So embedded in Western lore is the subject of Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s famous painting featured below that we recognize it at once as the Tower of Babel, evoking the account in Genesis 11:1–9 of how human accord was divinely mutated into linguistic pandemonium and cultural fragmentation. Its New Testament counterpart is the story of Pentecost, found in Acts 2, the inauguration at last of God’s promised reversal of the Babel effect. Far from favoring the monotonous standardization of cultures and languages being wrought by the juggernaut of globalization, God demonstrated through Pentecost that the confusion of intrahuman discourse was not to be mitigated through some global monolingual scheme but through God’s revelation of himself in the mother tongue of every tribe and nation. It is not surprising, then, that two thousand years after the event marking the Holy Spirit’s dramatic initiation of the church there should be the proliferation of translations highlighted in Harriet Hill’s superb update on the current and projected state of mother-tongue Bible translations.

Continued next page
In her lead essay Edith Blumhofer tells how—in the wake of Azusa Street and similar, concurrent revivals one hundred years ago—early American Pentecostals were convinced that the gift of tongues was God’s way of enabling them to preach the Gospel in the mother tongues of peoples all over the world, without the time-consuming labor of actually learning another language. The disappointing reality that Holy Spirit–inspired zeal for missions did not mean instant facility in an unknown language soon became embarrassingly evident. But a deeper truth, more consonant with 1,900 years of Christian history, was reaffirmed: when it comes to the relationship between spiritual gifts and missionary activity, the power from on high is less about spectacular and more about personal faithfulness. Since it was clearly God’s intention that all peoples should hear the Gospel, each in his and her own language, the tough work of language learning and translation must be integral to any authentically Christian mission.

Supported by short articles by Grant McClung, Douglas Petersen, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and reinforced by Todd Johnson’s centenary survey of three waves of Christian renewal since the Azusa Street revival of 1906, Blumhofer further points out that when it comes to the relationship between spiritual gifts and missionary activity, the power from on high is less about spectacular and more about personal faithfulness. Since it was clearly God’s intention that all peoples should hear the Gospel, each in his and her own language, the tough work of language learning and translation must be integral to any authentically Christian mission.

As Harry Boer convincingly argued years ago in his classic Pentecost and Missions (1961), and as the articles in this issue of the IBMR attest, Pentecost is not really about spectacular signs and wonders, exorcisms, prophecies, or material prosperity. It is about an encounter with the creator God in Christ that is so vivid, so intensely personal, and so life-changing that those who experience it find it impossible to keep quiet about what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20). It is about irresistible divine empowerment to mitigate Babel’s legacy with the Good News of God’s love for all peoples, especially the disenfranchised of this world. Although the poor have no meaningful part in the grand schemes of social ideologues and politicians, in God’s salvation drama, the kingdom of heaven is theirs, and the earth is their inheritance (Matt. 5:3, 5). Pentecost is about God’s insistence on communicating this Good News in the language most appropriate for intimate discourse, one’s mother tongue. The Pentecostal movement sweeping our contemporary world is not about Azusa Street but about Jerusalem.

Little wonder, then, that in the global South, where nearly 60 percent of all Christians live, we see the most evidence of the signs of renewal most frequently associated with Pentecost. Organizations such as the United Bible Societies and Wycliffe Bible Translators International, engaged in the rendition and dissemination of mother-tongue Christian Scriptures, are quintessential expressions of Pentecost’s impulse. Philip Jenkins in his article reminds us that the book now waved aside in the old heartlands of Christendom as nothing more than a confusing collage of tribal myths, contradictory clichés, folk wisdom, and sectarian regulations is increasingly recognized in the global South as a fresh, profoundly credible, and transforming guide for life—proclaiming, in fact, the very power of God unto salvation. This issue of the IBMR is a brief chronicle of that experience.

Front cover: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Tower of Babel, 1563, oil on oak panel, 114 x 155 cm; courtesy of Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Revisiting Azusa Street: A Centennial Retrospect

Edith L. Blumhofer

In April 2006 North American Pentecostals mark the centenary of an event that stands at the core of their myth of origins. It happened in Los Angeles and takes its name from its location—Azusa Street, an unremarkable thoroughfare that became a byword to thousands of devout women and men who mingled with the merely curious between 1906 and 1908 at a modest building known as the Azusa Street Mission. There from mid-April 1906 through at least 1908, revival meetings ran almost continuously. Along with traditional revival rhetoric about sin and salvation, visitors heard exhortations to pursue heart purity and spiritual power. But more compelling than the rhetoric or the heartily singing and agonized prayers that filled the hours were the gifts of the Holy Spirit in action.

At Azusa Street one could see and hear the “utterance gifts” listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10: tongues, interpretations of tongues, prophecies, and words of knowledge and wisdom. Seekers travailed in prayer for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, an experience they expected would be attested by speaking in tongues. Since they were told it “came only on the sanctified life,” confession of sin and inner conviction of forgiveness also had a prominent place. People who had “broken through” to Spirit baptism interpreted tongues and prophesied; the sick came for healing; the curious and scoffers came, too, drawn by newspaper cartoons or word-of-mouth, or perhaps by the bedlam. Startling claims became commonplace; the sick came for healing; the curious and scoffers came, too, drawn by newspaper cartoons or word-of-mouth, or perhaps by the bedlam. Startling claims became commonplace among the faithful: from visions to the ability to converse readily perhaps by the bedlam. Startling claims became commonplace among the faithful: from visions to the ability to converse readily in unknown foreign languages, participants in the Azusa Street revival dealt daily in the miraculous. They concluded that they held center stage in God’s plan for the last days; events at the Azusa Street Mission were nothing less than a “new Pentecost”—a long-awaited “restoration of the faith once delivered to the saints” that would issue in an unprecedented burst of evangelism before the end of time. Their name, Apostolic Faith Movement, captured their conviction that they stood in continuity with New Testament Christian experience; the label “Pentecostal” came a little later and pointed to the centrality of the first Christian Pentecost in their self-understanding.¹

Now, a century later, no one knows how many Pentecostals there are in the United States, Pentecostal denominations boast over 10 million members. If one adds the persons in other Christian churches who embrace Pentecostal-like beliefs and practices, the number more than doubles. In addition, estimates suggest at least 500 million adherents abroad, making Pentecostals the second largest group of Christians in the world, trailing only Roman Catholics. Such numbers are notoriously difficult to verify, but by any measure Pentecostal Christianity has experienced notable dramatic growth. Was the Azusa Street revival the source of the charismatic flavor of much of contemporary world Christianity? Is the story line simple and one-dimensional—from Azusa Street to the world? Or was Azusa Street one of multiple sources of contemporary Pentecostalism? Is Azusa Street primarily a North American story? The Azusa Street centennial offers a fitting occasion to explore the import of a 1906 revival that has assumed a larger-than-life place in the collective memory of North American Pentecostals.

Setting and Meaning

Today the site of the Azusa Street Mission stands in the Los Angeles area known as Little Tokyo. The building is long gone, but in 1906 a deserted African Methodist Episcopal Church on Azusa Street seemed an ideal site for undisturbed protracted meetings that had been overflowing a small house in a residential neighborhood on Bonnie Brae Street. There for several weeks in early April 1906, blacks and whites had mingled to pray for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Their leader was William J. Seymour, a black preacher recently arrived in the city with a new twist on revival preaching. Seymour’s message summarized that of his mentor, Charles Parham, a Midwestern healing evangelist who had concluded that the biblical evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was speaking in tongues.² Parham communicated his own eagerness for the restoration of apostolic experience to his adherents, and Seymour carried the word to Los Angeles. In the tumultuous world of American radical evangelicalism in Los Angeles, as elsewhere, competing claims about spiritual power fueled intense debate. Seymour offered verifiable “Bible evidence” for his views and set his message of an encounter with the Holy Spirit in the context of an end-times restoration of the apostolic faith. The mix had appeal among those who yearned for revival—or, as they put it, wanted “more of God.”³

Before long, the Azusa Street Mission could not hold the crowds. “Los Angeles seems to be the place, and this the time, in the mind of God,” wrote one devotee, “for the restoration of the church to her former place, favor and power. The fullness of time seems to have come for the church’s complete restoration.”⁴ This was restoration with a purpose: first, it was emphatically an end-times event; second, it was intended to fuel unprecedented and swift world evangelization.

The faithful expected that tongues speech would issue in the

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practical ability to speak languages useful for missionary work. Reports proliferated of tongues-enabled impromptu conversations with immigrants. For example, a young southern Californian named Lillian Keyes professed the ability to converse with local Chinese immigrants in two distinct dialects. The most devout assigned such experiences life-altering significance. In October 1906 the Azusa Street Mission’s publication recorded the testimony of a young female bound for Africa on the strength of her conviction that she had been given “the language of Africa.” The same enthusiasm that Lillian Garr (who had been impressed at Azusa Street that she had a call to China, while her husband professed one to India) improved daily in her miraculously given Thibetan and Chinese. When Lucy Farrow, an African American woman, felt called to Liberia, she reported miraculous ability to preach in Kru. Either external advice or internal conviction about what language one had been “given,” then, prompted men and women to sail for remote places with little thought for mundane matters like financial support, firm destination, or suitable supplies. “God is solving the missionary problem,” an unsigned column in the Apostolic Faith editorialized late in 1906, “sending out new-tongued missionaries on the apostolic faith line.” “The gift of languages is given with the commission,” Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, another column proclaimed. “The Lord has given languages to the unlearned, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Zulu and languages of Africa, Hindu and Bengali and dialects of India, Chippewa and other languages of the Indians, Esquimaux, the deaf mute language, and, in fact, the Holy Ghost speaks all the languages of the world through his children.”

The expectation of miraculous speech in known languages soon faded: so-called missionary tongues, by most accounts, simply failed to deliver the expected language facility. Yet the anticipation of xenolalia suggests the aspiration of preaching the Gospel directly to every language and culture, their proclamation unencumbered by any traces of Western cultural baggage, even language or accent. They did not articulate this aspiration; to their minds, the primary advantage of xenolalia was speedy evangelism.

In place of xenolalia, participants in the “new Pentecost” came to focus on a phrase from Acts 1:8: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” The baptism with the Holy Spirit was “enduement with power for service.” If it did not deliver a tangible result like immediate linguistic fluency, it did testify to possession of the divine power necessary for effective Christian witness anywhere. Participants considered that Azusa Street had cosmic meaning as a sign that the end of time had arrived. Its personal meaning revolved around themes of power, purity, and spiritual gifts. The baptism with the Holy Spirit transformed the meaning of life by heightening sensitivity to the spiritual world. Like Charles Wesley before them, early Pentecostals thought their religious experience brought a touch of heaven into their ordinary lives: “I have found a heaven below, living in the glory of the Lord,” one of their choruses ran. The lines of another professed, “The Spirit has come, has come to abide! I’ve Pentecost in my soul.”

Dissemination

The Azusa Street Mission was at first the hub of a local revival, but soon people came from afar to visit. “We hardly know people’s names in this movement,” the Apostolic Faith editor regretted. The emphasis on evangelism in the end times encouraged those who professed the baptism with the Holy Spirit to move on and get busy. Affordable rail fares gave them access to all parts of the country. Those in intent on destinations to the east often evangelized their way across the country before embarking from the port of New York, urging any along the way who would listen to embrace the “full gospel” of the restored apostolic faith. Some Pentecostals went abroad on short-term missions, others to stay. References to the imminence of Christ’s return punctuated the revival’s rhetoric and fueled enthusiasm for evangelism. Some moved restlessly from one country to another, pressing especially on missionaries the claims of their new spiritual convictions. Results were mixed at best, and complaints trickled back that Pentecostals seemed more anxious to pray than to work, more eager to persuade missionaries than to commit to the task of evangelizing native populations. The first Pentecostal missionaries were no one’s responsibility, and frustrated local officials had to decide how to deal with religious enthusiasts who lacked any pledged support. The resulting confusion was one reason some Pentecostals banded together to create structures for ongoing responsible missionary endeavors.

Azusa Street Mission

For their part, the Pentecostals whose accounts survive projected confidence in their calling and optimism about the ultimate triumph of their “full gospel.” Until it ceased publication in Los Angeles in 1908, the monthly paper of the Azusa Street Mission followed their activities and played an important role in keeping them informed about each other. The paper gave individual Pentecostals a sense of participation in a revival spreading from North America around the world. Together with the people who passed through the mission and testified to the revival, the Apostolic Faith was the primary popularizer of the mission’s message. It surfaced networks of people here and there who had experienced similar things before or beyond the immediate influence of Azusa Street. It circulated especially among widely scattered people and ministries who were already densely networked.

Radical evangelicals issued an astonishing number of simi-
lar papers. Often published with funds “as the Lord provided,” some circulated widely to overlapping constituencies and kept interested people aware of current news, personalities, and teaching. Excerpts from the Apostolic Faith disseminated the Azusa Street message in other constituencies, while copies of the Apostolic Faith circled the globe and captured the imaginations of people here and there. Some readers wrote to the mission; some recognized similarities between Azusa Street and local revivals in their own contexts. Revivals elsewhere prodded readers of such papers to pray for more intense revival where they were. Azusa Street was part of a larger context of renewal—most self-consciously that of the Welsh revival—and such events prompted people outside the context to pray for revival, while local revivals nurtured openness to reports of divine blessing elsewhere.

Even in North America the Azusa Street Mission was not the single source of the Pentecostal movement. Toronto had its own network of radical evangelicals who inclined toward the same spirituality before they heard about the Azusa Street revival. In the Chicago area, hub of John Alexander Dowie’s Christian Catholic Apostolic Church and home to many Scandinavian pietist immigrants, other impulses pushed radical evangelicals in a similar direction. Scandinavian pietists in Minnesota experienced intense revival accompanied by tongues speaking long before they knew anything about Azusa Street. It is possible to overstate the actual—though not the mythical—importance of Azusa Street for North American Pentecostalism.15

It is also possible to overstate the racial inclusivity of Azusa Street. Much has been made of a sentence in an influential book by the peripatetic Azusa Street participant Frank Bartleman. In 1925 he exulted that at “Old Azusa” “the color line” had been “washed away in the blood.” But that washing apparently did not last long. Tensions between African-Americans and Latinos, as well as among blacks and whites, led to friction and schism at the mission.16 Bartleman reported a meeting in which “poor illiterate Mexicans” attempted to speak, only to be “crushed . . . ruthlessly” by the leader. Azusa Street’s moment of racial inclusivity was brief and uneasy at best, though people of many nationalities passed through and mingled for longer and shorter periods at the height of the revival.

Bartleman played a vital role in creating Azusa Street as a literary event. In 1925 he published privately What Really Happened at Azusa Street, a small paperback he tirelessly peddled. It ran through several printings and surprisingly had no competitor as the authoritative account of the meetings. Bartleman described, interpreted, and crafted the event through his own lens, and the result may say as much about him as about Azusa Street. He rhapsodized over the first few months at “Old Azusa” but criticized its direction after the first few months as a betrayal of “real Pentecost.”17 More than any other person, Frank Bartleman is responsible for placing Azusa Street at the heart of the story of modern Pentecostal origins and interpreting its meaning. Thanks in large part to him, Azusa Street sometimes looms larger than the sum of its parts.

So What?

How does all of this matter to world Christianity today? The answer is not so straightforward as one might assume. The usual American rendering of the story uses Azusa Street as a symbol for the beginning of a Pentecostal movement that spread from North America to the world either directly or indirectly by inspiring missionaries abroad already inclined to such piety to identify with the fledgling Pentecostal movement. Through this lens, Azusa Street has two primary implications for Christianity worldwide. First, over time, North American and British Pentecostals formed denominations that reined in and organized the missionary emphasis apparent at Azusa Street and elsewhere. Western Pentecostal denominations quickly developed missionary programs that straddled the globe. The number of Pentecostal missionaries was not large, though it grew steadily. So, at one level, if Azusa Street unleashed an impulse that led to the founding of the Church of God, Cleveland, or the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, or the Assemblies of God, or the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, or the Assemblies of God, or...
The second wave of Pentecostal fervor has little to do with Azusa Street.

groups, would eventually disappear. Clearly, at least in the West in the 1960s, heirs of Azusa Street had not accomplished anything that demanded consideration among established religious or academic authorities. But McLoughlin’s death knell was premature. Even as he wrote, the charismatic movement was attracting notice, disseminating Pentecostal practices in a wide swath of Christian constituencies; a new generation of affluent Western Pentecostal entrepreneurs took to the global airwaves; and in the West a growing acknowledgment of the influence of evangelical Protestants focused attention on Pentecostals, too.

This second wave of Pentecostal fervor—unlike the first planting of Pentecostal institutions around the globe—has little to do with Azusa Street. And it often features aspects of Pentecostalism that Western Pentecostal denominations tried for decades to marginalize. Signs and wonders, exorcisms, prophecies, a prosperity gospel, and other forthrightly supernaturalist emphases combine with expressive worship to energize Christian practice around the world. Pentecostalism spreads without benefit of institutions, and its non-Western forms often articulate new social and political, as well as spiritual, agendas. New technologies, ease of travel, recent immigration, and the breakdown of denominational loyalty in the West have given new appeal to these forms of Pentecostalism in the West as well.

While North American Pentecostal denominations have often domesticated Azusa Street and narrowed its message by equating Pentecostal experience with the baptism with the Holy Spirit evidenced uniformly and immediately by speaking in tongues, outside the West, tongues speech may play a different role—perhaps as one of many spiritual gifts rather than as a single evidence of a particular experience. Non-Western Pentecostals or charismatics may or may not take one of these names, but the labels often encompass those who accent the supernatural, enter the vivid world of spiritual warfare, exorcise demons, and encounter the divine in dreams, visions, words of wisdom, prophecies, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. To be sure, some of this recent expression of Pentecostal fervor is tied to the churches, schools, and media affiliated with Pentecostal denominations, agencies, and ministries in the West. But even then, one must nuance the picture by close scrutiny of local situations. For example, sometimes indigenous people experienced revival and invited Pentecostal missionaries to resource it.

If Azusa Street has indirect meaning for those around the world whose Pentecostal belief and practice were mediated directly through Western missionaries, it does not loom large in the collective memories of the vast majority of Pentecostals worldwide, for whom, if it has resonance at all, it is but one example of the many ways in which the Holy Spirit revives the church. Azusa Street was a Western event that played itself out primarily in Western Pentecostalism, though it had a prominent role in encouraging evangelization, energizing religious imaginations, and networking scattered enthusiasts. And its early hopes for “missionary tongues” suggest to modern scholars a passion for communicating the Gospel unimpeded by cultural barriers. But an overemphasis on Azusa Street gives a Western point of reference for a surge of modern Pentecostal growth that may be better understood by nuancing its local contexts. Azusa Street has a place in the story of how contemporary Christianity came to be, but its story is but one piece in the narrative of exploding charismatic Christianity, not its prototype.

Outside the West, those who embrace Pentecostal forms of spirituality have their own reference points for their stories. Those that begin in contact with Western Pentecostal missionaries often move rapidly to adaptation and put down local roots as people read, receive, and interpret the Gospel for themselves. Philip Jenkins’s article in this issue, “Reading the Bible in the Global South,” makes the point that Christians outside the West encounter the biblical text with an immediacy that may incline readers to Pentecostal or charismatic understandings of miraculous provision, healings, exorcisms, and spiritual warfare. David Martin’s pathbreaking Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish makes much of Pentecostalism’s ability to move readily across cultures and sees Pentecostalism as a manifestation of modernity and the religious mobilization of the culturally despised; his index, though, does not list Azusa Street. Using an African lens, Ogbu Kalu argues persuasively that Azusa Street must be contextualized if a truly global Pentecostal history is to be written.

In his award-winning Missionary Movement in Christian History, Andrew Walls noted that American Christianity developed as it did in “a specifically local form.” It follows, then, that when Christian faith takes root anywhere in the world, local forms emerge. That observation applies as well to Azusa Street. The event was shaped by its particular American context. The way participants read the Bible led them to understand themselves as part of a revival with universal rather than merely local import. Christian revivals anywhere often inspire longing for spiritual renewal and energy for evangelistic work. Azusa Street certainly did, but so did other contemporary revivals that ebbed and flowed, creating other contexts that nurtured similar religious beliefs and practices. Early in the twentieth century, Western influence around the globe made it logical for Western Pentecostals to make bold claims about the global meaning of Azusa Street. Its global meaning faded—or at least altered—from the 1960s on as independence movements changed the global map and indigenous Christianities grounded new visions of the future.

Azusa Street as presented in its publication Apostolic Faith offers instructive insights into the tumult of ideas and practices that birthed Pentecostalism in the West and sent its emissaries around the globe. Together with other local stories, it is a piece of the puzzle that is contemporary world Pentecostalism.
"I came to Trinity because of its strong reputation in the world of missions. As a student here, I've been able to draw on the experience of both my professors and of fellow students. There are many international students here, people with ministry experience all over the world. It helps me to think more broadly and sometimes to look at ministry in a totally different way."

—Master of Theology student Melvin Sayer came to Trinity with his family after nine years of ministry in Ukraine.
Grant McClung

Waiting on the Gift: An Insider Looks Back on One Hundred Years of Pentecostal Witness

He gave them this command, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

—Luke 24:49 NIV

Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

—Acts 1:8 NIV

Notes


11. Ibid., p. 4.


was an inclusive gift, intended for “all people” (v. 17 NIV). Apparently they also insisted that the normative response to the announced Good News of the lordship of Christ would be for their audience to repent and receive this gift that was promised to them, their families and nations, and even to those “afar off” (v. 39 KJV)—a gift with clear missiological intent and implications.

