At first glance I was disappointed with this volume: the cover design is clunky; the same old names appear in the contents list, with familiar sounding essays. But the pique did not last, as the edition began to assert its difference from previous collections. Jessie Lutz’s volume, “an effort to bring Chinese Christian women into the history of women in China and the history of Chinese Christianity” (p. 14), presents a superb collection of essays dedicated to that task and represents a new milestone in the “recuperative history” of women’s role in the Chinese church. It is true that contributors such as Robert Entenmann, R. G. Tiedemann, and Eugenio Menegon have all written extensively on premodern Catholic women, but the gathering together of these and other essays in a dedicated volume affords a new critical reading.

There are seven sections in this volume, which concentrates on the narrative of Chinese Christian women before 1919 and which deliberately focuses on Chinese women, with scarcely a Western missionary in sight. The nature of the sources means that a male perspective dominates in reconstructions for the early and mid Qing periods, however, just as elite, male perspectives shape our readings of secular female life in late imperial China. But even as the writers in part 2, “Dedicated to Christ: Virgins and Confraternities,” accept that broad-brush strokes and suppositions abound, we nonetheless gain an understanding of the pattern of conversions through kin, of the remarkable agency of the Chinese “virgins” in catechizing and baptizing (including baptizing thousands of moribund babies), and of the “often prominent” roles of women in teaching and leading congregational worship in the decades before Western missionaries returned, aghast at such practices, in the 1840s. Particularities of Chinese social custom remind readers of the acute gender issues in inculturation debates, where a concubine who converted her husband had to be dismissed, since a Christian could not have two wives, or where a priest could not physically touch the woman he was baptizing.

The lack of dialogue between feminist theology and missionology that Lutz laments in her introduction is addressed in various ways throughout the volume, as is the silence in mainstream Chinese women’s history writings on Christian elements to the story. Part 3, “Living the Christian Life,” comprises three essays that provide new detail through local history case studies and biographical writings of late Qing and early Republican women. The compatibility of Christian and Confucian mores and the development of a new Christian culture at the turn of the twentieth century are two of many issues addressed. Part 4 reprises the topic of “Bible women” and evangelists, while parts 5 and 6 address social reform: the development of a female nursing profession, and new educational opportunities for women fostered by Protestant organizations. Through examinations of rhetoric, institutions, and individual lives, the authors explore (1) the interplay between women’s education, conversion, and identity and (2) the tropes of nation building and imperialism, showing the strength of the volume in speaking to wider studies of womanhood in China after the nineteenth century.

—Chloë Starr

Chloë Starr is Assistant Professor of Asian Christianity and Theology at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut.


Competing Kingdoms presents fresh and wide-ranging scholarship on gender and mission, linking it to American cultural expansionism (1812–1960). An introduction by editors Reeves-Ellington, Sklar, and Shemo is followed by fourteen essays and Mary Renda’s concluding essay emphasizing how the “language of domesticity” and the race issue underpinned nineteenth- and twentieth-century American women’s missionary endeavors.

Jane H. Hunter’s “Women’s Mission in Historical Perspective” and Ian Tyrell’s “Woman, Missions, and Empire” (section 1) provide a historical re-visioning of women’s missionary work, while offering new approaches to American cultural expansionism. Subsequent sections “Women,” “Mission,” and “Nation” (despite several overlaps between them) feature essays exploring gender and mission in various contexts of empire, including colonial Rhodesia, China, Egypt, Philippines, and India. Sylvia Jacob’s essay on African American women in Congo and Betty Bergland’s analysis of the Bethany Indian Mission in Wisconsin present fine critiques of racial “othering” as underpinning women’s missionary work. Reeves-Ellington’s essay focusing on the Ottoman Empire and Susan Haskell Khan’s on colonial India ably demonstrate how missionary work was far from a one-way street, as many missionaries recognized the importance of adapting to the local ethos and changing times.

But what about mission praxis within national American borders? And what about voices from the constituencies whom missionaries wished to “rescue”? Bergland’s use of Indian testimonials to offset mission records is commendable. Two other essays stand out. Derek Chang powerfully demonstrates how empire functioned within, as evangelicals “represented Chinese and Blacks as racial and national others” (p. 296). Finally, Rui Kohiyama’s study offsetting missionary sources with ample evidence from local sources and Japanese understandings of missionary work is a refreshing voice in this volume. For nuanced and truly cross-cultural scholarship on missions, diversity
is key. Like Tokyo-based Kohiyama, scholars based in Egypt, Philippines, China, Africa, or elsewhere in erstwhile “empire” would have added fresh insights through their understandings rooted in recipient societies and further enriched the perspectives presented in this volume.

