Korean Missions: Beyond the Obvious

Any computer’s performance is tied to software programs that run in the background, usually in ways mysterious to the user. If we compare Christian mission to a booted-up computer, one of today’s most active background programs consists of precolonial heritages passed down to postcolonized Christians. Whether obvious or difficult to discern, these heritages are powerful and in need of careful upkeep and attention.

Starting about 500 years ago, peoples of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific experienced the awkward installation of the alien operating systems of European, American, and Russian political, economic, and military power. Various Christian traditions were imported with those alien systems. The collapse of modern colonial empires provided opportunity for fresh and penetratingly helpful analyses of the modern missions movement, allowing for the dissection of complex interconnections between religious propagation and political-economic power. At the same time, Christian movements throughout postcolonized territories have had to grapple with the still lingering effects of their political, economic, and cultural subjugation and its direct mutant, globalization, on their identity as “Christians.”

Never uninstalled, however, and continuously running in the background have been peoples’ precolonial heritages. For the sake of their religious, ethnic, and national identities, postcolonial Christians have had to reprogram their undeleted precolonial heritages in relation to imported and often imposed foreign Christian traditions. These integration efforts have given fresh shape and impetus to local and regional Christianities.

Christians in sub-Saharan Africa have been conspicuous exemplars of this dynamic process. The late Kwame Bediako and others have observed that African religious leaders and

Continued next page

On Page

59 Korean Protestant Christianity: A Missiological Reflection
Joon-Sik Park

65 Grace Korean Church, Fullerton, California: Mission from the Margins
Wonsuk Ma

68 Noteworthy

72 Toward a Broader Role in Mission: How Korean Americans’ Struggle for Identity Can Lead to a Renewed Vision for Mission
S. Steve Kang and Megan A. Hackman

78 Lessons from Korean Mission in the Former Soviet Region
John McNeill

82 Upcoming Conferences

84 Missions from Korea 2012: Slowdown and Maturation
Steve Sang-Cheol Moon

86 The Second Text: Missionary Publishing and Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress
David N. Dixon

90 A “New Breed of Missionaries”: Assessing Attitudes Toward Western Missions at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
F. Lionel Young III

96 My Pilgrimage in Mission
Joseph G. Donders

100 Book Reviews

101 Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2011 for Mission Studies

110 Dissertation Notices

112 Book Notes
key social institutions now receive open and public indigenous Christian analysis in a way that was anathema during colonial times—postcolonial reflection that has been accompanied by unprecedented numerical growth. Correspondingly, Korean Christians, after draconian Japanese imperial efforts to squelch fledgling expressions of Christian life, experienced extraordinary numerical growth. Somewhat ironically, however, in Korea this growth has too often been detached from robust sociopolitical engagement.

The ongoing challenge across the continents has been to understand what it means to turn previously unconverted spheres of life to Christ. What does conversion look like—socially, institutionally, and politically—and how does it take place? And what does this mean for the Christian diaspora, for the hundreds of thousands of Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans who are finding new homes and fresh hope in North America, Europe, and Australia—missionary-sending continents whose Christianity is either moribund or greatly diminished? Bugs and error messages associated with this latest background software acquire particular poignancy for second- and third-generation, fully enculturated immigrants more comfortable with the languages and cultural forms of their host countries than with those of their parents or grandparents. In what sense is the Christianity of a Korean Russian or a Korean American unique? What particular roles, if any, do such bicultural and even multicultural Christians play in the worldwide mission of the Gospel?

Such challenges are as old as our faith itself. After all, Jesus and his earliest followers lived out their days in a multicultural, brutally colonized world. The same holds true for two successive millennia of Christians, whether it be Judean Christians under persecution, tenth-century Slavs trapped between the Holy Roman and Byzantine Empires, sixteenth-century Hispmanol believers enslaved by Spaniards, or early twentieth-century Hawaiian Christians dominated by powerful U.S. political and corporate interests. In the nineteenth century, First Nations Alaskans were baptized into Russian Orthodoxy or transmuted into English-speaking Presbyterians. Chinese Christians, across the centuries, have received the Christian Gospel in its Syrian, Latin, Russian, French, English, German, Korean, and other linguistic and cultural forms.

Today as never before, Jesus’ followers are found across a bewildering range of settings: multicultural, alien, postcolonial, politically oppressive, affluent, and destitute. Whatever the setting, whether rooted or on the move, the church is the deeply flawed but extraordinarily purposeful body of Christ incarnate—the Word made flesh. It exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning, as Emil Brunner so aptly observed. The modern world order created by expanding empires is giving way to social, demographic, and ecclesiastical realities that are much less tidy than those proposed by missiological cartographers of a century ago.

Can operating systems and background software ever be separated? Not without debilitating the one and destroying the other. There can be no church and mission without human beings, and there can be no human beings who are not shaped, conditioned, self-defined, animated, and limited by their cultures. Nor can there be any church and mission that will not instinctively influence and benefit their host culture. While the essays in this issue of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research are weighted toward the country of Korea, they illustrate well what is taking place worldwide.

—J. Nelson Jennings
Korean Protestant Christianity: A Missiological Reflection

Joon-Sik Park

The first Protestant missionary set foot on the Korea Peninsula in 1884. The growth of Korean Protestantism in the past century and a quarter has been extraordinary by any measure. Korean churches experienced rapid numerical growth, in particular from the 1960s through the 1980s. In 1960 the Protestant population was 623,000, and by 1985 it had grown over tenfold to 6,489,000. From the early 1990s, however, the growth rate of the Korean church began to decline. In 1995, according to the Population and Housing Census Report, 8,760,000, or 19.7 percent of the population, were Protestant Christians. During the following decade the number of Protestants declined slightly, to 8,616,000, a 1.6 percent decrease. During the same period, by contrast, Korean Catholics increased by 74.4 percent (from 2,951,000 to 5,146,000), and Buddhists by 3.9 percent (from 10,321,000 to 10,726,000).2

This downward trend has alarmed Korean Protestant churches, forcing them to search for its causes and cures. Their responses thus far, however, have been reactive and shallow; the churches have not yet engaged in the critical theological self-reflection necessary for the renewal of the church at a more fundamental level. Specifically, I believe that Korean Protestant Christianity needs radical transformation at the level of its ecclesiology. In this article I examine the past growth and present decline of the Protestant church in South Korea, identifying major factors in its advancement and role in the current downturn. I then propose an Anabaptist vision of the church as an ecclesiological tradition to be integrated into a new vision of the Korean church, and hospitality as the context for its mission and evangelism.

Factors in Korean Protestant Growth

It is striking that Korean Christianity began virtually as a self-evangelized church. Even before the arrival of foreign missionaries, Korea had a small number of Protestant communities that arose primarily through the distribution of the New Testament translated into Korean in Manchuria by John Ross and his team of Korean merchant-translators. The first portions were printed and circulated in 1882, and the entire New Testament was available in 1887. The translation of the Bible into the Korean vernacular also significantly contributed to cultural revitalization and the formation of national identity.

A visit to Korea in 1890 by John L. Nevius, long-time missionary to China, turned out to be missiologically critical, for this was a time when the “missionaries were still feeling their way toward an over-all strategy for the evangelization of Korea.”4 The so-called Nevius Plan, which stressed the crucial importance of native leadership for church growth, “became the universally accepted policy of Protestant mission in Korea,” spurring the Korean church to be independent and self-supporting.5 Besides the significant role of Nevius and his method, several other factors help explain the rapid growth of the Korean Protestant Church.

Historical and geopolitical factors. The historical and geopolitical situations in and around Korea encouraged Koreans to accept Christianity more readily than in other Asian countries. Korea became forcibly annexed by Japan in 1910, and this tragic loss of independence “decisively shaped both the nature of Korean nationalism and the life of the Korean church.”6 By the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of Asian nations had become subjugated by Western powers and turned anti-Western; in Korea, however, the nationalism was anti-Japanese. Koreans welcomed Christianity as “a viable channel for expressing its nationalistic sentiment against the Japanese.”7 Furthermore, Christian education became “the nurturing ground of nationalism, political resistance and democracy.”8

The early growth of Korean Christianity thus became inseparably intertwined with Korean nationalism. The nationwide March First Korean Independence Movement of 1919 serves as a telling illustration of this unique partnership. Of the original thirty-three signatories of the Declaration of Independence, remarkably fifteen were Christians, even though Christians at that time represented only 1 percent of the population. Furthermore, Korean Christians became prominent nationalists, even though the missionaries clung to their traditional political neutrality and refused to embrace Korean nationalism.9 In the March First Movement, “Korean Protestants—by virtue of their disproportionately large participation and suffering—demonstrated beyond all doubts their commitment to the Korean nation,” thus gaining for Christianity its “right to be considered a legitimate religion of Korea.”10

Sociological and cultural factors. Confucianism has been an integral part of Korean society and culture since the fifth century. The Chosôn Dynasty (1392–1910) created the most Confucian society in East Asia, even more fully than in China. From the fifteenth century onward, Confucianism penetrated all facets of the society, regulating family life, culture, and politics. Yet it carried certain values that could readily resonate with or complement those of Christianity. James Grayson describes the relationship between them as that of “dynamic complementarity rather than of confrontation.”11 For instance, the early missionaries’ pioneering work in modern education was in tune with Confucianism’s profound reverence for learning, and the missionaries’ strict moral teaching was seen as consistent with the austere moral code of Neo-Confucianism. Another element of Christianity attractive to Confucians was its stress on filial piety, which was one of the five relationships considered by Confucius to be the centerpiece of a harmonious society. It would not be an overstatement to say that, “in a very real sense, Protestant Christianity was built on the foundation laid by the moral concerns of Neo-Confucianism.”12

This complementarity, however, did not mean the absence of conflict. “It was Christian rejection of social hierarchy which appealed to many,” but it was also “a hindrance to the spread of Christianity.”13 On the whole, the vision of society heralded by Christianity did not seem necessarily to be in irreconcilable conflict with the Confucian social ideal. The initial complemen-
tarity between Korean Confucianism and Christianity provided a favorable setting for the rapid growth of the Korean church. Eventually, however, Confucianism came to have a negative influence on the development and maturation of Korean Christianity.