This gifting was experienced again at the Azusa Street revival and simultaneously in scattered locations across the globe in the early days of the twentieth century. How the participants interpreted the events and experiences of this renewal in 1906 is found in the first edition of the Azusa Street periodical *Apostolic Faith*, with the headline “PENTECOST HAS COME.” The lead article, under the heading “Los Angeles Being Visited by a Revival of Bible Salvation and Pentecost as Recorded in the Book of Acts,” provides narrative insight into the early missiological worldview of those who came to be known as Pentecostals. It reads: “The power of God now has this city agitated as never before. Pentecost has surely come and with it the Bible evidences are following, many being converted and sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues as they did on the day of Pentecost. The scenes that are daily enacted in the building on Azusa street and at missions and churches in other parts of the city are beyond description, and the real revival is only started, as God has been working with His children mostly, getting them through to Pentecost, and laying the foundation for a mighty wave of salvation among the unconverted.”

The evidence in this and other primary sources indicates that, although spiritual revitalization among existing believers was a necessary step toward empowering them for mission, the ultimate reason and goal for the Pentecostal gifting was world evangelization among the unreached. In fact, “Pentecostalism cannot be properly or accurately described without understanding its own self-identity as a missionary movement raised up by God to evangelize the world in the last days.” William J. Seymour, the recognized leader of the Azusa Street Mission, thus would often exhort the people, “Now, do not go from this meeting and talk about tongues, but try to get people saved.”

Near the midcentury mark of the Pentecostal movement, Pentecostal biographer and historian Stanley H. Frodsham reacted negatively against the label “the tongues movement,” insisting that speaking in tongues had not been the principal feature of the movement: “By no means. The first and foremost thing in the outpouring has been the magnifying of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . . We heard Pastor Jonathan Paul of Berlin, an acknowledged Pentecostal leader in Germany, say, ‘I have not put the word “Pentecost” on my banner. I have the word “Jesus” on it and expect to keep it there.’ And the rest of us say, ‘Amen.’”

Fifty years after Frodsham’s statement, missiologist Arthur F. Glasser added an evangelical “Amen!”: “Many evangelicals have been challenged by the immediacy and reality of God that Pentecostals reflect along with their freedom and unabashed willingness to confess openly their allegiance to Christ. The achievements of their churches are equally impressive, reflecting their settled conviction that the full experience of the Holy Spirit will not only move the Church closer to Jesus at its center, but at the same time, press the Church to move out into the world in mission.”

Pentecostal/charismatic mission theology maintains that baptism in the Holy Spirit is the indispensable enduement of power necessary for Christian mission (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8); that Jesus, the exalted Mediator between God and man, is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33); and that Jesus Christ continues today to do all that he began in his earthly mission (Acts 1:1).

We confess the Trinitarian proclamation of Peter on the day of the first Pentecostal outpouring: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32–33 NIV).

The Azusa Street centennial must be not only a cause for celebration but also a time for solemn reflection upon the awesome remaining task before us, and for a humble petition for yet another great move of God in our time. The Pentecostals are not the sole possessors of the gift or of the Giver. Together with all of the global Christian community, may we prayerfully continue “waiting on the gift” of renewed empowerment to be Christ’s witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Notes
4. Ibid., p. 272.
6. Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), presents one of the better studies of the “fourfold Gospel” of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and Soon-Coming King as found in Pentecostal theology.
The Azusa Street Mission and Latin American Pentecostalism

Douglas Petersen

In less than a century, the Pentecostal movement has evolved from a small, ragtag band of Christian believers at the Azusa Street Mission to a worldwide movement with an estimated 500 million adherents. In few places has the growth been faster than in Latin America. Although the early participants in the movement were on the margins of society—"the loose dust of the earth for the wind to blow away," as described not long ago by one Latin American theologian—the rippling waves of the Pentecostal experience have flowed into almost every sector of religious and secular society.

The exponential growth of Latin American Pentecostalism has typically been among the most disadvantaged or dissatisfied sectors, such as the peasantry, the urban poor, women, Indians and ethnic minorities, young adults, and the independent middle-class groups. These Pentecostal groups have in the aggregate organized the most extensive network of popularly directed associations outside the Roman Catholic Church and, in the process, have become a recognized religious alternative throughout Central and South America.

The Azusa Street revival became the locus for the Pentecostal movement that mushroomed throughout Latin America and around the globe. New Testament principles of spiritual empowerment, coupled with the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, themes developed during the formative years at the Azusa Street Mission, provided the essential theological pattern.

Contributions to Latin American Pentecostalism

The Azusa Street revival added fuel to the substantial fire of the revival movement already making its appearance throughout the world. Widespread circulation of literature coming from the pens of Pentecostal editors quickly carried the message overseas. Hundreds of potentially influential leaders from around the globe traveled to Azusa Street or one of the other urban centers, experienced Spirit baptism for themselves, and then returned to their country of origin to contextualize the Pentecostal message within their own cultural matrix. The emergence of Latin American Pentecostalism was, in large part, a fruit of these highly fluid and decentralized Azusa Street networks. The impact of the Azusa Street experience on the eruption of Latin American Pentecostalism was catalytic, providing models through which Latin American Pentecostals took the initiative in adapting the message to their own situations.

Although the rapid spread of Pentecostalism in Latin America occurred after World War II, the movement was established much earlier, primarily in Brazil and Chile before 1910 and in Central America during the following decade. Italian Luigi Francescon, filled with the Spirit during a visit to the Azusa Street Mission, carried the Pentecostal message to the south of Brazil and Argentina. Swedes Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren, who introduced Pentecostalism into the northern states of Brazil, were brought into Pentecost through the Chicago center, an offspring of Azusa Street, as were other Scandinavians, whose influence reached Willis Hoover, founder of the movement in Chile in 1909. Indeed, several Latin American Pentecostal groups predate the formation of the largest North American Pentecostal churches.

From the beginning, Hispanics were part of the new revival movement at Azusa Street. Through their natural networks, Latino preachers transmitted the Pentecostal message to countries in Latin America. Pentecostal churches in the communities straddling the United States–Mexican border arose almost simultaneously alongside their North American counterparts, often the two developing as a single movement. Pioneering evangelists like Francisco Olazábal and Juan Lugo, after experiencing Spirit baptism, introduced the Pentecostal message to Hispanics in the United States and Puerto Rico, with extraordinary results.

In addition to Latinos who were proclaiming the Pentecostal story, the churches represented at Azusa Street quickly organized themselves into scores of fellowships and almost immediately commissioned missionaries for global service. The Assemblies of God, for example, traces its Hispanic origins in the United States and along the border regions of northern Mexico to the churches established by missionary pioneer Henry C. Ball, beginning in 1915. Not a few early Pentecostal missionaries were initially sent out by other mission boards, but when the winds of supernatural happenings that took place at the Azusa Street Mission reached them, these missionaries also received Spirit baptism.

If the Pentecostal experience was perceived negatively by their sending agency, it was not unusual for a missionary to resign—sometimes willingly, sometimes not—from the respective mission with hopes of affiliating with one of the newly formed Pentecostal groups. Such was the case of Alice Eveline Luce, the daughter of an Anglican vicar and under missionary appointment to India with the Anglican-sponsored Church Mission Society. Luce, prompted by the testimonies she had heard from the Azusa Street revival, sought and experienced the baptism of the Spirit while serving in India in 1910. Four years later, at age forty-two, she decided to resign from her post with CMS, and soon she joined the Assemblies of God. Luce became one of the chief architects of the Hispanic Pentecostal movement in the southwestern United States and in Mexico, her career spanning another forty years of ministry.

By whatever channel the message of the Azusa Street Mission reached Latin America, Pentecostalism quickly became reproducible and was easily networked throughout the continent. In the popular religious market, where groups vied for prospective members and support for their particular brand of belief or form of association, Latin American Pentecostals, simi-
lar to the men and women from the Azusa Street revival, demonstrated unusual capacity to create ingenious mechanisms for extending their influence.

**Latinization of the Azusa Street Experience**

Reminiscent of their forebears from Azusa Street, Latin American Pentecostals, despite immense diversity, have at the core a supernatural worldview perspective that is codified through religious symbols and practices such as glossolalia and healings, supernatural interventions, participative worship, and expression in music. They approach the world with a “preunderstanding” that they are participants in God’s unfolding drama. The biblical narratives of sorrow and pain, or of power and praise, are interpreted theologically into the concrete realities of their daily spiritual, social, or physical contexts. Their interaction with society is sharpened by a personal sense that, despite the circumstances, the Holy Spirit has been bestowed upon them as an “enduement of power.” They are God’s instruments, even if their contextual reality may systematically deny them access to basic human rights, marginalize them to huge slums and shantytowns, or refuse them access to political and social opportunity. For Latin American Pentecostals, supernatural power is not an abstract or symbolic promise, but rather is demonstrable through an experiential spirituality characterized by its practicality. Latin American Pentecostals, whose testimonies parallel the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles, offer to millions an experience that is dynamically equivalent to that of the pioneers of the Azusa Street revival.

**A Fulfillment of the Azusa Street Vision**

Contrary to the dismissal of observers who consider Pentecostalism in Latin America as primarily a retrograde reaction to despair, confidence unleashed by Pentecostal emphases generates a feeling of worth and power, offering adherents extraordinary purpose in facing the future. These national networks of largely autonomous local congregations are not merely at the margins of a Latin American clamor for a more rewarding and secure future. They are also beginning to demonstrate their potential for mobilizing large numbers of people to create institutional structures capable of performing various educational, community development, social service, and political functions. If early Pentecostals at Azusa Street claimed that their essential mission was to restore to the church the energy of the primitive Christian faith, Latin American Pentecostals have unleashed that energy and taken their movement from marginality into the mainstream within three generations.

**Notes**


**Reading the Bible in the Global South**

**Philip Jenkins**

In recent years, Christian denominations worldwide have been deeply divided over issues of gender, sexual morality, and homosexuality, and gatherings of the worldwide Anglican Communion have been particularly contentious. On one occasion, two bishops were participating in a Bible study, one an African Anglican, the other a U.S. Episcopalian. As the hours went by, tempers frayed as the African expressed his confidence in the clear words of Scripture, while the American stressed the need to interpret the Bible in the light of contemporary scholarship. Eventually, the African bishop asked in exasperation, “If you don’t believe the Scripture, why did you bring it to us in the first place?” As worldwide Anglican tensions have escalated since 2003, attitudes to biblical authority have proved increasingly divisive. Kenyan archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi has even declared, “Our understanding of the Bible is different from theirs. We are two different churches.”

Though Anglicanism is an important tradition, claiming some 80 million adherents worldwide, it accounts for only 4 percent of all Christians. The kind of split that we have seen in the Anglican Church has emerged across denominations, especially in matters of gender and sexuality. Other churches have watched Anglican conflicts with some alarm, fearing that perhaps they might be getting a foretaste of future debates among Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and, perhaps someday, even Roman Catholics. Similar disputes surface not just in international meetings but also in North American religious communities with large immigrant populations.

**North vs. South**

The divisions churches have experienced tend to fall along lines of what has come to be referred to as North and South, with Christians in the generally richer northern countries favoring a liberal interpretation of Scripture, and those in the generally

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poorer South maintaining a more conservative Christianity and traditional view of Scripture. We often encounter conservative themes in the religious thought of African and Asian Christians, specifically in their attitudes toward the Bible. They often include a much greater respect for the authority of Scripture, especially in matters of morality; a willingness to accept the Bible as an inspired text and a tendency to literalism; a special interest in supernatural elements of Scripture, such as miracles, visions, and healings; a belief in the continuing power of prophecy; and a veneration for the Old Testament, which is treated as equally authoritative as the New. Biblical traditionalism and literalism are still more marked in the independent churches and in denominations rooted in the Pentecostal tradition, but similar currents are also found among Roman Catholics. Even a cursory acquaintance with African or Asian Christianity reveals the pervasive importance it gives to the Bible and biblical stories.

I am not proposing a simple kind of geographic determinism that shapes religious belief. We can hardly speak of how all Africans approach a given topic, any more than we can speak for all Europeans on a given point: Scots may think one thing, Sicilians quite another. Nor are these societies themselves in any sense uniform: Scots laborers presumably read one way, Scots professors another. Attitudes toward biblical interpretation and authority follow no neat North-South pattern. We find “Southern” expressions in the North in the form of charismatic, fundamentalist, and deeply traditionalist belief, while liberals and “Northern”-style feminists are by no means unknown in even the most fervently traditional-minded African and Asian churches. Also, despite all the financial difficulties faced particularly by African universities, global South scholars form a distinguished part of the global community of biblical learning. They read and publish in the mainstream journals of Europe and North America and reinforce international ties at conferences and seminars. Naturally enough, given the colonial and postcolonial histories of their nations, many such scholars have been shaped by radical theological perspectives, and by liberationist and feminist thought.

Global South churches produce a spectrum of theologies and interpretations, just as churches in the United States do. The North-South difference is rather one of emphasis. Though conservative and literalist approaches are widely known in the global North (which mainstream political discourse and the media are fond of labeling as controversial and reactionary), in the South biblical and theological conservatism clearly represents the Christian mainstream.

Several factors contribute to the global South’s more literal interpretation of Scripture. For one thing, the Bible has found a congenial home among communities who identify with the social and economic realities it portrays, no less than the political environments in which Christians find themselves. For the growing churches of the global South, the Bible speaks to everyday real-world issues of poverty and debt, famine and urban crisis, racial and gender oppression, and state brutality and persecution. The omnipresence of poverty in these societies promotes awareness of the transience of life, of the dependence of individuals and nations on God, and of the untrustworthiness of the secular order.

For another, Christianity, like any dynamic ideological or religious system, adapts to respond to its rivals or neighbors. Joel Carpenter notes how Euro-American academic theology, facing the challenges of secularism, postmodernity, and changing concepts of gender, still focuses on “European thinkers and post-Enlightenment intellectual issues. Western theologians, liberal and conservative, have been addressing the faith to an age of doubt and secularity, and to the competing salvific claims of secular ideologies.” Global South Christians, in contrast, do not live in an age of doubt but must instead deal with competing claims to faith. Their views are shaped by interaction with their different neighbors and the very different issues they raise, whether Muslims, traditional religionists in Africa and Asia, or members of the great Asian religions. Accordingly, “the new Christianity will push theologians to address the faith to poverty and social injustice; to political violence, corruption, and the meltdown of law and order; and to Christianity’s witness amidst religious plurality. They will be dealing with the need of Christian communities to make sense of God’s self-revelation to their pre-Christian ancestors.” In all these matters, they find abundant material in the Scriptures, often in passages that mean little to Northern-world theologians.

In consequence, the “Southern” Bible carries a freshness and authenticity that adds vastly to its credibility as an authoritative source and as a guide for daily living. In this context, it is difficult to make the familiar Euro-American argument that the Bible was written for a totally alien society with which moderns can scarcely identify, so that its detailed moral laws cannot be applied in the contemporary world. Cultures that readily identify with biblical worldviews find it easier to read the Bible not just as historical fact but also as relevant instruction for daily conduct.

Old Testament

The Southern sense of identification with the Bible is especially strong for the Old Testament. Cultural affinities with the biblical world lead African and Asian Christians to a deep affection for the Old Testament as their story, their book. In Africa particularly, Christians have long been excited by the obvious cultural parallels that exist between their own societies and those of the Hebrew Bible, especially in the world of the patriarchs. While the vast majority of modern Africans have no direct experience of nomadism or polygamy, they can at least relate to the kind of society in which such practices were commonplace.

Equally familiar in these societies is the very prominent element of sacrifice, such as existed in Hebrew ritual. In much of Africa, social events still frequently involve some kind of sacrifice or libation, as do celebrations of key events in the ceremonial year. In a much-quoted study, Justin Ukpong has drawn many parallels between the Hebrew practice of sacrifice as described in Leviticus and the modern institution as known among the Ibibio people of southeastern Nigeria. Another observer’s account of a modern African society also reveals striking similarities with the Old Testament mind-set: “In a Nigerian traditional setting, salvation is seen as a group affair and it is in the present. For a community to be saved from some kind of epidemic, afflictions, abominations, bad death and even wars, a price is paid. There is an atonement to please the gods. The medium of atonement is the shedding of the blood of animals.”

Global South Christians do not live in an age of doubt but must deal with competing claims to faith.
African and Asian readers need no gloss to understand Hebrew customs and forms that strike North Americans as archaic and incomprehensible. Why was God angry with David for taking a census of the people of Israel? Gikuyu readers in Kenya instantly appreciate the taboos associated with counting and enumeration. Unlike their Western counterparts, moreover, many African and Asian Christians think it only reasonable that the Bible should include lengthy genealogies for key figures, most obviously for Jesus himself: how else does one situate a figure and assert the basis on which he claims authority? Without roots and family, a political or religious leader has no plausible claim to one’s loyalty or even attention. Chinese scholar Fook-Kong Wong notes that “the genealogical lists in Chronicles bear witness to God’s intimate knowledge and remembrance of his people.”

For African believers, the pleasant shock of recognition is especially strong in the first twelve or so chapters of Genesis. In the calling of Abram, readers with any sense of African roots will encounter many well-known ideas. The story tells of the origin of a tribe or clan with particular claims to a precious tract of land and of a promise sealed by the construction of an altar and an act of sacrifice, and it emphasizes the rights of a community rather than those of an individual or a nuclear family. The story even takes place near a sacred tree. And the movements of the patriarchal clans are often driven by the endemic threat of famine, a threat easily understood in Africa today. In his analysis of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, a study that has had a profound influence on African Bible scholarship, Yoruba scholar Modupe Oduyoye comments that “one might call [these chapters] the Scriptures to all human beings, since there is little specifically Jewish in the material, and yet a lot that is Afro-Asiatic.”

Andrew Walls once commented, “You do not have to interpret Old Testament Christianity to Africans; they live in an Old Testament world.” The seeming Africanness of the patriarchal world helps explain the power of the stunning Malian film Testament world.”

The seeming Africanness of the patriarchal world helps explain the power of the stunning Malian film Testament world (1999), a retelling of the biblical tale of Jacob and Esau in which the hunters and the shepherds appear in thoroughly West African guise. And although today nomadism is becoming an increasingly marginal part of African life, the concept still provides a valuable rhetorical tool in discussions of social and economic conflict. The conflict between nomads and agriculturalists, Cain and Abel, can also symbolize the tensions between country dwellers and city dwellers, colonized and settlers, blacks and whites. Nor is the affinity between Southern societies and the Old Testament confined to Genesis. Commenting on 1 Samuel, Gerald West lists some thirty “African resonances,” ways in which the text rings true to southern African readers today. He includes the dynamics of polygamous families, “endemic conflict with neighboring tribes . . . the need to visit a seer on occasions . . . possession by spirits . . . [and] women dancing and singing in recognition of the exploits of their men.” In the Old Testament world as in Africa, men aspired to be “buried with their fathers.”

South African theologian Madipoane Masenya goes so far as to suggest that there must be something culturally amiss with an African who does not recognize a kinship with the Old Testament. Could an equivalent remark conceivably be made of European or North American Christians today?

The “Southern” Bible carries a freshness and authenticity that adds vastly to its credibility as an authoritative source and as a guide for daily living.

America, Francisco Goldman remarks that “Guatemala certainly feels biblical. Sheep, swine, donkeys, serpents—these are everywhere, as are centurions, all manner of wandering false prophets, pharisees, lepers and whores. The poor, rural, mainly Mayan landscape has an aura of the miraculous . . . it is the perfect backdrop for religious parables about fields both barren and fertile, fruits and harvests, hunger and plenty.” Across Africa and Asia, millions of modern readers know roads where a traveler is likely to be robbed and left for dead, without much hope of intervention by official agencies. They relate to accounts of streets teeming with the sick. They understand that a poor

Poor and Rich

The southward movement of Christianity involves not only a change in the ethnic composition of the world’s believers but also a fundamental shift in their social and economic background. The average Christian in the world today is a poor person, very poor indeed by the standards of the white worlds of North America or western Europe. Also different is the social and political status of African and Asian Christians, who often represent minorities in countries dominated by other religions or secular ideologies. This historic social change cannot fail to affect attitudes toward the Bible. For many Americans and Europeans, the societies in the Bible—in both Testaments—are distant not only in terms of time and place but also in their everyday assumptions, which are all but incomprehensible. It is easy, then, to argue that the religious and moral ideas that grew up in such an alien setting can have little application for a modern community. Yet exactly the same issues that make the Bible a distant historical record for many Americans and Europeans keep it a living text for the churches of the global South. For many readers in the global South, the Bible is congenial because the world it describes is marked by such currently pressing social problems as famine and plague, poverty and exile, clientelism and corruption. A largely poor readership can readily identify with the New Testament society of peasants and small craftsmen dominated by powerful landlords, imperial forces, and networks of debt and credit. In such a context, the excruciating poverty of Lazarus eating the crumbs beneath the rich man’s table is not just an archaeological curiosity but a modern reality both for modern dwellers in villages or small towns and for urban populations, who are often not far removed from their rural roots. And while some resemblances between biblical and modern life might be superficial, their accumulated weight adds greatly to the credibility of the text, to the sense that it is written for a contemporary world. Also, the Bible is seen as providing immediate and often material answers to life’s problems.

