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Rodney Stark, Xiuhua Wang
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Rodney Stark, Xiuhua Wang : A Star in the East: The Rise of Christianity in China before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Star in the East: The Rise of Christianity in China:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Brief and insightfulBy Leib Gershon MitchellThis book was good.1. I counted something like 140 references. That works out to just about one primary reference per page.2. Baylor University is known to be a Baptist university, yet the authors were very even handed in their treatment (even though one could imagine that they would have had reasons to be enthused about the Christianization of China or reasons to

be smug about the failure of the Catholic church to expand in China).3. The book was wonderfully brief (the whole thing can be read in about 3 hours). The actual text is something like 140 pages (I have to estimate because Kindle does not give page numbers).4. The book is several things in one. There are 6 chapters.a. New Religious Awakening (current circumstances in China and the dramatic increase in recent years);b. Christian Missions to China (detailing how Christianity came to be what it is in China (exclusive of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau) and some of its various persecutions (i.e. the Boxer Rebellion));c. Repression and Christianity (the stories of some Chinese Christians who would not be broken of their beliefs in spite of years of imprisonment/ physical torture/ persecutions);d. Converting the Educated;e. Converting Rural China;f. Future Prospects and Consequences (295 million by 2030 and 580 million by 2040).What do we learn from this neat little book? Quite a bit, as it happens:1. A lot of people (academics) try to smear the church as an institution of poor and stupid people. This is not quite right. It appears that a most of the missionary work is done to upper class Chinese people. (University graduates, etc.) At best, number of people who were converted among poor and rich was about equal.2. Some people like to imagine that the missionary work is done by foreigners trying to find a way to convert Chinese people. But according to these authors (convincingly), most of the work is done by local Chinese converting their own kinds.3. It is commonly imagined that the Chinese state is repressive toward the church. But that appears to not be the case. In the same way that China is nominally Communist-- but not really (in practice, they are open to market reforms and state capitalism), here they appear to be nominally atheist (but in practice willing to leave the people to worship as they will).4. We learn a bit about "the strength of weak ties." This is a famous idea in the academic world-- but brought to life in an interesting and unforeseen way here. In a nutshell, people who are poorer tend to have stronger ties with fewer people, but those who are wealthy have weaker ties with a larger number of people. Apparently, the latter types of ties are more useful in leveraging for building careers. Could it be that the church will create such a network of people in China? Only time will tell.,5. The authors take to task the MANY authors who have made predictions both about China (the 2006 prediction that the country would be democratic by 2015) as well as popular misconceptions that just won't die (Protestant work ethic).6. Finding a religious belief is not usually something that is done by poor people. And this is because finding food and shelter is "to be wholly without a sense of futility" (Eric Hoffer). But it people who are well-fed who have time to ponder existential questions, such as "values" and the "meaning of life." Why should we not be surprised that as China gets richer there are more people who have time to find such needs?7. There is discussion of why the Protestants have succeeded in conversion whereas the Catholics have not. (Doesn't it seem like the Catholic Church has a lag time of at least 500 years?) The answers that they give are: a. The Catholic Church insists on uniformity of doctrine (and therefore charismatic preachers/ preachers who have not been trained for years and years can't get a start) and the right to appoint its own bishops (this is a sovereignty issue that the government will not "just drop").Verdict: This book is worth the time that it takes to read because it gives just a little bit more insight into a specialized aspect of the fascinating land of China.It is better and more thoroughly researched than David Aikman's book *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China And Changing the Global Balance of Power* (even though that book is cited in this) and should be read in preference to that book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great overview of Christianity in ChinaBy E. JohnsonIf you like stats and you are interested in the rise of Christianity in China, you will find this book to be worth your time. I had the chance to spend three weeks in this country, so I read this book before I went to help me better understand what Christianity is all about. According to the stats, China had 60 million Christians in China in 2007 and the growth rate is about 7%. This means most people you meet will be converts and not just born into the church, which is exactly what I found to be true. All in all, it's to-the-point and easy-to-read format made this a valuable reference book and will provide a helpful background for many interested in this topic.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Star in the EastBy Linda AttiaThis book was very informative with matters about the Chinese church . It looks at surveys of Christian populations , it looks at attitudes and even health of Christians compared to non Christian s. I found it well written and even objective. It seemed to be a good sociological study.

What is the state of Christianity in China, really? Some scholars say that China is invulnerable to religion. Some say that past efforts of missionaries have failed, writing off those who were converted as nothing more than rice Christians, or cynical souls who had frequented the missions for the benefits they provided. Some wonder if the Cultural Revolution extinguished any chances of Christianity in China. Rodney Stark and Xiuhua Wang offer a different perspective, arguing that Christianity is alive, well, and even on the rise. Stark approaches the topic from an extensive research background in both Christianity and Chinese history, and Wang provides an inside look at Christianity and its place in her home country of China. Both authors cover the history of religion in China, disproving older theories concerning not only the number of Christians, but the kinds of Christians that have emerged in the past 155 years. Stark and Wang claim that when just considering the visible Christians, those not part of underground churches, there are still thousands of Chinese being converted to Christianity each day, and forty new churches opening each week.A Star in the East draws on two major national surveys to sketch a close-up of religion in China. A reliable estimate is that by 2007 there were approximately 60 million Christians in China. If the current rate of growth

were to hold until 2030, there would be more Christians in China about 295 million than in any other nation on earth. This has significant implications, not just for China but for the greater world order. It is probable that Chinese Christianity will splinter into denominations, likely leading to the same kinds of political, social, and economic ramifications seen in the West today. Whether you're new to studying Christianity in China, or whether this has been your area of interest for years, *A Star in the East* provides a reliable, thought-provoking, and engaging account of the resilience of the Christian faith in China and the implications it has for the future.

Sociologist Rodney Stark has done it again. Readers who enjoyed his earlier works on the Crusades, the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire, and Christianity's role in ending slavery will be grateful that he has now applied his brilliance to China. David Aikman, author of *Jesus in Beijing* and other books, and former China correspondent for *TIME* magazine. This is a concise, well-written, and stimulating account of the growth and prospects of Christianity in the world's largest socialist society. Rodney Stark, a leading theorist in the sociology of religion, well-known for his explanations of the rise of Christianity in the Mediterranean world, collaborates with a young scholar from mainland China to describe and explain the extraordinary recent growth of Christianity in China. Highly recommended. Graeme Lang, retired professor of sociology (2014), and founder of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong. In this brief, very readable account of Christianity in China, authors Stark and Wang argue that cultural incongruity is what has made an opening in Chinese hearts and minds for the Christian faith, while familial and social networking account for the robust patterns of conversion. And contrary to theories that reduce religion to consolation for the poor and marginal, Stark and Wang find that Chinese Christianity is more favored by the affluent and well-educated. This book is a valuable addition to the growing effort to understand Christianity's rise in China. Joel Carpenter, Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, Calvin College. Books on contemporary China have proliferated in recent years, and plenty of them address the remarkable growth of Christianity. What makes *A Star in the East* wholly distinctive though and so very valuable is its reliance on credible and strictly current quantitative evidence. The book thus provides an essential foundation for any future discussion of the religious scene in contemporary China. Philip Jenkins, Baylor University