Religious factors. Like most Asian countries, over the course of its history Korea has been deeply suffused with diverse religious traditions. According to David Chung, “The religious tradition of Korea had in a substantial way such congenial elements as the monotheistic concept of God, longing for salvation, messianic hope, [and] eternal life,” all of which were conducive to the acceptance of Christianity. In other words, some affinity between traditional Korean religions and Christianity made it easier for Koreans to adopt the Christian faith. As Samuel Moffett aptly described it, “Christianity did not deny much that people had loved in the old beliefs. Like Confucianism, it taught righteousness and revered learning; like Buddhism, it sought purity and promised a future life; like shamanists, Christians believed in answered prayer and miracles.”

Conversely, it could be argued that Christian conversions in Korea did not necessarily involve radically disowning formerly held beliefs, in particular those of shamanism. As the oldest religion in Korea, shamanism had taken deep root in the religious beliefs and the worldview of the Korean people. Because of shamanism’s enduring and permeating influence, it was typical as well as inevitable for religions later introduced to Korea to assimilate certain of shamanism’s beliefs and practices—in particular, its predominant focus on this-worldly and materialistic aspects of life. Christianity was not an exception. It could be safely stated that the phenomenal growth of Korean Christianity in part depended on mitigating possible conflicts between Christian faith and traditional religious values.

Economic factors. From the 1960s through the 1980s South Korea realized extraordinary economic growth, rebuilding itself from the rubble of war and rapidly becoming an industrialized and urbanized country. In 1990, in a little over a generation from the devastating Korean War, its economy became the fifteenth largest in the world. This swift transition from a rural-agricultural to an urban-industrial society resulted in a mass migration of rural villagers to urban areas, causing a widespread sense of intense dislocation and disorientation. Social instability was inevitable, as well as a steady erosion of long-held values and norms, including the breakdown of the traditional extended family. A deep sense of alienation and uprootedness spread throughout the country.

It should be noted that the period of the most explosive growth of the Korean church coincided with that of Korea’s rapid industrialization, and that the numerical increase of the church mostly occurred in urban areas. Seeking to alleviate their enormous physical and emotional dislocation and alienation, and searching for an alternative community to the close-knit rural social networks, many Koreans turned to churches. The churches in Korea were, however, not merely a passive receptacle of newcomers; they actively helped sustain the moral and spiritual values of the nation in the midst of the country’s rapid economic transition. According to Grayson, “Without the spiritual support of Christianity … the Korean nation would have lacked the moral and social coherence to survive the massive pressures imposed upon it by the radical social and economic changes.”

Adverse Effects of These Growth Factors

The very factors that spurred the growth of Korean Christianity through the early 1990s had inherent pitfalls that eventually began to negatively affect the identity and mission of Korean churches. First, it cannot be denied that the Korean church played a major role in the country’s opposition against Japanese colonial oppression, providing a crucial impetus for fostering a nationalistic consciousness. Once the country became liberated, however, the church’s intimate tie with nationalistic metamorphosed into alliance with the state. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the South Korean people were groaning under dictatorial governments, which did not hesitate to use repressive power to maintain their regimes, the majority of Korean churches remained silent. By their apolitical stance they in effect sanctioned such regimes. This indifference to the issues of social justice blunted the prophetic mission of the church and resulted in the loss of its credibility in society. It is noteworthy that, by contrast, the Catholic Church in Korea during this time greatly enhanced its social visibility and credibility by its active struggle for democracy, even at the expense of institutional security, and it has grown steadily since then.

Second, the early receptivity by Koreans to Christian faith and the ensuing church growth distracted Korean churches from the need to continue working for the conversion of Korean culture. At some point, Korean Protestants stopped pursuing “the steady, relentless turning of all the mental and moral processes [of culture] toward Christ.” Consequently, “the direct Christian influence on Korean society and forms of cultural expression is disproportionately less than one would anticipate.” Above all, the persistent influence of a Confucian vision of a harmonious society based on hierarchical relationships has kept the Korean church from overcoming social stratification among its members. The existing hierarchy of the larger society has often been reflected within the church, with the result that those not valued by society have become invisible to the church.

The role of the church in enlightening women and elevating their status in Korean society should be recognized. It was the Protestant missionaries who first introduced formal education for women and thereby paved the way for their attaining equal rights with men. However, according to an ethnographic study of Korean Christian women, in particular evangelical women, the church has served a contradictory, double role—liberating as well as oppressing. The Christian faith has certainly contributed to the reconstruction of their self-identity as well as to their self-empowerment and social autonomy, enabling them to cope with the patriarchal environment of the traditional family and gender structure. Yet, most Korean churches have left women “subordinated within the church hierarchy and authority structure” and been successful “in re-domesticating contemporary women for the [existing Confucian] family system” and social arrangements.

A bitter fruit of Confucianism in Korean Christianity has been the development of clericalism, with clergy exercising excessive power in both the faith and the polity of the church. A kind of “Protestant sacerdotalism” has limited the participation of laity—whose fervent prayer and passionate evangelism have been a driving force for church growth—in the church’s life and ministry as true partners with clergy; it has stifled the enormous
potential of the laity as agents of witness and transformation both inside and outside the church.

Third, Korean Christianity’s accommodation to shamanism, in particular its predominant interest in this-worldly and materialistic aspects of life, has produced a significant presence of nominal Christians. Shamanism has tamed the radical claims of Christianity. Consequently, Christian discipleship has been understood in narrowly individualistic terms, often as a gateway to personal prosperity, while its costly nature, as well as its communal and social dimensions, is ignored or underemphasized. Unfortunately, Korean Christianity has not yet critically reflected on and confronted its predilection for materialistic prosperity. Nominalism has also led to a large number of Protestants leaving the church. According to Gallup Korea’s 2004 survey, among those who changed their religion, 45.5 percent had once belonged to a Protestant church, in comparison to 34.4 percent who had left Buddhism, and only 14.9 percent who had left Catholicism. Moreover, both the 1997 and 2004 surveys revealed that, presently in Korea, Protestantism is the religion least likely to be considered for adoption by those without religious affiliation.23

Finally, the rapid industrialization and urbanization that once created a favorable climate for church growth now adversely affects it. For South Koreans, with the growth of economic stability and upward social mobility, “leisure becomes a functional imperative” and in response to decline, the church appears to direct most of its attention to finding ways to reverse it. An exception has been minjung theology, which grew out of the particular experience of South Korean people in their political and socioeconomic struggles for justice in the 1970s and 1980s. It affirms Korean culture and history as the context for a proper Korean theology, regarding the biblical stories and the social biographies of the suffering minjung (lit., “the mass of the people”) as the two primary reference points. Minjung theology in part arose in protest against the overall apolitical stance of Korean evangelicalism and its indifference to systemic injustices; it has challenged Korean Christianity to be more integral and prophetic in its theology and practice of mission and to be on the side of the marginalized minjung. This theology began, however, as a theological exercise among intellectuals and educated groups. Whether it has become a theology among and by the minjung themselves is a troubling question. Lacking a grassroots movement like the Catholic “base communities,” it has not been successful in developing as an organic theology.

It is crucial for Korean Christianity to continue to engage in critical theological reflection in its particular historical and social context so as to make its unique contribution to the understanding and practice of the Christian faith. Yet it is equally important for the Korean church to continue to be engaged with other churches and traditions for mutual correction and transformation. I believe that Korean Protestant Christianity must seek a radical transformation in its ecclesiology; specifically, the Anabaptist vision of the church can provide it with a fresh perspective and a much-needed corrective at this juncture in its history. Up till now, Anabaptist ideas have had no formative influence in Korean Christianity. There are presently only a handful of Mennonite churches in Korea, all of which were started within the last decade. Anabaptist ecclesiology has its own weaknesses,29 yet I agree with Douglas John Hall that this tradition, which has a historic link with the radical wing of the Reformation, could be of enormous help to churches that intentionally seek to disentangle themselves from the “cultural establishment” so as to recover something of their genuine identity and mission.29

For one thing, one of the marks of the Radical Reformation tradition is its stress on the integration of evangelism and discipleship. Evangelism is an invitation to discipleship; evangelism and biblical demands related to committed discipleship are not to be separated. For Korean Protestant Christianity, it is pivotal not to set aside the ethical content of conversion for the sake of making the acceptance of the Gospel easier. Korean churches have been rather exclusively preoccupied with personal salvation and piety, ignoring the call of the Gospel to social and cultural transformation. Korean Christians’ understanding of discipleship needs to be broadened and deepened so as to include seeking justice as well as caring for the poor, the excluded, and the stranger.

Second, Anabaptist ecclesiology focuses prominently on the communal nature of the church. It refuses to grant excessive authority or prerogatives to certain ones in the church. Instead, the church is to be a discerning community in which every member is heard and participates in moral reasoning and decision making. More important, the church is to be a “hermeneutic community” that gathers around Scripture for faithful interpretation and committed witness. Since the Korean Protestant church has been too clergy dominated in its worship and polity, the communal nature of the church needs to be recovered. Furthermore, the corporate dimension in experiences of both salvation and sanctification should be restored and renewed. As John Howard Yoder says, even salvation is not to be considered as only a personal, individual experience but also as a communal reality.30

Whither Korean Protestant Christianity?

