

hesitant and somewhat vaguer: it is left as a problem for his reader to judge.

It is a fascinating and rich book seeking to articulate not a theoretical model but, in its own words, 'a spirituality of dialogue' (p. 261). But I suspect that in the end, against the author's better instincts, theory gets in the way, twice. First, the brief but numerous theoretical asides are too superficial to do any heavy lifting, and they often push the prose towards making the kinds of propositional claims that the meditative mode might otherwise resist. Second there are structural contrary tendencies. The meditative structure is serial: beginning with a location, exploring the encounters (between persons more than texts) and drawing attention to what can be learned. Yet its conceptual structure – 'schools', 'translation', 'return' – is more sonata-like. The individual chapters prove too driven by their own particular concerns, rooted in everyday life, to be constrained within such an arc, and the result is that they tend to burst at the seams. This is a good book of meditations. Might it have been better with even less theory?

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Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are and How They Got There* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 399. £22.99/\$44.95.

I completed my formal, academic theological education during the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. There was much of great value in that education, but one thing that was clearly missing was any real sense of the rich diversity, complex history and varied theology of the global Christian movement. My view of the church and of God's work in and through it was much too small. For the most part, my church history began with the Protestant Reformation, and my study of theology and ecclesiology was largely limited to the Protestant tradition. My sense of the church failed to be shaped substantively by the riches of the ancient and medieval church, by the Catholic, Orthodox and even Pentecostal traditions, and certainly by the dynamics of the incredible growth and theological vitality of the Christian movement in the global south.

For those, like me, with a limited formal education in world Christianity, Douglas Jacobson's book, *The World's Christians, Who They Are, Where They Are and How They Got There*, opens a whole new world of Christianity that is far more diverse, theologically challenging and ultimately encouraging than the limited Christianity from my northern hemisphere Protestant world.

This book opens a window to the incredible diversity of Christianity in different contexts and historical periods while also identifying points of commonality (even if they are fewer than our diversities) that provide the common ground of world Christianity. This book is particularly relevant today when we are increasingly realising that we are living in what Jacobson describes as the ‘nearly flat world of global Christianity’ (p. 4), where all parts of the global church have something to share and something to receive from brothers and sisters in Christ who are dramatically different from themselves.

Jacobson introduces us to this diverse family of world Christianity through three tracks:

1. ‘Who They Are’ – *Christian Traditions*. An exploration of the four major (somewhat) related families of churches – Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Pentecostal – how they have been shaped and changed over the years, and how they shape Christian life today. Particularly valuable in this section is his treatment of the emergence of the Pentecostal tradition over the last century, so that it is now the second largest of these church families and the fastest growing as Christianity spreads among the poor in the global south.
2. ‘Where They Are’ – *Demographics*. An exploration of nine regions of the world and how Christianity interacts with the people, society and religions of these diverse areas. Particularly significant in this section is his analysis in region after region of how the Christian movement has grown in numbers, influence and vitality in the global south, which has now become the demographic centre of gravity for the Christian world.
3. ‘How They Got There’ – *History*. An exploration in roughly 500-year periods of the history of the Christian movement, looking both at the inner life and ecclesial/theological developments of Christian communities, and at how they related with one another, their societies and other religious communities.

All in all, this book leaves one with a sense of the wideness, variety, complexity and opportunity that being part of this wider global Christianity offers to Christians and to the world. If there is any limitation in a book like this, it probably comes from how quickly changes in the world and in the church date even so recent a publication. I am struck with how significant developments from recent times seem to be missing, such as the surprising ministry of Pope Francis, the even faster acceleration of changing global demographics through the contemporary refugee crises, and the intensification of violence, religious persecution and global genocide – much

in the name of religion – that seems to grip our world these days. The failure to highlight these new developments, which are having such an impact on shaping world Christianity, is not a shortcoming of the author (who had no way to know these developments would be emerging and so rapidly), but are rather a reminder for us that we not only need to learn from works like *The World's Christians* but also to follow its habits of always asking the questions of 'who they are, where they are, and how they got there', as we seek to understand the new developments that are happening in our world and our church today.

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Margo Todd (ed.), *The Perth Kirk Session Books, 1577–1590*, Scottish History Society (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), pp. 584. \$70.00 (hbk).

This edition of the earliest surviving kirk session books from Perth is one of the most important additions to the published sources of the Scottish Protestant Reformation to appear in recent times. Only St Andrews has a comparable run of sixteenth-century session minutes, published in the very first series of the Scottish History Society (vols 4 and 7, Edinburgh, 1889–90). Professor Todd's meticulous transcription of the original manuscripts and her fascinating and lucid introduction make available a treasure trove of primary evidence about the first generations of the parochial Reformation. As she rightly emphasises, the Reformers had the 'impossibly ambitious' agenda of completely changing hearts and minds and turning Scottish parishes into godly communities. 'The Reformation thus understood was a parochial endeavour, one whose outcome can only be understood by close examination of what went on in parish and pew' (p. 2). Thanks to the survival of other Perth records, the kirk session's business and record keeping can be placed firmly within its burgh context. The appendix identifying the elders is especially illuminating and enhances the richness of the source. These laymen were the key individuals who adopted the new religion and, by aligning the Protestant message with their own communal purposes, succeeded in changing their community. At one time or another nearly everyone in Perth would appear before the session, if only to request their marriage banns be proclaimed, and the edition furnishes a remarkable insight into the lives of the residents of this major burgh. Consequently, this volume will be of considerable significance not just within Scotland but also within British and