Out of Africa: Non-Western Theology of Mission

Earlier this year the secular press announced new evidence, via genetic research, that humankind originated in Africa. The population of modern Europe—and perhaps that of other areas of the globe—evidently traces back to a surprisingly small group of African migrants.

As this issue of the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN makes clear, in coming decades we can expect new articulations of the theology of mission, not only out of Africa but out of other non-Western regions. Across the globe, a new, more vibrant and holistic theology of mission is already working itself out in practice, on the ground.

In the opening essay contributing editor Wilbert Shenk writes, “Since the Christian majority is now to be found outside the West and missionary initiatives from the churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are at the cutting edge of the Christian world mission, we must ask: What kind of theology of mission will best serve the global Christian mission in the future?” As Shenk goes on to suggest, voices from the non-Western world can no longer be ignored.

Our second essay is contributed by Allan Anderson, director of the Research Unit for New Religions and Churches at the University of Birmingham, England, and administrator of the 25,000-item Harold Turner Collection of documentation gleaned from Christian movements in the Third World. Anderson’s discussion of the significance and contributions of African Initiated Churches serves notice that theologies of mission are increasingly compelled to acknowledge the impact on world Christianity, and ultimately on the theology of mission, of these indigenous movements in Africa.

Contributing editor Lamin Sanneh offers a penetrating review of Bengt Sundkler’s recently published *History of the Church in Africa*. His carefully nuanced critique helps to demonstrate Shenk’s contention that the dominant theology of mission remains beholden to Western categories and perceptions.

In “My Pilgrimage in Mission” Diana Witts offers moving testimony to the impact on her spiritual life of the suffering Christian community in southern Sudan. And in “The Legacy of Edwin W. Smith,” by W. John Young, we read of an earlier Western missionary who identified the special gifts and insights to be gained by listening to African voices.

Combined with contributing editor Gary McGee’s intriguing article on missionaries and the gift of tongues, along with a number of book reviews dealing with Africa, the editors believe that this issue of the BULLETIN will fascinate the general reader and serve researchers of African Christianity for years to come.

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of Missionary Research
Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World

Wilbert R. Shenk

David J. Bosch completed writing his magisterial *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* in 1990.1 Although Bosch intimated in articles in 1983 and 1984 that new, non-Western patterns and paradigms were emerging,2 in *Transforming Mission* he worked out his analysis within the framework of the missionary movement from the Western Christian tradition. The last third of *Transforming Mission* is a study of the way the logic of “mission in the wake of the Enlightenment” has been played out as an essentially Western initiative.

The past decade has proved to be pivotal in geopolitical terms. Along with the end of the cold war and the globalization of the world economy, a sea change in the locus of Christian initiative has taken place. Churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are now sending thousands of missionaries to other regions and countries, while the decline and disorientation of the churches in the West is a matter of mounting concern. Today the West presents a particularly demanding missiological challenge.

Recent surveys of mission theology reveal the continued domination of Western voices, with no discernible shift during the 1990s.3 Western theology of mission has continued on an essentially unchanged trajectory. Even recent initiatives to develop a theology that engages contemporary Western culture as a missionary frontier—an urgent priority—have been significantly stymied by the historical burden of the Western theological tradition.

Since the Christian majority is now to be found outside the West and missionary initiatives from the churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are at the cutting edge of the Christian world mission, we must ask: What kind of theology of mission will best serve the global Christian mission in the future? What fresh theological resources can be brought to bear on this new phase of the Christian mission? It is time to listen to voices from the non-Western world that can help construct a theology capable of empowering the global church for participation in the *missio Dei*.

My thesis is that (1) a dynamic theology of mission develops where there is vigorous engagement of culture by the Gospel, accompanied by critical reflection on that process; that (2) this process is decisive for shaping Christian identity; and that therefore (3) we must look to the evolving Christian movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to discern defining themes. Although various scholars have argued for the term “missionary theology” (on the grounds that all theology ought to be missionary in character, a position with which I sympathize), to minimize confusion I will retain the conventional terminology “theology of mission.”

Rooted in Cultural Engagement

Vital theology of mission flows from missionary engagement. As Bosch emphasized, the New Testament provides us with the example par excellence of theology animated by mission. In the New Testament theological concerns are grounded in the historical, social, religious, and political context in which the missionary encounter of the Christian Gospel with Middle Eastern culture took place. These documents show how the disciples of Jesus Christ responded to the existential questions they faced as the movement spread through the Mediterranean world. Christian identity was forged as the evangelization process progressed.

The contrast with Western academic theology could not be sharper. From as early as the fourth century Western theology has pursued an inward-focused, intellectual, and pastoral agenda rather than an outward-looking evangelistic and missional agenda. With the coming of the Enlightenment in the late seventeenth century, the West became convinced that its culture, through the process of modernization and growing scientific knowledge, was destined to be the universal culture. As Western theology moved into the university and was professionalized, it became increasingly detached from ecclesial reality and cultural context.4 In the twentieth century it was left to missionary statesmen and a few theologians sympathetic to mission to develop the theology of mission; the academy—in both its dominant seminary and university forms—largely ignored it.

The global domination of Western theology remains largely unaddressed. Theological education in the non-Western world is still captive to the Western tradition and curriculum. Describing Protestant theology in Japan, Masaya Odagaki calls the period before 1970 the classic age of contemporary theology. He notes that “theological giants such as Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich were playing active roles, and dialogue with these great theologians was the basic method of doing theology in this country. In fact, some have called this the period of the ‘Germanic captivity.’”5 In his review of developments since 1970, Odagaki concludes that Japanese theology has not yet begun to address the Japanese context effectively.

Nonetheless, in some non-Western areas another variety of theology is emerging. Surveying African theology, Johannes Verkuyl observes, “It goes without saying that African theology does all the things which theology in general does, but in African theology (as in Asian) all these other functions are embraced in the missionary or communicative function. It is not primarily an intra-ecclesiastical exercise, but a discipline whose practitioners keep one question central: How can we best do our theology so that the gospel will touch Africans most deeply?”6 The answer to that probing question will emerge only in the context of active evangelization.

In noting the shift from a Western to a non-Western locus of

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A vital theology of mission flows from a missionary engagement of culture.

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theological vitality, we do not intend to encourage the development of new, parochial theologies. The Christian movement is more global than ever. The local, wherever that be, must be held in a dialectical relationship with universal Christian experience. Instead of being preoccupied with intra-ecclesiastical debates, theology must engage with those seminal historical periods when issues of faith and culture were wrestled with effectively in the light of the missio Dei.

Shaping Christian Identity

A critical issue for Christians at the beginning of the twenty-first century is Christian identity. Human identity is the product of particular historical and social contexts with their peculiar interplay between external and internal forces. Christians in Latin America, Asia, and Africa who have been associated with Western missions in the modern period have struggled to overcome the stigma of being identified with a “foreign” religion. The economic, military, political, and cultural hegemony of the West, in which Christians have been implicated during the past three centuries, has greatly complicated the issue of identity for non-Western Christians. But it also must be emphasized that the question of identity is as urgent for Christians in the West as in any other part of the world. Western Christians face disturbing questions as to how to overcome the enervating syncretism that saps the vitality of Christian life today.

Whenever the Christian Gospel truly encounters a culture, it disturbs the status quo, altering the normal state of things that gives human beings identity. It exposes the fact that no culture is wholly submitted to the kingdom and rule of God. In every culture an array of principalities and powers contends for human allegiance. In the face of this reality the Gospel asserts that in Jesus Christ is the identity that is found. Jesus Christ is not acknowledged as Lord, the church is called to evangelize.

Conversion to Jesus Christ means embracing a new identity. Working out the implications of this identity in Christ will have profound and unanticipated consequences. For many believers in the earliest Christian community, it seemed clear that one could become a Christian only by first becoming a Jew. This issue was resolved only after hard struggle.3 To be converted is to embrace Jesus Christ as sovereign and take on the identity defined by Christ rather than the identity imprinted by the status quo. Conversion means that all rival authorities are dethroned and Christian identity.

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outside by a missionary or by the “mother” church; at other times the issue has arisen as an individual or church has struggled to decide how to practice faithful discipleship in a culture where historical precedents were lacking.

The dilemma in its latter form is vividly illustrated by the great Japanese Christian intellectual Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930), who wrote:

> When a Japanese truly and independently believes in Christ, he is a Japanese Christian, and his Christianity is Japanese Christianity.

... A Japanese by becoming a Christian does not cease to be a Japanese. On the contrary, he becomes more Japanese by becoming a Christian. A Japanese who becomes an American or an Englishman or an amorphous universal man is neither a true Japanese nor a true Christian. ... I love two J’s and no third; one is Jesus and the other is Japan. I do not know which I love more. ... For Jesus’ sake, I cannot own any other God than my Father as my God and Father; and for Japan’s sake, I cannot accept any faith which comes in the name of foreigners.

Christian identity starts from the premise that in Jesus Christ God is creating a new humanity whose identity is not dependent on any of the usual elements: race, language, social class, territory, and nationality. All of these are among the powers that must be relativized and transformed by the work of Christ. That is to say, these elements are not abolished but are to be brought into captivity to the purposes of Jesus Christ. Christian identity will be based on the decisive reconciling action of God in Jesus Christ to create a new humanity (Eph. 2:15). In the quest to embrace authentic Christian identity, no one culture is privileged over other cultures. Within the economy of the new humanity, all cultures are valued equally and are worthy of respect. Cultural and ethnic diversity becomes the means by which the richness and glory of God’s grace is more perfectly revealed to us.

Since at least the fourth century A.D., the quest for Christian identity has been complicated by elements of political, cultural, and ecclesiastical coercion. The Christian missionary movement too often has been co-opted as an instrument for imposing unwanted identities on people. A widely held perception is that the way in which the Christian Gospel was introduced, first to Europeans, and then to Latin Americans, Africans, and Asians, has contradicted the essential meaning of Jesus Christ for humanity; this feeling continues to fuel tensions between the Western church and other churches.

The seventeenth-century Enlightenment further reinforced this attitude by its quest for an approach to knowledge that was universally valid. As Charles R. Taber has shown, until well into the nineteenth century European culture was assumed to be the sacred vessel carrying to other cultures this universal vision that alone would deliver them from their unenlightened condition. During the modern mission movement this assumption became a source of profound tension between missionaries and the peoples to whom they went.

### A Methodological Clue

For several decades Andrew F. Walls has argued that the contemporary churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have more in common with the second-century church than with present-day Western churches. He maintains that they will find important resources for forging their identity by entering into dialogue with the early church. More recently he has suggested that the early church father Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254) was the pioneer of mission studies, including theology of mission. Origen and his fellow theologians were converts from pagan backgrounds. They worked through the issues of Christian identity as Gentiles who had been grafted into the biblical faith without being cut off from their cultural and historical roots.

Great cultural and historical distance separates the early church and the modern Western church, whereas contemporary Asian, African, and Latin American Christians have considerable affinity with those of the first and second centuries. Because Western theologians largely lack the experience of becoming Christian from radically different backgrounds, they find it difficult to enter into the existential situation of present-day Christians outside the West, where religious and cultural pluralism is the norm. Yet this limitation has not inhibited Western theology from assuming that it is uniquely qualified to determine the theological canons by which contemporary African, Asian, and Latin American churches ought to live.

This methodological suggestion has important implications. It encourages the theologian of mission to range over the whole of Christian history rather than being tied to a particular institutional or ecclesiastical tradition, or to a particular historical period. When theologians are tethered to particular ecclesiastical traditions, Western history is given disproportionate weight. It is more promising to cede to the Asian, African, and Latin American churches the freedom to seek out natural links between their experiences and those historical periods when the church confronted similar issues.

### Openness to Culture

During the past decade four issues have been at the top of the agenda of the theology of mission: culture, pneumatology, Christology, and ecclesiology. These issues, while not new, are being addressed in fresh ways.

From the beginning of the Christian movement, and particularly during the modern period, when intercultural contacts were increasing rapidly, the missionary attitude was to treat culture as a problem to be solved. In his critique of modern mission, Roland Allen charged the missionary movement with operating on the basis of a "Judaizing" viewpoint.

Although many missionaries struggled to understand culture and work with it constructively, the Western intellectual framework assumed the primacy of Western culture. This stance is reflected in the work of the eminent missionary and Africanist Dietrich Westermann, regarded as a progressive thinker in his day. In the Duff Missionary Lectures for 1935, in a discussion of African cultures, Westermann argued: "The avowed aim of missionary work is to give the African a life-power which is able to remake not only individuals but tribes and peoples as a whole. Giving the new, means taking away the old... In trying to build up a new society, the missionary cannot help destroying age-old institutions and ideals." Radical displacement of the old is assumed to be the only way forward.

A generation later, Islamicist Kenneth Cragg put a question to Westermann: "If the old is taken away, to whom is the new given?" Instead of radical displacement of the old, Cragg insisted that evangelization means that the old is encountered in such a way as to engender "the revolution that will both fulfill and transform it." Rather than refusing the risks involved in the struggle to find new expressions of the faith in the idiom of new believers, Cragg called for courageous engagement. Only in this way will the deepest spiritual yearnings of new believers be satisfied and the full resources of the Gospel be brought to bear on a culture.

The model of "continuity" and "discontinuity" focused...
attention on how much of a person’s religious and cultural inheritance could be retained and how much had to be discarded in order to embrace the Christian faith. Too often Western theologians, emphasizing the fall and alienation of humankind from God, concluded that the entire pre-Christian inheritance must be set aside. The emphasis on discontinuity was applied disproportionately with regard to cultures outside the West. Because the measuring rod was Western sensibilities, it was non-Western cultures that were stigmatized. This approach encouraged a dismissive attitude toward traditional culture and religion. The psychological wounds caused by Western cultural “Judaizers” have been slow to heal.

Increasingly in the postcolonial period the tide has turned against this formulation, thereby opening the way for a more constructive approach to all cultures. In Africa the study of traditional religion now enjoys full academic respectability, and generally the attitude is open and positive. Over the past thirty years theologians of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been “attempting to make clear the fact that conversion to Christianity must be coupled with cultural continuity.” But the task is incomplete. In spite of the gains made through the development of theories of enculturation and contextualization, these views still bear the imprint of the modern Western missions model. The struggle to find a more adequate approach continues.

A constructive theology of mission will be based on Christological openness to culture, not rejection. Three fundamental affirmations characterize such openness: First, God has modeled openness to culture in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Second, through redemption the creation is transformed and renewed; Scripture shows all peoples and cultures to be equally in need of redemption. Third, the apostolic principle adopted by the Jerusalem Council has continuing validity and should guide the church in responding to the issues raised by cultural and religious pluralism in each generation.

Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako has emerged as a leading figure in the effort to rethink and develop a missionary theology of culture based on Christological openness. Methodologically, Bediako follows the lead of Andrew Walls in seeking precedents and dialogue partners in the first two centuries of Christian history. Contemporary African theologians, observes Bediako, find in the apostle Paul an important ally. Paul understood that whoever encounters Jesus Christ does so as a whole person—a person in a web of relationships, with a history, living in a particular culture, speaking the vernacular. The work of redemption takes place in the individual’s indigenous environment. Conversion is meaningless if it does not connect to the individual’s entire context. Furthermore, the apostle Paul made clear that if adaptation is called for with respect to religious and cultural rules, it is the missionary who must accommodate (1 Cor. 9:15–23). Christian identity can be constructed only out of the cultural materials at hand, not on the basis of materials imported or imposed.

This thinking should not be interpreted to mean that the missionary is required to approve of a culture as it is. Rather, it is a call for the missionary to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the confidence that the Spirit is already at work in the situation. The missionary’s role is to bear witness to what it means to be “in Christ” and live within the new order of the kingdom of God. Christological openness toward culture does not begin with judgment but with relationship.

Among the most contested issues in mission studies and practice has been Asian and African views of the community’s relationship to ancestors. In many cultures the ancestors are a key element in a people’s worldview and essential to group identity. Asian and African theologians recognize that Christian identity will remain confused so long as the relationship to the ancestors is not clarified. Congolese theologian Bénézet Bujo argues that Jesus is essential to a constructive answer concerning ancestor theology. “This importance does not come from looking at Jesus Christ simply as an ancestor,” Bujo insists. “The term ‘ancestor’ can only be applied to Jesus in an analogical, or eminent, way, since to treat him otherwise would be to make of him only one founding ancestor among many.” Jesus did not merely fulfill the ideal of the ancestors but “transcended that ideal and brought it to a new completion.”

Although Christian theology will continue to depend on the work of specialists in biblical, theological, and historical studies, it is increasingly recognized that other sources must be included. In preliterate societies or cultures where narrative continues to play an important role, the theologian must draw on these materials and theologize in forms that are culturally appropriate. For example, too little attention has been paid to the fundamental importance in many churches of hymnody. In many non-Western societies theologizing is done primarily through the creation of hymns. Recent studies indicate this genre to be a rich source of theological insight.

Empowerment of the Spirit

Two developments were of overriding importance for the Christian movement in the twentieth century. The first was the shift in the center of gravity from the West to Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The second was the rise and spread of the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostalism emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as a socially nonconformed and racially inclusive movement among the lower classes in the United States. Though the U.S. movement did not retain its racially inclusive stance for long, the Pentecostal/charismatic phenomenon today comprises a global community of some 534 million adherents. The movement has been a major force in world evangelization and has exerted deep influence on the global Christian community.

Recent historical and sociological studies have advanced the argument that the Pentecostal movement has contributed not only to the redefinition of religion worldwide but also to constructive change in the wider society. David Martin traces the historical genealogy of Puritanism, Methodism, and Pentecostalism. He shows how these religious movements have contributed to the transformation of culture. Each movement has emphasized the experiential character of religion and the role of the laity at the grass roots. Space has been thus created for challenging institutional rigidities in church, politics, and economic systems. Martin provides case studies from throughout Latin America of the role of evangelicals and Pentecostals in fostering societal change in the twentieth century. For the past three centuries the main arbiters of meaning have been scientific...
modernity and traditional religion. Today both of these sources of authority are largely spent, and alternatives are needed.

Harvey Cox argues that the contest is now between fundamentalism and experientialism.29 Fundamentalism, a reaction to modernity, looks to the past for its inspiration by asserting fidelity to tradition but does so in a rationalistic mode that is characteristic of modernity. Experientialism also calls for a return to tradition, but its proponents are temperamentally pliable and express their quest experientially. "This emerging mode of spirituality, therefore, finds its cohesion not in the system but in the person, not in the institution itself but in the people who draw on its resources to illuminate their daily lives."26

Pentecostalism is distinguished by its emphasis on an immediate and personal experience of the Holy Spirit and the urgency of evangelization. The starting point is not rational discourse about the person and work of the Spirit but direct personal encounter with the Holy Spirit and the release of the charismata of the Spirit in the life of the believer. This emphasis on experience and a desire to see the experiences of the first Christians reproduced today has resulted in vigorous missionary activism among Pentecostals.

