

logues more enlightening, but for a broad sweep of some of the hurdles before these communities on the cultural landscape, S.'s study can be a significant contribution to an ever expanding and engaging conversation.

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ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES: A RESEARCH GUIDE TO AUTHORS, MOVEMENTS, SOURCES FROM THE 7TH TO THE 20TH CENTURIES. Edited by John C. England, Jose Kuttianimattathil, John M. Prior, S.V.D., Lily A. Quintos, R.C., David Suh Kwang-sun, and Janice Wickeri. Three volumes. Volume 1: South Asia, Austral Asia. Volume 2: Southeast Asia. Volume 3: Northeast Asia. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002, 2003, 2004. Pp. xlv + 679, 1 + 684, xlvii + 768. \$100/3-vol. set.

In an era of extensive online bibliographical resources that are available on demand and updated regularly, this three-volume collection might, at first glance, strike some as a quaint relic of a bygone era. Scholars who view all printed bibliographical collections as obsolete and outdated from the moment they are finalized and sent to the printers—and therefore avoid these resources like a plague—would miss the publication of this important landmark. Hailed as a groundbreaking publishing event by important Asian theologians and scholars across the denominational divide, *Asian Christian Theologies* is the culmination of an ecumenical collaboration that began in mid-1997. It aimed to produce a pan-Asian comprehensive survey of emerging Asian theologies across denominational boundaries, and publish a research guide that would illuminate the contributions of individual theologians, explore the emergence and development of important theological movements, and gather sources for further study, research, and teaching.

Volume 1 surveys South Asia, Australia, and New Zealand; volume 2 examines Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam); while volume 3 covers Northeast Asia (China, Hong Kong, Inner Asia, Japan, Korea, Macau, and Taiwan). Each region is introduced with a survey of important historical events and theological developments, followed by biographical discussions of the various Asian theologians and listings of their important writings. In addition to person and subject indexes at the end of each volume is a list of “Key Bibliographical Sources” that provides details of contact information for scholars interested in pursuing further research. Unfortunately, for those researching a specific topic across different Asian regions, there is no consolidated person and subject index for the entire collection.

The collection's central focus is *contextual* theologies emerging from Asia. Michael Amaladoss, the Indian Jesuit theologian, makes this point clearly in his foreword to volume 1: “Asian theology is contextual. This characteristic is not unique to it. All theology must be contextual. . . . But

Christians in Asia have felt the need to make the Word of God relevant to their life-situation. . . . Asian Christians, with their roots in the soil, began to read the Gospel and interpret it in their living context. This gave rise to authentic Asian theology. As these volumes show, we have gone far beyond the stage when we were saying that an Asian Theology is needed. We have an Asian theology, or rather Asian theologies, now" (xiii-xiv).

Amaladoss explains that Asian theologies are primarily contextual and liberational in orientation, seeking to put themselves at the service of life in Asia. They generally eschew abstract, theoretical discussion of theological questions and prefer instead an ongoing dialogue with the realities of life in the complex and diverse Asian milieu, including the ancient Asian religions, cultures, and the immense numbers of Asians mired in poverty and suffering (xv-xvi). Responding to the observation that many of the resources in this collection are written in English, Amaladoss points out that Asian theologies are culturally rooted, notwithstanding the need to use English as a medium of communication that transcends boundaries (xvi). Finally, he suggests that Asian theologies are holistic in orientation, undergirded by a vision of harmony and positive regard for human ideals and ethical values in the various Asian religious and cultural traditions (xvii-xix).

Volume 1 is divided into three parts. Part 1, "Asia as a Region" (1-166) introduces readers to a hitherto often neglected dimension of church history, namely, the history of ancient Christianity in Asia before the arrival of European missionaries in the middle of the second Christian millennium. This history is presented in two sections: from the seventh to the 15th centuries (3-26), and from the 16th to the 18th centuries (27-77). The former section focuses mainly on India, while the latter focuses primarily on China. Because there are fewer extant theological writings in the earlier period, the editors have included often overlooked resources, such as ancient hymns and songs, rituals, biographical narratives, letters, and inscriptions on monuments.

On the one hand, it makes sense to discuss the historical developments of ancient Asian Christianity separately, so as to provide a historical context and framework of discussion for the emergence of Asian contextual theologies in the 19th and 20th centuries. On the other hand, this separation creates some confusion with respect to countries such as India and China. For example, researchers seeking information on Chinese theologies might be stymied by the fact that the historical and theological developments pertaining to Assyrian (or Nestorian) Chinese Christianity and Matteo Ricci's endeavors to inculcate the Christian Gospel in China and their bibliographic resources are found in volume 1, while the rest of the discussion on Chinese Christianity and theologies is found in volume 3.

"Asia Regional and Ecumenical Theologies" (78-166)—section 3 of volume 1, part 1—surveys specific theological developments from the 18th to the 20th centuries. It begins with records of theological heritage from the fourth to the 19th centuries, then presents important theological developments and supporting bibliographies for the whole of Asia in three periods:

1957–1973, 1973–1990, and 1990–2000. The focus here is on “ecumenical theologies” emerging from the vision of a shared, collaborative mission among various Asian Christian Churches. This section not only presents key ecumenical texts, but also discusses the contributions of Asian women as well as the history and contributions of Asian Christian ecumenical associations such as the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC). This section concludes with a twelve-page supplementary bibliography on Asian Church history, theology, and spirituality from 1950 to 2000.

The treatment of India is the most extensive—more than 300 pages discuss more than 100 individual Indian theologians—followed by China as a distant second. On the other end of the spectrum, the treatment of “Inner Asia”—the term used to classify the entire region of Central Asia—is embarrassingly scant, covering a mere nine pages. This lacuna also reveals the inadequate discussion of theological developments among Asian Christians from the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, many of whom live in this region; the exception is the detailed historical discussion of ancient Asian Christianity of this region in volume 1, part 1.

For the most part, Protestant and Catholic theologies are discussed together on equal terms, without any sharp distinction between the two, except in volume 3 where Protestant and Catholic theologies in China are discussed separately. One wonders whether this is merely an editorial oversight or reflects a difference in thinking among the scholars who authored this section. In addition, for historical reasons, the discussion on China in volume 3 is split into four separate sections: Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau.

While this ambitious collection seeks to present a comprehensive survey of Asian theologies over two millennia, the editors admit that they “have no illusions that these volumes offer an exhaustive guide to Asian Christian theologies” (xliii). Because the cut-off date for all biographical and bibliographical entries was 2000, many of the entries were outdated even before the collection was published. Nevertheless, this collection represents an important step in providing a systematic and synthetic presentation of emerging Asian contextual theologies to a broader audience that has not been matched by any other publication. This indispensable resource in Asian theologies should find a place on the bookshelves of all serious scholars of Asian Christianity in general and Asian theologies in particular.

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THE BEAUTY OF THE INFINITE: THE AESTHETICS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH. By David Bentley Hart. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. Pp. xii + 448. \$55.

Taken on its own terms, this book can no more be reviewed than Mozart or muzak. To “sell” it (or the opposite) to potential readers by assessing its virtues and shortcomings would be to employ language in a way that Hart deplores and takes enormous pains to escape. What he has written can, to

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