Book Reviews


Volume 2 of the History of the World Christian Movement was originally envisaged as encompassing Christian history “up to the new millennium” (cover blurb as advertised by Amazon), but according to the introduction, the wealth of material necessitated a reduction in scope, first to 1900 (as still advertised by Amazon), and finally to 1800. It would thus seem that the writing of this work was for the authors a journey of discovery: there is much more world Christianity in this period, when one looks for it, than traditional Western preoccupations allowed for.

In seeking to do justice to the wealth of stories of faith and to the number of movements in this period, this volume includes inspiring testimonies to living Christian faith at the margins of the expanding Christian world. Highlights for me were the Roman Catholic missionary endeavor in the seventeenth century, showing its contribution to the modern emergence of Christianity as a world faith; the unobtrusive Moravian witness and its solid legacy; and the eighteenth-century African American and Native American Christian stories, so often marginalized. The book also gives a sober account of the melancholy record (to say the least) of so-called Christian nations in their dealings with the peoples of the wider world. This period saw the brutal Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the Americas, the rise and heyday of the Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery, and the beginnings of the colonial projects of other European nations. Against such great odds, the world Christian movement survived and, in places, flourished.

This volume continues with the aims and methodology of volume 1, namely, to view Christian history in such a way as to be inclusive of all its varied streams, tracing the fortunes of the Orthodox and Catholic traditions around the world in their ancient heartlands and also in new contexts as they engage new peoples. The rise of Protestantism in Europe and beyond is thus set within a wider perspective as one movement among many. The work also seeks to do justice to the emergent indigenous movements around the world, as Christian engagement with cultures and religions takes on new dimensions. The consistent attempt to understand the Christian movement as a cultural engagement is commendable, as is the steady focus on the achievements of Christian women and indigenous religious leaders.

Volume 2 also follows the structure of the earlier volume in its geographic and chronological sweep, considering in turn the Christian and mission stories of each region of the world in each century covered. This approach occasionally results in repetitions or a break in stories, but on the whole it works well. The ending of the book, however, is abrupt, and one would have wished for the epilogue mentioned in the introduction (announced as providing “a preliminary overview of the direction as well as significant themes that volume three will entail”), but it is not included. This omission, together with a number of factual errors and grammatical mistakes, gives an appearance of haste in getting the work into print.

The authors stress that this volume is again the fruit of collaboration with colleagues around the world and across disciplines. It would have been helpful to continue the practice of volume 1 in acknowledging the key contributors, thus highlighting the spirit of collegiality. A more minor issue of recognition is the cover design. It would have helped to connect the persons chosen to depict world Christianity on the cover with the narrative within by identifying them.

These issues notwithstanding, this book is a valuable contribution to the ongoing task of recovering Christianity in its universal and local dimensions as a world movement and a translatable faith.

—Gillian Mary Bediako

Gillian Mary Bediako is Deputy Rector of Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana.

Asian and Oceanic Christianities in Conversation: Exploring Theological Identities at Home and in Diaspora.


A collection of articles on multifaceted Christianities in Asia and Oceania, this book is divided into three parts, addressing in turn the issues of hermeneutics, contextuality, and emerging voices. The opening article by M. Thomas Thangaraj puts in perspective what world Christian-ity is and why it is to be valued.

The first part examines the produc-tive role of local experiences in constructing theology. Heup Young Kim reinterprets his Korean Confucian experience, applying the concept of theo-tao (theology based on Eastern tao, way of life, instead of Western logos). Anri Morimoto insists that the past of Asian, particularly Japa-nese, Christianity should be considered contextualized, as well as cumulative. According to the Vietnamese-American Peter C. Phan, we are to move in our models from colonialis-t to fulfillment to mutuality and partnership. Highlighting the danger of fundamentalist hermeneu-tics in the context of Sri Lankan ethnic strife, R. S. Sugirtharajah underscores intertextuality between secular stories and Scripture. Angela Wai Ching Wong argues that a materialist or economic factor is as important as a cultural one in Asian, especially Chinese, theology.

The book’s second part covers regional hot issues. Both Hisako Kinukawa and Benoit Vermander shed light on paci-fism, the former citing a case of mission in reverse, and the latter suggesting peace-making as interfaith dialogue. Indian
scholar J. Jayakiran Sebastian attempts to view Christ as a guide who stands aside, as an accompanier.

