**Book Reviews**

**Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context.**


In this study J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu provides an excellent introduction to the latest waves of Pentecostalism in West Africa. Each chapter—with one notable exception—examines a key characteristic of this new Pentecostalism. But unlike the arrangement familiar from treatises on systematicics, Asamoah-Gyadu organizes his presentation by praxis, not according to doctrine or theology. This method allows him to do full justice to the strongly experiential and results-oriented faith of the new Pentecostals, in which power, victory over evil spirits, and prosperity are essential elements. These chapters single out key aspects and emphases of the new Ghanaian Pentecostalism for description and initial analysis.

After a first chapter on Spirit-filled Christianity, the author examines worship as experience (chap. 2), prayer strategies (chap. 3), ecclesiology, in effect the democratization of charisma that produces a new vision of church (chap. 4), giving and tithing (chap. 5), the concept and practice of anointing (chap. 7), Holy Communion (chap. 8), and the Bible (chap. 9). In all these chapters, Asamoah-Gyadu illustrates distinctive emphases, concerns, and practices, doing so from preaching, books, events, and the experience of believers, all the while noting the points of resonance with elements of traditional African religion. Noteworthy is the foundational character of dynamic worship: “Worship, as a continuous experience in the anointing of the Holy Spirit is . . . the heartbeat of Pentecostal Christianity” (20). But distinctively, “in an African context, worship is also an engagement with the supernatural world of inanimate beings and ancestors” (25).

In all these areas, the pioneer pastors have manifested a remarkable creativity as they have drawn from the Scriptures, their African heritage, and (perhaps least) the missionary inheritance to fashion a distinctively new and dynamic expression of Christian faith. Asamoah-Gyadu notes, “In their worship, ecclesiology, modes of incorporation into church community, and interpretation of the Bible, the new Pentecostals have truly reinvented Protestant Christianity in many ways” (159).

Asamoah-Gyadu’s strength lies in his closeness to the subject matter and his attention to fine detail. For example, his observations on the distinctive role played by glossolalia in this African Pentecostalism could help to reinvigorate this gift more widely in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements and could cause it to be given greater attention in Pentecostal theology (see pp. 26–28, 48–51). In the African context, where prayer is typically a matter of wrestling against the powers of darkness, praying in the Spirit (tongues) is a prayer of power, of confident assertion of the lordship of Jesus, who saves and delivers now. In these milieus, speaking in tongues is not a distinctive doctrine but a distinguishing practice.

The author demonstrates a clear connection between these African Pentecostal emphases and the precariousness of life in a world of poverty and unstable government. He sees the focus on blessing, success, and prosperity as a new and Christian expression of the role of the African religion as strategies for survival. The impact of the new Pentecostal-charismatic churches results from creatively addressing issues neglected or denied by the historic mission churches, such as the relation between salvation and physical health; the problems of evil spirits, curses, and magic; and the relation between the present generation and the ancestors.

Yet at the same time, Asamoah-Gyadu is troubled by materialistic tendencies that are far from marginal in the new churches. His criticism forms the only chapter, entitled “Calvary to Pentecost” (chap. 6; see p. 106n5), that is a revision of previous material. This insertion is not wholly successful, introducing non-African voices (John Stott, Jürgen Moltmann, J. I. Packer, Thomas Smail, and Martin Luther) to deplore the neglect, often avoidance, of the New Testament association of power with the cross. Logically, these criticisms belong to the conclusion, but their insertion in the middle avoids giving the book a more critical tone. For Asamoah-Gyadu remains highly sympathetic to this new African Pentecostalism, avoiding overall negative judgments, while clearly indicating its shadow side and weaknesses. So, for example, he affirms that “teaching on giving has generated within African Pentecostalism more broadly an incredibly high sense and spirit of generosity, unparalleled in the history of the church in Africa” (94). This spirit has enabled the new churches to become financially independent. Again positively, he treats of “giving as worship” but criticizes the “transactional philosophy” (90) of some preachers that puts God under obligation to confer material blessings.