Particularly appealing to these Southern societies are the parables, in which Jesus incorporated so many observations of contemporary conditions. Writing of contemporary Central
woman who loses a tiny sum of money would search frantically for coins that could allow her children to eat that night. In many countries, readers appreciate the picture of the capricious rich man who offers hospitality on one occasion but on another demands payment of exorbitant debts and obligations, and who must not on any account be offended. Today, though, the rich person would not be a generic magnate or Hellenistic princeling but a corrupt official of a ruling party.14

Jesus lived in an agricultural society intimately familiar with planting and harvest—a world of grain, grapes, and olives—and metaphors from this life pervade his teaching. Many of these metaphors are almost incomprehensible to many modern readers in the global North. Without a commentary, or at least a lively interest in gardening, how many American Christians can make much sense of the critical vine-and-branch metaphor in John 15? And for all the enthusiastic language of “harvest” used by Euro-American evangelicals, few have much idea when the actual physical harvest occurs in their part of the world, and few could say whether last year’s harvest was particularly rich or poor. Metaphor apart, how many have actually labored in a real vineyard? Yet most Southern Christians are only a generation or two removed from an agricultural society in which traditional rituals were believed to maintain prosperity. In such a world, the notion of death being required to produce life has an intuitive plausibility that is largely lost in urban societies.

On occasion, the social background of global South readers allows them to see dimensions of the text that have been largely lost in the postindustrial world. I was once talking with some West Africans about the Bible passages that make particularly good sense in an agricultural society. Not surprisingly, they mentioned the parable of the sower and the grain of wheat, but they were also moved by the verse about sowing in sorrow and reaping in joy, from Psalm 126. In the King James version this passage reads as follows: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (vv. 5–6). For modern Christians around the world, the one most frequently used for African sermon texts is James 4:14, which seems uncannily relevant to the conditions of everyday life: “Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor [NIV: a mist], that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (KJV). Echoes of this text often resurface in paraphrased form. In the Sudan, which for some forty years has suffered from civil wars and vicious persecution of non-Muslims, one Christian chorus teaches the grim truth, “You are here today but tomorrow you’ll be here no more / Our only hope is Jesus Christ, so receive him now.”15 In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, sermons in the churches of South and East Asia made great use of James.

This sense of transience and frailty extends not just to individuals and families but also to whole nations. While global North nations certainly experience disasters, very rarely do they threaten the existence of a society or of large numbers of its people. In 2001 shocking terrorism in the United States killed 3,000 people, and the AIDS epidemic has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths since the early 1980s. In 2005, a hurricane all but destroyed a great American city. At no point, however, did such calamities threaten the functioning of the nation. Elsewhere in the world, though, epidemic diseases and natural disasters remain a common part of life, giving a special relevance to the biblical language of plague, drought, and famine.16

Under such challenges, nations can literally collapse, a truly frightening idea in a world in which nationality determines so much of our identity. Nations disintegrate as poverty, hunger, and disagreements over natural resources fuel ethnic and political tensions. The failed states that result are the nightmares of international policymakers, as has been the case with Afghanistan, Somalia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. And in the immense lands of the Congo, war alone has killed some 4 million people over the past decade.17

A postcolonial world appreciates the provisional character of nationhood. Realistically or not, Americans, the British, and the French tend to believe that their nations have always existed and will continue to do so, whatever disasters they might experience. In contrast, many African and Asian countries have
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What the North reads in moral or individualistic terms remains for the South social and communal.

The same circumstances of the global South that make Wisdom literature come alive also increase the relevance of the genre of lamentation. Writing against the background of political and religious repression in China, Archie Chi Chung Lee has protested “the loss of lament.” Lamentation was in antiquity a well-known genre, a literature of mourning and grief, bemoaning the fall of a state or society, which was also a mainstay of traditional Chinese culture. In the Bible this genre is represented by the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Lee notes that in the West, however, lament no longer maintains its ancient centrality, and he pleads for a reversal of this contemporary ignorance. “The voice of the exiled and desperate community must be released in this current time of sorrow and loss so that grief-stricken and wretched people can make their own voices heard with all their power. . . . For them, the book of Lamentations has survived and, in its role as literature of survival, will continue to provide the means of survival for suffering humanity.”

A Catholic Bible commentary writes that “Lamentations can be considered as a prayer book for Africans”—a grim statement, but undeniably true.

The prevalence of hunger and natural disaster also helps explain the enormous popularity in Christian Africa and Asia of the Book of Ruth, a tale of a society devastated by famine in which women survive by depending on each other and on trusted kin. In the American context, the book attracts some interest from feminist scholars, and Ruth’s plea to Naomi “Entreat me not to leave thee” (1:16) is included in blessing rites for same-sex couples.

In the global South, however, the book’s interest lies in how the various characters faithfully fulfill their obligations to each other and their relatives. The book becomes a model, even a manual, for a situation that could arise all too easily. Musimbi Kanyoro writes that “the book of Ruth is loved because it has something for everyone in Africa. Africans read this book in a context in which famine, refugee status, tribal or ethnic loyalties, levirate marriages and polygamy are not ancient biblical practices but the normal realities of today.”

What the North reads in moral or individualistic terms remains for the South social and communal. In many other ways, too, African and Asian readers can identify strongly with sections of the Bible that mean little to Northern-world believers. I think of passages about healing and spiritual warfare, or of readings that demonstrate a real suspicion of the secular state, particularly in the apocalyptic tradition. But these passages only reinforce the point made here, that the Bible rings so true for African and Asian Christians because it speaks to their daily realities. These Christians can easily echo the eerie words of Martin Luther about the emotional appeal of the text, which underlies the intellectual appeal: “The Bible is alive—it has hands and grabs hold of me, it has feet and runs after me!”

Perhaps in the coming decades the Christian world will increase its hand and grab hold of me, it has feet and runs after me!...
African Initiated Christianity in Eastern Europe: Church of the “Embassy of God” in Ukraine

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

The crucial events of Christian history have often taken place through obscure people.
—Andrew F. Walls, The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History

Changing paradigms in Christian mission challenge standard definitions of African Initiated Churches as “churches established by Africans in Africa for Africans.” This essay revisits the older definitions in light of the ministry of Nigerian-born Pastor Sunday Adelaja, founder of a new type of African Christian initiative in eastern Europe. He is head of The Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations, a neo-Pentecostal church in Kiev, Ukraine. The significance of this new type of ministry is understood against the backdrop of the “mission in reverse” theory. Unlike the majority of African Initiated Churches in the diaspora, God’s Embassy is not predominantly African in membership. More than 90 percent of its 20,000 adult members in the Ukraine are indigenous Europeans. This fact has turned Pastor Adelaja into a religious icon in the country. During my visit to Kiev in May 2004, my first information on God’s Embassy came from a taxi driver. He knew about, and highly respected, Pastor Sunday; “he is doing great work in our country,” he told me.

“So what do you think about this church?” I asked. “Well, I don’t go [to] church myself, but looking at the many Ukrainians in it, it certainly must be something good, that [an] African pastor has become more popular than the politicians.”

Pastor Sunday Adelaja

Nigerian-born Pastor Adelaja relocated from Russia to the Ukraine a little over a decade ago. He was born again in Nigeria at nineteen years of age in 1986. Six months later he obtained a scholarship to study journalism at the Belarus State University in Minsk, during which period he also led the African Christian Students’ Fellowship in what was then the Soviet Union. He ruled out returning to Nigeria after studies because of the “unstable nature of the situation at home.” Pastor Sunday speaks fluent Russian and preaches mainly in that language. He started the church because, as he notes, “God gave me a specific word in 1993,” namely, “I will use people [is] a place of destruction of curses. At the head of every kingdom is a king. Our King is Jesus Christ! He is the Lord of all nations; . . . God created Africa to open our eyes to his salvation.”

In the view of Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako, the self-definition of the new Pentecostal churches as “international” organizations points to “some specifically Christian dimensions of the African participation in globalization that may escape secular-minded observers.” For, by their own assertion, they are international churches because God has called them into a global missionary task. “We now know why God created Africa,” is how Pastor Vladimir Gargar, a Ukrainian pastor of God’s Embassy, summarized the meaning of Pastor Adelaja in their midst: “God created Africa to open our eyes to his salvation.”

“Taking New Territories”: The March for Life

“Ukraine is choosing Jesus”; “There is a way out, and it is Jesus”; “Jesus is the answer to AIDS”; “Jesus is the answer to narcotics”;
“God is blessing Ukraine”; “Choosing Jesus will protect Ukraine from AIDS.” These were a few of the proclamations made in May 2004 during the annual March for Life organized by God’s Embassy in Kiev. Jesus marches are symbolic reenactments of the biblical march around Jericho (Joshua 6). The church believes that as believers march, territories are conquered, just as the walls of Jericho fell when the Israelites under Joshua marched around them. Its modern-day prototypes are meant to pull down what evangelical Christians refer to as territorial strongholds, that is, invisible “walls” of social vices in communities perceived to be instigated by evil powers.

During the colorful Jesus march, participants carried banners from at least thirty nations around the world, signifying the countries in which God’s Embassy has branches. According to Bishop Bilonozhko Anatoliy of God’s Embassy, their church has a mission to eastern Europe: “We want our Christianity to transform medicine, military, politics, sports, education, even entertainment in Ukraine. The March for Life is the beginning of a reformation in the land; this March for Life has demonstrated the power of God; the march is breaking down the walls of division among the churches, and in our society.”

When Pastor Adelaja took the microphone to bring the curtain down on the March for Life, his vision to influence and change Ukrainian society was evident in his prayer: “Let your grace come,” he prayed, “and let your Spirit come. Let your power come, Lord. Let this nation seek your face; let doors be open; we need your power so that people may come into your kingdom.” In addition to whatever spiritual achievements may have been accomplished, the color, pomp, and size of the crowd forces the society, including those watching the proceedings on TV, to take notice of this new revival movement. Pastor Sunday Adelaja’s success symbolically reverses the “traditional” direction of mission, proving that God indeed uses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

God’s Embassy A Paradigm Shift

Gerrie ter Haar has done extensive work on African migrant churches in modern western Europe. The initiative of God’s Embassy is a concrete instance of the conviction among African Christian migrants that “God has given them a unique opportunity to spread the good news among those who have gone astray.” Ter Haar identifies two features that are common to the lives of the immigrant churches in question. First, “their members are mostly immigrants”; second, “they are mostly black.” These two factors, according to ter Haar, are “social facts with important consequences for the religious life of the believers.”

But God’s Embassy presents a negative instance of current trends regarding African immigrant churches. How does one explain the existence of a church initiated by an African in eastern Europe, but with 90 percent of the membership indigenous European? The founder, as in the case of many of such churches in western Europe, is an African immigrant, but God’s Embassy is not paradigmatic of African diaspora churches.

Discussions of African migrant influence in the diaspora therefore need to distinguish between “African churches,” such as classical Pentecostal and historic mission denominations established by Africans as extensions of similar churches back home, and “African-led” or “African-initiated” churches, which ter Haar identifies as “African international churches” on account of their global outlook. Against the backdrop of developments in eastern Europe, however, we also need to distinguish between African-led churches that are predominantly African in membership, and African-led churches like God’s Embassy that are founded by Africans but that are not necessarily African in membership. The “mission in reverse” idea thus invites fresh consideration of the causal explanations previously employed to interpret what God may be doing, not so much with individual African churches, but rather with African Christianity, especially in its independent, nondenominational charismatic streams in the diaspora. Without dismissing the network theories often used to explain the phenomenon of African immigrant churches, which highlight the social and religious support that they provide for their members, the racial composition of membership in God’s Embassy suggests that African initiatives in religion in the northern continents may be more complex than previously thought.

Mission as “Greater Works”

We have identified “influence” and “change” as the basis of the mission that God’s Embassy has set itself. Based on the work of Kenneth S. Latourette, Andrew Walls reconsiders the history of Christian expansion in terms of the “influence of Christ.” The influence of Christ is seen in the “greater works” of those who follow his footsteps in mission (see John 14:12). Three major influences are identified in the work of Latourette: first, the spread of Christian profession in particular areas, which Walls recasts as the church test; second, the number and strength of new movements owing their origin to Christ, which he recasts as the kingdom test; and third, the effect of Christianity on humankind as a whole, recast as the gospel test.

What has made God’s Embassy in the Ukraine the talking point in terms of Christian mission is the identifiable community of people in a supposedly atheistic environment testifying to the influence of Christ upon their church as a community of the Holy Spirit. With a sense of what the church as a community of believers stands for, Pastor Adelaja gives voice to the church test when he writes that “God wants everyone to actively participate in the life of the church, so that his greatness, might, and glory could be manifested through us.” The second, the kingdom test, relates to the demonstration through the group, that is, the church, of the transformative power of God. In the words of Walls, “The kingdom is declared when demons are cast out by the finger of God. The kingdom of God has drawn near in the presence of Christ with his acts of mercy and power.” The kingdom of God comes with power, and when it does, the dark night of sin and all that detracts from human wholeness are chased away so that God’s image in people may be restored. The image of the Gadarene demoniac after his encounter with Christ, found by witnesses to be “sitting there, clothed and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15), is one that may be invoked here to explain what the coming of the kingdom upon people is like.

God’s Embassy suggests that African initiatives in religion may be more complex than previously thought.
It is instructive that the ministry of the Embassy of God includes former narcotic addicts and prostitutes who are now turned around for Jesus after encountering his power. Kingdom signs like these, Walls further notes, mark the new innovative movements that reflect true Christian expansion “because, like the kingdom, they sprout and stir up, they produce a more radical Christian discipleship.” The signs of the kingdom are everywhere, as political authority and the society in general acknowledge the transforming influence of the Embassy of God on Ukrainian society.

The Embassy of God has established itself as a movement of “reformation, renewal, and revival.” When I asked Pastor Adelaja to summarize his vision in one word, he told me: “God has called us to effect another reformation.” The final test is the gospel test, which relates to the difference that the resurrection of Christ makes in the here and now. Out of the chaos that followed the Communist era, the Embassy of God sees itself as an instrument of newness in the land of Ukraine. The motivational messages of Pastor Adelaja help to bring the message of the resurrection as newness to a people looking for hope after “death.”

Conclusion: Christ to the Nations

It is inconceivable that Jesus, without the use of microphones, could have spoken to a crowd of more than a few thousand in his day. For an African Christian missionary to draw into a single church more than 20,000 eastern Europeans at the turn of the twenty-first century is a phenomenon that may well be interpreted best in the light of the promise of Jesus that those who listen to him and follow obediently will do “greater works.” The renewal of Christianity through African initiatives suggests that in the midst of the political turbulence and other socioeconomic problems bedeviling the Continent, the revival of a Christian presence in the northern continents may turn out to be one of the areas in which Africa might make some of its greatest contributions to the global village in the new millennium.

Notes
3. Throughout, quotations are from conversations and interviews from my 2004 visit to Ukraine.

Three Waves of Christian Renewal: A 100-Year Snapshot

**Todd M. Johnson**

April 2006 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the Azusa Street revival, one of the most remarkable events in the context of three waves of Christian renewal (Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neocharismatic) and 100 years of growth of global Christianity. Several observations can be made:

- The renewal was well underway by 1906. Just over 1 million Christians were part of the movement, largely centered in independent churches in Africa.
- The renewal, expressed in three different waves, experienced a meteoric rise in the twentieth century. Renewalists grew at five and a half times the rate of growth of global Christianity as a whole (line 3, col. 3 [6.6 percent] divided by line 2, col. 3 [1.2 percent]).
- The renewal has slowed considerably into the twenty-first century but now involves over one in four Christians. While 60 percent of all Christians live in the global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), nearly 80 percent of all Renewalists are found there. With its hub in the vibrant Christian South, the renewal is expected to grow somewhat less than one and a half times as fast as global Christianity. Also expected to grow is the overlap in categories, producing over 30 million doubly counted Renewalists by A.D. 2025.
- The Pentecostal renewal, most directly traceable to Azusa Street, is still active but is the smallest and slowest growing of the three waves that make up the renewal. Independent churches in Africa and Asia increasingly represent the prototypical Renewalist.

Behind the figures is the reality that Renewalists are now found in every Christian tradition, in every country, and in nearly every people group with a Christian presence. From small beginnings in the earliest part of the twentieth century, the renewal has become an essential and ubiquitous feature of global Christianity.

**Todd M. Johnson** is Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts.
### Table 1. Three Waves of Christian Renewal, A.D. 1906–2006, with projections to A.D. 2025

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1906</th>
<th>100-year trend, % per year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>19-year trend, % per year</th>
<th>2025</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Total population</td>
<td>1,753,248,000</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6,529,426,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7,851,455,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Total Christians</td>
<td>625,880,000</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2,156,350,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2,630,559,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Christianity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Total Renewalists</td>
<td>1,009,000</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>596,096,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>789,320,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. as percentage of global Christianity</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Wave Pentecostal Renewal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Pentecostals (First-Wavers)</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>81,100,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>97,800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Denominational Pentecostals (White)</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>81,100,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>97,800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Classical Pentecostals</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>77,500,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>93,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Oneness Pentecostals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>3,600,000</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4,300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Second Wave Charismatic Renewal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Charismatics (Second-Wavers)</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>190,919,000</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>264,330,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Anglican Charismatics</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>18,000,000</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Catholic Charismatics</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>133,000,000</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>185,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Protestant Charismatics</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>36,600,000</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>50,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Orthodox Charismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3,300,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4,300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Marginal Charismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Third Wave Neocharismatic Renewal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Neocharismatics (Third-Wavers)</td>
<td>970,000</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>325,701,000</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>457,500,000</td>
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<td>16. (a) In 2 kinds of wholly Third Wave networks</td>
<td>970,000</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>281,000,000</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>399,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Non-White indigenous Neocharismatics</td>
<td>940,000</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>233,000,000</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>325,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. White-led Independent Postdenominationalists</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>48,000,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>74,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. (b) as % of 7 kinds of non-Third-Wave denominations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>44,701,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>58,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Independent Anglican Neocharismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>773,000</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Independent Protestant Neocharismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>424,000</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>26,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Independent Catholic Neocharismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>1,631,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Independent Orthodox Neocharismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>408,000</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Nonhistorical Independent Neocharismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2,355,000</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Isolated radio/TV Neocharismatics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>114,000</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Hidden non-Christian believers in Christ</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14,800,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>23,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Doubly counted Renewalists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>-1,624,000</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>-30,310,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Renewal Members on 6 Continents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Renewal members in Africa</td>
<td>920,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>150,000,000</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>210,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Renewal members in Asia</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>165,400,000</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>225,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Renewal members in Europe</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>34,300,000</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>40,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Renewal members in Latin America</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>158,700,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>208,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Renewal members in Northern America</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>83,000,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>100,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Renewal members in Oceania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>4,696,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5,820,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Note:** Definitions and detailed notes for every category of Renewalists are found in David Barrett and Todd Johnson, *World Christian Trends, AD 30–AD 2200*, part 5, “GeoRenewal” (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2001), pp. 265–90.

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The United Bible Societies and World Mission

Samuel Escobar

In 2004 the Bible society movement became 200 years old. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded on March 7, 1804. But its initial vision also included a British imprint when the British and Foreign Bible Society was recognized as an expression of the missionary thrust of the church. They have also made a decisive contribution to the history of the United Bible Societies (UBS), a fellowship of more than 140 national Bible societies around the globe. The UBS has played a significant role in the changes Christianity has undergone in the past two centuries. Studies about the expansion of Christianity make reference to the distinctive contribution of Bible societies to that process. Bible societies have had an influential presence in the practice of mission as an expression of the missionary thrust of the church. They have also made a decisive contribution to the theory of Christian mission, especially through the reflection of UBS agents and translators.

Contribution to Christian Mission

The beginning of the Bible society movement had a definite British imprint when the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded on March 7, 1804. But its initial vision also included a global awareness and vocation, as is evident from the following anecdote. Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala, Wales, related a story to Joseph Hughes, then secretary of the Religious Tract Society, about a little girl named Mary Jones who courageously searched for a copy of the Bible. Hughes was struck by the story and recognized the need for an organization that would put the Bible within the reach of ordinary people. He commented, “Surely a Society might be formed for the purpose and if for Wales, why not also for the Empire and the world?”

Two centuries later and far beyond the old British Empire, Hughes’s dream has become an amazing reality, as there is now a large and vigorous global family of Bible societies.

During its bicentennial celebration in August 2004—in Wales, of course—delegates reviewed the road covered thus far and committed themselves to pursue the Bible society vision throughout the twenty-first century. The motto chosen for this assembly was “God’s Unchanging Word for a Changing World.” The leaders of the movement today believe that the initial global mission of the founding generation was shaped by the same global thrust we find in the Lord’s command to take his message “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), and in the apostolic vision of Paul “that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you” (2 Thess. 3:1).

In this article I explore the missiological significance of the Bible society movement by reviewing four distinctive marks of its historical development, namely, the participation of volunteers mobilized for mission, the belief in the translatability of the Bible, the practice of a true ecumenism beyond denominational barriers, and the search for excellence in service. In each area the Bible societies have made a significant contribution.

