



STUDY GUIDE

WHY HAS THE WEST BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL?

KEY TERMS: Western civilization Judeo-Christian tradition revelation
reason democracy free enterprise

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <i>during</i> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <i>after</i> the video.
<p>What achievements happened whilst Western thought evolved?</p> <p>According to Judeo-Christian beliefs, what are the rules that God lays down vital for?</p> <p>According to historical Greek thinking, what is it that drives our understanding and exploration of the universe and guides us towards knowing truth?</p>	<p>What are the two main perspectives regarding Western civilization and the outcomes of developing Western civilization?</p> <p>Why is the balance between revelation and reason so important?</p>

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- At the beginning of the video, Mr. Shapiro contends that in terms of Western civilization, “The left likes to focus on the bad – genocide, slavery, environmental destruction. But those have been present in every civilization from time immemorial. The positives are unique to the West. Religious tolerance, abolition of slavery, universal human rights, the development of the scientific method: these are accomplishments of a scope and scale that only the West can claim. These aren’t the only achievements that make the West special and uniquely successful. As Western thought evolved, it secured the rights of women and minorities, lifted billions of people out of poverty, and invented most of the modern world.” Why do you think that Leftists tend to focus exclusively on the negative outcomes of Western civilization instead of considering the positive outcomes as well and weighing the outcomes in comparison? Explain. What factors do you think contribute towards Western society being so uniquely successful, especially in terms of elevating the quality of life for so many people? Explain.
- In another part of the video, Mr. Shapiro points out that, “Without Judeo-Christian values, we fall into scientific materialism – the belief that physical matter is the only reality – and therefore also fall into nihilism – the belief that life has no meaning, that we’re merely stellar dust in a cold universe. Without Greek reason, we fall into fanaticism – the belief that fundamentalist adherence to unprovable principles represents the only path toward meaning. The Soviet Union, Communist China and other socialist tyrannies rejected faith and murdered 100 million people in the 20th century. Much of the modern Muslim world has embraced faith but rejected reason.” Why do you think that some modern societies reject faith or reject reason- even though they have the benefit of historical review to see what has worked and what hasn’t worked? Explain. Why do you think that so many people often tend to think so narrowly and so strictly in terms of finding meaning, purpose, and happiness in their lives and the in the lives of people in their society? Explain.
- However, Mr. Shapiro notes that, “Western civilization, and only Western civilization, has found a way to balance both religious belief and human reason,” and that, “Nowhere is this more perfectly expressed than in the American Revolution in which the Founding Fathers took the best of the European Enlightenment with its roots in Greek thought and the best of Judeo-Christian practice with its roots in the Bible and melded them into a whole new political philosophy.” What factors do you think led to a portion of humankind figuring out how to transcend its base instincts and move towards a truly more civilized and prosperous society- one that can continuously reconcile revelation and reason successfully? Explain. Do you think that the Founding Fathers of the U.S. were right to draw so heavily upon Judeo-Christian principles and values equally with Greek thought and reason when guiding the creation of a new nation? Why or why not?
- Mr. Shapiro explains that, “Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that every human is created in the image of God; that is, each individual’s life is infinitely valuable... The far more natural belief is that the strong should subjugate the weak – which is precisely what people did in nearly every society in all of history. Only by recognizing the divine in others did we ever move beyond this amoral thinking toward the concern for human rights, democracy, and free enterprise that characterize the West. But Judeo-Christian religion alone didn’t build our modern civilization. We also required Greek reason to teach us objective observation: that man has the capacity to search beyond revelation for answers.” What do you think Mr. Shapiro means by the phrase ‘recognizing the divine in others?’ Explain. Do you agree with

Mr. Shapiro's assertion that the ability to reason is what balances out revelation and the probable slide towards fanaticism? Why or why not?

- At the end of the video, Mr. Shapiro sums up his thesis and concludes that, "...we need both – Jerusalem and Athens. Revelation and reason. And yet many want to reject both. These people call themselves 'Progressives.' Ironically, they want to take us backwards, to a time when man was governed neither by reason nor faith, but by feeling, and therefore back to a time of moral chaos and disorder, of feeling over fact. It would be a fatal mistake to follow the 'Progressives.' Stick with Athens and Jerusalem." Why do you think that Leftists want to govern society exclusively based on feelings- i.e. why do Progressives reject revelation and reason outright instead of at least attempting to reconcile them with feelings? Explain. What do you think Mr. Shapiro means when he warns that following the Progressives would be a 'fatal mistake?' Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Chinese crackdown on religion

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the articles "China Launches Massive New Wave of Persecution Against Christians: 'There Is No Freedom at All,'" and "China cracks down on religion, crosses burned at Christian churches, Xi Jinping photos installed," then answer the questions that follow.

