

The Missionary Movement in China

An Introduction to the Literature

G. Wright Doyle

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INTRODUCTION

In 1975, my wife and I set out for Asia as new members of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF; now called OMF International). OMF is the successor organization to the China Inland Mission founded by J. Hudson Taylor. We had received three weeks of training during the Candidates Course the previous year, but we were otherwise unprepared for life as cross-cultural missionaries. After six months at the Discipleship Training Centre in Singapore, where I taught several courses, we moved over to the international headquarters of OMF on Orchard Road.

For the next ten weeks, we sat under the teaching of the leaders of OMF, who were mature missionaries with decades of experience. They introduced us to the history and theory of missions in Asia, linguistics, principles for survival in a new culture, and other needful information.

One thing that struck both of us was the evident humility and kindness of most of our teachers, though we were taken aback by the palpable anti-American bias of one or two of them and of a couple of our British classmates. We also noted two other things: We were told to respect the people among whom we would live and whom we would serve, and we were instructed to honor fellow missionaries with whom we disagreed on matters of theology.

These same emphases got our attention when we arrived in Taiwan for language study. For two years, we attended classes for half a day and studied on our own the other half of the day. Our leaders kept pressing upon us the necessity of learning the language well. They were in no hurry to thrust us out as evangelists among a people whom we did not understand and with whom we could not communicate!

Weekly prayer meetings with other OMF missionaries included not only Bible study and prayer, but instruction in how best to live and serve among the Chinese. We were also encouraged to attend the quarterly meetings of all the missionaries in our city. There, we met people from different mission organizations but the same goal: To communicate the gospel of Christ to the Chinese.

After these two years and an early furlough made necessary by a breakdown in my health, we returned to Taiwan, where I taught Greek and New Testament for seven years at China Evangelical Seminary in Taipei.

Why tell you this? Because, in nearly ten years among missionaries, I did not meet a single example of the “ugly missionary” so scathingly criticized in both secular and academic Christian literature. True, we were constantly warned of certain attitudes and actions that would spoil our testimony, such as national pride, pride in our churches back home, impatience, etc., so I should have known that these admonitions sprang from the bad examples our teachers had encountered or read about.

When I began to study the history of the missionary movement in China a few years later, therefore, I was not prepared for some of the acerbic descriptions of previous generations of missionaries. I simply had not met anyone like the villains of this critical literature. I began to think that my experience was unusual and that I was naïve in my mental images of 19th and 20th century missionaries in China.

Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I read one biography or general survey after another. Here, too, I encountered men and women like those I had met in Asia. They were motivated by love for God, and for the Chinese, whom they wanted to see enjoy the benefits of knowing God through faith in Christ. Many of them endured great hardship to bring this message to the millions who had not yet heard. Almost without exception, they tried to learn the language and culture of the Chinese, whom they general

respected, though they did not condone their idolatry or some practices like foot-binding. True, they had their flaws, but in general they served as examples of Christian, even Christ-like, character.

This could not be said of all of them, of course. Tarleton Perry Crawford, who caused Lottie Moon (and others) endless trouble, seems to have been a thoroughly unlikeable person. A few other “rotten apples” show up in the pages of A.J. Broomhall’s seven-volume history of J. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission. Even the “good guys” had their bad moments, as one would expect.

My reading has been limited, I admit. If I delved deeper, especially into the lives of the missionaries who lived in big houses in the cities along the seacoast, I probably would meet more disagreeable types. Furthermore, too many missionaries seem to have assumed the superiority of Western culture in all respects and may not have appreciated some of the finer points of China’s great civilizational heritage.

Perhaps even more galling to Chinese would have been attempts by teachers in Christian colleges to “Westernize” their students, and approval by some missionaries of strong-armed tactics of western imperial powers. These are blemishes on the missionary record.

Nor am I completely unaware of my failings as an ambassador of Christ over the past forty-five years or so. The older I get, the more ashamed I am of not only my youthful follies but of mistakes I have made even after decades of serving among the Chinese. I am still learning, and frequently repenting of my sins of commission and of omission – not working harder at the language, for example. My knowledge of Chinese language and culture remains shallow and selective, and my understanding of the deep structures of Chinese “habits of the heart” is woefully lacking.

Yet, when all is said and done, my reading of the overall history of the missionary movement in China and of biographies of missionaries has made me feel that they were people whom I could admire as genuine heroes and heroines. Time after time, I find myself praying that I could be more like the ones whose lives I record in articles for the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* or in reviews like the ones you will find in the pages to follow.

Perhaps because I have, like them, tried to learn and use a difficult language, become acquainted with a very rich civilization, and because I seek to communicate the message of Christ to an intelligent and sophisticated people, I can sympathize with their imperfections and failures more than arm-chair academics might. I know from experience how hard their task was, even if I have no way to comprehend the enormity of the challenges they faced – famine, drought, civil war, banditry, riots, official persecution, sickness, the deaths of beloved family members, loneliness, slow communications with people back home, etc., etc., etc. I know that I could not have done half as well as they did, and I admire them greatly.

Another thing: Over the years, I have spoken with many Chinese Christians and secular academics. Almost without exception, they have expressed appreciation for the foreign missionaries who brought the gospel to China. When they learn that my wife and I used to belong to “Nei di hui” – the China Inland Mission, as it is still known - they double their praise.

One of the most moving events I have witnessed took place in 2006, when I attended the conference of the Chinese Congress on World Evangelization (CCOWE), held every five years. At a dinner in a huge ballroom with 3,000 people seated, a special ceremony was held to commemorate the coming of Robert Morrison to China in 1807. Dr. James H. Taylor, III, was invited to receive a plaque of gratitude from Chinese Christians, on behalf of all Western missionaries.

Dr. “Jim” Taylor, like his great-grandfather, was a very humble man. Taking the gift with both hands, as Chinese do, he said, “It is all of grace.”

I'm sure that these words convey the feelings of most of the missionaries who have served among the Chinese, both past and present. They – we – are most thankful to God for the immense privilege of serving him among such a great people.

So, in honor of them and of those who sent and supported them through sacrificial gifts and faithful prayers, these reviews/summaries of books about the missionary movement in China are offered to scholars, teachers, students, and interested laymen.

A word about the contents of this collection:

As background to books specifically about missions to China, I have included books on the general history of missions. Why? Early in my missionary career, I was told that we should not confine our reading to the Chinese culture, history, and Christianity in China, but should study the history of missions in other places as well.

After all, missions to China, from the Nestorians to the present, are part of a massive, two-millennia-long movement of people who responded to Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18). Nothing could quench the fire of their love for God and for those "lost sheep" of "other" flocks who still needed to be found and brought into the fold of God's redeemed people.

The records of cross-cultural envoys of Christ across the centuries and around the world furnish contexts, contrasts, and comparisons by which to see the missionary movement in China in a broader and deeper perspective.

Teachers of missions or the history of Christianity in China can assign one or more of these reviews/summaries to students for oral or written reports, or just as supplementary readings. Scholars will find these articles a convenient way to refresh their memories of works they read long ago; there may even be a few titles that they have not yet had a chance to peruse.

Enjoy!

G. Wright Doyle

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PART I: GENERAL SURVEYS AND TREATMENTS

Organized alphabetically by author – click on title below to go directly to that review

Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions

edited by Gerald H. Anderson

Anderson, Gerald H., ed. *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

After many years of on-and-off reading, a page or two at a time, I finally finished this magnificent volume.

Honestly, I was sad when I came to the end of the biographies, for they had opened my eyes, enlightened my mind, and stirred my heart. Though published more than twenty years ago, this massive compendium of information remains an essential resource for all students of Christian missions, world Christianity, and world history.

“Information” doesn’t capture the wealth of these brief entries. Somehow, almost all the contributors were able to include not only the basic biographical data for each person (name, dates, nationality, education, affiliations, accomplishments, publications, etc.), but also a few words of insightful analysis and evaluation. We learn not only who they were and what they did, but how they fit into their historical contexts and, usually, what they contributed to the Christian mission worldwide.

In other words, this dictionary is not just filled with essential facts, but also helpful interpretation.

Unless you possess comprehensive knowledge about the entire history of the worldwide Christian mission, you will find virtually every article not only informative but also stimulating.

“Written by 350 experts from 45 countries, *The Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* contains 2,400 original, signed biographies portraying missionaries from the patristic age to the present, representing all branches of Christianity, arranged in an A-Z format.” (From the back cover)

Who were the missionaries?

Reading through this volume gave me a new understanding of the scope, variety, history, and immense reach of the Christian missionary movement over the past 2,000 years.

Extensive appendices track this international work force: From the early church to 800, more than sixty pioneers and church leaders carried the gospel through throughout the Roman Empires and beyond. The dictionary gives biographies of more than 90 significant figures born from 800 to 1500. After that, the numbers explode: Around 800+ from 1500 to 1800; 1,000 from 1801-1850; 1100+ from 1851-1900; tapering to 600 from 1900- to the latter part of the 20th century.

Of course, these articles represent only a tiny fraction of the total missionary and support force. We are reading only about the truly outstanding ones, but not all the significant workers.

In the past two centuries, women have comprised a major part of missionaries and missions advocates. The *BDCM* contains biographies of 300 of the most notable figures. Still, the great preponderance of entries about men reflects at least two facts: For more than 1,600 years, most missionaries and senders were single men, and after the Protestant missions movement gained momentum, most Protestant female missionaries were wives of men, many of whose stories appear in this volume. They were, of course, indispensable companions, helpers, and partners in the work of their husbands, even if they do not receive separate mention.

Since Stephen, Peter, Paul, and the apostles, martyrdom has been common. Articles on more than 100 “martyrs” demonstrate the high cost of spreading the gospel.

Where did they live and serve?

The Christian missionary movements began in the Roman Empire and with its neighbors, and spread throughout the world, reaching almost every nation by the middle of the twentieth century. This volume includes entries on about 470 Christian witnesses to Sub-Sahara Africa; 390 to Central and Northern Asia (including China, Mongolia, Tibet, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Siberia); 400 to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka; around 140 in Japan and Korea; around 240 to Southeast Asia; 560 in Europe; 110 in the Middle East (including Western Asia); 575 in North America (including Central America and Mexico); 100 to the Pacific Islands; and 175 to South America.

Several things stand out:

1. The large number of Christian senders and missionaries in Europe reflects the long history of Christian expansion in Europe from the time of the early church.
2. Sub-Sahara Africa, India, and North Asia, especially China, were major centers of Christian witness, especially after the 16th century.
3. The huge proportion of entries of those serving in North America shows that colonization and settling were accompanied by vigorous missionary work among the native populations in the first few centuries.
4. The United States and Canada were bases for sending cross-cultural witnesses for more than a hundred years.
5. Lastly, churches in those two countries engaged in energetic outreach of many kinds to their own growing populations.

What did they do?

Because of the particular focus of this website, in the following discussion I will restrict myself to examples from Westerners, especially Protestants, who were involved in the missionary movement in China.

Note: Missionaries whose names are followed with an asterisk (*) are also subjects of shorter or longer articles in the online *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* (www.bdconline.net). Two asterisks (**) after a name indicate that the person is treated in even greater detail in *Builders of the Chinese Church*, edited by G. Wright Doyle (Wipf & Stock, 2014).

Preaching and Bible teaching

For the first hundred years, most Protestant missionaries considered their first task to proclaim the gospel through preaching and teaching. Especially after the First Opium War, when treaty ports were opened to foreigners, missionaries communicated their message in street chapels, open air venues, religious temples, marketplaces, tea shops, and anywhere else they could gain an audience. Space will not allow us to list all of their names. From William Milne*, David Abeel*, Elijah Bridgman*, and William C. Burns*, to J. Hudson Taylor**, John Nevius* and Jonathan Goforth**, they traversed the length and breadth of China, engaging in evangelism and elementary biblical teaching of converts.

Even Timothy Richard used oral proclamation in his early years, along with teaching Christians to memorize large portions of the Bible, before he turned to other methods. In the twentieth century, when more and more missionaries focused on social reform and education, at least half of the foreign workers still made preaching and teaching their main activity. Though members of the China Inland Mission (CIM) like J.O. Fraser* and David Adeney* are often mentioned by Chinese and Westerners alike, other societies fielded intrepid evangelists and preachers, like the Baptist heroine Lottie Moon*.

Literature work

Bible translation: From the beginning, Protestants placed the highest priority on translating the Bible into Chinese. Believing that the Scriptures alone were the inspired Word of God, and that both initial faith and consistent Christian living must stem from a knowledge of the truths revealed in the Bible, they expended enormous time, energy, and resources to produce one translation after another in various dialects of Chinese.

Robert Morrison** (1782-1834) paved the way, of course, with the help of William Milne* (1785-1822), who later joined Morrison in the work. Together, they completed the translation of the entire Bible in 1819. Morrison saw his translation as only a first step. Others quickly began the task of revising his version to make it more accurate and readable. For the next one hundred years, usually working in teams but sometimes singly, Samuel Dyer*, Charles Gützlaff*, Hudson Taylor**, Walter Henry Medhurst*, John L. Nevius*, Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky*, Griffith John**, W.A.P. Martin**, and a host of others took time from other tasks to make the Scriptures available to Chinese readers. Their efforts culminated in the publication in 1919 of the Chinese Union Version, which is still the most widely used translation of the Bible in Chinese.

Missionaries also reduced several minority languages to writing and published portions of the Bible in those new scripts. George W. Hunter*, with the China Inland Mission, translated “scripture portions into Kazak and a dialect of Kalmuk or Western Mongolian,” as well as tracts. Samuel Pollard*, another CIM worker, developed the “Pollard script,” which he used when he translated the New Testament into the Miao language. J.O. Fraser* reduced the Lisu language to writing and produced translations of the Bible, a hymnal, catechism, and other Christian books.

Reference works: Here, too, Morrison** was the pioneer, with his massive three-volume *Chinese-English and English-Chinese Dictionary*, a *Grammar of the Chinese Language*, three-

volume *Vocabulary of the Canton Dialect* (Chinese - English, English - Chinese), plus smaller works. J. Hudson Taylor** added cross references to his revision of the Ningbo New Testament. Schereschewsky* produced reference Bibles in Mandarin and Easy Wenli. Samuel Wells Williams*, like Morrison, compiled a dictionary, called *A Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*.

Tracts and books

By 1895, many Protestant missionaries had acquired enough facility in the written language to have produced several thousand books and tracts on Christian subjects. The “tracts” ranged in length from a few to several hundred pages. These were a testimony to their intelligence and diligence, though they almost always employed Chinese assistants. W.A.P. Martin’s *Tiantao Suyuan (Evidences of Christianity)* “was recognized by the 1907 Centennial Missionary Conference as the single best Christian book of the century” (437). John Nevius* authored *A Manual for Inquirers*. Samuel Schereschewsky* published a Chinese *Book of Common Prayer*.

Believing that Western knowledge on all subjects, written from a Christian perspective, should be made available to Chinese, missionaries published a large number of textbooks and some influential periodicals. Calvin Mateer* was outstanding in this regard, as were Alexander Williamson* and Timothy Richard**.

Education

From the beginning, missionaries opened schools. Usually, they began with primary schools, though later, a system of intermediate and then higher education emerged from the Protestant missionary movement. Almost all missionaries thought that primary schools were an effective means of gaining trust and doing good in pioneer outreach. Later, they sought to educate the children of converts, then to train Chinese church workers and evangelists, and finally to educate elite youth in Western learning.

Hudson Taylor** began teaching Chinese children within months of arriving in Shanghai, and other CIM missionaries used followed suit, but the CIM in general did not rely on these schools as much as other missions did. Missionaries differed about whether English should be taught. Calvin Mateer* insisted on Chinese, while others advocated English, which finally became the practice in mission-founded colleges.

Young J. Allen* established one of several high schools. Timothy Richard** and Samuel Schereschewsky* founded universities. George Leslie Mackay* founded Oxford College in Tamsui, Taiwan, and a theological school that became Taiwan Theological College near Taipei.

Beginning with William Milne’s wife Rachel*, missionaries pioneered education for girls in China. Eliza Jane Bridgman*, wife of Elijah Bridgman*, who opened the Bridgman School in Beijing and then in Shanghai, was only one of hundreds of married and single missionary women who made the education of girls their major form of ministry. Martha Foster Crawford*, wife of Tarleton P. Crawford*, devoted some of her best energies to teaching Chinese Children.

By teaching Chinese converts to read the Bible, missionaries produced a significant group of Chinese whose level of literacy far exceeded that of the population as a whole.

Medical work

From the beginning, showing God's love through physical healing complemented their missionary methods. The famed eye surgeon Peter Parker* is said to have "opened China at the point of a lancet." J. Hudson Taylor** received training in medicine, surgery, and midwifery. In Ningbo, he ran the hospital begun by his fellow missionary William Parker after Parker had to leave China. In Hangzhou, the base of the first group of CIM workers, he opened a clinic where he saw hundreds of patients each week. The CIM went on to found many hospitals and clinics, but they were not alone.

Notable missionary physicians included John Kenneth Mackenzie in Tianjin. Dougald Christie pioneered medical work and medical education in Manchuria, where he founded Manchuria's first hospital and Mukden Medical College, as well as propounding a comprehensive philosophy of medical missions as "integral, not ancillary, to the gospel." Nelson Bell*, a Southern Presbyterian, turned the Love and Mercy Hospital in Haiyiyin into one of the largest in China.

Introducing China to the West

Following in the footsteps of learned Roman Catholics, Protestant missionaries served as the primary interpreters of China to the West well into the twentieth century. Morrison** wrote about Chinese customs, as well as a multitude of other subjects, in his massive dictionary. J. Hudson Taylor** was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society for his observations on the flora and fauna; his articles in the CIM journal *China's Millions* later, supplemented by contributions from CIM workers, covered all aspects of Chinese life. Other invaluable introductions included John Nevius's* *China and the Chinese*; W.A.P. Martin's* *Cycle of Cathay* and *Lore of Cathay*; James Legge's* monumental translations of the Chinese classics; Samuel Wells Williams'* two-volume *The Middle Kingdom*, and Kenneth Scott Latourette's *The Chinese: Their History and Culture* (1967). Other noted Sinologists included Alexander Wylie*, Joseph Edkins*, and Frederick William Baller*. Though not included in this volume, Helen Nevius' biography of her husband, her *Our Life in China*, and R.H. Graves' *Forty Years in China* (1895) all reflected careful and sympathetic observation of Chinese society

Famine relief

When the terrible famine of 1877-78 hit northern China, most missionaries dropped everything else and plunged into emergency relief work. Timothy Richard** is famous for his brilliant organization of relief efforts in cooperation with the government, but many others, including Jenny Faulding Taylor*, Hudson Taylor's second wife, and John L. Nevius* worked tirelessly in the devastated hinterland to provide food and money to destitute sufferers.

Missionaries and Western imperialism

We know that some missionaries served as agents for foreign entities as interpreters, negotiators, or even diplomats. Robert Morrison** worked as an interpreter for the East India Company;

Peter Parker* was U.S. commissioner plenipotentiary for almost two years (1855-57); W.A.P. Martin** “participated actively in the American delegation that produced the Treaty of Tientsin” in 1860. And there were others. Some expressed too much enthusiasm for the “unequal treaties” that opened China to both merchants and missionaries.

In their roles as negotiators, however, these men generally endeavored to mitigate the harsher proposed terms of the treaties in favor of the Chinese. Without their active intervention, the resulting treaties would have been worse for China.

Most missionaries did not approve of the use of force to “open” China, and none of them approved of the hated opium trade, but they all saw the results of Western aggression as the sovereign work of God in making the gospel available to the Chinese people.

What were they like?

We often read that foreign missionaries were proud, arrogant, and contemptuous of the Chinese and their culture. When we look more closely, however, we find that, though there were undoubtedly some missionaries who conformed to this caricature, the vast majority lived lives of love, patience, incredible hard work, and self-sacrifice, and that they loved the Chinese as individuals, even if their Christian convictions led them to criticize certain aspects of Chinese culture and society.

True, a few were like Tarleton P. Crawford, whom everyone agrees was “dogmatic and often irascible,” and who “was repeatedly absorbed with missionary colleagues and nationals.” These types were notable for their rarity, however. The overwhelming majority come across as sincere servants of Christ seeking to bring health and true happiness to the Chinese, whom they loved, and to the nation in which they served, usually for many decades.

Not a few, like William Burns*, J. Hudson Taylor**, and Lottie Moon*, impressed those who knew them by their extraordinary love for God and for others, expressed by heroic labors and apostolic suffering for the cause of the gospel.

Most of the missionaries showed their respect for Chinese culture by expending time and effort to learn the language, familiarize themselves with the customs, and seek to live kindly among the people they came to serve.

Though they did not usually tell us the full names of their Chinese co-workers, it is clear they loved, admired, and valued them as indispensable partners in their work.

Despite their theological differences, they generally cooperated with members of other missionary societies, eventually forging impressive bonds of unity and cooperation, until the disruptive Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the early twentieth century. We see this in the various cooperative endeavors, including Bible translation, literature production, “comity agreements,” and the major missionary conferences, where all worshiped together in a spirit of love and harmony, despite their differences of opinion over some matters of policy. The irreconcilable theological and missiological conflict between J. Hudson Taylor** and Timothy Richard** was an outstanding exception, again until the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy.

The missionaries' legacy

What we have seen in the careers of missionaries to China could equally be said of the countless numbers of Christians who crossed cultural boundaries to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to peoples all over the world throughout Christian history, as masterfully illustrated in the *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*.

What of their legacy?

Very briefly: Missionaries throughout the centuries have been used by God to bring the saving knowledge of Christ to countless individuals; create churches of local believers; introduce literacy; bring healing; revitalize local languages; diffuse the knowledge of different cultures to people of their home nations, thus creating an ever-widening body of understanding and appreciation of our common humanity and our unity in Christ; and lay the foundation for a worldwide Christian community.

As Robert Woodberry has shown, Christian missions and the indigenous churches were founded upon economic, social, legal, and political reforms, including the introduction of Western law and even constitutional changes. Andrew Spencer lists some of Woodberry's findings:

Not only did they educate people, but missionaries brought in the concept of private property so traders wouldn't take advantage of them. They taught new skills, like carpentry and advanced agricultural techniques. Missionaries introduced new crops to countries, which gave indigenous people opportunities to engage in trade with products that were desirable in Europe. (Andrew Spencer "How Christian Missionaries Changed the World for Better," <https://tifwe.org/how-christian-missionaries-changed-the-world-for-the-better/>. Accessed July 10, 2020)

In the last two centuries, Protestant missionaries in China and elsewhere have left two enduring legacies: first, as already mentioned, the existence of self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing churches in every nation and in thousands of people groups; and second, the bringing of the benefits of modernization from the West.

While we can debate the nature of these "benefits," mixed as they have been with the baneful features of modern Western civilization, and while we can deplore the overweening pride of those who considered Western civilization to be categorically and universally superior to all others, we cannot ignore the creation of medical, educational, and social reforms that have lifted millions from disease, poverty, and ignorance.

Nor can we downplay what for Christians is the prime achievement of Christian missions since the time of Christ: Bringing, by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, millions of people into a saving knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and into the worldwide family of God's redeemed children.

That was the cumulative effect for me of reading this stunning volume. The variety, extent, and sheer nobility of the Christian missionary enterprise left me thanking and praising God. Historians will be in debt to Gerald Anderson's marvelous work for decades to come.

China's Reforming Churches: Mission, Polity, and Ministry in the Next Christendom

edited by Bruce P. Baugus

Baugus, Bruce P., ed. *China's Reforming Churches: Mission, Polity, and Ministry in the Next Christendom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014.

This solid volume grew out of a conference held in January 2013, but it includes both new material and revised papers from that meeting.

Its central thesis is that the large and growing church in China today urgently needs both internal church organizational development and a more adequate grounding in theology, and that both presbyterian polity and Reformed theology can meet these needs.

Disclosure: The present reviewer contributed a chapter, but neither he nor any other author receives any share in the royalties.

The Preface states the aims of the book clearly: to inform the reader about both the history and current conditions of Christianity in China, and in the process to challenge some widely held impressions; to guide Christians into more effective support for, and participation in, God's work among the Chinese; to inspire us to engage in various sorts of activity; and to present an argument for the pressing need for Reformed theology and presbyterian (small "P") polity in China's churches today.

The Introduction by editor Bruce Baugus presents about the best overview of the history and present conditions of Christianity in China that I have seen anywhere.

It includes a general description of the political, social, and economic situation, as well as insightful comments about church history. The author believes that Matteo Ricci's attempts at accommodation with Chinese culture "resulted in a syncretistic version of Roman Catholicism" that rightly bothered Dominicans and Franciscans (9), he asserts that the foreign missionary movement did not fail, but succeeded, in that the church that it helped to produce survived decades of turmoil and then vicious attempts to eradicate it entirely, and he shows how Western (especially American) evangelical and Pentecostal Christians – most of them young, inexperienced, and lacking theological training – in China have largely neglected the work of helping Chinese believers form strong congregations organized in accordance with biblical teachings. He acknowledges the great difficulties attending this effort but believes that it is "one of the great kingdom projects of our generation" (23).

Baugus explains why more and more pastors are turning towards presbyterian (small "P") polity – that is, rule by a plurality of elders and associations of congregations in larger networks. He also explains why intellectuals and some "culture Christians" are adopting Reformed theology not only to support "healthy church development but for reconstructing China's culture" (22).

Like some other observers, however, he worries that “the potential politicization of the Reformed brand could harm the vital, ongoing work of church reform, and the subjection of the church and her mission to a culture-changing agenda could undermine it” (22).

The Introduction deserves to be printed separately and disseminated broadly. In fact, I felt that way about many of the chapters in this well-edited volume.

If you are not a Presbyterian, don’t let the “Presbyterian” focus of much of the book put you off. All the chapters discuss matters of prime importance beyond the confines of Presbyterian theology and polity. These include history, theology, church polity in general, conditions for ministry in China today, and the crucial question of contextualization/indigenization.

Limitations of space prevent full summaries of all the essays in the book; what follows, though quite long for a book review, is still selective and very limited. I really encourage you to read this important work carefully.

Part One: The History of Presbyterianism in China

Chapter 1 surveys the history of Western Presbyterian and Reformed mission in China. The author, a Chinese, is quick to point out the very substantial contribution missionaries from this wing of the church have made in China, beginning with Robert Morrison. Many early LMS workers were Presbyterians. The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) began sending people in 1837, and eleven other Presbyterian denominations followed. Robert Nevius, Calvin Mateer, and Hunter Corbett were all American Presbyterians.

As liberalism began to affect Protestants in the West, more and more missionaries came to China with “modernist” theological leanings, including W.A.P. Martin, an American Presbyterian. Especially after the Boxer rebellion, in which hundreds of more conservative missionaries were killed, the proportion of liberal missionaries in China dramatically increased. Among Presbyterians, John Leighton Stuart serves as an example of this trend.

As a result, more and more emphasis was placed upon “Christianizing” China – through education, medicine, and political reform – and upon organizational unity, with a de-emphasis upon the gospel and upon traditional theology. Conservatives bucked this trend, of course, as the next chapter illustrates. Since the 1980s, while very few liberal Presbyterians have gone to China, many evangelicals have been active, including the late Jonathan Chao, and have helped to build what is now a strong Reformed movement among urban house churches.

Chapter Two is titled, “Watson Hayes and the North China Theological Seminary,” by A. Donald MacLeod. The NCTS “was the center for the propagation of the Reformed faith in the Middle Kingdom and explains that tradition's vigorous and persistent influence there. In this drama no one was more significant – and subsequently more neglected – than its founder and first president, the towering figure of Watson McMillan Hayes (1857-1944), protégé of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield” (59).

The school started when eighteen Presbyterian students walked out of the Union Theological Seminary of Shandong Christian (Qilu) University in Jinan, because Watson Hayes had been forced to resign, along with three other deans at the university. These students were theologically conservative, and they were protesting the liberal orientation of the seminary at the university. They wanted Hayes and other conservatives to teach them, so a new seminary was organized, the NCTS, with Hayes as its president.

This chapter tells the story of a remarkable missionary and theological writer and teacher, whose ministry was part of the evangelical movement that arose in opposition to the liberal takeover of "mainline" denominations and mission societies in the early part of the twentieth century. NCTS became the largest seminary in China, with a national influence as it trained evangelical students from all over China until it was forced to close by the Japanese.

Chapter Three is titled, "A Brief History of the Korean Presbyterian Mission to China," by Bruce P. Baugus and Sun-Il Park. The Presbyterian Church of Korea, formally organized in 1912, began mission work in China the next year. The PCK grew out of revival meetings that were held in Pyongyang in 1907. Not only "did this revival infuse Korean Presbyterians with great expectations from God and a spirit of personal evangelism and holiness," it also "placed prayer and missions at the center of Presbyterian life in the emerging PCK" (74).

The PCK sent three missionaries to work among Chinese in Shandong in 1913. "[F]rom this humble beginning sprang a century of outreach to China and the growth of what would one day become one of the most active missionary-sending churches in the world." (74) Taking advantage of a unique historical moment in Korea, intrepid Korean Presbyterian missionaries inaugurated a movement in Shandong, applying the principles enunciated by Nevius and founding a church that weathered both the war against Japan and the communist victory in 1949. Lessons from this history carry relevance for the church in China today, as do the sad developments in Korea of captivity to culture, materialism, and a "power Christianity" of an undiscerning church growth movement [that] replaces humble, patient, and persistent reliance on the means of grace" (95).

Part Two: Presbyterianism in China Today

Brent Fulton opens with "In Their Own Words: Perceived Challenges of Christians in China," an informative essay that questions common notions that Chinese Christians are persecuted, needy, and poised to launch a massive move to evangelize the world. He also challenges the idea that the growing numbers of Christians in China will lead to a "Christian China." In fact, the reverse seems to be the case: house churches display a "tendency to absorb, and be absorbed by, popular religion than to replace it" (quoting Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*, 242), and some urban churches have been neutered by materialism and diverted by the century-old quest to "save China" politically.

Relying on the large, and largely unfettered, Christian presence on the Internet in China, Fulton reports what Chinese church leaders themselves are saying about their situation and its challenges. The urban environment has brought both greater freedom for believers and churches

and a harsh environment for disciples and congregations alike: “Busyness and distractions of the urban lifestyle, materialism, and postmodernism” are greater threats than government persecution, while a desire to increase numbers has led many leaders into superficial ministry (sound familiar?) (111-112).

The missions movement is growing, to be sure, but it is hampered by glory-seeking and insufficient training and support. Christians are beginning to serve as salt and light in the larger society and to engage issues of common concern, including the breakdown of the family. They are developing leaders who are much more “professional” than before but still hampered by traditional Chinese patterns of “imperial” leadership.

Fulton concludes by acknowledging that outsiders have much to share with Christians in China, but only if we avoid mistakes of the past. We can offer tools, examples, and theological resources. Most of all, we can develop friendships that are mutual and allow for mentoring healthy Christian living and leadership.

In “Why Chinese Churches Need Biblical Presbyterianism,” Luke P.Y. Lu makes a strong case that only presbyterian (small “P”) government can help Chinese break out of the “imperial” leadership model, and he calls for a commitment to truth that trumps pragmatism.

“A Few Significant Ones: A Conversation with Two of China’s Leading Reformers,” distills insights gained by editor Bruce Baugus from personal interviews. He records that they “advocate forming godly character, serving the needy and marginalized, boldly speaking the truth in love, and laying a strong foundation for the church so that the Reformed faith . . . can thrive in China for centuries to come.” These leaders are convinced that what China most needs are “strong, vibrant, and healthy biblical churches testifying to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (138).

They decry the shallow evangelism that calls for “decisions for Christ” rather than repentance of sin, deep reliance on Jesus alone for salvation, and faithful, biblically based discipleship within a local congregation/church over many years. They think that “[i]n the current era, church revivals are normally content with worldly values and structures” (150). Rather than focusing on political reform, they want the churches to “prepare godly citizens” (153). They do not think that future leaders of the church should be trained in seminaries overseas, but in China. They are looking not for ephemeral revival, but for “genuine reformation,” a process that could take several hundred years. The quote of “W” on page 155 is priceless.

Part Three: Challenges and Opportunities for Presbyterianism in China

Chapter Seven, “The Social Condition of Ministry in China Today,” written by this reviewer, briefly describes the social environment of ministry in China today and concludes that there are both significant obstacles to the spread of the gospel, especially by foreigners, but also encouraging opportunities for continued church growth.

In “China: A Tale of Two Churches?” Brent Fulton explains the history and current status of the relationship between the government-supported Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and

unregistered (often called “house”) churches. The two now have a “tense, yet synergistic relationship.” Meanwhile, many of the newer urban churches have no ties to either the TSPM or the older house churches. I predict that many will be enlightened, surprised, and even encouraged by what Fulton presents here, especially the fact that most TSPM pastors preach an evangelical message.

“Two Kingdoms in China: Reformed Ecclesiology and Social Ethics,” by David VanDrunen, should be read by everyone who believes that Christians ought to have an impact on society. He fully agrees that believers should serve as salt and light, and that faithful disciples will gradually have an influence on all domains of culture, but he questions the emphasis many place upon the connection between Christianity and Western notions of human rights. While rejecting a pietism that neglects the duties of Christians to family, work, and the larger culture, he also challenges recent calls for Chinese Christians to build an “all-encompassing ideology” that would prescribe certain economic and political policies, matters upon which godly people will always disagree. He endorses the concepts that Christians in China “should seek the good of Chinese culture and society,” “peace, justice, and prosperity in China,” “the greater conformation of Chinese society to the norms of” God’s will as revealed in the covenant with Noah, and generally to “bless” China’s culture (220-221).

On the other hand, he urges caution in using phrases like “transforming Chinese culture” and building a “Christian China.” Gradual moral and conceptual transformation will result from careful and comprehensive application of biblical principles to all of life, but will never “redeem” any culture, including Chinese culture. In other words, “China can never be transformed into the redemptive kingdom,” which awaits the return of Christ, and thus “this sort of redemptive transformation is an improper and impossible goal” (222).

Instead, he calls upon Christians to build healthy disciples and congregations, free from interference by the government (he supports house churches, not the TSPM) and to train Christians in godly lifestyles at home, school, work, and throughout all of society. His approach seems to me to be close to that of James Hunter’s in *To Change the World*. There is much more in this weighty and important chapter, which deserves wide reading and careful consideration.

“From Dissension to Joy: Resources from Act 15:1-35 for Global Presbyterianism,” by Guy Prentiss Waters, argues that the Jerusalem Council provides both a historical precedent for dealing with church conflict and a prescription for the traditional presbyterian system of a hierarchy of ecclesiastical courts.

Part Four: Appropriating a Tradition

This section provides guidelines and issues calls for more energetic and focused action by Reformed and Presbyterian churches outside of China.

Phil Remmers describes “The Emergence of Legal Christian Publishing in China,” calling it “An Opportunity for Reformed Christians.” This carefully researched essay offers both information and insight into the state of Christian publishing in China today and is of general interest.

Editor Bruce Baugus gives an overview on “The State of Reformed Theological Education in China today” that will be helpful to anyone concerned for the effective training of pastors for Chinese churches, although many will not agree that the Western academic model is the best – or even a biblical – way to equip ministers of the gospel.

The final chapter by Paul Wang, “The Indigenization and Contextualization of the Reformed Faith in China,” like the other contributions, raises and speaks to matters of import for all who seek the development of a truly “Chinese” Christianity. Wang seeks a balance between a theology that stands firmly on “the fundamental truth revealed through Scripture,” rather than on our existential cultural and societal situation, and a “contextualized theology [that] will reshape the existential situation.” (296) He repeats Paul Hiebert’s call for “critical contextualization” that both accepts the transcendent authority of the Bible and the derivative binding authority of the ecumenical creeds and that “calls for the application of transcendent truth to particular social and cultural contexts” (296-297).

He rejects calls to abandon or relativize the theological heritage from the early church and even the formulations of the Reformation, for he believes that these faithfully restate the truths of the Bible. He does not believe that an appeal to a so-called “Eastern” or “Chinese” way of thinking, in contrast to some supposed “Western” approach, is a valid approach, for all human systems are antithetical to the gospel. Instead, we should seek to construct a truly biblical theology and world view, with full appreciation for what our forefathers have bequeathed to us.

Though I agree with almost all he says, I do question his assertion that Jesus was addressing a “problem of cultural succession” when he declared that he came to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17) and that the growth of the Christian faith in China “will not abolish Chinese cultures, but fulfill them” (294). Jesus was speaking about God’s special revelation in Scripture and in his teaching, not culture, and the use of “fulfillment” vocabulary raises thorny issues. More careful terminology is needed.

Conclusion

The editor ends the book with a call for “wisdom, patience, and discernment” as we apply lessons from the past to current conditions. “Hasty and anxious actions are likely more damaging than helpful. In the end, we in the West are limited in what we can do and could easily do more harm than good” (303).

He is encouraged, however, by the growth of a truly indigenous Reformed movement in China, one that centers upon the doctrines of God’s grace, the authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice, and the centrality of properly governed churches. He urges Reformed Christians to take advantage of current opportunities to contribute to this development.

There are two helpful appendices: Robert Morrison’s 1811 Catechism and “The Appeal to Found the North China Theological Seminary.”

A New History of Christianity in China

by **Daniel H. Bays**

Part I

Bays, Daniel H. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Daniel Bays has given us the results of decades of study in a volume that is remarkably comprehensive, concise, and compelling. The Introduction explains that this history arises from the need to present the results of the significant research on Christianity in China of the past three decades. Kenneth S. Latourette's magisterial *History of Christian Missions in China* is 80 years old; Jean-Paul Charbonnier's *Christians in China*, though always fair to Protestants, focuses on the Roman Catholic experience.

The book provides both a broad sweep of the history of Chinese Christianity and sufficient detail to make the story interesting. In each chapter, for example, Bays names the individuals who drove the action; he also gives more extended vignettes of key institutions and movements.

We find a balance, too, between admirably objective discussions of controversial topics and people, and candid "in my opinion" comments, all of which must be taken seriously, regardless of one's point of view. In other words, Bays has tried to be fair without denying us the benefit of his mature judgment.

As Professor Mark Noll writes, "Readers interested in a solid historical treatment of the dynamic story of Christianity in China need look no further. This is the book." (From the back cover)

Principal Themes

The narrative traces two major realities: "The basic tension between 'foreign' mission and (Chinese) church" and "the always-present instinct of the Chinese state... to monitor and control religious movements; as a result, Christianity was usually not seen only, indeed not even primarily, as a 'religion' or belief system, but as a behavioral phenomenon which could cause endless trouble" (2).

Bays detects a "persistent, overriding dynamic" in Chinese Christian history: "The Chinese Christians were first participants, then subordinate partners of the foreign missionaries, then finally the inheritors or sole 'owners.'" This process was also always a cross-cultural one, "the result of which has been the creation of an immensely varied Chinese Christian world in our day" (1).

Two major themes which arise from this story are: first, "the notion that Christianity, when it is separated from its bonding with Western culture in a package we may call 'Christendom,' is

perfectly capable of adapting to function in different cultural settings.” The other is “the remarkable flexibility and creativity in the Chinese relationship with Christianity (or perhaps ‘Christianities’)” (2).

In every chapter, the development (or demise, as the case might be) of institutional Christianity is woven into the fabric of China’s political and social history, with special attention to the ways in which the “foreign” flavor of the religion helped or hurt its reception among the people and their leaders. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics receive attention, though Bays mirrors Charbonnier after the arrival of Robert Morrison in 1807 by focusing more on the Protestant story. An appendix on the Russian Orthodox mission in China concludes the book.

In the modern period, both Establishment “liberal” efforts and those of “independent” and “conservative” (or “fundamentalist”) Christians receive attention, as do Pentecostals and what Bays calls “sectarian” movements.

A Few Reflections

A survey of the contents of the book, which I started to write, would make this review much too long, and would violate the spirit of Bay’s volume, which is so wonderfully succinct. Perhaps it would be better just to offer a few observations and reflections.

In the modern period, it would appear to me that the author’s sympathies lie a bit more with those who tried to create the Church of Christ in China more than with those who refused to join. At the same time, he shows how vulnerable the institution-heavy “Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment” (SFPE) was to criticism for its failure to turn leadership over to Chinese Christians and to changes in political and financial conditions in China and the West.

An expert on Christian higher education in China, Bays highlights the crucial role that graduates of Christian colleges played in the modernization of China, and he tries to note both the strong faith of many alumni and the political and social orientation of most. I think that he also honors the heroic efforts of Christian reformers, both Chinese and foreign, while honestly admitting, with John King Fairbank, the “limits of Christian reformism” and concluding that “Christian reform efforts of the ‘Nanjing Decade’ came to naught or very little” (127).

Likewise, the huge campaign of Chiang Kai-shek’s “New Life Movement,” which many missionaries supported, “was of no use in promoting needed social and economic reforms, and faded from the scene, with its Christian supporters losing face among liberals and progressive” (128).

Many readers will find his spirited account of the rise of independent churches and the careers of prominent leaders very helpful; he helps to explain, also, why these churches have grown more than those aligned with the SFPE. The story is relevant because these two alignments coalesced (with some exceptions) into the present division between unregistered churches and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), Bays’ treatment of which is highly illuminating.

As for the Roman Catholics, Bays displays great admiration for the ambitious program of Matteo Ricci and the Jesuits, while drawing repeated attention to the dominance of foreign clergy until very recent years and the problems caused by the accumulation of power, land, and wealth. He seems critical of the strong anti-communist stance of the Vatican, which has, along with Chinese nationalism, created a schism among Roman Catholics up to the present.

The description of Christianity in China today in the final chapter should be required reading for all who want to understand the complex phenomena of rural, urban, “official,” unregistered, and “cultural” Protestant Christianity, as well as both wings of Roman Catholicism. Actually, the whole volume is now essential background for anyone who has anything to do with Christianity in China, even those who will not agree with all of the author’s judgments.

Do not let the brevity of the book, or the limpid style of its author, keep you from noticing the depth, breadth, and sheer brilliance of *A New History of Christianity* in China. For this reader, every chapter brought new information and fresh insights. Even very advanced scholars in this field will find *A New History of Christianity* in China both enjoyable and enlightening.

A New History of Christianity in China

by **Daniel H. Bays**

Part II

Bays, Daniel H. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

The author divides the history of Christianity in China into eight periods, devoting a chapter to each, with an appendix on the Russian Orthodox Church and Ecclesiastical Mission in China. A few highlights:

The Nestorian Age and the Mongol Mission, 635-1368

He notes, but does not presume to assess, the recent claim that Christianity entered China in the first century A.D. Clearly, “Nestorian” Christianity, which arrived in the seventh century, was a “remarkable combination of Christian ideas and concepts mixed with Daoist and Buddhist terms,” but “we still do not have a good grasp of the ‘religious content’ of Nestorian Christianity” (10).

As a result, Bays will not decide what really caused the extinction of the Luminous Religion (or Church of the East) in the Tang dynasty, though the absence of Han Chinese converts must surely have been a factor. Instead, “what was most noteworthy and portentous for the future... is the alacrity with which the Christian faith took on distinct Chinese characteristics,” a theme to which he returns often (11).

We are reminded that Nestorianism made a huge impact on some of the Turko-Mongolian tribes; that the mother of Kublai Khan, founder of the Yuan dynasty, was a Christian; and thus, that when the Roman Catholics sent missionaries to the Mongol court, they found Nestorians already present in numbers, resulting in vigorous competition between the two traditions. Why did Christianity disappear again at the close of the Yuan dynasty? “The elements of Christianity may have been so closely tied to the foreign presence that there was almost no influence on indigenous persons and institutions” (14). The foreigners, in turn, depended on support from the government; when it fell, so did their work. Finally, the Black Death in Europe and shifting geopolitical realities stopped the flow of missionaries from Europe.

The Jesuit Mission of Early Modern Times, 1580s-1780s

The second era of Roman Catholic missions to China “constituted a key transition in the worldwide serial movement of the Christian faith to parts of the non-West. It was also an important part of the first cross-cultural experience of the West.” (18-19) Two major forces led to this development: The Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic reaction to it, and “the rise of the first of a succession of seaborne empires beginning in the early 1500s,” which, in the

case of China, meant the Portuguese incursions into Asia. “All agreed on the unitary nature of Christianity and European culture. This was ‘Christendom’” (20).

Bays begins with “Matteo Ricci, the Jesuits, and the Larger China Mission,” which followed several strategic policies, especially in the early years:

Accommodation and adaption to Chinese culture. Evangelization from the top down, addressing the literate elite, even the emperor if possible. Indirect evangelism by means of science and technology convince the elite of the high level of European civilization. Openness to and tolerance of Chinese moral values and some ritual practices (21-22).

He then turns his attention to “the real action,” which he considers to be the ways in which later generations of Jesuit missionaries scattered across China to create “local rural-based Christian communities” consisting mostly of commoners and low-ranking elites; these communities, and others like them, have persisted into the 21st century and were more the “faith of families” than the “religion of converts” (23-24). Of particular interest to Bays is the variety of ways in which Roman Catholicism took on the flavor of traditional Chinese religion and culture, a process which has continued, and one that has evoked some concern by Roman Catholic priests who were afraid that syncretism was taking place.

After a survey of different regions in which Roman Catholicism took root, Bays tells the story of the Rites controversy, in which his sympathies lie with the Jesuits, not the “rites haters.” The ensuing proscription of Roman Catholicism in China drastically reduced the number of missionaries, but did not eradicate the communities of adherents, who learned to live “on their own” throughout the “long eighteenth century” until renewed Western advances “opened the door” for missionaries and believers to practice their faith openly.

Protestants, Catholics, and Taipings, 1800-1860

New actors entered the scene in the early 1800s, as Protestants began sending missionaries and expanding their mercantile empires. Bays gives brief but adequate sketches of the pioneer missionaries, most of whom concentrated upon translation of the Bible and production of other Christian literature in Chinese, along with evangelism. Very soon, they also composed substantial works of Sinology for Western readers.

The story of the Opium Wars and the “Unequal treaties” that opened China to foreign missionary travel and settlement makes sad reading, especially given the lack of opposition to these wars (though not to the opium trade) by the missionaries and sometimes even their cooperation with imperialist governments (though one wishes that Bays had shown how the missionaries usually attempted to mitigate the harsher provisions of the proposed treaties). Mostly, they were convinced that the treaties would work for the furtherance of the gospel. In the end, for better or for worse, Christianity was “embedded” in the treaty system.

As for the Roman Catholics, the new treaties allowed for the return of large numbers of European priests, who quickly began to re-assert control over what had become an indigenous organization, arousing strong opposition from Chinese believers.

Bays' evaluation of the Taiping rebels is quite interesting. On the one hand, he acknowledges that some of their beliefs and practices were bizarre and not considered orthodox by most missionaries, but on the other he believes that they should be considered "Christian enough" and points out the fundamental challenge they posed to the Confucian social order. He thinks that the Qing officials who saw the Taipings as a "Christian" threat to the entire Chinese governmental and "socio-political system" were correct. Their uprising was "the most important single event of these decades" and its influence persists to this day in the presence of "sectarian movements in the countryside" that "bear some resemblance to them" (61).

On a more positive note, Bays gives recognition to a number of prominent Chinese Christians whose work in evangelism and translation were invaluable.

Expansion and Institution-Building in a Declining Dynasty, 1860-1902

"At no time in Chinese Christian history was the problem of violence being directed at missionaries and Christians" experienced more than during this period, "[y]et this was also a time when the young Chinese Protestant church and in different ways the Roman Catholic church as well, put down roots of community that constituted a solid foundation for the future" (66).

The number of Protestant missionaries exploded, reaching about 3,500 by 1905; so did the number and variety of missionary societies and the range of works they undertook. On the one hand, the China Inland Mission, founded by J. Hudson Taylor in 1865, concentrated upon the rural areas; on the other, many concentrated their efforts on the cities, where they built a vast infrastructure of educational and medical institutions. During the famine in North China in the 1870s, a number of missionaries engaged in famine relief efforts. Bays names Timothy Richards, of course, but, like many historians, passes over the sacrificial, even heroic, efforts of members of the China Inland Mission, represented by J. Hudson Taylor's second wife, Jennie. (He also seems to me to lean a bit too heavily on Alvyn Austin's problematic interpretation of the CIM in general.)

The Protestant missionaries were mostly united in their general evangelical theology and overall aims. Bays, along with others, believes that one of their convictions was that China needed "Christian" civilization, and that "Christian" really meant "Western." Between 1890 and 1920, more than 33,000 college-educated students joined, or were inspired by, the Student Volunteer Movement to go change China with the Gospel and their ideas of modern society.

Meanwhile, the Chinese elite of Confucian scholar-officials "did not like Christianity. They thought it was a seditious doctrine but had to tolerate it, lest foreign, especially French, political or military power be mobilized" (74). They saw the missionaries as direct competitors to their own local prestige and power who often stirred up ordinary citizens. A major cause of resentment was the way many missionaries, especially Roman Catholics, were given formal or informal status equal to that of magistrates, and their converts were made exempt from temple taxes and legal prosecution. The "religious cases" that resulted vexed the Chinese government for decades.

The Chinese church grew, despite resistance from officials. Some converted to gain material benefits, others found a new socio-political identity in the growing church community, and some were attracted by the promise of moral renewal. Still others saw Jesus as a more “efficacious god” than the local idols.

The status of women rose, especially as more and more girls received education; women also were given scope for activities in the church. Bays introduces us to a number of leading Chinese Christians, only a few of whom received the recognition they deserved by foreigners at the time. Some of these became part of a group of reformers urging Western-style changes in society. They were spurred on by missionaries like Timothy Richard, Young J. Allen, and Gilbert Reid, and they were joined by a larger number of non-Christian Chinese with similar political views. After a brief ascendancy, they were repudiated and eliminated by the Qing government, which in the end also supported the savagely anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion.

Bays does not hide the role played by some missionaries in the havoc wreaked by victorious foreign troops after the rebellion was crushed, and he opines that their excessive hopes for radical reform led to disgust and even anger towards the recalcitrant Qing government. Is there a lesson here somewhere about priorities in Christian mission?

A New History of Christianity in China

by **Daniel H. Bays**

Part III

Bays, Daniel H. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

We conclude our review of Daniel Bays' *A New History of Chinese Christianity* with a survey of the last four chapters.

The 'Golden Age' of Missions and the 'Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment,' 1902-1927

“Ironically, the undoubted tragedy of the Boxer events in 1900 ushered in a period of more than two decades during which both the foreign mission enterprise in China and Chinese Christian communities seemed to flourish,” even as “the Christian movement ... was sliding toward a precipice” (93). The defeated Qing government inaugurated a series of ambitious reforms, many of them inspired by Protestant missionaries and their urban converts, especially those educated in Protestant schools. Numbers of adherents grew, as did autonomy from missionary control.

Independent congregations, founded and led by Chinese, proliferated, despite the indifferent response of Western missionaries. These Western missionaries were not always sure whether the Chinese were ready to run their own churches and institutions, as the careers of Marcus Ch'eng (Chen Chonggui) and Cheng Jinyi illustrate.

What Bays calls “the ‘Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment’” emerged by the dawn of the 20th century and was in place by 1915. Consisting of the recognized leaders of the Protestant missionary societies, it gradually grew to include a coterie of younger Chinese Christians, many of whom had been educated in the West. The flavor of the missionary contingent was rapidly changing from the predominantly evangelical group of the 19th century to a more liberal crowd, mostly from the U.S, who were fired with idealism of the Student Volunteer Movement, the Social Gospel, and the general optimism of the pre-World War I period.

These were joined by Chinese, many (though not all) of them equally liberal, who aimed not just for partnership with foreigners, but for a truly indigenous – that is, independent – Chinese church, one that would abolish denominational distinctions in a national church of China. This goal was achieved in 1927, and up to one-third of all Chinese Christians eventually were part of what became the Church of Christ in China. In the first three decades of the century, this SFPE engaged in both evangelism and social action, including political advocacy. The leading lights on the Chinese side figured prominently especially in the latter, even as they advanced liberal theological views in what some called “Indigenous Theology.”

There were other actors, however, especially those missionaries like Jonathan Goforth and Chinese like Ding Limei, who engaged in vigorous and fruitful evangelistic endeavors. Dozens of new mission organizations, and even more freelance missionaries, many of them from the Holiness/Pentecostal movement, further diversified the Protestant landscape. “Revivalism as a missions strategy after about 1920 was more likely to be used by conservative evangelical groups and independent traveling evangelists than by the SFPE” (105).

Around 1920, the former consensus among missionaries broke down, as the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” controversy erupted. When the Church of Christ in China was organized, many conservatives refused to join. Things would never be the same among Protestant Chinese, even to this day. (Throughout this narrative, Bays evinces much greater sympathy for the “ecumenical” Protestants than for the conservatives, whom he seems to consider uncooperative and narrow-minded.)

At about the same time, the May Fourth Movement forever altered the intellectual landscape of China. All things old, including Confucianism and Christianity, were considered outdated and even superstitious, and all things foreign, including missionaries and their institutions, were labeled as imperialist. Chinese Christians joined in the call for local control of schools, hospitals, and church organizations as part of the raging nationalism, and some academic theologians sought to reconcile Christianity with Chinese religious traditions. In the general anti-foreign mood, those Chinese who had thrown in their lot with the SFPE did not escape being tarred with the “foreign” brush.

As the 1920s drew to a close, Roman Catholics still outnumbered Protestants and were being led more and more by Chinese, but Protestants were increasing at a faster rate, especially in the cities, but also in rural areas, where indigenous sectarian movements were gathering steam.

The Multiple Crises of Chinese Christianity, 1927-1950

“In the first half of the twentieth century, the foreign missionary movement in China matured, flourished, declined, and died. In these same decades, a Chinese church was born, a church which today is growing very rapidly. . . [F]rom 1900 to 1950, Christianity forsook its foreign origins and put on Chinese dress. It was not an easy process” (121).

This fast-paced chapter opens with the scathing criticisms of the missionary enterprise in China by Pearl Buck at a major church conference. The widely influential report, “Rethinking Missions,” reflected liberal theology and “advocated an overhaul of missionary thinking, especially, on such questions as the exclusivity of Christianity” and “the massive financial crunch in the early 1930s” that hit the “expensive institution-heavy facilities, especially hospitals, schools and colleges” of the SFPE (123).

Not all missions were equally affected, however. More evangelical groups like the China Inland Mission (CIM) and Pentecostal revivalists continued to flourish and grow rapidly. David Adeney of the CIM worked effectively with students; the martyrdom of John and Betty Stam spurred a fresh wave of applicants to the CIM.

Meanwhile, the National Christian Council launched several projects aimed at rural reform which also foundered due to both the size of China and the “intractability of some of the rural realities that Christian reformers faced,” such as the stake which local elites had in the status quo. The same could be said for reform efforts in urban areas, in which the YMCA played a leading role, and which were stymied by “business and industrial power structures” (126).

Equally fruitless was the new Life Movement sponsored by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his wife. Its failure brought embarrassment to the many missionaries who had embraced it largely because of the Chiangs’ identification with Christianity.

The liberal churches associated with the Church of Christ in China sought social reform, while conservative groups aligned with the Bible Union of China pursued evangelism and church building. During this period, a variety of new and fully independent movements arose. Bays traces the expansion of the True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family, Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng) and his movement (the “Little Flock”), and the Spiritual Gifts Society, along with highlighting the growing number of outstanding individual evangelists. The author provides brief but compelling accounts of Wang Mingdao, Dora Yu and women’s evangelism, the Bethel Band and the “paradoxical” John Sung (Song Shangjie), and Marcus Ch’eng (Chen Chonggui), clearly one of Bays’ heroes (whereas his portraits of Wang Mingdao and John Sung are rather negative, perhaps partly under the influence of Lian Xi’s somewhat jaundiced treatment of this whole group. It should also be said that Song did not “stress” healing, though his prayers did lead to many miraculous cures. His emphasis lay, rather, upon repentance, faith, and holy living).

Bays makes the most of meager materials to follow the fortunes of the church during the Second World War, when Japanese occupation forced many to work under an umbrella organization, which others, such as Wang Mingdao, refused to join. During the war, the evangelical and Pentecostal movements grew, Chinese necessarily assumed leadership in all areas, Christianity was spread more widely throughout the nation, and the SFPE suffered further loss of vitality.

At the end of the war, when missionaries returned, there were many struggles over control, with Chinese understandably reluctant to return to a subservient role. Student work resumed, with the more liberal YMCA tending to support the Communist side in the burgeoning civil war, while the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship – with David Adeney again taking a major role – emphasized more evangelical themes. Churches mirrored this split, where the liberals connected with the National Christian Council, lining up with the Communists, and conservative groups tended to support the Nationalists, though not unaware of their corruption and incompetence.

During the war, Roman Catholics, with their large land holdings, were reluctant to irritate the Japanese. Afterwards, those same properties made them vulnerable to the anti-landlord campaigns of the Communists, already alienated by the anti-communist stance of Pope Pius XII. Wartime collaboration between the American OSS and some Roman Catholic missionaries merely confirmed the suspicions of the new rulers of China.

Christianity and the New China, 1950-1966

Like virtually all Chinese governments in the past, the new communist rulers insisted upon “monitoring religious life and requiring all religions, for example, to register their venues and leadership personnel with a government office. The repeated historical experience of sectarian popular religious movements . . . turning into anti-dynastic rebellions was sufficient to make all central governments instinctively vigilant of religion” (159).

What was new, however, was “a powerful central state that was capable of demanding their compliance,” and a Marxist ideology that sought “systematically to reduce the influence of religion in society,” believing that it would eventually disappear. The “centerpiece” of their policy was simple: “cutting all ties with their foreign former associates and foreign institutions, putting them under the jurisdiction of state and party bodies assigned to monitor them.” (159).

The government found a ready-made slogan for this policy: “Three-Self.” Under the rubric of “self-government, self-propagation, and self-support,” the churches would be completely severed from all foreign connections. This had been the stated goal of missionaries for decades, of course, but had been unrealized, as we have seen, except in the case of the independent Protestant movements. Now the Chinese believers would be absolutely free from all foreign domination – though, of course, not free from government oversight and even control.

From 1949 to 1954, the Protestants were largely brought into the new “Three-Self Patriotic Movement.” The story is a bit messy, and does not make very happy reading, but Bays does justice to the complexity of the situation. With a very few notable exceptions, the leaders in the TSPM were the same theological liberals who had previously been prominent in the SFPE.

The Korean War greatly accelerated the process of breaking ties between Protestant Chinese and foreigners and intensified various anti-foreign movements by the government, which merged into campaigns to denounce and remove from leadership all except for a few totally cooperative Christian leaders.

Those who were attacked were charged with criminal, rather than religious, offenses, to prevent them from becoming martyrs. In the case of Wang Mingdao, however, his refusal to participate in the TSPM because of the liberal theology of its leaders led to harsh treatment that was largely spearheaded by the future head of the TSPM, K.H. Ting (Ding Guangxun). Later, Chen Chonggui, an evangelical who had supported the TSPM and served as a vice-chairman, was ruthlessly purged. The memory of these events remains fresh in the minds of many in the unregistered churches.

During this same period, Roman Catholics resisted the government’s efforts to control them and force them to join Catholic Patriotic Association. A systematic campaign of vilifying the foreign missionaries as foreign imperialists, proclaiming religious freedom while denouncing all who used religion to “undermine” the government, and imprisoning those who would not cooperate while providing incentives for those who did, resulted in the creation of a permanent split between the officially sanctioned CPA and a large “underground” contingent of Roman Catholics who remained loyal to the Pope.

The Great Leap Forward devastated the economy of China and produced a horrible famine; at the same time, most churches were closed in a rabid anti-religious campaign. Already, however, some Protestants and many Roman Catholics had begun to gather in homes, sowing the seeds of powerful movements. By 1966, it seemed that Christianity in China had almost died out.

From the End of the Cultural Revolution to the Early Twenty-First Century

From 1966 to roughly 1976, the entire country was plunged into a maelstrom of insanity and violence caused by Mao Zedong's struggle to regain control of the Communist Party. Christians suffered along with everyone else, though sometimes even more severely, as "all religions were abolished" in a "nationwide eradication policy" that seemed for a while to have succeeded. During this time, Protestants gathered, of necessity, in house churches. The salvationist and revivalist message continued the legacy of the conservative/evangelical missionaries and independent Chinese Christians. Their faith was also millenarian, "looking to the imminent return of Christ," and it was "to an extensive degree Pentecostal . . . highlighting 'gifts of the Spirit' such as speaking in tongues, prophecies, and miraculous healings" – characteristics true of many of the rural churches even today (186). Quietly but rapidly, they grew in numbers.

During the era of "reform and opening" which began in 1978, both the TSPM and the Catholic Patriotic Association were reinstated, led mostly by the same leftists whom many believers had come to distrust and even despise. Despite this, Protestant church buildings, when reopened, were filled to overflowing. Needs for proper pastoral care were – and are – acute, and training resources stretched beyond their limits. The unregistered groups proliferated, as did the number of TSPM adherents, largely unhindered by the state, which had other, more important problems to tackle.

Bays skillfully describes how the growth of rural Protestantism and Roman Catholicism results from a fertile mix of spiritual hunger, social dislocation, political freedom, Pentecostal zeal, real miracles, and a great deal of similarity to Chinese popular religion. The product is a most amazing smorgasbord, ranging from "orthodox" evangelical/fundamentalist/Pentecostal groups to the wildest of cults, all of them reflecting the strongly pragmatic, utilitarian, and eclectic nature of Chinese religiosity. Roman Catholicism, still largely rural, is even more indistinguishable from popular Chinese religion, except for difference in ritual.

The wildfire growth of Protestant Christianity in the countryside began to slow in the 1990s, to be replaced by an almost equally rapid increase in the cities, especially among intellectuals. These new urban Christians are quite sophisticated and aware of recent trends in Western churches. At the same time, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of scholars are investigating Christianity for the first time in Chinese history in a development that points toward a future in which Protestantism could become more potent in public life.

Bays closes this marvelous survey with several comments: Most Protestant Christians do not face persecution; Christianity will continue to grow, but perhaps not as fast as in recent decades; China will not become a "Christian nation." But Chinese Christianity will form an increasingly important segment of the worldwide church.

Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present

edited by Daniel H. Bays

Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*.
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

The twenty chapters in this collection of essays fall into four sections, entitled: “Christianity and the Dynamics of Qing Society,” “Christianity and Ethnicity,” “Christianity and Chinese Women,” and “The Rise of an Indigenous Chinese Christianity.”

Though the book does not claim to be a comprehensive survey, there’s something here for almost everyone. Do you want to know why Chinese often reacted violently to both missionaries and their converts? Several authors detail the complex web of factors, including resentment provoked by the special privileges granted to adherents to the foreign religion, especially its Roman Catholic form. The resulting rage and counteractions included murder (or was it suicide?), theft, riots, lawsuits – some pages look as if they came out of the local police register.

Perhaps you wonder why some groups accepted the gospel more readily than others. Chapters on “worldly” motives behind large-scale conversions by members of minority groups shed light on the problems of Taiwan’s “mountain” Presbyterian churches today and dispel the notion that the Hakka are a naturally “resistant” people. Christians in Taiwan will also find interesting the chapter on Pentecostal and charismatic churches there.

What makes a “successful” missionary? Individual sketches, as well as descriptions of missionaries and their work in many chapters, highlight certain qualities: hard work, excellence in the language, living among the people, practical assistance, and a manifest love for those they came to serve. From the flamboyant, peripatetic, and controversial career of Karl Gützlaff to the steady labors of Samuel Pollard, we see the value of hard work and suffering in winning the confidence of the ever-practical Chinese.

I was impressed with how seriously Roman Catholics in general, and some Protestants also, took the need for solid instruction of candidates for baptism. Encouraging also were indications of ways in which foreigners quickly began to employ talented and dedicated Chinese in evangelize and education.

The book contains sadder stories, too, of foreigners who seemed distant, proud, and domineering. A common theme: the unwillingness of many to grant full responsibility and authority to Chinese co-workers. Another dark hue: the power of the purse, especially when controlled by donors thousands of miles away. For much of this period, the connection between gunboats and the gospel cast a shadow over the entire missionary enterprise and hampered the rise of true indigenous Christianity. We continue to labor under that onerous legacy.

Women constitute a huge proportion of the Chinese church. Several treatments of individual Chinese women, as well as of schools and organizations, shed light upon the ways in which Christianity affected women in China. Feminism seems to undergird most of these reports, which means they must be interpreted in the light of biblical teaching on the value and roles of women in the home, church, and society.

Sometimes missionary work brought unintended consequences. Though some single women missionaries went to China zealous to raise up independent professional women who would transform society, most wanted to inculcate “traditional” values associated with being a wife and mother. Without knowing it, however, even these “conservative” women, by living independently of a husband, presented a different role model, one that impressionable Chinese girls readily adopted as a pattern.

That brings us to a major concern: the relationship of Christianity to China’s rapidly changing society. The new religion was correctly viewed as culturally “subversive” by 19th-century conservatives, but as a key to modernization by many 20th-century progressives. How should a Christian relate to the larger society? Can a Christian be a Communist? What are the reasons for cooperating with a government-sponsored church and what are the risks? Several chapters explore this vital topic with balance and sophistication, at least from a secular historical viewpoint.

Sometimes the answers to this question will depend upon whether one has a “liberal” or “conservative” theological viewpoint. We see this clearly in the chapters on Gilbert Reid, the *Wenshe* (Protestant Publishing house) and Y.T. Wu. Like Jonathan Spence’s *To Change China: Western Advisers in China*, these studies show the potential and the perils of focusing on education and reform as “missionary” and “Christianizing” activities.

The Communist victory in 1949, like the brief Japanese occupation of parts of China during World War II, brought forced indigenization to the Chinese church. Several chapters deal with various aspects of this development, which had been long desired but insufficiently prepared for. Brief overviews of entirely indigenous ministries both before and after 1949 remind us that the history of the church in China is not limited to a record of missionary activity!

Though I skipped several chapters on my first reading, because they didn’t seem to discuss matters of interest to me, for the sake of this review I eventually read the entire collection. I’m glad I did. This is not a complete history of the last 150 years of Christianity in China (despite a rather misleading title), but it does highlight a number of key themes, movements, and people, and raises critical issues for all who seek to ponder how the gospel has affected the world’s most populous nation.

This collection of essays from specialists in Chinese history will seem too detailed at first for many readers. I found, however, that all the articles provided useful information and insights, with application far wider than the narrow topics treated in each chapter.

Published by a non-religious press, this compendium seeks to maintain the highest standards of historical scholarship and seems to succeed well. Balance, objectivity, and careful documentation – these qualities make for a reliable and convincing presentation of each subject addressed.

Not everyone will find the format appealing at first, but I recommend this book to all those who seriously want to understand Christianity in China.

After Imperialism: Christian Identity in China and the Global Evangelical Movement

edited by Richard R. Cook and David W. Pao

Richard R. Cook and David W. Pao, eds., *After Imperialism: Christian Identity in China and the Global Evangelical Movement*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011.

After Imperialism is the fourth volume to be published in the series “GCC Studies in Chinese Christianity,” following *Salt & Light: Lives of Faith that Shaped Modern China*, Volumes 1-3. Although I had little to do with the publication of this book, as co-editor (with Carol Lee Hamrin) of the series, I should not commend it in these pages. Instead, I shall try to give an indication of its contents and respond to a few of the issues that the contributors raise.

Arising from a conference held in Hong Kong in 2008 with the theme, “Beyond Our Past: Bible, Cultural Identity, and the Global Evangelical Movement,” the book contains a dozen chapters from as many contributors. Half the authors are Caucasian, and the rest are Chinese, giving the collection a good balance of ethnic perspectives.

The editors believe that “Evangelicalism possesses assets with explanatory power able to address significant theological and cultural issues arising out of the churches in the global south,” including the issue of identity, the focus of this volume. They are also convinced that evangelicals should use both the social sciences and “thorough biblical inquiry” to investigate issues pertinent to Christian identity for Chinese; indeed, this is a major focus of several papers (xi).

Historical Studies with Current Relevance

The first section contains four chapters on “the history of evangelicalism, its continuing value..., and its future utility in an increasingly global church.” Douglas Sweeney opens with “Modern Evangelicalism and Global Christian Identity,” in which he traces the history of modern evangelicalism from the 18th century revivals to the present. He points out the true identity of evangelicalism in its theology, which calls for constant evangelism. Noting evangelicals’ tendency to ignore history and downplay doctrine, he calls for a renewed awareness of evangelicals’ identity as both global and local. Contextualization is necessary, but it must be undertaken cautiously.

In “Missions, Cultural Imperialism, and the Development of the Chinese Church,” Ka Lun Leung appears largely to agree with the common charge that Western missionaries to China were willing agents just as much of Western culture and even imperial expansion of the gospel. Leung believes that most conflicts between Christian teaching and the local culture are cultural and not truly religious, and that opposition to Christianity in China, in the past and in the present, stems not from rejection of its religious teachings but from fear of its being used as a tool by foreign

governments to undermine society and government. American Christians should take note of the latter reality.

For more than one hundred years, Chinese have faced two questions: how to reform the nation politically and how to reform the culture. The government resists any pressure to reform politically but cannot stop the globalization – what Francis Fukuyama has called “Americanization” – of culture, which is creating an identity crisis in China and elsewhere. Leung calls for a local Christianity that preserves the core biblical message while addressing concerns of the Chinese people now.

Frankly acknowledging the close connection between 19th century Western missions and imperialism in China, Richard Cook seeks to answer three questions: “How can we as Evangelicals in the West today relate to our missions past? How can we identify with this past? How can we get beyond Western guilt stemming from imperialism?” (36) The same three questions face Chinese Christians.

His studies have convinced Cook that “a complex context comprised of multiple factors influenced missionary behavior” in the Age of Imperialism, and that “the missionaries involved may be deserving of a better understanding of the sometimes excruciating circumstances surrounding the decisions they made” (45). (Specifically, when missionaries like Robert Morrison were asked to serve as interpreters for the British after the Opium War of 1840 and later in 1860, when his non-missionary son John also interpreted). They faced a difficult choice. Should they insert provisions ensuring protection for Chinese Christians who were being brutally persecuted for propagating the faith? Did they have an ethical obligation to do what they could to relieve the plight of their beloved brothers in Christ?

They thought so, and thus became inextricably involved in the “unequal treaties” mess that has forever tainted missions history in China. Cook does not necessarily endorse their decision, but he calls for a greater sympathy for their motives as we try to move on.

In the larger context of evangelicals’ involvement in society worldwide, Kevin Xiyi Yao surveys the situation in China in “Chinese Evangelicals and Social Concerns: A Historical and Comparative Review.” He opens with a brief introduction to the growth of Protestantism in the 20th century, tracing the rise of the two distinct camps which have marked the scene until recently.

On the one hand, “liberals” both downplayed the saving work of Christ and the authority of Scripture and placed their emphasis upon “social transformation as the new goal of mission work” (49). On the other, fundamentalists and evangelicals upheld traditional Christian doctrines and poured their energies into evangelism and the maturation of believers in the church. They did not entirely neglect the national crisis unleashed by the Japanese invasion, however, as they pointed to the wars and chaos of the era as proof that human progress is myth, and that social transformation will take place only when the Lord returns. Meanwhile, the only hope for China

was for people to repent and trust in Christ and then to live lives that reflected the character of God. Conversion of individuals would “naturally” bring improvement to society, they taught.

In the past couple of decades, overseas Chinese Protestants, who are mostly evangelical, have begun to call for more social involvement. Meanwhile, the leaders of the new urban, unregistered congregations (sometimes called “house churches”) have also begun to “exhibit some significant new features. In addition to a new openness to intellectual life and theological education, strong social and cultural concerns definitely distinguish these churches from the old generations and churches of the 1980s” (66).

Today, three different approaches can be discerned:

1. A few churches hold to the old separatist convictions.
2. A few, influenced by Reformed theology, vigorously advocate for human rights and political activism, understanding the church’s prophetic role in highly political terms and tying the human rights agenda closely to the church’s mission and calling. For this group, to live out one’s Christian faith is to “defend religious freedom, fight for social justice, and push for political reform in China.” Though a tiny minority, because “of their popularity and celebrity status they enjoyed among overseas churches and human rights groups ... they are often considered the spokespersons of the house churches in China” by American evangelicals.
3. By far the majority of urban unregistered churches, however, firmly reject such a politicized and confrontational approach. Committed both to the Pietist theology of their forebears and to a generally Reformed world-and-life view, they prefer to focus on the unique mandate of the church to propagate the gospel, to help grow believers in spiritual maturity, and to advocate a “salt and light” approach to cultural engagement and social involvement. They reject the “Christendom” model of Western Christians and of the politically minded urban church activists. Yao supports this last group as “more akin to the Chinese churches’ evangelical heritage, more relevant to their context and status, and more beneficial to their future.”

Biblical Considerations

The second part of the book contains four chapters on various biblical issues pertinent to Chinese Christianity. K. Lawson Younger, Jr. writes on “The Old Testament in Its Cultural Context,” showing why “contextual criticism” of Old Testament passages is essential for understanding their application to Christian identity.

Tremper Longman, III examines “Holy War and the Universal God” in the Old Testament and concludes that “the holy war texts in the Old Testament provide no justification for warfare in the present redemptive era” (109). Zealous advocates for assorted military “crusades” in the name of Christ should take note.

Writing from the standpoint of a Chinese living in Hong Kong, David Pao looks at “New Testament Conquest Accounts in a Post-Colonial Setting.” He reminds us that 19th-century missionaries benefitted from the “unequal treaties” signed at gunpoint, a legacy that still haunts Christianity in China. Careful examination of several passages convinces him that the New Testament provides no warrant for privileging one group over another, calls all of us to submit to God as the true Victor and emphasizes that creating any distinction between colonizer and the colonized is “problematic.”

Frank Thielman responds to the frequent complaint that Western Christians have all too often preached a gospel of individual salvation exclusively in “The Group and the Individual in Salvation: The Witness of Paul.” He freely admits the corporate element of Christian salvation, but he proves that in Paul’s message there is also a clear and fundamental component of the individual’s personal response to God through faith and obedience. In other words, “the individual is critically important in the soteriology of Paul” (139).

In another Biblical study, Maureen Yeung examines “Paul’s View on Table Fellowship and its Implications for Ethnic Minorities” in “Boundaries in ‘In-Christ’ Identity,” with a particular focus on ancestor worship. Accepting Thielman’s assertion of the individual’s identity in Christ, she states that “the hard question is how this new ‘in Christ’ identity relates to a person’s ethnic identity” (155). She concludes that “‘in-Christ’ identity can be attained only through justification by faith apart from works. This identity takes priority over ethnic identity” (173). Regarding ancestral worship practices, those that merely express neutral cultural traditions may be allowed, while “ethnic expressions should be abandoned if they are idolatrous or immoral.”

The final three chapters consist of “three case studies of contextual theology.” From a perspective of anthropology and intercultural studies, Robert Priest looks especially at the word “dragon” as used in Chinese culture and in the Bible. He concludes that the translation of the Greek *drakon* as long (dragon) plunged Chinese Christians into a profound identity crisis, since Chinese see themselves as “children of the dragon.”

David Y. T. Lee argues for the validity of using “Chinese culture as an interpretative tool or communication vehicle” in an alliance with the Bible to understand and convey important biblical concepts (193). He follows Kevin Vanhoozer’s method which, while insisting that the Bible has “epistemic primacy,” also seeks to understand and communicate biblical ideas in terms of the local culture as well as the evangelical community of wisdom, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Carver Yu concludes the volume with a wide-ranging, challenging essay, “Forging Evangelical Identity: Integration of Models of Theological Education in the Global Context.” He clearly describes the loss of identity in post-modern culture, which has stripped away an enduring core for the self and replaced it with a concept of identity that is “a reflexive project, an ongoing story that proceeds by continually sorting out and integrating events in the external world” (222).

He rejoices in the rapid expansion of Christianity in the global south, but questions whether Christianity will be able to withstand the onslaughts of post-modernity, including a narcissistic culture that seeks not “personal salvation but psychological well-being” (225). Theology and the authority of the Bible are being undermined; we must recover the idea of theology as a critique of culture and of the church. Education for Christian ministry should include careful cultural reflection, an awareness of history, and a clear sense of purpose. Reflecting the church’s nature as charismatic community, ministerial training must be personal, reflective, missional, and even properly Pietistic, in keeping with traditional Chinese notions of knowledge as more than the acquisition of information. The entire chapter deserves careful study.

Evaluation

The comments above will indicate the overall value of this path-breaking volume; here, I must confine myself to a few critical remarks.

Leung’s assertion that conflicts between Christian teaching and the local culture are cultural, and not religious or moral, needs much more evidence to be convincing. In the middle section of biblical studies, one or two chapters will require “translation” by the reader into the Chinese context, since the authors spoke in general terms. Yeung’s otherwise very helpful essay suffers from the common misidentification of circumcision and other Old Testament regulations as simply ethnic customs, whereas the real issue for Paul was justification by works of the Old Testament Law versus by faith alone.

Priest’s “Who Am I?: Theology and Identity for Children of the Dragon” raises an extremely important question and makes a powerful case for using a variety of disciplines in cross-cultural communication of the Gospel, but it also suffers from several weaknesses, including setting up straw men, introducing the same confusion about “ethnic” customs noted in Yeung, and entertaining a rather superficial treatment of whether *drakon* should be translated as “dragon.” He would have done well to address such issues in a different manner; given the deceptive nature of the “serpent” in the Bible, might the positive connotations of “dragon” in Chinese culture pose a threat to faithful Christian discipleship? Additionally, to what extent might the “dragon” as symbol of the Chinese state fit the image of the beast that persecutes Christians in the Revelation, at least in previous eras?

Several of the chapters would have been stronger if they had interacted with Lit-sen Chang’s *Asia’s Religions: Christianity’s Momentous Encounter with Paganism* and with Carl Henry’s extensive treatments of issues such as hermeneutics, culture, sources of theology, and the nature of revelation in Volumes 2-4 of *God, Revelation, and Authority*.

Even with these criticisms, however, one must admit that all the contributors have offered serious discussions of important topics for the vital subject of Chinese Christian identity.

Chinese Christian Unity, Indigenization, and the Role(s) of the Missionary

reviewed by Dr. Wright Doyle

“Chinese Christian Unity, Indigenization, and the Role(s) of the Missionary.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 36, no. 1 (January 2012).

For years, I have found the IBMR enormously valuable as a resource for the latest and best scholarship on the history of missions and world Christianity, but this issue holds particular value for all those who seek to understand the church in China today. No fewer than six major articles, including the lead editorial, deal with the history of Christianity in China, with pointed references to the situation today.

“If the quest of the church is for unity in Christ, the on-the-ground reality has been kaleidoscopic fragmentation. And the kaleidoscope is spinning with increasing speed,” observes Dwight Baker in his editorial, “Unity, Comity, and the Numbers Game.” What is true worldwide applies to the Chinese scene as well, despite obvious peculiarities of the situation there.

He asks rhetorically, “Who has measured the level of redundancy, competition, ill-coordination of efforts, and striving to establish organizational identity or ‘brand’ that this level of multiplication entails?”

To be sure, organizational diversity reflects the vast variety of gifts, abilities, and interests within the Body of Christ, so “diversity and fragmentation” may not be precise synonyms, but we must admit that “the ways these tensions have played out in mission practice and in the wider Christian movement have frequently been less than edifying.” Several articles in this issue demonstrate that “the planting of the Protestant church in China provides an excellent case in point.”

“Comity Agreements and Sheep Stealers: The Elusive Search for Christian Unity Among Protestants in China,” by Gary Tiedemann, helpfully traces the competing trajectories of movements towards unity and the dynamics of diversity from the mid-1800s to the present. He notes the efforts of mainline mission societies to cooperate in various large ventures, such as education and medical work, the role of the Student Volunteer Movement and the integrating effects of a shared “evangelical” theology, joint missionary conferences in Shanghai, and the regular publication of the Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal.

The pace quickened after the electrifying speech of Cheng Jingyi at the Edinburgh conference in 1910, leading eventually to the formation of the China Continuation Committee, then the convening of a National Conference in 1922, the formation of the national Christian Council of China (NCC), and finally the creation of the national Church of Christ in China in 1927.

On the other hand, fragmentation also increased, driven by such factors as denominational determination to remain separate, the “fundamentalist-modernist” controversy beginning in the

1920s, the entrance of faith missions and holiness movements into China, the rise of independent Chinese leaders and churches, and the influx of a host of independent and “radical” missionaries from the West. Tiedemann very usefully describes these and the roles they played in organizational diversity, concluding that “despite the best efforts of the authorities in the People’s Republic of China to create one unified post-denominational faith, deep divisions persist to this day within indigenous Protestant Christianity.”

With this historical background, we can briefly discuss the other excellent articles in this issue of IBMR, beginning with Gloria Tseng’s lucid and illuminating portrait of the conflicting historiographical challenge posed by differing accounts and assessments of 20th-century Chinese Christianity in “Botany or Flowers? The Challenges of Writing the History of the Indigenization of Christianity in China.” Both the division of Protestants into government-sanctioned churches and unregistered (or “house” churches) and varying theological and ecclesiological assumptions make composing a balanced narrative quite difficult (though she has the courage to undertake such a project at this time!).

Tseng notes that “the history of the indigenization of Christianity in China in the twentieth century has three currents: (1) The ecclesiastical development of the Church of Christ in China, (2) The emergence of Chinese Christian intellectuals associated with missionary colleges and universities, and (3) The emergence of independent preachers and their mass followings.” The first two of these share both a similar cast of actors and a similar cohort of supporters among historians; the last group has evoked quite a different set of responses, both within China and among outside historians.