Asamoah-Gyadu notes the deficiencies of historic mission Christianity. At times, it may appear that their only important contribution was to bring the Bible to Africa (see the citation of Kwame Bediako on p. 171). He writes of “dry denominationalism” (25, 65) and is particularly critical of imported liturgies and of “staid and over-formalized forms of worship” (33). He writes that “one of the key achievements of Pentecostal/charismatic worship is its influence on historic mission church modes of worship” (31). His only example, however, is a Presbyterian congregation where the leader “has literally turned the church into a charismatic church” (32).

As a Roman Catholic reviewer, I sense that there is unfinished business in Asamoah-Gyadu’s position concerning the “pentecostalization” of “historic mission Christianity” (25, 32). With his negative assessment of imported liturgy, he nonetheless several times describes Pentecostal use of oil for anointing as a sacrament (137, 139, 143). He recognizes a liturgical/ritual character to the new Pentecostalism but retains a highly critical attitude toward historic liturgy. He observes that the “very survival” of “most historic mission churches . . . has come to depend on how open they are to a charismatic ecclesiology and culture” (11). This African Pentecostalism exposes the inadequacy of a liturgical renewal that restricts itself to a modification of rites, without addressing the necessary interaction between a received liturgical heritage and a pervasive flexibility always open to the creativity of the Holy Spirit.

Peter Hocken is a Roman Catholic priest and specialist in the charismatic movement, with a teaching ministry in Eastern Europe.
Do We Worship the Same God? Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue.


In 2009 the Yale Center for Faith and Culture organized two consultations. One was for Christian theologians, the other for Jewish, Muslim, and Christian scholars. The central question addressed during these consultations has become the title of this publication. Another important offshoot of the two consultations is Miroslav Volf’s book Allah: A Christian Response (HarperOne, 2011).

Why is the question of God’s sameness such a big issue? Because Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are here to stay, and the processes of globalization bring the adherents of the three religions into ever closer contact with one another. Also, all three religions are of a prophetic, socially engaged nature; they want to participate in the public debate about the good life. Taken together, these factors make it possible, even likely, that conflicts and clashes will occur. The need to search for common values is urgent. If, however, Jews, Christians, and Muslims come to the conclusion that they worship radically different Gods, finding such a common basis will be difficult. This consideration would support the value of the three parties’ meeting to find agreement on specific questions, such as the one addressed here. The outcome, of course, is influenced by deep-seated convictions, held by members of all three religions, about the other religious traditions.

The contributors tackle this issue from different points of view. Christoph Schwöbel gives an enlightening analysis of Vatican II’s Nostra Aetate. This document does not claim a common dogmatic ground between Christians and Muslims, as many read into it, but, more modestly, a common ethical perspective. Properly speaking, the question of whether Muslims and Christians are talking about the same God cannot be settled in this world, as there are limits to the knowledge of faith. Dialogue should not aim at consensus, but at a better understanding of our differences.

Philosopher Denys Turner tackles the difficult topic of the supposed Christian “three-ness” of God versus the supposed Muslim “one-ness” of God and shows that, in both traditions, we should be wary of “counting” God.

Amy Plantinga Pauw distinguishes between the thin theology of interreligious consensus and the thicker theological grounds from within a particular tradition that urge for generosity toward people of other faiths. The Scriptural Reasoning
movement allows us to combine both perspectives.

Rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein addresses the problem posed in the Talmud tractate Avoda Zara (foreign worship) that states outright that Christians are involved in idolatrous worship. But does Maimonides, whose comment on this tractate is authoritative, actually claim that Christians pray to another God? Rather, he claims that their worship is mistaken, although they may have partial knowledge of God. Nevertheless, even this claim is very strong, as ritual and history are more important to most Jews than theology.

Reza Shah-Kazemi points out that ultimately the referent of the beliefs of Christians, Jews, and Muslims is the same but that theological conceptions differ considerably. He is more optimistic, however, about the resolution of these differences on the higher plane of metaphysics and the deeper plane of mysticism. Ibn Arabi, Eckhardt, and the apophatic traditions in both Christian and Islamic theology are helpful in this respect.

Peter Ochs, the well-known cofounder of the Society for Scriptural Reasoning, points out that there are many different types of answers that can be given to the question, Do we worship the same God?, and that it is our practicing together as Jews, Christians, and Muslims that creates a common ground (as well as a space to discuss our enduring differences) rather than a priori theological inquiry.

