

# The Growth of Christianity in East Asia

John Mark Terry

## INTRODUCTION

**M**ISSIOLOGISTS AND MISSIONS administrators focus much of their attention on East Asia. This is natural because East Asia contains about 25 percent of the world's population. China's

population alone represents 20 percent of the people on earth. What is the status of Christianity in East Asia? This article will survey the progress of Christianity in these nations of East Asia: China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan. As will be shown, much has been accomplished, but much remains to be done.

## CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA

A noted Chinese Christian leader, John Ong, often speaks of—the gospel “to” China, the gospel “in” China, and the gospel “from” China. Those helpful designations provide an outline for this brief survey of Christianity in China.

## THE GOSPEL “TO” CHINA

Christianity first came to China through the efforts of Nestorian missionaries. The Nestorians entered China in the seventh century, traveling along the ancient Silk Road from the Middle East. They were welcomed by the emperors of the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) and were allowed to build monasteries and establish churches. The Nestorian monks continued their work in China for two hundred years until Emperor Wu Tsung ordered the monks and their monasteries expelled in A.D. 845. The fate of the Nestorian converts in China is unknown, but a Nestorian monk, sent to ascertain the state of the church in China in A.D. 987, reported that he did not find any Christians in China.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity re-entered China after the visit of Marco Polo in 1266. His account of his adventures in China prompted the Vatican to send a Franciscan monk, Giovanni of Monte Corvino, to China in 1294. The emperor welcomed him and gave him freedom to build a church and evangelize. By 1305 he had six thousand baptized believers. The Roman Catholic mission prospered in Beijing and on the southeastern coast in Quanzhou.

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Again, a change of dynasty brought persecution for the Christians. When the Ming dynasty came to power in 1372, the Ming emperors favored Buddhism and suppressed Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Catholics again sent Jesuit missionaries to China in 1582. They entered China through the Portuguese colony in Macau. Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit, learned the Chinese language and culture in Macau and then transferred to Beijing, the capital city, in 1601. Ricci had been trained as a clock maker. He made a beautiful clock and presented it to the emperor. The emperor liked the clock and named Ricci the imperial clock maker. This gave Ricci both prestige and access to the emperor's court. With these freedoms Ricci and his fellow Jesuits were able to baptize two thousand converts by 1610.<sup>3</sup>

While the Jesuits prospered in Beijing, the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries fumed in Macao. They envied the Jesuits's access to the capital, and they disagreed with the Jesuits on accommodation to the Chinese culture, especially in regard to the veneration of ancestors. This "rites controversy" continued for a century until the Vatican ruled in favor of the Franciscans and Dominicans. The pope's ruling angered the emperor, and he ordered the expulsion of all the missionaries and the closure of all the churches in 1724.<sup>4</sup>

The next phase of missions in China saw the entry of the first Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, in 1807. Morrison served under the London Missionary Society. He had to study Chinese secretly because it was illegal for Chinese to teach their language to foreigners. Morrison only made twelve converts during his twenty-eight years in China, but his great achievements were the Chinese Bible and his Chinese-English dictionary.

After the Opium War of 1840 the Chinese government was forced to open five treaty ports for western commerce and missionary activity. A number of missionaries went to China, but most confined their work to the ports and nearby districts. Hudson Taylor arrived in China in 1854, serving under the China Evangelization Society.

He became so disgusted with that agency's poor administration that he resigned. Bad health forced Taylor to return to England in 1860. While he was recovering, he prayed and planned for a new type of mission organization. In 1865 he founded the China Inland Mission. He was determined to penetrate all of China with the gospel, thus the name, *Inland*. Hudson Taylor was one of the great missionary recruiters, and the China Inland Mission grew rapidly. One reason for its rapid growth was his openness to appoint single women as missionaries. He also accepted missionaries with little formal schooling. He insisted that all his missionaries live by faith, forbidding them to solicit financial support. Thus, the China Inland Mission became the first and prototypical "faith mission." Taylor also required all his missionaries to adopt Chinese dress, master the Chinese language, and identify with the Chinese people as much as possible.<sup>5</sup>

Hudson Taylor's determination to evangelize all of China, especially the interior, was achieved. By 1882 the China Inland Mission had deployed missionaries to all of China's provinces, and its total number of missionaries had risen to 641. This made it the largest mission agency in China, and the largest Protestant missions organization in the world.<sup>6</sup>

