

PIECE 14. THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF CHINA. **(Includes A few Dumb Europeans and the Smart Chinese.)**

A brief intro!

Christianity in Chinese history

Famous Christians in Chinese History.

How many Christians in China?

“A few Dumb Europeans and the Smart Chinese.”

The future situation: Quo Vadis?

What it all means for China?

A brief intro!

A study on China, however small like this book, would be incomplete without this subject. Some of you may be wondering why this chapter is in here at all, and the reasons for this is that some answers can be found towards the end of this very same chapter! So I do encourage you to hold on and stick this one out until the end and what it all means for China, thanks! This chapter may be more detailed than I originally anticipated. Through researching it and realizing the quasi- importance of this to China right now, it became, well,... longer! *

From ancient times, believe it or not, faith in the Bible God and later Christianity has been alive and well in China. This may be a surprise to you, as it was to me. However, this has been researched very well in several books, and one particularly sound-bitey (or is that sound-bitey?) and fascinating book is called ‘Jesus in Beijing’ by David Aikman.

Before you switch off and think this is a religious section of this book and load of ____ do bear with me as you may learn something very amazing before this chapter is finished. After all, don’t you pride yourself on being open-minded? Can you truly call yourself open minded if you already switch off? Not really.

**I have avoided as much as possible relying on the writings of others in this book. However with this chapter and a few sections in Piece 13 I have been compelled to visit more knowledgeable authorities, so I have used some specific information in this chapter from ‘Wikipedia’.*

Many Chinese today, possibly most educated Chinese; consider Christianity the ‘Religion of the West’. This is largely because of their (communist) propaganda, which teaches them that Christianity is a religion of the West, which came riding on the backs of the Colonials and the merchants who treated China unjustly in the 19th century. Whatever they learn when they are young usually becomes ‘gospel’ (if you excuse the word!) for them as they become adults. To give you an example of this principle—

I was once invited as a foreign judge for an English-speaking contest at a Chinese university. One of the topics the students were to speak about was; ‘Who is my favorite person in history?’ Out of the 22 speeches on this topic, seven students, both male and female, chose ‘Madam Marie Curie,’ other high rankings were ‘my mother’ (3 people) and ‘my father’ (2 people), and Alexander the Great got in there also with two I think!

I was interested why Marie Curie received such attention. Later the senior English professor, who is Chinese, yet speaks excellent English, more or less debunked this whole topic, and in his closing notes that evening said;

‘Students, it is not suitable that so many of you chose Madam Curie; this is because in your Middle Schools she is one of the main characters of western civilization we study, so many of you chose that in order to make your research simple and easy! You should learn to look deeper, do more research and come up with more innovative ways of expressing what you feel. **Above all be honest!** I know most of you don’t think Madam Curie was the greatest character in history. So for starters you are not being honest! This is why I marked you so low on your presentation.’

Well, there you are, the influence of Chinese middle and lower schooling!

And so it is with ‘Christianity’. Chinese have been taught in their still Marxist-dominated textbooks that the

‘Big C’ was ‘The Religion of the West’ and a ‘Tool of Imperialism.’

I notice, and find myself also doing it, that we humans love to generalize, and somehow we think that the generalization or theory we speak, if we speak it often enough, becomes true. Like Evolution for example; Evolution has now been debunked so many times and so many honest scientists have abandoned it in droves, that they are at least searching for other theories of how we got here, yet evolution is still taught the world over as ‘gospel’ (‘scuse that word again!) and ‘so many hundreds of millions of years ago blah blah blah’. We hear it all the time, we just accept it. The day of being outraged by it is long gone.

As Hitler suggested, if you want to lie and have people believe your lie, make sure you tell one lie SO BIG and SO OFTEN, that the common person would not think you could possibly dare to tell such a lie and therefore it must be true! Thank you, Adolf and he certainly did seem to practice what he believed, along with, by the way, if you didn’t catch it the first time, the ‘survival of the fittest’.

Now, I would appreciate it if you would please allow me to digress further before we return to China. Thank you.

While on the one hand, Science or secular History praises the greatest scientists, physicists, engineers, discoverers, inventors, mathematicians, presidents, educators and innovators etc. of the past 500 or more years, it often conveniently likes to gloss over the fact that many of the main ones who we have come to regard as truly great (in the Western world) , such as some of those listed below, were, in fact all Christians or deep believers in God, and they talked about it openly as well.

Here are just a few of the many *hundreds of thousands* in European and North American history!

1. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (English author and playwright 1564-1616)

"I, William Shakespeare, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warrick, gentleman in perfect health and memory. God be praised, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following, that is to say, first, I commend my soul into the hands of God, my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ, my Savior, to be made partaker of life everlasting, and my body to the Earth whereof it is made."

2. NAPOLEON BONAPARTE (French Emperor 176(8)9 -1821)

I marvel that whereas the ambitious dreams of myself, Caesar, and Alexander should have vanished into thin air, a Judean peasant--Jesus--should be able to stretch His hands across the centuries and control the destinies of men and nations.

The Bible contains a complete series of facts and of historical men, to explain time and eternity, such as no other religion has to offer. ... What happiness that Book procures for those who believe it! What marvels those admire there who reflect upon it!"

3. GENERAL JOHN PERSHING (American Army General 1860-1948)

We are told that in one of his speeches to the soldiers of the first World War, General Pershing said: "I have known Jesus Christ now for 47 years, and I could not face life without Him. It is no small thing to know that all the past is forgiven, that help is available from God every day." Then continued the stalwart general: "I commend such a Savior to you."

4. CHARLEMAGNE (King of the Franks A.D 742 (or 747) –814)

Charlemagne gave instructions that when he died he should be buried seated in the royal posture of a ruling monarch on a throne. Then he directed that the Gospels should be laid on his knees, his sword beside him, the imperial crown on his head, and the royal mantle on his shoulders. And thus his body remained for 180 years.