Together, these contributions, different in nature though they may be, do have certain features in common: they combine a certain robust assertion of the particularity of the tradition of each scholar, along with the humble acknowledgment that our knowledge of the divine is and will always remain partial and defective.

—Gé Speelman

Gé Speelman is Lecturer in Religious Studies at the Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam.

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**African Christianity Rising: Christianity’s Explosive Growth in Africa.**


In this “Complete Educational Edition” of four DVDs, documentary filmmaker and ethnographer James Ault has produced a wonderful portrayal of the all-pervasive nature of African Christianity in the Sub-Sahara. Recorded over the span of a decade, *African Christianity Rising* focuses on Ghana and Zimbabwe. The videos include commentaries from well-known African figures such as the late Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako, Zimbabwean theologian and Methodist bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa, Ghanaian Catholic archbishop Peter Kwesi Sarpong, and Ghanaian charismatic mega church leader Mensa Otabil, as well as other church leaders, including from Pentecostal, independent, and mainline churches. Bediako and Sarpong in particular provide incisive commentary on Ghanaian history and culture; Sarpong was known especially for his innovative practices in introducing African symbols into the Catholic church. In an interview he describes African traditional religions as monetheistic and those who practice them as “knowing God.”

Both large churches in massive buildings, with immaculately dressed congregants, and small house churches, where the poverty of the people is palpable, figure in the ethnographies. The accounts include the story of a college lecturer in Ghana who becomes a charismatic evangelist in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, as well as the stories of a Zimbabwean schoolteacher and a retired nurse who are women lay leaders in the United Methodist Church. Deliverances are depicted as a prominent part of Ghanaian Christianity of all types, a result of practices associated with African traditional religions. By recording Christian worship, prophetic practices, and African traditional healers, *African Christianity Rising* gives insight into the African spiritual world in a way that no academic description can do. The material is allowed to speak for itself, and the narrator (Ault) does not attempt to interpret the materials.

The two disks of educational extras from Ghana and Zimbabwe provide a wealth of materials, mainly interviews with African scholars and church leaders about their views and fascinating life stories. Supporting video footage shows the diversity of African congregations at worship, from drams and dancing used in an Ashanti Catholic Church in Ghana, where the innovations of Peter Sarpong are illustrated and explained, to the modern music of an Accra charismatic mega church. Clips of Ghanaian charismatic Presbyterians present deliverances from evil spirits; others show healing rituals in both Christian and traditional settings. The film clips are of various lengths and offer more detailed versions of stories found in the two main films. Interviews with Bediako, Sarpong, Nhiwatiwa, and Andrew Walls provide insightful commentary on African Christianity.

In all, *African Christianity Rising* is a most useful resource that well serves teachers of African Christianity.

—Allan Heaton Anderson

**Sister Churches: American Congregations and Their Partners Abroad.**


*Sister Congregations*, a product of Janel Kragt Bakker’s dissertation research, represents foundational investigation into an increasingly important topic for world Christians. Significant research on short-term mission trips is widely available, but Bakker has given us the first in-depth ethnography of extended relationships between sister congregations in different parts of the globe. Twelve churches (Roman Catholic, Presbyte rian, Anglican, and Baptist) from the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area participated in the study. The churches studied had budgets and memberships well above the median. This social location both imposed a parochialism (which Bakker acknowledges) and provided the benefit of being able to include participants involved professionally in international development who affirmed the significance of congregation-based partnerships.

It might be posited that Western Christians, if they wish to address their present malaise, should give particular attention to partnerships with the churches of the Global South. Bakker’s groundbreaking research would be an important place to start in any such effort. She identifies encouraging possibilities for the long-term relationships of sister churches. Western Christians have deeply ingrained assumptions that our practices are the normative form of Christianity. Bakker demonstrates the need to move beyond such suppositions and beyond project-based encounters to deep relationships, an approach that allows us to address money as power in North-South ecumenism. Western
hegemony has faded, and a more faithful understanding of partnership is required.