China was the first foreign mission "field" for Southern Baptists. When the Southern Baptist Convention was established in 1845, its first action was to establish the Foreign Mission Board (FMB). One of the first actions of the Foreign Mission Board was to make China its initial field of ministry. China was Southern Baptists's main mission field until 1949. In the beginning Southern Baptist missionaries focused much of their work in southern China, specifically in and around Canton. Rosewell Graves, a missionary physician, served in Canton for an amazing period of fifty-six years. His faithful ministry contributed to the development of what the FMB called the South China Mission. Later, the FMB established work in Shanghai. Matthew Yates led this work for many years. This work became known as the Cen-

tral China Mission. Southern Baptist missionaries established the North China mission in Shandong Province in northeastern China. Prominent missionaries in that mission included J. B. Hartwell, T. P. Crawford, and, of course, Lottie Moon. In 1910 the FMB, inspired by the example of the China Inland Mission, opened its Interior China Mission in Hunan Province, and the Manchuria Mission was opened in 1924.<sup>7</sup>

There were 49 Southern Baptist missionaries in China in 1900, but by 1918 the number increased to 172. The highest number recorded was 287 in 1924. The effects of the Great Depression and World War II caused the number to decrease steadily except for a brief increase between 1945 and 1948. When the Communists won the Civil War, they gradually forced the missionaries out, and by the end of 1951 all Southern Baptist missionaries had exited. The close of the China missions did not mean that Southern Baptists ceased to work with Chinese. The FMB reassigned the missionaries to work with *diaspora* Chinese all over Asia, and, indeed, “the old China hands” opened Baptist work in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea.<sup>8</sup>

The missionaries of the China Inland Mission and the Roman Catholic missionaries suffered greatly during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. The Boxer Rebellion was a nationalistic movement that aimed to remove foreign influence from China. Because they considered Christianity a “Western religion,” the Boxers attacked missionaries and Chinese Christians and burned churches and Christian institutions. Tens of thousands of Chinese Christians died at the hands of the Boxers, and 135 Protestant missionaries and 53 children of missionaries died as martyrs. Most of the missionaries escaped to the coast of China, where foreign soldiers protected them.<sup>9</sup>

The missionaries re-engaged the Chinese people after the Boxer Rebellion, and the martyred missionaries were replaced by new missionaries, especially those enlisted by the Student Volunteer Movement. The zenith of Protestant missionary

deployment to China came in 1925. In that year there were 8,158 Protestant missionaries serving. That number declined in the 1930s due to the world economic depression and in the 1940s due to World War II.<sup>10</sup>

In 1911 a Christian physician, Sun Yat-Sen, led a revolution that overthrew the Manchu dynasty and installed a democratic government. Sun’s weak government struggled and soon failed. Regional warlords controlled much of China. From this chaos emerged two strong political forces, the Nationalist Party of Chiang Kai Shek and the Communist Party, led by Mao Tse Tung. They both fought the Japanese, who invaded China in 1937, but after World War II they fought each other. The Chinese Civil War brought even more devastation to China, which had suffered greatly during the world war. Finally, in 1949 the Communist armies defeated the Nationalists, and Chiang Kai Shek escaped with his army to Taiwan.

#### **THE GOSPEL “IN” CHINA**

When the Communists gained control of China in 1949 there were, perhaps, 750,000 Protestant Christians in China and 4,062 foreign missionaries. The Roman Catholics numbered about 1,500,000, and there were 5,682 foreign priests and nuns. That was not many in a country of approximately 400 million.<sup>11</sup> The missionaries began leaving China during 1949, but they had no choice but to leave after 1951. In that year Chou En Lai, Premier of the People’s Republic of China, issued an order, expelling all foreign missionaries. This was not surprising, given the fact that the Chinese Communist Party was officially atheistic. The Communist government closed most of the churches and imprisoned many of the pastors and church leaders. The Communists reorganized Chinese Protestant Christianity into one national church—the Three-Self Patriotic Church. This church was closely controlled by the Communist government, which appointed all the pastors. The government chose that name to emphasize the church’s separation from foreign control. The

term “three-self” came from the indigenous mission strategy espoused by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn. They encouraged missionaries to plant churches that would be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Of course, the Communist government did not want the church to propagate, but they did desire to eliminate foreign influence on the Chinese church.

