Book Reviews

Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology.


While Pentecostals/Charismatics are well known for aggressive and numerically successful missions work all around the world, until recently their academic theological reflection has lagged behind the grassroots-level activities. Julie and Wonsuk Ma’s book testifies to the fact that Pentecostal theological reflection on mission has come of age.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part I offers theological perspectives on Pentecostal mission, with the focus on various aspects of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The second part addresses strategic issues such as church planting and contextualization, covers debated issues such as power encounters, and includes a number of case studies.

The book contains many delightful surprises. Wonsuk begins the first major part of the book with a robust creation theology based on key Old Testament texts all the way from Genesis 1 to Isaiah (the latter book was his dissertation topic at Fuller Theological Seminary). Taking note of the fact that Pentecostals typically begin their theological reflection on mission from Acts 2, Wonsuk argues strongly that the Spirit’s role in bringing about and sustaining life should be the first topic studied. Besides consideration of the Spirit’s role in creation, Wonsuk includes useful reflections on the manifold biblical testimonies to charisms, as well as signs and wonders. Talk about holistic pneumatology!

Another delightful surprise is the discussion of the theological meaning of religions and their worldviews. Linked with that discussion is the highly interesting chapter written by Julie, in the second major part, on contextualization and syncretism among the Santuwa, a syncretistic group in the Philippines (her dissertation topic at Fuller Seminary).

Different from Pentecostal—or any other—missions written by Western authors, this one, by two Koreans, unashamedly incorporates insights, case studies, and lessons from Asian contexts. This alone makes the book great reading. Highly useful and creative, the book suffers slightly from the fact that some chapters were originally published separately. Thus, some repetition and lack of bridges are unavoidable. These lacunae, however, in no way diminish this book’s excellence and usefulness.

Having done missions work for more than two decades in the Philippines, including teaching and academic administrative positions in a Pentecostal seminary, Julie and Wonsuk Ma are currently giving leadership to the Oxford Center for Mission Studies, Oxford, United Kingdom.

—Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a native of Finland, is Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, and Docent of Ecumenics at the University of Helsinki.

Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change.


Paul Hiebert was distinguished professor of mission and anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, where he died in 2007. Transforming Worldview is his final work and reflects a lifetime of engagement with missionary anthropology and missiology in India and in teaching posts in the United States. The early chapters of the work provide background for understanding anthropological (and other social scientific) perspectives on how cultures change, and this information is the basis for the argument that conversion represents a process of transforming the worldview of converts. Worldviews are defined as “the foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives” (pp. 25–26). Hiebert is particularly concerned with the possibility for a deep transformation of worldviews within conversion, a process that begins only when a decision is made by the individual.

The heart of the book (chaps. 5–9) consists of Hiebert’s discussion of worldviews in the kinds of societies with which missionaries and churches have been engaged over time. The discussion of small-scale and peasant societies makes use of rather traditional anthropological materials on those contexts, and over a third of the book deals with modern, postmodern, and “glocal” worldviews that shape contemporary societies at the global scale of analysis. The chapter “The Modern Worldview” is the longest in the book (pp. 141–210). Although the focus on rationalism, secularization, and the autonomy of the individual reflects a missiological concern in many quarters about how those processes have “disenchanted” the sacred worldview of the cosmos in the pre-Enlightenment world, the discussion falls somewhat short of what anthropological perspectives might bring to the larger discussion of issues such as cultural pluralism and interreligious dialogue as these processes play out in the twenty-first century.

Hiebert does not push as hard as he might on the critique of Christendom that links Christianity too closely to power structures in the Western world. This is not to say that he is unaware of the critiques linking missionization with colonialism, and he does make the interesting observation that in the process of missionization and the sharp division in some circles between evangelization and social ministry, “modern missions often became a powerful secularizing force” (p. 155). The chapters on postmodernity and what he calls “post-postmodern or glocal” worldviews attend to the intersections where global culture makes an impact on local cultures; the missiological implications for making sense of social practice at these places of encounter are...
Hiebert articulates his concern for a critical realism in which “human knowledge is based on critical engagement with the world rather than a distant magisterial, management explanation of it (positivism) or personal knowledge limited to particular situations (instrumentalism)” (p. 260).