Bakker notes the limits of her research, including the lack of Global South perceptions. This and further exploration of the role of missionaries as links and teachers of the partners deserve investigation. “Congregations themselves are the driving agents behind the sister church phenomenon” (69). The mainline institutional crisis suggests that the role of regional denominational structures (e.g., judicatories, synods, conferences, dioceses) may be worth further research, with an eye toward involving more and smaller congregations and supporting fuller accountability.

In 1910 at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference the plea from Indian bishop Azariah was “send us friends.” Bakker has blessed us with a resource to respond to that admonition and move beyond the Western guilt complex noted by Lamin Sanneh in 1987 in the Christian Century.

David G. Dawson

David G. Dawson retired recently after thirty-three years as regional judicatory staff for the Presbyterian Church (USA). He lives in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania.

**Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity.**


Ours is an age of handbooks and companion volumes—and for good reason, as we all need sources we can turn to that provide informed and reliable overviews by experts in a particular field. This small handbook on the complex and timely topic of Pentecostal Christianity delivers the basics and more. The book has two primary objectives: to assist instructors wanting to introduce their students to Pentecostalism and to serve as a “compact companion” for the general reader. The twenty-four authors from five continents treat fifty topics from a range of disciplinary perspectives. The entries are concise and engaging, treating the history, theology, practices, and contemporary forms of Pentecostalism through the lens of a particular term, concept, or figure, ending with a brief set of references and suggestions for further reading.

As the editor rightly states, the various entries can be read separately as needed.

Some of them treat expected topics such as the Azusa Street Mission and Revival, baptism of the Holy Spirit, exorcism, prophecy, snake handling, healing, and the Word of Faith movement. Others address lacunae in the scholarly literature such as the concept of suffering. Commendable attention is given to the role of women in the Pentecostal movement, as well as to Pentecostal developments in the Global South. (The book, though, is weighted toward classic North American Pentecostalism.)

It is worth noting that the majority of the authors, several renowned scholars in this field, write from an insider, normative perspective. That notwithstanding, several chapters do allude to debates and disagreements over the interpretation of specific aspects of Pentecostal Christianity. Moreover, editor Adam Stewart emphasizes that “Pentecostalism is best understood as a truly global, polygenetic...
China Interrupted: Japanese Internment and the Reshaping of a Canadian Missionary Community.


By the author of the excellent Healing Henan: Canadian Nurses at the North China Mission, 1888–1947 (UBC Press, 2008), this book explores the end of the missionary era in China by investigating the experiences of a small group of Canadian missionary kids (MKs) who returned to North China in the late 1930s as missionary nurses and often also became missionary wives. As war loomed between Japan and Canada, they were caught in the dilemma of either leaving their work to return home to safety or staying to face inevitable hardships and probable internment. Some, like Florence Liddell, the Canadian wife of legendary Scottish missionary doctor Eric Liddell (who would die in captivity), wisely in hindsight, returned home, but other MK nurses chose to stay.

Drawing on letters and private diaries, Grypma focuses on the career of Betty Gale (née Margaret Thomson), the daughter of United Church of Canada missionaries, who returned as a missionary nurse to China in 1937 and soon married a British Baptist missionary doctor teaching at Qilu Christian University. Even though she had a baby daughter, Betty chose to remain with her husband in China. Betty’s wartime experiences after December 8, 1941, began by first being under house arrest on the Qilu campus, then waiting uncomfortably in Shanghai for a place on an exchange ship (a place that never materialized because a less-deserving Shanghai British queue-jumper took it), and eventually being held, along with her husband and daughter, in squalid conditions at an internment camp in the Pudong district of Shanghai.

Betty Gale’s experience provides both a valuable firsthand account of the trials and hardships of civilian internment during the Pacific War and a glorious testament to Christian courage and service to others under extreme conditions. Grypma shows, however, that prior to 1941, MK nurses and their missionary husbands, especially those at Qilu, enjoyed a high lifestyle that, in depression-era Canada, only the wealthiest of Canadians could ever hope to emulate. Missionary nurses worked hard, but at least from the perspective of hindsight, returned home, but other MK nurses chose to stay.

China Interrupted is a book that deserves a wide readership. It not only deals with the end of the missionary era in China, contributing to missionary and Christian studies, but also exploits fresh records that illuminate the social history.