The third part introduces hitherto muted voices of the regions. Revealing Australia as a multicultural and multireligious society, Seferosa Carroll underlines hospitality. Charles E. Farhadian’s chapter views the memory of suffering as the basis of local theology in West Papua. Employing the concept of hosting, Jione Havea shows us jovial and festive Christianity in Pasifika, in contrast to sullen traditional Christianity. Fumitaka Matsuoka reminds us of the importance of the ethnic minority’s perspective in the United States.

Undoubtedly, one of the strengths of the book is that it unearths the reality of Oceanic Christianity, to which lamentably little scholarly attention has been given; most of the chapters, however, focus more on cases based in Asia. In general, the chapters seem more successful in conversing with the North than with other partners in the South. My only complaint is that the book could have used more careful proofreading.

—Kyo Seong Ahn

Kyo Seong Ahn is Assistant Professor of Historical Theology, Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea.

Church History: Five Approaches to a Global Discipline.


Dyron Daughrity’s innovative textbook advances two objectives: guide beginning students through complexity in church history, and give substantial attention to Christianity outside of Europe and America. In doing so, he utilizes five approaches—chronological, denominational, sociological, geographical, and biographical—in as many chapters. The reader is treated to a succinct and at times breezy account.

Along the way, traditional themes receive attention without bogging down the author. Important doctrinal developments that caused rupture factor in the narrative, but results rather than meaning in context are stressed. The contested Reformation principle of sola Scriptura means that believers have freedom to interpret the Bible on their own (58), persecution of Anabaptists by Reformation princes aside. In the sociological section, secularization theories provide one way to interpret declining Christian affiliation in Europe and growth in the Global South through
David Griffiths and the Missionary "History of Madagascar."


David Griffiths and the Missionary “History of Madagascar” is a valuable contribution to the history of Christian missions. The book is divided into three sections. The first chronicles the life and work of David Griffiths, the longest-serving member of the London Missionary Society (LMS) Madagascar Mission. Campbell effectively demonstrates that mission politics and interpersonal tensions at play between Griffiths, a Welshman, and other notable LMS figures, particularly LMS Foreign Secretary William Ellis and Joseph John Freeman, had a great impact upon the official histories written detailing the first Madagascar Mission. Though Ellis had not yet visited Madagascar, he published his History of Madagascar in 1838, drawing from secondary sources and the experiences of LMS affiliates who lived there. Griffiths followed suit four years later, publishing his own monograph, Hanes Madagascar (“History of Madagascar”), entirely in Welsh. Campbell compares these two works and casts doubt on the true authorship of Ellis’s official LMS history, suggesting that the book was derived chiefly from Griffiths’s extensive research.

The second section includes the first-ever English translation of Griffiths’s Hanes Madagascar, with the final section of the book consisting of an extensive commentary on Griffiths’s work. The translation and commentary alone make this book important reading for anyone interested in nineteenth-century missionary narratives or the LMS presence in Madagascar. Campbell writes that he hopes this book might “open the door to a serious re-evaluation not only of the Madagascar Mission, but of early nineteenth-century British imperialism and its relationship to the global evangelical enterprise” (p. xxi). While he only touches on the wider potential, from his case study of Madagascar he demonstrates effectively how closely entwined the writing of official missionary history was with British imperialist aims.

He is convincing in validating Griffiths and, perhaps more important, in arguing that the English and Welsh missionaries of the LMS mission held differing cultural perceptions that influenced their work and interactions among the Malagasy people, which in turn impacted the direction and success of the mission. It is hoped that these points will inspire similar research among other field sites.

This project, over thirty years in the making, is clearly a labor of love. Campbell, a Canada Research Chair and director of McGill University’s Indian Ocean World Centre, shares in the preface of his ties to Madagascar and how he came across Griffiths’s work on a research trip in 1978. Extensively researched, David Griffiths and the Missionary “History of Madagascar” reflects a masterful command of the primary material, along with the high attention to detail one has come to expect from Gwyn Campbell’s work.

—Hilary Ingram

Hilary Ingram, a Ph.D. student at University College London, is undertaking a comparative study of female involvement in British Protestant medical missions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.


This book contains papers presented at three Asian Mission Consultations held at Redcliffe College, Gloucester, United Kingdom, between 2008 and 2010. The papers were produced by missiologists, mission leaders, and practitioners from both Asian and non-Asian missions. The book’s focus is on major issues in East Asia (China, Korea, and Singapore) and South Asia (India).