Hiebert is at his best when discussing the process of conversion and discussing how that process relates to a “biblical worldview” (chap. 10). He advocates what can only be called a grace-filled understanding of the essential Christian message rather than one tied to specific doctrines. Restoration is a critical part of his view of salvation, and there is an insistent message that responding to issues such as violence and poverty should reflect salvation because “in missions we must identify with people in our common humanity. We are all humans, part of creation over against the Creator and formed in the image of God, fallen but redeemable” (p. 290). Moreover, Hiebert argues at some length that missionary activity should be culturally specific, while not offering cheap grace or being so rule- or law-bound that no one can be saved.

From the anthropological perspective, this highlights an organic view of culture and a holistic understanding of missionary activity, concerns that seem more in line with Hiebert’s basic instincts regarding conversion than do the occasional reference to syncretism or Christo-paganism (p. 69). The recognition of the individual and corporate dimensions of worldview transformation provides a more expansive view of salvation in local contexts where competing worldviews are negotiated in everyday life: “The church in each locale, as a community of faith, must define what it means to be Christian in its particular sociocultural and historical setting” (p. 326).

Transforming Worldviews will be most useful when sections of it are woven into missiology courses pitched toward upper-level undergraduates and seminary students. These sections will best be used in conjunction with ethnographic studies of Christian and other religious practices in particular places. The combination will address to some extent the affective “assumptions and frameworks” Hiebert sees as understudied when scholars have tried to make sense of the different worldviews discussed in the book. These “practical” studies of worldview in action will complement Hiebert’s challenge to consider how we apply the biblical worldview(s) with which we are engaged by tradition and training.

—C. Mathews (Matt) Samson

C. Mathews Samson, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina, is the author of Re-enchanting the World: Maya Protestantism in the Guatemalan Highlands (Univ. of Alabama Press, 2007).
A Protestant Theology of Passion: Korean Minjung Theology Revisited.


Minjung theology, which grew out of the particular experience of South Korean people in their political and socioeconomic struggles for justice in the 1970s and 1980s, affirms Korean culture and history as the context for a proper Korean theology. Considering “the emergence of contextual theologies…an empirical and hermeneutical turn in the history of twentieth century theology” (p. 1), Volker Küster of the Protestant Theological University (Kampen, Netherlands) seeks to introduce minjung theology as an Asian contextual theology with “a clearly Protestant profile” (p. 17). Unlike Latin American liberation theology, it rejects the Marxist analysis of society and regards the biblical stories and the social biographies of the suffering minjung (“people”) as the two primary reference points.

The author’s keen interest in minjung theology has led him to make multiple visits to Korea since 1987 for field research, and his intimate knowledge and deep insight into Korean Christianity and society are clearly reflected throughout the book. Exploring the socioeconomic, political, and cultural context of Korea in the beginning chapters, Küster devotes the major part of the book to providing biographical portraits of representative minjung theologians: Ahn Byung-Mu, Suh Nam-Dong, Hyun Young-Hak, Kim Yong-Bock, and Chung Hyun-Kyung. In the concluding chapters he examines contextual challenges and transformations of minjung theology, setting it in intercultural perspective and addressing the question of its continued relevance.

Küster perceptively identifies two prominent and perennial issues facing minjung theology: the subject of theology and the relation between truth and experience. These topics could have been probed in greater depth, however, for some critical questions regarding the subjecthood of the minjung were not adequately considered, partly for the fear of interpreting it with traditional Western theological categories. Minjung theology began as a theological exercise among intellectuals and educated groups. Whether it has become a theology among intellectuals and educated groups.