Three examples are given: Wallace Merwin’s “sanguine assessment” of “the ecclesiastical development of the Church of Christ in China” and the role Cheng Jingyi played, Samuel Ling’s critique of the Chinese Christian intellectuals involved in the May Fourth Movement, and Lian Xi’s study of popular Christian movements. Ling and Lian believe that the “liberal” unification project, which was closely tied to political involvement, failed in fostering true indigenization; Lian believes that popular Christianity has assimilated too much from popular Chinese religion.

If we are properly to understand the current situation, we must acknowledge both the historical and theological conflicts which have led to it, Tseng concludes.

Narrowing the focus to one leading figure, Peter Tze Ming Ng portrays Cheng Jingyi as a “prophet of his time.” Like the previous contributors, however, Ng puts his portrait of Cheng on the wide canvas of the indigenous movements from 1900 to 1949 and the overall quest for indigenous Christianity. He shows why Cheng was such an influential person in the whole process, and why he deserves great respect as someone who saw the issues facing the Chinese church, issues which remain unsolved to this day.

Turning our attention back to the beginnings of Roman Catholic missionary work in China, Jean-Paul Wiest succinctly presents Matteo Ricci as the “Pioneer of Chinese-Western Dialogue and Cultural Exchanges.” After describing Ricci’s education, training, and remarkable personal

abilities, the author reminds us of Ricci's "respect for the diversity of culture," his "promotion of mutual understanding," and his status as a "pioneer of dialogue" between well-meaning Chinese and Western interlocutors.

Of relevance for us today are Ricci's commitment to learning Chinese language and culture, his cultivation of deep friendships with Chinese scholars, and his immense labors to connect with Chinese culture in communicating his understanding of the gospel.

Jessie Lutz returns to the vicissitudes of the Protestant missionary endeavor in her article on "Attrition Among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1807-1890." Drawing upon a wealth of sources, she uncovers the principal reasons for removal from service (death and disease) and delineates the different experiences of men and women on the mission field. Men lived longer and stayed longer, especially in the early decades. Women died earlier or left when their husbands died. Illness and death among children produced profound sorrow and discouragement, testing the faith of the best of them. Until medical and scientific knowledge uncovered the connections between sanitation and health, all too many succumbed to diseases such as dysentery or suffered all their lives. When converts were few and opposition was intense, missionaries struggled with despondency—again, especially in the first period.

In short, "Mission work in China remained a costly and risky career."

Finally, Australian scholar Ian Welch covers the highly-relevant life of Lydia Mary Fay, missionary with the Episcopal Church Mission in China. Her career illustrates the trials and triumphs of hundreds of intrepid women missionaries to China. Though Fay walked a "path of lowliness and lowliness of service," she persevered, refusing to become one of the statistics cited in Jessie Lutz's article on missionary attrition.

As teacher and administrator in missionary schools, she evinced dedication and devotion, expressed through hard work over many decades. She expended the time and toil to learn the Chinese language so well that she evoked the admiration and trust of Chinese readers and editors. Above all, her character gave everyone an example of selfless service as well as patience under affliction, including lack of proper recognition by her male superiors in the mission.

Evaluation

In addition to the broad survey of modern Chinese history contained in these essays, we are provided with three examples of superb Christian living and serving, reminding us that long-term usefulness requires hard work, courage, perseverance, and a host of other rare character qualities. I consider it a privilege to read about such heroic people.

Furthermore, the problems of unity and indigenization remain acute today. Though control of Chinese Christianity is in the hands of Chinese, and is thus in one sense "indigenized," the complex task of allowing the gospel to take root in Chinese culture remains a daunting challenge. Ricci's program was controversial in his own time, and remains so today, but regardless of whether we adopt his strategy of accommodation, we must learn from his example.

These articles come from some of the most outstanding scholars working today. Their research and writing deserve our highest respect and close attention. Just to list their major publications would take too much space; I refer you to the journal itself. We are all indebted to their many years of tiring and diligent labor in libraries around the world, and to their carefully crafted, succinct, and yet comprehensive essays.

I strongly recommend that you peruse this number of the IBMR, which is available without charge online at www.internationalbulletin.org/register.

Having said that, in the interests of clarity and accuracy I presume to make the following comments:

Two of the authors cite Alwyn Austin's *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832-1905*, which, as I have tried to show elsewhere in these pages, is often highly inaccurate and unreliable. In particular, the claim that "the CIM adopted an 'extensive' rather than an 'intensive' missionary strategy" has been convincingly challenged. Dr. Tiedemann's frequently used adjective "radical" also needs further definition to be helpful.

Secondly, it seems to me that the essays on Christian unity presuppose a definition of "church" which may not be warranted by biblical usage. I realize that this is an extremely controversial subject, but I believe that we need to rethink our assumptions about the precise form(s) which Christian unity should take. Though visible unity of some sort is clearly commanded for both individual congregations and among Christians in any locale, any wider use of the term "church" must be carefully scrutinized, as most biblical scholars, and many theologians, would deny its application to a national organization or worldwide denomination.

Perhaps the search for Christian unity needs to be directed towards the congregation and the city rather than a larger organization, not only because of the biblical evidence, but also for more practical reasons: Larger networks necessarily provoke government intervention, either in the form of state sponsorship and potential control (TSPM, CPA), or opposition and possible persecution (unregistered or "underground") churches. There is also the historical reality of almost inevitable abuse, even corruption, when power becomes concentrated in the hands of a few people.

Those remarks aside, however, I believe that all serious students of Chinese Christian history should make it a priority to read these outstanding essays, all of which possess relevance for our understanding of today's situation.

Christianity and Confucianism: Culture, Faith and Politics

by **Christopher Hancock**

Hancock, Christopher. *Christianity and Confucianism: Culture, Faith and Politics*. London: T&T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2021.

With the publication of *Christianity and Confucianism*, Dr. Hancock has presented the reading public with a masterpiece of cultural, intellectual, religious, and cross-cultural history.

First, and most obviously, this is a *big* book. The text runs to 500 pages, followed by a bibliography of 134 pages and an index of 50 pages.

But it is big in other ways. Just as the announcer on the classical music station will sometimes say, “And now, for our big piece of the day, here is Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” so this treatise is long and wide, deep and high, rich and complex, with a vast range of topics and a temporal, conceptual, and imaginative scope that one very seldom finds even in multivolume works.

At first, I was almost tempted to think that between these two widely separated covers we find not one, but two books, and perhaps more. The title announces the foundation of the argument, namely, a very careful and detailed comparison and contrast of Christ and Confucius, introduced in the first two chapters and developed as the conclusion of each of the following chapters. His treatment of these two men runs altogether to about 150 pages and could be published as a stand-alone volume. For what it is worth, I shall say that, based on my limited knowledge, the author has accurately and powerfully set Confucius and Christ before us.

Summary

PART I

Chapter 1, “Confucius, ‘the Master,’ and Cultural Decay” reviews the life and legacy of Confucius, including the sources and the growth of the Confucian tradition. Not for the first time, Hancock displays his mastery of the most important literature on this huge subject.

Chapter 2, “Jesus, ‘The Christ,’ and Spiritual Renewal” likewise canvasses both the ancient history of the “many comings of Christianity” in China and – briefly but succinctly – the history of the doctrine of Christ in the Christian church. A lengthy section on the New Testament evidence for Jesus lays the groundwork for his later studies of what the four Gospels have to say about the founder of Western Christendom.

PART II

The subtitle, “Culture, Faith, and Politics,” hints at the wealth of subjects discussed in the remaining chapters. According to the author, this is the heart of the book, where he expounds his thesis at great length in in much detail. “Chapters 3 to 8 visit select instances – historical snapshots, if you like – when the dialogue between China and the West, and thence Christianity

and Confucianism, intensified. My argument is that both China and the West have been indelibly affected by this exchange; indeed, affected to a degree that we *do* not, perhaps, *cannot*, maybe even *will* not, appreciate” (xiii. Emphasis original).

He goes on, “In keeping with a new genre of ‘One World’ literature, this volume tells the story of East-West cultural exchange through comparative analysis of Christianity and Confucianism. It offers a multi-disciplinary read on historic East-West relations, with a view to recalibrating contemporary culture studies and diplomacy” (xiv).

Here the author declares his basic *assumption*: We now live in one world, inseparably joined to each other by a shared cultural history and common human experiences. The *nature* of the book: It is a *story* of the often-conflicted relationship between China and the West. The *purpose* of this story is to “recalibrate” both contemporary culture studies and diplomacy.

Chapter 3, “Heaven, Earth, and ‘Harmony,’” looks at the monumental achievement of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci, who arrived in China in the 16th century and sought to win a hearing through his mastery of Confucian literature and etiquette and of the latest Western science. The Jesuits introduced the new discipline of sinology to Europe, which was more than ready to receive a new, more secularized, cosmology. It concludes with a fascinating comparison of what the Analects and the Gospels have to say about “heaven and earth.”

Ricci’s controversial use of the Chinese term “heaven” provoked a debate that continues today – that is, what is the best Chinese translation of the biblical words for God? (For my views on this subject, see [\(99+\) \(DOC\) Names for God in Chinese | Wright Doyle - Academia.edu.](#)) Hancock shows that, despite some similarities, such as a common belief in a fundamental “harmony” in the universe and a common desire to realize that harmony on earth, Confucian and Christian views of Heaven and Earth differ greatly. Jesus taught that God was the creator of the universe as well as the only one who can empower us to become morally better.

Chapter 4, “Humanity, Society, and the Search for Worth,” traces the cross-cultural engagement of China and the West from the last decades of the 17th century to about 1750. Josiah Wedgwood and his wildly successful manufacture of porcelain provides what the author calls a “global archetype”: “In the discovery, beauty, subtlety, ambition, and oppression of porcelain, human life, character, progress, and community are laid bare” (130). By the way, that sentence is typical of hundreds like it in a book of extraordinary subtlety and complexity unified by a common theme.

Europe not only adapted porcelain to its own uses, but Chinese humanistic, rationalistic anthropology, as Hancock shows through portraits of Leibnitz, Spinoza, and others who birthed the European Enlightenment. A section on “Voltaire, Diderot, and the Culture of *Encyclopedias*” traces the Francophone counterpart of other European thinkers, followed by a survey of “Britain and the Birth of Anthropology, 1650-1750.”

This chapter concludes with a comparison of Confucian and biblical anthropology. We see that the “Analects’ hesitant metaphysic contrasts starkly with the clear theological ontology of the Gospels; humanity finds itself in God through Christ” (179). In the Gospels, “life on earth is seen

as subject to God as creator, and to Jesus as saviour or recreator. This is different from the Analects, where humanity is cast in functional, relational and moral terms. . . The [biblical] emphasis is consistently on humanity being transformed and energized by the ‘life-giving’ work of the Spirit” (180).

Finally, while “the Analects teach respect in key relationships, the gospels command an egalitarian, inclusive love for all” (182).

Chapter 5, “Character, Purpose, and Morality: China and Enlightenment Habits and Values” traces the interchanges between China and the West from about 1750 to 1820. In the West, an “Age of Respect” for China changes into the “Age of Contempt.” “Adolescent Europe meets adult China. They fail to understand one another; the generational, cultural gap is immense” (183).

Here, tea is the global cultural archetype. “The consumption, trade, social profile, and literary invocation of tea offers an accessible motif to access key features of the evolution of ethical thought” during this period, as “[c]hinoiserie takes liquid form in tea,” even as Europeans begin to feel a “solid antipathy” for China (185). “Life, values, morality, taste, sentiment, character, and virtue are richly illustrated in the long history of . . . tea” (189).

Hancock traces the evolution of ethical and cultural “turn to the self” in Europe through Kant, Beethoven, the romantic poets, thinkers like Burke and Paine during an age of revolution, and then the pivotal roles played by Rousseau, Herder, Hegel, and Schleiermacher in the creation of the modern age.

As a counterpoint to this story, the author introduces us to the first Protestant missionary who worked in China, Robert Morrison (of whom he wrote what is now the standard biography), and Morrison’s huge impact upon both the West and China. His translation of the Bible into Chinese and his multi-volume dictionaries introduced a powerful new literature into China and laid the foundation of English sinology. Over the next two hundred years, Protestant missionaries would have an enormous influence, not only upon China but also on the West.

Hancock’s detailed and nuanced exposition of Confucian ethical teachings is matched by a brief section on the ethics of Jesus. He sees a remarkable similarity between the “negative” form of the Golden Rule in Confucius and the positive statement by Jesus, but also fundamental differences in their ethical systems. Christian virtue and character, especially *agape* love comes from God and finds its incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. “Specifically, the gift of the promised Holy Spirit empowers Christians to keep God’s law and live ‘holy’ lives” (256-257).

PART III

The last three chapters of the book examine “three related themes that assume particular prominence for different reasons between c. 1820 and the end of the Cultural Revolution in China in 1976”: truth, memory, and death.

Chapter 6, “Truth and Truthfulness: The 19th-Century Crisis in China and the West,” “addresses the heart of historic Sino-Western relations. Its theme is truth, and its associate truthfulness.

Trust is fed by truthfulness. Suspicion flourishes when truth *per se* is compromised” (263). During this period, mistrust between China and the West grew to awful proportions.

“Now the pressing issues are money, power, and empire,” as the two sides clashed again and again (264).

In these turbulent years, “Western philosophy, art, literature, politics, religion music and aesthetics, all bear witness to ongoing, increasingly complex, Sino-Western relations. The nature of truth, and the obligation of truthfulness, are both implicated” (265).

The chapter is filled with surprises, at least for me. Shakespeare knows about China, and he becomes increasingly read and respected there. Darwin’s works are translated into Chinese. The novelist Mary Anne Evans (aka George Eliot) was “sensitive to China and its culture heritage,” and reflected some aspects of Confucianism in her writings (279).

Others enter this cross-cultural exchange: Charles Dickens; the scholar-missionary James Legge, who translated the Confucian Classics into English; Richard Wagner; Ludwig Feuerbach; Friedrich Nietzsche; skeptical biblical scholars seeking to write a credible “Life of Jesus.” “The seeds of 20th-century ‘deconstructionism’ are sown in the late 19th century” (330).

In light of this unravelling of traditional ideas of truth, the author looks at Confucius and Christ.

Though “truth” as a concept does not figure in Confucius’s teachings, he does insist the people be honest, sincere, and trustworthy. Words must reflect the reality of the situation. “Still, Confucian morality is rightly seen as pragmatic, integrated, and dynamic. It is also conditional and situational. Indeed, it is more akin to postmodern ‘situational ethics’ than the normative absolutism of traditional biblical ethics” (338).

In contrast to the Confucian *Classics*, “the gospels establish an unequivocal connection between God and truth. . . God [is] true, pure, trustworthy and truthful. He is faithful” (339). We are to respond to this God with faith, trust in his love for us, and actions of love that flow from our conviction that in Jesus Christ truth was – and is – embodied. “Secondly, biblical truth has a practical, moral, existential, spiritual character. It is not easily confined to modern categories” (340).

Though human relationships must be taken into consideration in the Gospels as with Confucius, in contrast to the *Analects*, “in the Bible a theological basis for truth is essential” (341). In particular, the Bible is true, and its words are trustworthy. Confidence in that belief eroded rapidly in the 20th century, of course, as the ideas canvassed in this chapter began to impact theology and the church.

Chapter 7, “Memory, Rite and Tradition,” deals with modernism in China and the West. The seeds were sown in the 19th century: “Romanticism’s disavowal of bourgeois values, Enlightenment confidence in Kantian idealism, Marxist criticism of capitalist oppression, and various expressions of Darwinian evolutionism, all create a proto-Modernist confidence in humanity’s creative endeavour and power to overcome” (347).

There's more: "If these are the roots of proto-Modernism, Modernism *per se* is to scholars more probably, and dramatically, anticipated in the severe existentialism of Kierkegaard and in the horny pessimism of Schopenhauer." After quickly mentioning famous figures in literature, art, psychiatry, music, and architecture, Hancock concludes, "When Modernism reached its apogee in 1939, no form or tradition remained untouched, no process or principle to construct reality was put out of bounds." (348).

He moves on to look at T.S. Eliot, Vincent Van Gogh, Edmund Husserl "and his heirs," Igor Stravinsky, Marcel Proust, Niels Bohr and Quantum theory, and Ezra Pound, most of whom were heavily influenced by Chinese philosophy and literature, and all of whom made a deep and lasting imprint upon Chinese intellectuals. Throughout, the author probes how these culture-shapers saw memory, rite, and tradition.

Finally, turning to the Analects and the Gospels, we come to what, for me, was a high point in the book.

In both sources, memory, rite, and tradition play a crucial role, but this similarity "cloaks intellectual, epistemological, and moral distinctives. Christianity and Confucianism agree memory is inseparable from ritual, liturgical acts, and oral traditions, but they differ over the focus, agency, effect and core purpose of memory" (395).

After emphasizing the profound legacy of Augustine's view of memory, Hancock reverses the usual order and discusses "the Judeo-Christian Anamnestic Tradition," where memory and tradition . . . recall dynamically God's activity in the past and his saving power in the present. The effect of this psychological and practical operation is the (re-)engagement of believers, and the challenging of doubters with the presence, power, and sovereign will of God" (397).

He surveys the material in the Old Testament and the New Testament before focusing on the central place of the Lord's Supper. "Christianity's appeal to memory is theologically potent and practically relevant. When *this* past is recalled, the present is transfigured and the future confidently projected" (401).

Centered upon the Confucian *Classics*, "memory functions in classical Confucianism as a guardian of the past and a guide to the present" (402).

Some points of contrast: "In contrast to the pedagogical and moral focus of the Chinese Classics, biblical interests are spiritual and eternal. Memory serves God's spiritual purposes and humanity's deepest needs" (407). In the Bible, "God and humanity are co-agents in remembering. . . The lack of an unequivocal, transcendent agent in classical Confucianism restricts memory to humanity" (408).

"Christianity . . . ascribes to memory the power of rendering the past 'really present' and God dynamically active in and through spiritual re-birth and the sacramental rituals of baptism and Holy Communion" (408).

Chapter 8 turns to "Sickness, Death and the Afterlife: On Making Sense of Everything and Nothing." In light of the horrors of the 20th century, and the changing attitudes toward death and

the afterlife, Hancock asserts that a “‘One World’ perspective builds confidently on the universality of humanity in its capacity to empathize with those in pain, loss, and grief, and to wreak vengeance and destruction on even those who are near and dear. East-West cultural and political relations make more sense if we are ready to accept that we are, as humans, less different than culture, history, and politics may suggest.” Further, the “visceral, intellectual, spiritual issues of sickness, death and the ‘afterlife’ in the Analects and Gospels take us to the heart of our common humanity and of Christian faith and Confucian philosophy” (421).

Once again, we can only hint at the richness of this wide-ranging study. The two major developments dealt with are the rise of atheism and of existentialism, both of which dramatically altered our perception or, and response to, common human suffering.

A mere list of leading characters will have to suffice: Nietzsche, Sartre, Dostoyevsky, Heidegger, Husserl (again), Unamuno, Buber, Marcel, Jaspers, Camus, Wiesel, Ernst Bloch, Eberhard Jungel, Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Protest Atheism: and “Post Holocaust Theology”, Liberation Theology, Berdyaev, Bultmann, Tillich, Macquarrie, Wittgenstein, Ricoeur, Foucault and Derrida, Habermas. Some receive more attention, some less, but the cumulative impact of this chapter is powerful: We live in a world where suffering and death can no longer be seen in traditional terms.

As the pain and associated angst continue to increase, we sense the author’s deep compassion; clearly, he is no disinterested observer, but a passionate participant in this “sad” world.

Finally, we return to Confucius and Christ. “We encounter these old texts with a new sense of our pain-filled shared humanity and common quest for existential truth” (482).

“Suffering and death assume symbolic and ritual forms in early Confucianism” (483). His discussion of these practices seemed quite insightful to me. After reading Hancock’s section on the integral meaning and function of rites of veneration to ancestors, I felt that for the first time in forty-five years of dealing with Chinese people, I finally began to understand why these rituals are so important to them.

His explanation of the “cult of Confucius” also makes sense. “As he had taught, in death Confucius lives in the prayers, praises, rituals and lives of others” (490).

As we would expect, we find numerous points of comparison and contrast between the Analects and the Gospels. I will mention only a few:

In contrast to the Analects, “suffering, death and are interpreted theologically in the gospels; that is . . . human life, suffering, death, and hope of an afterlife, are represented as contingent on God’s creation, love, grace, and sovereign purpose” (492).

For the Christian, “Life and death are now redefined in relationship to a personal, loving, righteous heavenly Father.” This assumption finds no “direct counterpart in the practical wisdom, or moral anthropocentrism, of the Analects” (493). Furthermore, contrast “with the Analects is even clearer when we see suffering, death and the afterlife interpreted christologically in the Gospels,” where “the crucifixion is also a natural, physical event (that

reflects his mortality), a unique historical crucifixion . . . and a representative offering on behalf of human sin' (493).

That means that “[a]cceptance or rejection of the benefits of Jesus’s atoning sacrifice determine a person’s present and future experience of life and death” (493). Because of the resurrection of Christ and his promised return the “‘eschatological orientation’ of the Gospels represents one of the clearest points of contrast with classical Confucianism. This is the basis for Christian hope. It is rooted in Jesus’s resurrection and celebrated in Christian existentialism. This has no counterpart in the Analects of Confucius’s life, message or death. Filial piety does not raise the dead, however well it honours them” (494).

Evaluation

Aside from being very *big* as this summary indicates, the book is also *beautiful* – from the cover to the printed page, from the elegant style to the eminently humane and generous portrayal of people, events, and ideas that have often clashed – the author treats us to an aesthetic banquet of rare delights.

Christianity and Confucianism deserves the often-hackneyed adjective “good.” Truly, it is a good book. Yes, Dr. Hancock presents us with new information – I learned something new on every page - arranged with artful balance, a clear progression, and almost overwhelming lushness of literary and thematic elaboration.

It is good in the more important sense of being morally challenging and uplifting. Both our dignity and our depravity as humans are portrayed in a way that builds us up and prods us toward greater love for “the other.” In particular, the ethical teachings of Christ and Confucius summon us out of our provincial, often bigoted, and usually selfish ways to the kind of moral character that would inspire others to emulate.

Christianity and Confucianism, indeed, is written with passion – a passion for world peace. Hancock hopes fervently that his book will help us to understand each other and then to get along with each other, conscious of our common humanity, and despite our differences. That hope ties the book together.

Going back to my initial impression that we actually have two books in this one volume, I have changed my mind.

In this story, Confucius and Christ are treated as equals, in that they both founded “dynasties” of thought, culture, and civilization.

Thus, we should not look here for an explicit demonstration of the superiority of Christ and of true Christianity over Confucius and Confucianism, but for an understanding of how Chinese influenced by Confucius and Westerners influenced by Christ have related to, and shaped, each other.

On the other hand, after reading his comparisons and contrasts of Confucius and Christ, I realized that, though Hancock has not penned an explicitly evangelistic tract, his depiction of Jesus Christ in the Gospels and in authentic Christian tradition and life would lead any careful

reader to ask the question, How can I not believe in, and follow, this Man? A man who is also God, and who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

In short, I believe that Hancock is driven by a passion to see people reconciled to God and to each other through faith in Jesus Christ. This volume is one book, and it is a brilliant work of apologetics, theology, and evangelism.

Questions

I do have some questions, however.

DID MISSIONARIES “OVERSTATE THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL PLIGHT OF THE CHINESE, AND THE LACK OF ‘LIGHT’ IN CHINA’S ANCIENT CONFUCIAN CULTURE” (252)?

The descriptions of China before 1950 found in both the biographies and the sinological studies of missionaries provide abundant evidence that the society in which they lived was in desperate straits, as later revolutionaries would insist. As our author has shown us, though Confucianism had much good advice to offer, it did not possess the kind of “light” that can either show us how to live before God in this life or with him eternally in the next life.

WHO IS “WE”?

The author constantly asserts, "We read the *Analects* and the Gospels in the light of ..." the intellectual and cultural movements that he so brilliantly describes. To me, the interpretative key of the book might lie in the meaning(s) of this word "we."

Here are my guesses: “We” are 1. The cultured despisers of Christianity (and the wisdom of Confucius). 2. Extremely sensitive, alert, and educated students of our culture - people like Christopher Hancock. 3. In the last chapter, almost everyone, for we have all been influenced by some form of existentialism.

So, I think that he is trying to prod the skeptics toward greater respect for, and even faith in, truth, and especially Jesus. He is reminding himself and other Christians to return to a “simple” and straightforward reading of the *Analects* and the Gospels. And he seeks to help everyone realize just how complex and inter-related the relationship is between China and the West.

DOES HE REALLY “READ THE ANALECTS AND THE GOSPELS IN THE LIGHT OF...”?

One thing that stands out very clearly is that in each chapter, though he repeatedly says, “We read the *Analects* and the Gospels in the light of...”, only in the last chapter does he make this more explicit when he compares Confucius and Christ. Furthermore, in all his expositions of the *Analects* and the Gospels, he offers us analysis and interpretation that are almost entirely devoid of any references to what has gone before in that chapter, and in a way that is very – and, I would say appropriately – “pre-critical.”

In other words, except in the last chapter, he does not “practice what he preaches,” which, in my opinion, is good!

IS IT TRUE THAT WE CAN NO LONGER SAY THAT “CHRISTIANITY AND CONFUCIANISM ARE ENGAGED IN A COMPETITIVE QUEST FOR WISDOM”?

Certainly, this book has shown that people in China and the West have for millennia engaged in the search for wisdom, and that the ethical teachings of Confucius and Christ have some things in common. I have published a book comparing Christ and Confucius that points out some of these similarities. (Composed in English, the book was translated in Chinese and published in Taiwan. An abridged version, *Jesus: The Complete Man*, is available in English.)

And yet, Hancock himself makes abundantly clear that these two belief systems diverge at the root; they are built on two different foundations. That makes sense of an incident that took place in Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius, not too long ago. When local Chinese Christians planned to erect a very large church, one that would overshadow the ancient complex of buildings honoring China’s Sage, Confucianists erupted with rage and made such a protest that the government – itself committed to a revival of Confucianism – ordered that construction on the church be abandoned.

FINALLY, DO WE REALLY NOW LIVE IN A SITUATION IN WHICH “‘ORIENT’ AND OCCIDENT’ ARE WORDS IMPOSED ON OUR OLD, MAJESTIC, PROFOUNDLY INTERCONNECTED WORLD” (259)?

Hancock has persuasively demonstrated, with massive erudition, that China and the West have together created a world that is immensely interconnected. Chinese and Western intellectuals do, indeed, in habit a “One World” of discourse.

On the other hand, having lived and worked among Chinese for more than forty-five years, I am still struck by the ways in which we inhabit different worlds at some very deep levels. Even Christians, who share the same theological and ethical beliefs, hold significantly divergent assumptions about social relationships, decision making, and moral obligations.

To give only one example: My wife and I watched a 48-episode long Chinese drama series about highly sophisticated elites in Shanghai. We were surprised that they were shown eating Western food, drinking *Americano* coffees (not tea), travelling to Europe as if going down the street, and speaking English with their global partners in the technology sector.

BUT – the entire plot revolved around a sense of filial piety and obligation that would strike most Westerners as not only strange, if not bizarre, but which was perfectly comprehensible to the huge audience of this drama in China.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

Those questions aside, however, I highly recommend *Christianity and Confucianism*.

There is no way I can convey to you the stunning breadth and depth of the author’s description of the development of the main currents of Western thought and culture over the past 500 years or so, and of how these developments have both influenced, and been influenced by, China’s great tradition, Confucianism.

What I can say is that he provides us with a clearer understanding of the culture in which we live and – more importantly perhaps – in which our children live. While reading the last chapter, I went into the kitchen to freshen up my tea. On the radio I heard Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra playing Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. I said to my wife: "This book explains why this kind of music could not have been composed after the First World War." Then I added, "It also shows me why, perhaps, we appreciate this music even more than those who first heard it."

Hancock cares deeply about harmonious relationships, both in the family and between nations. Clearly, he hopes that readers of this story, both in the West and in China, will learn to see how much we have in common, while at the same time respecting our differences.

Guizhou: The Precious Province

by Paul Hattaway

Hattaway, Paul. *Guizhou: The Precious Province*. Vol. 2, *The China Chronicles: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History*. London: SPCK, 2018.

Popular author Paul Hattaway (*The Heavenly Man; Back to Jerusalem; An Asian Harvest* – his autobiography) plans to write one volume on the history of Christianity for each province in China. So far, he has published books on Shandong, Guizhou, Zhejiang, Tibet, and Henan. I have read all of these, and I find them to be not only most informative but also fascinating and deeply moving.

Hattaway's scholarship is impeccable but unobtrusive, for you are caught up in the thrilling narrative of God's work among the people of China over the centuries. "My intention is not to present readers with a dry list of names and dates but to bring alive the marvelous stories of how God has caused His kingdom to take root and flourish in the world's most populated country" (xiii). To put it another way, he simply wants to compile "a record of God's mighty acts in China" (xiii). In other words, the focus of these books is squarely upon God.

For these stories, he has not only read more than a thousand articles and books but has also conducted "hundreds of hours of interviews . . . throughout China, with many testimonies that have never been shared in public" (xiii).

Guizhou: The Precious Province

Each volume opens with a brief description of the province under consideration.

"Guizhou" means "precious province" in Mandarin, but it can also mean "land of demons." Indeed, the progress of the gospel in this mountainous and rainy province has been fiercely contested by the forces of evil. More than 80 different ethnic groups live in an area the size of Missouri and Oklahoma and larger than England, Wales, and Northern Ireland combined. The population is several times greater than the American states named above and 60 percent of the British kingdoms, however.

Because of the heavy, constant rains and the ubiquitous mountains, Guizhou is "indisputably one of the poorest regions of China" (6). Many people have migrated to other parts of China and countless girls are sold to human traffickers looking for brides to supply the shortage of females caused by the female infanticide and abortion during China's one-child policy. Centuries of internecine warfare and Han Chinese aggression against the tribal peoples have left deep scars and suspicion toward outsiders.

Hattaway, an expert on China's minority ethnic groups, pays special attention to the diversity and crucial distinctions within Guizhou's immensely diverse population. He quotes Revelation 5:9–10 to remind us of the importance of each people group to God.

The growth of the church in Guizhou has not generally been marked by the kinds of massive revivals recorded in the volume about Shandong, but today there are about 2.7 million Christians, representing exponential increases since the Communists took over in 1949, despite all the obstacles and attacks upon Christians.

As in other books in the series, Hattaway traces the story of Christianity decade by decade, interposing chapters dedicated to a particular person or group. This book begins with a look at the mysterious origins of the Miao people, who trace their ancestry back to Adam and whose cultural memory includes a narrative of beginnings closely parallel to the one in Genesis.

Throughout the history of Christianity in China, followers of Christ have endured fierce opposition and, often, cruel persecution. In Guizhou, terrible suffering came upon believers from the beginning and continues to this day. A chief cause of hostility toward Christians was their refusal to participate in ancestor worship rituals and their unwillingness to contribute money to the many idolatrous festivals held throughout the year. In the twentieth century, the government attacked those who would not renounce their faith in Jesus.

Hattaway's graphic stories are replete with accounts not just of cruel torture and death, but of indomitable courage and a refusal to deny Christ, no matter the cost. He does not spare us the gruesome details; these only serve to highlight the faithfulness of Christians and the power of God to sustain his people through suffering to glory.

Missionaries also suffered harsh and sometimes brutal treatment from Han Chinese literati, who feared that the new religion would diminish their cultural and political power. The first China Inland Mission (CIM) worker to be killed was William Fleming, in 1898, the victim of rumors that the foreigners were smuggling weapons to the tribal people in preparation for a revolt against the Chinese government. False stories about missionaries have continued to cause opposition throughout China, down to present day.

The first evangelical missionaries arrived in 1877 with the coming of CIM missionaries Charles Judd and his brother-in-law, James Broumton. Others from the CIM followed them, including George Clarke, "who proved to be a key instrument in bringing the gospel to the unreached minority groups of southwest China. Clarke's wife was the first foreign woman to live in Guizhou" (36).

The first converts were women reached by CIM workers Charlotte Kerr and Jane Kidd, who had started a school for girls. They established a clinic to help opium addicts break free. These two methods – primary education and opium clinics – joined evangelism and the distribution of Christian literature as primary means for planting churches.

Hattaway does not only tell the stories of intrepid missionaries, but he brings to light the unknown sagas of Chinese Christians, who were by far the more important agents in the growth of Christianity. Chen Xiguang was the first evangelical believer and the first evangelical Chinese pastor. His story and photo remind us of the transforming power of the gospel. At least a dozen other Chinese Christians are memorialized with both words and pictures in this volume.

Though many believers stood firm despite persecution, the Hmu, who were members of the Miao people, stopped being open to the gospel after government soldiers killed many of their tribe in 1900. Thereafter, they were afraid to associate with foreigners.

Hattaway has a great burden for unreached peoples, including those numbering only a few thousand or even less. With obvious love, he tells the story of the remarkable ministry of CIM missionary James Adam to minority groups. As he got to know the Miao better, Adam noticed differences among them. One tribe, the A-Hmao, cherished an ancient legend that they once had a written language and books in that language, but that these had been destroyed. When Adam learned their language and eventually had the New Testament translated for them, their joy was immense. A powerful revival broke out and many became believers. Later, Samuel Pollard produced a translation in a script that was even easier to read and is used even today.

Within a year, Adam, Pollard, and two other missionaries died. The believers were shaken, but the Miao church survived, and now numbers over 500,000.

Later in the book, he tells us about the Ge, the Hmu, the Nosu, the Bouyei, and the Dong – all considered “Miao” by the Chinese government, but each one with a distinct language and culture. In my opinion, the story of the conversion of thousands of Nosu is alone worth the price of this book.

The 1930s

For several decades, missionaries concentrated their efforts upon these triable groups, who were much more receptive than the Han Chinese. Their outreach to Han Chinese centered upon cities. In the early 1930s, however, God began to work among Han Chinese in isolated villages. When CIM missionary Harry Taylor learned of this, he urged missionaries in the capital city of Guiyang to extend their work to villages. The movement to Christ continued to grow and was greatly enhanced by the visit of the Bethel Band Mission in 1934.

The Holy Spirit worked through these revivalists to convict multitudes of sin, and to confess these, even the most terrible offenses, in the presence of those whom they had offended. People who had been cold-hearted for years were broken in spirit, crying out to God for forgiveness and receiving profound joy and peace. Churches were revived, families reconciled, and many new people brought to faith in Christ.

Another preaching band that made a powerful impact was composed of five men from three different tribes.

Missionaries were among those who suffered when the Communists traveled through Guizhou on the famous Long March in 1934. Rudolf Bosshardt and Arnolis Hayman were captured and forced to accompany the Reds. Though they had to endure great trials, God preserved their lives.

The 1940s

Hattaway candidly records the ups and downs of church growth in Guizhou, noting that sometimes the Christian witness seems to have almost died out.

Faithful Christians labored on, however, including the sisters of the German Friedenshort Deaconess Mission, who quietly lived among the tribes as associated members of the China Inland Mission. They demonstrated the love of Christ through medical ministry and education for the children of the impoverished tribes. Later, they reached out to lepers. Their mission to the tribes came to an end after 1949, but they had made a profound impact.

Meanwhile, Christians among the A-Hmao tribe held fast. They experienced a breakthrough when they decided to attend the large festivals with their fellow tribesmen and share the gospel with them.

In 1940, after he recovered from his ordeal, Rudolph Bosshardt and his wife returned to serve in Guizhou. They preached the gospel faithfully, seeing much fruit, until they were forced to leave China in 1951.

Nothing daunted, they relocated to Laos, where they worked among Chinese until they had to retire. After his wife's death, Bosshardt emigrated from Sweden to England, where he founded the Manchester Chinese Christian Church.

By 1949, Christians in Guizhou numbered around 100,000, almost a fivefold increase since 1922.

The 1950s and 1960s

When the Communists came to power, they unleashed upon the Miao Christians the worst persecutions in the history of their much-persecuted church. "At this time, with all foreigners removed from Guizhou a black curtain descended, and for many years little or no news emerged from the Christians in the Precious Province" (149–150).

"Thousands of pastors and devoted believers died because they stood firm in their faith. Additional thousands were sent to prison where they suffered various forms of torture, hard labor and starvation" (150–151).

Despite extremely cruel and harsh persecution, the church in Guizhou survived, and even grew. The Word had been planted deeply and could not be rooted out. Scriptures had been widely distributed, were treasured, and were hidden in secret places until the time would come when the Bible could be read openly again.

The 1970s

"By the early 1970s, China had become a place of misery for the masses. . . In the midst of this harsh environment, the Holy Spirit was still at work in Guizhou, drawing men and women with open hearts to Jesus Christ" (155).

In the face of repeated revivals and the bold stand for Christ made by the Miao believers, murderous persecution fell upon them. On one occasion, hundreds were mowed down by army machine guns during a prayer meeting. Others were imprisoned and tortured. Nevertheless, the church continued to grow.

The 1980s

Persecution continued in the early 1980s, but the numbers of Christians among several different tribes also continued to increase. In a new development, evangelists from a large house church network in central China went to Guizhou to share the gospel. Despite danger and even death, they were able to minister with power.

Although the government-sanctioned Three-Self Church had often betrayed Christians, some churches in Guizhou decided to register with the government. In 1987, a government survey counted 100,000 believers in Three-Self congregations. The unregistered churches had about 250,000 adherents at this time.

The church grew by meeting in homes; praying for the sick and seeing many healed; casting out demons; distributing Bibles; showing love by engaging in works of practical help, such as giving money to the poor and building a road; prayer; and zealous evangelism in the face of fierce opposition.

Letters and pictures

From the beginning of the history of Christianity in Guizhou in the late 1800s, photographs illustrate this fast-paced narrative. We see the faces and dress of tribal people, Han Chinese, and foreign missionaries.

Starting with this chapter, Hattaway includes excerpts of letters from Christians in each province that have come to the outside, often to the Far East Broadcasting Company offices in Hong Kong. These letters run the gamut of joyful faith, to confusion about how to behave as a believer, to intense sadness. Many of them express the desperate need for Bibles and for trained teachers of the Word. They paint a picture of the Christians in China that cannot but move the reader.

The photographs and letters form an essential part of Hattaway's history and are a major strength of the books in this series. The author has searched archives for older pictures, but he has added to these many more taken with his own camera and reflecting his extensive travels.

The 1990s

“Christianity in many areas of Guizhou continued to flourish throughout the 1990s. The decade saw a further softening in attitudes against the Church compared to the brute force used in previous decades, but life continued to be desperately hard for many tribal believers” (180).

Though the Communist Party strictly forbade its members from becoming Christians, this decade witnessed a large number of cadres joining the church. In another change, Han Chinese and members of other, previously unreached, and apparently uninterested tribal groups began to turn to Christ.

Government pressure eased a bit during this time, but materialism started to distract people from spiritual things. Tribal Christians who moved to urban centers for better jobs often found it hard to retain their faith.

Nevertheless, by the end of the century, evangelical Christians in Guizhou were estimated to number 300,000 to 400,000, explosive growth since 1987.

The 2000s “Decade of Harvest”

Beginning in the early 2000s, foreign Christians from the United States, Singapore, Malaysia, and other parts of the world began to travel to Guizhou on short-term mission trips. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, these visits often brought the gospel to places that had never before heard about Jesus or served to revive existing churches.

Foreigners, usually working through interpreters, shared God’s love in various ways: testimonies, teaching, Bible distribution, Christian literature, evangelistic video and audio resources, and gifts of goods and money. Hattaway reports that the Mo, the Ge, the Shui, and the Dong tribes received the good news about Christ for the first time and responded. Again, these stories demonstrate the power of God in the lives of his people when they are obedient to his leading.

At the same time, visitors were themselves blessed. As they witnessed conversions, heard stories of zeal and martyrdom, and listened to the stunning singing of tribal Christian choirs, they experienced God’s goodness in new ways.

These and previous efforts paid off. By 2010, there were about 2.6 million Christians in Guizhou.

The 2010s: “The Church Pushes Back”

The first five years of this decade were relatively calm for Christians in Guizhou, but bitter suffering was not unknown. Hattaway records several instances and tells of how the Christians began to push back by bringing lawsuits against illegal police actions.

In 2016, a storm was unleashed: After new laws against Christianity were enacted in 2015, “China dramatically reversed its policies, and full-scale persecution of house church Christians broke out in many parts of the country, including Guizhou” (214). The authorities demolished church buildings, threatened to deprive believers of their rights to pensions, and brought immense pressure upon church leaders. Pastors and others faced arrest, imprisonment, beating, and torture.

Nevertheless, the church kept growing, as Christians met in homes and in twos and threes. The Horned Miao (so called because their women wear horns on their heads) and the Hmong Shua experienced an amazing influx of new believers, for example.

“The Future of the Church in Guizhou”

No one knows exactly what will happen, but Hattaway believes that the kingdom of God will never cease its advance among the peoples of Guizhou.

While noting significant advances in the past 150 years, Hattaway concludes by saying that “dozens of small tribes remain isolated from the good news, with many groups containing no known Christians at the present time. The Hmu remain the largest unreached people group in Guizhou. . . [Finally,] less than 8 percent of the population professes to be Christians” (224–225).

As in all the other volumes of the *China Chronicles*, an Appendix at the end includes a county-by-county survey of the province, showing how many professing Christians there are in each region. Hattaway explains that he has used the most rigorous and in-depth research to arrive at his numbers and considers these appendices to be essential features of each book.

Conclusion

With each installment of the *China Chronicles*, Paul Hattaway solidifies his position as one of the outstanding scholars of Christianity in China. Though not an academic, he is producing books of high academic value.

Perhaps just as importantly, he writes with clarity, vividness, balance, accuracy, and passion.

Henan: The Galilee of China

by Paul Hattaway

Hattaway, Paul. *Henan: The Galilee of China*. Vol. 5, *The China Chronicles: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History*. Carlisle, UK: Piquant Editions Ltd., 2009.

“This was one of the most agonizing experiences of my life,” recalled Peter Xu, of being tortured by hanging from his wrists on a gate that was made to slide back and forth.

“The pain was absolutely unbearable. . . . I was certain my time had come to die. Death was what I longed for. . . . I was grateful for this opportunity to know the Lord more intimately. It was my honeymoon with Jesus.

“Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, the chief interrogating officer came and unlocked my handcuffs. I fell to the floor in a heap . . .” He was made to walk, then collapsed again. “The officer continued his interrogation. ‘Xu, this is your last chance. Confess all your crimes! How do you feel about the treatment we have given you today?’

“I looked at him with compassion in my eyes. I didn’t hate him at all. He had been a young boy in Henan Province once, just like me, only he had never once heard the gospel. I looked into his eyes and said just one brief sentence: ‘thank you.’”

I don’t know how I’ll be able to convey the essence of this gripping narrative, which is 320 double-column pages long, in a brief review.

Perhaps I should start with my conclusion: Paul Hattaway has given us a major contribution to the history of the church in China, based on extensive reading and personal interviews with key characters in the story. Hattaway had already written several well-known books, including *The Heavenly Man*, *Back to Jerusalem*, and *China’s Book of Martyrs*.

Henan was the first volume in a planned multi-volume series covering the history of Christianity in all the provinces of China. The series “died” when the publisher went out of business. A new series, *The China Chronicles: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History*, now published by SPCK and Asia Harvest, the organization that the author leads, already has three volumes in print: *Shandong: The Revival Province*; *Guizhou: The Precious Province*; and *Zhejiang: The Jerusalem of China*, which were all published in 2018.

“Fire and Blood” in the initial series title referred to the “fire” of revival that God has sent, and “blood” referred to the fierce and often deadly persecution endured by missionaries and Chinese Christians over the past four hundred years.

For this series, Hattaway says that he read more than 1,500 books and thousands of articles, and he conducted hundreds of hours of interviews. He was given access to the archives of OMF International (formerly the China Inland Mission, the largest Western missionary society in China). The book is richly illustrated with photographs.

When dealing with recent Chinese church history, security is always a major concern. The author has tried not to reveal the names of people who could be hurt by exposing their names or pictures of their faces. Some prominent house church leaders have said that they have already suffered so much and are so well known by the government that there isn't much to be gained from hiding information about them.

Henan

Hattaway chose Henan for this opening volume in the study of China's provinces because "it is now China's most populous province, with almost 10 million people," and "also has the largest number of Christians and is the centre of the greatest and most sustained revival of Christianity, which has lasted more than 30 years" (1). The coastal city of China has been called the "Jerusalem of China" because it has so many Christians, so the believers in Henan call it the "Galilee of China," because so many millions of believers come from there and also because it has "become an engine room for the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout every part of China, and even in recent years beyond the country's borders" (1).

The Story

After two chapters on Henan's geography and history and the Jews in China, Part I traces the story of Roman Catholic missions and Chinese Roman Catholics from the beginnings to the present.

Part II follows the course of Protestant missions in China from 1875 to the end of the 1940s. Part III, "The Refiner's Fire," tells how the church went underground during the first years of Communist rule in China and during "the Silent Years, the 1960s and '70s," when the Bamboo Curtain kept those outside of China from any news of the fate of China's Christians.

Part IV, "The Three-Self Church in Henan," gives an overview of the government-sponsored Three-Self Patriotic Movement as well as the myriad of cults that have sprung up in the province.

Part V: "Henan's House Churches," is by far the longest section of the book at more than 150 pages, and it is clearly the heart of Hattaway's narrative. He tells us that suffering is the "Secret to China's Mighty Revival," a theme that he will illustrate many times over, often in graphic, sometimes almost overwhelming, detail. Three chapters take us decade-by-decade through the "valley of the shadow of death" through which Henan's house church Christians have been taken by God. The last one hundred pages examine both major house church "networks" – all of them with millions of adherents – and outstanding leaders, whose stories read like the Book of Acts.

A very helpful section describes the "eight types of house churches" to show the variety of unregistered groups and to caution against simplistic generalizations about them.

The narrative ends with the "struggle with unity" that church leaders have pursued but not quite attained and a sobering warning of "the threat of Mammon" faced by Christians in today's more prosperous China.

An appendix gives detailed answers, with supporting figures, to the oft-asked question, “How Many Christians Are There in China?” followed by maps, tables, and a bibliography containing almost 500 titles. Paul Hattaway is a first-class historian; he weaves a fast-paced narrative that draws upon first-hand testimonies and accounts, as well as hundreds of books and articles from a variety of sources from the nineteenth century to the present. Though he is by no means completely impartial – he writes from the viewpoint of Evangelical Protestant Christianity – he maintains a high degree of balance and objectivity.

Throughout the text, pictures and footnotes illustrate and document this comprehensive account of Christianity in Henan.

Major Themes

No review can do justice to the wealth of information contained in this fast-paced history. I can only highlight a few prominent themes.

The Foundational Work of Missionaries

For Protestants, the Henan story begins with Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission (CIM) and a Chinese evangelist from Hubei named Yang. Together, they brought the gospel to that province in 1875. Taylor eventually left because of the fierce opposition he met from the Mandarins and literati, but others followed him: A. W. Sambrook in 1884 and J.A. Slimmon in 1886. Joe Coulthard, also of the CIM, established the first Protestant church in Henan in 1887; Maria, Hudson Taylor’s daughter, married him the following year.

The Canadian Presbyterian Church, urged by Hudson Taylor to send missionaries to Henan, had established three stations by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1895, Howard Taylor, the son of Hudson Taylor, who had married Henry Guinness’s daughter Geraldine, opened a medical mission in Zhengzhou (the present capital). He combined preaching the gospel with his healing skills, and Geraldine impacted thousands of students through her Bible teaching and a “shining face that comes to those who speak with God” (40).

Other mission societies established bases later, but many had to quit because of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. One of the most effective groups was the American Norwegian Lutheran Mission in Nanyang.

Toward the end of the century, “many missionaries began to realize that the key to winning the country for Christ lay not in their own efforts but in the hands of the Chinese they had won to the faith. Hudson Taylor was one who promoted this development. . . . Instead of taking prominent leadership roles, many of the wiser missionaries stepped back and were content with helping and advising the Chinese preachers. As a result, the light of the gospel began to shine more brightly” (42).

Hattaway devotes two chapters to Jonathan Goforth, “China’s Greatest Evangelist.” You can read a brief biography of Goforth in the Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity.

After he had been personally revived, Goforth became “the flaming preacher” in the eyes of the Chinese, for he blazed with love for God, zeal for the lost, and a passion for the gospel. He

sought and received the constant filling of the Holy Spirit, who used him to bring revival not only to Henan, but to other places in China as well. He rebuked sin but also spoke of the matchless love of God offered to those who trust in Christ. Wherever he preached, the Spirit fell upon professing Christians and seekers alike, causing them to bewail their sins, cry out for mercy, and then shout for joy when they received new life.

One who knew him said, “Jonathan Goforth was an electric, radiant personality, flooding his immediate environment with sunlight that was deep in his heart and shone on his face. And God used him in mighty revivals” (54). Another spoke of “his utter dependence on the Holy Spirit” when speaking at meetings. Hattaway writes of dramatic conversions from sin and to Christ as a result of Goforth’s ministry.

Along with other conservative missionaries, Goforth also spoke out against the modernism (otherwise known as liberalism) that had infected the church at home and many missionaries in China.

The Indispensable Role of Chinese Evangelists, Pastors, and Believers

“When the last Western missionaries left China, they left behind them a faithful, if small, group of believers. . . . They became a tiny remnant battered about in the ugly, swirling red sea of Communist Revolution. But wherever they were, these Christian believers became beacon lights pointing to Christ. Without this tiny remnant there would have been no one to introduce the people of China to Jesus Christ” (154).

Accordingly, throughout his book, Hattaway introduces us to dozens of zealous Chinese who could proclaim the message more clearly and in a “Chinese” fashion. We hear of early witnesses like Li Zizeng, the first Chinese Christian in Taikang, in the 1880s; the “Christian General” Feng in the first part of the twentieth century; James Liu and Stephen Wang; Liu Daosheng; John Sung, Andrew Gih and the Bethel Band; Li Tian’en; Peter Xu Yungze, and his sister Xu Yngling; Elder Fu; Brother Yun (Liu Zhenying); Zhang Rongliang (whose book *I Stand With Christ* was reviewed in these pages); Sister Hei; Sister Lu Xiaomin, the prolific songwriter, and thousands of nameless evangelists, many of them young women.

Most of these names are unfamiliar to readers on the outside, but they deserve to be just as well-known as famous evangelists and pastors in the West.

The Sufferings Endured by Missionaries and Henan’s Christians

Both missionaries and Chinese believers encountered fierce resistance from the earliest days, but the Boxer Rebellion in the summer of 1900 claimed the lives of hundreds of missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians, though Henan suffered far less than some other provinces. Hattaway tells the stories of thrilling escapes, horrific suffering, and indomitable courage, especially on the part of Chinese believers who risked – and often lost – their lives to protect their foreign friends.

Page after page of graphic narrative of barbaric torture inflicted upon innocent believers, especially since the Communists gained power, invests the word “persecution” with new

meaning for most Westerners. From these stories, we see the bestial cruelty of Communist police, the God-given persecution of the believers, supernatural love for their tormentors, and the power of the Holy Spirit to use unspeakable pain to lead unbelievers to Jesus, who suffered for us.

In addition to hanging prisoners from their wrists as recorded at the beginning of this review, Christians in China have been beaten repeatedly until they are black and blue and almost dead; shocked with cattle prods, often in very sensitive places; forced to kneel for hours, even days, on end; deprived of food and even water for days; pinched with pliers; placed in solitary confinement for weeks and months; left naked to freeze; subjected to water torture; and burned with cigarettes and cigarette lighters. Some were chained to vehicles or horses and dragged through the streets to their death. Others were crucified on the walls of their churches. Women were repeatedly raped and horribly abused.

Some guards were so sadistic that they took pictures of their victims being tortured and even of the guilty agents in action. Hattaway includes many of these photographs.

The Relentless Attempts of the Chinese Government to Eradicate Unregistered Churches

The Communist Chinese government has engaged in repeated systematic campaigns to wipe out unregistered Christians and their churches. Hattaway records the ebb and flow of persecution, demonstrating that a time of relative peace and quiet may quickly be followed by a period of intense attack. As these lines are being written, Christians in China, after almost two decades of relative freedom, are once again subject to the wrath of an atheistic regime that cannot tolerate any rivals to its ideological supremacy.

Sometimes, persecution has been limited to a particular county or church network. At other times, as at the present, the central government has mobilized all its resources to bring all religions under its control, with particular attention to believers in unregistered churches.

Often, even during the fiercest assaults on unregistered groups, government spokesmen will blandly assert to foreign visitors that there is freedom of religion in China and that claims of persecution are false. All too often, gullible church leaders, including people like a former Archbishop of Canterbury and leaders of American Christian denominations, will naively believe what they are told.

These visitors are routinely taken to worship services of congregations belonging to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), which was created in the early 1950s to bring all Protestants under control. The visitors are not told that the TSPM has often, even recently, been one of the prime means used by the authorities to root out and destroy house churches.

When we read that leaders of house churches continue to refuse to join the TSPM and harbor great mistrust towards its leaders, we must keep this tragic history in mind and not blithely scold them for refusing to register with the TSPM.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)

Nowhere does the author's commitment to truth and balance appear more clearly than in his discussion of this very controversial topic.

He first explains why the leaders of unregistered churches continue to refuse to join the TSPM. Though they freely acknowledge that multitudes of sincere believers crowd the Sunday worship services of TSPM congregations, they also remember the relentless opposition of TSPM leaders to any Christian activity outside the bounds of that organization.

They point also to the restrictions on normal Christian activity that the TSPM has received from the government, which are stamped with the approval of TSPM leaders. All these regulations – which are now being enforced to a new degree – prohibit religious activity outside the walls and formal organizational structure of the TSPM. That includes teaching Christianity to anyone under eighteen, meeting anywhere but in TSPM buildings, conducting itinerant evangelism, or serving as church leaders without TSPM approval and training. The house church leaders note that all top officials of the TSPM have been theological liberals or even atheists, and that the TSPM is committed to putting official Communist Party dogma above Scripture. The recent “Sinification” of Christianity is just the latest expression of this long-standing practice.

On the other hand, Hattaway not only acknowledges that TSPM churches have millions of true believers but that most of the lower-level clergy are faithful servants of Christ. He describes in detail the heartrending shortage of ordained, or even trained, clergy and Bible teachers in the face of the overwhelming spiritual hunger of Henan's Christians. The TSPM opened a seminary to help meet this need, but it can only send out a few graduates each year, many of whom leave their ministries after a short time because of the abject poverty they have to endure.

Though sanctioned by the government, the TSPM has had to overcome the opposition of corrupt officials to obtain land, build church structures, and conduct services. In some places, officials demand payment for each person who is baptized!

To win the hearts of the people, the TSPM has sought to provide a variety of services to meet urgent needs. These have included medical clinics, outreach to AIDS sufferers, assistance in times of disaster like floods, contributions to economic development by opening sustainable businesses, care for the elderly, the printing and distributing of Bibles, and even the provision of tea without charge during the Luoyang Peony Festival.

Slowly, some of the fierce animosity between the TSPM and house churches is abating, but there does not seem to be much possibility that house church leaders will ever agree to joining the TSPM. The bottom line, they say, is that the TSPM (and the China Christian Council – CCC) are controlled by the government (more recently, they have come under the aegis of the Party). How, they say, can Christians submit their religious activity to an atheist government?

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Christianity in China

Paul Hattaway presents both the strengths and the weaknesses of Protestant Christianity in China. He does not romanticize the house churches or repeat unfounded criticisms.

From the foregoing, we can already see that Protestant Christians in China have come through fire and water, and they have emerged with a toughness and tenacity that matches Christians of any place or era. Not only their most famous leaders, but ordinary believers, have endured unspeakable torture and suffering without denying their Lord or losing their zeal to propagate the saving message of Christ.

It is true that some have failed in the hour of testing, and the author records these sad stories, but they are relatively few. Besides, what would we have done under similar trials?

The huge house church networks have exhibited unrivalled ardor in obeying the Great Commission, sharing their faith as pastors, evangelists, and individual believers despite overwhelming odds and seemingly impassible obstacles. Hundreds of accounts in this book testify to a fire to tell others about Jesus that rebukes our lukewarm attitude and lethargy. In recent decades, these churches have organized and trained bands of evangelists, sending them not only throughout China, but to other parts of the world.

They maintain systematic training programs for believers and leaders at all levels, seeking to overcome the stigma of being “a mile wide and an inch deep” or even heterodox in their faith.

At the center of this unprecedented explosion of Christianity stands their reliance on the Holy Spirit and their devotion to, and love for, the Word of God. Both Word and Spirit fuel this ongoing movement that possesses both depth and staying power. Hattaway fills his narrative with tales of people who hunger and thirst for the Scriptures and who cry out to God for the supply of the Holy Spirit to work miracles and empower them for holy living and selfless service. They are following the example of early missionaries, especially some like Jonathan Goforth and Marie Monsen, and they have benefitted from the ministry of the Pentecostal missionary Dennis Balcombe.

We could go on, but we must not neglect the faults and failings that Hattaway also faithfully records. Since the 1950s, some leaders have gained and held onto almost dictatorial power within the churches and networks they have founded. In this, they are only following the age-old tradition of China’s imperial leadership style, one that shows its evidence in all domains and at all levels of Chinese society and church today.

Hattaway lays bare the kingdom-building and self-preserving drives that have led to lack of unity and even competition. Happily, since the 1980s, the major house church networks have valiantly sought to forge some sort of unity, but they have been thwarted at many points. He also confronts head on criticisms that have been levelled at leaders like Peter Xu and Brother Yung, “the heavenly man.” In each case, he tries to acknowledge the force of their detractors’ charges and to respond with a sympathetic, balanced, and candid statement of why he believes these men are still to be honored and respected.

In an uneducated rural society lacking an adequate supply of Bibles, we should not be surprised that a multitude of sects, heresies, and cults have misled many. The worst, perhaps, is the Eastern Lightning cult, but there are too many others. Indeed, both the TSPM and house churches leaders name this as the greatest threat to the church.

Well, maybe it does not constitute the greatest danger. The last chapter in the book bears the title, “The Threat of Mammon,” and shows how modernization, urbanization, and globalization have been used by Satan to lure large numbers of leaders and followers away from a pure devotion to Christ. Love of money and of the world has challenged China’s Christians to the core and will remain a constant foe.

Conclusion

Henan: The Galilee of China ranks among the very finest studies of Christianity in China. In my opinion, despite its limited treatment of only one province, and though we need the perspective of broader surveys like Daniel Bays’ *A New History of Christianity in China* and the specialized studies of other books reviewed in these pages, this volume is now the most valuable description of the past and present of the largest Christian movement in history. I look forward to reading Hattaway’s book on Christianity in Shandong and eagerly await the forthcoming volumes in this ambitious series.

Shandong: The Revival Province

by Paul Hattaway

Hattaway, Paul. *Shandong: The Revival Province*. Vol. 1, *The China Chronicles: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History*. London: SPCK, 2018.

Paul Hattaway became famous with the publication of *The Heavenly Man*, but he has also authored other widely read books, including *An Asian Harvest*, his autobiography; *Operation China*; and *China's Christian Martyrs*.¹ His heavily referenced book on the history of Christianity in Henan was meant to be the initial volume in a series, but the publisher went out of business. (See a review at www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/book-review-henan-the-galilee-of-china?rq=Hattaway%2C%20Henan). This volume on Shandong inaugurates a second series, *The China Chronicles*, which is projected to cover the history of Christianity in each of China's provinces. As of this date, three other books in the series have appeared, treating Guizhou, Zhejiang, and Tibet. A revised version of his history of Christianity in Henan will be next.

Be careful before starting to read any of Hattaway's works: You may not be able to put the book down! His energetic, vivid, and fast-moving narratives carry you along. Though backed by careful research and supported by notes when necessary, his telling of God's mighty acts among the Chinese never fails to grip the reader with its drama, pathos, and sheer magnitude, reflecting both the long history and great diversity of this nation and its peoples.

Shandong: The Revival Province

Each volume in *The China Chronicles* has a subtitle that highlights a particular feature of the province being discussed. As in the other books, the author introduces Shandong Province's history, geography, and special characteristics. In particular, however, he calls Shandong "The Revival Province," because it has witnessed so many massive turnings to God, often spilling over into other parts of China. "Through many hardships and persecutions, the body of Christ rose from the ashes and grew greatly in size throughout the twentieth century, boosted at regular intervals by sovereign outpourings of the Holy Spirit" (9). Other provinces have more Christians and a greater percentage of Christians, but none has witnessed revivals as Shandong has.

Sowing seeds of revival: the missionaries

These great movements of God's Spirit, though sovereignly timed and orchestrated, did not come out of nowhere. Decade by decade, Hattaway traces the progress of the gospel from the arrival of Charles Gützlaff in 1832, the slowly growing trickle of Protestant missionaries, and the even slower response. A number of missionaries died of illness and some by violence, but more took their places, including some who became well known, like Hunter Corbett and Calvin

¹ A review may be found at <https://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/2013/05/17/chinas-book-of-martyrs-the-church-in-china?rq=Hattaway%2C%20>

Mateer. At the end of more than forty-years of service in China, in 1907 Mateer issued a challenge to Christians back home. After describing the inroads of “agnosticism, skepticism, and rationalism from the West” he appealed to the young men in America: “Who will champion the truth? Who will administer the antidote? Who will uphold the cross? Who will testify for Christ?” (22-23). Earlier, Isabelle Williamson of Scotland issued a similar appeal to women to come and share the gospel with women in China.

Timothy Richard set sail for China from England in 1870. Very early, he became convinced that missionaries should focus their efforts on the educated elite, especially those who were “members of secret societies who were seekers after the truth” (31). He developed a strategy of visiting these men “in the privacy of their own homes” and spending long hours with them, getting to know them, and conversing with them about Christ. When the terrible famine of 1876-1878 struck, he helped to organize famine relief from both foreigners and the Chinese government. People were much more open to the gospel after the famine, and the church grew exponentially.

Richard later received criticism for opposing the practice of open evangelism, concentrating upon secular education rather than gospel presentation, and espousing ideas that raised questions about the orthodoxy of his Christian faith. Nevertheless, he is still highly regarded by educated Chinese as one who learned their language and culture and fully entered into the life of the nation. (For more on Richard, go to <http://bdconline.net/en/stories/richard-timothy>).

Missionary strategies and tactics

In the 1870s, there were some remarkable instances of rapid church growth. “One of the most prominent features of this movement is regular family worship and the use of the Lord’s Prayer, even in homes where the members may not be baptized” (34).

“The missionaries sought out those who were interested in the gospel and didn’t waste their time trying to convince those who were hostile to their message” (34).

“Not a few who received copies of the Gospels and Christian books in the early part of the studied them, so that they are now able to give a clear outline of the life and work of Christ. A number desire baptism. Little groups in different places meet regularly on the Sabbath for worship and the study of God’s word” (35).

One female missionary’s loving care for a boy with a disease in his knees shows the immense value of practical help, prayer, and persistence (38-39).

The great famine of 1876-1879, and the missionaries’ sacrificial efforts to care for the victims, opened the hearts of many to the gospel.

The value of Christian literature become increasingly evident: “They [the Chinese] are a reading people, and there is every reason for operating through books on the Chinese mind. . . . In the course of missionary journeys in Shandong I have found that the practice of reading aloud exists in families, and the women of the family sit and listen with interest” (44).

Missionary labors bore fruit: “As the good news of Jesus Christ continued to spread throughout the towns and villages of Shandong, an increasing number of people put away their idols and dedicated their lives to the living God. The missionaries were careful to teach that the local believers must finance their own church buildings, schools and workers, lest they fall into the pit of dependency on foreign funds” (44).

Problems for churches

In the 1880s and 1890s, Christians struggled with three major difficulties. The province swarmed with bands of bandits, while warlords exercised power in different regions. Internally, the refusal of believers to participate in rites of veneration to ancestors brought down upon them the wrath of family and community. Many were ostracized, beaten, and even killed for their insistence that these ceremonies constituted idolatry; this was especially true of rural areas. Finally, the Roman Catholics began aggressively to steal Christians away from Protestant churches by offering them a variety of tangible rewards.

At the end of the century, the Boxer Rebellion erupted in Shandong. The “Boxers” were a secret society that practiced martial arts – hence their name – and burned with anger against foreigners, including missionaries. Supported by the Qing government, they slaughtered hundreds Protestant and Roman Catholic Chinese and dozens of missionaries. Thousands of believers had their houses burned down and suffered cruel beatings. Hattaway tells the stories of both missionary and Chinese martyrs with vivid detail.

Indeed, his ability to use particular people as examples of larger events and trends marks the entire series of histories.

More missionary stories

Louisa Vaughan, a single woman missionary from America, saw God work many wonders through prayer. In 1903, she started a Bible study group for women inquirers. Their response was so discouraging that Vaughan “went to pray and the Holy Spirit challenged her to have faith for a miracle and to let her confidence rest in him and not the impossible situation confronting her. She asked the Heavenly Father to save the women and pour out his Spirit upon them, that they might return home and be shining witnesses to their families.” On the second day, starting with one woman who broke down and wept, confessing her sins,” one woman after another was “marvelously transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they were now so eager to learn of Christ that I could scarcely find time to satisfy them” (60-61).

Similar scenes of revival took place over the next few years, as she called out to God to soften hard hearts, open blind eyes, and grant new life. On one occasion, prayer was used by God to open the heavens and end a long drought with abundant rain.

One arresting feature of the revivals that visited Shandong was that Presbyterians, many of whom were not open to “excesses of emotion,” found themselves at the center of mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon Chinese and missionaries alike. Hattaway’s accounts of these events demonstrate that God can break through a strong commitment to having church meetings be conducted “decently and in order” to give new life to individuals and churches. One

missionary recounted that the “confessions of sins, prayers for forgiveness and intercessory prayers for their own friends, poured forth by the Christians, showed that they realized how shallow their Christian lives had been, and they were irresistibly led by the Spirit to seek forgiveness” (69).

Among missionaries the most famous revivalist was Jonathan Goforth, whose life demonstrates the power of reliance upon the preaching of the Word of God, fervent prayer, and faith in the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Not only were unbelievers converted and Christians renewed, but physical healings convinced the practical Chinese of the reality of the living God. (See bdconline.net/en/stories/jonathan-goforth).

In the 1920s, the spiritual life of the churches seemed flat and stale, but “there were encouraging signs that God was about to do something special. Meetings by a number of revivalists such as Marie Monsen prepared the soil for what was to come.” Hattaway quotes CIM missionary Leslie Lyall, who wrote that Monsen’s “skill in exposing the sins hidden within the Church and lurking behind the smiling exterior of many a trusted Christ – even most trusted Christian leader – and her quiet insistence on a clear-cut experience of the new birth, set the pattern for others to follow” (104). Hattaway relates her story with characteristic vigor and vividness, devoting an entire chapter to her dramatic impact upon the churches. Though most of her ministry took place in the province of Henan, “she also spent considerable time in Shandong, where she was a catalyst for revival. In a very quiet voice, she exposed sin and pressed home the question, ‘Are you born again?’” Countless church members came to see that they had never really repented of their sins and trusted in Christ for salvation. For more on this remarkable woman of God, see the article on her at bdconline.net/en/stories/monsen-marie.

“Before God poured his Spirit upon the Chinese churches, however, he did a deep work in the lives of the missionary community, bringing many to their knees in repentance” (104). The author describes one such event, which led to awakening in Chinese churches as well, a movement that was “characterized by deep confessions of sin as the Spirit of God moved on people and exposed parts of their lives that displeased the Lord Jesus. These public confessions of sin were completely contrary to the typical reserved Chinese behavior, but God used them to break people and to do a deep work in their lives” (105).

Sowing seeds of revival: Chinese Christians

From the outset, missionaries knew that Chinese Christians would evangelize their own people much more effectively than a foreigner could. Progress was slow at first, but the number of vibrant Chinese witnesses for Christ eventually grew into a veritable “cloud” of uncounted believers.

One of the first in Shandong was Wang Baogui, a teacher of the Confucian classics, who was born in 1826. Reading the New Testament given to him by a friend, he realized that to follow Christ would entail being cut off from his family and community. As he continued his study, however, he began to believe that he was a wretched sinner, and there was no hope for him but to accept free salvation through Jesus Christ. As soon as he was persuaded of this, he yielded his whole heart to Jesus, made a public profession of faith, and received baptism. From that day

onward his faith never wavered, and he loyally and faithfully strove to follow in his Saviour's footsteps, and to "win others to Christ" (24). "Elder" Wang, as he came to be called, went into the surrounding villages, living among the people and conversing with all who wanted to hear about his Lord. Though poor, he funded the construction of a school to help poor children come to know Christ as well as learn to read and write.

In 1909, Ding Limei, a Shandong preacher, was used to set off a revival among students. "Ding's personality was low-key and self-effacing, and the revivals God brought about through his ministry often shared the same characteristics," as "God spoke through the still, small voice, in the quietness of men's hearts, producing very deep but well-controlled conviction" of sin" (72). See www.bdcconline.net.

During the 1920s, when the church witnessed some small revivals that were a foretaste of the great movements of the Spirit in the 1930s and later, God miraculously changed the lives of many Chinese, like an elderly Buddhist couple whose marriage was transformed, and "Simeon the storyteller," who became a powerful evangelist: "When he recites the Scriptures, each word stands out as a living Word, under the power and anointing of the Spirit, for it is the living Word to him" (110).

Throughout his narrative, Hattaway provides quotations from eyewitnesses like that one of above; these alone are "worth the price of the book," as the saying goes.

The 1930s

Early in the decade, God's Spirit moved powerfully in the churches of Shandong, truly reviving spiritually "dead" individuals and congregations. This movement was not planned, but took place as people saw their sins, repented, committed themselves to Christ, and then experienced a wide variety of "signs and wonders" as God confirmed his message in tangible demonstrations of his power to transform lives, heal bodies, deliver people from demons, and restore relationships.

No one escaped this refining and renewing: missionaries, Chinese pastors, and elders, young and old, educated and illiterate, men and women, "sinners" and "saints" – all fell down before a holy God and were raised up to a new life of love, joy, and hope. Prayer meetings went on for hours, often into the night, as people poured out their hearts in confession, praise, and intercession for the lost.

Some of the revival meetings were extremely emotional, leading both Chinese and missionary Christians to worry that emotional excesses would not necessarily produce lasting spiritual fruit. They addressed this concern by inviting noted Chinese Bible teachers to come and instruct the new believers.

The most famous of these revival teachers and preachers were Wang Mingdao, Marcus Cheng, Leland Wang, Andrew Gih (Ji Zhiwen), John Sung (Song Shangjie), and Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng). Stories on most of these men can be found at www.bdcconline.net. Again, Hattaway uses eyewitness accounts to enliven his narrative telling how these men preached the simple gospel, without calls for emotional response, and taught the basic truths of the Bible. Most of them also encouraged the formation of evangelistic bands, which spearheaded advance into

places where there were few or no Christians. Composed of “normal,” ordinary Christians, these small groups brought gospel literature and moving testimonies of how had changed their lives. This involvement of “lay” Christians greatly expanded the outreach of the church and freed it from relying on ordained ministers to proclaim the Word of God to unbelievers.

“For the most part, the gospel was spread by faith-filled Chinese evangelists who were propelled forward by the Spirit of God throughout the thousands of unreached villages in the interior of the province,” sometimes accompanied by missionaries whose “hearts were made to rejoice as [they] saw multitudes of heathen gather about us with their hearts eager for the gospel message, to hear of Him who died for the whole world . . .” (145).

Hattaway notes that these bands were the forerunners of the teams of zealous evangelists who went out from house churches several decades later.

The 1940s

The invasion of China by Japan wrought havoc and devastation, as bombs rained down on towns and cities and soldiers pillaged and looted, murdered innocent civilians, and raped countless women. Missionaries found it nearly impossible to go out into the country between 1938 and December 1941, before Pearl Harbor resulted in their expulsion, retreat, or internment. During these chaotic years, faithful Chinese pastors and believers carried on with the work of the gospel, sometimes suffering terribly as a result.

Eric Liddell was perhaps the most famous missionary in Shandong until he, too, was interned in 1943. Hattaway tells of his Olympic triumphs and then his even more heroic efforts to tend to the sick and wounded and to proclaim the love of Christ while he could. (See bdconline.net/en/stories/liddell-eric-henry). A Korean missionary named Pang Zhiyi, unknown in the West, receives due attention as a courageous messenger of Christ during the war and in the early 1950s, until his opposition to the Communists led to his expulsion. Returning to Korea, he carried on a fruitful ministry for many decades until his death in 1915.

One of Paul Hattaway’s strengths as an historian is his willingness to tell the stories of controversial people and movements, and to describe them with respect and balance. He traces the rise, fall, and resurrection of the Jesus Family, a communal movement that sought to demonstrate the love of Christ in tangible ways. Though not without faults, this organization did try to be faithful to Christ, despite intense persecution by the Japanese and then the Communists. The chapter on them, with photographs and powerful testimonies and letters, forms a bridge to the rest of the book, which deals with the new era of life under Communist rule.

The 1950s

After the Communists took over, they moved to bring all expressions of religious faith under their control. They formed new organizations for Protestants and Roman Catholics to regulate public worship, pastors, and the content of teaching. Working gradually, they eventually removed those church leaders who would not cooperate with them. Church members who resisted this campaign also received severe treatment. Hattaway illustrates this story with several vivid accounts of pastors, ordinary Christians, and missionaries who suffered for their faith. To

show his power and love in extreme circumstances, God worked many miracles of healing and deliverance.

When one missionary was about to leave, having been expelled by the government, an elder in a Chinese church somehow visited her at night and gave her this message for Christians in the West: “One, tell the people in America not to be discouraged about the Chinese Church. Two, tell them their gifts and offerings have been accepted by God. Three, the Church in China will go through great persecution and a time of winnowing the chaff from the wheat. Four, the Church will come back in great revival.” Hattaway adds: “Rarely have more accurate words been prophesied in China” (183).

During the Great Leap Forward, which began in 1958 and ended in a disastrous famine, “Christians throughout Shandong went into survival mode. . . . Most church leaders were arrested and received long prison sentences, often of 20 years or more. Hundreds of pastors were killed or perished in the harsh prison labor camps. Although the shepherds had been removed by the government, many Christians continued to meet discreetly in small groups of three or four. . . . The Church throughout Shandong survived, however, as the Holy Spirit had already done a deep work in the hearts of countless thousands of disciples before the excesses of the 1950s and 1960s” (184-185).

The 1960s

Stung by criticism of his disastrous “Great Leap Forward,” Mao launched the Great Cultural Revolution to purge the Party and bring the nation into a purer form of Communism. From 1966 to 1976, Chinese people suffered greatly, including Christians. The author provides gripping examples of how they stood faithfully for Christ: Pastor Tian, who was beaten to death in the presence of his son; Sister Zhang Jiakun, who survived twelve years of solitary confinement, during which she continued to write devotional materials; an engineer who had to work as a common laborer but who possessed “full joy in Christ.”

During these dark years, bands of young people would go out preaching the gospel, despite the great danger they faced.

The 1970s

The author uses the remarkable story of the Chang family in eastern Shandong to summarize the kinds of courageous testimony and evident miracles that took place in Shandong during the 1970s, when Christian churches were shut down and Christian witness met with official rejection and retribution.

The 1980s

By 1980, China was beginning to open up to the West, and churches were also being given more freedom. Because of thirty years of repression, however, when preachers were imprisoned and Bibles were destroyed, the believers were spiritually starving. They simply did not know the Word of God. Hattaway, whose ministry to China began with smuggling Bibles from Hong Kong, first describes the intense spiritual hunger of Chinese Christians, and then the “turning

point,” when an American named Brother David managed to deliver one million Bibles to church representatives gathered on a beach in southern China. After these Scriptures found their way to house churches throughout much of China, revival took place.

One pastor said later, “The delivery was the spark that set many house churches alight, as believers gained strength and faith from God’s word” (205).

Another force for renewal and growth among house churches was the introduction of Pentecostal teaching about the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit by preachers from Zhejiang in 1989. Faithful ministers had laid a foundation of solid biblical teaching, but many churches and Christians felt dry. Hattaway, who in this chapter seems to identify himself with Pentecostal beliefs, tells how the Spirit moved with great power as Christians were transformed into energetic followers of Christ and then shared the gospel with their neighbors. One does have to agree with Pentecostal doctrine to appreciate the new vitality that swept the churches during that time.

The 1990s

The same doctrinal conservatism that preserved the church during persecution made leaders reluctant to receive teaching from the outside, either foreigners or Chinese from other provinces. Still, radio broadcasts from Hong Kong penetrated this barrier and led to conversions and spiritual maturity. Persecution often followed but could not quench the fires of revival. Numbers of Christians attending the official Three-Self churches increased dramatically, while house churches experienced even greater growth. By the end of the decade, however, the lack of trained preachers and persistent shortage of Bibles led to a superficial knowledge of the truth among multitudes of churchgoers. Leaders feared that the revival was now “a mile wide but only an inch deep.”

Beginning with this chapter, Hattaway includes excerpts from letters written by mostly house church Christians to gospel radio broadcasting stations and other China ministries. These candidly express both the indomitable faith of Chinese believers and the temptations and weaknesses with which they struggled. It is hard to read them with dry eyes. I want to read them over and over again; they are so heartfelt. Their presence in this and following volumes in the China Chronicles makes these books priceless for students of Chinese Christianity.

The 2000s: “Revival fire continues to burn”

“Despite being persecuted and deprived of Bibles, the legal right to assemble and the ability to train leaders, Shandong’s house churches began the new millennium in revival, and the first of the Holy Spirit continued to burn brightly throughout the province well into the decade” (230). One mark of revival was “the unquenchable thirst for the Lord” shown by young believers. “They were so zealous for God’s word that they set out to memorized chapter after of the Scriptures. They were filled with the Spirit and began to weep” (231).

During this period, hundreds, then thousands of people turned to the Lord in profound repentance and vibrant faith.

Such a movement of God will inevitably meet with opposition from Satan. The Christian church there has had to battle fierce persecution, the seductive “prosperity gospel” brought in from the West, and the violent Eastern Lightning cult, which tortures and kills in order to compel Christians to convert to their heresy. As always, Hattaway enlivens his history with powerful vignettes of individuals and churches experiencing both revival and opposition. He ends the chapter with another collection of moving excerpts from letters by believers and seekers of all ages, stages in their spiritual journey, and situations.

The 2010s: “A time of consolidation”

After such an intense period of rapid growth, the number of new believers slowed to “only” tens of thousands each year. Pastors and elders realized that these converts much receive biblical teaching in order for them to grow into maturity and resist the various sorts of temptations they faced, especially the consumerism that gripped the entire nation, Christians included.

Bibles were still in short supply, greatly hindering efforts to ground church members in the Word of God. Though Amity Foundation prints Bibles, these are only available in the bookstores of Three-Self churches, mostly in urban centers. Believers in rural house churches had little access to them. To meet this need, Hattaway’s Asian Harvest ministry continues to find ways to get the Scriptures into the hands of these spiritually starved people. Letters from grateful recipients prove just how valuable this risky ministry is to them.

The vexing question of whether house churches should register with the government and join the TSPM met with various responses, but most pastors decided to remain independent, despite the dangers of such a stand. Sure enough, in 2016 the central government announced new regulations designed to curb the growth of Christianity and other religions. Church leaders began to “disappear” into unnamed locations where criminals received harsh punishment. Meetings were closed down. Believers once again dispersed to homes for small group gatherings.

Hattaway relays a report from one church leader that the police are now using a new method to deal with those whom they have detained: “Instead of beating them, they are drugging them with a mid-altering chemical that diminishes the person’s mental capacity.” He added, “Ministry is still possible, but we need to move with extreme caution” (257). This situation has continued to the present time.

Conclusion

The last chapter surveys the history of Christianity in China. At the time of writing, there were 5.3 million Christians of all creeds in the province. “Of these, about 2.9 million belong to unregistered house churches; 1.5 million attend government-approved Three-Self churches; while Catholics presently number around 800,000, distributed among both registered and unregistered congregations” (260). As in all the volumes in this series, Hattaway offers a detailed survey of the Christian population of the province, by county and city, based on meticulous research based on printed documents and hundreds of interviews with church leaders.

The massive migration from the countryside to the cities all over China has affected the churches also. Almost half of the rural believers now live in urban centers. Some have fared well

spiritually, but too many have fallen prey to the dislocation, isolation, and temptations of city life, and have stopped attending church meetings.

Hattaway ends the book with these words: “Today [Christians] are battling materialism and cults, and have struggles exacerbated by the lack of bibles and a dire shortage of church leaders who can teach the word of God in a balanced and effective manner. The Church in Shandong today, despite its long history of revival and amazing testimonies, is in need of continual pruning and awakening if the fruit of the harvest is to remain useful for God’s kingdom. May Shandong long continue to deserve its reputation as ‘China’s Revival Province.’” (262).

Tibet: The Roof of the World

by Paul Hattaway

Hattaway, Paul. *Tibet: The Roof of the World*. Vol. 4, *The China Chronicles: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History*. London: SPCK, 2020.

As I have said before, with this series of books on the history of Christianity in each of China's provinces, Paul Hattaway has established himself as perhaps the foremost living scholar of Chinese Christianity. So far, I have read four volumes and have found them to be not only informative but also inspiring. The narrative flows quickly and easily, with gripping stories of Chinese Christians and Western missionaries, set in the context of the history of China and documented from an array of sources.