The present strength of Pentecostalism arises in large measure from the fact that it has become indigenous throughout the world to an extent unmatched by other Christian traditions. It can be categorized in two types: (1) indigenous churches and (2) mission-founded churches, the first being by far the largest. African Initiated Churches (AICs, or sometimes Indigenous African Christian Churches) are perhaps the best-known example of indigenous Pentecostalism. The origins and motivations of these movements have been the subject of considerable study, and various classification schemes have been proposed.27 Theories based on such factors as political aspirations, economic dissatisfaction, social deprivation, and racial discrimination have been advanced to explain the rise of these churches. Based on research carried out among the Akan of Ghana, Kofi Appiah-Kubi concludes "that spiritual hunger is the main cause of the emergence of the Indigenous African Christian Churches." What Appiah-Kubi describes as spiritual hunger is the felt-need to worship in a way that responds to the full range of human experience. "The most significant and unique aspect of these churches is that they seek to fulfill what is lacking in the Euro-American missionary churches."28 These indigenous churches emphasize healing, dreams, visions, and prophesying. Worship is dramatic and participatory. There is a sense of the immediacy of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Pentecostal focus on the Holy Spirit has been accompanied by ethical sensitivity. On the one hand, Pentecostals typically have developed strict codes of Christian behavior. On the other, perplexing issues such as what the attitude of the Christian should be toward the ancestor cult have been addressed with sensitivity and clarity. Allan Anderson concludes that in the African experience "we have evidence of a Spirit-inspired confrontation with the ancestor cult which has replaced the traditional beliefs with a truly Christian alternative." This step has been achieved without negating indigenous culture. "[T]he revelations of the Holy Spirit in African Pentecostalism point to a realistic encounter and confrontation between the new Christian faith and the old traditional beliefs. Christianity thereby attains an authentically African character, realistically penetrating the old and creating the new."29

Another important area of encounter between Gospel and culture for African churches has been the response to the liberation of creation. Traditionally, Africans have placed a high value on the environment and their place in it. It was understood that human well-being depended on respecting and caring for the physical environment. In many areas around the world industrialization and urbanization have contributed to the destruction of the environment, and the church has failed to give clear guidance. M. L. Daneel has reported extensively on the practical efforts undertaken in Zimbabwe by the AICs to restore the environment and to develop a theological framework for doing so.30 Significantly, much of this theological response has been "in ritual activity rather than in written theology."31 These churches readily combine their evangelizing with stewardship of the environment.

The sense of the immediacy of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faith community has fostered an ethos in which women are free to acknowledge and exercise their gifts, including leadership roles in the churches. Pentecostal/charismatic churches have long recognized the leadership of women. Indeed, numerous prophetesses have founded churches. Now a shift is under way as women in these churches are being encouraged, in the freedom of the Spirit, to forge their own style of ministry rather than fitting into the conventional patterns of ministry of the past.32

Pentecostal theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, noting that Pentecostals "have given experience a privileged place in mission," observes that "a distinctively Pentecostal theology of mission is still in the making." Emphasizing the urgency of the task, Pentecostals have devoted little time to reflecting and writing about their vast experience in evangelization. Kärkkäinen stresses the importance of Pentecostals undertaking this task and asks, "What would a distinctive Pentecostal-Charismatic missionary pneumatology look like?"33

Clearly the emergence of the Pentecostal movement in the twentieth century has resulted in a rich and extensive experientially based variety of Christian faith. Having produced contextually appropriate churches in diverse cultures, the movement holds promise of a new understanding of theology, including theology of mission, no longer bound to the categories of Western rationality.

A Missional Christology

Christology has been at the center of theological work, and often controversy, throughout history. Jaroslav Pelikan explores eighteen metaphors that have been used over the course of nearly two thousand years to describe and interpret who Jesus Christ is.34 Pelikan shows the historical context of each metaphor and explains how each metaphor has highlighted an important dimension of Jesus that appealed to a particular culture or group. Such studies remind us that perceptions of Jesus are at best partial and always conditioned by the historical context.

In any given situation the critical question is, What is the functional understanding of Jesus Christ in the life of this faith community? Saul Trinidad and Juan Stam, in their study of Protestant preaching in Latin America, observe: "Protestant preaching has by and large been characterized by a functional Docetism in its Christology. . . . The heavenly and spiritual Christ has been real and personal for believers. But he has not been Jesus of Nazareth in all his humanity and historicity."35 This Docetic Christ is not known as companion to the poor and oppressed in their everyday world (see Luke 4:18-19).

In sub-Saharan Africa Charles Nyamiti, speaking from a Roman Catholic perspective, reports a situation in ferment. Describing the range and variety of Christologies, he observes, "Perhaps for the first time in the history of sub-Saharan Africa
Indigenous Preaching

Preaching & Cultural Identity: Proclaiming the Gospel in Africa
by John Wesley Zwomunondiita Kurewa

In this valuable resource for African students and indigenous preachers and missionaries, the author explains the importance of preaching in Africa by using African historical, cultural, and traditional imagery in order to communicate the gospel more effectively. This book provides insight into the value of indigenous preaching, imagery, and concepts (rather than missionary-given Western forms) and offers a vision for preaching in Africa for the next millennium.

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new African categories are systematically employed to express and expound upon the mystery of our Saviour.” Terms and categories drawn from indigenous culture are being used to describe the work of Christ, including “healer,” “ancestor,” “master of initiation,” and “chief.” At the same time Nyamiti is compelled to add that none of this recent theological work has found its way into the curricula of Catholic and theological institutes. Consequently, it has yet to exert “influence in the life of the African churches.”³⁶ In contrast to AICs Catholic and Protestant churches with historical ties to Western Christian traditions have been inhibited from incorporating theological and institutional innovations. The traditional European or North American curriculum still controls theological education. Procedures for fostering theological development in a dialectical relationship with the church have not been developed.

Since the end of the colonial era we have become intensely aware of social and political conditions in Latin America, Africa, and Asia that are characterized by dehumanizing injustice and poverty as a consequence of forces controlled by the global economy and the powerful, rich nations. Who do we say Jesus Christ is in relation to such conditions? How is the Gospel heard in such situations? In this situation the church is challenged to ask afresh, What is the church, and what is the mission of the church? How does it relate to the missio Dei?

C. René Padilla, Latin American biblical scholar, has stressed the urgency of a missional Christology, that is, a Christology that is historically situated and responds to the cries of the poor and disenfranchised of the world. Such a Christology is based on the historical reliability of the biblical account of Jesus.³⁷ The humanity of Jesus is essential to establishing the link “between his mission and that of his followers.” For Padilla it is important that social ethics arise from Christology: “If the Christ of faith is the Jesus of history, then it is possible to speak of social ethics for Christian disciples who seek to fashion their lives on God’s purpose of love and justice concretely revealed. If the risen and exalted Lord is Jesus of Nazareth, then it is possible to speak of a community that seeks to manifest the kingdom of God in history.”³⁸

Based on the account of Jesus in the Gospels, Padilla shows that the ministry of Jesus is the enactment of his message. Padilla identifies the following elements in Jesus’ ministry: (1) Jesus presented himself as a prophet with prophetic authority. (2) He had a unique and intimate relationship with God and called God abba. (3) Jesus associated freely with “publicans and sinners,” a radical departure from the conventional wisdom that held that such folk had no favor with God. (4) Jesus insisted that God’s kingdom had entered history, the evidence for which was that the sick were being healed, the dead were being raised, and the kingdom had entered history, the evidence for which was that the risen and exalted Lord is Jesus of Nazareth, then it is possible to speak of a community that seeks to manifest the kingdom of God in history.”³⁸

Ask afresh, What is the church, and what is the mission of the church? How does it relate to the missio Dei?

Some have shifted from Matthew 28:18–20 to John 20:19–23 as a Christological basis of mission.

A Missional Ecclesiology

It has been observed that the churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America know at first hand what it means to be a missionary church because they are much closer in time to missionary action. Persecution and suffering for the sake of Christ continues to take place. Being a Christian requires personal decision in the face of risk. Unfortunately, while this risk-taking is undoubtedly present in many non-Western churches, the formal ecclesiology these churches have inherited from the Western tradition largely reflects a church focused on pastoral care and maintenance.

An important dimension of liberation theology was its critique of traditional ecclesiology. In the wake of Vatican II, the base ecclesial communities were understood as an attempt to “reinvent the church.” The church was viewed as being encumbered with burdensome institutions and procedures controlled by a hierarchy that seemed out of touch with the people. These structures were not associated with missionary action. Against this background, the base ecclesial communities began in Brazil as a lay-led grassroots evangelization movement.

Among the leading proponents of missional ecclesiology are Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, and the late Orlando Costas. Instead of traditional Western Christology and ecclesiology developed in a context where the religious and cultural center seeks to maintain control, they advocate a vision of missional ecclesiology integrally related to missional Christology. Only in this way will the church be empowered for its missionary responsibility in the world. But this vision entails a change in perspective as to the actual social location of the church. Realistically, the church must learn to do its theological work from a minority position—and often on the margins—since that is the position of the church in many countries.

Using the Gospel of Mark as his primary text, Costas developed “a theology of contextual evangelization.” The whole of Jesus’ ministry, argues Costas, is framed by his being a Galilean. Galilee is a metaphor for both the political and the social backwater of the nation. Mark’s gospel furnishes a model of contextual
evangelization that includes three elements: (1) the sociohistorical foundation—the periphery is the base; (2) the public character of evangelization—the Gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed amid the multitudes; and (3) the global scope of evangelization—the Gospel is proclaimed from the periphery of the nations. In this situation, evangelization is carried out with full awareness that Jerusalem is the center of power. Jesus challenged Jerusalem, knowing full well that he would face crucifixion because he threatened the religious and political establishments.

Escobar and Padilla have urged the need for an ecclesiology that is consistent with this missional Christology. Padilla asserts, “The basic question that this new ecclesiology seeks to answer is how to be the Church of Jesus Christ in the midst of poverty and oppression?” Padilla points to three things that will characterize a missional ecclesiology. First, it is grounded in a church of the people. Liberation theology emphasized the importance of “the poor.” But the official church has long been the church controlled from the center and catering to the interests of those who had the power. The church belongs neither to the center nor to the periphery, neither to the powerful nor to the poor. It belongs solely to Jesus Christ. The importance of the insight introduced by liberation theologians was to expose the way in which the church has long been held captive by powerful interest groups, thereby marginalizing the poor and powerless.

In the second place, says Padilla, a missional ecclesiology depends on developing the priesthood of all believers. In the words of Leonardo Boff, “The mission of the People of God is not entrusted only to a few but is given to all. . . . All are sent out to proclaim the good news about the bright future of history.” In other words, the mission entrusted to the church is too important and of such scope that it cannot be left in the hands of the hierarchy or an earnest minority. The church dare not squander the gifts the Holy Spirit bestows on each member. A missional church will nurture and call forth all gifts for ministry and evangelization.

Third, a missional ecclesiology will embrace the prophetic mission of the church. This feature is consistent with Jesus’ own ministry (Luke 4:18–19). All the forces and powers that touch human life come under scrutiny. Those that oppress the poor and destroy life are to be exposed and denounced. Good news means that men and women can be set free from life-destroying powers. The vocation of the Old Testament prophets was to proclaim this message. Jesus intensified the prophetic witness and made it foundational to his messianic work. The witness from the periphery ultimately is to create space for the emergence of God’s new order, the kingdom of God.

A missional ecclesiology starts by recalling that when God wanted to do a new thing, God sent the Messiah to Galilee—the periphery of Jewish life. It was from this vantage point that God chose to announce that the kingdom was now breaking into history in the person and ministry of God’s Messiah (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14–15).

Conclusion

The thrust of this essay has been to argue that in the decade since David Bosch’s Transforming Mission was published, theology of mission has been moving toward a new stage of development. Four themes characterize this emerging phase.

First, the Christian movement requires a reconceptualization of missionary theology from two angles. The nature of theology needs to be rethought. Formally, mission theology is the effort to understand and interpret the missio Dei in the light of Scripture, the experience of the church in mission throughout history, and the present sociopolitical context in order to give guidance to the church in fulfilling its missionary calling. Although we may readily agree that this is the only kind of theology the Christian movement requires, there is little clarity as to its content. Furthermore, the Western captivity of all theology, including theology of mission, must be broken. The task in the twenty-first century is to conceptualize theology in light of the fact that the Christian faith is global with multiple heartlands. The churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are at the cutting edge. In the past, mission thinking was cast in terms of a movement directed from the Western center to far-flung geographic frontiers. With multiple centers of initiative and the church encircling the globe, mission theology must be freed from the traditional Eurocentric bias.

Second, a new criterion of theological validity ought to be adopted: Only theology that motivates and sustains the church in witness and service in the world deserves to be accredited. This criterion means that the whole church needs to recover the kind of theology modeled by the earliest Christians and found today among the churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The distinction between theology and theology of mission only serves to perpetuate a false dichotomy and ought to be abolished. The church can ill afford any theology that does not equip it for faithful witness to the world concerning Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Third, the experience of the churches of Africa, Latin America, and Asia offers important guidance for the next stage of the Christian movement. As minority groups in their societies, reflecting on the challenges they face in mission, non-Western churches have insights to share with the West. The clues proposed here—Christological openness to culture, dynamic pneumatology, missional Christology, and missional ecclesiology—suggest some key elements for this theological agenda. In each case new approaches ought to be explored out of the interaction between contemporary missionary witness, the New Testament, and the experience of Christians who faced parallel issues in other historical periods.

Fourth, the churches in the West urgently need resources for responding to the challenge of evangelizing their own culture, which regards itself as postreligious, resources that may well be found outside the West. Contemporary Western culture takes pride in its multiple pluralisms—religious, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and esthetic. Clearly, however, this culture intends to keep religion sequestered in the private sphere so that public culture remains wholly secular, free of religious influence. Neither pluralism nor fundamentalism can effectively meet the demands of this situation. Does not the church in modern and postmodern Western culture need to embrace the agenda of Christological openness to culture, a dynamic pneumatology, missional Christology, and missional ecclesiology as urgently as the churches of other continents? The renewal of the church is intimately linked to the recovery of the missio Dei as the reason for the church’s existence. Apart from this focus, renewal serves no purpose.

Nineteenth-century mission leaders spoke of the time in the future when the Western church would be the beneficiary of “a blessed reflex.” They anticipated the time when the so-called sending churches in the West would be challenged and renewed by the churches then springing up in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. May it now, finally, be so.
Notes


4. Wilhelm Pauck, “Theology in the Life of Contemporary American Protestantism,” in Religion and Culture, ed. Walter Leibrecht (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), pp. 270–83, noted the irony that although American churches were shaped by dynamic evangelization on the Western frontier, this fact has had no influence on American theology. Pauck then makes a general historical observation: “It is a remarkable fact that the missionary enterprise does not engender theological creativity. With the possible exception of the early Church, whose theology was decisively shaped by the missionary spirit, no part of Christendom has produced major theological responsibility and creativeness in connection with evangelistic endeavors. This is strange because one should expect that precisely that encounter with other religious claims would cause the missionary to justify and explicate the grounds and reasons for his own faith by means of theological thinking” (p. 278). Cf. José Míguez Bonino, Faces of Protestantism in Latin America (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), chap. 6; Andrew Kirk, The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission (Harrissburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997); and J. Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 5–6.


7. Floyd V. Filson, The Crucial Decades (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1963), gives an engaging account of this struggle.

8. Cited in Robert Lee, “Service to Christ and Country,” in Missionary Theology in Africa, Although American churches were shaped by dynamic Protestantism,” in Three Crucial Decades (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1963), gives an engaging account of this struggle.


25. Cox, Fire from Heaven, chap. 15.

26. Ibid., p. 305.


38. Padilla, “Toward a Contextual Christology,” pp. 84, 89.

39. Ibid., p. 89.

Types and Butterflies: African Initiated Churches and European Typologies

Allan H. Anderson

A typology may overlook the complexities of a subject and may even distort our understanding of it. As often as not such has been the case with attempts to apply typologies to African Initiated Churches. In the words of South African anthropologist Martin West, "It must be questioned whether the various typologies have in fact added significantly to our knowledge of the independent church movement: too often they are like Leach’s butterfly collecting, where information is pigeon-holed and the terms of reference are inadequately explained."¹

This comment highlights exactly the difficulty faced by students of African Independent Churches, or, as I prefer to call them, African Initiated Churches (hereafter, AICs).² The tendency is to start with presuppositions drawn from one particular African country and then to apply them in sweeping generalizations for the rest of the continent. Over time, however, as knowledge of these churches increases, many exceptions are discovered. The picture becomes bewildering, and generalizations prove altogether inadequate.

Harold Turner, one of the more perceptive and sensitive observers of AICs, advises that it is best to think of a typology "of tendencies and emphases" rather than of individual religious bodies and movements. . . . "The only safe course is to proceed to construct an African typology based on the ways in which the phenomena tend to be grouped."³ My intention, in this essay, is to offer a typology based on Turner’s advice.

An African Reformation

The Research Unit for New Religions and Churches at Selly Oak, Birmingham, England,⁴ founded by Turner in 1981, administers the internationally acclaimed Harold Turner Collection, which contains over 25,000 documents focusing on the Christian movements in the Third World that demonstrate the interaction between Christianity and indigenous or so-called primal religions. About half of the documents pertain to the AICs.

AICs are undoubtedly a major force in African Christianity today. In most countries south of the Sahara, one cannot engage in Christian work without encountering this vast phenomenon. During my time since 1995 at Selly Oak, I have come to a greater appreciation of the ecumenical implications of the AIC movement and of the distinctiveness of the AICs.⁵ Observers have long recognized that the AIC movement amounts to a fundamental reformation of African Christianity, a movement of such momentous significance that it can truly be called an African Reformation.⁶ It must be taken seriously by anyone interested in African Christianity and the globalization of Christianity.

David Barrett’s groundbreaking Schism and Renewal in Africa argues that independency is a manifestation of "a vast movement of reform of the Christian community" that is not restricted to AICs alone.⁷ He considers there to be "a striking number of parallels" between the history of AICs and the sixteenth-century European Reformation. He describes the AIC movement as exhibiting "a radical mission of renewal and reformation," and he notes that AICs constantly refer to themselves as "a reformation of over-Europeanized Christianity." He says that the entire AIC movement "has discovered and implemented some of the major theological concerns being expressed elsewhere in the world concerning a reformation of the Christian community." This reformation has occurred out of the context of Africa itself, spurred on by the vernacular translation of the Bible, as was also the case with "numerous earlier reformations and theological renewals in history."⁸ The entire AIC movement in all its many forms throughout the continent, but particularly in its most prominent Pentecostal-type churches, represents an indigenous reformation and transformation of Christianity unprecedented in the history of the worldwide church.