—Joon-Sik Park


Both of these books make important contributions to our understanding of Korean American religion. Contentious Spirits is the first (and so far only) book-length treatment of the foundational period of Korean American history. In it, David K. Yoo, a distinguished historian and director of the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, argues that two characteristics stand out in the history of the Korean American community between 1903 and 1945: (1) the encompassing presence of religion, more precisely, Protestantism, and (2) contentiousness among Korean Americans over how to fight for the independence of Korea, which was then languishing under Japanese colonialism.

In this period the total number of Korean Americans was about 10,000, the vast majority of whom were Protestants—“an estimated 90 percent of those who left Korea [for the United States] identified themselves as Christians [i.e., Protestant]” (p. 8). This is an extraordinary fact given that Christians represented at most 2 percent of the Korean population at the time, a singularity owed partly to some
Protestant missionaries who encouraged Koreans to emigrate to the United States. Yoo’s narrative begins with 1903 because that was when the first group of Korean immigrants arrived in Hawaii; it ends in 1945, presumably because the end of World War II initiated a series of events that culminated in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which marked a new era for Korean and other Asian Americans, the era that gave birth to people covered in Kim’s book.

To make his argument, Yoo mainly examines the sparse records that exist on Korean American Protestant communities in Hawaii and Los Angeles. Specifically, he analyzes how Protestantism and contentiousness meshed with three sets of dual relationships that obtained among Korean Americans: migration and exile, religion and race, and colonialism and independence. The meshing is not always clear. Overall, however, Yoo provides a convincing narrative of the community, showing how Protestantism helped Koreans to acclimate to American culture despite their contentiousness, even though their faith in the end could not trump the racism that barred them from fully participating in American society.

While Yoo treats the foundational period of Korean American religious history, Sharon Kim, in A Faith of Our Own, focuses on the most recent period of that history, 1996–2006. Hers is a sociological study concentrating on twenty-two of the fifty-six second-generation Korean American Protestant churches she located in the Los Angeles area. All these are full-fledged independent churches, not English ministries of Korean immigrant churches or missions of white churches; all were founded by Korean Americans whose first language is English.

Kim, who teaches sociology at California State University at Fullerton, asks two overarching questions: What gave rise to these churches and what do they say about the spirituality of post-1965 second-generation Korean Americans? The author’s answer, and the book’s argument, is that these churches represent a hybrid third space embraced by the second generation that feels ill at ease both in the churches of their parents and in the churches of European Americans. Kim asserts, “By neither assimilating into mainstream churches nor remaining in the ethnic churches of their immigrant parents, but establishing their own independent religious institutions, second-generation Korean Americans are establishing that in today’s American society, there are hybrid third spaces to inhabit” (p. 163).

While explaining factors behind the rise of this hybrid spirituality, Kim challenges some long-standing assumptions about second-generation Korean Americans: that they are less spiritual than their parents, that they abandon their parents’ churches either to assimilate into white churches or to leave the faith altogether, that they more or less keep to themselves. This book is sure to reinvigorate conversations on the religious outlook of second-generation Korean Americans.

—Timothy S. Lee

Timothy S. Lee is Associate Professor of the History of Christianity, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas.

Followers of Christ Outside the Church in Chennai, India: A Socio-historical Study of a Non-church Movement.


Followers of Christ offers documentation and commentary on 390 individuals in a random-sample survey of 12,166 people in ten zip codes of the Chennai area, a megalopolis in South India of about 8 million people. Jeyaraj establishes the contours of the Chennai context in which Christianity is spreading, and he offers a unique and rare glimpse into the world of contemporary Christian spiritual traditions outside of organized church structures.
The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity.


This is an important book with which North American evangelicals need to come to terms. In fact, an entire session at the 2010 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society was devoted to interacting with the ideas presented in it. The author, a Korean-American evangelical, formerly a pastor in the Boston area and now a professor at Chicago’s North Park Theological Seminary, provides a compelling account of what is happening in Christianity today. He pleads with white evangelicals to get their heads out of the cultural sand in which they are now buried and participate fully in the new order, where immigrant, ethnic-minority, and multiethnic churches are burgeoning.