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In keeping with its vision to serve God’s servants from around the world, the Overseas Ministries Study Center grants scholarships to select international Christian missionaries, church workers, and academics from outside the United States—especially those engaged in cross-cultural ministries. Applicants are encouraged to apply for scholarships for residency and study toward OMSC’s Certificate in Mission Studies. These scholarships, which are granted on a competitive basis, include furnished accommodations and modest living stipends.

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of wartime China, thereby shedding light on the controversial issues surrounding the Japanese treatment of Western civilian internees in Shanghai and North China.

—Hamish Ion


Understanding Christian Mission offers the church an indispensable resource for mission foundation, formation, and expression. Scott Sunquist, a thoughtful participant-observer and scholar of mission, seeks to enrich the development of missiological thought by approaching the subject from historical, theological, and ecclesiological perspectives. The book’s underlying premise is that “mission is from the heart of God, to each context, and it is carried out in suffering in the world for God’s eternal glory” (xi).

Understanding Christian Mission “starts from historical awareness, builds a constructive theology that is trinitarian in essence and biblical in awareness, and . . . ends with practical applications” (20). Part 1 focuses on the past 500 years, as “this history most directly influences our present reality” (25). Among other things, the historical focus of the work helps us to celebrate the good accomplished in mission, but at the same time to “make careful judgments about where our past participation in mission has not been faithful to God’s mission” (25).

Part 2 seeks to develop a missiology that is founded on the mission of the triune God. Acknowledging the pitfalls to be found in the development of the concept of missio Dei, Sunquist expresses the importance of grounding our understanding of mission on the nature of God rather than on any other noble premise. This approach has “proven to be an enduring theological gift for missiology and for Christian theology” (136).

In part 3 the book moves from a “trinitarian theology of mission” to ecclesiology (272). This section emphasizes that mission is the “central purpose” of the church (273) and that the church was brought into being for God’s mission. The ecclesiology expressed is that of a global church in community with God and of a witnessing community present in a variety of contexts.

Navigating the checkered record of Christian history (including the history of Christian mission), exploring the biblical portrayal of God’s mission, and providing an ecclesiology built on these, Sunquist offers a valuable missiology in which the church’s mission flows from its inseparable union with the triune God.

—Stephen V. Coertze

Stephen V. Coertze, a graduate of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, serves as a missiological consultant for Wycliffe Global Alliance.

Rwanda before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era.


In Rwanda in 1994 more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were victims of genocide. How was this possible in a country where 90 percent of the population belonged to a church, and 70 percent to the Roman Catholic Church? The

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At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521
www.eerdmans.com
American church historian J. J. Carney has examined the motivations, ideas, and political positions of the leaders of the Catholic Church, with special attention to the period 1952–62, the critical years before Rwanda’s political independence in 1962.

The book is a revised version of the author’s dissertation presented to the Catholic University of America in 2011. The author has scrupulously examined statements and correspondence of the clergy, located in archives in both Rome and Rwanda, of which he gives account in transparent footnotes to every paragraph, displaying a clear style that makes the book easy to read.

Carney states that the Catholic Church in the 1950s represents the resurgence and ultimate triumph of the “church from below,” formed by the first Rwandese converts who came from the ranks of Hutu peasants and marginalized petit Tutsis. “For late colonial Hutu leaders and their missionary allies, the Hutu social revolution was closely connected to the establishment of a more egalitarian Rwandan society marked by social justice, democracy and economic equality” (3). Carney discusses the role played by the Catholic hierarchy within these political dynamics and the internal tensions within its ranks.

It is striking that Hutu-Tutsi antagonism was not present in the post–World War II period. Mention of antagonism between the groups is almost completely absent from the reports produced by the White Fathers (56). In the late 1950s the pan-ethnic political reform movements changed into “a mission to empower the Hutu masses over and against a perceived Tutsi oligarchy” (3). Carney discusses the role played by the Catholic hierarchy within these political dynamics and the internal tensions within its ranks.