—Maina Chawla Singh

Maina Chawla Singh is author of Being Indian, Being Israeli: Migration, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Homeland (New Delhi, 2009).

Joining In with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission.


Kirsteen Kim has emerged as one of the most important European missiologists today. She is currently associate senior lecturer in theology at Leeds Trinity University College in the United Kingdom. This is the latest of several important books authored by herself or her husband, Sebastian Kim.

The book’s title is based on a marvelous phrase of Rowan Williams’s: mission is “finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in” (p. 1). Kim writes the book from the perspective of the “unbound nature and unpredictability of the Spirit’s presence and activity (John 3.8)” and how it “cuts across human expectations and confounds our sense of geography” (p. 1). In particular, she attempts to connect the Spirit’s work in the entire world with the experience today of the Spirit’s presence in every local situation.

Originating in a ten-week introduction to mission studies at the United College of the Ascension, Selly Oak, Birmingham, Kim’s work presents a concise and creative summary of mission thinking today. The book is a bit weak on biblical and theological foundations (although there is a good, if brief, treatment of the missio Dei [pp. 27–30]), but she provides wonderful summaries of the major elements of missiological thought, all from the perspective of the Holy Spirit. Her treatment of inculturation, for example, is entitled “Discerning the Spirit Among Peoples and Cultures”; her chapter on justice she calls “Empowerment of the Spirit: Struggles for Justice, Freedom, and Well-Being.” Chapter 7, “Wisdom of the Spirit,” speaks about mission in the context of modernity, postmodernity, and fundamentalism. She deals also with interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and development.

The book is filled with many insights and is obviously the product of wide reading and considerable powers of synthesis. I would quibble about her statement that Roman Catholics consider the core of the Gospel to be the celebration of the Eucharist and certain ideas of the priesthood (p. 51), and I think it is a pity that she does not use the second edition of my Models of Contextual Theology when she reflects (very helpfully) on inculturation. But this is a fine book and deserves a wide readership. It covers well-known territory, but in surprisingly fresh ways.

—Stephen Bevans

Stephen Bevans, S.V.D., a contributing editor, is Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D., Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. His most recent book is An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective (Orbis, 2009).


The Gospel Among the Nations details and updates for students and experts in mission studies the most important reflections, statements, and documents that tell us how the Gospel of Jesus Christ has traveled among the nations—like a germ in their midst. This book is a product of Robert Hunt’s long years of study and dedication to the service of missiological research and education. He is presently director of global theological education at the Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

The book is divided into two parts and has nine principal chapters. In part 1 (chaps. 1–4), “Introducing Christianity and Its Boundary Crossing History,” Hunt traces the biblical and theological foundations of mission, as well as the ancient and modern history of church formation in a pluralistic world. For instance, on the history of mission in the New Testament, Hunt writes: “The New Testament depicts a multifaceted engagement by the apostles with the persons and societies that they encounter among the nations.... As importantly, they founded communities that manifested in life together the same outpouring of Christ’s Spirit that fell on the first believers at Pentecost, while maintaining a plurality of forms and structures arising from the plurality of social and cultural situations in which they arose” (p. 6). Part 2 (chaps. 5–9) contains selected readings, statements, and documents related to the founding of churches and their witness from the patristic period to the modern time. Besides the patristic readings, there is an excellent selection of conciliar documents of Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches, with special focus on the important documents of the World Council of Churches on mission and evangelism. The author also discusses the missionary perspectives of evangelicals and Pentecostals (pp. 260–77). In addition, he analyzes some important figures and teachers in the world Christian missionary movement.

Another interesting aspect of the book is the section “The Critical Voice from Outside the Western Church” (pp. 137–45). Here we meet the main trends of thought on the nature of the Christian mission in the writings of contextual theologians from North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. These writers call for balancing missionary activity with the equally important work of inculturation, interreligious dialogue, justice, and peace.

The Gospel image of sowing the seed of the Good News is reflected in the way Hunt discusses the theology of mission, as he highlights the important role of the local church in the work of incarnating the Good News. This is a way of recognizing mission as reciprocal activity between sister churches that have been established in every place. This is the high point of The Gospel Among the Nations, as it stresses the need for us to respect cultural diversity in the church and the role of local churches (in communion with all the churches) in mission work.

—Francis Anekwe Oborji

Francis Anekwe Oborji is Professor of Missiology at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome.
Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century.