The two chapters by Patrick Fung, general director of Overseas Mission Fellowship (OMF), on the formation of a Chinese mission movement are particularly interesting. He proposes that strategic theological education for Chinese church leaders will be necessary if China is to be transformed from a missionary receiving country into a missionary sending country in the near future. Julie Ma offers critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Korean mission movement. Florence Tan argues that Singapore can play an important role in contributing to Asian mission movements since it is strategically located as the gateway city of the Pacific Rim, the so-called Antioch in Asia (167–71). Other presenters emphasize the role of...
global partnerships for developing theological, human, and logistic resources for missions in South Asian contexts. Finally, Kang San Tan points out that Asian mission movements are still driven by Westerners, arguing that national leaders need to sit in the driver’s seat of the movements “with good support” from more experienced foreign drivers (64).

This book offers constructive and critical perspectives on Asian mission movements. First is the claim that as the center of gravity of Christianity has shifted from the Global North/West to the Global South/East, Asian churches have engaged as active participants in Christian mission. Second, the book emphasizes that current Asian mission movements, although they arise from within the Asian churches, still need global partnership with Westerners in order to overcome weaknesses and lack of experience. Third, the presenters at the conferences came from various parts of Asia as well as Western countries, bringing diversity of perspective to their coverage of missiological issues in Asia.

—Daniel S. H. Ahn

Daniel S. H. Ahn is Assistant Professor of World Christianity/Mission Studies at Singapore Bible College and a mission educator of OMF.

Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context: A Believers’ Church Perspective.


This refreshingly transparent and self-reflective volume delivers what its title promises. Reconciling the transcendent nature of Christianity with the immanence characteristic of Japanese religious sensibilities is a formidable task. Atsuyoshi Fujiwara brings to bear his experience as a Japanese theologian and educator working in Japan, deftly employing the Believers’ Church perspective as a unifying focus.

Fujiwara begins with a streamlined analysis of the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, centering on “Christ the Transformer of Culture.” He clearly defines important terms such as “theocentric relativism” and “radical monotheism” as background for his careful analysis of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, whom he sees as essential companions for doing theology that is culturally vital, not only in contemporary Japan, but in other contexts as well. He astutely and fairly critiques seminal theologians (Ernst Troeltsch, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth) while carefully mining their enduring insights for use as paving stones on the road to understanding a theology of Japan. He clarifies in particular the historic influence Barth exerted on Japanese theology and sharply differentiates “Japanese theology” from “a theology of Japan.” For Fujiwara, the former is theology that, although done in Japan, essentially appropriates German scholarship; the latter is theology originating in Japan that critiques its own religiously pluralistic culture.

The book continues with a well-organized historical survey of Christianity in Japan. Fujiwara illuminates points of particular interest, including kakure kirishitan, wakon yosai, and Mukyokai. He offers thought-provoking comparisons between the missional approaches employed by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian mission (common people, cultural accommodation, community formation).
and those characteristic in the nineteenth and twentieth century (educated elite, cultural imperialism, institution formation) and the outcomes of these different approaches. He also addresses with honesty and insight the severely oppressive situation churches faced during World War II and the troubling attitudes adopted during that painful time.

Finally, Fujiwara rounds out his theological, historical, and cultural study by considering the groundbreaking work of Japanese theologians Kazoh Kitamori (theology of the suffering of God), Yasuo Furuya (theology of religion), and Hideo Ohki (theology of Japan). Ultimately, all of these discussions point clearly to the need for the church to be a dynamic alternative community, even while it remains in touch with the society around it. Such a community is redemptive to those within it and transformative to its surrounding context. This volume provides an indispensable tool for pursuit of a vital theology of culture in local contexts.

—Michael J. Sherrill


A new revised and expanded version of Hugh Kerr and John Mulder’s 1983 book Conversations: The Christian Experience is now available. It traces conversion through a number of cases in one of the major streams in Christianity, the Western Catholic and Protestant tradition. Taking the apostle Paul as archetype and starting point, the book presents, among others, Constantine, Augustine, Luther, Ignatius Loyola, and Teresa of Ávila, as well as John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Graham, and Oral Roberts, concluding with Bono. Also included are a number of noteworthy instances of conversion from outside the Western mainstream: the black American woman and former slave Sojourner Truth, the Indian Brahmin female convert Pandita Ramabai, and the Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

The book is easy reading and truly a joy. Conversion stories are fascinating. But after having read the book, I have a critical question: Who is the intended reader? There are indications that the intended reader is not a scholar trying to grasp what Christian conversion might entail. Even if short but well researched introductions preface each vignette, neither method nor theoretical framework is spelled out. In consequence, what is presented is a florilegium of conversion stories contextualized by introductions, but stories nevertheless.

