missionaries was located in Anqing while the language school for female missionaries was located in Yangzhou. Lyall wrote about his experience at the language school:

The five young men arriving at Anqing to attend the language school were the “vanguard” of these reinforcements. Within days they were joined by Americans, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, Swiss, Germans and Swedes - a wonderfully varied and happy mix of nationalities, temperaments and accents - to commence the awesome study of the Chinese language ... The men were greatly privileged in having a unique Chinese teacher named Yen who was also an accomplished artist. While knowing no English, he had the great gift of mime and humor; and he taught us, word by word, line by line, by the direct method. Fifty years later it is easy to recall the excitement and the fun of taking our first steps in Chinese. Yen was also assisted by several ageing and bewhiskered “scholars” who, sipping their green tea, would listen sleepily to their pupils spelling out the Gospel of John word by word. An unorthodox variety of basketball played every afternoon had been an opportunity to let off steam and to take our much-needed exercise.³⁶

In fact, Lyall was not the only missionary who expressed such feelings about the language school. Many others like David Adeney had similar experiences. Adeney

³⁵ Leslie Lyall, "After 8 Years in China," *China's Millions* 64 (1938): p. 9.

³⁶ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, pp. 17-18.

found the varied tones of the Chinese language so complicated that it was almost impossible to remember.³⁷ Obviously, this kind of training was very inadequate. In fact, Hudson Taylor himself recognized this problem and according to A.J. Broomhall, he required all his workers to spend at least two years to learn how to speak, read and write Chinese. In addition, they were instructed in Chinese geography, history, customs and political systems.³⁸ Many of the CIM missionaries hired private tutors to teach them the language even after this intensive course ended. However, the question remains: Were the missionaries linguistically well equipped to carry out their missionary work effectively? Some missionaries said that many of them had only acquired “a smattering of the Chinese language,”³⁹ but such a comment is too generalized and unfair. Oi Ki Ling gave a much fairer assessment when she said, “The majority of the British missionaries were well versed in the spoken language. Missionaries from the CIM and other missionary societies had to undergo a period of two to three years of tough training in the language.”⁴⁰ In fact, the key to mastering a language is constant practice. In the 1930s, many missionaries worked in the educational or medical institutions. They were not required to have direct contact with local Chinese. They tended to work through their Chinese colleagues, supervising their efforts rather than being directly involved in evangelism or preaching. Their work required a relatively elementary knowledge of Chinese. This was not the case for the CIM missionaries; most were engaged in direct evangelism and preaching and had many opportunities to practice their Chinese. I personally knew quite a few CIM missionaries (e.g. Adeney) who were proficient in the Chinese language. Lyall was exceptionally outstanding in his knowledge of the Chinese language as well as Chinese culture.

2.2.3 Lyall’s Ministry in the Chefoo School

The Chefoo School was founded in 1880 as the “Protestant Collegiate School” in

³⁷ Carolyn Armitage, *Reaching for the Goal: the Life Story of David Adeney: Ordinary Man, Extraordinary Mission* (Wheaton, Ill: H. Shaw Publishers, 1993), p. 48.

³⁸ A. J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor & China's Open Century. Bk.3*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.), p. 335.

³⁹ Austin Fulton, *Through Earthquake, Wind and Fire: Church and Mission in Manchuria 1867-1950; the Work of the United Presbyterian Church, the United Free Church of Scotland, the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland with the Chinese Church in Manchuria* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew P, 1967), p. 334.

⁴⁰ Oi Ki Ling, *The Changing Role of the British Protestant Missionaries in China, 1945-1952*, p. 191.

Chefoo (Yantai) in Northern China, some fifteen years after the foundation of the CIM. Its original purpose was for the education of the children of missionaries active in the field. Taylor saw the need to provide for, “the children of missionaries and other foreign residents in China, (which) we trust that through it the trial and expense of sending children home from China may in many cases be saved.” Chefoo was regarded as an improvement over sending children back to their homelands for education, thus separating them from their parents for seven to ten years at a time. Chefoo offered a Western education with a separation of only one to three years, depending upon where the parents were stationed.⁴¹ The school was based in a building which also served as a sanatorium for sick missionaries. It was a boarding school which also welcomed children from the business and diplomatic communities. It followed the British model of education and placed emphasis on classics, religious education and sports. Famous alumni included Jim Broomhall, Alfred Luce and Thornton Wilder.

The School grew rapidly. When it first started, it had only three pupils: Fred Judd, Ross Judd and Edwin Judd. By 1886, there were over 100 pupils in three schools. The Prep School was co-educational for children aged six to ten. The segregated Boys’ and Girls’ Schools were for children aged eleven to sixteen. Upon successful completion of the Sixth Form, the students usually returned to their parents’ homeland for further study or employment.

The mid-1930s saw improvements to the school. In 1934, two new buildings were erected to combine the Boys’ and the Girls’ Schools for “co-educational” classes, and the Prep School was relocated within the same compound. The quality of education improved as more of the teaching staff were qualified teachers. The student population increased steadily to its peak of 338 students in 1940. About half of the students were children of CIM missionaries; another quarter were children from other mission organizations, and the remainder were children of people living in China for business or other occupations.⁴² The higher enrollment led to improved performances in both

⁴¹ Marshall Broomhall, *Jubilee Story of the China Inland Mission* (Philadelphia, PA: China Inland Mission, 1951, p.226, quoting Hudson Taylor; Stanley Houghton, Edith B. Harman &, Margaret Pyle, Chefoo (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1931); Marshall Broomhall, *The Jubilee Story of the China Inland Mission* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1915), p.226.

⁴² F.H. Judd, “A History of the China Inland Mission School at Chefoo, China,” *The Chefoo Schools Association Magazine* July 1951: (pp. 4-7); Dec. 1951: (pp. 4-7); July 1952: (pp. 4-7); Dec. 1952: (pp. 2-4); July 1953: (pp.

academics and sports. Sporting activities included soccer, boating, cricket, field hockey, netball and tennis. In 1938, twenty students entered the Oxford Local Examination; all passed. In the same year, of the seventeen students who took the School Certificate Examination, no fewer than fifteen secured Matriculation Exemption.⁴³

Lyall was silent about his work in Chefoo, but Kathryn Judd, later Lyall's wife, did share her experiences teaching in the Prep School in 1933. At the time there were 250 boys and girls in the Compound aged 6 to 17 when the school was in session. The school emphasized religious and academic subjects as well as sports and self-discipline. Teachers did not just teach, but served as "parents" as well. She wrote, "The class I teach is the seven-to-eight-year-olds and they are charming. A fairly large percentage of them are day scholars from non-Christian homes of business people in the port and I know you'll take your part in making Scripture lesson each day a living, real matter to each one of them."⁴⁴ No matter how exciting this ministry might have been, most of the missionaries, like Judd, still wanted to serve the local Chinese. She wrote, "Though I enjoy and love the children, and know the Lord has His lessons to teach me here, the work among the Chinese in Hwailu is still my first love and in His own good time, I'm hoping to get back there again, into the villages, among the country women and children."⁴⁵

Whether the setting up of such a school is a good strategy is debatable. On the one hand, there were many advantages for the children of missionaries. First, not having to send children back to their home countries for education was a great economy.⁴⁶ In addition, the school provided a safe environment for all the children instead of having them follow their parents into possibly dangerous mission fields, or leaving them in their home countries to be exposed to secular or liberal religious influences. Finally, it also gave their parents more freedom and time to commit themselves to their ministries.

4-5); Dec. 1953: (pp. 7-10); July 1954: (pp. 3-6).

⁴³ W.H. Aldis, "From the Home Director," *China's Millions* 64 (1938): p. 174.

⁴⁴ Kathryn Judd, "Duty-day at the Prep." *China's Millions* 59 (1933): pp. 74-75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.75.

⁴⁶ Rhonda A Semple, "The Conversion and Highest Welfare of Each Pupil: The Work of the China Inland Mission at Chefoo," *The Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History* 31 (1932): pp. 29-50.

On the other hand, there were also problems related to the school. First is what we call the identity problem. The CIM emphasized identifying themselves with the local Chinese. Missionaries were required to dress like the locals, live among them instead of in mission compounds and speak their language. However, in Chefoo, all the staff and students were white with the few exceptions being Chinese servants. The school was much like the private schools in Britain, which were mostly middle-class. It was almost like a British oasis in the Chinese desert. It would have been difficult for missionaries to justify their positions if they were posted as teaching staff in the school even though the Chefoo teaching staff comprised only 7% of the total missionary force. It is perfectly understandable why Kathryn Judd said that though she enjoyed and loved the children at Chefoo, her first love was still the work among the Chinese in Hwailu, and she hoped to return to the villages, to work among the country women and children. This ambivalence about teaching at the school may explain why Lyall was silent about his service at Chefoo.

The greatest problem faced by the Chefoo School was that of the separation of families. According to the China Council Minutes, families sometimes expressed unhappiness about their children attending Chefoo. The reality of travel in China at the time meant that not all parents could visit their children readily, nor did mission regulations allow them to do so. Rhonda Semple commented that what began as a positive alternative to sending children back to England gradually became one of the mission's 'iron-clad rules'. At times the mission seemed hard-hearted in its adherence to rules for members and strict fiscal responsibility, something quite different from 'the Lord will provide' fiscal freedom practiced by Hudson Taylor in the early years of the mission.⁴⁷ In fact, in 1895, the China Council determined that children of missionaries should remain at school in Chefoo even while their parents returned home for furlough. Their justification was that private family life came second to the work of the Lord. There was one particular incident that occurred in 1919. A recently widowed father applied for furlough to take his three children home to be cared for by relatives. The youngest one was only a few weeks old. Since the father had been home on furlough less than four years previously, the mission took the decision to send the two youngest children home with another woman missionary on her way home on furlough while the oldest

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

one was to be kept in China.⁴⁸ Though most separations were less dramatic than in this particular example, yet the separation issue at the Chefoo School never ceased to be discussed in mission minutes. This may have been another reason why Lyall, who suffered from the traumatic experience of losing his father at the age of five, was silent about his experience at Chefoo. On the whole, however, he was still very positive about the Chefoo School as he commented in his book *A Passion for the Impossible*, “Some people have imagined that the children of missionaries, through being taken away from their parents at an early age, are under-privileged and deprived in some way. The opposite is usually the case, for God cares in a special way for the children of those who have sacrificed all for His service.”⁴⁹

According to the same report, Lyall asserts that twenty per cent of its alumni went into Christian work and many of them into the mission fields of the world. One hundred and sixty-eight returned to serve in the CIM. Others made their mark in many spheres: Kenneth Taylor, C.B.E., Canadian Privy Councillor, Financial Advisor to the Canadian Prime Minister and a Governor of the Bank of Canada; the Hon. Allister Grossart, Canadian Senator, the Rt. Rev. Kenneth Charles, Bishop of Ontario; William Goforth, Professor of Economics at McGill University; Henry Luce, former editor of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* magazines; Douglas Gonder, Vice-President of Canadian National Railways; Carrington Goodrich, Professor of Chinese at Columbia University; Thornton Wilder, author, playwright and Nobel Prize winner; Richard Harris, Far East correspondent of *The Times*; Harold Judd, O.B.E. Controller of Salvage under the Ministry of Supply in the Second World War; and a long list of prominent scholars, doctors, lawyers, executives, architects and administrators.⁵⁰ From this, we can conclude that the Chefoo School was indeed a “success”.