Chinese Christians responded to the government’s crack-down in two ways. Some rejected the Three-Self Patriotic Church and took their faith underground. They worshipped in small groups in homes, barns, and apartments. This was especially true in rural areas. In urban areas some churches remained open, and other Christians tried to adjust to the new realities. Some even stated that the Chinese church was better off, freed from the domination of the Western missionaries.

The situation for Catholic Christians was similar. The Communist government insisted that the Catholics in China break with the Vatican. Those who refused to do this experienced severe persecution. Others acceded to the government’s demands and formed the Catholic Patriotic Association.

Both the Three-Self Patriotic Church and the Catholic Patriotic Association tried to serve as a buffer against the antipathy of the Communist government. They both suffered during Mao’s anti-rightist campaign in 1957-58 and especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). During the Cultural Revolution intellectuals and religious persons suffered persecution at the hands of the Red Guards. Many pastors were jailed or sent to “re-education camps,” and more churches were closed.<sup>12</sup>

After the death of Mao Tse-Tung (1976) China opened up to the West. With this political renaissance in China came a toleration of the church. Three-Self Patriotic churches were reopened as were some theological seminaries. By 1987 four thousand Three-Self churches were established and were full of worshipers. The reduced persecution also benefited the house churches. These were

(and are) churches that refuse to register with the government because they reject government control of their congregations. Many different house church networks developed, and some of them have millions of members. Though they are called house churches, they meet in many different locations, including factories. Some exhibit reformed theology, but many of them could be described as charismatic or Pentecostal.<sup>13</sup>

The persecution of the church in China proved to be an Acts 8 experience for the church in China. Acts 8:1, 4 tells how the church in Jerusalem was persecuted, but the persecution actually spread the gospel throughout Judea and Samaria. In 1949 the church in China was hindered by foreign control and by institutionalism. The expulsion of the missionaries and the closure of the institutions forced the Chinese church into a new pattern of operation. The Chinese church returned to its New Testament roots. As the house churches proliferated, the number of Christians multiplied rapidly. In fact, the *Asia Times* reported that ten thousand Chinese become Christians each day.<sup>14</sup>

How many Christians are there in China? The real answer is that no one knows for sure, but there are lots of estimates. According to the Chinese government, there are 21 million (16 million Protestants and 5 million Catholics), but the government only counts those in the registered churches.<sup>15</sup> In some provinces it seems the authorities deliberately under-report the number of members in the Three-Self churches. Also, the government only reports the baptized members of Three-Self churches. Because it is against the law to baptize a person under the age of 18, the Three-Self statistics do not include youth and children who attend the churches, nor do the statistics include millions of worshipers who have yet to be baptized.<sup>16</sup>

The China Aid Association reported in 2007 that Yie Xiaowen, director of the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, stated in a nonpublic meeting at Beijing University that the number of Christians in China was 130 million, most of whom were members of house churches.<sup>17</sup>

Paul Hattaway is recognized as one of the most knowledgeable researchers on Chinese Christianity. In August 2010 he reported 82 million Protestants of all types in China and 21 million Catholics, for a total of 103 million.<sup>18</sup> The latest edition of the highly respected prayer guide, *Operation World*, estimates that there are 21 million Catholics and 85 million Protestants (Three-Self and house churches combined).<sup>19</sup> Most of these Christians are ethnic Han Chinese, and they live mainly in the eastern part of China. One encouraging sign is that the Three-Self Patriotic churches are increasingly evangelical in their theology and practice, though there are some restrictions on their evangelistic efforts.

Why is it so hard to get an accurate count? Several reasons complicate the work of missions researchers. First, the Chinese government does not want the total number of Christians publicized. Researchers risk arrest and punishment. Second, there are hundreds of house church networks. Some of them do not keep records for security reasons. Other networks refuse to number their members, believing that practice is contrary to Scripture. They cite God's punishment of King David for numbering Israel (2 Sam 24:1-17). Third, the house churches are so decentralized that many house church leaders do not know how many people actually belong to their churches. Fourth, China is a big country with a big population, and accuracy remains a great challenge. Still, Western Christians can rejoice that the number of Christians in China has risen from perhaps three million in 1949 to more than one hundred million in 2011. Patrick Johnstone writes, "China remains one of the biggest challenges for world evangelization.... We all marvel at the millions of Chinese who have come to Christ over the past twenty years, but this fact obscures a vital truth that this turning to God is not happening for every part of China nor for all its constituent peoples."<sup>20</sup>