After I finished *Tibet*, I decided to review it before the author's volume on Zhejiang, the third book in the series. This is perhaps the first attempt to write a complete history of Christianity in Tibet, where the author and his then-pregnant wife lived among the nomads for a while as he compiled material for his study. "The genesis for this book comes from my own personal love for, and interaction with, the Tibetan people over approximately 30 years" (18-19). He has also conducted extensive research, the results of which he makes available to us.

Not only is Tibet a fascinating and little-known province of China, but the progress of the gospel in that forbidding land is replete with the stories of almost unimaginable courage, perseverance, and suffering. Once again, Hattaway has risen to the challenge of providing a general history with enough brief biographies of intrepid witnesses of Christ to present us with a balanced picture of the history and current state of Christianity in Tibet.

Background

As in previous volumes in *The China Chronicles*, the author first introduces us to the history, geography, and peoples of Tibet. We learn that Tibet was for centuries divided into hundreds of small political units, ruled over by kings of varying degrees of sovereignty. There are three major groups of people: The U-Tsang, the Kham, and the Amdo. Tibetan Buddhism is unique. Traditional Buddhism is really a veneer over a vast body of legends, superstitions, rituals, and practices that have kept the people in spiritual bondage for millennia. This folk religion is called Bon.

What Hattaway calls "the dark arts" of Tibetan priests and magicians are so seemingly bizarre that they tempt Westerners to incredulity, were it not for the undisputed accounts of objects moving from one place to another and human bodies becoming like iron under the power of an amulet. The religion also encourages sexual immorality: traditionally, a girl was not considered marriageable unless she could show evidence of having had sexual encounters with multiple partners. Despite his smiling face and intellectual sophistication, the Dalai Lama regularly consults the spiritual leader of Tibet, who is said to be the mouthpiece of a god.

When Christians have tried to penetrate the mountain barriers of Tibet, they have had to endure not only huge physical obstacles, but even more daunting spiritual opposition. As Hudson Taylor famously said, “To make converts in Tibet is similar to going into a cave and trying to rob a lioness of her cubs” (18).

The History

Hattaway follows the pattern of earlier volumes in the series by tracing the story of Christianity in Tibet from the earliest times. He presents evidence that the “Nestorians,” or Syrian Church of the East, preached their version of Christianity there as early as the sixth century.

The Roman Catholics came next, with heroic attempts to penetrate the almost impassable mountains to live and serve among the Tibetans. The author introduces us to such intrepid missionaries as Antonio Andrade, a Jesuit who made several trips to the region of Guge, whose king warmly welcomed him and his colleagues and gave royal support to their mission. Sadly, when this ruler was overthrown by a neighboring monarch, the Christians were brutally eliminated. Hattaway concludes that what seemed to be – and was, for a while – a great breakthrough ultimately “delivered little as the missionaries had relied totally on the favor of the king” (36).

A hundred years later, the Italian Ippolito Desideri succeeded in gaining residence in Lhasa, where he lived for five years. He took the time to learn Tibetan, gaining such fluency that he was able to speak and write Christian works “that are still considered classics by both Tibetan and Western scholars” (41). Hattaway comments: “Desideri’s brilliant academic mind and focus on studying the Tibetan language places him above almost all other Christian missionaries to Tibet throughout history” (41). His missionary career was cut short when the Vatican reassigned Tibet to the Capuchin Fathers. He left Lhasa in 1721, only three years after his arrival. His linguistic and literary achievements in this brief time span approach the fabulous.

Protestants

Though he does not ignore the missionary labors of Roman Catholics, Hattaway focuses more on the growth of the Protestant church in China.

The 1870s and 1880s

He records the pioneer journeys and ministry of China Inland Mission (CIM) missionaries, beginning with James Cameron, who made epic journeys to and through most of the provinces of China, including the Kham region in 1877.

Cameron found that the Roman Catholics had been there long before him and had planted churches. The evangelicals had to learn how to adapt quickly to an environment rife with killing, banditry, and ferocious strife between Han, Hui, and Tibetans. They were struck by the endemic violence of the Tibetans, for whom life was cheap. So many Amdo were massacred that their area was still depopulated decades later.

Literature distribution was a major emphasis of the early missionaries, who sold or gave away tracts in Mongolian and Tibetan.

After Cameron, George Parker and his Chinese wife “Minnie” reached out to Tibetans living over the border in China for many years. Similarly, the Moravians, beginning with William Heyde and Edward Pagel, spread the gospel through various ways in Ladakh, in northern India, where many Tibetans lived or traveled on their way somewhere else.

The 1890s

Other missionaries followed this strategy in the 1890s, when workers from the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) took up residence in southern Gansu, located strategically near the border of China and Tibet. Their children grew up among Amdo Tibetans; many returned later to serve in the same area. Cecil Polhill of the CIM moved to Qinghai Province in 1888. After his marriage to Eleanor Marsden in 1888, they settled in northwest Sichuan, where they proclaimed Christ to Tibetans. Despite horrific suffering at the hands of irate Tibetan Buddhists, they and their Chinese associate persevered, drawing the admirations of many Chinese and Tibetans alike.

Some of the most courageous and persistent missionaries were women, one of whom was Annie Taylor. “Of all the heroic stories of missionaries who spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in Tibet, few are as intense and compelling as that of Annie Taylor” (65). Another was Susie Rijnhart, who would not give up her zeal for evangelizing the Tibetans even after her husband died. Hattaway excels in brief biographies, of which these two are outstanding.

The 1900s

Hattaway continues his gripping narrative with stories of both Roman Catholic and evangelical missionaries and Tibetan believers who, despite fierce and barbaric persecution from the lamas, endured even unto death. The power of the written word kept manifesting itself. One New Testament portion sold by a CIM missionary to a Tibetan in China was read by the man’s brother, the head of a monastery in Tibet, who sent him back for the whole New Testament. The monks read and discussed it eagerly, finding in its pages the true light for the first time.

Christian & Missionary Alliance workers William Christie, “the Apostle of Tibet,” and his wife Jessie carried on a remarkable ministry of preaching, teaching, healing (Jessie was a nurse), and exorcism for almost three decades. Hattaway’s account of their career is alone “worth the price of the book” – but then we could say that about many more such brief biographies in this volume.

The 1910s

Evangelical missionaries saw slow progress, but occasionally were greatly encouraged. In 1917, a living buddha wrote to a Norwegian missionary that he had read the New Testament and wanted to believe in Jesus but needed more information about the Christian religion. The prince of a remote tribe bought 500 Scripture portions because his people were interested in the Christian message. The Tibetans were especially moved by the story of the Prodigal Son, so posters with the parable were put up and gospel booklets distributed to continue sowing the seed of the Word.

Hattaway relates how CIM missionaries Harry French Ridley and his wife Sarah ministered to the people without regard to their own health or lives, eventually gaining respect and seeing some converts. A living buddha came year after year to obtain portions of the New Testament and was thrilled when he was finally given a copy of the whole book. The Dalai Lama, who became good friends with Ridley, expressed his belief that Christianity was superior to Buddhism and would someday replace it.

Even after Sarah died, Ridley persevered in his ministry to the people of Xining, who “took special pride in him because he spoke their strange dialect, and its weird tones and expressions could be recognized wherever he went” (117).

Albert Shelton, a medical doctor, was so respected among evangelicals that they called him the “Prince of Tibetan Missionaries.” He and his wife Flora lived in a remote town called Batang, where they carried on a “full-service” ministry that included a kindergarten and a school for older students; a hospital, with mobile clinic work in the area around the town; and a church, with Sunday school classes. The wives visited women in their homes in the country. The Sheltons and other missionaries tried to help the poor, beggars, and destitute children, teaching them vocational skills to equip them to make money.

“Skilled as a surgeon, fluent in Tibetan, compassionate in his ministry to people, he ministered to both Chinese and Tibetans in many war situations and was respected equally by all, who recognized him as a man of God” (128). Hattaway tells his story with his usual verve in another “worth the price of the book” mini biography.

The 1920s

During this turbulent era, missionaries were not allowed to enter the regions ruled by the government in Lhasa, so they reached out to Tibetans elsewhere. Once again, Hattaway narrates the actions and experiences of dedicated missionaries, like Marian Grant Griebenow (who preferred to be called “Mr. G.”) and his wife Blanche, who lived among the Amdo at Labrang. Their children grew up with their Tibetan age-mates, winning trust for the whole family. M. G. became a blood brother to a bandit in a covenant that paid rich dividends later. These stories are simply thrilling to read.

Huston Edgar and his wife Lily are the subjects of another tale of total dedication, identification with the people, and literature distribution in a remote and dangerous region. Another chapter describes the “faithful and courageous” 41-year career in Tibet of Victor Plymire, whose epic journeys and powerful evangelistic ministry cannot help but inspire us to a greater level of consecration to God and the gospel.

One great strength of Hattaway’s writings is that he does not shirk controversy or gloss over the faults of famous Christians. His treatment of Sadhu Sundar Singh, a man of intense spirituality, immense courage, and wide influence, balances appreciation of the evangelist’s great piety and zeal with frank admission of why he was criticized in his own time and since then.

The 1930s

We should not think that all the missionaries who went to Tibet stayed and enjoyed great success. Instead, the “frequent turnover of missionaries caused the work [among the Amdo] to stagnate, with many choosing to go home after having invested years learning the Amdo language. Although a steady trickle of new recruits did arrive in the region, most soon gravitated toward the much easier Chinese work. Discouragement and loneliness were the main reasons why so many workers abandoned Tibet” (190).

On the other hand, “those who patiently endured the challenges of life in Amdo often later experienced wonderful advances in the work,” among whom were CIM medical missionaries Vaughan Rees and his wife, who were based in southern Gansu (190). Frank and Annie Learner opened a “Gospel Inn” in a town frequented by Tibetans, Hui, and Han Chinese, where they offered warm hospitality, gospel presentations with singing, and literature – all free of charge – to more than ten thousand visitors within a ten-year period. Learner even had a chance to meet and share the gospel with the current Dalai Lama when he was a little boy of four years old.

The 1940s

“The 1940s saw an increase in the number of Tibetan Christians as the large amount of faithful sowing of God’s Word finally began to reap a harvest” (204) Literature distribution had taken the Christian message deep into Tibet, where lamas and ordinary folk eagerly read about the new religion, one of life and hope.

The end of the missionary era came when the Communists gained power in China and began to expel all missionaries. Before they left, however, many missionaries saw the results of decades of faithful labor, as testimonies of Tibetans who had believed came to them from all over the country.

A separate chapter traces the saga of the translation and publication of the Tibetan Bible, which took ninety years and the dedicated, exhausting work of several heroic Tibetan Christians in the face of vicious spiritual warfare that stymied one attempt after another until, in 1948, the entire Book was printed and distributed.

The 1950s

When Chinese Communist forces attacked Tibet in 1950, everything changed. Not only were missionaries expelled, but thousands of Tibetans were savagely tortured and killed, including Christians. Hattaway tells of John Ding and his wife Ju Yiming, Han Chinese who went to Tibet to preach the gospel. They were arrested and thrown into prison. Yiming finally died from torture, but John lived through intense suffering until he was released in 1981. During the years of his confinement, Ding was able to preach the gospel to Tibetans who were suffering with him. He later received a letter from the government exonerating him of all the alleged “crimes” for which he had been in jail for twenty-two years. He died in the 1990s.

Other brave Han Chinese volunteered to carry the message of Christ to the Tibetans. The “Back to Jerusalem” movement brought believers from other provinces to the northwest, but their activities were brought to an end by the Communists.

The 1960s and 1970s

Information ceased to come from China generally, including Tibet, for almost twenty years, but the gospel still advanced. Hattaway includes the powerful testimony of Nyima Cothan, a Tibetan monk who came to Christ through the help of several foreign missionaries in India and Bhutan, where he had fled for safety. He and his wife later served God among Tibetan refugees in the Himalayas.

The 1980s and 1990s

As China gradually opened, some Western missionaries went to Tibet, including the children of former missionaries. Sometimes using medical care to demonstrate God's love, they have had many opportunities to continue the work of their parents.

More importantly, Han Chinese house churches, which were going through an epochal revival, learned of the spiritual needs in Tibet and sent evangelists. Thousands more Christians settled in Tibet as part of China's new policy of raising the population of Tibet through Han who took up residence there. Among them were many Christians. Despite initial hostility from the locals, believers gradually won a hearing for the gospel.

God used signs and wonders, as well as the sacrificial service of self-denying Han Chinese missionaries, to open hearts to the gospel. Churches began to spring up all over Tibet.

The 2000s

"In the new millennium, the Spirit of God continued to move on the hearts of Tibetan people, and the Chinese Church made more progress in its vision to reach Tibet" (275). Han Chinese Christians had to overcome obstacles, such as the lack among Tibetans of any belief in a creator God, as well as inexperience in how to send and support missionaries. Gradually, they have begun to overcome these, and small house churches have been planted.

Recently, pro-Tibetan independence Westerners have joined Tibetan Buddhists and Chinese Communists to oppose any efforts to reach Tibetans with the Christian message.

God has also used non-Han Chinese. The Lisu, who live in mountainous areas in Yunnan, have a strong Christian history. Dwelling among them are many Tibetans, with whom the Lisu believers have effectively shared the gospel. Following the leading of the Holy Spirit, foreign Christians, including South Koreans, on short-term missions have also been able to lead some Tibetans to Christ.

The last short biography in the book relates the amazing experiences of a former monk who became a Christian partly through the healing prayer of a Swedish missionary in India. This narrative is not for the faint-hearted, for it exposes the darkness, hypocrisy, sexual degradation, and violent brutality of many Tibetan Buddhist monks. More than that, however, this former monk's dramatic testimony reminds us of the light, the love, and the power of Christ, his followers, and the gospel.

As in other volumes of the *China Chronicles*, Hattaway provides priceless extracts from letters by Tibetan believers to the church outside. These frequently told of miracles that changed lives. On the average, however it took ten and a half years after first hearing the gospel for a Tibetan to trust in Christ. Hattaway again stresses that, despite the impression of Tibetan Buddhists as peaceable people, Christians are often beaten and even killed by lamas and ordinary Tibetan Buddhists.

These letters highlight the potent effect of Christian radio broadcasting, which can penetrate high mountains and “impassable” political barriers to speak to the hearts of hopeless Tibetans.

Hattaway warns against inflated claims of thousands of converts, however. Growth has been slow, gradual, but steady. Nevertheless, “Jesus Christ is gradually being revealed as the true king of Tibet. God is taking a glorious inheritance for His Son out of Tibet, as a remnant emerges on the Roof of the World” (305). As in other volumes of this series, an appendix gives a town-by-town census of known Christians, based on extensive research.

Conclusion

This powerful book, with dozens of wonderful stories, shows how God has used courageous, self-sacrificing missionaries, Chinese Christians, and Tibetan believers to call out for himself a Tibetan people. In the process, medical ministry, literature – especially the Bible – friendship and hospitality, and faithful, persistent proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ have all been employed to evoke faith. Often working on the perimeter of Tibet, Christ’s witnesses have sometimes been able to glorify him in Lhasa and other centers of Tibetan religious and political power.

At the same time, almost imaginable spiritual opposition has inflicted loneliness, discouragement, sickness, persecution, torture, and death upon those who dare to challenge Satan’s rule over Tibetans. Despite this intense spiritual warfare, the Spirit of Christ has enabled his messengers to persevere and has transformed the lives of thousands of Tibetans.

Despite the length of this review, it has only highlighted a few major people and events. I enthusiastically encourage you to read and re-read this marvelous work of Christian history.

Religious Entrepreneurism in China's Urban House Churches: The Rise and Fall of Early Rain Reformed Presbyterian Church

by Li Ma

A Missed Opportunity: The Failure of a Bold Project

Ma, Li. *Religious Entrepreneurism in China's Urban House Churches: The Rise and Fall of Early Rain Reformed Presbyterian Church*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Note: The unusual length of this review results from the nature of the book and the controversy it has spawned. *Religious Entrepreneurism* (I shall use this shorter title hereafter) is a dense, complex monograph about a very complicated series of events centering upon a person with many sides to his character and conduct, and the volume has evoked a variety of criticisms. I have been able to touch briefly upon a few major points; much more could have been written.

For this review, I interviewed eight people who were either very close to the events covered in *Religious Entrepreneurism* or who are internationally known scholars with a detailed knowledge of Christianity in China. Most of the interviews were conversations, but three people chose to respond to my draft and my questions in writing. In each case, I can vouch for the integrity and credibility of those whose comments form part of the background for my review. In addition, the author Li Ma kindly read and responded to a late draft of the review. Some of her comments appear as qualifying statements in what follows. As will become obvious, Ma would not agree with the overall tenor and thesis of what I have written.

The author has been called “a brilliant scholar,” and “a rising star” among younger scholars of Chinese Christianity. She and her husband Jin Li co-authored *Surviving the State, Remaking the Church*, a volume in the *Studies in Chinese Christianity* series published by Wipf & Stock, which is co-edited by Dr. Carol Lee Hamrin and this writer. That book quickly won wide acclaim.

Religious Entrepreneurism received strong endorsements from noted scholars such as Mark Noll, Richard Swedberg, and Richard Mouw, who praised it for careful research, the integration of social theory with rich ethnography, the use of “interdisciplinary lenses,” and a “highly readable narrative.”

At the same time, the book has evoked sharp criticism from a variety of people who were close to the Early Rain church (henceforth ERC). The debate about its purported merits and alleged defects has broken out into public, with both negative reviews and vigorous defenses on the Internet. For a detailed criticism of the book, see this Amazon book review: [Sensationalism disguised as scholarship \(amazon.com\)](#).

The following discussion will try to balance an appreciation for the merits of *Religious Entrepreneurism* with a careful assessment of the charges leveled against both the methodology employed and the content of Ma's narrative.

To anticipate: Though this book contains much useful information and insightful analysis, it is fundamentally flawed, shot through with errors both large and small, and should be read only with extreme caution.

The Book

First Impressions

The subtitle, *The Rise and Fall of Early Rain Reformed Presbyterian Church*, evokes images of the Roman Empire, originally relatively pristine and finally collapsing in an orgy of abused power and sexual license.

The Dedication, "For my sisters," alerts us that this will be a "Me Too!" narrative, with Chinese characteristics. In an interview with a Hong Kong media outlet, Ma says that she writes "from the perspective of a female social historian. I hope to bring the voices of the vulnerable and women to the public. . . . I think in all areas of the Chinese society, there should be female voices speaking up. . . . What happened to me recently, including how some scholars attempted to use nonacademic means to slander me and incite mob cyber violence against me, these show the reality – if even I, as a woman scholar who published a scholarly book through a globally well-known publisher, have to face so much resistance when speaking up, how much more difficult does it take for the voices of vulnerable women in this system to be heard? How much more costs do they have to pay?"

A brief description at the front says, "This book offers a unique historical documentation of the development of the ambitious religious entrepreneurship by leaders of the Early Rain church (and later Western China Reformed Presbytery leadership) in an effort to gain social influence in China through local institution building and global public image management."

Introduction

The Introduction begins with a dramatic scene: the leaking of "photographs of a confidential 'church court trial'" that "spread on the Chinese Internet and through social media. These posts sent shock waves across China's emerging urban churches." The next paragraph tells of police interruption of a prayer meeting, followed by videos of "Yi Wang (the pastor of Early Rain church) and some church members' praying loudly outside the local police station, that became a heroic and celebrated image on Twitter" (1).

The rest of the book maintains this vivid tone and flows swiftly, as Ma purports to give an accurate account of how such a heroic figure could develop into someone whom she portrays as essentially driven by a hunger for power and fame, and who led his church from being a small home fellowship to China's "iconic" house church. Along the way, we read of overweening ambition that spawned excessively rapid expansion, internal strife that eventually split the church, what Ma calls "moral bankruptcy" at the core, "suppression of dissent," "radicalization"

that led to open conflict with the government, and finally the closing of the church and Yi Wang's detention by the police.

Methodology

Her research method includes “formal interviews, informal conversations, publicly available bulletins and online publications,” as well as “texts and conversations on social media” (12). The plethora of quotations she includes in her narrative certainly adds to its energy and consistent power to hold the reader's attention.

Though she does “not claim to present a complete story,” it is her “earnest desire to present a balanced perspective.” Her “analysis is interdisciplinary, for, as some scholars put it, since a ‘church is a diverse, complex, and simultaneously sociocultural and theological reality,’ it ‘naturally requires boundary-cross of many disciplines’ . . .” Ma expresses the “hope that, by integrating social theories, organization behavior research, and theological analysis, this volume will provide an important benchmark for China mission research” (13).

If consistently followed, this research method could be very productive.

Structure

The Introduction explains the clear organization of *Religious Entrepreneurism*. Part One follows the “consolidation phase” of Early Rain Church from 2006 to 2013. Under the charismatic leadership of Yi Wang, the congregation grew from a small house church to a sizeable congregation meeting publicly in rented space.

Part Two covers the phase of expansion from 2014 to 2016, during which a school was opened, Yi Wang's “personal influence and fame grew nationally and internationally,” and “a core of PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) church-planters joined and consolidated power to found WCP (West China presbytery).” Meanwhile, however, some congregants felt spiritually undernourished. Fierce conflict engulfed the new school; Yi Wang and his teammate, Huasheng Wang, began to have conflicts.

Part Three follows what Ma calls the “radicalization from 2017 to 2018,” when the government closed the church and arrested Yi Wang and others, as world media presented them as heroes of “resistance under communist suppression” (15).

Thesis

The central thesis of this book claims that the ambitious religious entrepreneurship by leaders of Early Rain church (and later WCP leadership) in an effort to gain social influence in China through local institution-building and global public image management, was undermined by an internal loss of moral authority. Such a loss was largely due to pervasive disillusionment among members about their charismatic leader Yi Wang. Claiming to uphold a Presbyterian Church governance with checks and balances, Yi Wang and other church leaders apparently adopted double standards for themselves and for congregants. Later, despite the church's claim to publicness, corporate interest became more dominant, creating a relentless and oppressive leadership culture.

Over time, a series of moral inconsistencies led to an avalanche of internal strife, manifesting inequity, over-conformity, judicial injustice, and alleged sexual abuses (5).

The Conclusion “analytically summarizes and historicizes different phases” of this story.

“A multilevel institutional analysis explains the different social processes at different levels of social reality. Within this latter framework, the relevance of macro-level parameters (global media and the Chinese regime) implies a pervasive crisis for Christianity in a world that is paradoxically globalized and disconnected” (16).

This structure fits neatly into the pattern of good storytelling that my 10th-grade English teacher taught us: Situation, Complication, Resolution. The Resolution could be either happy or sad, and the end determines whether the story is a comedy or a tragedy. Christian Entrepreneurism is a tragedy, at least as Li Ma tells the story.

Evaluation

After reading all of this book, including the voluminous end notes, very carefully, and parts of it two or more times, I have very mixed feelings about it. I'll begin with what I liked.

Positive

Ma's desire to speak for vulnerable women who have been abused by church leaders is entirely laudable, especially in a male-dominated and face-obsessed culture like China's.

The author's use of a variety of sources, and especially quotations from Chinese social media, offers vivid evidence of the controversies that Yi Wang's bold actions generated, not only within the church but also among Chinese Christians in other parts of the country and around the world.

Ma helpfully puts the intentional expansion and aggressive media presence of Early Rain church within the context of decades of marginalization of Christians. Many urban house church leaders thought that Christians should strive for a more public presence.

She provides a helpful analysis of how the Internet presented vast new opportunities for Christians to promote their views and to communicate with each other, making it possible to create a vibrant Christian voice in a new way, and she shows how Yi Wang made the most of this new medium.

Ma quotes an impressive array of online comments, including both criticisms and defenses of Yi Wang and the church. The extensive use of these debates is not only an essential component of her method, but a substantial contribution to our understanding of the role of the Internet in the controversies she describes, and of the various points of view that Christians from different places and perspective expressed.

Ma explains how Yi Wang and ERC sought to train his people to influence society by all that they did. The Christian school and college were means to this end, along with sermons and classes.

She raises the legitimate question of how fast a church and its ministries should grow and warns against expansion that does not come organically and with sufficient planning and preparation. Whether Yi Wang and ERC were guilty of going too fast, as Ma claims, I cannot say, but the question is an important one.

Religious Entrepreneurism exposes some of the dangers of big churches, including the difficulty of providing adequate pastoral care of the members. Elsewhere, I have argued that house churches are both the biblical norm and the most effective form of “doing” church for China. (See G. Wright Doyle, *Reaching Chinese Worldwide* (Torchflame Books, 2013) 142-145; and “Home Meetings - the Way Forward for Chinese Christians?”)

Li Ma also raises questions about the pitfalls of seeking a prominent public presence and boisterous attempts to gain influence in society. Again, I agree. My book *Christianity in America: Triumph and Tragedy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013) devotes 400 pages to showing how American Christians, from the Puritans to the present, have all too often failed to be “salt and light” in society by seeking to be “Savior and Lord” in their nation. That is not to say that Yi Wang coveted political power – he said he did not – but that pursuing greater influence in all domains of society brings many attendant risks. Perhaps the greatest of these is to go for quick, public recognition, rather than slow, quiet, organic transformation, starting with oneself, the family, the church, workplace, and neighborhood, working unseen as yeast in a slowly rising loaf of bread.

Yi Wang’s purported criticism of churches that subdivided into small groups after the new religious regulations came into effect in February of 2018, as a “step backward,” if accurately reported, reflects his commitment to a large, building-based, public religious organization. He is standing within the mainstream of Christian history and current practices at this point, but I believe that this view is misguided.

If accurately reported, some of Yi Wang’s public statements were, at the very least, problematic. Examples would include his equation of words from a Muslim hymn as consistent with Calvinism and his denunciation of Chinese who emigrate to other countries, including America.

If accurately reported, Yi Wang’s frequent insistence on the “absolute authority” of “an institutional local church” raises questions for most Protestants (74). Ma does note that Yi Wang warned against the abuse of authority in his earlier sermons, however.

People who know Yi Wang do agree that he was a typical strong-willed Chinese leader. He did not always take advice or wait for others before forging ahead with his ambitious projects. Especially after the church split in 2017, he changed his allegiance to a more “episcopal” style of leadership, with himself as “bishop.” We see this type of charismatic celebrity pastor in America, too. With eloquence, energy, and vision, they build an array of institutions around their congregations, as Yi Wang did.

Gifted, energetic, and charismatic pastors often over-extend themselves, attempting too much and then failing to meet the expectations of those whom they have inspired to join their growing ministries. As they acquire more and more influence, the natural human tendency is to acquire

more and more power. Very few people, no matter how godly, can handle too much power. Regardless of whether all of Ma's assertions about Yi Wang are true, we can certainly believe that the concentration of power poses great temptations to abuse it.

As Ma notes, Yi Wang became so heavily involved in so many projects that he could not provide adequate pastoral care for his members. He attempted too much, without having built a strong leadership infrastructure that would have prevented some of the problems Ma describes.

Traditional Chinese culture confers great authority on leaders, especially men. One could easily imagine how the presbyterian system of government by elders could become legalistic and authoritarian. (In this review, I distinguish between "presbyterian" and "Presbyterian." The former refers to a type of church government by elders and deacons, and, often, of an organization of churches in a group called a presbytery. The latter refers to a specific denomination, such as the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), or the self-identification of the Early Rain Reformed Church as part of the West China Presbytery, with informal links to the PCA.) Such a twisting of the original intent of the presbyterian church polity has also happened in the West, of course.

The purchase of the new campus, though perhaps legal according to the church's new situation after the West China Presbytery was formed, took the congregation by surprise and seemed to many to be very unwise, even disastrous. One can see why the elders would not tell the people until the transaction had been completed, in order to ward off intervention by the state or cause an open conflict in the church, but one can also see how such a major decision, with so many ramifications, could shock and upset people who had no inkling that it was coming.

Likewise, some ERC policies, if accurately reported by Ma, would seem problematic, such as the by-law that gave the president of the presbytery (by which she probably means session) two votes.

Ma rightly points out the influence of one strand of neo-Calvinism upon intellectual urban house church leaders. This school properly propounds the truth that biblical Christianity has many implications for all domains of life, including politics, education, economics, and the family. In the process, however, they sometimes fail to focus on the core of Reformed theology – the so-called "doctrines of grace" – and, instead, concentrate on these secondary implications.

In adapting these important truths to the Chinese situation, some American teachers and Chinese house church leaders have sometimes seemed to forget that it took more than a thousand years for biblical principles to "produce" the American Constitution. Understandably impatient to see changes in Chinese society, a few Chinese urban house church leaders sometimes made the mistake of pushing for too much, too soon. The author questions the applicability of this "Christian civilization narrative" to China. Again, though I greatly admire the Puritans and the efforts of American Christians to influence society, I do think that we should beware of attempting too much, too fast, and of trusting in political change to reform society.

Ma justifiably objects to what she calls unequal treatment of "ordinary" Christian members of the church and leaders who have been guilty of sexual misconduct. According to her, the former

received public censure and discipline, while the latter were protected from open shaming and given only light discipline. In the case of the alleged rape by an elder, she notes that he received only six months' barring from the Lord's Supper, and he was not removed from his position and ministry. If this charge is true, it does seem unfair. We must remember, however, that he was not formally charged or tried in a church court, so his offense must have been considered sexual immorality rather than rape. Still, the disparity between his light discipline and that meted out to ordinary members of the church is highly troubling.

She also raises legitimate questions about how the church dealt with married women employees when they became pregnant. Summary removal of them from their jobs, without prior policy to that effect, if accurately reported, does seem to constitute not only illegal, but also unloving, action.

It seems that Yi Wang's hiring of Bingsen Su as principal of the Covenant Reformed School and his full support of him, if accurately reported, was problematic from start to finish.

If accurately reported, some of Su's pedagogical methods - though not all (see below) - do seem questionable. The whole process makes Yi Wang look very bad.

Yi Wang's decision to bring legal charges against the police (called a "jiao'an") understandably generated sharply divergent reactions.

If accurately reported, it seems that Yi Wang increasingly broached political themes in his preaching, almost daring the authorities to stop him.

Holding prayer meetings in front of police station where Christians were detained has no biblical warrant and seems to be unnecessarily provocative. If accurately reported, Yi Wang's stated intention "to take over this city one street at a time, one police station at a time" sounds extremely inflammatory (4).

As we know from the thousands of cases of sexual abuse among Roman Catholics, and widespread instances of abuse by Southern Baptist clergy, church leaders have sometimes been guilty not only of sexual abuse, but also of covering up such outrages. Thus, Ma's claim that two leaders in the churches connected with Early Rain (not Yi Wang or Peng Qiang, however) were guilty of rape or sexual abuse, is plausible. She is right to call for severe penalties to be inflicted upon the guilty, and to warn against the tendency of leaders to cover up abuses.

Ma is certainly correct to point out that Western media, especially the American press, have tended to idealize Chinese house churches and their leaders, and that a "persecution narrative" has dominated all reporting on non-official Christianity in China for several decades. Brent Fulton discussed the problems with the persecution narrative in *China's Urban Christians: A Light that Cannot Be Hidden*, published in the Wipf & Stock's series, *Studies in Chinese Christianity*, the same series in which Ma's *Surviving the State, Remaking the Church* appeared.

Likewise, Western media, and especially Christian reporting, have not often dwelt upon the faults and failings of Chinese Christians and their leaders.

These are a few of Ma's observations that I found helpful, assuming that her account is accurate. For some thoughts on what we can learn from this book, read our review "What We Can Learn from Christian Entrepreneurism by Li Ma" at ReachingChineseWorldwide.org.

What Kind of Book is *Religious Entrepreneurism*?

In the interview quoted earlier, Ma emphasized that *Religious Entrepreneurism* is a scholarly, academic work. That is certainly partly true. The book is published by Routledge, a highly regarded academic press. She has hundreds of endnotes in which she cites many sources. She employs a multi-faceted methodology. She places her narrative within a sophisticated theoretical framework, especially in the Conclusion.

On the other hand, *Religious Entrepreneurism* is much more than an academic study. It has features of investigative reporting, in which the reporter digs deep into many sources to find out what "really happened." As her dedication to her "sisters" indicates, this is also very much a work of advocacy for women who are treated in ways that do not reflect their inherent worth as persons created in the image of God.

Finally, *Religious Entrepreneurism* is a sustained and very clever indictment of Yi Wang, much of his ministry, and his "gang," including Qiang Peng and the missionaries connected with the church and the presbytery. In other words, it is a work of polemics.

From the title to the last sentence, Ma presents a complex and comprehensive "case" against Yi Wang, his supporters, and much of what he stood for. To some degree, this corresponds to Yi Wang's role and status as a "celebrity pastor" who played an oversized part in the leadership and public image of the church.

Negative Responses

"The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him."
Proverbs 18:17

Lack of Balance

Religious Entrepreneurism does not present a balanced account. On the contrary, the entire thesis is anti-Wang and his colleagues.

Ma says there were "debates," but almost always quotes people on one side of the debate. In all the citations of interviews and Internet posts, I could find only a handful of quotations from those who supported Yi Wang and the church's leaders. Most especially, regarding the trial of Huasheng Wang, she relies heavily on comments of Xin Fan, who represented Huasheng Wang and who vehemently denounced the proceedings of the court.

We should consider that post-split ERC had rules barring church members to talk with outsiders. Some contacts might have turned down the interview requests because they had to ask for permission from the top. Some may not have returned requests for interviews.

On the other hand, we should remember that:

1. Before these non-disclosure rules were put in place, Ma could have interviewed anyone, but she chose only to voice the criticisms of Yi Wang's detractors
2. Even after the non-disclosure rules took effect, she could have interviewed Yi Wang, Qiang Peng, Guoqing Zhang, Changping Zha, and any of the missionaries whom she so sharply attacks. Instead, she did not seek to know or relate their side of the story
3. The non-disclosure rules applied to non-members of the presbytery who had been invited to Presbytery meetings, which are always confidential.

It is true that Yi Wang and other leaders of ERC urged their people to refrain from spreading rumors or inaccurate charges on the Internet. But so did Huasheng Wang. They were trying to stem the flood of wild accusations and counter-accusations that were poisoning the atmosphere and muddying the debates.

Statements about Yi Wang in the last three-fourths of the book are almost all negatively couched. For example, Ma claims that after being rebuked by the presbytery, at a congregational meeting he "had no apology," as Huasheng had. He only "appeared to shed some tears" (145). The first statement about Yi Wang is blatantly false: He did confess his sin, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. The second assertion raises a question: How does one merely "appear" to shed tears? Of course, good actors can shed tears at will, and some could have interpreted Yi Wang's tears as, in that sense, "faked." Furthermore, Huasheng Wang did not confess to any sin, but only to "mistakes."

Ma frequently imputes sinister, or at least self-seeking, motives to Yi Wang. She echoes secular social scientists who claim that entrepreneurs "are inevitably driven by the desire for power, the will to succeed and the satisfaction of getting projects accomplished" (8). Accordingly, Yi Wang is portrayed as a narcissist driven by a hunger for fame and power. According to her, Western missionaries were also interested in ERC and the WCP as "a network of opportunities rather than a congregation of individuals who need to be cared for" (232). Since only God knows the hearts of men, this imputation of motives is a highly questionable – not to mention unscholarly - procedure.

Ma criticizes the missionaries for not checking Yi Wang's excesses and for describing him to their American Christian supporters in entirely positive terms. These criticisms could be partly true. Several of them were Yi Wang's friends and colleagues, and they were trying to help guide a rapidly expanding Presbyterian movement. As guests and outsiders, they would need extreme wisdom to know when to voice concerns or criticisms.

On the other hand, it is known with certainty that these missionaries did give Yi Wang advice and occasionally spoke frankly to him. Furthermore, as members of the presbytery, they participated in discussions critical of Yi Wang and ERC and joined in the censure of him by the presbytery.

(True, missionaries generally do not criticize their local partners when they are reporting to their supporters back home. Understandably, they try to show how God is using indigenous Christians. Would we expect them to do otherwise?)

Almost all Yi Wang's actions and the policies of ERC are interpreted negatively. For example, the very common practice of having small groups discuss the sermon, and especially its relevance to members' personal lives, comes across as highly controlling.

The same goes for Yi Wang's possession of pirated books. We must remember that this practice is almost universal in China, that theological books are largely unavailable to Chinese Christians, and that Yi Wang generally tried to honor copyright laws. Furthermore, there is a history to his collection of copied books. When the church/seminary library began, original editions of books in English were hard to obtain, so copied ones were used. Gradually, following a policy that strongly emphasized the ethical imperative to honor copyrights, these books were replaced by those obtained from overseas or through legal channels. In the end, they had a large collection of unauthorized books to dispose of. Rather than throwing them away, the church transferred them to Yi Wang's office for his use in preparing articles, books, and sermons.

This is one instance among many of Ma's telling only part of the story or putting a more negative slant than was warranted on something she reports.

Another example: Yi Wang did say something like, "We are going to take over this city one police station at a time." Those familiar with the context of this statement say, however, that they understood him to mean that ERC church members would use the time they spent in jail to evangelize fellow prisoners as well as police officers. The "takeover" was spiritual, not physical or political. He merely meant, these people believe, that being detained by the police could lead to the further spread of the gospel in Chengdu.

The book likewise generally uses negative or even pejorative terms when describing those who generally supported Yi Wang.

Apparent Ignorance

The author appears to be ignorant of the reasons for the common practice of Western Christian workers in China to stay away from public worship services, especially in unregistered churches. While she does accurately say that the missionaries explained that they wanted to provide worship for their children, she does not also give other obvious reasons for not attending worship services at ERC: Western Christian workers do not want to jeopardize their own positions in China by drawing attention to themselves, and they do not want to cause trouble for Chinese Christians, especially since the government often accuses them of being tools of Western imperialists.

In her account, this anonymity also leads to a form of lack of accountability.

She appears to be ignorant of Presbyterian polity. For example, she uses the word "presbytery" for both the board of elders in a local church (called the "session" by Presbyterians) and for the group of elders who govern several churches in a region (the proper meaning of "presbytery"), in this case, the West China Presbytery (WCP).

This confusion may seem minor, but it affects major portions of the narrative. For example, in the Introduction, she says that many Chinese were shocked that the Early Rain Reformed

Presbyterian Church “had conducted a confidential court trial of its own pastor” (1). In reality, the trial was held by the presbytery, not the session of the church. The difference is critical.

Though one can see why many Chinese would object to the “secret” trial of Huasheng Wang, Ma seems not to know that all disciplinary trials in Presbyterian churches are held in secret, to protect the rights of the accused. Repeated references to this event as “secret” thus lose their force.

She says that when ERC elders were given their office for life, they became members of an “elite” corps of leaders. She does not seem to know that normally in Presbyterian churches, elders are always chosen “for life,” unless they later violate doctrinal or ethical standards. Since much of her indictment of Yi Wang and other leaders involves their alleged “elite” status, this indication of ignorance greatly weakens her argument.

She criticizes Early Rain Church for purchasing the Baihua sanctuary without a congregational vote but does not seem to know – or did not want to note – that the church had adopted the presbytery’s by-laws a year before, and that these had replaced the church’s bylaws and allowed for the purchasing of the property with only a vote of the elders.

Ma notes in the Introduction, and often later, that many outsiders were surprised and dismayed when they learned of the “splitting-style church planting” that had led to the formation of two congregations out of one. She - and they - apparently did not know that this way of starting new churches out of existing ones is very common. Indeed, as she ought to know, “church splitting” is not the proper translation of *fen tang*. In English, “church splitting” has an entirely negative connotation, one that is lacking in ordinary “Christian” Chinese usage. For many years, I attended a Presbyterian Church in Taiwan that grew by establishing new meeting points, which they called “fen tang.”

Ma is either ignorant of this common way of growing a church or she deliberately chose to employ a negative English term for a neutral and even positive Chinese phrase.

Now, it is true that the sudden way Yi Wang announced and effected this split caused great confusion and controversy, and this led to his censure by the presbytery. The eventual split was, sadly, deep and rancorous. Still, the method itself should not have drawn Ma’s fire.

To take another example, she cites the *Christian Science Monitor* as a “Christian media” outlet. She should know that the *Christian Science Monitor*, though highly respected, is not a “Christian” publication. This is a small mistake, but it adds to the overall garbled attack on journalists in general.

In her critique of the pedagogy employed by Bingsen Su in the Covenant Reformed School, she describes their “classical” education as “often meaning ‘old,’” and cites his use of McGuffey’s *Readers*, “an old series of textbooks used in American schools from the mid-19th century” (118). She apparently does not know that these readers had been widely popular in the home-school movement and the Classical Education movement in the United States for several decades. They had a proven record of training children to read increasingly advanced material for more than a hundred years and continue to be chosen as textbooks even now. (Having heard my father, who

was educated in the early 1900s, praise McGuffey's *Readers*, I purchased a set in the 1990s when I was homeschooling our daughter. I soon learned why they are still so highly regarded by educators.) Ma's ignorance of the provenance and popularity of the *Readers* clearly informed – or mis-informed – her criticism of Bingsen Su.

Nor does the author seem to know that the Classical Education method stresses rote memorization for a variety of reasons. Su may have gone overboard in this, but the method itself has proven value.

Inconsistencies

Ma repeatedly criticizes Yi Wang for sermons that focused almost entirely on politics. How does this square with her statement that “William” (a pseudonym), the one missionary of whom she approves and whom she interviewed, was “impressed with the . . . ‘thick’ preaching of Reformed doctrines” (113)? These doctrines would include the doctrines of grace, as we shall see.

The “Persecution Narrative”

Until very recently, I joined with Brent Fulton and others at ChinaSource to challenge this “persecution narrative.” In a chapter on *China in Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom*, edited by William D. Taylor and others (2012) and in an article called, “Are Chinese Christians Being Persecuted?” published on the Global China Center website, I argued that persecution, though common and brutal in the past, had given way to unprecedented freedom for most of China's “house church” Christians.

In early 2018, however, as Li Ma records at several points in her book, as part of a new trend in which the “regime's tolerance towards any Christian engagement reversed to a historic low,” China rolled out new regulations on religious activity (6). These outlawed many activities that, though technically illegal, had been allowed for a decade (or even two decades, depending on the region). Since then, the authorities have pursued a systematic campaign to eliminate unauthorized Christian activities, including public meetings and Internet postings. (As a result, I have since taken down the article from our website.)

Ma notes this in her text, but in her chapter on Western media she writes as if persecution were entirely a thing of the past, when nothing could be farther from the truth. This is strange, for her book covers events up to the end of 2018 and she states clearly that the government had started a comprehensive campaign against house churches.

She falsely accuses Ian Johnson, author of *The Souls of China*, of relying on only one source (see below), but her account of the trial of Huasheng Wang comes from the testimony of only one person, the man who represented Huasheng Wang at the event.

She falsely states that Ian Johnson was not “embedded” in the church community (see below), while in fact she did not live in Chengdu or attend ERC during most of the period she describes in her book (2014–2018). She had lived there while doing research on an earlier book and for the first part of this volume, which may partly explain why the first section of her narrative contains many fewer errors than the last three-fourths of the book.

Radical Openness

The author often notes that Yi Wang and others claimed that the ERC sought “radical transparency, making his sermons available online and giving the police names of people who attended Early Rain” (206, quoting an article by Ian Johnson), but she sharply criticizes Yi Wang and leaders of the WCP for “creating nondisclosure agreements during major church governance decision.”

Clearly these two actions are of a different nature; it is like comparing apples and oranges. Seeking to keep some internal matters within the church, especially when outsiders were voicing strong opposition, is different from allowing the government access to sermons and names of members.

Religious Entrepreneurism Omits Much Vital Information

Though the author gives extensive treatment to the ethical, social, and political teachings of Yi Wang and his team, she almost entirely fails to discuss any other content of their messages. Since Reformed churches almost always give prominence to what they call the “doctrines of grace,” that is, the teachings that emphasize God’s sovereign grace in the salvation of sinners, it is incredible that the ERC pulpit would not treat these core themes.

The “doctrines of grace” (plural) are often summarized by the acronym TULIP: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints. These are the “heart and soul” of Reformed theology, and, as William said, constituted the content of at least some of Yi Wang’s preaching; others have confirmed this fact. Ma nowhere mentions this as part of his ministry, though she does note that the Westminster Catechism was widely circulated among the congregation and presumably formed an underlying set of common beliefs.

When Yi Wang examined men for church office or interviewed candidates for baptism, he did stress the importance of the Reformed doctrines of grace.

Another crucial omission is Yi Wang’s explicit statement that he was not aiming for changes in the governmental structure of China. By failing to include this sentence, Ma significantly misrepresents Wang’s “political” statements.

Ma says that William was the only one of the American missionaries who “was willing to participate in the church life of local Chinese” and to attend the worship services of ERC (113). This claim is both misleading and false. She does not tell us that William is a Korean-American, and thus could attend worship services without drawing attention to himself, while at least some of the others, being Caucasian, would have immediately been identified. Furthermore, one of the other missionaries, although Caucasian, attended Sunday worship services faithfully.

Ma gives the impression that these missionaries were not involved with the congregation, but this is not true. One of the missionaries had regular Bible with elders and deacons, and his wife had a regular “tea-and-Bible-study” with women in the church.

Besides, how can we know the motives of others without asking them directly? But Ma never asked the other missionaries why they didn't attend worship services at ERC.

She presents only one side of the complex story of the ecclesiastical trial of Wang Huasheng. Since this event occupies such a major part of her narrative, not to have both sides represented is an omission fatal to her claim to be "balanced" and "nuanced."

Perhaps her worst omission involves her treatment of an alleged cover up of an alleged rape.

In her text and in the Conclusion, she states flatly that Yi Wang, Qiang Peng, and their wives were guilty of a cover-up of at least two alleged rapes. But she presents only one account of the conversations between the alleged victim of rape and Qiang Peng and his wife Ou Wang. Here I am not denying that the man was guilty of rape. That is not the main point. The real question is whether Peng (and Yi Wang) were guilty of a cover-up. She has only called one witness – for the prosecution – and none for the defense. She could have interviewed Peng and his wife, but she didn't. Why? Clearly, she believed in the account by this woman. That is her right, but failure to interview Peng and his wife does considerably weaken a major part of her "case" against Yi Wang and Qiang Peng.

Still, the crux of the matter is whether, as charged, these leaders and their wives willfully tried to deny a fair hearing to the woman, and perhaps to several others. That charge has been denied, and it has not been proven by Ma, only stated. Though she narrates several incidents in detail (188-99), her accounts, while giving the reader a strong impression of the credibility of her charges, don't give us a chance to know the other side of these stories. She may have corroborating evidence, but, if so, she hasn't included it in her book. Ma does say that Qiang Peng offered to take the rape charge to the presbytery court. When she declined this offer, he had little else he could do to help her. We can understand the woman's reluctance to go through formal channels, but that does not justify Ma's one-sided and unsubstantiated accusations of a cover-up.

Qiang Peng has a reputation for the very highest integrity and consistent Christian character. When I asked one of his close friends to find out Peng's side of the story for this review, he replied, "I would be embarrassed even to ask. He would never do such a thing."

That doesn't mean that Peng or his wife may not have spoken words that could have been misleading or even unkind, but it does put the burden of proof on Li Ma to provide testimony from all the parties involved in this sad event.

Unnecessary – and Harmful – Inclusions

Though giving a pseudonym for "William," who opposed Yi Wang, Ma provides the full names of three American-based Christian workers whom she associates with the pro-Wang camp, and whom she frequently criticizes. When called out on this, she replied that people who are "public" do not have to be protected by anonymity: "If these individuals and organizations publicize about themselves on various websites, media, and conferences, why does it become a threat once they appear in my book?" In short, "I am not concerned about their sensational charges that this book

revealed their secrets and harmed their safety. This is a book about facts and historical happenings.”

First, each of these persons carefully sought to keep their institutional and organizational positions and affiliations unknown. In no sense were these facts made “public,” as Ma asserts.

The question is, moreover, whether the “facts” are accurately and fairly recorded.

Ma criticizes the three people (“PCA ministers”) whose names she reveals for not regularly attending ERC worship services. As their staying away from public worship indicates, they were trying to keep a very low profile while in China. Her exposure of their names probably means that they can no longer operate freely in China. She says that she quoted their statements on public sources, but this does not negate the fact that she revealed vital information about their organizational affiliations that had hitherto not been made public, including Tim Mountfort’s position with MTW and Enoch Wang’s role in the China Partnership.

The same is true for her identification of Mountfort as connected with China Partnership. CP is a public organization, to be sure, but it did not publicize the identify of people in China who were associated with it.

Contrary to journalistic ethics concerning the rights of vulnerable people, she has revealed the names of men whom she accuses of rape, but who have not been formally charged or convicted of this crime, either by the state or by the church.

Despite her assertion to the contrary (14), Ma has been accused of also failing to gain permission from several people, whom she quotes, to use their names in her book. At least six very prominent sources for her narrative, including two who were critical of Yi Wang, have said to people whom I interviewed that they were told that they would see and be given the chance to approve their remarks in her text but were not shown the final text before submission to the publisher. Ma also betrayed their trust by misquoting what several of them said. This is a violation of the fundamental ethics of both journalism and writing contemporary history.

Distortion of Documentary Information

Someone who has compared Ma’s text with relevant documents, claims that she “intentionally chooses sections of the Presbytery’s commission and keeps out other very key areas to help fit her narrative. She also seems to have intentionally mistranslated certain sections of documents or flat out mischaracterized them to fit the narrative she came up with.”

One prime example is the discipline that was carried out by the presbytery on Wang Huasheng and Wang Yi. She said that they did not discipline Wang Yi and only disciplined Wang Huasheng and she quotes the commission’s finding document. She also [says that] Paul Peng in a regional gathering only criticized Huasheng in reading the document, [but] she failed to point out that Wang Yi was in fact disciplined by the presbytery, and he was in fact mentioned first in the document because he was the senior pastor. The commission disciplined him, he accepted the discipline, and apologized to

Huasheng at Presbytery and also read a statement before his congregation in tears apologizing (personal correspondence with the writer, August 20, 2019).

Ma faults Ian Johnson for not being “embedded” in the church, when his book (*The Souls of China*) clearly states that he lived in Chengdu and attended church events for several months at a time.

Errors

The author does mention “the doctrine of grace” one time, but this is not what Reformed preachers call their distinctive views of soteriology. “Doctrines of grace” is the term they use.

Ma asserts that after his visit to New York’s Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA), pastored by Timothy Keller, Wang Yi “identified with the Christian Right as defined in the West” (68). This statement is highly misleading. The Christian Right is a movement with many aspects to it and a history of several decades. At no time has Timothy Keller identified himself with the Christian Right, except perhaps in the minds of uninformed critics on the political Left. In fact, he is criticized by many on the Christian Right for his relatively “liberal” views on some social questions.

The Chinese names for Charles Chao’s Reformation Translation Fellowship and his son Jonathan Chao’s China Ministries International are incorrectly translated (72).

The English name of Pastor Lin Cixin is wrongly given as Samuel Lin, rather than Samuel Ling, the name he uses in all his writings.

Enoch Wang was not a PCA minister. He was ordained as a Teaching Elder by the West China Presbytery. He was thus not an “American missionary.” He is a Chinese citizen.

She writes that the “Presbyterian missionaries were in fact accountable to no one” (232). Although it is true that it is hard to exercise close control of missionaries on the field, in this case her statement is almost entirely false. Obviously, she does not understand how mission agencies, or at least the PCA’s Mission to the World, operate. There are, in fact, several ways by which missionaries are held accountable.

First, they are accountable to their own team of fellow missionaries. As associate members of the WCP, they could be expelled by a simple vote. They could exercise influence in the church or the presbytery only by moral character, friendship, and persuasion.

Additionally, they are accountable to their sending organization, in this case the Mission to the World of the PCA. In one major case, when a fellow missionary criticized another, he was invited to take the case to the highest level of MTW leadership. After a thorough review, his accusations were thrown out as completely unfounded. (Indeed, the entire paragraph is replete with unsubstantiated generalizations dressed up in fancy terms like “information asymmetry.”)

Lest one think that MTW always looks the other way when its missionaries are faced with serious allegations of misconduct, it is important to note that in recent years the mission

organization has recalled several of its workers from the field after reviewing the charges. This is not a rubber-stamp process.

Ma states that the missionaries connected with the PCA brought foreign money to the church. This contradicts not only Yi Wang's policy of not receiving foreign funding, as noted on page 204, but also the policy of MTW not to provide money to local churches. She speaks vaguely of tightening up on "overseas funds transfer, education resources and foreigners' participation," (170) but her footnote only references a general statement by the China Partnership on how to respond to the new religious regulations in China. It gives no support to the false assertion that foreign missionaries brought foreign money to ERCC.

How many more of her notes would lead down a similar blind alley?

Careful comparison of her criticisms of the writings of Ian Johnson with the actual texts reveals a similar pattern of misquoting, taking sentences out of context, hiding essential information contained in the documents she discusses, confusing chronology, and outright contradiction of plain statements in those writings. There are at least a dozen examples of this kind of falsification.

For example: She claims that Ian Johnson relied on only one source, but the text and notes of his book name at least six persons whom he interviewed and show that he spoke to others who attended church services.

Ma criticizes Johnson for praising Yi Wang but neglects to say that he also recorded criticisms of him. She gives the impression that he overlooked the splits within the church, while failing to point out that the major conflicts arose after the publication of *The Souls of China*. Indeed, the entire section of her book criticizing foreign media coverage of China's house churches, though containing a few accurate observations, is marred by so many inconsistencies, misrepresentations, and factual errors that one wonders what was animating this attack on journalists.

For more examples of errors and (apparently) deliberate misquotation and omission, some of them from documents in Chinese, see the Amazon book review referenced earlier.

Ma claims that the writer of the review and other critics had not read her book, but at least this review seems to reflect a careful study of *Religious Entrepreneurism*.

These tactics are so egregious, blatant, and numerous that they could only have been intentional and deliberate. That is, they go beyond the general sloppiness of much of Ma's reporting and seem designed only to advance her narrative and support her case.

There are other errors that could easily have been avoided by more careful writing and closer editing. These include so many mistakes of grammar and English usage that I had to stop marking them in my copy. There are at least hundreds of these in what claims to be a scholarly book published by a renowned academic press. In addition, knowledgeable people have said that her account includes numerous errors of chronology. Some of these are relatively minor, but

others, involving both the sequence of events in the conflicts narrated and her harsh attack on Ian Johnson's writings, make a difference.

Ma's Response to Criticism

In the interview referenced earlier, Ma fiercely attacked the writer of the critical review at Amazon Books cited above. She claims that the writer, who calls himself "Deng," is clearly writing anonymously. That may be true. The real question is whether the writer's charges are accurate. All the accusations are based on a close reading of her book and from public documents. Furthermore, many of the sources quoted by Ma are also anonymous. People can have various reasons, including the fear of public denunciation by a skilled polemicist, for withholding their names. That may be why some of the people whom I interviewed did not want their names revealed. They have seen how she responded to the critical review referenced earlier.

Inconsistencies

In response to criticism that she revealed the names of people, Ma emphasized her reliance on public documents and the right to speak openly about public people who are public persons, but she also relied heavily on private, and essentially anonymous, interviews as part of her research method.

Ma claims that the WCP "became the extension of his personal will" (216). How, then, could the presbytery condemn Yi Wang for his actions? In fact, WCP often disagreed with Yi Wang.

She roundly excoriates Western journalists, including (by implication) Ian Johnson, for not being "embedded" in the Chinese context, and therefore not being able to understand the true situation. But she was not "embedded" either. As noted earlier, though she had lived in Chengdu for a few months in previous years, she didn't live in Chengdu or attend Early Rain Church during the period when the conflict that she describes took place. Johnson, on the other hand, spent several months in the city and in the church.

She criticizes Ian Johnson for purportedly relying on only one pro- Yi Wang source, but as noted above, she draws most of her description of the trial of Huasheng Wang from only one anti-Yi Wang source. As the notes to Johnson's book *The Souls of China*, make clear, he interviewed a variety of people with a variety of viewpoints.

She repeatedly characterizes Johnson as a "journalist," with the implied contrast to herself as a "scholar," but she ignores the academic nature of his work, *The Souls of China*, which meets the highest standards of scholarship. The Wikipedia article on him states that "his reporting from China was also honored in 2001 by the Overseas Press Club and the Society of Professional Journalists. In 2017 he won Stanford University's Shorenstein Prize for his body of work covering Asia. In 2019 he won the American Academy of Religion's 'best in-depth newswriting' award." He is not just any "journalist," as Ma implies.

Ma calls Johnson an American, which is only half true. Furthermore, as his bio shows, Johnson was born and brought up in Canada, where he is also a citizen, and he has spent very little of his

life in the United States. He lived in China for twenty years, as Ma could have known from public documents, and should have said.

After quoting from one of Yi Wang's prayers, she writes that he "was skilled at using parallel texts to set off a poetic grand discourse that has little internal logic" (73). Again, this statement is partly true, in that Wang is a prolific poet whose sermons did not necessarily follow the usual pattern of biblical exegesis taught in the West. On the other hand, the quote she adduces as evidence of having "little internal logic" does not illustrate her point. More seriously, as I have tried to show, her own book lacks internal logic at key points.

For example: the long and detailed narrative Ma included from the perspective of a woman who had allegedly been raped by an elder in the ERC (187-190). This account is meant to show that Qiang Peng and his wife engaged in a cover-up of the incident. But Ma also records Peng's offer to take the matter to the presbytery court. If that is true, how can we believe that he was deliberately trying to cover up the incident, as she repeatedly charges in her book?

Lack of Nuance

Li Ma says she wanted to present a nuanced account of the rise and fall of ERC and its controversial pastor Yi Wang. Sadly, the result is anything but subtle and balanced. Instead, Yi Wang comes across, as I said earlier, as obsessed with personal power and fame. Though admittedly eloquent in speech and writing, and skilled in deploying various media to fashion a positive public image, Wang is portrayed as a flat, two-dimensional figure.

She does admit that he has a happy marriage, but she does not seem to wonder how such a thoroughly unscrupulous and self-seeking man could retain the love and loyalty of his wife. Ma does not seem to entertain the possibility that at any point he could have been motivated by a desire for God's glory, the healthy growth of the church in China, or the good of Chinese society.

In contrast, one person said to me, "I've known Wang Yi for fifteen years. I have worked with many Chinese pastors, but none has possessed as much integrity as he" (telephone conversation with the writer, September 22, 2019). He continued, "Wang is a very complex and complicated person, but Ma turns him into someone else." Another long-time associate said, "He made mistakes, for sure, but his heart was pure."

Bias

Although no historical narrative can be fully objective, sometimes an author's biases may exercise an undue impact upon the recitation and interpretation of the facts.

Li Ma clearly does not agree with the traditional views of the role of women in the church. She labels these as "anachronistic doctrines" (12). That is her right, of course. But the PCA Book of Church Order limits the offices of elder and deacon to men. This position was almost universally held in Christian churches until very recently. It is still the rule among Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and many theologically conservative Protestant denominations. Proponents of this view base their position on a number of biblical texts that seem to deny certain offices and activities – such as preaching from the pulpit – to women.

Ma also does not agree with traditional views of the role of women in the home. These ideas, sometimes called “complementarian” now, were the norm in most societies and Christian churches until very recently and were also based upon biblical texts. Li Ma is clearly what would now be called an “egalitarian.” She thus objects strongly to the increasingly strict positions and policies of Yi Wang and ERC reflecting traditional beliefs. She writes about this development in a pejorative style that reflects her bias.

Ma says that Huasheng Wang never received a reply from the PCA to his letter about his trial. This charge is not true; the assistant stated that the clerk of the PCA did respond. I have seen a copy of this reply.

Accurate Reporting?

By now, the reader will understand why I prefaced several statements in the earlier part of this review with, “if accurately reported.” I cannot check all her assertions, some of which seem plausible to me. On the other hand, she makes so many false statements, big and small, that I cannot accept even the most plausible charge or apparent quotation as necessarily reflective of the facts.

Timing of Publication

A number of people have wondered why this book was published while Yi Wang was under arrest on charges of a capital crime. Li Ma has replied, “This book took more than ten years to come out. The publisher had the right to decide when it is released.” That statement is very misleading. Her research may have taken ten years, but the book was submitted to the publisher after Yi Wang had been arrested. Her claim not to have had any control over the timing of its publication is not fully persuasive. In fact, from the time of its submission to publication, it was only a few months. The book came out in the spring of 2019, which is very, very fast. Perhaps that is why it shows so many signs of haste and lack of editing and proofreading.

One of the leading Chinese authorities on the church in China said of this book:

In fact, I couldn't and still cannot understand why she seemed to have rushed to get the book out, before the end of the sixth month of Wang Yi's secret detention (secret detention usually has a maximum length of six months, then the case has to be moved from the police bureau to the prosecutors' bureau. But the Wang Yi case is not usual, so he has been held in a secret place for almost ten months by now without access by his family or lawyers). The timing of the book's release and the severe accusations of Wang Yi and other church leaders in the book made me wonder whether she intentionally wanted the book to be used to facilitate the Chinese authorities' prosecution of Pastor Wang Yi. If this is the intention, it is a serious violation of research ethics. In the US, prison inmates are treated as a vulnerable population and there are extra requirements for human subject protection measures when applying to study them. In short, I have serious concerns about the research ethics of this book (Personal correspondence with the writer. October 3, 2019).

Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid, who has known Yi Wang for many years, says the book is “very unbalanced. Too speculative. Amid severe persecution against Wang Yi and the church, for Ma Li’s book to be released with some serious charges without giving the accused an opportunity to rebuttal is very irresponsible too.”

A Scholarly Book?

The authority on Christianity in China quoted in the section above wrote to me that he (after reading *Religious Entrepreneurism*):

. . . was totally surprised by Ma Li’s new book. I’m very disappointed, to say the least. . . . I read it from cover to cover . . . in the beginning of July. Honestly, I don’t see much scholarly value or Christian value or any value in this book. There is so much hearsay about Wang Yi and the Early Rain Church in social media already, and the book does nothing but amplify some of the hearsay; it used one-sided interviews and made a biased interpretation of events. A serious researcher should have taken the time and done a much more careful job in terms of research, should have tried hard to hear and understand all parties in church conflicts. In short, in my view, this is not a scholarly book.

A person very close to the situation wrote to me:

Ma Li could have done everyone a great service by interviewing both sides of the split and giving a balanced, detailed account of some of the key issues alongside a thoughtful analysis. Instead, she literally ignores, discredits and even slanders everyone in the Wang Yi “camp” including locals, missionaries and respected journalists. I know of one well respected elderly woman from the non-Wang Yi “camp” that stated, “Ma Li’s knowledge of the situation is superficial, and her book is nonsense” (personal correspondence with the writer, August 16, 2019).

When you consider the other flaws mentioned earlier, including misuse of published sources; the pejorative language; plethora of errors, some based on ignorance but others obviously preventable; violation of journalistic ethics concerning vulnerable persons; countless mistakes of grammar and English usage – plus an index that is very thin, sparse, and very incomplete – many will conclude that *Religious Entrepreneurism* fails substantially as a purportedly scholarly and academic work. The high price of \$46 (from Amazon; the publisher charges more) does not seem justified.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, *Religious Entrepreneurism* contains much useful information and many helpful insights. It employs a methodology that, if applied consistently, could have resulted in a work of lasting value.

Instead, the shortcomings of the book greatly outnumber and outweigh its strengths. It is fundamentally flawed in so many ways that it must be read with extreme caution.

A History of Christianity in Asia: Volume I, Beginnings to 1500

by Samuel Hugh Moffett

Moffett, Samuel Hugh. *A History of Christianity in Asia. Volume I: Beginnings to 1500*. 2nd rev. ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

Like the review of Volume II, this one will focus on the sections dealing with Christianity in China.

At the outset, we should note Moffett's fluent, almost racy, style that makes the book hard to put down, even if you are trying to limit your reading to the Chinese sections. Open its pages at your own risk!

Nestorian Christianity

Like others in the past few decades, Moffett concludes that Nestorius did not, as he was falsely charged, deny the deity of Christ, nor did he teach the existence of two "persons" in Christ, as charged by his arch-enemy, Cyril of Alexandria. He fell victim to political jealousy, his own theological vagueness, and popular outrage against his attempt to discourage the use of the term "Mother of God" to refer to Mary.

Nevertheless, his later followers, angry at the unfair treatment meted out to them by the victors in Constantinople, probably were "Nestorians" in the usual sense, emphasizing the full humanity of Christ without denying his deity. They would also have followed the practice of the Antiochene school of biblical interpretation, focusing on the plain, literal, and historical sense of the text rather than the allegorical approach favored by Origen and those who followed him in the West.

Moffett traces the sad history of the separation of the church in Persia (later to be called Nestorian) from that in the West and the unremitting internal theological wrangling and nepotism that split its ranks. What surprises us most, therefore, is that this church became such a potent missionary force in Asia.

Moffett describes for us what contributed to the later success of Nestorian missions among the Chinese:

Its glad acceptance of hardships for the cause of Christ, its full-rounded blend of spiritual and practical missionary methods – evangelism, education, and agriculture – and its compassion for captives combined with evangelistic concern for captors does much to explain the almost unbelievable successes of Nestorian expansion across Asia in the next two centuries (209).

To these successes we now turn.

The First Christian Mission to China

The “Nestorian Monument,” dated 781 and discovered only in 1623, alerted the world to the arrival of missionaries in China from Persia in 635. The great Alopen was received warmly by the Tang Emperor T’ai-tsung, who practiced religious toleration throughout his reign. A man of learning and the arts, he was happy to learn that Alopen’s was a religion of the book. He introduced him to the vast imperial library and ordered him to begin the translation of Christian scriptures into Chinese.

The emperor ordered the construction of a Christian church in the capital from his own treasury, as he had done for Buddhist and Taoist temples. His son, at first also favorable to the Nestorians, began to favor Buddhism under the influence of his wife, who was later known as the infamous Empress Wu. This thoroughly evil woman later encouraged a Buddhist-led persecution of Christians, the first of many to come in the following centuries.

The Arab conquest of Persia did not at first hinder the growth of Christianity in China, for the caliphs tolerated Nestorians, even using some of them as emissaries and interpreters. Many more traveled on the Silk Road to and from China, and Nestorianism flourished with imperial favor – or at least the protection of powerful patrons. Moffett introduces us to fascinating and noble persons, like Issu, the Nestorian priest and high-ranking general and Adam, “a bishop and missionary-scholar so famed for his knowledge of Chinese language and literature that even Buddhist missionaries came to him for help in translating their own sacred books” (300).

Indeed, Adam may have “seeded Christian ideas into the variations of northern Buddhist belief as it developed in Japan” by assisting Japanese translators of Buddhist sutras. Among Adam’s own translations were some parts of the Bible: “the Gospels and portions of the book of Acts, Paul’s Epistles, the Psalter, and [perhaps], parts of the Pentateuch and Isaiah” (301).

Nestorian Christianity virtually disappeared from China by 980. The question is, why? Moffett adduces several possible causes:

- Persecution: Nestorians were caught in the wave of officially inspired persecution of all “foreign” religions, especially Buddhism, that resulted from “a rising tide of xenophobia and sectarian strife” that began in 840 and reoccurred intermittently thereafter (303).
- Syncretism, or “watering down the faith:” Examining all available evidence, he finds that there is no real “Nestorian” heresy in the documents which were translated into Chinese. Further, all the major tenets of orthodox Christian faith are included in these same documents. Still, Moffett finds that “some weight must be given to the charges of syncretism leveled against T’ang Christianity” (301). To allow readers to decide for themselves, he includes the introduction to the Nestorian Monument as an appendix, noting in italics terms that seem to come from Buddhist, Taoist, or Confucian writing. At the very least, we can see that some important Christian ideas are left out, and many words and phrases are used to communicate Christian ideas.

In other words, Moffet believes that the Nestorians neither compromised the faith as much as they have been criticized, nor communicated it with as much biblical clarity and precision as perhaps they could have.

- Foreignness: The Nestorian churches seem to have been composed mostly of people with Syriac names or of tribes from the outlying borderlands, and almost all their priests were Persian, not Chinese.
- Lack of social influence: Furthermore, “the social and cultural level of the church was inferior to that of China’s intellectual and political leadership and therefore failed to promise effective improvement for the life of the masses” (435).
- Reliance on the emperor: Moffett thinks that “the decisive factor... was the fall of an imperial house on which the church had too long relied for its patronage and protection. Dependence on government is a dangerous and uncertain foundation for Christian survival” (313).

The Mongols and the Recovery of Asian Christianity

In a truly remarkable turn of events, Ghenghis Khan, who founded an empire that conquered much of the known world, including China, married one of three Christian sisters from a tribe that had been evangelized by the Nestorians.² The other sisters married two of his sons, and one of those sisters became “the Christian mother of three imperial sons, an emperor (Great Khan) of the Mongols, an emperor of China,” and an emperor of Persia.

The Mongol conquest produced a 140-year Pax Mongolica over a huge empire that enabled free travel from Europe to Korea. This had huge consequences for Christianity in China. During this time, the first Franciscan missionaries came to China.

Reeling from the shock of the horrible slaughters inflicted by the Mongols on Eastern Europe, Pope Innocent IV sent Franciscan monks on a twofold assignment: to dissuade the Golden Horde from attacking the rest of Europe and to preach the Gospel. He had hopes of an alliance with the Mongols that would outflank the Muslims.

After a tortuous journey, the pope’s emissary finally reached the camp of the Great Khan and was able to present the pope’s letter. While there, he was “astounded to see himself surrounded by Nestorian Christians.” The Khan’s chilling reply “shocked the pope but it did not stop the missionaries” (409.) For the next hundred years, they continued to brave the dangerous and arduous journey. William of Rubrick arrived in 1253 to find that a Nestorian Christian Kerait princess, Sorhaktani, was the mother of the fourth Great Khan, and that other Nestorians held high positions in the court and the army.

² For a fascinating account of how the Nestorians had influenced these border tribes, and thus eventually the Mongols, see *Steppe By Step*, by Hugh Kemp.

William did not think much of the spirituality of the Nestorians whom he met, though those at the court were more biblically literate than the ones he had seen among the Uighurs. Still, they were superstitious, practiced sorcery and participated in other non-Christian practices, and were guilty of widespread and gross debauchery and immorality. His debate with Buddhists and Muslims produced as little fruit as his extraordinary interview with the Great Khan, but he was able to baptize six Christian captives in the Mongol camp.

Moffett cites much evidence to support the claim of “the existence of a fairly widespread presence at the Mongol court and irregularly throughout the empire, most notably in the northwest and east” (445). In the dynastic rivalries that roiled the Mongol realms, however, the Christians always lost out, and their connection with defeated rebels did not strengthen their hand with the victors.

Christianity During the Rule of Kublai Khan

The two Polo brothers, with son and nephew Marco along, were the first Europeans to reach China proper. Kublai Khan, already ruler of much of the former Sung territories, received them kindly and sent them back to Rome with a letter asking the pope to send one hundred missionaries. None returned with the Polos, and the first Catholic mission arrived in 1294, after the death of Kublai. The Yuan dynasty was already waning.

Like others before them, the Italians found Nestorian communities in various parts of China. Even more amazing to them was the discovery of a Christian “kingdom” just north of the Great Wall. In fact, it was only a province, but the ruler was Prince George, an Ongut with the highest connections with the Khans by marriage. A Nestorian, he became a Roman Catholic after meeting missionaries sent by Rome.

Kublai Khan himself inclined toward Tibetan Buddhism, but tolerated Islam, Christianity, and Confucianism. Suspicious of Chinese, he governed through intermediaries, including powerful Nestorian Christian advisors.³

The combination of a rebellion by a Christian prince and the influence of Kublai’s Buddhist wife and a Buddhist advisor and teacher led to his strong support of Buddhism and its rapid spread in China. For the first time, it was no longer perceived as a foreign import. Moffett speculates about what a victory by the Christian prince might have done for the faith, noting that political defeat sometimes closes the door irrevocably.

John of Montecorvino and the Roman Catholics

The first Roman Catholic missionary to reach China (1294), John enjoyed the favor of Prince George, though he had to endure the fierce opposition of Nestorians. He was later joined by others sent out by the pope, and together they baptized and educated many. (A church was given to them by an Armenian Orthodox woman in Beijing, a sign of the presence of Christians other

³ Moffett takes at face value Marco Polo’s claim that he was also privy to the Khan, despite the skepticism of other scholars such as Jonathan Spence. See Chapter One in *The Chan’s Great Continent*.

than the Nestorians in China.) Alas, those baptized usually not did walk in the way of Christ, according to the missionaries' reports.

The Second Disappearance of the Church in China

When the Mongol dynasty fell in China, all Chinese churches – Nestorian, Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Jacobite – disappeared. Missionaries stopped coming. Mongol Christians assimilated to Chinese ways.

As the Mongol rule weakened, Chinese rose in rebellion and regained mastery of their country. “China as it has so often done, turned away from the world and turned in upon itself. The new China was to be isolationist, nationalist, and orthodox Confucian... To the Chinese, Christianity appeared as a foreign religion protected and supported by a foreign [Mongol] government. Catholic missions gave the impression of being even more foreign than the Nestorians, ...for they received far more visible support from outside China” (474).

The result: “Without foreign support a church that had become dependent upon it withered away” without even a memory of its existence (475).

Finally, the fierce Tamerlane (1336-1405) exterminated Christians (indiscriminately with others) by the hundreds of thousands as he cut a swath of blood and fire through much of Asia in a grand attempt to establish his empire. When his empire, too, collapsed, “[a]ll Asia north of the Himalayas was once more either Muslim or Chinese. If there were any Christian left, here and there, no one noticed them” (488).

Moffett's lively style, clear presentation, grasp of the grand sweep of both secular and Christian history, depth of research, and colorful details make this a history well worth reading.

A History of Christianity in Asia: Volume II, 1500-1900

by Samuel Hugh Moffett

Moffett, Samuel Hugh. *A History of Christianity in Asia: Volume II, 1500-1900*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.

Only the sections on the growth of Christianity among the Chinese will be discussed.

Samuel Moffett has presented us with a work that is comprehensive, yet concise; lucid, yet lively; balanced and yet not totally without an occasional, but mostly-controlled, bias; incisive, yet irenic – not a small achievement in a history of this scope!

Volume II begins with the arrival of the Jesuits in Macau and brings us up to the beginning of the immense changes that took place in the 20th century. (A third volume is in preparation by a younger scholar, Scott Sunquist, editor of the *Dictionary of Asian Christianity*.)

Chapter 5 (“Once More to China: ‘Missionaries and Mandarins’”) relates the rise and fall of the second major Roman Catholic attempt to reach China. The author tells how the early Jesuits, especially the great Matteo Ricci, won the esteem and the ear of China’s mandarins. Years of hard work, mastery of the Chinese classics, immense knowledge of Western science – all these led to the conversion of high-ranking Chinese scholars and even the admiration of more than one emperor.

Moffett shows his balance by including the stories of three Chinese believers, “the three pillars of the Chinese Church,” and by giving both sides a fair hearing as he reviews for us the long and sometimes bitter “rites controversy” that ultimately led to the expulsion of all Roman Catholic missionaries from China.

The issues, then as now, are complex. Moffett does his best to show why the Jesuits believed that the traditional ancestor ceremonies were merely expression of respect, not worship, and why the Dominicans, Franciscans, and several popes thought they constituted idolatry. He does seem to favor the Jesuits a bit, however, as did the Emperor, and as do most later Chinese and Western commentators, with some exceptions, including this writer!

(Although the Emperor and his eminent scholars probably did consider bowing to pictures of ancestors merely a mark of respect, the common people – among whom the Jesuits’ accusers lived and worked – clearly regarded them as acts of worship to departed spirits. The same distinction may be found today in modern Taiwan, where the Roman Catholic Church now allows acts of reverence (“worship?”) toward ancestors.)

Chapter 10 includes a section on the Dutch in Taiwan (“Formosa: Gateway to China? 1642-1661”), which tells how Dutch missionaries made a substantial impact upon the aboriginal tribesmen whom they found in the countryside. That same group welcomed Presbyterian missionaries in the 19th century, and they now comprise a large section of the Taiwan Presbyterian Church.

Chapter 13, “The Door to China Opens Again (1807–1860),” begins with the coming of Robert Morrison to China and ends with the failure, and religious impact, of the Taiping Rebellion.

Once again, Moffett displays critical charity as he evaluates the monumental achievements of the early pioneer Protestant missionaries, especially Morrison, whose translation of the Bible laid the foundation for all subsequent renditions. He notes both the involvement of some missionaries with the opium trade (Morrison later worked for the East India Company and Gützlaff rode on Company ships – the only ones available) and their firm and vocal opposition to it.

As with the earlier Jesuit effort, Chinese converts played an essential role in the spread of the gospel, and the intrepid Liang Fa and others receive their due from the author (as they usually did from their spiritual fathers, despite later neglect in missionary reports).

The Chinese will never forget – or allow others to forget – that the gospel came with the gunboats; this sad fact is given ample treatment by Moffett, who acknowledges both the burden of this heritage and the obvious implication of some of the missionaries in European imperialism. At the same time, he records how the “opening” of China at the point of the bayonet was seen as the work of God allowing many to hear the saving news of Christ despite government opposition.

The leader of the Taiping Rebellion, Hong Xiuquan, has been aptly called one of the most interesting megalomaniacs in Chinese history. His own writings, originally influenced by a book written by Liang Fa, constitute “theological anarchy, an explosive mix of Bible truth, Chinese mythological fantasy, and imperial egocentricity” (299; this being a good example of Moffett’s sometimes racy style). The rebellion began and ended in blood and fire, the smoke of which can still be seen and smelled.

Moffett concludes his survey of Christianity in China in Chapter 22: “China’s Christians at Empire’s End (1860-1900).” As always, he covers a lot of ground quickly without being unhorsed or failing to observe lovely flowers along the way. In forty pages, he tells the story of Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission; the “Roman Catholic Recovery;” the increasing national influence of Protestants, especially those of the more “liberal” variety; the growth of a truly Chinese church; and the “Chinese Backlash,” which culminated in the horrors of the Boxer Rebellion.

A few quick notes:

Taylor’s contribution was truly monumental and receives the evaluation which it deserves. Drawing heavily on A.J. Broomhall’s seven-volume biography (see my review), Moffett

confirms earlier judgments of Taylor's aims and his accomplishment. Like the other missionaries, Taylor and his followers relied heavily on Chinese helpers. He engaged in evangelism but sought also to train converts and establish an indigenous church. Firmly evangelical, he furthered ecumenical cooperation at every turn. While calling for a thousand men to go to China, he sent more women than men and employed them in pioneer evangelism.

Roman Catholics rebounded from earlier losses, but did not grow as fast as the Protestants, being greatly hampered by their association with the French government, which used its power to guarantee special rights for Catholic converts, thus arousing the ire of nationalistic Chinese.

Timothy Richard receives special attention, as an immensely influential – Moffett claims he was the most famous – missionary. His turn from early evangelism to later immersion first in social work and then in education is well known, but Moffett – always seeking balance and peace – affirms that Richard never forsook his childhood faith. According to the author, he and Taylor were not as different as is usually pictured.

Given the modern scholarly bias in favor of Richard – and against Taylor – I would question whether charity has trumped fact in this treatment of the two. Though Taylor and his colleagues definitely threw themselves into famine relief and medical work as much as anyone, their commitment to the gospel was never in doubt, as was Richard's. Still, Moffett carefully examines the charge of syncretism leveled at Richard, and he finds it unconvincing.

I greatly appreciated the fine balance shown by Moffett in his discussion of the more “evangelical” missionaries and those convinced of the usefulness of literature, education, and social transformation from the top down. He observes that “the priority given to evangelism and church growth by conversion ... proved to have important social consequences” (473). On the other hand, he highlights the abiding relevance of Richard's “effective church planting method.” Things are not always as black-and-white as they seem.

In a marvelous blend of conciseness and concrete detail, including touching stories, Moffett takes us to the end of the century when the Christian message was beginning to permeate China, with momentous consequences for the coming convulsions of the 20th century.

Although I am embarrassed to confess that I have not read the rest of this book, I am not ashamed to recommend it on the basis of the masterful survey it gives of the beginning of the modern era in Chinese Christian history.

A History of Christian Missions

by Stephen Neill

Part I

Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christian Missions*. 2nd rev. ed. Edited by Owen Chadwick. Vol. 6. *Penguin History of the Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1986.

Long considered a standard work, this revised edition was brought up to date by Owen Chadwick according to the “projected intentions” of the author. I confess that I have not read it until now, perhaps because I thought it might be too sketchy or antiquated to be of use. How wrong I was! For several reasons, I now consider Stephen Neill’s book to be essential reading for all teachers, students, and practitioners of Christian missions.⁴

First, let us note the word “Missions.” Scholars have largely abandoned this term, deciding to replace it with “Mission,” as more faithful to the truth that cross-cultural missions are but one aspect of the God-given and God-centered “mission” of the church, itself an outworking of the *missio Dei* – the mission of God.

Recently, however, missiologists have seen the need to revive the venerable use of “missions” to highlight the distinct necessity and nature of intentionally taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to people of all ethno-linguistic groups – the new understanding of “nations” – by Christians who dare to leave “home” and go to “the other” out of love for God and the people he has created.⁵

To be sure, drastic changes have radically altered the landscape of “missions” since even the revised edition of Neill’s classic history. We now talk about “from all places to all places,” since global migration and the collapse of Western Christendom, among other forces, have shifted the center of Christianity from the West to the Global South, and countries that formerly received missionaries now send them out by the thousands.⁶ The last few pages of this history make note of these great transitions, which were still in their infancy at the time of writing, but the book as a whole concentrates on the previous eras of worldwide missions.

