

**“The Historical Relationship between China and Christianity:
How Suppression Has Actually Encouraged Religious Growth in the PRC”**

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Christianity in the Modern World

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I have chosen to confront the historical and current situation regarding Christianity and its relationship to Communist China. My intent was to begin by giving a brief history. However, a brief history of this particular relationship is not possible to accomplish my goal in this instance. This subject is so deep and intricate that it can only be offered in depth in order to address my questions properly. Following this necessary in-depth history, I intend to convey the recent circumstances which have driven many Chinese citizens towards a religious affiliation. More explicitly I will suggest a plausible explanation as to why Christianity is outpacing all of the other traditional religions, such as the recent tendency to lean towards Western influences rather than traditional Chinese ones because of dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. In closing I will answer the question of why members of the People's Republic of China have turned to the Christian religion specifically although there are several other options available.

The historical relationship between China and Christianity has been one of extreme adversity. The most fundamental problem for Christianity and its existence in China is that it is a religion where one answers to God first and government second. Because "religion has always been regulated by the state"¹, and the Chinese tradition is one where "the government is the master" and "religion is the follower"²; a tradition of anti-Christianity has reportedly existed as far back as the early seventeenth century³. More recently there are many contributing factors to this tradition of disapproval of Christianity in China, such as "the attitude of

¹ Merle Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (January 1986): 147.

² Richard Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 4 (2010): 66.

³ Paul A. Cohen, "The Anti-Christian Tradition in China," *The Journal Of Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (February 1961): 170.

indifference of the Peace Conference to the problems of the Far East and of China”, and “the lack of recognition by the League of Nations given to China”⁴. A strong “national feeling in China”⁵ during the nineteenth century caused “the vast majority of the educated classes” to “either passively or actively” reject religions altogether⁶. According to Cohen, professor of history emeritus at Wellesley College and associate at the Harvard Fairbank Center, expressions of hostility were exposed by creating and distributing inflammatory anti-Christian literature and “issuing threats of retaliation against any who dared enter the religion”.⁷ When the Chinese Communist Party came to power, just as its ideology advocated, it “regarded missionaries as the most invidious representatives of the Western imperialism that had humiliated China.”⁸ This impression of insult stemmed from the lack of recognition that China received from the League of Nations following World War I. China’s contribution was offered in good faith that the Shandong Province would be returned to China following the war, but their request was basically ignored during the Peace Conferences. Despite assurances that what was decided was in China’s favor, the United States was viewed as having betrayed China.⁹ Following the Shandong Problem China’s considerable amount of disapproval regarding foreign religions, especially Christianity, was primarily due to fact that the religion originated from outside China and was therefore justifiably widely condemned.

⁴Lewis Hodous, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China," *The Journal of Religion* 10, no. 4 (1930): 487.

⁵ Hodous, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China," 487.

⁶ Cohen, "The Anti-Christian Tradition in China," 169.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 148.

⁹ Bruce A. Elleman, *Wilson and China: a Revised History of the Shandong Question* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 125.

When Mao Zedong came to power in 1949, Karl Marx's statement that "religion is the opiate that the capitalist class" uses "to anesthetize the people"—became the standard understanding of the Marxist view of religion and became the basis for putting China's negative religious policies into practice.¹⁰ "With the Chinese Communists' consolidation of authority over the whole of China in the early 1950's, an intolerance of religious beliefs" continued and actually increased in force.¹¹ Because of this acceleration towards intolerance and the already established dislike for foreign religions and western influences, "Christians suffered harsh suppressions in the first 30 years of the People's Republic of China (PRC) under rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)"¹² However, it wasn't just Christianity that suffered during the rule of the CCP. "China's treatment of other religious groups also became less tolerant in 1959, the time of the Great Leap Forward, a massive campaign to have China reach Communism quickly."¹³ The idea was that if China could extinguish all such unnecessary religions, as they perceived Marxist theory to suggest as a pertinent element to Socialist societal structure, they would then achieve a true and successful Communist state. This idea didn't come into full realization until the "Cultural Revolution"¹⁴ which began in 1966. It was then that the regime progressed swiftly from a policy of "gradually repressing religion" to "extinguishing it altogether." This movement was meant to be a restructuring of the Chinese society on a monumental scale that would lead it into a future of laudable

¹⁰ Pilgrim W.K. Lo, "Theology Is Not Mere Sociology: A Theological Reflection on the Reception of the Christian Religion in Mainland China," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 43, no. 3 (2004): 160.