#### **THE GOSPEL "FROM" CHINA**

The Christians in China, in at least some of

the house church networks, are coming to understand their responsibility to bring the gospel to the world. This is wonderful development because the Chinese church has great missions potential. There are several reasons for its potential. First, Chinese Christianity has grown amidst great persecution. Chinese Christians know how to evangelize, plant churches, and endure hardships. Second, the rapid development of China's economy can provide the funding necessary for world missions endeavors. Third, the large number of Chinese going overseas to work makes it possible for Chinese missionaries to enter restricted access countries more easily.<sup>21</sup>

There are two aspects involved in the recent Chinese missions movement. As mentioned above, the vast majority of Christians in China are Han Chinese, who live in the eastern part of China. The Han comprise about 90 percent of China's population. However, there are many ethnic groups in China (about five hundred according to *Operation World*). Most of the people groups in western China are Muslim. The two largest of these Muslim people groups are the Uyghurs and the Hui. So, the first goal of the mission-minded believers in eastern China is to bring the gospel to the Muslims of western China.

The second aspect of the Chinese missions movement is international missions. Several large house church networks in China have joined together to sponsor the Back to Jerusalem Movement. The basic idea of this movement is that the gospel traveled from Jerusalem westward into Europe. Then the gospel was brought to the Americas. Later, missionaries from Europe and North America carried the gospel to China. Now, Chinese Christians have a special calling from God to complete the circle and bring the gospel through Central Asia and the Middle East and "back to Jerusalem." The Chinese believers mean to traverse figuratively the ancient "silk road" that leads through Central Asia and the Middle East toward Jerusalem.

This vision of bringing the gospel back to Jeru-

salem is not new. It actually harkens back to the vision of a small group of Bible college students in northwestern China. On Easter Sunday, 1943, the students at the Northwest Bible Institute in Fengxiang, Shaanxi Province, received a challenge from one of their professors, Mark Ma. He challenged the students to commit themselves to evangelizing western China. Eight of the students responded by declaring their call to evangelize Xinjiang Province in far northwest China. Mark Ma committed himself to accompany the students to the Northwest. He and the students adopted a Chinese name and an English name for their group. They chose "The Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band" as their English name. The group made short-term mission trips to the Northwest beginning in 1944. They sent a group into far western China in 1949; however, the events of the China Civil War overtook them, and they were turned back. Eventually, most of the members of the band were arrested and spent time in Communist prison camps. The vision of the Back to Jerusalem Movement could not be implemented for almost forty years.

In 1988 Simon Zhao, a pastor who had spent thirty-one years in prison camps, encouraged the house church leaders to resuscitate the Back to Jerusalem Movement. Several house church network leaders responded, and the Back to Jerusalem Movement was reborn. There was much initial enthusiasm, and the house churches deployed the first wave of missionaries into Central Asia. Unfortunately, these missionaries received no training, and they struggled to cope with the harsh realities of service in Muslim countries. Some returned home; some were arrested; some became ill; and some were martyred. The leaders of the house church networks realized that zeal alone would not suffice. The missionaries needed training in order to serve effectively in cross-cultural settings.

The initial failure of the Back to Jerusalem Movement has prompted the house church networks to develop missionary training centers.

Many young adults have received missionary training, and many more are currently in training. Beyond that, a missionary infrastructure is being developed. Rest houses, safe houses, and field supervision are being provided now, and these will enhance the effectiveness of the second wave of missionaries.

## **CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN**

Jesuit missionaries sent by the Roman Catholic Church first brought Christianity to Japan. Francis Xavier arrived in Japan with two Jesuit companions in 1549. Japan was in political, cultural, and religious turmoil at that time, and the Catholic missionaries found Japan a fertile field. However, eventually central rule was established in Japan, and that was a bad thing for the Christians. In 1587 King Hideyoshi ordered that all the missionaries be expelled, but many missionaries refused to leave. In 1614 the persecution intensified until by 1630 the authorities had eradicated Christianity.

Christianity was reintroduced to Japan in 1853. In that year Commodore Matthew Perry sailed his squadron of U.S. Navy ships into Tokyo Bay. He demanded that the Japanese government establish relations with the U.S. This was done, and an American consul, Townsend Harris, went to live in Japan. He was a dedicated Episcopalian, and he held Christian worship services in his home. In 1858 a Roman Catholic missionary entered Japan, and between 1859 and 1869 four American missionary agencies (Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Reformed Church, and Northern Baptist) sent missionaries to Japan. The reign of the first Meiji emperor, Mutsuhito, began in 1867. He was interested in Western culture, and he eventually allowed missionaries to enter Japan freely. By 1882 there were 145 missionaries in Japan, and they claimed about 5,000 converts. By 1888 there were 451 missionaries and 25,000 believers.<sup>22</sup> Southern Baptist missionaries entered Japan in 1889.