In their book Rise Up and Walk, published in 1989, David Barrett and T. John Padwick estimated that from a total of about 42,000 AIC members in 1900, there arose 29 million in 1985. The authors projected that the numbers would rise to 54 million by 2000, or 14 percent of the total Christian population of Africa.⁹ According to the new edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia, edited by Barrett, George Kurian, and Todd Johnson, that projection has been substantially exceeded. The WCE, which utilizes "Independents" and "Pentecostals/Charismatics" as overlapping categories, reports 83 million Independents and 126 million Pentecostals/Charismatics in 2000, accounting for something like one out of every five Christians in Africa.¹⁰ About two-thirds


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of AIC members are found in the three countries of South Africa, the Congo (Kinshasa), and Nigeria.10 There are also large numbers of AICs in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Ghana. To the consternation of some, this astonishing growth has sometimes been at the expense of older European mission-founded churches.

Christianity, having originated in the “Third World” of the eastern Mediterranean, is returning to its roots. The AICs offer living, radical experiments of an indigenized Christianity that has consciously rejected Western ecclesiastical models and forms of being Christian. Barrett described the phenomenon as “the product of African spirituality stripped of support from other cultures.” He observes that the AIC movement has “grown in the teeth of the anathemas of the vastly richer mission churches, with, in most cases, no help from outside.”11 The AICs express their theology in oral narrative and experience, and those seeking a meaningful African theology, one that takes seriously the African worldview, must examine their contribution. Important lessons will be gained about the relationship between the Gospel and culture, the contextualization of Christianity, and new forms of mission strategy.

From Sects to Churches

Following the European colonization of Africa during the nineteenth century, a process of religious acculturation took place as older African religious and social traditions were threatened and partially replaced by new ones. The independent African Christian churches that began to emerge at the turn of the twentieth century were initially snubbed. Western mission church leaders and other observers dismissed them as sects and labeled them “nativistic,” “messianic,” “separatist,” and “syncretistic.” The term “African independent churches” was probably the first acceptable, neutral phrase used. Turner defined “African independent church” as “a church which has been founded in Africa, by Africans, and primarily for Africans.”12

AICs have flourished usually, but not exclusively, in areas where Protestant missions have worked longest. This generalization is particularly true in southern Africa, the Congo River basin, central and western Kenya, and along the West African coast. There also seems to have been a connection between the number of different Protestant missions in a particular region and the emergence of AICs there. There are a small number of religious movements in Africa that do not see themselves as Christian, some of which Turner has defined in an essay about the influence of the Holy Spirit and of divine healing, and combining both African and European cultural elements.13 In an earlier publication I suggested that Daneel’s term “Spirit-type” might also be termed “Pentecostal-type,” because of the common historical, liturgical, phenomenological, and theological features of these churches with patterns in Western Pentecostalism. Today I am less inclined to make the comparison. Although “Pentecostal” is often used by observers to describe these particular churches, African independent Pentecostalism is quite a different movement. Turner’s term “prophet-healing” is possibly a description that can be used continentally for these churches.14

In the use of any terms at all, it is important to remember that there are many more types of churches than those proposed by researchers, and that often the churches themselves do not recognize the categories given them by outsiders. Furthermore, within every type there are exceptions to the general characteristics, so one must constantly use terms like “generally” or “usually” in defining them. The categorizations that have been
attempted do not do justice to their diversity, and such systematization is not an African concern anyway. Adrian Hastings makes the point: “It is rather that there is such a rich spectrum of diversity and that any consistent categorization is either too complex to fulfill its purpose or simply misleading in being based on a too selective approach to the characteristic forms of church life.” He further points out that even the terms “Zion” and “Ethiopia” are not mutually exclusive: “Zion is of course Jerusalem, but it is a Jerusalem somehow realized here in Africa, and what is Ethiopia but par excellence such a Zion?”

Still, as Turner has suggested, a “common framework and language” is necessary both for comparative purposes and “in order to distinguish the essential features” of African religious movements. In an effort to provide some order, while bearing in mind that one must focus on tendencies and emphases rather than closed types, I offer below an outline based on three types of AICs. The outline is not presumed to be exhaustive or definitive, especially as the movements it encompasses are dynamic churches undergoing a constant process of change.

African/Ethiopian Churches

AICs that have modeled themselves to a large extent on European mission churches and that do not claim to be prophetic or to have special manifestations of the Holy Spirit have been called “Ethiopian” or “Ethiopian-type” churches in southern Africa, and “African” churches in Nigeria. In South Africa and Nigeria these churches were the first AICs to emerge. In southern Africa the word “Ethiopian” in the church name is more common than in other countries; it had special significance in those countries that were more heavily colonized than the rest of Africa. Ethiopia, the only African nation that successfully resisted European colonization, is mentioned in Psalm 68 as a nation that “stretches out its hands to God.” This reference and the conversion of the Ethiopian court official in Acts 8 formed the basis of the Ethiopian ideology that spread in South Africa and Nigeria in the 1890s. Africa had received Christianity before Europe, and therefore Africans could reckon that they had a special place in God’s plan of salvation and at least as much right to being messengers of the Gospel as Europeans.

African/Ethiopian churches typically originated in secessions from mission-founded churches on racial and political grounds. Formed in the context of the white mission’s conquest of African peoples, they arose primarily as political and administrative reactions to European mission-founded churches. Nevertheless, as Sundklér points out, the “church organization and Bible interpretation are largely copied from the patterns of the Protestant Mission Churches from which they have seceded.” They usually practice infant baptism, read set liturgies, sing translated European hymns, wear European-type clerical vestments (often black), and are less enthusiastic or emotional in their services than are the “spiritual” churches. Sometimes they even include the church’s generic name (e.g., “Methodist,” “Presbyterian,” “Congregational,” “Lutheran”) in the church title.

African/Ethiopian churches are generally earlier in origin than the other two types described below. In the past fifty years they have been somewhat eclipsed by the other, more enthusiastic “spiritual” churches. Comaroff suggests that this is because they occupy the middle ground in an increasingly polarized society and do not offer radical alternatives.

Spiritual/Prophet-Healing Churches

The “spiritual” or “prophet-healing” churches emphasize spiritual power. They are independent African churches with theological connections to the Pentecostal movement, although they have moved in their own direction away from Western-oriented Pentecostalism in several respects over the years and may be regarded as Pentecostal only with important qualifications. Like Pentecostals, however, they are churches that emphasize the working of the power of the Spirit. Pobee and Ositelu call these “Pentecostal churches in Africa,” noting that they do not trace their origins to Europe or North America.

The term “Pentecostal” is taken from the account of the coming of the Spirit in the second chapter of Acts, and although spiritual churches differ fundamentally from Western Pentecostal churches, they too emphasize the centrality of the Holy Spirit in faith and (especially) in practice and therefore may be termed “African Pentecostal.” Three decades ago Swiss theologian Walter Hollenweger employed “Pentecostal” to refer to “spiritual” (Zionist) churches, and, more recently, Harvey Cox referred to them as “the African expression of the worldwide Pentecostal movement.” But although there are definite links with and similarities to Pentecostalism, it is necessary in Africa to make a distinction between the older “spiritual” churches and the newer Pentecostal churches (discussed in the next section) in order to avoid confusion.

The spiritual/prophet-healing churches form the largest and most significant grouping of AICs. They are particularly difficult to describe, for they include a vast variety of some of the biggest of all churches in Africa—the Kimbanguists and the African Apostolics in central Africa; the Christ Apostolic Church, the Aladura churches, and the Harrist churches in West Africa; and the Zion Christian Church and the Amanazaretha in southern Africa. These are all churches with hundreds of thousands of members, and in at least the cases of the Kimbanguists and Zionists, several millions. Some of these churches are now members of ecumenical bodies such as national councils of churches, the continental All Africa Council of Churches, and the international World Council of Churches. In the eyes of those who consider these councils as offering some measure of respectability, these moves are welcomed and give the AICs legitimacy that they denied them by European churches and colonial powers for so long. Most spiritual AICs, however, are not members of ecumenical bodies and are not clamoring to be so. Their legitimacy hails from a belief in divinely appointed leaders who do not need to seek human recognition, and from their time-tested strengths as major denominations in their own right.

Because written theology is not a priority and is generally less precisely formulated in these churches than in European institutions, the differences in belief systems, liturgy, and prophetic healing practices are usually considerable. Foundational to these churches are definite theological presuppositions, found more in the practice of their Christianity than in formal dogma. Like the newer Pentecostal and charismatic churches described below, there is an emphasis on healing, although the methods of obtaining healing differ. Whereas other Pentecostals and charismatics generally practice laying on of hands and
accompanied by the use of various symbolic objects such as blessed water, ropes, staffs, papers, or ash. This practice constitutes one of the more obvious differences between other Pentecostals and these churches. There are strong taboos prohibiting members from any use of alcohol, tobacco, and pork. The attitude to traditional religious practices is generally more ambivalent than in the newer Pentecostal churches, particularly when it comes to ancestor rituals, and some of these churches allow polygyny. At the same time, the majority take a clear stand against practices such as witchcraft and spirit possession.

For the outside observer, the biggest distinguishing feature of many of these churches is the almost universal use of uniforms for members, often white robes with colored sashes and, in some cases, military-like khaki. These obviously non-African accretions notwithstanding, spiritual/prophet-healing churches have possibly adapted themselves to and addressed the popular African worldview more substantially than other AICs, which is their unique contribution to African Christianity.

**Newer Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches**

The newer Pentecostal or charismatic churches and ministries are of much more recent origin. They may be regarded as Pentecostal movements because they too emphasize the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, many of these churches prefer terms like “charismatic” and “evangelical” and do not regard themselves as “Pentecostal.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African/Ethiopian (from ca. 1884)</th>
<th>Spiritual/Prophet-Healing (from ca. 1910)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bapedi Lutheran Church</td>
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<td>Zulu Congregational Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>African Presbyterian Church</td>
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<td>African Orthodox Church</td>
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<td>Africa Israel Nineveh Church</td>
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<td>Spiritual churches</td>
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The newer churches vary in nature from small independent house churches to rapidly growing, large church organizations, such as the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria led by William Kumuyi, the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God African led by Ezekiel Guti, and the Grace Bible Church led by Mosa Sono in South Africa. Despite their recent origins, some of these churches are already among the largest and most influential in their respective countries. Their rapid growth over the past two decades indicates that they have grown at the expense of all types of older churches, including the spiritual churches. There is a strong Western, especially North American, Pentecostal influence in many of these churches, both in liturgy and in leadership patterns, and North American neo-Pentecostal “prosperity” preachers are sometimes promoted. The difference between these churches and Pentecostal and charismatic churches in the West is difficult to discern on the surface, except that leadership is entirely African and exhibits more of a local, autonomous nature. Their founders are generally highly gifted younger men and women who are respected for their preaching and leadership abilities, and who are relatively well educated, though not necessarily in theology.

These churches tend to be more sharply opposed to traditional practices than is the case with spiritual churches. They often ban not only alcohol and tobacco but also the use of symbolic healing objects and the wearing of church uniforms. The membership tends to consist of younger, less economically deprived, and more formally educated people. They are often seen, particularly by the older AICs, as mounting a sustained
Christianity's World Mission would be less intimidating and more manageable if everyone spoke the same language, followed the same customs and viewed life the same way. That idyllic world, however, is not the world Christ calls us to engage.

The real world features at least a dozen major cultural families and more than 2,000 religions, 6,000 languages and 30,000 distinct societies and cultures. There are also an unknown (and shifting) number of sub-cultures, counter-cultures and peoples with their own distinct name, history and identity. Furthermore, secularization has transformed Western nations into “mission fields” once again.

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attack on traditional African values. To the older European mission-founded churches, they demonstrate a form of Christianity that has great appeal to a new generation of Africans. To the older AICs, with whom they actually have much in common, they are often a source of tension. The new churches preach against tribalism and parochial denominationalism. They are often sharply critical of the older AICs, particularly in what they perceive as the African traditional religious component of AIC practices, which are sometimes seen as manifestations of demons needing to be exorcized. Not surprisingly, older AICs feel hurt and threatened by them.

The new churches have to some extent embraced Western notions of a nuclear family and have promoted individualized, urban lifestyles, thereby enabling members to escape onerous commitments to the extended family and to achieve success and accumulate possessions independently. This focus brings the newer churches into further tension with African traditional culture and ethnic ties. The newer churches sometimes castigate other churches for their dead formalism and traditionalism, so that European-founded churches also feel threatened by them.

Conclusion

I have outlined three of the ways in which AICs can be described. These types are by no means the only ones, nor is this the only way a typology could be suggested. There are hundreds of AICs that do not neatly fit into any of these categories and probably would not wish to do so. What is important is how the churches see themselves. This discussion of typology is merely intended as an admittedly superficial introduction to the tremendously rich diversity and creativity of the AIC movement. It is hoped that the reader will be able to make evaluations about the complexity of the AIC movement on the basis of the internal evidence from the churches themselves.

Notes

2. African Initiated Churches are known variously as African Independent Churches, African Indigenous Churches, and African Instituted Churches, all of which may be indicated by the acronym AIC. John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu II (African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts, and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches—A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement [Geneva: WCC, 1998]) advocate the term “African Initiatives in Christianity,” saying that the term “independent” no longer describes the uniqueness of AICs, which is seen in “their character as African initiatives and, therefore, in accordance with the African genius and culture and ethos” (p. 4).
4. Previously in the School of Mission and World Christianity, Selly Oak Colleges, from August 1999 the unit has been attached to the newly named Centre for Missiology and World Christianity, Department of Theology, University of Birmingham.
11. “Independents,” as reported in WCE for the three countries, are Congo, 12,005,000, Nigeria, 23,975,000, South Africa, 18,500,000, totaling 54,525,000, or 65 percent of the African “Independents” category.
16. See Barrett’s assessment of the literature in his Schism, pp. 37–43.
17. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets, p. 53.
29. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets, p. 54.
32. Ibid., p. 192.
34. Pobee and Ositelu, African Initiatives, p. 34.
38. It is becoming increasingly difficult to define “Pentecostal.” If we persist with a limited, rather stereotyped and dogmatic understanding of the term, we will fail to recognize the great variety of Pentecostal movements in most of the rest of the world, many of which have arisen quite independently of Western Pentecostalism. In Africa the term includes (1) the majority of older AICs, (2) classical Pentecostals originating in Western Pentecostal missions, and (3) newer independent churches, fellowships, and ministries. The classical or denominational Pentecostals (such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of God) are very active and growing throughout Africa; they have undoubtedly played a significant role in the emergence of some of the newer groups. But the classical Pentecostal churches typically were founded by missionaries, mostly from Britain and North America, and therefore they cannot be regarded primarily as African initiated movements, even though their growth involved more African leadership and financial independence than...
was the case in most of the older missionary-founded churches.


41. Anderson, Zion and Pentecost, pp. 76–78.


A Resurgent Church in a Troubled Continent: Review Essay of Bengt Sundkler’s History of the Church in Africa

Lamin Sanneh

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ike the temple of Solomon, Bengt Sundkler’s History of the Church in Africa (with Christopher Steed [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000], xix + 1,232 pp., maps, bibliography, index) was several decades in the making, and its completion was as eagerly awaited. Sundkler was a Swedish missionary in South Africa and Tanzania and subsequently professor at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. He died in 1995 before the work was completed, but by then he had laid the tram lines and set the direction before being joined by Christopher Steed, who teaches at Uppsala. Steed steered the book through its final stages of writing and presided over its publication.

It is a book on a grand scale, as such a fitting monument to the staggering story of Christianity in Africa. Sundkler, it happens, was one of the first writers to recognize in his Bantu Prophets in South Africa (1948, 1961) that African Christianity, even in its birth pangs, showed signs of being significantly different from the version Europeans contrived for it, and that it was destined to outlast the colonial rule that framed its modern introduction in the continent. This 1,200-page volume is Sundkler’s long-awaited retrospective assessment of the subject.

The book presents what has become the familiar outline of the story of Christianity from its origins: the political and social forces with which the first Christians contended; the measures of suppression and repression adopted against the new religion; the ferment and upheaval in the north African church; the stories of converts, heretics, apostates, martyrs, bishops, imperial agents, monks, and missionaries; and the flourishing and waning of Christian states and institutions. This catalog is followed by an overview of developments in the nineteenth century, the century of European ascendency and of epochal geographic discoveries, including advances in modern hygiene and medicine. Christianity’s range expanded accordingly, and Protestant and Catholic missions penetrated settlements beyond the coastal fringe.

Appearances can be deceptive, however, for Europe’s ascendency in no way explains Christianity’s successful spread and expansion in Africa. It was not European surrogates such as kept kings, paramount chiefs, trading clients, and coastal mulatto populations (p. 47) that carried the Gospel into the heart of Africa, but African preachers, evangelists, catechists (p. 412), schoolteachers, lay readers (as in Uganda, pp. 572ff., or in the Congo, p. 1,021), nurses, petty traders, women of note, their dependents, and, in the Congo, young army recruits who were signed on as catechists. The great promise of Christianity lay in the interior, not on the coast with its compromising European cultural climate.

In African custom, the ancestors were venerated and male elders revered, whereas in Christianity, by contrast, the young were embraced and women enfranchised. So the religion irrupted in Africa as a mass youth movement in significant discontinuity with custom and usage. Similarly, what justified establishing the church in Africa was not late nineteenth-century classic colonialism but rather the drive a century earlier to abolish the slave trade and to create free settlements under the leadership of former slaves and captives. In fact, free settlements were conceived as a weapon in the crusade for abolition. Thus was Freetown, Sierra Leone, established, precariously in 1787 with a haggard batch of London blacks, and then confidently in 1792 with a determined band of American blacks, leading to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. Christianity was accordingly stamped with the values of antislavery and promoted as the cause of the oppressed and the stigmatized. The book refers to this factor, but, regretably, only as a subordinate theme of the story of European missionary outreach.

The European theme dominates in several places, even when Africans are being approved of. Take the matter of translating the Bible into African languages (pp. 1,029–31). The book describes this language factor in the transmission of Christianity in haphazard, anecdotal fashion: individual missionaries and their struggle to communicate with Africans in the mother tongue, individual accounts of translation work that formed part of the missionary enterprise, the use of the vernacular in particular schools, and the numerous languages involved in the mis-

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This way of describing the subject is a conceptual framework that ties Bible translation into the logistics of indigenization.

It is not simply that Europeans needed to overcome the obstacle of African languages in order for Christianity to make headway, but that the creation of vernacular Scriptures grounded Christianity in the native soil. (Protestants followed up the translation of the Bible with a translation of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and the Catholics with, say, Thomas a Kempis's Imitatio Christi [p. 845].) To claim, as the authors do, that the vernacular cause represented a Protestant social concern for a nonelitist biblical Christianity (p. 250) is to take the matter out of African hands and to reduce it to a version of what transpired, or is purported to have transpired, in Reformation Europe. (As it turned out, in some places, such as in Malawi, Protestants embraced educational elitism [pp. 479, 636-45].) Tellingly, vernacular literacy sometimes provoked a spirited defense of things native against Christian imposition, making advancement of things native a precursor of Christian advance. Such irony, and the struggle for justice and autonomy that it spawned, belongs very much with the history of the church in Africa.