- What type of persecution has been taking place in China? What does President Jinping's 5-Year Plan aim to do? How has the government been taking steps to implement the plan? What has happened to some Christians? How many Christians are estimated to be in the country? What are crosses being replaced with? Who is Liang Zhang, and what does he describe as happening at his church? What do 'information officers' do? What is happening to online sales of Bibles?
- Do you think that people in China should be allowed to practice whatever religion they choose? Why or why not? In what ways might religious practice be a 'threat' to the government in China? Why do you think that the government in China focuses so much on symbolism- i.e. why are symbols so important that the government is taking the religious ones down and putting up the propaganda ones? Do you think that the Chinese government will always be totally successful in suppressing religion and 'outside' influences? Why or why not? What do you think drives people to attempt to find meaning in the world and in their lives?
- Which points in the article support points made in the video? Do you think that people in current non-Western cultures will ever find another way towards a moderate, i.e. non-extremist, life other than the Jerusalem/Athens balance presented in the video? If so, what might that way be? If not, do you think that those cultures will eventually reform towards a Jerusalem/Athens model? Explain.



QUIZ

WHY HAS THE WEST BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL?

- 1. Which of the following are accomplishments only the West can claim?**
 - a. Religious tolerance
 - b. Abolition of slavery
 - c. Universal human rights
 - d. All of the above.

- 2. Western civilization has found a way to balance both _____ and _____.**
 - a. racism; tolerance
 - b. slavery; environmental destruction
 - c. religious belief; human reason
 - d. toxic masculinity; genocide

- 3. Jerusalem represents religious _____.**
 - a. reason
 - b. revelation
 - c. revelry
 - d. restitution

- 4. Athens represents _____.**
 - a. reason
 - b. revelation
 - c. revelry
 - d. restitution

- 5. What happened to socialist tyrannies that rejected faith?**
 - a. They made great scientific discoveries.
 - b. They experienced an economic boom in the 20th century.
 - c. They brought peace to the Middle East.
 - d. They murdered 100 million people in the 20th century.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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China Launches Massive New Wave of Persecution Against Christians: 'There Is No Freedom at All'

08-12-2018 [Kayla Root](#)



China Churches

A massive new wave of persecution of Christians has been taking place in China.

In the spring, China's president Xi Jinping introduced a 5 year plan to "sinicize" all the nation's religions by infusing them with "Chinese characteristics" such as loyalty to the Communist Party.

Over the last several months, the government has taken steps toward this measure by shutting down hundreds of private Christian "house churches" and seizing Bibles.

The unregistered Protestant house churches that sprung up independent of the official Christian Council, were largely tolerated at one point but have since become a target.

"Chinese leaders have always been suspicious of the political challenge or threat that Christianity poses to the Communist regime," said Xi Lian, a scholar of Christianity in China at Duke University. "Under Xi, this fear of Western infiltration has intensified and gained a prominence that we haven't seen for a long time."

Some Christians have lost their jobs, been evicted from their homes, or even jailed for their faith.

In March, a prominent Chinese house church leader was sentenced to seven years in prison after he built Christian schools in Myanmar.

ChinaAid reports that last month, half a dozen Christians were sentenced to up to 13 years in jail for involvement in a so-called "cult."

ChinaAid says because of this crackdown, several dozen pastors and their families have fled to the United States in recent years.

"The government says that we have religious freedom, but really there is no freedom at all," said one pastor's wife, who asked to remain anonymous for her husband's safety. "Many of our Christian brothers and sisters are upset and fearful."

Experts say the new wave of persecution comes as the country undergoes a religious revival.

Reports say there are an estimated 67 million Christians, including Catholics, in the country — which means China is on track to become home to the world's largest Christian population in a matter of decades.

"After the 'collapse' of communist ideology, no value system has been in place to fill the spiritual vacuum," said writer Zhang Lijia. "China has witnessed a religious revival in recent decades precisely because of this vacuum and relaxed control."

Under the new crackdown, children and communist party members are banned from churches in some areas, and at least one township has encouraged Christians to replace posters of Jesus with portraits of President Xi.

ChinaAid founder and pastor Bob Fu said, "I think it has to do really with President Xi Jinping's ideology. He is really wanting to take China to Chairman Mao's old, kind of, path by exercising more political control, mind control, ideological, a Sinicization into the communist party's ideology, and anything else would be regarded as a threat."

China cracks down on religion, crosses burned at Christian churches, Xi Jinping photos installed

By Ian Burrows and Bang Xiao

Updated 25 Sep 2018, 12:25am

China has intensified its crackdown on religion, with images emerging of crosses being burned and destroyed at Christian churches.

The crosses are said to often be replaced with objects such as the Chinese flag and photos of Chinese President Xi Jinping and former Communist Party leader Mao Zedong.

In one video posted on Twitter earlier this month, fire is seen engulfing the cross at the Chinese Christian Church in Xinxiang city, in the country's central Henan province.

Liang Zhang, 48, the pastor of a house church in Henan's Shangqiu city, said the state had been tightening its control over church operations.

"In the beginning, they said that children would not be allowed to enter, and signs on the outside should be removed, including the cross and other signs of faith," Mr Zhang told the ABC.

"And then they came into the church saying that things inside should be removed.

