

The Christian Virus

By Ronald L. Dart

An email showed up in my inbox last week with nothing except a link to an Internet page. I almost didn't read it. I have heard about Chinese Christians before, but nothing to make me think they could do any more than struggle along in a communist, atheistic society.

But I opened the file, and when I started reading, I couldn't stop. Something important is happening in China that is so counter to what one might expect that it sounds like, well, a miracle. Moreover, the miracle is remarkably similar to the one that turned the Roman world upside down in the days of Paul and Silas. But there is no Chinese Paul. There isn't even a Chinese Billy Graham, or Rick Warren. Christianity is not on television, or even radio as far as I know. There are no mega-churches, but there are now some 70 million Christians in China. How on earth did that happen?

Christianity spreads like a virus

It happened in the way Christianity has always thrived: person to person, like a virus. Oh, the Chinese Christians have pastors and teachers, of course. But their influence, like that of Saint Paul, is

limited to the people they can meet in person.

I was so caught up in the article that I didn't notice that it was dated June 22, 2008. It had taken 18 months to get to my mailbox. It was written by Evan Osnos of the Chicago Tribune, titled: *Jesus in China: Christianity's rapid rise*. What has happened in China is that a communist government, atheist by definition, has come to realize that Christianity may not be a threat to the country, but an asset. Here is what Evan Osnos wrote:

Christianity an asset to China

"China's top leaders have taken unprecedented steps to acknowledge religion. At the country's

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highest political gathering, the 17th Party Congress, [held October 2007], the word 'religion' was added to the Communist Party constitution, bringing it closer in line with the national constitution. That official recognition is giving some members of the government the confidence to publicly acknowledge their faith for the first time. Judge Diana Zhou presides in China's maritime court in the eastern city of Qingdao. Since she joined the court

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Tax-Smart Giving . . .

Knowing where, when, and how much to give is an important part of good financial stewardship. By donating an appreciated stock, you can reduce estate taxes by removing both the stock and the appreciation from your estate. This can be a good method of charitable giving for the person who may not have ready cash available. Check with your personal tax advisor to make sure appreciated stocks are the right procedure for you. For further information about donating appreciated stocks to CEM, contact Larry Watkins at 1-888-BIBLE-44.

Memorial Day Family Retreat

Branson, Missouri, May 28-31, 2010

You deserve to sneak off and join us in the beautiful Ozark Mountains for a weekend of fun, fellowship, and spiritual renewal. What better place to go in the spring of the year than this unique city. This special event will be held at the Radisson Hotel, located at 120 S. Wildwood Drive in Branson. It begins Friday evening with a Meet and Greet, and ends Monday noon with a farewell talk by Ronald L. Dart.

What the retreat offers your family

We've planned a full schedule of exciting YEA classes, insightful seminars, a most important sermon by Ronald L. Dart, and social events for the entire family to enjoy. Opportunities will abound for you to personally get to know brethren from all over the country, including a dance and the famous ice cream social.

YEA Classes

Exceptional YEA classes for five age groups will be held at 11 a.m. Sabbath, Sunday, and Monday mornings. All kids between the ages of 3 and 20 can pick up their full-color, *FREE* YEA booklets at registration Friday evening at the Meet and Greet. If you arrive too late, booklets will be available before class at registration, or your teacher can provide one. No effort has been spared to make each class an awesome experience. Fun activities, great caring teachers, and relevant subjects will make kids excited to be in each class.

Because this is the Memorial Day weekend, we honor those who have given their lives for our freedom. The patriotic theme of each booklet for all five age groups is *Celebrate: A Person, An Event, A Day*. The following are the lessons for each age group:

Beginners (3-5)

Sabbath - Nice Neighbor
Sunday - Pray With Me
Monday - Let's Celebrate

Primaries (6-8)

Sabbath - The Favorite Son
Sunday - Alive Again!
Monday - Celebrate Pentecost

Juniors (9-11)

Sabbath - Trust Me
Sunday - Sidetracked
Monday - Three Names, One Feast

Intermediates (12-15)

Sabbath - Rich and Famous Relative
Sunday - Rotten to the Core
Monday - An Awesome Event

Senior Teens (16-20)

Sabbath - Was Noah "Nutty"?
Sunday - Clearly Seen
Monday - Count 50

Accommodations

Special CEM group rates at the Radisson Hotel are available until April 29, 2010, for the three days before and after event dates. After April 29, the group rates may change. All room are a flat rate for one to four persons. For reservations call 1-800-395-7046 and be sure to mention you are with

Christian Educational Ministries or go to www.radisson.com/cemmem to make your reservations on line:

Double/King Room - \$89.00
Leisure Suite - \$105.00
Presidential Suite - \$145.00

Additional housing is available across the street at Thousand Hills Golf Resort. Call 1-800-697-9472 ext. 1, or go to www.thousandhills.com for the special Christian Educational Ministries group rate of:

Queen Suite - \$85.00
One Bedroom Condo - \$119.00
Two Bedroom Condo - \$149.00
Three Bedroom Condo - \$223.50

For more information, contact Larry Watkins by telephone at 1-888-BIBLE-44 or by email at lsw@cemnetwork.com, or go to our website at www.borntowin.net.

If you arrive early or stay in the Branson area after the Family Retreat, you will be delighted to enjoy natural beauty, wholesome family entertainment, recreational and community living. For entertainment your entire family will enjoy, try a wide variety of music including Rock n' Roll and Gospel, magic, featured entertainers, comedy, museums, and more.