About 1,000 A.D. the tomb was opened by the Emperor Otho. They found the skeleton of Charlemagne, dissolved and dismembered into various hideous postures. The skull was still wearing the crown. And the bony finger of the skeleton was pointing to the verse of Scripture, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

The various relics were collected and used in the coronation of the Emperors of Germany to signify

their greatness and succession from Charlemagne.

5. PATRICK HENRY (American Revolutionary 1736-1799)

"I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could give them and that is faith in Jesus Christ. If they had that and I had not given them one shilling, they would have been rich: and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor indeed."

6. SIR JAMES YOUNG SIMPSON (Scottish, discovered properties of Chloroform, 1811-1870)

In the year 1847, a doctor from Edinburgh, Sir James Simpson, discovered that chloroform could be used as an anesthetic to render people insensible to the pain of surgery. From his early experiments, Dr. Simpson made it possible for people to go through the most dangerous operations without fear of pain and suffering. Some people even claim that his was one of the most significant discoveries of modern medicine.

Some years later, while lecturing at the University of Edinburgh, Dr. Simpson was asked by one of his students, "What do you consider to be the most valuable discovery of your lifetime?"

To the surprise of his students, who had expected him to refer to chloroform, Dr. Simpson replied, "MY MOST VALUABLE discovery was when I discovered myself a sinner and that Jesus Christ was my Savior."

7. ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879-1955)

"The need of the World is to listen to God."

and "Science without religion is lame."

8. WILLIAM GLADSTONE (British Prime Minister 1809-1898)

"There is but one question of the hour: How to bring the Truth of God's Word into vital contact with the minds and hearts of all classes of people."

9. CHARLES DICKENS (Victorian author 1812-1870)

"The New Testament is the best Book the World has ever known or will know."

10. H.G.WELLS (visionary author 1866-1946)

"Christ is the most unique Person in History. No man can write a history of the human race without giving first and foremost place to the penniless Teacher of Nazareth."

11. SIR ISAAC NEWTON (English mathematician, physicist and astronomer 1643-1727)

"I account the Scriptures of God the most sublime philosophy."

And

"I can take my telescope and look millions and millions of miles into space; but I can lay my telescope aside, go into my room and shut the door, get down on my knees in earnest prayer, and I see more of Heaven and get closer to God than I can when assisted by all the telescopes and material agencies on earth."

12. GOETHE (1749-1832)

(‘The universal and most highly cultivated of poets’)--"I consider the Gospels to be thoroughly genuine; for in them there is the effective reflection of a sublimity which emanated from the Person of Christ: And this is as Divine as ever the Divine appeared on Earth."

13. GEORGE WASHINGTON (First U.S President 1732-1799)

It will surprise you and touch your heart when you see it--the epitaph on the gravestone of George Washington. As you approach the grave, you may imagine that it will take a big stone to mark properly the resting place of this tremendous man. And on that stone you will expect many striking truths concerning this giant of history. He was the Commanding General of the Continental Armies, the First President of the United States, and the Father of his Country. But you will likely be a little awed when at last you look down upon the small, plain stone that marks his grave. On that stone is engraved the name George Washington, the date of his birth and the date of his death. And at the bottom of the stone are these words:

"Jesus said, I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

14. JEAN JAQUES ROUSSEAU (Philosopher from Geneva 1712-1778)

“The majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Pursue the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures.”

15. WILLIAM LYON PHELPS (1865-1943)

(Called the most beloved professor in America--of Yale University)--"I thoroughly believe in university education for both men and women, but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible.”

16. ROCKEFELLER, John D. Sr. (American financier and multi-millionaire. 1839-1937)

One of the richest men in history in his generation!

“Yes, I tithe, and I would like to tell you how it all came about. I had to begin work as a small boy to help support my mother. My first wages amounted to \$1.50 per week. The first week after I went to work. I took the \$1.50 home to my mother and she held the money in her lap and explained to me that she would be happy if I would give a tenth of it to the Lord. (*this act is called ‘tithing’ in the Christian world.*)

I did, and from that week until this day I have tithed every dollar God has entrusted to me. And I want to say, if I had not tithed the first dollar I made I would not have tithed the first million dollars I made. Tell your readers to train the children to tithe, and they will grow up to be faithful stewards of the Lord.”

17. DR. LOUIS PASTEUR (French Chemist and notable for his work in Microbiology 1822-1895)

“The more I study nature, the more I am amazed at the work of the Creator”

18. WILLIAM WILBERFORCE (1759-1833)

English Member of Parliament who fought for the abolition of slavery across the British Empire. He finally succeeded after decades of struggle and opposition and died three days after a law (Emancipation Act) was passed by the British Parliament abolishing slavery throughout the (British) Empire.

“God Almighty has set before me ... the suppression of the slave trade.”

Well, back to middle school in China. Yes, the ‘God of the West’ and ‘Western Culture’, is basically how it can all be summed up. In fact nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus Christ himself was a Jew, an Asian geographically, but also a Jew.

So, all that long-winded stuff is to try and prove to you that Chinese believe that Christianity is a western religion.

Christianity in Chinese history – a simple summary

The facts (historical and archeological) are that Christianity has been in China from as early as the 7th century A.D and probably well before.

Middle –Eastern Christian traders had undoubtedly shared their faith in China in the first centuries of the Church, since there is much evidence of trade between China and the Roman Empire.

There is also historical evidence of migrating Christians and their families fleeing persecution in Persia in the early seventh century AD. A few of these records have survived in China. Undoubtedly these people shared their faith in the areas of western and northwestern China.

