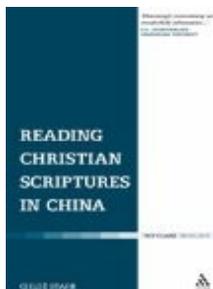


READING CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES IN CHINA

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C. Starr

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Review Title:
Reading Christian
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Reviewer:
Graham A. Duncan¹

Affiliation:
¹Department of Church
History and Church Polity,
University of Pretoria,
South Africa

email:
graham.duncan@up.ac.za

Postal address:
Faculty of Theology,
University of Pretoria,
Pretoria 0002, South Africa

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The papers which constitute this volume were presented at a conference held at Oxford University in 2007 under the auspices of the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation, the Universities' University China Committee of London, the Sub-Faculty of East Asian Studies at the University of Oxford and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in China, Oxford. The Editor informs us that the first missionary incursion into China providing evidence of the existence of Christian scriptures in Chinese dates from the seventh century CE. Thereafter, there was no evidence of a full translation of the entire scriptures until the 1820s when scripture translation was a mark of that particular missionary era. Interestingly, she notes that the first Protestant translations depended to a great degree on earlier Roman Catholic influences.

This particular book attempts to explore the parameters of how Scripture has been read in China. It does this first by considering readings of the Bible up to the present along with the contextual settings of scripture in China; then, the focus is on hermeneutics in which case studies of individual Chinese biblical exegetes and their approaches to reading are discussed. A creative and eclectic characteristic of this work is its interdisciplinary approach in which historians, theologians and sinologists offer their particular insights to biblical scholars with a concentration on historical readings. A side benefit of this study are the insights which are offered into modern Chinese history and cultural change from a Christian perspective.

The particular context for this book is the dearth of scholarship on Chinese theologians and biblical exegetes. It provides a basis for further detailed studies of themes raised here. These include the bible as text, social and personal readings and contemporary readings. The first part of the book is concerned with the context in which Chinese bibles were prepared and received. Chapter one looks at various perspectives on the reception of the Bible, a source for ethical living, a heterodox document, a revolutionary guide and a literary text. The editor in chapter two describes the missionary use of texts which interpreted scripture in the form of Bible stories, primers and catechisms. Chapters three and four continues this theme in contemporary China, while chapter five gives an overview of the current academic scene in China. The second part focuses on the early part of the twentieth century. Chapter six considers the work of a group of Protestant exegetes, while chapters seven and eight offer more detailed examinations of two of these theologians readings. Chapter nine discusses different readings of the Sermon on the Mount. The final chapters, ten to twelve, introduce a Roman Catholic perspective. What becomes obvious in reading this book is the strong influence the bible has had on modern Chinese language. But beyond that it has provoked moral outrage, inspired revolutionary leaders, motivated writers and provided a daily devotional guide for countless Chinese Christians.

This is a very interesting and readable book and a fount of information for those interested in the development of Chinese Christianity during the past two hundred years. It is both a resource and a stimulus to further study of a neglected area of biblical research. ■