

# The Impact of Christian Faith on Asian America



An Incomplete History

# Goals for This Inquiry

1. Understand the impact of spirituality on culture, family, justice
2. In some cases, to understand our own experience a little better
3. For Christians, understand the challenges confronting standing at the intersection of two cultures

# Demographics

1. Filipino-Americans: 80 – 90%
2. Korean-Americans: 70 – 77%
3. Chinese-Americans: ~30%
4. Vietnamese-Americans: ~30%

# Christian Faith in the Philippines

- 1521 AD. Ferdinand Magellan lands at the Philippines, introduces both Spanish rule and Roman Catholic faith
  - **KEY QUESTION: Is Christianity for the oppressor or the oppressed? What is the truth about the Christian faith?**
- 1862 – 1875. Pedro Pelaez, Jose Burgoz, and Archbishop Martinez champion cause of Filipino priests.
- 1872 . Martyrdom of Filipino priests Burgoz, Gomez, Zamora, ‘for treason.’ Jose Rizal begins Propaganda Movement for Philippine liberties.

# Christian Faith in the Philippines

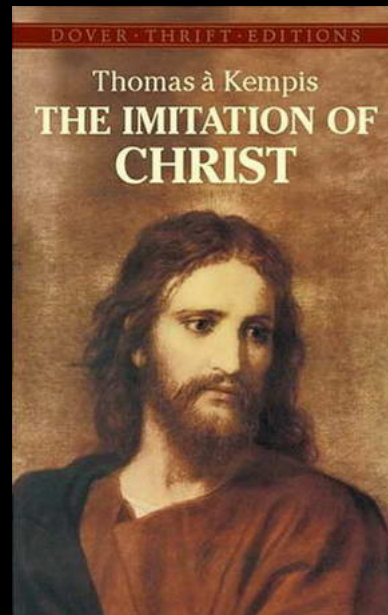
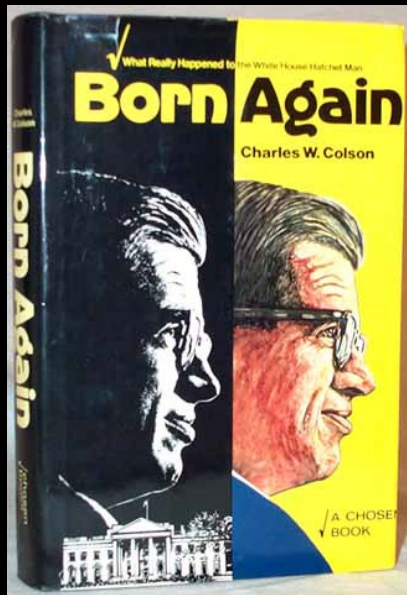
- 1896 – 1898. Failed revolution: Anti-Spanish Philippine patriots call their short-lived government ‘the most democratic Republic of Asia’ and ‘the first Christian Republic in the Orient.’
- 1898. The U.S. gains the Philippines from Spain for \$20 million after the Spanish-American War. Also, the YMCA establishes first Protestant presence.
- 1899. The First Philippine Republic formed in January, declares war on the U.S. The fighting lasts until 1913, claiming the lives of about 1 million Filipinos.

# Christian Faith in the Philippines

- 1946. The U.S. gives independence to the Philippines on paper.
- 1966. Ferdinand Marcos, backed by the U.S. because of U.S. military and economic interests in the Pacific, becomes President of the Philippines.
- 1986. Philippine 'People Power' movement, made up largely of Filipino Catholics, ousts Marcos. Corazon Aquino elected President of the Philippines.

# Christian Faith in the Philippines

- Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino



# Christian Faith in the Philippines

- “It is true, one can fight hatred with a greater hatred, but...it is more effective to fight hatred with greater Christian love...I have decided to pursue my freedom struggle through the path of nonviolence, fully cognizant that this may be the longer and the more arduous road...Only I will suffer solitary confinement once again, and possibly death...But by taking the road of revolution, how many lives, other than mine, will have to be sacrificed?”
  - Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino



# Christian Faith in the Philippines



# Christian Faith in the Philippines



# Christian Faith in the Philippines



# Christian Faith in the Philippines

- Present.
  - ~80 % Catholic
  - 5 – 10% Protestant or Independent
  - 5 – 10% are Muslim, Buddhist, tribal or other religion.