Apart from that early date, there are specific records, written and archeological that (Nestorian, also sometimes referred to as ‘The Church of the East’) Christians, were influencing the Tang Emperor as early as 636 A.D, and, apart from some persecutions when they (foreign missionaries) were expelled, (and many Chinese Christians killed) this influence is still here (in China) all the way up to the present day!

As far as we know, the first official contact between Christianity and China was not made until the beginning of the Tang Dynasty (A.D 618-907). According to the inscription of 1,780 Chinese characters on a stone tablet (Stele), which dates 781 and was unearthed in 1623, the initiator of this contact was a Syrian Nestorian Bishop called A-lou-ben (Alopen). He, with a number of others, came from, or through, Persia and arrived at the Chinese capital in 635, and thus their churches were called Da Qin Si, or, mistakenly, the

temples of Persia. Nestorian Christianity won support and toleration from the government.

According to the (stone) tablet, the Nestorian (Christian) community (in 635 A.D) gained great favor from the imperial Chinese authorities early on. "When the emperor heard their teachings," the stone relates, "he realized deeply that they spoke the truth." The emperor then issued a decree: "Proclaim the teachings everywhere for the salvation of the people. Aluoben, the man of great virtue from the Da Qin empire, came from a far land and arrived at the capital to present the teachings and images of his religion. His message is mysterious and wonderful beyond our understanding." Thereafter the teachings were translated into Chinese, and Christian communities (Monasteries) were established throughout Tang China.

According to the stele (Stone with engraved historical record), the first 150 years of these Christian missionaries in China constituted a period of great favor and success, though there was a temporary setback in 698 A.D when Buddhists hostile to the growing Christian success initiated a brief period of persecution.

By the first part of the eighth century, the Nestorians seem to have recovered from this setback and even improved their situation, according to the stele. During the reign of the Tang emperor Xuan-zong, a senior Tang general was ordered to attend the consecration of an important church in the vicinity of Changan (present-day Xian), referred to as the Five Saints Church. This occurred around A.D. 742. By the time of the inscription of the stele in 781, Nestorian Christianity in China may have been at its apogee (zenith).

(Courtesy; 'Jesus in Beijing' by David Aikman)

In fact only 10 years ago, in 1998 a western scholar called Palmer discovered the oldest known Chinese Christian church in China. Located some 50 miles south west of Xi'an. It dates back to the 8th century A.D. Here are some quotes from Mr. Palmer himself taken from the 'Da Qin Project':

"The Da Qin Project: Early Christianity in China"

Speech by Martin Palmer

Secretary General, Alliance of Religions and Conservation

"Let me summarize what we have. We have a site, which according to Chinese contemporary documents was built in 650 AD, the second church to be built in China. It is the only surviving one and thus the oldest surviving Church site. We have statues in a pagoda built in 781 AD and the statues have been tentatively dated to 800 AD. We have Syriac graffiti and a site orientated east to west. In other words, we have the most important Christian antiquarian site in China. What is more, we have this church and pagoda, this monastery, built within the sacred compound of the huge Lou Guan Tai Taoist complex. This was the Imperial Temple of the Tang dynasty and here the Christians were allowed to build a church. Indeed the Emperor must have given them the site. It is as if the Hare Krishnas were given a site beside Canterbury Cathedral, or Muslims were allowed to build a mosque in the grounds of the White House. It shows that the Church, far from being one amongst a number of strange western religions in Tang dynasty China, had a special place. This has revolutionized our understanding of the Church in China.

Yet it was this Church which brought the Gospel to China. We know that in 635, according to both Chinese dynastic records and the Church of the East stone in Xian, a bishop called Alopen arrived in China with the Gospel, icons and banners to proclaim Christianity. He brought with him books, which were to be translated for the Chinese. It was clearly a well-planned mission, for he was expected and given Imperial treatment and favour.

We have four of the books that Alopen brought, but in Chinese translations. Found in the early part of the {20th} century, they reveal the breadth of the Church of the East for the books come from different sections of the Church. It seems quite clear that the mission realized it was going to encounter a culture in which Buddhism, shamanism and some other forms of belief were central. It therefore drew together books that could speak to this multi-religious world.

The {Christian} sutras were translated in the Imperial Library. [The Emperor] studied The Way in his own Forbidden apartments, and being deeply convinced of its correctness and truth, he gave special orders for its propagation."

The text then quotes the imperial decree about this new religion, issued by the emperor in 638 A.D, which concludes, “This teaching is helpful to all creatures and beneficial to all men; so let it have free course throughout the Empire.”

We are then told that a monastery was built in the capital, a portrait of the emperor was hung in it, and 21 priests were ordained to serve there. When the Emperor Tai Zong died, he was succeeded by Gao Zong (650–683) who “allowed monasteries of the Luminous {Christian} Religion to be founded in every prefecture . . . and the law spread throughout the ten provinces. . . . Monasteries were built in many cities while every family enjoyed great blessings.”

The text goes on to describe how, between 698 and 712, first Buddhists in the East, then Taoists in the West slandered the new religion. But Christian leaders rose up to strengthen the church; under Emperors Xuan Zong (712–756), Su Zong (756–762) and Dai Zong (763–779) the church again flourished with royal favor. This section of the text then concludes with praise for the present emperor, De Zong (780–805). The blessings of that time are then enumerated, closing with “all these are the meritorious fruits of the power and working of our Luminous Religion.” ”

A Fruitful Path (taken from unknown author)

The path of Christianity was not smooth even under the imperial patronage of the seventh and eighth centuries. A resurgence of pro-Buddhist ideologies in the ninth century led to growing problems for Christians. An imperial edict of Emperor Wu Zong in 845 ordered Christian monks and nuns to “return to their secular life and cease to confuse our national customs and manners.”