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Carney formulates it very concisely: “The surfacing of the ethnic question stemmed in part from Tutsi elites’ failure to share political power and in part from Hutu elites’ growing recognition of the electoral salience of ethnic labels” (70). André Perraudin, a Swiss White Father and bishop of Kabgayi, then publicly adopted the Hutu social analysis in his Lenten Pastoral of 1959, in which he claimed that “in Rwanda social differences and inequalities are for a large part linked to racial differences,” without mentioning the masses of poor Tutsi peasants. This position was continued by his successors. Carney labels this stance Perraudin’s pro-Hutu “analytical partisanship” (135), an uncritical support for the state, more out of institutional self-interest than of ethnicism per se. This “analytical partisanship” made it impossible to raise a prophetic voice, despite all public laments against violence.

Carney does not perceive a direct...
link between the events of the 1950s and the vastly different historical context of the early 1990s (4). Nevertheless, he notices a continued broad support of the government from the side of the church, a hesitancy to speak out with a strong voice in the early weeks of the genocide (198), and a general failure of the church leaders to maintain prophetic distance from state leaders.

An example of accuracy, transparency, and erudite research, this book is indispensable for understanding the relationship between church, state, and ethnic discourse in twentieth-century Rwanda.

—Gerard van ‘t Spijker

Gerard van ‘t Spijker, a Dutch theologian and anthropologist, has been in the service of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, 1973–82 and 1995–99. He served as guest professor of the Faculties of Protestant Theology of Yaoundé (Cameroon) and Butare (Rwanda), 2006–12.

Trialogue and Terror: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam after 9/11.


There is “dialogue,” and there is dialogue. The former can be any kind of conversation, including argument. True dialogue occurs when one transcends personal agendas and the desire to make a point, preach, or missionize, and arrives at a place where there is genuine learning from the other. “Trialogue” is a neologism designed to bring Muslims into the conversation between Jews and Christians, particularly after the horror of 9/11. As in my first sentence, there can be “trialogue,” as well as trialogue.

The chapters of this volume, edited by Alan Berger from a series of conferences held at Florida Atlantic University between 2007 and 2010, represent a mix. Among the Jewish and Christian contributors, all experienced in Jewish-Christian dialogue, there tends to be not only an understandable apprehension about the ability of Muslims to engage productively with Jews and Christians, but also a marked tendency to essentialize Islam and a kind of hubris about their own religious superiority vis-à-vis Islam that inevitably thwarts true dialogue. Exceptions are the chapters by Deborah Weissman, Mary Boys, and Theresa Sanders, all of whom offer excellent and thoughtful contributions.

The Muslim contributors, by contrast, are uniformly excellent. They demonstrate how one can be self-critical and probing of one’s own religious experience and education in a manner that does not denigrate one’s own religion and sense of divine truth. Khaleel Mohammed models an extraordinary level of enlightened self-criticism and religious humility while simultaneously articulating the range of perceptions by Muslims of their own religion and also of the West. Rashied Omar carefully explains how Islamic notions of peace are grounded in notions of justice in a manner that Western observers have consistently and erroneously mistaken for bellicosity. Muhammad Shafiq and Akbar Ahmed tell their own individual stories of personal transformation that brought them to a place where they can engage deeply and lovingly with the religious other while maintaining absolute commitment to their religious beliefs. For these essays alone, the volume is well worth reading.

—Reuven Firestone

Reuven Firestone is Professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, California.
The Saint in the Banyan Tree: Christianity and Caste Society in India.


David Mosse provides a nuanced study of the history of the relationship of Roman Catholicism to caste in Tamil-speaking South India. The relationship is one marked by dramatic reversal: early seventeenth-century Catholicism fused with hierarchical social orderings of caste (Brahmin), whereas late twentieth-century Catholicism fused with egalitarian social critiques of caste (Dalit). This reversal is carefully discussed in chapters that are archivally, anthropologically, and theoretically rich. Mosse’s important text will be of interest to those invested in Tamil-speaking South India, Christian mission, and the political development of demands for social justice.