Its daunting length and awkward prose notwithstanding, Inuit Shamanism and Christianity makes a notable contribution to indigenous studies. With painstaking detail, the authors—Frédéric Laugrand, professor of anthropology at Université Laval, Quebec City, Quebec, and Jarich Oosten, professor of anthropology at Leiden University—present a symbolically pictographic table of Inuit shamanism as it encounters Christianity of various theological persuasions across the decades of the last century. With concrete illustrations drawn from cultural practice, oral history, artifacts, and art, the authors intersperse the narrative of contact with shorter interpretive commentaries. It is an excellent primary source for previously undocumented material in a nonliterary culture; it is less effective in presenting an interpretive analysis of its subject.

The sociocultural backdrop represented in the text is in itself a contribution to the largely uncharted terrain of the northeastern Canadian cultural landscape. The consideration of the relationship between geography, economy, ritual, religion, education, and the so-called natural world is significant.

Throughout, this volume assumes that shamanism adapted to accommodate Christianity, recognizing in the European religious framework aspects of meaning-making with which it was willing to relate. An interesting question unexplored by the work is the extent to which that modification was a dialectic of cultures, rather than a predominantly one-sided conversation.

—Wendy L. Fletcher

Wendy L. Fletcher is Principal and Dean, and Professor of the History of Christianity, at Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, British Columbia. She works extensively in the area of cross-cultural research and education.

The Word of God Is Not Bound: The Encounter of Sikhs and Christians in India and the United Kingdom.


With The Word of God Is Not Bound, John Parry offers an expanded version of his doctoral thesis in Siga Arles’s series “Studies in the Gospel Interface with Indian Contexts.” The wider publication of Parry’s overview is a welcome addition to the still very limited literature on the interaction between Sikhism and Christianity.

Drawing upon a number of published and unpublished sources, Parry discusses motivations for mission among the Sikhs, the ethos and attitudes of missionaries, Sikh faith, and interreligious Christology. The study’s focus is on organized mission to the Sikhs from its inception in 1833 and onward. As a study in mission history, the
The book has a double objective: historical description of the Punjabi church and mission history as well as theological understanding of other faiths in the dialogical situation that the encounter between Christianity and Sikhism has created.

Based on 2 Timothy 2:9, the very title of the book becomes somewhat provocative when applied to a concrete, historical form of religion, namely, Sikhism: What exactly are we to expect from the encounter between Christianity and Sikhism if we accept the fundamental theological presupposition that the Word of God is universally present although hidden? In his exploration of the encounter and dialogue between Christianity and Sikhism during the last two centuries, Parry’s agenda is not simply historical but ultimately theological and spiritual, for the result of an exploration of dialogue prompts new understandings of one’s own faith. That we are to have high expectations surfaces clearly in Parry’s sympathetic presentation of Gopal Singh’s theological poetry on Jesus (chaps. 9 and 10).

Parry’s own perspective is explicitly Christian but also impartial and methodologically self-conscious. Exactly for this reason does his contribution become important. Historically, the Christian missionaries’ understanding of Sikhism has been formed not only by engagement with the writings of Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, or with Sikh religious life but also by Protestant interpretations of Sikhism. In contrast to this approach, Parry states his purpose as offering an interpretation of Sikhism in the light of Christianity (p. 108), thus demarcating the enterprise from similar attempts in either comparative theology or history of religions. Parry’s book should therefore be viewed both as a presentation of Christian practice and theology of Sikhism and as an invitation to spiritual development through letting the reader follow the dialogue, sensing that indeed the Word of God is not bound.

—Jonas Adelin Jørgensen

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Church and Settler in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Study in the History of the Anglican Diocese of Mashonaland/Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1925.


The vitality and diversity of the faith and church life of black Christians in Zimbabwe, formed from organic interaction with indigenous religion and the clarifying pressure of white oppression, has drawn such intensive and sympathetic scholarly attention that the religion of white settlers has tended to be either
neglected or viewed exclusively through the prism of complicity with the colonial and Rhodesian political dispensations.

This is a lacuna that Pamela Welch addresses at depth in this insightful and richly researched study of early Anglican presence. Three chapters detail the difficulties through which Anglican church life was formed, viewed principally through the shifting emphases of the first four bishops. Fresh light is cast on the weaknesses of founding bishop G. W. H. Knight-Bruce, alongside his visionary confidence that Africans would be won by Africans, as well as on the crucial organizational contribution of William Gaul and the paradox by which Frederic Beaven’s conscientious innovation of a department for indigenous work separated and hence alienated white from black Anglicans.

