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Catholicity Under Heaven: Reformed Ecclesiology and Chinese Visions of Cosmopolitanism

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Abstract

Reformed catholicity suffers from a fragility that causes it to easily fragment over comparatively small differences. This study wagers that an important resource that can be useful for addressing this problem is the Chinese philosophy of *tianxia*. The article introduces the idea of a 'Reformed catholicity under Heaven' by placing a more liberal interpretation of *tianxia* in conversation with the problems in Reformed approaches to the church's catholicity. In doing so, the article demonstrates *tianxia*'s ecclesiological usefulness while articulating two dimensions of 'Reformed catholicity under Heaven' that can deepen how Reformed churches inhabit catholicity in ways that promote unity.

Keywords

Reformed theology – ecclesiology – catholicity – *tianxia* – ecumenical theology – Chinese philosophy – cosmopolitanism

话说天下大势，分久必合，合久必分。

- 三国演义¹

'It is said, for great Empires under heaven, division, in time, must lead to unity; and unity, in time, must lead to division.'

- ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

1 罗贯中，三國演義（上）（北京：人民文学出版社，1973），p. 1. The translation is mine.