2.2.4 Lyall’s Ministry at Shanxi (Shansi)

Shanxi is enfolded in a great bend of the Yellow River as it flows from Tibet towards the sea. This province, whose name means “west of the mountains,” is as large as England and both fertile and beautiful. Prevailing winds blowing from the Gobi Desert have over the centuries deposited thick layers of golden dust or loess over the region.

⁴⁸ *China Council Minutes*, 19 March 1919.

⁴⁹ Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible; the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965*, p. 51.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.50-51

The Yellow River carries such a heavy load of this silt that it has built up its bed above the level of the surrounding plains; by periodically bursting its banks at flood time it has frequently caused widespread devastation and heavy loss of life, so earning the name “China’s sorrow.” In almost regular cycles the late summer monsoon rains fail and famine results. According to Lyall’s report, the great famine of 1875 in which 75% of the population of seventy million people died of starvation, called world-wide attention to this ‘cradle of Chinese civilization.’⁵¹

This province was also the scene of significant missionary activity in the history of the Chinese church. As early as 1866, there were already missionaries working in this province but it was in 1877, following the disastrous famine, that missionaries began to truly pour into this region. David Hill (1840-1896), a missionary from the British Wesleyan Mission, was sent to Shanxi. He devised an interesting way of reaching out to the scholars. He distributed notices advertising an essay competition outside the examination hall in Taiyuen (太原), the provincial capital and promised to give money prizes for the winners. Of the hundred and twenty entries submitted, a scholar named Hsi (Xi Zizhi 席子直 1835-1896) won three of the four prizes. In spite of Hsi’s anti-foreign prejudices and opium addiction, Hill led him to a saving faith in Christ. Hsi immediately sought deliverance from his opium addiction and after a few years of serious Bible study, set out on a remarkable missionary career. He changed his name to Hsi Shengmo (Xi Shengmo 席勝魔) meaning conqueror of demons and started to establish churches, one after another, in southern Shanxi. The CIM was impressed by the work of Pastor Hsi, and in 1884, sent five of the Cambridge Seven to assist him. D.E. Hoste became a close friend and colleague until Hsi’s death in 1896. This became a model of partnership between missionaries and local pastors, and may be one reason why Hoste was eager to change the CIM’s role from leader to partner of the Chinese church when he took up the leadership of the CIM. During the Boxer Uprising in 1900, Shanxi suffered more than any other province in China. There were 159 deaths among CIM missionaries and their children; thousands of local believers were tortured and killed. Of all the different missions, the CIM had the highest casualty rate.

In the thirty years after this tragedy, the church in Shanxi continued to grow. The CIM

⁵¹ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, pp. 22-23.

established hospitals, schools, churches and Bible schools. There were quite a few reports in *China's Millions* describing the situation in Shanxi at the time when Lyall entered into this mission field. C.H. Stevens, a CIM missionary working in Fengsian, Shanxi reported that banditry was common. Many Christians were taken captive. Some were beaten to death, while others had to be ransomed by their relatives. "Rice Christianity" was not uncommon then - many came to church for food, money, or some other material benefit.⁵² The most critical problem facing the CIM at the time was the shortage of local pastors. This was directly due to the CIM's implementation of the three-self principle in the 1930s. Lyall wrote in his book *God Reigns in China*:

This affected our relationships with the Chinese in mission employ, whose wages were a mere pittance compared with our own allowances. Considering the prevailing poverty, Chinese Christians found it hard to accept our new policy of reducing financial subsidies to the churches and insisting on their "self-support"; a number of well-trained and able pastors and evangelists consequently left the province to seek employment with other missions which still paid generous salaries to their employees. One of my Chinese language teachers was attracted by Communism, and his arguments in favor of greater equality and the sharing of material things were hard to dismiss ... The new policy had been a bitter pill for the Chinese church to swallow."⁵³

Again in *China's Millions*, another CIM missionary Arthur Reynolds working in Shanxi wrote: "A few years ago, the CIM decided to put into practice, more stringently, the policy whereby it was hoped to help the church towards a place of independence. Salaries for many workers were no longer granted by the Mission, while the local churches, for several reasons, found themselves unable to undertake the support of those available. No little burden was it to Pastor Yang, of Kuwo (曲沃), that thirteen counties should be left with no more than five or six full-time Chinese workers, and volunteers were few and far between. The spiritual state of the churches constituted a direct challenge. What should be done?"⁵⁴

⁵² C. H. Stevens, "From the Front Line," *China's Millions* 59 (1933): p. 112.

⁵³ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁴ L. T. Lyall, "Workers Together with God," *China's Millions* 63 (1937): pp. 132-133.

The good news was that despite all these challenges, a number of capable Chinese leaders began to emerge and take up leadership roles during this critical period. The most prominent leader was David Yang who was the chairman of the CIM Church Council for the province of Shanxi. He started the Ling Gong Tuan (靈工團 Team of Christian Workers) which was something of a discipleship training center for local Chinese. Such movements proved very effective for the training of local Chinese to take up pastoral and evangelistic responsibilities. Lyall commented that the thirty-eight counties of Shanxi for which the CIM was responsible made more progress towards the goal of a healthy autonomy than churches anywhere else in China. It was due not so much to the success of the policy as to the fact that God reigned and often overruled human mistakes and shortcomings for His own glory. The real reasons for the progress made towards an independent church were spiritual revival and godly, gifted Chinese leadership. When God broke through in revival, He changed even the most uncompromising situations, and when He raised up men of spiritual authority and vision, the church took on a new lease of life.⁵⁵

In 1932, Lyall was assigned to serve in Xiaoyi in Shanxi along with a more senior missionary, a Mr. Mellow. His main responsibility was for the children and young people. He taught a Bible class for about 30 young boys every Sunday. He was also invited to speak about the Christian faith to the boys in a nearby government school where the teachers were interested in the Gospel. He often went to nearby villages to preach. He was frequently called to counsel military officers, school teachers and students. He shared that these experiences were enjoyable and valuable. He began to better appreciate the Chinese and the life they lived - taking interest in funeral and wedding processions on auspicious days, tragedies of death with the accompanying fear of the unknown, family brawls which all within a quarter-mile radius shared, the bustle of village fairs accompanied by temple observances, strange wedding ceremonies when a girl was united with a youth she had possibly never met – so much coveting the young lives for Christ.⁵⁶

Like other young missionaries, Lyall faced a number of handicaps. His language skill

⁵⁵ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ L. T. Lyall, "Round the Western Hills," *China's Millions* 58 (1932): pp.178-181.

was limited though he had abundant opportunity to practice.⁵⁷ He still needed time to fully appreciate the Chinese culture and way of life. He was often haunted by a sense of loneliness, anxiety and fear especially when Mr. Mellow was away. He recorded personality clashes with fellow missionaries in his book *God Reigns in China*.⁵⁸

Lyall was helped by the revival movement in Shanxi at the time, as well as by the mentoring he received from David Yang. Revival among the missionaries led to mutual confession of sin. Lyall told a story about his relationship with one of the two hundred “vanguards.” Because of their differences in temperament, there had been an awkwardness in their relationship. After a revival meeting held by the Bethel Band, they were able to humble themselves and put right what had been amiss in their relationship.⁵⁹

David Yang’s mentorship proved vital to Lyall’s life and ministry in China. This was especially so when they had the opportunity to work closely together at the Hoste Middle School in Hongdong County. Lyall said, “In that year, he (David Yang) took me with him, even allowing me to give my first faltering messages in Chinese. As I travelled and lived with this man I realized I was observing a true man of God, a skillful exponent of Scripture capable of adapting his teaching to suit the agricultural life-style of his hearers, and a wise and much-loved leader.”⁶⁰

In the summer of 1935, Lyall was quite depressed. First, there was the threat from the Communists. He and two other bachelor missionaries were stationed in the city of Xinjiang. From the city walls they could see the Communist detachments moving freely from hamlet to hamlet. Although the city itself was not attacked, fear reigned. The Chinese press, followed by that of the world, erroneously reported the capture of both Xinjiang and of the resident missionaries, bringing deep concern to the Mission authorities and relatives alike.⁶¹ Second, he had just seen his fiancée, Kathryn Judd, invalided home with very little chance of returning to China. He was totally broken.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.181.

⁵⁸ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.32.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 44.

Hearing Yang preach on 2 Corinthians 2:14 was a turning point in his life. Pastor Yang spoke of himself, “I was once proud, self-willed, self-opinionated, self-pitying, self-exalting, but Christ overmastered me. He broke me down and subdued my stubborn spirit.” Then he continued to emphasize that the believer must know the experience of the Cross in daily life and needed to be totally abandoned to God’s disciplinary process - an attitude which would certainly involve a common sharing in tribulation, in the Kingdom and in patient endurance. Lyall wrote that this message penetrated deeply into his heart at a time of personal crisis and healed his broken heart.⁶² In fact, the happiest time for Lyall in Shanxi was the time when he was teaching at Hoste Middle School where Pastor Yang was the Acting Principal. His room was often filled with eager, seeking youngsters praising the Lord and praying for themselves and others. Many found Christ for the first time, while others yielded their lives for God’s service. Many of these students became leaders in the houses churches after 1950.⁶³

2.3 Lyall’s Ministry During the War (1937-1946)

Lyall’s second term in China was marked with more personal maturity and effectiveness in ministry. He took sabbatical leave in 1936, spending time in England with relatives and old school friends in the church family. Then he travelled to the USA to meet his fiancée Kathryn Judd who was wonderfully restored to full health. They married in Philadelphia in 1936. Kathryn was a granddaughter of C.H. Judd who was one of Hudson Taylor’s closest colleagues. The Judd family was heavily involved in the ministry of the Chefoo School and in fact Kathryn herself spent some time teaching in the Chefoo Prep School in the early 1930s. They returned to China in 1937, on the eve of the outbreak of the War between Japan and China.