Quite simply, Korean Protestants are now in desperate need of transforming their ecclesiology. They likewise, in humility, need to adopt biblical hospitality as the proper focus and ethos of all their mission and evangelism.

Transformation in ecclesiology. Since the 1960s, the focus of the Korean Protestant church has been rather exclusively growth-oriented. Its operating missional framework is still that of growth, and in response to decline, the church appears to direct most of
Third, Korean Protestant churches have become much too worldly, allowing the secular and materialistic spirit of the age to penetrate deeply their life and ministry. They now need to pay careful heed to the “central importance of the Christian community as a new humanity” or as “a new kind of social reality.” The mission of the church is first and foremost to be and remain a faithful community of faith with a new and distinctive identity and life. Peoplehood and mission cannot be separated, and the life of the church should not invalidate its witness. Evangelism and mission are practicable and feasible only when there is a community whose life reflects authentic differences from the rest of the world, in particular with regard to power, Mammon, and violence.

Finally, the Anabaptist understanding of the Gospel as a message of peace is crucially pertinent to Korean churches, for “participating in national reunification remains an important part of [their] mission.” A small segment of the Korean church has actively engaged in the reunification movement, in particular since the 1980s. Yet the general sentiment among Korean Christians settles for a strong anti-Communist position, which has kept them from engaging reunification issues from a biblically informed perspective of reconciliation and from moving beyond their evangelistic interest and humanitarian concern toward undertaking peacemaking initiatives. Korean Christianity needs to be reminded afresh that witness to peace is “something very central to the Gospel . . . [and] always a part of the Gospel.” It is crucial for the Korean church to construct a theology of reconciliation based upon the peace message of the Gospel, for without forgiveness of the past history between the North and the South, genuine reunification is not likely.

Hospitality as the context for mission and evangelism. A focus on missions, especially very active sending out of missionaries, has been a distinctive feature of Korean Christianity from the very beginning. In 1908, less than a single generation from the arrival of the first missionaries, the Korean Methodists organized a missionary society for Chientao (an area of China along the Korean border with a large number of Koreans) and sent its first missionary. In more recent history, the number of Korean overseas missionaries grew an astonishing 160-fold: from 93 in 1979 to nearly 15,000 in 2006. South Korea is now the second largest missionary-sending country, behind only the United States. In the same period, the number of countries where they serve increased from 26 to 168. Considering that Koreans are a monoethnic and monocultural people, their active role in world mission appears even more remarkable. Korean missionaries “have become known for aggressively going to . . . the hardest-to-evangelize corners of the world,” even at times being “at odds with the foreign policy of South Korea’s government.” In most mission fields they are the world, even at times being “at odds with the foreign policy for aggressively going to . . . the hardest-to-evangelize corners of even more remarkable. Korean missionaries “have become known monocultural people, their active role in world mission appears rightful Christianity is now at a crossroads. Either it can recover its essential identity and mission, channeling anew its enormous resources of personnel and finances into participation in God’s redemptive work, or it can remain concerned only about its own well-being and survival, unfaithful to the movement of divine providence. The Korean church must turn from an interest in its own numerical growth and institutional expansion, looking instead with single-minded focus on becoming a hospitable and transformative missional presence that is deeply involved in the struggles and aspirations of Korean society, as well as those of the rest of humanity. If Korean Protestantism fails to be renewed as a faithful, reconciled, and reconciling community of Christ, we hospitality never violates the identity and integrity of the other, and it always calls for mutual respect and recognition between evangelists and hearers, as well as between missionaries and Christians of hosting countries. Furthermore, the practice of biblical hospitality “integrates respect and care,” seeking “to respond to the needs of persons while simultaneously respecting their dignity.”

Mission to North Korea could well be a test case for the integrity of the Korean missionary movement. It definitely would be a cross-cultural mission, for North and South Korea have lived in two different ideological and political systems for more than six decades. Given the economic superiority of the South, it is critically important that missionaries welcome North Koreans with both respect and care. Mission and evangelism must be carried out with sensitivity to the fragility of North Koreans, resulting particularly from the heavy economic dependence on the South that can be expected of North Koreans. For South Koreans to welcome and accept North Korean defectors would be “a very important precedent” for the Korean church’s mission of reconciliation toward North Korea.

It is also pivotal for Korean missionaries to extend hospitality to one another, and thus to overcome competitiveness and rivalry. In light of the temptation to impose denominational patterns and structures on indigenous churches, it is crucial that missionaries guard themselves from creating or perpetuating on the mission field “the divisions experienced in Korean Protestantism.” Partnership in mission through the practice of biblical hospitality and mutual coordination will prove crucially important, in particular in the future mission to North Korea. The North Korean Church Reconstruction Council, formed in 1995 by the Christian Council of Korea, presented a three-stage plan for rebuilding the churches in North Korea: first, to form a single channel of evangelization to prevent missionary competition; second, to build a single Christian denomination without transplanting the schisms and splits of the South to the North; and, third, ultimately to enable churches in North Korea to be independent and self-reliant without the domination of South Korean churches. For such a plan to succeed, true ecumenical unity among the churches in South Korea should first be embodied through the practice of welcoming and showing hospitality to each other.

Conclusion

The phenomenal growth and spiritual vitality of Korean Christianity are to be explained neither as an accident nor as the result of merely historical factors. The Christian churches in Korea were firmly established by the blood of martyrs, and they have rightly been known as praying churches. In noting their status as the predominant religious force in early twenty-first-century Korea, we thus wish to ascribe the primary cause to God’s gracious providence, which defies human analysis. Yet Korean Protestant Christianity is now at a crossroads. Either it can recover its essential identity and mission, channeling anew its enormous resources of personnel and finances into participation in God’s redemptive work, or it can remain concerned only about its own well-being and survival, unfaithful to the movement of divine providence. The Korean church must turn from an interest in its own numerical growth and institutional expansion, looking instead with single-minded focus on becoming a hospitable and transformative missional presence that is deeply involved in the struggles and aspirations of Korean society, as well as those of the rest of humanity. If Korean Protestantism fails to be renewed as a faithful, reconciled, and reconciling community of Christ, we
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Notes
1. This article originated as a faculty lecture at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, Ohio, on February 16, 2011. I thank James H. Grayson for helpful comments on an earlier version.
12. Ibid., pp. 82–83.
15. Moffett, Christians of Korea, p. 52.
Grace Korean Church, Fullerton, California: Mission from the Margins

Wonsuk Ma

In recent years mission watchers have drawn attention to significant changes in the global Christian landscape, with two of the most important being the southward shift of global Christianity and the rise of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. These two elements come together as we observe that the majority of thriving churches in the Global South are charismatically oriented. Their exponential growth in both numbers and dynamism contrasts sadly with the steady decline of Western churches. In God’s economy, the Southern church may now be called to come to the aid of Western churches. Such a missionary call, however, has not been the main focus of the emerging missionary churches in the South. Instead, I believe that Southern immigrant congregations that are located in the heart of Western societies are the ones that are poised as the conduit of missionary energy from the South. I have therefore been searching for an example that cries out for recognition and perhaps also for assistance in the growth and maturity of its mission thinking and practice. And I found one: Grace Korean Church, in Fullerton, California. It is not perfect, of course, but it strikes me as extremely significant.¹

An Invisible Giant

Grace Korean Church (GKC) is a Korean-American diaspora congregation. It has never called itself Pentecostal but, like many Korean churches, is extremely Pentecostal in its theology, worship, and ethos. Paul Gi Hong Han, the current senior pastor of the church, characterizes the twofold focus of the church as (1) the work of the Holy Spirit and (2) mission.

With its 6,500 membership and a 26.2-acre campus, the church has a distinct presence in the city, and its missionary accomplishments have become legendary among Korean-American Christians. However, except for a few nearby ministers, some missiologists, and several short reports in the local Orange County Register, the most popular local newspaper, the church’s presence and its activities have been largely unknown to mainstream society and the media. This invisibility stems from GKC’s exclusive association with other Korean churches in the area and in the country (as well as in Korea). Although the church includes an English-speaking congregation primarily made up of second-generation Koreans, the core group consists of first-generation Korean immigrant believers. The church has simply not produced any English-language literature that would properly introduce the church and its impact on society and mission.

My first acquaintance with the church was through GKC’s widespread reputation as a single-minded missionary church during my studies in Southern California in the early 1990s. GKC was not the largest among the Korean immigrant churches, nor was the broadcast preaching of Kwang-shin Kim, its founder, eloquent in delivery or profound in its theological content. Nonetheless, Kim has been widely known for his charismatic leadership and deep spiritual sensitivity. His missionary leadership defies many common-sense missiological assumptions. My visit to the church’s rented school facility confirmed all that I had heard about Kim and the church. In my view, they represent a surprisingly new missionary player from a social and ecclesial fringe that has potential to significantly influence Christianity and its missionary work.

This study is first of all descriptive, for the story of Grace Korean Church is not widely known outside of Korean-American Christian circles. It includes a look at Kim, the birth and growth of the church, and the development of its missionary work, particularly in areas of the former Soviet Union. The second aspect of the study is a critical analysis of GKC’s mission thinking and practice. The study concludes with evaluations, concerns, and suggestions for the future of its missions work.