A Popular Movement

A key to understanding the enduring impact of the Bible society movement on Christian mission during the last two centuries is that it has been a popular movement. Although one could say that the pioneers of the Bible societies were members of an Evangelical elite with a profound sense of mission, the movement also mobilized the rank and file of churches for mission. The question of its composition has been carefully analyzed by Andrew Walls, who considers that a key for the advancement of the Christian missionary cause was “a development initiated by the British and Foreign Bible Society and copied by missionary societies, including the CMS, of establishing local auxiliaries.”

Those “local auxiliaries” became the core of a mobilizing movement both at home and abroad. As Walls remarks, “The local Bible societies had a dual function: they distributed the Bible in their own localities by arranging easy-payment subscriptions, and enrolled those who already possessed a Bible to contribute to making it available elsewhere in the world, both at home and overseas.”

The movement was inspired by two convictions: that the Word of God was intended to reach every person in the world, and that every member of the Christian community could participate and become involved in the task of getting the Word out into the world. These convictions brought about a creative implementation of the theological truth of the priesthood of all believers.

There was also an educational component for those involved with the Bible societies. Volunteers of the Bible society auxiliaries gained a well-informed global awareness. “Subscription was encouraged and sustained by a flow of information, information from and about lands with which the subscribers had had hitherto nothing to do, but in which by their subscriptions they were now personally involved.”

During my own childhood in Peru I remember discovering the periodical La Biblia en América Latina (The Bible in Latin America) on the desk of my father, who was a faithful and enthusiastic contributor to the Peruvian Bible Society. This UBS publication was one of my first sources of information about the Christian presence in other countries and continents—my introduction to global awareness!

No doubt the future of the Bible society cause depends on the ability of the movement to keep a focus on the Bible as the book for everyone everywhere, and to involve every member of the Christian church in the effort to distribute it. The “local auxiliaries” may adopt new names, and the practical ways of organizing them may have to be adapted to new situations, but these two principles—that the Bible is for everyone and that all Christians should be involved in distributing it—are worth keeping.

As a result of the information explosion in globalized societies, people today have a wide array of sources from which to learn about countries, regions, and cultures other than their own, and to become globally aware. Such awareness is more than entertaining information; it develops the perception of global realities as an opportunity to participate in what God wants to do in the world. Knowledge and wisdom are more than information, however, and the explosion of information today does not mean that people are wiser or more knowledgeable than they were in earlier days. It is the way such information is processed that can turn it into a wise, knowledgeable, and educated global awareness.

Samuel Escobar, a contributing editor, serves the Baptist Union of Spain as theological educator under the Board of International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches.
A Translating Movement

A firm belief in the “translatability” of the Gospel has grown in breadth and depth during the history of the Bible societies. Along with this belief has grown the commitment to assume all the necessary tasks related to the translation of Scriptures. A tradition in church history acknowledges the importance of the vernacular for communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It includes such outstanding figures as Jerome, Ulphilas, Cyril, Tyndale, and Luther. By the eighteenth century this tradition seems to have diminished, but it revived during the new Protestant missionary era inaugurated by the Pietists of central Europe and by the Englishman William Carey. With the coming of the Bible societies, the rhythm of Bible translation gathered speed and exploded into what it is today.

By 2004 there were 2,377 complete or partial translations of Scripture, largely because of the contributions of the UBS movement. With their vast experience, UBS translators have made significant conceptual and technical contributions to the church at large and to the world. It is no exaggeration to say that the science of translation as it stands today owes a great amount to Eugene Nida, whose career is closely linked to the Bible society movement of recent years. Missiology has been enriched by the remarkable work of anthropologists involved in translation such as Jacob A. Loewen, Robert G. Bratcher, Charles R. Taber, and William A. Smalley. The UBS provided them with an opportunity to fulfill a missionary call and at the same time gave them a vocation for scientific research.

An issue of the UBS Bulletin from 2002 is an especially eloquent proof of this contribution to translation. In the table of contents of this issue, entitled “Current Trends in Scripture Translation,” the first fact that attracts our attention is the broad, international composition of the group of contributing UBS translation consultants. In the editorial presentation Phil Noss recalls that in the 1960s there were so few experts that they could all meet in the Nidas’ house, but by 2000 the Triennial Translation Workshop convened almost 200 persons in Málaga, Spain. It included UBS translation officers, as well as scholars in the fields of Bible studies, linguistics, anthropology, oral literature, communication, and computer technology for translators.

The global reach and international character of this group is also evidence of the way in which the Bible society movement has become a global enterprise and not just a European or North American one. The movement has involved and trained a large and worldwide company of experts who not only gather for triennial global meetings but also work together on a daily basis using all modern means of communication.

As the conviction about the translatability of the Gospel has grown in depth, so has the conviction about the need to contribute to the development of indigenous forms of Christianity. At this point the local and the global come together in a unique way. The translatability of the Bible is a demonstration of the universality of its message. At the same time, this universal message finds expression in local and contextual forms of life, testimony, service to human need, and worship that are relevant to their respective contexts. Now, in 2006, we have the perspective to better appreciate this outstanding and paradoxical aspect of the Christian faith. In its universality it is a message addressed to all human beings and received by all human beings, but it takes shape in the most varied and singular cultural contexts.

In a document published by UNESCO, Jewish scholar Leon Roth noted that the Bible does not start with Abraham but with Adam. It is not a book exclusively for and about Jewish people, but it is a book for and about all of humankind. It is not a book created by a white dominant culture to impose its values and worldview on poor, dominated cultures. It is a book that originated in the Fertile Crescent, and it took the shape it has now in a region that was then a peripheral area of the world. When Paul wrote of his desire “that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere,” the Word was then spreading from an obscure corner of the world into the center of the Roman Empire. Jesus had taught in Aramaic, but the written record of his life and teaching was set in Koine Greek, the language spoken by the majority of people in the empire. The message had to be translated because it was meant for all human beings!

This universal message took the shape of the cultural context in which it was received. When John the Evangelist used the Greek word logos, he found a meaningful term from the Greek culture to communicate the greatness and uniqueness of Jesus: “And the Word [the Logos] became flesh” (John 1:14). Since then, the eternal unchanging Word of God has continued to become “enfleshed” in the most diverse languages and cultures. Now past the age of empire, we acknowledge that the universality of the message of the Bible is better grasped through the rich variety of cultural forms in which it finds expression. So the celebration of 200 years of Bible societies is not the celebration of the imposition of a European cultural tool on the rest of humankind but the reception of the unchanging Word in the most diverse kinds of human flesh.

There are new and difficult challenges in the translation task today. As Phil Noss states, “In the 20th century technological inventions rapidly opened the door to mass communication through new media. This is a door that the Bible societies have but slowly entered.” Julian Sundersingh, a UBS consultant in India, reports that in the 1996 assembly at Mississauga, Ontario, the UBS agreed that “together with enthusiastic embrace of new technology there has been a change of reading and listening habits in most societies. This change demands that Bible societies seek innovative ways of presenting the Word of God to people whose lifestyle has moved from print to non-print, and also to those who may not be interested in the Bible or the life of the Church.” Sundersingh’s article in the UBS Bulletin, which explores the complexities involved in this new form of translation, affirms an important principle: “Appropriateness to the medium needs to be seen both in the preparation and in the presentation of an aural text in the new medium. However this aspect of appropriateness to the media is not to be taken as license to indulge in deliberate attempts to misrepresent the message of the Biblical Scriptures.” Thus, for instance, the American Bible Society has sponsored the launching of the CD Elementz of Life, which is a kind of holy hip-hop, “a project that hopes to reach at-risk youngsters by translating the biblical message into their pop culture language and lifestyle.”

The universality of the message of the Bible is grasped through the rich variety of cultural forms in which it finds expression.
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An Ecumenical Movement

Looking back on the history of the Bible society movement, it is impossible to deny the evangelical stance of its founders and the corresponding convictions that explain what we could call the genius or the ethos of the movement. Inasmuch as some of these principles have been, and continue to be, a driving force of the movement, it is worthwhile to identify them and the way they have been worked out in the past two centuries.

An evangelical stance presupposes that the preaching of the apostolic Gospel as it is found in Scripture is what the Spirit of God uses as the source of life and truth for the birth and growth of the church. Closely connected with this stance is a conviction about the priesthood of all believers and the concern that Bibles should be available to every person, especially to every Christian believer. Part of the genius of evangelicalism is to express these convictions in a practical way by creating missionary structures through which the missionary drive can be channeled into actions of obedience.

Not long after the first Bible society was founded, its agents became the kind of truly evangelical missionaries that engaged in the distribution of Scriptures and the sowing of the Word that eventually gave fruit in new churches. Colportage has been an evangelistic method that opened the way for the presence of missionaries themselves. It was an evangelism that majored on the basics, that is, on the Bible, rather than on particular denominational tenets.

The UBS today has become one of the most ecumenical expressions of Christianity, and one of the most inclusive movements within Christianity. It is not a secret that now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, ecumenism has experienced many setbacks, and the enthusiastic mood of the mid-twentieth century is gone. Yet the UBS member societies continue to play a key role as platforms for common service and dialogue around the Word of God.

The UBS member societies are not conclaves of theologians who debate ecumenism at theological and philosophical levels, as some may think upon hearing the word “ecumenical.” I am referring to a more practical kind of ecumenism. In my past experience as president of the UBS, I experienced this ecumenical reality in my day-to-day contacts with Bible societies around the world. Although my personal experience has been limited mostly to the Americas and Europe, my acquaintance with the Bible societies in other parts of the world through board activities and assembly experiences reinforces what I have learned through personal observation and experience. Whenever I would visit the local offices or stores of the UBS member societies, I almost invariably discovered that they were a meeting place for Christian leaders from all denominations. The societies serve all churches, and in their service they try to obtain the cooperation of all churches.

It could be said that an evangelical stance and an ecumenical vision are part and parcel of the ethos of the UBS movement. Such an ethos has been the key for the openness to the future and the flexibility to use new technologies in responding to the challenges of numerical growth and geographic reach in the movement. I find a valuable illustration of this ethos, which is at the core of the UBS identity, in the evolution of the understanding of the principle “without notes or commentary,” which David Burke has examined extensively. The genius of the UBS stance is a fascinating example of the ability to maintain a principle in a creative and progressive manner, discovering new possibilities without abandoning the validity of the principle itself. In Burke’s own words, “This is an extremely important principle and the controlling model for the success Bible Societies have had over the years in being able to work with and serve the Scripture needs of almost every Christian denomination and tradition within the broad spectrum of Christendom.

An Efficient Movement

This Bible society movement has been capable of enduring for more than two hundred years thanks to its unchanging sense of mission and its ability to attract people and provide a product. An equally important ingredient in its persistence and duration has been the development of structures through which human vocation is able to express itself in an efficient way. The UBS has been successful because of its ability to develop and grow from a national entity of the British Empire into a worldwide fellowship by reproducing itself in some regions and entering into cooperative alliances in others. This formative process of the UBS has coincided with, and even contributed significantly to, the process by which the Christian church has become a truly global church.

In reviewing the history of the UBS, it is noteworthy that the piety and the sense of commitment of its leadership is accompanied by a continuous search for excellence, a kind of holy discontent that allows for self-criticism. The search for excellence was a mark of character of the initial generation, and it has been the genius of the movement to keep it alive. Vision, creativity, and hard work are necessary to set up standards, structures, and procedures that will turn a dream into a reality. At every point in this long story God has provided personalities whose life and ministry were marked by the necessary combination of piety, commitment, and efficiency. In the latter half of the twentieth century alone, there were outstanding personalities such as Olivier Beguin from France, Ulrich Fick from Germany, Eric...
North from the United States, and Lord Coggan from Great Britain, all of whom left their mark on UBS history.

A businesslike approach for the achievement of this missionary vision has been necessary, given the unique nature of the Bible societies with their business and mission aspects. Key questions had to be dealt with, and certain emphases developed as a result of careful and sometimes painful evaluation. At a certain point in the late 1960s it became clear that millions of men, women, and children were open to receiving the Word, but that the Bible societies had not kept pace with the demand by also increasing the production of Scriptures. So production became an emphasis, and through a contagious enthusiasm it was multiplied around the world. Later on, in the 1980s, with a renewed awareness of the accelerated population growth, the fellowship realized that distribution had to be improved, and there followed a concerted, systematic, and intentional emphasis on that aspect of the ministry. Then fund-raising became the area to explore and develop on a global level. More recently, the UBS has embarked on actions and reflection about Scripture engagement, realizing that in addition to producing and distributing, steps are necessary to foster the reading and enjoyment of Scripture.

The ethical standards that have been set for the business aspects of the Bible societies correspond to good business practices as well as to Christian principles. A movement that promotes the use and reading of the Bible must be based on ethical standards that follow biblical principles. No contradiction can be admissible at this point. Keeping and applying such standards has meant making painful decisions at some points. As one of the historians of the UBS reminds us, “The test of seriousness in any organization with standards was what it did when a member, once accepted, breached the rules by which it was admitted.”

This is a most relevant truth to keep in mind in our times. We are familiar with the corruption of petty tyrants in poor countries who have siphoned money from foreign help into accounts in Switzerland or the Bahamas, but today even more rampant corruption is sweeping across the world of business corporations in the West. If Bible societies are going to be consistent with the message they promote and translate, they need to keep being models of corporate honesty and responsibility, “a light to the world.”

One of the great challenges of recent years in the UBS fellowship has been the need for new structures in order to maintain efficiency and to move according to the standards of this new century. Comments by Lutheran missiologist Paul Varo Martinson to a symposium about the future of missions seem relevant to the UBS: “Rather than centralised bureaucracies, we need dispersed networks that fit the communication realities of our day. And rather than functioning as centres of top-down control, mission agencies should serve to consult, inform, inspire and connect, functioning differently at different levels, letting the energy of local communities of faith take shape in any number of ways, in many manners of configuration. . . . Initiative for action can and should come from any and every source—whether local, regional or international—that carries a vision and can justify that vision.”

In summary, the UBS as a movement has been popular, translating, ecumenical, and efficient. It is now a robust global family in which the founding members continue to be leaders, partly because their vision and willingness to share have contributed to the rise of new members around the world. They have demonstrated a unique ability to update their agenda according to the new demands of the changing world, without abandoning the basic principles rooted in an unchanging Word. Together, these qualities give the UBS a unique missiological significance.

The UBS has contributed significantly to the process by which the Christian church has become a truly global church.
We celebrate the centennial of the birth of American Pentecostalism, which in turn celebrates Pentecost—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when people miraculously heard the wonders of God in their mother tongue. That the Holy Spirit broke through the ordinary language of communication and spoke to people in their mother tongue shows the importance of people’s linguistic and ethnic identity in the plan of God. This point is underlined again in the Book of Revelation, where the multitudes gathered around God’s throne include saints “from every tribe and language” (5:9; see also 7:9). When God speaks to us in the language we learned in our mother’s arms, the message of his acceptance of our identity penetrates the very fiber of our being. Ask anyone who has recently received God’s Word in his or her mother tongue for the first time. It awakens something that has been nearly extinguished inside and brings tears to the eyes.

The need for people to have God’s Word in their mother tongue has been recognized throughout the church’s history. Although church growth is influenced by a variety of factors, times of increased emphasis on mother-tongue Scriptures, such as the Reformation, often correlate with times of church growth. Times when mother-tongue Scriptures were neglected in the communication of the Gospel, such as the early Middle Ages in Europe, often correlate with times of spiritual stagnation. Churches that experienced persecution and isolation from the rest of the Christian world, such as those in Madagascar and China, have often endured and even multiplied if they had Scriptures in local languages. In contrast, churches without Scripture in local languages, even those at centers of Christianity like Alexandria, have disappeared from the map. These correlations were evident before 1906. But now from the 100 years since 1906, what can we learn about the relationship between mother-tongue Scriptures and church growth?

**Great Progress**

During the first 1,800 years of Christianity, Scripture was translated into about 70 languages. During the nineteenth century, the number of people called to missionary service increased dramatically. Wherever they went, they encountered a language barrier. If they intended to communicate, they had to learn the local language, and in order to communicate God’s Word, they had to translate it into the local language. The result was Scripture in 460 more languages during the nineteenth century, a quantum and unprecedented leap.

In the twentieth century, the pace of Bible translation accelerated even more. Between 1900 and the year 2000, a total of 1,768 more language communities received Scripture in their mother tongue for the first time. By the year 2004 the number of languages with Scripture totaled 2,388. Within the twentieth century, the momentum of Scripture translation increased dramatically after 1960, jumping from an average of 11.4 languages per year for the years 1900–1960 to an average of 27.2 per year for 1960–2000. (See table 1.)

Even at this rate, however, it would take another 125 to 150 years to begin translation in all of the world’s remaining languages that need it. In 1999 SIL International and Wycliffe Bible Translators International decided that this pace was unacceptable. They formulated Vision 2025, which states, “By the year 2025, together with partners worldwide, we aim to see a Bible translation program begun in all the remaining languages that need one.” This vision called for a radical rethinking of the way Bible translation is carried out. As the firstfruits of this vision, translation organizations are working more intentionally with partners, recruiting and training translators from all nations of the world, and working with clusters of related languages rather than with one language at a time. Under the impetus of Vision 2025, the number of new translation project starts has increased from an average of 25 per year in the period 1990–93 to 64 per year in the period 2001–4. If this rate is sustained, every language in the world that needs Scripture will have a translation project started by 2037—significant progress, though still short of Vision 2025. Happily, the number of new project starts continues to rise.

**Greatly Improved Methods**

The way Bible translation is done changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. Typically in the early 1900s pioneer missionaries were the first to bring the Gospel to an isolated people group. They ministered to that group for life, of necessity learning their language in order to communicate. Bible translation was one of their many responsibilities, often crowded off the agenda by the seemingly more pressing needs of evangelization and discipleship. They received no training in linguistics, anthropology, or translation, because these sci-

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Harriet Hill has been involved in Bible translation with SIL since 1978, working primarily in Côte d’Ivoire, West Africa. She is now serving as Scripture Use Coordinator for SIL International and Wycliffe Bible Translators International.
ences had not yet taken their modern form. They drafted the translation themselves, often quite literally, calling on the cook or gardener for help with the language when necessary. They published the Scripture “without note or comment,” in part because extratextual helps had been used in very divisive ways in the past, and in part because they believed Scripture alone would communicate. They were the first to develop writing systems, compile dictionaries, and publish literature in the languages in which they worked. Once printed, Scriptures were greatly appreciated by the growing church, and becoming literate was considered part of becoming Christian. In the long term, the vernacular Scriptures caused the church to grow and the culture to be revitalized.

By the end of the twentieth century and now in the twenty-first, typical Bible translators spend years training in linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, literacy, and translation—fields that their predecessors helped develop through their long-term, in-depth exposure to local languages and cultures. They belong to one of the many organizations that specialize in Bible translation, and they have access to resources prepared specifically for translators: United Bible Societies (UBS) Handbooks, Translator’s Notes, The Bible Translator, Notes on Translation, and the Journal of Translation. The available resources are cumbersome to transport, so missionaries have all of them at their fingertips in electronic form, as well as many computer tools that assist them in language analysis and translation, including Field Works, Translator’s Workplace, Paratext, and Biblical Analysis Research Tool (BART). A fair amount of their time is given to learning these computer tools. They may even use computer programs to import a translation from a related language to use as a first draft. Non-Roman scripts no longer stymie their work. Computer programs can handle them all: right to left, left to right, from Arabic script to Cyrillic, and anything in between.

Today, translators are increasingly mother-tongue speakers of the language, with expatriate missionaries serving as technical advisers. Rather than translating literally, they endeavor to communicate the meaning of the original text in a way that is natural in the receptor language. They include extratextual helps, realizing that the audience will need some of the background information assumed by the original authors in order to be able to correctly understand the text. A translation consultant checks their work, asking a mother-tongue speaker to translate it back into the language of wider communication. Places where the meaning of the back translation does not resemble the meaning of the original are investigated to assure that the translation is accurate. The consultant also questions areas where the translation seems to follow the grammatical structure of the source text to assure that the translation is natural.

The translated Scriptures may be prepared in printed form, but not necessarily. They may equally appear on cassette, video, or film, or they may be memorized and told in person. Literacy is no longer viewed as a prerequisite to genuine Christian experience. Most likely a church is already established in the community. It functions using Scriptures in a language of wider communication, a practice that takes a surprising amount of effort to modify so that mother-tongue Scriptures can take their rightful place alongside Scriptures in other languages. Education, government offices, cybercafés, cell phones, televisions, radios, and transportation link the community to the wider world, resulting in widespread multilingualism.

New Challenges

During the twentieth century, Bible translation became a specialized field, a development that had both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, the quality of the product improved significantly, and mother-tongue Scriptures were completed more quickly. Although there is always room for improvement, Bible translation agencies, by and large, now know how to translate Scriptures well. The task is daunting, but doable.

A negative effect of specialization is that churches contracted Bible translation out to specialists, which created an unexpected problem. The strong link that had existed throughout the nineteenth century between Bible translation and the church was broken, and without the church’s direct involvement in the process, people often did not make use of the Scriptures when they became available. Translations in the nineteenth century of an inferior quality were used widely in the churches. Translations of superior quality in the twentieth century often sat in storehouses, rejected by those for whom they were intended.

