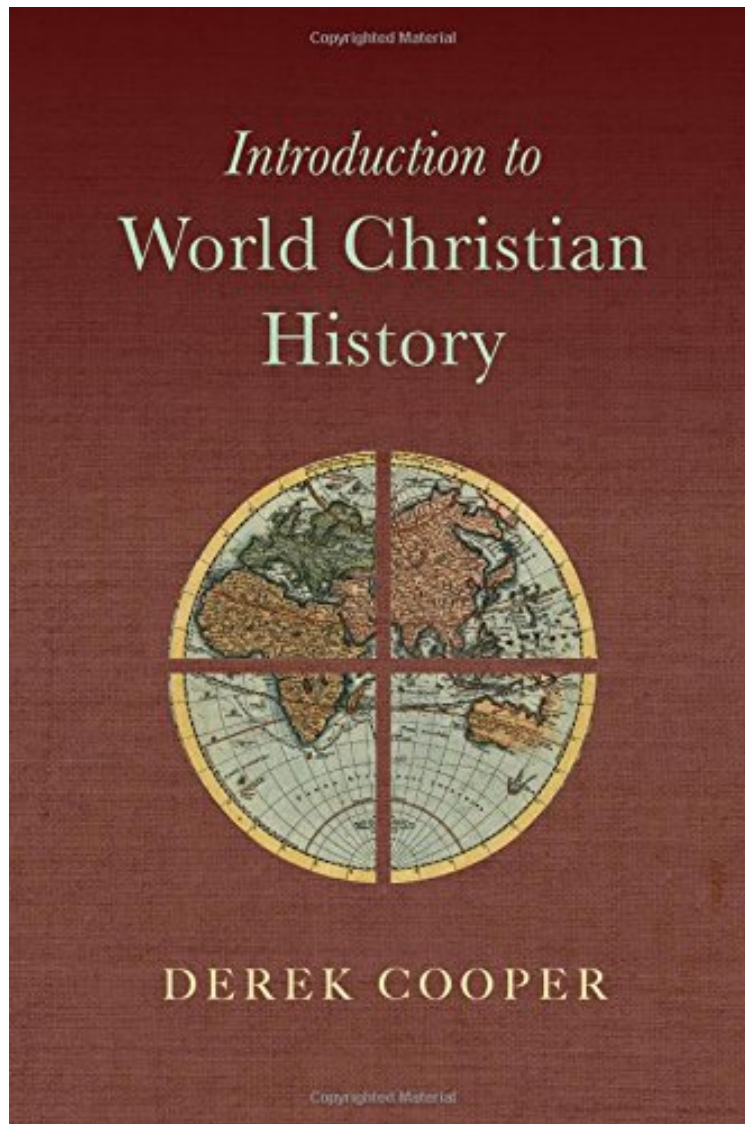


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Introduction to World Christian History

Derek Cooper

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Derek Cooper : Introduction to World Christian History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Introduction to World Christian History:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Introduction and Needed PerspectiveBy
jacksonrl527Recently released by IVP Academic, Derek Cooper's Introduction to World Christian History is an excellent introductory text to the people, controversies, and events that have shaped twenty-one centuries of Christianity. Truly global in scope, the book will help Western Christians see and understand how Christianity

developed in other parts of the world. As the center of Christianity has shifted to the Global South, it is important that we see Christianity through non-Western eyes. Derek Cooper, associate professor of World Christian History at Biblical Seminary, helps us to begin to see that Christianity's history is not a Western alone. Christianity's history began in Asia and has stretched around the world.

StrengthsThe major strength of the book is the shift of focus from Western Christianity to Global Christianity. Cooper embraces the focus by placing a demarcation line of Christian history at the rise of Islam rather than the conversion of Constantine. This line shows great respect for Christians outside the West, as Islam has held more significant influence over the lives of Christians in the majority of the world than the rise of Christendom in the Roman Empire. The book surveys history rapidly. (See thoughts on depth below.) The writing flows. The language is not so technical that the reading would be difficult for most readers with an interest in the topic. A basic knowledge of theology and historical controversies that shaped systematic theology is helpful for understanding, but the lack of it would not prevent a reader from finding this book worthwhile.

WeaknessesIf the reader is looking for an in-depth study of the various aspects of world Christianity, this book does not meet the need. The book is an introduction and covers twenty-plus centuries in a little over two hundred pages. Personally, as an introduction, I find it excellent.