A similar objection can be made to the way the book deals with African names for God. One could argue that the adoption in Christianity of African names for God represented the most fundamental theological adjustment in the transmission of the Gospel. It implied the abandonment of arguments of European ascendancy and, too, of the moral logic of permanent colonial and missionary tutelage. But there is no thematic treatment of it in the book.

In distinguishing between Catholic and Protestant missions, the book calls attention to the structures of leadership and central direction for Catholics and the boards and committees for Protestants. In the priesthood Catholics required much higher standards of proficiency in philosophy and theology than did Protestants, who stressed instead the training of national leaders. In other words, in their structures, Protestants gave greater prominence to lay activism and direction. And they also felt the need to oppose Roman Catholicism, though, far removed now from Europe's fratricidal wars, Protestants discovered in the fellowship of the Gospel on the mission field a spirit of deep ecumenical charity that would grow. Though Catholics and Protestants differed sharply on educational policy, some major mission board leaders, including the English Henry Venn, the American Rufus Anderson, and Catholic leaders like Charles Lavigerie and Francois Libermann, strengthened this ecumenical solidarity.

Still, I would like to have seen stressed in such solidarity the effects of the African values of hospitality and tolerance. For example, it was Ajayi Crowther (ca. 1806-91), the African former captive turned Anglican bishop, who in 1885 welcomed the Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers to Onitsha, Nigeria, with a gift of land. Said he, "I acquired this land for the cause of God—take it." Indeed, Crowther's promotion of Christianity as sympathetic to African religious and social values deserves development into an organizing and an interpretive idea.

What makes this book hard to evaluate is not so much its scale as its methodology. The survey approach takes in countries, regions, the bewildering array of missions, religious orders, breakaway groups, movements, schools, local agents, prophet leaders, Catholics, Protestants, Copts, Ethiopian Orthodox, the slave trade, the Portuguese, the French, the Italians, the British, the preindustrial and apartheid South Africa, the Kimberley mineral revolution, the amaZulu, Tiyo Soga, church women, Islam, African religions, the two world wars, the Vatican and Africa, prayer, dreams, healing, prophecy, and so on. This cafeteria-style church history has many advantages, bringing in as it does a large selection of items, whereas a more selective approach with a clear analytic set of theses would in all likelihood have made for easier comprehension, though it would force out of the account much that is worthy of record. It is a Herculean person who would shoulder all or much of this information without buckling under its weight. In the event, the book will be used mainly as a library reference text by students of the subject. Africans, sadly, will have limited access to it even there.

I am forced by the constraints of a review of a long book to highlight selected trends in the spread of the church in Africa. The colonial factor was a complex one: the French, the Portuguese, and, in their time, the Germans laid down some clear policy objectives that corralled the missions. The British for the most part tacked and veered with the prevailing wind, with the realities of an awakened Islam and settler politics in eastern and southern Africa driving administrative calculations. The role of kings and chiefs, particularly in eastern and southern Africa, was crucial for some missions, while that of lay free agency, as in Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria, was decisive for others. Rwanda and Burundi, Botswana, and Lesotho, for example, were heavily Christianized, while, by contrast, Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville, and the Central African Republic were only minimally so. Trade in European goods and in African raw materials shaped Africa's encounter with the West and with Christianity. Africa's entrance into the international community of nations and its worldwide trading and economic system changed the continent forever but not always for good. Africa's embracing of Christianity, however, was a great deal more complex, thanks to the role of African languages in Christianization.

The book gives attention to a dimension of this question in chapter 12 (called "Local Perspectives" [pp. 659-85], as if "foreign perspectives" is implied for the rest). The twentieth century saw new developments in mission policy and in indigenous responses to Christianity. It was the century of charismatic Pentecostal movements that spawned African Independent Churches as well as producing a dream-filled and vision-charged ferment in mission-founded churches, both Catholic and Protestant, a subject Sundkler has elsewhere expounded with great originality. The phenomenon of charismatic Christianity, with its prayer and healing ministries, and its peculiar brand of millennial expectancy, is called Zionism in southern Africa, Kimbanguism in the Congo, Aladura in Nigeria, and prophetism in the Ivory Coast and Ghana. It carried before it unprecedented numbers of African converts, with a spillover effect on the other churches—an example of African agency at work. "Ethiopianism" was the political counterpart to spiritual Zionism. It called for freeing Africans from the religious and political tutelage of Europeans.

The missions responded to this two-pronged challenge with
adaptation as a theological strategy (p. 744), which it found to be inadequate. Placide Tempels in 1945 offered radical "bantuization" in response but was removed back to his native Belgium for his troubles. But the dike had been breached, and the missions reeled as the revival tide rose and swept over the religious landscape. In South Africa the politics of apartheid splintered society but united African Christians and church leaders in opposition. Religious freedom acquired a heady purpose at a time when political freedom was suppressed. It resulted in a proliferation of groups and churches and associations. The picture would be considerably complicated by a concerted drive in the churches in Africa in the 1970s for a moratorium on missions (p. 1,027). Following the Soweto uprising of the mid-1970s, pressure mounted to end white rule in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, as well as in Rhodesia. The churches were busy breaking free of the Western straitjacket of separation of church and state, a separation that compressed Christianity into individual, privatized piety, or else captured it as a legal enclave under a concordat agreement, as happened in Angola and Mozambique. But events fast overtook the churches: the dream of political independence, trailing the secular millennium, soured dislocation, the AIDS epidemic, and an unprecedented refugee crisis (pp. 909–17).

The churches, under African leadership, could not be indifferent. The missionary compromise with the colonial state was seen as a betrayal not only of Africans but also of Christianity's message of liberation, justice, and hope. Sadly for African church leaders, however, with little political catechism about how to reposition the churches vis-à-vis the postcolonial state, they engaged in social criticism with not much more than a rhetorical flourish, and their own ambition for power and office weakened their moral authority. They behaved with the same authoritarian intolerance as the political leaders they criticized. Corruption and despotic rule despoiled countries, divided society, and failed the national cause, but they did succeed in uniting with the exploiters of the people. The Protestant bodies, organized under national Christian councils, stepped into the breach created by the weakness or collapse of the state and, with other NGOs, embarked on social and economic development centered on urban and rural projects. That shift challenged the religious status quo, and so church leaders responded with free market-style mass revival campaigns, with encouragement from U.S.-based evangelical organizations. Much of it was a distraction from the real problems of Africa at a time when distractions were a norm of political practice. Contextual theology flourished in this setting, with the ironic backing of external organizations like the Geneva-based World Council of Churches and other European bodies. It was a calculated alignment of the churches' intellectual base community. The astonishing spread and expansion of Christianity in a deeply troubled continent has created an inverse lowering of capacity, leading to an extraordinary bottleneck of problems striking for their critical urgency. Equally plausibly, anything and nothing would help.

**Noteworthy**

**Personalia**


**Died.** William J. Danker, 86, in Arlington, Virginia, May 17, 2001. After serving for eight years in Japan, where he helped found the Lutheran Church of Japan, Danker served as professor of mission and director of the Center for World Christian Interaction at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

**Gary J. Bekker,** academic dean and professor of missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary, has been appointed Executive Director of Christian Reformed World Missions. **Douglas Petersen** has been appointed to the Chair in World Missions and Intercultural Studies at Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California. **Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe** was appointed Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples by Pope John Paul II, effective May 2, 2001, succeeding Cardinal Jozef Tomko, who led the mission congregation for sixteen years.

**Announcing**

On January 1, 2001, the Irish School of Ecumenics became an academic institute within Trinity College, Dublin. The school provides postgraduate study on peace, justice, and ecumenical issues and offers M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees, or a Diploma in Ecumenical Studies and International Peace.

Roger E. Hedlund, Managing Editor of the Indian publication *Dharma Deepika: A South Asian Journal of Missiological Research* and Professor of Mission Research, Serampore College, has announced a new publication project, the *Dictionary of South Asian Christianity.* Mr. Paul Joshua has been appointed project coordinator. Completion of the dictionary is expected to require three to five years.

**Currents in World Christianity (CWC),** directed by Brian Stanley at Cambridge University, has established a database for missionary periodicals published in England and Ireland between the eighteenth century and 1960. It is designed to help researchers investigating the meeting of Western and non-Western cultures. Searchable by region, title, and specific terms, it can be accessed via "Resources" on the CWC homepage at www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/carts/ewc.

CWC is also sponsoring a consultation November 1–3, 2001, at the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois, on the preservation of Protestant nondenominational mission records. Contact Robert Shuster at Robert.D.Shuster@wheaton.edu.

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The Roman Catholic scene is a variation and a repetition of the Protestant scene: with their different structures and hierarchies, Catholics and Protestants still had Africa in common. At the hands of Pope John XXIII the Catholic Church went through the aggiornamento, an intellectual and structural change and renewal, culminating in Vatican II, which stimulated widespread developments throughout the church. For example, the Bible was reinstated in Catholic teaching, with translation work into different African languages authorized (pp. 1,029–30). Earlier Pius XII and, later, Paul VI encouraged initiatives in Africa, which in Paul VI’s case included a personal visit in 1969 that left an indelible impression on him. Pope John Paul II maintained the tradition with visits to Africa in 1980, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1989, and several in the 1990s, including his convening of the historic African Synod in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in September 1995, an idea first mooted in 1983 by the bishops in Zaire. Africa had become an accepted part of the Christian landscape. But the changes overtaking the Protestant churches were not sparing the Roman Catholic Church, particularly changes involving the role of women and laypeople. In response, someone like Cardinal Zairean rite, the Mass of the Lagunes, the Mass of the Savanna, the Ndzon-Melen Mass of Yaoundé, the Swahili Mass, and chants in numerous languages, including the Cameroonian Ewondo, were produced. A rich vein of African spirituality was uncapped, and it inspired efforts at cultural renaissance. Accordingly, Alioune Diop, the Senegalese scholar and founder of the Paris-based Présence Africaine, organized numerous cultural conferences dealing with all aspects of African religion, culture, and society, as well as with the black diaspora, culminating in the world Black Arts Festival at Lagos in 1977 (pp. 1,023–25).

The book draws to a conclusion with an epilogue in two parts. The first is a list of seven features characteristic of Christianity in its origin and in its eventual transmission in Africa. The paradox of Christian growth and renewal amid political and economic collapse is a striking mark of African Christianity, echoed in the corresponding increase in church membership in the absence of adequate institutional resources and leadership. It suggests a depth of spiritual impact independent of resources and structures that would be considered indispensable in the West. The second part is an elaboration of that spiritual impact on people, specifically of what the Christian faith has meant to Africans. With that point the book returns to a question that has implications for the writing of the history of Christianity in the non-Western world, namely, the transmission and appropriation of the religion by the peoples of the world. This task is different from that of writing about Global Christianity, with its suggestion of a single, authorized version approved for transmission to the natives, and subject to periodic purification by external arbiters. World Christianity, by contrast, is Christianity transformed from its diverse local cultural impact and from its translation into the languages of the people. The book strikes this note repeatedly, saying that African Christianity is a youth movement and a religion of lay agency, that the Bible in the vernacular is the people’s book, that preaching is a high calling more than it is a profession, that the liturgy is the celebration of life, and that the church is a place to feel at home in, and so on. If we remember how much of this perspective has come to pass with little reliance on institutions and structures of any consequence, then we are justified in viewing the history of African Christianity as a movement of antistructure, as a movement of the young, women, the outcast, the oppressed, and the helpless who exist outside the structures and who thrive on the new ethics of liberation, justice, mutual help, and openness. African Christianity demonstrates a splendid exception to the law of the survival of the fittest.

The book ends with a reference to the tantalizing sermon of a Zulu pastor delivered on Easter morning, 1939. Apart from its nostalgic value, it is not clear where the sermon belongs in the structure of the book: does it have connections with the theme of African Christianity as a mass youth movement? Does it tell us something about the role of pastors, or even about directions in Zulu Christianity? Does it suggest, not the “Christus Victor” motif of the theology of St. Irenaeus, as the authors claim, but a shift in the old Zulu millennialism from retributive sanctions to the new Christian eschatology of hope and promise? Or does it speak specifically to the African use of Scripture? In that case, is that what the authors mean when they claim earlier that the Bible is the book of Protestant Africa (p. 1,031)? What, then, is “Protestant” about Zulu eschatological meditations? A more coherent conclusion seems called for.

The book deserves to take its place in the distinguished lists of current works on African Christianity. In scale it comes closest to C. P. Groves’s four-volume The Planting of Christianity in Africa (1948–58), now dated, though the approach is different. It is also different in approach from Adrian Hastings’s lively, singleminded study The Church in Africa: 1450–1950 (1994), or Elizabeth Isichel’s more reflective, interpretive personal approach in her History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present (1995).

I welcome Sundkler and Steed’s emphasis on African agency and cultural mediation of the Gospel, and thus its central premise of dynamic inculturation that gives pride of place to African recipients over against Western transmitters. I would have liked to see greater attention given to how the African transformation in its wholesome character represents all at once a genuine movement within a plurality of indigenous idioms and categories, an important break with Western rational norms of religion, and a further extension of the apostolic heritage. Accordingly, different Christian traditions as well as different religions have found a welcome home on the continent. The book’s historical approach is perhaps the only satisfactory way to do justice to this range and diversity.

There are quite a few slips and errors in the book. Some of these are easily fixed, such as in the index, where the same authors appear under different entries. In the main body of the book, some names are inconsistently spelled. The reader, for example, is not sure which is which: John Gatu or Gatuh, since both are given, though in the index “Gatu” is listed. The Senegambian African king whom the Portuguese met in 1458 is Nyomimansa, not Nomimansa. The bibliography is uneven.

On its own logic and balance, the book should have had at least one African coauthor. Then the recourse to a “global”
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European understanding of the church would have been less tempting, and it would have sent a significant signal of Africans owning their part in the history of Christianity on their continent. Sundkler's own instincts and sympathies, so evident throughout the book, were very much in line with that suggestion. It would have made it a good deal easier to commend the book not only as a monument to the church in Africa but as a testament of the church in Africa.

The mixed baggage that was the legacy of the European presence in Africa, as well as the handicap for Africans of the book's high price, would have been mitigated somewhat by an African coauthorship. John Colenso is a worthy example in such sensitivities. He insisted that, given the troubled nature in the nineteenth century of the encounter of the whites with the Zulus, no trouble should be spared to ensure that the "native point of view" was preserved. Accordingly, in an unprecedented move, he encouraged the Zulus themselves for the first time to write their own history. The book could have taken a lesson from that innovation and vindicated its own African premise. Nevertheless, *A History of the Church in Africa* is a major account of a crucial subject.

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**Shortcut to Language Preparation? Radical Evangelicals, Missions, and the Gift of Tongues**

*Gary B. McGee*

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, radical evangelicals on the fringe of the Protestant missions movement longed for the restoration of apostolic power in "signs and wonders" (Acts 5:12) to expedite gospel proclamation before the imminent return of Christ. The slow pace of conversions overseas and the unprecedented opportunities for evangelism had created what was widely referred to as the crisis of missions. This essay traces how radical mission enthusiasts proposed that according to Jesus' promise in Mark 16:17—"And these signs will accompany those who believe . . . they will speak in new tongues"—God might confer intelligible human languages on missionaries. I shall also examine the frustrations over failure to acquire language proficiency, the appeal of the "gift of tongues" (glossolalia), criticisms of such expectations, and the legacy of this interest.

**The Challenge of Foreign Languages**

In the latter part of the century, as European colonial empires began to reach their farthest extent, American imperialism flourished and acquired its greatest gains as a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898. Anglo-Saxons on both sides of the Atlantic looked forward to the day when the English language would become the international means of communication. With more than a whiff of social Darwinism, Josiah Strong, general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of the United States, announced that the English language "is better fitted than any other to become, and . . . is actually becoming more and more, a world-language." Nevertheless, until that glorious day arrived, colonial administrators and civil servants, military personnel, merchants, and missionaries were reduced to learning the vernacular languages of the countries in which they worked.

Not surprisingly, learning a foreign language presented a major obstacle to most people. Agencies pressed their missionaries to master the languages as soon as possible. Radical evangelicals especially struggled to jump this hurdle; they wanted to preach immediately after arriving on their fields because, in their view, the time was short in which to complete the Great Commission. As Cora M. Rudy cautioned in her song "Christ for the Philippines,"

*How can you hope to enter heaven if you refuse to tell The many, many heathen souls that still in darkness dwell, Then speed your prayers, your gifts, yourselves, or God's eternal "woe" Will take the place of His commission, "Go."*

Yet, despite the divine imperative, the challenge of a language often seemed insurmountable, and some returned home in failure.

Sharing the sentiments of other veteran missionaries, J. C. R. Ewing, president of Forman Christian College in Lahore, India (now in Pakistan), cautioned the collegians at the Third International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) meeting at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1898, about the difficulties that lay ahead: "It is a lifetime's work. No person with less than five years of hard study can speak to the peoples of oriental lands as he should." J. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission described the task as "[breaking] the back of the language." Unfortunately, the drudgery of several years of instruction in the country of their calling usually replaced the "joyful evangelism" that new recruits envisioned.

One missionary to China said, "It is dull work to pass the day saying Ting, Tang, in a hundred different tones." Indeed, "to thoroughly master the Chinese language would require a head of oak, lungs of brass, nerves of steel, a constitution of iron, the patience of Job, and the lifetime of Methuselah." Another missionary, this one to the "Red Indians" of North America, groaned, "No white man could ever get his tongue round the long Indian words which seemed to have been growing since the flood of Noah itself, so long and so immense are they in size." Judging by these sentiments, it is little wonder that, in the words of Congregational pastor Edward A. Lawrence, writing in 1895 after a twenty-month tour of the missions, "Some have been disposed to pray for the gift of tongues."
Baltimore cautioned that even God himself would not help you the gift of tongues. You will have to learn the language of the cuts. Calling the volunteers to a “sanctified common sense” at the Fourth International Convention of the SVM in Toronto, Canada, in 1902, he pronounced that even with a special divine endowment of power, the Holy Spirit “will not in a miraculous way impart to you the gift of tongues. You will have to learn the language of the people to whom you go as you learned Greek and Latin and Hebrew in college and seminary.” The problem continued to attract attention, most notably at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910.

**The Gift of Tongues**

More than others after midcentury, A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, encouraged the faithful to trust God for miracles when engaged in evangelism, especially physical healings. Along with A. T. Pierson, A. J. Gordon, and other radical evangelicals influenced by premillennial eschatology, he declared: “We are preaching the gospel not for the conversion of the world, but for a witness unto all nations, and when we shall have accomplished this, [Christ] will come.”