It is not surprising that little has been written about GKC. I know of only two books about it, both in Korean. One is a collection of stories, particularly of GKC’s mission to places in the former Soviet Union; the second is a book published in 2009 with three distinct components: a synopsis of the construction of the church’s new Vision Center, an autobiography of Kim, and an autobiography of Paul Gi Hong Han, Kim’s successor. In addition, a mission handbook published by Grace Mission International (GMI), an outgrowth of the church, lists its missionaries with a brief description of their ministries. Also, Tai Choul Yang, GKC’s mission pastor, who has completed a doctor of ministry degree, wrote his dissertation (in Korean) on GKC’s missionary work. Pastor Han kindly arranged for his two mission leaders to answer my questions and requests for documents. We currently have no way, however, to confirm the objectivity of the presentations or the validity of the data; I should note that some parts of the sources are fairly promotional in nature.

Founder Kwang-shin Kim

Kwang-shin Kim was born in Korea in 1935, about ten years before the liberation of Korea from the harsh rule of the Japanese, who had annexed the country in 1910. He evidently spent a few years of his primary school education under the Japanese assimilation curriculum, which denied Koreans their language and culture. His experience with the Korean War as a teenager greatly impacted him. He volunteered to serve in the army, although he was not old enough. We know really nothing specific about his early years, but he must have witnessed, if not indeed experienced firsthand, decades of poverty and political struggle under military dictatorship.

He graduated from the prestigious Seoul National University and served as an English teacher at Sookmyung Girls’ High School in Seoul. For unknown reasons, he migrated to Argentina in 1969. Two years later he moved to the United States, where he eventually completed seminary.
Conversion. Kim had a radical experience of conversion at age forty-two, although he had previously been a churchgoer and even a choir conductor. It happened through his brother-in-law, who shared his experience of God’s radical healing of a cancer. This triggered a chain of events that eventually led to Kim’s encounter with God’s reality. He was also baptized in the Holy Spirit. He claimed that several spiritual gifts accompanied this series of events, including seeing a weeping Jesus in a vision.

Two years later he began his seminary education at Biola University, La Mirada, California. Upon completion of his theological education in 1982, Kim founded Grace Korean Church. The first meeting had three families in attendance. When the church celebrated its twenty-eighth anniversary in 2010, the membership of the church had reached 4,500. By early 2012 the church had grown to around 6,500 members and had a multitude of ministries. It currently owns an extensive infrastructure on its property in Fullerton.

Missionary vision. Kim’s vision of a local church, which continues under his successor, is simply a community of believers empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission. This mission-centered ecclesiology was born of Kim’s vision of a weeping Jesus early in his Christian life.8 His life’s journey as an immigrant in a foreign land may have contributed to this sense of a missional call.9 GKC’s dual theological pillar is articulated by Paul Gi Hong Han, who succeeded Kim as senior pastor in 2004: “From the beginning of GKC, there has been a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. Many are healed, words proclaimed through Kim convict and convince hearts and lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Many are healed, words proclaimed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Many are healed, words proclaimed through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Mission priority. The priority of mission for Kim is tangibly demonstrated in several ways. The first is a conspicuous banner that greets everyone in the main lobby of the Miracle Center, the main sanctuary. It reads, “Mission is Prayer, War, and Martyrdom.” It shows not only how the church understands mission and their resolution to fulfill it, but more important, mission as the very reason for the church’s existence.

The second evidence is the way mission is financed. The church has consistently spent between 50 and 60 percent of its gross income on mission. A key lay member of the Mission Committee has commented, “It is often said that GKC spends 60 to 70 percent of its annual budget for mission, but that is misleading. . . . We have never had a certain amount of money set aside for mission. Rather, as urgent mission needs are made known, we take voluntary collections to meet the needs. In this way, by the end of a year, we see that the church has spent a high proportion of its finances on mission.”10 The priority of financial resources given to mission is—or at least has been—demonstrated in how the church handles its overall spending. It has been widely known that the remuneration packages for the senior pastor and other ministers on the pastoral staff are equal. Also, for the first twenty-two years of the church’s existence, despite its rapid growth in numbers and resources, Kim refused to have the church own any property. It was assumed that owning property would distract the church’s attention and financial resources from mission. (In 2009, however, GKC completed construction of a $40 million International Prayer Center, which has placed an enormous financial burden on the church body.)

The third evidence of the priority of mission in GKC is the extent to which the congregation has adopted Kim’s view that giving oneself to missionary service is the very best way a Christian can live his or her life. Most church members have participated in several short-term mission trips. When Kim suggests that a member consider a full-time missionary career, no matter how fearsome that possibility might at first appear, it is taken as the eventual climax of one’s Christian life at GKC.12

Peter Wagner has given a brief, glowing commendation of Kim and of his powerful leadership impact on the whole church, with its unusual commitment to, and achievements in, mission. Referring to mission heroes such as William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and David Livingstone, Wagner commented, “I believe David Kim is one of the most significant missionaries and apostles to be counted among them.”13

GKC Mission Successes

Mission to the Soviet Union. Kim reportedly wept in prayer for five years for the Soviet Union, although he had little direct knowledge of or contact with its member republics.14 Eventually he focused his prayer on the 450,000 ethnic Koreans scattered widely throughout the U.S.S.R. In 1990 the church organized a thirty-three-member missionary choir, including many youth. With very little missionary experience of any kind, GKC’s first missionary team sang a mixture of Christian songs and Korean folk tunes in concerts throughout the Soviet Union. With the grip of Communism still strong, and despite challenges from local and national bureaucracies, the choir gave presentations in Sakhalin, Khabarovsk, Moscow, Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and Almaata (Kazakhstan). Throughout, the group faced the government’s strong suspicion of their motives, not to mention a medical emergency and a tight schedule and budget. Challenges were always overcome through total trust in God’s intervention, the sheer determination of Kim and the team, and, more important, a mind-set of martyrdom. Each formidable challenge proved to be merely a stepping-stone for spiritual and emotional breakthroughs in each place. Evangelism was gloriously successful. (I should note, however, that information about this effort comes only from GKC’s publications.)

This trip had several immediate results. First, in almost every city where the choir held a Gospel concert, a local congregation was eventually established. Second, all the participants experienced a deep sense of missionary commitment, with many of them eventually becoming career missionaries. Third, the church itself entered into a new era, with an intensified awareness of mission. Their experiences were repeatedly shared through preaching, debriefing sessions, small group prayers, and the like. In the same year, ten members were officially appointed as missionaries to Soviet cities, while GKC’s “Soviet mission plan” was soon expanded beyond ethnic Koreans in the U.S.S.R. Later the church chartered a jumbo jet from Los Angeles to Russia.
for a follow-up missionary trip. Throughout the flight the team devoted itself to fasting, prayer, and praise.

Mission to Tajikistan. The church in this Muslim country, which gained its independence in 1991, began in 1992 during a period of civil war. The initial contacts were among 500 ethnic Koreans in Dushanbe, the capital, a city of 600,000 people. Yoon-sup Choi was one of the early GKC missionaries who helped found a congregation, the Dushanbe Grace Church. The new church launched an aggressive evangelistic program, using various approaches, including a martial arts studio for the city youth, in which high-ranking government officers and police eventually took part. This program typically attracted between twenty and one hundred participants daily. As with all the church’s programs, it began with a time of prayer followed by a fifteen-minute presentation of a Christian message before every tae kwon do session. The church also began a daily feeding program for an average of 300 people, and conducted thirty or forty short-term medical service projects, drawing on Korean American and Korean Christian medical personnel from within GKC circles. On average, each short-term medical service project lasted about six weeks. No matter what means were used to draw interest or meet human needs, prayer and a straightforward presentation of the Christian message of repentance and salvation lay at the heart of the evangelistic campaign.

At the beginning of this mission, an average of seventy members spent about five hours daily in prayer for the evangelization of the city of Dushanbe and the entire nation. Choi trained about fifty members for personal evangelism two-by-two throughout the region. Great results were reported, particularly in rural villages, where in many cases Muslim leaders accepted the Christian message and their entire village turned to Christ. It is claimed that an estimated 150,000 in Tajikistan have heard the presentation of the Gospel, although this number cannot be verified. By 1999 the church had grown to over 1,000 worshippers, with a host of daughter churches throughout the country.

In 2000 the church was bombed during a Sunday worship service, killing ten people and injuring around a hundred. This event made it clear that the church’s rapid growth and its impact were perceived as a threat to Islam, the state religion. Against the convictions and commitment of the church members, whose numbers continued to grow, this attack provided an unusual opportunity for GKC to deepen its commitment to and support of the mission, representing God’s power through healing and miracles, seeking the Spirit’s guidance, and the like. Any social component, such as relief work, social services, and cultural interests, is simply to facilitate the work of evangelism and church planting.

The empowerment of God the Holy Spirit is to be used to adopt a lifestyle that is willing to surrender to, and thus suffer for, mission.

Analysis

Theological assumptions. I have found hardly any articulated theological reflection on GKC’s mission engagement. Yet Kim’s sermons and the mission policies and practices of GKC reveal a clear mission theology. Three aspects of this theology are noteworthy.

First is Kim’s extremely functional ecclesiology. The very reason for the church’s existence is to carry out the missionary mandate; spiritual formation and pastoral care are not ends in themselves but merely means for the building of a missionary community. Kim believes that the size of the congregation, which in only three years grew to about 1,000 members, is a natural outcome of the church’s mission orientation, representing God’s choir’s repertoire included old Korean folk songs, which it used to connect emotionally with its audience. At the climax of any gathering, however, was a straightforward presentation of Kim’s simple message of salvation through Christ. In retrospect, we can see that such large-scale gatherings and well-planned cultural presentations using music and drama filled a social and emotional vacuum left by the collapse of Communism. GKC’s missions used this cultural “packaging” to initially attract people to a presentation of the Gospel, but the overall goal of the mission has always been evangelism, which arises from the theological conviction that sin is the fundamental root of all human and social problems. The church’s missionary approach is extremely spiritual, including intercessory prayer, belief in supernatural manifestations of God’s power through healing and miracles, seeking the Spirit’s guidance, and the like. Any social component, such as relief work, social services, and cultural interests, is simply to facilitate the work of evangelism and church planting.