Why, then, must we still turn to the work of a man who was a missionary in the mid-twentieth century? In this review I can only list and briefly discuss a few of the merits of *A History of Christian Missions* and urge you to read this classic yourself. You won’t be disappointed.

⁴ For convenience, I shall refer to the author as Stephen Neill, since Owen Chadwick made his revisions along the lines laid down by Neill, and since Neill is listed as the author on the cover and in bibliographies and catalogues.

⁵ See, for example, A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010); John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

⁶ “Global South” refers not only to countries in the Southern Hemisphere, but also to newer centers of Christianity like China and South Korea.

Strengths

This one-volume history of Christian missions is, in one sense, *comprehensive*. At 478 pages, its length exceeds that of similar surveys, such as Dana Robert's *Christian Mission* (177 pages), Lamin Sanneh's *Disciples of All Nations* (287 pages), and Edward Smither's *Christian Mission: A Concise Global History* (200 pages), and *Encountering the History of Missions*, by John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher (362 pages).

Neill sought to give the main facts about history of missions in a balanced way, and he mainly accomplished this goal. Proceeding chronologically, he discusses evangelism and church planting in virtually all parts of the world. He includes treatments of early church missionaries, the Syrian Church's far-flung initiatives (using the old name Nestorian), Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestant missions, and some of the new outreaches by independent churches like the African independent churches.

His desire to be comprehensive did not lead Neill into the trap of a – necessarily futile – attempt to write an exhaustive history. He consciously selected what were the key men, movements, and moments in the 2,000 years since Christ commanded his disciples to take the gospel to the whole world.

Fair and frank: Stephen Neill, though an Anglican bishop, largely succeeded in presenting the achievements of those from other Christian traditions with fairness and objectivity. Nor does he neglect to point out the faults and failings of even the greatest missionaries, but he does so in a spirit of gentle charity.

Highly readable: Neill's grandparents and parents had served as missionaries in India, bequeathing to him an insider's knowledge of missionary life and work, which he augmented by serving in India with the Church Missionary Society for twenty years. He was also the beneficiary of the best English education, to include a brilliant career at Cambridge University, where he served as a tutor before going to India. He wrote as, perhaps, only someone from that educational background could: with erudition, grace, wit, and elegance. In other words, his narrative reads like a story rather than a mere chronicle.

Themes and highlights

Part One: From the beginnings to 1800

Chapter 1: A Faith for the World

Neill starts with the fundamental fact of “universalism” in the Old Testament, based not only on the creation of all mankind by one God but also on clear declarations throughout the Old Testament of God's will to save people of all nations. Though the early Christians in Jerusalem did not immediately see the worldwide implications of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, within a generation they realized that “the New Israel, like the old, was destined to have its history” and that “the life of the Church is to be not a frenzied proclamation because the time is short, but a steady programme of expansion throughout the world, yet with an unflinching sense

of urgency because for each man any and every moment may prove to be the crucial time of decision” (20).

Largely because of the ministry of Paul, Christians began to see that “the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles is an essential part of the plan of God” (20), and that “the great consummation” cannot come “until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in” (21). Since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., “the Christian Church has never had one local centre; it has learned to look only to the living presence of the Lord within itself,” so that every Christian now knows that “he belongs to the wandering people of God, who here have no continuing city” (21).

From the first pages, therefore, Neill built his *History* on a solid biblical foundation and laid down the essential lines of his fast-paced and wide-ranging narrative.

He ends the first chapter with the observation that “every Christian was a missionary. . . [F]ew, if any, of the great Churches were really founded by apostles. . . . That was the greatest glory of the Church of those days. The Church was the body of Christ, indwelt by his Spirit; and what Christ had begun to do, that the church would continue to do, through all the days and unto the uttermost parts of the earth until is unpredictable but certain coming” (22-23).

Chapter 2: The Conquest of the Roman World, A.D. 100-500

In the early days, Jewish synagogues could be found in almost every city, and they were attended also by “God-fearers,” Gentiles who were already interested in the God of the Old Testament. “It was the presence of this prepared elite that differentiated the missions of the apostolic age from every subsequent time, and makes comparison almost impossible” (25).

After tracing the rapid spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire during its first three hundred years, Neill states some of the possible causes of this remarkable phenomenon: “First and foremost we must reckon with the burning conviction by which a great number of the earliest Christians were possessed.” Many renounced everything to take the gospel to the ends of the world, with the “assurance that in face of very obstacle men can be won and must be won for Christ” (35). They knew that they had a message much needed, and often welcomed, in the world at that time.

“Thirdly, the new Christian communities commended themselves by the evident purity of their lives . . . In those days to be a Christian meant something” (36). They belonged to a community with strong bonds of love and arms open wide to people of all classes. They shared their goods with the poor in an “elaborate development of charitable service, especially to those within the fellowship” (37).

“Finally, we must consider the effect of the persecution of the Christians on the popular opinion about them.” Though persecution was sporadic, “martyrdom could be attended by the utmost possible publicity. . . . There is no doubt that that the attitude of the martyrs, and particularly of the young women who suffered along with the men, made a deep impression . . . “what we find is calm, dignified, decorous behaviour, cool courage in the face of torment, courtesy towards enemies, and a joyful acceptance of suffering as the way appoint by the Lord to lead to his heavenly kingdom” (38).

By the year 300, perhaps ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire was Christian. This church by then then “gathered into itself almost all that was vital in the thought and creativity of the last phase of the life of the ancient world,” creating a Christian literature of surpassing elegance and persuasive power (40).

After Constantine declared Christianity to be legal, “the favourable attitude of the emperor produced a complete change in the situation of the Christian Church. . . . Crowds pressed into it, and the Church was in danger of being submerged under the flood of new believers . . . Christianity was fashionable. . . . In all this there were great dangers. Faith became superficial and was identified with the acceptance of dogmatic teachings rather than with a radical change of inner being. As the Church became rich, bishoprics became objects of contention rather than instruments of humble service. . . . In a new and dangerous fashion, the world entered into the Church” (41).

At the same time, we must recognize several lasting contributions of the early church, especially the clarification of Christian doctrine through the great councils from Nicea (325) to Chalcedon (451), and the creation of the “great classical liturgies” (42). These were foundational and have set the tone of much of Christianity since then, until the spread of non-liturgical Protestantism, including charismatic and Pentecostal churches, in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Neill mentions another, much more problematic, development: “The synthesis between Christian faith and the ancient languages and culture was brought to completion” (41). No doubt, the mastery of Greek and Latin by prominent church leaders greatly assisted the spread of the faith among intellectuals. On the other hand, the “synthesis” of which Neill wrote has become a model, as it were, for other attempts to “synthesize” biblical Christianity with local cultures, a project which has almost universally led to toxic compromise and even syncretism. This will be another major theme in later chapters.

To his great credit, and anticipating recent emphases upon World Christianity, Neill expands his narrative beyond the Roman Empire to discuss the spread of the gospel to Edessa in the “little country of Osrhoene,” where the king accepted the new religion. The emergence of a church there showed that “the Gospel early spread eastwards from Palestine into the region of Mesopotamia; that Edessa was one of the great Christian centres in that region; and that the language of that area was Syriac” (43).

Without lending his authority to the venerable tradition that Thomas, one of the Twelve, traveled as far as India and planted the church known by his name, Neill presents the evidence and declares that there is nothing impossible about this tradition. He then traces the rise of the church in Ethiopia in Africa and then Armenia in Asia Minor. “If Osrhoene was the first Christian kingdom, the second was undoubtedly Armenia” (47). “This is the first case known to us in which the conversion of a king was the first step in the conversion of a whole country. . . . Secondly, from the start the Church was associated with the language and the thought of the people,” when a scholar invented a new alphabet for them and participated in the translation of the New Testament into Armenian. “The close identification of race, language, culture, religion,

and political organization as given to Armenian Christianity an extraordinary resilience and pertinacity” (48).

Neill skillfully retells the well-known stories of the conversion of Ireland through the pioneer work of Patrick, and that of the Franks when their king, Clovis, was baptized in 496. Alas, this mass accession of the wild Franks helped to sow the seeds of the fundamental weaknesses of Western European Christianity, for “what they brought in was fierce untempered natures, with an inveterate tendency to brutality and excess” (52).

By the year 500 the Christian church had helped to civilize the Western world, at least to some degree; “defined the limits of the Scriptures, . . . settled many questions of doctrine, . . . developed a system of worship, . . . and through the Councils . . . had developed a marvellous instrument for the expression and the maintenance of Christian unity. . . . Christians in every part of the world felt themselves to be one with all other Christians” (52)

I have quoted this section at length because it lays out many of the principal themes of the rest of the book: Zealous evangelism and devotion to Christ; growth in numbers; persecution; recognition by, and often alliance with, political rulers, followed by superficiality, worldliness, and even corruption.

Chapter 3: The Dark Age, 500-1000

During this period, the Christian Church was engaged in two conflicts: “the struggle with the barbarians, and the unending battle with Islam” (53).

As for the first, in brief: Some were “converted” *en masse*, usually through the influence of kings, so “for five hundred years the major task of the Western Church was that of wrestling with the barbarians and with barbarism in the effort to make their conversions something more than nominal” (53-54). By the end of this period, “the greater part of this task had been at least outwardly accomplished, though . . . it was still very far from being completed” (54).

Far different was the protracted conflict with Islam. In the end, “the Muslim conquest was a major disaster for the Christian world. The ancient Eastern Churches lost their dominant position in government and in the world of thought. They were constantly drained of their resources through the defection of so many of their young men,” though they were able to “maintain their worshipping tradition with courage” (55).

As a result, “Christianity became an almost completely European religion, . . . and increasingly a religion of the northern and western Mediterranean” (56).

Should we take note of this before we too quickly charge previous writers of Christian history for being “Euro-centric” until very recently? In fact, both the majority of Christians and of cross-cultural Christian missions had no choice but to be “European.”

As for the “conquest” of Europe itself by Christianity, the task was “that of making Christian faith effective in their lives, of bringing proud, undisciplined, and illiterate natures under the yoke of the Gospel. That it was accomplished at all was due in the main to three continuing factors – royal favour, martyrdom, and monasticism” (57).

With consummate skill, Neill tells the story of this complex, world-changing process with great conciseness, while giving due attention to the major people, events, and institutions. Beginning with Britain and the Venerable Bede, he describes the progress of Christianity through Germany, France (the kingdoms of the Franks), Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Central Europe, Russia, and all the way to China.

We meet great missionaries like Augustine of Canterbury, Columba, Aidan, Wilfrid, Columban, Willibrord, Boniface, Anskar, the brothers Constantine (later Cyril) and Methodius, Adelbert, and Alopen, the first to bring Christianity to China. Along the way, we trace the beginnings of the churches in these regions and countries, as well as the great church in Byzantium, a city (and empire, albeit shrinking) that far surpassed anything in Europe for a thousand years.

Neill shows how the great monasteries became bases, not only for profound piety and learning, but also for courageous outreach to the dangerous tribes of Europe. He also draws our attention to the important role played by those who were willing to suffer martyrdom that others might be saved.

The author does not shrink from telling us the less savory aspects of “conversions” led by “Christian” kings. Charlemagne may have been the most powerful and aggressive, but there were many others, like Geisa in Hungary, “who set himself to make his country Christian; where persuasion did not prove effective, he had recourse to other and less agreeable methods. Converts multiplied” (80). We can only imagine the “methods” he employed, and we should be skeptical about the meaning of words like “Christian” and “converts.”

As with the “conquest” of the Roman Empire by Christianity, the “conquest” of Europe by the gospel raises serious questions about the quality and nature of the Christianity that “conquered” pagan kingdoms. Indeed, much of later European history and of what is called Christendom makes sense when we understand the very mixed process by which Western civilization took on its character.

Chapter 4: Early European Expansion

This chapter’s title fits the subject, which includes the spread of European culture and political power as well as of the gospel.

Indeed, sadly, as before, the boundaries between politics, power, and persuasion were fluid and porous. As in the previous centuries, emissaries of Western – that is, Roman - Christianity seemed to concentrate their energies on converting rulers, who would then be expected to “persuade” their people to embrace the new religion.

In the eighth century, the Vikings burst out of Scandinavia into Europe. “The range of their depredations is astonishing, and the destruction which they caused was almost without limit” (86). Over the course of about three centuries, conquered Christians very gradually began to make an impact on their barbaric overlords. King Canute had apparently been brought up by an unnamed Christian; as he grew older, “he became more pious, and devoted himself with intense earnestness to making of his realms and Christian kingdom” (88). Using England as his base, he sponsored the establishment of the Christian church.

His program became a pattern: “Every king wanted to have his own church organization, headed by an archbishop who would be under the direction of a king, except in so far as the Pope was able to exercise a shadowy suzerainty” (88). Neill traces this pattern to Denmark (Canute was a Dane), Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Sweden, and Finland, and finally Prussia, and then Lithuania, the “conversion” of which marked “the end of European paganism as an organized body, though not, certainly, of its subterranean force” (96). In the process, nations as we know them were formed around the nexus of state and church.

“Conversion” all too often came at the point of the sword. “Saint” Olaf of Norway, for example, “made use of every weapon – flattery, guile, persuasion, and when all else failed, sheer naked coercion” (90). The nadir of this commitment to force, if necessary, came with the Crusades, which was “a vast fiasco,” leading to the permanent alienation of Western Christianity from Eastern Orthodoxy, “a trail of bitterness across the relations between Christians and Muslims” to this very day, and “a lowering of the whole moral temperature of Christendom” (98). The “Christianization” of Spain and Portugal fit the same mold. For the Popes, it was a short step from authorizing, and rewarding, a “holy war” against Muslims to the slaughter of “heretical” Albigensians in France.

Were the terrible invasions by the Mongols part of God’s judgment on European Christianity? In any case, they put a stop to the eastern advance of Western power and furthered the advance of Islam.

During this dark period, bright lights shone from time to time. As always, courageous missionaries, most of them Dominicans or Franciscans, endured incredible hardships to carry the message of Christ into pagan lands, often suffering martyrdom as a consequence. Neill brilliantly tells the stories of these pioneers in the Ukraine, and especially the heroic missions to Central Asia and eventually China. We read of William of Rubruck, who visited the Great Khan in Russia; the Nestorians, who continued their work among the Mongols; John of Monte Corvino, who established a flourishing church in Beijing; and Ramon (Raymond) Lull, “one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the Church” (114-115).

Lull would have nothing to do with force or coercion as means of evangelizing Muslims. Instead, he propounded a missiology that called for careful study of Islamic language, theology and culture; reasoned and respectful dialogue with Muslim scholars; and “the willingness to be a faithful and courageous witness among the Saracens, even at the cost of life itself” (117). On his fourth trip to North Africa, he was “so roughly handled that he died of his injuries” (117).

Neill does not ignore the indispensable role of the countless anonymous traders, slaves, and Christian wives whose gentle witness led to the conversion of nobles, and even princes, among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia.

In the end, however, very little came of Christian witness to the Mongols or the Muslims of the Middle East. Neill assigns several possible reasons for this failure: The great distances that had to be traveled and the resulting loneliness and isolation of missionaries; the loss of life; and especially “the tragic unsettlement of the times, and the recurrent calamities caused by one

invasion of the barbarians after another,” culminating in the horrible destruction caused by Tamurlane (113). He concludes, “It seemed as though the time for Asia had not yet come” (114).

Despite the epic travels and labors of intrepid missionaries, this chapter leads me to think that we must blame the alliance of church and state, the superficial nature of “conversions” from the top down, and the resulting lack of spiritual vitality. Neill puts it this way: “It is true that the Christianity of those times does not give the impression of having been a dynamic conviction producing both holiness of life and the inspiration to witness” (113).

A few small weaknesses

Neill rightly emphasizes the Jewishness of Jesus, but he concludes that “a great deal of what Jesus said could not have been readily intelligible to the ordinary hearer who was not a Jew” (15). This assertion flies in the face of the frequent mention of the presence of Gentile hearers of his preaching in the Gospels and new research that shows that Jesus almost certainly taught in Greek.⁷ A child of his academic time, he also assumes that the Gospels contain errors and that not all of Isaiah was written by the great prophet of that name.

He makes the same mistake in saying that the church in Rome must have consisted mostly of the lower classes, since they spoke Greek. The fact is, however, that all educated Romans of that period spoke Greek.

As an Anglican bishop, Neill thought and wrote as a spokesman of the institutional Church. In later chapters, he describes the uneven growth of the Ecumenical Movement in terms of mainline Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox hierarchies. For him, visible, organizational unity was a goal to be pursued.

This review is to be continued.

⁷ See G. Scott Gleaves, *Did Jesus Speak Greek? The Emerging Evidence of Greek Dominance in First-Century Palestine* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

A History of Christian Missions

by Stephen Neill

Part II

Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christian Missions*. 2nd rev. ed. Edited by Owen Chadwick. Vol. 6. *Penguin History of the Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1986.

Major themes

Briefly, these are: The fundamental missionary nature of Christianity, which impelled believers to take the good news of Jesus Christ to those who had not heard; the hard work and suffering that were necessary for the gospel to be effectively communicated, and the heroism of many missionaries; the institutionalization of Christianity and its organization into larger or smaller national bodies with a hierarchical structure; the role of monasteries, monks, and special missionaries; the alliance of church and state throughout Christian history; the baneful effects of this unholy union; the roles of migration, invasion, and conquest; repeated attempts to “convert” nations from the top down, almost always with results which included resistance, persecution, and shallow Christianity when eventual “success” was secured.

Finally, we note the pattern of progression, “conquest,” and then retrogression, as formerly “Christian” nations and peoples were conquered from without or fatally compromised from within.

Chapter 5: The Age of Discovery, 1500–1600

At the start of the “Age of Discovery,” two aims motivated the early explorers: “to bring the light of the true Gospel to hitherto unknown nations who had lived in darkness; secondly . . . to enter into contact with the Christian churches which were believed to be in existence in those lands,” and thus to establish alliances that could finally break the power over trade routes held by Muslims (120).

At first, Portugal and then Spain were the only two European nations engaged in the great voyages of exploration. To prevent rivalry between these two Roman Catholic countries, the Pope assigned to Portugal the territories east of a north/south line drawn on the map to the west of the Azores. Later, the line was moved eastward to recognize the discovery of Brazil by a Portuguese. The lands west of that line would belong to Spain.

Rome bestowed both ecclesiastical and political authority on Spain and Portugal, with the clear understanding that godly messengers of Christ would accompany the ships and soldiers who set out to conquer the newly discovered territories.

Neill first tells the story of Portuguese advances into Asia, and especially of the Jesuits, that missionary order that was confirmed by the Pope in 1540. The author calls this “the most important event in the missionary history of the Roman Catholic Church” (126).

He then traces the exploits of the Jesuits in India, where they encountered the ancient “Christians of St. Thomas,” a group that claimed ecclesiastical descent from the apostle Thomas and was affiliated with the Syrian church of the East. The Jesuits persuaded them to break with their patriarch in Mesopotamia and align themselves with the Pope, a move that worked for only a while. As in Europe, the Jesuits sought to convert whole peoples through their leaders. This policy, as we shall see, had mixed results and was sometimes disastrous.

Francis Xavier, one of the greatest missionaries of all time in Neill’s view, went from India through Malacca to Japan. There, he succeeded in planting the seeds of a church that eventually grew to number 300,000 converts. Persecution broke out in 1614 and was so fierce that by 1630 Roman Catholic Christianity had ceased to exist in Japan.

Turning to China, Neill relates the main facts of the remarkable career of Matteo Ricci, who arrived in China in 1583 after a while in the Portuguese colony of Macao. A great man by any standard of measurement, Ricci eventually established a Jesuit mission in Beijing, where they had access to the imperial court and high officials. Ricci’s reputation as a missionary rests partly on his policy of adapting the Christian message to Confucianism, an approach that was controversial in its day and has remained so since. (For more on Ricci, go to [Ricci, Matteo | BDCC \(bdconline.net\)](#).)

Neill’s history then explores the progress of Roman Catholic missions in the Philippines and Central and South America. After a region had been conquered by Spanish or Portuguese soldiers, the missionaries were to gather the native people in villages, teach them the rudiments of the Roman Catholic faith, and establish schools and churches. This strategy eventually resulted in the “conversion” of the people and the “Christianization” of the land. Sadly, true religion was rare and the impact of Roman Catholicism, though wide, was not deep. Meanwhile, as usual, the church was closely aligned with the political rulers.

“The principal obstacle to the evangelization of the western peoples was the cruelty with which they were treated by the Spanish colonists, who were subject to the cupidity and harshness of the men into whose hands the helpless Indians had been given over. . . . [In time], whole populations began to die out; it may well be that their principal sickness was despair” (145). Missionary protests produced some changes, but no real reform.

Chapter 6: The Roman Catholic Missions, 1600–1787

Roman Catholic missions in the sixteenth century were dominated by the two sponsoring nations, Spain and Portugal, and led by the religious orders, primarily the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans. Missionaries were often too entangled in the affairs of the world; rivalry was intense.

“In 1622 Pope Gregory XV took action and brought into being the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, often conveniently known for short as the Propaganda” (154). From now on, missionary work was to be under the authority and direction of Rome. The first secretary of the Propaganda enunciated basic principles that still command attention, such as

allowing people to retain their customs, etc., as long as they did not conflict with the Christian faith.

“The second great triumph of the movement . . . was the inauguration in 1663 of the seminary of the Société des Missions Étrangères at Paris” (153), a reflection of the rise of France “as the great roman Catholic missionary nation” (153). One of its main goals was to raise up an indigenous clergy.

Neill tracks the progress of this new missionary movement in India, where controversial experiments in indigenizing the faith were undertaken, and then China, where the labors of the Jesuits led to the appointment of a Chinese bishop, Lo Wen-Tsao, and where rivalry between the religious orders led to the (in)famous Rites controversy. Our evaluation of this long-drawn-out controversy will depend in large part upon our theology. The Franciscans and Dominicans “were horrified to find among the converts of the Jesuits what they regarded as a semi-pagan Christianity; they felt that the Jesuits, out of a base desire to stand well with the nobility and to avoid persecution, had sold out on essentials of the Christian faith. The Jesuits looked with great disfavor on those newcomers, who would not take the trouble to understand the Chinese mind” (163).

The missionaries disagreed on “the customs to be observed at funerals, the reverence to be paid to ancestors – was this civil deference, or did it involve an element of religious worship? – and the terms to be used in translating the name of God” (163). When the matter was referred to Rome for judgment, the Pope pronounced against the accommodationist approach of the Jesuits. When the Chinese emperor heard of this, he considered it an improper interference in the affairs of his realm, and in 1704 ordered all missionaries who did not follow the rules laid down by the Jesuits to be expelled.

It seems to me that the Franciscans and Dominicans were right to see ancestral rites as acts of worship, at least as far as the mass of common folk were concerned, even though the emperor’s judgment that they were only civil ceremonies reflected the attitude of the *literati*, with whom the Jesuits had mostly to do.

For the next two hundred years, “Roman practice, nearly as it was at Rome, was to be in every detail the law for missions” (165). That included using Latin in the liturgy. At the same time, the missiological experiments in India ended abruptly.

The story in Vietnam is quite different. There, the Jesuit Alexander de Rhodes, with a remarkable linguistic ability, learned Vietnamese, a notoriously difficult tonal language and reduced it to writing. He also invented an extremely effective instrument for spreading the gospel and planting indigenous churches: the “company of catechists,” lay brothers living in community and under rule, who were trained in the faith and in the rudiments of medical care.

In West Africa, Capuchins recorded large numbers of converts, but extremely low levels of instruction and over-reliance on the favor of local rulers led to shallow churches. In Africa generally, Roman Catholic missions made little lasting imprint because they did not make a “serious attempt . . . to face all that is involved in a mission to quite primitive peoples – the need

for a deep and accurate knowledge of the language, understanding of their customs and mentality, the long and patient instruction that must precede baptism, the endlessly patient pastoral care that must follow it” (169–170).

In North America, Roman Catholic missionaries faced enormous difficulties, compounded by “inhuman cynicism with which the white man engaged the Indian in his own quarrels,” and the introduction of alcohol and its devastating effects, leading to “the tragedy of the red man” (171). South America, despite early successes by the Jesuits in Paraguay, yielded little lasting fruit.

“The second half of the eighteenth century was a period of tragic collapse for the Roman Catholic missions,” as Spain, Portugal and France were driven out of their conquered territories by England and Holland and as the new Protestant missionary movement got underway (173).

In China, Roman Catholics endured fierce persecution, and foreign missionaries survived only by going into hiding in the homes of the faithful. “In the nineteenth century almost everything had to be done afresh” (174). Something similar happened in Siam and North Vietnam; only in South Vietnam did Roman Catholicism maintain itself and even grow a little

In 1773, Pope Clement XIV dissolved the Jesuits. For too long, there had been complaints of “their arrogance, their improper missionary methods, their interference in political affairs, and the vast wealth accumulated through their commercial speculations” (173).

In his summary evaluation of two centuries of Roman Catholic missions and the relative lack of fruit they had borne, Neill points to several factors: The churches at home were in a state of “lassitude and retreat” in the seventeenth century; the numbers of those engaged in missions was small, and many died of disease and persecution; the various religious orders engaged in constant competition and rivalry; they failed to develop in indigenous priesthood; they made local rules that retarded growth, such as the use of Latin and the requirement that clergy be celibate; and they did not translate the Scriptures.

Despite all this, Roman Catholics had created a “bridgehead” in a number of lands that would help them when they resumed active missionary work in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 7: New Beginnings in East and West, 1600-1800

This chapter begins a good survey of the Russian Orthodox church in the early 1700s. Moscow now considered itself the “third Rome,” since the first Rome (the Roman Catholics) had fallen into heresy and the second, Constantinople, had fallen to the Turks. Russian missionary activity was always so closely connected with the state that missionaries became as it were, agents of the expansionist Russian empire. Still, Russian Orthodox missionaries have been notable for their zeal, industry, and sufferings.

Protestant missions got off to a slow start, as most Reformation churches were also connected to the state and saw no need to move beyond national borders.

Credit for lighting the fire of Protestant missions goes to the Pietists, a movement within churches for renewal and witness. About the same time, King Frederick IV of Denmark became burdened for the “well-being of his Indian subjects in the tiny Danish settlement of Tranquebar” on the southeast coast of India. He dispatched two Pietist missionaries, whose principles of operation were similar to all pioneer missionaries:

“1. Church and school are to go together. Christians must be able to read the Word of God, and therefore all Christian children must be educated . . . 2. If Christians are to read the Word of God, that Word must be available to them in their own language . . . 3. The preaching of the gospel must be based on an accurate knowledge of the mind of the people, acquired through careful study of the actual religious beliefs of the people . . . 4. The aim must be definite and personal conversion . . . 5. At an early a date as possible, an [indigenous] church, with its own . . . ministry, must come into being” (195-196).

These principles became a template for most Protestant mission work until the end of the nineteenth century and, for evangelicals, into the twenty-first century.

Likewise, Neill’s description of “the most famous of all the missionaries who have worked in South India . . . , Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1726–98),” could serve as a (very high) standard for all who would gain lasting success as ambassadors of Christ. Schwartz was a man marked by long (48 years) service in India; “uprightness and probity” of character; a profound “knowledge of the Indian character”; wide knowledge of several languages, including Tamil and Persian; a “charm that enabled him to move easily in all classes of society”; “the extreme simplicity of his life”; “utter self-forgetfulness and integrity. But central to everything was a simple and stalwart faith, and a total dependence on the merits of the Redeemer. Men who met Schwartz knew that they had seen a man of God” (199).

From India, Neill turns his eyes to Greenland, the West Indies, Africa, and North America. In all these places, it was a time of small beginnings.

Part Two: From 1800 to the Present

Chapter 8: Introduction

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, missionary activity outside of Europe had almost come to a standstill, and the results of previous efforts were small, fragile, or even buried in oblivion. Why? Because Europe was still weak and unable to support sustained and vigorous missionary efforts.

Several changes transformed Europe, much of the rest of the world, and cross-cultural missions:

- A long period of peace in Europe after centuries of devastating wars
- A new sense of confidence in European civilization and its relatively greater strength compared to other cultures and nations
- “Scientific and economic” discoveries that achieved the “mastery of speed and the mastery of power . . . The rapidity of communication which set in with the invention of

the steam-engine and the steamship did more than anything else to make possible the first of the new world in which we live” (209)

The Industrial Revolution “sent Europe out conquering with a new self-confidence, and increasingly, as the century advanced, with a new sense of mission to the world” (210). Along with this came a “passion for exploration,” which “was followed, or accompanied by, exploitation” (210). In short, Colonialism, the evils of which Neill succinctly describes, though without mentioning some of the benefits that this movement brought to conquered peoples.

At the same time, there was “an unforeseen religious awakening which affected almost every Christian denomination in every country of the West” and led to the great burst of missionary zeal and outreach. By 1920, missionaries had planted churches, translated the Scriptures, and established schools and hospitals in almost every country of the world. Almost always, the poor and the oppressed responded most warmly to the gospel. Missionary societies were formed in most Protestant nations and Roman Catholics expanded their work under a stronger papacy and for the first time in missions history, women joined in the work and soon outnumbered men.

Alas, Western missionaries “in the nineteenth century had to some extent yielded to the colonial complex” (220). For too long, they did not raise up native clergy or, when they did, power was still retained by the Westerner.

Chapter 9: New Forces in Europe and America, 1792–1858

This chapter begins the thrilling story of what K.S. Latourette famously called “The Great Century” of Christian missions. During this remarkable period, Western missions, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, exploded onto the global scene with revolutionary force, forever changing much of the world forever.

Neill opens with the well-known story of William Carey, often (though not quite accurately, since others had gone before him) called “the father of modern missions.” He and his companions Joshua Marshman and William Ward – “the Serampore Trio” – established a foothold for Protestant missionary work in India.

Like almost all pioneer Protestant missionaries who followed him, Carey set out first, to learn the language, in this case Bengali, of which acquired “incomparable knowledge” (223), and then to translate the Bible. He and his team faced terrific obstacles, but they persevered, eventually producing more than a dozen translations of all or part of the Bible. Some were of dubious value, but a start had been made.

Carey embarked on a “five-pronged advance”: “(1) the widespread preaching of the Gospel by every possible method; (2) the support of preaching by the distribution of the Bible in the languages of the country; (3) the establishment at the earliest possible moment of a Church; (4) a profound study of the background and thought of the non-Christian people; (5) the training at the earliest possible moment of an indigenous ministry” (224).

Neill comments: “In each of these five directions notable success was achieved” (224). Aside from the Bible translations, “Carey’s Sanskrit grammar, a . . . work of 1,000 pages, was a

memorable contribution. . . . Carey is held by the experts to have been the founder of prose literature in Bengali” (225).

Neill, an Anglican, then traces the history of Anglican missions in India. We read, for example, of Henry Martyn, who “in seven brief years . . . completed the New Testament in Urdu, a version which is still the basis of that which is in use today, . . . completed a thorough revision of the Persian, and was deeply launched on the revision of the Arabic” (227). In the south of India, the Church Missionary Society began work among the Church of the Thomas Christians in 1816.

“A new period in the history of Indian missions begins with the arrival in 1830 of Alexander Duff (1806–78),” who came “to present the Gospel to the cultured sections of the community through higher education in English” (233). His method was controversial, but it produced lasting fruit. Others followed in his steps, laying the foundation for India’s modern educational system.

We do not have space to follow Neill’s lively narrative of the efforts of other missionary societies, which planted the seeds for a church that today ranks only second behind the number of professing Christians.

That brings us to China. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to that great and ancient land, arrived in 1807. We know his story: He had to learn Chinese in secrecy, because Chinese were forbidden to teach that language to foreigners. Nor could he reside in China without some legitimate employment. He felt “compelled” therefore to work as a translator for the East India company, which imported opium to China to pay for the tea it raised in India. Morrison’s connection with the EIC, and the Opium War of 182, have forever etched in the minds of the Chinese a connection between the gospel of Christ, the missionary movement, and Western imperialism.

Could Morrison have chosen a different path? Yes. He knew that many Chinese were living outside China. That is why he decided to found an Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca, where he set his colleague Milne to work. I think Morrison should have lived there also, an arrangement that would have allowed him a “normal” family life.

Nevertheless, he is rightly remembered and praised as the man who, with the help of Milne and courageous Chinese assistants, translated the entire Bible into Chinese. “His whole life was devoted to the extension of his knowledge of Chinese, that shoreless sea, and to use it for Christian purposes. . . . His great dictionary of Chinese went far to establish the knowledge of that language on a scientific footing” (238). His indefatigable labors laid the foundation of the entire Protestant missionary enterprise in China.

After the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, which granted to foreigners the right to live in China and to be tried by their own courts (“extra-territoriality”), “while deploring the [Opium] war and doubting the wisdom of the treaty, missionaries took the view that what was deplorable in itself had been overruled by divine providence with a view to the opening up of China to the gospel” (240). Neill comments that the resentment among Chinese over this and other “unequal treaties,” and the stigma thereby attached to foreign missions, “have never quite died away. That Christian

work seemed so plainly to enter in the wake of gunboats and artillery was to be a permanent handicap to it in China” (240).

China having been “opened,” however, many missionary societies hastened to send workers there. Most of them were content to work in the five “treaty ports” allowed to foreigners, but a few were not. Neill briefly describes the pioneering work of William Burns, a Presbyterian, and the flamboyant and controversial Karl F. A. Gützlaff (1803–51). Despite his failure to see that he was being deceived by his Chinese helpers, his vision of using Chinese to evangelize their own people, his mastery of the language and customs, his dressing like a Chinese, and his itinerant ministry all made a huge impact on J. Hudson Taylor.

The author concisely describes the rise and fall of the Taiping Rebellion, then concludes this section with the “determination of all the Protestant missions in China . . . to have from the earliest possible date a fully ordained and responsible Chinese ministry,” by which he means ministers of the gospel. After giving us the name of the first Chinese ordained by the Anglicans, he says, “This concentration on the indigenous ministry was of vital importance and proved its worth a century later in the general collapse of missions in China” (245).

Neill then follows the course of pioneer missionaries in Thailand, Malaya, Borneo, Indonesia, and Burma. The remarkable labors and sufferings of Adoniram Judson (1788–1850) receive ample description. Like Morrison and so many other Protestant missionaries, Judson mastered the Burmese language, translated the Bible, and left behind “an immense collection of materials for a dictionary; the English-Burmese section was ready for the press” (249).

The limits of this review do not permit even the barest summary of the rest of the chapter, which narrates the work of European missionary progress among native peoples in Ceylon, the South Pacific, Hawaii; the ancient civilizations in the Middle East; and the vast reaches of Sub-Saharan Africa. With a rare combination of succinctness and detail, Neill highlights the main achievements and introduces us to the major actors, including Robert Moffatt (1795–1883), “one of those in whom the vocation of a missionary has in outstanding degree manifested its power to produce great men and splendid characters” (264, quoting J. Richer).

Just a few notes about Moffatt: he lived and worked among the Bechuana for forty-eight years; became a “master of the Tswana language, the difficulties of which were formidable”; and by 1857 had produced a translation of the whole Bible, which he published himself. Always seeking balance and candor, Neill does not pass over the very real flaws of this great man, especially his patriarchal attitude towards the Africans.

Remarking that “the fame of Moffat has been a little overshadowed by the superlative greatness of his friend and son-in-law David Livingstone (1813–73),” the author takes pains to record Livingstone’s life-long passion: the suppression of the slave trade. Since Africans were enslaved by other Africans, especially Muslims, Livingstone believed that “Africans should be persuaded to engage in legitimate commerce, exchanging the products of their own fields and forest for those desirable things which the white man could supply.” Only then “would the evil and destructive commerce [of slavery] be brought to an end” (267).

The chapter concludes with brief but powerful sections on missionary work in Madagascar and the southern tip of South America.

In summary: “In sixty years, Protestant missions had entered a large number of countries, and most of the Churches of the Protestant world had become engaged in the enterprise. But we are still in the day of small things . . . But the missionary force was there. Back-breaking work had given it its tools in language and Scripture” and the way was prepared for the next massive surge of Western missionary activity (272).

This review is to be continued.

A History of Christian Missions

by Stephen Neill

Part III

Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christian Missions*. 2nd rev. ed. Edited by Owen Chadwick. Vol. 6. *Penguin History of the Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1986.

Chapter 10: The Heyday of Colonialism

Resuming the narrative of the “Great Century” of Christian missions, Neill opens the chapter by pointing to the pivotal nature of the year 1858. For one thing, an “extraordinary constellation of genius, talent, and power . . . existed in the middle of the nineteenth century,” coupled with “the confidence with which the European world was animated, both in Church and State, at the opening of the period of its greatest influence. . . . Peace reigned almost unbroken for more than half a century [thereafter]. The whole world was open to Western commerce and exploitation” because of the West’s military superiority. “The day of Europe had come” (272).

Neill observes, or opines, that the “missionary enterprise of the Churches is always in a measure a reflection of their vigour, of their wealth, and of that power of conviction which finds its expression in self-sacrifice and a willingness for adventurous service” (274).

He then notes five major events that marked a turning-point in history and in Christian missions: First, the “acceptance of the British people, through its government, of responsibility for rule and administration in India,” ending the reign of the East India Company. British rule brought both peace and religious freedom to the sub-continent for the first time, opening the door to Christian missions (274).

Second, “the second war of the European powers with China had ended in 1858 with a series of treaties between China and the several European nations, [which gave] permission to foreigners to travel in the interior beyond the Treaty Ports . . . [and] guaranteed toleration of Christianity and protection of Christians in the practice of their faith” (275). These “unequal treaties,” as the Chinese called them with resentment, opened the way for missionaries to spread the gospel throughout the Chinese empire.

Third, the “Second Evangelical Awakening, starting among laymen in America with an intensity for individual and corporate prayer, crossed the Atlantic, and woke revival in many areas. . . . The new spiritual life into which many Christians entered found expression in a sense of responsibility for personal witness to Christ and for missionary service” (275).

Fourth, in 1858 “the first foreign missionary in modern times, a Roman Catholic priest, entered Japan,” to be followed eventually by Protestant missionaries from America and elsewhere (273).

Fifth, in 1857, David Livingstone published his *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. The Christian world was convinced that the time had come to “resume evangelistic efforts in Africa” (275).

Neill goes on to tell the thrilling stories of foreign missionary endeavors in Japan, China, Korea, Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, India, the Middle and Near East, Africa, Latin America, and North America. He combines remarkable conciseness with enough details about people, events, and organizations to retain our interest and provide deep insight into complicated histories.

As before, I will focus on China.

“In China, the new-found liberty granted by the treaties encouraged rapid increase in Protestant work. Many new societies entered in. . . . A revolutionary change in the situation was brought about, as is so often the case, by the faith and conviction of one man,” Hudson Taylor (282). Neill concisely relates the story of Taylor’s early years and the founding of the China Inland Mission, whose principles differed from those currently used by other societies:

- (1) “The mission was to be interdenominational. Conservative in its theology, it would accept as missionaries any convinced Christian, of whatever denomination, if they could sign its simple doctrinal declaration.”
- (2) Those with little formal education could join the CIM. “It was good that one society was prepared to keep this door open; and cases were not lacking in which those who started with very little education grew to be notable scholars and sinologists” (283).
- (3) “The direction of the mission would be in China, not in England – a change of far-reaching importance. And the director would have full authority to direct.” Neill is quick to point out that this principle did not come from Taylor’s arrogance, but from practical experience.
- (4) “Missionaries would wear Chinese dress, and as far as possible identify themselves with the Chinese people.”
- (5) “The primary aim of the mission was always to be widespread evangelism. The shepherding of Churches and education could be undertaken, but not to such an extent as to hide or hinder the one central and commanding purpose” (283).

Despite major difficulties and setbacks, “almost from the start his success was sensational” (283). Within thirty years, the CIM had missionaries in almost all the provinces of China. In addition to many members from humble backgrounds, the CIM attracted a few men from the educated classes, like the famous Cambridge Seven. Likewise, though most converts were ordinary folk, some were scholars, like Pastor Hsi. “In nothing was Taylor’s wisdom more remarkably seen than in his capacity to hold together his motley crew and to use their various gifts to the best advantage” (284).⁸

“The greatest service rendered by the CIM was that it demonstrated the possibility of residence in every corner of China” (284). Neill emphasizes the great reach of the CIM, perhaps reflecting

⁸. A short biography of Taylor can be found at [Taylor, James Hudson | BDCC \(bdconline.net\)](http://www.bdconline.net).

the unfounded criticism of many that its work was too superficial. In fact, Taylor's policy called for itinerant preaching that led to settled work in major cities and towns.

Neill rightly contrasts the approach of the CIM with that of Timothy Richard and others like him. Richard hoped to reach the masses of Chinese through concentration upon a few people. Recent scholarship has shown, however, that the goal of Richard's wide diffusion of secular knowledge among the educated elite was not the conversion of this class, but the removal of prejudice and superstition which would, he hoped, reduce barriers to the gospel.⁹ Soon other missionaries joined in the campaign to provide higher education to Chinese young people. Colleges and universities founded by foreign missions proliferated, mostly spearheaded by Americans. (Neill does not say this, but these institutions did not produce many converts to Christianity, as was hoped; rather, they introduced Western learning and some Christian ideas to young people who would later take leading roles in society.)

By the end of the nineteenth century, there were about 1,500 Protestant missionaries, including wives, working in 500 stations in almost all the provinces of China. About 500,000 people were connected in some way to Christianity, 80,000 being adult communicants. "But the missionaries were widely regarded – and feared – as the spearhead of Western penetration" (286). Suspicions and enmity had been brewing for years, particularly over the ways that some missionaries had "been less than discreet in making use of the privileges assured to them under the treaties; some had shown an insensitive disregard of Chinese feelings with regard to property and order" (287).

Again, Neill does not mention the fact that most of the hostility arose from the practice of Roman Catholic missionaries of arrogating to themselves the privileges of local officials and of claiming protection for their converts in civil cases. Nor were Protestants without fault, for some of them appealed too quickly to civil authority in local cases involving Christians, and even had occasionally called in their governments to protect their treaty rights.

Long-simmering hostility finally erupted in the summer of 1900, when, backed by the Empress Dowager, the so-called "Boxers" went on a rampage, killing both Chinese and foreign Christians. Roman Catholic Christians suffered most, and Protestant missionaries suffered as well, especially the CIM, since they lived in the interior. When it was all over, 188 missionaries had died, the largest number by far in Christian history. Though the CIM had suffered the most, Hudson Taylor decided to refuse compensation for these losses.

In the aftermath of the Boxer movement, in "Christian circles there was little resentment against China and the Chinese. The one thought of most of the missionaries who had lost everything was to get back as soon as possible to their chosen work and their beloved people. New societies entered the field; old societies greatly strengthened their forces. At the end of our period, there were no less than 5,462 Protestant missionaries in the field, including the 1,652 wives of missionaries" (288).

Furthermore, the years following 1900 "were years of exceptional openness to the Christian message," with students asking the question, "How can China be regenerated?" (288). Many of

⁹. See a brief biography of Richard, go to [Richard, Timothy | BDCC \(bdcconline.net\)](http://bdcconline.net).

those enrolled in Christian colleges were baptized, but few joined the church. “This rising Chinese Christianity had a somewhat exceptional character. It was little interested in the question of personal salvation. Not ‘how can I be saved?’ but ‘how can China live anew? – this was the burning question. . . . What they stood for was ‘the Christian movement in China.’ Ethically high-minded, socially conscious, ready for service, they had little awareness of the place of worship in the Christian life; they were more interested in the practical expression of Christian faith than in its inner development” (289).

The old regime was overthrown in 1911. Sun Yat-sen, who became President of the Republic of China, was representative of these younger, educated “Christians.” During the next twenty or thirty years, though a tiny minority, these Christian elites played a major role in the attempt to modernize China and make it strong again.

The End of an Era

When the World Missionary Conference convened in Edinburgh in 1910, with delegates from most of the missionary societies in attendance, optimism prevailed. This was the largest such gathering in Christian history, and they had good reasons for their high hopes for the future. As Neill points out:

- Though a few countries remained closed, “missionaries had been able to find a footing in every part of the known world.”
- “The back of pioneer work had been broken. Language had been learned and reduced to writing; all the main living languages of the world had by now received at least the New Testament.”
- “Tropical medicine had solved most of the problems of disease and made possible the prolonged residence of the white man even in the most unfavorable climates.”
- “Every religion of the world had yielded some converts as a result of missionary preaching.”
- “No race of men had been found which was incapable of understanding the Gospel, though some were more ready to receive it than others.”
- “The missionary no longer stood alone; an increasing army of nationals stood ready to assist him.”
- “The younger Churches were beginning to produce leaders at least the quality of the missionary in intellectual gifts and spiritual stature.”
- “The Churches had become engaged, as never before, in the support of the missionary enterprise.”
- “Financial support had kept pace with the rapid expansion of the work.”
- “The universities of the West were producing a steady stream of men and women of the highest potential for missionary work.”
- “The influence of the Christian gospel was spreading far beyond the ranks of those who had actually accepted it.”
- “Intransigent opposition to the Gospel seemed in many countries, such as China and Japan, finally to have broken down” (333).

Thus, Neill concludes that the slogan, “the evangelization of the world in this generation” was not a pipe dream, but a realistic concept. Its proponents were not saying that everyone would be converted, but only that each non-Christian would have had an opportunity to hear the saving message of Christ.

Further, “the slogan was based on an unexceptional theological principle – that each generation of Christians bears responsibility for the contemporary generation of non-Christians in the world, and that it is the business of each such generation of Christians” to preach the gospel to every creature.

Not all “the dreams of Edinburgh 1910 have been fulfilled. . . . But they were right to rejoice” when looking back over what K.S. Latourette later called “The Great Century” in Christian missions.

Chapter 11: Rome, the Orthodox, and the World, 1815-1914

As the title indicates, this chapter covers “The Great Century of Missions” with a narrative of the remarkable expansion of both Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox missionary achievements. For both groups, this period witnessed a veritable explosion of energy, along with greater organization, especially among Roman Catholics.

These advances were spearheaded by some truly outstanding, even heroic, individuals, like Cardinal Lavignerie, Archbishop of Algiers (1825–1892); John Veniaminov (1797–1879), who worked in Russia’s Far Eastern regions, finally becoming Metropolitan of Moscow; and Nikolai, missionary to Japan from 1861 to 1912. These men evinced great courage; learned the language and culture of the people whom they served; labored incessantly into old age; and left behind strong churches.

The weaknesses of Roman Catholic missions resembled those of their history: A strong reliance on European power and prestige; baptisms without careful teaching or evidence of true conversion; intense efforts to draw away adherents of other denominations, including Protestants and members of Eastern churches; and a top-down approach that targeted local elites and rulers.

Once again, I will concentrate on China, where, despite great danger, Roman Catholic missionaries had carried on in secret, being cared for by Chinese Christians as they move from place to place.

When the treaties gave certain rights to Christians and foreign missionaries, Roman Catholic missionaries pressed these rights to the farthest extreme, even going beyond treaty stipulations. With France’s strong backing, they carried French passports, regardless of their national origin; supported Roman Catholic converts in civil and even criminal cases even when “it was not always easy to be sure whether it was for his faith that the convert was being persecuted, or for some other and much more legitimate reason. Missionaries tended to interfere in lawsuits, and to use their influence with magistrates and others in favour of the Christians. . . . It can hardly be doubted that the Roman Catholic method in China opened the door wide to those who came in for purely mercenary motives. . . . A firm link was being forged between imperialistic penetration and the preaching of the Gospel” (345).

Building on their longer tradition of work in China, Roman Catholics grew more rapidly than did the Protestants. “But nemesis was preparing: if unsatisfactory methods are adopted, sooner or later a heavy price will have to be paid for their adoption” (346). When the Boxer madness erupted, Chinese Roman Catholics suffered the most as being too closely associated with foreign imperialism.

After the Boxer rebellion, however, as with the Protestants, so the Roman Catholics were “able to profit from the new spirit of openness in China, new Orders and societies entered, the work was reorganized and extended, and the number of (Roman Catholic) Christian grew more rapidly than ever before” (347).

The problem now, however, was the absence of Chinese bishops. With one major exception, the missionaries were very conservative, and felt that they should retain leadership of the churches. That exception was Vincent Lebbe, who campaigned long and hard for total identification of the missionary with the people he had come to serve and who, like Hudson Taylor, believed that it was better to suffer with the Chinese Christians than to rely on foreign gunboats for protection.

Chapter 12: From Mission to Church

Professor Neill died in 1984, twenty years after this book first appeared. Before his death, he gave instructions for the revision of the volume in the light of more recent events. Professor Owen Chadwick, series editor of Pelican (now Penguin) Books and author of the volume on *The Church in the Cold War*, made the revision, especially of the last two chapters.

This chapter traces two movements around the Christian world: The first, from the leadership, or even dominance, of missionary societies over the local churches that they had planted, and the second, from separate denominations to national, regional, and then international organizations, or councils, of denominations.

The author writes as an insider since he was a bishop in the Anglican communion and then in the Church of South India.

As a result of the 1920 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, national committees were set up in many countries around the world, particularly as the result of a tour of Asia by Dr. John Mott in 1912–1913.

Toward Independence

The movement towards self-government by local churches gained momentum throughout the first part of the twentieth century, as nationalism, the debacle of World War I, and the emergence of strong indigenous leaders combined to demand greater independence from foreign missionaries. Sadly, too many missionaries still believed that the newer churches were not mature enough to govern themselves. Furthermore, financial control remained in the hands of foreigners, especially with regard to institutions such as schools and hospitals.

Sometimes it took the “disappearance” of missionaries to make native leadership both necessary and possible. This happened in China when foreign consuls ordered their nationals to evacuate

their posts during the Anti-Christian Movement and general chaos of 1926–1927, and again when all the missionaries were expelled after 1950.

Organizational autonomy is one thing; indigenization of theology, worship, and ethics is another. Neill very wisely comments on the complexity of this difficult transition:

Reluctance comes primarily from the converts themselves, and from their reluctance to have anything to do with the world from which they have emerged. Only in rare cases does the convert regard his former religion as a preparation for the new. The old world was a world of evil in which he was imprisoned, and from which he was delivered by the power of Christ. The last thing that he wishes is to turn back in any way to be associated with that which to him is evil through and through. And, after all, he is the only man who knows; he has lived in that world, and knows better than anyone else its lights and shadows. If his reaction to that world is wholly negative, who has the right to blame him? (397-398)

Toward Christian Unity

Neill next provides us with a fine description of the process by which different ecclesial groups created national and then trans-national organizations. That is, he describes the growth of the Ecumenical Movement.

In a few cases, like Japan, China, and India, denominations merged – or were forced to merge by the government – into one union. In others, common efforts, especially in Bible translation, brought about new, though sometimes informal, associations.

Another impetus was the desire of local Christians to be freed from the confusion and competition of a multiplicity of mission societies and denominations. Why couldn't they all just be "Christians"? Furthermore, as they matured, the newer churches sought liberation from control by foreign missions and church organizations with headquarters in the West. These are certainly understandable aspirations.

As I have noted before, Neill firmly believes that organizational unity must be pursued. His view of the "Church" is of an organization headed by a bishop in communion with other bishops. Congregationalists and, to a lesser degree, Presbyterians, would see things differently. Even they, however, often band together in large "networks," as with the "house" churches in China, though Neill does not discuss this in the present chapter.

In general, large conventions became "councils" with stronger or weaker ties of union. Neill sees all this as positive, even necessary. For theological reasons, evangelicals have often resisted this approach. After Neill had died, Billy Graham and John Stott convened the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism in 1974. Its continuation committees and periodic meetings have created an evangelical counterpart to the World Council of Churches.

For this reader, the identification of "Church" with "denomination" lacks biblical warrant, so this chapter, though extremely helpful as an historical analysis, raises as many questions as it answers.

Chapter 13: Yesterday and Today, 1914 and After

This final chapter, like those that preceded it, contains so much important detail, such elegant writing, and so many brilliant analyses and insights, that one is tempted to quote, not just whole paragraphs, but entire pages. In a review and summary that is already too long, that would not do. I can only try to make this section shorter than others, select a few excerpts, especially about China, and wholeheartedly commend the entire volume as essential reading for any student of missions or even of world history.

Nationalism, and a general desire to be free from Western domination, had been brewing for a long time even before World War I. Then, the “European nations, with their loud-voiced claims to a monopoly of Christianity and civilization, had rushed blindly and confusedly into a civil war which was to leave them economically impoverished and without a shred of virtue” (415). After that, the “Russian Revolution of 1917 was a new and perplexing factor in the situation. A great new anti-Christian force had been let loose upon the world, a force with which for the future the Churches would have to reckon” (416).

“The natural consequence of all this was the awakening of the ideals and passions of nationalism among the peoples of Asia and Africa. [Nationalism can have its noble aspects,] but this can easily slip over into a narrow and arrogant intolerance, and a contempt for the members of other and less favoured nations. If the state is deified and becomes the final and unquestioned authority in all the areas of man’s life, then the way is opened to idolatry and blasphemy against God” (417).

Meanwhile, “the mind and temper of the Christian churches was becoming afflicted by a new kind of uncertainty” (417). Liberal theology began to question the core tenets of the faith. This led quickly into a repudiation of the fundamental premises of Christian missions, that Jesus is the only Savior and that his message must be preached to all peoples so that they can be saved.

Despite all this, thousands of Christians continued to offer themselves for service as cross-cultural missionaries. The authors note five facts: 1. Most new missionaries (at the time of revision, 1986) were from the United States. 2. The growth came mostly from the rise and expansion of non-denominational societies. 3. Pentecostal and charismatic churches and their missions assumed an increasingly prominent place in several parts of the world. 4. The historic churches of Europe “were making far less than a proportionate contribution to the work of Christian witness in the world,” mostly because of the ravages of World War II. 5. After independence from colonial rule, the number of missionaries in India and Africa fell drastically.

As a result, “for all the elements of disturbance, conflict, and chaos that have been let loose upon the world since 1914, and despite the extermination of Christian work through communist nations in certain areas such as Central Asia, missions and Churches made unexampled progress in the period now under review. . . . It is in this period that we discern the beginnings of the landslide through which in many parts of the world hundreds turned into thousands and thousands into millions” (424-425).

From our perspective, those millions have turned into hundreds of millions, including the almost incredible explosion of Christian in China since this revised edition was published.

Turning to China in this period, however, we see, first, the chaos following the revolution of 1911; the growth of all forms of Christianity during the brief Nanjing Decade of the Kuomintang (Guomindang) under Chiang Kai-shek (1927–1937); the horrendous suffering inflicted by the Japanese invasion and occupation of much of China (1937–1945), which, surprisingly, led to new advances of the gospel into hitherto under-served areas; a brief respite after the conclusion of the war; and then an entirely new situation after the communists gained power in 1949.

After a short time of relative freedom, all but handful of missionaries had been expelled by 1953. From 1950 onwards, the state took control of the church. At this point, our authors opine that many Christians were happy to see the foreigners kicked out and the church come entirely under indigenous leadership. That was no doubt true, for henceforth Chinese Christians stood entirely on their own, untrammelled by Western control.

On the other hand, increasing suppression, then oppression, by the government meant the loss of schools, hospitals, church buildings, and then even pastors, the low point coming during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). “In 1981 there was evidence of rapid Christian growth among the young, but the whole episode of 1949–1980 was a Christian disaster of the first magnitude” (431).

At that time, no one on the outside could know that deep underground, in prison cells and secret home meetings, Christians had continued to meet and to share their faith. During the 1980s and afterwards, up to the present, Protestant Christianity has continued to grow at a rate unprecedented in Christian history.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong and Taiwan, missionaries were free to work, and they did, strengthening local churches and aiding in evangelism up to the present time. The new reality, however, was local control by Chinese Christians, with foreigners serving as assistants or as pioneer evangelists.

How I wish I could follow the thrilling story of the phenomenal growth of the Christian faith in India, Africa, and Latin America, brilliantly recorded here!

Conclusion

Not surprisingly, the book ends with a powerful conclusion.

“In the twentieth century, for the first time, there was in the world a universal religion – the Christian religion. . . . In country after country . . . it took root, not as a foreign import, but as the Church of the countries in which it dwells” (473). Though the term is not used, this was the period when “World Christianity” fully came into being as the major development in Christian history and, perhaps, of all human history.

“At a time when Churches were declining, at least in numbers, in many of their historic European homes, the statistics of Christian expansion were still extraordinary” (473). These final pages trace this phenomenal growth around the world, in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe. It is true

that Christianity faces strong opposition in the Muslim world, some Buddhist countries, and communist countries like China.

In addition, “the Churches in Asia were engaged in a holding action, not an advance. The old religions of Asia pulled themselves together, recovered their spiritual inheritance, realized that they had things to offer their world. They seemed to be making themselves and their adherents even more impervious to the Christian Gospel” (476). One thinks of Buddhist countries like Thailand, Burma, and Taiwan, for example, and, especially recently, India. But even in India the church continued to rescue hungry souls from darkness.

Looking back over the broad sweep of history, the authors note that in the unbroken darkness of the tenth century in Western Europe, it must have seemed most unlikely that the Church would ever find the way to greatness. . . . But what followed was . . . the first great renaissance of Europe, with Anselm as its principal thinker, and Norman architecture as its massive and memorable outward expression.

The cool and rational eighteenth century was hardly a promising seed-bed for Christian growth; but out of it came a greater outburst of Christian missionary enterprise than had been seen in all the centuries before. There is no reason to suppose that it cannot be so today. But such renewals do not come automatically; they come only as the fruit of deliberate penitence, self-dedication, and hope (477).

Even as this edition was being sent to press, a new age of missionary expansion had begun, as countries like South Korea, India, and Brazil thrust forth workers in harvest fields around the world.

And yet; and yet –

“A third of the people in the world, perhaps, have not yet heard the name of Jesus Christ, and another third, perhaps, have never heard the Gospel presented in such a way as both to be intelligible and to make a claim on their person lives. There is plenty still to be done” (478).

On the other hand, and despite all the faults and failings of previous generations of Christians, “the Church is there today, the Body of Christ in every land, the great miracle of history, in which the living God himself through his Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell” (478).

Amen!

Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion

by **Dana L. Robert**

Robert, Dana L. *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Students of Chinese Christianity need this book for at least two reasons: first, to counter the common misconception that Christianity is a Western religion that has been imposed on China by foreign imperialists; second, to help us see that the rapid growth of Christianity in China in the past century is part of a worldwide expansion that has made Christians a major presence in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

It is so easy for us to focus on the remarkable rise of Protestantism in China, as if it were something utterly unique, when in fact the church in Africa and Latin America has increased just as dramatically.

Dana Robert, who teaches World Christianity at Boston University, has given us a slim volume that tells the thrilling story of the spread of Christianity from its beginnings as a tiny minority in Palestine to today, when, as the “largest religion in the world,” “[t]he geographic range, cultural diversity, and organizational variety of Christianity surpass those of the other great world religions” (1).

The author wants to answer the question, “How did Christianity get to be so diverse and widespread?” Simply put, the answer comes in one word: mission. From the beginning, this faith has been a missionary one. The idea of universality stands at the heart of its philosophical structure, and its founding documents are missionary in content and function, being written by and about the messengers of the gospel, including Jesus and Paul, as well as the other apostles.

The first part of *Christian Mission* presents a concise but remarkably comprehensive retelling of the story of the expansion of Christianity. Part II, “Themes in Mission History,” offers very stimulating insights into “The Politics of Missions,” “Women in World Mission,” and “Conversion and Christian Community: The Missionary from St. Patrick to Bernard Mizeki.”

Over the past 2,000 years, Christians have sought to obey the Great Commission, by which Jesus commanded his followers to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That is why “the history of Christian mission – and of churches’ particular missions – provides a useful framework for grasping the meaning of Christianity as a multicultural, global presence in the world today” (1).

Christian Mission is a brief, “thematic history of an endlessly complex and detailed process in the history of Christianity” (2). The author has not tried to write a comprehensive story of the spread of Christianity, much less a record of theological controversies or ecclesiastical

organizations and conflicts. She does attempt to focus on “shifts in methods of communication and changes in sociopolitical context that opened the way for the transmission of Christian faith across cultural boundaries,” and to show how Christianity has often served as a “catalyst for a new identity-formation rather than a fixed institution” (2).

Part I: A Concise History of Christian Mission

Robert divides her historical sketch into three chapters: 1. “From Christ to Christendom,” 2. “Vernaculars and Volunteers, 1450 –,” and 3. “Global Networking for the Nations, 1920 –.”

From Christ to Christendom

At the beginning, she notes that “charting the spread of Christianity” is made difficult because “its expansion has not been a matter of continuous progress” (9). Christianity has thrived in a certain region for several centuries, then declined or even disappeared, while the faith took root in another area. We see that process in the early centuries, when North Africa and the Middle East were the heartland of Christianity, until the Muslim advance all but wiped it out. Meanwhile, Northern Europe experienced rapid church growth, largely through the work of Irish missionaries.

Paul, the quintessential missionary, was a bridge personality since he was equally at home both in Jewish and in Hellenistic cultures. The churches that he and other apostles founded were almost immediately characterized by “internal and cultural differences,” a common feature even to this day. The spread of the gospel across cultural boundaries started as soon as Jews and Greeks learned to accept one another as members of the same family of God, and as the message was translated into another language.

The Book of the Acts shows us a “multi-cultural people on the move,” establishing urban networks of house churches throughout the Roman and Persian Empires. From the start, persecution, care for the poor, ascetic practices, and healings and other miracles brought favorable attention to the dedication and zeal of followers of Christ.

“Christendom” began to take shape with the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. It grew as new “barbarian” tribes were converted, or at least declared nominal allegiance, to the faith, often with the intention of tapping into the growing secular power of the bishop of Rome. Outside the Roman Empire, Christianity was adopted by kings or many people in Persia, Armenia, and Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The “Nestorian” or Syrian Church spread all the way to China at a time when most of Europe remained outside the fold.

Thus, even at the beginning, Christianity was not a “Western” religion.

Vernaculars and Volunteers

The roots of modern missions lie with the Roman Catholics who accompanied conquistadors into Latin America and merchants to Asia, and with Protestants who carried the gospel to the New World, Africa, and on to Asia as their nations’ military and economic reach extended farther and farther.

Beginning afresh with the Age of Exploration (aka Conquest) by European powers in the 16th century, first Roman Catholic and then Protestant missionaries found themselves associated with military conquest and economic expansion. Though they often vehemently objected to their nation's aggressive policies, they also were unwilling not to take advantage of open doors to declare the love of God to people who would otherwise never hear. Frequently, they labored to ameliorate the suffering caused by conquest.

From the early church to the present, monks and nuns have stood at the forefront of cross-cultural expansion, from medieval monastics to the religious orders of the Roman Catholic church which took up the baton in the 15th century. For Protestants, the voluntary society has been the principal agent in sending and supporting missionaries.

Protestant missions have been characterized by 1. Translation of the Scriptures into vernacular languages, 2. Church planting, and 3. The central role of the family as both a base for missionary work and a model for new converts. Translation requires, of course, that the foreigner learn both the language and the culture of the local people. This, in turn, has produced greater understanding of indigenous religions and philosophy, frequently with the (unintended) result of a revival of traditional culture, and almost always with the formation of a new ethnic and even national identity.

World-Wide Networking

The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 marked the apogee of the "great [long] century" for Protestant missions. The optimism of that gathering would be shattered by two world wars which discredited Western "Christendom" and unleashed independence movements that brought freedom to former colonies.

The conference demonstrated how advances in communications had made global networking possible, a development that would continue unabated into the 21st century. Student Christian fellowships joined across national boundaries to spread the gospel and then to agitate for peace and political and social reform, while the "continuation committee" formed at Edinburgh spawned the ecumenical movement among mainline denominations and presaged the even larger Lausanne Movement towards the end of the 20th century and beyond.

Already in the 19th century, "faith missions" such as the China Inland Mission had broken denominational and national restrictions to create large agencies that dispatched intrepid workers to the farthest corners of the earth. The Pentecostal awakening at Azusa Street in California, along with other independent revivals elsewhere, sparked a worldwide explosion of charismatic and Pentecostal missions that have led to the formation of the largest movement of Christians by the 21st century.

Increasingly, independent churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America provided scope for local leaders and believers to express their own unique versions of Christianity, some of them bizarre, even heretical, but others simply different and autonomous of Western missionary structures. In

China, Wang Mingdao, Watchman Nee, and John Song typified what was really a worldwide phenomenon, as Robert clearly shows.

Roman Catholics, meanwhile, had resurrected Matteo Ricci's approach of "inculturation" in a search for ways to make their version of the gospel truly indigenous.

Throughout the 20th century, "awakening internationalism" went hand in hand with an increasing emphasis upon friendship and social service in missions that "meant that education and medicine remained the largest areas of financial investment for established church mission agencies" (65). In these same circles, the idea of Christianity as a world religion harbored the "expectation that it could be expressed in nonwestern cultural terms" (67).

After World War II, as one nation after another threw off the colonial yoke, "native" churches also sought independence. Especially within the ecumenical movement, there was a call for a "moratorium" on missions in the "postcolonial" era, while evangelicals stepped up their efforts to bring the gospel to as-yet "unreached peoples." It is no wonder that "mainline" bodies quickly made peace with the state-sponsored Protestant organizations in China, while evangelicals sought to support the "underground" churches whose existence and rapid growth came to light after China opened to the world in the late 1970s.

The most significant development in the past 65 years has been the remarkable growth of non-western churches, as well as the proliferation of non-western missionary efforts, as Latin Americans, Africans, and Asians have mobilized and fielded tens of thousands of cross-cultural messengers. External factors, such as "decolonization, population explosion, urbanization, migration, globalization, and improved transportation and communication networks all played a role in the changes in Christian population" (70). As well as in the great addition of non-whites to the worldwide missionary force (though Europeans and North Americans still outnumber those from other regions).

Several new trends in missions include the formation of partnerships, the development of missions into a "multi-directional," "multi-faceted, multi-cultural network," and the huge number of those taking short term "mission trips" rather than moving to spend their lives in another culture. Robert notes that this has led to the formation of "a vast network of mission amateurs," while "the professional, language-fluent, bicultural, long-term missionary remained the backbone of cross-cultural mission" (73).

While the church has grown tremendously in China, Robert reminds us that Latin American and African Christians far outnumber their Chinese brothers and sisters.

She states that "Sub-Sahara Africa has registered the most dramatic growth in the number of Christians of any region since the mid twentieth century," resulting in the sending of missionaries to "Europe and the United States as part of the new African diaspora" (74).

Liberation theologies in Latin America pushed for political change, but they led to heightened spiritual vitality among Roman Catholics as peasants developed "a hunger for a deeper Christian

life” 9760. Healings, miracles, and care for the poor among Protestants helped to create an indigenous “charismatic” church marked by “the cultivation of spiritual gifts, healing of physical emotional illnesses, disciplined lifestyles . . . , and the pursuit of material prosperity” (77).

“In Asia, Christianity in the late twentieth century remained a minority religion in most countries . . . The perennial challenge for Asian Christianities was the attempt to be both culturally Asian and Christian at the same time, in a context where Christianity was historically viewed as a western, colonial religion” (77).

Though an Africa specialist, Robert reports that “the growth of Chinese Christianity was so rapid that by the early twenty-first century it was believed to be the fastest-growing church in the world” (78) She notes that this came as “networks of Chinese house churches multiplied, with emphasis on healings, prayer, singing, and Bible study,” without foreign assistance (78).

Those familiar with Chinese Christianity will recognize many points of contact among various “Christianities” around the world. It should help us put the Chinese situation into a broader perspective.

Part II: Themes in Mission History

In part II of her book (review of part I), Dr. Robert revisits the history of missions by focusing on three themes: 1. The Politics of Missions, 2. Women in World Mission, and 3. Conversion and Christian community.

Politics of Missions

As we all know, an immensely significant transition took place in the fourth century, when, under the Emperor Constantine and his successors, Christianity was first tolerated and then made the state religion of the Roman Empire. Hailed as a great blessing by many at the time, this connection between church and state has had a corrosive and corrupting effect on Christianity ever since, as the book proceeds to demonstrate (though not, perhaps, by the author’s design).

Indeed, one of the strongest lessons I learned from this brief history is that Christianity thrived on the margins of power and degenerated when it has occupied the center. From Constantine onward, big buildings replaced homes, while bishops gathered more and more power to themselves, funded by big budgets and buttressed, often, by big government. The oppressed often became oppressors and the persecuted turned into persecutors whenever church leaders had access to ecclesiastical or political power. It’s a very sad and sobering tale.

That connection between Christianity and politics has persisted almost without interruption or exception throughout the history church’s mission in the world, as Robert shows in both her brief chronological treatment in the first part of the book and in a special chapter on “the politics of missions” in the second part. Whether “at home” or “overseas,” Christian proclamation has often gone hand in hand with political power, though often against the wishes of the missionaries.

As a result of this nexus of power and proclamation, missionaries have been painted “with the brush of cultural and political imperialism” (87). They have been “condemned for introducing social or cultural changes, or for being connected to outside global forces such as imperialism, colonialism, westernization, or modernity” (88). Almost everywhere, the introduction of Christianity has “been charged with interfering with the established social order” (88). China – after Latin America, Africa, and India – might be called Exhibit “D” of all these charges, many of which are justified.

On the other hand, Dr. Robert takes pains to demonstrate that missionaries have, more often than not, worked for the well-being of those among whom they served, brought countless social benefits, and opposed colonial abuses. Specifically, people’s lives have been “improved through missionary efforts, including the introduction of vernacular literacy, schools, hospitals, modern agricultural methods, work to enhance the lives of women, suppression of the opium and drug trade, and the missionary study of nonwestern religions and literature” (90).

The “repeated attempts by missionaries to defend human rights and to provide education and medical care to people around the world belie the easy assumptions about their acquiescence in the colonial project” (96). A few missionaries stood between life and death for thousands of helpless Chinese during the Japanese slaughter of hundreds of thousands in Nanjing, for example.

Furthermore, “the role of indigenous initiative in mission” has been omitted from the critical narrative, as well as “the crucial role played by early converts to Christianity as mediators between traditional ways and Christianity” (94). Robert especially highlights the powerful ministries of John Song and early converts to Roman Catholicism in China.

Women in World Mission: Purity, Motherhood, and Women’s Well-Being

An expert in the history of women in missions, Dr. Robert summarizes her knowledge in a few pages to give an excellent summary of their unique contributions.

By and large, women missionaries have elucidated “the meaning of mission as service,” for they have “concentrated largely on lifestyles of service and personal relationships as the way to spread the gospel” (118–19). Dr. Robert uses Annalena Tonelli’s life as a paradigmatic example of such missionary life and work.

Purity: Thousands of women have chosen a life of celibacy as the best means of expressing their love for God and other people, sacrificing family life and all that goes with it. “Paradoxically, the choice of celibacy bestowed upon women a gender neutrality that allowed them to overcome the normal expectations of and limitations on women’s roles in traditional societies” (120).

From the wealthy women in Roman society who devoted themselves and their resources to the poor and to the church, to the order of deaconesses in the early church, to the highly organized societies for celibate women in the Roman Catholic Church over the centuries, these women

have gained independence over their own bodies and the roles and responsibilities usually assigned to them. In doing so, they have gained freedom to serve without distraction.

Motherhood: Many celibate women have been able, nevertheless, to attain the status of “motherhood” through the love which they have lavished on other women and children in their host cultures. Furthermore, the married Protestant women missionaries not only served as mothers in their own homes but reached out to share God’s love with local women and children and, like their celibate counterparts, found themselves regarded as “mothers” of many “children” besides their own offspring.

Two things stand out, at least to me: first, the way that women were able to penetrate the closed social systems that kept more than half the population from hearing the gospel from male missionaries. And second, the tremendous work that women missionaries have done to rescue widows, orphans, and others at the margins of society.

Protestant missionary wives have been able to strengthen the family as the primary unit of society and of the church, and to introduce a kind of “Christian” family model that allowed both sexes to exercise their God-given abilities, with wives being accorded the dignity they deserve.

Women’s Well-Being and Social Change: Finally, the author relates how women missionaries have been at the forefront for the advocacy of changes in customs deleterious to women, such as female circumcision in Africa, foot-binding in China, child-brides in India, and sex slaves in Japanese-occupied areas of Asia. Women have opened schools for girls and dispensed medical care for women and children. “Bible women” have carried the gospel to women and children in Asia and Africa, and some have become noted healers and preachers.

In an especially provocative paragraph, Robert highlights the importance of hospitality in the advance of the kingdom of God and quotes one missionary who said, “One must never underestimate the importance of a cup of tea in the evangelization of the world” (138).

Conversion and Christianity: The Missionary from St. Patrick to Bernard Mizeki

In this final chapter, the author deals with the ways in which foreign missionaries brought Christianity to local cultures, how they created communities, and how these communities, in turn, both changed their own cultures and affected the form in which Christianity took root in that culture.

The missionary is a bridge personality who serves “as an agent of religious and cultural change.” St. Patrick, as we all know, went from being a captive slave in Ireland to a missionary who helped to transform the land of his captivity into a “Christian” nation and culture. He saw himself as “a wanderer under God’s protection, . . . someone who operated on the margins of society” (148). A “stranger and sojourner,” he later so identified with the Irish that he suffered much for their sakes.

“The expansion of Christianity in Ireland took place on multiple levels, led by indigenous leaders” who engaged in all sorts of evangelism and education that eventually reshaped Irish

culture and made the Irish churches – or, should we say, monasteries – bases for further extension of the faith to Europe (151). In the process, some aspects of Irish culture were jettisoned, while others were incorporated into Irish Christianity. For example, Patrick acknowledged the existence of demons and devils and drew much of his persuasive power from his ability to defeat them in power encounters.

On the other hand, the violence of the Irish was countered, and to some degree tamed, by the gospel of peace. To their tribal identities was added a greater one: membership in the worldwide family of God through faith in a common Lord, Jesus Christ. The Scriptures were then used as a framework for a whole new body of law that “civilized” the wild Irish.

The story of Bernard Mizeki carries equal meaning and evokes similar emotions of wonder and gratitude. Originally from Mozambique, he served as an Anglican missionary in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He possessed rare linguistic aptitude, musical ability, and zeal. His work included evangelism, education, power encounters with local spirits, and care for orphans and other sufferers. Faithful at his station unto death, he has become a martyred “saint” to millions of African Christians.

The author concludes her energetic, enlightening narrative with an anecdote demonstrating her thesis that Christianity has become a worldwide religion and that the missionary endeavor is now multi-directional, multi-cultural, and multi-faceted. Since I want you to read her book, I shall only give you a hint: Her story traces the journey of a white South African to a major Chinese church leader and then back to South Africa.

Disciples of All Nations

by **Lamin Sanneh**

Lamin Sanneh. *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

This first volume in the *Oxford Studies in World Christianity*, also edited by Professor Sanneh, has set the highest possible standard. The author's elegant writing, impressive scholarship, expansive outlook, and incisive analysis combine to make this a book to read and re-read. A full survey being impossible, my review will only highlight a few major features of Sanneh's overall thesis, with a focus on the insights they provide for students of Chinese Christianity.

As the subtitle indicates, Sanneh builds his discussion of World Christianity upon a few "pillars." Presented in roughly historical sequence, they are: the "missionary" pillar of the New Testament and the early church; the "pillar of historical intelligibility" as applied to the encounter with Classical culture; the "comparative" pillar of "the Christian movement in Islamic perspective"; the "trans-Atlantic" pillar of "Old World precedents and New World directions"; the "colonial" pillar of the modern missions movement; the pillar of charismatic renewal; the "primal" pillar of "resurgence and the new order in West Africa"; the "critical" pillar, dealing with "civilization and the limits of mission"; and finally the "bamboo" pillar manifest in "Christian awakening and the New China."

Of particular interest to Sanneh is the "vernacular" pillar, present from the beginning, which allowed for the "translation" of Christianity into the languages, thought forms, and deep cultural structures of societies in which it became implanted.

The author, who was Professor of History and World Christianity at Yale University, makes little attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the spread of Christianity around the world over the past two millennium, though this rich volume would be a good start for such a study. Instead, he offers us critical perspective on certain key men (and women), moments and movements, particularly as they illustrate the indigenization of the gospel. Naturally, Sanneh draws upon his own background and extensive research to reflect long and deeply upon Christianity in Africa. Perhaps this should not have surprised me, but I discovered that the parallels with China are numerous and striking.

As Philip Jenkins points out, "throughout, Sanneh asks the critical question: How can we reconceive Christianity in a way that frees it from its European and imperial contexts, permitting the faith to adapt to the kaleidoscopic realities of different societies around the world?"

With that introduction – and invitation to enjoy the pleasures of this intellectual banquet for yourself – let us move to what we might learn about Chinese Christianity from this brilliant volume. We'll follow the order of the book for convenience and historical sequence.

In the first chapter, the author makes two major points: “Christianity [has] no inalienable birthplace and the church no territorial patrimony.” It brings new forms of social life “without the necessity of a promised land or the advantage of cultural privilege.” That is, Christians do not – or should not - sink their identity into any one nation, nor do they place their reliance on the favor of any government. The Roman Empire, seeing “religion as state monopoly” and intent upon controlling all public exercise of religion, “saw Christianity as a structural anomaly, and dealt with it as a political problem.” Recent analyses of China’s religious policy have come to similar conclusions.

These two competing ideas of this new and “foreign” faith brought the early church into conflict with the Roman state, with multiple persecutions trying both sides for almost three hundred years. During this period, however, Christians were growing both in numbers and in their penetration of Hellenistic culture with the new wine of the gospel. Philanthropic activities by Christians began to win public, and even official, recognition and admiration, while the superior morality and civic obedience of believers slowly allayed suspicions.

Christianity won the allegiance of more and more different peoples within the Empire, and even burst the boundaries of Roman control to gain adherents in neighboring countries among a variety of cultures, proving itself to be a truly universal faith. It placed “God at the center of the universe of cultures, implying equality among cultures and the necessarily relative status of cultures vis-à-vis the truth of God.” There is no inherently superior culture, nor one so “backward” that it can be ignored or despised – another major theme in the book.

One major contribution was a “transformed kinship” and “a new sense of social solidarity” brought about by baptism into the church of Christ. A fragmented Roman empire needed just such a social anchor to prevent total social disintegration. One thinks of China today.

Later, monasteries “redefined mainstream culture” by “hammering out distinctive styles of religious living.” Indeed, true Christianity will have the same formative influence wherever it is truly lived. At first, it spread among Arabs partly by taking advantage of the deep commitment to hospitality, which led naturally to “culturally prescribed ways of acknowledging God’s unfathomable hospitality.” Alas, without the translation of the Bible into Arabic, Christianity was left powerless against the advance of Islam – the same fate that befell the first three attempts to root the Gospel in Chinese culture.

Such Christianity as did develop in Arab societies was so shallow that “an indigenous Arab church failed to arise.” Meanwhile, the Eastern Greek church was hopelessly split by theological controversy and almost totally embroiled in national politics to present a home to Arab believers. The connection of the faith with an alien empire made its acceptance by Arabs all the more difficult.

“Things were different in Ethiopia,” where the Bible was early translated; identification with ancient Israel helped to give a sense of distinctive worth in a world dominated by Islamic nations; and the dynamic character of Christianity “offered a convincing rationale for established societies, as well as for those undergoing rapid internal change.” “The church provided the essentials of social security” and “a new sense of social solidarity.”

As Muslim armies attacked the “Christian” West and Byzantium, they encountered a church that had not conquered the Roman Empire but had been itself conquered by the empire. “The empire . . . converted Christianity.” In the early modern period, Muslims saw European Christianity as mostly committed to the good life, which “demanded as its price the repudiation of God.” How true is that today?

Fast forward to the Age of Exploration – or the beginning of Western imperialism, as it is more properly called. On the one hand, as Sanneh shows at great length, the ties that bound the missionaries to their rapacious home countries did untold damage to the cause of the Gospel. On the other, the missionary movement itself led to a radical re-thinking of the connection between Gospel and culture. In the end, acceptance of Christ by peoples of Latin America, Africa, and Asia “transformed Christianity into a world religion,” though Westerners were long in recognizing this fundamental fact.

In both Africa and China, the message of the missionaries was widely accepted, often despite the methods and ungodly ways of some missionaries. Local believers saw that Jesus was not bound to the white man’s culture; that they were valued in God’s sight; that essential human dignity was affirmed for them by the Scriptures; and that they could overcome their anger at European imperialism by forgiving their former masters in the name of Christ. All the while, they have been struggling with what it means to be both African – or Chinese, or Indian - and Christian, both affirming some aspects of their traditional cultures and denying others.

After the calamitous disaster of World War I, non-western peoples lost much of their respect for European civilization, and the Christians had to face increased pressure just because they had embraced a Western religion; they have mostly come through that phase, however, and now the church is firmly planted as an indigenous movement. As part of that de-linking with missionaries, both in Africa and in China, independent, and mostly charismatic, leaders and movements have sprung up, outside the confines of mainstream mission organizations. Mutual suspicion and even criticisms have marked this stage of “growing up,” but now these movements are being held accountable by other Christians within their own cultures, with regard to both doctrinal orthodoxy and biblical morality.

