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WU Qing 吳青. *He Minghua yu Zhongguo guanxi zhi yanjiu (1922–1966)* 何明華與中國關係之研究 (1922–1966) [A Study of Bishop R. O. Hall in China: Social Activist and Theologian (1922–1966)]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2017. 207 pp., paperback, CNY45.00, ISBN 9787308141819.

Is there shelf space for another book on the seventh bishop of Hong Kong, Ronald Owen Hall? Anna Qing Wu's study comes two years after Moira Chan-Yeung's volume on *The Practical Prophet* (reviewed by Wu Qing in *Ching Feng* 14, with a response from Chan-Yeung in *Ching Feng* 15), and thirty years after David Paton's landmark *R. O.: The Life and Times of Bishop Hall of Hong Kong*. Two strongly affirmative answers are offered by the volume. The first is that of Lo Lung-kwong in the preface: that readers have waited a long time for a Hong Kong or Chinese Christian perspective on Bishop Hall. Wu Qing's study is the first in Chinese as well as the first published in the mainland, and utilizes a good deal of material that was not available to Paton. The second answer occupies Wu Qing in her introduction, which touches on the important question of "mission history" and the contested role of foreign Christians in Chinese history. As Wu notes, the focus of scholarship recently has been indigenization, inculturation, and the study of Chinese scholarship. This was a welcome and necessary corrective—but as Wu implies, the exclusion of the foreign marks an equally extreme pendulum swing. He Minghua, or Bishop Hall, was both actor and spectator in Chinese history, present during the Anti-Christian movement of the 1920s, bishop in China in the Nationalist and war years. He is a case par excellence for a non-defensive position on missionaries in a PRC historiography: lauded for his work in Industrial Cooperatives by no less than Mao, and remembered for the many educational and social institutions he founded in Hong Kong.

Paton's work *R. O.* offers a rich reading for an English audience, giving biographical detail on Hall's early life, as well as lengthy quotations from letters, diary entries, and sermons to convey a sympathetic and full biography from someone who had known him well. Chan-Yeung's volume adds greater detail on R. O.'s diurnal life in China and his social work, including the establishment of Chung Chi,

and delves into facets of life from which Paton had refrained, in particular Hall's love letters to his wife Nora and the strains of their long-distance relationship, and the fallout from Hall's positive assessment of the religious situation during his 1956 trip to the mainland. Wu Qing's study is written for a scholarly audience and concentrates on the social side of Hall's episcopacy and on his theology; reflection on the wider meaning of his ministry sets Wu's work apart. This can be seen in chapter one in her careful reconstruction of the history of Christian youth movements in China, including the Student Christian Federation and its interactions with the YMCA and with socialist youth groups; in tracing Bishop Hall's involvement in supporting industrial development and cooperatives in the 1930s and in refugee and aid work in Guangdong throughout the war period in chapter two; and in the extensive survey of social and charitable organizations that Hall was involved with in Hong Kong in the late 1940s and 1950s, from housing societies and refugee resettlement to juvenile care and higher education institutes, in chapter four. Wu's narrative benefits from a clear style and judicious quotation, and she marshals a great array of data from archives and sources in China, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom, inserting tables and lists into the flow.

If the work offers a wealth of detail on Hong Kong and its Christian heritage to local residents, the intellectual questions that undergird the study face towards the mainland.

Through her engagement with the series of social movements in China and with Bishop Hall's great contributions to migrant work, housing and other causes, Wu makes a subtle case for the import of the Christian, and the foreign, in twentieth-century Chinese history. In his thoroughly unimperial attitudes, Hall undermines the anti-foreign invective, while his theological interests hold many of the concerns of the mainland Chinese church up to scrutiny: nationalism, denominationalism, indigenization. And while R. O. would scarcely have subscribed to a Great Man version of history, Wu's study manages to humanize him while at the same time reminding that this particular Christian leader played a vital role in post-war Hong Kong life.

One aspect of R. O.'s life that Wu highlights and which exemplifies her careful reading of Chinese sources is his role as a mentor and theological sounding-board for other priests and theologians. A deep friendship with T. Z. Koo (Gu Ziren) brought Hall back to China. Many know that R. O. ordained Zhao Zichen in Hong Kong in 1941, but most are unaware that Zhao Zichen was present at Bishop Hall's episcopal ordination in London in 1932. In the decade in between, R.

O. had enabled Zhao to find space within the Anglican church, as he had for Cai Yongchun (Y. C. Tsai), a student of Zhao's also ordained by Hall. It speaks to the depth of R. O.'s character that he was relaxed about letting others find their own answers to spiritual and theological questions without pre-set notions, and that his valorization of friendship and capacity for listening allowed Zhao, Cai and others to tease out troubles and be strengthened in their own work. The combination of sure faith and an acute theological mind made Bishop Hall an important resource for intellectuals and clergy, and so for building up a generation of church leaders. As Wu notes, when Hall arrived to take up his role as bishop of the huge diocese of South China, comprising Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan, one of his priorities was ordaining Chinese suffragans, which he did in 1935 and 1940.