¹¹ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 147.

¹² Fenggang Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 4 (2005): 426.

¹³ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 149.

¹⁴ Ibid

socialist success. It “began with the elimination of the ‘Four Olds’”¹⁵ which were referred to as “old ideas, old values, old customs, and old traditions”. “Traditional religions” were termed “feudal superstitions” and were thrown into the ‘Four Olds’. Their classification in these terms caused it to undergo “severe attack”. Any and all outward expressions of religion were “completely forbidden” and “all religious ritual was discontinued.” The Cultural Revolution entailed the tearing down or closing of all religious centers, the search of people’s houses and personal property for any religious relics, and all exposed religious affiliates to be “expelled to the “cowshed” in remote areas to undertake a thorough “conversion”.¹⁶ Many could not cope with the loss of their religions, nor the peace and spirituality which they offered in such a tumultuous time. “Thousands of innocent people were beaten to death without knowing why. Thousands committed suicide.” One of the most immediate actions the CCP took was to expel or imprison any foreign missionaries. The study of religious texts, such as the Bible and the Koran were expressly forbidden. All “scholarly writing about Chinese religious history ceased; it was as if the religion of China had never existed.”¹⁷ China retreated within itself and enacted a supreme reconditioning in the Socialist scope according to Marxist-Leninism.

During the Cultural Revolution, all traces of organized religion became undetectable and Mao exercised solid control of the country. What began in 1949, as the use of religious research “only to serve atheist propaganda”¹⁸, culminated

¹⁵ Jiping Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," *Sociological Analysis* 52, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 101.

¹⁶ Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," 103.

¹⁷ Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," 101.

¹⁸ Fenggang Yang, "Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China," *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 116.

between 1967 and 1974, when “not a single article on religion was published in journals, magazines or newspapers in the People’s Republic of China.” Not only was all religious research completely shut down, but “the few who had written about religion in the past were muted, and many of them suffered physical and psychological tortures”¹⁹. For all outside eyes directed at it, “China appeared to be the most secularized country in the world. Not a single temple or church was open for public religious service, and people appeared to wholeheartedly believe in atheism”²⁰.

During Mao’s reign, he used “rituals as a tool”²¹ to enhance his power. The greater part of the public, which the People’s Republic of China was comprised of were “poorly educated” and considered easy to fool. ²² With an intense loss of religious focus, they turned to government and redirected their support and belief towards its success as their new savior. As this transition occurred, “the relationship between Mao and the masses was seen as that of the sun and sunflowers. Like sunflowers turning toward the sun, the hearts of people turned to Mao.”²³ Mao exercised his station and power to offer instruction to the people. He encouraged a strong socialist mentality and a love and support of country that could not be rivaled. His strength grew as people settled in to the new system of belief, and any attempt to question the sacred nature of Mao or his thought would be met with “reaction as extreme as the response of the Catholic church to sacrilege during the

¹⁹ Yang, "Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China," 105.

²⁰ Ibid, 101.

²¹ Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," 109.

²² Ibid, 107.

²³ Ibid, 103.