"For example, the banner saying: 'For God, so love the world' and the scriptures were torn down, and all things related to the Bible and faith had to be cleared out."



Photo:

Photos of Chinese President Xi Jinping and former Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong flank a cross inside a church. (Supplied: Liang Zhang)

China's campaign to 'Sinicise' religion

Several videos sent by Mr Zhang to the ABC, and others circulating on social media, appear to show the forced destruction of crosses and changes to churches' appearances.



Photo: Authorities make changes to the exterior of a church in Zhengzhou city, Henan province. (Supplied: Liang Zhang)

In some videos, which Mr Zhang said were filmed recently in Henan, authorities use cranes to take down crosses, while others show officials forcing their way into underground churches.

The campaign corresponds with the Government drive to "Sinicise" religion by demanding loyalty to the officially atheist Communist Party and eliminating any challenge to its power over people's lives.

Mr Zhang said the clampdown had become more dramatic in recent months, with even state-sanctioned churches targeted.

"Since June, they started to ask us to tear down things about Sunday School for kids," Mr Zhang said.

"[Many] of the big official TSPM churches and the family churches were closed down," he added, referring to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, a state-sanctioned church.

Mr Zhang said the Government was installing "information officers", who report behaviour that is anti-government or seen as a threat to social stability, in churches.

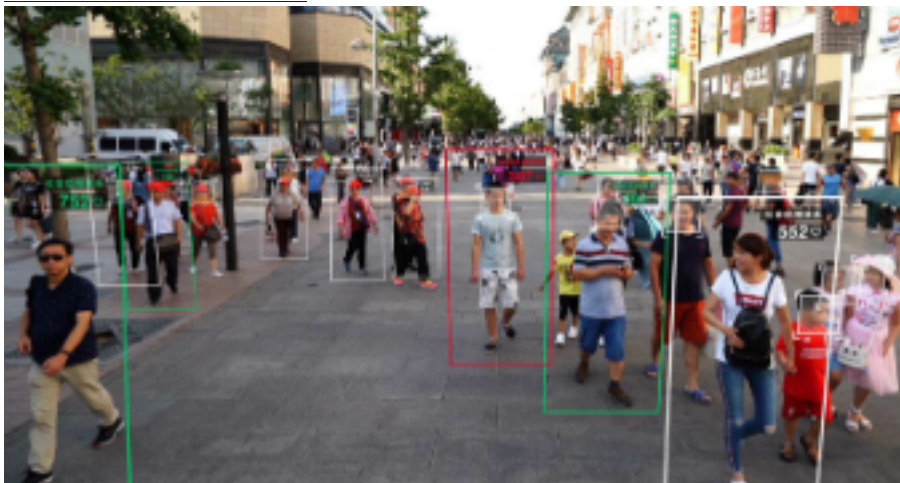
He said the only places where the Bible could be discussed freely were small church setups in houses, where 20-30 people could gather.



Photo: Millions of Chinese attend underground churches like this Protestant one in Beijing. (Supplied: Wayne Mcallister)

Under Chinese law, religious followers are only allowed to worship in congregations registered with authorities, but many millions belong to so-called underground or house churches that defy government restrictions.

Leave no dark corner



China is building a digital dictatorship to exert control over its 1.4 billion citizens. For some, "social credit" will bring privileges, for others, punishment, as Matthew Carney reports.

Mr Zhang said dozens of churches had been shut down in his county and those remaining were beginning to "look like culture clubs" rather than religious buildings.

"All of the ... religious facilities inside the church have been removed [and] the national flag will have to be hung at the gate before October 1st," he said.

"We now have our cross in the middle of our presidents' portraits, which are President Xi and Chairman Mao's portraits."

The latest tightening of control follows moves earlier this year to pull bibles from sale through online bookstores across China, sparking outrage from Chinese Christians.

Crackdown comes as Vatican reaches deal with China

The crackdown on religion was continuing even as Beijing was negotiating a landmark deal with the Vatican over the appointment of bishops.

On Saturday, the Vatican signed an agreement giving it a long-desired and decisive say in the appointment of bishops in China, though critics labelled it a sell-out to the Chinese Government.



Photo: China has been appointing bishops without the Pope's consent. (AP: Alessandra Tarantino)

The deal resolved one of the major sticking points between China and the Vatican in recent years, with the Vatican agreeing to accept seven bishops who were previously named by Beijing without the Pope's consent.

The Vatican has said the accord, a breakthrough after years of negotiations, was "not political but pastoral", and hoped it would lead to "the full communion of all Chinese Catholics".

Bob Fu, the founder of Christian human rights organisation ChinaAid, was among those to hit out at the agreement.

"While we understand the eagerness of Vatican for seeking more legitimacy in the eye of the Chinese Communist Party, this reported deal is nothing but a betrayal of both the millions of suffering persecuted Christians in China and the global Catholic Church," he said.

Joseph Zen, a Chinese cardinal of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong, said the deal lacked detail and helped empower the Government.

"With the agreement the [Chinese] Government can tell the Catholics: 'Obey to us! We are in agreement with your Pope!'"