Also noticeable is GKC’s strong orientation toward “foreign”
mission, that is, mission that involves the distinct element of "going," preferably crossing geographic, cultural, and religious boundaries. The church particularly favors mission to "unreached people groups." The bigger the gap between "home" and "over there," the more need there is for commitment and sacrifice. I have seen no mention of a possible mission to the large Hispanic population in Southern California. We can imagine that, as first-generation Korean immigrants, with harsh memories of the Korean War and the ensuing Cold War era, the church members have felt a natural concern for mission to the former Soviet locations. This sense of needing to go "over there" has deep roots in the Great Commission, along with the notion that

Noteworthy

Announcing
An English-language, African-focused mission journal, The Shepherd: A Publication of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Nigeria, commenced with the January 2011 issue. The editor, Metropolitan Alexandros, oversees the Lagos-based archdiocese, which is part of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and which has congregations in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Niger, countries where there are few Orthodox communities. "If I am not mistaken (though I hope I am), Shepherd is the only Orthodox journal, at this time, published by a missionary church. As it appears, it differs vastly from the journals we have in Greece, and which are produced for mission, and not by a missionary church. Africans themselves have contributed to this Nigerian journal, and they are paving the way for a valuable opportunity for the whole Church to be realized: for the African voice to be heard and the contemporary situation in Africa to be made known" (http://missionstudies.org/index.php/noteworthy-news/), commented missiologist Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, tutor at Hellenic Open University and editor-in-chief of Synaxis. For details on the new journal, e-mail the editor, Alexander Yanntitis, shepherd@orthodoxnigeria.org, or go online to www.orthodoxnigeria.org.

The Maryknoll Sisters, the first US-based Roman Catholic congregation of women religious dedicated to foreign missions, celebrated their centennial with a mass at their headquarters in Ossining, New York, on January 8, 2012. The liturgy was celebrated by Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York. Janice McLaughlin, M.M., president of Maryknoll, and the bishop of New York. Janice McLaughlin, M.M., president of Maryknoll Sisters (www.maryknollsisters.org), led the liturgy. It was accompanied by a mini-encyclopedia of Christian organizations in China before 1950 that includes for each organization the abbreviation, full name in Chinese, and date it was established in China. More than two hundred Christian organizations are listed. Cui’an Peng, senior associate at the Global China Center (www.globalchinacenter.org), Charlottesville, Virginia, compiled the list from the 1936 Handbook of the Christian Movement in China (Shanghai, 1936) and World Missionary Atlas (New York, 1925). Read the directory at www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/by-affiliation.

Faith Comes By Hearing (www.faithcomesbyhearing.com) and the United Bible Societies (www.unitedbiblesocieties.org) have agreed to collaborate by combining FCBH’s Digital Bible Project and the UBS Digital Bible Library, which will create the “world’s largest repository of digital Bible text and audio” and “leverage technology for greater access, while also improving efficiency and reducing duplication of work and services,” according to news announcements on the organizations’ Web sites.

The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, Calvin College, and Baylor University Press announced a forthcoming book series, World Christianity: Studies from the Global South and East. The series will focus on particular movements, traditions, ideas, or historic episodes in the development of Christianity in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, and among migrating communities from these regions. Joel Carpenter, Nagel Institute director, jcarpenter@calvin.edu, is series editor. For details, go to www.calvin.edu/nagel/projects/baylor.html.

Personalia
Appointed. Scott W. Sunquist, professor of world Christianity at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as dean of the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, beginning July 1, 2012. A former missionary with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), he moved to Pittsburgh in 1995 after being a lecturer in church history, ecumenics, and Asian Christianity at Trinity Theological College, Singapore (1987–95). Previously, he had worked for six years with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship on campuses in Virginia and Massachusetts. Sunquist is editor of A Dictionary of Asian Christianity (2001); coauthor with Dale T. Irvin of History of the World Christian Movement, vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453 (2001); vol. 2, forthcoming (see www.hwcmweb.org); and coeditor with Caroline Becker, his daughter, A History of Presbyterian Missions, 1944–2007 (2008). C. Douglas McConnell, former dean of the School of Intercultural Studies, was installed as provost and senior vice president of Fuller Theological Seminary in October 2011.

Appointed. Xiyi (Kevin) Yao, associate professor in the Department of Theological Studies, China Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Hong Kong, as associate professor of world Christianity and Asian studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, effective in January 2012. A Beijing native, Yao’s academic career began as an editor and researcher at the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Science. During his tenue at CGST, he was a researcher at the school’s Chi-
one should go to “the ends of the earth” in order to reach “all nations” (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

GKC thus defines mission very narrowly, which helps explain its focused energy in mission. My quick survey of the Orange County Register noted several brief reports about GKC, yet I saw no evidence that the church, even with its enormous membership and huge campus, had any impact on the city of Fullerton or its highly concentrated multiracial communities.

Mission practice. The above comments support my conclusion that GKC conducts its mission work strictly as a “faith mission,” in the fullest sense of the term. The church steps into the unknown with

Chinese Culture Research Center. From 2001 to 2003 he served as a Beijing-based consultant for the China Educational Exchange, a North American Mennonite program. While working in Hong Kong (2003–10), he was an associate of the Mennonite Mission Network. Recently, he has been active in scholarly exchanges among Korean, Japanese, and Chinese church historians.

Appointed. John Richard Nuelle, M.S., as executive director of the United States Catholic Mission Association (www.uscatholicmission.org), Washington, D.C. He was director of the North American La Salette Mission Center in St. Louis. He began his missionary career in Madagascar, where he served for nearly thirty years, then was in Rome as general secretary and temporary procurator to the Holy See for the La Salettes. Nuelle succeeds Michael Montoya, M.J., who served as executive director for six years. The USCMC celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in October 2011 in Miami. The 2012 mission conference, planned for October 26–28 in Los Angeles, will have “Forging New Paths: Interreligious Dialogue” as its theme.

Appointed. Gregory K. Williamson as chief mission officer for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), St. Louis, Missouri, effective January 3, 2012. Williamson is responsible for LCMS mission, ministry, and programmatic functions of the synod’s national office, supervising the Office of National Mission, the Office of International Mission, and the fund development and communications departments. The announcement was made by LCMS president Matthew C. Harrison. Before joining the LCMS staff, Williamson was a command chaplain at the U.S. Army Garrison, Yongsan, Seoul, Korea. He also coordinated policy and activities with U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force chaplains, and with staff and command chaplains at Combatant Commands and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Appointed. Philip Jenkins, professor of history and religious studies, Pennsylvania State University, as a distinguished senior fellow at the Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University, Waco, Texas (www.baylorisr.org). Jenkins, who will divide his time between Penn State and Baylor, will be codirector of Baylor’s Initiative on Historical Studies of Religion and will lead history seminars. An IBMR contributing editor, Jenkins is author of Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can’t Ignore the Bible’s Violent Verses (2011), The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South (2006), and The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (2002).

Appointed. Susan H. Greener, dean of students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, as associate professor of intercultural studies, Wheaton College (Illinois). Evvy Hay Campbell, a Wheaton intercultural studies faculty member since 1996, is now emerita faculty.

Appointed. Moses O. Biney as assistant professor of religion and society and director of research in the Center for the Study and Practice of Urban Religion, New York Theological Seminary. He is also minister of missions and outreach at First Presbyterian Church of Irvington, New Jersey, and was the organizing pastor for a Ghanaian immigrant congregation in Bronx, New York. Biney is author of From Africa to America: Religion and Adaptation Among Ghanaian Immigrants in New York (2011).

Died. Edward L. Cleary, O.P., 82, Dominican missiologist, professor emeritus of political science at Providence College (Rhode Island), and scholar of Latin American studies, November 21, 2011, in Providence. Cleary served as a Dominican priest for fifty-four years, joining the Central Province of St. Albert the Great in Chicago in 1957. He served in La Paz, Bolivia (1958–62) and was vicar provincial of the Dominican Mission Vicariate in La Paz (1966–71). Cleary participated in numerous national and international conferences and programs. In 1998 he witnessed the meeting of Pope John Paul II and Fidel Castro in Cuba. His passion for Latin America was reflected in his scholarship, lectures, and publications, always ecumenical in spirit and concerned for human rights. He wrote, edited, or coauthored fourteen books, including The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America (2011) and Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America (2007). Cleary’s mission pilgrimage is told in the January 2010 issue of the IBMR.

Died. Josef Metzler, O.M.I., 90, German Catholic mission historian and archivist, January 12, 2012, in Hünfeld, Germany. After teaching mission history at the Urbaniana University in Rome, Metzler was in charge of the missionary archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Propaganda Fide) from 1966 to 1984, when he was appointed prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, a post he held until his retirement in 1996. He also was for many years coeditor of the Bibliotheca Missionum and the Bibliographia Missionaria. His article “The Legacy of Pius XI” appeared in the IBMR in April 1993, A Festschrift for Metzler, Ecclesiae Memoria (1994), was edited by Willi Henkel, O.M.I.