Christianity began to wane, but we do not know at what rate. The Arabic writer Abu Sayd states that Christians were among the 120,000 people massacred at Canton (modern Guangzhou) in 878. As we have seen, the *Book of Praise* sutra was composed in the tenth century, and when manuscripts were being gathered for preservation in the cave at Dunhuang in 1036, some Christian scrolls were still to be found and thought worth preserving.

Farther north, near the present border of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, two Nestorian graveyards were discovered in 1885. Six hundred Nestorian tombs with crosses and Syriac inscriptions were discovered there, with dates ranging from 858 to 1342.

{The respected Japanese archaeologist} Saeki accumulates archaeological evidence from other parts of China as well. The presence of an influential Nestorian church in late thirteenth-century China is confirmed by numerous literary sources, including the journal of Bar Sauma (a Nestorian monk from northern China), the writings of the Western monk John of Montecorvino, and those of Marco Polo. It is now clear that between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, several Turkish tribes along the Silk Road and in northern China became predominantly Nestorian Christian, but it is uncertain whether this was due to the influence of Chinese missionaries or new missionary endeavors from the Middle East.

There were further official and unofficial attempts to bring Christianity or Catholicism into China throughout the centuries. In 1289, Franciscan friars from Europe arrived in China. For about a century they worked in parallel with the Nestorian Christians. The Franciscan mission collapsed in 1368, as the Ming Dynasty set out to abolish Christianity (Nestorian and Catholic) in China.

The first Jesuit attempt to reach China was made in 1552 by Francis Xavier, but he died the same year on the Chinese island of Shangchuan, without having reached the mainland. In 1582, Jesuits once again initiated mission work in China, introducing Western science, mathematics, and astronomy. One of these missionaries was Matteo Ricci.

In the early 18th century, the Chinese Rites controversy, a dispute within the Catholic Church, arose over whether Chinese folk religion rituals and offerings to the emperor constituted idolatry. The Pope ultimately ruled against tolerating the continuation of these practices among Chinese Catholic converts. Prior to this, the Jesuits had enjoyed considerable influence at court, but with the issuing of the papal bull, the emperor circulated edicts banning Christianity.

(Courtesy Wikipedia)

The Modern Missionary Era in China.
(1840-1949 and up to the present day.)

During the waning power of the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), foreign powers invaded China in the 19th century. On the backs of each of these powers, controlled certainly by their desire for exploiting China of whatever she had to give, and offering little in return, were the British, French, Dutch, German, Russian, Japanese and other merchants. However along with the unscrupulous merchants came also the philanthropic and concerned -- and the Christian Missionary.

The 'misguided missionary', some might say, but nevertheless historically 'ever-present'. The unequal treaties of the 1840's between these foreign powers and China gave missionaries free access to vast parts of China for the first time since the 8th Century.

One such missionary was the (British) Yorkshire man Hudson Taylor, who has been variously described as:

'It is estimated that Taylor was responsible for more people being converted to Christianity than at any other time since Paul the Apostle brought Christian teaching to Europe.'

'The missionary Hudson Taylor has been called one of the significant figures in Chinese history in the 1800s'

"Hudson Taylor was, ...one of the greatest missionaries of all time, and ... one of the four or five most influential foreigners who came to China in the nineteenth century for any purpose..." - Kenneth Scott Latourette

'The organization which Taylor founded, The China Inland Mission was the largest mission agency in China at that time.'

*The century from 1842 to 1949 was marked by many achievements of Christianity in China. Re-entering China under the flag of the imperial powers, Christianity was once again free to propagate throughout the entire country. Devout and faithful Christian communities were to be found everywhere, together with an extensive network of churches and a vast array of charitable and social works, educational programs and medical ministries to meet every need. Yet, the Church's position in China was not secure. Due to its association with the Imperial Powers and the several Unequal Treaties forced upon China by the western powers, Christianity in China remained under a dark cloud of suspicion. Many Chinese, their sense of sovereignty deeply wounded, continued to hinder the Christian missionary enterprise. ('Courtesy; 'Jesus in Beijing' by David Aikman)

Chronologically, we now come to the famous Tai Ping revolution (Rebellion) beginning in 1851 and beyond! I do encourage you to read more about this unique revolution in Chinese History. I will include more in the section following a few pages later called 'Famous Christians in China.' Basically, the TaiPing rebellion was the fruit of the conversion of a Hakka Chinese. Today the Hakka are largely found in Guangdong province and many Chinese communities abroad. Although there may be, in fact, many more loose cannon computer 'Hackers' both throughout China and around the world!

Converted by foreign missionaries, Hong Xiuquan the leader of the TaiPing Rebellion, added elements of his own revelations to form an army and parallel government that seriously threatened the Qing dynasty. (See story later)

The opening of the twentieth century ushered in what has been called Christianity's Golden age in China. It was a period of transition for both the church and the nation. China moved from Qing dynastic rule to a warlord-dominated republic to a united front of the Guomindang and Chinese Communist party in league against warlords and imperialism. Christianity enjoyed unprecedented popularity for two decades. Variety within the Protestant community increased; conservative, evangelical societies strengthened their presence; the social gospel approach gained momentum, and Chinese formed their own faith sects and autonomous churches.

Reaction to the failures of nineteenth century reform movements and to international humiliation subsequent to the Boxer Uprising helped create a readiness for change in China. Many Chinese assumed that to modernize, China would have to import and adapt from the West. Since missionaries contended that Western progress derived from its Christian heritage, Christianity gained new favour. The missionaries, their writings and Christian schools were accessible sources of information; parochial schools filled to overflowing. Church membership expanded and Christian movements like the YMCA and YWCA became popular.

The number of Protestant missionaries had surpassed 8000 by 1925 and in the process, the nature of the community had altered. Estimates for the Chinese Protestant community ranged around 500,000.