To hasten the process, Simpson added, “The plan of the Lord [is] to pour out His Spirit not only in the ordinary, but also in the extraordinary gifts and operations of His power … as His people press forward to claim the evangelization of the entire world.” With the close of human history just days, months, or a few years away, the gospel message had to get out, regardless of the number converted.

The millenial clock had already begun to strike the midnight hour in the minds of many Christians. God just might enable missionaries who had sufficient faith to “speak with new tongues” in order to bypass the nuisance of language school. With a more confident view of supernatural empowerment than Scholl, Simpson considered the possible reappearance of tongues and, by 1891, noted that “instances are not wanting now of its apparent restoration in missionary labours both in India and Africa.”

As early as 1830 this expectancy surfaced in a charismatic movement began in Scotland under the ministry of the Presbyterian minister Edward Irving, when several people spoke in tongues. An early participant, Mary Campbell, said that she had received Turkish and the language of the Palau Island group in the Pacific Ocean to enable her to evangelize these people groups.

Given the brevity of time before Christ’s return, she wrote, “If God has promised to furnish his servants with every necessary qualification, what have they to do but step into the field, depending on Him for all?”

Other radical evangelicals shared this optimism about the Spirit’s bestowal of languages. Seeking a special baptism of power, the celebrated Cambridge Seven of athletic fame in England arrived in China in 1885 to serve with the China Inland Mission. While sailing up the Han River with J. Hudson Taylor, three of them, C. T. Studd and Cecil and Arthur Polhill, put their Chinese grammar books aside and prayed for the Pentecostal gift of Mandarin and supernatural power according to Mark 16:17.

Exasperated, Taylor told his starry-eyed novices: “How many and subtle are the devices of Satan to keep the Chinese ignorant of the gospel. If I could put the Chinese language into your brains by one wave of the hand I would not do it.” Taylor emphasized not only that such presumption would delay their mastery of the language and keep the Chinese from hearing the Gospel even longer but also that effective communication in Mandarin required more than just an ability to speak the words. Criticized as an idle fanatic, Studd wrote home that he and his companions finally returned to their books.

In 1889, twelve years before the revival at Charles F. Parham’s Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, which sparked the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement, a “faith mission” developed within the Kansas YMCA. It became known as the Kansas-Sudan movement. After hearing the stirring preaching of H. Grattan Guinness, founder of the Congo and Balolo Mission (later the Regions Beyond Missionary Union) at the Topeka YMCA, eight men and women dedicated their lives to missions and set out for Sierra Leone in 1890.

Allegedly influenced by Simpson as they waited at his missionary hostel in New York City for their ship to sail, the eight arrived in Sierra Leone confident of biblical promises of healing and Pentecostal tongues. After discovering their need to learn the native dialect, they persevered, but three died from malaria, having refused to take quinine. Mrs. H. Grattan (Fanny) Guinness, editor of the London-based *Regions Beyond* mission magazine, held Simpson responsible for their adoption of an “unscriptural and reason-revolting doctrine.” She warned her readers that Simpson, like Irving before him, believed in a restoration of the gift of tongues for the advancement of missions.

Whether or not it was fair to blame Simpson for the expectations of the Kansans, there was a flurry of interest in the gift of tongues in the Alliance. In 1892 William W. Simpson (no relation to A. B. Simpson) and William Christie arrived in China intent on evangelizing Tibet, then considered by some to be the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Like Studd and the Polhills, they hoped to receive the Mandarin as well as Tibetan languages from God.

Responding to discussion in the ranks, “but wishing to avoid the dangers of Irvingism,” the Alliance convention in October of that year issued an urgent call to the faithful to pray for “the special outpouring of the Spirit in connection with the acquiring of foreign languages and the resistance of the climatic difficulties of Africa, India, and China. We are sure that God has it in His heart to specially signalize His promise in this connection.”

Six years later, however, Simpson reminded his readers of the excesses among the followers of Edward Irving and cautioned Alliance members about a “strained and extravagant attempt to unduly exaggerate the gift of tongues.” Some have even proposed, he wrote, “that we should send our missionar­ies to the foreign field under a sort of moral obligation to claim this gift, and to despise the ordinary methods of acquiring a language.”

**The Walter Blacks and M. Jennie Glassey**

In the summer of 1895 in St. Louis, Missouri, Walter S. and Frances Black and M. Jennie Glassey testified to receiving new languages. Walter Black, a Canadian Baptist minister who was pastoring a congregation in St. Louis, met the seventeen-year-old Glassey while conducting services in a rural part of the state. She told him that when she experienced postconversion baptism in the Holy Spirit on March 23, 1894, she “received her call to Africa and the promise of the language to be given in due time.” In January 1895 Glassey moved to St. Louis, where she eventually resided with the Blacks. On July 8–9 Glassey reported receiving a “wonderful language lesson” from the Holy Spirit and spoke in several African dialects: “Housa,” “Croo,” and “Khoominar,” with the ability to write in the last named. Later the Blacks,
claiming the promise of Mark 16:17, obtained “Khoominar” through prayer with the laying on of hands by members of their church. With this experience, they too heard the call to Africa.

Returning home to Canada, the Blacks along with Glassey related their stories to an overflow crowd at the YMCA in Amherst, Nova Scotia, on December 8, 1895. Walter Black began by quoting scriptural precedents for the “gift of tongues, the visions seen by [New Testament believers] and all the gifts promised through the Holy Ghost.” He also gave Bible proof to show that the promise applied to the current time. “God is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” so that it was not God that had changed, but people. The Amherst Daily News also reported Glassey’s story of the vision she had received in St. Louis, in which she saw a long scroll with unfamiliar letters: “These were in the Croo language. The spirit [sic] read them most rapidly and she read after him. First, the psalms, for she was reared a psalm singing Scotish [sic] Presbyterian, then the Bible. So rapid was the reading that she feared she could not remember all, but has done so, and speaks the Croo language with grace and fluency.”

While the party remained in Amherst, a correspondent notified the St. John (New Brunswick) Daily Sun that Glassey had

A Wesleyan leader urged missionaries to seek the gift to speak fluently in the vernacular.

also acquired the Chinese language and then “visited two Celestials [Chinese] who run a laundry here, and carried on a conversation with the Chinamen in their native tongue, and also read passages from the Bible.” The Blacks and Glassey then departed for Sierra Leone on “faith” (i.e., without pledged support), led by “signs, wonders, miracles, healings, tongues and prophecy.”

Arriving in Liverpool, England, on January 7, 1896, where they ordinarily would have booked passage on a ship sailing down the West African coast, they were forced to remain there because of insufficient travel funds and perhaps other reasons. Their residence in the city lasted two years. On one occasion Glassey spoke to an old sailor acquainted with the “Khoominar” language who had visited Sierra Leone a dozen times. Upon hearing her speak in the dialect, “the power of God settled upon him, and then and there he broke down, confessed his sins, and became a Christian.” Black consequently remarked: “The same power that drove the arrow of conviction into the hardened heart of an old sailor as he listened to a young girl speaking a language she had never heard in the power of the Holy Ghost, that same power will convict unconverted people, even as it did on the day of Pentecost.” In view of their newfound abilities, he looked at contemporary mission endeavors and crowed that neither “20,000 nor 100,000 missionaries of the common sanctified type will [ever] evangelize this globe.” Instead, God’s church should seek the gift to speak fluently in the vernacular tongue, at the same time not depreciating their own efforts. Sometimes this anticipation brought unusual testimonies. William Taylor, Methodist missionary bishop for Africa, told of a young woman he had appointed who began her work by preaching through an interpreter. When he visited the mission station two or three months later, she was preaching fluently in the native language. Apparently, the same thing happened to others among his missionaries as well. In South India in 1881 Miss C. M. Reade of the Highways and Hedges Mission, who knew a few words in Hindi, prayed to receive the language to communicate directly to her hearers. As a result, “the power came to her as a gift from God.” One month she was unable to do more than put two or three sentences together; while the next month, she was able to preach and pray without waiting for a word. Those who heard her could only say with herself, “It was a gift from above.”

Eight years later China missionary Jonathan Goforth, a Canadian Presbyterian, said that he gained mastery of Mandarin only after receiving supernatural enablement. In 1892 an Anglican missionary in Japan, W. P. Buncombe, related that although he could not “speak fluently at all on any other subjects,” yet, “when preaching the Gospel the Holy Ghost makes me forget that I know but little Japanese, and I find, too, that the listeners understand.”

The Pentecostal Movement

Charles F. Parham, a midwestern holiness preacher, read an abridged account of Glassey’s story, reflected on its implications for mission, and reprinted it in his Apostolic Faith newspaper in 1899. He had also heard of a Bible institute where the personnel had “sought in vain, month after month for the speaking in other languages” (possibly Sandford’s Holy Ghost and Us Bible School). A year later he announced that a “Bro. and Sister Hamaker” had lodged at his headquarters in Topeka, Kansas, “to labor for Jesus until He gives them a heathen tongue, and then they will proceed to the missionary field.” During the summer of 1900 Parham journeyed to Shiloh, Maine, where he heard speaking in tongues for the first time at Sandford’s school. By the fall of 1900 Parham had become convinced that tongues not...

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only served as the indispensable sign or evidence of Spirit baptism but also offered the key to world evangelization: "If Balaam’s mule could stop in the middle of the road and give the first preacher that went out for money a bawling out in Arabic," he declared, "then anybody today ought to be able to preach in any language of the world if they had horse sense enough to let God use their tongue and throat."\footnote{Arthur T. Pierson popularized the phrase in his book *The Crisis of Missions; or, The Voice out of the Cloud* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1886); see also Dana L. Robert, "The Crisis of Missions: Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions," in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880–1980*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 29–46.}

By the time Parham and his students at Bethel Bible School in Topeka prayed in January 1901 for the end-times outpouring of the Holy Spirit (encouraged by Joel 2:28–29), the possible restoration of the gift of tongues had stirred interest among radical evangelicals for over two decades. With a unique theological twist, Parham and his followers expected that the Spirit would form them as the "bride of Christ," God’s special company of empowered and linguistically equipped missionaries.\footnote{Radical evangelicals were aware of the textual problem with the longer ending of the Gospel of Mark; see, for instance, A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of Healing* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, n.d.), pp. 245–46.}

Participants testified, as others did at later Pentecostal revivals (e.g., the Azusa Street revival of 1906–9), that God had given them the languages of the world, including Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Hungarian, Norwegian, Swedish, Bulgarian, Russian, Syrian, Zulu, Swahili, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Tibetan, Mandarin, Japanese, Chippewa, "Esquimaux," and even sign language for the deaf.\footnote{Josiah Strong, *Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions, 1880–1980*, (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1990), p. 147.} Referring to both Matthew 10:8–10 and Mark 16:17, one news note from Azusa Street boasted, "God is solving the missionary problem, sending out new-tongued missionaries on the apostolic faith line, without purse or scrip, and the Lord is going before them preparing the way."\footnote{George Scholl, "Points to Be Emphasized in Preparation for Missionary Work," in *World-Wide Evangelization: The Urgent Business of the Church: Addresses Delivered Before the Fourth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Toronto, Canada, February 26–March 2, 1902* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1902), p. 79.}

Not surprisingly, though claims of bestowed languages had the potential of being empirically verified, such claims severely tested the credulity of outside observers. Corroborating testimony that Pentecostals preached at will in their newfound foreign language or for spiritual worship—the notion of receiving languages reflected zeal and empowerment for evangelism, most Pentecostals seemed to have accepted the transition in meaning. Still, glossolalia among Pentecostals generated a continuing apprehension for other evangelical Christians. Even before the Pentecostal movement began, Presbyterian missionary John L. Nevius had rattled the serenity of the faithful when he told of exorcisms in China where demons had spoken in tongues.\footnote{Still, glossolalia among Pentecostals generated a continuing apprehension for other evangelical Christians. Even before the Pentecostal movement began, Presbyterian missionary John L. Nevius had rattled the serenity of the faithful when he told of exorcisms in China where demons had spoken in tongues. To some critics, Pentecostals had "crossed the Rubicon" into the satanic realm.}

As time passed, however, stories circulated that in rare instances there were missionaries, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, who when preaching in their own language, were unwittingly heard in another by their listeners.\footnote{Not surprisingly, though claims of bestowed languages had the potential of being empirically verified, such claims severely tested the credulity of outside observers. Corroborating testimony that Pentecostals preached at will in their newfound foreign language or for spiritual worship—the notion of receiving languages reflected zeal and empowerment for evangelism, most Pentecostals seemed to have accepted the transition in meaning.} During a revival in the Belgian Congo (now Republic of Congo) in 1953, Western visitors surprised a missionary affiliated with the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade when they told him that in one service when he was speaking in Swahili, they heard him in English. On the next day, an African woman informed him that twice, "when she had been praying with us in our house before some of the meetings, she had understood all that we prayed, even though we had prayed in English, a language of which she did not know a word."\footnote{By the time Parham and his students at Bethel Bible School in Topeka prayed in January 1901 for the end-times outpouring of the Holy Spirit (encouraged by Joel 2:28–29), the possible restoration of the gift of tongues had stirred interest among radical evangelicals for over two decades. With a unique theological twist, Parham and his followers expected that the Spirit would form them as the "bride of Christ," God’s special company of empowered and linguistically equipped missionaries.}

C. Peter Wagner has written about missionaries, struggling to learn a language, who received the "gift of language" and then preached fluently. He also tells of Jon and Cher Cadd of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship, whose interpreter suddenly began translating for them in the Vidoma language, even though he had never heard it before; this event led to the conversion of 120 Vidoma-speaking people in northern Zimba­bwe.\footnote{Still, glossolalia among Pentecostals generated a continuing apprehension for other evangelical Christians. Even before the Pentecostal movement began, Presbyterian missionary John L. Nevius had rattled the serenity of the faithful when he told of exorcisms in China where demons had spoken in tongues. To some critics, Pentecostals had "crossed the Rubicon" into the satanic realm.}

Final Remarks
The roots of much of the contemporary interest in "signs and wonders" can be traced to the expectancy of radical evangelicals a century ago that "these signs will accompany those who believe." Desperate concern to evangelize the world prompted some of them to hope that the Holy Spirit would restore the gift of tongues according to the promise of Mark 16:17. Their rationale was more pragmatic than theological. While Jennie Glassy and especially Charles Parham linked languages to Spirit baptism, others simply focused on their utility for preaching.

Much to their disappointment, missionaries who thought they had discovered a shortcut to language preparation had to dust off their grammar books and begin practicing the many pronunciations of words like "ting" and "tang."
My Pilgrimage in Mission

Diana Witts

My father’s family came to England from Holland as refugees during the eighteenth century. The name “Witts” is an Anglicization of “de Witt.” For 200 years the family lived in the Cotswold village of Upper Slaughter, where my grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather were rectors of the local church for over a century between them. So there was a good clerical tradition in the family, although the calling skipped my father’s generation when he himself went into the army. My mother’s family came from Lancashire, where her father had been a cotton spinner, and I was brought up in her parents’ home in Herefordshire when my father was away during the Second World War.

Together with my two sisters and brother, I was brought up on Bible stories and taken regularly to church; for many years I thought the reason that we always had to go to church on Whitsunday was because that was a special Sunday for the Witts family. Later on at boarding school I was confirmed along with my contemporaries, but I had little real idea what it was all about. I used to go to church spasmodically as a young adult, but gradually became less interested, and saw the Christian faith as a rather dull business of trying to be good.

In 1963 I went to Kenya to teach. In those days the British government gave overseas aid by sending teachers to secondary schools. So off I set to teach physics and mathematics to girls in a school in the White Highlands of Kenya, attracted to that part of the world by the color of the relief maps of East Africa. By then I had fallen in love with the hills, and there were clearly many mountains waiting to be explored in Kenya.

A Life-Changing Experience

Just a few months after arriving in Kenya, I had an experience that changed the course of my life. I became aware, over several weeks, that I had no understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of my life. I had never bothered about this question before, but at that time I was seized with a compelling need to know the answer and had no idea how to find it. I went to Holy Communion one Sunday morning, and as I knelt at the altar rail and put out my hands for the bread, I realized that I did not know what I was doing. Yet I also knew that I must know.

Afterward I asked the vicar if I could see him, and in the evening we talked together. He spoke about the cross, but at the time it made no sense to me. I went back to my flat, and as I was standing beside my bed, still in a state of total confusion and not even trying to pray, I suddenly saw a figure hanging from a cross. The vision appeared only fleetingly, but that was the most illuminated and meaningful moment of my life. Even now I can be moved to tears by the memory. I knew that what I had seen was the most important thing that had ever happened in the whole history of the world . . . and I knew that I had come home.

It was such an overwhelming experience that I had real difficulty with the language of the Christian community around me at that time. Had I made a decision for Christ? To me the words were meaningless—I had only been aware of being overwhelmed by God. I could no more have failed to respond to that moment than to have denied my own being. Did I know that Jesus was my personal Savior? Indeed I did, and the knowledge filled me with joy, but the statement seemed too small—I knew that the cross of Christ stood at the heart of the universe.

The next day when I went shopping I wanted to tell the people I met in the grocery store to stop worrying about the price of cabbages and rejoice that Christ had died for them. I have to confess that my British reserve inhibited me from actually doing so, but that initial clarion call from God was a deep call to mission.

When I came back to England, I spent six months in the community at Lee Abbey, a Christian conference center in Devon. There I met with young Christians from many parts of the world and experienced the joys and difficulties of living in a Christian community. I discovered that Christians (including myself) were far from perfect, but I also learned something of the power of God’s grace to transform difficult relationships. I particularly appreciated the teaching of the warden, Ken Pillar, and was grateful for that formative time.

I then returned to Kenya to teach at the Alliance Girls High School, Kikuyu. This was the leading African girls secondary school in Kenya at the time, and the school had a strong Christian tradition. Many of the girls used to walk considerable distances in all kinds of weather to teach Sunday school classes in the local primary schools. I helped them to prepare the lessons each week, and I was always challenged by their fresh insights and their missionary commitment to sharing their faith with the children. I also taught physics to some of the first generation of Kenyan women doctors.

After returning to Britain I spent four years at Gordonstoun School in Scotland, which was about to go coeducational. It was the first of the British boys public schools to take girls in throughout the school, and I was appointed as senior mistress to prepare the way for this change and to oversee the first few years of integration. The school at that time was an almost totally male community, and the whole ethos of the school was fairly tough—rugby players and mountaineers fitted in more easily than did sensitive children with artistic gifts. When the first girls came, it was assumed that they would simply fit in to the existing framework; there was no expectation that the school itself might need to change. Those first years were not easy ones for many of the girls, and I learned much about challenging structural inequalities. The whole experience made me more deeply aware of the social implications of the Gospel and the importance of working for just structures in society.