Wayne Dye carried out a study in 1980 exploring this situation. In the era of the three-self church and the moratorium on missions, people thought that with “the availability of the written Scriptures in the vernacular, local converts appropriated the gospel without running it through Western filters first.” The Bible translation strategy upheld this view, expecting that giving people Scripture in their own language would result in a completely indigenous church, unstained by expatriate involvement. Dye’s findings confirmed growing suspicions that this model was not accurate. In one community, the Gospels were published just as the expatriate translation team left the area for several years. Having left the community with Scripture in the mother tongue and no outside involvement, the translators eagerly anticipated the development of a wonderfully indigenous church. When they returned, however, they found that the church had stagnated. The model did not produce the anticipated results. In over half the language communities Dye researched, the translated Scriptures were not used. Where Bible translation led to church growth, it was always accompanied by personal witness and Bible teaching. A subsequent study by David Landin showed that the attitude of mission and church leaders toward mother-tongue Scriptures was the most significant factor affecting their use. The contract model jeopardized this important link between church leaders and mother-tongue Scriptures.

Bible translators realized that translated Scriptures sitting in warehouses fell short of their goal. Their real goal was to put these Scriptures to draw closer to God. UBS refers to this goal as Scripture engagement; SIL and Wycliffe refer to it as Scripture use. Global sociolinguistic factors in fact militate against vernacular languages, making the use of mother-tongue Scriptures the premier challenge for Bible translation in the twenty-first century.

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Effect of Colonialism on Vernacular Languages

Two factors in the twentieth century had a significant effect on the languages people use in their Christian experience: colonialism and modernity. Colonialism embraced cultural evolution, the idea that societies move from savagery to barbarism and finally become civilized. The colonial agenda was to impart the three C’s: to Christianize, commercialize, and civilize. Local languages, if recognized as languages at all, were perceived to imprison people in their “barbaric” past. Many missionaries in this era set out with the noble intention of “civilizing” the people they went to serve by teaching them Western culture and languages.

Languages serve two purposes: communication and identification. Surprisingly, the latter is often the stronger. The colonizers designed language policies intended to develop national identities in the states they had created. Among the languages of potentially rival ethnic groups, European languages were neutral and allowed people to communicate with each other and the colonial power. At the same time, they created a sense of national identity and allowed people to communicate with each other and the values of the language of our daily humiliation and punishment. “The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own. . . . We who went through that school system want to distance ourselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own.”

In research among university students in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in the early 1990s, I asked the students what languages they spoke. They replied with the European languages they knew but omitted the Ivorian ones. When I asked one Bété student about this fact, he referred to his language as a “pile of borrowings, not a language at all.” In fact, it is a very complex and rich language. Political independence from the colonial powers
was much easier to obtain than freedom from negative colonial attitudes toward one’s language, culture, and identity.

**Effect of Modernization**

Colonizers used force to denigrate mother tongues. Modernization has not needed to resort to forceful measures. The draw of urban centers, with their promise of a better life, brings people into heterogeneous and multilingual living situations. Between the years 1900 and 2000, the percentage of the world’s population living in urban centers increased from 14.4 percent to 47.6 percent. Nearly half the world’s population now lives in urban centers, a number that continues to rise. Villages are emptied of their youth as economic opportunities are concentrated in cities. Communication puts even those in remote villages in touch with Hollywood. I will never forget the uncanny sensation I had, on one visit to Mali, when the early morning silence in Bamako was broken by the sound of Michael Jackson singing, “Don’t matter if you’re black or white.” I thought, “What on earth is he doing here?” But he was there, and everywhere else, too.

Modernization functions on standardization, not diversity, as technology reduces processes into units that can be reproduced on a mass scale. The pull of modernity is strong. People voluntarily abandon their ethnic distinctives in the quest to belong to and benefit from modernity. For example, the Adioukrou of Côte d’Ivoire, with whom I lived for many years, abandoned their mother-tongue schools in the 1940s, believing that French schools would lead to a better future. An increasing number of the world’s smaller languages are dying out under this pressure.

Mother-tongue Scriptures have quite a different reception in this climate than they did in earlier eras. Drawing examples primarily from the nineteenth century, Lamin Sanneh speaks of the powerful effect vernacular Scriptures had on local populations to ignite vernacular reform and revitalize local cultures.

He contrasts this pattern with the effect of Islam on local languages, where Arabic serves as a “cordon sanitaire” to insulate society against esteem for the vernacular, and predicts that “everywhere that such an attitude toward the vernacular exists, we can predict that Christian renewal will have minimal impact.” In the twentieth century, however, colonialism and modernization helped produce negative attitudes toward vernacular languages in ways similar to Islam, albeit for very different reasons. The church has grown in the global South despite these negative attitudes, but Christians have often had little appetite for vernacular Scriptures. Rather than fostering a vernacular renewal, churches often have the opposite effect.

When congregations are multilingual, many churches resort to using languages of wider communication. Because people are able to buy and sell in the market using a language of wider communication, church leaders assume that they are also able to...
understand the things of God in that language. This is not necessarily the case. In Carol McKinney’s research among the Bajju in Nigeria, 21 percent of the respondents could not give a reasonable answer to the question “Who is Jesus?” These were people who went to church daily all their lives. Church was conducted in Hausa rather than the mother tongue, and comprehension suffered. McKinney comments, “Knowledge of Jesus clearly correlated with language ability in Hausa.”

Christianity by Diffusion or by Incarnation?

Christianity can be spread by diffusion, in which the new replaces the old, or by incarnation, in which the new is expressed in terms of the old. The diffusion model sees little or no value in the old, and so replaces it without remorse. The unity of the global church is pursued at the cost of local particularities. Bible translation in vernacular languages is incongruent with this model. It is not cost-effective, nor does it promote standardization. It is perceived to work against the unity of the church.

Incarnation involves the conversion of the old. It values the contribution of each culture to the body of Christ and upholds unity in diversity. The World Christian Encyclopedia, for example, affirms “the centrality of indigenous cultures to local expressions of Christianity, of the right to exist of minority tribes and peoples, of their autonomy in their own areas, of their importance from the Christian standpoint vis-a-vis the world’s dominant peoples and cultures, and of the need to reduce the imperialistic influence of these latter (especially Western culture) in non-Western local churches and lands.”

Mother-tongue Scriptures are needed today both for comprehension and so that the Gospel message can permeate, revitalize, and transform local cultures. Research among the Dega of Ghana shows that vernacular Scriptures increased their appallingly low level of self-respect, freed them from beliefs that hindered their development, opened the door to literacy and to numeracy, transformed traditional ceremonies, and allowed all segments of the society to apply Scripture to daily life. Andrew Walls challenges us: “Perhaps a comparative history of translation would be an illuminating way of approaching the history of Christian mission and expansion—not only in the geographical and statistical sense of the spread of the Church, but the dynamic expansion of the influence of Christ within the Church that comes from the attempts at the radical application of his mind within particular cultures.” This radical application of Christ’s mind within a culture happens best when Scriptures are in the mother tongue. Without a theology that is grounded in local languages, the church remains foreign and fragile. Although the center of gravity of the church has shifted from the North to the South numerically, theological reflection remains primarily a Western endeavor. Walls summarizes, “The language you use to talk to your wife should be the language you use to pray to God, and the language you use to pray ought to be the language in which you do theology.”

Many church congregations today are multilingual, but this fact does not mean that they need to function exclusively in a language of wider communication. Alan Tippett recommends that churches find a balance between embracing their ethnic diversity and experiencing their unity in Christ. By assuring that all members of the church receive spiritual food in a language they understand and identify with, the church can grow both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Which model will the church in the twenty-first century choose—diffusion or incarnation? Although there are strong global pressures against local languages, will the church be a voice that helps people uncover their love for their vernacular treasure? Throughout Africa church leaders have used the creed below to fan the nearly-extinguished fire of their natural love for their own language and identity. In simple terms, it provides a theology of language and culture. It can encourage churches everywhere to work more intentionally with, and with deeper appreciation for, the vernacular treasures in their midst.

We believe that—

- God wants to communicate with us in a way we can understand.
- The diversity of languages is compatible with the plan of God: He likes unity in diversity.
- No language is better than another to communicate with God.
- God has shown us through the incarnation that he wants to come to our level to reach us.
- The Gospel must penetrate people’s worldview and this is done best in the mother tongue.
- Christians cannot mature in their faith unless they have access to the Word in a language they understand and like to use.
- No church can last long without the Word of God in a language the people understand.
- Church leaders must see that all members of their congregations receive spiritual food in a language they understand, regardless of social class, gender, or age.
- The more church leaders encourage the use of Scripture in the mother tongue, the more the members will use it.
- Culture is a part of God’s plan.
- Christianity can be lived out in any culture.
- The Gospel transforms and redeems cultures.
- Christianity is expressed differently in different cultures.
- Christians are united by love, not similarity.

Notes

3. Members of the International Forum of Bible Agencies have agreed to use the American Bible Society (ABS) statistics for Scripture production. These figures represent languages with at least one book of the Bible translated.
4. For convenience the data shown in table 1 begin with 1900. The year 2004 is the most recent for which statistics on the number of Scripture translations are available. By extrapolation, in 1906 some portion of the Bible was available in 592 languages.
9. For example, the United Bible Societies, SIL International,
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International Bible Society, Lutheran Bible Translators, Pioneer Bible Translators, Word for All, Word for the World, Seed Company, or the Institute of Bible Translation.


23. Ibid., p. 187.


My Pilgrimage in Mission


“The pilgrimage to Assisi has taught us anew to be aware of the common origin and common destiny of humankind. Let us see in it an anticipation of what God would like the developing history of humanity to be: a fraternal journey in which we accompany one another toward the transcendent goal which he sets for us.” These words were spoken by Pope John Paul II at the conclusion of the Day of Prayer for Peace, which was held in Assisi on October 27, 1986. I and my fellow Missionaries of Africa had seen some of the events on television, but little did I realize that this event was marking a watershed in my own life.

Early Missionary Training

I was born on August 17, 1937, in Walsall, a town in the West Midlands of England. My parents were Catholic but sent me to non-Catholic schools. They arranged for a teacher at the Catholic parish school, Miss Quigley, to come once a week to teach me the catechism. It was perhaps from her that I first heard about the missionary work of the church in Africa and read books such as Wopsy: The Adventures of a Guardian Angel, which told exciting tales about life in Africa. From very early on I wished to be a priest and indeed a missionary. Some boys from the parish had gone to join the Missionaries of Africa (also known as the White Fathers), and at the age of twelve I insisted on leaving the local grammar school and going to junior seminary, first in Scotland and then in the south of England.

The thoughts of all of us at junior seminary, both boys and teachers, were focused on “Black Africa” and the conversion of the Africans. There was hardly any mention of Islam, and indeed we were sometimes exasperated by his prudence with regard to the explicit preaching of the Christian Gospel. The White Father tradition in North Africa, initiated by founder Cardinal Lavigerie (1825–92) and later developed into a missionary theory by Henri Marchal (1875–1957), advocated a persevering pres-
ence of missionaries and efforts to change the milieu rather than working for individual conversions.

At the end of senior seminary I volunteered to work among Muslims in Nigeria or Tunisia. But after ordination to the priesthood in 1961, I was sent to Rome for further studies in theology. It was the exciting time of the Vatican Council. Though the courses at the university hardly reflected the new thinking coming out of the council, I had the opportunity to attend special lectures given by Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, and others. We knew, too, that our superior general and the superiors general of other missionary congregations, were actively engaged in preparing a text expressing a missionary vision that would be respectful of different cultures and even of different religions. The documents of the council—Lumen gentium, on the nature of the church; Gaudium et spes, on the role of the church in the modern world; Ad gentes, on the church’s missionary task; Dignitatis humanae, on religious liberty; and Nostra aetate, on the relations of the church to other religions—formed the basis of my later theological work.

Islamics Study and Teaching

My mind turned toward teaching theology in seminaries for the African clergy or for our own missionary candidates. To my surprise, just as I was finishing my doctorate, I was asked to join the staff of the Pontifical Institute of Arabic Studies (known as IPEA from its title in French), which had recently had to transfer from Tunis to Rome. “Think about this carefully,” cautioned Leo Volker, the superior general, “because this will determine the rest of your life.” I could hardly object, however, since this assignment was in line with what I had asked for at ordination. In order to prepare for this task, I moved in 1965 to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London University, for a three-year undergraduate degree. The lecturers, whether Christians or Muslims, did not appear to be surprised that a missionary priest should be studying Arabic. I also enjoyed friendly contacts with the mosque in Regent’s Park, where from time to time I asked the help of the imam. I remember one day the imam visited SOAS for a discussion in the common room, and he turned to me and said, “Father Michael, please explain the Trinity in five minutes.” This was a flattering request but not one that I responded to, because I knew already that the mission of missionaries and efforts to change the milieu rather than working for individual conversions.

At the end of senior seminary I volunteered to work among Muslims in Nigeria or Tunisia. But after ordination to the priesthood in 1961, I was sent to Rome for further studies in theology. It was the exciting time of the Vatican Council. Though the courses at the university hardly reflected the new thinking coming out of the council, I had the opportunity to attend special lectures given by Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, and others. We knew, too, that our superior general and the superiors general of other missionary congregations, were actively engaged in preparing a text expressing a missionary vision that would be respectful of different cultures and even of different religions. The documents of the council—Lumen gentium, on the nature of the church; Gaudium et spes, on the role of the church in the modern world; Ad gentes, on the church’s missionary task; Dignitatis humanae, on religious liberty; and Nostra aetate, on the relations of the church to other religions—formed the basis of my later theological work.

Islamics Study and Teaching

My mind turned toward teaching theology in seminaries for the African clergy or for our own missionary candidates. To my surprise, just as I was finishing my doctorate, I was asked to join the staff of the Pontifical Institute of Arabic Studies (known as IPEA from its title in French), which had recently had to transfer from Tunis to Rome. “Think about this carefully,” cautioned Leo Volker, the superior general, “because this will determine the rest of your life.” I could hardly object, however, since this assignment was in line with what I had asked for at ordination. In order to prepare for this task, I moved in 1965 to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London University, for a three-year undergraduate degree. The lecturers, whether Christians or Muslims, did not appear to be surprised that a missionary priest should be studying Arabic. I also enjoyed friendly contacts with the mosque in Regent’s Park, where from time to time I asked the help of the imam. I remember one day the imam visited SOAS for a discussion in the common room, and he turned to me and said, “Father Michael, please explain the Trinity in five minutes.” This was a flattering request but not one that I responded to, because I knew already that the deep truths of our religions cannot be shared in such a superficial way.

England also provided contact with the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, where John Taylor was lecturer in Islamics. I was invited to a seminar there on Preparatio Evangelica, an idea that the Second Vatican Council had taken up from the Fathers of the church. This was my first exposure to theological reflection on interfaith dialogue. Robin Zaehner of Oxford was one of the participants. I would later make much use of his books At Sundry Times and Mysticism: Sacred and Profane.

After London, I returned to the IPEA in Rome to start teaching and to continue the study of the Qur’an. I attended the classes of Robert Caspar, a sound scholar who showed great sympathy for Islam. I would later follow his line when I had to take over teaching his courses. But almost immediately a vacancy opened up in the Department of Religious Studies at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, and I was accepted for the post. Arriving at Makerere, I found that there was already a Muslim lecturer in the department, but he had thought it useful to have a Christian colleague sharing the teaching of Islamics, since the students were of both religions. I wondered whether he would reserve the more religious topics for himself and leave me with the history of Islam. In fact, he let me do whatever I liked and made no attempt to control my teaching. This openness and trust was immensely encouraging. It impressed me then and has always remained with me as an example of interreligious relations. It led, though, to the strange situation of a Catholic priest teaching Islam to Muslim students. The majority of these students were Ismailis, followers of the Aga Khan, who knew little about Sunni Islam, which I had studied. I never hid the fact that I was a priest, and my respectful attitude to their religion helped to create a climate of mutual acceptance.

Some years later, during a Christian-Muslim meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, some Muslim participants from West Africa proposed that no non-Muslim should be allowed to teach Islamics. This idea was scotched by the Muslim cochair, Badru Kateregga, at that time ambassador of Uganda to Saudi Arabia, who declared, “I had a Christian as a lecturer on Islam at Makerere [referring to me]. He it was who encouraged me to specialize in Islamics so that I eventually became a lecturer in this subject in Nairobi. And now I have trained a Christian lady to take my place.” It seems to me that this mutual confidence and this cooperation in scholarship are essential ingredients in Christian-Muslim relations.

Christian-Muslim Dialogue

After two enjoyable years in Uganda I was brought back to Rome to resume teaching at the IPEA, now the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI, following its Italian title). One year later I was appointed director, at a time when the institute was expanding its programs to include English-speaking students in order to address the needs of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa and Asia.

We were lucky at the PISAI to be able to invite as guest lecturers such well-known Catholics as George Anawati, Louis Gardet, and Roger Arnaldez, and Muslims such as Mohammed Arkoun, Abdelmajid Charfi, Ali Merad, and Abdelmajid Méziane. Their presence was, each time, the occasion for a public lecture that brought various aspects of Christian-Muslim relations to a wider audience. With the same end in view we started publishing a periodical, Encounter: Documents for Christian-Muslim Understanding, providing an article each month on some aspect of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. A further innovation, launched during these years, was the specialist journal Islamochristiana, which publishes historical and contemporary material concerning dialogue and interaction between the two religions.

Traditionally, the director of the PISAI is chosen as a consultant (or adviser) of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), so my connection with the PCID, which continues to the present, goes back to 1972. It was through the Secretariat for Non-Christians, as it was then known, that I was introduced to formal Christian-Muslim dialogue. The first meeting I attended was a consultation in 1972 organized by the World
Council of Churches in Broumana, Lebanon. At the time it did not seem to me to be a very satisfactory meeting. Too many topics were addressed, and nothing was studied in depth. A number of the participants, both Christian and Muslim, appeared to form a clique around the figure of Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Muslim participants believed that censorship was being applied, thus preventing open discussion. Later I had the privilege of attending a gathering in Manila where a leading Muslim from Mindanao spoke about the benefit of meeting with people from other countries and getting to know about Christian-Muslim relations in other areas. This meeting helped to convince me that international gatherings can indeed serve to promote Christian-Muslim understanding.

Another international gathering was held in 1976 in Tripoli, Libya, organized by the Arabic Socialist Union of Libya and the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians. It had been intended as a private meeting between two international delegations, but the Libyan government with extreme generosity sent out invitations far and wide, so that the discussions took place before an audience of some five hundred people. The final communiqué, prepared rather hastily, included two clauses that the Vatican side had to reject. This action gave a bad reputation to the Tripoli meeting and made many people suspicious of Christian-Muslim dialogue; unfortunately, the positive aspects of this meeting tended to be overlooked.

During these same years I was involved in meetings with delegations to the Vatican from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Indonesia, and I took part in a difficult meeting at Chambéry-Geneva on the concept of mission as understood by Christianity and Islam. I can still hear the voice of Bishop Kenneth Cragg pleading for a less partisan approach. The ecumenical dimension of work in Christian-Muslim relations, and in interreligious dialogue in general, has become a strong feature of my own convictions. Yet ecumenical cooperation was not always easy. Early in 1978 I attended an inter-Christian exchange on relations with Muslims in Europe, organized by the Conference of European Churches at Salzburg. What remains in my mind about this meeting is that the group discussing the theological underpinning for Christian-Muslim relations could not come to any agreement, not even to disagree. The section “Theology” of the final report from the consultation carried an eloquently blank page.

Ministry in Sudan and in Rome

That same year I handed over the direction of PISAI to one of my confreres and left Rome for the Sudan. For the next two years I did parish work in northern Sudan, not far from the Ethiopian border. Our task was to minister to the Christian population, mainly southerners who had come to the northern region looking for work. But at the same time we were cooperating with local Muslims who helped us run a center for adult education. These years gave me practical experience with two aspects of the church’s mission, which I would later see defined as proclamation and dialogue. It was not always easy making this double commitment understood. The Christians tended to resent the attention given to Muslims and the fact that the church premises were open to them. At the same time, some of our Muslim friends felt that we were wasting our time with “these blacks,” an attitude that only served to convince us that we were right to give this form of Christian witness. We insisted to the Christians that the church cannot be a club but must be at the service of the whole population. In turn we struggled alongside the Christians to enable them to gain more respect. We came to appreciate the approach taken by Gabriel Zubeir Wako, the first Sudanese archbishop of Khartoum and now cardinal, which featured a fearless defense of the Christian community, tireless work on behalf of human rights, and constant advocacy of nonviolent methods.

The Sudanese interlude over, I returned to Rome, expecting to take up teaching again in PISAI. Instead, I found myself elected to the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa, and so the next six years were spent in administration. This responsibility entailed a fair amount of traveling in Europe, Africa, and even Brazil, visiting communities and individuals, encouraging them in their missionary life and work. The team I belonged to, the General Council, did try to stimulate an interest in dialogue with Muslims but without a great deal of success.

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

It was during the General Chapter of 1986 that the Assisi event took place. Again I was prepared to return to PISAI, but instead I was appointed to work in the Vatican as the Secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, renamed in 1988 the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. This assignment entailed an enlargement of scale and a widening of horizons. Up to this point I had been concerned with Christian-Muslim relations, but now my field of work extended to all religions except Judaism, responsibility for Catholic-Jewish relations being held by a special commission under the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The range of religious groups I worked with was extremely wide—from the Ahmadiyya to the Zoroastrians. Ideally I should have been given time for study in order to prepare for this new task, but in fact I had to start straight away, picking up bits of knowledge as I went along.

