

Why are missionaries in America?

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The Spirit Moves West: Korean Missionaries in America

BY REBECCA Y. KIM FEBRUARY 7, 2015

“Why are there missionaries in America? This is a Christian country!”

“We send missionaries out. We don’t bring them in.”

“Missionaries in America... I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

These were some of the comments I encountered as I conducted research on the phenomena of missionaries in America. Despite these protests, missionaries from outside of the West do come to the United States, seeking to revitalize and evangelize Americans. Listed below, I provide seven reasons for why missionaries—particularly those from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—are sharing the gospel in “God’s country.”

(1) “We did not come to just enjoy eating beef and butter.”

However they may have entered the United States, there are many theologically conservative and devoted immigrant evangelicals in America that view themselves as a “chosen” people with a divine mission. They believe that they should not just enjoy their lives in America eating “beef and butter” and socializing only with other immigrants in ethnic enclaves. Instead, they should strike out and be the “salt and light” of America and evangelize both locally and internationally.

(2) The United States is the “Great Nation”.

The United States is a top destination for emigrants. It is also a prime destination for self-supporting “lay” missionaries. The factors that draw immigrants to the United States also draw missionaries to America. When asked why missionaries are in America, one of the directors of a large “reverse” mission church explained: “If you are looking for an answer other than spiritual reasons . . . there are various reasons like children’s education, the desire to see the world’s best country, the wealthiest country . . . Almost everyone wants to come to America.” Everyone wants to be in the “great nation,” including missionaries.

(3) The United States is the “Modern Rome”.

Missionaries do not come to America just because it is a “great nation” for immigrants, but also because it is the “modern Rome,” the most powerful nation in the world.

Centering one's mission work in the most powerful nation in the world is simply strategic. The United States is the superpower and therefore a logical base for launching a world mission movement. Once you make it in America as a mission movement, you can also make it elsewhere. You have more power, prestige, and legitimacy if you base your mission movement in the "modern Rome" of our world.

(4) Evangelize America, evangelize the world.

Living in the global nation of nations, missionaries in America don't have to go far to participate in world missions. The world is at their doorstep. If they evangelize in America, they can reach people from all four corners of the world, including China and Muslim nations. The United States is therefore a most important mission field.

(5) The United States is a "Christian" nation in trouble.

Missionaries in America view the United States as a "Christian" nation in trouble. America has lost its spiritual fire with growing materialism, secularism, humanism, and sexual immorality. It is no longer a "city on a hill" or a "beacon of light," and may even become like the now secular and "dark continent" of Europe. Although the United States is a predominately Christian and a dominant missionary-sending nation, it is framed as a nation that has lost its foothold as a leading Christian influence. Its churches are great in number, but they are weak in "Spirit." Missionaries are therefore needed to bring spiritual revival in America.

(6) Create a positive "spiritual trickle-down" effect for world Christianity.

In the world of spiritual warfare, all of Christianity would be in jeopardy if the United States fell as a dominant Christian nation. If, however, the United States is resuscitated and exerts its power as a leading "beacon of light," there will be a positive "spiritual trickle-down" effect for all Christians of the world. The United States is a most important spiritual territory that missionaries must safeguard for Christianity to be the dominant world religion.

(7) How can you be a history maker? Save the history makers.

What happens if people from the formerly colonized and less powerful nations send missionaries back to the western nations that have been the dominant imperial and missionary-sending nations of the last few centuries? What happens if you save the people of the United States, the superpower nation that has been the modern history-making country? You and your country can be history makers as well. If you save the

history maker, you can be a history maker and thereby become a spiritual conqueror on the world stage.

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