Among the Maasai

In 1975 I was accepted for training by the Church Mission Society (CMS) and went to Crowther Hall in Selly Oak for a term. There I sat at the feet of Lesslie Newbigin, who taught the theology of mission course, and Dan Beeby, who opened the Old Testament to me in a totally new way. The CMS then sent me back to Kenya, where I was asked to explore appropriate models of secondary education for Maasai girls. I was sent to the tiny village of Meto in the heart of the Maasai bush on the Kenya/Tanzania border and eventually established a small center for vocational training.

Diana Witts is the recently retired General Secretary of the Church Mission Society, London.
There were no other Europeans within a radius of sixty miles, so I had a unique opportunity to enter into the life of the local Maasai community.

I was fascinated by the language and struggled (mainly unsuccessfully) to master the tonal differences. The complex verbal system includes no future tense, and the word for tomorrow is *meta bai ki*, which translates as “should it happen.” During my first ten months at Meto there was no rain, and I started to understand why the future is such an uncertain concept for the Maasai. By the end of the ten months the grass had turned to dust, understand why the future is such an uncertain concept for the

Had the drought continued, people would have begun to die as well. But then one miraculous day the rain came. Three days later the whole landscape had turned green, as lush grass covered the plains and fresh leaves sprang from the branches of the thorn trees. Rivers flowed and water holes filled up with life-giving liquid. Never mind that the roofs of the huts leaked and flowing rivers cut the roads. Everyone gave thanks to Enkai for the gift of life. “Enkai” is the Maasai word for God and is also one of the words that the people use for rain—after all, rain is the giver of life.

The imagery of life-giving water that runs through the Bible has held a powerfully deepened significance for me ever since, and even during a wet British summer I now rejoice in the gift of rain. A Maasai elder asked me one day if it was true that in England it could rain on any day of the year. After a moment’s hesitation I rather gloomily agreed, and he immediately exclaimed: “Then England must be like heaven!”

In almost every aspect of life I had much to learn from my Maasai friends, and at Meto I started to discover how to let go of my European need for activity and instead to spend time waiting and listening. It was a deeply enriching experience.

Development in Zaire

My next assignment in Africa was to spend six months in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), assessing development opportunities for the growing Anglican Church. During that time I traveled widely across Kivu and Haut Zaire, mostly by driving over abominable roads in an ancient Land Rover, occasionally by flying, and in the remoter areas by going up rivers in a canoe or along forest paths on foot. A fascinating experience, it brought me into close touch with many pastors and evangelists who were faithfully serving their congregations in remote villages with few material resources to sustain them. Life for people in towns like Kisangani and Bukavu was also hard, as food could not be grown locally.

At the end of this time I produced a general report and then a specific project proposal for an integrated development project at Boga. By God’s grace the personnel needed to carry this forward appeared (from within Zaire and from the United Kingdom), and since then Boga has become the center for a community health service that has survived successive waves of fighting in the area. Having worked very much at a grassroots level at Meto, this task led me to think more widely and strategically about a variety of missiological and ecclesiological issues.

Later I spent a year living at Boga, setting up a village-based program of theological education by extension. I worked together with a Zairean colleague, Buleta Kataro, to train leaders for TEE groups. Most of the group leaders were pastors or teachers, and our main concern was to help them to understand that they were not required to preach or to teach but to enable the rest of the group. This perspective was not easy for any of them to grasp, as the whole Zairean system of education accustoms everyone to learn by sitting and listening passively to the teacher. But some of the leaders did have the confidence to encourage the other group members to participate freely. When they did so, it was exciting to see the creativity that was released as each person realized they had their own unique and authentic experience of God that they could share with the group. Watching those groups grow in confidence has strengthened my longing to help my own church (the Church of England) to value the ministry of the laity more fully and to release the gifts of all God’s people for the work of the kingdom.

Return to Britain

In 1985 the CMS called me back to London to become the regional secretary for West Africa, Sudan, and Zaire; later southern Africa was added to my brief. I was responsible for our relationships with our partner churches in the region and for the deployment of personnel and other resources. During the next ten years I traveled widely across Africa. It was a stormy time for almost all the countries with which we were involved; there were repeated coups in Nigeria, and destructive civil wars ravaged Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and Mozambique. Economies nose-dived in many countries as tough World Bank policies were implemented, and disasters, including drought and floods, added to the misery of thousands of people. The numbers of refugees grew each year.

Sometimes I was asked by well-meaning people in Britain if I found my job discouraging. But the reality was quite the reverse. Every time I visited somewhere in Africa, I returned to Britain reenergized, challenged, and humbled by the extraordinary faith, courage, and sheer resilience of the people I had met. I was always given warm and generous hospitality, even in places where I knew food was very scarce, and I found an abundance of hope. Churches in many places were growing, and growth was often happening most rapidly in places where the suffering was greatest. I saw much material poverty, but spiritual resources were more widely in evidence than in many of the churches in Britain.

Death and Resurrection in Sudan

During those years I traveled regularly into Sudan, and in February 1992 I made my first visit to the heart of the war zone to visit the Anglican bishop of Bor, Nathaniel Garang, at his home in Malek on the banks of the Nile. Bishop Nathaniel had just emerged from an extraordinary period of five years when he had been totally isolated from the outside world by the civil war. The area had been overrun by a massive raid only a few weeks earlier, and the road to Bor was littered with the debris of war: blown-up tanks, collapsed bridges, and the carcasses of cattle. We passed burned-out cattle camps and food distribution centers for thou-
sands of starving, displaced people. Further on we saw human bodies lying by the side of the road. Yet as we approached Bor, we were greeted by hundreds of cross-carrying Christians who ran behind the vehicle in growing numbers, escorting us to Malek with dancing and singing. We reached Malek as the light was fading, and there some thousand people gathered on the river bank to worship the God who sustained them. As we sang and prayed together in that terrible place, where there was no human reason for anything but despair, I saw hope and joy illuminating the faces of those around me. I realized I was surrounded by people whose material securities had been utterly swept away and who had discovered what it means to trust in Christ alone.

When I left Malek, the women gave me a cross. The long stem of the simple wooden cross was encircled by brass rings that were made from spent cartridge cases, bullets that had been used to kill and maim human beings. Dinka Christians had reshaped those instruments of death and destruction by threading through them that supreme symbol of life and healing, the cross of Christ. This creation gave vivid expression to the transforming power of this creation that was so astonishingly evident in their lives. That bullet-encircled cross from Malek is now my most precious possession.

For the last five years of my time with CMS I was appointed general secretary, the first woman to hold this post, and only the second layperson to do so in the 200-year history of the CMS. My four immediate predecessors had been bishops, so it was a fairly daunting task. But I much appreciated the collegiality of the management team and the complementary nature of our gifts. During those years I was privileged to travel to many places across Asia for the first time, and to visit eastern Europe, a relatively new area of involvement for the CMS.

Again I had a multitude of rich experiences, meeting yet more faithful and courageous Christians and experiencing the fellowship in Christ that unites us all at a deeper level than the many ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences that divide us. I met heroic survivors of the cultural revolution in China, Bible students in Nepal who were willing to become social outcasts for their faith, Christians in Japan working for reconciliation with their Asian neighbors, faithful members of the diminishing churches in Palestine, Syria, and Jordan, and many others. I also started to have more interaction with those from the other major faith communities of Asia, and to appreciate more fully some of the complexities of interfaith engagement.

Time to Pray

During those years in London I tried to spend a week on retreat each year, and my prayer life was transformed after I discovered that prayer is basically God's activity rather than my own. (This thought, of course, parallels the basic reality about mission.) I found awareness exercises helpful in seeking stillness and simply waiting on God. In 1991 CMS gave me a three-month sabbatical break that I spent at St. Beuno's in North Wales. The time included a thirty-day period of prayer and meditation on Scripture that was a powerful experience; the days were often filled with a deepening awareness of God's love that came in unexpected ways. Going back to the hectic life of the office after such an interlude was extraordinarily difficult, but in retrospect I can see more clearly how the centeredness of that time shaped my response to the events that followed and nourished my ongoing pilgrimage.

I retired from the CMS at Easter 2000 and now find myself on a continuing journey that is basically unbroken by this change. My sense is that a new challenge (perhaps the greatest challenge yet) awaits me—mission in our own post-Christian, postmodern, materialistic, and individualistic society in Britain. My conviction is that the churches in Britain will be renewed only with the help of fellow Christians from around the world, and I am deeply thankful to God for having been so greatly enriched myself by such brothers and sisters in Christ over the years.

The Legacy of Edwin W. Smith

W. John Young

Edwin William Smith (1876–1957), who became famous as a missionary/anthropologist with linguistic talents, was born at Aliwal North, South Africa, on September 7, 1876. His parents were missionaries of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, a movement that began in the early nineteenth century and became one of the main branches of British Methodism. Edwin Smith’s father, John Smith (1840–1915), went to Aliwal North in 1874 and spent ten of the next fourteen years there. Returning to London, he became secretary of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society in the 1890s and president of the Primitive Methodist Conference in 1898.

As a young person Edwin Smith showed few signs of academic prowess and found an office job in London. In his spare time he roamed through his father’s large library and read the works of John Colenso and other progressive writers. This reading undermined his faith, but a local minister led him to view Christianity pragmatically, “as a life to be lived.”22 He also read books about the exploration of Africa, and as his longing to return to Africa increased, he realized in 1895 that there was an opportunity for service as a Bible translator in a new mission among the Ila of central Africa. He learned Greek at Birkbeck College and spent a year acquiring basic medical skills at Livingstone College, in London’s East End. Then in 1898 he returned to Africa and spent a few months in Lesotho with the Paris Evangelical Mission. The enthusiasm and expertise of Rev. E. Jacottet of Thaba Bosiu inspired him to make his own studies of Bantu languages and cultures.

Edwin Smith and his fiancée, Julia Fitch, a teacher, were married at Cape Town on the same day that Julia arrived in South Africa. The marriage was blessed by a headman of the Ila people, who expressed approval that the couple had chosen to work among the Ila of central Africa. Returning to the Ila mission, Edwin and Julia endured hardships and temptations, and they were joined by two other missionaries.

Edwin Smith and Julia Fitch were missioned to the Ila people of central Africa by the Paris Evangelical Mission. They married on the same day that Julia arrived in South Africa. Edwin Smith continued to work among the Ila people, and he later became a general secretary of the Church Mission Society (CMS) in London. Edwin Smith is known for his work in Africa, his contributions to linguistics, and his leadership in the CMS. He is remembered as a dedicated and committed Christian who had a significant impact on the mission field and on the church at large.

W. John Young, a Methodist minister, is a pastor in Rhondda Valley, South Wales. He studied in Bristol, England, and Richmond, Virginia, and served as a chaplain in Zambia where he worked with the archives of the United Church of Zambia.
Africa, October 3, 1899. The Smiths intended to leave for central Africa in 1900, but the tense political situation of 1899, which led to the Second Anglo-Boer War, kept them at Aliwal North until 1902. Smith ministered in the Primitive Methodist circuit, continued his language studies, and acquired practical skills in the mission workshops. Their son Thabo ("joy") was born in January 1902, a few months before they set off for Zambia.

**Missionary Work in Central Africa**

When the Smiths arrived at Nanzhila, on the edge of Ila country in Zambia, the Primitive Methodist mission needed further stimulus. Smith applied himself energetically to evangelism, education, and building, but his most telling contribution to mission development came through his linguistic work. During his first tour among the Ila (1902–7), he published St. Mark's gospel in Ila (1906), prepared hymns, services, and Old Testament stories in Ila, and wrote an Ila grammar, *Handbook of the Ila Language* (1907). This thorough piece of work is still admired for its accuracy and wealth of detail.

Smith took a keen interest in the religious beliefs of African people and published his first thoughts on this subject in 1907 in an overview article, "The Religion of the Bantu." In the same year he followed this with a published lecture, "The Secret of the African," which concentrated on Ila religion. In seeking to reach his people with the Gospel, Smith used their traditional beliefs as stepping-stones to Christian faith. He believed that Africans had discovered religious truths, and in his preaching he introduced, for example, their praise names for God and then went on to preach Christ. In finding points of contact, he anticipated the approach toward animistic religions that was taken at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910.

Edwin and Julia Smith, after a two-year furlough, returned to Zambia in 1909 and opened a new mission in the heart of Ila country at Kasenga. Edwin did more building—a school, two houses, and other buildings—and continued his Ila New Testament translation; by the end of his term of service in 1915, the New Testament had been completed. During these years, realizing that language has to be understood in its cultural context, he made anthropological studies of the Ila people with A. M. Dale, a district officer. Knowing that administrators and missionaries alike needed to understand the people, they hoped their research would help future workers. World War I delayed publication, but the two-volume *Ila Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (henceforth ISP) appeared in 1920. Students used it as a standard text for many years. In 1968 Elizabeth Colson, who did important anthropological research in central Africa, described the ISP as "one of the great classics of African ethnography . . . a precious heritage of African history." 4

The Smiths returned to Britain in 1915, and Edwin served on the Western Front as an army chaplain. His experiences and reflections in Africa laid the foundations for his future participation in several aspects of African studies over the next forty years.

**Varied and Integrated Studies**

Ill health forced Smith out of the army in 1916. As he had fundamental disagreements with his mission's policies, he did not return to Africa. However, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), an interdenominational organization, seconded him to work as its agent for Italy. After five years in Rome he returned to Britain as secretary for western Europe but was soon transferred to the BFBS Bible House to take charge of the society's literature. From 1923 to 1932 he published reports and edited magazines for adults and children. Then in 1932 he was given responsibility for Bible translation as editorial superintendent.

Translation had been his chief missionary interest, and as well as being a translator, he had written a splendid book entitled *The Shrine of a People's Soul* (1929), in which he drew on his own experiences in Africa and anthropological insights. He expressed the view that translation should be true to the original text, understandable to the hearer/reader, and as beautiful as possible. Not surprisingly, Smith looked for reader-friendly translations when he was responsible for translation policy. He was impressed by Basic English, a simplified form of English with a limited vocabulary of 850 words, and was on the committee that produced the *Bible in Basic English*. He advocated Basic English as a tool for translators and published books in Basic English, including his own version of John's gospel (1938).

Before retiring from the Bible Society, Smith toured India (1938–39) to assess the need for new or revised versions. Although some of those interviewed, including Gandhi, thought it better to retain archaic versions, Smith insisted that modern versions were much needed. He discussed the matter with the veteran missionary C. F. Andrews and the poet Rabindranath Tagore, and the latter agreed to help in making a new Bengali translation. World War II hindered implementation of Smith's suggestions, but his report was highly regarded and did influence later policy. 5 Illuminated by anthropology, Smith's approach has been followed in the professional era of translation (said to have begun in the 1940s with the arrival of Eugene A. Nida at the American Bible Society). Smith is recognized as a precursor of the modern era, and common-language Bible translations are part of his legacy. 6

**Missiology**

Smith knew that translation and missiology are interrelated. His missiology involved translation, not only of languages, but also of cultures. He believed that the form in which Christianity was expressed in any culture should be appropriate to that culture, and he opposed the belief that traditional customs were necessarily wrong. It distressed him that so many believed that one could not be both Christian and African, and in his wide-ranging Hartley Lecture, *The Golden Stool* (1926), he promoted radical Africanization of Christianity. He suggested that African baptismal names, dances, drama, indigenous music, and the Christianization of initiation and marriage ceremonies would help Christianity in Africa to be more rooted in African experience. He was quite aware that foreign features could be accepted and adapted by Africans, but he was adamant that Africans should decide what to accept, adapt, or reject. He realized too that the Western proclivity for domination needed to be con-
trolled. Missionaries, for example, might introduce the faith, but he was convinced that they should not impose their expatriate forms as norms. Indeed, he believed that if Christianity was identified with Western imperialism, it was likely to be rejected when the empires fell. This thought led him to argue that there was a supreme need “to purge our missionary enterprise of all taint of cultural imperialism.” The first principle, he declared, “is Christ, not western civilization.” In 1926 he wrote: “Missionaries are not a permanent factor in the life of Africa—they will one day (the sooner the better) disappear because no longer needed. It is not their business to decide what form African Christianity shall take.” Although he wanted to reduce the influence of missionaries, Smith respected the work of his predecessors and wrote biographical studies of Robert Moffat, the Mabilles, Daniel S. Rattray, and his preferred term for what was usually known as magic. It described belief in an underlying energy or force, akin to mana, which people tried to control through charms, medicines, taboos, and witchcraft.

Smith went on to write more widely about African religion and did much to develop and publicize the subject throughout his life. He used his fourfold scheme in his first book on African religion, *The Religion of Lower Races* (1923); the unfortunate title for this useful book was not given by him. Critics highlight the title and the occasional examples of Western and Christian superiority but omit numerous examples that show how seriously he took Africans and their religious traditions. He said, “The Bantu are not savages”; “The Bantu are not simpletons.” He advised missionaries to treat local customs with respect and to master African languages. Smith himself was offended by the title given to his book; he offered an apology in a later work and refused to sign a copy in New York twenty years later. *Lower Races* was replaced in 1929 by *The Secret of the African*, which followed the same general scheme and included summaries of beliefs in Africa south of the Sahara. Others, notably W. C. Willoughby, also studied African religion, and some researchers wrote about religion in specific areas (R. S. Rattray, E. Evans-Pritchard). In the 1920s and 1930s, however, Smith’s studies were prominent in publicizing the subject in popular and academic circles. His work was both wide-ranging and held together by an analytic framework. He used his fourfold schema (sometimes threefold, when the second and third terms, “souls” and “spirits,” were combined) throughout the interwar years. After World War II he incorporated more features, especially ritual and symbolism, drawn from anthropological and religious studies, as well as using information gathered during several long tours of southern Africa.

In the study of African religion Edwin Smith was followed by others whose names have become more famous than his: Placeide Tempels and G. W. Parrinder, and Africans such as J. Mbiti and K. A. Dickson. Nevertheless, Smith’s work in publicizing this subject among anthropologists, missionaries, and students of religion in the 1920s and 1930s was vital for establishing African religion as a subject worthy of careful study. African religion had a very low profile in studies of comparative religion in those years, and he played a leading role in helping to provide a sufficient base of coherent knowledge for others to become interested in it.

**Anthropology**

Smith continued his involvement with anthropology after the publication of the *ISP* in 1920 and as he pursued his Bible society career. He had joined the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in 1909, and from 1923, when he was based at the Bible House in London, he attended the RAI’s activities and became involved in its organizational structure. He was awarded the RAI’s Rivers Medal in 1930 and was frequently a member of its governing council in the 1920s and 1930s. The RAI elected him president for 1933–35, the only missionary ever to be so honored. His first presidential address, “Anthropology and the Practical Man” (1934), argued that anthropology is a useful subject for administrators, educators, and missionaries. He criticized missionary methods and considered that Africans could create a version of Christianity as worthy of Christ as anything produced elsewhere. The second presidential address, “Africa, What Do We Know of It?” (1935), was a monumental survey of the knowledge base in African studies at the time. He considered many aspects of Africa and suggested numerous lines of research. He had been interested in such developments for at least a decade, having helped to found, in 1926, the International African Institute, which was promoting such research. The 1935 address turned out to be very influential, and thereafter anthropologists were...
attracted to African topics. Sir Raymond Firth, secretary of the RAI at the time, told me that this address “did much to launch the systematic research interest in Africa which developed” after 1935. Anthropologists, and those who use their research, owe a great debt of gratitude to Edwin Smith for turning their attention to Africa.