I was now the immediate collaborator of Cardinal Arinze, the president of the secretariat, from whom I learned much, in particular the deep respect that is due to the local churches. Our office was at the direct service of Pope John Paul II, and I was soon to realize how much his example and teachings influenced the Catholic approach to people of other religions. Many Christians who had followed the events of the Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi felt reassured that meeting with people of different religions is not against one’s own faith.

One of my first tasks as secretary was to help to organize the 1987 Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat, which brought together some thirty bishops from many different parts of the world. The agenda included discussion of the first draft of a document that was to become Dialogue and Proclamation, eventually published in 1991. The preliminary work on this document, which became a joint venture of the PCID and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, brought me into contact with Jacques Dupuis, one of the leading Catholic theologians on religious pluralism. My realization grew of how delicate this topic is and how much room there is for misunderstanding.

Theological reflection, though, was not confined to official
documents. To foster dialogue within the church, Cardinal Arinze took the initiative of arranging two theological consultations—one in 1993 in Pune, India, entitled “Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, and Encounter with Religions,” and the second in 1996 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, entitled “The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Encounter with Traditional Religions.” The proceedings of these consultations were published in the journal of our office, whose title was changed in 1994 from the Bulletin to Pro Dialogo. This journal reproduces whatever the pope writes or says about interreligious relations.

Interactions with Other Religions and the WCC

Not all the secretary’s time is spent sitting behind a desk. There are many visitors to receive, meetings to attend, and talks to be given, in Rome, throughout Europe, and further afield. In 1990 I was given the opportunity of joining a party of monks and nuns from Europe who were taking part in an exchange program with Buddhist monastics in Japan. The experience of living in a Buddhist monastery, even if only for a couple of weeks, helped me to get some understanding of Buddhism from within. The importance of silent meditation, the attention to the present moment inculcated through menial work, the humility required to go out begging in the streets—appreciation for these features of Buddhism grew through sharing in them. The program included visits to prominent Buddhist monasteries, including Mount Hiei, near Kyoto. The abbot, the Venerable Etai Yamada, had attended the 1986 Day of Prayer in Assisi and had been so impressed that he decided to organize a similar event in his monastery the following year and every year since then. Etai Yamada reminded me in some ways of John Paul II, with his strong convictions, his deep spirituality, and his great attention to young people.

At the end of 1991 Cardinal Sodano, the secretary of state, summoned me and said, “The Holy Father wants to make you a bishop. Come back tomorrow with your answer.” What could I say? I accepted and was ordained bishop by Pope John Paul II in St. Peter’s Basilica on January 6, 1992. This elevation did not entail a move from Rome, as I was given a titular diocese, Nepte, which is the modern Nefta in Tunisia. I have been twice to this place of Africa to the religious heritage of the world. I had always felt that greater attention should be given to young people.

As a bishop I am on occasion asked to administer confirmation and also to confer ordination. One such invitation was to Birmingham, England, to a very multicultural parish. During my stay I was taken to a large gurdwara, or Sikh house of worship, in Handsworth. It was a Saturday morning, and the building was crowded with people, all doing different things. In one hall there was a wedding; in another room there were people reciting the scriptures, while others were receiving instruction; in the langar, the communal kitchen, women were chanting prayers as they made chapatis. It was most impressive. Later a delegation from this gurdwara came to visit us in Rome, and we engaged in formal exchange on the role of scripture in our respective religions. On other occasions Sikhs have taken part in multireligious meetings that we have organized, including a consultation on marriage and the family in the modern world and a discussion on the role of religions in society. I had always felt that greater attention should be given to the Sikhs, and so it was with joy that we welcomed religious leaders from the Golden Temple in Amritsar when they came for another Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in January 2002. In December of 2004 I was able to return this visit.

In my work with the PCID I have also been involved with inter-Christian dialogue. Almost from its first years, our office established a strong working relationship with the corresponding office in the World Council of Churches. Staff members from Geneva have been invited to attend the PCID’s plenary assemblies, and as secretary I represented our office at the meeting of the advisory committee of the WCC’s office on interreligious relations and dialogue. At these meetings hosted by the WCC, I felt completely accepted as a full participant and not merely an observer. Though not always agreeing fully with all the opinions expressed, I have come to appreciate and respect the thinking of writers such as Stanley Samartha, Wesley Ariarajah, and Hans Ucko. These good relations have developed into common projects, such as joint reflections on interreligious marriage, consultations on interreligious prayer, and a program highlighting the contribution of Africa to the religious heritage of the world.

Though the brief of the PCID does not extend to relations with Jews, I was also appointed as a consultant of the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. This role has taken me to meetings with Jews in Rome, New York, Jerusalem, and, most recently, Buenos Aires. I have also been involved in trilateral dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, organized on an ecumenical basis. Such a dialogue is by no means simple, and the current political situation presents added difficulties, yet such efforts are always needed.

Pontifical Council President and Archbishop

The PCID has a group of consultants who reside in a number of different countries. They are appointed for five-year terms, and our custom is to meet with them on their respective continents at least once during their mandate. In September 2002, after earlier meetings in Dar es Salaam and in Damascus, we were gathered in Korea with our Asian consultants and secretaries of interreligious commissions from different countries. Cardinal Arinze was presiding; two Asian colleagues and I formed the rest of the team. It was at this time that the cardinal was notified of his impending appointment to head another office of the Roman curia, and I was told that I would be taking over as president of the PCID. Cardinal Arinze returned to Rome, and I stayed on to preside over an already planned Catholic-Buddhist dialogue that took place in Tokyo. In October I was also elevated to the rank of archbishop.

So a new phase in my life opened, one that is still ongoing. I am able to build on the good work of my predecessors, particularly Cardinal Arinze, with whom I had been working closely for fifteen years.

I was asked one day if I had an episcopal coat of arms. I said no, but it set me thinking, and with the help of a heraldic expert I devised one: a palm tree to represent Nepte, my titular diocese; a star evoking the Feast of the Epiphany, the day on which I was ordained bishop; and a Celtic cross in a verdant field to recall my Irish descent. For a motto I chose Fructum dabit, “It will give fruit.” These words come from Psalm 1: “He is like a tree that is planted by running water, yielding its fruit in due season.” This thought, for me, is a good expression of what dialogue means. One cannot expect immediate results. There is a need to prepare the ground, to build up confidence, to establish friendship, so that relationships can grow stronger. One has to be patient and persevere in hope. Fruit will certainly come in due time.
The Legacy of Paul and Clara Gebauer

Allan Effa

Paul Gebauer, who made myriad contributions to a wide number of fields, could be described as a missionary statesman, strategist, educator, anthropologist, and art collector, all with a heavy dose of personality. From the perspective of mission history he is most remembered as a key architect of the Cameroon Baptist Convention and as the catalyst for the development of the North American Baptist Missionary Society. His service in Cameroon, from 1931 to 1961, was interrupted only twice: when he served as a chaplain in the U.S. army for three years during World War II and when he spent two years acquiring a master’s degree in anthropology at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Despite a heavy administrative load as the director of a growing missionary body, he collected priceless ethnographic information among several people groups living in what was then known as British Cameroon.

Clara Kratt, who married Paul in 1935, brought considerable strengths to this missionary-couple team with her formal training in art and experience in education. Together they forged a new way of doing mission among Baptists of western Cameroon, leaving an enduring mark on a church that today numbers more than 82,000 members.

Significant Influences

Paul was born in 1900 as one of ten children in the family of a successful shoe merchant in Silesia, which at the time belonged to Germany but today is part of Poland. His father, a staunch Baptist, established a chapel in conjunction with his business, seeking to win to Christ his neighbors in Bolkenhain, and he also established mission chapels in some of the neighboring communities. Three of Paul’s sisters married Baptist ministers, and his brothers were likewise involved in a variety of Christian ministries alongside their regular professions.

At the age of eighteen Paul was drafted into the German army and served during World War I for approximately a year. Upon his return he taught Sunday school, was involved with the young people of the church, and worked as an apprentice to a local mechanic.

In the fall of 1925 Paul emigrated to the United States, eventually settling in Detroit. He worked in a number of trades during the day while completing high school at night. He quickly developed fluency in English and was able to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1928 to 1931. While at Louisville, Paul must have come under the teaching and influence of William Owen Carver, who taught missions and world religions. Carver was a strong proponent of the view that “the native Christian should be the true evangelist of his people and that the wise missionary recognizes and encourages the native’s autonomy and adjusts the missionary methods to it.” Carver’s philosophy was akin to what is today termed contextualization. He believed that Christianity must “pass through the molds of native hearts and minds and will become . . . indigenous to the soil of every civilization.” When Paul articulated his philosophy and strategy of mission at the launching of the work among the Kaka people of Cameroon, the echo of Carver’s voice was heard rather distinctly.

In 1931 Paul graduated from seminary, became a U.S. citizen, and was appointed as a missionary to Cameroon under the German Baptist Mission. Like other Americans of German Baptist heritage, he served under the auspices of the German mission society, but became a forceful advocate for the establishment of a missionary work under North American Baptist direction in ways that he felt would be more progressive and more in line with his passion for an indigenous church. His first term of service was spent under the mentorship of the German-American Carl Bender, a strategist and ethnographer in his own right.

Paul’s working approach to mission was further refined and developed through his studies at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon (B.A., 1943), and his anthropological studies under the eminent professor Melville Herskovits at Northwestern University (M.A., 1958).

Clara Kratt, born in 1908, was the youngest child and only daughter of the six children born to Rev. and Mrs. Jacob Kratt, who had emigrated from Germany to the United States and settled in Portland, Oregon. Jacob served for more than forty years as the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church of Portland. Clara’s interest in art led her to enroll in a three-year program at the Chicago Art Institute after completing high school in 1925. In 1928 she accepted a position as a high school art instructor in Madison, Wisconsin. In that same year her father was appointed to serve on the board of directors of the Cameroon mission. For the next six years she taught and engaged in “independent work in art metal and art appreciation.” Her contributions to ministry would later be felt, particularly in her early efforts in education among the Kaka people and in a lifetime of seeking to integrate Cameroon art forms into the worship and architecture of the emerging Cameroon church.

Paul’s marriage to Clara became the feature-page article of the October 1, 1935, edition of the denominational biweekly Baptist Herald. Paul and Clara had met several times during Paul’s first furlough. Destiny seemed to bring them together, for they returned to America on the same ship from the Baptist World Alliance meetings in Berlin in 1934. Following their wedding in September and shortly after their honeymoon, they were sent off by Paul’s home church, Ebenezer Baptist, in Detroit, to begin a pioneer effort where no missionaries had previously resided. They went as the very first appointees under the newly formed General Missionary Committee of North American Baptists. On the other side of the Atlantic they organized under the name “Cameroon Baptist Mission.” Their assignment was to open a new field among the Kaka and Mambila peoples of the interior grasslands. Because this region had little previous contact with Christian missionaries or indigenous evangelists, the Gebauers felt this would be an ideal place to begin a fresh work for North American Baptists.

A New Strategy for Mission

Paul and Clara saw themselves as pioneers of a new era of mission strategy in Cameroon, in contrast to the methods of their coworkers from Germany. The Gebauers described the old way of doing mission as paternalistic, resulting in “spoiling” the

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Africans and robbing them of their independence. They envisioned a church among the Kaka people that would be a genuinely African expression of Christianity. Paul’s strategy manifesto is eloquently articulated in an article entitled “The Pentecostal Field of the World” and is worth quoting at some length here:

We shall not take our culture to them, for they have one of their own. We shall not burden them with our American civilization, because theirs is one of their own. We shall not go to them on behalf of the cotton trade or tailoring profession of Fifth Avenue fashion shops but rather to encourage them to remain “Africans of the Africans” as to their styles and customs. We shall not offer another religion to them, for they are sick at heart about the many which they already have. We shall not discard their practical system of education, but we shall perpetuate and perfect it suitable to their peculiar needs. We shall not laugh at their art and crafts but encourage them to carry on and to perfect the expression of their appreciation of the beautiful.

In years to come we shall not burden them with occidental architecture of church buildings nor western modes of worship, with our theological difficulties nor our denominational warfare.

. . . If Jesus is the One we claim him to be, the World’s Savior, the Kaka people, as they receive him, will forget the worship of evil spirits, the fear of demons, and the rites of cannibalism. They will turn their songs and their music into praises for Jesus. In him the African Church will arise in Kaka-land. There will be different forms of worship but the same Master. There will be strange music flowing from their lips but the same faith which they will confess, and the same baptism. African music will accompany their psalm. An African Christ will hang upon their cross. An African Church, the tribe of Jesus, will arise to the glory of God.

Paul called for a critical examination of traditional customs and practices, avoiding the extremes of outright condemnation on the one hand and unequivocal acceptance on the other. He believed that such a posture required the missionary to be a careful student of the culture and seek an insider’s perspective before determining what is compatible or incompatible with Christianity. The explanation of his methodology and some specific cases of how he dealt with customs that appeared to conflict with Christian principles are candidly outlined in his annual report of 1939.

The Gebauers resolutely avoided the introduction of any practice that might encourage a lasting dependence on foreign missionaries or their resources. An illustration of Paul’s conviction in this regard was his intransigent refusal to supply white baptismal robes to new converts among the Kaka. Presumably this early group of converts expected to receive the same treatment as those converted under the German missionaries and promptly went on strike prior to their immersion when they found out they would be wearing nothing but their traditional loincloths! Fortunately, through the mediation of a Cameroonian evangelist, the strike was called off, and the service proceeded. Paul commented, “And by this small incident we helped to establish an indigenous church that will grow and carry on without the presence of missionaries and without aid from foreign countries.”

A Passion for Indigeneity

Commitment to the establishment of an indigenous church guided the Gebauers’ strategy from the beginning of the work in Kakaland. The very first efforts of evangelism were made by Bekom evangelists from the Belo region who were entrusted with the responsibility of baptizing converts and planting new churches. Primary among them was Robert Jam, who invested a lifetime of itinerant evangelism in planting churches among a number of different ethnic groups. These men, along with their wives, were cross-cultural church planters in the fullest sense, having to learn new languages and settle among peoples historically considered hostile. The missionary’s work was therefore more administrative than evangelistic. Responsibility for the expansion of the church was placed in the hands of each believer. This strategy affirmed the work and giftedness of national clergy and laid the foundation for the emergence of churches that were self-governing and self-propagating: “We have, therefore, made it a rule on our youngest mission fields, Kaka and Mambila, that your missionaries remain in the background in order that your African fellow-believers may not only accept fullest responsibilities right from the outset but also have the privilege of baptizing their tribesmen into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

With the baptism of the first twenty Kaka converts and the establishment of an organized church, Paul and Clara ensured that, right from the outset, the local Christians “should be put on their own feet.” Deacons from within the membership were immediately appointed (two male and one female), and the missionaries’ role was restricted to that of an advisory voice in the matters of the young church. The Gebauers saw these policies as being in line with the Apostle Paul’s: “We believe with that great missionary of old that the Spirit of God will guide these young Christians into all truth. We believe that these beginners can be trained to listen to the voice of God more than to the voice of their missionaries. We leave to them all financial worries and we plan with them the extension of the work.”

The concepts and even some of the terms Paul Gebauer used to enunciate his vision for the Kaka church seem to have been taken from Roland Allen’s Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours? Although he never quotes Allen directly, the similarities in their thinking make it quite likely that the book had a formative influence on Paul and Clara’s missionary strategy.

World War II broke out during the Gebauers’ first furlough as a couple. All missionaries from Germany were repatriated, and the responsibility for the entire Baptist work in British Cameroon fell into the hands of George and Louise Dunger, North American Baptist missionaries who had joined with the Gebauers in 1938. When Paul reassumed the position of field director after his service as a U.S. army chaplain, he was determined to promote the ideal of the three-self formula throughout the Baptist constituency: “We are agreed to bringing about the indigenous church. Dollar-dependency has been cut consistently with reference to churches and church workers. From the German policy of being paymasters we have advanced to wipe out all foreign help within a visible period. From a policy of complete foreign control we have advanced to complete native government in our churches. Self-propagation has taken a weighty step forward. An ideal has become a reality.”

Clara’s Educational Work

The Kaka people proved to be particularly receptive. During their first year of ministry Paul and Clara had twenty baptisms, established one church, opened eight chapels, and reported 675 converts seeking baptism. Paul devoted himself to the construction of a mission station, while Clara began to teach literacy classes, Bible studies, and crafts, with the aim of developing a group of Christian leaders who could take the places of the
Bekom evangelists. The arrival of a missionary nurse, Edith Koppin, allowed the fledgling mission to begin to offer medical services as well.17

Clara’s contribution to the work among the Kaka included the establishment of the first school at Mbem. She shared Paul’s respect for the preservation of all that was noble and good in the Cameroonian culture and sought to develop an educational system that did not alienate the emerging generation from its cultural roots. When the school opened in April of 1937 with fourteen students, it bore the unique imprint of the Gebauers’ philosophy. Besides teaching elementary courses in reading, writing, and mathematics, there were courses in health, local traditions, and nature studies. Clara, the school manager, announced:

It is the general aim of the school not to alienate the boys from their village life, and as much as possible to keep them from becoming dependent on the European for the supply of their needs. For this reason they are housed, native fashion, in strongly built huts, are allowed to wear no European clothes but only clean loin-cloths and are taught to write on banana leaves with a sharpened stick until the price of a slate has been worked off. Classes are not held to a rigid time schedule but they are encouraged to take time for repairing bridges, road making and other practical projects. Emphasis is placed on relating all instruction as much as possible to native life and on inspiring a greater appreciation for native crafts and tribal organization.18

When the Mbem school opened its doors for its second year of training, enrollment had more than doubled, to a total of thirty students.

Unfortunately, however, Clara’s experiment in education was short-lived. Soon after the Gebauers left for what became an extended furlough in 1940, the schools were forced to conform to the government’s pattern and curriculum, largely modeled after Britain’s. Nevertheless, by affirming the value of many traditional ways while introducing Western education, the Gebauers set a standard for the development of a church that could be both authentically Christian and unashamedly African.

Students of Culture

Paul and Clara demonstrated an appreciation for the culture on a scale that was unique for missionaries of that era. They modeled and legitimized the role of missionaries as ethnographers. While others might have regarded such work as wasteful and a distraction from the more urgent task of evangelization or education, the Gebauers took pains to understand the cultures of Cameroon and encouraged others to do the same.19

Clara focused her interest primarily on the collection and preservation of material art. In 1971 the Portland Art Museum purchased a significant portion of this collection (the Gebauer Collection), which includes many rare sculptures, masks, shields, handbags, and tobacco pipes. Seventy-nine of those objects were selected and featured in Paul’s work Art of Cameroon.20 Clara, more than just an art collector, was convinced that a people’s art serves as a vital bridge to their cultural heritage. So throughout their ministry the Gebauers encouraged local artists by incorporating into the buildings they erected these artists’ furnishings, woven shields and baskets, and plaques, as well as posts made by traditional carvers.21 The architecture of the churches at Mbem and Nkwen (in Bamenda) set a standard of incorporation of Cameroonian art that unfortunately failed to become normative.

Music was another area in which local forms were empha-
sized. Large drum huts were built adjacent to the chapels, and the drums were used to summon people to worship. Indigenous music, which was suitable to the tonal languages of the region, local instruments, and dances were employed. In summary, the Gebauers “refrained from introducing any Western music or instruments.”22

Paul spent a portion of 1938–39 as an apprentice to a traditional diviner, learning the art of spider divination among the Kakas. His extensive field notes formed the substance of what later became his M.A. thesis. It was subsequently published under the title Spider Divination in the Cameroons. Paul’s meticulous work, documenting a practice that has since disappeared, earned him the respect of his mentor, Melville Herskovits, “a man of strong, usually justifiable, attitudes and, as a rule, no admirer of missionaries or colonials. His high praise of Paul Gebauer was therefore most impressive.”23

Mention should also be made of the images Paul captured with his camera. No fewer than 9,000 black-and-white photographs and more than 2,400 slides were part of the collection acquired by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. The photographs portray a way of life long since forgotten. Despite a lack of formal training in photography, his work was masterful. “They looked nothing like a scholar’s photographs—they were a photographer’s photographs. They showed the eye and technical skill of an artist, and the easy familiarity of one who was photographing his friends and neighbors.”24

A significant incongruity in the Gebauers’ ministry revolved around language acquisition. Unlike Carl Bender, who became fluent in Duala, the Gebauers never made the effort to learn a Cameroonian language other than the lingua franca, Pidgin English. With more than 280 regional languages spoken in the country, Paul and Clara may have found it difficult to choose a particular one to learn. They depended on the assistance of African translators and were unable to promote the development of literature in the various vernaculars of Cameroon. Later in his career Paul lamented this decision, insisting that this deficiency in missionary practice must somehow be overcome.25

Paul’s Military Demeanor

Paul’s experience of serving in two world wars under two different armies affected the way he conducted himself, as well as the language he used to describe the missionary mandate. He was a strong advocate for the mission station concept, calling it a “modern necessity” and “the hub of training programs.” The station was not just a missionary’s home, but “a citadel out of which your modern apostles walk or speed in cars after well-laid plans of attack.”26 Military terminology peppered his articles in the Baptist Herald. For example, in describing the work of his “African Apostles,” he reported that “Robert Jam opened up the most doubtful sector, the extreme north of the land, Noah Ndimbu probed the southern approaches, and Johannes Tonto attacked the center of the field.”27

Paul carried this militaristic demeanor into his relationships with fellow missionaries and Cameroonians. He was character-
ized as a "very straightforward person." Despite his appreciation for the ways of the people and his disdain for colonial thinking, he "treated people like the German officers did and related to the evangelists like an employer, not a partner." His deportment, at times, fell short of his stated ideals.

