

BOOK REVIEW

Changing Paradigms of Christian Higher Education in China (1888-1950), by Peter Tze Ming Ng, in collaboration with Philip Yuen Sang Leung, Edward Yi Hua Xu and Jing Huan Shi (United Kingdom: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002,) Chinese Studies series; volume 25, vi + 237 pp., ISBN 0-7734-7051-4.

C*hanging Paradigms of Christian Higher Education in China (1888-1950)*, is dedicated to Father Edward J. Malatesta, SJ, (1932-1998), who had a lifelong interest in the study of Christian higher education in China. China historians in the West, with the exception of Jessie Lutz and Philip West in the 1970s, have largely ignored the importance of Christian colleges in China. These colleges were for the most part derided in China as bastions of imperialism. The joint research of four Chinese historians in the late 1990s, whose findings are presented in this volume, provides a new and more objective look at the record of those colleges in the context of Sino-Western cultural dynamics. In the West, Anglo-Saxon scholars such as Ruth Hayhoe, Douglas Reynolds, Ryan Dunch and others have also been revisiting this area of research.

As Professor Daniel H. Bays has noted, the major contribution of this work is bringing to light a few significant aspects of Christian higher education in China during the Republican Period (1912-1949). These include the decline of



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Western religious and theological education, and the paradoxical growth at some of these foreign established institutions of high quality academic programs in Chinese studies. This latter development, which could not have been expected as late as 1920, was a reality by the 1930s, and as Professor Philip Yuen Sang Leung shows, it was linked to the resources made available by the Harvard-Yenching Institute founded in 1928, as well as to other factors such as intense Chinese nationalism and modern reform policies.

The contents of this book focus mainly on Protestant or Christian colleges, but do not exclude Catholic institutions of higher education in its research. For instance, Professor Leung observes that Fu Jen Catholic University among all the Christian colleges, Protestant and Catholic, could be described as the only exception to the changing paradigm from Western to Chinese learning in the 1920s and 1930s. This college had a strong emphasis on Chinese learning from its very beginning.

The volume also makes a significant contribution to the present discussion among scholars on the changing religious, educational and cultural paradigms within the history of Christianity in China during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both the concepts of religion and culture elude an easy grasp and definition by Western as well as Chinese scholars today. Professor Peter Tze Ming Ng quotes and agrees with the observations of some Western scholars on the different understanding of the role and status of religion, ritual and Christianity within Chinese and Western societies. Professor Ng writes about the necessity to unravel the "cultural knot," which just as in Matteo Ricci's era remains a crucial factor in understanding Christian missionary activities during China's modern era. The issue is complex. Indeed there is further need to study the educational activities of Chinese Christian intellectuals within the context of encounter, dialogue and exchange between Christianity and Chinese culture. At the same time, there is a felt need for a more systematic historical study of the development of Catholic education in China from the mid-19th century to the present day. The study of Ma Xiangbo (1840-1939), the founder of Aurora University in Shanghai, by Chinese and Western scholars such as Zhu Weizheng and Jean Paul Wiest is already an important step in this direction.

The volume also demonstrates how and to what extent the process of secularization or rather the process of adaptation and of modernization has influenced the development of religious and theological education in China's Christian colleges. The secularization of Christian higher education in the 20th century is not a phenomenon limited to China. In both European and American history, this phenomenon has attracted the interest of several leading historians of culture and religion. Therefore this present volume, in exploring various aspects of Christian higher education in China, is making an important contribution to a wider discussion of the evolution of Christian colleges and universities worldwide.

The volume includes a useful bibliography, glossary and index. It is a great pleasure for us at the Holy Spirit Study Centre to recommend this volume to our readers. The research of the authors individually and collectively, as Professor Bays has noted, is significant in any reconsideration of the role Christian higher education has played in the history of modern China.

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