The ordination which gained Bishop Hall's early notoriety and lasting admiration was, of course, that of Florence Tim-oi Li (Li Tian'ai), which Wu takes as the focus of the third part of chapter three. This episode—the first ordination of a woman as a priest in the global Anglican church, and not at the time something permissible in canon law—has been well-studied by others, including David Paton, on whose account Wu draws extensively alongside documents from Lambeth Palace and Florence Li's own recollections. By placing this event in the context of a discussion on Hall's *The Art of the Missionary* and immediately after sections on his raising up of Chinese clergy, nurturing of young English mission partners and wartime work with students, Wu makes an important point: the ordination, performed to enable the work of an Anglican priest to continue on Macau in the war years, should be seen as at one with Hall's missionary focus, and not an aberration or provocation. As other biographers of Hall have suggested, R. O. could be impetuous to the point of rash, but the upside of knowing his own mind well and trusting in his own judgment was the ability to take strong or unusual decisions. Hall's *The Art of the Missionary* (1942) is, incidentally, a work which repays returning to (and using in any course on mission or cross-cultural church work for its self-effacing clarity), and as Wu shows in the excerpts she translates, Hall's trust in the work of God in China long before missionaries' arrival, and his belief that Christianity would make Chinese more like "themselves"—even in their a-religious worldview, shaped rather by art—contributed to his focus on nurturing Chinese priests and the view that missionaries should be "guests and co-workers" in China. What Wu terms Hall's "penetrating understanding" (p. 64) on the relationship between China and religion

reflects a view that is decades ahead of many European and US clergy in China in their thinking on mission and culture.

The final chapter of Wu's volume is entitled "Practical Theologian," placing R. O. Hall's theology as a summation rather than foundation of his work. The chapter is divided into Hall's theological thought and methods, and his ecclesiology, with the latter subdivided into his ideas on unity or "reunification" and on the New Church Order, or the Episcopal church in the world. As the opening sentence makes clear, Hall's theological views were wholly integrated with his life's work as bishop, "He Minghua [Hall] was not only a church leader and social activist, but was also a practical theologian, who throughout his whole life used action to implement the will of God" (p. 155). Wu first explores the influence of F. D. Maurice on Hall's thought, and notes his reliance on Maurice's writings as "trusted friends and counselors." Hall (whom the English press labeled "the pink bishop") was clearly shaped by Maurice's ideas, especially the possibility of the church as a transforming agent in society, and Christ as the living word, at work in the wider world and not just effecting salvation for an elect few. In focusing so strongly on Maurice (with some Niebuhr), however, Wu perhaps underestimates the overall Anglican nature of Hall's formation and theology and the effects of global Anglicanism in shaping his worldview. Hall remained wryly self-deprecating about the fuzzy Anglican via media and the "logical absurdities of our Church in England," while drawing deeply on its spiritual resources.

Hall's role as champion of both the disenfranchised and the Chinese church did not mean that he always agreed with his colleagues any more than he did with the British powers in Hong Kong. On the matter of church unity, for example, a matter of great relevance to the contemporary mainland church, Hall was notably out of kilter with mainstream Protestant thinkers and theologians (including Zhao Zichen) who pressed towards a post-denominational vision and saw the division of the church along missionary lines as lamentable. Wu divides her discussion into sections on internal Anglican unity and unity across denominations, and offers a cogent reading of Hall's Hale Memorial Sermon of 1941 where he sets out his vision for provincial autonomy and for egalitarian unity across the Episcopal/Anglican world. Elsewhere, when Hall discusses "reunion," he is not, I think, referring to general church unity as Wu assumes, so much as specific unity with the Roman Catholic church (a question of import for Anglicans but scarcely on the radar of most Chinese Protestants). As he explains in an article Wu cites, "Why I am not Reunionist," the price that Rome pays

for unity—autocracy—is too high. Hall's ideas here do speak to the broader case of Protestant unity, and manifest his admixture of practical wisdom and theological insight. The attempt to unify or control is, Hall suggests, "a form of sin" because it is rooted in pride and denies human fallibility; he would rather a real, practical unity and mutual respect for the richness of diversity than doomed adherence to an ideal. As Hall memorably wrote, "It is the devil who offers us the apple of unity from the tree of 'Greatness,' knowing well that if we take it it will become an apple of discord." Prescient words indeed. As the example Wu quotes of a Himalayan mountain ridge shows, Hall held that there was a sub-surface unity across the Christian world even if it appeared divided at ground level.

Although Hall referred to himself as an "amateur" theologian, he was anything but, and Wu's chapter stresses his activism entwined with profound thinking on society. Jesus did, as Hall wrote, what others talked of doing: "He that does builds his house on rock." Wu notes R. O.'s respect for tradition, tallying with his experience in China. Hall was, if anything, even more international than Wu credits, and when he writes in 1937, for example, about "Action Church" and charity breeding "more deeds, more love, more friendship," (p. 170) Hall's discussion context is "Action Orthodox," the Russian charity in wartime France whose (female) leader would later be sent to Ravensbruck for sheltering Jews. Hall was well-read, and internationalist, and his lament for his inability to read Chinese was undoubtedly heartfelt.

Wu Qing's excellent study provides a finely textured reading. For Christians, R. O's servant-leadership offers compelling testimony to what faith can accomplish. For scholars of religion, this Anglican bishop's life presents a lens through which to read the vicissitudes of religious policy and practice in China, and to consider the interactions between church and state on the mainland as well as in colonial Hong Kong. For historians, a timely reminder that accounts which dismiss the foreign diminish China's own record.

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