After retiring from the Bible Society, Smith taught African studies in the United States for five years (1939–44). This subject was badly neglected in those days. He spent four years at the Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford, Connecticut, where his attitude to Africa and its peoples left a deep impression on his students. Bill Booth, who studied Bantu linguistics at Hartford with him in 1943, mentioned Smith’s “sensitivity to cultural imperialism and his deep respect for African peoples and their cultures.” Booth observed that such “qualities, running against the current as they did, turned his students towards Africa with different expectations than they would otherwise have had.”

Smith’s final year in the United States was spent at Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Fisk, a college for African Americans, impressed him by its multicultural approach, and he spent his time there encouraging the students to acquire a greater respect for their African heritage.

Respect for Africans

Smith left much that has benefited later generations. Behind his varied enterprises was a great respect for Africans. This attitude was remarkable because Africans were seldom treated with respect fifty or more years ago. Indeed, Smith claimed that when he began his work among the Ila, he regarded himself as vastly superior to them. Experience, however, changed his thinking, and he realized that he was often their inferior. He saw that they “were not essentially different from myself. Such unlikelinesses as existed were mainly accountable to environment and tradition.” He was always impressed by African languages, and in 1950 said, “I defy anyone to study a Bantu language thoroughly and retain an opinion that Africans are innately inferior to Europeans in intellect.” Respect for Africans was evident in his anthropological studies, and a later observer, Elizabeth Colson, a professor of anthropology, observed that Smith and Dale “wrote of friends whom they respected as their equals.”

Respect for Africans entered Smith’s discussion of race relations, and here his thinking could have developed in various ways. In the 1920s, when he was concerned that European influence would destroy African cultures, he toyed with the idea, common among anthropologists, that African societies should be preserved and, as far as possible, separated from European influence. He soon realized that this position would be undermined by European greed, which produced a grossly unfair distribution of land, so he abandoned separation as an approach to race relations. Instead his thinking, following J. H. Oldham and, more important, J. E. K. Aggrey, developed on the lines of cooperation. Aggrey, a Ghanaian who had lived in the United States, advocated cooperation as a basis for race relations, which Smith, who wrote Aggrey’s biography in 1929, took as his guiding principle. Respectful cooperation between cultures and subcultures conserves the past, maintains cultural integrity, and enables creative interactions. Smith offered his mature statement of these principles in his Phelps-Stokes Lectures given at Cape Town in 1949 and published as The Blessed Missionaries (1950). This was at the beginning of the apartheid era. Had his views been heeded, South Africa would have been saved from many years of racist domination. He held that South Africa would be deservedly admired by the whole world if it could establish “a community in which the several ethnical groups can live in harmony and co-operate for the common good”; such thinking did not prevail in South Africa until forty years later.

Edwin Smith’s Legacy

Edwin Smith died on December 23, 1957, at Deal, England. What has he left future generations? Chiefly, there is respect for people, especially Africans, and their languages, cultures, and religions. He expressed this respect through copious writings that helped Westerners, especially Christians, gain a sympathetic understanding of Africans. He used social sciences in forming such a view and clearly learned much from Africans. His varied and integrated studies suggest that he imbied the African sense of wholeness. His quest for cross-cultural understanding has profound implications in that painstaking efforts are needed to comprehend and perceive the varied perspectives of other cultures. Respect for Africans was behind his opposition to cultural imperialism, as rife in the twenty-first century as in his day. It was also behind his missiology of translation that allows people to comprehend and perceive the varied perspectives of other cultures. Respect for Africans was behind his opposition to cultural imperialism, as rife in the twenty-first century as in his day. It was also behind his missiology of translation that allows people to express the Christian faith in forms they can own. Such matters need as much attention in the twenty-first century as in previous centuries because of our human tendency to impose our forms of thought and culture on others.

In Africa he was known as chitutamano, “the quiet wise spirit,” an apt description of Smith as a Christian missiologist and Africanist.

Notes

1. Many sources give Smith’s middle name as Williams. I have been able to establish conclusively that it is William.
3. Thabo died later in the year in Zambia. Their other child, Matsediso (“mother of consolation”), was born at Nanzhila on July 26, 1904.


Archival materials on Edwin W. Smith are to be found in three locations:

1. The Methodist Missionary Society Archives, the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. These items include diaries, translation work, journalistic material, photograph albums, and some unpublished material.

2. Bible Society Archives, Cambridge, England. These items include diaries and reports for India, 1938–39, correspondence, and drafts of John 1–6 in Basic and Simplified English.

3. There is a relatively small collection of correspondence and other Smith papers in the Hartford Seminary Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

Works About Edwin W. Smith


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Book Reviews

Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa.


The former principal of Tshwane Theological College, South Africa, presents in this work his extensive research of the Zion and Pentecostal churches in southern Africa, conducted while he was a researcher in the Pentecostalism Project of the University of South Africa. Allan Anderson is now the director of the Research Unit for New Religions and Churches in South Africa. He traces the various church groups back to their nineteenth-century roots in Mpumalanga (Eastern Transvaal), influenced by the Zion City, Ohio, revival and the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. He provides a spirited overview of the context, significance, and growth of the resulting church communities, comparing their worship, liturgies, preaching, and development.

The experience of the Holy Spirit at work through his gifts of healing, exorcising, and prophesying gives these churches a self-authenticating key in a hermeneutical process, leading them from their role as healing and coping communities to their becoming effective antisegregation and liberating forces—in short, churches that are interested not only in daily misfortunes, illness, witchcraft, poverty, and bad luck but also in concrete social problems.

The author asserts that the Holy Spirit, acting as guide and counselor, took over some of the functions of the ancestors. The result is leading to a contextualized, or inculturated, African theology. Christianity is attaining African expression as it explores the balance in the relationship between the work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the churches’ leadership. We are witnessing “stages on the way to final conversion, a goal that western Christianity itself has probably not yet attained” (p. 233). In the context of being “sister” churches to those of southern Africa, we in the West will find a study like this to be priceless.

—J. G. Donders, M.Afr.

Day of Devastation, Day of Contentment: The History of the Sudanese Church Across 2,000 Years.


This book is the tenth and final publication in the Faith in Sudan series, and it makes a fitting climax to a series that has already become greatly valued by Sudanese Christians and their friends across the world. Day of Devastation, Day of Contentment offers a comprehensive ecumenical history of the Sudanese church, starting with the faith of the early Nubian Christians and moving through to the current experience of Sudanese Christians in the continuing situation of civil war.

The three authors were well qualified to undertake this complex and scholarly task. Roland Werner has studied a number of Sudanese languages, and both William Anderson and Andrew Wheeler have worked closely with the Sudanese churches in the field of theological education.

The years 1964–72 are highlighted as marking a particularly significant period in the history of both church and state. When foreign missionaries were expelled from Sudan in 1964, many outside observers feared that the expulsion would seriously weaken the Christian community, as the young Sudanese churches were thrown abruptly on their own resources. In the event, Sudanese Christians took up the responsibilities of leadership, the churches grew, and a truly Sudanese church emerged. The continuing political implications of this development, as successive governments in Khartoum try to create a unified national identity through the twin policies of Arabization and Islamization, are brought to our attention.

For Sudanese living in the chaos and suffering of civil war, this book offers a framework for understanding more clearly how God has worked through their community over the years. It may also help Sudanese and others to a deeper understanding of the current complexities and to see where the paths to peace may lie. For all those who love Sudan this book provides fascinating and essential reading.

—Diana Witts

Diana Witts is the recently retired General Secretary of the Church Mission Society, London.

The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999.


The Church Mission Society (CMS) was founded in 1799 as the evangelical alternative to the (High Church Anglican) Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. By 1850 the CMS had become the largest and most influential British mission.
CMS's preeminence was assured in the nineteenth century by the leadership of Henry Venn from 1841 to 1872. In the twentieth century Max Warren, CMS general secretary (1942–63), played a similarly influential role.

This book consists of twelve studies of key themes from CMS's two centuries of work. Kevin Ward considers how the general secretary (1942–63), played a role in the CMS's preeminence. Paul Jenkins recounts the important cooperation between CMS and several German missionary societies up to 1850. Jocelyn Murray and Guli Francis-Dehqani study the changing strategic role of women. Kenneth Cragg argues that mission was the educator of the missionary. The genius of Henry Venn's thought is explored in depth by Peter Williams. Allan Davidson and Lamin Sanneh critically analyze the deleterious impact of missionary domination in New Zealand and West Africa in the nineteenth century, which lingered throughout much of the next century. Geoffrey Oddie and John Karanja analyze the interplay between indigenous culture and Christian faith and how cultural differences shape patterns of conversion.

By the middle of the twentieth century it was evident that one of the dominant issues would be the relationship between religious faiths. Graham Kings examines the developing theological perspectives of Max Warren and John V. Taylor. Finally, John Clark traces the important policy and structural changes CMS has undergone over the past generation as it has reoriented itself to include mission to Great Britain.

The long and rich CMS tradition is a source of continuing insight and challenge from which all can benefit. This substantial volume provides authoritative access.

—Wilbert R. Shenk

Wilbert R. Shenk, a contributing editor, is Professor of Mission History and Contemporary Culture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. He served in Indonesia 1955–59 and was a missions administrator 1965–90.

Protestantization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa


This is the third title published in the series Religion and Human Rights, a joint venture of the Law and Religion Program of Emory University (Atlanta) School of Law and Orbis Books. The previous two titles focused on eastern Europe and Latin America. Taken together, the three studies provide evidence that “the relationship between religion and human rights is both problematic and unavoidable in all parts of the world” (p. vii, Series Preface).

The issues of proselytization and communal self-determination in Africa are examined in eleven chapters, preceded by an introduction by the editor, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, professor of law and fellow of the Law and Religion Program at Emory University. The contents of the chapters range from theoretical considerations to political, legal, and religious aspects of proselytization. Case studies deal with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Mali, Nigeria and Ghana, Kenya, and Algeria. Authors include J. Paul Martin, Harry Winter, Farid Esack, Lamin Sanneh, Francis M. Deng, Benjamin F. Soares, Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Hannah W. Kinoti, and Chabha Bouslimani. They are to be commended for choosing to contribute to “a more nuanced and enhanced understanding of
the complexity of proselytization in the present African context” (p. 23).

This book has the usual problems associated with multiauthored works. There does not seem to be, for example, agreement on the definition of proselytization. For An-Na'īm “proselytization is by definition offensive and hegemonic” (p. 19; see also p. 6), while J. Paul Martin and Harry Winter propose “a more neutral and more descriptive” definition as; “witnss with a view to recruiting” (p. 39; see also p. 30). An-Na'īm’s view of proselytization explains his suggestion that the state should be the “mediator of competing claims of proselytizers” and “protector of the interests of the target groups” (p. 13). Can this role really be expected of most states in Africa, when some of them, like Sudan, carry out religious proselytization by coercive means (pp. 222–23)? Despite having no answers to such important questions, Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa is a significant contribution.

—Tite Tiéno

Tite Tiéno, a contributing editor, is Professor of Theology of Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, where he is also Chair of the Mission and Evangelism Department.

Nothing but Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Foreign Missions.


This book challenges the preoccupation of previous students of Rufus Anderson (1796–1880) with his ideas, and with “the false dichotomy of ‘civilization’ versus Christianization” (p. 163) in missionary thought. Paul William Harris, professor of history and department chair at Moorhead State University in Moorhead, Minnesota, approaches Anderson by focusing on the contexts and consequences of missionary policies and practices. He examines important developments in the missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Hawaii, Turkey, South India, and Sri Lanka, including Anderson’s controversial deputation of 1854. In the process he provides a wealth of previously unpublished information about Anderson’s activities. Harris’s portrait of Anderson directly challenges what he sees as the overly positive picture of Anderson as a pioneering cultural relativist.

Harris asserts that those involved in missions should be judged not on their intentions but “on the usefulness of what they had to offer for meeting the needs and aspirations of their indigenous clients” (p. 14). He is most interested in the external social, economic, and political factors that shaped missionary policies. Anderson and others are taken to task for failing to understand the nature of social movements, advocating indigenous leadership but “suppressing indigenous aspirations,” creating grand theories to justify practical necessities, and not questioning “the sanctity of all those aspects of their culture that they chose to export” (p. 163).

Readers familiar with Anderson may feel that his thought and the nature of his role in the American Board are unduly neglected, that the religious aspect of missions is too easily dismissed, and that some of the book’s large revisionist conclusions are inadequately supported. Harris’s approach seems, in its own way, as one-sided as the one he rejects. Nevertheless, we are indebted to Harris...
for expanding our knowledge of Anderson and for providing an alternate perspective that stimulates us to reexamine the accepted historical wisdom about him.

—Robert A. Schneider

Robert A. Schneider is Director of Core Curriculum and Transfer at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is an Assistant Professor of Religion, teaches the history of religion in the United States, and is coeditor of Outreach and Diversity, vol. 5 of the Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ (Pilgrim Press, 2000).

Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice.


*Gendered Missions* is a collection of case studies focusing on relations between women and men in different European missions during the colonial period (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries).

Among the missions studied are Dutch Reformed, English Anglicans, Swiss Pietists, Norwegian Lutherans, and a Roman Catholic mission originating in Germany. Mission fields under observation are West Africa, East Africa, New Guinea, and Sumatra, as well as the home efforts of women in England and Norway.

The essays attempt to show how gender relationships changed as they were affected by sociocultural conditions on the home front and the challenges of the mission experience in the wider colonial context overseas. Several threads run through the seven essays. One is the observation that the missionary movement provided opportunities for professional development that women of the period did not have at home. Yet, while the missionary experience opened new possibilities to women and blurred traditional boundaries between the sexes, women missionaries remained under the domination of their male colleagues. In spite of growing numbers and acknowledged contributions, they continued to be underrepresented in administration and on policy-making boards.

Several of the essays point out interesting contradictions, one being the observation that women, as well as men, acted "paternally" in regards to national believers, in keeping with the general colonial ethos.

The focus of *Gendered Missions* is clearly on gender rather than on mission. Yet the book makes a valuable contribution to an understanding of mission history and the changing roles and contributions of women in mission. Essayists include anthropologists, sociologists, and a historian. Editor Mary Taylor Huber is senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and Nancy C. Lutkehaus is associate professor of anthropology at the University of Southern California.

—Nancy Thomas

Nancy Thomas, along with her husband, directs a masters-in-mission program for Latin Americans at the Universidad Evangélica Boliviana in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.


On the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Peter Beyerhaus, the eminent and controversial missiologist from Tübingen, this voluminous Festschrift has been published. The title, although of biblical origin, is obviously taken as a critical response to Paul Knitter's No Other Name? The omission of the question mark indicates not only the focus of the volume but also the theological concern of Peter Beyerhaus. The editor points out three major areas that have been of importance for Beyerhaus throughout his life: Christian mission, Christian witness to other religions, and the struggle for the validity of the Bible and creeds in the churches worldwide. The book has four major parts, one on the person and work of Peter Beyerhaus, including an article by himself on his missiological pilgrimage, the other three on the problem of syncretism. Most of the chapters are contributed by theological friends and disciples of Beyerhaus, who point out the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in interreligious dialogue and the danger of syncretism (most of the time without clarifying syncretism adequately).

At least three chapters display a wider outlook. The late Hans-Werner Gensichen discusses opportunities and temptations of interreligious dialogue and opts for a relational approach to dialogue and a dialectic approach to mission. Theo Sundermeier emphasizes the need to differentiate between syncretism as a descriptive term and its theological use. He convincingly argues that calling something syncretistic may give us as much information about the person doing the labeling as about the object of labeling. Reinhard Hummel argues for a differentiated approach to syncretism and suggests using the term only for religious groups that consider themselves syncretistic.

The book is informative about current controversial issues of interreligious dialogue but clearly favors an apologetic and exclusive approach. Andreas Nehring

Andreas Nehring is Assistant Lecturer at Augustana-Hochschule in Neuendettelsau, Germany. He taught religious studies at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India, from 1993 to 1996.

Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? Jesus, Revelation, and Religious Traditions.


Gerald McDermott, associate professor of religion and philosophy at Roanoke College in Virginia, specifically asks whether Christian faith can learn from Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Islam. He is convinced that there are aspects of national heritage, religious traditions, and systems of thought that one can appreciate. Religions can confirm important biblical content—not that

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Missiology

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Studia Institutii Missiologici 72
Steyler Verlag, Nettetal, Germany, 2000

Life and Death Matters brings together nine case studies on inculturation from various parts of Africa. The book is offered as a text for theology students working on issues of ethno-theology or liturgical studies, as well as to anyone taking contextualization and inculturation seriously at a practical level. Its purpose is not to replicate the excellent theoretical work that focuses on the nature of inculturation/contextualization or the construction of local theologies. Rather, it attempts to show what is actually being done, to indicate some of the practical issues and problems, and to demonstrate that Christian theology can and must engage with the lives of actual people: it is a matter of life and death.

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The author of this book attempts to provide a fresh understanding of historical and theological plurality within the Christian world—to show how local traditions fit within and reflect a common core of universal tradition. He also seeks to explain how “hegemonic” and “normative” claims of Western Christendom have been and are being challenged, if not subverted, by voices emerging both from past centuries and from diverse cultures in far places. Communities of the East and South, long-eclipsed or half-buried—in Egypt and Mesopotamia, Ethiopia and Persia, India and China, not to mention sub-Saharan Africa and Latin-America—are arising and bearing witness to Jesus as Messiah. In doing so, they are reclaiming their birthright within the Christian mainstream.

At the same time, they are challenging Christians of Europe and America to abandon normative delusions and pretensions that have held sway for so long. In so doing, Irvin contends, women and minorities, along with members of non-Western churches who are in the West, are also telling their own separate and
distinctly different stories. All such stories are seen as imperative. Local tradition(s) and local faith(s) are inextricably linked. Lingering discord and occasional dissonances serve to remind all that harmony, like perfection, is an ideal, an abstraction toward which Christians strive. But vital unity and the universality of Trinitarian monotheism, however richly varied local histories, remain centered in the person of Jesus Christ.

Challenging, important, and timely, this work is also contentious. In its “tropes” of discourse analysis, its rhetoric seems to reflect nihilistic and postmodernist forms of a fashionable ideological lineage that stretches from Said and Spivak back to Derrida, Foucault, Heidegger, and Nietzsche, if not Marx. This point of view represents, in Gramscian terms, the currently ascendant ideological hegemony of the “diversity paradigm,” which, with its underlying relativism, obscures as much as it clarifies. Ironically, such dependence upon a single parochial, Eurocentric perspective tends to undermine its own pluralistic argument.