Though appreciative of the efforts of missionary education and medical work, Sanneh shows how John Nevius exposed the fallacies of relying on institutions like schools and hospitals to spread the Gospel. He applauds both Nevius and Roland Allen for going back to the Bible for effective means of communicating Christ – rather than Western culture – cross-culturally.

Sanneh’s long chapter on “Christian Awakening and the New China” shows him to be an acute student of the rise of the Chinese church. He finds the Western liberal idolization of the communist revolution, with their premature announcement of the replacement of Christianity by Mao’s brand of Marxism, to be highly ironic in the light of the subsequent imploding of communism as a viable world view and the explosion of indigenous Chinese Christianity. After a long period of “appeasement” of communism and the government by both Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders, the surge of conversions and growth of mature leadership has ushered in new era in Chinese Christian history.

He quotes a Chinese believer who observes that “the Christian idea of love has introduced a new value system in China, including the idea of repentance ‘which is lacking in Chinese culture.’” The faith has become truly indigenous, with its own leaders, Chinese Bibles, songs, and style of worship. “The church looks and feels Chinese.”

On the other hand, Sanneh is aware that a huge percent of “Christians” “said they embraced Christianity for reasons that had to do with their personal physical health” and that “the values of the Gospel . . . are in sharp contrast to the new Chinese values of making money and having more and more possessions.” It seems that European Christianity has no monopoly on worldliness.

He notes David Aikman’s theory that Christianity might become “the dominant worldview of China’s senior elites,” with significant consequences for its foreign policy. For this reviewer, that prospect raises the specter of a new Chinese Constantine, who would co-opt a willingly patriotic church and replicate the cultural captivity of Christianity that forms a major theme of this book. The fact that many Chinese believers seem to consider China as *Shenzhou* – “the land of God” – recalls too many tragic parallels which Sanneh has described in the earlier chapters of his book.

The author helpfully balances the usual focus on the Protestant church in China with a discussion of the Roman Catholic dialogue with China. He notes the quickening collapse of boundaries between the state-controlled Patriotic Association of Catholics and the Catholics who hold on to their allegiance to Rome.

Much of the fascination and complexity of this volume derives from Sanneh’s description of the two-way process of communication that the expansion of Christianity has spawned, with a proper shattering of Western cultural and national pride, as well as a clearer understanding of the universal nature of the Gospel, as inevitable consequences. The “Christian” Western civilization that can rightly boast of many intellectual, artistic, philosophical, governmental, and even religious achievements has, in the process of the Gospel’s assimilation by people of other cultures, also been exposed as arrogant, blind to its own faults, limited in understanding of some fundamental features of biblical revelation, and woefully lacking in moral depth and integrity.

Meanwhile, the translation of the Scriptures has not only penetrated local cultures with the Gospel but has led to a renaissance of indigenous languages and traditions. Not infrequently, the very language of the Bible infused existing languages with new life, and non-Christians found themselves using new terms and metaphors. Recent studies in the birth of modern Mandarin have documented the potent influence of the Chinese Union Version upon 20th-century literature, for example.

The traffic has gone both ways. Western missionaries quite often lost much of their cultural pride as they became more familiar with the rich tapestry of local traditions. Some rejected the Gospel altogether, but more of them received new insights into God’s revelation as they encountered different ways of thinking and living. One thinks especially of the rebuke to Western individualism presented by the value which traditional cultures place upon the claims of community; our monochrome worldview that is blind to anything that cannot be seen; our

pathetic reliance upon money, power, and organizations rather than upon the Holy Spirit and the Word of God; and our shallow concept of friendship.

Indeed, the Western church, which is now so marginalized and empty of real spirituality, has begun to turn to the “younger” churches for examples of truth faith, hope, and love. Stories of Chinese Christians, such as those found in *The Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* (www.bdcconline.net) and the *Salt & Light: Lives of Faith the Shaped Modern China* series of books, have encouraged many non-Chinese to break out of our lukewarm lives into authentic discipleship.

Naturally, no one will fully agree with everything in a work of such scope, complexity, and sophistication. I have questions, for example, about his frequent references to the “Hellenization” of New Testament Christianity, whereby “Jesus became a Greek philosopher” and “The Greek Christ ended up trumping the Jewish Jesus.” Such statements need more elaboration and qualification than Sanneh could allow himself, and distracted me from his major point, which is the fundamental “translatibility” of the gospel message.

Like many others, Sanneh interprets the Apostle Peter’s move toward Gentiles as essentially the rejection of a cultural boundary marker. Both Peter and Paul, however, are following the example and teaching of Jesus, who from the beginning viewed the inclusion of Gentiles as the necessary corollary to what Paul would call justification by faith alone, not obedience even to the moral law of Moses. The issue is not faith versus “national custom and social affiliation,” but faith for all believers “without regard to their moral record, spotty as that is,” as Sanneh himself also says. The internal contradictions and over-generalizations of the Introduction and first chapter are, to me, the only real weakness of the book.

But even though some of his theological judgments may be questioned, Sanneh’s sure grasp of history, and especially the history of the expansion and inculturation of Christianity around the world, makes for thrilling reading. For students of world Christianity, this volume is a must.

To Change China: Western Advisors in China

by Jonathan D. Spence

Spence, Jonathan D. *To Change China: Western Advisors in China*. New York: Penguin Books, 1980. First published 1969 by Little, Brown (New York).

In this fast-paced volume, China history expert Jonathan Spence studies the lives of sixteen Western advisors of various sorts who went to China to make a difference in that great nation.

Four missionaries receive careful treatment: the Jesuits Schall and Verbiest in the 1600s and Protestants Peter Parker and W.A.P. Martin. John Fryer, who taught at a missionary school, belongs on the fringes of missionary history, but his early career as an English teacher makes him of interest to others like him in our day.

Other members of this colorful cast are two mercenaries (Ward and Gordon), an educator (Edward Hume of Yale for China), a Russian revolutionary (Mikhail Borodin), a civil engineer (Todd), a physician (Bethune), and three American generals (Chennault, Stilwell, Wedemeyer).

To Change China holds at least three kinds of value: 1. History - The biographies include ample information about the times of each person, making the book a very readable primer of Chinese history from the 17th through the mid-20th centuries, 2. Biography - Spence describes both actions and attitudes, and 3. Instruction - It contains both explicit and implicit principles for effective service among Chinese.

Along the way, we find subtle and nuanced discussions of the best methods of evangelism (though Spence cannot understand the Evangelical point of view) and of the complex relationship between Western culture and the long-term welfare of China.

This review will concentrate upon the relevance of these brief personal sketches for foreigners working among Chinese. The careers of these men demonstrate that success or failure depended upon several key qualities, including:

Competence

Like Ricci before him, the Jesuits Adam Schall and Ferdinand Verbiest excelled in their mastery of Chinese language and literary culture. They could speak, read, and write on a par with the learned Mandarins whose conversion they sought. Verbiest became the official interpreter for the Chinese government in dealing with foreigners, and he eventually became tutor to the Emperor, having learned the Manchu language for this purpose.

Likewise, Peter Parker, W.A. P. Martin, and John Fryer attained fluency in spoken and written Chinese. Martin learned the Chinese Classics and could compose hymns in Chinese even before

he began writing works in that language. Horatio N. Lay studied Chinese under “Dr Gützlaff, a celebrated language teacher and missionary,” and “made such rapid progress with the Chinese written and spoken language” that he was appointed as an interpreter over others senior to him (96-97). Both he and Hart insisted that their staff in the Customs Service “acquire fluency in Chinese.”

And so it goes. The men who could win the trust and respect of the Chinese first spent years in hard study of that difficult language.

But their competence extended further. The Jesuits excelled in astronomy and mathematics, Parker possessed extraordinary skills as a surgeon, Martin had a wide knowledge of several branches of learning, Ward and Gordon shone on the battlefield, Todd was a brilliant engineer, Hume commanded respect as a medical school administrator, Borodin knew how to make a revolution, and Stilwell’s generalship earned the admiration of his troops.

John Fryer concluded, “If I could have my way, not a single missionary should say one word in public till he had lived with the people and studied the local dialect . . . at least five years, and passed an examination. Just imagine the ridicule which such people bring on Christianity (145).”

Courtesy

Competence is not enough, however. Interviewers for top corporations say that they assume that most applicants can do the job. The successful candidate must also possess what some call “style.” Spence’s book illustrates how much of a difference courtesy makes. “Though Schall was a forthright man, he was horrified by the brash tactics of two Franciscan friars who appeared in Peking in 1637” (13). Verbiest, even more tactful than Schall, attained the Emperor’s favor.

Parker’s delicate handling of Chinese forms of courtesy won him the respect and affection of Commissioner Lin, but he later made enemies by his intransigence. Gordon refused a costly gift from the Emperor, committing “an incredible affront to the Chinese,” and thus prompting an attempt to have him removed.

Spence, who seems almost to be imitating Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives of the Greeks and Romans*, paints other such contrasting portraits. Lay was an irritant to the Chinese, but Hart, who followed him, brought a welcome contrast: “He established a firm basis with his new [Chinese] employers by emphasizing – as did the Chinese themselves – cordial interpersonal relationships.”

Stilwell squandered his diplomatic capital by privately, then openly, criticizing Generalissimo Chiang, while Wedemeyer “was cautious and conciliatory, punctilious to Chiang Kai-shek and courteous to Chennault,” both of whom Stilwell had frankly despised (268).

Character

Listen to Spence’s comments about some of these men:

Schall: “Never tolerant of human frailty” (12).

Lay: “Hot-tempered, energetic, and often arrogant with his Chinese opposites . . . Self-assured, most ambitious, and extremely capable. . . Immature, unable to accept criticism or delegate authority, and vindictive to those whom he considered a threat to his position” (97).

Consistency

Fryer: “With no goad except personal ambition, life in China could fall into a wearisome pattern of drudgery and disappointment. Such as the case for John Fryer, who sought wealth and honor in China” (140).

Borodin (the atheist revolutionary) was described by colleagues as “[a] wholesome kindly individual. . . ; a very pleasing personality. . . [who gives the] impression of sincerity and deep earnestness.” Spence adds, “Behind this courteous front Borodin was, of course, a tough and capable man, working carefully to consolidate his position” (188).

Hume, the leader of Yale-in-China, “was a sensitive man, genuinely fond of the Chinese, and eager to learn everything he could of Chinese medical techniques, which he frequently acknowledged were more effective than his own” (166).

Commitment

Hume said that “what were needed in Chinese were ‘foreigners who love the Chinese’” (177). Commitment to the Chinese as people, and to China as a nation, enabled most of these men to contribute significantly to the well-being of her people. Commitment kept them going despite constant, often heartbreaking, setbacks.

Commitment to “progress” fueled the fires of zeal for the Chinese to learn all that the West had to offer, especially science. Martin, like many others, believed that “Westernization must precede, and would inevitably lead to, Christian conversion” (133). Borodin came to China committed to worldwide revolution as the only solution to the plight of the masses. Stilwell and Wedemeyer were committed to victory in the war against Japan, and to the welfare of the Chinese soldiers whose fighting skills they increasingly respected.

But what about commitment to Christ and his kingdom? Here Spence traces a recurring theme among the missionaries. Each one discovered that competence in “worldly” knowledge and skill led to greater and greater concentration on “secular” activities. In the end, they were all frustrated that there was so little time for direct Christian work.

Another, and sometimes deeper, frustration, gripped almost each one whose career this book relates: “It took Fryer twenty-eight years to find out that the Chinese were using him, not he them” (157). They went to China to “make a difference,” and expected to be appreciated, admired, and imitated. When the Chinese failed to do as they suggested, or even turned on them in bitterness, the sadness was profound.

Spence concludes that their story “is more a cautionary tale than an inspirational tract,” and not only because “negative personal attributes offset the positive ones – such as arrogance, impatience, intolerance, tactlessness, or stupidity” (291).

Inevitably, we must ask about motives: “One... was to help bring either spiritual or material improvement to China... Help meant making China more like the West... But [there was] a more complex motive, a desire not so much to help China as to help themselves... [They sought] a chance to influence history... and thus to prove their own significance” (291).

Though I cannot recommend this book highly enough, it should be balanced with biographies of “satisfied servants” such as Hudson Taylor, Jonathan Goforth, Pauline Hamilton, and David Adeney, who show us how foreign efforts “to change China” can and should be done!

A Star in the East: The Rise of Christianity in China

by **Rodney Stark and Xiuhua Wang**

Stark, Rodney and Xiuhua Wang. *A Star in the East: The Rise of Christianity in China*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2015.

This book “explores how and why this religion is growing at such a rapid rate and speculates on its future growth. After all, if the religion keeps growing at its current pace, in a decade there will be more Christians in China than in any other country in the world.” (Location 69, Kindle edition; all numbers in notes hereafter indicate the Kindle edition location).

Chapter 1: The New Religious Awakening in China

Despite what appeared to be the near extinction of religion during the Cultural Revolution, religious faith has been undergoing something of an explosion in the past few decades. Traditional faiths like Buddhism and popular religion (which are in fact hard to distinguish) have made a comeback, but the rapid expansion of Christianity is something new in Chinese history. Thus, it may be more appropriate to call what is going on in China today a religious ‘awakening,’” rather than a revival of traditional religion (2).

The authors support their claims about the expansion of Christianity in China by referring to two very large surveys, backed up by field reports. Strict statistical analyses, conducted according to recognized principles of sociological research, make this book much more authoritative than others before it.

The Decline in “Irreligion”

Two problems have made it difficult to track the real number of religious adherents in China. One is that people may be unwilling to reveal to interviewers that they have religious faith because of government anti-religious policies. The other, more important problem is that most Chinese “define religion as belonging to an organized religious group, rather than consisting of practices, such as praying in temples, or of belief. Hence, some Chinese say that they believe in Jesus Christ while denying that they are Christians” (5). Recently, however, more and more Chinese have been willing to say that they have a religion.

Practicing Folk Religion: Chinese by the hundreds of millions practice folk religion, the “most basic form” of which “involves ancestral spirits” (5). We can say, therefore, that “traditional Chinese folk religion ‘has revived with great force’” (7).

The Revival of Buddhism: The number of people willing to admit that they are Buddhists has likewise risen, especially since the government has moved to legitimize this traditional faith in a variety of ways, despite its foreign origin.

Islam: Only two percent of China's population are Muslim, and they live mostly in the border areas, including Inner Mongolia and Tibet. Many of them believe that they are discriminated against by Han Chinese and by the government, and more and more violent attacks against Chinese have been launched in recent years, exacerbating tensions further.

Christianity: By far the fastest growth has taken place among those who identify as Roman Catholic (RC) or Protestant, or who participate in overtly Christian practices. Most probably, the total came to about 60 million in 2007.

Chapter 2: Christian Missions to China: 1860-1950

This chapter recounts the familiar story of Western missions in China since the so-called "unequal treaties" made residence in China and evangelization in all parts of the country legal for foreigners, including missionaries.

The authors treat the usual topics, including early missionary efforts and results, the Taiping Rebellion, the roles of women missionaries, the Boxer Massacres, Christianity and Chinese nationalism, the effect of the Great Depression on missionary sending in the 1930s, and the impact of World War II and the civil war upon missionaries and Christians.

We learn some interesting facts, with supporting statistics, such as the preponderance of American and British missionaries, the high mortality and illness rate among missionaries before 1891, the much greater numbers of Christians in urban and coastal areas than in rural areas in 1918, and the devastating effect of liberal theology on the number of missionaries sent out by "mainline" denominations in the twentieth century. ["Without the conviction that they were bringing priceless truths to those in need, the mission spirit quickly dissipated in liberal Protestant circles" (34).]

Chapter 3: Repression and Christian Resistance

After the Communists came to power, they moved to impose control upon religious groups, including Protestants and Roman Catholics. The authors claim that Roman Catholics, because of their loyalty to the pope, endured much fiercer persecution from the beginning of Communist rule, while the government "tolerated many Protestant groups for a few years" (43). Then came the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when all religious activities were banned, and religious leaders and practitioners were brutally persecuted.

"Ironically, the persecution of Protestants may have been the single most beneficial event for the success of Christianity in China!" (43-44). The expulsion of missionaries made the church completely indigenous. "Gone too were the American liberal Protestant missionaries who weren't sure why they had come to China" (44). And – to the authors, this is crucial – "given that religious conversion is the result of close interpersonal relations, to deprive a religious movement of a public presence and the capacity to make mass appeals has very little significance" (44).

The rest of the chapter traces the remarkable growth of Protestant Christianity in China since the 1950s, despite repression and sometimes brutal persecution.

They attribute the spread of Christianity to the dynamic of conversion: “People tend to convert to a religious group when their social ties to members outweigh their ties to outsiders who might oppose the conversion, and this often occurs before a convert even knows much about what the group believes” (49). “To convert someone, you must be or become a close and trusted friend. In turn, when someone converts to a new religion, then that person usually seeks to convert friends and relatives, and therefore conversion tends to proceed through social networks” (50).

That means that “the missionary enterprise consists of two essential stages or steps” (50). First, the missionary becomes a close friend with a local person, who may then eventually accept the new faith. That person then seeks to bring family and friends into the group of converts. The role of the missionary after that is to educate the converts in the tenets of their newfound faith.

“Because conversion spreads over networks of close personal relations, it is not a very visible phenomenon and, in the face of repression, can be conducted in secret. That makes it extremely difficult to detect or punish” (50).

Anti-Roman Catholic persecution was especially crippling, with the death or imprisonment of large numbers of priests and bishops creating a severe shortage in ordained clergy. Because of its hierarchical structure, Roman Catholicism in China was thus hampered, whereas “the Protestants would seem to have a nearly inexhaustible supply of preachers” (56). Their churches thus “not only survived underground, but grew” (57). Even the Little Flock Movement, though targeted by the government for extinction, survived and grew. Why? “They kept a very low profile and organized cell groups and home meetings at the grassroots level” (59).

Since Opening and Reform began in 1978, both official Protestant and Roman Catholic organizations have operated with relatively little interference (though since the book was published, cross removals and building demolitions in the Wenzhou area have made the atmosphere more tense). Even unregistered Protestants have enjoyed a great deal of freedom and space to worship and teach. By contrast, the underground Roman Catholics, who remain loyal to the pope, have endured constant pressure and persecution. In both cases, believers hold to a conservative form of Christianity. “Why? Because persecution served as a potent selection mechanism” (72). Furthermore, these groups have “high member intensity,” which fosters growth through conversion of friends and relatives of the believers.

The result: Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics by about ten-to-one now.

Chapter 4: Converting the Educated

This chapter shows that educated Chinese are more likely to convert to Christianity and turn from Buddhism than those with less education: “[N]ew religious movements nearly always are based on elites,” because of a sense of spiritual deprivation. Modernization and globalization have produced in China a “crisis of cultural incongruity – a conflict between the cultural assumptions of modernity and those of traditional religious culture,” leading to a sense of spiritual deprivation that produces a tendency to turn away from Buddhism, the traditional faith, to Christianity (76). This is true throughout East Asia.

Chapter 5: Converting Rural China

Confronting the fact that Christianity has also spread like wildfire in rural areas, the authors try to show that this has not been due to material or power deprivation, as many have assumed. First, the differences between rural and urban church growth are very slight. In other words, Christianity is growing quickly everywhere in China. Second, it seems that “it is the more affluent rural Chinese who are most likely to convert” (100). As for age, most rural Christians, like their urban counterparts, converted when they were young, not elderly. China does reflect the worldwide fact that more women are religiously active than men, but this has nothing to do with a sense of powerlessness. In short, the usual theory of material deprivation driving religious conversion does not seem to hold true.

What does emerge clearly from recent, and rigorous, studies is the power of social networks in conversion. Most people become affiliated with a Christian church through the influence of someone whom they know well, and who has sought them out. Since social networks are stronger in rural areas, that explains why Christianity has grown slightly faster there, and why it appears to be more stable and vigorous.

Chapter 6: Future Prospects and Consequences

The final chapter seeks to address three questions: 1. "How large will the Chinese Christian community become?" 2. "Will Chinese Christians splinter into a variety of denominations differing in their intensity and doctrines?" and 3. "If Christians become a major presence in China, what difference will it make?"

Here are their answers:

1. At current growth rates, in 2010 there will be 149.7 million Christians; by 2030, 294.6 million; by 2040, 579 million.
2. “Chinese Christianity is and will be separated into many denominations,” with different doctrines and different degrees of intensity in their commitment to the faith, to each other, and to evangelism.
3. As it is elsewhere, Christianity will make Chinese believers healthier and happier. The social impacts will include greater material income, higher educational levels, and lower child mortality rates. A free-market economy is not necessarily more likely to emerge, however. Nor is a more democratic society inevitable, unless the growing numbers of Christians in the Party exercise decisive influence in decades to come.

Evaluation

Strengths

By and large, the authors do a very good job telling the story of Christianity in China since 1900 within the context of Chinese history. Their account is concise and largely accurate. Brief, vivid biographies of outstanding Chinese Christians, usually with photographs, fill out the narrative and highlight the major themes. Most of these are especially well written.

Aside from the basic helpfulness of its historical narrative, the great strengths of *A Star in the East* are these:

1. For the first time, we have solid statistical studies, yielding reliable numbers, for the history of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in China. This makes the book immensely valuable for researchers and historians.
2. Their sociological approach helps us to understand just how the church has grown so rapidly, through social networks, which can point towards effective practices in the future.
3. They specifically and persuasively refute the common notion held by some urban Chinese church leaders and many in the West who claim that Christians must have more public space and a more public witness to grow and to influence society. Specifically, large congregations meeting in big buildings and engaging in public programs are not essential, or even helpful, for solid, lasting growth. Christianity expands, both in numbers and in societal influence, when believers meet in small groups, preferably in homes, where their transformed lives and relationships attract others and eventually leaven an entire culture.

A Star in the East provides a complement to Brent Fulton's *China's Urban Christians* (reviewed earlier in these pages) and, like Fulton's book, is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand Christianity in China.

Weaknesses

No book is perfect, and this volume has some weaknesses. Some generalizations and even some specific statements appear to be incorrect, or at least need careful qualification. For example: "Subsequent to the rise of Communist rule, [Roman] Catholicism has been the target of far more intense government opposition than has Protestantism" (14). "British General Charles 'Chinese' Gordon commanded [the] imperial army" fighting the Taipings (17). "Often, buildings were sacked and burned and sometimes the missionaries were injured or even murdered" (22). Beginning in the 1920s, there was "endemic friction" between Chinese Protestant leaders and Protestant missionaries (32). "For several years after coming to power the Chinese Communist regime ignored the Protestant churches led by Chinese" (43).

In discussing attacks on missionaries and Christians in the nineteenth century, they do not make a distinction between the hostility against Roman Catholics and Protestants. The former were resented for holding property; gaining treaty rights that granted equal social status and real political power to priests and bishops; being too closely tied to, and supported by, the French government; and enjoying the constant protection of Chinese converts from lawsuits. The Protestants in the coastal areas were also guilty of intervention in lawsuits, the so-called "religious cases" that so riled Chinese officials.

They correctly say that the foreign legation held out courageously against vastly superior Qing firepower but fail to mention that the imperial forces, apparently deliberately, restrained their attacks, probably aware of the inevitable foreign victory and the consequences for China of a

massacre of diplomatic personnel. (See A.J. Broomhall, *The Shaping of Modern China*, Volume Two, 687-688.)

Their interpretation of the relative “advantage” of RC missions in China because of its many similarities to popular religious practices and architecture would seem to be correct. Others would argue, however, that some of these similarities stem from non-biblical Roman Catholic customs, and that the resulting form of Christianity resembles folk religion so much that what we see comes close to Christo-paganism, not true Christianity.¹⁰ The same might be said of a great deal of rural Protestantism, however.

Like some others, they do not adequately distinguish between the policies and practices of the China Inland Mission (CIM) and most “mainline” mission organizations. For example, the CIM was quicker to turn control over to Chinese Christians and experienced less conflict with their Chinese colleagues.

The biographical sketches about Witness Lee, Watchman Nee, and John Sung gloss over some controversial questions. Though they state that Nee wrote many books, in fact he authored only one, *The Spiritual Man*. All other publications under his name consist of edited versions of his magazine articles and transcripts of his sermons.

More importantly, the authors deliberately downplay the role of “doctrine” in conversion, which they see as a sociological phenomenon. Though their case for conversions through social networks is powerful and convincing, we should not ignore that what we have seen in China is a vast movement of the Holy Spirit, working through the message of Christ and his Cross preached by courageous and dedicated men and women, often in a context of great suffering. The book does acknowledge the importance of healing miracles but does not address the efficacy of prayer.

Their definition of “Christian,” likewise, seems limited to the social affiliation of individuals, rather than one’s personal relationship with God. This is appropriate, given the sociological approach of the authors, but does not reflect biblical usage. More than semantics is involved here because, as many have observed, Christianity in China is increasingly “a mile wide and an inch deep.” That is why church leaders now agree that their greatest challenge is to nurture true faith, genuine hope, and sincere love in those who claim to follow Christ.¹¹

¹⁰ For rural Roman Catholicism’s similarity to folk religions, see, for example, Richard P. Madsen, “Beyond Orthodoxy: Catholicism as Chinese Folk Religion,” in Stephen Uhalley, Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu, eds., *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001, 233-249). Madsen, a Roman Catholic, uses the milder term “Folk-Catholicism.”

¹¹ For some implications of this book for Chinese Christians and those working with them, see the companion article at: <http://www.reachingchineseworldwide.org/blog/home-meetings-the-way-forward-for-chinese-christians>.

The Unexpected Christian Century: The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900-2000

by **Scott W. Sunquist**

Part I

Sunquist, Scott W. *The Unexpected Christian Century; The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900-2000*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

Noted historian on the subject of World Christianity, Scott Sunquist has given us another outstanding volume. The author of *Understanding Christian Mission* (reviewed in these pages here) and co-author of *History of the World Christian Movement, Vols. I & II*, he possesses both a wide knowledge of the Christian movement's history as a whole and a comprehensive grasp of Christian missions in all its dimensions.

The Unexpected Christian Century follows a format that departs from the region-by-region approach of the *History of the World Christian Movement* series. That is because, "in looking at the twentieth century we can no longer talk about the development of Christianity in South Asia as separate from the development of Christianity in North America or in West Africa. With globalization coming to flower in the twentieth century, Christian movements like Pentecostalism occurred almost simultaneously in China, South Korea, northeast India, Chile, California, and Scandinavia. It is more honest to talk about global themes than about geographic regions" (xxiii).

After opening with a brief history of World Christianity from the Gilded Age to the Great War, this book therefore discusses five grand themes:

1. Christian Lives: Practices and Piety
2. Politics and Persecution: How Global Politics Shaped Christianity
3. Confessional Families: Diverse Confessions, Diverse Fates
4. On the Move: Christianity and Migration
5. One Way among Others: Christianity and the World's Religions

An Epilogue: Future Hope and the Presence of the Past concludes the volume.

The twentieth century surprised "the religionists, the historians, and the politicians." It was one of the "three great transformations in Christianity in two thousand years." The first took place in the fourth century, when Christianity "moved from being a persecuted minority to being a favored faith." This changed everything. The second transformation occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when "Christianity broke out of its small enclaves of Western Europe, South India and Ethiopia and became a truly worldwide religion. . . . The third great transformation took place in the twentieth century, a great reversal . . . in that the majority of Christians – or the global center – moved from the North Atlantic to the Southern Hemisphere and Asia," and "in

that Christianity moved from being centered in Christian nations to being centered in non-Christian nations. Christendom, that remarkable condition of churches supporting states and states supporting Christianity, died” (xvi-xvii).

A key aspect of this was “the globalization of the faith,” in which “Christianity participated in (we might say was one of the pioneer movements in) globalization” (xvii). Christians are found everywhere, but so are Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. The spread of Christianity came about as a result of various causes, including “the spread of Pentecostalism . . . [which] forced migrations of people, ongoing missionary work, and the advances in communication and transportation. As a result, it is not really possible to talk about Christianity by region or continent because so many of the themes are global” (xviii).

Hence the structure of this book.

Introduction: From Jesus to the End of Christendom

The Introduction tells the story of the first nineteen hundred years of Christianity, “noting the major shifts and turns that took place until we end up with Christianity of the imperial age, or the Gilded Age, when almost all Christians lived in the West. . . . This introduction is about how Christianity, an Asian religion, became a European and Euro-American religion. This book is about how the twentieth century, actually just the latter half of the twentieth century, changed all that” (1).

We learn that the earliest Christianity was a movement, the Jesus Movement, that relied on the power of the Holy Spirit rather than earthly powers. Then, in the fourth century, a few rulers, including Constantine, the emperor of the Roman Empire accepted this new faith. “The results transformed the new religion.” From then on “the early spread of Christianity depended to a great extent upon the conversion of rulers” (2).

Lest we misunderstand that fact, Sunquist hastens to emphasize, as he does throughout, that “from the beginning, Christianity has had a missionary impulse” (3). Believers just had to tell others the Good News.

As Christianity became a multi-national, multi-cultural religion, it had to find ways to express a universal faith in local contexts. Sunquist believes that the ecumenical creeds represented an attempt to “express the meaning of Christ in ancient philosophic concepts” (3). I’m not sure about that. Yes, some key terms, like “substance” and “person” were taken from existing philosophical vocabulary, but they were chosen in response to questionable explanations of the biblical language about Jesus and his relationship to God the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Though times and terminologies have changed, up to the present Christians have not been able to expound the core elements of the faith any better.

Still, it is true that the perennial challenge for missionaries and their converts has been so to “translate” the Bible’s message into local languages and cultures as to remain faithful to the Gospel while being understood by new adherents.

Christians in different lands had a great impulse for unity; they knew that they belonged to the same spiritual family. Thus, the emergence of the Great Church through the Creeds.

In time, “the impulse for unity often became a need for uniformity,” as state-backed church leaders imposed religious conformity upon all the people in their realms (4). This sad feature of Christianity persisted in Europe and other places until the American Constitution created a new model: the separation of church and state. The story of Christianity until recently, contains far too many tales of persecution of “heretics” or “unbelievers” by “Christians.”

One way to resist state-sanctioned ecclesiastical control was to form monastic societies. These new organizations spearheaded the expansion of Christianity into new regions for many centuries afterward. In time, however, they often became institutionalized themselves. In the sixteenth century, two great transformations took place, by which “Christianity developed four major families from two, and Christianity became a world religion” (7). “Spiritual” and “Reformation” church bodies were created, shattering the unity of Western Europe.

The second transformation was that, through the explorations and conquests of Roman Catholic powers, Christianity broke out of Western Europe into Africa, Latin America, India, and Asia. “The methods of evangelization in this early period were medieval (convert or else!), and yet Latin American was closely evangelized” and outposts of Roman Catholicism were founded in Africa and Asia (10).

Christian Mission Recovered: Seventeenth through Nineteenth Centuries

This was the great period of missionary work around the world. Sunquist highly praises the Jesuits, who spearheaded the Roman Catholic movement, for their sensitivity to local cultures and for seeking to “present Christian faith in local forms and language” (11). Their methods have had strong critics, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, however.

Often following in the footsteps of Roman Catholics, Protestants later created their equivalent, the missionary societies that took the Gospel to Africa, Asia, India, the Middle East, and Oceania. They, too, were concerned for local cultures, “especially learning language,” and they made translation of the Bible their first priority. Almost from the first, medicine and education became “the two great and powerful tools in the toolbox of Protestant missions” (13).

Christianity, Modernity, and Missions in the Nineteenth Century

Roman Catholic, and to a lesser degree, Protestant missions often went hand-in-hand with promotion of Western political power and culture. Towards the end of the century, Protestants became divided between “liberal,” or “modernist” and “fundamentalist” camps. These divisions persist today.

Chapter 1 - World Christianity: The Gilded Age through the War

After this foundational introduction, Sunquist describes what global Christianity looked like in 1900. At the turn of the century Christians confidently believed that, with the expansion of the reach of “Christian” empires and the opening of global markets, Christianity would spread, too.

“It has always been a problem to identify Christian rulers with the king of kings or Christian nations with the kingdom of God” (16).

This chapter look at “dynamics at play in Christianity around the turn of the century,” and “the Christian presence globally during the transition from the Gilded Age (1870s–1900) through the Great War [World War I]” (16). The War, in which “Christian” nations slaughtered each other, shattered confidence in Western civilization in general and, for some, Christianity as well. The influenza pandemic killed fifty million people. The Great Depression devastated Western economies and affected the world. Germany re-armed and another war loomed.

Meanwhile, the center of political, military, and economic power was shifting from Western Europe, especially Great Britain, to the United States. American big business funded big missions and big ecumenical conferences, full of confidence in a big movement that would soon sweep the whole world. Some missionaries brought the old gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, but others touted modern science, economics, education, medicine, and progress in general.

While all this was happening, “non-Western church leaders were quite aware that Western Christianity was struggling to rise above its own materialism and nationalisms” (17). Indeed, during this period, “The main story would be the spreading decay of this Christianity as the West . . . and the remarkable vitality of Christianity from the margins” (18).

“One of the greatest themes of this period of transition in the early twentieth century was the relationship between Christian missions and colonialism” (19). This very “delicate” relationship was becoming the main issue. Colonial experiences by native peoples both helped and hindered the growth of Christianity. “Oppression, more than colonialism or imperialism, seems to be the most important factor” (19).

An even more important question, however, is “about the intent of the colonial powers and the intent of the missionary societies” (20). Christianity’s role “was not unqualified support for the colonial agenda” (21). The situations were complex and diverse, but, generally, “Christian mission planted the seeds for the survival and revival of Christianity in non-Western lands, and at the same time planted the seeds of future movements of liberation in Asia and Africa” (23). Translation of the Bible stimulated both Christianity and local languages and religions; Christian education, especially higher education by liberal missionaries, fueled the revolutionary nationalist movements that later threw off the colonial yoke.

Sunquist highlights the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference as “the transition of Western Christianity from spiritual movement to modern business affair.” It also “reminds us how divided Christianity had become since the sixteenth century” (24). “Third, the conference marks how central the missionary movement had become to Western cultures,” with thousands attending, journalists reporting, and politicians supporting the meeting (25).

The conference also showed “the internal struggle that Western missionaries and their missions had to give up leadership of their overseas institutions” to local Christians, only a tiny number of whom were invited to the gathering (26).

For the last time, Protestants at this meeting all agreed that Christian mission “was rooted in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all peoples,” and the mandate to carry this saving message to all nations (26).

Finally, the conference marked the “beginning of one of the major themes of Christianity in the twentieth century: the ecumenical movement for global Christian unity”; a continuation committee set in motion plans that would lead to the World Council of Churches (27).

Within a year, however, the theological consensus of Edinburgh was breaking down, as major church leaders began to hold the view that Christianity must not only study and respect other religions, but also learn from them and perhaps even incorporate some of their teachings into the faith.

In America, Christians were divided between those who held to the traditional message and those who thought that the old faith must accommodate itself to the so-called “findings” of modern science. The Bible came under criticisms as old-fashioned and full of errors. The government stepped in and insisted that Christianity must no longer be the central assumption of public education. Another question was how the Gospel was to be expressed in an increasingly secular society.

As Western Christianity lost vitality, its struggles impacted believers in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. In China, some followed modernist teachings, while others believed and boldly proclaimed the ancient Gospel.

Pentecostalism also brought vitality to Christianity in other nations. Immigration led to the strengthening of movements like Eastern Orthodoxy in North America.

Meanwhile, major transformations of Christianity were taking place outside the West. In China, Jing Dianying started a Pentecostal movement. The period saw the rising influence of Wang Mingdao, John Sung, Watchman Nee, David Yang, and Marcus Cheng, all of whom “stressed repentance, conversion, holiness, doctrine, and discipleship. They were the vanguard of a great revival that swept through the Chinese churches of the late 1920s and 1930s. Evangelical and antiliberal, they decried the leadership of modernists and liberals in their churches” (33, quoting Harvey, *Acquainted with Grief*, 24).

In this chapter and elsewhere, Sunquist pays detailed attention to the many African independent churches that became a continental movement parallel to the campaign for national independence. In Latin America, political movements influenced by Marxism changed the political landscape, including the Mexican revolution that greatly reduced the influence of Roman Catholicism. As in North America, “newer immigrants were arriving . . . bringing newer forms of Christianity” (34).

All over, the new ideologies “challenged the place of the church, as well as the very existence of God. The Christian church had never faced such a formidable and influential global idea in nineteen centuries.” At the same time, “especially for the optimistic Americans, it was a time of great opportunity and hope. Christian empires were extending their influence, and churches, schools, and even Christian colleges were being built in the heartland of Hindu, Muslim, and

Buddhist territories. . . . Overall, the assessment was that the greatest opportunities for Western Christianity were ahead and that the Great Century that was coming to a close was opening the door for an even greater century. What actually happened, no one predicted. Western Christian hope was hope misplaced” (35).

Having introduced the book’s first chapters, which introduce the “unexpected twentieth century” itself, I shall narrow the focus of the rest of this review. Since these pages highlight Chinese Christianity, I shall only discuss what Sunquist says about that in the treatment of his five major themes.

Chapter 2 - Christian Lives: Practices and Piety

“Christianity from the beginning has been the story of individuals in communities living out the life of Christ in and for particular contexts. It is the story of everyday people placing their lives, hopes, and decisions in the light of Jesus Christ and the church. And so, we now turn to examine some twentieth century followers of Jesus, particularly those who have had a great impact on the shaping of Christianity across the globe” (37).

To represent China, Sunquist first discusses the great evangelist John Sung (Song Shangjie, 1901–44), “whose impact was felt globally, although only among Chinese speakers” (50). He received a PhD in Chemistry at Ohio State University, then briefly attended Union Theological Seminary. During an intense emotional and spiritual crisis, he experienced God’s saving love.

After returning to China, the Bible would be his only textbook, and he would retain a great distrust of Western theologians and missionaries. Sung’s significance, in term of his ministry and his reputation, comes from his strong commitments to basic issues of Christian lifestyle and Christian teaching. He lived very simply, eating mostly rice, vegetables, and teach, with very little meat. He wore a simple white Chinese cotton outfit and prayed for hours every day for specific people he had met in his travels.

“In his travels he spoke clearly about repentance from sin and the need to reshape lives in conformity to that of Jesus Christ” (51).

Tens of thousands responded to his messages with lasting repentance and trust in Christ, and probably thousands received healing through his prayers. Wherever he spoke, “he would form evangelistic bands, who were to study the Bible together, pray for the salvation of others, and then go out to evangelized their communities” (51).

“Sung represents a very strong stream of Chinese Christianity that has a Confucian concern for right behavior, a Chinese concern for independence from the West, and a ‘Bible only’ approach to theology” (52). I mostly agree with that assessment, except that Sung’s exhortations to a holy life were supported by reference to Scripture.

Watchman Nee (Ni Tosheng, 1903–72) is one of the best-known Chinese Christians in the West, largely because many of his sermons were transcribed and then translated into English as books – more than 60 of them. Though heavily influenced by British “Keswick” teaching, Nee’s version of spirituality “would in the end look more Confucian than Anglo-Christian” (52). Nee,

He established what became a denomination, though he decried Western denominationalism. Arrested in 1952, he spent the last twenty years of his life in prison.

“His loyalty to his flock, his writings, his deep spiritual cultivation, and finally his suffering have made him a very influential Christian leader globally. Most of Nee’s churches did not join the TSPM and became, and continue to be to the present day, one of the major streams of the underground church movement in China...” (53).

“In contrast to these Chinese evangelists and spiritual leaders are those Chinese Christians who accepted Western theological thought and political theory and developed theology and church leadership more publicly” (53).

To be more precise, these men accepted Western liberal theology. They included Y.T. Wu and Anglican Bishop Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting, 1915–2012). He “personally, but not publicly supported the Anglo-Catholic Marxists” (54). Wang Mingdao, and other independent Chinese Christian leaders, “spoke against what they saw as the theological compromises of Christians such as Wu Yaorong (Y.T. Wu), graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York and the first chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)” that was the only state-sanctioned Protestant body (53).

After several years in the West, Ting returned to China in 1951 to head up the “government-recognized China Christian Council (CCC). As elsewhere in this book, Sunquist believes that “it is not our responsibility here to make judgments,” but he does note that Ting was instrumental in getting Protestant churches opened after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and that he “argued for greater religious freedom while a member of the National People’s Congress and at the Chinese People’s political Consultative Conference” (54). (He does not mention Ting’s leadership of the TSPM in joining with government forces to persecute unregistered Protestants.) Sunquist correctly says that “Ting was more of a political theologian, thinking and writing about how the church can exist and participate in society” (54).

He acknowledges that “Ting’s positions were strongly criticized by many Christians overseas and by Chinese Christians who suffered during the first three decades of Communism,” but goes on to emphasize “the great impact he has had on Chinese Christianity and, globally, on how Christian theologians think about Christian life in society” (54).

Chapter 3 - Politics and Persecution: How Global Politics Shaped Christianity

“The simple confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, coupled with the obedience such a confession requires, led to Christians being persecuted throughout the century and around the world. . . . [T]he twentieth century was the century of the greatest persecution and martyrdom for Christians” (78).

After presenting a list from a variety of countries and contexts, he observes that “nationalism and national ideologies (dictatorial fascism and Communist atheism) are the major causes.” In looking at “global political change, persecution, and Christian life,” Sunquist states: “Key to this change was that the world map was transformed between 1946 and 1991, which meant that the global ‘Christian’ empires dissolved and Christianity lost its privileged position” (79).

During the last four decades of the twentieth century, the center of Christianity shifted dramatically from the West (Atlantic world) to Africa, Asia, and Latin America (the 'non-West,' for shorthand). "In the West, Christianity declined largely as the result of "intellectual movements from the Enlightenment" (79). Political changes served as the main catalyst for the faith's growth in Asia, where "Christianity, detached from colonialism and the supports of Western missions, stood on its own and became rooted in local social and cultural realities" (79).

With "about 4,300 people . . . leaving the church in Europe and North America every day, and not being replaced," increases in the rest of the world, meant that "at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Christianity was nearly two-thirds a non-Western . . . western religion" (81).

"Another great shift has been from Protestantism to the newer Spiritual churches (Pentecostal, Free Churches, and indigenous churches). . . . First, many of the indigenous churches . . . communicate the message in patterns that are more culturally appropriate for their neighbors . . . Second, most of the missionary work at the end of the twentieth century was done within continents by local, indigenous Christians" (82).

Wars played a huge role in this shift as "Western nations, mostly identified as 'Christian,' were also responsible for some of the greatest violence. . . . World War II . . . devastated Western Christianity. Christians were killing other Christians for what had become a higher loyalty: nation" (83). In Japan, it was predominantly "Christian" America that dropped atomic bombs, while in Germany most "Christians" supported Hitler.

Regional conflicts also had a big impact on Christianity. "First, in some cases Christianity survives and then thrives on the other side of war," as in Korea (85). "The same could be said of the Chinese War of Liberation (or Civil War). . . . On the other side of the war and persecution, the Chinese church grew dramatically" (85).

"Second, at times war decimates the Christian community and cuts off the life source of the church," as it did in the Middle East and Spain. "Third, wars have created Christian refugees, who have then diversified Christianity in the West. . . . Finally, when wars end, there is always a new order. . . . The two great determinants of how Christianity survives are the overall health of Christianity before a war and the resulting social order after a war" (86).

China

Since 1949, "the growth rate [was] greater in two generations than in any single nation in Christian history" (81). The church suffered greatly under Mao and his successors, but the result was unprecedented growth, both there and in nearby countries, where expelled missionaries and migrating believers spread the gospel.

The author correctly points out that it was mostly those "who had come from Anglican, Episcopal, Congregational, and some Presbyterian and Methodist missions and churches, as well as the YMCA and the World Christian Student Movement," who "sought ways to work with the CCP" (Chinese Communist Party) and supported the state-sponsored (and controlled) Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) (90). Those who resisted the TSPM "came mostly from Baptist

churches, independent churches (including indigenous churches), and China Inland Mission churches.”

Sunquist’s conclusion is striking:

“Left on their own – cut off from foreign money, leadership, or training – Chinese Christian found ways to survive and pass on the faith. . . . The difficult experience of the Chinese churches under Mao’s form of Communism did more to promote Chinese Christianity than 140 years of Protestant missions. Interestingly, both the missionary work and the Communist persecution were necessary” (90).

We can confidently expect the same outcome from the new wave of persecution under the current Communist regime.

The Unexpected Christian Century: The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900-2000

by **Scott W. Sunquist**

Part II

Sunquist, Scott W. *The Unexpected Christian Century; The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900-2000*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

Chapter 4 - Confessional Families: Diverse Confessions, Diverse Fates

This chapter traces the different ways in which the trends discussed earlier impacted Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Spiritual churches around the world. After very helpful analyses of the orthodox and Roman Catholic experiences, Sunquist turns to Protestantism.

“Protestantism, starting late in the modern mission era, greatly outpaced Roman Catholicism globally in the twentieth century. But by the end of the . . . century the growing edge of Christianity was suddenly passed on from the Protestant churches to the Spiritual, African Indigenous Churches, and unregistered churches in China” (112).

Sunquist states that the two main “themes after 1920 were the tandem issues of ecumenical unity and mission,” and frames his discussion accordingly. He traces the rise of the ecumenical movement as it was crystallized in the World Council of Churches (WCC), noting its increasing commitment to liberal and then to liberation theology. The 1932 Hocking Report called into question the meaning and methods of traditional missionary efforts and sparked a ferocious controversy at home and on the mission field, including China. More conservative theologians challenged the idea that Christians should aim to collaborate with other religions in works of social reform, not compete with them, by proclamation of the gospel.

Other important themes were “liturgical development, especially the proliferation of Christian music,” and “the increased role of the laity, especially of women.” This last theme is more important in Protestant Christianity, and even more significant (or radical) still among the “Spirit family” (122-123).

The author also pays attention to formation of parallel missionary and ecumenical organizations among evangelicals, such as, in America, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the missionary conference convened by Billy Graham and John Stott at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974.

“By the end of the century the WCC maintained a broad involvement in missions, with much greater emphasis on peacemaking, environmental issues, and justice. The evangelical groups also maintained a broader involvement of mission than before, with greater emphasis on evangelism and church planting among ‘unreached people groups.’” But it was “no longer just a Western discussion. As the Western institutional structures promoted ongoing discussions, most of the

missionary work had become the prerogative of Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans after the 1980s” (116).

In China, the split between liberal and evangelical approaches expressed itself in the tensions and division between the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the unregistered churches, which were many times more numerous. The totalitarian Communist government imposed a forced unity upon “mainline” Chinese denominations, while a common commitment to the Bible and to the spread of the gospel united unregistered groups in spirit, if not organizationally.

As in the rest of the world, liberal church leaders in China stressed social transformation, while evangelicals focused more on repentance, faith, and a transformed life. This Christianity “was more biblical in orientation, more evangelistic, more diverse, and more like the early church” (122).

Spiritual Churches: Independents and Pentecostals

“Of all of the transformation and themes we might discuss concerning Christianity in the twentieth century, the single most important is the rise of ‘four stream’ churches: those that are independent and rise up, or suddenly spring up, in local contexts” (124). These churches emphasize “the spiritual life that Christian faith engenders and even requires. [It] may be a matter of exhibiting spiritual power or uncommon gifts, but often it is seen in transformed behavior” (128).

This is true in China, too. Sunquist mentions the Great Shandong Revival, which affected all denominations; the Jesus Family; the Spiritual Gifts Movement; the revivals that accompanied the preaching of the Bethel Band and John Sung; the True Jesus Church; the Little Flock of Watchman Nee; and churches led by “important pastors like Wang Mingdao,” all of which “provided indigenous Chinese Christian leadership that would become the foundation for a large percentage of Christianity that germinated during the Mao years (1949-76)” (131).

These movements “often have Confucian concerns for a moral and ethical life mixed with a Daoist openness to the mysterious and mystical.” Out of them “have come new indigenous hymns and spiritual writings,” as well as dynamic evangelistic and, recently missionary, endeavors (131).

Chapter 5 - On the Move: Christianity and Migration

“At their best moments Christians recognize that they are sent in the pattern of Jesus Christ, to go into the world – to all the nations – proclaiming redemption and exhibiting the coming kingdom of God on earth. In the twentieth century this missionary identity underwent an odd twist, based on a false assumption.” Christianity was for a long time considered a Western religion because its main base was in Western Europe. “Slowly, as Europeans moved out to the Americas, Africa, and Asia, a new belief came to be assumed, that missionary work was ‘from the West to the rest’” (135).

“From the very beginning Christianity was a missionary faith in two ways: apostolic individuals being sent out from a church center and migrations of people carrying the cross of Jesus into new cultures and nations” (137). This chapter explores the latter form of “missionary” movement.

“The twentieth century . . . brought two odd twists to this global understanding of mission and Christian identity. First . . . ‘the nations’ began to come back to the old Christian homelands of Europe and the Americas” (137). As Western colonial empires have collapsed, migration has transformed the religious landscape.

The second “strange twist” relates to the missionaries themselves; most of them are no longer European or North American. “Just as the missionary movement up to the twenty-first century could be seen as an undercurrent of modern migrations, we can also understand the modern, non-Western missionary movement as an undercurrent of present migration trends” (138). By 2000 “more than 62 percent of the Christians in the world were non-Western, and more than 70 percent of the missionaries were non-Western” (138).

Most of those who migrate are “seeking a safer or healthier place to live. . . . Most of the migrants of the world are intensely religious people, and at times the experience of migration magnifies the religious commitment” (139).

Sunquist examines in turn several causes of migration. The two fundamental ones are communications and transportation, both of which make migration much easier than before. Other factors are urbanization, as masses move into cities, the urbanization of China being the greatest internal migration in history. Economics plays a huge part, as “poverty pushes and hope pulls” (140). Many migrants “drift away from the religion of their childhood, and some become Christians. There is a much higher rate of Christian practice among Chinese, Korea, or Indian professors” of faith in the West than in their home countries (140).

“Chinese flooded out of China to Southeast Asia as well as across the globe after the victory of Mao’s Red Army in 1949. With these Chinese immigrants also came Western missionaries who had been working in China. Thus, Mao’s political policies helped to spread Western missionaries – most of whom were fluent in Chinese dialects – and Chinese Christians to Southeast Asia.” Further, the “persecution of Christians and the removal of foreign support strengthened the small Christian community in China” (141).

One of Sunquist’s major themes is that “Christianity develops, for the most part, along the borderland, or along the overlapping folds of cultures. . . . Christianity, unlike other religions, seems to exist within or on the missional edge” (144).

In the case of the Chinese, at “the end of the twentieth century, as China was once again opening up to the world, Chinese began moving out. Most . . . have only a rudimentary understanding of Christianity. Unexpectedly, however, many Chinese who have encountered Christians in their adopted countries have been converted. Many of these . . . return to China, either permanently or on visits, with their newfound faith. This is not a planned strategy of a church or of a mission agency, but many Christians who receive Chinese in their countries do what they can to enhance the movement” (145).

As one who spent twenty-five years intentionally seeking to reach Chinese who have come to the United States, I would only need to disagree with one part of that succinct statement of an enormously significant development: For at least the past twenty years, China-related ministries in the West have very consciously sought to take advantage of this major work of God in bringing the gospel to people who have been, in some ways, more receptive than they would have been had they remained in China.

Christians also join in migrations, for various reasons including a desire to escape persecution. Chinese believers who left Hong Kong in 1997 planted churches in Canada that later actively evangelized newcomers from China. Those from Taiwan formed Bible studies and churches that have had a huge gospel influence on students and scholars who have come to the West since the 1980s.

In the conclusion to this chapter, Sunquist draws out the significance of massive migration: First, “Christianity is more and more a religion practiced as a minority faith without ‘Christian’ government support,” as it was for 1,700 years in Europe (150). In short, “Christendom Christianity . . . is coming to a close. . . . Second, and closely related, is the shift away from Western religious hegemony” (151). Christianity is entering into other cultures as a minority faith and is appropriating indigenous religious culture into itself, forming a new synthesis.

This new development comes as a result not just of migrations but also “the surprising fruitfulness of Western Christian missions” (152).

Third, without its former support and protection from governments, Christianity will be more vulnerable to hostile governments. The dissolution of Christendom means, on the other hand, we must remember that “it was such an alliance with power that gave Christianity its darkest blots in the historical logbook. . . . As always, Christianity is centered on the person of Jesus, not in a culture, nation, city, or ethnic group” (152).

Chapter 6 - One Way Among Others: Christianity and the World's Religions

“The missionary encounter of the nineteenth century set the stage for three related movements in the twentieth century: religious pluralism, religious conflicts, and the conversion of many from one religion to another” (164).

As religions met and often clashed with each other, sometimes violently, within Christianity some argued for “greater tolerance and pluralism in practice and belief,” while others “became anxious and belligerent about the growing pluralism.” Some in this second group became intolerant of diversity; others became more committed to missionary work among other religions (154).

In this very wide-ranging chapter, the author explores these general trends. New Religious Movements (NRMS) arose all over the world, some of them mutations of Christianity and other world religions, others being amalgamations of several different faiths.

Christianity and Asian Religions

“Western Christianity developed two minds regarding its relationship to other religious beliefs, especially in relation to Asian religions. . . . One of the great themes of Christianity in the twentieth century is the development of theologies of religion related to Christian interaction with the great religions of Asia” (159). Influential “mainline” theologians, greatly influenced by Enlightenment rationalism, called for a “humanization” of Christianity that made it more like other faiths and less “superstitious.” At the same time, missionaries and local Christians were “encountering a world more like the first than the twentieth century as they became embedded in African, Latin American, and Asian communities,” where exorcism, healings, and other spiritual experiences were common.

While theological liberals developed a theology and the practice of interreligious dialogue, evangelicals, still felt “the call to be witnesses to all nations” (164). Throughout the chapter, Sunquist seems to be mostly aware of “the loss of Christian vitality in the West, the decline of missionary work among theological pluralists, and the divisions that persisted in the remnant of Western Christendom” (164). Only in a few passages, and very briefly, does he seem to take note of the huge rise of interest in evangelical missions and the ongoing energy of the evangelical and Pentecostal/charismatic missionary movement, though he is surely aware of these.

China

Reflecting conditions at the time of writing, the author says that “today religions are not seen as being evil and expedient, but as useful and inevitable” (166). At the same time, he rightly draws attention to cults and sects that are millenarian and even violent, such as Eastern Lightning (now called Church of the Almighty God), which is noxious mutation of Christianity that reminds us of the Taiping rebellion of the mid-nineteenth century. (Since 2017, the Chinese government has launched an all-out campaign against all religions.)

Shifting Beliefs and Relationships

Returning to an earlier theme, Sunquist writes, “I want to emphasize that Western Christianity in the twentieth century lost its confidence. In retrospect we can say that it lost its misplaced confidence. Rather than trusting in the work of God through Jesus Christ as its power, Christendom leaders trusted in their institutions, their empires, and the cultural forms of faith” (170). As missionaries learned more about other faiths, a new respect for other religions grew into a belief that all religions are equal – at least among liberal theologians and missiologists. Thus, “Christianity in the West, in an age of great comfort and affluence, slowly dissipated as it became its own worst enemy, dying by suicide, or at least by growing irrelevance” (171).

At the same time, “in Asia . . . Christians were actively proclaiming and spreading Christian faith,” and developing forms that were more indigenous (172).

Religions Growing and Declining

In China, Confucianism continues to serve as the “core” that is “surrounded by other religions,” including folk religions (173). Sunquist claims that “the folk-religious aspect of Chinese

religious life is not returning,” apparently on the basis of statistics available to him at the time, but contrary to what we now know about the massive resurgence of traditional Chinese religions, at least before the recent crackdown. He does correctly note the striking rise in the number of agnostics and atheists, not only in Russia and China, but also the West.

Once again, he concludes that Christians at the start of the twenty-first century, though still about 34% of the world’s population, now live predominantly outside the West. “Christianity now has a darker complexion and speaks more languages and dialects than any other religion in the world. The twentieth century was a Christian century in that Christianity finally completed the movement out of Western Europe to become a truth global faith – a process that began in the fifteenth century.”

The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 was being fulfilled as never before, and “the vision of John in Revelation [7:9] was closer than ever to being fulfilled” (176).

Epilogue: Future Hope and the Presence of the Past

This concluding section is so eloquent and powerful that I am tempted to quote it in full, but a few highlights must suffice.

Where the Twentieth Century “Great Reversal” Has Brought Us

On the one hand, “We live in the ruins of civilizations, hopes, systems and souls,” wrote George Florovsky in 1955, citing the decline of Christianity in the Soviet Union and Western Europe and “then the loss of Christian culture in the United States” (178-179). He concluded that “if there is any historical future at all, it may well happen that this future is reserved for another civilization, and probably for one which will be quite different from ours” (179).

Sunquist agrees. “There is a vitality, hope, and life to Christianity, and this hope is now a historical reality among the poor and minority groups . . . among the powerless Christian minorities in Asia and among the poor in Africa and in Latin America” (179). More specifically, he quotes veteran China missionary Calvin Mateer, who wrote in 1907 that “the future of the church and of the world lies wrapped up in this great people,” that is, the Chinese (179). Christian hope moves this great religion forward, “and now we see that there may even be Christian hope in one of the most ancient and immovable civilizations, China” (180). This Christianity, like China itself, will be diverse, but Christians will “recognized themselves across such cultural and social divides,” showing that “the centeredness of Christianity in the person of Jesus Christ” (180).

“Christians are united around the Word of God, revealed in the Bible, revealed in creation, and incarnate in the communion of his followers” (181). In addition to their common allegiance to the Word of God, Christians recognize that “[m]ission and evangelism remain a permanent duty of the Church at all times and places” (181, quoting Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople).

What the Twentieth Century “Great Reversal” Has Taught Us

“First . . . the Jesus movement has always been about clay vessels and the glory and power within [not in any worldly power, as some have always believed]. . . . Second, the Jesus

movement thrives on borderlands, where cultures overlap and encounter one another. . . . Third . . . the apostolic nature of Christianity is part of its essence. Another way of stating this is that Christianity atrophies without missionary expression.

“Finally, it should be remembered that the unexpected Christian century is a paradox, the type of paradox that is at the root of Christianity. Jesus talked in parables about the need for a seed to die for it to bring fruit. . . . Suffering and death are essential to the DNA of Christianity. This paradoxical century of Christian reversals can best be understood as the planting of Christian seeds throughout the globe during ‘The Great Century’ [Kenneth Scott Latourette’s name for the nineteenth century and its massive missionary movement]” (183-5).

As an historian and missiologists, Sunquist affirms that the “missionary movement made the miraculous growth in Africa and in parts of Asia possible. . . . The miracle of Christian growth in China is directly related to missionary in earlier decades and even centuries. The appropriation of that gospel message was the work of local people, but the message that was delivered [by missionaries] was given in a form that could be understood and then be reshaped to make sense to local farmers and traders” (185).

In short, “the development of Christianity in the twentieth century resulted from the synergy of Western missions and non-Western appropriation. . . . [Despite its flaws] missionary work, with great sacrifice and suffering, established some small, local Christian presence, then, in each of the many contexts, local people adopted the teachings of Jesus and made them their own,” often at great cost to themselves and their families (186-187).

This tells us that “the message of the gospel is more powerful than human motives and more gentle than human powers.” Missionaries from non-Western countries today move out “in ways not that different from the Europeans and Americans of the past, but with little of the worldly power. . . . A gentle and suffering Savior will be Lord of all these efforts in the future, as in the past” (187).

Evaluation

Overall, this is an outstanding book, of great usefulness to anyone wanting to understand the immense changes that took place in the twentieth century. It is also a marvel of conciseness: Sunquist packs an enormous amount of information and analysis into fewer than 200 pages.

Throughout, he seeks to maintain almost strict neutrality as he describes people and movements from hugely divergent streams of Christianity. In general, I think he succeeds in presenting different points of view in a way that those on the “Inside” would consider fair and accurate. Though an evangelical, he portrays Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals favorably and sensitively.

My only difficulty with his method is that at times Sunquist appears to affirm radically different positions as if they were of equal fidelity to the Scriptures. In other words, in seeking to be ecumenical and broad-minded, he frequently seems to endorse mutually contradictory convictions. He often reproduces opinions without qualification, as if they were true, rather than introducing them with some statement like, “according to”

The reader is left with the question: Does the author really agree with and endorse, for example, both Liberation Theology and conservative evangelicalism? He portrays Y. T. Yu (Yu Yaozong), who helped found the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, in a positive light, though Yu was very liberal in his theology and the TSPM has often worked closely with the Communist state to persecute those who chose not to join the TSPM.

Perhaps it's best to see Sunquist as a teacher of history who aims simply to present the best of all the different men and movements he surveys, leaving the readers to make their own evaluations.

That might work for very knowledgeable and theologically trained persons but could also lead to a great deal of confusion for others.

Other Comments

While Sunquist is definitely correct that Christianity declined in Europe and among mainline Protestants in America in the twentieth century, we should also note that evangelical and Pentecostal-charismatic churches experienced tremendous vitality and growth. That trend slowed and has almost stopped in the early years of the twenty-first century, to be sure, but American Christians with traditional beliefs, though perhaps shallow in their theology and inconsistent in their practice, demonstrated enormous energy while liberal Protestantism was hollowing out.

During that same period, missionaries from the North America helped to spearhead the explosive spread of Protestant Christianity that forms the main theme of this book.

His rootedness in mainstream ecumenical Protestantism results in detailed treatment of the two themes of church (meaning denominational) unity and mission, perhaps with less coverage of developments among evangelicals than would have been appropriate. For example, Sunquist talks about "Western theology," by which he means liberal and neo-orthodox theology, without acknowledging the stunning growth and vitality of evangelical and conservative theology in the North America in the latter half of the twentieth century, of which Carl Henry was one major catalyst and spokesman.

Finally, he writes in several places of the indigenization or enculturation of Christianity in Africa and Asia in ways that would seem to endorse what evangelicals would consider syncretistic.

These criticisms should not in any way detract from my delight in, admiration for, and strong endorsement of this remarkable book, one which, perhaps, only someone with Sunquist's immense learning and elegant style could have written.

Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory

by Scott W. Sunquist

Sunquist, Scott W. *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Scott Sunquist has given the whole church a beautiful book. Writing out of his own experience as a missionary in Asia and then as an American-based theological educator, writing from decades of careful study, and benefitting from his wide exposure to mission in the name of Christ, the Dean of the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary has forged a synthesis of history, theology, and applied missiology that will benefit all sorts of readers, including both beginners and veterans.

This volume combines theory and practice, general surveys and specific examples, professional reflection and personal experience, lessons from both the Eastern and Western church, ecumenical and evangelical, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant perspectives. The style combines clarity and elegance, precision and passion, objective information, and subjective response.

Introduction

The introduction lays the foundation by tracing the history of missiology, a relative latecomer to the academic curriculum. He defines key terms: mission, missions, missionary, missiology, and missional. Interestingly, he retains the old word term “missionary” as a biblical noun for one who is “sent from the heart of God to proclaim the present and coming Kingdom of God to all nations of the earth” (8). He observes that “theology starts with mission,” both in the history of the church and in the fact that “missiological reflection is both the context of all theology and the first movement in theological reflection” (9).

While describing some definitions of mission, he notes their common points: “Mission” involves crossing frontiers, communicating an essential core message, and contextualizing that message within particular cultures. He then describes this book as a missiology that is “[t]rinitarian, catholic, and evangelical” (15). Missiology speaks of the mission of the Triune God, involves the entire worldwide church, and centers upon the gospel of God’s work in Jesus Christ.

Nine contextual concerns inform Sunquist’s approach:

1. “Theology” – including missiology - “must be ecumenically informed (globally and from many churches)” (16).
2. “Missiology must be big enough to include various strands of Christianity...” and “focused enough to be distinguished from the Rotary or local Garden Club.”

3. We must be aware of the special characteristics of twenty-first century Christianity. It is “mostly non-Western,” it is “growing outside the older boundaries of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches” to include “spiritual and indigenous forms of Christianity,” and it is now less organized and much more diffuse than previously (17).
4. “The major issues of today have to do with religious encounters, political presence, and ongoing human-induced tragedies” (19).
5. His major dialogue partners include a small, but representative, group of thinkers from various times, places, and traditions. This is a major key to understanding the book.
6. Mission “is really a dimension of our spirituality;” missiology, therefore, is “a spiritual theology.”
7. Christianity is unique, because it speaks of the “uniqueness of God’s redemption” in Christ (19).
8. He follows Andrew Walls in “understanding that Christianity is both incarnational [Jesus tabernacles among us, and so is at home in all cultures], and it is a pilgrim faith (Christians are not at home; we are pilgrims and refugees)” (19).
9. The gospel must take root in all cultures, but it must also challenge all cultures.

Part 1: “Suffering and Glory in Mission: The Mission Movement”

Sunquist, who has already published standard works of Christian history (including *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*; *Explorations in Asian Christianity: History, Theology, and Mission* ([link](#)); and (with Dale Irvin) *A History of the World Christian Movement*, 2 Volumes), begins the book with a broad survey of the history of the Christian mission movement. He does this for several reasons: Christianity is a historical religion, and “Christian missions is a process that takes place in history” and is “both influenced by the historical and exists for the sake of influencing what is historical” (24).

As you might expect, the author’s treatment of the history of mission(s) is both comprehensive and focused; his theme remains the suffering and glory of the church in mission. A few major subsidiary themes stand out: the necessity of learning the local language and culture, the centrality of Bible translation, the role of renewal and revival in sparking new mission movements, the folly of wedding the gospel to any particular culture, or of expressing it in terms which promise worldly benefits alone, the unhappy association of Western missions with imperialism, the central role of mission societies, the place of the Great Commission in motivating evangelical missions, and the necessity of appreciating local cultures.

In the 20th century, other themes appear: the urgent imperative of fostering truly independent indigenous churches, the checkered role of expensive institutions (such as universities and hospitals), the revolutionary results of 20th century wars and independence movements, the growth of the ecumenical movement, and the rise of Spirit and Pentecostal churches. In addition to these themes, the author explores the growth of the worldwide evangelical movement, the

sudden rise of non-Western churches, the debate over the place of “liberation” in mission preaching and praxis, the boundaries of inter-religious dialogue, the vast changes brought about by Vatican II, the post-World War II “nationalizing of missions and the decline of the West” as a missions force, rapidly replaced by mission societies from other nations, and increasing dialogue about mission among evangelicals, liberal Protestants, and Roman Catholics.

Although particular statements here and there may be questioned, overall this section strikes one as an almost magisterial overview of the history of missions. It deserves repeated readings and reflection.

Part 2: The Suffering and Glory of the Triune God

With this brief historical background, which Sunquist admits is incomplete, Part 2 seeks to root missiology in Scripture and the Great Tradition (that is, the essential doctrines of Christianity as expressed in the ecumenical creeds, especially the Nicene Creed). As one example of why we need to know how other Christians have understood the gospel, he cites the popular, but tragic, loss of repentance and confession of sin in the evangelistic message of many people today, and thus the lack of spiritual depth in too many churches.

He believes that his approach has three helpful features: First, he sees the mission of God as “a matter of our participating with Jesus Christ in his suffering love for the greater glory of God to be revealed.” This will, of course, “critique any and all gospels of health and wealth” (172). Amen! Second, he envisions “mission as a fundamental dimension of Christian existence,” and thus as central to the church and “a matter of basic discipleship” for all believers (172-173). Finally, “mission is primarily a matter of spirituality,” “an expression of spiritual life in God,” and thus something about which ancient disciples can teach us (173).

At this point, Sunquist offers his own definition of mission: “Christian mission is the church’s participation in the Triune God through the suffering of Christ, who was sent by the Father for the redemption and liberation of the world, by means of the conversion of individuals and cultures, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the end that God be glorified in the nations and in all of his creation” (173). Every part of this definition will be unpacked in the following chapters. Here I would only note the necessary insistence upon our participation in the suffering of the Lord Jesus.

How I wish I could just list some of the powerful and illuminating statements and concepts in this section, including quotations from figures from church history! A few examples:

- “All of the Bible is about God’s mission and therefore our mission as well. Mission is one of two major themes of the Bible (the other being God’s glory). There is a basic Bible story – a metanarrative, if you will! – that must be told.”
- “Trinitarian language for God has always been expressed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” so “Mother” is not an appropriate title for God (190).
- “Jesus as missionary, Jesus as message, and Jesus as sending Messiah are all part of a study of Jesus in the mission of God” (202).

- “The central image of this story [about Jesus] is the cross” (205).
- The “central concern” of God’s mission is “God saves (from sin)” (207).
- “The mission of God carried out by the church will be resisted. Jesus’ response to this resistance, and the church’s response, is to speak clearly, act faithfully, and receive the rejection in gentleness and humble submission” (212).
- “Christian spirituality is centered on humble witness through suffering” (214). Try telling that to Joel Osteen!

The chapter titled, “The Holy Spirit in Mission: Presence, Participation, and Power” provides such rich food for thought that space does not allow more than the slightest reference. Space does not allow more than the slightest reference to this very rich chapter. The author laments the absence of attention given to the fundamental role of the Spirit in mission and seeks to provide a corrective. In short, “Christian mission is a dynamic process whereby the Holy Spirit is at work in the elect to bear witness to the salvific and liberating work of Jesus Christ for all nations. The active agent – the power and the personality, the righteousness and the relationship – in Christian mission is the Holy Spirit” (232). He writes of the Holy Spirit and the church, in Acts and in the ancient church as well as the Spirit and the God of the Old Testament. Aside from one or two references to the “conversion” of cultures, I found the sections on cultures and contextualization, as well as the discussion of other religions, both balanced and challenging.

Part 3: “The Suffering and Glory of the Church: The Church in Mission Today”

After first establishing the fundamental declaration that the church is missional by nature, Sunquist further treats the church as “the community of worship and witness,” (Chapter 9) where believers “find their meaning in devotion to Christ and in discipleship of the nations” (282). His observation that “the [church as] community must develop smaller communities in which genuine, caring, and loving relationships, marked by forgiveness and trust, can flourish” will thrill proponents of small groups and house churches (293). He takes up Ralph Winter’s concept of the two “redemptive structures” of the local church and the “sodality – a structure designed to carry out a specific task” (303).

Chapter 10 contains a most helpful discussion of “evangelism and Christian mission,” with many practical insights. Very, very gently, Sunquist dares to say that hell is real and that it is “something to be avoided,” though he refuses to say what happens to those who have never heard the gospel (335). Chapter 11, “Urban Community: Mission and the City,” stresses the strategic importance of the city and of churches in the great cities of the world and offers principles for effective urban ministry.

Chapter 12, “Global Community: Partnership in Mission,” displays the kind of nuance and comprehensiveness that characterize the entire volume. The term “partnership” is defined; different examples show how it can be done both well and poorly; the history of the concept is traced, along with its biblical basis; and practical guidelines are given for effective partnerships in mission.

The final chapter, “Spirituality and Mission: Suffering and Glory,” recaps some lessons from mission history before a detailed description of “Mission as Christian Spirituality.” Seven elements receive brief but powerful portrayal: silence, Scripture, community, repentance, action, attentiveness, and love. Sunquist reminds us of the value of reading missionary biographies, restates his central conviction that mission must involve sacrifice, and closes with the crucial truth that “the final word in mission is glory. . . God’s glory that will be revealed through the church in this age and in the age to come” (410).

Some Questions

Any work this long and complex, treating a subject replete with controversy, will invite questions and calls for further discussion. Clarification is needed for the claim that “compared with the fourth family of Christianity (radical or Spiritual), the Protestant division should be understood to be more of a slight mutation” (43). Some Protestants will wonder about his mostly positive assessment of the Jesuit mission in China. Some New Testament scholars and missiologists will no doubt object to the statement that the “Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) is focused on cultures” (174). The assertion that the New Testament writings were “translated from Aramaic to Greek” will evoke more than a few raised eyebrows as well (199; see especially G. Scott Gleaves, *Did Jesus Speak Greek?*).

His characterization of Jesus’ message at Nazareth (Luke 4) as one of “liberation” requires much clearer explanation, as do a couple of comments he makes about the “conversion” of cultures (252). Is this really a good way of describing the effects of “salt and light” Christians in society? We can ask the same question with the assertion that “the particular practices [Jesus] confronted in society were often practices that promoted injustice and oppression” (253). In a similar vein, the broad accusation that “banking and business practices that make possible the accumulation of wealth in the presence of oppressive poverty” are “immoral activities” (354) must be qualified in order to make sense.

Conservative evangelicals will wonder about his undiluted praise for the Social Gospel movement, while some with a knowledge of history will take issue with the same assessment of Martin Luther King, Jr., who denied his father’s evangelical faith and basically promoted a form of liberation theology. Proponents of house churches will challenge Sunquist’s affirmation that “there is always a need for large churches: cathedrals that are reminders of the global Christian family and that have the leverage to address complex situations” (366).

Though he writes as a committed evangelical, and though he clearly describes such conflicts as the fundamentalist-liberal debates in the early 20th century, Sunquist’s broad ecumenical inclusiveness sometimes leaves him open to the charge of blurring the abiding importance of distinctions between Roman Catholic and Protestant understandings of the gospel and of liberal and ecumenical theological conflicts.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, most will concur with the lavish praise from reviewers quoted on the back cover. *Understanding Christian Mission* will probably serve as a standard

textbook for a long time. We all owe Scott Sunquist a debt of gratitude for what was obviously a labor of love.

Sorrow and Blood: Christian Missions in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom

edited by **William D. Taylor, Antonia van der Meer, and Reg Reimer**

Part I

Taylor, William D., Antonia van der Meer, and Reg Reimer, eds. *Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012.

Occasionally, you come across a book that you think every thoughtful Christian, and all Christian leaders, should read. *Sorrow and Blood* may be one of those books. True, it “is neither short, nor easy, nor is it another Christianity-lite chapter of soft gospel. It is strong meat” (491). The volume was produced “first, to guide Christians facing persecution, and second, to prepare Global North or Global South churches to deal with growing discrimination, harassment, facets of persecution, and even martyrdom” (491). Laudatory remarks from twenty-one world Christian leaders commend *Sorrow and Blood* in the highest terms, and rightly so.

The volume speaks to three audiences: those currently suffering for their faith in Christ; mission leaders who need to equip workers for ministry in risky contexts; and comfortable Christians who either ignore what their brothers and sisters are going through around the world, or naively suppose that “it can’t happen here.” Perhaps recent events in the United States have made evangelical believers aware of a growing cultural and even official hostility toward both the gospel and those who seek to follow Christ. I can think of no better resource for them than this incredibly rich volume.

Sixty-eight writers from twenty-two nations contributed sixty-nine brief chapters on the current state of suffering, persecution and martyrdom in the world, biblical studies on suffering, and “reflections from history and case studies,” including two on the Middle East, three on Russia and the Soviet Union and on India, and two each on China, Rwanda, and several others. (Disclosure: I wrote one of the chapters on China.) More than twenty chapters deal with preparation, support, and restoration of workers in dangerous contexts. The volume concludes with four short chapters calling on us to pray for those who are suffering for the name of Christ and for ourselves.

There are six very helpful appendices of resources for further study and action. Inserts on separate pages present stirring stories and quotations from a variety of sources, including martyrs. Biblical quotations throughout the text remind us of the centrality of suffering in the entire history of God’s people and of His plan of salvation. A few photographs and examples of artwork, some of them in color, bring powerful images to augment the text.

A preface by Ajith Fernando urges people in the Western world to learn from the Majority World how to break out of our slavery to “productivity and profit” and to convenience and comfort, as well as a fear of unbalanced commitment to Christian service. We are to learn that “persevering through inconvenience, struggling to be productive against so many odds, taking on suffering, sticking to unpleasant relations are what combine to produce great mission” (xxii).

Part One: Building the Foundation

Lead editor William Taylor reminds us that “we are living in the days of the greatest growth of the church, when multitudes are coming into the Kingdom of Christ. At the same time, these are days of some of the greatest persecution of Christians in all of human history” (2). After this reminder, six chapters set the stage for the rest of the book, which fills out and illustrates a few basic themes. In them, we learn that persecution of Christians is worsening, especially in the former Soviet Union, India, and Muslim lands. As there are various types and stages of persecution, so, too, the reasons for persecution differ from place to place. In general, however, the growth of the church is seen as “a threat to the position of the majority religions and state ideologies” (12). “The West is hated by the rest, and Christians are often equated with the West” (14). “The international Character of Christianity and the international relations of Christians are regarded as a threat” (14). Connections with America, especially, evoke both suspicion and hostility.

Many authors note that Western Christians have no “theology of suffering,” and some even believe in the “prosperity” message, which is rank heresy. We fail to see that suffering is at the core of the Christian message – think of the Cross. On the other hand, not all “Christian” suffering is necessary. Child evangelism, neglect of elders and social structures, confrontational evangelism, ignoring the necessity of contextualization, and lack of creativity in the use of various means of sharing the gospel have all provoked unnecessary hostile reactions. Ill-prepared and over-zealous short-term trippers frequently come in for criticism.

There have also been various responses to suffering, persecution, and martyrdom for Christ. Some persecuted believers choose to flee or escape; this often leads to a further spread of the gospel. Most endure patiently, reflecting the significant emphasis in the New Testament that “persecution for the followers of Jesus is both inevitable and normative” (27). Martyrdom also often somehow contributes to the growth of the church, as Tertullian said long ago. Finally, some believers, both sufferers and those in other nations with more freedom, advocate on behalf of religious freedom on humanitarian and legal grounds. This last option is best done by experienced experts and may lead to further persecution.

Careful definitions are necessary to prevent exaggerating the extent of persecution and martyrdom of Christians around the world. Martyrdom involves violent death for believing in Christ or propagating the faith. Persecution is defined as “any unjust action of varying levels of hostility perpetrated primarily on the basis of religion and directed at Christians, resulting in varying levels of harm as it is considered from the victim’s perspective” (47). Importantly, this definition includes actions that “may or may not necessarily prevent or limit these Christians’ ability to practice their faith or appropriately propagate their faith” (47).

People describe situations in various countries, including China (see below) differently based on these definitions. For example, does ridicule constitute persecution? Are Christian human rights lawyers being persecuted for their faith when they advocate for legal protection for believers of any religion? Should we distinguish legal restrictions and social or economic discrimination from actual persecution? These nuances matter when reporting upon the difficulties of believers in lands with limited religious freedom.

Part Two: Reflections from Scripture and Theology

Ten chapters comprise this section: “Deliver Us from Evil,” “A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship,” “The Prosperity Gospel” (2 chapters), “From Genesis to Revelation,” “The Teaching of Jesus on Suffering in Mission,” “Biblical Teaching Suffering and Perseverance in Paul and Peter,” “The Problem of Evil and Suffering,” and “God’s Plan of Perseverance and Suffering in the Book of Revelation.” Each one hammers home the same theme: “Integral to authentic discipleship is the command to ‘take up your cross and follow me’ (Matt 16:24).” “At the very heart of our faith is sacrifice, supremely of the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’ Followers of Christ must also, in response to, and imitation of, that once-for-all perfect and complete sacrifice, voluntarily live in a mindset and practice of sacrifice, offering up our lives in the mundane and the extraordinary, in the love of God, and in service of our fellow human beings” (60).

Sadly, ever since the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire, the church has, on and off, become “seduced by power, wealth, and ease” (61). Despite the obvious fact that, from Genesis to Revelation, “persecution [is] a Central Topic of Scripture,” Christians have all too easily sought not only to avoid suffering but have even perpetrated it on other believers. The so-called Prosperity Gospel may be the most outrageous example of false teaching in this regard, but even otherwise “orthodox” Christian preachers and teachers, today as in the past, have overlooked and ignored the plain fact that Jesus commanded each of his followers to follow in his footsteps to the Cross, and that “persecution and suffering belonged to the basics that Paul was teaching every church” (68). We in the West “fail to recognize that persecution is normative for the follower of Christ historically, missiologically, and (most importantly) scripturally” (72).

These chapters contain powerful statements of this central and vital truth: “A cross-centered gospel requires cross-carrying messengers” (73). “Christ’s cross was for propitiation. Our cross is for propagation” (73).

Alas, the Prosperity Message, which began in America with Kenneth E. Hagin and has continued to be preached by his son, Gloria and Kenneth Copeland, Oral Roberts, Joel Osteen, Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, and many others who have been heard around the world on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, has greatly impacted Africa, Latin America, and Asian churches. Millions of people have been misled by this false teaching that health and prosperity are the birthrights of believers and have thus been robbed of their forebears’ spiritual power in bearing sacrificial testimony to Christ. This worldly message dovetails nicely with traditional religions in Africa, China, and elsewhere, making it easy to propagate without bringing offense, but it produces false “conversions” and shallow “disciples.”

It can be “traceable to the televangelist culture in the United States” and is tied to a “celebrity culture that has little space or room for the cross of Jesus Christ” (88). It is, however, “nothing less than seduction into a false delusion” (89). There are better, more biblical ways to address the very real issues of illness and poverty in these areas, and these are explored.

One chapter in this section deals with Matthew 10, which is “a benchmark for understanding opposition, persecution, and martyrdom in the context of world evangelization” (91). We see that Jesus anticipated that his disciples would face degrees of persecution, from prevention of preaching to death. He pointed to the sources of persecution and identified the underlying attitude behind persecution – hatred of Jesus himself; he also showed how we should respond to persecution and offered words of comfort for those amid persecution.

A profound reflection on the problem of evil and suffering includes the reminder that “there is such a thing as ‘the fellowship of his suffering’ for the disciples of Jesus” (128). “In that sense, both joy and suffering are an integral part of the Christian experience.” Along the way, however, we have the love that comes from the community of fellow believers and the comfort of knowing that suffering produces perseverance, which produces character, which confirms our hope that “suffering and evil will be ultimately defeated when the redemption we have received in Christ shall be fully consummated” (128).

Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom

edited by **William D. Taylor, Antonia van der Meer, and Reg Reimer**

Part II

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Part Three: Reflections from History and Case Studies

Though comprised mostly of stories from individual countries and regions, this section highlights realities and themes that apply across chronological and geographical boundaries. The nations and areas described include Turkey and the Middle East, Japan, Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, the modern secular West, Nigeria and Rwanda, China, Sri Lanka and India, Vietnam, Iran, and Afghanistan.

The themes that emerge from this inductive study include the following:

- Suffering, persecution, and martyrdom are the “normal” conditions under which most Christians have lived. The current state of peace and freedom enjoyed in the West and some other places is an historical anomaly that could soon come to an end. We may as well prepare ourselves to join the ranks of Christians throughout history and around the world today who are paying the price to follow Christ.
- Tragically, persecution has all too often been inflicted upon Christians by fellow “Christians,” beginning with the early church and continuing through the Crusades, the Inquisition, the reign of “Bloody Mary” in England, religious conflicts in Europe, the Rwandan massacres, and modern and current persecution of Protestants in Eastern Orthodox countries, especially Russia and the Soviet Union.
- Christians face persecution when they are perceived, rightly or wrongly, to pose a threat to social and political stability. You can see this in the death of Jesus Christ, the persecutions of the Roman Empire, and in modern totalitarian, communist, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu states. When Christians join revolutionary or independence movements, they are (rightly) seen as an existential threat to the state and face fierce persecution.
- In the modern secular West, Christians who refuse to approve of abortion on demand or homosexual practice and same-sex marriage, educate their children at home, or dare to challenge the reigning myth of evolutionism, already encounter hostility, especially in

schools and universities; this could soon turn into state-sponsored persecution. To some degree, this has already begun, with legal action being taken against Christians for public displays of their faith or disagreement with government policies.

- Religious persecution takes place where another religion is fundamentally opposed to Christianity and contains within its core teachings the duty to restrict the growth of Christianity or even to eradicate Christians altogether. Today's chief example is persecution from Muslims, but ideologically motivated persecution has also taken place in Marxist nations.
- When Christians seem to have close ties to other foreign powers, they may expect the ire of nervous or nationalist governments. China and Russia are two of today's outstanding examples. This perception can be heightened by the culturally and politically insensitive actions of well-meaning but ignorant, and often arrogant, Christians from the West. Again, China and Russia are two outstanding examples in the 21st century.
- "Missionaries" of all sorts from outside a "closed" country may call down unnecessary persecution upon themselves by foolish methods of evangelism. Those going to sensitive places must be thoroughly trained and instructed in how to be effective witnesses of Christ, and they must be discouraged from seeking quick results or publicity for foolishly bold actions. Understanding the local culture is a prerequisite for effective cross-cultural ministry.
- Short-term "vision trips" are useful in educating people from outside and furthering prayer, but short-term "mission trips" seeking speedy numerical results usually cause great damage.
- Sometimes, persecution has been a factor in the further growth of the church, as in modern China; at other times, persecution has been so severe that entire groups of Christians have been wiped out or reduced to minuscule minorities, as in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) of the early church, sixteenth and seventeenth-century Japan, and, apparently, Iraq today.
- One cause of the disappearance of Christianity can be the failure to translate the Bible into the local language or to raise up indigenous leaders.
- State-sponsored persecution of all sorts in the modern era has usually been accompanied by a comprehensive propaganda program aimed at alienating the populace from Christians. In the secular West, this has been greatly assisted by the leaders in the news and entertainment media and in education.
- Christians avoid, and survive, persecution best when they (1) meet in small groups, especially in homes, (2) develop strong leadership that is not dependent upon clergy or upon foreigners, (3) have the Bible in their own language and commit large portions of it

to memory, (4) worship in ways that reflect their culture without compromising biblical truth, and (5) emphasize the cross of Christ in evangelism and in teaching believers the duty of suffering for followers of Christ.

- Christians may give a strong testimony for Christ even in prison or when they lose property or the lives of loved ones if they meekly reflect the love of Christ and show their faith in his promises. Armed or violent self-defense never advances the cause of the gospel.
- International advocacy for the rights of Christians can sometimes help, as in the case of Vietnam; at other times, if the advocacy is seen as part of Western, especially American, attempts to interfere in domestic policy, it can bring added pressure on Christians by further “confirming” suspicions that Christians are agents of unfriendly foreign governments, especially the United States.
- To be effective, advocacy must be conducted patiently, prayerfully, moderately, truthfully, intelligently, and in constant dialogue with local Christians and their government. Loud, exaggerated, and hasty advocacy usually backfires, though it may bring in funds to the organizations involved.

China Changes

Since the publication of *Sorrow and Blood* in 2012, conditions in China have changed. Most dramatically, large church buildings in the city of Wenzhou, “the Jerusalem of China,” have been either demolished or had crosses removed from their rooftops or steeples. Since these churches include both Protestant and Roman Catholic, and both registered and unregistered congregations, this campaign represents a significant move away from protection for officially sanctioned churches. Though the Communist Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province is said to have ordered the demolitions, because he is close to President Xi Jinping, such a major departure from previous policy in a highly visible place could hardly have been undertaken without prior knowledge, perhaps even permission, from the top, observers say.

Church members have responded to these attacks on their buildings by forming human shields to prevent damage. They have then protested, with some protests leading to violence by police and the arrests of protestors. They have followed those protests with a public chorus of written protests. Lately, a countermove of putting little crosses on their clothing, in their homes, in offices, and elsewhere has been initiated. They have also objected to new requirements that church members be given political instruction.

Elsewhere in China, a few other church buildings have been torn down and crosses removed, but not many. In general, however, the nationwide tightening of security and central control since 2017 has included few more detentions of house church pastors, greater scrutiny and more restrictions on house church meetings and a general sense that Christians must be very careful not to provoke unnecessary attention.

Among those who have been most affected are civil rights lawyers, many of whom are Christians. The government has detained more than one hundred of them, including those who have offered legal advice in Wenzhou or represented the case of churches affected by the government's assault of church buildings that violate codes or are otherwise considered "too large."

Almost everywhere, Christians of all sorts now face pressures unknown since the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Part Four: Preparation, Support, and Restoration

Rich both in theory and in practical guidelines, Part Four deals with several major themes: how to prepare missionaries and their families, short-term mission teams, churches, and mission agencies for service in places where suffering and persecution must be expected; how to handle crises when they arise; how to minister to the persecuted church, both locally and through advocacy, as well as how to learn from them; how to help victims of trauma find healing; and how to support, and learn from, the hard but mostly unsung work of those who conduct research.

Preparation

All Christians, but especially those engaged in cross-cultural ministry, must understand that "Christ's vicarious suffering means . . . for his followers not deliverance from earthly suffering, but deliverance for earthly suffering. . . He is our pattern and example. His suffering requires us as his followers to tread a similar path (1 Pet 2:21)" (317). Such suffering brings a special intimacy and leads to eternal glory. Rather than indicating that God has abandoned us, suffering for Christ is evidence that he loves us! (318)

In fact, "[m]ission, of necessity, encounters adversity and suffering" (318). "Christians deny themselves in order that they may give themselves fully to God for his purposes in the world. If Christians say 'no' to their own lives, it is so that they may affirm the lives of others" (319). That does not mean that we rashly seek to suffer, but that we are ready for it when it comes.

Like Christ, his followers must have an attitude of self-denial and of servanthood. "Sadly, most Christians have values similar to those of the world and development of a Christian character is not being taught in our churches" (320). Missionary training must, therefore, emphasize character development, so that they may learn that "Jesus' way of dealing with evil and suffering is the way of the cross – of self-giving love, obedience, and service unto death" (321).

We need to learn to persevere, but also to accept the limits of what people can endure, and not push others farther than they can go.

Still, we must remember that "God's way of action is through weakness, suffering, and self-sacrifice" (321). Our weaknesses can become the platforms for a powerful testimony of God's grace. Page 322 contains a summary, "What does this mean to missionaries today," that should be read by all professing Christians.

Since many modern churches are “a product of modern showmanship evangelism or the so-called prosperity gospel,” their members are “not prepared and willing to pay the price of taking the gospel to the unreached or least evangelized people groups,” where they are the most likely to encounter hostile opposition (343). “Other churches, especially in the western hemisphere but also in some of the regions of the Majority South of the world, have become comfortable and complacent over the years. They have lost evangelistic fire and missionary zeal and certainly are reluctant to venture out of their comfort zone” (343).

In times like these, we need to “awaken and prepare the church and mission agencies to face the challenges of missions in the twenty-first century. This necessarily entails preparing them for suffering, persecution, and martyrdom” (343).

As part of their training, this generation of Westerners needs to learn to live at a much lower standard of living, not only to reduce costs but to draw near to the people and show them what self-denial looks like. They must also learn to respond to hatred with love, persecution with prayer, and cursing with blessing, while teaching their converts to react in the same way Jesus and the apostles did.

At the same time, they must learn to obey legitimate laws, conform to local regulations and customs, and avoid actions that would unnecessarily provoke hostility.

Responding to Crises, Ministering to Victims of Persecution, and Using Research

These chapters are so full of practical and godly wisdom that I would be foolish to try to summarize them, but all involved in cross-cultural ministry – from church and mission leaders to missionaries preparing to go overseas or already on the field – should read them carefully. In particular, theological educators, foundation managers, and mission leaders should ponder the implications of the chapters on “The Place and Function of Academics,” and “The Place and Function of Research.” Briefly: All aspects of the theological curriculum should show the central role of suffering in the Bible, church history, theology, ethics, and missions, and those making decisions should invest time in reading what researchers have learned, lest they make costly mistakes with money and manpower.

The body of the volume concludes with a call for “Accurate Information, Urgent Intercession, Thoughtful Advocacy, and Courageous Action.”

Part Six includes six appendices of invaluable resources.

I cannot recommend this book (except for my chapter) highly enough. It came to me as a reminder of what my wife and I were told before we left home for Asia with OMF in 1975. As mission leaders instructed us to prepare a current will, they said, “a missionary must be prepared to preach, pray, or die at a moment’s notice.” About a year later, at a conference for new workers in Taiwan, a senior missionary summed up what he had learned in these words: “Effective

missionary service will include hard work and suffering.” It seems that very little has changed since then.¹²

¹² For some suggestions on how we should apply the lessons from *Sorrow and Blood* to our evangelism and discipleship, go to: <http://www.reachingchineseworldwide.org/blog/preparing-for-suffering-in-christs-name>.

Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume Two

edited by **R. G. Tiedemann**

Part I

Tiedemann, R.G., ed. *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume Two: 1800–present*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

This superb volume, edited and written by some of the world’s leading scholars, should be read carefully by every serious student of Christianity in China. Foreign Christians who wish to have a positive impact on the growth of the faith in China should reflect soberly on a few of its major themes.

We also invite our readers to see the companion article at China Institute on some possible implications of the history of 19th century Roman Catholic and Protestant missions for today.

The book is divided into three parts, dealing respectively with late Qing China, Republican China, and the People’s Republic, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan. This review will deal with Part One only.

Each part is divided into four sections: Introducing the Sources, Actors, “Scene” (historical period), and Themes. The Sources section could not have been more inclusive, containing 114 pages of detailed bibliographic information about Chinese Primary Sources (annals, official histories, archival sources, published collections of edicts and memorials, local histories, published primary sources in modern collections, libraries with important collections). Western Primary Sources include a “typological survey,” bibliographies of primary sources, topographical surveys, published collections of primary sources, and manuscript sources in archives. Secondary Sources and Reference Works are divided into bibliographies and biographies. This is a researcher’s gold mine, though it can be skimmed before one dives into the substantial articles themselves.

The Actors

Most of us will be more interested in the next three parts, beginning with the Actors. In order of appearance, they are Roman Catholic missionaries, Protestant missionaries, the Russian Orthodox Church, Chinese Roman Catholics, and Chinese Protestants. What a star-studded cast of characters it is!

We learn that persecution of Roman Catholics in the 18th and early 19th century had driven their church underground and, with few foreign missionaries unable to operate openly, had impelled Chinese priests, catechists, and “virgins” to take the lead, thus laying the foundation for a truly indigenous church. The process was interrupted by the arrival of many new missionaries from Europe after the Opium War treaties in the 1840s, so that local initiatives and innovations were

stifled by the imposition of foreign rules and regulations, a process which only intensified as the French exercised a “protectorate” over Roman Catholics in China.

The result was “the imposition of a borrowed church” (119) that was understood by many Chinese as “an integral part of a deliberate planned policy of the West. The gospel was perceived as a gospel of power, a foreign religion imposed by barbarians” (120). This is understandably so, since “[i]t was especially French power that enabled the missionaries to reassert the Western political and religious form of the Catholic church” (120). More attention should be paid to the heroic and effective labors of the Chinese, even though one must also admire the “apostolic” labors and sufferings of the missionaries, many of whom paid the ultimate price for their dedication.

“The Protestant Missionary Enterprise” began in 1807, with the arrival of Robert Morrison, and it can be divided into two phases. The first one, 1807-1841, is further divided into the first period, 1807-1830, and the second, 1830-41, beginning with the arrival of the American Elijah Bridgman and ending in 1841 with the temporary departure of most missionaries at the start of the First Opium War (1839-42). “Morrison in China: the Many Lives of a Missionary Exemplar” gives due credit to this hard-working and long-suffering pioneer, who had the foresight to see himself as a foundation-layer preparing the way for others (135-138).

Elijah Bridgman paved the way for what became a steady stream of American missionaries, but neither he, nor Morrison, nor any other foreigner could have accomplished much without the assistance of such Chinese co-workers as the indefatigable and courageous Liang Fa, who is also given proper recognition as the first in a long and growing line of Chinese who formed an “embryonic network of Christian workers” (141). That network would go on to build a fully indigenous church. Murray Rubenstein pens a crisp, concise, yet lively introduction to these early giants, many of whom, alas, were, directly or indirectly, fairly or unfairly, associated with and sometimes implicated in, the odious opium trade and the “unequal” treaties that followed the First Opium War.

“Mission Strategies and Tactics in the First Treaty Port Era” began with preparing new missionaries for their work, starting with learning the language, the teaching and acquisition of which were still illegal when Morrison arrived in Canton. Sometimes they started out in Southeast Asia, where the Qing government could not impede their progress. Some especially gifted missionaries, such as Morrison, Charles Gützlaff, James Legge, and others, became outstanding linguists and Sinologists; most acquired by sheer hard work enough Chinese to communicate at least the basics of the gospel.

Before describing the wide variety of discrete activities in which missionaries engaged, the important point is made that “the missionaries employed a larger and more cohesive strategy that served to integrate such activities as part of a larger whole. To put it another way, each and every type of missionary activity was ultimately directed toward one ultimate goal: to win the individual Chinese to Christ” (167). In other words, central to their thinking was “bearing

witness and converting people” (168). One might add that they intended to bring these converts into congregations of believers.

Especially before the interior of China was opened to evangelistic itineration, missionaries devoted much of their energy to preparation of Christian literature in Chinese and relied on Chinese converts to carry these silent sermons into the hinterland, where they performed essential preparatory work. The Bible came first, of course, and then a whole series of “tracts,” some of which could be very substantial.

“Protestant Missionaries in late Nineteenth-Century China,” by Jost Oliver Zetsche, covers the period of rapid missionary expansion, both in the number of individual workers and in the number of mission societies, during the period 1860-1890. In addition to the established missions, dozens of newer societies entered the scene, “the most remarkable” of which was the China Inland Mission (CIM), founded by J. Hudson Taylor in 1865.

The CIM differed from other organizations in several key respects: “(a) its headquarters was in China, (b) the necessary funds were not solicited (the ‘faith-mission principle’), (c) the educational or denominational background of the applicants was essentially irrelevant,” though “they did have to agree with the evangelical view of the Bible and Christian life and work,” (d) co-operation rather than competition with the denominational societies was sought, (e) the missionaries were to conform as much as possible to the living conditions of the Chinese, and (f) “the main goal of the mission was the diffusion of Christianity and the entering of new areas.”

Here, sadly, the author relies on Alwyn Austin’s highly inaccurate treatment of the CIM and repeats the common misconception that the CIM did not seek to build local churches.¹³ The truth is that the CIM used itinerate evangelism very strategically, with the aim of establishing Chinese-led churches in cities, from which further evangelism in the surrounding countryside would then lead to the founding of more congregations.¹⁴

Though various Protestant societies did sometimes compete within the same region, as time went on, they worked hard to establish “comity” agreements, which called for one society to focus on an agreed-upon area and to respect the “turf” of other missions. By and large, a spirit of harmony and cooperation existed among the many mission societies.

They came together to form special interest groups addressing particular problems in Chinese society, such as famine relief, textbooks for schools, Bible translation, printing and distribution, the campaigns against opium and foot-binding, and ministries to “the blind, deaf, opium addicts, and orphans” (181).

¹³ For a review of Austin’s *China’s Millions*, go to <http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/christianity-in-china/chinas-millions.php>.

¹⁴ See <http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/t/taylor-james-hudson.php> for more on Taylor’s strategy.

After this general introduction, we are given lively cameo portraits of some of the more famous missionaries of this period, including Griffith John, Hudson Taylor, Timothy Richard, and Lottie Moon.¹⁵

Russian Orthodox missionaries and their work receive a brief description, followed by a longer overview of Roman Catholic missionaries and societies by Jean Charbonnier, author of the magisterial *Christians in China: A.D. 600 to 2,000*.¹⁶ He partly retraces ground traversed earlier in the volume with a quick survey of the situation in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, but he then offers significant additions, such as a detailed catalogue of the directives given to Chinese catechists, short biographies of major Chinese priests, more on the “institute of virgins,” and refugee communities for Roman Catholics harassed by the authorities. Distinguished historian of modern Roman Catholicism in China, Jean-Paul Wiest, follows with a concise description of the context of Roman Catholic work in the middle of the century, Chinese “Lay Apostles,” and Chinese Priests, Sisters, and Brothers.

Jessie G. Lutz, author of several authoritative studies on early Protestant Chinese Christianity, begins by noting the difficulty of reconstructing the biographies of the first generation of Chinese converts, who were few, while “apostasy was all too common” (247). Nevertheless, she gives thumbnail sketches of Liang Fa, helper to Robert Morrison and William Milne, and his son Liang Jinde, who worked for Commissioner Lin during the first Opium War, later returning to help Elijah Bridgman with the Delegates Bible. Two men with a strong commitment to Confucianism, Dai Wenguang and Wang Tao, illustrate just how tenacious loyalty to traditional Chinese culture could be; Dai even left the Christian faith. Their stories “help us to understand the obstacles to conversion and the social costs of church membership,” (250) factors still operative today, though perhaps less so in some ways.

Religious tracts and the Bible brought some to faith, among whom was Che Jinguang. Alas, when James Legge called in military force to gain possession of property for a church and then left Che in charge, the local gentry vented their wrath upon the convert, who was tortured and killed – an example of the frequently toxic effects of close association with foreigners, another constant in Chinese Christian history. Missionaries lamented the rarity with which Chinese converts expressed sorrow for sin, but some did, like He Jinshan. Another recurring theme is the penchant, even obsession, missionaries had for establishing schools, hoping thereby to gain converts to the faith who would also become preachers. “Relatively few graduates entered the ministry and many ceased active church membership,” however, a trend that continued up to 1950 (253).

“Once a small cluster of Chinese had converted, these Chinese recruited a high proportion of the ‘second generation’ of Christians. Chinese assistants ordinarily made the initial converts, while missionaries and the few ordained Chinese provided further instruction and baptism” (254).

¹⁵ For short biographies of these and other missionaries mentioned in the Handbook, see the online Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity (www.bdconline.net).

¹⁶ A review can be found at <http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/christianity-in-china/christians-in-china-ad-600-to-2000.php>.

Again, this pattern persisted into the middle of the twentieth century. Lutz notes the growing involvement of Chinese Christians in education, the important role played by women, and the ways in which Christian communities were formed along kinship and other relationship lines.

These new communities became mini-societies, replacing former networks in providing a variety of services, but also tending to alienate Christians from their neighbors and often provoking charges that they had ceased to be “Chinese” and had come under the sway of foreigners – yet another persistent phenomenon. In one good development, Christian families “were often the major source of Chinese ministers, Bible women, and teachers while family stability and parochial schools promoted social mobility” (256).

I have quoted this chapter so much because it seems to show how much the early decades laid the foundation for the church that would grow in the coming century, with both beneficial and baneful features still visible today.

David Cheung follows with an introduction to specific groups of Chinese Protestants in the last four decades of the nineteenth century. These included pastors, preachers – evangelists – catechists, Bible women, educational and medical workers, writers, colporteurs, and general assistants or helpers. Perhaps the dominant impression given is the speed with which missionaries recognized the greatly superior effectiveness of Chinese workers, compared with foreigners. Increasingly, Chinese were entrusted with leadership of local congregations as well as evangelism; in time, they took over more and more responsibility for teaching, medical work, and writing. Alas, then as now, the chief impediment to the production of quality literature in Chinese lay in the busyness of qualified Christians, who were overworked and laden with the burden of multiple responsibilities.

Cheung then provides vignettes of some well-known Chinese Protestants, including He Futang, “Pastor Xi,” Ren Chengyuan, Li Zhenggao, and others. Toward the end of this period and until the early 1900s, “the revolutionary movement was mainly spearheaded by Chinese Christians,” a fact that will strike different readers in different ways (274). The main point of this section, however, seems to be that Chinese Protestantism was coming of age, and a generation of highly capable leaders was rising, building up the “spiritual capital” for the full indigenization of the church that would eventually come.

Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume Two

edited by R.G. Tiedemann

Part II

Tiedemann, R.G., ed. *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume Two: 1800-present*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

The contents of this magisterial volume deserve careful reading by everyone interested in Chinese Christianity, but the length and cost of it will probably be deterrents. So, I offer this series of rather thick reviews to give readers a taste of its riches and perhaps entice a few more to buy and feast upon it.

We cannot understand the residual resistance to Christianity among educated Chinese without a knowledge of the material covered in this section on the late Qing scene.

Late Qing Scene

Having been introduced to the main “actors” of 19th-century Chinese Christianity, we turn now to the “stage” on which they played their many roles.

There was a “Roman Catholic Revival” beginning in the 1830s, especially in France, whose missionaries promoted “the modern ‘mission civilisatrice’” of France, under the powerful protection of the government (281). Popes decreed that they should make the training and empowerment of Chinese clergy their highest priority, but this was resisted by the missionaries for almost a hundred years. “Depending for their work on French military protection, the[y] often saw their mission as an intimate extension of French economic and political interests” (282).

Meanwhile, the Protestant world experienced widespread religious revival, one of the fruits of which was the modern Protestant missionary movement, in which there was “a remarkable degree of unity of purpose and international co-operation” (283). They differed among themselves, of course, with some looking for speedy, and perhaps superficial, conversion, while others, notably Calvinists and members of denominational societies, preferred a slow and steady approach that would yield solid growth. Over time, another debate arose, concerning whether missionaries should limit themselves to evangelism and church planting, or whether they should also engage in “good works” such as medicine and education. What would become a wide theological fissure was already starting to open.

Once again, the remarkable growth of the China Inland Mission receives notice, and once again the claim is made that the CIM engaged only in “extensive” itineration and evangelism, “promoting relatively superficial proclamation of the gospel,” rather than “intensive” and “in-depth building of churches” (287). One wonders where this misconception comes from, for it

could not be the result of a careful reading of the sources. The concluding paragraph of this chapter also records, without qualification, charges made against “faith” missions by spokesmen for “classical” societies that the faith missions worked without close coordination with a sending board at home which could properly select missionaries. In addition, they somehow failed to see to “appropriate distribution of . . . contributions” and to provide “an adequate supply of information from the mission field” (289). At least for the CIM, these statements are utterly inaccurate and could easily have been known to be so at the time.¹⁷

Otherwise, this chapter, like all the others, is a model of concise and comprehensive clarity.

Chinese Historical Context

From the beginning, the Qing dynasty government relied upon a small group of elite officials supplemented by a much larger, though still relatively small, class of educated Mandarins and their employees. By the end of the 18th century, “administrative decay had set in,” aggravated by immense growth of the population “and the consequent overall scarcity of opportunities” (292). To make matters worse, “the quality of most local office holders seems to have deteriorated as ineptitude, mismanagement and malfeasance spread,” widely. Worst of all, “corrupt practices were particularly prevalent amongst the sub-bureaucratic yamen clerks and runners” (292). The whole system relied on a very delicate balance between local and central power, and between official administrators and members of the local elite.

When disaster struck, the entire structure could collapse. Floods, famine-causing droughts, and uprisings, which were all too common and quite devastating, could eviscerate the core of social and governmental control and lead to social breakdown. At all times, growing scarcity of resources exacerbated existing tensions between clans, villages, and factions, leading to collective violence, rural unrest, rebellions, and accelerating dynastic decline.

When foreign powers began to intrude, the situation became both more complex and more volatile. If, as often happened, local Christians could leverage connection with a foreign power – usually France – to protect or even advance their interests in competition with others, their success further fed anti-foreign anger. A worldwide silver shortage led to economic decline and prompted foreigners to import even more opium to make up for the shortage, further enraging Chinese officials, who linked opium to missionaries. The “scramble for concessions” begun by the so-called “Unequal Treaties” only intensified after the devastating defeat of China by Japan in 1895. As imperialist governments expanded their presence in China and ate away at the sovereignty of the nation, patriots fumed at the aggressors and the missionaries who depended upon the treaties for their multiplying stations in the interior. The further into the country they

¹⁷ The last five volumes of A.J. Broomhall’s *Hudson Taylor & China’s Open Century* (now published as *The Shaping of Modern China*) provide ample evidence of the tight but flexible organization, strong home council involvement, financial frugality and accountability, and almost unparalleled dissemination of information from the field from the inception of the CIM, in strong contrast to the Chinese Evangelisation Society with which J. Hudson Taylor was first connected.

penetrated, the more Chinese connected them with the horrible disasters which were killing millions and impoverishing many more.

The Treaty System

The treaties which were extracted from a defeated Qing government both inserted new foreign rights into Chinese official and public life and forever implicated the missionaries who either assisted in the negotiations or benefited from the provisions, as each nation insisted on “most favored nation” treatment. In particular, when missionaries insisted on implementation of treaty “rights” for themselves and Chinese Christians, both local officials and non-Christian citizens resented the intrusion of foreign power.

The Sino-French negotiations in the 1840s not only led to removal of the ban on Christianity but also the return of properties that had been confiscated in the previous century or more, leading to bitter disputes over land as the Roman Catholic missionaries sought to obtain better property. The French led the way again in 1860 with concessions that allowed missionaries to travel freely, demand punishment for those who injured missionaries or Chinese Christians and build on property which they purchased. This final provision was surreptitiously inserted into the French version of the treaty and only discovered later. When it was, however, missionaries from other nations demanded that they, too be allowed to acquire land and build structures of all sorts. Naturally, “it incurred the indignation and a general distrust of the messengers of Christianity and French diplomats in China,” an attitude that was soon transferred to all foreign powers and Christian missionaries who reaped the results (300).

French missionaries were, in time, granted assistance by consular officials in their frequent conflicts with Chinese authorities over land and taxes, and then ordained clergy received the right to dress like government officials and be treated as equals, further challenging the social order and antagonizing Chinese elites. Protestant missionaries “insisted, however, that they were entitled to the same privileges as Catholic priests and continually urged” their consular authorities “to secure equal rights for them” (302). The major exception, again, was the China Inland Mission.

Religious legal cases

These appeals to legal protection under the treaties led to hundreds of so-called *jiao'an* – religious legal cases — in which missionaries and their Chinese converts were involved, as they asserted rights to property and protection in the courts. As a result, though “anti-missionary conflict was to some extent part of the growing resistance by the Chinese people to the increasing pressures exerted by the foreign powers, it should also be recognized that anti-Christian violence tended to be intimately linked to existing tensions within and among local systems” (303).

Another cause of anti-Christian conduct was the growing perception that Christian missions presented a fundamental challenge to the Confucian social order, as missionaries in general “launched an uncompromising attack on the Confucian value system.” Furthermore, missionaries

“affiliated with the ‘classical’ missions . . . advocated their version of ‘modernisation’ (for example: Western learning, the provision of medical services, promotion of individualism) as China’s way forward to ‘salvation’ – if need be at the point of a gun” (305). The CIM, once again, is the major exception, though there were others.

Sectarian movements which could merge with Christianity were yet another source of official opposition. Often rebellious, these movements also tended to destabilize social order. When sectarians joined the Christian movement and then aligned themselves with foreign powers, they were properly seen as subversive and evoked strong persecution at the local level. Of course, many former members of sects became Christians because they found the answer to their spiritual quest. But when they refused to join in temple sacrifices or even pay taxes to support temple activities, they aroused the ire of their neighbors for withdrawing from the social fabric.

Religious cases also stemmed from attempts by Protestant missionaries to acquire property in the interior like their French counterparts, and then called in consular authorities to back up their claims. Some missionaries were not reticent about their opinion that change would come to China only if it were imposed by force from the outside. After the outrage at Yangzhou in 1868, the CIM resolutely refused to seek help from either local or foreign authorities, preferring instead to trust in God’s protection.¹⁸

Provoked to the point of exasperation by these repeated insults to their national integrity, the Chinese government’s Zongli Yamen circulated a Memorandum in 1871, asserting that the missionaries’ right of exemption from local laws (extraterritoriality) was the core problem, aggravated by criticisms of Confucianism and interference in legal cases. The foreign powers rejected this overture, laying the ground for the furious response of the Boxer Rebellion at the end of the century, which was supported by the Qing government.

The CIM is singled out for its missionaries’ adoption of Chinese dress, living among the people, and distance from foreign government help. Even when, as with the CIM, missionaries did not interfere with the local administration, their very presence irritated officials who resented what they represented. Contrary to the impression given in this chapter, however, popular response was usually quite warm and favorable, even if converts were relatively few. Except in a few places, such as Hunan and Shandong, missionaries found many who welcomed their message and their acts of charity and love, and a solid foundation was being laid for the growth of today’s Chinese church.

Missionaries of other societies, alas, were not always known for their appreciation of local customs. “Among the Americans, for example, there seems to have been an explicit sense of cultural superiority in their refusal to blend into their Chinese surroundings” (318). Living in a foreign compound in foreign-style buildings, separated from their Chinese neighbors except for those whom they employed, they stood out as foreigners in every way. And yet, despite the

¹⁸ Alvyn Austin once again gives a false impression by claiming J. Hudson Taylor changed his story after the event.

impression given in this chapter, most Protestant missionaries seem to have been generally appreciated by those whom they came to serve.

Female Missionaries

Especially with the CIM, but also among Roman Catholics and, later, denominational Protestant missions, female missionaries assumed a growing role, until they comprised two-thirds of the total foreign missionary presence. On the one hand, they were able to reach women and children as men could not, and were greatly loved; on the other hand, their counter-cultural lifestyle, particularly when they were unmarried, shook the roots of Confucian society, and even more when single Protestant women taught Chinese girls in missionary schools.

Protestant Advance into the Interior

Charitable work, particularly famine relief, brought a sharp reduction in anti-missionary and anti-Christian feeling in the latter part of the 19th century. Both the CIM and other societies worked together with the government to alleviate the horrible suffering of those whose lives were devastated by floods, drought, disease, and famine. These “good works” earned a great deal of good will, though anti-foreign feeling could resurface quickly.

That brings us to motives for conversion to Christianity. These included material incentives, not just during famines but also when Roman Catholics could get privileged access to land; other Christians were given legal protection; many were employed by missionaries; and there was prestige and power attending association with foreigners. Spiritual incentives included a sense of having found the truth and life-changing power that they had been seeking in other religions.

On the other hand, those who resisted the missionaries and their Chinese converts usually did so because they saw the missionaries as “formidable political actors” and their followers as agents of the foreign interloper (325). When religious cases were settled in favor of the Christians, large indemnities might be imposed. In some instances, Chinese officials who had failed to prevent violence were removed or even punished. When a large number of American missionaries later became involved in diplomatic and consular work for their government, they naturally wanted to see their former colleagues protected which further convinced the Chinese elite that missionary and military officer were co-conspirators in a plot to destroy China as a sovereign nation.

The Boxer Uprising

No one should have been surprised, therefore, when all these irritants finally converged to produce the Boxer Uprising, which is well described in this section. Though an awful drought precipitated widespread social violence, the slaughter of thousands of Chinese Christians and a few hundred missionaries must be attributed to decades of rising resentment and fear.

Cross-Cultural Encounters: China and the Reformed Church in America

edited by Gloria Shuhui Tseng

Tseng, Gloria Shuhui, ed. *Cross-Cultural Encounters: China and the Reformed Church in America*. In *Studies in Chinese Christianity*, edited by G. Wright Doyle and Carol Lee Hamrin. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021.

What was it like to be a Christian missionary in China? What were the missionaries like as people? How did they relate to the Chinese among whom they lived and with whom they served? Were they tools of foreign imperialism, or humble servants of Christ and ambassadors of his kingdom? How did they cope with the devastating wars and tumultuous political and social changes that swept over China in the modern period? And what did they *do*, in actuality?

Cross-Cultural Encounters offers insightful answers to these questions through biographies of the lives of a few American missionaries in one province of China.

This is one of the latest additions to the now twenty-volume *Studies in Chinese Christianity* series published by Wipf & Stock. ([Search Results | Wipf and Stock Publishers](#)). (Disclosure: As co-editor of this series, I read and commented on an early draft of these chapters.)

Editor Gloria Tseng is Associate Professor of History at Hope College, Holland, Michigan. Under her supervision, students wrote the essays that comprise the book, for which Dr. Tseng contributed an Introduction and co-authored one of the chapters.

Hope College is connected to the Reformed Church in America, whose historical archives are stored there. The student authors mined this rich collection of original material to pen studies of RCA missionaries to China from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to 1951. These missionaries were all part of the Amoy mission, which the early RCA missionary David Abeel pioneered in 1842. Thus, like three other volumes in the *Studies in Chinese Christianity* series, this book describes the work of a single denomination. (The others are *On the Road to Siangyang: Covenant Mission in Mainland China 1890-1949*, by Jack R. Lundbom; *Through the Valley of the Shadow: Australian Women in War-Torn China*, and *Children of the Massacre*, both by Linda and Robert Banks.)

Unlike some books about missionaries, these chapters highlight not only the ways in which missionaries tried to communicate the Christian message to Chinese, but also those in which Chinese culture impacted them. As Dennis Voskuil says in the Foreword, “It is evident that cultural influences always moved in two directions. The Chinese certainly embraced many of the ideals and practices introduced by those from the West, but it was just as true that the missionaries were also absorbing and embracing the ideas and practices of the Chinese.” Thus, the reason for the title, *Cross-Cultural Encounters*.

Reflecting the numerical majority of women in Protestant missions, *Cross-Cultural Encounters* contains chapters on “Missionary Wives,” missionary nurses, and “Single and Female in the

China Mission of the Reformed Church in America.” Seven of the twelve women discussed in this volume are women.

Almost from the beginning, Protestant missionaries combined both word and deed in their efforts to share the love and truth of Christ with Chinese people. *Cross-Cultural Encounters* highlights this balance. It opens with the story of a medical missionary who considered his healing ministry as auxiliary to his basic call to make known the Gospel. One chapter focuses on the role of missionary nurses, while the last chapter provides a survey of “Faith and Humanitarian Aid in Wartime China.”

The Contents

The editor’s concise and comprehensive introduction begins by noting that during the period in which RCA missionaries worked, “war was almost a permanent reality, and China underwent significant transformation” as industrialization affected first treaty ports and then the whole nation, gender and family roles changed; and Confucian values sustained powerful shocks. “Through all this, the RCA mission was both a historical witness and a historical actor” (xi).

Tseng points out that “the issues raised and topics covered in this volume – medical missions, gender and family, education, racial relations, cultural exchanges, modernity, and humanitarian aid – are all subjects of interest to the scholar or student of the history of Christian mission and the history of world Christianity” (xii). One doesn’t need to add that these themes are of interest also to all students of modern Chinese history, in which Christian missions have played such an influential role.

All except one of the missionaries featured in the book experienced the terrible traumas of the Sino-Japanese War. “In the vast human misery caused by this undeclared war . . . Christian missionaries exhibited great compassion and courage by offering relief to as many as they could in the midst of wartime shortages” (xiii).

The crucial role of friendships in effective cross-cultural missions shows up often. In her book, *Faithful Friendships: Embracing Diversity in Christian Community*, Dana Robert draws our eyes to this critical component of the missionary task, one that has not received enough formal attention. The missionaries described in *Cross-Cultural Encounters* built friendships that included both joy and sorrow. These relationships between peers “mitigated the impact of colonialism and sowed the seed for the remarkable growth of world Christianity we have witnessed in the postcolonial era” (xiv-xv).

Finally, Tseng rightly observes that the study of Christianity in China has grown rapidly since the 1960s. “The current volume of essays joins this widening stream of scholarship as a small piece in the intricate and vast puzzle of the history of Christianity in China” (xv). By its combination of individual portraits and treatment of larger themes, *Cross-Cultural Encounters* offers readers a significant treatment of the beginnings of what has become the fastest-growing church in the world.

Chapter 1: A Visionary Mission: The Life and Work of Dr. J.A. Otte, by Rebekah Llorens

“The study of Christian missionaries and their work enhances many different fields of inquiry,” including cultural history, the life of the church, and how modern missionaries might understand their predecessors (1). In particular, the “life of one missionary, Dr. John A. Otte, and his service in China give insight into two realms of mission work. As a medical missionary, Otte provided healing to the Chinese people in both their bodies and their hearts. He sought to bring holistic healing without forcing his patients to become Christians” (1).

Two things are worthy of note about Otte: first, “he applied his faith to his practice. For him, the work of the Gospel took priority, and medical work was simply a means to further it.” Rather than expecting Chinese to conform to Western ways of living, he “changed his personal lifestyle to better relate to the people whom he served” (1-2). That is, he “was determined to help the Chinese remain Chinese, and not become westernized in their Christianity” (2).

Almost as soon as he arrived in Amoy (now called Xiamen), Otte began building a hospital, to be followed soon by another one for women. He served not only as physician and chief administrator, but also as an evangelist to his patients. He did not require that they believe, but he did insist that they listen to a simple gospel presentation before they received treatment. In time, he enlisted the help of Chinese Christians to do the work of evangelism, knowing that they would be far more effective than he would. Many conversions resulted from successful surgeries. Some of the converts returned to serve as evangelists. He constantly asked supporters at home to pray not only for the medical side of his ministry, but even more for the Holy Spirit to come into the lives of his patients. Facing the opium habit that plagued China, Otte found that those addicts who truly trusted in Christ could find deliverance; others usually relapsed into their habit.

“Otte was a doctor with a variety of talents useful in mission work: he was a good surgeon, a personable manager, and a passionate follower of Christ” (13). Early on, he took the time to learn the language well as the first step in breaking down cultural barriers. He and his wife “kept their door open to anyone who needed them and often hosted Chinese neighbors for dinner and Bible study” (15). He studied hard to find ways of reaching both wealthy Chinese and the poor effectively. Honoring Chinese rules for relationships between men and women, he brought out an American woman to teach Chinese nurses how to care for members of their sex. He successfully fought to make the hospital financially self-sustaining, so that Chinese Christians would not depend on foreign funds. He handed leadership over to Chinese doctors as soon as he could, though he discovered that in times of crisis the hospital fared better under Western leadership than Chinese.

At several points, the author draws a parallel between J.A. Otte and L. Nelson Bell, the Presbyterian medical missionary who began his missionary career about six years after Otte died. Both men sought to provide excellent medical care, and both longed even more for the spiritual healing of their patients; they managed their institutions with impeccable integrity; and they did all they could to empower Chinese to assume leadership.

Chapter 2: Cultural Exchange: The Story of William Angus and His Poetry, by Eric Dawson

William Angus served as a missionary in China from 1925 to 1951. During that time, he composed over three hundred poems, which he collected into five separate books. They were not published until 2015, however. Eric Dawson is the first to have made use of them for research.

Dawson deploys these poems for his nuanced analysis of the cultural exchanges that marked Angus' career in China. Unlike most foreign missionaries, Angus spent most of his time among the Chinese, eating, traveling, and living in their homes as he engaged in itinerant ministry. He thus came into close contact with the people he had come to serve. These close encounters exposed the vast differences between the two cultures and challenged both the missionary and the Chinese.

The author quotes from Angus's poetry to address some of these differences: political power, financial status, whether to leverage superior status and money to benefit Christians and the church, attitudes toward women, and everyday customs, including cuisine.

We see that the usual criticisms of foreign missionaries as arrogant, separated from the people; intent on exploiting their greater power, status, and wealth; imposing their views and customs on the Chinese; and generally acting as cultural imperialists – all must come under more careful scrutiny. Angus, and many others like him, did all he could to avoid these faults.

He did not always succeed, of course. Often, greedy or manipulative Chinese, including Christians, tried to use him for their own benefit. Much of the time, he simply could not change the power equation. Still, in his poetry we see a man who grew in his cultural understanding and in his own radical discipleship of Jesus Christ. We also gain a sharper vision of how two cultures interacted with each other, leaving neither of them the same as before.

This is a rich chapter, especially because of the extensive quotation of Angus' poems.

Chapter 3: The Dual Calling of Missionary Wives: Married Women Missionaries of the RCA in China, 1917-1951, by Victoria Longfield

“This chapter tells the stories of three remarkable married women of faith but also echoes of others whose stories are lost and not recorded. Stella Veenschoten, Joyce Angus, and Ruth Holleman were women who vibrantly lived out their roles as wives and missionaries in China” (42). They represent thousands of others who tried to balance their domestic responsibilities with the call to serve the spiritual needs of the Chinese among whom they lived.

Their contribution to the overall ministry was immense, but researching them poses difficulties, because records of their lives are usually contained in archives filed by their husbands' names, and their labors did not receive special attention in reports home, as did that of men and single missionary women.

“The work of missionary wives was powerful because it spread the Gospel to people whom their husbands could not reach” – that is, Chinese women and children. Records about them “detail the challenges women faced as wives, mothers, and missionaries in a foreign country. Two roles

emerged – one operating in the household and the other in ‘China’ – and evident tension existed between the two,” especially when the children were younger and demanded more time. (46). Each wife contributed to the ministry in her own unique way.

After studying the Amoy dialect of Chinese, Stella Veenschoten “steadily became more and more involved in teaching music in school and at home to both missionary and Chinese children. She also spent time arranging music for choirs” and directed the music in their Chinese church (47). After her children had grown older, she visited churches in other villages “to sing and play music” during worship services (56). Nevertheless, her obituary stated that she was also known throughout her life as an “ideal homemaker” (47).

Agnes J. Buikema Angus, who went by “Joyce,” was the wife of William Angus, the evangelist-poet. With her husband often on the road, she managed the home and children while also teaching English. When her children had grown up a bit, she taught more English classes and went with William on evangelistic journeys. She and William continued their ministry to Chinese after returning permanently to the United States by opening their home to international students, especially those who spoke the Amoy dialect.

Ruth Vanden Berg Holleman, the wife of Dr. Clarence Holleman, “set up a girls’ school but often acted as a nurse for her husband during surgery” (49-50). During the war against Japan, she assisted her husband in “running a clinic that provided milk for refugee babies” (55).

In other respects, all these women were expected to fulfill the same four essential “household” tasks: moving or relocating the entire family, managing the household staff, homeschooling the children, and maintaining an “American” home. The missionary wife also had to deal with the pressure of completing these tasks alone while her husband was away from home during times of unrest, often not knowing if he might be captured by bandits or suffer a worse fate.

The description of these four tasks sheds a great deal of light on missionary life in China, even as it dispels some myths about foreign missionaries. Moves took place for summer vacations to a cooler location, when going home on furlough, and when fleeing danger. Household servants were essential for life in China, and they freed up the wives for teaching their children and more interaction with the local people, but dealing with them required great tact, wisdom, and patience because of the differences in culture. For example, the “amah” would often indulge and spoil the young boys while treating the girls strictly, as in a Chinese home. Many missionary wives also felt uncomfortable employing servants.

The wives were to homeschool their children and maintain an “American” home, not from a sense of cultural superiority, as is commonly asserted, but to prepare their children to re-assimilate to American culture when they returned home. Missionaries did not assume that their offspring would follow in their footsteps to China – though a remarkable number did – but wanted to ready them for life in their home country and give them the freedom to make their own career and marriage decisions.

By setting their husbands free to engage in direct missionary work, educating their children, and serving in their own unique ways, missionary wives “were an indispensable part of the greater

story of the Gospel in China” (56). (As a lifelong missionary, I would affirm that my wife has been an essential partner with me in our common service of God’s kingdom among the Chinese since 1975.)

Chapter 4: Hope and Wilhelmina Hospital School of Nursing: The Role of Missionary Nurses in Xiamen, China, by Katelyn Dickerson

This chapter traces the history of the Hope and Wilhelmina School of Nursing from its beginning in the early 1920s to its dissolution after the Communists forced missionaries to leave China in 1951, with special emphasis upon its formative years. During this crucial time, a trio of American missionary nurses ran the school while also providing nursing care in the men’s and women’s hospitals. They were Jean Nienhuis, Jennette Veldman, and Jessie Platz.

The spirit of these dedicated servants of God is well captured by the response of Jennette Veldman to those at home “who questioned her decision to practice and teach nursing in China”:

Is Christian nursing in China worthwhile? When God fills your heart so full of His peace and love that it fairly bursts, is it worthwhile? When a body is saved, is it worthwhile? When a new soul grasps the meaning of the free gift of love, is it worthwhile? Broken bodies repaired, broken hearts mended, lost hopes replenished, lost souls brought to Christ. Friends, those are the results of the work of yours and my hospital (58).

Founding of the nursing school

Shortly after Hope Hospital was opened, two nurses from the Netherlands arrived to serve the patients, who were mostly men. Soon, the need for a separate women’s hospital led to the founding of Wilhelmina Hospital, aided by a generous grant from the queen of the Netherlands. When the Dutch nurses returned home, they were replaced by the three American women named above.

At this time, nursing as a profession was still in its infancy in the West, and hardly existed in China. Very gradually, the American missionaries, with strong support from the missionary doctors, gathered and trained a group of young Chinese women, whom they put to work in the wards. Naturally, they encountered a variety of obstacles, including traditional views of women and of male-female relationships, in medical care. Chinese ethical norms forbade contact between men and women, so it took a long time to get the nursing students and nurses to participate in the care of male patients. Furthermore, there was no tradition of nursing. Families took care of the non-medical needs of hospital patients.

The American nurses were strong, independent, single career women, and thus represented a stark contrast to the traditional ideal of women as those who lived and served in the home only. Over the years, the nursing school provided not only an education to young Chinese women, but opportunities to work outside the home in a profession that eventually gained respect in society. Though the strict hierarchy necessary for efficient medical care was observed in the school and the hospital, with the American nurses clearly in authority over the younger Chinese nurses and students, the missionaries broke through national, social, and racial barriers by living with the

students. Outside the work setting, “socially and religiously, all the nurses were on an equal footing” (67). The missionary nurses created an environment that allowed for cross-cultural interactions. They even tried to form friendships with the Chinese, who initially felt quite shy but sometimes responded with true friendship. It was particularly hard to persuade the Chinese that they could address their “superiors” by their first names, but some accepted the challenge.

The hospital and nursing school were Christian institutions, with the main purposes being to glorify God, serve the patients, and attract people to the Christian faith. The morning began with Scripture reading and common prayers for students and nurses. At first, only Christians were admitted to the school, but this requirement was later changed to allow non-Christians to receive training also. “The dedication of doctors and nurses to Christian ideals made mission hospitals a location where many conversions took place” (64). Over the years, many patients and nursing students became Christians through the influence of the missionaries and the Chinese Christian nurses and students, as well as the missionary doctors.

The missionaries envisioned a day when Chinese would take over leadership, and they sought to prepare Chinese medical students, doctors, and nurses for leadership roles. Some senior nurses were given administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, throughout the history of the hospitals and nursing school, the foreign missionaries retained leadership. Despite this, “the lack of Chinese leadership never developed into a contentious issue” (66).

The hospitals and nursing school were not exempt from the turmoil and hardships of early twentieth-century China. They treated refugees and wounded soldiers. Supplies were sometimes cut off by hostilities. The war with Japan led to the internment of all foreigners until they could be repatriated as part of prisoner exchanges. When the missionaries returned after World War II, they found the hospital in a shambles. The rebuilt institutions were then able to treat the sick and train doctors and nurses for a few years until all missionaries had to leave China in 1952.

Nevertheless, the Chinese women who had been trained at the nursing school did not forget their former teachers and fellow nurses. In the 1980s, when some of the Americans were able to visit the hospital, they received a warm welcome, testimony to their place in the hearts of the Chinese whom they had served and loved, and for whom they had continued to pray for many years.

Chapter 5: Tena Holkeboer: Single and Female in the China Mission of the Reformed Church in America, 1920-1948, by Gloria S. Tseng and Madalyn DeJonge

Continuing the study of women missionaries, this chapter follows the career of Tena Holkeboer, an outstanding RCA missionary for twenty-eight years. By drawing heavily upon her letters, the authors weave a rich tapestry portraying the development of Holkeboer from a fresh new worker to a veteran with impressive accomplishments as a teacher, evangelist, administrator, and mission leader. We receive insight into her joys and sorrows, successes and trials, and her gradual maturity as a person and as a missionary.

“In Holkeboer’s missionary career, one sees that singleness both liberated a woman to achieve remarkable accomplishments in the mission field and exacerbated the loneliness caused by prolonged separation from one’s family of origin. She was part of a close-knit missionary

community in China and deeply devoted to the people whom she served, but all her letters home – they were numerous and lengthy – repeatedly spoke of her longing for her family and revealed an unflagging interest in the details of home life” (79).

“A graduate of Hope Preparatory School, Holkeboer taught for several years at Holland Christian School prior enrolling at Hope College in preparation to become a missionary” (79). Thus, she was well-qualified to serve as a teacher of Chinese children as part of the RCA Amoy Mission’s educational ministry in Fujian Province. Later in her career, she augmented her academic credentials by earning an M.A. from Columbia University.

She had an unusual gift for acquiring languages, and she completed the required Chinese language study course quicker than most of her peers. By spending a lot of time among the Chinese and boldly taking on tasks that posed new linguistic challenges, she became proficient in the written language and the spoken Amoy (Xiamen) dialect, which is one of the harder varieties of Chinese to learn. (I know from experience. Before my last furlough, I labored to master the eight different tones under very capable instruction but had to give up the project after returning to the United States.)

On the ship to China, she became friends with a fellow RCA missionary, Jean Nienhuis, forming a relationship with would last for decades.

“In her heart, Holkeboer was an evangelist,” seizing every opportunity to accompany senior missionaries as they visited Chinese homes. She wrote, “Oh, to see these heathen women *drink in*, as it were, every word you say, to see their eagerness to listen, and to know that there is a message for these thirsting souls, is such an inspiration to me that I *long* to get to the stage where I, too, can speak to them” (82). Many years later, she used almost the same words to express her thrill at seeing Chinese women listen intently to the gospel and, gradually, come to faith in Christ. Her zeal for personal evangelism manifested itself in her care for the spiritual condition of her students, speaking in churches, and letters home, and only increased as the years passed, to the point that this form of ministry was all that she really wanted to do.

She began teaching in the girls’ school and accompanied fellow missionary William Vander Meer as they organized a Sunday school for Chinese of all ages and educational levels. Her training and experience bore fruit when she devised a system of teaching women and girls with no exposure to formal education, assigning them to different classes according to their ability and knowledge. Over the years, as a teacher and later as an administrator, she made a major contribution to the RCA’s educational ministry.

Initially based in Amoy (Xiamen), she was later assigned to serve in Tong’an, a town farther inland. Here, in addition to teaching, she also helped in the hospital, where she saw firsthand the physical effects of poverty, ignorance, malnutrition, and warfare. Throughout the chapter, extracts from her letters provide detailed information on the day-to-day life of a missionary in China.

She was not immune to health difficulties, either. This chapter describes several serious illnesses, one of which may have delayed her return from her first furlough in 1927, during which she

studied at Columbia University. The authors graphically relate how God used a miracle to heal a large tumor right before surgery was to begin.

After she became principal of the girls' school, her responsibilities increased, as did her need for quiet time alone, but she moved into the school dormitory so that she could draw closer to students and teachers. Meanwhile, she was appointed to various committees of the RCA mission and served as the RCA delegate to several inter-missionary gatherings, necessitating travel to meetings, often by sea.

Holkeboer's passion for evangelism only grew as the years passed. When she rejoined the work at the Tong'an station in 1946, "remarkably, now in her fifties, she embarked on a new initiative to strengthen rural churches and evangelize the countryside." She did this with two Chinese women workers, though it "involved much traveling and physical hardship" (103).

As noted earlier, Holkeboer's joy in her missionary work did not prevent her from being stricken by grief when members of her family died. The authors give us poignant quotations from her letters home throughout the chapter to show us this very human side of a very successful missionary.

Chapter 6: Faith and Humanitarian Aid in Wartime China, 1937-1941, by Claire Barrett

This well-organized, fast-paced, and fact-filled chapter forms a fitting conclusion to *Cross-Cultural Encounters* by narrating the ways in which RCA missionaries put their Christian faith into action during China's great crisis, the war against Japan.

The Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 called for the creation of foreign settlements in five Chinese port cities. Xiamen (Amoy) was one such city; Gulangyu, an island not far from the city, was the site of one of the foreign settlements. Here, merchants, diplomats, bankers, and missionaries lived and worked under the government of their own committee. Foreign nationals had full freedoms, which made the island not only an ideal base for RCA missionary work in the region but also a safe haven for them and for Chinese refugees in the first three years of the war.

The day after the Japanese invaded Xiamen, thousands of panicked citizens fled the city, many going to nearby Gulangyu. All communications with the rest of the world were severed by the Japanese. Food and medical supplies became scarce, creating a humanitarian crisis overnight.

Immediately, the foreigners on the island, including missionaries, organized an International Relief Committee to replace the Chinese committee that had ceased to function. Four Westerners and five Chinese served on the committee, with a missionary as chairman. "Working together with the Japanese military, Chinese remaining on Gulangyu and in Xiamen, Chinese expatriates in Southeast Asia, and the American and British governments, members of the Amoy Mission would provide extensive aid in the form of medical care, food, shelter, schooling, and spiritual instruction" (110).

Two other important facts: Though "only five percent or less of the population on the island . . . were Christian, more than 90 percent of the leadership and relief work was conducted by them" (110). Furthermore, though under foreign leadership, the Chinese, many of them Christians,

organized themselves into work teams to perform essential tasks like cooking, cleaning, and interpretation for foreigners.

The rest of this chapter tells a remarkable story of efficient cooperation, creative innovation, worldwide communication, and sacrificial service. RCA missionaries were at the center of efforts to provide food, medical care, housing, and education. They helped to teach hundreds of refugee children, not omitting Christian instruction in the process. Many Chinese, seeing the love of the missionaries, became open to the Christian faith. Finally, with missionaries all over China, they served as essential witnesses to the barbaric atrocities inflicted by Japanese soldiers on helpless civilians.

The selfless service of the missionaries helped to combat the prevailing propaganda that missionaries were simply agents of imperialist governments. At least for a few years, that old narrative could no longer be foisted upon the facts of 150 years of history to the contrary.

Some Chinese still remember what really happened, however, and remain grateful to the foreigners who came, not as emissaries of their governments, but as servants of Christ.

Conclusion

Professor Gloria Tseng and her capable students have given us a well-edited volume that answers the questions posed at the beginning of this review, which, though very long and detailed, only offers a sampling of the wealth contained in the book's pages.

China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future

edited by Stephen Uhalley, Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu

Uhalley, Jr., Stephen and Xiaoxin Wu, eds. *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*. Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe. 2001.

This substantial volume includes eighteen papers from a conference centered around the title of the work held in San Francisco under the sponsorship of the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History and the Center for the Pacific Rim of the University of San Francisco in 1999.

Arranged in rough chronological order, the chapters cover a wide variety of topics by scholar-specialists from many fields. There was no attempt at the conference, or in this partial compendium, to provide a systematic, much less a comprehensive, overview of China's interaction with Christianity over the past several hundred years.

However, an introductory "perspective setting" essay and a concluding chapter suggesting future lines of study provide excellent brackets for this disparate collection.

Reflecting the Jesuit sponsorship of the conference, one-third of the papers deal with the Jesuits, mostly of the Ming and Qing periods, and more than half of the book reflects a Roman Catholic perspective. All the same, this Evangelical Protestant reader found at least two-thirds of the chapters quite helpful (though I must add that *Christianity and China*, edited by Daniel Bays, was even more useful).

The length of the book and the variety of its contents preclude detailed description. In brief, the volume would be essential reading for specialists in the history of Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism, in China. More than that, however, I think that all who engage in cross-cultural ministry among Chinese would profit from many of these insightful, sometimes profound, essays.

A few recurrent themes struck this reviewer: Christianity has almost always been seen as a foreign faith; usually, this has hindered its acceptance by Chinese. Those foreigners who have succeeded most in communicating the Gospel have taken the time and effort to learn the language and the culture, have lived among the people, have shown respect for the Chinese and the finer elements of their culture, and have displayed genuine love and concern.

Chinese have had various motives for accepting the Christian faith including, often, a desire for "salvation now" from disease, poverty, social injustice, and oppression. That is to say, Christianity in China often looks little different from its pagan counterparts in folk religion and millenarian political movements.

Contextualization of Christianity among Chinese involves a wide variety of processes; requires immense knowledge, understanding, and skill on all sides; is fraught with many dangers, most notably syncretism and compromise; and usually fails to achieve its intended goals. On the other hand, Christianity has become a truly Chinese religion, with adherents among all classes who see themselves as both Chinese and Christian.

Protestants and Roman Catholics in China today confront a bewildering array of challenges and are marked by immense variety among themselves. These studies have contributed greatly to my own understanding of “China and Christianity.”

(You may skip the following synopsis if you have already decided to buy and read *China and Christianity*. Otherwise, I recommend that you avail yourself of the many valuable insights offered by the volume’s authors by reading these summaries.)

Synopsis

To offer a little taste of the banquet contained in its page 500+ pages, I shall briefly survey the main points of most of the chapters in the book.

The first chapter, “Universal Teaching from the West,” highlights the fundamental tension we face: Christianity claims to possess a message of universal relevance, even authority, and yet it has come to China from “the West.” John Witek, S.J., traces the history of various forms of Christianity in China, noting the ways in which it has both gained adherents and faced rejection as a threat to the social order.

Like many others, he believes that Christians must demonstrate their commitment to the welfare of society as part of the current transformation of China. He concludes with this hopeful statement: “There is no doubt that Christianity, despite its size relative to the population, has become an integral element in the history of China” (27). The prominence of “Christians” in the Republican era reinforces this claim, even if Sun Yat-sen’s Jesus was “a revolutionary leading a religious cause.”

Witek also advises that we study “the role of Christianity in Taiwan as well as... in Hong Kong and Macau during the past fifty-five-year period” for “insights into understanding Christianity in China’s future.”

A Brief Review of the Historical Research on Christianity in China

Zhang Kaiyuan opens his chapter, “A Brief Review of the Historical Research on Christianity in China” with a quote from Francis Wei that should be memorized by all foreigners who seek to communicate Christianity among the Chinese:

“In interpreting the Christian teachings and institutions in terms of another culture the important thing is first of all to enter into the spirit of the culture” (29).

He goes on to trace the study of Christianity in China by Chinese scholars over the past 100 years, listing the most important works and their authors in a most helpful survey of literature.

He is encouraged that scholars in China have now largely cast off “leftist” influences, so that they can undertake their research more objectively. At the same time, he calls for increased cooperation among scholars from all parts of the world.

Erik Zürcher describes how the Jesuit missionaries in China consistently portrayed their European homeland as a utopia ruled according to Christian laws and leaders. Their religion was thus presented as a civilizing force, similar, and even superior, to Confucianism. This idealized picture greatly influenced the perception of Chinese Christians, who concluded that their own country and civilization were inferior to that of Christianized Europe.

There is only one problem with this portrayal: Much of it was fabricated. When reality set in, disillusionment was not far behind. Fast-forward to the period after World War I, and you have a case of *déjà vu*.

Revelation in the Confucian and Christian Traditions

Paul Rule compares “Revelation in the Confucian and Christian traditions.” One particularly pertinent observation follows from the way in which Christianity “fitted only too easily into the paradigms of Chinese popular religion” (he mentions various supernatural elements of both): “It was always, and still is today, elite culture which puts up the strongest barriers” (74-75).

That elite culture placed “the prime source of contact with transcendence” – and thus the source of revelation – in “the moral nature of humanity,” especially the writers of the Confucian classics (75). In other words, Heaven does not speak, as does the Christian God. True, later Jesuits sought to soften this contrast by appealing to natural revelation.

“In the end, however, what determined the reaction of those presented with the *Tianzhu jiao* (Roman Catholic ‘religion of the heavenly Lord’) was acceptance or rejection of a unique and definitive incarnation of God in Jesus.” “Was it historical fact, and if so, why unknown to the Chinese until now? Isn’t it unseemly for Tian/Shangdi/Tianzhu to become a man?... And should we worship a crucified criminal” (79).

“Today, again, the issue has arisen in the form of ‘Culture Christianity,’ with its admiration of the social and cultural utility of Christianity and the subtlety of its theology, but deep ambiguities about its truth claims” (79). Indeed.

Christianity in Late Ming and Early Qing China as a Case of Cultural Transmission

Nicholas Standaert, S.J., studies “Christianity in Late Ming and Early Qing China as a Case of Cultural Transmission” in another chapter with pertinence for today’s encounter. Contacts between Europeans and non-Western cultures have been classified in various categories, such as “cultural” contact (very brief), “collision,” and “relationship” (“a prolonged series of reciprocal contacts on the basis of political equilibrium or stalemate”). Though he considers the Roman Catholic experience of this period different from all those types, the categories are interesting.

He notes that during this period “in the exchange the aspect of external power was relatively reduced,” there was a marked “predominance of the Chinese language in the exchange,” and it

resulted in “raising some fundamental questions to Chinese culture which were fully developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and which are not yet resolved” (84). These include “Why did scientific and technological development stagnate in China and in the West? Why was Jesus Christ born in Judea and not in China? What does modernization mean for China?” (85).

“Transmission between Europe and China can be called external, strategic, holistic, active, and cross-cultural” (91). That is, foreigners brought their religion from the outside and emphasized Aristotelian philosophy more than the Bible; the Jesuits aimed to influence those in authority; they introduced not just religion, but science, technology, and arts and crafts; Chinese played an active part in the encounter; and thus, both sides learned from each other.

Particularly fascinating to me were ways that the Jesuits sought to “translate” their message: pictures of the Madonna were made to look like Guanyin; church structure was adapted to fit Chinese social structure, in which the Jesuits tried to play the role of Confucian teacher as well; Jesus was put into the genealogy of Yao, Shun, Yu, and Confucius; “Confucian and Christian stories [were] juxtaposed to illustrate Confucian Christian virtues.”

Observers of the current scene will not be surprised to learn that, in those days, Chinese religious associations, including the ones organized by Roman Catholics, were “communities of effective rituals” (107). “A religion proves its worth by the immediate efficacy of its rituals. In most cases the proven efficacy of these rituals, the happy discovery that ‘they work,’ appears to be a primary motive for conversion... It was a community of mutual support, in the general fight against all kinds of fear (disease, death, demons, natural disaster). The regular intervention of the supernatural, by way of miraculous healing, rescue from disaster, ... revival from temporary death, etc., ... was the way in which the efficacy of the faith was sustained” (107).

Or, to put it another way, a recent commentator on house churches in China today observed that “millions of Chinese believers are one unanswered prayer away” from abandoning the faith.

Some conditions in a culture favor acceptance of elements of foreign origin, the inner dynamism of a culture, for example. “Officials and scholars searched for concrete ways in which to save the country from decay. It is this preceding quest that fostered the unique interaction between them and the Jesuits.... Late Ming literati responded to the crisis and moral decadence of the society by writing and circulating morality books... Christian moral tracts that aimed at the same purpose were readily diffused by such literati” (111).

Another key factor is prior knowledge, which allows the recipient to fit new knowledge into familiar categories. The Chinese could thus accept astronomy but were uninterested in technology, since theirs was equally advanced.

Emotional-affective characteristics also play a vital role. “Both Western and Chinese sources indicate that Ricci’s natural gift of easily establishing interpersonal relationships must have greatly influenced the way in which he was accepted. There are other examples in which the

reduced distance between teacher and disciple favored transmission” (112). English teachers in China today, for example?

Patterns of transmission of knowledge influence the diffusion of new ideas. Network-building (*guanxi*) is central to Chinese society. The mobility of the educated elite during this period made transmission possible and opened new doors to the Jesuits as their converts moved to new locations. The role of women in the home as educators of the young also facilitated the spread of the new religion.

On the other hand, the threat of danger, even if it is only perceived, may hinder acceptance of new ideas. Christianity was seen as a challenge to the social order and thus rejected by many of the elite. The outsiders played a part in this: “Missionaries... may well overact towards certain aspects and pronounce more explicitly and more sharply their ideas in the new environment than they would in their original setting. This in turn asks for a reaction by members of the new culture” (114). A good reminder!

This chapter is rich in insights and concepts, as the author explores the complexity of cross-cultural interaction. I found it quite brilliant and recommend repeated reading of it for all involved in the current encounter between China and the West.

Chinese Renaissance: The Role of Early Jesuits in China

Li Tiangang’s treatment of the “Chinese Renaissance: The Role of Early Jesuits in China” paints a fascinating picture of the influence of Westerners upon Chinese intellectual history. Briefly stated, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Jesuit missionaries, largely through their translated works, set in motion new trends in Confucianism that laid the foundation for modernity in China.

The reasons are many. Important for us is the fact that the Jesuits “understood Chinese culture even better than many contemporary Chinese,” and were thus, with the strong participation of their converts, able to shape the use of terms and help to redefine the essence of Confucianism.

The connection with modernity derives from the Jesuits’ own debt to the European Renaissance, with its emphasis upon scientific study of each field. “They shared the humanistic attitudes of the Renaissance,” and so they could speak the same language as the humanistic Confucian scholars.

In addition, they “raised the ideal of global culture through cooperation with Confucianism.” They also “participated actively in the transformation of Ming dynasty scholarship.” Their overt influence waned in later centuries, but the impact of their presence remains. Quite an achievement!

The Problem of Chinese Rites in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan

Robert Entenmann’s study of “The Problem of Chinese Rites in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan” offers insights into the ways in which Chinese Christians reacted to the papal prohibition of the worship of ancestors in “one of the most fruitful mission fields in China.”

The Jesuits had taught that ancestor-worship rites were essentially civil, not religious, but the pope had listened to other arguments that regarded them as idolatrous. How did Chinese Catholics respond to the ensuing edicts that forbade traditional practices? Some of them quietly succumbed to the threat of persecution by their neighbors and conformed to tradition. Others, like Antonias Tang and Andreas Ly, sought to enforce the papal commands and root out all vestiges of what they considered to be superstition and idol-worship, especially at funerals.

Sino-French Scientific Relations Through the French Jesuits

In his brief look at “Sino-French Scientific Relations Through the French Jesuits and the Academie Royale des Sciences in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” Han Qi shows how French Jesuits “from the beginning used science to interest Chinese scholars in Christianity.”

His conclusions: With their impact upon the development of science, especially mathematics and astronomy, “their influence in Chinese was to prove more effective in transmitting science than it was in making converts to Christianity.”

China in the German ‘Geistesgeschichte’

Claudia von Collani’s chapter on “China in the German ‘Geistesgeschichte’” reminds us that cultural transmission was a two-way street even long ago. “Whereas the Jesuits brought to China curiosities, Christianity, and European science, China gave to Europe philosophy, which led to the Enlightenment, *Chinoiserie*, Chinese language, and Chinese chronology.”

She shows how books by Jesuits about China, as well their extensive correspondence with European scholars, helped to change the intellectual landscape of Europe away from a respect for revealed religion towards a confidence in human reason and morality. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a universal genius, was largely responsible for this, but others such as Christian Wolff and outstanding Sinologists also played vital roles.

“The Russian Orthodox Church in China” explains that the Russians were always limited in what they could do in China because of their intimate association with, and even diplomatic service of, a neighboring power. Nevertheless, many missionaries delved deeply into Chinese culture and produced works of significant scholarship—something Protestant Evangelicals have usually failed to do.

China and Protestantism: Historical Perspectives, 1807-1949

Jessie Lutz gives us a most helpful review in “China and Protestantism: Historical Perspectives, 1807-1949.” She notes that “[s]cholars have been slow to recognize the growth of an indigenous Chinese Christianity” and seeks to rectify that lack. Another new development is the study of the Protestantism in China “from a new perspective, this time with greater attention to the Chinese side of the story.”

1807-1860

Lutz begins with the story of the intrepid missionaries who brought the gospel to China in the early 19th century. While noting their many achievements, including translation of the Bible and wide propagation of their message, she also reminds us that “[m]ost of the initial conversions were accomplished by Chinese.” “Chinese not only had the advantage of language facility and acquaintance with Chinese mores, but they could travel freely in the interior.”

“More importantly, they had family and lineage as avenues of approach.” As the faith spread among lineage groups, “the Christian congregation became in some ways a surrogate lineage. The Protestant missionary’s concept of the centrality of the individual gave way before the primacy of family and social harmony.”

Chinese evangelists “relied heavily on conversations with small groups in informal settings. Frequently they visited tea houses or engaged in discussion on a one-to-one basis,” though the acquisition of church buildings tended to introduce more formality.

Lutz analyzes the motives of those who converted to the new faith: Many “found the concept of a loving and forgiving Jesus attractive in the light of personal troubles and social disorder... They resisted the idea of original sin and continued to subscribe to the Confucian-Mencian concept of the essential goodness of human nature. But they readily acknowledged personal failings and they craved reassurance and hope.”

Others “were distressed not simply by their own inadequacies, but also by the widespread social and political breakdown surrounding them,” so they welcomed news of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Do we see here the seeds of the same fundamental moralism that characterizes much of Chinese Protestantism even today?

1860-1900

In the next era, that of “foundation building and expansion,” missionaries played a less active role in actual evangelism, which was carried out more and more by Chinese. Power and money still resided in the hands of the foreigners, however. Some outstanding Chinese Christians chafed under this situation and began to act more independently.

As time went on, “converts came slowly, while attrition statistics remained worrisome. Missionaries looked for other means to attract and retain converts. Some sought to appeal to Chinese scholars through translations of Western secular works, science demonstrations, Chinese language periodicals, and philanthropic projects. They hoped to persuade Chinese that Christianity was an essential component of a civilization with a long and respectable heritage... Other missionaries turned to education, social service, and medicine to supplement evangelism.” Does any of this sound familiar?

Opposition to foreign privileges and encroachments on the authority of local leaders finally found its most violent expression in the Boxer Rebellion.

1900-1925

During this period of “Good Times: Popularity and Growth,” evangelical Christianity expanded, and the Social Gospel was introduced. Chinese involved with such organizations as the YMCA “believed that dedicated Christian individuals were the key to reform and they hoped to contribute to the reconstruction of China while also attracting Chinese to Christianity.”

As the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy split the missionary community, “Christian” education played an increasing role. Most Chinese students in Christian schools, however, sought mostly to learn English and Western science “as a means to power and wealth,” and that this was “separable from Christianity,” so they eventually “found other avenues for information about the West.”

In the end, these schools “nurtured a corps of Christian leaders who acquired influential positions in education... Most were characterized by liberal theology, committed to social reform, deep Chinese patriotism, and acquaintance with Western learning and mores.” Was this what the missionaries who founded the schools had intended?

Variety grew within the Chinese Christian community, however, as people like Wang Mingdao and John Sung spoke out for a traditional evangelical message without dependence upon foreign missionaries and attracted thousands of young converts.

1925-1949 “Hard Times: An Era of National and Social Challenges”

These turbulent years were marked by decreasing missionary dominance and growing indigenization of leadership, evangelism, and pastoral work. The Anti-Christian Movement of 1926 created a crisis for both foreigners and Chinese believers, but it brought a deepening of faith for the latter. In the 1930s and 1940s, indigenous movements such as the True Jesus Church and the Little Flock gained adherents, even as independent evangelical bodies and sects “redefined Chinese Christianity as they incorporated elements from folk religion and Buddhism.”

“Christianity in all its variety had taken root in China and possessed the strength and techniques to survive decades of hostility and/or persecution.”

Protestant Christianity in China Today

Ryan Dunch’s “Protestant Christianity in China Today: Fragile, Fragmented, Flourishing,” helps to penetrate the confusing variety of often contradictory reports about the Protestants in China. It, too, will be summarized in some detail.

“There are indeed deep complexities and contradictions within the Protestant experience in China... while on the one hand the Protestant church is flourishing in China, it is at the same time both fragmented ...due to the great diversity of theological, practical, and regional streams that make up the contemporary Protestant church, and fragile due to the limited role which the church, despite its growth, plays and can play in Chinese social and cultural life.”

He begins by noting that different “interested parties” define Protestantism in China according to their own interests and outlooks and settles for the “self-representation” of each group “as the chief criterion for inclusion” in his study.

He categorizes the main strands of Protestantism in China according to their historical origin: “the mission-founded churches, the indigenous Chinese Protestant movements of the early twentieth century, and the new Protestant movements that have emerged in the PRC since the 1970s.”

The mission-founded churches were marked by “relative richness of resources” producing “on the whole a well-educated population with a large representation among the modern professions.” Western connections and Western control over money created tensions between Chinese believers and the missionaries and within the Chinese themselves.

These churches employed a professional, “educated clergy leading worship services in churches on Sundays, stressed preaching from biblical texts, and featured some sort of liturgy..., and hymns consisting of Western tunes and translated Western texts.” These characteristics are still “evident today, especially at urban centers, where most congregations are descended from the pre-1949 mission-founded churches.”

Partly in reaction to these mission-founded churches, a significant number of “independent and indigenous Protestant sects” arose. Their common features included the mission-church background of many of their leaders, a “stress on the direct access of the believer to God’s word in the Bible,” and “considerable interpenetration of membership between the indigenous movements and the older missionary churches.”

The last, and latest, stream includes “some of the most energetic Protestant movements in China today,” which were “begun by Chinese Protestants with no institutional links to the older churches, under the conditions of suppression of all open religious activity in the latter stages of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).”

“They are heavily experiential and revivalist in emphasis, stressing direct personal experience of God, centered on literal reading of the Bible, spread by itinerant preachers with little in the way of formal education (theological or otherwise), but a great deal of dedication and enthusiasm. Suspicion of the state, and of the TSPM/CCC for its ties to the state, are characteristic, as is an other-worldly and often eschatological orientation.”

For a variety of reasons, including increased mobility among the Chinese middle class, “Institutional fragmentation has been a major trend in the history of Protestantism in China since the 1920s.” Such fragmentation has allowed, and been abetted by, the great number of Western groups which have sought to “conduct missionary work of some nature in China.”

Some of these efforts are open, such as teaching English. Many are secret, working directly with unregistered churches, “and not always on very sound missiological principles.” Example: One foreign group supplies laptop computers and scholarships for the study of English, to facilitate communication with English-speaking missionaries.

Demographically, Protestants are “most numerous in three distinct areas: the coastal provinces of Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Shandong, which were centers of missionary work before 1949;

the provinces of the central China plain, particularly Henan and Anhui; and among the minority peoples of southwest China.” The newer movements seem to be “more numerous in central China.”

Most Christians are found in rural areas and represent the so-called “four manys:” old people, women, sick, and illiterate. Women constitute 60 – 80% of most churches. Recently, urban congregations composed of educated younger people have proliferated, however.

Is there anything we can call “Chinese Protestantism?” Dunch finds two “common orientations:” “an experiential emphasis and Biblicism.” He cites evidence to support the view that “many Chinese Protestants, particularly in rural areas, understand their Christian faith in terms drawn from Chinese popular religion. Jesus functions much like a Chinese deity and is a source from which to seek healing for illness and other supernatural help.” That accounts for the heavy emphasis upon healing, exorcism, and other supernatural manifestations in much of Chinese Protestantism, including the newer movements.

The Bible is considered the inspired Word of God and “plays a central role in preaching.” On the other hand, the absence of commentaries and other aids to interpretation, coupled with indigenous methods of handling a text, have led to widespread use of allegory and “spiritual” interpretation of the Scriptures, “without regard to the context of traditional interpretations.”

The problem of indigenization of Christianity and Chinese culture has plagued Chinese believers for centuries and has plagued Protestants for at least one hundred years. Dunch notes several different approaches: Some attempt to find parallels to, and support for, Christian teachings in the ancient Chinese classics. Others note the trend towards connecting with popular culture, especially through hymnody and song.

Still another definition considers financial, administrative, and organizational distance from the Western missionary to be the defining mark of the indigenous church, though this approach contains some major problems. The communists, of course, only consider Christians (and their writings) who support socialism to be indigenous.

Dunch comments: “The difficulty of defining indigenization can be traced, I believe, to the difficulty of defining Chinese culture” with all its variety. Popular and elite culture split, as the elite characterized the former as superstitious and a barrier to modernization. This split created an identity crisis persisting to the present. The default definition has become nationalism, and Chinese Protestants continue to struggle with the perception that theirs is a foreign faith, with connections to foreign - and not always friendly - powers.

Indeed, “the problem of indigenization is ultimately a matter of perception rather than ‘reality,’ since it flows from the subjectively experienced tension between Chinese and foreign identities among some sectors of the Protestant church in China; where no such tension is experienced, the question of indigenization is answered.” This sage remark agrees with my own experience

among Chinese Evangelicals, many of whom no longer see Christianity as a “foreign” religion at all.

Dunch, whose book on Protestants in Fuzhou highlighted their prominent role in society, looks closely at the present position of Chinese Christians in China. He shows, first, that “it lacks a well-developed awareness of its own history,” which means that Chinese believers do not see their religion’s deep roots in Chinese culture over the past 200 years. Even more important, what sense of history they do possess is “a separate history, not as one embedded in the history of modern China.”

The relationship of the church to the state in China is particularly perplexing. All Protestants “experience state pressure and intervention in their activities.” The TSPM, which conducts its affairs openly, does so under government scrutiny. Unregistered churches find themselves subject to harsher treatment, as is well known.

Furthermore, Chinese Protestants mostly lack an intellectual frame of reference for participation in society, since their faith focuses on private, or narrowly parochial, concerns. A strong Pietistic background has fostered the view that one should not think about “unspiritual” matters.

Dunch provides a very helpful discussion of “civil society” in China, and the role of Protestants, especially the unregistered churches, in creating such a realm outside the direct control of the state. Though the churches do not engage in politics, they affect the political scene in at least two ways:

- (1) They withdraw from what they consider to be a corrupt system, which they cannot change.
- (2) They devote their energies to personal and family renewal, seeking thus to reform society from the bottom up.

Moreover, by not entering into the political system, they implicitly deny the Communist claim to ultimate allegiance and total domination of the nation. Dunch does not rule out the possibility that these a-political Christians might exert influence suddenly and unexpectedly, as happened in Eastern Europe – which is just what the leaders in Beijing fear.

When we look at Chinese Protestantism in World Christianity, “it is striking how little is unique about” it. In particular, like Protestantism around the world, it is “an increasingly individualized faith.” The author cites scholars who view Pentecostal movements, with their “emphasis on the self,” as part of a religion seen as “commodities in a religious marketplace, oriented towards satisfying the needs of the religious consumer-self.” Observers of the American scene will find nothing strange here!

Dunch wonders how such an individualized, fractured Protestantism can “maintain an agreed core in the absence of an overarching authority structure.” Can international conferences, frequent conversations among leaders, and literature prevent further fragmentation?

He concludes that “Protestant Christianity has an established place” in China, as well as in “the transnational reality of Chinese culture, in the middle-class churches of Hong Kong and the overseas Chinese communities, and as a focus of interest and cultural inquiry among Chinese intellectuals. . . . In the fluid mutations and recurring patterns which make up Chinese culture today, there is an undeniable Protestant element which will continue to develop in tense and dynamic interaction with that culture.”

Catholicism as Chinese Folk Religion

For me, one of the most enlightening chapters, and one which fills out hints in others, examines “Catholicism as Chinese Folk Religion.”

Richard P. Madsen makes a good case that “Catholicism in China, especially in the rural areas where the vast majority of Chinese Catholics live, is as much folk religion as world religion.”

The early missionaries, led by Ricci, taught that all folk religion ought to be avoided. They coined the term *mixin* – “deviant belief,” now translated as “superstition,” and sought to portray Confucianism as “an agnostic doctrine or moral wisdom, a philosophy that had already recognized the existence of the Supreme Being and that lacked only the revelation of the Gospel.”

Contemporary Confucian scholars, however, discriminated between “the heterodox religion of certain folk-Buddhist sects and the relatively harmless worship of ancestors and village gods.” Madsen believes that “Chinese Catholicism eventually assimilated elements of both kinds of folk religiosity.”

Chinese governments have almost always held to one “orthodox” view of religion, branding all others as “heterodox.” But Madsen quotes Paul Cohen to the effect that Catholic Christianity was itself considered heterodox by many of the literati, because of “its foreign origin, its fundamental non-adherence to [Sung and post-Sung] Confucianism, the miraculous content of some of its doctrines, and its suspected motives of political subversion.” Does any of that remind you of the current situation?

Late-Ming–early Qing “heterodoxy” can be seen in the White Lotus sect of Buddhism. Its stress on the need for salvation, worship of an “Eternal Mother,” and millenarian aspirations made it politically subversive. Some sects emphasized present salvation, including healing and exorcism, sometimes through breathing and other bodily exercises like *qigong*; others focused more on religious matters.

But all were voluntary associations which preached a universal salvation “irrespective of family or lineage or village.” Women usually played an important role in these sects, they “built extensive networks of communication across long distances,” and they “drew members from almost all social strata.” Partly for this reason and partly because they lacked the opportunity to train their leaders openly, “the sects lacked a systematically educated leadership.”

All these features made them potentially powerful politically, and sometimes they “did indeed provide the impetus for massive peasant rebellions.”

Catholicism as “Heterodoxy”

Likewise, Roman Catholicism in China took on many of the same features. After losing their status with the elite, they “focused their missionary efforts on uneducated rural people, whose religious imaginations were imbued with the mentality of the folk religion.” After the missionaries were expelled, “there were no opportunities to train native priests.” Laypeople did most of the training, which “increased the possibilities for developments in doctrine and spirituality which would fit more closely with the characteristics of traditional rural mentalities than the foreign missionaries would have wanted.” Add to that the threat of state persecution and the need for secrecy, and you end up with a group that is forced “to think of themselves as in opposition to official authorities,” and thus “heterodox.”

This, in turn, “[p]ut pressure on them to shape their lives in similar ways to other religious groups that were so classified. One can see this influence in folk-Catholic beliefs, institution structures, and in a general attitude of Catholics toward the rest of society.”

Beliefs: “Chinese Catholic thinking seemed to be more dominated by the search for salvation than the quest for ethical perfection.” While not worshiping the “Eternal Mother” of Buddhism, they did develop an extraordinarily strong “devotion to Mary.” They “have their own magical waters and supernatural powers of healing...[and] apocalyptic visions.” They practice healing and exorcisms and have a strong sense of the imminent end of the present world order.

Structures: Lay leadership is predominant, which often leads to much more effective evangelism based on intimate contact with non-Catholics. Women play a prominent role.

Finally, they see themselves as not only independent of the state and its “orthodox” beliefs, but in some ways opposed to it.

Catholics and Communal Folk Religion

Before the 20th century, Catholics had trouble fitting into rural communal society because of their opposition to most of its religious practices, but in recent decades they have begun to “blend in more fully into the fabric of family and village culture,” especially after the Vatican gave permission to engage in some form of “ancestor worship.”

“They honor their ancestors, not by offering sacrifices of food on the ancestors’ graves, but by praying fervently to them on the Feasts of All Souls and All Saints, by having priests say Masses for the Dead, and by offering Catholic prayer in front of their graves at the Qing Ming festival.” They celebrate “all the main festivals of the agricultural calendar” and engage in “many of the same customs, although they [give] them a somewhat different interpretation.”

Though alert readers will have noticed many similarities to the newer Protestant movements in rural China, no better contrast between Evangelical Protestant Christianity and Roman

Catholicism in China today could be painted than Madsen does towards the end of his most illuminating essay:

For most rural Catholics most of the time, the faith is completely melded with the structures of family and village life. One becomes a Catholic by being born into a Catholic family in a Catholic village, not by making any faith commitment to a doctrine of universal salvation. Such Catholics seem indistinguishable in terms of mentality, morality, and lifestyle from non-Catholic villagers, the only major difference being the performance of different rituals to make important events in the life cycle.

What of the relationship of folk-Catholicism to the state? Catholics are, on the whole, peaceable and submissive to the government. “At other times, perhaps because they have been outraged by government persecution or perhaps inspired by rumors of visions and miracles, Catholics will rise up in opposition to established authorities, and sometimes these uprisings are coordinated over wide regions by the networks of the ‘underground Church.’ Therefore, even when Catholics are sincerely peaceful and law abiding, the government mistrusts them and tries to inhibit them. But this makes it even more likely that the Catholics will react negatively.”

My own observation: Almost every sentence in this chapter will strike a chord with observers of the Protestant scene in China and provide food for thought, not to mention grounds for anxiety.

From Past Contributions to Present Opportunities: The Catholic Church and Education in Chinese Mainland During the Last 150 Years

The overview of Roman Catholic educational efforts in China by Jean-Paul Wiest traces the changes which have taken place over the course of time. The opening paragraph of “From Past Contributions to Present Opportunities: The Catholic Church and Education in Chinese Mainland during the Last 150 Years” neatly summarizes the earlier impact of both Protestant and Roman Catholic education in China and deserves quotation in full:

No history of China’s past 150 years would be complete without mentioning the role played by Christian schools in the modernization of the country and the reform of its educational system. Protestant and Catholic missionaries alike opened the way to new disciplines of study in sciences and technology as well as in medicine. They were the first to make music and athletics an integral part of curriculum. They popularized the study of foreign languages. Academically, the run [sic] outstanding private schools that ranked among the leading institutions of the country. Socially, they opened education to all strata of the Chinese society, including women. Morally, they were deeply concerned with character building before government schools began grappling with problems of probity and discipline. Spiritually, they nurtured the faith of millions of followers and trained a Christian leadership for their Church as well as the Chinese society at large.

Over time, three strategies have driven Roman Catholic educational policy. The first is to nurture the faith of Roman Catholic believers. The second is to try to convert non-believers through the

medium of Catholic schools. The third focuses on “cultivating civil virtues” as part of the nationwide attempt to modernize Chinese society.

While the first of these has continued, and the second has proven to be a failure, the third “became the cornerstone of the educational strategy of the Catholic Church at the secondary and tertiary levels.”

Today, with both greater openness than in the first few decades of the Communist regime and the continuing restrictions upon religious schools by the government, Roman Catholics have found several ways to strengthen their own followers as well as to influence society.

By serving the needs of disadvantaged folk in the community (the elderly, the unemployed, the poor) through practical help and instruction, the Catholics have gained a positive image for themselves among non-believers. Equally important is the move to encourage more believers to participate in public education. Periodicals, conferences, and continuing education have equipped these adherents to make a more effective contribution to society and to present a Catholic point of view through informed, effective service and winsome character.

Christianity and China’s Minority Nationalities

“Christianity and China’s Minority Nationalities—Faith and Unbelief,” by Ralph Covell, examines various factors which might make a people receptive or resistant to the Christian message. Though the number of minority people in China is relatively small, the areas in which they live comprise much of China’s territory, and they have received a great deal of attention from Christians overseas.

Covell’s summary and conclusion, reflecting the observations of a number of scholars, states that the variety of conditions which might lead a people to receive, or to reject, the gospel of Christ include “political, personal, practical, strategic, sociological, cultural, and religious or theological” situations present when the message arrives. Specifically, he believes that “the relationships among dominant and subordinate groups have played a major part in the resistance or receptivity to the Christian faith.”

If the gospel seems likely to benefit a people, and particularly to give them a new sense of identity, those people will be more likely to welcome its messengers. Likewise, if the missionaries are sensitive to, and knowledgeable of, the culture of their hearers, they are more likely to win adherents. The new faith will be more readily received if it comes from people who are not seen as a threat to social order, offers liberation from spiritual oppression or economic poverty, provides new forms of recreation or beauty, seeks to win entire families rather than isolated individual, and comes at a time of cultural or social weakness, even disintegration.

From the chart adapted from Charles Kraft on page 279, the reader will see at once how this decade offers a unique opportunity for the spread of Christianity in China and why this opportunity may be harder in the future.

Discussion on “Cultural Christians”

Zhou Xinping, director of the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, provides an excellent “Discussion on ‘Cultural Christians.’” Some intellectuals in China categorize “three kinds of Christians in contemporary Chinese churches: The first kind are the so-called ‘elite Christians,’ who have a high level of education and theological knowledge.” They are few in number, however, so “the Chinese church still lacks these ‘elite Christians’ for reconstruction and development in China today.”

Second are the “so-called ‘church Christians,’” whose theology and piety are sound, but who mostly “have no academic concern for the destiny and significance of Christianity in China.” Finally, the “folk Christians” comprise the largest majority, especially in rural areas. They are mostly “charismatic” in emphasis, asking God for “personal salvation from trouble, illness, and death, and also for a harmonious relationship in family and in community.” They lack much understanding of their faith, however. “Some of them only combined their traditional folk religions or local beliefs with the outer form of Christianity”—a theme we have met before in this volume.

In this context, Chinese intellectuals who are interested in, even attracted to, the Christian faith, but who do not want to identify with any of the above sorts of “church Christians,” have been called “cultural Christians.” Eager to study Christianity, and often quite knowledgeable, they usually do not belong to a church or even profess to be followers of Christ.

Recent decades have witnessed a huge increase in the study of religion, including Christianity, as a social phenomenon. Scholars from various disciplines, usually without theological training, investigate the history of Christianity, especially its “cultural value and significance . . . towards human beings, and . . . its historic and social function in the development of human society.”

These “Scholars in Mainland China Studying Christianity” (SMSC), while appreciative of some facets of Christian teaching, are often quite critical of the current church in China. They seek something that will contribute to spiritual civilization in China, without necessarily intending to convert to this new faith.

Many SMSCs also want to understand Christian theology in the West as part of their own research in philosophy, religion, history, literature, etc. Since most church leaders have no time for such theological investigation, those outside the church often know more about Western theology than do “church Christians,” which creates a gap, of course. Once again, we see an attraction to the “cultural” side of Christian theology, rather than merely to its traditional dogmas.

There are different sorts of so-called “Cultural Christians,” and different responses to the term. Nevertheless, though they are few and still face misunderstanding, SMSCs are making a significant contribution.

1. They are both evidence of, and a further impetus to, a more favorable attitude towards Christianity in China. They serve as a “bridge between government and religious circles for mutual understanding and exchange.”

2. The SMSC movement “promotes political and cultural understanding of Christianity in the Chinese mainland,” so that now one may speak openly of the contribution of Christians to society.
3. They have contributed to “academic progress in religious, and especially Christian studies” by popularizing “Christian knowledge among the people.”
4. This movement “helps the inculturation and contextualization of Christianity in Chinese culture,” holding out the prospect of a truly “Chinese” theology.
5. Finally, by showing the role of Christianity in Western society, it points to ways in which Christianity may take its part “in the process of Chinese modernization and its cultural reconstruction.”

The Catholic Church in Post-1997 Hong Kong: Dilemma in Church-State Relations

“The Catholic Church in Post-1997 Hong Kong: Dilemma in Church-State Relations,” by Beatrice Leung, considers three issues: “Catholic educational and social welfare services; the political participation of Catholics; and the bridge-building effort of Hong Kong Catholics between China and the Vatican.”

During British colonial rule, and especially after 1949, the Roman Catholic church in Hong Kong cooperated with the government on a “contractual” basis by supplying essential social services and by offering a Christian-based and anti-communist educational program. At the same time, it tried to build a bridge between Roman Catholics in China and the Vatican.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic church supported the efforts by the British to introduce a greater degree of democracy in the colony after the signing of the 1984 Sino-British Agreement on the future of Hong Kong. During and after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, Christians of all stripes joined to support the democracy movement in China, thus arousing the ire of the Communists.

In their desire to strengthen the Roman Catholic churches in China, both government-sponsored and “underground,” Hong Kong Catholics participated in the training of clergy, distribution of literature, and financial aid. Again, this sort of outside “interference” in “domestic” affairs displeased Beijing, whose leaders believed that “religion is employed by international subversive forces to ‘Westernize’ and ‘divide’ China.” (The same is true of similar Protestant activities, of course.)

The revival of Roman Catholicism in China since 1983 “was impossible without the aid of the bridge-building endeavor among overseas Catholics.”

After 1997, however, political and bridge-building activities have been at odds with the policy not only of Beijing, but also the new leaders in Hong Kong. Communists fear “the ability of religious organizations to promote, in the name of religion, a particular political view,” and thus seek “to curb any civil organization including religious organizations as a means to secure state control of the society.”

As in China, so it is in Hong Kong, where social service efforts by churches receive a warm welcome; nothing has changed in this respect since the handover.

As part of its generally anti-Christian stance, the new government in Hong Kong downgraded the status of all Christian church leaders and created a holiday commemorating the birth of Buddha. The latter move showed a desire to “stress the importance of oriental as well as Western religions.”

After 1997, Roman Catholics faced a difficult situation. Heavy government funding for educational and social service activities had created a dependency that rendered criticism of official policies hazardous.

Thus, the Roman Catholic church found itself in the dilemma of how to maintain a friendly relationship with the governments in Hong Kong and in China while remaining true to official Catholic teachings, which had by now included a stress upon the social implications of Christianity.

The dilemma was resolved with the response of the Catholics to the 1999 ruling of the Court of Final Appeal which allowed all mainland children born of Hong Kong permanent residents to live in Hong Kong. When the new government appealed this ruling to Beijing, church-led protests broke out. Choosing rather to uphold principles of social justice, Cardinal Wu, backed up by his successor, then-Bishop Zen, challenged the government’s stance.

Only the future will tell where this bold criticism of government policy will lead, but it does seem to have garnered a great deal of support for Roman Catholics in Hong Kong.

Note: Those lines were written before the recent drastic changes in the legal status of Hong Kong and the transfer of authority to officials from the Beijing government.

Christianity in Modern Taiwan

In “Christianity in Modern Taiwan—Struggling Over the Path of Contextualization,” Peter Chien-main Wang notes the slow growth of both Roman Catholics and Protestants in Taiwan. After pointing to the common claim that the progress of the gospel among Chinese has been hindered because it is viewed as a “foreign religion” with connections to outside power, he laments the lack of attention given to the history of Christianity in Taiwan, especially since both Protestants and Roman Catholics have promoted contextualization.

Boldly, he states that “the slow growth of Christianity in Taiwan cannot be blamed on lack of contextualization.”

To explain this controversial stance, he looks first at the relatively rapid advance of the Christian faith after 1949. He reports the observations of various scholars who have assigned various reasons for this early success, chief among them being the huge influx of foreign missionaries, most of them experienced workers from mainland China. They found a people who were quite

unsettled by post-war conditions and were encouraged and sometimes aided by the Nationalist government.

Looking more closely, we find that most of the receptivity was among the refugees from China who came with Chiang Kai-shek, and among aboriginal peoples, whose lives were disrupted in the new era.

In the mid-1960s, however, church growth slowed and has remained level almost to this day. Wang cites several possible reasons for this phenomenon: The missionaries “did not have a thorough and thoughtful plan for the evangelization of local people,” and “they did not encourage the laity, a truly indigenous leadership, or a self-supporting spirit.” Seminaries “accepted many low-quality students,” whose graduates could not serve effectively in a rapidly modernizing urban environment.

As people migrated to the cities, they were not integrated successfully into churches. Meanwhile, an anti-Christian climate had arisen among the intellectual elite; affluent people “began to pursue material gains and no longer pursued spiritual satisfaction. At the same time, the traditional Chinese religions which lay strong emphasis on *Bao* (retribution) became popular as people became wealthy or established.” (Perhaps the idea of unmerited grace would not appeal to such self-made successful people; nor would the promise of a better life after death.)

In response, Protestants began to study church growth theory and practice, inviting prominent pastors from other nations to come to share their ideas. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, have visited Korea to learn from Paul Yung-chi Cho, and still more have gone to Singapore to find out how to establish “cell churches” from Dr. Ralph Neighor.

Nevertheless, the total percentage of Christians of all sorts remains less than 4%, including baptized infants recorded by Presbyterians, Methodists, and Roman Catholics.

Next, Wang describes efforts by the Taiwan Presbyterian Church to contextualize the gospel. They made a new translation of the New Testament into Taiwanese, the official language of the denomination, and they sponsored translation of the Bible into various tribal languages.

To ensure that foreigners could not control their churches, the Presbyterians categorized missionaries as “providers of expertise” without any administrative, financial, or supervisory authority.

Most of all, the Presbyterians have adopted a strongly political role in Taiwanese society. While the KMT was in power, they called for political reform and greater democratization. From its inception, they have supported the Democratic People’s Party with finances, manpower, preaching, and prayer. In one statement after another, they have promoted the independence of Taiwan as a separate nation. Indeed, “[m]aking Taiwan a new and independent country’ has become the highest standard and goal of the Presbyterian church.”

The Presbyterians have also tried to formulate an indigenous theology, one which centers upon the social implications of the Christian faith and leads to further participation in politics. These activities they consider to be “participating in God’s politics of construction.”

In all of this, they have limited themselves to a “Taiwan-only” orientation, being concerned to construct a truly “Taiwanese” church as part of the overall program of creating a Taiwanese national identity. As the DPP has had to moderate its formerly strong backing of independence, the Presbyterians have found themselves in opposition as they advocate faithfulness to its original separatist platform.

Despite these attempts at political contextualization, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan “has not experienced any significant growth for the past fifteen years.”

Roman Catholics have also been seeking to indigenize their methods and message over the years. The first group of priests who arrived from the mainland after 1949 spoke Mandarin, and thus naturally reached out to the new refugees from China’s civil war. At first, they concentrated upon providing the essentials of life, such as food, clothing, and education, so much so that some called Catholicism “powdered milkism” or “[baking] flourism,” and the church was known as “the flour church.”

Just as reliance on outside funds pointed to the “foreign” nature of Roman Catholicism, so did a failure to train and deploy native priests, and the use of the word “China” in its official name. A close association with the Nationalist government – the very opposite of the Presbyterian position – also kept Roman Catholics from developing a strong presence among Taiwanese-speaking people.

After 1970, however, Roman Catholics in Taiwan actively sought to adapt to Chinese culture in a process they called “inculturation.” Theoretically, theologians tried to show similarity between Chinese cultural concepts (such as love, filial piety, etc.) and traditional Christian doctrines.

Practically, Roman Catholics have reversed the results of the famous Rites Controversy in China. In 1971, Cardinal Paul Yu Bin “formally promoted honoring of Heaven and the ancestors in the Chinese Spring Festival, saying, “Chinese customs may be incorporated in Christian celebrations.” While retaining the highest worship (*Latria*) for God, and the second highest (*Hyperdulia*) for Mary, Roman Catholics now allow “Dulia” for saints, angels, and ancestors. Thus, in a stunning vindication for Matteo Ricci and the Jesuits, ancestor-worship (*jizu*) has now been deemed merely reverence and not idolatrous.

These moves, along with church buildings that reflect traditional Chinese style, were meant to appeal to the local populace. Nevertheless, “The promotion of cultural contextualization did not have any positive effect on the church growth. On the contrary the Church began to lose members in 1970.”

The decades of the 1990s saw a heightening of tension in Taiwan as the DPP, supported by the Presbyterians, pushed hard for a new national, fully “Taiwanese,” identity. The Roman Catholics

have responded by changing their official name to “the Chinese Regional Bishops’ conference in Taiwan,” and Taiwan was allowed to have its own Cardinal. Old attempts at “inculturation” with Chinese culture have been replaced by an emphasis upon Taiwan culture.

As with the Presbyterians, so with the Roman Catholics, however: Neither “political contextualization” nor “cultural contextualization” has resulted in church growth.

The author concludes, “The judgment as to what kind of contextualization is best for the Church and for society must be left for future historians to make.”

To put the matter bluntly: This provocative article raises fundamental questions of missiology that deserve the attention of the best minds in all branches of Christianity.

Christianity and China: Toward Further Dialogue

In his concluding chapter, “Christianity and China: Toward Further Dialogue,” Philip Wickeri names several key issues which kept surfacing in these papers: (1) Whether, and in what sense, Christianity can be considered a “universal teaching from the West;” (2) The relationship between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism among Chinese Christians, which includes the matter of contextualization; (3) Christian contributions to Sinology; (4) The importance of popular Christianity in China; (5) “Christianity and Chinese cultures,” including the degree to which all theologies are, of necessity, “hybrids.”

He lists topics deserving further study: Women in the Experience of Christianity in China, The Bible in the Study of Chinese Christianity, and Dialogue with Chinese Themselves – a reference to the difficulty still facing Christians within and outside China in actually talking to each other in public.

Rereading this hefty volume increased my appreciation for its wealth of information and insights. I highly recommend it to all serious students of China and Christianity.

PART II: BIOGRAPHIES

Organized alphabetically by subject of biography - click on title below to go directly to that review

GÜTZLAFF: Opening China: Karl F. A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852

by Jessie Gregory Lutz

Lutz, Jessie Gregory. *Opening China: Karl F. A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. *Studies in the History of Christian Missions*. Edited by R.E. Frykenberg and Brian Stanley.

Who said history wasn't relevant? Though at first glance a biography of a largely discredited independent German missionary who was born almost two centuries ago might seem to have little to do with our current situation, Jessie Lutz's masterful narrative and analysis of the life and times of Karl Gützlaff provokes the question, "Has anything changed?"

Opening China sets Gützlaff's career in the intricate matrix of Sino-Western relations, which, in his day as in ours, feature pressure upon the rulers in Beijing to unlock China's doors to free trade and to the propagation of the Christian faith. Obsessed with keeping a tight grip on their people, China's leaders resist outside intrusion and insist upon their right to control destabilizing Western imports.

Then, as now, evangelical Christians believed that more freedom for commerce would also entail increased liberty for foreign messengers and their converts to spread and receive the gospel of Christ. Nor were some of them unwilling to assist foreign powers in their attempt to apply political and even military force when persuasion and diplomacy failed. To make matters worse, many missionaries initially supported the Taiping rebellion, with its apparently strong "Christian" component, and would have rejoiced to see the Qing dynasty toppled. Not without reason, communist officials have wondered at the close connection between American Christians and the U.S. government, especially during the recent Bush administration.

The parallels with Gützlaff go even further: Like thousands of his spiritual descendants, he flouted the laws against preaching the Christian faith within China, making repeated forays to evangelize and to distribute Christian literature, which was contraband. Citing the favorable response of the common people, he mocked their magistrates' attempts to enforce the decrees of the emperor. He paid Chinese employees whom he hired to distribute Bibles and tracts illegally among the masses.

Alas, it doesn't stop there, for Gützlaff exemplifies the independent evangelistic entrepreneur so familiar to American evangelical culture. Though he began as a member of a missions society, he soon hived off to obey what he thought was God's special leading in his life. For most of his career as a missionary, he launched out on his own, free from supervision, fully convinced that he was right, almost impervious to criticism, and depending upon direct links with supporters back home. In time, of course, he founded his own organization, the Chinese Union.

From his youth, Gützlaff demonstrated pride, self-will, a tendency towards exaggeration, unbounded optimism which frequently defied reality, and unwillingness to heed criticism or submit to authority.

Convinced that only Chinese believers would be able to carry the gospel effectively to their people, Gützlaff strongly advocated, and practiced, what we would now call “indigenous missions” (though the term itself is an oxymoron). Why spend money on an expensive foreigner when you can hire a local, especially since he already knows the language and customs of his people? Imagine his heartbreak when many of his trusted workers turned out to be frauds.

A master communicator in many languages, Gützlaff carried on an extensive correspondence with Christians in Europe and America, inspiring them with dramatic stories of his colorful campaigns to evangelize Western Christians to donate to his projects, even when evidence of their effectiveness was spotty at best. Exaggerated claims of conversions further inflated expectations, which were then crushed when his numbers were effectively challenged.

Indeed, one might ask, as Lutz and many of Gützlaff’s contemporary critics did, “What is ‘conversion,’ anyway?” Does it consist of a head knowledge of vital doctrines, plus an avowed intention to follow Christ? Or does true faith show itself in a solid understanding of the gospel accompanied by consistent Christian living? Holding the former “minimalist” view, Gützlaff was happy to see Chinese memorize the Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and Ten Commandments, and then agree to distribute Bibles, books, and tracts – for a salary. Other missionaries looked for more than intellectual assent and some formal association with a Christian organization and questioned the validity of untested professions of faith by people with hardly any other knowledge of the Bible.

Likewise, when we hear that China now has 130 million Christians, some dare to ask, “What do you mean by the word ‘Christian?’”

Gützlaff also remains controversial today, because he, perhaps more than any other contemporary missionary, played a variety of roles that could not but confuse the Chinese he meant to serve. He took repeated trips on vessels engaged in the opium trade, though he abhorred it, he sought out information on the cultivation of tea in order to break China’s monopoly on its growth, and he helped the British win the first Opium War and then served as Chinese secretary for the British administration of Hong for many years, all the while presenting himself to his supporters at home as a missionary.

This confusing mix of activities did a great deal to fuel Chinese suspicions of Western Christian’s intentions and of Christianity itself, down to the present day.

We can understand why many criticized him, but why did so many succumb to his charms?

Well, partly because he possessed many remarkable attributes and was himself an extraordinarily effective missionary to the Chinese. Unlike most Westerners seeking to evangelize the Chinese today, Gützlaff became unusually fluent in several dialects of Chinese, so much so that he was

regularly taken for a native speaker, though perhaps from a different region of the country. He wore Chinese clothing and mastered Chinese etiquette.

Well educated in biblical languages, Gützlaff translated parts of the New Testament into Thai and the entire Bible into Chinese. Building upon the pioneer work of Robert Morrison, William Milne, and their Chinese helpers, he worked with several other missionaries to produce a revision of Morrison's work. In later years, he revised both this version and his own translation of the New Testament in a style that was considered the most accessible to Chinese readers.

He studied Chinese history, geography, and culture so well that he could author authoritative, scholarly, and popular books to educate Westerners. The title of one of them, *Opening China*, was chosen by Jessie Lutz as the title for her biography because of its double meaning: Gützlaff was providing information to British officials who sought to expand trade and diplomacy with China, but he was also trying to "open" China to the minds of Westerners. He composed many works on Western civilization in Chinese to broaden the horizons of narrow-minded scholars.

He even learned how to govern like a Chinese mandarin – only an honest one. After serving as guide, spymaster, and negotiator for the British in the first Opium War (1840-42), Gützlaff administered the important port city of Ningbo so well that later missionaries benefited from his reputation among the people as a fair and decisive arbiter of justice. The Chinese knew that he held their interests in his heart and sought their welfare.

His passion for the evangelization of China's millions motivated Christians in Europe and America to establish several dozen missionary societies and send workers to China, and his conviction that Chinese could best spread the gospel to their countrymen moved him to form the Chinese Union, as we have seen. In short, he mobilized both foreign and Chinese Christians to participate in the great task of reaching China with the truth. Perhaps his greatest legacy was the lasting impact he made upon J. Hudson Taylor, who inherited Gützlaff's vision and adopted many of his methods, with modifications gleaned from Gützlaff's bitter experience.

Perhaps most important of all, he loved the Chinese, and they knew it.

Jessie Lutz has written a superb biography, one which should remain the definitive work in English for a long time. Gützlaff's life is placed within the swirl of Sino-Western relations, in which he played a not-insignificant part. His faults are not hidden, but his abilities and impressive accomplishments are duly and appreciatively recorded. Each chapter, and even each section, begins with a summary that provides the context for what follows.

Though she obviously does not fully admire Gützlaff - who could? - and may not share his form of pietistic Christianity, she accomplishes the nearly impossible task of writing an "objective" account. All writers of history, and especially of biography, should study this book carefully; it is a masterpiece of its genre.

The author has meticulously documented her narrative with citations from original sources, including archives in German and in English, as well as primary Chinese materials. Clearly

aware of the literature both of Gützlaff's era and of our own, she explores her subject's significance not only for his time but for ours as well, making frequent "applications" to current issues.

Opening China rightly takes its place in a distinguished series. Both the author and the editors are to be congratulated.

LEGGE: The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage

by Norman J. Girardot

Girardot, Norman J. *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.

James Legge (1815-1897) is a major figure in Protestant missionary history, both in light of his long service in Hong Kong and because of his monumental achievement as a translator.

After a brief (68 page) treatment of Legge's childhood, youth, education, and thirty-year career as a missionary in Hong Kong (1844-1874), this massive intellectual biography focuses on the last twenty-two years of his life, when Legge was Professor of Chinese at Oxford University. Throughout the narrative of Legge's time at Oxford, the author places him within the context of early Western sinology, the rise of the study of comparative religions, late nineteenth-century academic and intellectual developments, and the controversial career of Orientalist Max Muller.

It would seem that Girardot makes this choice for two reasons: First, Legge's ministry in Hong Kong had already been minutely described by Lauren Pfister (with whom the author initially collaborated), and second, Legge's work as an academic translator and interpreter of the Chinese classics remains his principal legacy today.

As the book's subtitle indicates, the author believes that he can trace a clear trajectory in Legge's "pilgrimage" as a missionary and as a sinologist. Through the prism of Legge's career, Girardot sees also the "Victorian foundations of the modern Western perception of China and religion" (xv). Consequently, he traces the rise and growth of sinological Orientalism and of the comparative science of religions as new academic disciplines. Along the way, he describes "the incremental secularization of public life, the emerging relativistic climate of comparison and pluralism regarding other religions and cultures, the curricular and structural transformation of education . . . , the progressive professionalization of academic life, the implicit cultural imperialism of the Orientalist disciplines, the changes in the world-wide missionary movement, the one-sided encounter of a so-called progressive West with a retarded Orient, and so on" (xv).

Clearly, some of these topics are still very much with us today, as are some of the debates in which Legge took part. In other words, this is not just history (if there is such a thing), but a fascinating discussion of the roots of our current situation, both in the academy and among missionaries, for the sharp criticisms directed at Legge concern matters which remain controversial.

In fact, one of Girardot's goals, in which I believe he largely succeeds, is to challenge both the provincial nature of sinology in the past hundred years, as well as the smug secularism that grips

the academy as a whole and makes so-called “scholars” prisoners of their own unexamined agnostic or atheistic presuppositions. Even more provocatively, he writes with the conviction that, though “all forms of human expression are certainly rhetorical (broadly conceived), . . . this does not mean that all written discourse about discourse in the past has to read like a postmodernist manifesto” (xxix). In other words, he takes Legge and his contemporaries seriously on their own terms and seeks to understand what they meant and what they say to us today.

Legge as “Pilgrim”

The “pilgrimage” theme that structures the narrative includes several aspects: first, Legge’s actual journey from Scotland to Hong Kong, his visit to the homes of Confucius and Mencius in Shandong, his return to Great Britain, and his final years in Oxford.

Girardot also traces Legge’s development as a worker. First, he was a missionary, then a missionary-scholar. At Oxford, he increasingly saw himself more as a scholar and less as a missionary. Finally, he almost repudiated his role as a missionary entirely.

More importantly for the book, however, is Legge’s supposed transition from a stance of traditional evangelical disparagement of Confucius, Confucianism, and Chinese religion in general – especially Buddhism and Daoism – to a place of profound admiration for the Sage of China, belief in the original religious orientation of the ancient Chinese, and even some appreciation for Chinese religions as containing elements of the truth. Legge did, indeed, change his initial evaluation of Confucius from “not a great man,” to “a very great man.” He also expanded his research and translation over the years, beyond a focus upon the dominant Confucian classics to important Buddhist and Daoist “sacred books.”

Girardot makes much of Legge’s friendship with the Chinese Ambassador, Guo Songtao, who challenged his assertion that “Christian” England was more “moral” than Confucian China. As time went on, his disgust at Britain’s imperial policies, odious opium trade, and domestic moral degeneration made him less and less willing to trumpet the supposed superiority of Christianity as a force for good in society; he had to admit that in some respects China was more “moral” than England. Like other missionaries, he realized that the blasts of gunboat cannon, the stench of opium, and the shameful behavior of Western merchants in China were making it hard for many Chinese to hear the gospel or see its intrinsic beauty and social utility.

On the other hand, the author clearly notes certain continuities that seem to diminish the force of this “pilgrimage” motif. From the beginning, Legge worked hard at understanding and translating the Chinese classics, with the conviction that missionaries must know those to whom they intend to preach the gospel of Christ. Much to the dismay of many fellow missionaries, even in his early years as a missionary Legge also believed strongly that the ancient Chinese knew the God of the Bible and worshiped him as *Shang Di*. Legge’s liberal Nonconformist evangelical esteem for education motivated ongoing and successful efforts to introduce non-sectarian education both in Hong Kong and Oxford, where he also involved himself in other reform projects.

Most importantly, and to Girardot's chagrin, Legge never wavered in his conviction that Jesus Christ is the final, full, unique, and supreme revelation of God. No amount of reverence for Confucius or growing esteem for the higher elements of Buddhism and Daoism could shake his faith in the unequalled status of Christianity as the most excellent religion and the only one that could confer knowledge of God and renovation of the inner self. Even his most conciliatory and "comparativist" work, *The Religions of China: Confucianism and Taoism Described and Compared with Christianity* (1880), which Girardot cites as evidence of Legge's alleged "pilgrimage" to a "broader" and more accommodating view, ends with a ringing affirmation of traditional Christian truths and their abiding unique supremacy.

Legge as Translator and Interpreter of China to the West

Despite this possible tension between a posited inner development and the obvious stability of Legge's central convictions, Girardot excels in his description of the immensely productive literary career of this missionary-scholar. Legge began by translating the Four Books (*Analects of Confucius*, *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Mencius*) and eventually rendered all the traditional Thirteen Classics into English, plus the *Dao De Jing*, the writings of Zhuangzi, and several Buddhist texts (including *The Travels of Fahien*, or *Faxian's Fuguo ji*). The Classics included the *Book of Poetry* and the *Book of Changes* (I Jing), both notoriously difficult to understand and translate.

The book does, therefore, indicate how Legge expanded his understanding of China's literary and religious tradition by moving beyond the Four Books and even the rest of the Confucian (or, as Girardot prefers to call it, Ruist) canon, which he had initially thought so thoroughly dominated Chinese intellectual life that non-Confucian literature was not that important.

Legge drew upon a wide and precise knowledge of the entire Chinese commentarial tradition in his effort at comprehension and interpretation. Though he was criticized by some for over-reliance upon Zhu Xi, a careful reading of his comments reveals Legge's independence of judgment and discriminating choices, as Girardot acknowledges. As time passed, he respected Zhu Xi more and more, but never followed him slavishly. Wang Tao's encomium of Legge makes the same point.

Painful Criticisms

Legge was also chided for accepting the traditional ascriptions of date and authorship, rather than exercising what was becoming a fiercely negative critical approach to ancient texts, a trend which overwhelmed the academy at the end of the nineteenth century and still exercises considerable influence. According to this new and supposedly "scientific" approach, Homer and Moses were severed from the books that they had been thought to compose, and Isaiah, John, and other biblical authors were tossed into the dustbin of naïve credulity. It took much of the twentieth century to recover from this obsessively skeptical prejudice, and recent scholarship has only partially succeeded in showing that our forebears were not as stupid as earlier self-confident critics had assumed. Evangelicals have made a powerful case for traditional authorship and dating of the Pentateuch and the Gospels; classical scholars are more willing to admit that

someone like a Homer must stand behind the epics and some learned men have reaffirmed the historicity of Laozi and even his authorship of the *Dao De Jing*.¹⁹

More stinging, however, were the rebukes of colleagues in the missionary enterprise, including, in Legge's early decades, the leaders of the London Missionary Society. Until he had acquired fame as the leading sinologist of the day, Legge was considered by the LMS directors to be spending too much time on translation, to the detriment of traditional missionary work. This was despite his constant defense that he stole time from sleep, not from his normal duties as a missionary, by rising early in the morning for scholarly labors. Later, however, he admitted that in his last years in Hong Kong, his scholarly work "came to engross my time more and more, and interfere with the prosecution of direct missionary work both in preaching and teaching" (180). The root problem, nevertheless, seems to have been that the LMS could not see the value of Legge's producing translations that enabled missionaries to understand those to whom they were speaking. Then, as now, fundamental research does not seem valuable to practitioners and funders.

Even more difficult to bear were the charges from fellow missionaries that he was compromising fundamental tenets of Christianity by daring to insist that the ancient Chinese somehow knew God as *Shang Di* by taking off his shoes at the Temple of Heaven, and then by including translations of Chinese texts in Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East* series. The notion that non-biblical texts could somehow be considered "sacred" seemed to demote the Bible from its unique position as God's special revelation. Even the effort to "compare" Chinese religions with Christianity, or Confucius and Buddha to Jesus, smacked of compromise, since it appeared to place Christ and Christianity in the same category as mere mortals and man-made religions.

His paper comparing Confucianism and Christianity, which was read for him by fellow "liberal" William Muirhead at the 1877 General Missionary Conference in Shanghai, evoked a firestorm of protest, not on the day of its presentation, but later, when a resolution to omit the paper from the conference proceedings volume was overwhelmingly passed. Girardot rejects the official reason for this, which was that the pre-conference arrangements committee had agreed not to allow discussion of the highly explosive "Term Question," lest missionary unity be destroyed. He adduces evidence for his claim that the missionaries favoring *Shen* as a translation for "God" had manipulated the whole proceeding, and that "Leggism" was silenced, but only for a while. By 1910, the *Shang Di* party, represented by Legge, had triumphed, as "the liberal theology of 'fulfillment' theory, the 'social gospel,' and 'indigenization' was in ascendancy" (217).

Girardot believes that Legge's paper was "a turning point in the history of the Protestant missionary movement," (218) because it built "a case for a broad attitudinal shift in the overall terms of the missionary movement" (219). From then on, missionaries would be increasingly willing to find "various 'parallels' with Christian tradition" in classical Chinese literature, and a

¹⁹ See, for example, Chichung Huang, *Tao Te Ching: A Literal Translation, With Notes and Commentary* (Fremont, California: Asian Humanities Press, 2003), 9-23, where the evidence for the historicity of Laozi as a man and as author is critically examined and defended.

“two-way conversation” would be opened, with “the potential danger of a reciprocity that could lead to the conversion of Christians as much as it could win over heathens” (219).

The truth may be a bit more complicated. Legge did argue that Confucianism, like the Pentateuch, was “‘defective’ but not ‘antagonistic’ to Christianity” (223), he averred that Confucius and Mencius and others like them had been “raised up” by God to keep some knowledge of himself among the Chinese, and that some of their sayings were not only equal to the Law of Moses, but parallel to the teachings of Christ. He also insisted, however, that missionaries must try to inculcate in the Chinese a sense of sin, which Confucianism lacked. Still, his belief that Christianity would “supplement,” rather than “contradict” Confucianism provoked strong rebuttals, along with charges the Legge was moving too far in the direction of “assimilation” of the faith to Confucianism, devaluing the Old Testament by ascribing similar status to the Confucian classics, and enlisting rationalistic Chinese views as “allies” to the gospel. More than one missionary virtually accused him of heresy.

In that sense, Girardot is correct to see Legge’s Shanghai paper as a watershed in missions history, since his relatively moderate comparativism was later developed into a full-blown theological liberalism that split the missionary movement in China into two bitterly opposed parties. Girardot also notes the sad fact that both denominational (what he calls “sectarian”) and nationalistic factors further complicated the debates, as Legge’s critics were mostly Americans, while the British generally came to support the *Shang Di* position.

This debate continues to the present. Though I personally believe that *Shen* is the better translation for the Greek word *Theos*,²⁰ and that the idea that Christianity “fulfills”, or “supplements” other religions must be carefully examined, I think also that both Legge’s contemporaries and perhaps even Girardot may have exaggerated his “liberalism.” He was still, as even Girardot admits, an evangelical.

From the other end of the ideological spectrum came accusations, or at least insinuations, that Legge, as a former missionary, could never free himself from theological bias enough to form an accurate understanding of the Chinese classics. “How could a mere missionary be a real scholar?” they wondered. The growing professionalism and specialization of academics meant that only those who devoted themselves fully to their specialty, and who did so from a strictly neutral and “scientific” perspective, could really count as scholars.

Thus Legge “would forever be identified as a hopelessly liberal comparativist by conservative missionaries and as a heroically diligent, but vaguely old-fashioned and excessively pious, ex-missionary scholar by critical academics and secular Orientalists” (414).

Girardot responds to these allegations by showing how Legge never denied the unique supremacy of Christ or of God’s revelation in the Scriptures and in Christ, and how his theory

²⁰ See G. Wright Doyle, “Names for God: Shang Di” (<http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/articles/names-for-god-shang-di.php>) and “Names for God: Shen” (<http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/articles/names-for-god-shen.php>).

and practice of translation, not to mention his diligence in mastering the Chinese scholarly tradition, place him among the highest ranks as a careful scholar.

Even his comparativist method evinced only respect for the “other,” not any lessening of reverence for God. Legge merely believed that the Golden Rule obligates us to describe and evaluate other faiths as fairly as possible. Indeed, Girardot rather laments that Legge, though admitting a number of points of similarity, consistently pointed out where the Chinese religions were, in his word, “defective,” and where Christianity contained precious doctrines not found elsewhere. It is thus “superior” to all rivals. Confucius and Laozi were never “more than men,” but Jesus is both God and man. Nor is there anything in Chinese texts like the Incarnation, the propitiatory death and bodily resurrection of Christ, and therefore the hope of future blessedness for his followers.

The new sinologists also questioned whether translation itself should qualify as true scholarship. Girardot rightly maintains that there is no such thing as “mere” translation, for each translation, to be faithful, must involve detailed study of the original text and its meaning before a proper rendering into another language can be made. Legge’s massive volumes contained not only careful (though not word-for-word) translation, but also extensive commentary, reflecting the highest scholarly standards.

Misunderstood, unfairly criticized, and thus inadequately respected, Legge may seem to be something of a pathetic figure, and Girardot does paint a portrait of a man increasingly intellectually lonely. He pressed on, nevertheless, with his daily study, writing, schedule of teaching (though his students were few), and with public lectures. Firm in his conviction of God’s leading in his life, and steadfast in his commitment to his calling, Legge worked indefatigably to fulfill what he regarded as “the whole duty of man.”

His first few years at Oxford were a “period of special domestic happiness shared with his wife, children, and grandchildren,” (193) but his wife Hannah’s developing “despondency and religious scrupulosity” could not help but affect the rest of the household (195). When she died, Legge’s status as a non-conformist prevented her from being buried in the Anglican cemetery, to Legge’s profound sorrow and disappointment. Until the end, he was always something of an outsider at Oxford. Then, finally, both he and his first wife, Hannah, were buried together in the Anglican cemetery. The pilgrim had reached his destination(s).

Evaluation

Though I found the book immensely informative and stimulating, in addition to the question about the cogency of the “pilgrim” thesis, there remains the fact that the author obviously does not share Legge’s evangelical faith. He thus cannot restrain himself from snide and supercilious remarks about evangelicals in general and evangelical missionaries in particular, frequently mocking their zeal for seeing lost souls saved through faith in Christ and their concern for correct doctrine. By failing to appreciate Legge’s core convictions, Girardot inevitably falls short in understanding the central subject of this otherwise brilliant biography.

Despite this deficiency, however, Girardot's monumental study has succeeded in giving us a sympathetic, even moving, narrative of a great man, missionary, and scholar. Repeatedly, he praises what he calls Legge's "epic doggedness of intellectual labor," especially by contrast with other professors at Oxford (192). He also vividly describes Legge's intellectual and academic environment, though I have largely neglected this aspect of the book in my review. We are indebted to the author for his own labors in libraries and archives to bestow on this man the honor to which he is due. With its depth, breadth, and copious notes (filling 200 pages), the volume is a treasure-trove for scholars, but anyone interested in late Victorian intellectual and academic history will find it fascinating.²¹

²¹ For more on Legge's dual career, see: <http://www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/1/legge-james.php>. For some lessons to be learned from his life and work, see: <http://www.reachingchineseworldwide.org/blog/lessons-from-james-legges-career>.

MORRISON: Robert Morrison and the Birth of Chinese Protestantism

by Christopher Hancock

Hancock, Christopher. *Robert Morrison and the Birth of Chinese Protestantism*. London: T & T Clark, 2008.

As the first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison laid a foundation for what would become the imposing edifice of today's Chinese church. Morrison was quite conscious of his role and worked deliberately to prepare for others, Chinese and Western, to follow. We have much to learn from him today.

The basic facts are well known, and Hancock's sparkling narrative presents them in a clear and orderly fashion. He relies primarily upon "a close re-reading" of the two-volume *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of the late Robert Morrison*, composed by his second wife Eliza, but draws freely upon other sources, both primary and secondary. From Eliza we learn of Morrison's inner conflicts about work for the East India Company while trying also to fulfill his missionary calling, as well as intimate details of his family life. Morrison comes across as a real man, flawed, to be sure, and a bit stiff and formal at times, but devoted to his family, his mission, and his Lord.

For the record: Robert Morrison compiled an English-Chinese dictionary in several volumes and also published a translation of the entire Bible in Chinese (with essential assistance from an existing translation of part of the New Testament, Chinese helpers, and William Milne); a grammar of the Chinese language; translations of the Book of Common Prayer and other Christian texts several monographs and many shorter works on Chinese history, culture, literature, etc., along with translations of Chinese literary works; a history of Christian missions among the Chinese; a vocabulary of the Cantonese dialect; and several dozen other works in English and Chinese.

The monumental literary achievements, not to mention other aspects of his ministry, which were all wrought in an atmosphere of constant pressure from Chinese and EIC, flowed from a man whose character is described as marked by "untiring perseverance," "the most ardent zeal – [and] indefatigable diligence (Page references for quotations will not be given in this review.) Beset by headaches, fatigue, and multiple physical ailments and always conscious that his Chinese helpers, his precious books and printing-blocks, and his own person could be at any time threatened by Chinese officials, restrained both by law and by the labor required by his job with the EIC, far from home and friends, working alone most of the time, and longing for his family – Morrison started from almost nothing and built an edifice of scholarship surpassed by few.

That is why Morrison's own character forms a major sub-theme of this account of his life and work. Both his virtues and his shortcomings receive balanced attention. "His capacity to endure and consistency of vision are remarkable." "For all his bullish single-mindedness and (to some) priggish self-righteousness, Morrison had a remarkable capacity to love and be loved." Not

surprisingly, “Morrison’s will often outran his body in later years. He was always better at exhausting himself than resting well.”

Hancock refers often to the strong Calvinistic convictions which animated Morrison, and which enabled him to endure repeated setbacks that would have sent a lesser man home. This same confidence in God’s benevolent sovereign purposes fortified him against the awful losses of his beloved wife, Mary, and his close friend and colleague, William Milne. Not that he did not suffer from a “profound” grief when Mary died, such that Eliza could write that his “health and spirits suffered considerably for some time,” but that, in Hancock’s words, “as before, Morrison turned adversity into energy: ‘I purpose, by God’s grace, to be more and more devoted to the good cause’ although he recognized that ‘God alone can give success to the labours of Christian missionaries.’”

The author also quite properly records the multi-faceted nature of Morrison’s activities, including, of course, his diligent service of the EIC, but also his care for both the physical and spiritual state and needs of seamen and other foreigners in Canton. Additionally, his wide-ranging study of all that could be known about China – geography, history, literature, culture, flora and fauna, medicine, politics, etc., his far-sighted foundation of the Anglo-College in Malacca, the forerunner of what would become the vast educational enterprise of later missionaries, his assiduous promotion of China’s need for Christian missionaries and his insistence that these be properly trained and educated are documented in this volume.

We glimpse Morrison’s realism in the way he both admired China’s ancient and rich culture and sharply criticized the ways in which this culture ignored or violated God’s revealed truth. He was, after all, a Christian missionary, convinced that all peoples and cultures need the gospel.

We are presented here with a man whose broad-minded grasp of the complexities both of China itself and of any effective methods of reaching its people with the gospel opened a path and set a pattern for thousands of others, down to the present.

Hancock’s literary style makes this biography a delight to read. A few examples must suffice:

“Too astute to be a modern ‘fundamentalist,’ he nevertheless believed his gospel true, his life dispensable, and his hopes of heaven secure.”

“Battered alike by censure and praise, Morrison sought to hold firm, a gospel lighthouse in a dark, stormy world.”

[On Morrison’s decision later in life to concentrate upon teaching Christianity to the Chinese]:
“Here the already ageing missionary restricted himself for the sake of achievement, his idealism bowing before realism and the passage of time. Here the eminent elder statesman of Southeast Asian Christianity defined a principle, a parameter, a priority for his heirs and successors; controversial to some, commendable to others. Here the wise servant, aware of ‘more’ opted for ‘less’ to achieve his pre-eminent ambition; namely, to teach Christianity to the Chinese.”

Evaluation of Morrison

Critics, then and now, have questioned Morrison's connection with the East India Company. While acknowledging Morrison's ongoing agony over both the crushing work load entailed by employment with the EIC and the frustrations he felt at being associated with an enterprise which did not have the interests either of the gospel or of the Chinese at heart, Hancock seems to accept at face value Morrison's belief that he had no choice but to use his service to the Company as his principal means of support and only legal means of living in China.

Both aspects of this have been challenged, however. Could Morrison not, like other missionaries, have relied on the London Missionary Society to provide for his material needs? More importantly, was residence in China itself necessary? His colleague William Milne, after a short time with Morrison in Canton, continued translation, preaching, and educational work in Malacca, far from the prying eyes of Qing secret police. Others followed the same course, laboring among the numerous Chinese population in Southeast Asia for decades, until the treaties imposed by the Western powers after two wars blasted open China's doors to residence by merchants and missionaries alike.

Binding himself to the EIC meant that Morrison had to live separately from his wife for half the year, it strained his health by forcing him to do his translation at night, and it tainted him – and the Western missionary movement - with the brush of both opium and gunboats from then until now.

Morrison attached himself to the EIC to obtain legal residence in China. He remained in Canton when in 1833, his second wife Eliza returned to England to preserve her health and that of her children. He was never to see her again, choosing to remain in China for the same purpose – to die in China. But why this obsession with a physical presence in China? Could this have been part of some missionary ideal, rather than a necessary choice? Others worked well from the periphery of the closed Middle Kingdom. The same question might be asked of foreign Christians seeking to reach China today.

Considering the damage done to the reputation of Christianity by its association with imperialism at its worst, and the lasting impact of the example of missionaries who, in the name of a "higher calling," essentially neglected their wives and children, whom they dearly loved, one wonders whether Robert Morrison might have lived longer and accomplished even more of what he considered to be his primary mission had he trusted more in God's provision to come through the LMS.

I am not saying that it is wrong for Christians to engage in non-religious, "secular" work – far from it! But I wonder whether those whose primary purpose is to preach the gospel should entangle themselves unnecessarily in the affairs of this world, especially those who are being sent out as missionaries. Other forms of work (medical, educational, commercial, diplomatic) are equally legitimate, and may be even more effective in bearing witness, and Christians should enter these fields. But should those who have been set aside for missionary service enter the country under such a guise, or bind themselves to fulfill these roles, just to have a "cover" for living in a China whose government does not allow direct "missionary" activity? This question, first raised by Morrison, his supporters, and his critics, challenges us still.

That having been said, Christopher Hancock has given us a beautiful book about a great man, whose “ministry ... managed the seemingly impossible conflicts of mind and heart, study and activity, isolation and engagement, obscurity and eminence, faith and work, law and grace.” In all this, we see “Morrison’s deeply intentional cross-shaped spirituality,” from which, as we said at the outset, we all have much to learn.

PALMEIRO: The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia

by **Liam Matthew Brockey**

Brockey, Liam Matthew. *The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.

Though I began reading this weighty volume only because a good friend had sent it to me, and I waded through many pages asking, “What does this have to do with Christianity in China today?” I now believe that the story of André Palmeiro holds great relevance for both historians and those who seek to contribute to the growth of Christianity in China.

Briefly: Palmeiro’s visit to China at the end of the Ming dynasty came at a critical juncture in the Jesuit mission there. His personal career, the decisions he made about mission strategy, and the story of the first two centuries of Jesuit missions worldwide carry potent lessons for us now.

In an effort to fill a lacuna in research about the Jesuits, this biography of André Palmeiro is specifically concerned with “how the Society of Jesus functioned outside of Europe” (19). By narrating the career of one man in detail and with reference to his background, “this book restores depth and texture to the men of the early modern Society of Jesus” (19). Palmeiro’s life provides a lens through which to see more clearly the second- and third-generation Jesuit missionaries in Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. They were the most widely scattered and controversial of Roman Catholic missionaries, and since they worked closely with secular powers, both European and local, they open up to us a view of early modern European expansion into newly discovered lands.

In other words, the work is “an attempt to describe the life of one man in a variety of different early modern contexts with the goal of enhancing understanding of the period” (20).

“One political context will receive considerable attention: the Portuguese Empire in Maritime Asia” (20). Just as we cannot understand the Jesuits without regard to their place in the empire, so the colonial administration and its complex relationships with Roman Catholic clergy, members of other orders, local rulers, and foreign merchants cannot be understood without knowledge of the important, and sometimes central, role of the Jesuits.

Brockey draws heavily upon the mass of letters which Palmeiro penned to the superior general of the Jesuits, which provide detailed information not only about the affairs of the order which the Visitor was charged to oversee and strengthen, but also about the customs, geography, politics, and general life of the peoples among whom the missionaries served. This correspondence is placed within a framework of wide-ranging scholarship and critical analysis.

The book’s two-part structure “reflects the boundaries of the Portuguese Empire in the early modern period and the place of the Society of Jesus within it” (22). The first part discusses “Palmeiro’s early years and his academic career in Portugal in addition to examining his two

terms as visitor in South Asia, a combination that underscores the common structures of Jesuit life in these regions...The second part...deals with the final nine years of Palmeiro's life, the time he spent as visitor of the East Asian missions." Though he lived in Macao for most of that period, Palmeiro undertook an extensive journey into late Ming China, and his duties obliged him to direct his attention far beyond the boundaries of Portugal's empire to Southeast Asia, China, and Japan, where the king of Portugal had no power and where missionaries survived only at the pleasure of the regional ruler.

The Society

Founded in 1540 by Ignatius Loyola, the Society of Jesus quickly became the vanguard of the Counter-Reformation, as Rome sought to regain territories lost to the Protestants. Focusing on education and mission, both in Europe and later overseas, the Jesuits sought to educate the sons of the elite from an early age so that they might become loyal Roman Catholics. They were known not only for their superior educational equipment, but also for their zeal in taking their version of Christianity into both the citadels of power and the rural, unreached places of the world.

Like other religious orders, Jesuits took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to their superiors. More than other orders, and reflecting the military background of the founder, the Society was organized and governed like an army. They saw themselves as engaged in spiritual warfare – a counter-offensive in Europe and an advance corps of elite warriors for the kingdom of God in newly-explored and colonized regions of America, Africa, India, and the Far East.

As spiritual soldiers for the cause of Christ as they understood it, the Jesuits became as well known as the mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, for sacrificial service, long journeys, simple living, unremitting toil, great courage, and often heroic endurance of suffering and even martyrdom. The colossal agonies of the Jesuits and their followers in Japan frame the story of André Palmeiro, whose last days were filled with anguish over the fate of his brothers in Japan and the apostasy of one of them.

Their educational system was rightly famed for its rigor and comprehensiveness. Starting as young boys, prospective brothers entered a curriculum that included reading, writing, and religion. Latin, in which students were expected to speak and compose essays, was also a cornerstone in the curriculum, as well as grammar, the Greek and Roman classical authors and the Greek language, and rhetoric. Later, the students were instructed in philosophy, canon law, casuistry, mathematics, rhetoric, science, and theology. Finally, their education was capped by a three-year course in the "arts," which included logic, metaphysics, Aristotelian philosophy, and natural philosophy (that is, mathematics, physics, and other sciences). Finally, they were permitted to study theology, the "queen of the sciences."

For instructors in the Jesuits' colleges, further academic work was required: Theological studies included moral theology and speculative theology, with Thomas Aquinas' works the chief source. The entire system followed the massive synthesis of secular and sacred learning constructed by Aquinas and naturally fostered a spirit of accommodation between Christian and pagan thought. Aquinas believed that one could move from general revelation, seen in the

created order and in the finest products of the human mind, to special revelation, found in the Scriptures and in the traditions of the Church.

Like their fellow Roman Catholics everywhere, Jesuits acknowledged the authority of the Church, with the pope as its head and spokesman. They continued the medieval rites and rituals against which the Reformers had so strenuously objected, including seven sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in common with Protestants, but also Confirmation, Penance, Marriage, Extreme Unction, and Ordination to the priesthood); confession to a priest; masses for the dead; the veneration of Mary and the saints, to whom prayers were made; adoration of relics, such as a piece of the True Cross which Palmeiro treasured; fasting on stated days; the observance of feasts to commemorate the saints; adoration of the Host; communion in one kind only; sprinkling holy water on people and places to consecrate them; the use of the crucifix as a sacred object with mighty powers; indulgences; the use of icons and carved images in worship and private devotion; a celibate clergy; self-flagellation to atone for sins; and more.

You see all of these in the narrative of Palmeiro's long career, for he was a typical Roman Catholic of his time.

Unlike other religious orders, however, the Jesuits were noted not only for their educational attainments, but also for their pragmatism and pursuit of power. That is, they eagerly sought the favor of political rulers and did not hesitate to employ a variety of means to gain their objectives. Believing that the conversion of the prince would lead to the Christianization of the land, or that at least his favor would ensure their continued right to reside in a country where Europeans had no power, they endeavored to ingratiate themselves with kings and courtiers through expensive gifts, adherence to the local code of etiquette, mastery of the language, and knowledge of Western science and engineering.

Trained in mechanics and even military architecture and ordnance, they directed the construction of fortifications and the manufacture and deployment of artillery in places like Ming China. Indeed, their residence in Beijing was finally secured when Jesuits accurately predicted an eclipse, thus demonstrating their superior prowess in astronomy and displacing the Chinese royal astronomers in correcting the calendar, essential to the determination of proper days for rituals.

This close interplay between religious and secular activities and relationships shows up constantly in *The Visitor*, for Palmeiro combined his duties as overseer of the internal affairs of the Society with his position as the senior representative of his order, and thus became a major personage in the political and ecclesiastical administration of Portugal's colonies.

Though the Jesuits insisted upon strict conformity to the constitution and detailed rules of the order, they also granted wide latitude for personal discretion and creativity to their well-trained, highly motivated, and often innovative missionaries in far-flung locations where direction from Rome was impracticable. Sometimes this policy gave space for innovations that sparked vigorous controversy. As Visitor, Palmeiro was obliged to navigate the tricky waters of missiology, strong personalities, and intra-Society conflicts on two such occasions, in India and in China. For our purposes, the accommodation strategy of Matteo Ricci and his followers, which later exploded into the protracted "Rites Controversy" that led to the expulsion of all

Roman Catholic missionaries from China, occupies the greater interest and will be explored below.

The Visitor

Palmeiro began his long career with the Jesuits as a young student in one of their premier colleges in Portugal. His studies followed the usual course and culminated first in his ordination as a full brother in the order, and then in the conferral of rank as a professor. He taught grammar and rhetoric, then philosophy, moral theology ethics, and the sacraments, and finally speculative theology. Finally, he was given the responsibility over another Jesuit college in Portugal, where he exercised pastoral oversight, saw to the material affairs of the college, tried to resolve conflicts, and served as an important emissary for the Society to both ecclesiastical and secular officials. All this prepared him further for his role as Visitor in Asia.

The Visitor in India

At the age of forty-nine, Palmeiro was ordered to go to India as Visitor for the Society, with plenipotentiary powers to act as the agent of the director general in Rome. He sailed first to Goa, the capital of Portugal's Indian imperial holdings; later, he would travel to the east coast of India to inspect the work of Jesuits there and on nearby islands. All the characteristics of early modern Roman Catholicism and the early Jesuits mentioned above play major parts in the narrative: Palmeiro exemplified Tridentine Roman Catholic piety; enforced the strict rules of the Society; promoted education through the Jesuit colleges overseas; tried to provide material resources to the far-flung missionaries; mediated between members of the Society whose personalities, ministry styles, and convictions about missiology caused sharp and sometimes nearly violent conflicts; and served as the Society's emissary to secular and ecclesiastical authorities. The close connection between the Roman Catholic hierarchy and political power seen earlier in Europe shows up again in Asia.

His "territory" extended as far west as Ethiopia, where Jesuits had converted the emperor to Roman Catholicism and were in the process of replacing the local Christian faith with their religion. They particularly strove for the standardization of the liturgy, insisted upon Papal supremacy, and struggled to bring about a decision by Emperor Susenyos (b. 1572, r. 1606–32) to "adopt the Roman rite" (176). Their eventual failure exposed the weakness in this Jesuit strategy of working "from top to bottom," a strategy they also employed in China.

One controversy that is particularly pertinent to Palmeiro's work in China involved the hotly debated practices of one Jesuit Nobili, who had not only adopted the dress of an Indian Brahman but had also incorporated some Hindu Brahmin religious terms and practices in his missionary approach to them. Palmeiro had no problem with Nobili's use of dress and other externals to become "all things to all men," but he did question some of the accommodations that touched upon theology.

The Visitor in China

In 1626, Palmeiro proceeded to his next assignment, the "Province of Japan," which encompassed Japan, China, and areas of Southeast Asia, including what is now called Vietnam.

In these regions, however, Portugal had no colonial holdings, so Jesuits were entirely dependent upon the pleasure of the local rulers for residency and freedom to work. He made his base in Macao, which, though nominally a Portuguese-ruled area, existed in that way only at the allowance of the emperor, whose agents outside the city walls kept a close watch on what went on there.

In Macao, Palmeiro encountered the same problems he had dealt with in India: personality conflicts, competition, and strife among different Roman Catholic orders (which in one notorious case led to a deadly riot), a shortage of material resources and men, local resistance to his authority when his views differed from those with more experience in a particular area, and the declining power of Portugal, whose navy was being challenged by Dutch fleets.

Merchants in Macao helped subsidize the Jesuits' work there and throughout East Asia. In return, the Jesuits served as "diplomatic and economic mediators with indigenous authorities and traders" (198). As Visitor for the Jesuits, whose numbers and skills made them "a major political and economic force in the colony" (198), Palmeiro once again found himself near the center of political, economic, and religious power.

Not surprisingly, Roman Catholic missionaries' close identification with Portugal presented perhaps the most dangerous challenge, since they were assumed to be agents of a foreign power whose intentions were either suspect or known to be aggressive. Already, persecution under a hostile government in Japan – where the Jesuits' "strategy of intermingling politics and economics with their religious aims led to their being viewed as adversaries by the military hegemony" (200) – had reduced the Jesuit work there to a mere shadow of what it had been before, and even worse was to come during Palmeiro's time as Visitor. To overcome this obstacle, Jesuit missionaries either tried to hide their nationality or sought ways to make their religion more palatable to local rulers.

For our purposes, Palmeiro's involvement in the Vice-Province of China carries the most interest. Though we can see all the major themes mentioned previously repeated here, his judgment concerning the controversial "accommodationist" strategy and tactics of the Jesuits in Beijing is most pertinent today.

Following Matteo Ricci, Jesuits in Beijing and elsewhere adopted the dress of Chinese scholars so that they could gain access to this influential elite. They studied the Confucian classics and criticized Buddhism and Daoism in support of Confucianism (which many now prefer to call "Ruism," since "Confucianism" is largely a construct created by the Jesuits themselves). More than that, believing that the ceremonies in honor of Confucius were merely secular and honorific rites, and not religious worship, they declared that Chinese Christian converts could participate in these rituals.

In their efforts to win approval and to attract the interest of both the scholars and the Court, they presented very costly gifts, followed the usual rules of etiquette, and introduced Western science, especially astronomy. This strategy was a major, and often leading, partner in their campaign to gain permission to reside in the capital city and in the entire nation. They had gained a few converts among the scholar elites, "but the strategy of engaging mandarins had been met with ambivalent results and had even played a role in an outbreak of persecution in 1616" (201).

One major source of controversy was their choice of *Shang Di* as the proper appellation for the Christian God. They had studied the Classics and believed that Chinese notions of *Shang Di* corresponded neatly with biblical descriptions of God.

The Jesuits' approval of participation in rites honoring Confucius would grow into the "Rites Controversy," which would eventually lead to the expulsion of not only the Jesuits, but also all Roman Catholic missionaries, from the Middle Kingdom in the eighteenth century.

During Palmeiro's year-long visit to China, which involved traveling more than three thousand miles, he heard arguments from both supporters and detractors of Ricci's approach. As in India, Palmeiro did not disapprove of most elements of their methods, but he did issue a judgment about the proper translation for the biblical names for God. In his opinion, which carried full authority, *Shang Di* was not to be used, precisely *because* it resonated so well with Confucian scholars. In other words, what others considered to be the strength of this name – its complex of connotations within traditional Chinese Confucian writings – represented for Palmeiro its fatal flaw.

Like others before, during, and after his time, he believed that *Shang Di* carried too many meanings, some of which indeed resembled the God of the Bible, but some of which did not. That lack of total overlap made it the wrong choice as a name for the God of the Bible. Palmeiro agreed with the judgment of critics within the Society in China that Ricci "had erred by using terms and phrases that his Chinese readers would associate with their religious traditions, thereby identifying Christian concepts with paganism" (219).

Being a practical man as well as a theologian, the Visitor also wondered why "there were so few Christians despite the presence of Jesuits within the Ming Empire for forty years 'with so much labor and expense?'" In other words, why had there been so many interchanges that "resulted only in 'conversation and not conversion?'" (216)

The Jesuits in Beijing had tried their best to hide from the Visitor the religious aspects of Confucian belief and practice. For example, they did not allow him to visit the temple of Confucius in Beijing, lest he observe the obviously pagan ceremonies conducted there in what appeared to be worship of the Sage. Despite their best efforts, however, they failed to persuade Palmeiro that Confucian scholars were purely secular in their outlook, a judgment that has been shown in recent times to have been inaccurate from the beginning.

In *The Visitor*, we find a nuanced, balanced, informed critique of the accommodationist approach of Ricci and his followers. Brushing aside caricatures of their critics as ignorant outsiders, the author demonstrates that the most stringent objections came from within the Jesuits in China, men who also had learned the language, culture, literature, and religions of the land, and who still considered Ricci's strategy risky and unnecessary. Brockey shows, quite helpfully, that Ricci's use of metaphor, while effective in speaking to the poetic sensibilities of Chinese scholars, was "not the most reliable tool" in the rhetorician's kit" (289).

As he reflected upon what he had seen and heard in China, Palmeiro "questioned whether the maturing Chinese mission still needed to rely so heavily on ambiguous translations and metaphors" (290). He realized that formidable obstacles faced Christian missionaries in China,

including “widespread xenophobia, a lack of clear permission to reside in China, and an excess of timidity on the part of the missionaries” (292). He encouraged them “to preach the sacred gospel more freely” (295) and “objected to ‘political’ behavior,” that is, dissimulation “which sacrificed virtue for expediency and constituted a way of masking one’s true intentions so as to avoid giving offense” (296).

He understood that, while reception of the gospel among the lower classes had been far greater than among the literati, there was a danger that “we might appear to be gathering these plain folk into our hands in order to incite riots” (292).

In dealing with the elites, he said, missionaries should be careful lest they spend too much time talking about science or mathematics; these should be merely conversation starters and should always serve “to draw Chinese minds to the Creator of the universe, not to creation” (301). Nor did Palmeiro think that the similarities between Christianity and Confucianism so stressed by some missionaries were more than superficial. Fundamentally, the two belief systems were divided by huge differences, not only in beliefs about a supreme being, but even in their moral standards. He contrasted behaviors which Confucianism tolerated with biblical norms and found the disparity too great to be elided by those zealous to emphasize points of contact.

Even practically speaking, if a prospective convert did not understand the essential differences between his culture and the Christian faith and realize just how great a cost conversion would entail, any profession of faith would be built on a weak foundation. Any truths in Confucianism came from being created in God’s image; “coincidence was hardly a reliable ally in the battle for conversions” (310).

Finally, Palmeiro “placed the blame for the low number of baptisms in China on those Jesuits who persisted” in this accommodationist approach (310).

Later, when overseeing the work of Jesuits in Southeast Asia and in China, Palmeiro would apply similar standards in the realm of ethics, insisting the catechumens should be instructed in the Christian teachings on marriage and not allowed to marry non-Christians or engage in polygamy. He did not give in to the argument that this rigorist position would turn people away from the faith, nor did he approve of allowing laxity in Christian religious practices. Insisting upon the indissolubility of Christian marriages, for example, produced communities whose example attracted pagans to Christianity.

Evaluation

The Visitor describes in grisly detail the cruel persecution and torture suffered by thousands of Japanese believers and many Jesuit missionaries and narrates with sadness the events surrounding Palmeiro’s death, which was brought on not only by age, fatigue, and the stresses of his job, but also by grief over the fate of his brothers in Japan and his own severe, even excessive, self-mortification to atone for his sins. The book closes with a brief survey of the ephemeral results of the once-flourishing work of the Society, which “crumbled before the nineteenth century” (429). A major reason for the general failure of the Society’s enterprise was its dependence upon Portuguese military and economic power and its close connection with politics in every country.

Once I began *The Visitor*, I could not put it down. Though the scope of the narrative goes far beyond my area of interest, I was held by the attractiveness of the main character, the drama of Jesuit missionary life in maritime Portugal, and the relevance of the major topics to the task of bringing the Christian message to China in the twenty-first century.

Palmeiro's balanced and prudent evaluation of controversial "accommodationist" missionary practices remains instructive for us today: Christians, including foreigners, may use externals, such as dress, to make connections with local peoples – as J. Hudson Taylor would do centuries later – but the core message must not be compromised by confusing, or perhaps even syncretistic, adoption of non-biblical terms and names. For my assessment of the debate about the proper translation of biblical names for God, see [\(DOC\) Names for God in Chinese | Wright Doyle - Academia.edu](#).(link)

While not disputing the strategy of working among the scholar elites, critics of the Jesuits' methods of accommodation (a method which some nineteenth-century missionaries like Timothy Richard admired and imitated) can still raise the question: Why does an emphasis upon secular education and religious accommodation lead to so few converts to Christianity? The overwhelming proportion of Christians in China came not from such approaches, but from presentations of the "simple" biblical message of forgiveness of sins and radical personal transformation through faith in the sacrificial death, resurrection, and present ministry of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, and this is true also for the urban intellectuals who have become Christians in such large numbers since the 1980s.

For this and other reasons, Brockey's volume has value for not only historians but also practitioners. His rare combination of a "big picture" panorama and minute details of every sort, expressed in an elegant and sometimes powerful style, make *The Visitor* a work to be studied and enjoyed by professional scholars and educated readers alike.

RICHARD: Timothy Richard's Vision: Education and Reform in China, 1880-1910

by Eunice V. Johnson

Johnson, Eunice V. *Timothy Richard's Vision: Education and Reform in China, 1880-1910* (*Studies in Chinese Christianity*). Edited by Carol Lee Hamrin. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014.

Eunice Johnson begins her study of Timothy Richard's vision for education and reform by noting that most missionaries did not conform to the usual stereotype of "cultural imperialism or colonial paternalism" (1). Rather, they endured much sacrifice and privation to bring blessing to China, both in the form of the message about Christ and through various social works, such as education for both sexes, hospitals, and helpful literature.

Though studies of the key roles that missionaries played in the modernization of late-Qing and early Republican China are increasing at a rapid rate, and the missionaries' part in the creation of institutions of higher learning is being recognized, these investigations are still in their infancy. Johnson has given us an excellent account of Richard's overall "vision" for the general improvement of the lot of the Chinese people and of his central part in the establishment of the Imperial University in Shanxi.

After an opening chapter that briefly introduces the whole book, the author moves through Richard's long tenure in China to trace the development and implementation of his grand strategy of education and reform. Always, Richard was motivated by a view of the kingdom of God that would be "worked out intellectually, spiritually, and materially, ultimately leading to peace among individuals and nations" (4).

Unlike most biographies of Richard, this book does not rely solely on his own account, *Forty-five Years in China: Reminiscences*, but also draws upon private notes and letters, biographies composed by his contemporaries, and newspaper and journal articles in English.

The second chapter traces Richard's early years, from his birth and education to his acceptance as a missionary with the English Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), founded two hundred years previously by William Carey and others. The well-known story includes his initial engagement in traditional missionary activities, including preaching in street chapels and itinerating in the countryside, followed by a gradually developing strategy of "finding the worthy" – that is, people of higher academic, social, or religious standing – and nurturing friendships with them. Over the years, he developed good relationships with men in very high positions.

He sought to build relationships that would reduce the anti-Christian prejudice common among educated elites, and he used the method of instructing them in "secular" studies that would

broaden their understanding of the world and the God-given laws which lay behind its workings. He hoped thereby also to free them from superstitions, such as belief in *feng-shui* (geomancy), which hindered progress. In time, these lectures would develop into a scheme for a network of schools in China.

When the great famine of 1876-79 hit Shandong, he poured his energies into raising funds for famine relief, distributing those funds, and suggesting reforms of various kinds that would reduce the severity of such disasters and perhaps even prevent them. He later moved to Shanxi to apply the same methods, where he also established a permanent work for the BMS, and where he presented reform ideas to the governor. From this famine, Richard became convinced that the great need in China was education, especially in Western science, mechanics, industry, and organization, as well as the beneficial effects of Christianity upon Western civilization. He also began to make recommendations for political reforms, such as granting religious liberty.

Johnson, working from a number of sources, provides an excellent and very succinct account of this formative period in Richard's life. By 1884, Richard sensed that his missionary labors in Shanxi must take a different direction. In 1885, he and his family returned to England for furlough and consultations with the leaders of the BMS.

In Chapter Three: Refining the Reformer, 1885-91, we read how Richard returned to England on furlough in 1885, armed with a proposal to present to the home committee of the BMS that called for founding excellent colleges in all the provinces of China, in which Western science, history, philosophy, and other similar subjects would be taught. He argued that such an educational system would help Chinese officials serve the people better, reduce prejudice against Christianity among the elites, and prepare Christian evangelists for more effective service. The BMS turned down his plan, citing lack of financial resources; Richard sailed back to China deeply disappointed.

Johnson then describes the conflict and criticism which met Richard when he returned to Shanxi, where he discovered that some of his BMS colleagues, as well as CIM missionaries, disagreed with his missionary methods and what they perceived to be his errant theology. (Her account of the ensuing controversy comes almost entirely from Richard's point of view, emphasizing that Richard's critics in the BMS were younger, inexperienced missionaries, and attributing their continued public opposition to Richard as evidence of personal animus against him. She notes that A.J. Broomhall's seven-volume *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century* was published by the successor organization of the CIM and does not classify it as "academic," thus seemingly discounting the value of Broomhall's narrative of the alienation of the two great missionaries from each other as a balanced and reliable historical source.)

The rest of the chapter covers Richard's departure from Shanxi for Beijing and Tianjin; attempts to return to Shandong to establish a college and newspaper as a BMS missionary; serious illness, resignation from the BMS; and publication of important works on education, the benefits of Christianity for British society, and the growing threat of persecution in China. Johnson describes his brief editorship of the influential paper, *The Times* (Shi Bao), relationships with

high-ranking Chinese, and eventual assumption of the post of General Director of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese (SDK, later known as the Christian Literature Society or CLS) with the temporary financial support of the BMS.

Chapter Four: Shaping China's Reform Movements, 1891-1910, covers what the author considers to be the most fruitful period of Richard's life. Through the CLS, he disseminated information introducing Western science to Chinese leaders and tried to show that Western power derived from its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. He also promoted economic and political reform. Personally, he mentored high-ranking Chinese officials who also believed that China needed fundamental change and were willing to learn from the West.

Johnson explains in detail Richard's comprehensive plan for expanding the influence of the CLS and its ideas to every part of China.

After the humiliating defeat by Japan in 1895, the pressure for reform became urgent among many of China's educated elite, all the way to the emperor himself. Johnson narrates the growth of this first reform movement and Richard's crucial role in virtually all phases of it, including meetings with key reformers and several of the highest officials in the land. His works and others of the CLS were read with appreciation by the emperor, who recommended them to others.

Richard saw the many signs of growing impetus toward reform as indications that Chinese elites were losing their antipathy to Westerners and Western learning. He made it clear to his supporters that he was not just promoting Western civilization and its benefits, but "was seeking to guide public opinion in China to an understanding of the need for 'the application of the healing powers of the Gospel to the social miseries of a great nation; it is a benevolent work, exemplifying the love of Christ, on the grandest scale . . . [which] needs most of all character and conscience, purity in the family life, integrity in the official life, and in order to get these, she needs a religious New Birth – she needs Christianity'" (67).

In the wake of the brutal suppression of the One Hundred Days' Reform by the empress dowager in 1898, Richard and other missionary reformers were naturally dismayed, but that did not stop them from continuing to publish literature that could be used whenever the doors to Western learning reopened. Richard's involvement in, and eventual leadership of, the Educational Association of China (EAC), prepared the way for the huge opportunities that suddenly presented themselves after the Boxer Uprising was quelled by foreign powers and the Court realized that implementation of wide-ranging reforms was necessary. Johnson tells in detail how Richard and others in the EAC and CLS strove to fill the new demand for all sorts of textbooks, and how the CLS grew rapidly, both in membership and in number of volumes published.

The author also describes Richard's efforts to counter the growing influence of Japan and its educational system in China after its defeat of Russia in 1905. Seeing that Christians were losing traction in high places, he urged the consolidation of missionary efforts to present a unified voice to officials. Within ten years, however, the government had prioritized elementary and secondary schools to inculcate "patriotism, loyalty, and concern for the public good," rather than the "love,

peace, and righteousness” that Richard had envisioned would flow from a system with a Christian foundation (88). After 1906, the Chinese took over their own educational work, and the role of missionaries as advisers declined dramatically.

Chapter Five: Fulfilling the Vision: The Imperial University of Shanxi, 1901-10, tells of the recently acknowledged historical roots of present-day Shanxi University in the earliest missionary efforts. When the Boxer Uprising failed, Richard became a leader in the process of settling claims for losses to foreigners and Chinese Christians. Johnson narrates the story well, showing Richard’s key role at this crucial time and how it led to the creation of the Imperial University of Shanxi in Taiyuan. She also correctly reports (in a footnote, 93) that, contrary to the impression one gets from Richard’s account, the initiative for refusing indemnity for missionaries who had been killed came not from him but from the CIM. Johnson makes clear how the impact of Richard’s writings and relationships with Chinese officials and foreign educational missionaries shaped several important developments in higher education during the years right after the Boxer Uprising.

The prolonged and delicate negotiations between Richard and the governor of Shanxi in 1902, in which Richard insisted, among other conditions, that faculty be allowed to talk about Christianity in the classroom, are fully described and documented. Johnson portrays a man willing to compromise on secondary matters, but adamant on the essentials. Her narrative goes into specifics about the design of a new higher educational system, one which had been thought through years before by Richard, and she tells how this University was to set the pace for the entire nation. In 1910, when Richard made his last visit to Taiyuan, the provincial legislature convened a special assembly, during which he was roundly applauded for his great contributions in education and reform. Because of the impact of the educational program which was initiated by the Imperial University of Shanxi under the early joint chancellorship of Governor Cen Chunxuan (Ts'en Ch'un-hsuan) and Timothy Richard, this later became known as the “Model Province” of China under the governorship of Yan Xishan (Yen Hsi-shan).

The final chapter, “Giving Honor Where Honor Is Due,” first describes the extraordinary recognition bestowed upon Richard by both the Chinese government and foreign institutions. It sums up his early life and career, frequently with new information not found earlier in the book, while presenting reasons for Richard’s great success. He had a pleasant and charming personality, never wavered from his convictions and goals, and possessed the qualities of a natural leader.

Johnson then skillfully relates how Richard’s strategy grew from a focus on the salvation of individuals to the “salvation” of the entire nation through education and reform, as a means of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. She also shows how his optimism, expressed in an acceptance of the idea of progress through education, failed to account for the “materialism that pervaded Chinese philosophy and religion, as well as the gentry’s vested interests in the status quo” (119).

We learn more, too, about Richard's breadth of vision and innovative methods of instruction and public communication. In his later years, he directed his energies toward the establishment of international organizations and covenants that would produce lasting world peace "rooted in Christianity, or even a united religion" (124). Beneath these schemes lay "an assumption of human perfectibility," which was shattered, at least for a time, by World War I.

Contemporary and later scholars are cited to disprove charges of theological heresy, and the question of his innovative but controversial "Christian" interpretation of Mahayana Buddhism is being revisited.

The book concludes with an explanation of why, until very recently, Richard's profound and wide-reaching impact upon Chinese intellectuals, through literature and personal friendship, has remained largely unknown.

Throughout, Johnson fills in gaps in Richard's autobiography from letters and other English language documents. Copious footnotes supplement the text with more information and documentation. She tells Richard's remarkably rich life story with admirable succinctness, coupled with just the right amount of detail, much of it in well-crafted, richly satisfying footnotes.

Skillfully edited by Carol Lee Hamrin, *Timothy Richard's Vision* is now the authoritative work on one of the most influential Westerners ever to reside in China. It deserves extensive and careful reading.²²

²² For more on Richard's life, as well as an evaluation of the man and his missiology, see: <http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/r/richard-timothy.php>.

A brief discussion of lessons which might be learned from Timothy Richard's career may be found at: <http://www.reachingchineseworldwide.org/blog/lessons-from-timothy-richard>.

TAYLOR: China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832-1905

by Alwyn Austin

Austin, Alwyn. *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and late Qing Society, 1832-1905*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.

Alwyn Austin is a Canadian who has written extensively on missionaries from Canada. His earlier work, *Saving China*, established him as an authority on the Canadian missionary movement in China. His parents were members of the China Inland Mission.

Although containing much useful information, some illuminating insights, and a fresh perspective on the early years of the China Inland Mission, this revisionist history is almost fatally flawed by a profound prejudice that prevents objectivity in dealing with the sources and leads to misinterpretation and at times even misrepresentation.

Before looking at examples of the serious faults of this book, let us glance at the content and acknowledge some of the merits of Austin's rendering of the story.

China's Millions traces the life of Hudson Taylor from his birth in Barnsley to his death in China. Along the way, he describes the growth of the China Inland Mission from a tiny bank account to a huge "octopus" with tentacles extending throughout China, Great Britain, Europe, North America, and the lands Down Under.

Because of its intrinsic interest, its importance to the CIM, and its role as the incubator for many of the CIM's leaders, the province of Shanxi receives most of Austin's attention. Here we meet rebellious members of the CIM; Taylor's antagonist Timothy Richard; the remarkable Pastor Hsi (Xi Shengmo, "Conqueror of Demons"); the colorful Cambridge Seven, including one of the few characters Austin seems to admire, D.E. Hoste; the murderous Boxers, abetted by the villainous governor Yu Hsien (Yuxian); and the intrepid Trio – Mildred Cable and the French sisters.

Austin has certainly mined the available sources for all sorts of data which shed light upon the rise and growth of the largest mission in China.

Helpful charts show the geographical and denominational background of members admitted to the North American branch in the 19th century. Research into the religious background of the first adherents to Protestant churches shows that those coming from reformist Buddhist and Daoist sects often made the quickest and most zealous converts.

The author carefully tracks the career of numerous lesser-known members of the CIM and reveals how many of them were crushed by the rigors of cross-cultural living. The famous

“Cambridge Seven” are followed closely, and much of the romanticism surrounding them is dispelled by the light of fact. Drawing upon a variety of sources, he paints a grisly picture of the horrors endured during the Boxer Rebellion.

After a bitter experience in his early years, Hudson Taylor held to the principle of not seeking protection from foreign governments or reparations from the Qing government for losses sustained at the hands of local violence. Austin shows how this policy departed from that of most missions, especially after the Boxer Rebellion.

Official minutes and personal letters shed light upon the tensions between CIM leaders in America and England, and the difficult choices Hudson Taylor had to make as General Director. Different accounts of the same incidents highlight the inevitable editorial processes which have colored the history of the mission.

Extensive research into the use of morphia to wean opium addicts from their habit leads to a different view of Pastor Hsi and the opium refuges run by him and by the CIM. Austin wonders whether morphine was merely substituted for opium, and whether many of the so-called “converts” who had been “delivered” from opium were in fact merely made into morphine addicts.

Austin is at his best when he explains the theological and sociological factors involved in the expansion and composition of the CIM and similar evangelical organizations. Likewise, he helps us understand some of the sociological and religious background related to the spread of Christianity among Shanxi’s peasants. He pens a starkly somber narrative - “warts and all” - of a wide variety of missionaries, some of them quite idiosyncratic.

Major themes in the narrative include the use of the “wordless book” to share the gospel among illiterate people; the rise of “fundamentalism;” the role of demon exorcism and healing in the work of Pastor Hsi and CIM missionaries, and the challenge this posed for staid Victorian Christianity; and the conflicts between North American and British leaders.

Austin quite rightly points out the severe strain that life in the CIM imposed on some marriages. In particular, a stringent furlough policy sometimes kept couples apart.

Overall, and with some exceptions, *China’s Millions* presents a generally negative description and interpretation of Hudson Taylor and his immediate family, Pastor Hsi, Henry Frost, and the CIM as an organization.

Austin’s chief complaint seems to be that the sources – essential material for the historian – have been tainted, doctored, or destroyed. From the tone of his treatment, one is led to believe that, from the very beginning, leaders of the CIM sought to prevent the truth from being told. Only an approved, sanitized version was permitted to see the light of day. According to Austin, the resulting hagiographical accounts need to be deconstructed and reinterpreted to give us an accurate picture.

Modern readers do cringe at the “sweetness and light” of Victorian biographies. No one could have been that good!

Furthermore, Austin appears to cite hard evidence for this claim, citing even “the official historian,” A.J. Broomhall, who “used terms like ‘a conspiracy of silence,’ and ‘cocoon of silence’” (16).

The problems with this blanket charge are several and serious, however.

Austin spots a conspiracy behind almost every bush, even where neutral observers would perceive only prudence or typical Victorian biography – as when it is hinted that the CIM archives were burned to prevent advancing Communists from seizing records that would incriminate thousands of Chinese believers. This was, after all, the period of the “great man” theory of history.

More damaging to Austin’s credibility as an historian is his habit of constantly misreading, misinterpreting, or just ignoring the sources that do remain.

When we turn to the actual pages on which Broomhall’s words are found, we discover that “conspiracy of silence” echoes an often-voiced criticism that, in its effort to avoid public solicitation of funds, the CIM even withheld information about actual financial needs from potential donors. “Cocoon of silence” merely describes Taylor’s ability to concentrate in a noisy environment!

Let us stop for a moment to ponder the significance of this fact: Austin has – apparently deliberately – totally misconstrued his source to make it support his own fundamental thesis. This is a clear breach of the canons of historical integrity and casts a cloud of suspicion over all that follows.

Austin refers repeatedly to Hudson Taylor’s “authoritarian” style of leadership. But A.J. Broomhall has effectively refuted this old charge with quotations from Taylor’s instructions to his lieutenants in China and his private correspondence to his wife and others. Had Austin read – or chosen to note – this evidence (*The Shaping of Modern China*, Volume II, 529-530, plus countless other passages showing how Taylor dealt with difficult missionaries) he might also have concluded that “[t]ime and again the myth of Hudson Taylor being authoritarian is shown ... to be hollow.”

More importantly, though he records Taylor’s clearly stated principle at the founding of the CIM that workers would all submit to him personally, Austin does not give adequate weight to the fact that all new workers joined the CIM fully aware of this condition for membership and service. The “Shanxi spirit” was first and foremost a deliberate renunciation of a covenant made by those who had found its terms - especially wearing Chinese dress and living simply - difficult to fulfill.

Austin loses no opportunity to describe Taylor’s strategy and methods for reaching China as “blitz evangelism.” In his view, the most outrageous instance of this was the idea that all of

China's families could be evangelized by one thousand missionaries within a period of three years. Simply by quoting part of Taylor's pamphlet, and employing a few well-chosen adjectives, Austin gives the impression that this plan was nothing short of bizarre.

But Broomhall gives more information (*The Shaping of Modern China*, Volume Two, 531), and shows that Taylor meant only that all of China's households could be given the chance to hear the simple gospel once, that he was talking only of the initial sowing, that he intended for missionaries to return often to the same place and teach the whole counsel of God, and that the goal was a settled work in each area. In other words, "responsible evangelism" was what Taylor had in mind. ("This calculation takes no account of the help to be given by the 1,000 missionary workers now in China...and it takes no account of the help to be given by native Christians, which of course would be immense and invaluable." *China's Millions*, 172.)

Furthermore, responding to the charge that only telling people the bare gospel once was insufficient, Taylor had responded, first, with many examples of Chinese who had been truly converted after only one hearing of the message and, second, with the rhetorical question, "If one offer of the gospel is insufficient, what shall we think of none?"

The careful reader will be struck by Austin's own very selective use of sources, some of which he fails to identify. We are told that Taylor's policy was, "Only sell success" (in a quotation from Norman Cliff's *Flame of Sacred Love*, 53), but Cliff gives no citation for this supposed quote. This is a major omission for such a crucial point, one that underlies much of Austin's argument.

Austin asserts that the CIM deliberately misled the Christian public about Pastor Hsi's more controversial activities, "even if it meant relocating or firing missionaries and censoring their reports" (443), but this claim rests on highly questionable readings of several strands of testimony and fails to take a variety of factors into consideration.

He tells us that one of the "dirtiest secrets" of the CIM was the high incidence of unhappy marriages (233). To be sure, as we have noted, one might surmise that some missionary couples were not happy with each other. But if this is a "secret," how does he know? And if he has evidence, why did he not produce it?

In the early years especially, Taylor and his CIM peripatetic pioneers exasperated Chinese officials and British consular officers alike with their aggressive itineration beyond legal boundaries. Austin quotes several hostile critics at length. He admits that Taylor also "had friends in high places," but does not give us their perspective (18). In the news media, that would be termed "one-sided reporting."

Several stories, such as Taylor's dedication at birth for China service by his parents, are called "pious legends" – that is, unfounded myths – without any substantiating documentation to back up this claim.

Sometimes he gets important facts wrong. For example, Taylor's grandson, Hudson Taylor II, did not resign from the CIM because of a belief that those who had not heard the gospel would

be saved. (Other mistakes: p. xix Dr. Patrick Fung, not Timothy; p. 3 Hudson Taylor's heart attack was in Boston, May 1900, not Shanghai; p. 21 Alfred James Broomhall, not Anthony; p. 271 Timothy Richard was not "rejected" by the CIM but referred to his own BMS which was founded in 1860, not by Richard, who did not arrive in China until 1870).

Austin notes that, almost from the beginning, most CIM missionaries worked in settled stations, but that does not deter him from repeating his charge that Taylor believed in, and planned for, "blitz conversion" – a concept Taylor explicitly renounced. Austin states categorically that after Taylor retired as General Director, the CIM ceased pioneer and peripatetic work; Broomhall's history proves just the opposite. But Austin himself had shown in various places that both settled and itinerant preaching had been the policy from the inception of the CIM's work in China, as part of Taylor's overall strategy.

Another contradiction: The author frequently accuses Taylor of sending out ill-trained and inexperienced missionaries, implying that they bumbled along with no idea what they were doing. But he also describes in detail the incredibly demanding language curriculum required of all CIM workers and admits that the CIM was known for its high standard of linguistic and culture acquisition. Again, he notes Taylor's belief in on-the-job training during the language learning period, through the mentoring system of Senior/Junior missionaries, but does not integrate this into his negative evaluation.

Austin contradicts himself, also, by pitting Timothy Richard's outreach to the Confucian elites against Taylor's "blitz evangelism" (see above), and then telling us that CIM male missionaries targeted students emerging from the annual examinations (442). Inherent in the story of Pastor Hsi is further evidence of this typical misreading of Taylor and the CIM: Hsi was, after all, a Confucian scholar. As Broomhall shows, CIM missionaries often sought to befriend and win the literati, though without much success. We may ask whether Richard fared any better: Did the elites who admired him so much become converts to biblical Christianity or to Western modernization?

Other Internal Contradictions:

Austin tells us that Taylor's initial problem with the first interracial marriage in the CIM was "not just racialism" – as if that were a factor at all. Broomhall – and even Austin himself, in the same sentence – proves that prudential considerations were the only reasons for not wanting to approve this union (239). This is a familiar rhetorical pattern of the author: slanderous innuendo qualified – and even negated – by the text itself. But the impression has been made, nevertheless.

Austin repeatedly states that Taylor did not believe in the possibility that those who had not believed in Christ could be saved. Broomhall quotes a very late assertion of this conviction from Taylor's pen in 1902 (*The Shaping of Modern China*, Volume Two, 740). But then Austin writes that Taylor told Frost in 1904 (or 1905 – Austin is not clear) that his "position was 'a temptation of the evil one,'" and that Taylor had changed his own views on the fate of the unrepentant. Broomhall's focuses the account on Frost's insistence upon applying current standards to

members who had joined the CIM under a previous understanding, not on the fate of those who had not trusted in Christ. Whom are we to believe?

According to Austin, at some unspecified time after 1900, Hudson Taylor “slipped into senility” but – inexplicably – he records a variety of statements by Taylor after that, even on the day before his death in China in 1905, statements which demonstrate that the old man was still mentally sharp.

On his last trip to China, Taylor is described as “a tiny aged elf with wild white hair and a long white beard,” but the famous picture of Taylor with Griffith John and W.A.P. Martin shows that Taylor’s hair was well-groomed. A small detail, to be sure, but just one more indication of a pervasive bias that renders the entire work suspect. (On Taylor’s size, cf. Roger Steer, *Hudson Taylor: A Man in Christ*, 310-311).

Despite ample evidence, in Broomhall’s account and elsewhere, that Hudson Taylor was an extraordinarily practical man, Austin portrays him as an other-worldly mystic, in contrast to the practical Timothy Richard.

Although he relates the origins of Taylor’s insistence upon having the mission be governed from China by those with firsthand knowledge of conditions there, Austin narrates the conflict between the China council and the London council as if this were not a factor, indeed the crucial ingredient, in the dispute.

Austin introduces a cute but confusing modification of the term “Shanxi spirit,” which originally referred to the rebellious, and doctrinally suspect, actions and opinions of some members of the CIM in Shanxi who had fallen under the influence of Timothy Richard. Austin notes that use, but then expands the phrase – even making “spirit” plural – to refer to several different things, including the practice of casting out evil spirits.

Austin uses rhetoric to make key points, including pejorative adjectives (“militant fundamentalism,” “radical evangelicalism,” “radical Protestant congregations” – i.e., unregistered house churches in today’s China) and nouns which meant one thing at one time but now carry negative connotations (fundamentalism). He inaccurately describes Taylor’s family as a “dynasty;” however, unlike the heirs of Chinese emperors, neither Taylor’s son nor his grandson succeeded him.²³

²³ His great-grandson, Jim (James Hudson Taylor III), was elected General Director of OMF from outside - at the time a Free Methodist missionary serving as president of China Evangelical Seminary - on the basis of his merit. This Taylor was chosen by the 3,000-strong Chinese Congress on World-wide Evangelization meeting at Macau in 2006 to represent all Western missionaries in receiving a tribute of profound gratitude for their contribution over the past 200 years. His son, Jamie (J.H. Taylor IV), like his father, is widely respected among Chinese and non-Chinese alike for his fluency in Mandarin, leadership ability, and missionary passion. In short, we are dealing with a family God has graciously chosen to use, not a decrepit Qing-style dynasty.

He invents attitudes and even vocal expressions for Taylor: “Taylor sniffed” (273) and “He said bloodlessly.”

The word “bloodlessly” was Austin’s interpretation of Taylor’s observation that Mandarin is best learned when one is young. As one who started that difficult language at the age of 32, I consider Taylor’s opinion wise and prudent, but Austin regularly sees Taylor through ink-tainted glasses. Not until page 349 are we given a one-sentence list of his moral, personal, and leadership virtues. On page 355, Austin does comment with admiration upon this otherwise “frail” missionary’s incredible physical stamina.

Referring several times to Taylor’s diminutive stature (as we have seen), Austin seems intent on making him seem like a pygmy. But how could his less-than-life-sized man have moved thousands with his spoken and written words as well as his personal conduct? *China’s Millions* does not adequately account for Taylor’s reputation and influence at the time. Why did the Shanghai Missionary Conference of 1890 so heartily support his call for one thousand new missionaries? (340) Why did the delegates accede to his highly irregular calling of the question in the debate over W.A.P. Martin’s acceptance of Confucian ancestor worship rite and vote overwhelmingly for his motion? (341)

How could Austin’s rendering of the tale account for the possibility that even a fraction of the comments made after Taylor’s death by those who knew him best might be true? (See Broomhall, *The Shaping of Modern China*, Volume Two, 746-750). And what of the evaluation of knowledgeable historians (including K. S. Latourette, Eugene Stock, Stephen Neil, and S. H. Moffett)?

Like many today, he clearly believes that Taylor rejected Chinese culture out of hand and spent his life “busily trying to stamp out heathenism.” Later, however, he quotes a CIM missionary’s description of that “heathenism” in such a way as to leave a careful reader in no doubt that 19th-century Chinese society, including that of the cultured elite, was often ugly. Even today, both Christian and non-Christian Chinese – and a host of trained foreign reporters – paint a picture that is not very pretty.

Furthermore, many Chinese considered Taylor and the CIM as outstanding in their attempt to identify with as much as possible within Chinese culture, while pointing out the parts of it that clashed with biblical norms.

The author’s treatment of Pastor Hsi and CIM North American Director Henry Frost, likewise, provides no explanation of why these men were so highly regarded, and unusually influential, despite the manifold faults and failings which are portrayed in *Technicolor*. Hsi (a Confucian scholar in traditional, paternalistic Chinese society) is made out to be a petty demagogue, and Frost (a Princeton University graduate) comes across as a depressive neurotic and panderer to the rich and famous.

Writing of one key North American supporter, Austin opines, “Without putting too fine a point on it, Coleman, who became a member of the North American council and generous donor for thirty years, bought his way into the CIM” (445). Such a judgment, to carry historical significance, must be backed up by proof that money was the main cause and element of Coleman’s involvement with the CIM, and that his money purchased undue influence.

Austin frequently invents – or cleverly implies – impure motives for Taylor, Hsi, and Frost. Taylor’s consistent position against accepting compensation from the Chinese for damages is also “a good selling point at home” – as if that were a real reason for the CIM’s response to the Boxer Rebellion (425). Hsi supposedly expanded his operations because he saw a chance to make money.

Before giving the very weighty reasons why Frost thought he should move the North American headquarters in Toronto back to the United States, Austin colors the narrative: “Like many expatriate Americans,” Frost never “gave up looking for a new movement of the cloud, this time back to the States” (445).

He interprets Frost’s concern for the shift towards theological liberalism in the United States as part of the “dark night of the soul” that he had experienced in his trips to China, rather than to Frost’s own theological convictions.

How does he know all this about men who are long gone? My guess – and it is only a guess - is that the author’s theological position, rather than historical facts, have colored his entire treatment of Frost, who seems to be the real villain of the story.

Austin’s interpretation of Frost rests upon the latter’s unpublished memoirs. This fact deserves at least two comments: First, this reviewer has no way of assessing the accuracy of his treatment. Any doubts about Austin’s objectivity arise from his handling of the sources about Taylor and the CIM which are available. Second, should we not give Frost some sort of credit for producing a document that apparently displays his own shortcomings? Does that not say something about a man whom Austin seems to disdain so thoroughly?

As with Taylor, Hsi, and Frost, the mission as a whole is usually depicted negatively. A few examples:

In the Introduction, he repeats, without qualification, the words of a hostile British consul who described the outer pilgrimage of the China Inland Mission: “the religious mania in Europe that sent uneducated and impulsive young men and women into the interior of China, where their religious fervor evaporated in the apathetic Chinese environment. Some lost their minds, some lost their nerve” (29).

Ignoring evidence in Broomhall for Taylor’s real position on “comity” – the practice of seeking to avoid competition among missionary societies - Austin gives us a CIM that resembles the expanding British Empire (though he himself does not make that comparison) (273).

From the beginning, and from his sad experience with the Chinese Evangelization Society, Taylor intended for his missionaries to live “by faith” – that is, without open and direct solicitation of funds – and simply, as close to the Chinese as possible. Austin connects these two in one paragraph and does so in a critical manner. First, we hear of “the CIM’s *claim* to support a missionary for \$250” (309; emphasis mine). The word “claim” casts doubt on the veracity of Taylor, Frost and the CIM leaders – a consistent theme of this book.

Then, the frugal lifestyle of the CIM workers is described in condescending terms, using the derogatory words of a missionary from another organization. To this day, Chinese Christians praise Taylor and the CIM/OMF for their attempts to draw near to them by learning the language well and living without ostentation or luxury. Austin’s narrative takes one of the assets of the CIM and turns it into a liability.

Sometimes, he suppresses the ample evidence from both Christian and non-Christian, Chinese and non-Chinese sources that most CIM workers were highly admired and quite successful (see, for example, *The Shaping of Modern China*, Volume Two, 741).

Again, in a section on the minutes of the CIM China Council that does contain some quite interesting information, Austin sees a glass more than half empty: “The Chinese council minutes make melancholy reading, sad litanies of the walking wounded...” He cites a few cases and concludes, “And so on, year after sad year” (352).

I leave the reader to judge the historical quality of this passage from the Introduction:

As [Pastor] Hsi spiraled out of control, the CIM decided to support him at all costs, hush up his tantrums, because everything depended on the stories he concocted out of smoke and mirrors. Opium was the case that made the CIM famous (14-15).

At the end of the book Austin asks very important and provocative questions about the stance of the CIM and its successor the OMF towards the charismatic movement. But his treatment is too brief and one-sided to be truly helpful.

For example, he asserts that the “fundamentalist” position absolutely excluded an openness to the more extraordinary workings of the Spirit, such as casting out demons. But in 1975 – thirty years before the publication of this book – new workers were being given specific training on how to exorcize demons at the Orientation Course in Singapore. Had Austin done a little bit of homework, he would have avoided a major error of fact and of interpretation.

The discussion also lacks theological precision. Austin claims that the CIM “would condone manifestations of Chinese folk religion such as exorcism” without adequately taking into account the belief by missionaries that exorcism had been practiced by Jesus and the Apostles and was part of frontier evangelism (456). The matter is more complex than he allows.

The book simply does not account for the most important phenomena which it describes. As such, it fails as history. The author’s suppression, distortion, and misinterpretation of sources

equal or surpass anything of which he thinks he has shown Taylor and his “dynasty” to be guilty (see below).

China’s Millions is touted as the first history of the CIM from an outsider. This, at least, is true. Austin writes from a position fully outside the CIM, the missionary movement, Chinese society, and the Chinese church both inside and outside China, where Taylor and the CIM are almost universally held in the highest respect. Such detachment is sometimes helpful for an historian, but in this case, it seems merely to have enabled Austin to impose preconceived notions upon documentary evidence, and to have largely missed the soul of both the men and the movement whose story he undertakes to tell. With all his wide reading and meticulous research, he appears to remain ignorant of the true nature of his subject.

China’s Millions contains much information that could be used for a concise, objective, and accurate history of the CIM under the leadership of Hudson Taylor. Alas, that book remains to be written.

Seldom have I disagreed more strongly with the commendatory comments on the back of a book – and never more reluctantly, given my high admiration for those who wrote them.²⁴

²⁴ Disclosure: The author of this review joined the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in 1975 and resigned in 1989 over differences with OMF policy. He does not consider himself a “fundamentalist,” holds views on the charismatic movement that seem similar to those implied in *China’s Millions* by Alvyn Austin and has serious reservations about some of Hudson Taylor’s actions.

TAYLOR: The Shaping of Modern China: Hudson Taylor's Life and Legacy

by **A.J. Broomhall**

Broomhall, A.J. *The Shaping of Modern China: Hudson Taylor's Life and Legacy*. Carlisle, United Kingdom: Piquant Editions. Jointly published by Piquant Editions, William Carey Library and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 2005. (Originally published as *Hudson Taylor & China's Open Century* in seven volumes, 1981–1989.)

The invitation to write a review of the new two-volume edition of this magisterial work came as I was about one-third of the way through Volume Six of the previous version. Having gone through the whole set two times now, I am even more convinced that this is a marvelous book about a great man and the movement which he led.

The Man

That James Hudson Taylor, FRCS, deserves the epithet 'great' is undisputed. At his death, those who had known him long and well during his many temptations bore eloquent testimony to his character, conduct, and contribution to the spread of the Gospel among China's millions. Let us savor a few extracts:

W.A.P. Martin, with whom Taylor disagreed on several important points, called him "the Loyola of Protestant missions in China" and added that "like Martin Luther he needed no honorific title" (2.748).

His successor spoke of Taylor's "complete consecration to the fulfillment of his divinely appointed trust and calling. . . . We can witness to his beautiful character . . . the sources of his influence lay . . . in his humility, love and sympathy" (2.748).

The pioneer missionary and eminent sinologist Griffith John said, "It was impossible to come into close contact with Mr Taylor without feeling that he was not an ordinary man and that as a Christian he towered far above most men... God and His love; Christ and His Cross, the Gospel as God's one remedy for China and the whole world, were realities to him. His trust in God was implicit...He lived in Christ and Christ lived in him...His heart was full of love" (2.748).

One close companion observed that "Hudson Taylor was gifted with remarkable powers of organization. He paid the greatest attention to detail" (2.749).

Other comments: "He did a mighty work for China, and he did a mighty work for the Church at home" (2.749). He was "a great missionary, a great leader of missions, and in a very profound sense a prince in the Church of Christ" (2.749).

A colleague of many decades, whom Taylor had passed over to follow him as leader of the CIM, offered this tribute:

His meekness and lowliness of mind ... made him pre-eminently gracious, gentle, and courteous in his bearing to all ... Besides his long seasons of private devotion in the stillness of the night or early morning ... 'Pray without ceasing' was his constant habit in considering any question or difficulty (2.750).

Taylor was a man of simple faith, but not a simpleton. As a non-conformist (i.e., non-Anglican) he could not study at Cambridge or Oxford, but to matriculate as a student at London University Medical College, he had to demonstrate "his general education" by a mastery of Latin, Greek, French, German, history, mathematics, and a variety of sciences. Daily, he searched the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek, and he read through the English Bible annually for forty years. Reading widely, especially in medicine, throughout his life, he impressed everyone around him with his amazing "sanity," broad knowledge, and good sense, but above all by a sanctity of life and singleness of purpose as rare then as they are now.

The familiar story comes alive once more in the author's graceful prose. He describes Taylor's parentage, childhood, conversion (through the prayers of his mother and sister), and call to serve among the Chinese. We read of his intentional preparation for a life of dependence on God alone, his rigorous self-denial, and his regular ministry of evangelism among the poor of England. The picture that emerges presages no ordinary life.

His apprenticeship to a surgeon in England was followed by several years as a medical missionary in China with the inept Chinese Missionary Society. There he served both with a veteran physician and with intrepid itinerant missionaries who taught him how to get out among the people, preaching and selling Christian literature. His lifelong commitment to widespread sowing of the Gospel grew from those first few years, as did his later founding of a Mission built upon trust in God to provide funds, not upon the vain promises of men.

The Mission

The China Inland Mission began in 1865 with only a name and ten pounds in the bank, and grew into the largest Protestant society in China, if not the world, by the time of Taylor's death in 1905. Often criticized then and now, its principles and practices receive both full description and reasoned defense, remarkably objective coming from a member of CIM's successor organization, OMF. (Disclosure: As a former member of OMF, I cannot be fully unbiased in this assessment, even though I am not uncritical of either Taylor or the CIM.)

Rather than a fanatical folly, Taylor's insistence that no funds should be solicited grew from his desire not to draw support from established agencies, as well as his belief that "God's work, done in God's way, will not lack God's supply." Influenced by his friend and supporters, he took the "faith principle" to new heights of apparent "risk" and demonstrated the efficacy of prayer and the faithfulness of a prayer-hearing God. OMF International, successor to the CIM, fields a thousand workers in Asia in the same way today.

Broomhall shows how Taylor's passion for evangelizing the unreached millions of China's inland was meant to be followed by systematic, steady work in cities, towns, and villages. Kenneth S. Latourette's picture of the CIM as merely a band of traveling preachers is shown to be woefully inadequate.

Furthermore, the CIM, like other foreign organizations, depended heavily upon Chinese colporteurs, evangelists, and pastors to reach their own people. Never did they imagine that a healthy Chinese church would spring from foreign soil.

Nor would it spring from foreign control. Taylor agreed with the genuine "self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating" methods of his close friend Nevius, and he sought to incorporate them into CIM mission strategy and tactics from the very beginning – long before the "Three Self-Patriotic Movement" was organized under the supervision of the Communist government.

Broomhall candidly relates the disagreements between Taylor and W.A.P. Martin on the admissibility of ancestor worship, and between Timothy Richard and him on the methods and goals of missions. But he also reminds us that Taylor and Martin remained friends for life and gives ample evidence that Taylor's "conservative" approach reaped a far greater and more lasting spiritual harvest.

At the same time, we read of the heroic and sacrificial labors of Taylor and other CIM missionaries to relieve human suffering and advance Chinese society. From a small start, medical work grew into a major component of CIM work. Famine relief occupied time, energy, and money during times of crisis. Hundreds of schools for children of Christians (and many non-believers as well) prepared them to make a contribution to society, and Bible schools equipped workers for the church.

Taylor did not support the establishment of "Christian" universities, because he foresaw that they would graduate people only nominally connected with Christ or his church. Broomhall cites evidence from a variety of sources to show that very few graduates from the mission-sponsored universities became active Christians; they were more committed to modernization than to Christ.

When the foreign powers imposed crushing indemnities upon China for the huge loss of life and property during the Boxer Rebellion (the story of which is recounted in moving detail), Taylor instructed his mission to take not a penny, preferring rather to accept suffering and robbery without retaliation or recompense. Stunned Chinese rewarded this attitude with even greater openness to the Gospel.

To bring the story up to date (as of 1988), the author covers the tumults of the twentieth century and the triumph of "The Chinese church that would not die." A participant in some of the events, he writes with sustained eloquence combined with cool passion, creating a narrative that virtually flies and leaves the reader moved with awe and gratitude for what God has done in China. At the

end, he is forced to point out that the repeated accusations of the Communists, as well as some of the leaders of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, against Hudson Taylor are simply silly.

The Book

Broomhall chronicles the life of Taylor and the growth of the China Inland Mission in meticulous detail, drawing upon archives and previously unused letters, as well as standard histories such as John K. Fairbank's volume in *The Cambridge History of China*. The new edition retains all the previous content, but in a format which is much easier to read. The original line drawings and black-and-white photos are quaint but effective. Copious notes document the sources and substantiate the account.

Sadly, the omission of the extensive index of the original deprives the new set of much of the previous series' research value. This lack will be remedied in the future with a separate publication, I am told.

Broomhall's work has been criticized for (1) excessive length, (2) a reverential, even uncritical, attitude towards Taylor, and (3) occasional inaccuracies or infelicities of style.

1. True, the set is very long! Broomhall anticipates this criticism, and invites someone to make an abridgment, but he believed that the full story needed to be told in detail to convey a sense of the magnitude of the achievement of Taylor and his early colleagues.
2. Not having known Taylor personally, I cannot judge the accuracy of the author's portrait, which is certainly less hagiographical than the typically nineteenth-century treatment of his son and daughter-in-law. Considering the evaluation of those who knew him well, both friend and foe; the character of the organization which grew out of his personal life and work; and the lasting nature of his contribution, our difficulty may rather be with the rarity of people like Hudson Taylor.
3. No one now would repeat the earlier use of the word "occupy" to describe a missionary's settling down in a particular place or would employ the military metaphors for the advance of the gospel. Further, fresh information has come to light since he did his historical research in the 1970s and 80s. One would want to make full use of newer works by specialists, including Jonathan Spence's *The Search for Modern China* and Fairbank's *China: A New History*.

The new title (chosen by the publisher, not the author) is both ambitious and controversial. I prefer the original one. Will the unwary think that Broomhall has attempted a comprehensive history, as Spence and Fairbank succeeded in writing? Or that Taylor aimed at a "modern" China, as did Timothy Richard? Still, we cannot deny that the spread of Protestant Christianity during "China's Open Century" had a powerful impact upon the nation, and that Hudson Taylor and the CIM played a pivotal role in that epochal development.

All in all, I believe that Broomhall has given us an outstanding work which will remain an invaluable resource for years to come. The two-volume biography by Taylor's son and daughter-in-law (available also in abridged form under various titles), Taylor's own autobiography of his

early years, John Pollock's imaginative *Hudson Taylor and Maria*, the beautiful pictorial *Christ Alone*, and especially Roger Steer's *Hudson Taylor: A Man in Christ*, all have their considerable value. But I think that I shall continue to pick up Broomhall's book whenever I need to fix my eyes on a larger goal and a greater God. (For more on J. Hudson Taylor, go to [Taylor, James Hudson | BDCC \(bdconline.net\)](#).)

TAYLOR: Between Two Worlds: J. Hudson Taylor and the Clash between British and Chinese Customs, Cultures, and Laws

by G. Wright Doyle

Doyle, G. Wright. "Between Two Worlds: J. Hudson Taylor and the Clash Between British and Chinese Customs, Cultures, and Laws." Paper presented to the Yale-Edinburgh Group for the Study of the History of Missions and of Non-Western Christianity, Yale Divinity School, July, 2009.

J. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission which he founded in 1865 are well known for their adoption of Chinese dress, in contrast to most foreign missionaries at the time and afterward.

What may not be as well-known is the connection between wearing Chinese-style clothing and other aspects of Taylor's unusual approach to conducting foreign missionary work in China. This approach included eating Chinese food with Chinese implements, living among the Chinese in Chinese housing, the high standards which he and the CIM set for acquisition of the languages of those whom they intended to reach, care to observe local customs and etiquette, and refusing protection from British consular authorities and the military power at their disposal.

In this paper, I shall try to show that these were all natural products of one basic motivation: the desire to imitate Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word of God who "became flesh and dwelt among us." Hudson Taylor believed not only in the theological truth of this creedal affirmation but also in its missiological necessity and the numerous practical advantages which flowed from following the example of Christ.

Hudson Taylor was harshly criticized at the time for several of these practices, for being too "Chinese," but – ironically – has even been faulted in recent times for failing to express sufficient respect for Chinese culture.²⁵ Then, as now, Taylor has been a controversial figure

²⁵ Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor & China's Open Century*, Book Seven, 138-143, addresses in detail the oft-repeated charge that Taylor was the major opponent of more "liberal" views towards ancestor worship, proving that others shared his views and that the debate involved a variety of complexities. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989; the entire series of seven volumes appeared, later re-published in two volumes by Piquant under the title, *The Shaping of Modern China*).

more often either idolized²⁶ or caricatured²⁷ than understood. This paper seeks to redress that balance to some degree.

Let us now look at the various elements of Taylor's unconventional approach in the context of current British assumptions.

Dress

When Taylor himself adopted Chinese dress, including shaving his head and wearing a queue (*bianzi*), his countrymen in Shanghai considered him a madman.²⁸ Many foreigners in Shanghai responded the same way when the first party of CIM missionaries arrived with the Taylors in 1866.²⁹ One of them recollected in 1890 that "Shanghai papers ridiculed the 'pigtail mission' and dubbed [Taylor] a fool or a knave, but he answered not a word." This veteran missionary then added, "I for one feel ashamed of my attitude towards Mr. Taylor in those early days."³⁰

Taylor, on the other hand, saw that the usual way of adhering to European customs would not win the hearts of the Chinese. As one of his early critics later wrote, "His missionary colleagues dressed and behaved like European clergymen. They belonged, visibly, to the same world as the merchants and the administrators and the soldiers whom the Chinese collectively classed 'red-haired foreign devils.' The first step was obviously to get out of devildom by looking and behaving as much like a Chinese as possible and thus approaching one's potential converts on their own terms."³¹

Taylor himself put it this way: "In (Chinese dress) the foreigner though recognized as such, escapes the mobbing and crowding to which, in many places, his own costume would subject him; and in preaching, while his dress attracts less notice, his words attract more."³²

Partial vindication of this policy came when some members of the CIM reverted to foreign dress and a riot ensued, forcing Taylor to again insist upon conformity to their agreed-upon guidelines.³³

²⁶ The biography by his son and daughter-in-law is often cited as an example of missions hagiography, though a recent reading has caused me to modify an earlier impression. Careful attention to detail will reveal that the authors did acknowledge Taylor's weaknesses and the many criticisms directed his way, though they do not objectively note his faults in the manner of modern writers. As A.J. Broomhall notes, "The paucity of source material showing his shortcomings is a matter for regret as it makes a balanced picture of him difficult to attain," though he assures us that in his own treatment, "nothing is suppressed." A.J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor & China's Open Century*, Book Four: *Survivors' Pact*, 7.

²⁷ Alwyn Austin's *China's Millions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), though positively reviewed by distinguished historians, suffers from a strong negative bias against its subjects that renders its treatment fundamentally inaccurate, despite masses of useful information in the text. See my review at www.globalchinacenter.org.

²⁸ Austin, 76, for Miss Aldersey's irate assessment of the man who would woo her (presumed) ward, Maria Dyer.

²⁹ Austin, 122-3.

³⁰ Broomhall, Book Four, 227.

³¹ Woodstock, *The British and the Far East*, quoted in A.J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor & China's Open Century*, Book Four, 226.

³² Broomhall, Book Four, 358. On the different types of Chinese attire donned by Taylor and his missionaries, see Austin, 120-123.

³³ Broomhall, Book Four, 283.

Food

Taylor insisted that his workers not only dress like the Chinese but adopt their eating style as well. This caught the attention, and won the approval, of their neighbors, one of whom sought from a Chinese Christian an explanation of who these people were, who “not only dressed as Chinese, but ate like Chinese, enjoying food cooked in the Chinese way.”³⁴

Accommodations

Despite the difficulty of obtaining rented premises in cities away from the treaty ports, Taylor persisted in settling his missionaries in Chinese buildings among the people they wished to reach, rather than concentrating them in the foreign settlements on the coast, where they could enjoy the comforts of European-style accommodations.

Customs

Taylor’s own experience had taught him that adoption of Chinese customs was necessary to overcome well-founded prejudices against European ways. For example, he instructed prospective candidates in this manner:

Husbands and wives may not walk out together arm in arm, nor even walking separately may they be unattended. In walking out among the Chinese, persons of both sexes will have to adopt the slow, orderly, sedate gait of educated natives; otherwise, they will lose influence with the people, and be thought ill-brought up, unmannerly and ignorant.³⁵

Language

Hudson Taylor himself set a high standard of language acquisition by acquiring the ability to preach in four dialects – Mandarin, Shanghainese, Cantonese, and the Ningbo dialect. His knowledge of the Ningbo tongue was so colloquial and exact that he was able to revise the existing vernacular version of the New Testament, composed in a Romanized script that was easy to teach to illiterate Chinese.³⁶

He expected all his workers to learn to speak, read, and write Chinese as well. Soon the CIM became the “gold standard” for missionary language learning, and its curriculum was adopted by other missions. Completion of a six-part course was required of all workers within two years of arrival in China. Even the usually critical Austin, who provides details of the subjects to be mastered, comments on the CIM’s exacting standards, and acknowledges that those who passed the test “had remarkable freedom to get close to the people.”³⁷

³⁴ Broomhall, Book Four, 256.

³⁵ Broomhall, Book Four, 357.

³⁶ Perhaps we should note here that Taylor was also able to read French, German, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and regularly studied the Bible in the original languages.

³⁷ Austin, *China’s Millions*, p. 249; see also 228-229, and pp. 250-254, Appendix 3: Course of Study for Probationers, though in his text (p. 248) he speaks of new arrivals being given only a “smattering of language and cultural training” – a typical example of his negative bias contradicting both the facts and his own (albeit limited) recording of them.

Summary

In 1867, as the number of applicants to the CIM increased, Hudson Taylor addressed a long letter to all who would seek to join him in this new work.³⁸ Here he clearly and forcefully expressed his convictions on adaptation to Chinese ways, beginning with a reminder of the example of Jesus Christ himself:

Surely no follower of this meek and lowly One will be likely to conclude that it is 'beneath the dignity of a Christian missionary' to seek identification with this poor people... Let us rather be imitators of Him (who washed His disciples' feet).

We have to deal with a people whose prejudices in favour of their own customs and habits are the growth of centuries and millenniums. Nor are their preferences ill-founded. These who know them most intimately respect them most; and see best the necessity for many of their habits and customs – this being found in the climate, productions, and conformation of the people. There is perhaps no country in the world in which religious toleration is carried to so great an extent as in China; the only objection that prince or people have to Christianity is that it is a foreign religion, and that its tendencies are to approximate believers to foreign nations.

I am not peculiar in holding the opinion that the foreign dress and carriage of missionaries – to a certain extent affected by some of their converts and pupils – the foreign appearance of the chapels, and indeed, the foreign air given to everything connected with religion, have very largely hindered the rapid dissemination of the truth among the Chinese. But why need such a foreign aspect be given to Christianity? The word of God does not require it; nor I conceive would reason justify it. It is not their denationalization but their Christianization that we seek.

We wish to see Christian (Chinese) – true Christians, but withal true Chinese in every sense of the word. We wish to see churches and Christian Chinese presided over by pastors and officers of their own countrymen, worshiping the true God in the land of their fathers, in the costume of their fathers, in their own tongue wherein they were born, and in edifices of a thoroughly Chinese style of architecture.

It is enough that the disciple be as his master (Jesus Christ).

If we really desire to see the Chinese such as we have described, let us as far as possible set before them a correct example: let us in everything un sinful become Chinese, that by all things we may save some. Let us adopt their costume, acquire their language, study to imitate their habits, and approximate to their diet as far as health and constitution will allow. Let us live in their houses, making no unnecessary alterations in external

³⁸ Broomhall, Book Four, 355-356.

appearance, and only so far modifying internal arrangements as attention to health and efficiency for work absolutely require.

He concludes with the other motivation for such an approach: “Our present experience is proving the advantage of this course,” and goes on to describe the practical benefits of thus identifying with the Chinese.

Later in that same letter, he returns to the primary motive for such adaptation:

Rather let the love of Christ constrain [compel, motivate] you to seek to commend yourself and your message to the Chinese, as becomes the followers of such a Master. Let there be no reservation; give yourselves up fully and wholly to Him whose you are and whom you wish to serve in this work; and then there can be no disappointment.³⁹

Consular Protection

Now let us turn to Hudson Taylor’s stance toward Chinese law and the treaties which had been signed between China and the Western powers.

At the beginning of his missionary career, he violated the stipulations of the treaties by traveling and preaching outside the boundaries of the designated treaty ports, as he admits himself in his brief autobiography.⁴⁰

But in another letter to prospective missionary candidates in 1875, Taylor wrote that the CIM was looking for men who:

Believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and who, accepting the declaration, “All power is given unto me,” are prepared to carry out to the best of their ability the command, “Go...teach all nations,” relying on Him who possesses “all power” and has promised to be with His messengers always, rather than on foreign gunboats, though they possess some power.

He guaranteed “a harvest of souls and a crown of glory hereafter ‘that fadeth not away,’ and on the Master’s ‘well done’ to those who were ‘prepared to take joyfully the spoiling of your goods, and seal your testimony, if need be, with your blood.’”⁴¹

After the conclusion of the Second Opium War in 1860, the Peking Convention allowed for the opening of nine more ports to foreign commerce, as well as legal travel and residence in the interior of China. More importantly to missionaries, the propagation of the Christian message was also allowed.⁴² Teachers of Christianity were “entitled to the protection of the Chinese authorities” and persecution of them prohibited. Sixteen years later, the Chefoo Convention of

³⁹ Broomhall, Book Four, 358.

⁴⁰ Hudson Taylor, *Looking Back*. Littleton, Colorado: OMF International, 2003 (former title, *A Retrospect*), 59.

⁴¹ Both quotations from Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission, Volume Two: The Growth of a Work of God*, 228.

⁴² Broomhall, Book Four, 26-27.

1876 provided “that foreigners were at liberty to travel in any part of the emperor’s dominions, that they did so under his protection, and were to be received with respect and in no wise hindered on their journeys.”⁴³

Hudson Taylor and the CIM counted on these provisions to open doors for them to travel and live in every corner of China. When threatened with violence by ordinary citizens, they appealed to local officials for protection, but they did not, like many other missionaries, appeal to their government for reprisals against offenders, much less demand that they be sheltered by foreign military power. In other words, they placed themselves under the authority of the laws of China.

There was one early exception to this attitude, when Taylor wrote a letter to the British consul in Ningbo to protest the outrageous actions of a mandarin who had refused to protect several of his workers and their Chinese associates. He went so far as to say, “I would fain hope that you may see it right to vindicate the honour of our country, and our rights under the treaty of Tientsin, by requiring such a proclamation to be put out, as shall cause our persons and our passports to be respected, and shall give the natives confidence in rendering us their legitimate services.”⁴⁴ As Broomhall goes on to note, however:

By the standards he later set himself, it was the immature letter of a harassed man with no precedents from working under the new treaty conditions. With experience in more riotous circumstances, Hudson Taylor was quickly to reach a balance of co-operation with the well-meaning consular authorities and the mandarins in the best interests of the Mission, its members and the cause they existed to promote. The vindication of national and religious rights ceased to concern him.⁴⁵

To be sure, these laws were promulgated at the point of a bayonet and resulted from the hated “unequal treaties” forced upon the Chinese by foreign imperialists. From that standpoint, we may say that the missionaries were indirectly relying on the results of military victories won by their governments against the Chinese. A few of them, indeed, gloated in the successive defeats of China and the resultant opening of ports and later the inland to merchants and missionaries alike.

To my knowledge, however, these chauvinists did not include any members of the CIM, or Hudson Taylor himself. They deplored the rapacity of their national governments and waged long campaigns against the odious opium trade. They were, nevertheless, willing to take advantage of what they viewed as the providence of God in allowing them to spread the Gospel among the Chinese under the provisions of treaties which had been signed under duress.⁴⁶

But what else could they do? Remain in the port cities while hundreds of millions of souls perished without the knowledge of Christ? That they could not endure, so they went forth into all

⁴³ Taylor, *Growth of a Work of God*, 242.

⁴⁴ Broomhall, Book Four, 282.

⁴⁵ Broomhall, Book Four, 282. After another riot in Huzhou, Taylor appealed to the district prefect and then to the provincial governor for protection under treaty rights and did again – but for the last time – refer to his rights as a British subject under treaty provisions. Broomhall, Book Four, 397-8.

⁴⁶ Broomhall, Book Five, 92-125.

corners of the Chinese empire, not without danger even though they were supposedly guaranteed protection by Chinese magistrates. They were urged on not only by their evangelical faith and evangelistic zeal, but by the warm welcome accorded them in countless cities, towns, and villages by people whose lives had been ravaged by the Taiping Rebellion and other shocks to the old order. In general, when the literati had not succeeded in arousing the populace against them, the missionaries found ready and eager audiences for their messages, and many converts were being formed into congregations presided over by Chinese leaders. That is to say, they did not sense that they were being rejected by the people; persecution usually came only when the leaders of society violated the new laws. In seeking help, the missionaries were operating within the legal system itself.

But Hudson Taylor would not countenance seeking help from a consul, even for redress after a riot in which damages were suffered. After the nearly fatal riot in Yangzhou, the foreign press distorted the facts and provided fuel for the British authorities in China to demand reparations, hoping that a refusal would justify military action, but all of this was contrary to Taylor's express wishes.⁴⁷ The violent retribution for which the newspapers clamored, and which might have sparked yet another war, was only averted by compromise by the Chinese and British alike.⁴⁸

As Austin, in his usual ironic style, puts it:

In the apocalyptic struggle for China's soul, the British consuls might be doing the devil's work. By threatening to revoke passports, by sending gunboats, by high-handedly degrading provincial governors, by demanding minatory concessions, the flag obstructed the gospel. Out there in the countryside, the CIM knew that ultimately its protection came from the blind eye of the Chinese officials: one could travel better as a lamb than as a wolf.⁴⁹

Aside from the misuse of the word "minatory," this passage, though accurate about the deleterious effects of British intervention, overlooks the consistent testimony of Taylor and his colleagues that they looked for protection, not to myopic mandarins, but to Almighty God, as we saw in the statement quoted above.⁵⁰

As we all know, the CIM, consistent with Taylor's lifelong principles, refused to demand, or even to receive, compensation for losses after the horrors of the Boxer Rebellion, in which fifty-eight of its adult members and twenty-one children were killed, while dozens of others passed through harrowing experiences. This attitude, though approved by the British Foreign Office,

⁴⁷ Austin, 128-132.

⁴⁸ Austin, 132.

⁴⁹ See also *Growth of a Work of God*, 129: "We had to cry to God to support us..." and "God was our stay and He forsook us not;" *Looking Back*, pp. 63, 118, and countless other references to their trust in God to protect them.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *Growth of a Work of God*, 493. An editorial in "China's Millions," the CIM magazine, went so far as to blame the Western powers for provoking the Chinese to violence; Broomhall, Book Seven, 454-5, 458, and passim.

stands in stark contrast to the actions of both the allied powers who had sacked Beijing and of many other mission societies.⁵¹

Austin writes:

As usual, the CIM bucked the imperialist rhetoric of the time, affirming Hudson Taylor's dictum that faith in God was better than a revolver. According to the *Principles & Practice*, the CIM refused to ask for reparations or to accept them. . . . As a result, it gained respect in the eyes of both the foreign and Chinese officials.⁵²

Conclusion

In summary, we may say that Hudson Taylor sought to implement a consistent policy, which he expressed briefly in another letter to prospective candidates for service:

Pray that we may daily follow Him who took our nature that He might raise us up to be partakers of the divine nature. Pray that this principle of becoming one with the people, of willingly taking the lowest place, may be deeply wrought in our souls and expressed in our deportment."⁵³

⁵¹ Austin, 425; Broomhall, Book Seven, 468-470.

⁵² Austin, 425.

⁵³ Taylor, *Growth of a Work of God*, 195.

TAYLOR: The Bible in Hudson Taylor's Life and Mission

by Christopher E.M. Wigram

Part I

Wigram, Christopher E.M. *The Bible and Mission in Faith Perspective: J. Hudson Taylor and the Early China Inland Mission*. Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2007.

Hudson Taylor is widely recognized as one of the most influential Western missionaries to China in the nineteenth century. The founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM), which became the largest missionary agency in China, Taylor also helped spark a movement, generally called “faith missions,” within the larger Western missionary enterprise.

His position as a major figure in the immensely popular foreign missions endeavor gave him a platform from which to speak, not only about overseas missions, but also about the Christian life in general. In fact, he exercised wide influence in evangelical circles as a Bible teacher and advocate of a certain type of spirituality - the “Keswick” or “deeper life” approach to the Christian life that emphasized faith, consecration, intimacy with God through Christ, inner peace, and commitment to the Great Commission.

This excellent study examines Taylor's biblical interpretation and application to personal life and cross-cultural missions, especially in the light of wider currents of teaching on Christian discipleship and effective missionary work. Drawing upon a broad array of primary sources and supplemented by more recent publications about the nineteenth century missionary movement, the author paints a detailed picture of Taylor's Bible-based spirituality and its impact upon his life as a bearer of the gospel to the Chinese.

A few common notions about Hudson Taylor come in for reevaluation, but the overall portrait closely resembles what almost all previous biographies have drawn of a man filled with zeal for God and his Word, focused on Christ and his redeeming work, trusted in his heavenly Father to supply all needs, depended upon the Holy Spirit for new life and sustaining power and grace, and consumed with a passion to communicate the love of God in Christ to spiritually needy Chinese at any cost.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Standard biographies include A.J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century* in seven volumes, the earlier two-volume biography by Taylor's son and daughter-in-law, Howard and Geraldine Taylor, and Roger Steer's shorter but very fine *Hudson Taylor: A Man in Christ*. Alwyn Austin, *China's Millions*, though containing much useful information, is so negatively biased as to be fundamentally flawed and highly unreliable (for a review of this work see <http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/christianity-in-china/chinas-millions.php>).

Because of Hudson Taylor's significance both as a missionary to the Chinese and as a leader in the growing "faith" mission movement, Wigram's book deserves careful and detailed examination.

This volume began as a doctoral dissertation, so it naturally opens with an explanation of the author's methodology, structure of the work, and a description of sources.

Hudson Taylor's Context

The second chapter places Taylor's approach to the Bible within its historical context: Roman Catholicism, the Reformation, Puritanism, Pietism, the Moravian Brethren, and early Methodism. Protestants of the early nineteenth century were not reading their Bibles in a vacuum, for they were heirs of the Reformation, with its emphasis upon the Scriptures alone, to be read and received by faith. In fact, "Taylor's intensely devotional approach to the Bible stands in a tradition that has its roots in Puritanism" (32).

Later, the Pietists, with their intense love for God and Christ nurtured by a Christo-centric, devotional reading of Scripture and a longing for the imminent return of Christ, a lessened emphasis upon bare mental adherence to orthodox doctrines, and a strong commitment to missions, fed into the holiness movement in which Taylor's faith and practice were nurtured. Their insistence upon both immediate, personal communion with God in Christ and foreign missions was transmitted to the English-speaking world through the Moravians, who had a decisive influence on John Wesley, the father of Methodism, the tradition into which Hudson Taylor was born. Wesley's stress upon "entire sanctification" followed the Puritan concern for holy living and deeply influenced Hudson Taylor and his colleagues. The gathering of people based on a common religious experience rather than denominational membership was another characteristic that Taylor inherited and transmitted to the CIM.

The author next introduces more specific influences upon Taylor. Following David Bebbington and others, he claims that both the Enlightenment and Romanticism helped to shape the contours of Taylor's reading and application of the Bible. While not wanting to deny the influence of cultural movements upon the Church in any age, I found this to be the weakest part of Wigram's thesis; the other traditions which he had already described would seem to be explanation enough for most of Taylor's principal distinctives in biblical interpretation and practical outworking. I don't know what to make of the claim that he was "the embodiment of evangelical romanticism," especially in his broadening of the financial support base of missions beyond churches to individual believers and "his liking for female companionship" (57). Other explanations seem more likely to me, such as his desire not to compete with denominational missions and his very close relationship to his mother and sister (and distant one with his father).

More plausibly, Wigram notes the undoubted impact of Methodism, with its use of female evangelists and the priority of evangelism and missions; the holiness movement, with its passion for total consecration, leveling distinctions between clergy and laity, "ceaseless activity," the hunger for spiritual power for greater effectiveness in service, belief that union with Christ brought all that one needs for life and ministry, and call for a "deeper life" of "rest" in Christ;

and the Mildmay conferences, which evolved into the Keswick meetings in which Taylor took a prominent part, with their emphasis on the life of faith, pre-millennial eschatology, high participation of women, and earnest longing for the fullness of the Spirit. Spiritual qualifications trumped everything else as prerequisites for effective missionary service.

Others who left their mark on Taylor, especially early in his career, included George Müller, whose orphanages were supported by unsolicited gifts in response to prayer alone and who urged Christians to be “truly at rest and happy in God,” and whose habit of consecutive reading of the Bible became Taylor’s own; Edward Irving and his teaching on faith; Anthony N. Groves, especially his simple lifestyle and radical dependence upon God for material provision; and the Open Brethren, in their “fostering expectations of higher attainments in practical holiness” (70). Andrew Jukes, who used allegory and typology in his interpretation of Scripture and who held strongly to pre-millennial eschatology, affected Taylor for a time when he was young.

Two men whose lives as missionaries in China profoundly shaped Taylor’s missionary strategy and practice were Karl F. A. Gützlaff and William C. Burns. Taylor called Gützlaff “the grandfather of the CIM” (73) through his impact on the Chinese Evangelization Society, Taylor’s first sending agency. Gützlaff engaged in extensive preaching, distribution of literature, and training of Chinese Christians to replicate his ministry where foreigners could not go. Anticipating Taylor, he called for female missionaries to reach the women of China. His failure to supervise the Chinese workers whom he employed led Taylor to stress the need for foreign missionary oversight of local evangelists and pastors until their worth had been determined (and until the new missionary had been trained by them!). The German missionary sought to spread the gospel as widely as possible, with the plan of starting Chinese-run churches when a group of believers had been gathered. His powerful advocacy of mission work among the Chinese through letters and personal visits back to Europe provided a model for Taylor’s equally effective promotional efforts.

Not long after arriving in Shanghai and gaining facility in two Chinese dialects, Taylor met and began to itinerate with William C. Burns of Scotland. From Burns he learned the value of starting on the outskirts of a city, to enable the people to gain familiarity with the foreigner, and then gradually moving towards the center, in the hope of establishing residency. From Burns he also saw the imperative of living among the people, the value of enduring hardship and failure, the place of the “lay evangelist,” the need for women missionaries, and the necessity of a resident missionary to follow up recent converts.

The Bible in Hudson Taylor’s Spirituality

Having thus carefully described the various streams which fed into the river of Taylor’s use of the Bible in his personal and missionary life, Wigram plunges into the heart of the book, which consists of three substantial chapters on the Bible in Taylor’s personal spirituality, his missionary teaching and preaching, and the activities of the CIM until 1905 (the year that Taylor died). Only some highlights from these dense and valuable chapters can be given here.

Despite his debt to many others, Taylor was also quite unconventional in some respects. He took the Bible as a fully reliable and completely sufficient source of guidance for faith and practice. From his reading of the Scriptures, he imbibed a zeal for radical self-denial, which was a fruit of union with Christ, itself fed by daily and prayerful reading of the Word of God coupled with an attempt to obey fully whatever the Spirit seemed to be saying to him from the sacred writings. Though convinced that God could speak directly to him, Taylor was protected from extreme idiosyncratic subjectivism because he “had a thorough and methodical approach to scripture with disciplined habits that aided his overall grasp of the Bible” (80).

“For Taylor, knowing God was a ‘glorious reality,’ for He was ‘the great Father, the source of all fatherhood, of all protection, of all that is blessed here and true, and noble and good, and of all the glories to which we look forward in the future.’ It was the task of the Christian to give glory to God in all that was done. Taylor was dismissive of a merely intellectual knowledge of God. For him the practical application of the Christian life was a daily reality” (81). In other words, ready obedience formed an indispensable aspect of knowing God through the Bible. Without acting upon a clear promise or obeying a clear command, one’s study of the Scriptures was in vain.

Some key themes in the Bible feature prominently in his own life and in his teaching. The love of God the Father probably comes first. Taylor believed implicitly in the goodness of God and therefore the necessity of acquiescing in all manifestations of God’s providence, including those that brought intense pain and sorrow. He spoke much of the majesty and glory of God: “It is clear that doxology was a fundamental feature of his life and worship” (83).

Other key themes included prayer, the efficacy of which Taylor never doubted; indeed, his confidence in God as a prayer-answering Father stood at the heart of his life and work. The CIM, he would have said, provided clear evidence of the Lord’s willingness to respond to pleas for workers, spiritual fruit, strength, and financial resources. Taylor’s understanding of Christian spirituality also highlighted the centrality of self-denial in the service of God and of others, and his own example of humility, “intense love and sympathy,” compassion, “great self-denial,” and “indefatigable perseverance” exerted immense influence upon all who met him (90).

Taylor found the quest for complete holiness in the very fiber of Scripture and fully exemplified by the kenotic (self-emptying) example of Christ; other terms for this were “entire consecration” and life on a “higher plane.” What Wigram calls Taylor’s “immediate hermeneutic” – that is, his belief that God could speak directly to him through the words of the Bible - found comfort in the lives of biblical characters whose sufferings and consolations could be ours as well. Repeated exhortations in the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, to praise God led Taylor and others like him to fill their lives with hymn singing, either privately or corporately.

“Faith is one of the qualities that Taylor is most noted for and was a foundation for his spirituality” (100). In particular, he taught that God could be trusted to raise up workers for the harvest and to supply for all their material and spiritual needs. He mined all of Scripture for his emphasis on faith, particularly the passages which dealt with God’s fatherly care for his children

and various promises of provision. Mark 11:22 played a central role in his understanding of God as a faithful provider. After 1869, he claimed that he had found “the rest of faith” that enabled him to enjoy almost constant peace.

Such “rest” “was to be found in following Jesus and labouring for Him . . . For Taylor the rest of faith was encountered in mission” (104-105). Believing prayer brought rest as Christians relied on God for all their needs in all circumstances. For Taylor, such passages as 1 Peter 5:7 and Philippians 4:6-7 were crucial, as they assured him that we can have peace – and thus mental rest – regardless of pressures and problems. For us to enjoy this rest, however, we must consecrate ourselves fully to God and to his service. “This central doctrine of holiness teaching enabled Taylor to experience rest from the trials of leading the CIM and was the basis of his extraordinary spiritual equanimity” (107).

Only by abiding in Christ can we enjoy this rest. But Taylor read John 15:5 as a statement of fact: We are already in Christ; all we must do now is to remain in him by trusting his promises and obeying his commands. In other words, we do not have to attain Christ, but to enjoy what he already is – divine Lord and Savior – by remaining in his love. Likewise, John 6: 35 assured him that we now have unlimited supplies of spiritual nourishment merely by “coming” to Christ constantly through faith in his promises. By doing this, we bear fruit, which means that we become more and more like Christ, and thus glorify God. Union with Christ through faith in his Word brings the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives that leads to even closer intimacy and even more growth in holiness, though, of course, not to the point of sinlessness in this life.

These realities exerted a pervasive influence on the CIM in coming decades, when “Taylor’s own experience became important teaching for others in the Christian community, as he not only taught but demonstrated the reality of what he was teaching” (113).

The Bible in J. Hudson Taylor’s Worldview

Though Taylor was nurtured in the Reformation tradition of full confidence in the Scriptures, the author claims that he read the Bible in a way that was distinctive and a bit different from the Reformers’ practice. For him, the Scriptures were, of course, the very Word of God in the words of God, and thus completely trustworthy and authoritative. He strongly rejected the skeptical approach of modern German higher criticism that was beginning to affect some churches and missionaries.

More than that, however, the Bible was “the very atmosphere in which he lived.” It was “the main source for transformation and specifically connected to inspiring others about mission to China” (117). In his many editorials in *China’s Millions* and other writings, he referred to almost all the books of the Bible, though of course some were favorites, such as Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah, and the Gospels, and the rest of the New Testament rather “evenly” (117). In his selection of texts, Taylor mirrored the usage of evangelicals of the time.

Taylor’s daily consecutive reading of the Bible used a version with English, Greek, and Hebrew interleaved. He knew the biblical languages and used this knowledge in his exegesis, as well as in the revision of the Ningbo phonetic New Testament. He favored the use of *Shen* to translate

Elohim and *Theos*, even though most British missionaries favored the translation *Shang Di*. Wigram notes that his “preference for ‘Shen’ was indicative of a conviction that Christianity stood in clear discontinuity from Chinese religious tradition,” in stark contrast to the accommodating approach of men like James Legge, W.A.P. Martin, and Timothy Richard (126).

Taylor used both allegory and typology in interpreting and expounding the Scriptures. His exposition of the Song of Songs furnishes the best example of his allegorical exegesis and is thoroughly in line with the most common treatments of this Old Testament book, from the third century to the nineteenth century. For him, such an allegorical reading found support from clear Old and New Testament references to Yahweh/Christ as the husband or bridegroom of his people, but Taylor also found spiritual meaning in many details of the Song of Songs, rather like his contemporary Charles Spurgeon in his preaching. He also used typology, finding adumbrations of Christ in Solomon and Boaz, for example.

He often distinguished between the literal and spiritual meanings of Scripture and usually focused on the latter, because for Taylor the purpose of the Bible was to bring the believer into a deeper communion with God in Christ and then into more faithful obedience, including going into the world to preach the gospel. To gain insight into the spiritual significance of a passage, Taylor consciously relied on the Holy Spirit to guide his understanding as he both studied the text and prayed for true spiritual understanding.

In his exegesis, Taylor assumed, with his evangelical contemporaries and in keeping with their Reformation, Puritan and Pietist heritage, that “the scriptures are for all people, not just for scholars and clergy,” and that “submission to the scriptures is more than just intellectual assent.” He also assumed that “the situation of the contemporary reader is closely aligned with the original situation as represented by the text” (134). This approach has been criticized as naïve by modern missiologists who assume that cultural, social, and economic situations condition and even determine our reading of the Bible, but it is completely consistent with the Reformation doctrine of the perspicuity of the Bible – that is, that the Scriptures are clear enough to readers of all sorts if they employ ordinary principles of interpretation within the community of faith.

“The focus on the spiritual meaning of the text gave Taylor a very immediate and highly personal approach to the interpretation of Scripture” (135). He applied this method not only to himself but to his colleagues. He viewed the kingdom of God as “a present reality, not something for a future dispensation,” and thus saw Jesus as present King whose commands must be obeyed (136).

That brings us to Taylor’s Christological interpretation of the Scriptures. The “incarnate Word is the true key to the written Word,” he said at the outset of his book on the Songs of Songs, which he considered to be a picture of the relationship between the risen Christ and the true disciple in this age. Likewise, Jesus is now the true Vine for all who believe and obey. Faith and obedience were for him key to proper continued understanding of the Bible.

With this “immediate” and Christological hermeneutic, Taylor applied the Bible directly to his current situation. For him, the Scriptures were written primarily for our personal and corporate edification, despite the contextual distance between us and the original readers. His own spiritual experience also colored his handling of biblical texts, such as when he spoke of finding teachings on the power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in passages that might not have originally referred to that truth.

He “oscillated between preaching on whole chapters of scripture and using just a few verses” (138). Though he often seemed to ignore the original setting, at other times he could weld the biblical occasion to the current situation of his hearers. He sometimes noted the genre of a passage and sought to interpret the text accordingly. “Close attention to the text was not unusual,” including careful consideration of the original languages (139).

Wigram concludes this chapter by claiming again that Taylor’s use of the Bible “differed markedly from other Protestant mission leaders before him,” despite their shared evangelical worldview (139). The author also states that Taylor’s commitment to a “biblical position” when applying the Bible to matters of custom and culture kept him from “considering the values present in the Chinese context in order to facilitate communication in understandable, local terminology” (140). This particular point does not seem to follow from Wigram’s previous description of Taylor’s use of the Bible to construct his worldview and seems at odds with the way in which he was able to hold the attention of dozens and even hundreds of Chinese listeners throughout his career of preaching in China.

Wigram also says that though Taylor “looked askance at the new trends in biblical studies,” he “ironically shared common ground with Protestant Liberals in honouring experience over a rational defence of biblical authority” (141). This seems a bit far-fetched, for Taylor always believed in the historicity of narrative passages and assumed that acceptance of inerrancy was a reasonable position as well as one borne out in personal experience. The author curiously states that for “Taylor the biblical text did not so much justify mission, that was assumed, rather it provided spiritual sustenance within mission for the consecrated disciple” (141). While the latter part of that sentence is surely accurate, the former flies in the face of his own analysis of the ways in which Taylor found imperatives and motives for mission in not only classic texts but others (such as Proverbs 24:11-12) as well.

Another questionable criticism of Taylor is that his focus on personal edification made it unnecessary to “study the local context in light of the mission” (141). We know from many accounts that Hudson Taylor paid close attention to the situation of his hearers, including their cultural setting. More evidence is needed to substantiate this charge, especially since, only a few pages later, Wigram himself gives examples of Taylor quoting a Chinese proverb and alluding to an event in Chinese history to make contact with his audience (144). He also notes that “Taylor encouraged his colleagues to familiarise themselves with the religious thought of the Chinese in order to contextualise their teaching” (150).

The Bible in Hudson Taylor's Life and Mission

by **Christopher E.M. Wigram**

Part II

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The Bible in Hudson Taylor's Missionary Teaching and Preaching

Receiving invitations to speak at a variety of meetings on the subject not only of missions but the Christian life, Taylor was “a Bible teacher, a holiness preacher and an evangelist” (143). Though he was not a great orator, his speaking had consistently powerful effects on his hearers, partly because of the “‘precision and sincerity’ with which he delivered his message,” and partly because of “the eloquence of his life of faith in God” (143). Over time, he “became well known for his biblical understanding and his natural style made him accessible” (143). Specifically, his message of abiding in Christ profoundly moved many, including John Mott and Samuel Zwemer.

In China, he was primarily an evangelist, at least in his early years, and evangelism remained the love of his life even after he had become the leader of a large mission.

Here, however, one must take exception to Wigram's claim that “Taylor prioritized itinerant preaching over more traditional patterns of missionary service” (146). Yes, Taylor did emphasize the importance of itinerant evangelism, believing that the widespread dissemination of the seed of the gospel would inevitably bear fruit. In this practice, he followed the example of Jesus and Paul, and not just that of his Methodist forebears, as Wigram says.

But the oft-repeated assertion that Taylor downplayed the value of settled, ongoing teaching and preaching to congregations gathered in towns and cities flies in the face of a great deal of evidence that shows that Taylor believed itineration paved the way for the establishment of permanent centers in key towns. He himself spent years in Ningbo and Hangzhou preaching at regular meetings in missionary chapels and medical clinics, and he always made it clear that his strategy consistently aimed at finding some place for the missionary and his Chinese co-worker to dwell and plant a church. It is very baffling that misunderstanding on this point persists even among scholars like Wigram who are very familiar with the sources. Indeed, Wigram accurately describes Taylor's overall strategy later in the book (216) in a way that contradicts some of his earlier assertions.

As we have seen, Taylor resisted the inroads of German higher criticism when it began to inject skepticism into the study of the Bible. Toward the close of the century, he became “highly aggressive in his defence of conservative theological positions” (148). Wigram believes that

Taylor's own very personal and experiential reading of Scripture made him impervious to the liberal attacks on the reliability of the Bible, but we could also describe his approach as an example of a belief in the interior witness of the Spirit to the enscripturated Word of God – a traditional Reformation doctrine.

In his conflict with Timothy Richard, Taylor rejected the idea of trying to find common points between Christianity and other religions and called instead for preaching that put the Cross of Christ at the center. He noted that “a particularly capable Chinese preacher made little mention of the religious literature of the Chinese,” and chose “to dwell on the salvation given through Christ rather than emphasizing local knowledge” (150).

Turning to the traditional topics (loci) of theology, Wigram examines Taylor's teaching on all the major doctrines as found in his biblical expositions.

“Taylor was averse to speculation over theology and took little detailed interest in the new developments. His faith emphasized the reality of the living God and was based on the existence of God as depicted in the Bible. . . There was nothing more important than personal knowledge of God” (151).

For Taylor, the first blessing bestowed on us through prayerful study of the Bible was knowledge of God as Father. Indeed, his “most frequent designation for God was Father” (152). His implicit faith in a heavenly Father who knew all the needs of his children enabled Taylor to strike out into new territory time and again, always convinced that God would provide.

The second blessing was knowledge of God the Son, Jesus, whose two favorite biblical titles for Taylor were bridegroom and king, “for they showed the ‘tenderness and preciousness’ of this blessing” (153). Finally, for Taylor, the Holy Spirit was a living presence, a constant source of “living waters” to those who came to Christ in faith.

God not only created a world worth studying, but he now also governs it with watchful and loving providence. This implicit belief in God's particular providence strengthened Taylor during periods of intense trial and loss, such as the deaths of children and of his first wife, Maria. “The loving, reverent, observant Christian sees the hand of God in every little event of daily life,” he affirmed (155). This great God possesses an inherent glory; our duty is to seek his greater glory among men in all that we do, as he often reminded his colleagues.

Believing that all men and women were fallen, Taylor did not share the optimism about “progress” that prevailed in some circles in the second half of the nineteenth century. On an individual level, he thought that we could only be freed from sin by the work of the Holy Spirit. Even believers, though they can count on God's help to gain substantial victory over indwelling sin, must await the resurrection before they are granted sinless perfection. In our struggle with our corrupt nature, Taylor's solution was to meditate on “Christ for us, Christ with us and Christ in us” (158).

Our fallen condition makes conversion necessary for salvation. Taylor tried to ensure the “genuine nature of that conversion before baptism” for Chinese who professed faith in Christ (158). “Regenerative re-creation was foundational for Taylor. This viewpoint relativised the legitimacy of other ministries,” such as medicine and education. Though valuable, they were “auxiliary to the preaching of the gospel. They were helpful but not necessary” (159).

Only the message of God’s grace in Christ would meet the spiritual needs of the Chinese, and only missionaries who were themselves constantly depending on God to give grace in response to prayer would be able to communicate this message with power. Thus, he saw “the hard heart of the missionary as the main hindrance to the spread of the gospel” (159). God’s grace could be experienced daily, and it must be shared with others in both word and deed.

Contrary to some critics of Taylor, Wigram writes that “Taylor struck a balance between the preaching of the gospel and what might be termed social needs” (160). He had always sought to provide for needy Chinese from his own meager personal resources, and of course through his medical ministry. Still, they were secondary to the preaching which alone would produce true conversions.

As for Christology, aside from holding orthodox views, Taylor applied the doctrine of the Incarnation to missionary life by urging his colleagues to imitate the self-emptying of the Son of God to save sinners. He appealed to the risen Christ’s status as Lord and King to call for entire consecration and submission, and to Jesus’s life as a man as our example of sacrificial service. Living simply among the Chinese - wearing their dress, eating their food, and following their rules of etiquette - was just the outward manifestation of what was for Taylor an essential inward attitude. “This included understanding as far as possible the thoughts and feelings of the Chinese, and not just dressing up like them. Taylor’s main concern was the relationship between the missionary and the Chinese” (168).

“These insights aided Taylor in forging a new method for mission based on faith. It also enabled the CIM to endure suffering and persecution, for the principle of self-emptying and self-denial was a condition for personal spiritual blessing and for the advance of the gospel” (167).

Hudson Taylor saw the work of Christ on the cross as “foundational to understanding the kenotic work of Christ” (169). As an evangelical, he believed that the death of Jesus was substitutionary and effective for all people who repent and trust in him. This faith in Christ brought reconciliation with God and imputed righteousness and resulted in “union with Christ and issued in freedom and power” (169).

Furthermore, in contrast to the early Jesuits and to Timothy Richard, “Christ crucified’ was a topic that eschewed intellectual approaches to ministry among the Chinese” (170). It also called for a life of daily dying with Christ and of constant self-denial in the service of the gospel. That implied, for Taylor, a refusal to claim rights under the treaties imposed by imperialistic governments and relying on God alone for protection, choosing to suffer if necessary.

The resurrection of Christ applied the power of his death and the energy for new living to all who trusted in him. United with Christ, the believer has authority over Satan and sin and can live victoriously.

Of course, such new life depends upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. “The work of the Holy Spirit in Taylor’s life was one quality highlighted by those who knew him well,” and he often called on others to turn to God for constant fillings of the Spirit (171). Only the Spirit can enable Christians to grow daily in holiness, a prime desire for Taylor. Such holiness “was always connected with obedience and the likelihood of suffering in pursuing mission in China” (173). Jesus’ teaching on living water in John 4 appeared often in Taylor’s preaching on the unceasing availability of the Spirit to trusting Christians.

Missiology and ecclesiology occupied uneven positions in Taylor’s biblical exposition. For him, the church existed to obey the Great Commission, out of love for God the Father and God the Son, following the example of Christ, and relying on the Holy Spirit. He avoided detailed discussion of the distinctives of church organization and practice that divided evangelicals into different denominations. Broad-minded and genuinely ecumenical, he welcomed people from all church backgrounds into the CIM, and even eventually assigned workers with similar convictions to the same area, so that they could have freedom to plant churches on principles they deemed scriptural.

Wigram claims that Taylor’s preference for the Markan version of the Great Commission over Matthew’s made it “inevitable that Taylor would diminish the importance of making disciples which might have led to a policy of consolidation” (177). Again, one must reply that Taylor’s whole life, and especially his strategy of planting churches that would nurture mature Christians and the establishment of schools to train believers and their children, refutes this common misconception, the source of which remains a mystery. (Wigram corrects this error later in the book (220).)

Despite his earlier statements that Taylor prioritized itinerant evangelism to the neglect of church planting, the author now says, correctly, that “The CIM existed to see the gospel preached all over China and for the individuals who were converted to be formed into churches. . . The CIM shared the policy of all Protestant missions to create self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending churches in which opportunity was to be given for the manifestation of spiritual gifts and in the grace of giving” (179). Probably following the example of Paul, he made a distinction between the local pastor, who should be supported by his own church, and the evangelist, who could be financed by either the mission or those who sent him.

Although he did encourage missionaries to teach their converts to cease from ordinary work on the Lord’s Day, Taylor was otherwise very unattached to traditional ecclesiastical polity and practices. Instead, for him “personal relationships often overrode denominational labels.” In his view, “the church was made up of individual converts rather than any already existing corporate organization” (181). He did require careful recording of those being baptized, however, and on “being sure of the professions of faith,” probably influenced by the New Testament teaching that

true faith will produce visible fruit. His focus on evangelism, in keeping with current patterns among “holiness” and Keswick teachers, led him to emphasize “facilitating the mission work of the individual rather than ... administering the mission work of a corporate body,” such as a denomination (181). This was, Wigram claims, a “new ecclesiology.”

Like others in the evangelical movement, Taylor believed in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Believers were to long for this blessed event and treat all worldly attachments as of relatively inferior worth. Wigram attributes this to the influence of Romanticism, but one could find dozens of passages on the New Testament which would produce a similar conviction and consecration. In addition, like others in these circles, Taylor was “pessimistic about the state of the world,” even as he was “comforted to know that a just and perfect rule was coming” with the visible return of Christ (183). He did not adhere to dispensational teaching, however, and was “‘very guarded’ when he spoke from the prophetic scriptures” (184). Over time, he began to think that sincere believers could differ on such subjects, and that fellowship and cooperation did not depend on full agreement on eschatology.

Taylor’s eschatology influenced him personally (he regularly rid himself of excess possessions); his teaching (he urged others to set their hopes fully on the return of Christ); and his missiology (which rejected “culturally adaptive approaches which took time and depended on educational institutions” (185).) Believers could derive joy from the promised return, despite all earthly trials.

Unlike a growing body of evangelicals, Taylor held that those who finally rejected Christ would suffer eternal punishment in hell. He saw no “wider hope” in the pages of the New Testament. Those who have not heard the gospel of Christ are still responsible for worshiping the God who is revealed through the created order and in conscience, as Paul taught in Romans, chapter 1. For that very reason, the church had the responsibility of taking the saving word to the world, regardless of cost. He saw the great potential of the Chinese as a race and hoped that one day Chinese Christians would take the gospel to the rest of the world – an expectation that has finally begun to be realized.

The Bible in the Activities of the China Inland Mission until 1905

In general, we can say that Taylor’s own use of the Bible for his life and work was institutionalized in the entire structure and ethos of the CIM. Wigram accurately observes that “Taylor intended to personally lead and train the missionaries,” but then repeats the familiar charge that he assumed “an autocratic leadership style” (193). He reiterates this criticism in the conclusion, ascribing Taylor’s view of leadership to what others have termed the Romantic “great man” view (254).

Again, one wonders where this criticism comes from, when the narrative of his life shows that Taylor led by example, teaching, prayer, and patient dealings with those who refused to abide by the agreements they had made when they first joined the CIM. True, the CIM in China was to be led by the Director on the field, and all new recruits pledged to submit. On the other hand, there was nothing “autocratic” about Taylor’s manner of exercising the authority his workers had

agreed to follow. A careful reading of last five volumes A.J. Broomhall's *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*⁵⁵ ought to put this canard to rest. (See, for example, *Survivors' Pact*, 106-08, 278; *Refiner's Fire*, 146-147, 276; *Assault on the Nine*, 297-98, 383, 429, in addition to many other places.)

Taylor based his appeals for new workers on broad general principles and trusted the Spirit to move individuals to respond, even as he followed Jesus' command to pray for the Lord to thrust forth workers into the harvest field (Matthew 9:37-38). Likewise, he expected CIM members to immerse themselves in the Bible, including its promises of God's provision, and not to trust in man or in any appeals for giving. Such spiritual qualifications trumped education and social standing in the evaluation of applicants and guided his instructions to new workers before and after they arrived in China.

Very interestingly, Wigram demonstrates that Taylor's deployment of women as missionaries derived not from a close study of the Bible but upon his Methodist background and urgent pragmatic considerations (212-13). Later, Taylor justified the new strategy by what he considered to be its evident success, though one could question whether it led to gender imbalances in the Chinese church and ignored clear biblical patterns and teaching on pioneer evangelism (e.g., Jesus' sending of the Twelve and the Seventy, and Paul's all-male evangelistic band). At the same time, he held to traditional views of the role of women in church leadership and ministry, such as speaking in church meetings or holding positions of leadership over men (214).

Taylor's missionary strategy was more clearly grounded in his reading of Scripture, especially the records of Paul's evangelism in the book of Acts. The groundbreaking role of itineration was taken from Matthew 9:35, Mark 1:38, and Mark 16:15, to cite only the most prominent relevant texts. "Itinerant work should be seen as an important preliminary to localized work" (219). As for the widespread employment of colporteurs to distribute Scriptures and other Christian literature as widely as possible, Taylor believed that the Bible prioritized preaching over the unexplained literary text, which could be terribly misunderstood (as the case of Hong Xiuquan, leader of the Taipings, demonstrated). Following the biblical example, they believed that men were more suitable for constant iteration.

For effective church planting, missionaries must "teach [Chinese Christians] a love for God's word and a deepening knowledge of it so they can stand alone as soon as possible. This would be achieved through 'spiritual fatherhood' of the Chinese" and through "church nurture, discipling and the . . . training of the new converts for leadership" – another correction to earlier misstatements in the book (220-21).

Further study of the Bible convinced Taylor that he had erred in his earlier focus on establishing mission stations. "There is no command to open mission stations, in the Word of God, and there is no precedent to be found there" (226). Planting churches, he began to see, was God's ordained

⁵⁵ Now available in two volumes under the title, *The Shaping of Modern China*.

method for effective evangelism and church growth. He especially approved of starting churches in the homes of Chinese (224).

As for finance, Taylor put Matthew 6:33 at the center of his “fund-raising” policy, stressing the call for prayer over an appeal for donations. He took Psalm 84:11 at face value. With his belief in the imminent return of Christ, he rejected the use of investments and the practice of going into debt to finance new work.

Conclusion and Evaluation

Wigram sums up the volume in a succinct conclusion that needs little comment here, except for one criticism of Taylor’s use of Scripture. At many points, the author observed that Taylor rarely referred to the historical context of a passage which he was expounding; nor did he usually explain the place of that particular verse or passage within the entire book in which it was found. He is right, but the question seems rather to be, “Did Taylor twist the meaning of passages by his silence on their context?” Wigram points out only one flagrant error, which would indicate that Taylor’s method, though different from what we expect today, did not lead to distortion or abuse of the Bible.

Despite my disagreements with the author’s conclusions about some matters, I wholeheartedly recommend this important study of an important man. I personally found the book immensely informative and edifying and wish for it a very wide reading.

Throughout this volume, Wigram displays an impressive familiarity with Taylor’s preaching and teaching corpus, and a wonderful ability to synthesize and systematize material that had to be mined from a plethora of sources. His industry, careful scholarship, and clarity deserve our admiration and emulation.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ For possible implications of Taylor's use of Scripture today, please go to www.reachingchineseworldwide.org.