Two chapters on the challenges of fund-raising and missionary recruitment highlight the precariousness of Anglican work in Rhodesia and undermine common impressions of its security and privilege. Welch shows, indeed, that the establishment-derived reflex of Anglican leaders, who tried to cover the entire territory on the model of the English parish system, sometimes threatened the church’s viability. Her discussion of the varying currents of British popular and ecclesial opinion about the relative sacrifices and “romance” of “colonial” work among white settlers and “missionary” work among black Africans is relevant to all mission church traditions in the period.

The concluding chapter on settlers’ spirituality illuminates currents of high and low churchmanship and the deep appreciation many settlers had for the veld as their cathedral in the bush. The authenticity with which Welch’s analysis of settler religion resonates with the perspectives and spirituality of white Anglicans in Zimbabwe since the nation’s independence in 1980 confirms her view that the initial period marked indelibly all that followed. The excellence of this book highlights the need for studies of the period from 1925 to 1980, developments in other church traditions, and the particularities of the religious experience of the diminishing numbers of white Christians since independence.

—Titus Presler

Christianizing Crimea: Shaping Sacred Space in the Russian Empire and Beyond.


Christianizing Crimea offers a fascinating historical perspective on the various forces that helped transform Crimea from a mostly Muslim Tatar land into one of the holy places of Christian pilgrimage within nineteenth-century Russia, as well as into a special case study of Christian renewal in the post-Soviet era. Looking at historical, archaeological, political, and ecclesiastical archives, the author details how an array of influences have converged to help create this “sacred space.”

Crimea represented an extremely diverse region of the nineteenth-century Russian Empire, with not only numerous ethnicities but also quite a mixture of religious groups. During particular periods, Russians leaders like Catherine II had severely limited the ability of the Orthodox Church to evangelize or reach out to non-Orthodox Christians and Tatar
Muslims of the area. By the middle to late 1800s, however, a combination of political changes that came with the ascension of Czar Nicholas I (1825), together with religious developments such as the rise of the charismatic hierarch Archbishop Innokentii of Kherson-Tauride and external forces such as the Russo-Ottoman war and the Crimean War, created an atmosphere that fostered radical change in the ethnic and religious make-up of the region.

Historians and archaeologists played on the philhellenic passions of nineteenth-century Europeans to highlight the ancient Greek history of the region. Certain academic circles and ecclesiastical leaders underscored the rich Byzantine heritage, noting how Christianity preceded Islam in the region. Within this context, Archbishop Innokentii worked to create within Crimea an imitation of Mount Athos, the monastic state within Greece that is often considered one of the centers of Orthodoxy Christianity. These influences, helped along as wartime propaganda and nationalist fervor entered the mix, eventually led to the changes mentioned.

—Luke A. Veronis

Luke A. Veronis, Director of the Missions Institute of Orthodox Christianity and an Adjunct Instructor at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and Hellenic College, all in Brookline, Massachusetts, served twelve years as a missionary in Albania and East Africa.

Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity.


It is a daunting task to attempt a compilation of landmark essays in any field. The breadth and scope of missiology and its multidisciplinary undergirding make it an even more daring feat. Using surveys and interviews, in addition to consulting various bibliographic materials over a ten-year period, Robert Gallagher and Paul Hertig have successfully assembled “fifteen of the most important essays on mission published over the past seventy years.” They successfully cover Catholic and Orthodox scholars and also, within Protestantism, conciliar and evangelical scholars as well as those of the Pentecostal/Charismatic persuasion. Divided into seven parts, the volume covers biblical theology, history, theology, church and kingdom, evangelism and contextualization, Christianity and the religions, and anthropology and global trends.

Fuller Theological Seminary, an evangelical, multicultural, multidenominational school located in Pasadena, California, is seeking a Dean of the School of Intercultural Studies.

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David Bosch’s masterful argument that the Bible as a whole should be seen as the source and motivation for missions, instead of following the usual practice of isolating a few texts, stands alongside Karl Barth’s meticulous exegesis of Matthew 28:18–20. Dana Robert’s insightful articulation of the transformation of world Christianity in terms of a “massive cultural and geographic shift away from Europeans and their descendants toward peoples of the Southern Hemisphere” (p. 47) is present as is C. René Padilla’s critique of the homogenous unit principle. Paul Hiebert’s remarkable anthropological study regarding the “flaw of the excluded middle” admits the limitations of Western missions based on their post-Enlightenment leitmotiv and the need for a serious understanding of the spirit world in non-Western spirituality. Samuel Escobar offers a panoramic overview of mission studies and uses five leading reflective practitioners—Lucien Legrand, Eduardo Hoornaert, Ruth Tucker, C. René Padilla, and Lamin Sanneh—to present the dynamism and diversity within the field. The impact of globalization on missions, the role of women in mission history and practice, the inevitability of suffering, and primal religions as faiths with which to engage ecumenically all receive ample attention in this volume.