The number of Christians in Japan grew slowly but steadily until 1940. When World War

It began, the military-controlled government of Japan tried to force all the Christian denominations to combine into one—the Church of Christ in Japan (*Nippon Kirisuto Kyodan*). After the war American missionaries flooded into Japan, and they did find some response in the war-torn country. However, the interest in Christianity proved short-lived. By 1963 there were perhaps 500,000 Protestants in Japan and 250,000 Roman Catholics. This was in a nation of 90 million.<sup>23</sup>

The Japanese people are the largest unreached people group in Asia. Although there are strong churches and strong Christian institutions in Japan, the percentage of the population professing Christianity has remained quite small. The population of Japan in 2010 was 127 million, while the number of evangelical Christians was only 596,498. These numbers raise the question—Why is the number of Christians in Japan so low? A number of factors have negatively affected the growth of Christianity in Japan. First, Japanese view Christianity as a Western religion. Second, the Japanese are loyal to the Shinto religion, their national religion. Thus to be Japanese is to be Shinto. In actuality, many Japanese practice syncretism; that is, they worship at Shinto shrines, but they also practice Buddhism or one of the “new religions.” They see no inconsistency in this at all. The Shinto religion does not condemn syncretism, but Christianity does. Third, the Japanese are very group-oriented. To profess faith in Christ would be seen as breaking fellowship with their family, friends, classmates, and co-workers. The fact that approximately 50 percent of Christian converts renounce the faith within three years speaks to the great pressure to conform to group expectations. Fourth, some researchers say the true religion of Japan is materialism. They are seeking money and the comfortable lifestyle it can provide.<sup>24</sup> The Japanese government freely grants missionary visas, and many missions agencies have missionaries in Japan. New strategies and methods have been employed, but the response remains disappointing.

## CHRISTIANITY IN KOREA

Roman Catholic Christianity first entered Korea from China around 1860, but the king of Korea reacted against it. By 1864 no vestiges of the Catholic mission remained. Protestant missionaries began work in Korea after 1882 when the Korean government established diplomatic relations with the United States. Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries arrived in 1885.<sup>25</sup>

Two significant events shaped Korean Christianity. The first occurred in 1890. The new missionaries in Korea felt quite intimidated by the task they faced. They decided to invite John L. Nevius, a veteran missionary to China, to come and teach them how to do missionary work effectively. He and his wife came to Korea and spent several weeks, instructing the missionaries. Nevius had developed a strategy in China that had proved successful. He believed strongly in the indigenous approach to missions; that is, that missionaries should work in such a way that the new churches could be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. The three “selfs” were not new, but Nevius further developed the indigenous strategy. He taught that: (1) Each believer should continue in his home and work, witnessing to those around him; (2) Christian institutions and programs should be developed on a scale that was sustainable by the local Christians; (3) the local Christians should select and support financially those they deemed worthy of church leadership; (4) the churches should be built in an Asian style and with money and work provided by the local Christians; and (5) the church leaders—elders, pastors, evangelists, and church planters—should be gathered each year for a period of intense instruction in Bible and doctrine.<sup>26</sup> The missionaries heeded Nevius’s advice, and the Korean church was indigenous from the beginning, in stark contrast to the church in China.

The second shaping event was the revival of 1907. As mentioned above, it was the custom of the Korean Presbyterian leaders to gather for a period of biblical and theological teaching each

year. The teaching was done during the day, and at night worship services were held. On the night of January 6, 1907, the leader encouraged the worshipers to pray aloud at the same time. Soon, many of the participants were weeping and confessing sin. Throughout the night the service continued with praying, confessing, and singing. William Blair, one of the Presbyterian missionaries present, wrote this: "We may have our theories of the desirability or undesirability of public confession of sin. I have had mine; but I know now that when the Spirit of God falls upon guilty souls, there will be confession, and no power on earth can stop it."<sup>27</sup> When the participants returned home, they took the revival with them, and many local churches experienced renewal.