(Courtesy Wikipedia)

The century between 1840 and 1949 can perhaps be called the ‘Golden Century’ of Christianity in China. Perhaps some of you may be thinking; ‘well, what about when the Communists took over?’ The answer is that in-depth studies of Christianity during this time show conclusively that, far from being diminished, Christianity grew by leaps and bounds since 1949! The communist Government expelled all foreign missionaries during this time, and the many Chinese converts were left to fend for themselves. However this state of affairs produced perhaps one of the most exciting phases of Christianity in China.

Through much severe persecution and slaughters of Chinese Christians during the time after 1949, we find a situation where the church in China grew enormously. Through ‘underground’ means, which meant defying government bans on assembly, and meeting in forests, farms, and private houses, evangelism of the Chinese by the Chinese exploded in a wave of personal sharing of their religion.

Underground organizations sprung up primarily across Rural China, and were led by dynamic individuals. Despite some problems in unity, for the most part they were able to focus on their goals of ‘spreading the gospel’. These ‘Founding Chinese Fathers’ (and some ‘Mothers’) are endearingly referred to by the Christian Chinese as ‘Uncles’. Almost without exception, each one of these many individuals spent considerable time (as in, in some cases, **decades**) in labor camps across China. Consequently through careful organization and attention to security and in many cases, claims of great miracles and healings, the Chinese underground church grew to somewhere possibly around 180 million today.

Persecution has always been not only the ‘blood of the martyrs’, but the ‘seed of the church’ as well!’

‘So what and big deal’ you may say!

Well, actually, it may be a bigger deal than you think and for various reasons, and I will get to those reasons shortly.

Famous Christians in China.

By this we mean Chinese people.

Like Western Civilization, some of the most influential people in Chinese history were in fact—yes, Christians. Out-proportioning their small numbers in the Chinese constellation, sincere believers appeared at pivotal times in Chinese history thus influencing their country greatly. Their influence it can be said was usually, although not entirely, beneficial. It may surprise you that there are hundreds of them to choose from, and it’s been difficult to even just pick out the ones below. I have chosen several major ‘good’ ones and one who we can describe as dubious or slightly heretic. Life would not be complete without a few heretics, would it?

Lets take a look at just a few:

1. Sun Yat Sen. 孫中山 and also 孫逸仙 (November 12, 1866 – March 12, 1925) Perhaps the best individual to begin with is the Founding Father himself of the Republic of China; we know him in the west as Dr. Sun Yat Sen but the Chinese refer to him as Sun Zhong Shan, (孫中山) and he is still greatly revered today, both on the Mainland and in Taiwan.

His mausoleum can still be seen in NanJing, capital of Jiangsu Province and possibly hundreds of thousands of Chinese pilgrimage there yearly, or to his native haunt in Guangdong province. Most Chinese cities and towns have a ‘Zhongshan Lu. (road)’



Sun Yat Sen became a Christian in the early 1880's while still a very young man. Without going into too much detail, this happened in Honolulu Hawaii, where he had gone to study, under the patronage of his rich older brother. As his life progressed, so also did his belief in Christianity, and exerted an enormous influence on his life, decisions and policies. Basically, Sun Yat Sen is regarded as the Father of Modern China, and established some key points and theories to guide the newly born Chinese Republic. These points were: 'The Three principles of the people.' (How the Chinese love numbers!) His visionary thinking endeared him to many Chinese and one of his ultimate goals was to proceed from his theories into the very Christian goals of 'peace, freedom and equality'.*

* It's more likely that Sun Yat Sen had less violent tendencies than other revolutions, which may have embraced similar words or theories.

2 Soong May-Ling 宋美玲(1897-2003), yes she lived to be 105! –

(The wife of Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek), leader of Chinese Nationalist forces and later the first president of the Republic of China (Taiwan))

Lovely Soong May Ling, one of the many daughters of Charlie Soong, who was a Christian and a prominent businessman in Shanghai. May Ling was educated in the United States. She was possibly one of China's most well known female Christians, as well as an astute politician and pretty devoted wife.

She achieved great popularity in both America and Taiwan, and is still loved by many Chinese around the world.

Madame Chiang initiated the New Life Movement and became actively engaged in Chinese politics. She was a member of the Legislative Yuan from 1930 to 1932 and Secretary-General of the Chinese Aeronautical Affairs Commission from 1936 to 1938. In 1945 she became a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang. As her husband rose to become Generalissimo and leader of the Kuomintang. Madame Chiang acted as his English translator, secretary and advisor. During World War II, Madame Chiang tried to promote the Chinese cause and build a legacy for her husband on par with Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Well versed in both Chinese and western culture, she became popular both in China and abroad. Her prominence led Joseph Stilwell to quip that she ought to be appointed minister of defense (of the U.S!).

*In the United States, she drew crowds as large as 30,000 people and made the cover of TIME magazine, first with her husband as "Man and Wife of the Year" and second under the title "Dragon Lady." Both husband and wife were on good terms with Time Magazine senior editor and co-founder Henry Luce, who frequently tried to rally money and support from the American public for the Kuomintang. **On February 18, 1943, she became the first Chinese national and second woman to address the U.S. Congress. (courtesy Wikipedia)***

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soong_May-ling

3. John Sung

John Sung Shang Chieh (宋尚節, Pinyin: Song Shangjie; also spelled **John Song**) (September 29, 1901 – August 18, 1944) was a renowned evangelist. He played an instrumental role in the revival movement

among the Chinese in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia during the 1920s and 1930s. Born in Fujian province and yet educated in America. His father was Christian Pastor. In 1927, he claimed to have some type of emphatic religious experience, and abandoned several outstanding career possibilities in the U.S to become a modern day evangelist in China and SE Asia. His ministry is credited with converting more than 100,000 Chinese to Christianity.

4. Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee (倪柝聲 pinyin: Ní Tuòshēng; 1903-1972) became a Christian in 1920 at the age of 17 and began writing in the same year. In 1921, he met the British missionary M. E. Barber, who was a great influence on him. Through Miss Barber, Nee was introduced to many of the Christian writings which were to have a profound influence on him and his teachings. (courtesy Wikipedia)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watchman_Nee

Watchman Nee is possibly the most well known Chinese Christian outside China, due to his prolific ability to write and thus pass on his lessons of Scripture. He, along with other Chinese colleagues helped to establish many local assemblies, which eventually formed a part of the base of today's 'underground' work in China. His writings also made him well sought after by many Chinese, and remain an inspiration to many Christians today worldwide. He was imprisoned by the Chinese government in 1952 and, in fact, remained there until he died in 1972. He thus joined the ranks of hundreds of other Chinese Christian leaders, many of whom also spent decades in labor camps or prisons across China. This imprisonment though, has in fact elevated him to almost cult status among many Christians today.

5. Hong Xiuquan The leader of the Taiping Revolution.

Hong Xiuquan, was a Hakka Chinese who was greatly influenced by Christian articles given him by a Protestant missionary around the year 1842. It must be said, that in his condition at the time he met this Missionary, he was a discouraged young man, having failed to pass his exams, which would have set him up for life in the Chinese civil service and thus a cushy job would have been his in all probability.

After this initial encounter, Hong had several dreams and personal 'revelations' through which he came to regard himself as Christ's younger brother. He met his 'elder brother' Christ in dreams who apparently taught him how to slay evil with a special sword. He eventually interpreted these mystical encounters as portraying his destiny to overthrow evil (in China) and become the leader of a new Heavenly Kingdom. Hong Xiuquan is therefore regarded as heretical in mainstream Christianity today. He even later developed a third book of his own writings, which was given to those of his society to read along with the Old and New Testaments.

Together with another friend whose religious leanings were far more dubious, his sidekick, Yang Xiuqing, they developed an army and a seriously new civil society called the 'TaiPing TianGuo' or 'The Great Peace Heavenly Kingdom'.

This revolt against the 'evil' of China's dynastic rule was very attractive to many, and soon hundreds of thousands of disaffected young Chinese (male and female) joined the ranks of his army, which soon controlled a very sizeable chunk of the south of China. Warring with Imperial forces put the death toll among Chinese during this 1850-1865 period at 20 million all told! The Taiping Rebellion is truly one of the bloodiest periods of Chinese history and perhaps the second largest conflict in human history! (Ranking behind World War II).

Nevertheless the Taiping Rebellion stands as the second bloodiest conflict in history, greater than World War I and behind only World War II. It happened at roughly the same time as the American Civil War. Artifacts from the Taiping period can be seen at the Taiping Kingdom History Museum in Nanjing, China.

The rebellion's army was its key strength. It was marked by a high level of discipline and fanaticism. They typically wore a uniform of red jackets with blue trousers and grew their hair long — in Chinese they were known as Chángmáo (長毛, meaning "long hair"). The large numbers of women serving in the Taiping Heavenly Army also distinguished it from 19th century armies.

Combat was always bloody and extremely brutal, with little artillery but huge forces equipped with small arms. By 1856, the Taiping armies numbered just over 1 million. Their main strategy of conquest was to

take major cities, consolidate their hold on the cities, then march out into the surrounding countryside to battle Imperial forces. Although most modern estimates never put the Taiping Heavenly Army as numbering much more than a million in total, contemporary estimates placed its numbers far higher — indeed it was said that the main Taiping Armies in central China in 1860 numbered 2.5 million. If this figure were accepted as accurate (which it most likely is not), it would imply a total of 3 million soldiers or more.

Within the land that they controlled, the Taiping Heavenly Army established a theocratic and highly militarised rule.

- The subject of study for the examinations for officials (formerly civil service exams) changed from the Confucian classics to the Christian Bible.
- Private property ownership was abolished and all land was held and distributed by the state.
- A solar calendar replaced the lunar calendar.
- The society was declared classless and the sexes were declared equal. **It was the first Chinese regime ever to admit women into examinations.**
- Foot binding was banned.
- Monogamy was promoted.

Other new laws were promulgated including the prohibition of opium, gambling, tobacco, alcohol, polygamy (including concubinage), slavery, and prostitution.

(Courtesy Wikipedia)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Xiuquan

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion

So we can see from the above list that the old Taiping folks certainly had at least a few admirable ideas, based on their teachings, which were still largely Christian based, hence we have included Mr. Hong here in this list.

In fact, as in the Bible and also Christian History, it seems that this is the way things work; there are usually a few deep and powerful individuals who represent the ‘truths’ of the message of their faith who appear like stars in the firmament, and men and nations look to them. These individuals then exercise profound generation-changing effects on their nation or in many cases the whole world.

Such examples are extremely common in Europe, e.g. (Martin) Luther, Tyndale, Knox, Calvin, Savanorola, George Muller, D.L. Moody, Hudson Taylor, Rasputin (!), Zwingli, Wilberforce, Gladstone., etc,

Indian versions would include: Mother Theresa and Mahatma Gandhi (who was a quasi-secret believer in Christ, and some people believe this is a major reason why he was assassinated by those perennial Hindu extremists).

Biblical examples would include Abraham, Joseph, and Daniel etc.

How many Christians in China?

It has been realistically calculated that at the present time there are between at least 70-80 million ‘active’ Christians in China, or about 5-6% of the population! This would be almost on a par with another major Asian nation, India for example, which has around 8-9% of its population professing Christianity despite much persecution and regular beatings/killings/lynching/burnings of Christians in some areas.

The truth is that no one knows, and China hasn’t yet reached that part of the census stage of her people. But if one day such a census would be freely and carefully, as well as safely calculated, we may well find the number to be significantly higher. For example:

Recently the ‘China Daily’ {newspaper} has put the combined total of Christians in China at 200 million, nearly three times the membership of the communist party!