Middle Ages.”²⁴ Mao used this devotion, which was for many a redirection of the people’s religious faith towards political ritualistic structure, and “in this way, a personal god was created”²⁵. According to Jiping Zuo of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the people’s response to the new political system was not actually an effective elimination of religion, nor a transition towards atheism. “On the contrary, a new religion was created. In the eyes of the masses, there still existed a ‘supernatural power’”²⁶, Mao had effectively become a god to his people. While the socialist agenda supplied all citizens a “cradle-to-grave” form of welfare and a guaranteed job, it lacked actual success when all was said and done.²⁷ As the socialist momentum began to falter, Mao garnered dissatisfaction from his fellow constituents and became a scapegoat as they claimed he had orchestrated several unsuccessful measures. Basically, they blamed the state’s economic shortcomings on him. In an effort to remain in favor with the masses, he “personally isolated himself” in order to add to his already “mysterious image”²⁸.

Fortunately for the people of China, Mao died in 1976 and Deng Xiaoping succeeded his rule. Deng favored economic reform over Mao’s political ideologies regarding Chinese culture and society. As Deng took control of China, “The regime moved away from the Cultural Revolution’s destructive approach to religion and revived the more tolerant approach of traditional China.”²⁹ Where Mao had imposed a strict and complete suppression of religion, Marx’s original quote was

²⁴ Ibid, 105.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 103.

²⁷ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalads," 432.

²⁸ Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," 106.

²⁹ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 149-150.

reinterpreted as showing his belief that religion maintains an important function in communities, “mainly, it provides spiritual comfort for people who are suffering.”³⁰ It was concluded that, given a spiritual belief to have faith in, people who were faced with difficult life situations or met with “terrible loss”³¹ were better able to cope. Religion was seen as a means to offer an “emotional compensation function” that “helped reduce anxiety and provided a sense of security and confidence”³² which would strengthen the entire social structure as China rebuilt itself. During the 1980’s, the government took a stance on religion that was referred to as a “zone of indifference” where it could choose not to intervene on religious beliefs as it carefully began to expand into “areas of social and economic relations.”³³ Because of Deng’s focus on economic reforms, there has been a “marked departure from the repressive policies of the Maoist period.”³⁴ However, this departure was not to be construed as a complete surrender to religion as a permanent institution in the scheme of socialist politics. The government still seeks “to control religion and create an environment in which religion would be regarded as a superstition”³⁵ that would ultimately die out on its own as the people realize it is unnecessary.

The CCP did not just freely allow all religions to be practiced. It organized specific institutions in order to “control religious matters”³⁶ and it also regulated which religions it would accept as legitimate and practicable. The CCP established

³⁰ Lo, "Theology Is Not Mere Sociology: A Theological Reflection on the Reception of the Christian Religion in Mainland China," 160.

³¹ Ibid

³² Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," 104.

³³ Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," *The China Quarterly* 174 (2003): 318.

³⁴ Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," 319.

³⁵ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 148.

³⁶ Ibid.

the Bureau of Religious Affairs to oversee religious groups.³⁷ After an in depth evaluation of various religions, the CCP ruled to accept five primary religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism in order to “exclude folk religions, superstition and cults” from its umbrella of support.³⁸ Any religious sect that could be construed as a threat to the socialist structure was immediately blacklisted. Only a specific and carefully selected sequence of religions was allowed, and the ultimate goal of the CCP was to eliminate their necessity given time. Also, when referring to the members of any of these religious institutions, “if one did not accept the authority” of the religion’s assigned oversight institution then they would be imprisoned.³⁹ While presenting a front of religious tolerance, the Party’s main agenda was driven to support atheism in any way possible, including what some perceive as an abuse of its control over in order to “marginalize religious belief.”⁴⁰

An important aspect of this supposed religious tolerance is that China still emphasized an independent stance toward outside influences. Christians were required to commit themselves to the “Three Self Movement—self-support, self-governance, self-propaganda” which according to Merle Goldman, a professor of history at Boston University, had nothing to do with self-sufficiency, but rather was a decidedly unsuccessful attempt to “cut off Christian groups from contact with the West.”⁴¹ Under Deng’s rule, it seemed that the key to controlling religious activity

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," 320.

³⁹ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 149.

⁴⁰ Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," 320.

