The Dynamism of Chinese Christianity

Fenggang Yang
Center on Religion and Chinese Society, Purdue University

Drawing on original field research by a team of scholars, Fenggang Yang documents the deep heritage of Christianity in China and charts its status and role today. He finds that the growth of Christianity, particularly Protestantism, has been stunning, particularly in light of policies of state repression. Today at least 5% of China’s vast populous is Christian, and China may be second only to the United States in the size of its Protestant population. Christianity’s growth has moved from rural to urban areas, from marginalized to middle class professionals, and toward greater diversification and indigenization. Yang demonstrates the historic role of Christianity in promoting modern medicine, mass education, human rights, and religious freedom. He documents the proliferation of house churches, and how increasing numbers are moving aboveground. He charts the rise of Christian entrepreneurs and business networks, the conversion of exiled leaders of the 1989 democracy movement and the ongoing conversion of Chinese students, and the prominence of Christian lawyers in the defense of human rights. While Christianity remains under pressure, fragile, and fragmented, it presses for the rule of law, freedom of expression, constitutional democracy, and social welfare.