There might be good reasons why the subject is treated without a clear method or framework. But whatever those reasons may be, they are not academic. The motivation behind the book as presented in the afterword hints that good personal reasons lay behind the compilation of these conversion stories. Readers would have been helped to evaluate what is presented if the afterword had been made part of the introduction.

Thus the book remains a bouquet of


While some might think that women religious (the author uses the terms “sisters” and “nuns” interchangeably) remained in their convents, followed their rule of life, and were removed from the “world,” in fact sisters stretched the boundaries of religious customs for the sake of the mission in which they were engaged as more of the vast lands west of the Mississippi River were settled after 1850. The American West reshaped two elements of sisterhood: their religious identity, often based on a European monastic ideal, and a “regional identity that reconfigured religious behaviors to fit changing expectations for nuns and those they held for themselves” (303). Butler, trustee professor emerita at Utah State University and past editor of the Western Historical Quarterly, has analyzed in an absorbing manner the complexity of sisters’ lives in geographic and sociopolitical situations previously unknown to them.

Several strengths of the book are conspicuous, especially Butler’s vivid writing style, which readily involves the reader in the lives, struggles, and mission of the women; and the depth and breadth of her research and analysis. Stories are garnered from forty-four sisters’ archives in thirty-four cities. Individual chapters explore the travel process, the “labor” of the women, finances, control of sisters’ lives in relation to bishops and clergy, conflict between motherhouse customs and mission experiences on the frontier, ethnic intersections, and the reshaping of sisterhood because of the western experience.

Mission historians will find the next-to-last chapter, “Ethnic Interaction,” insightful. While sisters came from various ethnic and social backgrounds in the eastern United States, their lives were quickly enmeshed with a new “other”: Native Americans, African Americans, various Protestant individuals and groups, bandits, cattle rustlers, and laity from various socioeconomic backgrounds. The ideal of perfection as interpreted by motherhouse customs collided with mission life, as sisters rode horses and mules over rough terrain, interacted closely with laity in stagecoaches and hotels, or scrambled up rugged hills in hot, arid land in ankle-length wool habits. Cultural loneliness often formed an affinity between sisters and African Americans or Native Americans (176). One chapter features Mother Katharine Drexel and her work with the latter two groups.

Butler, a superb narrator, enriches a growing body of research on the substantial impact women have had on the spread and growth of world Christianity.

Angelyn Dries

Angelyn Dries, O.S.F., Professor Emerita, Department of Theological Studies, St. Louis University, and a contributing editor, is author of The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History (Orbis Books, 1998).

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Intensive research has been done on the translation of the Bible into Chinese, begun when Robert Morrison entered China in 1807, but until Lai’s work, Christian tracts written in Chinese, which were widely distributed in China in the nineteenth century, have not been explored critically and systematically. Based on primary materials and rare archival documents, Negotiating Religious Gaps places the translated texts into their sociopolitical, cultural, and ideological contexts and responds in detail to the central question of how the missionaries presented Christianity in China through translation.

Lai first scrutinizes the role of institutional patronage in the process of tract production, especially that of the Religious Tract Society (London) and the American Tract Society (New York). These two societies effectively dominated the translation and publication processes through the selection of texts according to their own ideologies and through their financial support, playing a much more crucial role than did individual field missionaries. The book also examines the significant contributions of Chinese collaborators, whose names were usually not mentioned in the publications.

Chapters 5 and 6 analyze two influential tracts that were widely circulated in the English-speaking world: The Peep of Day and The Anxious Inquirer. Both appeared in many different Chinese versions, meeting the needs of different readerships. Whatever the style of their translation, whether simple for poorly educated readers or elegant for the literate class, they reveal differing strategies used in the practice of translation which aimed to narrow the cultural and religious gap between the Chinese and the Christian faith.

