

Derek Cooper. *Introduction to World Christian History*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. 255 pages. \$18.00.

This latest introduction to World Christianity comes with some bold new claims and unique perspectives. It carefully builds on the existing resources and secures a place for itself with a fresh emphasis. However, to those who have journeyed with Earl E. Cairns' *Christianity Through the Centuries* or Spickard and Cragg's *A Global History of Christianity* and similar notable one-volume works on the subject, the obvious curiosity will be in regard to the originality and novelty of Cooper's contents and perspectives.

The stated purpose of Cooper's book is to provide an overview of world Christian history. Cooper constructs his brief yet captivating overview of the Christian past utilizing the United Nations geoscheme of nations, use of current names of countries, and new periodization of Christian history, among other things. With a PhD from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Cooper is an emerging Christian historian and biblical commentator. The associate professor of World Christianity at Biblical Theological Seminary, he is the author of *Exploring Church History* (2015) and other books. In the present book Cooper reintroduces world Christian history from global historical and theological points of view.

The book is divided into three chronological parts with chapters focusing on selected geographical regions. The first part discusses the emergence and spread of Christianity from the first to the seventh centuries. The continents in focus here are Asia, Africa and Europe. The chapter on Asia argues that Asia is the birthplace of Christianity and Christianity is originally an Asian religion. The chapter on Africa highlights the significance of African church in the early centuries after Christ with special reference to its theological contributions. The chapter on Europe underlines the fact that Christianity is not a European religion rather it was imported from Asia. The second part of the book narrates the development of Christianity during the eighth through the fourteenth centuries, the Middle Ages. Here, the division and decline of Christianity in Asia, its struggle with and the defeat under Islam in Africa, and its establishment as a native and prominent religion in Europe has been meticulously elucidated.

The third and final part of the book focuses on the history of world Christianity from the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries. In addition to the story of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Europe, this part includes three more chapters exclusively dedicated to exploring the rise and status of Christianity in Latin America, North America, and Oceania (Island nations in the Pacific Ocean). This period witnesses the collapse of indigenized and dominant Christianity in Europe, reintroduction and growth of Colonial then native Christianity in Africa, and the formation of minority and "foreign" identities of Christianity in Asia. Christianity in Latin America is reckoned as a Portuguese and Spanish Catholic phenomenon in the context of religio-cultural fusion. North America is argued to be the most diverse Christian region in the world with a growing non-Christian feature. Oceania is called the youngest Christian region on earth – Christianity being just about 200 years old. Cooper concludes by declaring that Christianity does not belong to any particular geographical region rather it is like the wind that blows where it wills.

Cooper's introduction to world Christianity reads like a fast paced narrative with useful signposts and key-themes in focus. It takes the reader to the north and the south, the east and the

west, and to the controversies and concerns in Christian history. A dominant theological perspective, besides geographic and cultural, is at the center of Cooper's reinterpretation. Overall, the book is a welcome overview of global Christian history. As a fine summary of global Christian history, this book is a significant tool for exploring world history of Christianity from a variety of viewpoints, especially geographical-theological.

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