2.3.1 Lyall in Occupied China

Japan’s rulers had always been ambitious, with grandiose plans for imperial conquest. In 1895, its armies annexed Taiwan. Korea was conquered in 1910 and taken as a servile subject nation. In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles awarded Japan all the former German possessions in China - Qingdao and the Shangdong Peninsula - in recognition of Japan’s help in defeating Germany in the First World War. This was despite China’s angry protests. In 1931, the Japanese army marched into Manchuria and occupied that

⁶² Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 38.

part of China. Japan's master plan was to establish a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.' In other words, Japan's ambition was to be the master of the whole of Asia. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of the Nationalist Government did not try to stop Japan's aggression because he was too busy fighting the Communists. He believed that Japanese aggression was only a "skin disease" whereas the Communist threat was a "heart disease" for China. However, during Christmas of 1936, when Chiang flew to Xian to direct the campaign against the Communists, he was kidnapped by his general Zhang Xueliang (張學良, 1901-2001) and held prisoner until a promise was extracted from him to stop the civil war and join the Communists to stop Japanese aggression. In 1937, using the excuse that some Japanese soldiers had been attacked by Chinese troops, the Japanese army crossed the Marco Polo Bridge (盧溝橋), the crucial access route to Beijing, on July 7th 1937. This signaled the beginning of the war between China and Japan that lasted for eight years. Beijing and Tianjin soon fell. On August 13th 1937, Japan mobilized 200,000 troops along with numerous naval vessels and aircrafts to launch a major attack on Shanghai. After three months of intense fighting, Shanghai finally fell though Japan paid a high price for that victory. The fall of Shanghai was followed by that of Nanjing, the capital of the Nationalist Government. Historians estimated that up to 300,000 Chinese were tortured and murdered, and thousands of women were raped in this "Rape of Nanjing." In 1938, the Japanese army captured Wuhan forcing the Nationalist Government to move its capital to Chongqing. By 1941, most of the Northern part of China and the coastal areas were in the hands of the Japanese; this area was known as Occupied China. In actual fact, the Japanese only controlled the cities while most of the countryside was still in the hands of Chinese guerilla fighters who roamed freely, launching attacks on the Japanese army, inflicting heavy casualties. Lyall's second term of ministry in China was spent under these harsh conditions.

Lyall and his family returned to China in 1937 and was assigned to Hebei, the war zone of north China. Hwailu was the administrative center for the CIM in Hebei where churches existed in seven or eight counties. His main responsibility was to visit these churches with encouragement, support, advice and pastoral care. Despite the difficult conditions, Lyall was passionate, bold and daring, typical of the "Hudson Taylor tribe." When he learned that the Japanese unit there had turned a CIM church into a brothel with Korean prostitutes, he immediately hurried on his bicycle to lodge a strong protest

with the local Japanese commander. He demanded that the church be cleared of the women immediately, arguing that the property was owned by a British organization.⁶⁴ This required extreme courage because it could easily have cost him his life. Despite the dangerous travelling conditions, he courageously took a faithful band of Chinese men and women to carry out the work of evangelism and pastoral care in the region.

After a short stint in Hebei, he was assigned to Shanxi to assume similar responsibilities. The CIM had a hospital in Luan, the main city of the region, with a staff of three doctors and three nurses. The Japanese army previously tried to fight its way into this region, but suffered heavy casualties; they finally withdrew. In 1939, this region was considered free from Japanese attacks and under the control of the Nationalist army and Communist guerillas. However, the journey from Hebei to Shanxi was still by no means safe. Lyall and his family had to take along with them medicines, petroleum and other hospital supplies to Luan. His wife was six months pregnant at that time and their elder daughter was only one-year old. They travelled through territories occupied by the Japanese, with frequent bombings by Japanese planes all along the way. They covered all their goods with large Union Jacks to avoid being bombed by the Japanese, and to assure the Chinese troops that they were friendly.

The Home Director of the CIM reported that in the majority of provinces, work continued unhindered. They were greatly encouraged by reports of the progress of the Gospel, of revival movements in the churches and of numbers coming forward for baptism. In the invaded areas, conditions rendered a partial evacuation advisable, but in most cases, those involved simply moved to other provinces to continue their ministry. Many workers in the province of Shansi (Shanxi) remained at their posts or moved to nearby cities where they were able to minister to thousands of wounded soldiers.⁶⁵

The following extract from a missionary's letter is very revealing:

The people's hearts are very fearful, and I feel we have a special ministry amongst

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

⁶⁵ Arthur Reynolds, "From the Home Director," *China's Millions* 64 (1938): p. 13.

them just now - the ministry of comfort and lost no time to get on, and these days of distress are making openings for the Gospel. Now is the time to put into practice what we have so often preached, namely, that our God whom we trust is able to deliver us and give us peace no matter what the outward circumstances. A Chinese was heard to remark, 'Oh, they haven't run away yet!' 'No,' replied the other, 'they believe and trust God.'⁶⁶

The war was a hazardous, sometimes exciting, often costly experience to many of the missionaries who decided to remain in occupied China. It afforded the opportunity for them to identify with the Chinese people in their suffering and to serve them in different ways. It was also a golden opportunity for Chinese Christians to become independent in cases where the missionaries chose to leave or were put into internment. Lyall's experience in Shanxi was typical among those who chose to stay in occupied China. There were a few incidents that deserve attention.

Once Lyall was in Luan, he lost no time to get to the work of preaching and teaching. He worked closely with Pastor Chang Mengen who had been trained by CIM missionaries. The war definitely prepared workers like Chang well for future trials and challenges, and he was just one of the many CIM-trained pastors who were to take up significant roles in the Three-Self Church as we shall discuss later in Chapter Six. In fact, Chang was still serving actively in the Three-Self Church in Lanzhou, Gansu in the 1980s.⁶⁷

The war also provided an opportunity for the missionaries to serve and witness to the Communist army. The CIM had a hospital in Luan. CIM medical missionaries were able to bring healing and hope to many wounded and sick Communist soldiers and their families.⁶⁸ Without doubt, the attitude of the Communists toward missionaries changed drastically during the course of the war.

Gordon Anderson, a Scottish CIM missionary doctor working in Luan hospital was a very close colleague of Lyall's during the war. In 1939, he contracted typhoid fever

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁷ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

from his patients and tragically did not recover. Andersen's death was not only a great shock at a critical time, but also reflected the dangers and risks involved in serving as missionaries in China then. Those such as Anderson had to have been motivated by a certain passion for meeting the needs of the Chinese people to risk their lives in this extraordinary way, but this spirit was typical of many CIM missionaries. Lyall commented after Anderson's death, "Hundreds of doctors and other missionaries have sacrificed their lives in order that the Good News might be shared with the Chinese people."⁶⁹

The Japanese re-invaded Shanxi on July 6th 1939. Bombing resumed. On the same day, Lyall's wife was delivered of a baby daughter in the midst of bombing overhead. As the mother could not be moved, the infant was placed under the bed while she lay watching the planes flying low on their deadly mission. Emerging from their shelter they found shrapnel scattered everywhere but little damage had been done and, mercifully, mother and babe were safe.⁷⁰ This incident again reflected the dangers and risks involved in being a missionary at the time.

Japanese occupation did not go unchallenged by the Chinese guerilla fighters. Though Lyall and other missionaries had a certain freedom in the occupied area because of their neutral position, yet it did not mean that they were safe. They often needed not only courage, but wisdom as well. The following incident was a typical example. According to Lyall's report, one evening a Chinese knocked at the compound gate and was admitted into the house. He claimed to be a spy for the Chinese armies and was afraid of staying in the city. He was sure that the missionaries were friends of China and would be willing to give him safe lodging for the night. As Lyall talked with him, he grew suspicious of his story, and threatened to report him to the Japanese police if he refused to leave. The visitor proved to be an agent provocateur sent to trap Lyall and other missionaries.

It was not uncommon for local Chinese pastors and evangelists to be arrested and imprisoned by the Japanese authorities. Lyall, as a British missionary, often went to

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

the Japanese authorities to protest their arrest and try his best to secure their release. Again, this was a very brave and risky act.

2.3.2 Lyall in Free China

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, and declarations of war between Japan and the US-led Allies, almost all the remaining Protestant missionaries in occupied China were considered enemies by the Japanese. Their movements were restricted almost immediately and the majority of them were put into internment camps. About a year before that, all CIM missionaries in occupied China had been advised to leave. Lyall left Shanxi in the winter of 1939 and was appointed to serve in Anshun, Guizhou where the Nationalist Government was still in control. His wife and two daughters flew to Hong Kong, then to Chongqing. From there, they took a bus to Anshun. Lyall would take a different route. He took the heavy baggage to Rangoon by sea, and then the Burma Road to Anshun.

The Burma Road was 1154 km long and ran through rough mountain ranges. The section from Kunming to the Burmese border was built by about 200,000 Burmese and Chinese laborers during the Sino-Japanese War. It was completed in 1938. The Burma Road was built with heavy loss of life among the engineers and workmen who had blasted their way forward with tremendous urgency. In fact, this highway was China's lifeline during the war because it was the only way to transport raw materials into China. Goods were transported from Rangoon through the Shan States, into Kunming. From Kunming, the road continued through Guizhou, into Sichuan, and finally to Chongqing, the wartime capital of China. The Burma Road was one of the most hazardous roads in the world. Writhing like a snake, it twisted and turned as it climbed gradients so steep that accidents seemed inevitable. Travelers on the road were horrified to see burnt-out wrecks of countless trucks littering the verges and precipitous slopes on either side of the road from start to finish. The loss of life among those who traveled this road was appalling.⁷¹

Along the Burma Road were many mountain tribes who had lived there for a long time. The CIM started its mission there as early as the late 19th century. This area

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

encompassed the villages of the Lisu, Miao, and Hmongs, among others. Many of these churches still flourish today in Burma, Thailand and China. After much hardship, Lyall arrived in Anshun on June 25th 1940.⁷² Guizhou was one of the poorest provinces in China, and it was also the wettest. A local proverb said, “No three miles flat, no three days without rain and no three persons with an ounce of silver between them.” Hilly, wet and poor! Furthermore, this area was also the center of the opium trade. The craving for drug and food drove many local people to crime. In Lyall’s four years in Anshun, thieves constantly climbed over his gate to steal blankets, clothing, food and even fruit from the trees. Pickpockets operated everywhere in the city while police were totally incompetent and impotent. The people were also idolatrous. The environment was inhospitable with appalling rat infestation.