The book’s six appendixes reflect the author’s exhaustive efforts in collecting primary materials in libraries and archives around the world. They contain rich and valuable information on missionary publishers and societies, on missionaries and Chinese translators, and on Chinese translations of Christian literature throughout the nineteenth century, all of which will be of great value for future studies.

—Liu Jiafeng

Profiles of African-American Missionaries.


Robert Stevens and Brian Johnson hope this collection will inspire African Americans to greater involvement in foreign missions. For Johnson, who is also profiled at length in the book, such efforts are part of his mission as national coordinator of the Cooperative Missions Network of the African Dispersion (COMINAD), which seeks to “mobilize churches with all their differences to work toward the common goal of the great commission” (235).

Both historical and contemporary missionaries are profiled. Most labored in Africa, but there are exceptions. Some of the selections are autobiographical, and those that are not typically draw heavily from first-person accounts. They tend therefore to have a familiar ring to anyone acquainted with the genre of missionary memoir. Common elements include accounts of conversion experiences and calls to mission, tales of courage in the face of danger and determination in overcoming hardship, and faith that the work has God’s blessing.

Although indigenous perspectives are lacking, some of the selections include insights into the American racial context of African American participation in missions. Examples include Bob Harrison’s autobiographical reflections, Mark Sidwell’s profile of Lott Carey, W. E. B. DuBois’s tribute to Alexander Crummell, and a reprinted article by Eileen Moffett and John Andrew III on Betsey Stockton, a missionary pioneer in the Hawaiian Islands.


—Paul Harris

The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation.


This book gives pride of place to the book Missional Church, edited by Darrell Guder (1998), as the touchstone for evaluating a range of voices in the “the missional church conversation.” By this standard, and using as a primary rubric the issue of divine agency, the authors map various popular expressions in the conversation (books and online resources that discuss “missional” or “missional church”) as belonging to one of four “branches” (though their labels reveal they are more about degrees of reception): discovering, utilizing, engaging, and extending. Frequent misapprehensions of the core notions of missional church in this slice of “the conversation” and the resulting elasticity in the use of the phrase itself are taken to be due to certain unresolved tensions, conundrums, inconsistencies, and ambiguities in the book Missional Church, which they deem to be its failings.

Based on these criticisms and in light of the perceived effect on the conversation, the authors make a series of “biblical and theological” proposals for reframing and undergirding the conversation. Their effort is to accentuate social Trinity in order to balance (supplant?) sending Trinity, creation to be held in tension with redemption, pneumatology to compensate for a perceived overemphasis on Christology, and participation with the Spirit in creation and culture to widen a sense of God’s mission. They exhibit allergic reactivity to the language of contrast or alternative community when divorced from public witness, to speaking about any of the persons of the Trinity in a manner separate from the others, and to tendencies that conceive mission primarily in terms of human agency. These allergies could be a detriment, but they may also be what gives their work its force.

Readers will want to test the validity of the critiques of Missional Church, the placement on the map of their own work or that of others (and the associated critique and invitation addressed to that branch or subbranch), and the degree of...
success the authors achieve toward their purpose of resolving tensions and providing integrated theological understandings.

—George R. Hunsberger

George R. Hunsberger is Professor of Missiology at Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan.

From Crisis to Creation: Lesslie Newbigin and the Reinvention of Christian Mission.


“Newbigin was a task theologian” (28, 244). This statement by Mark Laing serves as bookends, but also stands at the center, of his doctoral dissertation, recently completed at the University of Edinburgh and revised for publication here. The burden of his thesis is to address two related inquiries. First, he attempts to discern Lesslie Newbigin’s contribution to the process of integrating the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Missionary Council (IMC). Second, Laing looks at the impact Newbigin’s involvement in the task of integration had on his theological reflection on the nature of mission.

The “crisis” in Laing’s title refers to the context of Newbigin’s theological reflection—the crisis of the missionary movement in the mid-twentieth century and the crisis of mission as an out-of-vogue concept in the face of postwar tensions, revolutions, Communist ascendency, self-assertion on the part of “younger churches,” revitalized secularism, and renewed non-Christian faiths. “Creation” refers to the evolution of Newbigin’s concept of mission.