Repeatedly I found myself saying “Amen!” and “Right on!” to Rah’s affirmations. Christianity is now a global phenomenon, and the hitherto dominant white American faith is rapidly experiencing de-Europeanization. Although the situation in evangelicalism currently reflects the values, culture, and ethos of Western, white American culture more than the values of Scripture, “the times they are a-changin’.”

Rah develops the theme of cultural captivity through free-ranging analyses of American individualism, consumerism, materialism, and racism and then deals with specific deficiencies. These include the church growth movement, megachurches, the emergent church, the response to postmodernity, American cultural hegemony, and prosperity theology. In the final section he offers some specifics as to how white American evangelicals can learn from nonwhite communities, including a theology of celebration, holistic evangelism, and forming a multicultural worldview. He challenges whites to be willing to submit to the authority and leadership of nonwhites, to confess their corporate sins, and to serve as agents of reconciliation, even as our country becomes increasingly multiethnic.

—Richard V. Pierard

Richard V. Pierard is Professor Emeritus of History from both Indiana State University, Terre Haute, and Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts.

The Life and Letters of Philip Quaque, the First African Anglican Missionary.


Philip Quaque (pronounced kwah-koo) was born in about 1740 in what is now Ghana, in the region known as Cape Coast. In 1754 he was brought to England for education by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), and in 1765 he was ordained as the first Anglican priest of African descent. In addition to his pioneering work as an African missionary in Africa, Quaque was among the most prolific Africans writing in English during his lifetime. This important volume is the first scholarly edition of fifty-three letters written by Quaque between 1765 and 1811.

The helpful introduction situates Quaque’s correspondence in its complex geographic and political contexts. The introduction also delineates the several and sometimes contradictory roles in which Quaque wrote as an English-educated African who was a priest of the Diocese of London, a missionary and schoolteacher of the SPG, and a chaplain and officer of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa (CMTA).

Quaque’s letters are especially useful for scholars in their depiction of imperial relationships at a period “before the development of nineteenth-century pseudoscientific racism, as well as before the European conquest of much of Africa” (p. 2). The editors contend that Quaque’s writing “demonstrates the surprising complexity of the economic, military, political, and religious relations between Africans and Europeans” (p. 2). Like many missionary narratives of their time and continent, Quaque’s letters are full of tragedy, as well as material that is culturally and historically important. For example, we learn that his wife died in childbirth along with their infant child in 1766; he experienced ongoing conflict with missionary agencies in connection with funding; illness, war, and the era-defining institution of transatlantic slavery served as the background for his ministry, which was characterized, the editors note, by its “relative lack of success” in numerically measured religious terms (p. 20).

In one odd editorial choice, Caucasian clergymen mentioned in the text always receive an honorific “Rev.” without a definite article—“Rev. Thompson,” “Rev. Moore,” “Rev. Johnson,” “Rev. Bass”—while Philip Quaque himself is always mentioned in the text simply as “Quaque.” An alert editor with an eye for this and some other fine points of ecclesiastical language or reference would have helped to make for a more consistent edition.
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Nevertheless, the editors have done an extraordinary and important job of introducing Philip Quaque’s voice to a new generation of readers. They have set the bar very high for others preparing editions of the correspondence and writings of Quaque’s contemporaries in this period of fertile circum-Atlantic exchange.

—Richard J. Mammana, Jr.

Richard J. Mammana, Jr., is the founder and director of Anglicanhistory.org.

The “Inscrutably Chinese” Church: How Narratives and Nationalism Continue to Divide Christianity.


The “Inscrutably Chinese” Church opens a window of opportunity for us to view Protestant churches in contemporary China through a different lens. What is the reality for Christians in contemporary China? Or what is the “true face” of the Chinese church? Foreign Christians talking about China have long tended to divide the Chinese church neatly into “(bad) official church” vs. “(good) underground church,” or “repressive government” vs. “oppressed faithful” (pp. 4, 19). Obviously, for outsiders there still exists a measure of “inscrutability” about the contemporary Chinese church.