During the war, about six million people from the Coast and Central China fled to the West. Many were students, professors, and businessmen. They left their homes and businesses, and chose to live in free China though it was relatively backward. The local country folk resented the influx of the “down-river” people with their incomprehensible dialects. More importantly, the new arrivals took away their business and trade. The situation was complicated, but simultaneously presented to the missionaries a golden opportunity to reach out to these “immigrants.” Lyall said, “Privation, poverty, severe and near-fatal illness, almost daily trials of faith and strong Satanic opposition lay ahead. Anshun was to become for us a furnace of affliction and a valley of weeping, but, in the end, a place of fruitfulness.”⁷³ Lyall’s description was accurate.

The CIM had a hospital in Anshun run by Dr. and Mrs. Knight, old friends of Lyall’s from Shanxi days, together with a lady doctor from Australia, and two nurses from Australia and the USA respectively. There was also a Canadian couple working among the tribal people. The hospital provided a much-needed service to the community, but the church was in total chaos. Some deacons fell victim to opium addiction, and gave up their faith altogether. The large church building stood empty. Lyall came to know a former member of the congregation, a Dr. Chen, who maintained a family medical

⁷² Leslie T. Lyall, "Watchman, What of the Night?" *China's Millions* 67 (1941): p. 84.

⁷³ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 72.

service in his home. As their fellowship deepened, they decided to share the Gospel in the city as well as to the Miao tribesmen who came into the city to trade. At the same time, Lyall also took charge of the English service held at the hospital chapel. He started an English Bible class for medical professionals and medical students in the prestigious army medical college and the army veterinary college. Among the attendees were persons prominent in the medical and scientific field in China. They included China's foremost pathologists and other research scientists. The class grew steadily to sixty in the first year, then to eighty and eventually over one hundred. Many became Christians and went on to greatly impact the Chinese Church. A couple, both doctors, opened a "Luke Clinic" in China and later in Macau. Many of these doctors and scientists, according to Lyall, were later dispersed throughout China in key positions both in their profession as well as in the house churches. Others became active Christians in the USA. Lyall felt that God was manifestly using him and other CIM missionaries to prepare His witnesses among China's intellectuals for service in the Church of the future, both in Anshun and in other cities in west China.⁷⁴ This marked a turning point in the mission history of the CIM. We shall discuss this in Chapter Five.

Lyall realized that when the war ended, these "down-river" people would return to the East. They would not remain to form a permanent core group in the local church. Therefore, he needed to pay equal attention to the local people for both evangelism and discipleship training. With the help of Dr. Chen, he was able to rent shop premises near the center of the city where people liked to gather. He used these open-fronted premises as preaching chapels and did some street preaching. Though some did find Christ and were baptized, in general this method of evangelism was not very effective.⁷⁵ However, in 1940 the Anshun church was able to invite Rev. Marcus Cheng (Chen Chonggui 陳崇桂, 1884-1963), a close associate of the CIM and a well-known preacher, to come and lead a revival meeting. About 150 people attended the revival meeting and 250 students came to a special student service. This meeting proved to be the first milestone on the road to recovery of the Anshun Church. In 1941, Pastor Newman Shih came to the Anshun Church as a lead pastor. He worked closely

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

with Lyall and they became very good friends until Shih's death in 1960 in England. In 1941, about twenty people were baptized. It was apparent that the key to a successful ministry in China was a healthy partnership between missionaries and local pastors.

A Canadian missionary couple who had been working among the Miao people, resigned from the CIM due to poor health and left in 1941. The responsibility of overseeing the ministry of the tribal people fell on Lyall's shoulders. In the autumn of 1941, Lyall together with Newman Shih set out for a two-day visit to the Big Flowery Miao to attend their annual church conference. Here was Lyall's report on this visit, "God richly blessed the ministry of the Word, and the warmth of the welcome from those simple people was in striking contrast to the coldness we had first encountered in Anshun itself."⁷⁶ In fact, the ministry among the Big Flowery Miao was one of the most successful in CIM history as we shall discuss in Chapter Six.

When Lyall referred to his experience in Anshun as a furnace of affliction and a valley of weeping, it was not at all an over-statement. In terms of his ministry in the local church, he encountered multiple setbacks and disappointments. When the church was about to recover spiritually after much hardship, a storm broke out. Another church in town accused Lyall's church of being a "foreigner's church." He was also accused of insulting another church, and asked to make a public apology before both congregations - a clear attempt to humiliate the foreigner. The friction between the two congregations in the city was deeply disturbing to him. His co-worker, Newman Shih became the main target of criticism by the other party and under pressure, he finally decided to leave Anshun for a time. Under stress, Lyall became very sick. On June 3rd 1943, he was diagnosed with typhoid fever. His elder daughter, aged five, contracted the fever and almost died. Though she recovered after struggling between life and death for two whole weeks, the Lyalls were deeply distressed. It was only the Word of God, according to Lyall, "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" that gave them peace and comfort.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

When Lyall was about to leave Anshun in 1944, he summarized his four years there in this way, “It was thrilling to hear how, all over free China, God was at work in ways similar to those in Anshun: students were turning to Christ in their hundreds, new churches were being planted and old established ones revived.” Then he continued, “We had arrived to find a defunct church, and now we were leaving behind a vigorous and united congregation having a membership of well over one hundred with able leadership and a fine young pastor in charge.”⁷⁸ Indeed, in the end, Anshun was a place of fruitfulness.

2.4 Lyall’s Ministry in Post-War China (1946-1951)

Lyall and his family left China in 1945 and he spent some time in England teaching at Kingsmead. They returned to China in 1946 to start his third term of service. This term turned out to be the most effective and influential period of Lyall’s ministry in China.

2.4.1 Lyall in Beijing

Lyall and his family arrived in Shanghai in 1947. Leaving their two older daughters behind in Shanghai to attend school, he and his wife travelled to Beijing with their two younger children. He was able to rent a place at No.33 Hsi Tsung Pu Hutung at a very reasonable price. The owner was a lady who attended Wang Mingdao’s church. She wanted to make full use of her premises for the work of God and for that reason rented this place to Lyall at a hefty discount. It was a typical Beijing residence of the wealthy and in fact had been the temporary home of General Marshall’s deputy when he was attempting to arrange a truce between the Nationalists and the Communists - as it proved, to no avail. There was a huge guest hall capable of seating 200 people. It had once been a showroom for Beijing carpets where tourists came to make their costly purchases. To use Lyall’s words, this home was luxurious to a degree they had never before enjoyed during their twenty years in China.⁷⁹

The student revival that had begun in the West during the war continued its momentum after the war. When the students returned to the East, they started fellowship meetings on different university campuses. As a missionary who had been actively involved in

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 86.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

the student ministry in Anshun, Lyall was soon invited to hold Bible classes at four of Beijing's universities: Peking (北京大學), Tsinghua (清華大學), Yenching (燕京大學) and Fu Ren (輔仁大學) universities, as well as some of the other fifteen colleges. Lyall used his home as their headquarters. They had a monthly gathering in the guest hall at eight o'clock on Sunday morning before church. Soon, this group grew to such an extent that they decided to make it a weekly event. The students also ventured to publish a Gospel Magazine to meet much-needed demand. Wang Mindao was a popular speaker to this student group and many of these students attended Wang's church.

The political situation was very tense at this time. There were many student demonstrations in Beijing. Student demonstrators carried banners with slogans such as "End the Civil War" and "End Our Empty Stomachs." The Nationalist Government had lost the confidence of the people and they often used force to suppress these demonstrations resulting in bloodshed. On the other hand, Communist activities were spreading all over the city, such that the Nationalist Government decided to impose curfews. On university campuses, Communist cells intensified indoctrination among students. Many were confused as to whether they should follow the Communists or the Nationalists.

Despite these political tensions, the Beijing Christian Student Group proceeded to arrange a conference in August 1947, immediately following the IVF National Conference in July that year. They sent four delegates to the IVF Nanjing Conference where several hundred students from universities all over China gathered together to listen to the Word of God. Many of these students had become Christians while they were in the West, and had previously attended a similar conference in Chongqing in 1943. The speakers included Calvin Chao, General Secretary of the China IVF, David Yang, Andrew Gih, Dr. Chia Yuming (賈玉銘 1880-1964) and Frank Houghton, Director of the CIM. Many of these attendees were touched and dedicated their lives to Christ. Lyall reported that everyone was fully aware of the gravity of the national situation, and as these young people sought God for His blessings, for themselves as individuals and for the nation as a whole, the spiritual temperature rose daily. He said, "Those were tremendous days, the like of which would never be repeated, though forty years later the memory lives on. All these young people were soon to be confronted

with the choice of “Christ or Communism”, and all who chose Christ would be called to suffer greatly for His sake.”⁸⁰

The Beijing conference started on August 16th 1947. About one hundred and twenty students attended. The speakers were David Yang and Wang Mingdao. Many students came to accept Christ as their personal Savior and Lord while those already Christians increased in commitment and encountered more deeply the fullness of salvation. Lyall reported, “The tide of spiritual blessings rose daily, and the final testimony meeting brought the conference to a mighty climax ... When they were on the way back to their campuses, they were singing joyful songs of praise to God. Peking had never seen or heard the like before”⁸¹

By the beginning of 1948, the civil war was going badly for the Nationalist army. City after city in North China fell to the well-disciplined, well-equipped Communist army as the Nationalist forces became increasingly demoralized. Most realized that it was only a matter of time before China would be in the hands of the Communists. Many Christians also realized that it would not be easy for Christians to live under the atheist communists. It is interesting to see how Lyall ministered at this end-time.

In his wisdom, Lyall played second fiddle in the leadership team of the Beijing Christian Student Group. Though he was considered an advisor of the group, he gave much autonomy to the student committee. This committee planned the August 1947 conference, the outreach, publication of the Gospel Magazine, drafted the manifesto on the position of the Group toward the political situation at the time, and made the important decision not to join the National China IVF. In this way, the Group was able to survive and thrive under the leadership of the students after the departure of Lyall in 1949.