Laing portrays Newbigin as a pastoral, task theologian who is committed to the unity of the ecumenical church for the sake of mission. In Laing’s view, Newbigin was ideological and perhaps naïvely optimistic about integration, so much so that he overlooked real differences in constituency and organization between the institutional bodies representing church and mission. Laing argues that in the lengthy process leading to union, Newbigin’s theology of mission developed from being Christocentric and church-centered to being Trinitarian—no longer was mission an “obligation of the church”; rather, mission issues from the nature of God. When faced, however, with the practical task of finding an institutional expression for his theological conviction that church and mission belong inexorably together, Newbigin’s suggestions for structuring a missionary congregation were “frustratingly sketchy” (215). And the one who had eschewed the parochial model as incompatible with the secularized Western world ultimately returned to his experience of the spontaneous regional churches in South India.

From Crisis to Creation fills a gap in our understanding of Newbigin’s missiology and will certainly find a home wherever missiology and ecumenics are studied.

—Benjamin T. Conner

Benjamin T. Conner has taught mission, church history, and Christian education as Visiting Assistant Professor at Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tennessee, and Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

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Korean Theology in Historical Perspective.


Daniel Adams offers the first complete survey of theology in Korea to appear in English. Written with the purpose of enlightening English readers about the church in Korea, Korean Theology in Historical Perspective provides an in-depth look at the long history of Korean Christianity, how Korean theological thought has developed during the past century and a quarter, and the subsequent explosive growth of the church in Korea.

Adams pays particular attention to the ways that, in Korean society, theological thought interacts with the culture. He takes special care in recounting the historical contexts out of which theology was developed in Korea and how Korean theology managed to develop its own niche within the shamanistic, Buddhist, and Confucian cultural background. He continues by recounting the growth of the church and its influence, as well as covering the ensuing controversies arising from the presence of multiple denominations and the disagreements between conservatives and liberals.

The second half of the book shifts its attention to contemporary movements in Korean theology and religious thought, focusing on conservative orthodoxy, church growth and the prosperity gospel, minjung theology, and feminist theology, among others. Korean theologians evidence a marked growth in independence, as shown in the chapter devoted to the life and teachings of Ham Sok-Hon, who had an immense influence on religious thought and on the diaspora of the Korean church.

Not merely an academic introduction, although it fulfills that purpose wholly, this work embodies the viewpoint of an American Presbyterian who for thirty years participated as a member of the theological community in Korea. Much of the book is written from personal experience, from which Adams also considers the future of theological thought and the church in Korea. He expresses hope for the future, while being careful to note the challenges to come; the “task of theological construction in Korea has only just begun” (277).

—Dae Joon Roh

Dae Joon Roh is Pastor of the New Haven Korean Church, Hamden, Connecticut.

A Matter of Belief: Christian Conversion and Healing in North-East India.


A Matter of Belief makes a wonderful contribution to the anthropology of Christianity and therapeutic pluralism, as well as to mission history. Vibha Joshi’s monograph recounts the long history of the Christianization of Nagaland in Northeast India and the relationship of Christianity to local forms of religion and healing. Chapters 1–4 describe Naga culture, and chapters 5–7 treat its relationship to Naga Christianity. The great strength of this monograph, the fruit of sustained fieldwork by Joshi in Nagaland from 1985 to the present, lies in the richness of its ethnographic description—in particular, Joshi’s explanation of Naga spirits and illness, religious ritual, the role played by traditional healers, and forms of Christian therapy.

An interesting conclusion reached by Joshi is that the Naga Christian community is very inclusive of alternative forms of healing and medicine, particularly forms of traditional healing. This differs greatly from the situation in Africa, particularly West Africa, where I study Christian therapeutics. In Africa, forms of Christian healing, particularly within Pentecostal and Charismatic communities, are viewed as highly antagonistic toward traditional healing, which invokes local spirits (i.e., not the Holy Spirit). But why should the relationship between Christianity and traditional healing be so radically different in Northeast India and West Africa? That A Matter of Belief provokes questions such as this, comparing Christianities across geographic space, is an indication of the contribution it makes.

Another interesting component of Joshi’s monograph is the extension of her focus on healing from the individual body to the body politic, examining the role of Naga Christianity within the complex nationalist struggles in Nagaland. While Christianity has, significantly, been adopted as a justification for autonomy from a mainly non-Christian India, the faith has also been used to quell political violence in the context of large-scale religious gatherings such as the 1972 Billy Graham revival. In many ways the experience of these large-scale Christian gatherings resembles the social healing involved in healing camps and healing festivals, but with the focus instead on the larger body politic. Joshi’s examination and comparison of these two types of healing—the individual and the political—is an interesting and important scholarly contribution.