When you add to this, the very high percentages of Chinese who have gone to live, study and work abroad

and have the genuine freedom to choose and freely practice a religion, you will find that there are enormous 'quantities' of Chinese in Europe and North America and other developed and developing nations who have become Christians in recent years. Why is this? Part of the answer can be found in the section in the following pages below called: 'A few Dumb Europeans and the Smart Chinese.' There are other reasons, depending on your own faith, one of which could also be explained, if you are a believer, in the fact that the Christian world outside China has been praying for the 'conversion' of China for a very long time.

The magazine Christianity Today, brought out that demographers estimate that an average 200,000 Chinese people convert to Christianity every year, meaning that Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the nation, and has overtaken the Communist Party's of 70 million people. **This figure also makes China the fastest growing Christian nation on the planet.**

Other answers about why many Chinese are embracing this religion include the 'Principle Of Appreciation,' which I have just invented as a name for it! Or as the wise King Solomon said:

The full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Proverbs 27:7 (Proverbs is a book in the Bible)

In other words, when you have lived in 'darkness', had no freedom, been slaves, abused, tortured, experienced great injustices, been deprived and humiliated, been poor, mistreated and maligned, struggled for every penny or Yuan, and couldn't see any 'light' at the end of your 'tunnel', then you would surely know a 'good deal' when you see one, wouldn't you?

Conversely, we who are in the so-called developed world who have 'everything,' that we have taken it for granted and even cast it aside and despise the freedoms we enjoy, presumptuously thinking they will be there forever; we feel superior, confident, powerful, we complain about our 'blessings' and (comparative) abundances and the inward thought of our mind is that our 'house(s)' will continue forever', then to us, my friend, we may qualify for the first part of the description of the quotation above which talks about the honeycomb!

So is it any wonder that a religion which offers freedom, equality and even the keys to material supply and riches, not to mention spiritual wealth for eternity should **not** be accepted among the many (spiritually) hungry Chinese!? And this is perhaps the very best place to interject this fascinating piece, which I have titled:

"A few Dumb Europeans and the Smart Chinese."

Thank you for your kind attention to these amazing facts. It actually happened!

One thing I do like about the Chinese is that if you truly give them enough time and thought they may very well come up with the correct answer. Well, let's not be too kind, but I find the following very interesting. Some years ago to my knowledge and do correct me if I am wrong, the Europeans came up with a new ruling document for the EC, what they wished to be their Constitution or Charter for the future European society. (This was debated around 2000 A.D). As well as a Charter, it was also to be a type of 'History of Europe', which would be their official position of their own history. I am not aware of the exact name of this document, but the main thing that annoyed a lot of Europeans was that there was no reference to 'God' and 'Christianity' as the forming, molding force of European history. In an official 'post God' Europe, the wise men (sorry, and women) of Brussels and elsewhere have moved on and left Him behind. Who's 'Him', anyway? Whatever.

In the hotbeds of secular humanism which are now rampant in certain parts of Europe, The Almighty and His bit men and women didn't get any mention in the credits as not even one of the shaping forces of Europe.* Strange really, when you could list heaps of influences and manifestations of Christian thought and philosophy and institutions, buildings, organizations, schools of every type, universities, colleges, legal institutions and legal thought, (a great deal of which originated from the Judeo-Christian faith), hospitals, charities, both in Europe and exported outside her borders over the Millennia throughout such a great continent. Europe is just full of it.

So, Europe 10 God nil, and 'There are none so blind **as those who will not (refuse to) see!'

It reminds me of the joke on the toilet wall. Someone had written with great enthusiasm, 'GOD IS DEAD' signing it 'Nietzsche', the famous (Prussian) German philosopher, (who, it is rumored, died barking,

thinking he was a dog). Someone, coming in later and seeing this writing, crossed it out and wrote underneath 'Nietzsche is dead', 'God!'

A few short years previous to this very recent European commission on Europe, the Chinese had their own version of it. It went something very similar to this:

The Chinese Government was genuinely concerned WHY Western Civilization had for so long been powerful, dominant and successful, prosperous, and flourishing in every way, arts, good economies, pioneering the world, Colonialism, (oh my God, the C word!), the abundance of good schools and hospitals and medical facilities, great Universities and the Sciences of all kinds still strong. Then there was the 'rule of law,' of course; something totally alien to the Chinese concept of the rule of law! Compared to all that, China looked like an intellectual backwater or sewer with the emphasis on backwater and sewer! So the Beijing Government commissioned some high level academics from a prestigious University to research the reasons and the foundations of *what* it was that had made Europe and North America and the rest of the West great. After all, in the logical Chinese mind, there has to be a reason, right? Was China doing something wrong? Was there a better way, and if so, what was it? This little known study, little known for obvious reasons, turned up a remarkable answer.

The Chinese Professors and Academics who conducted their research, originally delved into two things: Political Thought and systems and Economics. Their minds intuitively telling them that it must be one or both of the two. They looked at democratic thought and reform and political systems foreign to the Chinese. Apart from this, they studied economic planning and policies of various western nations. However nothing came up that really was convincing that the West had the edge over the Chinese. It wasn't until they realized they were not looking deep enough, and in looking at the politics and the economies they were actually only looking above ground and not at the roots. These researchers all came conclusively to the fact that it was actually the Christian religion of Europe, and the West that had produced all the other 'fruits' and outward 'branches' of growth, peace, and prosperity, advanced educational systems and the emphasis on medical and legal systems for the most part. I can hear cries and groans from some of you over there in the West right now, but I am just telling you what my dear logical and scientific friends, the Chinese discovered.

