

God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions. Edited by Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin. Brookings Institution Press, 2004. 200 pages. \$19.95.

This book grew out of a conference sponsored by the Pew Civitas Program in Faith and Public Affairs at the Brookings Institution in February 2002. The ten chapters of the volume are devoted both to the history of Christianity in China, and to the possibility of religious freedom in contemporary China. The volume also brings attention to relationships between China's domestic policies on religious freedom and its international position within the global economy, including its December 2001 accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Carol Lee Hamrin, former senior Chinese affairs specialist at the U.S. Department of State, and author of the final chapter, suggests that the state of religious freedom in China will affect, for better or for worse, U.S.-China relations. While informative on a historical level, the book acts politically here, warning not only of a Chinese rejection of religious freedom in general, but more specifically of such rejection and the state of *Christianity in China*.

The volume, which comprises contributions from various academic, governmental and human rights advocacy specialists, is a compilation of contemporary viewpoints on the subject of church-state relations in China. With special focus on the history of Christianity in China, the book also examines political intervention in religion as tradition in China. In brief, state control of religion as it existed during twentieth-century China, and as it continues to exist in China today, is representative of an authority that is not only communist, but also just fundamentally Chinese. It is unsurprising that the foreign religion, Christianity, encountered even greater obstacles than indigenous religions, which also challenged official control. Yet the primary reason for the enduring displacement of various missionary strongholds over time, according to the book, lies in a history of Christian institutional disapproval from abroad. These

home institutions failed to invest any substantial religious authority in their Chinese adherents, instead maintaining their own systems of control from afar. This failure culminated in the perpetual disintegration of Chinese Christianity. The Rites Controversy of the eighteenth-century—a conflict during which the Vatican strictly refused the negotiation of Chinese Catholicism with Chinese Confucian ceremonies, exemplifies this underlying problem.

Examining the landscape of Christianity in China today, *God and Caesar* points to the manner in which twentieth-century communist power sealed borders to foreign influence following nineteenth-century European imperialism. Paradoxically, this process separated Chinese Christianity from foreign rule of the past, thereby allowing the new religion to domesticate for the first time. Such domestication, the book contends, is at the heart of Christianity's present success in China, where the country's Catholic population has grown to more than 12 million adherents while Protestantism has boomed to as many as 45 million followers since 1949.

The problem with the book's line of thought is multifold. While the growing numbers of Chinese Christians are impressive, they must be situated within the context of China's billion plus population. Additionally, a clear understanding of how it is that Chinese Christianity differs from the Christianity of other places, including that of the United States, is missing from the book. Here, the possibility that Chinese Christianity might be more *Chinese* than *Christian*, is not adequately explored as are, for example, current studies of "Chinese-ness" in other domesticated religions, such as Buddhism. The book's reasoning is even less persuasive in its attempt to link its understanding of Christianity as a religion that has succeeded in taking root in China to an assertion that the future of diplomatic relations between China and the United States depends on China's approach to religious freedom. In her chapter, Hamrin acknowledges religious freedom as a bilateral issue that has had both positive and negative effects on the relationship between

the two countries in the post-cold war period. Yet although she points to an American conservatism as partially responsible for the loud U.S. criticism of China's social policies during the 1990s, Hamrin's motive presents itself as having more to do with the importance of change in Chinese social policies, and less with shifting American ideologies attached to communist China.

While providing the reader with a decent survey of Christianity's Chinese history, *God and Caesar* ultimately offers only a superficial glance at the nature of contemporary Chinese Christianity. One must constantly remind oneself that neither *God* nor *Caesar* is a Chinese concept, and it is troublesome to conceive of the possibility that the book, which was sponsored by a North American Christian organization, is one which endorses China's acceptance of Christianity as a key influential factor in the development of U.S.-China relations.

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