Why do these old stereotypes persist in Christian circles outside of China? Nathan Faries believes that outsiders relate frameworks and narratives of opposition that stem from the assumption that there is a combative relationship between China’s state and its society. Once this dichotomy is established, the division between two factions in the Chinese church follows logically (pp. 26–27). For Chinese Christianity, however, the reality is more complicated and fluid than this simple dichotomy allows. Faries’s book presents the Chinese Christian experience, revealing how foreigners (particularly Americans, both those in government work and those who are personal Christians) and Chinese view Chinese Christians, the Chinese government, and the relationship between the church and the Chinese state. His work is largely based on textual and rhetorical analysis of narratives.

I believe that this book will help all of us see more clearly the true face of the Chinese church, close some gaps caused by cultural miscommunication, draw together the perception of those inside and those outside China, and bring the “inscrutably Chinese” church into clearer view. Faries suggests that we should listen closely to the stories told by those who are foreign to us (p. 277). Furthermore, he reminds us that we are all children with a long way to go and a lot to learn when it comes to understanding foreign cultures, particularly one as broad and deep as that of China (p. 279).

—Yong-an Zhang

Yong-an Zhang is Associate Professor of the History of Sino-U.S. Relations and of the Social History of Medicine, Department of History, Shanghai University.


This collection of fifteen essays by the head of the Office for Islam of the Vatican Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue reflects writings stretching over twenty years. Most of what Michel says is applicable to non-Catholic ver-
Beyond Empire: Postcolonialism and Mission in a Global Context.


Western colonialism has four striking, if not always beautiful, daughters: (1) cultural imperialism, (2) economic might, (3) political supremacy, and (4) spiritual pride. Their collective influence is extensive, for it has created the empire that has dominated the modern world and continues to strangle the Majority World. This is the thesis of this far-reaching book.

In a readable and personal style, Jonathan Ingleby, a mission partner in India and a former head of mission studies at Redcliffe College, Gloucester, U.K., argues that the missionary question in a postcolonial world must take into consideration the disappearing boundaries between Christian mission and ethnocentrism, the market economy, parliamentary democracy, and spirituality. They feed on each other, and one cannot be explained without reference to the others. The Western colonial empire has had deep and negative effects on the church, effects that continue to linger—indeed, they affect every sphere of the human condition.

Since the 1960s, postcolonial books have tended to be either comprehensive in their knowledge base but incomplete in their scope, or complete in covering a wide range of issues but not comprehensive in depth of knowledge. This book is different. It is both complete and comprehensive, arguing that the modern world has been profoundly shaped by the colonial experience.

The book has six chapters plus a brilliant conclusion entitled “Time to Wake Up.” The chapters cover important topics such as migration, poverty, consumerism, the vitality of the indigenous people groups, in the Southern Hemisphere, hybridity (or a third space), development, political Zionism, the future of postcolonial cities, and personal discipleship. The author’s insights are penetrating and instructive.

In the first four chapters, Ingleby probes the depths of postcolonial economic and political domination. His focus in these earlier chapters is on diagnosis and prognosis. The latter chapters reach out for prescriptions and recommendations, focusing on the extent of the missio Dei.

According to Ingleby, and drawing from the Book of Revelation, the authors of the Bible “are against empires” (p. 17), such as the Western empire, which now “has its hands round the throat . . . of the Church” (p. 27). He suggests that “one of the greatest things we can do for mission in the twenty-first century is to undo the economic imbalances that still mean that, all too often, the nations of the Global South (especially Africa, but parts of Asia as well) are beggars at the West’s door. . . . What we really need is mission movements in the Global South that are strong enough (economically and in other ways) to be planning and implementing global strategies of their own” (p. 45).

An excellent book—one of the best I have read in the past five years on world events and their profound effects on Christian mission.

—Caleb O. Oladipo

German Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia, 1848–1908: Influential Strangers.


