

You Can't Ignore the Miracle of Christianity in China

Last week I worshipped in Hong Kong with hundreds of believers at the Wing Kwong Church, a Pentecostal Holiness congregation that has grown from 28 members in 1978 to more than 13,000 today. The modern megachurch, which meets in a sleek six-story building completed in the year 2000, gives thousands of dollars every year to fund international missions work. Under the leadership of Pastor Donavan Ng, the church sent a missionary couple to Kenya in 2006 to reach Chinese immigrants who have moved to that African nation.

"God has entrusted to the Chinese church a special mandate for the 21st century," declared James Hudson Taylor IV, a surprise guest in the Wing Kwong Church that evening. Taylor is the great-great-grandson of British missionary pioneer Hudson Taylor, who ventured to China in 1854 to evangelize the world's most populous nation.

When Hudson Taylor sailed to China, there were no Christians there—yet the China Inland Mission that he established won 18,000 converts to Jesus Christ during his lifetime and became one of the greatest success stories in modern missions. Today, Taylor's great-great-grandson has a front-row seat to witness the greatest miracle on planet earth.

Hudson Taylor's beloved China is becoming a Christian country.

Many Americans today seem discouraged by evidence of spiritual decline in the West. Now would be the best time for us to heed Jesus' words in John 4:35: "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." Our pessimism has blinded us to what is happening in the East.

Consider these facts about the Chinese church:

1. China will likely become the largest Christian nation in the world by the year 2030. Fenggang Yang, a professor of sociology at Purdue University, notes that in the year 2010 there were more than 58 million Protestants in China, and he believes that number will swell to around 160 million by 2025 based on current growth trends. (The United States had 159 million Protestants in 2010.) By 2030, Yang predicts, China's total Christian population, including Catholics, would exceed 247 million, placing it above Mexico, Brazil and the United States as the largest Christian population in the world.

2. More Christians attend church on Sundays in China today than in Europe. Some people attend government-sanctioned churches like the 5,000-member Liushi megachurch, located 200 miles south of Shanghai in Zhejiang province. This church was forced to close in the 1950s, but it reopened in 1978 and has grown ever since. Many other Chinese believers prefer to worship in more covert "house churches" so they can stay away from any government interference.

3. Spiritual hunger is exploding in China, even though the country is officially atheist. A recent study found that online searches for the words "Christian congregation" and "Jesus" are far more numerous than for "communist party." And as more people have moved from rural areas to big cities, large numbers of young professionals have turned to Christ. Missiologists say between 10,000 and 25,000 people convert to Christianity every day in China.

4. Persecution of Christians is still rampant in China, but it does not seem to be slowing church growth. A 2015 report by China Aid says leaders of the Chinese Communist Party remain worried about the popularity of Christianity, and this is the reason they have instigated recent crackdowns on churches and arrested house church pastors. President Xi Jinping is considered the most authoritarian leader in China since Mao Zedong. Communist leaders have also been known to bankrupt churches in an effort to stop their work.

5. The growth of Chinese Christianity is linked to its economic growth. Economists announced that China overtook the United States as the world's largest economy in late 2014. China, with its population of 1.3 billion, now accounts for 16.5 percent of the global economy, compared with 16.3 percent for the U.S. A recent study by Qunyong Wang of Nankai University and Xinyu Lin of Renmin University of China discovered there was robust economic growth in areas of China where Christian congregations are growing.

Could it be that God will use the vast financial resources of China to pay for the next great thrust of world evangelism before Christ's return?

China's church is truly a marvel. The gospel seed that was planted by missionaries such as Hudson Taylor in the 1800s died in the ground after Mao Zedong unleashed his infamous Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. During that era, Mao tried to completely eliminate religion and foreign influence in China by forcing 10,000 missionaries to leave the country.

Mao also sent thousands of Christians to their deaths, but the blood of those martyrs has produced an unprecedented harvest today. No one on this planet will be able to ignore the full impact of China's miracle.

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