—Adam Mohr

Adam Mohr is Senior Writing Fellow in Anthropology with the Critical Writing Program at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

About Face: Rethinking Face for Twenty-First-Century Mission.


Thirty-five dollars for a 312-page paperback—out of touch with prices? or something exceptional in hand? The double entendre in Christopher Flanders’s simple title should not mislead potential readers into overlooking this exceptional work, for it is brimming with comprehensive detail, excellent insight, and provocative ideas stemming from Flanders’s integrative, interdisciplinary research. Ten years of missionary service in Thailand have provided him with perspective and astounding competency, as reflected in the well-documented research and analysis he demonstrates in pursuing the five ambitious goals outlined in the introduction: to document the disconnect between the Gospel and Thai culture, to illustrate the meaning and function of face in Thai culture, to explore the implications of Thai face for theology and missiology, to investigate theological perspectives from an understanding of face, and to provide a framework for undertaking the task of contextualized soteriology.

Flanders’s overarching objective, however, is pragmatic: to provide “legs” for the Thai church to do theological construction and be a contemporary, contextually relevant witness. Toward that end, the excellent introduction provides a clear description of the book’s organization. This description is also placed at the beginning.
of each chapter, which is especially needful in light of the rigor involved in assimilating the expanse of data, quoted material, and analysis coming from historical, linguistic, philosophical, biblical, and theological sources. That all of this is packaged in a concentrated single paperback is a burden—as well as a bargain—precipitated by the ambitious agenda. Toward the end of the book, when Flanders brings together all the strands of data and analysis to bear on the task of theological construction, it finally becomes clear why he has chosen to undertake the challenging task of reexamining the theology of the atonement in the same volume with his extensive treatment of the meaning and salience of face in Thai culture. Readers can then, finally, enjoy the purchase bargain—while preparing for a needed second reading!

—Leith Y. Fujii

Leith Y. Fujii, a Mission Co-Worker of the Presbyterian Church (USA), teaches in Bangkok, in the English Department of the Bangkok Institute of Theology (BIT), Christian University of Thailand.


This book on a century’s growth of Zimbabwean Catholicism is a well-researched addition to a burgeoning library of books by scholars whose primary interest is African (or Asian or Latin American) mission history and who are not missiologists. Creary, whose current research interest lies in the interactions between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe from the mid-fourteenth century to the present, teaches history and African studies at Ohio University.

Creary’s main sources for the book are Jesuit archives that he studies for insight into how European Roman Catholics (mostly Jesuits) sought to control the process and results of Africans seeking to adopt and shape Catholic institutions and rules. After a masterful introduction, in six chapters he analyzes six key areas of development and conflict: women becoming nuns, the development of an African clergy, the Catholic lay movement, the discipline of marriage, the issue of using the name “Mwari” for God, and rituals surrounding the veneration of ancestors.

Every Catholic missiologist will recognize the wisdom of these choices. Taken together, they offer an entrée into two vexed questions that Catholicism has still not answered: To what extent is Catholicism—the bearer of a two-millennia-old culture that it invites peoples of other cultures to join as a way of being Christian—justified in maintaining its traditions to foster visible unity? And then: To what extent does Catholicism—as a bearer of a faith that by its very nature is universal—have to allow new churches to alter its traditions to fit in their cultures?

Creary’s book does not delve into these questions as theological issues, but missiologists and theologians have much to learn from the skilled manner in which this historian has mined the archives. As an excellent resource for graduate seminars in mission studies, it offers insight into dynamics that indigenous Catholic leaders will be dealing with in the twenty-first century.

—William R. Burrows

William R. Burrows, a contributing editor, is Senior Fellow in the A. F. Walls Center for the Study of Christianity in Africa and Asia at Liverpool Hope University.
Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission.


While Strangers Next Door draws from existing literature in the field, the author, J. D. Payne, claims that “it offers the first extensive treatment of the connection of missions and migration to the West” (24). Toward that end, its first goal is to educate the Western church on the scope of global migrations that are taking place as the peoples of the world move to the West in search of a better way of life. Second, Payne seeks to challenge the Western church to reach the least-reached people living in their neighborhoods and to partner with them to return to their peoples as missionaries (18–19).