The Saint in the Banyan Tree emphasizes practice as prior to belief. Its approach is genealogical (though the term is not mentioned), not assuming a “pre-existing order of religion” but attending to how such order was “shaped through contact with other local discourses, practices, and events” and seeing “coherence, universality, and authority” as the effect of “struggle and contingent action” subsequently concealed (64). The book has a related research stance, arguing against “theorizing anthropologists who have sought not the outer form…but the inner reasons of caste” (115) and finding that “caste remained central to…village life” as a basis for relationships of distinction and equality rather than structuralist “notions of purity or impurity” (126). In addition, the volume has a Catholic object of study whose tradition echoes “the pragmatist view that experience precedes and produces theory” (19).

Mosse sees political development arising from antagonism, which “could be conceived in indigenous as much as missionary terms” (282), between universal beliefs and particular practices. In South India, this antagonism demanded an ability to negotiate contradictions between a “caste-ordered Tamil social life and their theological denial” in Christianity (131). Tamil Catholicism subsequently provided a “crucible” (277) for twentieth-century Dalit activism arising from centuries of such negotiations, shifting from caste-based demands for distinctive honors to how such order was “shaped through contact with other local discourses, practices, and events” and seeing “coherence, universality, and authority” as the effect of “struggle and contingent action” subsequently concealed (64). The book has a related research stance, arguing against “theorizing anthropologists who have sought not the outer form…but the inner reasons of caste” (115) and finding that “caste remained central to…village life” as a basis for relationships of distinction and equality rather than structuralist “notions of purity or impurity” (126). In addition, the volume has a Catholic object of study whose tradition echoes “the pragmatist view that experience precedes and produces theory” (19).

Mosse sees political development arising from antagonism, which “could be conceived in indigenous as much as missionary terms” (282), between universal beliefs and particular practices. In South India, this antagonism demanded an ability to negotiate contradictions between a “caste-ordered Tamil social life and their theological denial” in Christianity (131). Tamil Catholicism subsequently provided a “crucible” (277) for twentieth-century Dalit activism arising from centuries of such negotiations, shifting from caste-based demands for distinctive honors in rituals to equal rights in public. Ultimately, the tension between “Catholic universalism and Tamil cultural particularities” (89) became “an engine of social transformation” (26), illustrating “the value of looking at the ‘tradition-making,’ interactive, in-between space that Tamil Catholicism represents” (284). Such socially transformative powers—arising from practical negotiations between, rather than from authoritative doctrinal beliefs within, social groups—give Mosse hope: “the argument that Catholic religion is not a transhistorical global phenomenon introduced into ‘local cultures’ by missionary agents, but a contingent and at times unstable category of thought and action…does not, however, fail to point beyond itself to transcendent truth” (269).

—Matthew H. Baxter

Matthew H. Baxter is Associate Editor for South Asia of Asian Survey, a bimonthly journal published by the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley.


Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things, the inaugural book in the Evangelical Theological Society’s series “Studies in World Christianity,” is an auspicious launch for this promising series, which seeks “to raise the awareness of World Christianity among evangelical scholars” (xv). Allen Yeh and Chris Chun have assembled eleven authors who focus on William Carey (part 1), on Adoniram Judson (part 2), and on how the lives of Carey, Judson, and their wives manifest the history and contemporary themes of Baptist missionary activity (part 3).

Well-established missions scholars, including Timothy George and Timothy Tennent, highlight the way recurring missionary themes—such as translation, evangelism, conversion, worldview limitations, and nineteenth-century missions challenges—are evident in Carey’s and Judson’s lives, while demographer Todd Johnson reminds us that in our own day, “much of the education and perspective needed for the missionary enterprise will come from outside the Christian community” (83).

Readers already acquainted with the basic contours of Carey’s and Judson’s lives will especially appreciate the inclusion of contributions from non-Western writers. Chakravarthy Zadda examines Carey’s ministry from a Dalit Christian perspective, and May May Latt, writing “from the perspective of a Burmese Christian woman,” contrasts Adoniram and Ann Judson’s “open legacy” with their hidden one (84). In addition, Sean Doyle reviews “a series of published interchanges” from the early 1820s between Carey’s colleague Joshua Marshman and the Bengali intellectual Rammohan Roy (43). Doyle’s discussion provides a window through which we can better contemplate the enormous distances (cultural, religious, social, and personal) that exist in missions between peoples whose worldviews differ so profoundly, even as we strive mightily to convey the good news of the Gospel.