⁴¹ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 148.

lay in “educating the younger generations in historical materialism and atheism, rather than in coercion and repression of practitioners.”⁴²

During the mid-to-late 1980’s, the government reacted to “an outbreak of anti-Chinese unrest”⁴³ by imposing martial law and stepping up their efforts at securing political control. During this time the United States was directly portrayed as having an interest in “using religion to subvert China.”⁴⁴ The Chinese regulators give “special attention”⁴⁵ to Christianity partly because of historical links between Christian missionary work and imperialism which to the CCP insights a fear of internal subversion. In 1999, “special additional measures were enacted” to upset any religious activities that would “disrupt social order or harm the people’s lives, financial security” or the development of the Chinese economy. ⁴⁶ According to Pitman Potter, a Professor of Law at UBC Law Faculty, over the course of Deng’s rule several official Government Documents (similar to a United States government Bill) were released in reference to religious activity and control. The Documents were strategically worded to offer a carefully structured allusion to religious tolerance, yet continued to stress the CCP’s ultimate support and aspiration toward a total atheist state. With the release of Documents 6 and 19, it became evident that the People’s Republic of China intended and still does intend to control religion in an effort to use it as a tool to guide and unify the masses in greater service solely to the success of the CCP regime. Specifically, Document 19 stated that the basic policy toward religion was “one of respect for and protection of religions, pending such

⁴² Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," 323.

⁴³ Ibid, 328.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 322.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 329.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 331.

future time when religion itself will disappear.”⁴⁷ According to Potter, on the hand of obedience and compliance it promises tolerance, while on the hand of resistance to political orthodoxy it promises repression. Internally the state is viewed as “inherently hegemonic”⁴⁸, and to have dominated the “structure of religious expression” in an effective and emotionless manner.

The government’s politically biased method is simply making an assumption that the party-state’s domination of religion within society is complete when in reality it is not. The government has maintained an outward semblance of control over religious affairs within the PRC, such as the number of churches allowed open, which religions can be practiced and where. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the aspirations of the CCP are being challenged by the influx of religious converts. Whereas it was a “commonly held impression that most Christians in China are old, less educated” members of the peasant class⁴⁹, it has been observed that “an increasing proportion of urban converts are young and well-educated professionals.”⁵⁰ Also, it seems that certain religious affiliates have instigated a resistance as “underground churches, evangelists, and foreign missionaries have been active in many parts of the country” despite the risks.⁵¹ In addition to these signs of resistance, it has been suggested that “Christianity today is commonly perceived as modern, cosmopolitan, and universal”⁵² to the Chinese. These things in combination have contributed to the current number of Chinese

⁴⁷ Ibid, 319.

⁴⁸ Nanlai Cao, "Christian Entrepreneurs and the Post-Mao State: An Ethnographic Account of Church- State Relations in China's Economic Transition," *Sociology of Religion* 68, no. 1 (2007): 46.

⁴⁹ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 429.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 424.

⁵¹ Ibid, 430.

⁵² Ibid, 438.

protestants and their exponential growth. "A conservative estimate favored by many leading scholars of religion within China puts their strength at around fifty million."⁵³

Let us focus on the three strongest catalysts to this religious revival among the Chinese. Taking a broad perspective of observation into account, there are many reasons why the Chinese people are turning to religion with higher hopes than ever before.

The first reason seems to be that despite Deng's attempt to explain "that the Cultural Revolution was an aberration, perpetuated by Mao", the people had already become disillusioned with Marxism-Leninism and began to "search for something to replace it."⁵⁴ Much like they did when religion was eliminated at the beginning of Mao's reign and they turned to him to fill the void left behind. The problem was that "the ideologies of Marxism-Leninism and Mao do not answer the questions about human existence or give the kind of meaning to life that some people desire."⁵⁵ This was not just a desire, but a strong need within the people that was not being met. There was an "inability of Marxism-Leninism to deal with anything beyond the temporal world and its disregard of the inner being" and this inability loosened the hold on the ideal of atheism and "attracted those who were looking for spiritual answers." A possible reason why Chinese converts seem to be increasingly younger than in previous years is that the younger generations have become disenchanted with Communism and many of them are actively seeking alternatives.⁵⁶ The CCP

⁵³ Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," 63.