# Christian Faith in Filipino-America

- 1906 – 1910. First major wave of immigration, to Hawaii: 2,915 Filipino contract workers arrived in 1910.
  - Simon Ygloria, Jose Alba, and Pedro Royola become some of the first Filipino missionaries and ministers in Hawaii. The ministry focuses on guidance of young men.
- 1920 – 1929. Second major wave of immigration, to California: 31,092 admitted to CA, a majority come from HI.

# Christian Faith in Filipino-America

- 1920. The Archdiocese of San Francisco, CA established a Filipino Catholic Center in 1920
  - Involved a boarding house and recreation facilities, again to address the issue of guidance of young men.
- 1928. In Los Angeles Filipino Town, Silvestre Morales, a Filipino evangelist, met with Royal and Eve Dye to launch the L.A. Filipino Christian Fellowship
  - Offered Sunday worship services, band music, drama, native songs, forum discussions, community meeting space, games, and educational lectures to the whole Filipino community.
  - It affiliated with the Filipino Students' Christian Movement in NY and sponsored clubs: Debating, Athletic, Drama, Choir, and the Jurisprudence Society.

# Christian Faith in Filipino-America

- 1931. In Stockton, CA's Little Manila, Rev. Vicente Zambra established the Filipino Christian Fellowship out of an earlier organization, the Lighthouse Mission.
  - The ministry offered dormitories to students and single men from farms.
- 1942. Multi-ethnic mission. Trinity Presbyterian Church founded in Stockton, CA.
  - Though the church was primarily commissioned to work among Filipinos, it operated with open doors to all peoples.
  - Trinity became a spiritual home to Navajo, Spanish Americans, Mexicans, Portuguese, Koreans, Anglos, and African-Americans. A multi-ethnic congregation was very unusual for the U.S. in this time!

# Christian Faith in Filipino-America

- 1965. Third major wave of immigration, after the U.S. passed the Hart – Cellar Immigration Reform Act.
  - By 1980, the Philippines replaced all European countries as the leading foreign provider of accountants, engineers, nurses, physicians, dentists, teachers, and technical workers.



# Christian Faith in Filipino-America

- September 8, 1965. The Delano grape strike began. Mostly Filipino farm workers walked off farms of grape growers, demanding federal minimum wage. They were joined by the predominantly Mexican-American National Farmworkers Association, led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. They were strengthened by the California Migrant Ministry.

Philip Vera Cruz

A Personal  
History of Filipino  
Immigrants and the  
Farmworkers  
Movement

By  
Craig Scharlin  
and Lilia V. Villanueva

With an Introduction by  
John Silva



# Observations

1. Even when Christian faith comes from the oppressor, it cannot be maintained that way because of the belief that Jesus saves us from human evil: he is on the side of the poor, and brings reconciliation, justice, love.

# Christian Faith in Korea

1. 1784: Korean Catholic evangelism without foreign missionaries!
2. 1884: Presbyterians and Methodists started offices next door; also start medical services and schools
3. 1919: Korean Christians lead Korean Independence Movement

# Christian Faith in Korea



# Christian Faith in Korean-America

- 50% of K-A immigrants to the US have some sort of Christian background
- 70-77% of K-A immigrants regularly attend church
- 1970: 75 churches
- 1990: 2000 churches
- 40% of K-A immigrants became Christians after coming to the US
- Why such growth?

# Growth Factors: Upsides and Downsides

- Language & Culture
- Community and Social Support
- Social Services
- Social Status and Worth

# Language and Culture

- Language
  - Being able to understand the worship and the sermon
  - Korean language schools
- Culture
  - Celebration of one's home culture
  - Serving Korean food during Korean holidays

# Community / Social Connections

- Support for the alienated ethnic
- Like the Black church, the Korean church is the main social network
- Church as an extended family



# Social Services

- Immigrant reception center
- Pastor providing social services, language translation, etc.
- Youth and children's ministry

# Social Status

- Everyone invited to join church
- 27-32% of the church has leadership positions
- Loss of identity and status because of immigration
- Helps the formation of identity and status for the alienated immigrant

# Observations and Questions

1. When the Christian faith enters a people group, Christian values of **evangelism** and **social justice** shine. But over time, cultural values (status, money, etc.) take over. How do 2nd generation believers relate to non-Koreans and non-Christians, and care for the poor?
2. It's not always easy to distinguish between cultural values and truly Christian values