The contributions are preceded by brief biographical profiles of the authors, which are helpful in situating their contexts and research interests. Landmark Essays is an anthology that gives beginners ready access to the best in the field of mission studies and that also serves veterans as a one-volume reference.

One can always argue with the choice of essays. But on the whole, the editors have been painstakingly diligent in ensuring that, even though the papers were written for different audiences, cross-references enable readers to benefit from the kaleidoscopic spread of information and vantage points. Since most of these essays are more than ten years old, the most obvious benefit offered by Landmark Essays is to have gathered them all into a single volume.

—Casely B. Essamuah


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—David D. Grafton

David D. Grafton is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). He is the author of Piety, Politics and Power: Lutherans Encountering Islam in the Middle East (Wipf & Stock, 2009).
Dreaming in Christianity and Islam: Culture, Conflict, and Creativity.


Dreaming in Christianity and Islam explores an important phenomenon in Christian-Muslim relations and witness. The genesis of this compilation of papers was a conference organized by the International Association for the Study of Dreams, held in Berkeley, California, in 2005.

The first section is devoted to dreaming in Christianity, starting with its role in the Bible, then in church history, showing, for example, Luther’s concerns about dreams, in contrast to the more positive attitude of Calvin. The second section, devoted to Islam, looks at the experience of and teaching about dreams from those of Muhammad to those of contemporary Muslims. The Arabian Prophet is described in the Canonical Traditions as considering dreams a means of guidance from God. A result has been the rise of a professional class of dream interpreters. Although divination is condemned in the Qur’an, the practice of Istikhara is common, whereby individuals who face a difficult decision pray before going to sleep with the hope that they will have a dream to give them guidance. A chapter by Lana Nasser also describes the involvement of jinn (spirits) in the dreams of contemporary Jordanian women.

The third section is devoted to a comparative study of dreams in the two faith traditions. The findings are summarized thus: “Christianity and Islam both regard dreams as a legitimate and beneficial form of human-divine interaction” (p. 249). The authors support this by demonstrating that, first, dreams are reported favorably in the sacred writings of both traditions; second, many of their leaders were influenced by dreams; and third, many of their leaders have encouraged people to look to dreams for guidance, even as they need to guard against faulty interpretations and demonic sources.

Although the writers describe the role of dreams in religious conversions, they do not look at the wealth of material that we are finding particularly in contemporary conversions from Islamic faith to Christian faith. Also, there is an occasional slip in wording that suggests someone’s unfamiliarity with classical sources—for example, a reference to “hadith sources from Bukhari [a compiler of traditions] to Sahih [the name of his compilation]” (p. 126). Nevertheless, the work is a very helpful overview of an important field for mission studies. —J. Dudley Woodberry

J. Dudley Woodberry is Dean Emeritus and Senior Professor of Islamic Studies at the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. His major mission experience has been in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia.

William R. Burrows, a contributing editor, is Managing Editor Emeritus of Orbis Books and Research Professor of Missiology in the Center for World Christianity at New York Theological Seminary.

—William R. Burrows


Trent Pomplun’s account of Ippolito Desideri’s mission to Tibet is a worthy addition to recent studies of Jesuit missionaries in Asia from 1542, when Francis Xavier landed in Goa, down to the time of Desideri (1684–1733). Pomplun, associate professor of theology at Loyola University Maryland, brings to this missiological study the distinction of being a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism with a command of classic Tibetan Buddhist texts in their original language.

Another distinctive feature of Pomplun’s Jesuit on the Roof of the World is the attention he gives to a detailed analysis of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola and the culture of Jesuit formation and the impact they had on Desideri and his predecessors in the Asian mission. Reading Pomplun, one understands both the evangelical fire of the Jesuits and their Renaissance commitment to understanding the religion and culture of those among whom they worked.

The result is a picture of Desideri as a committed missionary with orthodox views of the missionary task as he brings both his Christocentric spirituality and his humanistic education to bear on introducing Christianity to Tibet and on understanding Tibetan Buddhism on its own terms, presenting Christianity in the light of questions raised by the Tibetan context. Pomplun’s work is critical in the best sense, bringing into relief both the genius and shortcomings of his subject. And he does it all in a book that is a really good read.

—William R. Burrows

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