

family (pp. 60-62). In unpublished correspondence Harriet also describes intimate moments such as family worship. Uriah Smith deeply loved his wife and frequently writing to her while traveling (pp. 112-115).

One of the interesting theological points about Smith's life that Land brings out is how Smith wrestled with how to distinguish in Ellen G. White's writings as to which portions are inspired, and those that are not. Smith believes that all of her writings related to visions are inspired, but if there is no connection to a vision in her writing, it does not mean that they are inspired (pp. 126, 245). Another interesting point is that Smith did not see any reason to change his theological thought except if there was "good reason" to do so (pp. 126, 229). It is for this reason that Smith felt free to disagree with Ellen G. White's view about the divine nature of Jesus Christ and the whole 1888 debacle because he did not see any "good reason" to change his view.

Despite the best efforts of the author, some areas could be improved, especially in describing the relationship between the Smith and White families. While the author utilizes Ellen G. White's unpublished writings, he does not make use of some of the unpublished correspondence that could have enriched the monograph. Land, for example, misses some very important details in the conflict leading up to the 1873 revival.

Altogether, the author successfully presents Uriah Smith's life and accurately describes his role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Land provides a fresh perspective about how Smith related to Ellen G. White's prophetic ministry as well as her family. Such a valuable resource provides a much better understanding about the contributions of Smith in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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*China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture*, by Yang Huilin. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. 264 pp. ISBN 978-1-481-30018-6. Softcover US\$59.95.

Christianity in China has been seriously distorted for many years due to some social and ideological reasons in Chinese society. This situation is now undergoing change. Dr. Yang Huilin, a professor, academic vice president, and Communist Party member of the famous Renmin Universi-

ty of China, is a leading scholar in Sino-Western Christian studies. He is particularly skilled in comparative literature and religious-philosophical analysis. Crowned as a "new thinker" by some, Yang presents an entirely different and significant view about Christianity within Chinese academia.

The compilation of numerous essays by Yang reflects the critical Christian predicament in China with its long-term unresolved "legitimacy in the Chinese cultural context." He responds to the "theological construction" raised by some Chinese Christian leaders. The book quotes a considerable number of Sino-Western authors in order to establish comparative studies among different religions, cultural settings, literal styles, and theological-philosophical schools of thought, so that the gap between Christianity and Chinese culture may be bridged.

The book has three parts dealing with the cultural, theological, and hermeneutical issues of Christianity within Chinese contexts. In the first part, the linguistic problems in the early Chinese Christian universities and the dialogue models between Christianity and Buddhism are presented to illustrate the collision and syncretism that occurs between East and West. He argues for a "third force" that transcends the "conflicting parties" as a suggested way to realize "dialogue" in this relationship (p. 23). As for the contextualization of Christianity, the "disseminators' strategy" and the "recipients' identity" are equally emphasized (p. 25). Either neglecting Chinese contexts or over-contextualizing, such as ethicizing Christianity by mechanically adapting to Chinese culture, will cause problems (pp. 31, 48-60). Yang concludes with a view shared with Dietrich Bonhoeffer that only "nonreligious interpretation of Christianity" can solve the religious problems (p. 43).

The second part is characterized by the profound theological-philosophical comparative analysis and interpretation. Opinions of theologians such as Bultmann, Karl Barth, Schleiermacher, and Paul Tillich, as well as sociologists like Zizek, Milbank, Heidegger, and Derrida, are repeatedly quoted. Chapter six, for example, responds to "the marginalization of the position of Christianity" in postmodernity, suggesting that various "theological hermeneutics" are to be taken. Christian theology has now received "more room for explanation," revealing its close relationship with humanities (pp. 80, 86, 91, 97). Many theories are discussed, but the author's purpose is to seek new approaches for theological construction in Chinese contexts.

The third part explains Chinese classics as to their original meaning. The author argues that a close relationship exists between Chinese "literature and religion." He especially mentions that James Legge, a missionary from Scotland, interpreted Chinese classics better than many Chinese because his knowledge about Bible gave him "a much better pre-

understanding" (p. 158). In the literal comparative studies between China and the West, the values of "scriptural reasoning" and "hermeneutical circle" should be taken into account.