Moravians forged the modern missionary movement and established missions around the colonial world. They arrived in the colony of Victoria in 1848 expecting favorable treatment from the Moravian lieutenant-governor, Charles La Trobe, but as Jensz has uncovered, they were viewed with suspicion both by the dominant Anglo culture under aggressive, often antimission, settler governments and in some cases by the Aboriginal people, whose conversion they so desperately sought. Jensz has burrowed deeply into the Moravian archives to engage with the culture of this influential denomination. She illuminates the day-to-day issues faced by the missionaries, including the drawing of lots (los) to determine God’s will on the forming of new missions and the choosing of marriage partners.

This book is founded on a bedrock of archival research, yet the analysis exemplifies the difficulties faced by many young historians who find missionaries distasteful and who struggle with the complex historiography of Christian mission. Despite her favorable references to the measured and sympathetic mission analyses of Jane Samson and Andrew Porter, Jensz was drawn again and again to earlier theses that consider the missionary to be the primary agent of indigenous suffering. She holds the Moravian missionaries to current-day standards of plurality and relativism and, not surprisingly, finds them to be wanting. This is illustrated most clearly in the last chapter, where Jensz tackles
the perplexing question of the long-lived missionary Friedrich Hagenauer, who was active in the colony from 1858 until his death in 1908. First missionary then government agent, Hagenauer is notorious in Victorian Aboriginal history for his part in the drafting of the Half-Caste Act of 1886, which drove “half-caste” Aborigines from the mission stations into the racist world of colonial society. Separated from their “full-blood” relatives, they suffered great hardship—exacerbated by the depression of the 1890s—and many were destitute. Jensz does not prove her thesis that Hagenauer was acting out a theological position and makes no real effort to identify his theological analysis of race and racial difference. Jensz’s extraordinarily detailed bibliography speaks to the breadth of her historical reading, but the cost has been in the depth of her analysis. Despite these flaws, this book demonstrates wonderful archival research and will reward the reader who seeks detail on the Moravians in Victoria.

—Helen Gardner

Helen Gardner is a senior lecturer in history at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century missions to the Pacific, the relationship between Christian mission and anthropology, and the role of the churches in the decolonization of Melanesia.

In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology.


In the Days of Caesar presents a clear treatment of an important but relatively neglected topic, namely, “the intersection between pentecostalism—its beliefs and practices—and the public square” (p. 3). Broadly defining both Pentecostalism and politics, the author starts with a general survey, noting that “pentecostalism invites not one but many forms of political, economic, and social postures and practices” (p. 38) and also that there are “multiple political theological options” (p. 82). He asserts that there is “a unique pentecostal theological approach,” which we may discern from a close examination of “pentecostal piety, spirituality, and religious experience” (p. 86).

His argument starts with the Spirit and the framework of the fivefold Gospel, consisting of the good news of “Jesus as savior, sanctifier, Spirit-baptizer, healer, and coming king” (p. 95). With the core observation of “many tongues, many political practices” (p. 109), the author constructs a general Pentecostal political theology, including a liturgical theology of cosmopolitical resistance, a sanctified politics of cultural redemption, a prophetic politics of civil society, a political economy of healing and shalom, and an eschatological politics of hope.

As a continuation of Yong’s earlier volume The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh (Baker Academic, 2005), this new book explores “soteriology as a, if not the, central pentecostal doctrine” (p. 116). The author defines his task as being “an interpreter of many tongues” of both Pentecostalism and political theology (p. 359). Rather than countering directly the common view that Pentecostalism is apolitical, the author emphasizes more an ecumenical vision of its overall political stance, including especially voices from the Global South.

—Yi Liu

Yi Liu is Lecturer in the Department of History and Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, Shanghai University.


Missions and Unity deals compactly, briskly, and accurately with two of the major—some would say dominant—trends in world Christianity during the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Scholars reading it may regard it as an unalphabetical but well-indexed minidictionary or encyclopedia of modern missions and unitive efforts. Organization of topics is Thomas’s strong suit. The first 84 pages are straightforwardly historical, offering no surprises to those who have any degree of familiarity with missionary activity from William Carey in 1792 to “Multiple Unity Streams” in 2010, but this account can serve as a digest.