# Christian Faith in China



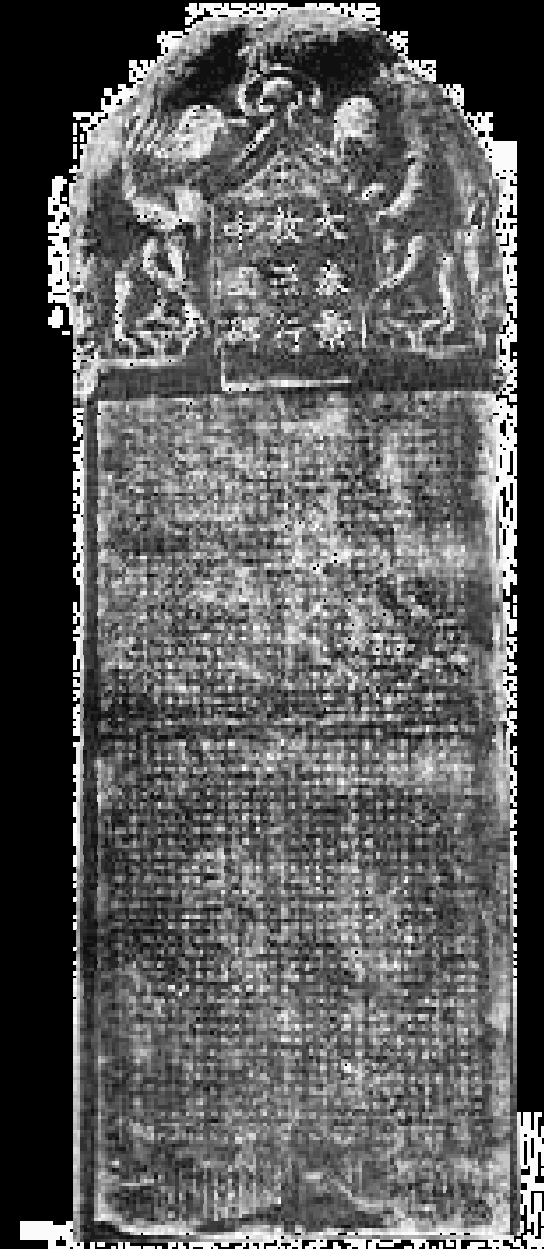
**64 AD. Christian tradition says the faith arrived in China.**

Wang Weifan, Professor of Theology at Jinling Theological Seminary in Nanjing, suggests that this is early Christian stonework, dating back to the Han Dynasty (25 AD – 220 AD). The wise men bearing gifts are on the left, the manger scene is in the center, and assassins are on the right (from Matthew 2).

# Christian Faith in China



**638 AD.** A stone inscription is carved testifying to an already large, established church in the ancient Chinese capital of Xian and influential in the upper levels of the Tang Dynasty.



# Christian Faith in China

- **1215 AD.** Genghis Khan's son Tolui married a Christian woman named Sorkaktani.
  - Kublai Khan, her son became Emperor of China
  - Her sons were also emperors of Mongolia and Persia
- **1275 – 1295 AD.** Marco Polo found large numbers of Christians in China.
- **1400 AD.** Tamerlane converted to Islam and persecuted Christians to near extinction

# Christian Faith in China

- **1582 AD.** Jesuits led by Matteo Ricci once again initiate mission work in China, introducing Western science, mathematics, and astronomy.
  - Missionary work was met by resistance by the emperor
- **1637 AD.** Jesuit missionaries rediscover the Christian stone dating back to 638 AD.



# Christian Faith in China

- **1884.** Dr. Sun Yat-Sen organizes resistance to the corrupt Qing Dynasty.
  - In 1911, He was elected the Provisional President of the Republic of China.
- **1925.** At the end of his life, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen said:
  - ‘As a Christian I have wrestled with the devil for forty years. You should do likewise and believe in God.’
  - ‘Even when I die I want people to know that I am a Christian.’
- **1949 – present.** Christian faith grows despite persecution: from 40 million to 130 million total Christians.



# Christian Faith in Chinese-America

- Population: ~3.5 million Chinese Americans
  - Chinese: 3<sup>rd</sup> most common language in the US
- Three waves of Chinese immigration
  - 1820-1882 – less than 20% Christian
  - 1949-1977 – changes in U.S. legislation
  - 1980-present - 66 churches to 800 churches
- Chinese Social Societies
  - Clan or Company, “Kongsi”
  - Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
  - Tongs

# Christian Faith in Chinese-America

1. Dissolving of the Tongks
2. Cultural and Language Centers
3. Preservation of Contemplative Spirituality
4. Social Services
5. Political Advocacy

# Larger Observations & Questions

1. Spirituality and Story: Circular or Linear?