In fact, so convinced were they that these research findings were true, that a significant number of them decided to become Christians overnight and still are today! Some of the most brilliant Chinese minds available for this research turned up the most simple of answers—it was just the Christian faith in God of many (Western) people in the past which inspired them and their countries to do, produce, design, pioneer, innovate, rule, serve and be successful!

So Christianity or belief in the One True God (Shang Di) is alive and flourishing on present Mainland China. It may still have a considerable way to go to reach the goals laid out in its Holy Book, but through the sacrifices and deaths and sufferings of many people, it has certainly taken a deep root in the Middle Kingdom.

*June 18 2004 in Brussels, officials agreed on the final text of the European Union's new Constitution. The charter made no mention of God, despite calls that it recognize Europe's Christian roots.

The Catholic Pope around the time the debates were raging had this to say:

Pope John Paul II. In a speech to the Vatican diplomatic corps on Jan. 13, 2003, "A Europe which disavowed its past, which denied the fact of religion, and which had no spiritual dimension would be extremely impoverished in the face of the ambitious project which calls upon all its energies: constructing a Europe for *all!*"

{The new European Constitution} "pretends to be more enlightening whilst it obscures the past" (De Groene Amsterdammer, April 5, 2003).

Today, just 21% of Europeans say religion is "very important" to them, according to the most recent European Values Study, which tracks attitudes in 32 European countries. A survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that nearly three times as many Americans, 59%, called their faith "very important."

** the definition of **blind** is:

1É without the power of sight; unable to see; sightless

Đ2É of or for sightless persons

Đ3É not able or willing to notice, understand, or judge

Đ4É done without adequate directions or knowledge [a *blind* search]

Đ5É disregarding evidence, sound logic, etc. [*blind* love, *blind* faith]

Đ6É reckless; unreasonable

Ð7É out of sight; hard to see; hidden [a *blind* driveway]
Ð8É dense; impenetrable [a *blind* hedge]
Ð9É closed at one end [a *blind* duct]
Ð10É not controlled by intelligence [*blind* destiny]
Ð11É i a) insensible b) [Slang] drunk

The future situation - What it all means for China?

We must now leave behind the lamentable situation of present day ‘blind’ European and French leaders and pseudo Charter makers in their intellectual hot beds, and return to the main point of this final chapter. We can say with somewhat accuracy that China is becoming a Christian nation, albeit slowly. But what type of Christian nation? Is it the type of politically 2000 A.D. plus American model that Muslims around the world fear and hate? Is it the conservative neo-con, ‘search and destroy the axis of evil’ of the recent past? No.

What does it *really* mean then, that China is *becoming* Christian?

The Chinese model will not be like its American counterpart, much to the relief of most of us! The Chinese are a more quieter and thoughtful race perhaps, in this respect.

There are many thousands of Chinese businessmen and women, who are now Christians; there are many thousands of University students and graduates, many of whom are becoming the following:

Lawyers

Doctors

Business Leaders

Entrepreneurs

Teachers

Architects

Scientists

Nurses

Company Directors

Administrators of various levels in Government offices

Also many returning more open-minded Chinese students from abroad who became Christians

All these types of people are going to become the grassroots of a future civil society that the West has long been pushing for incrementally. These people are smart, they are the movers and shakers, and know how to organize themselves and galvanize action. Whether they meet in ‘above ground’ official churches or continue for the most part ‘underground’, (as in the present climate), they will be a force for social change across the nation, no doubt! And given their increasing influence, it will seem only a matter of time before, like the Roman Empire of old, China will move from the persecuting Christians mode into itself becoming more widely Christian in all strata of society. Well, that’s the euphoric picture for some! But there are a few severe hindrances to this dream and prayer of many Chinese Christians. Probably one of the most severe is the coming of the Beast, I mean Mammon, actually I mean the adjustment in China from a poor agrarian society into an ‘I love money and things and Babylon and let the devil take the hindmost’ attitude. As we see from the West and as Marx more or less said, ‘Capitalism defeats itself.’ So one of the greatest dangers to Chinese Christianity is the encroaching march of materialism, which suffocates faith and blurs the vision of Christian thought into a selfish ‘me first’ easily defended pragmatism! China is certainly going that way. No one can serve two Masters. And this has always been one danger people of faith have faced. Whichever way the Chinese Christian goes, remains to be seen. Judging from their success in Indonesia, Philippines and other SEA countries, it seems the Chinese are well able to handle both riches and faith at the same time, and come out on top in both ball games!

So we see it’s entirely possible that Christianity in China will profoundly influence civil society, political thought and domestic and foreign policy, in time. This is something unheard of and unimaginable, just an incredibly short time ago!

Being bright, energetic, zealous and ambitious, it shouldn't surprise us that the Chinese Christians, as an entity, have a general goal of world evangelism. This itself could prove a fascinating chapter, and I can't divulge this information in this book, but it is certainly well organized and funded.

All this information and spectacular growth of Christianity over the last decades and right in its own mainland backyard, has, of course, not gone entirely unnoticed by the Central Government.

It seems slowly the mood has swung in various parts of the government or is swinging, to a 'if you can't beat them, then accept them' attitude. This may be the trend, although it's still not crystal clear, and, given the various mood swings by Beijing, could change again for the worse if the change suited a greater purpose. Anyway, as things stand, the continued growth of the Chinese Christian church looks assured for the present time.

In one of his last appearances on the political stage at a private function as Party Chairman, the revered **Jiang Ze Ming** 江泽民, was asked if he had any parting words of advice. Expecting some profound political thought from the man who gave China 'The Theory of the Three Represents', people were therefore taken aback when he quipped with a huge smile; 'I would make Christianity the official Religion of China'.

So even the Chairman-Emperor himself was admitting, as he stepped off the political stage, in whatever context he meant it, that something new was happening in his ancient land. Perhaps if he really knew it, he would see that perhaps the Chinese are in fact beginning to return to their truly ancient roots.