The book presents a largely favorable view of Chinese Christianity. The author is objective in his evaluation of missionaries based on the re-collected analysis. He commends missionary contributions to Chinese "higher education" (p. 3), "cultural theory and art" (p. 31), and "to normalize ethics, foster social order, and regulate people's mental outlook or spiritual imbalances" (pp. 39, 50). The author even claims that Western missionaries had a better understanding of Chinese culture than the Chinese because of the Bible (pp. 158, 173-178). He also observes the unfortunate link between "missionaries and opium" (p. 50), and the social and cultural assimilation problems of the Chinese Christian church. The author is quite generous in his view of these events, as he compares such events with other comparable tragedies such as Auschwitz in the West and the Cultural Revolution in the East (pp. 61-74).

The book transcends outward phenomena to examine the profound cultural, theological and literary components of Chinese Christianity. Phrases such as "third force," "nonbeliever" perspectives are constantly repeated. The characteristics of comparison strengthen these cultural links. The author offers rich insights into Chinese culture that transcend humanistic and political boundaries as he seeks to enter into harmonious relationship with the Bible.

The fact that the author has such standing using the third-part's perspective provides us with a straightforward analysis of Chinese Christianity, but such a perspective does have its limits. First, as a third part, he does present numerous quotations, but asserts his own opinions in certain areas that are difficult to grasp. The interpretation of Bible from the nonbeliever's standpoint appears to be rather one-sided (ex. "kenosis" used on p. 124). Some arguments bear characteristics of Marxism, which treats Christianity "more as a cultural discourse" than faith (p. 113). Thus "the Christianization of Europe" is also "the Europeanization of Christianity" (p. 28). The end result appears to be that Chinese Christianity is suggested to learn from Buddhism to produce an "entirely sinicized" sect with "its own scriptures" in order to gain converts (p. 28). This so-called "nonbeliever perspective" is in fact contradictory to the book's implication that Chinese classics triumph over humanity (pp. 156, 157), and the advocacy that Christianity should transcend ethics (p. 54), although the author's transcendence means "maintain a dual ethical force amid the tension" (p. 60). Such a contradiction is not reconciled in the book and Christian experience.

This is a significant book for Chinese academia that boldly interprets the Christian phenomena in a new way. It reverses the traditional bias

against Christianity, and may in fact inaugurate a more open discussion about religion in general among Chinese in the future. Such profound insights touch upon the very nature of the Christian faith, and bear significance for all Christians, as well as nonbelievers, to rethink their relationship with Christianity. Altogether the book provides a valuable window for understanding Chinese Christianity.

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*Connecting with Muslims: A Guide to Communicating Effectively*, by Fouad Masri. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. 171 pp. + 19 pp. appendices + 8 pp. further reading + 4 pp. index. ISBN 978-0-8308-4420-3. Softcover, US\$12.30.

*Connecting with Muslims: A Guide to Communicating Effectively* is a very practical, down-to-earth and very engaging book. Instead of putting up a wall of misunderstanding, Christians can actually build a bridge by which their Muslim "friends can cross over from misunderstanding to truth" and from "fear to faith" (p. 24). The book's basic thesis is that our role in the Great Commission is not to convert Muslims but to become ambassadors of Jesus. As ambassadors, Masri urges Christians to love, to pray for, and to offer the gospel to Muslims without using a confrontational or argumentative approach. The author shares some basic apologetic approaches to Muslim objections, not from an academic standpoint but from decades of personal interaction with Muslims.

The author divides the twelve chapters into two parts. Part one (chs. 1-4) deals with practical ways to start a conversation with a Muslim. The author cites several experiences that underscored the importance of showing respect and patience even in the face of ridicule and argumentativeness on the part of the Muslim. He explains how to converse with Muslims in such a way that they feel *compelled* to keep on talking with us!

Part two (chs. 5-12) deals with seven critical and very common questions about Jesus and the Christian faith. These include: the identity and prophethood of Muhammad; the reliability of the Bible; the person, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the identity of the one who was crucified on the cross; the Trinity; the atonement; and the Gospel of Barnabas. To all of these, the author gives a culturally sensitive and convincing explanation.