Written in a popular and accessible style, Payne passionately argues that human mobility and migration are inextricably linked with God’s divine purposes. He demonstrates this point in chapters on migration and kingdom expansion in the Old and New Testaments, as well as a historical overview of migration to the West (both North America and Europe) from 1500 to 2010. Payne also highlights the massive numbers of international students and refugees currently on the move, including numerous testimonials demonstrating their evangelistic influence when returning home with the Gospel. Finally, the book offers practical guidelines, strategies, and techniques for reaching the “strangers next door.”

Because the book’s core assumptions are shaped by the Unreached People Group (UPG) and burgeoning “Diaspora Missiology” perspectives, its data and methodology need to be understood in that light. For example, the book (see Appendix 1) claims that Armenians (163), Ghanaians (169), Greeks (163), Italians (163), and Zimbabweans (169) are UPGs—but all of these groups self-profess to be Christian by larger percentages than any of the Western countries to which they emigrate (as surveys by the Pew Research Center show). The United States, for instance, is the world’s number one destination for Christian migrants, who made up an estimated 74 percent of both its immigrant population in 2012 and its projected immigrant flows. This statistic is significant because, while a rather small segment of recent immigrants to the United States originate from areas where there are few self-professing Christians, most of the immigrants and many of the immigrants’ areas of origin are in fact Christian. Furthermore, these Christian immigrants bring with them their own expressions of the faith, establish vibrant congregations that maintain a dynamic multicultural missionary vision, and, I would argue, are often the most effective agents—more so than homegrown American churches—in reaching other migrant communities.

Ironically, Payne’s data define most of the world’s self-professing Christian migrants as “strangers next door,” which reflects what I call “denominational mobilization rhetoric” more than it does serious research. While Payne’s perspective is commendable, it is one that privileges Western agency, initiatives, and forms—paradoxically—under the mantra of missions to, through, and beyond the diasporas. Ongoing missiological reflection that uses outreach to incoming diaspora as its key framework should be challenged, since the majority of immigrant communities in the Western world originate from the new Christian heartlands in the South and East, and since they as brothers and sisters in Christ should be viewed as agents of mission rather than passive participants in Western mission programs or as mere objects of missionary outreach.

—Matthew Krabill

Matthew Krabill is a Ph.D. student in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.
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U.S. Churches Today.
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(Monday–Thursday)
Dr. Won Sang Lee, SEED International and Korean Central Presbyterian Church, Centreville, Virginia, points participants toward spiritually fervent, Christlike service of God and others. $175.

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How to Develop Mission and Church Archives.
Ms. Martha Lund Smalley, Yale Divinity School Library, helps missionaries and church leaders identify, organize, and preserve essential records. $175.

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October 4–5
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Leadership, Fund-Raising, and Donor Development for Missions.
Mr. Rob Martin, First Fruit Institute, Newport Beach, California, outlines steps for building the support base, including foundation funding, for mission. $95.

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The Internet and Mission: Getting Started.
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Indigenous Initiatives in Mission.
Dr. Jim Harries, Alliance for Vulnerable Mission, considers how using indigenous languages and local resources in ministry counters neocolonial missionary impacts and creation of dependency. $95.

October 28–31
(Monday–Thursday)
Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story.
Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, Jesuit Beijing Center, Beijing, China, and Ms. Michèle Sigg, Dictionary of African Christian Biography, share skills and techniques for documenting mission and church history. $175.

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The Primal Religions in the History of Christian Mission.
Professor Andrew F. Walls, University of Edinburgh, Liverpool Hope University, and Akrofi-Christaller Institute, explores Christian interaction with indigenous or “primal” religions from the Greco-Roman world and pre-Christian Europe to present-day Africa, Americas, and Asia-Pacific, and considers the special significance of the Old Testament in this connection—OMSC’s eighth Distinguished Mission Lectureship series—five lectures with discussions. $175.

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Dr. Volker Küster, Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany, and an OMSC senior mission scholar, gives inroads into interpreting contextual theologies of local artists’ images by looking at concrete examples of visual art from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. $175.

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The Gospel of Peace in Dynamic Engagement with the Peace of Islam.
Dr. David W. Shenk, Eastern Mennonite Missions, explores the church’s calling to bear witness to the Gospel of peace in its engagement with Muslims, whether in contexts of militancy or in settings of moderation. $175.

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Overseas Ministries
Study Center
New Haven, Connecticut
study@OMSC.org
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