A northern European time-consciousness would sometimes impel him to leave church services in the middle of a sermon. On one occasion, as a guest speaker at a church in the United States, the service went so long that, when it was time for him to offer the message, he simply offered a benediction and sat down.

In spite of Paul's cultural understanding and advanced anthropological training, there were times when personality and upbringing won the upper hand. Perhaps he, like the disciples in Gethsemane, battled the reality that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Clara, in contrast, compensated for his faults by her gracious and tender spirit.

**Lasting Contributions**

Under Paul's leadership the Cameroon Baptist Mission expanded its personnel to a total of fifty-two by the time the Gebauers resigned in 1961, with a ministry that included an extensive network of schools and medical posts. The Baptist churches experienced considerable growth as well, due largely to a philosophy that encouraged the Cameroonian church to be responsible for its own advancement. In 1951 the mission's 160 churches formed the Cameroon Baptist Convention, under full direction of national leaders, ten years before Cameroon obtained independence from British colonial rule.

Paul and Clara set a standard for missionary scholarship and cultural research, and they strongly encouraged new missionaries to do the same. After concluding their missionary service, Paul went on to publish articles that explained in considerable detail the architecture, dances, and tobacco pipes used by various groups of people he had studied. The documentation and preservation of the material art of early-contact-period ethnic cultures of Cameroon's grasslands is a legacy the whole world can enjoy.

**Closing Years**

After nearly thirty years of missionary service, the Gebauers resigned in order to devote more time to teaching and to their children, Anne and Walter. A new chapter opened for them in 1962 when Paul, took a position on the faculty of his alma mater, Linfield College, in McMinnville, Oregon, teaching modern languages and anthropology. He had previously received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Linfield (1952), and in 1957 Queen Elizabeth II had bestowed upon him the Order of the British Empire. Clara worked for many years in the Linfield College library.

During retirement Clara was an active volunteer at the Portland Art Museum, and both Paul and Clara devoted time to organizing and writing descriptions of the many pieces of art in the museum's collection. A number of publications emerged from their years of accumulated field notes. In 1971 Linfield College established the Gebauer Anthropology Prize in honor of Paul's missionary and teaching career. It is awarded annually to the top thesis or dissertation in the field of anthropology.

In a fitting finale to a lifetime of devotion to learning and adventure, Paul died suddenly in his sleep on June 23, 1977, while he and Clara were visiting the Grand Canyon with a group tour. Clara passed away on July 5, 2004, at ninety-six years of age.

**Notes**

3. Quoted in ibid., p. 87.
4. Ibid., p. 96.
8. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 312.
14. Ibid.
19. In one of his reports circulated to all the missionaries, Paul lamented the "lack of mental growth" among his coworkers and encouraged them toward "personal research" and "cultural advancement" ('"After Five Years,"' p. 3).
21. Ibid., p. 131.
22. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. For an in-depth analysis of the growth of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, see Lloyd Kwast's *Discipling of West Cameroon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).
31. Among subsequent missionaries, the late Gilbert Schneider holds the greatest distinction for his ethnographic work, photography, and linguistic studies.
The assembly was attended by 115 theological educators from ATESEA member schools, visitors, guests, and ecumenical partners. Business sessions dealt with academic standards, accreditation, finance, organization, graduate degree programs, and faculty development. Sientje Merentek-Abram, from Indonesia, was reelected for another four-year term as executive director of ATESEA and dean of the SEAGST. Thu En Yu, the principal of Sabah Theological Seminary in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, was elected as chair of the executive committee, and Anna May Say Pa, principal of Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon, Myanmar, was elected as chair of the ATESEA Accreditation Commission. Participants took part in four workshops: (1) the challenges of theological education amid the changing context of Asia; (2) revisiting/rethinking the “Critical Asian Principle”; (3) self-reliance in theological education in Asia; and (4) women’s role in transformational leadership.

Two significant programmatic decisions were taken during the assembly. First, all member schools of ATESEA should urge every student in a degree program to take a course on HIV/AIDS. (Modular courses on this issue developed by the Ecumenical Theological Education program of the World Council of Churches were recommended.) Second, “Women to Women” and “Faculty to Faculty” exchange programs with theological educators in China will be arranged in the future.

It was announced that a fiftieth anniversary celebration of ATESEA will be held November 26–28, 2007, at Trinity Theological College, Singapore, where the association was founded. At that time special attention will be given to the topic “Revisiting the Critical Asian Principle,” first adopted by the association in 1972. This principle “seeks to identify what is distinctively Asian, and use this distinctiveness as a critical principle of judgment on matters dealing with the life and mission of the Christian community, theology, and theological education in Asia.” Issues of contextualization, globalization, conscientization, and decolonization will be among the major concerns in that discussion.

Selected Bibliography

Works by Paul Gebauer


Developments in Theological Education in South East Asia

Gerald H. Anderson

The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) held its quadrennial general assembly October 13–21, 2005, on the campus of McGilvary Faculty of Theology in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Established in Singapore in 1957 as the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia, with sixteen mainline Protestant schools as founding members, ATESEA was the first formal regional association of theological schools in the non-Western world, and today it is the largest theological education association outside of North America. The name was changed in 1981 to reflect the wider concerns and involvement of the association. Today it has 100 member schools in sixteen countries, with approximately 20,000 students and 1,250 faculty members, which now include evangelical, Pentecostal, and Adventist schools. No Roman Catholic schools are members, but Roman Catholics participate in some programs sponsored by ATESEA. Countries with the largest number of member schools are the Philippines (25), Indonesia (19), and Myanmar (16). The executive office of the association is located in Quezon City, Philippines.

ATESEA serves as an accrediting agency for member schools in the region and, together with the Senate of Serampore College, India, and the North East Asia Association of Theological Schools, publishes the Asia Journal of Theology (begun in 1959 as the South East Asia Journal of Theology). It also sponsors the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), a federated faculty founded in 1966 that is organized in seven regions of South East Asia and today involves twenty-seven participating schools. During the last four years, 63 M.Th. students and 30 D.Th. students graduated, making a total of 207 M.Th. and 110 D.Th. graduates since the first graduation of M.Th. students in 1969 and the first D.Th. students in 1978. Concern was expressed at the assembly that only 11 of the 110 D.Th. graduates were women.

Gerald H. Anderson, a senior contributing editor, is Chair of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia. From 1961 to 1970 he was on the faculty of Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines.

Works About Paul Gebauer


Book Reviews

Azusa Street and Beyond: One Hundred Years of Commentary on the Global Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement.


This book, a revision of Azusa Street and Beyond: Pentecostal Missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century (1986), will be welcomed by many. At the centennial of the 1906 Azusa Street revival, it celebrates the amazing worldwide spread of the Pentecostal movement, especially outside North America.

The compiler, Grant McClung, has retained most of the original essays but also has added twelve new ones, making this work a rich addition to the growing literature on Pentecostal Christianity in the twenty-first century. Of the new, Vinson Synan introduces what he calls the “Missionaries of the One-Way Ticket,” who went from Los Angeles and Chicago and elsewhere to spread the Pentecostal movement in Brazil, Italy, Norway, and many other parts of the world. The role of women in early Pentecostal leadership is documented by Barbara Cavaness as “God Calling: Women in Pentecostal Missions.” Philip Hogan reminds us in “The Holy Spirit and the Great Commission” that not charts and graphs but the Holy Spirit is the cause of harvest.

Allan Anderson’s “Towards a Pentecostal Missiology for the Majority World” focuses on Pentecostal origins and explosive growth beyond North America and the significance of a healing ministry among the poor of the developing world. In “Pentecostals and the City” Augustus Cerillo points out that Pentecostalism began in the city and that urbanization provides impetus for growth, pragmatic training, and creative evangelism. That Pentecostal efforts to impact society often are led by women is shown by Elizabeth D. Rios in “The Ladies Are Warriors: Latina Pentecostalism and Faith-Based Activism in New York City.” According to Reuben Ezemadu, 70 percent of today’s Protestant missionaries are sent from a new sending base in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (“The Role of the Majority Church in Missions”). In “Commissioned to the Ends of the Earth” Luis Bush and Beverly Pegues argue for use of Internet technology and intercession to penetrate the 10/40 Window. The evangelization of Africa is inspired by the vision in Revelation 5:8–10 of worshipers from every tribe, says Dick Eastman in “Worship Realities for a New Millennium.” In “The Next Charismata: Tomorrow’s Forecast” Grant McClung moves beyond Pentecostals to include today’s megachurches of the world and others together in the missionary task. Finally, David Shibley, in “To Whom Much Is Given,” exhorts us that we are blessed to be a blessing to the world.

In this well-documented volume, the endnotes provide valuable resources for further research and ongoing study of the Pentecostal mission and religious vitality.

—Roger E. Hedlund

Roger E. Hedlund is Managing Editor of Dharma Deepika: A South Asian Journal of Missiological Research and Director of the Dictionary of South Asian Christianity project at the Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, Chennai, India.

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Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905–1929.


The strengths of this study of Russian and Ukrainian evangelicals make it required reading for anyone desiring an understanding of Protestantism in the last decade of Romanov rule and the first decade of Soviet power. Heather Coleman, professor of history at the University of Alberta, has reworked her dissertation from the University of Illinois, Urbana, into a fascinating and intimate portrait of two sister movements, Baptists and evangelical Christians, in relation to their staunchest opponents: the czarist and Soviet regimes and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Coleman’s work is one of the first on Russian evangelicals to take advantage of newly opened Russian archives. It is more coherent and makes more judicious use of archival sources than Sergei Zhuk’s 2004 study, Russia’s Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millenarianism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830–1917 [Washington, D.C.].) Another strength is the author’s skillful placement of evangelical developments in broader political, social, economic, intellectual, and religious contexts. At every turn Coleman demonstrates the place evangelicals occupy in Russia’s rush, for better and for worse, toward modernity. Their story figures in the czarist and Bolshevik interface with Westernization, industrialization, urbanization, advances in communications and literacy, and halting steps toward and away from constitutional democracy.

This study does a fine job of explaining the evangelical movement’s growth in spite of persecution, citing the appeal of Scripture in the vernacular, much-lauded evangelical organizational savvy, and “the participatory nature of evangelical services” (p. 39), including preaching in Russian, congregational singing, significant roles for women and common folk, Sunday schools for children, and winsome youth programs. Coleman also provides an excellent explication of Western (German, later English and American) versus indigenous influences upon Russian evangelicals (esp. chap. 5).

I have only two minor reservations. First, notwithstanding contradictory sources, the author should be less reticent in providing her best estimates of evangelical numbers at various stages. Second, “Russian Baptists” in the title is a convenient shorthand but can be misleading. Actually, there may have been more Ukrainian than Russian evangelicals in the period 1905–29. And evangelical Christians, subsumed under Baptists here, did not always hold to adult baptism (as Coleman notes), nor did they accept the Calvinist formulation that converts are...
exempt from losing their salvation. To this day, the majority of evangelical Christians–Baptists in the former Soviet Union are Armenian on this point. (For contrasts between evangelical Christians and Baptists, Paul Steeves’s dissertation, “The Russian Baptist Union, 1917–1935: Evangelical Awakening in Russia” [University of Kansas, 1976], still makes profitable reading.)

Many authors rightly define the 1920s in the Soviet Union as the golden age of evangelical growth. Coleman’s nuanced treatment of this decade, however, forcefully underscores how mixed the blessings were, as in her delineation of Soviet tolerance, then intolerance, toward conscientious objectors. For me, the most lasting impressions from this fine study will be the fascinating, behind-the-scenes snapshots dug out of archives. One cannot help but be struck by the intensity of internal czarist and Bolshevik debates over how best to combat what both considered a serious ideological threat.

—Mark R. Elliott

Mark R. Elliott is Professor of History, Southern Wesleyan University, Central, South Carolina, and Editor, East-West Church and Ministry Report.


With the debut of volume 2 of the Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC), a projected six-volume series, Brill Academic Publishers in the Netherlands confirms its status as the behemoth of Islamic studies publishers. Like its landmark multivolume reference work The Encyclopedia of Islam, the EWIC project has assembled a multinational team of scholars and looks set to become an indispensable reference work for the study of women, gender, and family issues throughout the Islamic world.

The EWIC series recognizes that the Islamic world umbrella is a wide one. Hence its articles cover not only core Middle Eastern, Asian, and African societies, where Muslim peoples form population majorities, but also societies that include well-established Muslim minorities, notably, western Europe and the United States. Articles also discuss some of the non-Muslim peoples who have lived in predominantly Muslim societies.

Centered on the theme “Family, Law, and Politics,” volume 2 contains more than 360 articles that are grouped by subject and subdivided by region. Its subject entries include, for example, adoption, citizenship, women’s participation in military, household forms and composition, freedom of expression, and religious associations. Two of the largest subject groups are law, further subdivided into such categories as Islamic and customary law, law enforcement, and historical trends in family law; and political-social movements, broken down into ethnic, Islamist, pacifist, millenarian, and other categories. Each article ends with bibliographic references to guide readers in further study.

My one quibble with the volume is that it has an idiosyncratic organization and lacks cross-referencing between articles. Some entry titles are opaque in their vagueness or specificity, such as “Women’s Rights: Male Advocacy” and “Shah Bano Affair,” respectively. Others are classified under counterintuitive headings: the article “Purdah in South Asia,” for example, appears under “Political and Social Movements: Protest Movements.” Readers interested in Islamic dress codes for women will need to scan the entry headings to find the articles entitled “Modesty Discourses,” which offer a limited discussion of related issues. The arbitrariness of classification stands out where ethnographic and minority issues are concerned. Self-standing articles exist under the headings “Armenian Women,” “Bahá’í Women,” “Jewish Women,” and “Kurdish Women,” but a discussion of Maghribi Berbers is subsumed in the article “North Africa” under “Political and Social Movements,” while discussion of Egyptian Copts appears in the article “Egypt” under the category “ Sectarianism and Confessionalism.” (Readers of the IBMR may be interested to note that this essay on Egypt focuses on the Coptic Orthodox population and refers only in passing to the existence of Egyptian Roman Catholics and Anglicans, while overlooking the long-standing Evangelical Presbyterian community.) A glaring omission from the category on sectarianism is Lebanon, which is usually cited as the Middle Eastern example par excellence of sectarian or confessional tendencies. Readers looking for topics that lack separate entries (such as abortion, Nigeria, or the Druze peoples) may be able to locate relevant articles by turning to the index.

In the volume’s preface, Suad Joseph, the general editor of the EWIC series, acknowledges the “unevenness and inconsistency in the geographical content of entries” and ascribes it primarily to the “challenge of finding authors who had the expertise (and time) to write” (p. xxvii). She notes that 130 commissioned articles (nearly a quarter of the projected total) did not arrive in time for publication and mentions that Brill will eventually make these additional articles available in an online version of the EWIC series.

Notwithstanding its uneven coverage, volume 2 of EWIC is an impressive book, stunning in its breadth and scholarly sophistication, yet written in a clear and jargon-free style. Its articles deserve praise for their attention to social detail and for their candor in addressing sensitive issues, such as domestic and sexual violence, and stereotyping and discrimination along ethnic, gender-based, or racial lines. Every serious research library should acquire this volume and the EWIC series as a whole.

—Heather J. Sharkey

Heather J. Sharkey is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas.


In December 1996 authors Manuel A. Vásquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt journeyed to Clearwater, Florida, to study an apparition of the Virgin Mary. There they found a “bustling and polyglot crowd,” which convinced them that they “could not conduct a traditional ethnographic study of the site, providing only a thick description of local beliefs and practices” (p. 1). This conviction led the authors to embark on “a more sustained study of the changing face of religion in the Americas . . . in the context of globalization” (p. 2), which resulted in this book.

The subtitle, “Religion Across the
Americas,” is more the focus of the book than globalization, reflecting the authors’ research interests. Vásquez is a professor of religion and Latin American and Latino studies at the University of Florida. Marquardt, a doctoral candidate at Emory University, has published in the areas of globalization, Marian apparitions, and religion and immigration in the United States. The authors wish to show that what they call ‘little religions’ are in fact “the vital and public expressions of religion in a globalized setting” (p. 228). The first four chapters (pp. 12–118) are devoted to theoretical considerations of religion, social change, globalization, border making, and border crossing. In the last four chapters the authors examine “grassroots religion” and “globalization from above” in religious institutions (pp. 119–222).

Four of the chapters deserve special attention: “Crossing the Electronic Frontier: Religious Congregations and the Internet” (4); “Saving Souls Transnationally: Pentecostalism and Youth Gangs in El Salvador and the United States” (5); “A Continuum of Hybridity: Latino Churches in the New South” (7); and “Blitzing’ Central America: The Politics of Transnational Religious Broadcasting” (8). They show that through the “interplay of delocalization and relocalization, religion gives rise to hybrid individual and collective identities” (p. 35). The authors’ focus on ‘lived religion’ and hybridity sets their study apart from other studies on religion and globalization. A very useful resource for missiologists and mission practitioners. —Tite Tiénou

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire.


Thomas Reilly’s book provides a fresh look at the Taiping Rebellion, the massive uprising that nearly brought down the Qing Dynasty and left millions dead in China in the 1850s and 1860s. That dramatic event has been interpreted from many perspectives—a peasant uprising against the landlord class, for instance, or a product of the mental illness of its founder, Hong Xiuquan. In contrast to such views, Reilly argues persuasively that we must pay more attention to the specifics of the Taiping religion and—crucially—its political implications. Where most previous studies have examined Taiping beliefs for their “deviation” from orthodox Christianity, Reilly presents “Taiping Christianity” as an indigenized Christianity rooted in the history of translation of Christianity in China and the social and political context of late imperial China.

Rather than beginning with Hong’s reading of Liang Fa’s tract Good Words to Admonish the Age, Reilly, assistant professor of history at Pepperdine University, traces a lineage of terms (and debates around them) from the early Jesuit mission, through an obscure manuscript translation of the New Testament in the early 1700s, to the Protestant missionary translator Robert Morrison, and thence to Liang Fa and ultimately Hong Xiuquan. For Hong Xiuquan, the ascription of the title di (as in Shangdi, a debated translation of “God”) to Chinese rulers since the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.) was a violation of the
third commandment. Taiping religion thus incorporated an indictment of the whole Chinese political order, and the Taiping denunciation of "the blasphemy of empire" fueled the rebellion, Reilly argues.

The book also deals with Taiping religious practice, the Qing state's identification of Taiping sectarians with regular Catholics and Buddhist sectarians, and a less persuasive section on missionaries' failure to incorporate the Taiping critique of the imperial order into their presentation of Christian doctrine. At some points specialists will wish for fuller evidence or argumentation, but overall this is an important book that should not be overlooked by anyone working on Chinese religious history; it also will interest scholars of missionary encounter and non-Western Christianity.

—Ryan Dunch

Ryan Dunch is Associate Professor of Modern Chinese History at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. His publications on the history and contemporary situation of Christianity in China include Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857–1927 (Yale Univ. Press, 2001).

Scattered: The Filipino Global Presence.


By compiling the papers from the Filipino Diaspora and Missions Consultation, held in 2004 in Seoul, editors Luis Pantoja, Jr., Sadiri Joy Tira, and Enoch Wan have put into book form what many Filipino Christians have suspected for years—namely, that the Filipino global presence has missiological implications. As the reality of globalization has accelerated and expanded the migration of peoples all over the world, the contributors of this volume, who are members of the Filipino International Network, have discerned the worldwide scattering, or diaspora, of God’s people in general and of God’s Filipino people in particular as a powerful arrangement for a missionary God to reclaim the world.

Divided into five main parts, this work seeks to understand the phenomenon of the diaspora from many different perspectives. The lopsided distribution of articles that make up these parts, however—two demographic, two biblical-theological, two missiological, nine strategic, and eight narrative—reveals the book’s strategic and practical bias. This is not necessarily to criticize the book so much as to point out the need for others to do further theoretically oriented research on the yet largely untouched issue of migration as mission. Its lopsidedness also reveals the book’s conservative evangelical orientation, as many of the articles seem to force themselves to conform to a particular vision of world evangelization. Again, this comment is not so much to criticize as to point out the need for other mission traditions to look at the reality of the diaspora from different angles in order to understand it more fully.

Melba Maggay’s slim Jew to the Jew: Greek to the Greek: Reflections on Culture and Globalization (ISACC, 2001) addresses similar issues, but it cannot be considered a precedent for Scattered. The latter breaks new ground for a Filipino theology of mission as it enables the church at home to view its scattered peoples as partners in the cause. As Tira concludes in her article, "May the dispersion of the Filipino nation result [in] the gathering of many" (p. 165).

—F. Albert Tizon

F. Albert Tizon, a Filipino-American, served in the Philippines as a missionary with Action International Ministries (1989–98) and is currently pastor of the Berkeley Covenant Church in Berkeley, California.

Murder at Morija: Faith, Mystery, and Tragedy on an African Mission.