Died. Michael G. O’Rear, 57, president and CEO, Global Mapping International (GMI) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on January 11, 2012, following a heart attack. In 1983 he joined the staff of the U.S. Center for World Mission, Pasadena, California, and there was introduced to the work of GMI (www.gmi.org). O’Rear led GMI from 1991, when he took over from the founder. During his GMI tenure, O’Rear coauthored the MisLinks Web resource (www.mislinks.org) with A. Scott Moreau; published The World of Islam and Operation China portable libraries on CD-ROM; and developed e-book, CD, and DVD-ROM versions of the Operation World prayer guide and the Global Ministry Mapping System. He served as senior associate for information technology for the Lausanne Movement.

For “Upcoming Conferences,” see page 82.
a confident expectation of God’s presence, guidance, provision, and intervention. It assumes that prayer plays a key role both for the church as a whole and for its missionaries in the field.

GKC’s understanding of a missionary call is striking. Most of the church’s missionaries have received no formal training in either missiology or theology. Many of them are former businesspeople who were deeply committed to mission, whom Kim personally “called” to go to mission. They have taken this word as God’s own call on their lives. In some cases they have sold their business, put their house on the market, and left for a mission field even before the rest of their family has been able to join them. Other members in mid-career, whose children’s education is complete, have seriously contemplated a missionary career. Missionaries such as these go through an unimaginable change of lifestyle, leaving the comforts of North American prosperity to go to a social context where one’s very freedom of speech and faith cannot be taken for granted. The level of perseverance and sacrifice needed to fulfill such a calling requires the deepest conviction and commitment. Hong, who often accompanies Kim on mission trips, likens GKC’s modus operandi to bungee jumping: missionaries must give up everything, but yet they bounce back.18 Although no data are available, one can assume that many of GKC’s missionaries are first-generation Christians who experienced an adult conversion, often characterized by a radical encounter with the reality of God. This conversion is typically reinforced by an experience of the Holy Spirit, often called baptism in the Spirit.

The church’s administrative structure is extremely agile and flexible, not only for the support of deployed missionaries and their ministries but also for swift decision making and immediate response to demands arising from the mission fields. The mission structure is not supported by a large budget, but voluntary contributions are made as needed (such as in response to the Dushanbe bombing), both to the church and also directly to missionaries on the field. The deployment of human and financial resources is often spontaneous. As military language is frequently used in the promotion of mission, so is Kim’s role as the “field general” for GKC’s “troops” overseas. Not surprisingly, such an operational structure lacks stability and predictability and makes long-term planning impossible.

Changes have occurred since GKC’s first mission work in 1990. Kim retired in 2004, when Paul Gi Hong Han, a homegrown leader, assumed the helm of pastoral leadership. The process of leadership succession was extremely smooth, which many viewed as a reflection of Kim’s unselfish attitude. Kim, now “retired,” has relocated to Korea, where he has established a daughter church of the GKC.

The missionary structure has expanded with the multiplication of daughter churches. In 2008 the missionary resources of the GKC gave birth to an international mission network—Grace Ministries International (GMI), which now functions as a corporate clearinghouse for missionary work of all the congregations in the network. Kim serves as the chairman of GMI. Therefore, Kim continues his mission leadership over GKC and its affiliate congregations, even though he has ceased to exercise pastoral leadership.

A 2010 report claimed that GMI was currently sending 270 missionaries (compared with 246 in 2009) and that it had established 1,500 congregations in the former Soviet Union. Its mission field has also expanded to include China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, East Africa, Japan, Europe, and Latin America. Again, such claims cannot be independently verified.

Evaluation and Suggestions

My immediate aim in this article is to publicize the missionary story of Grace Korean Church, which is not a typical immigrant congregation, even by Korean standards. Among Korean-American churches throughout the United States, GKC stands out as one of a kind. Kim has been genuinely revered both inside and outside the church for his incredible work ethic, sheer dedication, and unorthodox creativity. His simple lifestyle and missionary vision have attracted a large number of gifted and committed Christians to the church, which over the years has contributed to the growth of the GKC congregation and its mission enterprises. In this concluding section I look at the future of this incredibly gifted mission church and offer three suggestions.

Publicize GKC’s story. The “hiddenness” of Grace Korean Church to the outside world suggests that mutual efforts are needed, both by the church itself and by mission watchers. The church has produced only one English-language mission resource, one that communicates very little about either GKC’s unique mission program or the spiritual dynamics that underlie it. This internal deficiency is compounded by the almost complete lack of interest among mission watchers. The only one I know to have commented on GKC is Peter Wagner, whose short statement, mentioned above, appears somewhat patronizing. Nonetheless, it is a beginning; the world of mission badly needs more of Wagner’s mission mind, able to unearth hidden works of God. This hiddenness seriously deprives churches, both immigrant and “native,” of the chance to learn about fresh new models of missionary success.

While new research is encouraged, it is important for many existing studies on emerging mission experiences and models from the Global South to be made widely available through publication. Resources on GKC, as I have noted, are in Korean, but even Korean mission researchers have generally been unaware of them. I see university presses as more likely to respond to such a challenge than commercial Christian publishers. We need studies at all levels—academic, popular, and practical.

Strengthen the foundations. I think readers will agree that GKC represents a powerful example of a new missionary possibility. But how long can it sustain its initial level of missionary zeal and commitment? Since beginning its missionary engagement in 1990, the church has manifested several important new mission paradigms and has maintained a remarkable missionary impetus, all of which has the strong potential to empower many others. At the same time there are several alarming signs that require deep critical reflection if GKC’s missionary achievement is to continue beyond the first-generation congregation, as well as beyond its Korean confines.

The first foundation block I would suggest for a sustained mission of the church is the construction and explicit articulation of its mission theology. I cannot shrug off a lingering impression
that GKC’s mission has been planned, executed, and maintained by extremely pragmatic ad hoc guidelines, all arising from its charismatic decision-making process. Its achievements can be attributed to this flexible and responsive management structure. Nonetheless, while its missionary structure and engagement have grown rapidly, consistency and long-term planning are lacking. The processes of accountability and evaluation have not found a place. There is a great need for theological reflection on all aspects of mission.

The second fundamental need is for a critical and evaluative analysis of its brief mission history. A good history not only will reveal strengths and weaknesses but also will place the church and its mission within a larger historical and social context. GKC’s missionary work so far can be compared to a sprinter, with a sprinter’s focused energy and determination. However, the church now needs to plan for the marathon, the long haul, which requires everyone’s help. A third-party research project is one way to meet this need.

Ask hard questions. If fundamentals are solidified, the model of GKC can have a huge impact on U.S. Christianity, both immigrant and mainstream. The church’s dynamic “primal spirituality,” its single-minded dedication to mission, its mobilization of the entire church, and its equally outstanding achievements on its mission fields are impressive. However, this exceptional picture can continue only insofar as the missionary motive of the church remains as pure as it was two decades ago.

The most basic questions to ask are theological, such as, What is mission as we understand it? What has motivated the way we have been doing mission together? What areas of mission has the church not paid attention to? Also, What motivated GKC’s change from a previous policy of owning no property to one of purchasing property and constructing a multimillion-dollar facility? If this is viewed as purely a management decision, the missionary legacy of the church will have little to offer the next generation and the world.

Practical questions include, What expenses are included in the 60 percent of the budget devoted to mission? Who are included in the published number of missionaries? And How many of the congregations the church has planted continue to remain vibrant? If there is the slightest sign of inflation of these figures, then GKC is already beginning to fall into the success trap. It is not easy to resist such a temptation. With the changing circumstances of the church, including new leadership, the rise of a new generation, and the challenging financial picture, the church urgently needs to rethink the mode and motives of its missionary engagement.

The very elements that made GKC’s mission an incredible success can also cause its downfall. The resolute first-generation determinate cannot continue indefinitely. After two decades of its missionary enterprise, the operation remains strictly first-generation led. Unless the new generation, most of whom were born in the United States, successfully inherits the church’s mission conviction and vision, the future will hardly be as bright. A proper training mechanism, evaluation process, and structure are necessary to ensure transparency and accountability. Since its mission has been completely dependent upon the leader’s charismatic vision and commitment, the new leader will inevitably now shape the mission theology and praxis of the church. He will have to make clear how GKC will take the next significant step in mission.

The most challenging and immediate threat to GKC’s two-decade-old missionary legacy comes from a least expected front: the construction of the multimillion-dollar international prayer center and consequent financial struggles. The heavy burden of its debt service has the potential not only to significantly affect its missionary activities, but even to threaten the very existence of the church. For me, however, the more serious question is, What caused Kim to change the church’s celebrated insistence on no ownership of property? Was it a well-thought-out theological conviction, or was it simply a business opportunity? This brings us back to the fundamental question of the theological basis of GKC’s mission.

Grace Korean Church—a well-kept mission secret hidden in plain sight—is now revealed. In many ways, this church has provided critical clues for how a vibrant missional Christianity could be restored to North America. It also shows how a pragmatic decision can take the church into turbulent waters. Its mission, as that of any congregation, is far from perfect. In fact, it has many unsettling problems, real and potential. Nurturing and strengthening its missionary success is in everyone’s best interest, and ultimately for the sake of God’s kingdom. To this end I am passionate about bringing GKC’s story to light.