—Robert Eric Frykenberg

Robert Eric Frykenberg is Professor Emeritus of History and South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Since publication of his History and Belief: The Foundations of Historical Understanding (1996), he has been directing research projects in India and serving as coeditor (with Brian Stanley) of the Studies in the History of Christian Missions series.

Christianity in Melanesia.


Melanesia is one of the most Christianized regions in the non-Western world, but it has not always been that way. Today the struggle is to enable Christianity to break free of its Western captivity and become contextualized in Melanesia, where exists the greatest linguistic and cultural diversity in the world. It was with great anticipation that I began reading this book, but the title turned out to be misleading. It is more about the Catholic Church and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Papua New Guinea than of Christianity in Melanesia in general. Nevertheless, there are many good reasons to commend the book.

Theo Aerts is a Flemish missionary with over twenty-five years’ experience in Papua New Guinea, who presently teaches in the history department of the University of Papua New Guinea and is the ecumenical officer for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. To his reflections he brings training in biblical studies and interests in anthropology and art, and this combination of gifts and experience is what contributes most to this study.

This book is important grist for contextualization mills as Aerts attempts to give us a Melanesian perspective on so many aspects of Christian faith. He begins with the Old Testament as seen through Melanesian eyes, demonstrating why the Old Testament so naturally resonates with Melanesian beliefs, world views, and myths. Aerts does a thorough job of looking at Melanesian art in terms of its relationship to traditional religion and then discusses how these various art forms have been used to express Christian faith. The book is enriched by forty-seven photos of Melanesian art and architecture, demonstrating how these motifs have been incorporated into the life of many churches.

The Catholic Church, like other missions, bought into the notion of modernization and progress as the best route to development, and so the Catholic Church’s contribution to this effort is outlined. Localizing the clergy has been a struggle for the Catholic Church, but Aerts documents the efforts to do so. From a dozen or so national priests a generation ago, today we note that there are over two hundred.

Aerts concludes his book with a very detailed and important study of the theological vocabulary now found in Tok Pisin, the lingua franca of Papua New Guinea. It is here that we see great potential for the contextualization of Christianity in Melanesia.

—Darrell L. Whiteman

Darrell L. Whiteman, Professor of Cultural Anthropology in the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, has had mission and research experience in central Africa and Melanesia.

The Arabian Mission’s Story: In Search of Abraham’s Other Son.


This is must reading for anyone interested in the story of why the Reformed Church in America sent mission personnel to the Middle East, specifically to the Arabian Gulf, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Iraq (though not to Lebanon or Egypt). Here is the story of their search for Abraham’s other son: why they went, what happened when they got there, the failures and successes of what they did, and the ongoing saga. Scudder does a masterful job of illuminating these diverse landscapes by weaving together a story that covers more than 100 years and several locations with many characters moving back and forth, all of them involved in different kinds of ministry.

The book taps into resources, both written and oral, that were painstakingly collected, first by Ed Luidens, who began this history but died before it was finished, and then by Scudder, who was handed the task and continued the research. It was a good choice. Having grown up in Kuwait, Scudder writes from a vantage point that is quite personal but always insightful, intriguing, honest, and informative. The result is a great deal of new information that provides fascinating stories of personal sacrifice and conviction—humanized by failures of spirit and personal idiosyncrasies—yet somehow always ennobled by the call of Christ to preach, teach, and heal.

“The mandate I have,” writes Scudder, “requires that I be rigorous with facts and as thorough as possible. It is not the purpose of this book to promote the Arabian Mission. It is intended to be a history that will allow the record of that mission to stand on its own merits.” He reasons that if “we cannot speak openly and personally about ourselves then adversaries will take note and portray us as though they knew us better than we know ourselves” (p. xxi).

At the end, after eight chapters of skillfully woven factual history, warts and
ended. The book, praise God, concluded. All. Scudder writes: "The sermon now is not. The work is not." I only wish the author had drawn illustrations as copiously from Bahrain and Oman as he has from Kuwait.

The story told here goes a long way toward providing a definitive account of the Arabian Mission. Such a work may eventually require an outsider. What this portrait offers is an inside glimpse of the vision, drive, hopes, dreams, and frustrations of those who labored so many years to make the search for the sons of Ishmael into a pilgrimage of Christian love. It is a story still unfolding.

—Harold Vogelaar

Harold Vogelaar spent more than twenty-five years in church work in the Middle East, first in Bahrain, then in Oman, and finally in Cairo, Egypt, where he taught on the faculty of the Evangelical Theological Seminary and served as liaison for the Middle East Council of Churches. He is now Professor in Global Mission and World Religions at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

Robert E. Speer: Prophet of the American Church.


A long-standing lacuna in the history of North American Protestant missions has been the lack of a biography of Robert E. Speer. By any reckoning, Speer was the foremost North American missions leader during the first half of the twentieth century. Speer himself is largely to blame for this lack, since he forbade the writing of his biography. John F. Piper, professor of history and dean of Lycoming College, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, has devoted many years to the researching and writing of this epic study.

Speer (1867–1947) was born to a devout Presbyterian couple and raised in comfortable circumstances in Huntington, Pennsylvania. As a student at Princeton University, he joined the budding Student Volunteer Movement in 1887. While studying at Princeton Seminary in preparation for missionary service, Speer was tapped by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in 1893 to serve on its administrative staff. Within a few years he had become the secretary of the board, a role in which he served for forty-six years.

A man of prodigious energy and extraordinary talents, Speer presents the biographer with a daunting challenge. Speer wrote more than sixty books, dozens of pamphlets, and thousands of letters and memoranda. A gifted speaker, he preached and lectured scores of times each year. Always he left a paper trail. Piper wisely chose to organize the biography around major themes: Speer’s formation, character, and family; his role as missionary statesman; his service as “American churchman”; and retirement—all presented in fourteen chapters. Among Speer’s manifold services to the cause of missions was to retrieve the thought of Rufus Anderson and apply it to the twentieth-century missionary situation. We now are in John Piper’s debt for retrieving the largely forgotten legacy of Robert E. Speer and presenting it compellingly.

—Wilbert R. Shenk

Wilbert R. Shenk, a contributing editor, is Professor of Mission History and Contemporary Culture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. He served in Indonesia 1955–59 and was a missions administrator 1965–90.

Doane Missionary Scholarships

2002–2003

The Overseas Ministries Study Center announces the Doane Missionary Scholarships for 2002–2003. Two $3,000 scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis to missionaries who apply for residence for eight months to a year with the intention of earning the OMSC Certificate in Mission Studies. The Certificate requires participation in fourteen or more of the weekly mission seminars at OMSC and the writing of a final paper reflecting on the awardee’s missionary experience in light of the studies undertaken at OMSC.

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The OMSC Certificate program allows time for family responsibilities and some deputation. Families with children are welcome. OMSC’s Doane Hall and Great Commission Hall (below) offer fully furnished apartments ranging up to three bedrooms. Applications should be submitted as far in advance as possible. As an alternative to application for the 2002–2003 academic year, applicants may apply for the 2003 calendar year, so long as the Certificate program requirement for participation in at least fourteen seminars is met. Scholarship award will be distributed on a monthly basis after recipient is in residence. Application deadline: January 1, 2002. For further information contact Jonathan J. Bonk, Director, at:

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138 INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH


This voluminous study, written by Josef Alt, the director of the historical section of the generalate of the Divine Word Missionaries in Rome, is the third biography of Arnold Janssen (1837–1909), the founder of the Society of the Divine Word. Herman Fischer, S.V.D., wrote the first biography in 1919, and his work is still of great value, as it was written shortly after the death of the founder. Fritz Bornemann wrote the second biography in 1969 and tried, in obedience to the Second Vatican Council, to reformulate the charisma of the founder in the light of the new situation. Thirty years later, Josef Alt presents us with a biography with a more detailed approach to the historical situation and to Janssen’s charisma.

Giving us a kind of chronological reader and quoting extensively from archival holdings (prior to the present book Alt’s research resulted in three volumes of Janssen’s letters), the author helps us know the mind of Janssen and his contemporaries. Janssen was a man of a profound Trinitarian spirituality. He traveled often—starting from his general house at Steyl, the Netherlands—to explore the possibility of new foundations in Germany, Austria, France, and Luxembourg. Either through personal visits or by means of a constant exchange of letters, Janssen kept good relations with the ecclesiastical and civil authorities to prepare for new work in Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. He took the advice of his own counselors and saw to it that his followers were well prepared for the religious life and for their task in a worldwide apostolic activity. We come to understand why Janssen's society became one of the most successful among the many that originated during the nineteenth century. So far the advantages of this biography.

The disadvantage is twofold: the reading of this excellent study is tiresome; the reader is not helped by periodic summaries or by the recapitulation at the end of the work. All the same, Alt is to be praised for giving us what is called in Germany a Fundgrube, a treasure-house of sources enabling the reader to enter deeply into Janssen’s mind.

—Arnulf Camps, O.F.M.

Arnulf Camps is Professor Emeritus in Missiology of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He taught missiology, Islamology, and church history at the Regional Seminary in Karachi, Pakistan, from 1957 to 1961.


I congratulate John Berthrong on the clarion call in this book to respect and honor all the world’s religions and their adherents. The age of disrespect and bigotry is over—or it should be. Berthrong compares the world’s religions to a deli with cuisine from many different cooking traditions. The comparison is apt and suggestive. He deals with the many issues that arise in such a deli: intermarriage, religious meditation, the question of truth, ecology, and whether such a deli will work. He provides us with many valuable insights.

However, I raise a few questions. First, the unkind words about Southern Baptists in the Preface are out of harmony with the call for gentility and respect. Second, the emphasis on change tends to overlook the importance of permanence in order to make change meaningful. The Pythagorean theorem, gravitation, and $2+2=4$ do not change. Neither do certain moral and ethical principles, whatever the religion. Some of the deli may not be edible for some or may cause indigestion. Certainly the term “deli” rejects the claim of some religious pluralists that all the major religions are essentially the same.

Third, Berthrong’s title has problems. If the word “divine” refers to an impersonal reality, as it seems to—“divine reality itself” (p. xviii)—then it poses a problem for those who believe in a personal deity. Would not the title “Religious Deli” be better? Actually, the book seems to deal more with the human aspects of religions than the divine aspects.

Fourth, how is the whole discussion related to life? The most important thing in religion is not the delicious cuisine we eat but what the cuisine does to and for our living. Does the cuisine simply set forth good standards and admonish us to live by them? Or does it give us a new power within through a personal relationship with God that transforms and enables us through the grace of God to find victory in life and thus to live in peace and harmony with all persons on the globe? For the Christian this power comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

—William M. Pickard, Jr.

William M. Pickard, Jr., is Chairman of the Religion and Philosophy Department, Huntington College, Montgomery, Alabama. From 1954 to 1970 he served as a missionary of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines, working in the pastorate, in general evangelism, and as professor at Union Theological Seminary near Manila.

Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South.


The origins and tendencies of the black church have been the subject of several studies, and the findings of historians and sociologists have been immensely enriching. The significance of Cornelius’s work is that it is set within the area of missions. While there have been studies on aspects of overseas missions originating from the black church, little has been done on “slave missions” within the United States from an ecumenical perspective. Indeed, one essential feature of the black church is that it knows no denominational boundaries, and so this work is a timely
This interesting volume emerged from a 1996 conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Both conference and volume were largely the result of the energy and perseverance of Professor Irene Eber of the Hebrew University. The fifteen essays in the volume are by scholars from Europe, Israel, China, and the United States.

The overall aim of the volume is, within the historical context of Chinese-Christian contacts, to tell the story of "the introduction of Scripture, the biblical text, and the Chinese literary and intellectual appropriation of it" (p.14). This is basically a nineteenth- and twentieth-century story, although Nicolas Standaert's essay deals with the nineteenth century. The overall pattern revealed—one that will be surprising to some China scholars—is that of a "tentative embrace of a foreign scripture into China's age-old family of classics," including the "creative appropriation" of the Chinese Bible into Chinese culture (pp. 25-26).

The volume's three sections deal with the translation (six essays), reception (two essays), and appropriation (seven essays) of the Bible. The translation section includes an essay by Jost Zetzsche on the standard "Union version" translation published in 1919; it is a concise summary of his excellent book on this subject (no. 45 in this publication series). The essay in this section by Irene Eber is likewise taken from her substantial new monograph on Bishop Schereschewsky's Mandarin translation of 1875 (E. J. Brill, 1999). A fuller development of Lewis Robinson's essay on the appropriation of biblical themes and terms in a surprisingly broad segment of twentieth-century literature is to be found in his earlier book, Double-Edged Sword (Hong Kong, 1986).

To me, other highlights of the volume were Lauren Pfister's essay on Ho Tsun-sheen, a nineteenth-century Hong Kong pastor, theologian, and Bible commentator; Sze-kar Wan's piece on the theological debate of the late 1930s between Wu Leichuan and T. C. Chao; and Professor Gong Liang's essay surveying the extensive publications in China since the late 1970s, including his own. This is a varied set of essays, but very much worth the attention of scholars. A list of all the authors' institutional affiliations and a comprehensive bibliography would have been welcome. The index, which includes Chinese characters, is quite serviceable.

—Daniel H. Bays

Daniel H. Bays is Professor of History at the University of Kansas. During 2000-2001 he was Visiting Professor of History and Spelhovf Distinguished Scholar in Residence, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is editor of Christianity in China (Stanford, Calif., 1996).
Francois de Rougemont, S.J., Missionary in Ch'ang-shu (Chiang-nan): A Study of the Account Book (1674-1676) and the Elogium.


In this remarkable study, Noël Golvers of the Katholieke Hogeschool in Louvain, Belgium, examines the mission of the Belgian Jesuit Francois de Rougemont (1624-76), who served in the Yangtze delta city of Ch'ang-shu. Golvers's primary source is Rougemont's 230-page manuscript account book, a detailed record of the mission's receipts and expenses over a period of about a year and a half. The account book also records Rougemont's religious exercises, revealing his spiritual as well as material life. This volume includes the complete text of the account book, which was written in Latin with occasional words and phrases in Portuguese, Dutch, and romanized Chinese—along with an English translation. It also includes the Latin text of another of Golvers's sources, a fellow missionary's elegy for Rougemont, which drew from Rougemont's now-lost correspondence.

In addition, Golvers provides seven chapters of commentaries, in almost 400 pages, based primarily on the account book. Golvers examines the geographical setting of the mission, Rougemont's travels, his contacts with different groups in Chinese society, his pastoral work, various means of propagating Christianity, the material culture of the mission, and the mission's finances. For students of missions, the chapters on the priestly life and the means of propagation and propaganda are particularly fascinating, detailing Rougemont's pastoral work with the Chinese Christians under his care, his supervision of catechists and sodalities, his administration of the sacraments, and the books and pictures he used to propagate the faith. The chapters on the material culture and finances of the mission are a rich source of information on food, clothing, medicine, prices, and the cost of living in late seventeenth-century China. The glossaries and the analysis of Rougemont's transcription system, by Adrianus Dudink, are useful to researchers. This work is an extraordinary achievement.

—Robert Entenmann

Robert Entenmann is Professor of History at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

The Bible in Cross-Cultural Perspective.


Social science findings and methods (e.g., participant observation, qualitative study) are widely used by missionaries. Yet social science and theology have sometimes been uneasy and uncomfortable allies. Polite conversation, intermittent deafness, serious disagreement—and some real dialogue and collaboration—have marked their relationship.

Jacob Loewen—Mennonite, missionary, Bible translator, linguist, and anthropologist—brings to this book a lifetime of experience, a measure of wisdom, a shelf of scholarship, and a compassionate heart. His anthropological, theological, and biblical synthesis and analysis is full of insight and helpful suggestion.

First, the author presents culture as the framework for, and formative influence on human lives, giving an overview (helpfully long on information, frustratingly short on dates) of the many cultures and periods covered by the biblical record. He then shapes the book around biblical topics, under three overarching cultural/anthropological themes: the universe, God and the sacred, and the significance of names. The book concludes with a section on the implications of cultural contexts for a changing world, looking at polygyny, changing ideas of God, and the spirit world. Two fine appendixes are provided: an annotated list of some pseudopigrapha, and a detailed and technical treatment of the principles of translation of God's name in European languages.

There is much of value. The discussion of ideas of God (pp. 83-115) and translation (pp. 187-99) are excellent. The book is important for translators and anyone committed to contextualization/inculturation of the Gospel. I team-teach a graduate course called "Form and Meaning in Bible and Culture," for which this book will henceforth be required reading.


Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp., is Bishop F. X. Ford Professor of Missiology, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. After training in anthropology and linguistics, he served in Sierra Leone (1972-80). He has done research in the Trobriand Islands and Kiribati, among the Maasai of Tanzania, and among homeless women in Chicago, where he has taught since 1984.


For more than fifty years James K. Mathews has given leadership to the global mission endeavor of American Methodism. In this autobiography he gives a well-written account of his extraordinary career, first as a missionary in India, then as a mission board executive, and since 1960 as a bishop.

After graduating from Biblical Seminary in New York City in 1937, Mathews went to Boston University School of Theology for graduate study. During his first semester there he heard Bishop Azariah of Dornakal Diocese in South India preach at Trinity Episcopal Church on Boston's Copley Square. The next day he applied for missionary service in India, and three months later he sailed for Bombay, having aborted his graduate program (years later he completed a Ph.D. July 2001
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Peaceable Witness Among Muslims.


It is amazing to note that there are more Muslims than Episcopalians in America today. This reality presents a fundamental challenge to popular understandings of evangelism and proselytization. In Peaceable Witness Among Muslims Gordon D. Nickel presents new and exciting ways of sharing the Good News with Muslims. He advocates incorporating the Anabaptist peacemaking agenda in communicating the Gospel of peace to Muslims. The author makes a compelling case that the Anabaptist vision of peace, servanthood, love of enemy, and criticism of political power can positively affect Christian-Muslim relations. Nickeleschews any form of combative witness and affirms that it is possible for Christians to embrace Islamic values.

Nickel provides new ways of overcoming the crusading mentality that has afflicted so many Christians for centuries. Kosuke Koyama once remarked that Christians suffer from a “teacher’s complex.” Christians need to talk less and listen and learn more from other religious traditions. We need to avoid any form of pseudoevangelism or cultural imperialism. We must develop new means that will enable us to celebrate our religious diversity and appreciate unfamiliar perspectives. Such efforts are imperative in the global village we call home. This reader applauds the author’s basic contention that sharing the Gospel involves friendship, dialogue, love, reconciliation, and peace. This book makes a worthy contribution to Christian-Muslim dialogue.

—Akitunde E. Akinade

Akitunde E. Akinade, from Nigeria, received a Ph.D. in ecumenical studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York and teaches world religions at High Point University, High Point, North Carolina.
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