

HISTORY OF THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT: VOLUME II: MODERN CHRISTIANITY FROM 1454–1800

Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist
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Like volume one of this multi-volume set (*Earliest Christianity to 1453*, published in September 2001), this presentation of the development and history of the Christian church aims at a necessary and much-welcomed truly global perspective on what was indeed a world Christian movement early on. In addition to this global perspective which breaks free from traditional, often Eurocentric, church histories (or a Western world perspective, which often relegated the history of Christianity elsewhere to ‘mission history’, an idea that had already been criticised and overcome by K. S. Latourette, who was despite his Eurocentrism a pioneer in dealing with the presence of Christianity on all continents), this history also focuses on important issues that have increasingly concerned the Christian community in the past generation (such as the role of women or the rights of indigenous people).

Volume two consists of three main sections. ‘Part one, 1454–1600: Two major transformations’ (detailed introduction and overview of the era on pp. 1–7)

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starts with 'Christian Beginnings in America' (pp. 9–33; The prequest era; The conquest begins; Subduing the Aztecs; Conquering the Incas; Colonization of Brazil; Requerimiento, encomienda, and conquistadors; Defending the rights of indigenous peoples; characteristics of Christian life in sixteenth-century America, women in Catholic America, beginnings of the transformation of Christianity in America). Chapter two is devoted to 'African Christianity in the Sixteenth Century' (34–53). The authors start with the ancient roots of Christianity in Africa, a description of West African culture and the beginnings of Portuguese incursions, Africa, Christianity, and the slave trade and a more detailed description of Ethiopian Christianity (45–53).

Chapter three traces how 'Christianity re-encounters' Asia (54–70): Western Christianity comes to Asia; St. Thomas Churches and Indian Christianity; Arrival of the Portuguese; Francis Xavier and the Jesuits; Christian beginnings in Japan; Christianity reaches the Philippines; Europeans in the East Indies and Indochina. Chapter four traces the developments in 'Europe in an age of reform' (71–124). Chapter five examines Orthodox Christianity amid various empires (125–144: Islamic empires; Christians under Ottoman rule; The Coptic Church in Egypt; Christians under Safavid Persian rule; The Russian Orthodox Church; The Ukrainian Church on the borderlands). Chapter six closes this part with a survey of world Christianity at the end of the sixteenth century (145–163: Protestant confessional formations in Europe; Roman Catholic reform and development; Orthodoxy and the Ottoman empire; conflicts in world Christianity beyond Europe).

'Part two' covers the seventeenth century, which was characterised by global religious and secular encounters (brief introduction on pp. 165f). It describes Eastern Asia in the seventeenth century (167–194: The doors of China swing open...and shut; Jesuits enter the Middle Kingdom; Controversy over adaptation of Christianity to Chinese culture; Korean beginnings; Christian twilight in Japan, Vietnam, Siam and Cambodia; Catholics and Reformed in the East Indies, Spain and Catholic religion in the Philippines); South Asia in the seventeenth century (195–208: Disputes over Roman Catholic and St. Thomas rites; Christian witness in the Mughul empire; Roberto de Nobili and Christian adaptation in Hindu Madurai) and the developments in various African Christian kingdoms (209–225; Africa in the emerging global slave trade; Central Africa, Ethiopia; East and southeast Africa). Other chapters in this part address the Caribbean and South America (226–246: The Caribbean; Slavery; Brazil; Spanish America; Religious practices in America), North America (247–262: Spanish and French Catholic beginnings in North America; The Franciscan century in New Mexico; The English in North America; Colonies of Virginia, New Amsterdam, Maryland and Pennsylvania; there is also a section on Africans in North America, 259–261); Europe in the seventeenth century (263–295); Orthodox Churches and Christian Identity in the seventeenth century (297–315; Churches among empires; Orthodox communities in the Balkans; The Maronite Church in Lebanon; Theological conflicts in the ecumenical patriarchate; The Coptic Church

and the Ottomans; Armenian Christians between Russia and the Ottomans; Kurds between Christians and Muslims; The continuous decline of the East Syrian Church; Orthodox Christianity in Russia and the Ukraine).

'Part three, Independence, Liberation, Awakenings' surveys the developments in global Christianity in the eighteenth century (brief introduction on pp. 317f). The opening chapter on 'Africa in the Eighteenth Century' (319–336) starts with a brief overview and then describes the strengthening within Islam, developments in West Africa, the beginnings of abolitionism, and developments in Southern Africa, Ethiopia and East Africa.

Other chapters address the eighteenth century in Europe (337–372), the Orthodox world in the eighteenth century (373–395: The Russian Orthodox Church and the tsars; Orthodoxy under the Ottomans in the Balkans and West Asia; The Coptic Church in the eighteenth century; Armenian Christianity in the eighteenth century; Syrian Orthodoxy in Persia, Islam and Christianity), Christianity in East and Southeast Asia amid colonial conflicts (396–416: China and self-inflicted Christian wounds; Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand; The Philippines; The Dutch East Indies; South Asia); South America and the Caribbean in an Age of Revolution (417–431: The Caribbean; South America; Social upheavals) and the awakening and revolution in North America (432–474: Revivals and awakening in the North American context; The development of a distinct form of Christianity by Africans in North America; Missions to Native Americans in the eastern colonies and in the West; The war of Independence; Freedom of religion in the new nation; The varieties of religion in the early United States; The formation of new churches; The emergence of African American churches, Developments in Canada; Russian Orthodox missions in the Northwest). The volume closes with an index. Each chapter ends with a selected bibliography for further reading. The volume would have profited from a short epilogue which summarises the broad lines of development during the era under discussion.

Obviously, any one volume attempting to cover three and a half centuries needs to be selective. Due to the title of the volume (*World Christian Movement*) I looked in vain for the Moravian missions in Greenland which were established by the Moravian United Brotherhood and operated between 1733 and 1900.

This volume is remarkable in that it moves far beyond traditional divisions of church history into the Middle Ages, the Reformation and early modernity and emphasises continuity. Some of the changes after the Reformation were as far-reaching and significant, but have often been neglected. In addition, the international focus is a real eye-opener for readers whose training in church history has focused on one or two continents, individual countries or even denominations. The mode of presentation in this volume allows the reader to appreciate the developments that took place at the same time but in different places, and to relate them to each other. The volume also underlines that, throughout its history, Christianity was never

(only) a European or 'Western' religion, but global from its early stages onward and throughout its history.

African readers will appreciate that three of the nineteen chapters are devoted to Africa and that not only Africa but also Africans outside of Africa – their fate and also their various contributions! – appear elsewhere throughout the volume (easily accessible by means of the detailed table of contents and the index (p. 475). In its good coverage of Coptic and Ethiopian Christianity (p. 480, 484), the volume is a reminder that the nature and history of the church in Africa extends beyond the sub-Saharan region. Obviously, such a broad and global survey cannot replace the many excellent and much more detailed studies which focus on developments in different regions.