Notes

2. Hee-sung Park, Gara Ganda: Mission Story, Expansion of the Kingdom of God (in Korean) (Seoul: Gwang-ya, 2001). In Korean, gara is an imperative form “go!” and ganda is a response form meaning “yes, I am going.”
6. I am grateful to Tai Choul Yang, mission pastor, and Steve Hong, a member of GKC’s Missions Committee, for their help in gaining information about GKC’s mission program.
7. I have not been able to learn Kim’s exact place of birth, though his Korean accent strongly suggests Kyungsang Province, in South Korea. He was in Seoul, however, when he was fifteen years old.
9. Kim’s sermons give us an important window into this sense of call.
11. Suk-koo Hong, an untitled reflection in Traces of Jesus, p. 172. In 2008, $10 million of a total budget of $19 million was spent on missions.
13. C. Peter Wagner, an untitled contribution to Traces of Jesus, p. 167.
14. A detailed account appears in Park, Gara Ganda, pp. 41–70.
15. An account of this amazing ministry appears in ibid., pp. 230–53.
16. GKC is officially affiliated with the Bosu Hapdong Presbyterian Church in North America.
Toward a Broader Role in Mission: How Korean Americans’ Struggle for Identity Can Lead to a Renewed Vision for Mission

S. Steve Kang and Megan A. Hackman

By 2010, only three decades after the Korean church’s fledgling beginning in cross-cultural missions, South Korea had become the world’s second largest Protestant missionary sending country, with more than 20,000 missionaries in over 180 countries.1 South Koreans are touted as fervent and aggressive missionaries who powerfully embody Lamin Sanneh’s phrase “the Gospel beyond the West.” In contrast, it is estimated that there are only about 300 North American Korean cross-cultural missionaries worldwide, with 123 of them sent out by Grace Korean Church in Fullerton, California, alone.2 Of that 300, only 20 are English-speaking.3 While thousands of Korean Americans attended Urbana Missions Conferences between 1990 and 2009, this flood of interest in missions dwindles to only twenty Korean American, English-speaking attendees from the conferences who were engaged, by 2010, as missionaries on the field.4 The Korean American church is struggling to find ways to mobilize English-speaking Korean Americans for foreign missions.

Here we trace the sociocultural context of the Korean American church in order to understand some possible reasons for its general lack of mission involvement. Toward that end, we first examine the Korean American church, which is rooted in the history of Korean immigration to the United States and provides specific benefits to this immigrant community. Then we explore salient themes of the second-generation Korean American experience in order to suggest a renewed future for Korean American mission through this generation’s leadership in the broader Christian church.

The Korean American Church

The United States witnessed a significant influx of Korean immigrants during the twentieth century, particularly as a result of the Immigration Act of 1965. As many families settled in major U.S. cities, immigrant parents had to adjust their Korean ways of life in order to pursue the American dream. One major coping mechanism for them was to establish churches, which functioned as sociocultural centers of Korean American community life and as safe havens for their people.

Korean immigration to the United States. Three distinct phases of Korean immigration to the United States mark the history of Koreans in America.5 The first period involved plantation workers, mostly males, immigrating to the Hawaiian Islands in the first decade of the twentieth century. The second phase of immigration, in the years following the Korean War (1950–53), consisted of young Korean women who were married to American servicemen coming to the United States with their husbands. American families, many of them Christian, also adopted a substantial number of Korean War orphans, many of whom were Amerasians fathered by American servicemen who participated in the war.

The third phase of Korean immigration is said to be a direct result of the changes introduced by the 1965 U.S. Immigration Act. This act deliberately favored family reunion, granting preferential treatment to immediate family members of permanent residents or U.S. citizens. According to the 1970 and following U.S. censuses, the Korean population in the United States increased dramatically from 69,155 (1970), to 354,593 (1980), 798,849 (1990), and 1,228,427 (2000).6 Besides this change in U.S. immigration policy, two additional factors influenced Korean immigration to the United States.

The first factor involved a change in policy, made by Korea in the mid-1960s, to make emigration easier and thereby facilitate the formation of economic partnerships between Korea and the United States.7 The second factor was impetus provided by the cumulative negative consequences of military dictatorship and its policy of “guided capitalism.”8 Additionally, it may be noted that many Christian immigrants trace their ancestry to participants in the Pyongyang Revival of 1907 who, having fled North Korea for religious freedom, felt unwelcome among fellow Koreans in the South.

The 1990 and 2000 censuses indicate that Korean Americans settled in communities surrounding major U.S. cities. Four concentrated pockets in and near Los Angeles, New York City, Washington, D.C., and Chicago represented approximately two-thirds of the total Korean American population, with 44 percent residing in West Coast states. Even with this large concentration on the West Coast, Korean Americans are more widely dispersed than any other Asian ethnic group in the United States.9

Adaptation patterns of Korean Americans. In portraying the diversity of people in American society, researchers have used various adaptation models—Anglo-conformity,10 the melting pot,11 the salad bowl,12 and the mosaic.13 These different models denote the effect of both centrifugal (the pull outward) and centripetal (the push outward) forces that are operative on immigrants in respect to American culture. The effect of the centrifugal force can be described as assimilation, the process that leads to greater homogeneity in society, and the effect of the centripetal force as pluralism, the condition that produces sustained ethnic differentiation and continued heterogeneity.

These models may be instructive for understanding the broad picture of the adaptation patterns of first-generation Korean Americans and their children in the United States.14 They fail to address, however, the case of individuals whose experience
Trapped between conflicting cultural norms, second-generation Korean Americans are often referred to as the lost generation.

Korean-American; to extreme instances in which Korean Americans are pulled away from the upbringing and enculturation of their families of origin; and finally to a middle ground, which is where the second generation tends to find itself. Most frequently, the second generation’s experience is one of “beginning ethnic change, away from the anchors of traditionalism.”

Despite valiant effort on the part of first-generation Korean Americans, adapting to life in their new country has proven to be difficult. The potential for the future of the Korean American church lies with the second-generation, which is exploring its symbolic ethnicity under the influence of the Korean American church while relating as an ethnic “block” to both the American and the Korean cultures.

The role of the church. Korean Americans’ social ties with their own ethnic group have been strengthened as a direct result of immigration and their length of time as U.S. residents. They continue to maintain close contact with their relatives. Most of their friends in the United States are Korean Americans. The most significant network and social institution that has enabled the sociocultural fabric of the Korean American community to be maintained is the Korean American church. Korean American church affiliation is extremely high. In major cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago, for example, 69.9 percent and 76.7 percent, respectively, of Korean Americans are affiliated with Korean ethnic churches; 84 percent and 78 percent of these groups, respectively, attend church at least once a week.

The Christian legacy in Korean American history can be traced to the first group of Hawaiian settlers mentioned above. These settlers maintained close relationships with the American missionaries who had encouraged them to move to Hawaii, and they founded many Korean American churches soon after their arrival. A similar phenomenon took place on the Pacific Coast. This legacy has continued among the second and third waves of Korean immigrants. In 1991 there were approximately 700 Korean churches in the Los Angeles area alone. By 2000 there were more than 250 Korean churches in the Chicago area. The Institute of the Study of Asian American Christianity estimates that, as of February 2007, there were about 4,000 Korean American churches in the United States. These figures resonate with the popular Korean saying:

When Chinese go abroad, they open a restaurant.
When Japanese go abroad, they open a factory.
When Koreans go abroad, they start a church.

Upon immigration, the need for Christian fellowship is generally heightened, and even those who in Korea were not affiliated with a church often join a Korean American church. Such a change in church-going practice is due in part to the role the immigrant church has played in providing services to meet a variety of needs encountered by new immigrants.

As the sociocultural center for Koreans in the United States, the Korean ethnic church has provided an opportunity for the first generation to search for “the meaning of their uprooting and existential alienation in the new country.” As the most inclusive and accessible social institution for Koreans, the church has also provided a sense of belonging and psychological comfort and has functioned as the most valuable network for dealing with a variety of issues in the community. Furthermore, the Korean American church has functioned as an extension of the Korean immigrant family. The church has been the center of the socialization into Korean culture for the second generation, reinforcing family expectations.

The struggle for identity among second-generation Korean Americans. Second-generation Korean Americans grow up in a sociocultural context characterized by complexity and confusion. Rapidly acculturating to mainstream U.S. society, they typically acquire U.S. lifestyles and internalize America’s value systems. They find it a struggle, however, to assimilate fully into mainstream society because of various burdens placed upon them by the Korean American community (particularly by the Korean American church), including ongoing resistance to their integration into mainstream society.

That is, second-generation Korean Americans have experienced great pressure to maintain their Korean heritage and traditional Korean values in their new homeland. They have also been expected to succeed in American society, often according to their parents’ wishes to realize the American dream—with success measured in the context of American capitalism, consumerism, and liberal democracy. In the process, they have often been caught in a grueling tug-of-war between their parents’ Korean past and their own North American future. Trapped between conflicting cultural norms, they are often referred to as the lost generation.

The Korean American church, functioning as an extension of the Korean immigrant family, has served to reinforce these elevated expectations. Many researchers in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century studied the “silent exodus” of the second generation from the Korean American church and concluded that the trend indicated church doors would be closing. I (Steve) held this viewpoint as recently as several years ago, concluding that, though many second-generation Korean Americans sought mutual support within the context of the church’s educational programs, many have left the church, disillusioned by its inability to provide a safe and hospitable place for them.
to figure out their identity and find a vision for their lives. But as second-generation Korean Americans have begun to assume leadership positions in the church, recent research has shown this generation’s tendency toward civic and social engagement. The trend appears to be that the young leaders of this generation are assuming authentic American identities while using the Korean church as a platform for community development and outreach.

Voices, Authorities, and Values and the Self

Given their unique sociocultural context, second-generation Korean Americans have been constantly exposed to a multiplicity of voices, authorities, and values emanating both from mainstream American society and from the Korean American family and church. For many, these themes have been internalized and play a significant role in their construction of self.

For second-generation Korean Americans the voices of assimilation play a large role in their construction of self and roughly translate into their desire to be accepted by the mainstream society. During their formative years this desire leads them to avoid anything that might accentuate their cultural difference from their Caucasian American peers. They are eager to eliminate self-perceived cultural inadequacies by actively embracing American values and ways of living. And yet as adults they seek to maintain their Korean cultural heritage in the private sphere of their lives, giving their lives an aspect of dual allegiance.

