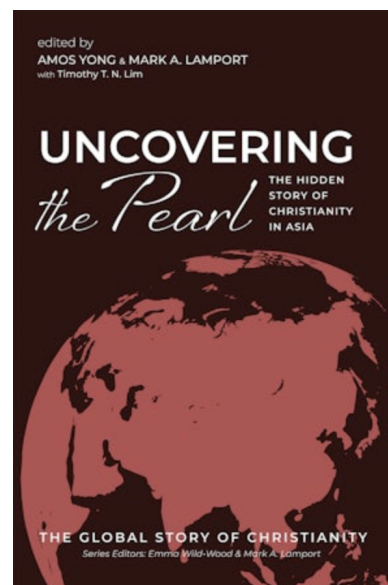


Yong, Amos and Mark A. Lamport. *Uncovering the Pearl: The Hidden Story of Christianity in Asia*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023.

Reviewed by Bo Parker, IMB Personnel, Asia Pacific Rim

Historical documents and treatises are never written in a vacuum. As much as an author might try, bias will seep through the ink of the author's pen. It is essential in the scope of Christian history that we look at the thread of Christian expansion, in this case the Asian context, through multiple lenses to get a fuller picture of all actors and events involved. Agreement or disagreement with the perspective and interpretation is valid; however, it is necessary to filter this type of historical interpretation through the lens of Scripture and not personal preference—thus, the daunting project undertaken by the editors of *Uncovering the Pearl: The Hidden Story of Christianity in Asia*, Amos Yong and Mark Lamport. The purpose for this endeavor is to unite collaborators from various backgrounds to provide a broad and comprehensive overview of Asian Christianity while also addressing contemporary issues facing the Christian community in Asia. This work is a part of a series entitled *The Global Story of Christianity Series*.



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This work provides brief and general histories of the movement of Christianity in each region or “neighborhood” of Asia while addressing the context and interaction with existing faiths, religions, and ideologies, and it finally tackles various global issues for which the Church plays a role in answering. The book is divided into three primary sections: *The Story of Christianity Nar-*

rated in *Historical Context*, *The Story of Christianity Adapts to the Asian Context*, and *The Story of Christianity Encounters Twenty-First-Century Asian Issues*. The first section provides a broader chronological survey of Christianity and the spread of Christianity throughout Asia. The historical discourse is broken up into three eras of time: 0-1500 AD, 1500-1800 AD, and 1800-Present. The historical narratives of these eras deal with the intersection of Christianity with existing faiths or beliefs and provide the context in which Christianity was introduced. In the second section, each chapter covers a different region of Asia in which the authors dive into the realities and challenges of Christianity. Within these discussions, the writers address issues related to ecumenism, practical theology, revivals, rise of education and health care, struggle against cultural immorality, and nationalism. The third section addresses contemporary issues that Christianity has faced in the Asian context. Each chapter, written by different authors, tackles issues of interfaith relationships, totalitarian governments, Asian diaspora, marginalized peoples, and the impact of Asian Christianity in a global context. *Uncovering the Pearl* does not provide a final concluding chapter. However, it concludes with a timeline of significant historical events in the Asian World that highlight events both related to and not related to Christianity.

Strengths and Weaknesses

A work of this magnitude was no small feat. Other Asian historical works exist, but it is virtually impossible to cover every detail or issue in one volume. *Uncovering the Pearl* reaches its intended purpose of providing a handle on the broad scope and influence of Christianity in the Asian context. The contributors maintain a sensitivity to indigenous expressions and perspectives throughout this volume. Yong and Lamport's selection of authors from varying backgrounds within the Asian context also provides a balance and perspective that is Asian in nature, although written in English. Clear section and chapter titles make it easy to navigate and see the intended direction of the book. A key strength of this work is its effort to help the reader to have a

shift in perspective from a Western point of view to an Eastern point of view as it relates to Christianity and the influence of Christianity in Asia.

This work also has weaknesses, including its ecumenical nature that in turn fails to create a distinction between Catholic Christianity and Protestant Christianity. A strong opinion on the negative impact of colonialism also tends to overlook those who, within that context, tried to distance themselves from colonial endeavors. Some authors understand their subject scope better than others in this book. At times the criticisms of Christian missionaries overlook the impact of the context and time on their methods. A few contributors also diminish the exclusive nature of the gospel in favor of interreligious harmony. Certain authors propose a greater emphasis on social ministry void of gospel proclamation as the necessary course of action as Christians. An overall lack of gospel perspective or response in correlation with the history and issues is a primary weakness of this book.

Significance as a Resource for Global Christianity

Overall, I find that this is a helpful resource for an understanding of Asian Christian context both from a church history perspective and missiological perspective. Though not perfect, *Uncovering the Pearl* is a needed resource that helps to fill a large void in recording the Asian church context and role in the expansion of Christianity.

Related Reading

Other works that cover the genre of Christianity in Asia include: *A Brief History of Christianity in Asia* by R. Lamon Brown and Michael D. Crane, *A History of Christianity in Asia: Volume I&II* by Samuel Hugh Moffett, and *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* edited by Felix Wilfred.