Lyall focused on training student leaders. Amazingly, many capable lay leaders emerged from this group. Among these, Peter (Zhang Xihuan 張錫煥), a member of the Yenching Bible class and the most prominent leader of the Beijing Christian

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 98.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 99.

Student Group, later attended Fuller Theological Seminary in California, USA to prepare himself for ministry. Wang Chang Xin (王長新) was another active leader who wrote a biography of Wang Mingdao entitled *You Sishi Nian* (又四十年). Chang Yu-Ming (Lyll called him Henry in *God Reigns in China*) became a well-known physician and an outstanding leader of a house church in Hebei Province. Yang Anxi (楊安溪 1930-2009), the son of David Yang was another outstanding leader in the Church of China. We shall expand upon the student ministry in Chapter Five.⁸²

Realizing that Christians might soon be unable to share the Gospel freely, Lyall and the students made full use of the remaining freedom to evangelize as much as possible. Many refugees had fled to Beijing from the North, creating new problems in the already congested city. When student refugees could not find anywhere to live, they camped in the open spaces outside temples. When the first snows of winter fell and the cold winds from the Gobi Desert began to blow, the plight of these young students sleeping under the open sky with little warm clothing was bitter and pathetic. Lyall and the Beijing students opened up Number 33 Hsi Tsung Pu Hutung and provided daily soup for these students. Lyall's residence became a very popular place for these hungry refugees who then also had the opportunity to hear the Gospel. The Beijing students also decided to stage a city-wide evangelistic campaign. Andrew Gih was invited to be the speaker; large crowds listened to the gospel proclaimed. Lyall commented, "This city-wide mission was without doubt the first of its kind ever to have been held in the city's history. It was certainly the largest and proved to be the final attempt before the city fell to the Communists to reach the Peking masses with the gospel."⁸³

Lyll was acutely aware of the likelihood that Christians in China would soon have to suffer a great deal. Accordingly, he prepared the students with the message of 1 Peter. This was the message for the first century Christians facing imminent persecution and suffering at the hands of the Roman Empire. Its teachings on the Christian foundation, the meaning of suffering and the hope in Christ were relevant to the young Christians

⁸² Ibid., p. 102.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 108.

and the situation in China. With this preparation, many survived and kept their faith despite the prolonged period of suffering that followed.

Lyll and the students realized that the best way to cope with future persecution was by scattering. Instead of having big Christian groups confined to a few cities, it seemed more strategic for Christians to be scattered all over China. In doing so, they were not only able to penetrate into unchurched areas, but also able to hide from persecution. Thus, the students sent their first missionary out to north-west China. He was a graduate doctor and he joined the Borden Memorial Hospital, operated by the CIM in Lanzhou, Gansu. After 1956, many of the Beijing students were scattered all over China, creating many oases for Christianity. In 1979, Lyll received a letter from Chang Yuming to say that he had maintained a steady witness, survived twelve years of fearful persecution and imprisonment, and was a leader among numerous house churches in his province. The letter said, "While I was in Peking, we had a reunion with some members of the Peking and Tientsin Christian Fellowship. Most of us have suffered during the past long difficult period, but now have been rehabilitated and are chief engineers or associate professors in universities."⁸⁴

Last but not least, they started a prayer movement. Lyll said, "The young people well knew that under Communism the freedom to witness would be severely curtailed if not denied them, but prayer would be the only activity impossible to restrict."⁸⁵ The students repeated this saying again and again, "From now on, our work will be the work of prayer."

The two Christian student groups in Beijing ended in distinctly different ways. The Student Christian Movement, believing that under a Marxist government their ideal of a socialist utopia was about to dawn, voluntarily disbanded soon after the Communists took over the city. The Beijing Christian Student Group, on the other hand, continued its witness to the Word of God for another six years. The Group was evicted from Number 33, but found alternative premises in the Union Church and did not disband until 1955 at the time of Wang Mingdao's arrest, against which they were the only

⁸⁴ Leslie T. Lyll, "A China Prayer Movement: Peking Students' Call to Prayer," *China's Millions* 75 (1949): pp. 2-3.

⁸⁵ Leslie T. Lyll, *God Reigns in China*, p. 112.

group in the entire China who had the boldness and courage to make a strong protest. In fact, we know now that 1955 did not actually mark the end of this group. Their influence and witness continues even to the present day as we shall see in the last chapter of this thesis.

2.4.2 Lyall in Shanghai

In November 1948, the local military situation became increasingly critical as the Red Army massed for an assault on Beijing. Lyall received instructions from CIM headquarters to leave Beijing and proceed to Shanghai. It was not easy for him to say farewell to the students; he could not help wondering what trials and sufferings lay ahead of them. It was even more difficult to say farewell to Wang Mingdao, with whom he had enjoyed so much fellowship and partnership in the student work. Wang Mingdao gave Lyall his recently published book *These Fifty Years* (五十年來) as well as an antique fan which had belonged to his family for generations as parting gifts. Before going to Shanghai, Lyall spent some time in Zhejiang, the province where the CIM had started its ministry in the nineteenth century. He had a chance to minister to the students in Quxian. He also travelled to Wenzhou and ministered to the leaders of the country churches there. After seeing off their three children to the school in Guilong, the rest of the family returned to Shanghai.

In Shanghai, Lyall was involved in three different brief but significant ministries. First, he was invited to teach the Old Testament in the China Bible Seminary founded by Ruth Brittain, an American missionary. David Yang, and Audrey Johnson, another CIM missionary, were among the faculty. Audrey Johnson was later to go on to found the popular Bible Study Fellowship in America. The China Bible Seminary started as a training center for Bible-women, but from 1947, men were also admitted. One of its most outstanding students was Samuel Lamb (林獻羔 1924-2013) of Canton (Guangzhou) who became a very influential house church pastor. This seminary produced hundreds of workers serving both in China proper as well as South East Asia. It was closed soon after Shanghai was taken over by the Communists.

Second, Lyall was involved in the Shanghai student ministry assisting David Adeney, the CIM missionary assigned to serve in the China IVF. When Nanjing fell to the Communists in April 1949, many flocked to Shanghai thinking it was safer because of

its large international community. Calvin Chao, the General Secretary of China IVF had already fled to Hong Kong leaving responsibility for the organization on the shoulders of David Adeney. Adeney then moved to Shanghai, and there attempted to build up a new base for China IVF. According to Lyall's report, work among the students in Shanghai at that time was at fever pitch. Adeney often went to Lyall's flat to discuss plans for the future and to pray over the many problems they faced. The China IVF continued its ministry well after the fall of Shanghai in late May 1949, until it was disbanded in 1951.

Third, Lyall began to get involved in the ministry of Christian literature. As CIM seriously planned for its uncertain future, many of its leaders began to realize that the publication of Christian literature needed to be a priority. Historically speaking, CIM and other evangelical missions did not pay much attention to publishing good and useful books. Before Lyall's departure from China, he and some other CIM leaders were able to have some very deep fellowship with Watchman Nee. Being a very good friend of Lyall's father-in-law, Nee told Lyall and the other CIM leaders very frankly that in fact, what the Chinese church needed most was good Christian books especially Bible commentaries. He said, "What we need very badly is more good commentaries. So please work on the translation of commentaries like those by Bishop Lightfoot! Next time you come, come not as missionaries, but as teaching elders in our churches."⁸⁶ Nee's advice had tremendous impact on both Lyall and the future strategy of the CIM/OMF.

The first book to be translated by the CIM was the biography of Hudson Taylor. The translator was a local Chinese doctor, but it was Lyall who edited and checked for accuracy. The second book was Halley's Bible Commentary, translated by Lyall with the assistance of a former student friend in Beijing. He also worked with another local Chinese Christian in the production of a new hymnal with an introduction by David Yang. All these efforts inspired Lyall to spend the rest of his life writing, especially about the church history of China and Christian Missions.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 123.

2.4.3 Leaving China

By 1951, it became clear to the CIM that their continued presence in China only embarrassed the Chinese Christians and threatened the Church's very survival. In January of that year, the CIM decided to withdraw. In May, the Lyalls said goodbye to all their old friends, some of whom bravely came to the railway station to see them off. They eventually arrived in Hong Kong to be re-united with their children who had left ahead of them. While waiting in Hong Kong, Lyall had ample opportunity to reflect sadly on the past and present sufferings of many of his good Chinese friends, and at the same time to contemplate the CIM's and his own uncertain future.

3. Lyall's Work in the Post-CIM Era

3.1 Lyall's Work in the OMF

Unlike many other mission societies, the CIM had no fields other than China. That meant its missionaries could not be transferred elsewhere. What then was to be the future of the CIM? From April 10th to 17th 1951, the Mission's directors met at Kalorama in Australia. They decided that this battle-hardened and experienced missionary force could not be disbanded. The Mission would continue, with a new focus on the Chinese communities in East and South East Asia. Survey teams were appointed to investigate the needs of Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The first surveys revealed the presence of 10 million Chinese in South East Asia. Christians in Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, Manila, Tokyo and Bangkok were eager to invite the CIM to their countries. The surveys also found a new pattern of need. Apart from the Chinese populations in these areas, the needs of the non-Chinese nationals were even greater. The directors decided to regard the following fields as especially their own: the tribal area of north Thailand, the thirteen totally unevangelized provinces in the Chao Phraya basin of central Thailand, the Muslims in south Thailand, the northern island of Hokkaido in Japan and the tribes of the island of Mindoro in the Philippines. The Mission was renamed The Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF),⁸⁷ with its headquarters in Singapore.

Lyall played a significant role in the transition from the CIM to the OMF. He served in the OMF for thirteen more years, responsible for recruiting and training new missionaries. After only four years, the OMF already had bridgeheads in sixty new areas in East and South-East Asia. Fruitful

⁸⁷ Frank Houghton, "If It be Thou ...A Report of the Conference of Directors of the China Inland Mission," *China's Millions* 77 (1951): p. 38-40.

evangelism was in full swing and embryo churches were emerging. Eighteen doctors were active in clinic, leprosy and hospital work. Some missionaries were also involved in teaching at four theological seminaries. Seventy-three new workers reached Singapore in 1955 bringing the total field membership to 552. The OMF continued to grow through the 1960s and 1970s. To use Lyall's words, the mission had in fact been rejuvenated. After 1951, more than 500 new members joined the OMF. It is of note that more than 58 % of the 850 members at the time were under the age of forty.⁸⁸ It is quite obvious in hindsight that Lyall's two books, *Urgent Harvest* and *Missionary Opportunities Today* written in the 1960s contributed to this success.

However, neither the OMF nor Lyall himself had forgotten China. They were very concerned about the church in China and the suffering of the brothers and sisters there. Lyall was actively involved in Christian China study groups. The one in London was typical. They met at Bedford College, University of London. Lyall was the honorary secretary. Attendance ranged from 30 to 60. There were always three sessions at each meeting. A summary of events in China was always presented first, followed by the presentations from invited guests who gave first-hand reports from China. The third and final session was for discussion and prayer. In 1980, the OMF launched "China Prayer Fellowship" groups all over the world.

3.2 Lyall's Writing Projects

Post-1951, Lyall wrote many important books on the Church in China, and on Christian missions. The first series of books was on the history of the Church in China. *A Biography of John Sung* was published in 1954, *Come Wind, Come Weather - The Present Experience of the Church in China* in 1960, *A Passion for the Impossible - The Continuing Story of the Mission Hudson Taylor Founded* in 1965, *Red Sky at Night: Communism Confronts Christianity in China* (also known as *The Church in Mao's China*) in 1969, *New Spring in China* in 1979, *Three of China's Mighty Men* in 1973 and *God Reigns in China* in 1985.

The second group of books he wrote dealt with the subject of Christian missions. *Urgent Harvest: Partnership with the Church in Asia* was published in 1962, *Missionary Opportunities Today - a Brief World Survey* in 1963, and *The Phoenix Rises - the Phenomenal Growth of Eight Chinese Churches* in 1992. Many of his books were translated into many different languages such as Chinese, German, French, and Japanese. All are invaluable to the understanding of the Church

⁸⁸ Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible; the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965*, p. 184.

in China as well as the history of the CIM/OMF.

II. An Appraisal of Leslie T. Lyall as a Historian and Missionary

1. Leslie T. Lyall as Historian

In the forward of *New Spring in China* (1980), D. Stuart Briscore wrote:

Leslie Lyall, a veteran China missionary, an astute observer of the China scene, and a gifted writer, has done the Christian service by writing his fascinating book, *New Spring in China*, which he describes as “an attempt at an honest appraisal of Communist China from a Christian point of view.” The “honest appraisal” begins with a heart-felt cry to the Christian church to be intelligently aware of the spiritual vacuum in which one billion Chinese live. Lyall’s deep concern for the Chinese has not wavered since he was expelled from China, but it certainly was refreshed when he returned recently through newly opened doors to see firsthand what is going on in the land so long closed to the rest of the world. He flatly rejects the naïve assumption of some Western theologians and political activists that China has become wonderfully selfless and that modern China is something akin to the kingdom of God in earth. At the same time he freely admits and carefully documents the real strides that have been made under the Communist regime.⁸⁹

Having carefully studied Lyall’s work, I can only concur with Briscore. This assessment applies not only to his reports about the Chinese Church behind the “Bamboo Curtain,” but also to all his books on the history of the CIM. We do need to admit, however, that his interpretation of these historical events was very much shaped by his theology. In the introduction to *God Reigns in China* (1985), he wrote, “This book, based on the author’s own journals, traces the sovereign hand of God at work over the past half-century ... The current phenomenal growth of the Church in China is, however, no isolated or unrelated occurrence but must be seen as the direct result of divine activity, both in the political sphere and in the Church, particularly over the past fifty years.”⁹⁰

One may question if a historian who wrote with such a patent religious bias is to be trusted. To some, the answer is “no.” This may be one reason why Lyall’s work has not hitherto been taken seriously by historians. David Bebbington observed, “If a Christian historian makes plain his religious commitment in

⁸⁹ Leslie T. Lyall, *New Spring in China* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp. 13-14.

⁹⁰ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.13.

his writing, will he not be excluding it from general notice and certainly from academic attention?” He continues, “Historiography that draws attention to traces of providence is unacceptable to the world in large.”⁹¹ Therefore, we need to evaluate the extent to which Lyall is an effective reporter of the history of the CIM.

Some theologians, like Tom Nettles of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, believe that providential historiography is not only possible, but absolutely necessary for all Christian historians. In fact, all historians are influenced by their own worldviews and presuppositions when they write. A theist writes from his or her presupposition that there is a God who guides the entire historical process. An atheist writes from the presupposition that there is no God, and determination and sovereignty are assigned to the random. Nettles writes, “A theist who tries to write history as if there were no God, performs as, and presents the world as, an atheist, is profane.”⁹² However, many Christian historians disagree. Carl Trueman of Westminster Theological Seminary, for instance, objects to the use of providence. First, he claims that providential readings of history “attempt to explain particulars in terms of a universal, which is remarkably unhelpful in its limitations.” He gives the illustration of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Saying that the Twin Towers fell because of providence is little more than saying they fell because of gravity. He said, “To claim the latter is to speak truth, but it is also to explain nothing about what really happened that day ... The provenance of the historian is found in the particulars, but providence is a universal, since God causes all things.”⁹³ In short, according to Trueman, providence may well be a sound theological doctrine, but it has no place in the toolbox of the historian because it places the historian beyond the realm of what is and is not verifiable according to the canons of evidence and interpretation.

Harry Stout of Yale University provides a more balanced view, making the distinction between temporal or mundane history, and providential history. Temporal or mundane history has to do with “natural or secondary causes: the social, political, economic and intellectual history that all historians, whatever their personal beliefs, practice by observing the rules of evidence and adhering to a common pursuit of truth that all can agree upon. Providential history, on the other hand, is seen through the lens of supernatural faith.” This is what makes Christian historians different from non-Christian historians. The former believe and assert that “the ultimate force in history, lying behind and above all secondary causes, is God.” The non-Christian historian ascribes finality to this or that mundane force or factor instead.⁹⁴ However, whether

⁹¹ David Bebbington, *Pattern in History, A Christian Perspective in Historical Thought* (Vancouver, BC, Regent College Press, 1990), pp.172-186.

⁹² Tom J. Nettles, “Iain H. Murray, Revival and Revivalism: A Review Article,” *The Baptist Review of Theology/La Revue Baptiste de Theologie* 6 (Spring 1996): pp.67-79

⁹³ Carl R. Trueman, *History and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, Ill. Crossway, 2010), pp.166-167

⁹⁴ Harry S. Stout, “Biography as Battleground: The Competing Legacies of the Religious Historian,” *Books and Culture* 2 (July/August 1996), pp.9-10.

one is a temporal or providential historian, one is required to observe the rules of evidence and adhere to a common pursuit of truth that all can agree upon. This challenge exists for all historians. Besides, as pointed out by Bebbington, the historian writes not for himself, but for a specific audience. If he writes to those who share a similar faith, he would write explicitly that God is the ultimate force behind all events. If he writes for the academic world, his providential views may be more implicit. In either case, he is bound to write in accordance with the rules of historical evidence.⁹⁵ Thus, when we evaluate the writings of Lyall, the issue is not so much his providential view on historiography, but whether his reports are reliable, trustworthy and historically valuable or otherwise.

Lyall's books, particularly *God Reigns in China* and *A Passion for the Impossible*, are basically his own journals. He was a CIM, later OMF, missionary for almost half a century,⁹⁶ a service characterized by both breadth and depth. He taught at the Chefoo School, was a youth worker in Shanxi Province in partnership with David Yang, a field supervisor in occupied China, a student minister in free China, a minister among tribal groups in Guizhou, a student worker in Beijing with Wang Mingdao, a researcher on the missions of South East Asia, a recruiter and trainer of new missionaries for the OMF, a researcher on the church in China behind the "Bamboo Curtain." This broad exposure gave him a thoroughly comprehensive view of the ministry of the CIM/OMF in the twentieth century. He was not only an eye-witness of all these events, but also a CIM insider with access to all the archival materials when he wrote. A great deal of valuable information appears only in his written work.

Lyall wrote, for instance, about the relationship between the Communists and the CIM missionaries, recording the special relationship that CIM missionary doctors in Shanxi had with Marshal Zhu De as a result of having been of service to Zhu's wife.⁹⁷ This was not an isolated episode, but was a typical example of Lyall's accounts from the Sino-Japanese War. Lyall wrote, in *Come Wind, Come Weather*:

When war broke out in 1937, the Communists, including the famous Eighth Route Army, engaged in guerrilla warfare behind the Japanese lines, and in areas supposedly occupied by the Japanese armies. These were times when missionaries found their sympathies with all who fought the common enemy, including the courageous young men and women of the guerrilla forces, in their fight against ruthless foe. They were

⁹⁵ David Bebbington, *Pattern in History, A Christian Perspective in Historical Thought* (Vancouver, BC, Regent College Press, 1990), pp.172-186.

⁹⁶ Lelsie T. Lyall, *A Passion for a Grater Passion- the Continuing Story of the Mission Hudson Taylor Began*, p.11.

⁹⁷ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.53.

often able to render medical aid and advice to grateful Communist detachments.⁹⁸

This may have been why Frank Houghton, Director of the CIM, was misled into believing that CIM missionaries, would be welcome in New China under Communist rule. Historians have hitherto not thoroughly explored the impact that missionaries had on the Communists. However, the Australian historian C.P. Fitzgerald has the following observations:

It is sometimes suggested that the original inspiration of Communism came from Christianity, that the ideals of the brotherhood of man, of the rights of the humble, and the community of property, were first expounded to mankind by the Sermon on the Mount, and were unknown, or at least not practiced ... Any close observation of the Chinese Communists reveals the strong resemblance between them and a religious organization. The single-mindedness, not to say fanaticism, the devotion to duty, the complete belief and unquestioning acceptance of a dogmatic creed, the sense of sin, absent before in China, and the practice of confession, all these things are familiar to the European from Christian experience, but were strange to the Far East ... This seems the more probable as the Chinese Communists during their formative guerrilla years, a whole generation, were never in touch with Russia, and hardly in relations with the Russian party. They were however, in the deep interior, in contact with the missions, and with men who had first-hand knowledge of their work. It is true that in the early years the Chinese Communists treated the missions as imperialist outposts, harried the missionaries ... In time they came to see that the missions had some things to their credit. They had fed the hungry and nursed the orphans. The best of them had tried to instill a sense of human equality and decency into the relationship between rich and poor ... The Chinese Communists treated the missionaries, who stayed in the Japanese-occupied provinces, as friends.⁹⁹

Lyall's reports on the relationship between the missionaries and the Communists is aligned with Fitzgerald's observations with respect to the impact of Christian missionaries on the Communists. This is an area that has not been thoroughly researched, but is without doubt an interesting and important subject to further investigate.