⁵⁴ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 150.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 156.

⁵⁶ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 435.

seems to have offered this semblance of tolerance in an effort “to lure and even coerce believers from their secret gatherings where it had no control, to public worship where it could reassert its control”⁵⁷. Some say that in doing this, the CCP was inadvertently laying down some of the conditions for its own destruction.”⁵⁸ In 1989 there was a movement of democracy led by students of the intelligentsia which spilled into the streets on June 4 in Tiananmen Square. What began as a public mourning of Hu Yabong (an outspoken political activist) at his funeral became a demonstration by Chinese citizens to gain more political reform and was treated as a rebellion against the CCP. The government reacted more harshly than anyone expected and Tiananmen Square was a massacre where over 2600 people were killed by military force and many more were injured.⁵⁹ Where previously Deng had begun to win the people over with his reforms, he was now seen in a much more severe and unfavorable light among the citizens of China. Despite such violent measures, people are becoming less afraid to speak up it seems, as “several people recalled the impact of the Tiananmen Square incident on their spiritual pursuit.”⁶⁰ This disillusionment with Chinese government and leadership is a huge factor in why the people have begun nurturing religious affiliation to replace their strong nationalistic history.

Another aspect of this first factor is that when Deng took power he opened China up to the world economy in an effort to create strength and financial stability for the struggling country. Deng’s reforms in the Chinese economy have caused a

⁵⁷ Goldman, "Religion in Post-Mao China," 150-151.

⁵⁸ Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," 67.

⁵⁹ Mary E. Ward, *Tiananmen Square Protest*, publication, section goes here, accessed December 8, 2010, http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/publications/doc/tiananmen_square_protest.pdf, 6.

⁶⁰ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 435.

large amount of instability and fear among the citizens who are unaccustomed to dealing with such volatile financial situations. In reform-era China, the emerging market economy “is exciting and perilous, accompanied by widespread moral corruption”⁶¹ which drives many to seek out ways of taking control through a theodicy that might reapply order to this chaotic and unfamiliar world. With so much confusion, is it any wonder why there are a significant number of Chinese converts? “Christianity is a faith that provides peace, certainty, and liberation amid bewildering market forces and a stifling political atmosphere.”⁶²

The second extremely important factor with regard to the rise in religious interest in China is “the rise of intellectuals”⁶³. During Mao’s reign the perception of religion was carefully crafted of “fact and fiction, history and folklore, reasoned criticism and obscene calumny” to convince the populous that “Christianity (or, for that matter, Western culture generally) were the worst of all evils-an evil which China must at all costs avoid.”⁶⁴ As a result, Christians were often viewed as having indulged in “incestuous and homosexual relations” as well as “fornicating freely with the members of the clergy” among many other invented and often exaggerated acts. These rumors contributed to the already confused perception that the people had towards Christianity and western culture. When Deng opened the door to religion he also re-opened the scholastic end of it and interested parties began tenuous research. Suddenly there were far too many interested people who wanted

⁶¹ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 425.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Cao, "Christian Entrepreneurs and the Post-Mao State: An Ethnographic Account of Church- State Relations in China's Economic Transition," 109.