The revival that began in Pyongyang in 1907 still affects Korean Christianity. Most churches still have dawn prayer meetings, and many have all night prayer meetings on Friday nights. Koreans continue to pray aloud at the same time in prayer meetings and worship services.

The Korean church grew steadily until World War II, though the church was often persecuted by the Japanese colonial government due to the Christians's anti-colonial activities. After the war Korea was divided into North and South Korea. North Korea became Communist, while South Korea established a democratic government. In 1950 North Korea invaded the South, and a devastating war began, which lasted until 1953. The government of North Korea persecuted the Christians and closed all but a few churches left open for show. Most of the Christians fled southward or died as martyrs. Little is known about the status of Christianity in North Korea today. The government has outlawed worship services in any location, and it is a serious crime to possess a Bible or speak of God or Jesus. *Operation World* estimates that there are 300,000 Christians in North Korea, including 100,000 in prison camps. Missionaries are not allowed to minister in North Korea. Some Christian relief organizations do operate there; but they are not allowed to witness, and their activities

are closely monitored by the security police.<sup>28</sup>

South Korea represents one of international missions's great successes. Flying into Seoul at night is a blessing for a Christian. One can see florescent crosses on top of church buildings all over the city. During the 1970s and 80s Christianity grew tremendously in Korea. That explosive growth has slowed now, but Christians comprise 31 percent of the population. The Korean churches have embraced the cause of international missions, and they have sent more than 20,000 missionaries throughout the world. At first these missionaries primarily ministered to Koreans living abroad, but improved missionary training has brought a greater emphasis on cross-cultural mission.<sup>29</sup>

### **CHRISTIANITY IN MONGOLIA**

Nestorian missionaries tried to establish work with the Mongolian people in ancient times, but nothing remains from those efforts. James Gilmour, a British Methodist, worked in Mongolia from 1872-1888, but he baptized only sixteen converts during those years. The church he established disbanded after he died in 1893. When the Communists gained control of Mongolia in 1921, there were no known Christians left in Mongolia.

The Communist government collapsed in 1990, and Christian missionaries entered the country. There were perhaps only four Christians in the country at that time, but by the year 2000 there were approximately 10,000. Today, there are more than 45,000 Christians of all denominations. Evangelizing the Mongolians presents a great challenge because one-third of the people are nomads. Beyond that, the great distances between settlements and inclement weather make missionary work difficult. Many Christian relief organizations work in Mongolia, seeking to address poverty and social problems. There is a missionary radio station operated by the Far Eastern Broadcasting Company, and the Jesus Film is available in the local languages and has proved quite popular. Korean missionaries have been



especially active in Mongolia. The total population of Mongolia is less than three million, but the people, especially the younger people, have shown an interest in Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

### **CHRISTIANITY IN TAIWAN**

Christianity came to Taiwan (Formosa) when the Dutch East India Company established a trading post in 1624. Company chaplains preached to the local people and won many converts, after they gave up preaching in Dutch and began preaching in Hokkien, the local language. The chaplain-missionaries organized churches and consistories of the Dutch Reformed Church. A local rebellion, led by Koxinga, defeated the Dutch and forced the Dutch East India Company and its chaplains to leave the island. Without any missionaries, the once thriving Reformed Church in Taiwan withered and died.

The Treaty of Tianjin, signed in 1858 after the second opium war, opened several Taiwanese cities as “treaty ports.” Missionaries were free to live and minister in treaty ports, and both the Catholics and Presbyterians soon established mission stations. The Japanese gained control of Taiwan in 1895. The Japanese were familiar with Christian missionaries, but they wanted to avoid competition between the different mission agencies. Therefore, the Japanese government excluded all missionaries except Roman Catholic and Presbyterian. These were permitted to continue because they were already ministering in Taiwan when the Japanese assumed control. The Japanese oppressed the churches and Christians during World War II because they viewed them as pro-Western. At the end of the war control of Taiwan reverted to China.

