

Christians Told to Trust the President More Than Jesus

In March 1966, John Lennon said the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. It came at a time when Mao Zedong had just launched his Cultural Revolution crackdown and had achieved cult-like status in China.

More than 50 years later, Communist Party officials have bestowed similar status on President Xi Jinping and many believe he is due greater honor and recognition than Jesus.

In China's Jiangxi province, government officials are now demanding that villagers remove Christians posters and replace them with images of President Xi.

Villagers "should no longer rely on Jesus, but the party for help," said Qi Yan, chairman of the people's congress of Yugan county's Huangjinbu township.

One third of the township population is Christian, yet *The Washington Post* reports 624 posters—most showing Christian sayings and depicting Christian images, have been removed and replaced with 453 images of President Xi.

One photo appearing on social media showed workers hanging a picture of Xi on a wall. An accompanying tweet said, "Help turn those who believe in religions into believing in the Party."

Government officials are encouraging the action in response to recent remarks by Xi, who is also Communist Party General Secretary. In remarks made at the recent Communist Party Congress, Xi said religion must be guided by the party to adapt to socialist society.

"Many rural people are ignorant. They think God is their

savior, said Qi Yan. “Many poor households have plunged into poverty because of illness in the family. Some resorted to believing in Jesus to cure their illnesses. But we tried to tell them that getting ill is a physical thing and that the people who can really help them are the Communist Party and General Secretary Xi.”

Communist Party members recently agreed to write Xi’s name in their constitution. That action alone elevated him to nearly the same status as Chairman Mao. Also, one local newspaper referred to Xi as “Great Leader,” a title that has not been used on a Chinese leader since Mao.

Chinese Christians often hang Christian posters and crosses on the walls and doors of their homes—especially during holiday celebrations. If they refuse to comply with government demands to replace them with images of President Xi, the government may withhold their allotted portions of government poverty relief funds.

Some Christians may eventually risk arrest. However, so far, there are no reports anyone has been arrested for non-compliance.

The Xi poster replacement campaign comes two years after a massive wave of government-forced cross removals from more than 1,500 Chinese churches—mostly in China’s Zhejiang province.

Some Chinese Christians now fear the growing cult of personality surrounding their president may lead to greater government persecution of churches and Christians who view Jesus, rather than Xi Jinping, as their “Great Leader.” {eo}

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