Another event recorded by Lyall pertained to his relationship with a Dutch Catholic missionary in occupied China during the war. While Lyall and his colleagues struggled for survival, the Catholic missionaries were relatively well-off, having their own wells and vegetable gardens. This Dutch Catholic

⁹⁸ Lelsie T. Lyall, *Come Wind, Come Weather* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1960). p.8.

⁹⁹ C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Birth of Communist China* (Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1967) pp.134-135.

missionary generously shared food and water with Lyall and his colleagues when they were deprived. Several years afterwards, the priest, according to Lyall's report, was killed by the Communists, while all the CIM missionaries were spared.¹⁰⁰ This was likely not an isolated episode. The relationship between Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries at the time, and the different ways in which the Communists related to each group would be another interesting topic for historians to investigate.

That Lyall's books are based on his personal journals does not imply that he did not research his subject matter extensively. He was extremely knowledgeable about the history, culture and geography of China. His close relationship with local workers enabled him to accurately assess matters from the Chinese perspective. His books *A Biography of John Sung* and *Three of China's Mighty Men* show that he had a close and intimate relationship with Chinese Church leaders.¹⁰¹ In fact, he is the only Western missionary who wrote about prominent Chinese Church leaders and their ministries, so that the West might have a better idea about the Church in China. He is also one of the very few authors of the evangelical faith to write about the Chinese Church behind the "Bamboo Curtain." In his compilation of what is veritably a digest of information on the history of the Church in China, he credits reports and studies written by both Chinese and Western groups such as *Christian China Study Group (London) Reports*, *China Study Project Bulletin* (British Council of Churches), *China Notes* (Division of Overseas Ministries, NCC/USA), *The China Quarterly*, *Asia Outreach* (Hong Kong), *Pray for China* (Hong Kong), *Current Scene in China* (Hong Kong), and *Lutheran World Federation Information Letter* (Geneva).¹⁰² He had access to the letters sent to the Far-East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), a Christian radio station, by Chinese Christians who listened to the FEBC in secret.¹⁰³ He interviewed many people when he visited China. Most importantly, he wrote with honesty. He said, "A Christian appraisal, however, must above all be honest, fair and constructive. It must avoid the simplistic attitude that argues, "All Communists are atheists and therefore incapable of anything but evil!" A Christian "proves all things" and "holds fast that which is good ..."¹⁰⁴

However, it is also apparent that Lyall's loyalty to the CIM and his providential reading of history, sometimes affected his ability to adequately critique the policies adopted by the CIM. One example pertains to the "reluctant exodus" of the CIM in 1951. Houghton misread the political situation and ordered CIM missionaries to remain in China even after the issuance of the Christian Manifesto. The CIM was totally

¹⁰⁰ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, pp.53-54

¹⁰¹ Leslie T Lyall, *A Biography of John Sung* (Singapore, Armour Pub. 2004) and *Three of China's Mighty Men*.

¹⁰² Leslie T. Lyall, *New Spring in China* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1980) p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 178

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16

unprepared for the eventual mass retreat. There were no plans and no funds. Lyall wrote, “As the year closed 518 full members, 119 associate members and a large number of children were still dispersed throughout the country. How would the immense cost of the evacuation be met? And what did the future hold for them all?”¹⁰⁵ Lyall recognized these failures but he did not criticize them, nor did he record the anger and frustration of the missionaries with Houghton’s decision. He was also silent on the eventual “firing” of Houghton at the Bournemouth meeting in November 1951, as a direct consequence of Houghton’s poor handling of the evacuation of the missionaries. In these matters, Lyall chose to emphasize the miraculous providence of God in the provision of funds, and accommodation for the missionaries in Hong Kong. Thus, we conclude that although Lyall’s reports are generally trustworthy, they still need to be verified against other sources.

2. Lelsie T. Lyall and the Four Changes of CIM Mission Strategy

Lyall was not only a recorder of CIM/OMF history; he was an active participant in the four significant changes of mission strategy, which proved indispensable to the longevity of the CIM/OMF. These include the change from the laying of the foundation to the building of the Chinese church, from the role of a leader to the role of a partner, from a focus on the peasantry to the intellectuals, and from the CIM of Old China to the OMF of Asia and New China. Lyall played key roles particularly in the last three of these changes in mission strategy.

When D.E. Hoste succeeded Hudson Taylor as Director of the CIM, he realized that the establishment of an indigenous Chinese Church with Chinese leadership was critical, indeed requisite, for its survival. Prompted by the Anti-Christian Movement and the Great Evacuation, Hoste, a talented strategist, responded with the Forward Movement. The objective of the Forward Movement was to implement a rapid transfer of CIM churches to Chinese leadership, pastoral care and oversight. To accomplish this, they needed to train more local leaders. Hoste recruited better educated and more qualified new workers to take up these training responsibilities. Lyall, a Cambridge graduate, was among those recruited in 1929.

Lyall made two major contributions to this change. First, he provided the theological framework for the change. In his book, *The Church - Local and Universal*, he clearly spelt out the theological justification for the CIM’s indigenization movement. The CIM realized that the mission of the Western Church was not to duplicate its own form and ritual in other countries no matter how long-standing these traditions might

¹⁰⁵ Lelsie T. Lyall, *A Passion for a Grater Passion- the Continuing Story of the Mission Hudson Taylor Began*, p.164.

be. They realized that such paternalism only hindered the normal healthy growth of churches in the mission field. The CIM was not a denominational mission. Its missionaries came from many different denominations in their homelands, and were not interested in reproducing Western denominationalism in China. Unlike other advocates of the Chinese indigenization movement who pushed for a Christian Union (or denomination) with Chinese distinctiveness, the CIM aimed to plant local autonomous churches without a super hierarchy over them. Each local congregation could design its own distinct style of worship, liturgy and form of government, but the essentials of their faith was the same everywhere. Each church was self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating though mutual help was common among these churches. To the CIM, the church was not an organization, but an organism, the living body of Christ. Unity among these churches was important and necessary, but uniformity was not mandated. Lyall regarded the mission and the local Chinese churches as partners in the expansion of the Kingdom of God. While the CIM remained in the hands of the Westerners, the Chinese Churches established by CIM missionaries were autonomous in every way. The Mission had no authority over the churches. They were partners and the CIM on the whole maintained a high level of sensitivity towards the Chinese Christians' aspiration to responsibility and autonomy at the local level.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, Lyall faithfully executed Hoste's Forward Movement by working with David Yang to train up youth for the ministry. Many of these were still in active service in the house churches forty-five years later.¹⁰⁷ It is because of the faithfulness of missionaries like Lyall that the ministry of the CIM flourished in the 1930s despite the political chaos prevailing at that time.

The success of the implementation of Hoste's Forward Movement depended greatly on the availability of capable Chinese leaders willing to serve as partners of the CIM. According to Lyall's reports, this change is closely related to the great revival in the 1930s resulting in the emergence of local Chinese Church leaders like Wang Mingdao, Watchman Nee and David Yang. Lyall called them three of China's mighty men. Lyall's contribution to the change in CIM strategy from leadership to partnership is again twofold. He reported on this new pattern of partnership between the CIM and the Chinese church. He was also involved in personally partnering with David Yang and Wang Mingdao. In his book *Three of China's Mighty Men*, Lyall mentioned only these three Chinese leaders out of many because they each represented three different kinds of partnership between the CIM and local leaders. David Yang represented those leaders who were trained and mentored by CIM missionaries. Wang Mingdao represented independent local

¹⁰⁶ Leslie T. Lyall and Leslie Newbingin, *The Church-Local and Universal* (London, World Dominion Press, 1962), pp. 1-10

¹⁰⁷ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p.38.

leaders who were neither trained nor mentored by the CIM missionaries, but who willingly partnered with the CIM or CIM missionaries in a semi-formal or informal ways. Watchman Nee represented those to whom the CIM entrusted their churches before their departure in 1951. Of these three partners, Lyall had intimate relationships with David Yang and Wang Mingdao. Yang was Lyall's mentor when he first served in Shanxi as a rookie missionary. Yang comforted and encouraged Lyall when he was downhearted. They labored together at the Hoste School in Hongdong. Wang Mingdao was Lyall's partner in the Christian Student Group in Beijing. They prayed, cried, rejoiced, and labored together as fellow soldiers for Christ, setting a good model for true partnership.

The third change in CIM mission strategy was the change from the focus on the rural to the intellectual class. Of all the CIM missionaries working among students, Lyall was the most effective. In the early stages of the student movement, Lyall was already heavily involved with the University students in Anshun, Guizhou. He befriended the doctors and students of the prestigious army medical college and veterinary college, starting Bible classes and Sunday services for them. When the China Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship began, Lyall was also involved in their ministry, particularly in their conferences. The climax of this student movement was the CIVCF Conference held in Nanjing in 1947. Lyall brought along several Beijing Christian Student Group leaders to the conference and witnessed a great revival among the students there.¹⁰⁸ The most important of Lyall's contributions to the change in focus to the intellectuals was his mentoring and teaching of the Beijing Christian Student Group. Its members were the elite of the most prestigious universities in China; they were the cream of Chinese society. Many were to become outstanding scientists, engineers and medical professionals.

This group was started by the students themselves, but they asked Lyall to hold Bible classes for them, using his home as their headquarters and a meeting place for bible study, prayer and fellowship. The group grew rapidly and held an annual retreat. Since they were not officially affiliated to the CIVCF, they survived for four more years after the CIVCF was disbanded by the Communist government in 1951. This Beijing Christian Student Group was key to the rise and development of the house church movement in recent decades. After the Communist take over, many of these graduates were forced to disperse throughout China. With the dispersal, that which had happened so wonderfully in Beijing was duplicated in many universities in other parts of China, creating small oases of spiritual life amid the desert of Marxism. These oases persisted through the stormy years, blossoming abundantly in recent decades. Others of the Beijing students also migrated to Hong Kong, Taiwan and the West, taking leadership roles in the local churches

¹⁰⁸ Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, p. 98.

wherever they went. The partnership between Lyall and Wang Mingdao was an informal one. Lyall often consulted Wang concerning the student ministry, and there was mutual respect between both men. Wang was one of the most popular speakers in this group, and he took over as mentor to the group after Lyall's departure from Beijing.