The meat of the book and its most imaginative section is Thomas’s treatment in “Ten Models of Unity.” Again, historians are likely to have knowledge of each of these, but they may well be unsorted in their minds. The author makes a good case for treating the movements as the models he discerns. Should energies go into realizing a “Global Church” or be poured into developing councils such as the World Council of Churches? Is there value in valuing the various “Christian World Communions” that got together in this period?

If not Councils or Communions, would more loose Associations serve the cause? Is there profit in surveying regional and national voluntary organizations or councils? What about frankly setting forth plans for straight-out “church union”? Does the famous formula accenting localization, the “all-in-each-place” model, have life and promise?

The answer to the ten questions about models is: yes! Thomas is no ideologue, and he treats the experiments, including faithful failures, with respect. As for the present and the future, necessarily treated after Thomas has shown how some models have become lifeless if not obsolete, there are added agenda items that go beyond the bounds of “Missions and Unity.” The first is the ecumenical outreach to “the secular vision,” which implies an alteration in perceptions of Christian resources, and then to “other faiths,” a hot, troubling, and in its own way promising direction.

The mere cataloging and citing of the movements and individuals from which Thomas draws his models in compressed space is dazzling—and useful. The author knows his limits, or the limits of his scope, and shows it by inserting brief sections on “Pentecostalism” and “Independency,” which have been eclesiological upstarts through the period. Will the two upset the century-old models or enhance them? Thomas offers a modest landmark in this period of fresh reckoning.

—Martin E. Marty

Martin E. Marty is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Chicago.


The history of mission has tended to privilege the exploits and experiences of men missionaries and to gloss over women’s contribution to mission, whether as missionarises themselves or as objects of mission. In Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville, an excellently researched book, Phyllis M. Martin, professor emerita of history at Indiana University, explores the encounter between missionaries and Africa in Congo-Brazzaville from 1883 to the late 1990s by focusing on women’s experiences in the Roman Catholic Church. Martin focuses on the social and spiritual attractions of the church for Congolese women after initial resistance and shows “how and why they came to greatly outnumber men in the post-colonial church” (p. 2).

Tracing the women’s relationship with the missionary Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, foreign and local, in their educational and pastoral work during colonial and postcolonial times, Martin argues that Congolese women were able to experience social community and spiritual communion through devotional meetings, Catholic action groups, and twentieth-century women’s organizations. Mission work drew women together as mothers and sisters, using motherhood as a mobilizing tool and a source of identity. Women drew from the rich social and spiritual capital of precolumial society, where women had associations for mutual aid and where maternity was a broad category not restricted to biological children but extended to lineage, clan, and community.

Martin also recognizes that motherhood is a contested and political category that, though it is a basis for women’s moral outrage and a platform for action against women’s experiences of injustice privately and publicly, is also perceived by men as primarily about domesticity at home or in the service of the state. Nevertheless, the author shows that women are involved in social change, challenging customs that relegate them to the margins, fighting stereotypes, and carving for themselves space in the public sphere and in the church, being its pillars and at the heart of parish life.

Historians, students, and scholars of African mission history have much to learn from this book. Reader friendly, with helpful maps and illustrations, it utilizes archival, oral, and secondary sources.

—Philomena Njeri Mwaura

Philomena Njeri Mwaura is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.

The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity.


The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity is a magnificent work of exemplary scholarship in which the editors have striven heroically to provide truly worldwide coverage of their theme. The book may also be among the last works of its kind that will ever appear, at least in a print format.