Please make every effort to join us in Branson. It will be a weekend retreat filled with spiritual opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We look forward to seeing you!

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11 years ago, Zhou has come to believe that Christianity could hasten the country's goals of clean government. 'If there are more and more people who pursue morality who are able to enter the party,' she said, 'then they can be a very healthy force within the party, which is already seeking to prevent corruption.'"

It is an astonishing moment in the history of communism, in that it is an acknowledgment that faith is practical. Even the dedicated communist has to come to see that his secular faith is empty. It has no moral basis, no system of ethics that prevents corruption. And you cannot create such a system with laws. It was Os Guinness who observed that you can't stop a moral landslide with laws. All you can do is add to the laws and destroy freedom. The Soviet Union couldn't do it, and the highest expression of communism there only led to millions of murders, and corruption that has survived the fall of the old union.

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I wouldn't have thought it, but it begins to appear that the Chinese have a more forward-looking view than the Soviets. To be sure, the response of the Communist Party

may be cynical, but at least they have come to see something in the Christian faith that Soviet communists never saw. The Christian faith is based on the world's oldest system of ethics, and those who embrace it have a reason for moral behavior. Life has meaning, a meaning that no atheistic system can provide.

Morals have to live in the heart

Moreover, the moral and ethical system of a country cannot be imposed from on high. It has to live in the hearts and lives of ordinary people. Some Chinese Christians argue that their faith is an unexpected boon for the Communist Party, because it shores up the economic foundation that is central to sustaining party rule.

"With economic development, morality and ethics in China are degenerating quickly," prayer leader Zhang Wei told the crowd at his church as worshipers bowed their heads. "Holy Father, please save the Chinese people's soul."

How Chinese Christians spread the Word

What sort of people are these who are making a difference in China? One example is a man who was born in a poor village. He grew up through years of famine in the countryside and, while still a teenager, he concluded that living off the land would forever put him at the mercy of the harvest.

"But I found that barbers were the freest people," he said. "In summer, they could work in the shade under a tree. And in winter, in a warm room. No barber ever died of hunger."

He married a preacher's daughter, who introduced him to Christianity. But it wasn't until Zhang's business foundered that he decided that religion would be his future. He began evangelizing wherever he could: to customers in his barber's chair, to passengers on the bus. In 1998, he spent four months bicycling from province to province, meeting church leaders and hearing tales of fights over religious expression. Local preachers, he concluded, were being treated "like drug dealers."

"During that time, I saw ordinary people complaining of injustice everywhere. No one spoke up for them," Zhang said. "I realized that nobody but Jesus can save this country and save the people."

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Virus a "good infection"

Do you realize how close this is to the way a virus is spread? From a barber to a customer in his chair? It reminded me of a phrase by C.S. Lewis: "Good infection." We have, over time, lost touch with the way the first Christians did their job. Paul and Barnabas did not have a radio program or a printing press. And yet they so moved people that someone cried, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

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Just two men with news, that is all they were. And yet, they carried a virus. It occurs to me that if this could happen in Rome in ancient days, and in China in our own day, maybe we need to think more deeply about what can be done where we are. We have a good infection that can end up saving, not only a country, but mankind. Maybe we should sneeze on someone?

But I have much more to say about this, and I say it in a brand new program titled, *The Christian Virus*. You can have a *FREE*, advance CD of the program by checking the box on the enclosed card and returning it to us. Frankly, some of the most dramatic and exciting things in modern history are taking place around us, and it is too easy to miss them. I want to ensure you're kept informed, so ask for this CD. It is one you must not miss.

A Listener Shares His Thoughts

“Dear Ron: I value your studies of scripture and enjoy them every morning at 5:30 am Norfolk, Va on 940am. I would like your comments on the following: 1. Owning guns for self defense and the whole issue of when do you resist an aggressor. I am not inclined to lie down but when I look at the martyrs/early Christians I have to stop and think. Jesus set up a heavenly kingdom, that is what we are fighting for, not a national system. All the same I believe I would fight to live under the constitution versus Muslim or communist rule and I would consider was approved by God. I do not see the sense of letting a bully grow in power on a daily basis. What level of resistance is allowed by scripture. 2. God ordains governments for his purposes. At what point is a revolution/overthrow of government ordained righteous, when it is done for the correct reasons I would suppose, ie when fighting for his honor. If you disagree with revolution, how do you square that with the American Revolution and all the promises to Abraham involved. I look forward to hearing your opinions on this matter(s). If you have teachings already posted I would appreciate those. Keep up the good work. Thanks, Sal, An Architect from Virginia (LOL) I hope you get the reference and its tie to the subject matter. I can feel his spirit so to speak. There is something in the water here that attracts freedom. Truth and Justice, The American Way. Kind of corny but true to the bone. That shining lamp on a hill.”

**If you would like to have answers to his questions,
call 1-888-BIBLE 44 and ask for the *FREE* booklet
*Capitol Punishment, A Christian Dilemma.***



In Memory

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges a generous donation made in memory of Renee M. Meglan of Springfield, Missouri, who passed away January 14, 2010. She is survived by her husband, Kurt; her two children, Allison Grace and Jacob James; and her parents, James (Tony) and Marcia Davis. Renee placed her faith in God and loved Christ. Her genuinely nice and caring spirit will be missed. Our prayers and deepest sympathy are with her family.

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*That the man of God may be
proficient and equipped
for every good work.*