The fourth change of CIM mission strategy was the change from the CIM of Old China to the OMF of Asia and the New China. After the CIM's departure from China, it was decided that the Mission should continue its work in East and South East Asia. Missionaries were re-directed to the new mission fields in Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong. The name was changed from the CIM to the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. In 1964, their ministry extended to non-Chinese as well. Non-western Christians could then become members of the mission. With the opening of China in the 1980s, the OMF also extended its work back into China with emphasis on evangelism, medical services, linguistic and student work. Lyall was not only involved in this change, he researched the mission fields of Asia for the OMF, and personally recruited and trained new missionaries. In 1960, he visited all the fields of the OMF in order to collect material for his book *Urgent Harvest-Partnership with the Church in Asia*.¹⁰⁹ This book painted a broad picture of the spiritual needs and opportunities in East Asia; Lyall also described how new churches were formed and how they grew. It not only contains factual information, but is also crowded with human interest stories and pen portraits of Asian converts. The publication of this book attracted many new missionaries to the OMF family. In 1963, Lyall edited *Missionary Opportunity Today*, which replaced the earlier survey *Mission Fields Today* written in 1956. Lyall reported on the tremendous missionary needs in the world, particularly in Asia and Africa. He wrote, "If we take the population of the world in 1963 to be 3,061,000,000, then two-thirds, over 2,000,000,000 souls, are outside Christendom, and largely unevangelized. Then there is still a stupendous task of evangelism to be done, but it can best be done by the national Churches in every land, rather than by 'foreign missionaries'." This book is not only informative, but presents a new missiology to the evangelical world. This new mission strategy is nothing other than the partnership model of the CIM.¹¹⁰ Again, in 1972, he wrote another important book entitled *A World to Win*, in which he passionately challenged the Christian church to carry on the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.¹¹¹ All these books motivated many young men and women to get involved in missions in Asia and many of them joined the OMF family.

¹⁰⁹ Leslie T Lyall, *Urgent Harvest-Partnership with the Church in Asia* (London, China Inland Mission, 1960), p. 9.

¹¹⁰ Leslie T. Lyall, *Missionary Opportunity Today, a Brief World Survey* (Chicago, Inter-Varsity Press, 1963), p. 7.

¹¹¹ Leslie Lyall, *A World to Win* (London, Inter-Varsity Press and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1972), p.5.

By far, however, Lyall's greatest contribution is his reporting on the Chinese church behind the Bamboo Curtain. In the 1960s and 1970s, many Western scholars and church leaders were impressed by the achievements of Mao Zedong's regime in China. Some even claimed that it was part of God's saving work in history. They questioned whether Christianity was any longer essential to China. Dr. Joseph Needham, of Cambridge University, for example, equated Chinese society under the Communists with the Kingdom of God and described China as 'the only truly Christian country in the world'!¹¹² Lyall's view differed sharply from Needham's optimism, but his was a lonely voice in the West. The difference lay in the fact that these so-called China experts drew conclusions based on the propaganda coming out of China. Lyall, on the other hand, drew his conclusions from the reality that he learned from people who had fled China. After the Cultural Revolution, many of these China experts realized they had been naïve in accepting reports from China at face value, and modified their views considerably. Without doubt, Lyall's reports and assessments of the church in China after 1950 is the more reliable and accurate.

In conclusion, Lyall was not only a faithful reporter of the history of the CIM/OMF who grasped the complexities of the situation clearly and accurately, he was also a significant participant in these changes, which proved vital to the miraculous growth of the Chinese Church today.

3. Lelsie T. Lyall as a Missionary

As we examine Lyall's life and work, we are not surprised that he finished the race and finished well. First, Lyall was a man of foresight. He understood China and interpreted the political situation of the time much more accurately than many other China watchers. Lyall was among the few who doubted the ability of the Goumindang to re-establish political order and stabilize the economy in China. As early as 1944, on his way back to England on an ocean-liner, he was invited to give a lecture on the future of China to an audience of senior British officers. He predicted then that China would eventually fall to the Communists. After so many years of observing both the Nationalists and the Communists, he was convinced that the corrupt and dispirited Nationalist army would not survive long and the more disciplined Communist red army would have the final victory.¹¹³ He also doubted that missionaries would be allowed to remain in China.¹¹⁴ It was this foresight into China's political future that motivated Lyall to return to China urgently and invest his life in the student ministry in what would be the last lap of his service in the CIM.

¹¹² Leslie T. Lyall, *God Reigns in China*, pp. 144-145.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹¹⁴ Leslie T. Lyall, "New Era in China," *China's Millions* 71 (1945): pp. 33-34.

Second, Lyall was a man of faith. In 1946, Lyall and his family were on their way back to China after a Sabbatical leave in the UK. They travelled to America to visit his parents-in-law. Due to an unexpected delay, they found themselves without the funds to travel from Vancouver to San Francisco where they were to join other missionaries on the Marine Lynx, a US troop ship bound for Shanghai. Lyall wrote:

Here was a fresh test of the principles by which we had lived ever since joining the China Inland Mission ... On December 8th we made a final call on my wife's parents to say goodbye. My father-in-law had just been handed ten dollars and, knowing nothing of our financial plight, he passed this gift on to us as we left for the railway station ... There someone else pressed a five-dollar note into my hand, and fifteen dollars was just sufficient to meet the cost of our meals during the two days' and nights' journey... On arrival in San Francisco, I found awaiting me an invitation to speak at a Bible school at Oakland. After the meeting I was handed the free-will offering of \$9.48, which proved to be precisely the amount needed to transport the family cases to the docks... Two further gifts totaling six dollars covered incidental expenses for the children, including a real American ice-cream.¹¹⁵

Though many missiologists and historians are skeptical and critical of this faith mission policy of the CIM for creating unnecessary anxiety and stress among the missionaries, Lyall regarded it positively as an exercise of faith.

Third, he was a man of wisdom. As an advisor to the Beijing Christian Student Group, he and the student leaders were wise enough not to be affiliated with the CIVCF. They saw the danger in some leaders of the CIVCF getting too close to the Goumindang; Madame Chiang Kai-shek even visited CIVCF's Nanjing Conference in 1946 to bring a message of welcome from the President.¹¹⁶ As a result, the Beijing Christian Student Group survived four years longer than the CIVCF. In his wisdom, Lyall deliberately chose to play second fiddle in the leadership team of the Beijing Christian Student Group. Though he was the advisor, he gave much autonomy to the student committee. This committee planned the retreats, outreach activities, publication of the Gospel Magazine, and drafted the manifesto on the position of the Group toward the political situation at that time. In this way, the students were able to lead the group effectively even after Lyall's departure in 1951.

He was a man of vision. Acutely aware of the likelihood that Christians in China would have to suffer a great deal, he prepared the students accordingly using the message from 1 Peter which had been for the

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

first century Christians facing imminent persecution and suffering at the hands of Rome. With such preparation, many survived and kept their faith despite prolonged periods of tribulation. Lyall also realized that the best way to cope with future persecution was by scattering. He wrote an interesting article entitled *Evangelization by Migration in China's Millions* suggesting Christians migrate to the North West for the sake of the gospel. In this article, he reported that some Chinese Christians, particularly Little Flock churches, were already emphasizing mass migration to the West for the sake of the gospel. He wrote:

This new venture of the Little Flock is still in its experimental stage, but it is easy to see its advantages. Instead of the lonely pioneer who, painfully slow and sometimes discouraging processes, sought to establish a witness for Christ among the heathen, a zealous Christian community and a live active church are transplanted into that same heathen area. No imagination is needed to see the possibilities of such migrations if they can be undertaken on a wider scale and to even needier unevangelized fields of China.¹¹⁷

In doing so, these churches brought the gospel to the unchurched peoples in the West, while simultaneously hiding from persecution. In fact, the Beijing Christian Student Group and the Little Flock were keys to the rise and development of the house church movement in recent decades. In 2013, I had a chance to interview some house church leaders in Zhejiang and was surprised to hear that many of the leaders in these churches are descendants of this movement.

Finally, he was also a man of passion. Hudson Taylor was not the only one motivated by the vision and passion to accomplish a seemingly impossible mission. His entire “tribe”, namely, the CIM missionary force, was similarly inspired to follow in his footsteps. Many CIM missionaries dedicated, even sacrificed their lives to the mission. Leslie Lyall was a typical example. Murray Watts commented in Lyall’s obituary that Lyall’s life was to be marked by depression as well as extraordinary faith, constant anguish of separation as well as a pioneering courage.¹¹⁸ The following stories are illustrative of Watt’s observations.

During the Sino-Japanese War, Lyall and his family were in England on Sabbatical leave. Many thought him mad to return to war-torn China with his four young children, but his commitment to the land was unwavering. Lyall and his family returned to China in 1937, assigned to Hebei, the war zone of North China. Hwailu was the administrative center for the CIM in Hebei where churches existed in seven or eight counties. His main responsibility was to visit these churches to encourage, support, advice and pastor. Despite the harsh conditions, Lyall was passionate and bold, often confronting the Japanese at great personal risk. Undaunted by the dangerous travelling conditions, he courageously took a faithful band of Chinese

¹¹⁷ Leslie Lyall, “Evangelization by Migration” *China's Millions Dec. (1951)* p. 3.

¹¹⁸ See p.1

men and women to carry on the work of evangelism and pastoral care in the region even though it was not uncommon for local Chinese pastors and evangelists to be arrested and imprisoned by the Japanese authorities. Lyall, as a British missionary, would protest their arrest and try his best to secure their release.

When the CIM reassigned him to West China after Pearl Harbor, he had to travel via the Burma Road from India. The Burma Road was one of the most hazardous roads in the world, tortuous and steep, with precipitous slopes on either side from start to finish. Lyall set forth with courage and determination. This was typical of many CIM missionaries.

It was this passion for the impossible that gave him and other CIM missionaries' success in the mission field. This spirit was undoubtedly inspired by Hudson Taylor himself. It was also this passion and sacrificial spirit that inspired many local Chinese to follow after their footsteps. It is, therefore, no surprise that the Church in China would survive and flourish, despite the difficulties and hardships she endured for so many decades.