When Chiang Kai-Shek and the Nationalists lost the Civil War in China, General Chiang and more than a million soldiers and supporters fled to Taiwan. Many veteran missionaries transferred their work to Taiwan, and many Christian institutions were re-established on Taiwan. These included Southern Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Assembly of God, Lutherans, the Christian

and Missionary Alliance, and the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship). Beyond these Western agencies, a number of indigenous Chinese groups opened work on Taiwan, like the Assembly Hall Church, founded by Watchman Nee. All this activity led to a marked growth in the number of Protestants from 13,000 in 1945 to 180,000 in 1960.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, the rapid growth, mainly due to migration, did not continue after 1960. Today, Christians only comprise 6 percent of Taiwan’s population. True, there are a number of strong churches and outstanding seminaries, like the China Evangelical Seminary and Taiwan Baptist Seminary, but the people have resisted fervent missionary and evangelistic efforts. Taiwan remains a bastion of Buddhism and especially Chinese religion. Chinese religion is a syncretistic amalgam of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and traditional shamanism. Taiwan freely admits missionaries, and a number of evangelical missionaries continue to work in Taiwan. *Operation World* describes Taiwan as “politically open, but spiritually closed,” and that is an accurate assessment.<sup>32</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Sometimes it is good to step back and get a better perspective on things. Historians can look back over four hundred years of Roman Catholic missionary work in East Asia and two hundred years of Protestant ministry. Certainly, much has been accomplished. There are more than 100 million Christians in China, and Korean churches have sent twenty thousand missionaries around the world. One can travel to any city in East Asia and find a church to attend. Seminaries, Christian institutions, and Asian mission agencies abound. So, a Christian can heave a sigh of contentment and thank the Lord for his faithfulness through the past centuries.

That feeling of contentment might be misplaced, though. Although many in China have come to Christ, the western provinces of China are still sadly underserved, and more than 90

percent of the Chinese people still do not profess Christ. Taiwan boasts large churches and outstanding seminaries, but 94 percent of the population is lost. The Japanese people remain the largest unreached people group in Asia. So, our reflective Christian should thank the Lord for his marvelous work in the past and pray to ask God for strength and spiritual power to finish the work. Much has been done, but much remains to do.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin, 1986), 81-82.
- <sup>2</sup>Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia: Vol. 1—Beginning to 1500* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 445-46.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 141.
- <sup>4</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1970), 3:356-57.
- <sup>5</sup>Neill, *History of Missions*, 282-83.
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup>J. Winston Crawley, "East Asia," in *Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Missions* (ed. Baker J. Cauthen; Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 79-86.
- <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 89-102.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 287.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 429.
- <sup>11</sup>The number of missionaries can be stated accurately, but the number of Protestants and Catholics in China is difficult to ascertain. The statistics given come from Ralph Covell, "China," in *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (ed. A. Scott Moreau; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 179; and Stephen Neill, *History of Missions*, 429. Daniel Bays estimates there were three million Roman Catholics in 1951 and perhaps one million Protestants. See his article, "Chinese Protestant Christianity Today," *The China Quarterly* 174 (2003): 491.
- <sup>12</sup>Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *A Global History of Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 445.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup>Spengler, "Christianity Finds a Fulcrum in Asia," *The Asia Times* (August 7, 2007), 1.
- <sup>15</sup>"Sons of Heaven," *Global Chinese Ministries Prayer Letter* (January 2009), 1.
- <sup>16</sup>Paul Hattaway, "How Many Christians Are There in China?" [cited 24 February 2011]. Online: <http://www.asiaharvest.org/pages/Christians%20in%20China/christiansInChina2.html>.
- <sup>17</sup>"News Briefs: China," *Lausanne World Pulse* [cited 9 June 2011]. Online: <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/newsbriefs.php/09-2007>
- <sup>18</sup>Paul Hattaway, "Asian People Group Profiles" [cited 9 June 2011]. Online: <http://asiaharvest.org/pages/profiles/pageChina.html>.
- <sup>19</sup>Jason Mandryk, ed., *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation* (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2010), 216.
- <sup>20</sup>Paul Hattaway, *Operation China* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), xi.
- <sup>21</sup>Michael Tai, "The Chinese Are Coming!" unpublished manuscript, Malaysia Baptist Seminary, 2009.
- <sup>22</sup>Neill, *History of Missions*, 276-81.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 427.
- <sup>24</sup>Mandryk, *Operation World*, 492-93.
- <sup>25</sup>Neill, *History of Missions*, 290.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 291.
- <sup>27</sup>Wesley Duewel, *Revival Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 254-55.
- <sup>28</sup>Mandryk, *Operation World*, 507-508.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 511.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 594-97.
- <sup>31</sup>Tsu-Kung Chuang, "China (Taiwan)," in *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (ed. A. Scott Moreau; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 179-80.
- <sup>32</sup>Mandryk, *Operation World*, 258-60.