

**Kenneth R. Ross, Francis D. Alvarez, and Todd M. Johnson, editors, *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*, Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). 549 pages. \$230 hardcover.**

This massive volume is the fourth in a series of volumes on global Christianity done through a “combination of demographic and interpretative essays by indigenous scholars and authors” (viii), following the successful pioneering efforts reflected in the *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*. Each volume “is devoted to a continent, or sub-continent as designated by the United Nations” (viii). The series editors, Ross and Johnson, add a third editor for each volume which, in turn, has its own editorial advisory board, to define and shape the issues for each volume, as well as reviewing demographics and recruiting the authors needed for that volume (ix). In this case, the co-editor, Francis D. Alvarez, a Filipino Jesuit, heads a team of forty-three authors for this edition. In general, the authors represent a good cross section of Christianity, although the Pentecostal/Charismatic (PC) tradition, which represents 32% of the Christians in the region (9) are represented only by Wonsuk and Julie Ma (xiv-xviii). This may be partially explained by the fact that most of the other traditions have a longer history in Asia, including academics, but the number of qualified PC scholars in the region has risen markedly in the last thirty years and makes this imbalance somewhat difficult to understand.

This volume combines two regions, East and Southeast Asia. The book is divided into three sections, rather than chapters, with numerous articles or essays in each section. The Introduction opens the book with a lot of helpful demographic information on Christianity in the region, using an impressive and comprehensive array of colored maps and charts that are easy to follow. Alvarez then follows with a general overview of Christianity throughout the two regions.

The first section is called “Countries.” The essays that follow, in general geographically moving from north to south and west to east, describe the state of Christianity within the cultural, geographical and political context in each country. The second section is entitled “Major Christian Traditions” with separate articles on Anglicans, Independents, Orthodox, Protestants, Catholics, Evangelicals and Pentecostals and

Charismatics (PC). The separate section on Independents is indicative of the vast numbers of independent traditions in that part of the world. The PC is unique in that it cuts across all of these traditions.

The third section, “Key Themes,” includes essays on Faith and Culture, Worship and Spirituality, Theology, Social and Political Context, Mission and Evangelism, Gender, Religious Freedom, Inter-religious Relations, Migration and the Colonial and Postcolonial Context, all of which are critical themes in Asia today. Since signs and wonders are a significant part of Christianity in Asia one might have wished for a separate essay on this issue, but, overall, the subjects dealt with here are excellent and substantial.

The book concludes with an essay on the future of Christianity in the two regions by Mary Ho, several appendices and an exhaustive index in the back. Overall, the coverage is excellent, comprehensive, and well written. No footnotes are provided, but each article has a short bibliography. As with any book, especially one of this size, scope and magnitude, there are a number of issues that could have been addressed or treated in a somewhat different manner, which I would like to mention here.

Alvarez, in his introductory essay (24-26) appears to endorse the practices of Folk Catholicism while giving no hint to the plethora of Scriptures that denote a better way to deal with the realities of the spirit world, although he does accurately suggest that the growth of the Pentecostal movement may be linked to its emphasis on “the activity of the Spirit” (24).

Meehyun Chung (119-131) correctly notes that the emphasis in Korean Christianity on the role of the pastor and the weaknesses of this model, but she does not mention that the antidote is to give more emphasis to empowering the laity (129) in a manner consistent with Ephesians 4:11-12. She also well notes the tensions and struggles of authoritarian hierarchical leadership in the churches, but does not mention that this may also be a strong contributing factor in the numerous denominational splits in South Korea. She also gives scant attention to the Pentecostal movement there nor does she mention their strong spiritual and social impact on Korean society.

In their otherwise fine article on Thailand, Seree Lorgunpai and Sanurak Fongvarin do not even mention the animism that is so prevalent

in their country that has just as strong a grip on the people's lives, if not more so, than Buddhism. Unfortunately, Jayeel Cornelio, does the same regarding folk Catholicism in the Philippines (242-253), as does Daniel Pilario in his essay on Catholicism (310-22) in the section on *Major Christian Traditions*. Sulistyowati Irianto, writing on Indonesia (200-211), also does not deal with folk Islam or folk Protestantism, nor does she mention the PC Movement, except to acknowledge that they have been one of the fastest growing elements of Christianity in Indonesia from the years 1970-2020 (201). Given that they comprise 33% of the Christian community (9), this omission is difficult to understand.

The article on the Orthodox (283-294) by Nikolay Samoylov, with a case study on Korea by Korean Orthodox metropolitan Ambrose-Aristotle Zographos (Song-Am Cho), represents a study in lack of contextualization, which likely contributes to Orthodoxy's small impact. Only 62,000 of the nearly 282 million (0.0%) Christians in the regions considered are Orthodox (285), down from .01 in 1970 (284) and indicating that the growth of Orthodoxy has not kept up with other Christian traditions. They admit that the Orthodoxy in East and Southeast Asia is heavily impacted by the Orthodox countries, especially Russia. From references scattered through the essay, their churches appear to be comprised mostly of expatriates although more recent trends reflect a growing indigenous representation (283). The authors claim that the Orthodox have a "significant history in China, Japan and Korea" (283) but this is not substantiated by these figures.

Moreover, the lack of contextualization is clear in their admission that most of the liturgical texts used were imported and simply translated into Japanese (287), Kymer in Cambodia (287) and Laotian (291), and presumably other Asian languages. Although some indigenous texts have recently appeared in Japanese (287), this means that the cultures in which the liturgies were written were also imported with little effort to contextualize (287). What I find disappointing is that the authors show a lack of awareness of the obvious correlation between the lack of contextualization and the slow growth of Orthodoxy. One can hope that the recent trends noted here will lead to a brighter future for the Orthodox.

Julie Ma, my mentor for both my master's thesis and doctoral dissertation on animistic practices in the Philippines, contributes an

excellent essay on Pentecostals and Charismatics (335-347). She accurately roots the Pentecostalism of Asia in the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles from 1906-1909, and the Charismatic and Third Wave renewal movements in the States (335), as well as the impact of the Pyongyang revival in 1907 in her native Korea. Surprisingly, however, she does not give more than passing attention to the deep connection between the Pentecostal emphasis on the person and power of the Holy Spirit and the traditional religious consciousness nearly universal in Asia, except for mentioning things like power encounters (344), despite the fact that she gives significant attention to this in some of her other writings (i.e., *When The Spirit Meets the Spirits*, Peter Lang, 2000). In my own research over the last twenty-five years, mainly in the Philippines, I conclude that this deep spiritual connection may be more significant to the growth of the PC movement in Asia than the western roots of the Movement, although it does give rise to legitimate concerns about Folk Pentecostalism.

Alexander Chow's essay on theology (375-385) correctly notes the impact of western theology in Asia, but the thrust of his work deals with interaction with the formal writings and scriptures of the main religious traditions and some formal Christian responses to them. He correctly notes that "theology (or theologies) in East and Southeast Asia reflects the complexities and diversities of this vast region" (385). But except for mentioning Mateo Ricci's Chinese Rites Controversy, he ignores the animistic or traditional religious practices in Asia and their impact on theology. He also does not acknowledge the growing Pentecostal theological corpus at all, nor of the manner in which Pentecostals have successfully engaged the indigenous religious consciousness. On the other hand, his lacuna here should send a message to Pentecostals that they need to keep writing.

With these issues noted, however, I believe that the volume, magisterial in its sweep, makes an excellent contribution to scholarship in Asian Christianity and I heartily encourage a wide readership.

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