ConclusionFor a student in college or seminary, this book makes an excellent historical, survey text that could stimulate interest in further study later. Christians who are not in ministry professionally but who want to know more about Christianity's history will find the book very accessible. I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a basic understanding of Christianity as it has come to be throughout the world.

(Full Disclosure: I received a complimentary copy of the book from IVP Academic for review purposes. I was under no obligation to give a positive review.)

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An excellent introduction to the development of Christianity around the world

By George P. Wood

Derek Cooper begins his Introduction to World Christian History with a thought-provoking quote: "In just over 100 years, the map of world Christianity has changed almost out of recognition. In 1900, it is estimated that 70 percent of all Christians were to be found in Europe whereas by 2025 Africa and Latin America will be vying with one another to claim the most Christians, having about a quarter each of the world's Christian population (p. 11, quoting Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion*). "Given this monumental demographic shift, Christianity must be understood broadly as a global movement, rather than narrowly as a Western one. Unfortunately, too many evangelical histories of Christianity continue to evince a Eurocentric bias in their presentation. (The same can be said of other Christian traditions too, of course.) They trace the Church's story from first-century Judea (where the Church was born) to fourth-century Rome (where orthodoxy formed a problematic relationship with the State) to medieval Europe (where Catholic Christendom flourished) to early modern Northern Europe (where the Reformation took root) to Enlightenment-era Britain and America (where evangelicalism began) to today—that is to say, they trace the history from them to us. That story is true, as far as it goes, but it leaves a lot of vital information out, about both past and present realities of the Church. The emerging field of world Christian history or global Christian history seeks to correct this Eurocentric bias and provide a more accurate history of the development of Christianity. Despite its close connection to the West today, Christianity has always been a global and ethnically diverse religion, Derek Cooper writes. The time has come for the church to recognize that its history extends far beyond the Western hemisphere. The church was planted in Asia, nurtured in Africa and harvested worldwide (p. 13). A thorough history of world Christianity would be a multi-volume affair. See, for example, Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist's projected *World Christian Movement*, whose first two volumes total 1,000 pages, with a third volume still awaiting publication. Even readers with an interest in the topic do not always have the time or patience to read long books like those. They should begin, instead, with Cooper's Introduction to World Christian History, which summarizes the main points of world Christian history in less than 250 pages. Cooper arranges his narrative chronologically and geographically. Chronologically, he divides his material into three fluid periods: (1) the first to seventh centuries, (2) the eighth through fourteenth centuries, and (3) the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries (p. 16). Geographically, he divides his material using the United Nations Geoscheme for Nations. Part 1 and 2 examine the development of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Europe during the church's first fifteen centuries. Part 3 begins in Europe, which is where Christianity had become spiritually and politically dominant, but then traces the Church's development into new fields in Latin America, North America, Oceania, Southern Africa, and Asia. The Church's development in this period coincided with European colonialism, which paradoxically constituted both an obstacle to the acceptance of Christianity by the indigenous peoples (because it was associated with foreign domination) as well as the catalyst for its growth (because indigenous peoples took the missionaries' gospel and made it their own). Reflecting on this history, Cooper concludes his book with words that are worth quoting: "Christianity does not belong to Europe or America, or to Asia or Africa or Oceania any more than the wind can be captured, claimed and bottled. The wind [of the Holy Spirit] continues to blow today, just as it did in the past. We can hear the sound of it and witness how it transforms peoples and cultures. But we do not know how long the wind will remain with us and where it will go next (p. 244). "Wherever the Wind may blow, Christians should pray and work so that the Wind carries them along with it."

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Exciting and well-organized, with lots of paths to follow

By J.W. Wartick

Derek Cooper's Introduction to World Christian History provides a look at the development of Christianity across the world. It is a broad introduction