⁶⁴ Cohen, "The Anti-Christian Tradition in China," 176.

to learn about the truths of Christianity, “but too few evangelists who” had a good enough understanding or knowledge of the religion.⁶⁵

It is a very difficult pursuit in China to conduct research and write about religion. Such research usually requires large amounts of funding which is very difficult to come by under the CCP. In recent years where it became somewhat acceptable to study religions “the majority of publications are historical studies” rather than evangelical.⁶⁶ To better explain the reason for “the lack of studies of contemporary religions,” first of all there is much easier access to historical materials and a deficiency in contemporary religious data available for studying.⁶⁷ Following the “opium war”⁶⁸ religious research was legitimized as a discipline and “studying religion as a culture”⁶⁹ became both respectable and necessary. Making advancements in the areas of religious scholarship became increasingly important, not just among the literati, but government officials and their necessity to undermine religion. After all, the allowance of certain religions was not without its limits because it was determined that for any religion to be considered legitimate, it must “work actively to build the harmonious society”.⁷⁰ This scholastic interest unveiled the fact that Marxist dogmatism gave way to scientific principles which require “neutrality and objectivity, thus making it possible to affirm both the positive and the negative functions of religion.”⁷¹ If a religion was not seen as fit to

⁶⁵ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 431.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 114.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Yang, "Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China," 106.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 108.

⁷⁰ Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," 66.

⁷¹ Yang, "Between Secularist Ideology and Desecularizing Reality: The Birth and Growth of Religious Research in Communist China," 116.

accomplish its positive function, then “the state must guide them so that they do fulfill their obligations”.⁷² Overall the allowance of religious scholastic research has opened up avenues of perception that were previously impossible due to a lack of knowledge. While this type of research still faces difficulties with funding and available sources, the Chinese people are learning more about religions and their benefits to a society and using this knowledge as a weapon against the current state of political affairs.

The third and perhaps primary factor in why the Chinese people are turning towards religion, and more specifically Christianity, is the increasing exposure to western cultural influences due to the market economy and the many developing technologies of the modern era. Madsen, a distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of California, suggests that the religious movements in China are a result of the “fluidity of networks and the porosity of borders in an age of global hypercommunication.”⁷³ The previously mentioned disillusionment of the current political regime and the influx of religious knowledge would not be possible if the people didn’t have some access to information outside of the CCP’s propaganda. Fenggang Yang, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Purdue University, suggests that “throughout the 20th century, many educated Chinese tend to prefer a meaning system that is universal instead of particularly Chinese.”⁷⁴ This means that most of the traditional Chinese religions supported by the government are viewed as “back-ward looking and

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," 67.

⁷⁴ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 439.

traditionalistic” which makes them a contradiction to the modern market economy that the people are adjusting to.⁷⁵ Yang goes on to assert that the Chinese people’s tendency toward western influence has nothing to do with them necessarily wanting to be American or Western but rather to simply connect with the outside world that has been denied to them in recent years.⁷⁶ It is a reflection of “the Chinese desire for global integration and modernity”.⁷⁷ Madsen perpetuates this theory by suggesting that the Chinese government cannot stop outside religious and cultural influences because it is unable to seal off China completely from the outside world.⁷⁸ Basically the Chinese people are encouraging western influences in their culture, such as being a Christian and speaking English, because it gives them what they view to be “an equal footing with the Americans and other Westerners as modern world citizens.”⁷⁹

These complex situations and viewpoints seem to be the main reasons why Christianity, rather than the more traditional Chinese religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism, is experiencing an unprecedented revival among the Chinese. Where previously Christians were treated as social pariahs and often violently persecuted, presently they appear to be widely accepted and oftentimes very successful occupationally as well.

Christians who are associated with economic success are also helping to build support as the Chinese economy grows. Based off of the accounts offered here,

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 438.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," 67.

⁷⁹ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at MacDonalds," 439.

it also seems that the reason Christianity specifically is outpacing the other acceptable religions in modern China is because it is not rooted in Chinese national culture where the people have become so dissatisfied in the last fifty years. It is perceived as a Western mode of thought, and where many see traditional Eastern thought to have failed in practice, they see it as a beacon of hope for possible success because it is so different from what they have practiced in the past. The question that remains to be answered, is whether or not this switch toward active western religious affiliations will have any substantial effect on the Chinese socialist society, or if it will lose its appeal in the future in line with the success or failure of the CCP.

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