

which the church – rightly or wrongly – has tried to develop criteria for articulating the content and forms of divine revelation, presence and grace in this universe. Brown pays no attention to the theological struggle with such criteria in thinkers, as for instance, Lessing, Schleiermacher, Otto, Eliade, Tillich, Ricœur and Tracy. These thinkers share Brown's conviction of the necessity of some sort of correlation between an interpretation of wider human experience, on the one hand, and a dynamic interpretation of Christian faith in the context of the larger religious landscape, on the other hand. But, unlike Brown, these thinkers have attempted to reflect on the nature of such an approach and on its hermeneutical conditions and limitations. Moreover, they have demonstrated that such critical and engaged thinking need not end up with exclusive lists of criteria; rather it may advance the dynamic and critical attention to possible instances of revelation, however within a properly discussed framework of religious praxis.

Brown's hermeneutics of retrieval offer the reader an enormous wealth of information of how experiences might be able to illustrate divine grace and presence. For an in-depth discussion of how to assess this kaleidoscope of potential presence within a hermeneutics of both retrieval and suspicion, the critical reader would need to turn elsewhere.

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Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig and Mariano Delgado (eds), *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450–1900: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 460. \$35.00; £19.99.

Historiographically, no better solvent can be found for dissolving the rust of Eurocentricity which corrodes the writing of Christian history than a polycentric approach open to voices from the global South, past and present. Only recently have we faced up to our preoccupation with missionary hagiography; Europeans (or Euro-Americans) were not the only ones doing the heavy lifting while everyone else stood idle. Nowadays, Eurocentrism is a cardinal sin; we grind our teeth at the sound of it. But try putting together a proper syllabus for a course in World Christianity without having access to a library stocked with primary sources in non-European as well as European languages, and the task may seem impossibly hard. Fortunately, the volume under review makes teaching much easier, thanks in no small part to the diligence of three editors, Koschorke for Asia, Ludwig for Africa

and Delgado for Latin America. Their labours have produced a sourcebook of sufficient size and scope to sustain a whole course on its own without need of further supplementation.

Architecturally, the material is arranged by region, chronologically. Within one of five historical eras, they are then sorted out thematically under major headings (e.g., 'Christians in Asia before the Arrival of the Portuguese') and minor ones ('St. Thomas Christians in India', etc.), 317 in all. Additionally, brief but helpful introductions clarify the context of the texts which were selected; at the end, the source for each is cited and a bibliography for further reading recommended.

As I read, I kept a tally of sources and their provenance, indigenous or exogenous (namely European or Euro-American), to confirm or refute the claim of the editors (p. xxix) that their sourcebook 'documents the voices of indigenous Christians'. Actually, it was about neck and neck, with a slight advantage on the side of individuals from the global North. Naturally, missionaries who were directly involved in Christianity's diffusion are cited most often; others are also included, merchants, military adventurers and travellers who happened to be in the global South and observed the faith communities emerging there.

Many of the items here are simply priceless, the solemn Franciscan–Aztec Dialogues, for instance, translated from Náhuatl in the 1550s when the Conquest was still a raw memory. Across the Atlantic, a letter dating to the same era from the Catholic monarch of the Congo complains that mission houses were being used to keep 'women of ill repute', bought as slaves (p. 152). An odd but interesting selection is a 1950s diatribe by Kim Il Sung, lambasting Jesus' Sermon on the Mount; this exemplifies a demonisation of Christianity prevalent in North Korea even today. No comparable volume recognises the importance of including backtalk from Christianity's global South adversaries, ancient and modern. Historiographically, this has real importance; how a thing is (mis)perceived ought to be considered an aspect of what it is (as Robert Wilken ably demonstrates in *Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, Yale University Press, 1984).

Eurocentricity, however, is a hard and persistent problem to recognise and eradicate. There is no critical reflection, for instance, on which things might count as 'documentation'. No doubt readers will wonder why Pentecostals were not allotted more space. But a more basic question might be: who speaks for traditional societies on all three continents where 'oracy' prevailed until literacy was imposed by colonisation and Christianisation? To his credit, Delgado includes *Chilam Balam*, a Mesoamerican specimen (Mayan). Still, why not include material artifacts? An 1890s Yoruba woodcarving of a

missionary (Bible or pistol in hand; several exist) seems as good an example of a 'document' as anything inscribed or printed on paper.

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Sylvia Walsh, *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode*, Christian Theology in Context, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xii + 232. £50.00 (hbk); £16.99 (pbk).

Sylvia Walsh's task in Oxford's 'Christian Theology in Context' series is precisely to place Søren Kierkegaard in the theological, ecclesiastical, philosophical, political and otherwise cultural contexts of his day, with an aim towards showing also how his thought might be translated into our own contexts and ways of thinking. She has succeeded accordingly and with the right amount of historical detail, and yet her book offers much more than a contextualised Kierkegaard. It is equal to any introduction to Kierkegaard's thought, and it is itself a work of substantive theology and philosophy. Her exploration of Kierkegaard's theology of creation, for example, is as good an exegesis of Kierkegaard and synthesis of his texts as it is provocative of new ways of considering this doctrine (pp. 70–4).

Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode is framed by chapters devoted to the context of Kierkegaard's life and thought. The first ('That Single Individual') offers a brief, though detailed, biographical portrait, an intellectual backdrop to the authorship, and a concise outline of Kierkegaard's varied writings and their strategy. For professors or religious educators teaching a course section on Kierkegaard, this chapter could stand alone as a beneficial introduction. The final chapter ('Religion, Culture, and Society'), focused especially on the 'attack literature' which, importantly, begins not at the end of Kierkegaard's life but is rather a theme throughout his writings, explores in similar detail the ecclesiastical, political and social issues which result finally in the heightening of the attack, to the point that Kierkegaard views the church as a 'toxic junk heap'.

In between these frames are five chapters which take up the most important themes of Kierkegaard's writings, including Christianity as an existence-communication, the human-God relation, Kierkegaard's rich theological anthropology, the person of Christ, and finally the Christian life understood through the theological virtues. At times portions of these chapters serve effectively as mini-commentaries on central works of the authorship, ranging from the monumental in size, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*