to Christianity around the globe. The book is formatted both by space and time. That is, sections on each general area (i.e. Asia) are traced for a specific time period (i.e. First through Seventh Centuries). Thus, readers looking to have a reference to work from need not look much farther than this book. Other readers, who may simply be interested in the broad development of world Christianity will not be disappointed either. Cooper does an excellent job showing the ebb and flow of Christianity's spread across vast regions of time and place. Individual stories of prominent Christians are told in historical context to highlight specific periods or ideas. These individual stories accompany a broader narrative that is delivered in a readable, engaging style. What makes the book particularly excellent is the way it provides all levels of readers with more to explore. It is an introductory text, for sure, but the notes are excellent and the topics explored are so broad that even readers with serious knowledge of Christian history will find more to explore. It is such a vast topic that no one can grasp each area, and Cooper gives glimpses into history that entice, like stained glass windows, much study. The only real downside here is unavoidable: with so much material covered, it is impossible to get a complete picture of any one topic. Readers must go beyond this introduction. But again, kudos to Cooper for making readers want to do so with such a rich narrative style. Introduction to World Christian History is the kind of book that will broaden readers' minds in a number of ways. From those merely interested in a specific region to those who want to know just how we got to where we are, the book has broad appeal. Cooper's style makes it extremely accessible for any level of reader, with plenty to tantalize more advanced readers as well. I recommend it highly. The Good+Fantastic overview covering large swathes of time and space+Provides readers with broader understanding of Christianity+Written in an interesting, readable style The Bad-Extremely brief on many interesting points Disclaimer: I received a copy of the book for review from the publisher. I was not required to provide any specific kind of feedback whatsoever.

Christianity is a global faith. Today, people are increasingly aware that Christianity extends far beyond Europe and North America, permeating the Eastern and Southern hemispheres. What we may know less well is that Christianity has always been a global faith. A vast untold story waits to be heard beyond the familiar tale of how the Christian faith spread across Europe. Not only was Jesus born in Asia, but in the early years of the church Christianity found fertile soil in Africa and soon extended to East Asia as well. In this brief introduction to world Christian history, Derek Cooper explores the development of Christianity across time and the continents. Guiding readers to places such as Iraq, Ethiopia and India, Scandinavia, Brazil and Oceania, he reveals the fascinating and often surprising history of the church.

"Derek Cooper's Introduction to World Christian History (2016) is a good, tightly written history that shows the importance of Asia and Africa in Christianity's first 14 centuries." (Marvin Olasky, World Magazine, Sept. 17, 2016) "Cooper's writing is engaging, and his chapter overviews and 'trail markers' help readers with uncommon terms and concepts. This is a valuable work for nonspecialists and scholars alike." (Publishers Weekly, May 9, 2016) "The challenge for those writing a book on this topic is negotiating the question of breadth and depth. How broad should it be, and how deep can one go without risking a superficial overview or selective analysis? To the author's credit he dexterously steers through these challenges and provides us with a work that engages and interacts with the range and diversity of the living realities of the Christian faith in various regions of the world, opening up entryways to wonder at the global expressions of Christianity." (J. Jayakiran Sebastian, dean and H. George Anderson Professor of Mission and Cultures, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia) "Derek Cooper's Introduction to World Christian History is a welcome contribution to the field. This accessible and informative historical narrative introduces the reader to the broad, diverse and far-reaching story of Christianity as it 'blows where it wills' from the first through the twenty-first century. In the end, the reader is left with little doubt that Christianity was and is a worldwide movement." (Jennifer Powell McNutt, associate professor of theology and history of Christianity, Wheaton College) "A welcome addition to the ever-expanding scholarship in the field of world Christianity studies, Derek Cooper's book helps to rewrite our traditional Western understanding of church history and course-correct away from North Atlantic centrism. Cooper gently leads us away from our particular tendencies to see and tell only our own stories toward a broader canvas of the 'great cloud of witnesses' that came before us and has not had its time in the spotlight." (Allen Yeh, associate professor of intercultural studies and missiology, Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University) "Derek Cooper's helpful volume reminds us that the global complexity of Christianity today is the fruit of a Christian past that is equally multifaceted and complex. His fresh rendering of that past emphasizes overlooked histories of Christians in Africa, Asia and other regions of the world, and downplays some familiar tales from the West that now seem quite parochial when viewed in global perspective. Cooper's kaleidoscopic account provides many different angles from which to view Christian similarities and differences, and readers will be enriched by the breadth and magnanimity of his presentation." (Douglas Jacobsen, author of Global Gospel) "It is widely known that today the majority of Christians live in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Less appreciated is Christianity's thriving presence in these locations for many centuries. In this book Cooper reintroduces us to the global story of Christianity relocating the center of the Christian narrative to the Global South, joining an emerging chorus of scholars who are challenging the status quo of

Christianity as a Western religion." (Todd M. Johnson, associate professor of global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary)About the AuthorDerek Cooper (PhD, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia) is associate professor of world Christian history at Biblical Theological Seminary. He is the author of several books, including *Exploring Church History and Christianity* and *World Religions: An Introduction to the World's Major Faiths*, and he is the coeditor of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* volume on 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles.