一本讲改革宗（涵长老宗）在中国宣教的书籍

This solid volume grew out of a conference held in January 2013, but 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 both 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 really 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.

HISTORY

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: “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), protege 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 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 rose up 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: “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 Pyongang 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 looks at the state of 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 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, 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 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 over many years. They think that “In 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, by this reviewer, briefly describes the social conditions 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 are now 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 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” 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 of 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 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 co-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 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 Morison’s 1811 Catechism and “The Appeal to Found the North China Theological Seminary.”

https://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/2014/09/06/chinas-reforming-churches-mission-polity-and-ministry-in-the-next-christendom