In its geographic and historical scope, the Dictionary indicates the near-revolution that has overtaken the study of Christianity in the past thirty or forty years. An excellent way of approaching the book is to study the initial lists of editors, advisers, and contributors, some 800 in all, and to marvel at the impressively global range of their institutional affiliations. Inevitably, then, material from Africa and Asia (say) is fully included and treated extensively, rather than being treated merely as an addendum. The vision of Christianity is holistic and comprehensive, and this comment applies as well to individual denominations and faith-traditions, Orthodox as well as Protestant and Catholic. Mormons, too, are treated as definitely belonging to the Christian spectrum.

One unusual feature of the book is its use of “clusters,” indicated by the dark background on which these lengthy sections appear. The clusters arrange
material on such sizable and complex topics as “Lutheranism,” “History of Christianity,” and “Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements.” Under these initial headings, the reader can pursue more detailed subthemes, such as “History of Christianity in Europe: Western Europe,” each of which includes still more specific subheadings.

The structure of these sections indicates the expectations of a computer-literate audience, in which readers are accustomed to beginning at a Web home page and then clicking on specific topics and subtopics as a means of locating desired information. The analogy is clear, but so are the difficulties in reproducing that approach within a printed volume. However user-friendly the publishers have tried to make the book, print can never reproduce the virtues of hypertext. For one thing, the reader of the published volume cannot simply cut and paste information about a given topic (at least without destroying the physical book!).

In short, the Cambridge Dictionary tries very hard to compete with electronic resources, but I am not sure how long the unequal contest can endure. The days of hard-copy reference books are rapidly drawing to a close.

—Philip Jenkins

Philip Jenkins, a contributing editor, teaches at Penn State University and has a courtesy joint appointment at Baylor University.

Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East.


Nearest East is concerned to show that “from the first overseas missionaries in the early nineteenth century to the political game in the early twenty-first, American millennialism preserved its impact but changed its forms” (p. 4), emphasizing its “concrete long-term impact on the history of relations with the Middle East” (p. 3). Distinguishing American millennialism from Europe’s “geniuses of history or ‘Providence’” by its fixation upon revivalist readings of the Book of Revelation as central to its vision “for the modern remaking of the world” (p. 8), the study traces its development from its postmillenialist (that is, its more positivistic and progressivist nineteenth-century “social gospelist”) form as championed chiefly by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Ottoman domains, through the transition to premillennialist apocalyptic approaches arising in the aftermath of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. That shift was accompanied by increasing U.S. economic and political missions, particularly in the post–World War II era, attracted in large part by oil. All shared a millennialist orientation, and all displayed, despite differences, “Zionist” aims, seeking and supporting restoration for the Jews to “the Promised Land.”

A linear connection is thus traced from the early spiritual to the latter more political American missions to the Middle East, highlighting at the end George W. Bush’s strongly apocalyptic millennialist-driven approach. The study highlights Kieser’s concern that “the American rhetorical synergy of millennialism could become self-righteous and deadly when it lost its breath” (pp. 163–64), a breath of life that “points to the end of egocentric human relations as they had been conceived on a gradually globalizing earth” (p. 162).

Kieser, adjunct professor for modern history at the University of Zurich, thoroughly grounds his study in history, drawing from original source documents. He places American Middle East mission history within a broader historical frame, noting how British, French, German, Russian, and other forces affected developments. Much room remains, however, to provide a larger world-historical context. As it is, he leaves us in the dark as to the role of pan-Islamic, pan-Arab, Arab nationalist, and other reform movements. The impact of the 1905 Japanese victory over Russia is also missed, among other key events. A bibliography and index would likewise increase the work’s usefulness. Despite these criticisms, Kieser’s work provides an informative and thought-provoking read.

—R. Charles Weller

R. Charles Weller (Ph.D., Al-Farabi Kazakh National University) is a Visiting Fellow at Yale University Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut, and a member of the World History Association.

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The review of *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East*, by Hans-Lukas Kieser (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press 2010), in the April 2011 issue of the *IBMR*, indicated that inclusion of a bibliography and index would have enhanced the book’s usefulness. The pre-publication copy of the book supplied to our reviewer lacked the bibliography and index, but the published version has both. The editors regret the error.