



BOOK NOTE REVIEW

Koschorke, Klaus. *Grundzüge Der Außereuropäischen Christentumsgeschichte: Asien, Afrika Und Lateinamerika 1450 – 2000.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022. Pp. xiv + 234; maps. 29,00 €, \$31.51 (paperback).

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One of the defining features of Christianity is its capacity to take root in many different kinds of soils. Its historiography, however, has often focused on recounting the growth it enjoyed in European soil. In his book Koschorke addresses this imbalance with an outline of how widely the seed has been sown outside of Europe, as the title in English, “Outlines of Extra-European Christian History: Asia, Africa and Latin America 1450–2000,” suggests. It is designed to be used as a resource in teaching this subject in which Koschorke presents selected episodes from Christianity’s global history. These highlight both its various local expressions and its global interconnectedness from 1450 to 2000 CE in the regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin-America. Koschorke certainly is no stranger to the subject, having occupied the chair of church history at the University of Munich since 1993 until his retirement, also transforming it into a center for the History of World Christianity.

The anecdote from the preface perhaps best expresses what the book contains. It comes from the Portuguese arrival 1498 in India: in search for the fabled prester John and his church, Vasco da Gama and his party celebrated their first mass on Indian soil in a ‘strange’ church. Wondering about the strange décor and many-armed statues, they only realized their mistake later: They had mistaken a Hindu temple for one of the churches of Prester John. Nevertheless, they did later meet the Christians of the church of St Thomas (but no Prester John himself) which had been in existence for almost 1000 years. Apart from illustrating the misunderstandings in cultural exchanges, this story illustrates that indigenous Christianity was often already present, and the missionary effort of the West was only one factor amongst others that drove the spread of Christianity.

Concerning Africa, Koschorke covers the important aspects to understand the broad strokes of its Christian landscape. Slavery, colonialism, genocide, and

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apartheid are each addressed, as are more intricate events such as the consequences of various Catholic councils and events in other colonies. Particularly interesting are the early indigenous initiatives in Africa, such as the Christian Kingdom of Kongo with its first African Bishop consecrated in 1521. Other strains of Christianity such as Ethiopianism, African Independent Churches (AICs), and the later ecumenical movement are also all covered.

The book is divided into six sections which are written such that they can each be read by themselves. This leads to some minor repetition if read from start to finish. Each section begins with background information which is relevant to understand the global or local factors influencing the development of the Christian faith. The background information alone presents useful waypoints of Christian history. The book does well in highlighting the polycentric nature of Christianity — a subject Koschorke has done pioneering work in. However, the scope of the undertaking in this book — to present a global history — naturally leaves much detail to be explored. Koschorke encourages such work to be done. Instead of making the already dense book any thicker, a link provides access to a lot of bonus material which can be used for illustration or lecture preparation. Currently the book is inaccessible to a global audience since is written in German, but an English translation is in the works. A reader from the regions covered in the book will learn a lot, but a reader from the West will almost certainly gain new perspectives on the breadth and depth that World Christianity encompasses. Any curriculum — especially those of mainline church seminaries — will be greatly enriched by Koschorke's book.