This text will be valued for its succinct, crisp, innovative convergences and contrasts in themes and personalities; its helpful references; the possibilities it offers for classroom, sermon, and illustrative purposes in the wider missions community beyond Baptist and evangelical circles; and the anticipation it stimulates for future publications in the series.

—Susan G. Higgins

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Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making?


Tomas Sundnes Drønen’s Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam contributes to the growing literature on Pentecostalism in Africa. In particular, it is an important addition to the already impressive Brill historical series Studies of Religion in Africa. Serious study of Pentecostalism in Africa is important because, within a century, it has become the representative face of Christianity on the continent. Drønen carried out this study within a Cameroonian context, which, unlike other locations in sub-Saharan Africa, does not have a long history of indigenous revivalist Christianity. Also, this is a predominantly Islamic context, which means that we are dealing here with factors and features that may not necessarily fit existing paradigms accounting for the rise of Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, there is a critical factor here: the Pentecostal movement in northern Cameroon, although late in coming, shares with the rest of the continent the perception that the movement offers an alternative to the dry denominationalism of historic mission Christianity.

Much of the history of African Pentecostalism on which the work is founded may be familiar and could have been enriched with information from African scholars. The book’s major contribution lies in its being located in the Islamic context of Ngaoundéré. As Drønen points out, Islam is considered simultaneously an opponent and a challenge in the Pentecostal society-building project, with its spiritual-warfare approach to the religious other. This factor means that, even if Pentecostal leaders avoid direct mention of Islam in their preaching, Islamic worldviews nevertheless find their way into Pentecostal discourse through the familiar processes of demonization and spiritual deliverance. In the words of the author, “Given that a Muslim spiritual worldview, where practices from African traditions are included by the religious specialist, le marabout, has come to dominate the region, any Pentecostal pastor ready to excercise demons will have to relate to the spiritual imagination of his church attendees” (6).

Drønen discusses the related issue of the challenge of those who preach a prosperity gospel, given the dire poverty of the African context, where the major economic players are Muslims. Interestingly, we learn from Drønen that relations between the two faiths have not been as hostile as they have been elsewhere in Africa, for Cameroonian Pentecostal Christians have attempted to negotiate their way thoughtfully within a socioeconomic context over which they do not possess hegemony. In the end, through exposure to globalization processes, media, and transnational networks, Cameroonian Pentecostals are able to “negotiate a place of their own because they provide plausible answers to everyday questions in northern Cameroonian daily life activities by connecting people to the wider world, exercising spiritual authority, and providing a sense of dignity to their members” (210). Drønen has provided useful material for those interested in current developments in African Christianity.

—J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu is the Baëta-Grau Professor of African Christianity and Pentecostal Theology, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, Ghana.

Ecclesiastical Colony: China’s Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate.


Ernest Young has written a superb and impressively researched account of the French Religious Protectorate—one of the central aspects of Catholic missions in China from the middle of the nineteenth century to the start of the Communist era. Young argues that this unilateral policy of the French government, whereby it declared itself the defender of all Catholic interests in China as a way to enhance its power and prestige, was an important factor embittering Sino-Western relations during this period. Drawing on a rich variety of sources—Vatican documents, archival records for several European Catholic orders with a major presence in China, diplomatic correspondence, and more—the author constructs a compelling narrative of the origins and operation of this policy and the negative impact it had on the development of the Catholic Church in China.

Young makes his case in part by providing a detailed analysis of how the Protectorate intensified conflict between Catholic and non-Catholic Chinese in the so-called jiao’ an (church cases), as well as by showing the numerous ways in which France blocked Vatican attempts to exert stronger control over the Catholic Church in China, thus hindering the development of a native clergy. The latter half of the book focuses on the gradual decline of the French Religious Protectorate during the early twentieth century, attributed to rising Chinese nationalism, the influence of the remarkable Belgian missionary priest Vincent Lebbe, and a more determined effort by the Vatican to promote Chinese leadership.

Ecclesiastical Colony represents a major contribution to scholarship on Christianity in modern China and the history of Catholic missions.

—John Barwick

John Barwick is a postgraduate associate in the Department of History, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
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