The setting is Morija, birthplace of Sesotho literacy and literature, and central to the operations of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, whose missionaries first set foot in that part of the world in 1833. While Couzens’s ostensible purpose is to solve the riddle of who and why in the fatal poisoning of Édouard Jacottet, a distinguished Swiss missionary to Lesotho, some eighty years after the crime took place, Murder at Morija is actually four books in one: a biography of Jacottet, a history of emerging Lesotho, an exposition and explanation of missionary modus operandi in politically and socially conflicted southern Africa, and a murder mystery.

The significance of Murder at Morija lies primarily in its illumination of the inner life of the Protestant mission movement, a major historical force in much of Africa and other regions of the world. Couzens’s picture of the internal politics, theological debates, personal loves and hates, sexual tensions, and family traumas in a mission community and its relationship to an indigenous society is among the most authentic that I have ever read.

Based on primary sources, written and oral, and evincing a thorough familiarity with secondary sources in the three most relevant languages, the book is thoroughly researched and gratifyingly well written. Africanists and those interested in missiology and the history of missions and non-Western Christianity will want to read this highly original work.

—Jonathan J. Bonk

Michael Power: The Struggle to Build the Catholic Church on the Canadian Frontier.


A Canadian paradox is that the roots of Catholicism are deeper in Canada than in the United States, yet Catholic doctrine has greater influence in the States than in Canada. Many Catholic prime ministers have served in Canada; the United States has had just one Catholic president; and yet many politicians in the United States openly claim to be guided by Catholic teaching—a rare and unpopular occurrence in contemporary Canada. Catholicism in the States has been influential mostly in neighborhoods; the identity of one Canadian province—Quebec—has
been overwhelmingly Catholic. Yet Quebec is now one of North America’s most secularized regions.

A question missionaries must ask, then, is how deep Catholic faith really went in Canada’s historical experience. And how—especially in Quebec—could Catholicism have been removed from the center of a community’s identity in a couple of decades? University of Toronto professor Mark McGowan’s biography of Michael Power, a vigorous Catholic bishop in early nineteenth-century Canada, is a good place to begin a discussion of these questions. The biography is also useful for readers who want only to learn about the trials and joys of missionary work.

Power worked for fidelity to Catholic teaching among less committed clergy and parishioners. He endangered his own life by laboring among the sick and dying, and he himself died of typhus. Though he labored in a little noticed corner of Britain’s growing empire, Power looked to the day when there would be an “unbroken chain of Bishops and Missionaries from Halifax to Columbia, and from Hudson Bay to Cape Horn” (p. 167). He established a seminary. Power was tireless, devout, and loyal.

One need not have a particular interest in Canadian history to benefit from this well-written and well-researched account of a committed missionary and Christian laborer.

—Preston Jones

Preston Jones, who teaches history and Latin at John Brown University, Siloam Springs, Arkansas, has published several articles on Canadian history.

Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change.


This wonderful book brings together ten excellent case studies from the Pacific, Australia, and southern Africa. It is ethnographically rich and missiologically significant, for it focuses on indigenous peoples’ diverse responses to the introduction of Christianity into their cultures. A common theme that runs through each of the essays is that we must no longer assume that all indigenous peoples have been the hapless victims of aggressive Christian missionaries who were tools of colonialism. That is a tired and worn-out thesis that many anthropologists and historians need to put to rest. This book is a refreshing alternative reading of mission encounters and provides some fascinating stories that will help debunk that thesis.

Peggy Brock’s introductory essay, reflecting on the social, political, and material changes introduced with Christianity, notes, “These changes observed through the responses of the receiving societies indicate that religious change is a creative dynamic, rather than a passive acceptance of new ideas, beliefs and practices. The variety of situations in which religious change occurs and the range of responses to introduced religion challenges those who maintain the process can be imposed from outside or pre-determined by cultural factors” (pp. 10–11).

The ten essays are spread across four sections: “Conceptualizing Religious Change,” “Mission Encounters,” “Transforming Christianity,” and “Assimilating Change.”

In the first essay Terence Ranger

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argues, contrary to some nineteenth-century missionaries and contemporary anthropologists, that all people are capable of appropriating and understanding Christianity, including Native Americans and Australian Aborigines. We have believed this statement as missiologists; now it’s nice to get some historical and anthropological confirmation. The genius of this book is that it demonstrates through well-researched case studies how indigenous people have taken Christianity and made it their own, incorporated it into their culture, and allowed it to change aspects of their society for their own good.

The only criticism I have of the book is its price. A solid index makes the book even more usable. Engaging, readable, sophisticated scholarship is represented in the pages of this book, which I heartily recommend. —Darrell L. Whiteman

Darrell L. Whiteman is Vice President and Missiologist in Residence for The Mission Society—A World Wesleyan Partnership, Norcross, Georgia. He has mission and research experience in central Africa and Melanesia.

Nationalism and Hindutva: A Christian Response.


Over the past two decades, India has seen a resurgence of Hindu nationalist activity, often expressed through violence toward Muslim and Christian minorities. This important volume articulates various Christian responses to hindutva, or the campaign to make India Hindu. Compiling papers from Union Biblical Seminary’s Tenth Consultation of the Center for Mission Studies, the book presents historical, theological, political, and practical responses. The interdisciplinary flavor of the volume is fitting, considering the multifaceted character of Hindu nationalist ideology and practice.

Robert Frykenberg, Arthur Jeyakumar, and Sebastian Kim place the Hindu nationalist movement within a wider historical context. This context encompasses understandings of Hinduism that arose during the early days of the Raj, Christian responses to Gandhi and the Congress Party, and ideological assumptions behind the state-backed Niyogi Report, which criticized missionaries in Madhya Pradesh for using foreign funds to “induce” conversions. While these contributions are careful not to equate the Hinduism of the colonial period with that of today’s Saffron Brotherhood, they provide an invaluable history of the organizations, sentiments, and ideas that have produced contemporary hindutva.

T. K. Oomen exposes contradictions inherent in the equation of Hindu identity and territoriality. By casting Hinduism as the religion of Indian soil, minority faiths are marginalized. His sociological analysis is complemented by the crisp theological analysis of Jesudas Athyal, Kirsteen Kim, Jacob Kavunkal, and Plamthodathil Jacob. These writers combine detailed summaries of Indian politics with insightful commentary on trends in theology and mission studies. The final section of the book offers more general, biblical assumptions.
reflections on nationalism, politics, and the church’s mission.

A volume of this kind is long overdue. In contrast to secular/Marxist and Muslim intellectuals, very few Christian thinkers have engaged hindutva publicly in a thoughtful and thorough manner. A step in the right direction, this book will hopefully trigger further reflection.

—Chandra Mallampalli

Chandra Mallampalli is Assistant Professor of History, Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California.

European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa.


This volume, comprising thirty-four varied articles and emerging from a conference held at Bayreuth in October 2001, is part of a series of the African Association for the Study of Religion. While many of the articles are written from the perspective of the history of religions, a surprising number deal with the part played by Christian scholars, including a number of missionaries, in the development of the academic study of African religions.

Many of the contributors will be well known to readers of the IBMR, and several of the subjects of articles are important figures in the Christian understanding of African religions. Andrew Walls has an article on Geoffrey Parrinder’s contribution to the study of religion in West Africa; Kevin Ward writes about Max Warren and John V. Taylor; W. John Young contributes a piece on Edwin W. Smith; Keith Clements writes of J. H. Oldham’s views on British colonial policy in Africa; and Christopher Steed provides a survey of Bengt Sundkler’s sixty years of interaction with Africa. For these contributions alone the book would be worthwhile, even if some of these writers are repeating, in briefer form, some of the points they have made elsewhere at greater length.

One might have expected a greater number of articles by African scholars (even though the topic is “European traditions in the study of religion in Africa”). There are some: Afe Adogame, an up-and-coming young Nigerian scholar, is one of the editors; Jacob Olupona, very well established in the field, contributes on German scholars among the Yoruba; and Musa Gaiya presents an African view of Thomas Fowell Buxton.

This is a book that, although many readers will not find everything in it of immediate relevance, most will discover to be both interesting and challenging. Among other things, it clearly establishes the prominent and important part that missionaries played in the development of this important field.

—Jack Thompson

Jack Thompson is Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh.

One of the primary tasks of the theological enterprise is to provide local churches and Christian institutions with written material that reflects the history, needs, priorities, and peculiarities of their specific contexts. Today this need is particularly compelling in Africa, Latin America, and Asia where the Church is experiencing rapid growth.

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Simon Chan, Philippines
“If the renewed interest in spirituality is to be something more than a passing fad, we need to link it firmly to sound theological reflection. Simon Chan has done just that, showing us how theology can be an expression of a vibrant relationship with the living God” – Dr. Richard Mouw

For details contact:
The Coordinator
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They do what anthropologists do best—give us thick descriptions of conversion from the perspectives of the converts themselves. Anthropologists argue that religion involves more than ideas about the supernatural. It is a theory of the world, and field missionaries, who too often reduce conversion to spiritual transformation and who do not take into account the effects of conversion on the lives of individuals and communities.

In these penetrating studies, the authors show us by way of ethnographic detail the complex intertwining of personal, social, cultural, and spiritual factors that are involved. They avoid the reductionism so common in social and psychological studies of conversion. They also examine how conversions affect nationalism, state formation, and the construction of authority.

The volume begins with an overview of anthropological theories of religion and ends with key theoretical implications that can be drawn from the cases. The book is of particular importance to missiologists and mission researchers.
from which they are derived” only by “freeing ourselves from manipulative, narrow or closed-ended fashions.” What is gained from this liberation can be an “experience of transformation” (p. 119), as Jenkins demonstrates, using three images from the Basel Mission Archive. Several other contributions are based either wholly or in part on the Basel photographs. Christraud Geary considers photographic portraiture of the Bamum elite in the Cameroon over an eighty-year period beginning in 1902, and Richard Fardon unravels the puzzling authorship of photographs taken at a ceremony in the Cameroon Grassfields in 1908. Basel cataloguer Barbara Frey Näf compares images in the mission archive with others from The People of India, a series of photographic illustrations . . . of the races and tribes of Hindustan (1868–72), finding valuable information to fill gaps in her documentation, and Thorald Klein makes some surprising finds in historical photographs of Chinese Christians.

This is a rich, absorbing, and well-illustrated compilation, impossible to do justice to in so short a review, and the editors are to be congratulated for bringing it to press so expeditiously. Photographs in the Basel Mission Archive can be accessed at http://www.bmpix.org.

—Rosemary Seton

Rosemary Seton served from 1979 to 2004 as Keeper of Archives and Special Collections at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

The Jesuits: Missions, Myths, and Histories.


Whether seen as the “shock troops” of the pope or as Marxist apologists for the global poor, the priests of the Society of Jesus never fail to fascinate. Jonathan Wright’s new book The Jesuits: Missions, Myths, and Histories presents a delightful overview of this extraordinary religious order. Written in a colorful and lively style, Wright surveys the entire history of the Jesuits, from their beginnings in the sixteenth century, to their missions in China, India, North America, Mexico, and Peru, their suppression in the eighteenth century, and their subsequent revival in the nineteenth. While recounting Jesuit activities over five centuries, Wright pays particular attention to the rise of anti-Jesuit mythologies, linking such attitudes to the broader intellectual currents of the times.

The finest part of this work details the creation of the anti-Jesuit myth in the early modern period. Wright conducted original research on this topic in Germany, England, and Scotland and provides unforgettable images of anti-Jesuit propaganda. In the words of an English Jesuit, “More fables perhaps are told about [the Jesuits] than were told of old about monsters” (p. 147). Yet not all aspects of Jesuit history are presented as thoroughly. Wright cites no sources in Spanish and mistakenly accuses José de Acosta of “rail[ing] against the notion of mixed-blood, mestizo children growing up to be Catholic priests” (p. 107). In fact, Acosta, “perhaps the most accomplished Jesuit missionary to Latin America” (p. 48), actively campaigned on behalf of mestizo clergy. In general, the Latin American missions could have been treated with greater nuance.

This reservation aside, Wright’s book is highly recommended. Describing the Jesuits as an ongoing collision between the intellectual fashions of the day and their own “defiantly idiosyncratic way of looking at the world” (p. 266), Wright has

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crafted a book that is informative, fair, and never, ever dull.

—Sabine Hyland


The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters Between Maasai and Missionaries.


In this remarkable and compelling book, Dorothy L. Hodgson, lecturer in anthropology at Rutgers University, provides a rich and insightful analysis of the influence of gender on the encounter between Spiritan missionaries and Maasai men and women in northern Tanzania. An important contribution to the study of gender, power, and mission, the book challenges scholars to reevaluate studies of gender that downplay issues of spirituality and religious belief and practices by overconcentration on economic and political notions of power.

Focusing on three parish communities, which were the mission of three Spiritan priests between 1995 and 2000, and utilizing primary oral and archival resources, Hodgson critically evaluates the complex history of Spiritan evangelization of the Maasai, which employed gendered strategies targeting men. Paradoxically, although “intent on creating Christian communities premised on male leadership and patriarchal authority[,] the men of the church instead facilitated the creation of a ‘church of women’” (p. 2).

Maasai women enthusiastically converted to Christianity, which provided them with a spiritual platform from which to challenge male assertions of power and authority and to reclaim and reaffirm their spiritual and moral superiority as guardians of the moral order of their world. The church offered women and a few men opportunities for spiritual engagement in new forms of spiritual expression, fellowship, and healing.

The depiction of Maasai women as active, although inadvertent, agents in their own conversion, however, fails to address the question of how renegotiated gender relations, which were mapped out spiritually, translate into empowerment for women in other dimensions.

This is an excellently written and
informative book, user friendly, and enriched with helpful maps and pictures. It will be useful to those interested in cross-cultural ministry, mission, and gender issues in African Christianity.

—Philomena N. Mwaura

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

Theology in Japan: Takakura Tokutaro (1885–1934).


J. Nelson Jennings, associate professor of world mission at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, has done a fine job with this comprehensive study of Takakura Tokutaro, a Japanese Christian theologian. Born in Kyoto, Takakura converted to Christianity at the age of twenty-one under Uemura Masahisa’s influence. Takakura, who studied at Edinburgh, Oxford, and Cambridge, greatly contributed to developing Protestant theology in Japan. His numerous writings were widely read. In his late years he assumed the duties of president at a seminary in Tokyo, which later became Tokyo Union Theological Seminary.

While Christians represent a minority in Japan, their intellectual influence on the rest of the population has been far more extensive than outside observers would suppose. Nevertheless, Japanese Christian thought has been mostly unknown overseas. Jennings’s work is therefore a significant breakthrough.

As Jennings notes, Takakura’s primary contribution is often viewed as transitional, introducing Scottish Calvinist theology to Japanese Christians and “unwittingly . . . creating an environment receptive to German dialectical theology.” His theology is seen as “lacking in originality” and “out of touch with the indigenous ‘ethos and issues of the day.’” Jennings, however, pays attention to Takakura’s “identity as a Japanese Christian who lived when and where he did” (pp. 401–2) and thoroughly discusses his background, the Japanese society of his time, and the nature of the faith he received from churches in Japan and the West. Such discussions facilitate our understanding of Takakura, revealing a unique intercultural process in his spiritual quest. Despite the apparent lack of originality, he was actually seeking to respond to questions peculiar to his own context, one alien to Western Christians.

We tend to appreciate non-Western theologies when wrapped in indigenous thought forms. Understanding non-Western Christianity, however, requires paying far more attention to the uniqueness of a believer’s search as such.

—Ken Christoph Miyamoto

Ken Christoph Miyamoto, a Japanese, is Associate Professor of Christian Studies at Kobe Shoin Women’s University in Kobe, Japan.

Prophecy, Miracles, Angels, and Heavenly Light? The Eschatology, Pneumatology, and Missiology of Adomnán’s Life of St Columba.


James Bruce, a Scottish scientist who has become an Anglican priest and church historian, studies a foundational source for Christianity in the British Isles—the Life of St Columba. Columba was the
foundating abbot of Iona, which Adomnán, the ninth abbot, wrote in about the year 700. Persuasively, with scrupulous historical method, Bruce distances himself from scholars who see Adomnán’s life as mirroring Irish saga, earlier saints’ lives, or scattered biblical templates. He argues, instead, that Adomnán interpreted Columba’s life in light of a New Testament theology of inaugurated eschatology in which the coming of God’s kingdom is prefigured by miraculous events. Bruce, of course, cannot know whether these events actually happened. But he presents evidence that indicates that wondrous deeds were involved in Christianity’s advance to the ends of Europe. Adomnán presents Columba as a monk/missionary who sought to embody God’s kingdom in the monastic community on Iona, from which missionaries traveled to preach but, even more, to perform miracles, which were prelapses of God’s kingdom. Especially interesting is Bruce’s conviction that the impact of Columba’s mission was gradual; it proceeded from the conversion of individuals and families and did not, as later writers imagined, transform society suddenly through mass conversions or the conversions of kings.

Bruce’s mastery of ancient texts and modern authorities (including theologians) is impressive. Readers of the IBMR may wish to compare Bruce’s thesis, which posits the central role for the miraculous in mission, with stories and reflections from the contemporary world church. Historians and practitioners of mission today have much to learn from this study of mission in the early “Celtic” West.

—Alan Kreider

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The author, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, is currently lecturer in new religious movements and Pentecostal theology at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana. The present text is a reworking of his Ph.D. dissertation (Univ. of Birmingham, 2000). It is a well-written and carefully researched study (as evidenced by the wide-ranging bibliography), providing a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship on global Pentecostalism and on the lively Ghanaian scene in particular. The author has a good command of the nexus of forces, local and global, that have resulted in the new wave of charismatic ministries becoming the most visible and influential form of indigenous, independent Christian expression in Ghana today. Readers will find the author’s history and comparison of the various forms and sources of Pentecostal-charismatic renewal to be helpful. For example, he recognizes U.S. influence from the outset, despite indigenous roots and appropriations, but rightly argues that it is now but one element of a more global phenomenon. His incorporation of modern media sources provides good evidence of these globalizing trends.

Asamoah-Gyadu identifies the principal themes of these newer independent churches as internationalism, transformation, salvation, prosperity, healing, and deliverance. He claims that his study is one of “tendencies and
emphases,” rather than of specific movements or individuals. Given his theological lens, he is particularly partial to the importance of the experiential, personal transformation generated by these new religious formations, and he chides some fellow scholars for failing to recognize this feature. He reserves especially strong critique for the so-called prosperity gospel in the Ghanaian context. He is also critical of the tendency within Ghanaian Christianity to overemphasize dualistic theology and rituals of deliverance. The author ends his work by reminding his readers of the vital importance of the intercultural, holistic approach to Pentecostal history, one that affirms diversity and the other, whether in the form of nations or of traditional religious cultures.

—Rosalind I. J. Hackett

Rosalind I. J. Hackett is currently President of the International Association for the History of Religions (from 2005 to 2010). She is Distinguished Professor in the Humanities at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ.
Vol. 3a.


This book is the latest addition to a monumental interdisciplinary project that aims at unfolding the many faces and images of Jesus Christ in China. The task was originally conceived as a collection of five single volumes, three of them for scholarly essays and original texts. The fourth one is for an annotated bibliography, index, and glossary; and the final tome will present artistic representations of Jesus. The first two volumes, published in 2002 and 2003, covered the period from the Tang to the end of the Qing dynasty. They were well received by the scholarly community, Sinologists and non-Sinologists alike. The material on the modern and contemporary period proved to be so rich that the editor decided to divide volume 3 into two. The present volume covers the first half of the twentieth century, while volume 3b will focus on the contemporary period.

Volume 3a will not disappoint readers. The thirteen scholarly essays and the twenty-four texts of the anthology section paint a rich and diverse portrayal of Jesus, reflecting the variety of contexts and issues of the period. Four contributions discuss how non-Christian writers and poets (e.g., Lu Xun and Ai Qing) understood and represented Jesus. One article deals specifically with images of Jesus among intellectuals of the 1919 May Fourth era. Two essays investigate the place of Jesus in Chinese Islam, and one considers the Christocentric mission of Karl Ludvig Reichelt to Chinese Buddhists. Six pieces focus on how Christian theologians, writers, artists, and scholars such as T. C. Chao, Wang Mingdao, John Wu, Lin Yutang, and Luke Chen tried to represent Jesus to their own people. Native Chinese wrote all but two of the twenty-four texts. Several of these writings, although previously published, are not readily available elsewhere.

This book, which bridges the gap between Chinese studies and religious studies, will greatly interest theologians and scholars of literature and the fine arts.

Jean-Paul Wiest

Jean-Paul Wiest is Research Director of the Beijing Center for Chinese Studies and Distinguished Fellow of the Ricci Institute at the University of San Francisco.

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Fall 2006: Enoch Wan

A native of China, Dr. Wan is professor of intercultural studies and chairman of the Division of Intercultural Studies at Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon. He has served on the faculties of Canadian Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Alliance Biblical Seminary of Manila. In addition to various scholarly articles, Dr. Wan is the founder and editor of Global Missiology, an online journal (www.globalmissiology.net).

Fall 2006: Colin Chapman

Colin Chapman was a lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon, from 1999 to 2003. He lived and worked in the Middle East for almost twenty years at various times between 1968 and 2003. An Anglican priest who speaks Arabic, he was principal of Crowther Hall, Birmingham, U.K., the Church Mission Society training college. He is the author of Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine, Cross & Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam, and Whose Holy City? Jerusalem and the Future of Peace in the Middle East.

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