Second-generation Korean Americans must also deal with a series of concentric spheres of “outside-in,” or extrinsic, authorities. These include a formidable array of authorities: parents, the Korean American church, Korean American culture, and mainstream society. Second-generation Korean Americans tend to look at these loci of authority as inevitable intruders and observe a hierarchy among and within the spheres. Their mode of operation is to seek to fit themselves under the authorities and the hierarchy in order to maintain peace and avoid being marginalized. At the same time there is a parallel set of “inside-out,” or intrinsic, authorities. In relation to these, they willingly

The quest for self cannot be limited to the sphere of the Korean American church; it must embrace a global vision.

imburse authority in something or someone. Generally, this intrinsic authority is established with specific people, whether peers or parental figures, who exhibit the characteristics of a benevolent father, or spiritual authorities.

These voices and authorities have developed a value system for second-generation Korean Americans, especially including the following five values: a functional family, appropriate autonomy, healthy relationships, safe and authentic community, and the conflicting goals of ethnic preservation and ethnic assimilation. These values (and voices and authorities) constantly impel them to engage in challenging life projects through which they strive for independence via career and permanent residence at the same time as they combat the social norms that would discourage them from forging a lifestyle of their preference.

In this regard the Korean American church has much work to do so as to become a constructive voice in the lives of second-generation Korean American adults. It must become a community that embodies authenticity, grace, healing, and reflexivity, that practices intentional and integrative ministry; and that proactively engages the world around it.

Toward a Broader Role in World Mission

Thus far we have outlined the role of the Korean American church in the historical context of Korean immigration to the United States. And we have highlighted the struggle for identity among second-generation Korean Americans against the backdrop of the Korean American church and mainstream American society. While many of these realities have inhibited the missionary fervor of the Korean American church, those same realities have the potential to allow Korean Americans to make important contributions to global missions.

Opportunities for individual Korean Americans. The individual’s search for self is intensely social, interacting with both the external situation and the multiplicity of internalized authorities, voices, and values. The search must take place not only in the person’s private sphere but also within the sphere of committed relationships in the church. Furthermore, the quest cannot be limited to the sphere of the Korean American church; it must embrace a global vision. Second-generation Korean American Christians must envision and participate in the vision of God’s reign here and now, particularly evident through the burgeoning global church of Jesus Christ. As they participate in God’s reign through building relationships with various partners in the global church, second-generation Korean American Christians can truly understand, readily accept, and engage in their God-given self-exploration project both socially and personally.

Through these interactions, they will understand their vocations more fully and will find wholeness in their experience of the self. Such collective reflection must go beyond merely collective introspection, which could easily end up as a navel-gazing project. The trend among second-generation Korean American Christians in recent times has been to allow themselves to be engrossed in the process of “finding” the self. In spending the majority of their time and energy on self-actualization, they have been left with little to give toward the cause of missions. Thus, it is necessary that, alongside self-introspection, they simultaneously engage the world, fulfilling God-given vocations for the glory of God.

In light of ongoing globalization and increasing cultural mobility, issues of identity and construction of the self will continue to plague generations of immigrants, Koreans and others, especially those who experience not only cultural change but religious change as well. In fact, one of the greatest challenges facing the Muslim world is to separate one’s culture from one’s faith. The struggles that Korean Americans have had in this regard can serve as a helpful tool in understanding the issues that potential converts will have in trying to adjust to new cultural and religious identities.

Opportunities for the Korean American church. As discussed above, the Korean American church has functioned as the center of the Korean American community, conserving the values and practices of the early Korean Christian immigrants that, for the most part, took root in their church experience while they still lived in Korea. Even the infusion of new immigrants in the past twenty years has had relatively little effect on the course of the Korean American church. Nonetheless, the challenges posed by
resettlement in a foreign land have had significant impact on the trajectory of the Korean American church, and this is likely to continue to be the case in the foreseeable future.

Seen in this light, it may seem unlikely that the Korean American church would ever match the exponential growth of missionary effort shown by the South Korean church, although it has made valiant attempts in recent years in this direction. While it has organized mission conferences and sought to mobilize its people for missions, these efforts have produced but modest results that do not compare well with those of its mother church.

Isolated research efforts by sociologists who are seeking to understand the influence of the rising second generation within the Korean American church have recently noted an outward focus among second-generation Koreans. As a new generation takes the helm in the Korean church, we are seeing the relational circle of Korean Americans slowly expand beyond the immediate individual and family and even beyond the Korean realm, reaching into the life of the broader community. The mosaic nature of ethnicity in the U.S. population, combined with the historic appeal of the “American dream,” appears to be drawing these younger leaders beyond the borders of their Korean families and communities and into the broader American community, in which the second-generation intends to root itself.

Research by Sharon Kim in particular notes the involvement of second-generation Korean Americans in civic and social programs outside the Korean church. Her surveys found that 61 percent of second-generation members of Korean American churches “had invested their time and / or money in various social service projects.” Kim records the testimony of a Korean American congregation in California that gave money to various international projects, one result of which was a stronger relationship between Turkey and the church’s Korean missionaries there. She notes that the second-generation leadership interprets the Bible’s purpose for the church as mandating “involvement in helping those in need.” Kim concludes that the American influence on this new generation—the centrifugal desire to be a part of the mosaic of American life—enables them to “serve as a bridge as well as a source of blessing to their non-Korean neighbors.” At the same time, the Korean sense of community is a potent source of centrifugal resistance that hinders these Korean Americans from influencing American society powerfully through imparting a renewed vision of that which is innately biblical: a unity of spirit in the kingdom of God. The question then becomes, will the reach of second-generation Korean Americans into the broader U.S. civic community translate into a vision for the global community that carries forward into future generations? Kim believes it already is doing so.

Although Kim states that second-generation Korean American churches are aggressively sending missionaries all over the world, the denominations and mission agencies are not yet seeing the numbers to support this perceived change in attitude. For example, a 2009 report by Wycliffe International discusses the Korean diaspora in Europe, noting that Korean migrant churches tend to be “inward focused—no evangelistic or missional vision (lack of Kingdom mind).” Such a comment, relevant also to the situation in the United States, reflects the self-preservation goal of first-generation Korean immigrant churches.

Instead of looking inward the second-generation Korean American church has a golden opportunity to utilize its strategic connection points to reach a world in need of the Gospel. Korean Americans can employ the unique sociocultural location in which they find themselves in combination with their understanding of K-pop, drama, and the English language to connect with Asia in a strategic manner. In other words, second-generation Korean Americans, in embodying the Gospel in the mission field, can utilize both their American cross-cultural experiences and their Korean cultural understanding. Alongside the forces pulling the new generation of leaders back to their Asian roots, there exist profound opportunities, especially for Asia-bound missionaries, to rise up out of the second-generation Korean American church.

Perhaps it behooves the Korean American church to be more realistic about its missionary ambition and to reflect corporately on its unique calling. Such a corporate reflection need not be independent of, but should be in healthy interdependence with, the South Korean church and various denominations, missionary agencies, and ethnic American churches.

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**Notes**


14. In the broad term “first-generation” we include Korean Americans who came to the United States in their early teen years, the so-called 1.5 generation. We also assume that the Korean Americans who grew up in the four cities mentioned above as having a significant Korean American population have had relatively more exposure to the Korean American church and other cultural “helps.”


16. Ibid.


can-center-summit-at.html.


33. We understand “self” as all of our knowledge, feelings, and ideas as unique persons. It is the very essence of that which we are. The self is not a stable object, a pure and enduring core, but the sum and swarm of our participation in social life. See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1981); George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1934); Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, p. 107.


36. See chap. 2 of Kang, *Unveiling the Socioculturally Constructed Multivoiced Self*.

37. For example, 3,000 participants from the United States and Canada met in Rochester, New York, December 27–30, 2011, for the three-day Global Korean Young Adult Mission Festival.


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**International Association for Mission Studies General Assembly**

The thirteenth general assembly of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) will be hosted by Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, August 15–20, 2012. An estimated 200 scholars from around the world will present papers, attend workshops, and take part in field trips relating to the theme of the conference, “Migration, Human Dislocation, and the Good News: Margins as the Center in Christian Mission.”

Dislocation, both voluntary and involuntary, has been integral to our human story from the very beginning. As we migrate across national boundaries or relocate within our own countries in the quest for basic security or a better future, our religion travels with us. Mission and migration are thus inextricably intertwined.

Five plenary speakers will address the assembly:

Daniel G. Groody, a Catholic priest and award-winning author and film producer; associate professor of theology and director of the Center for Latino Spirituality and Culture, Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, Indiana.

Jehu J. Hanciles, associate professor of the history of Christianity and globalization, and director of the Center for Missiological Research, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

Mojúbaólu Olúfúnké Okome, professor in the political science department of City University of New York’s Brooklyn College.

M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, distinguished professor of Old Testament, Denver Seminary, Littleton, Colorado. He is the Bible study leader.


Jonathan J. Bonk, executive director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut, and editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, is president of IAMS.

For details and to register, go to https://sites.google.com/a/iams2012.org/toronto-2012/.
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Lessons from Korean Mission in the Former Soviet Region

John McNeill

Koreans have been widely present in many settings outside their traditional homeland—including in many of my classes in the past twenty years. But I was surprised, as readers might also be, to learn of their presence in the former Soviet region, where they have a unique involvement and history. People informed about the modern growth of Protestant Christianity would not be surprised to hear of Korean missionaries somewhere in the world. But why did they choose to go to the former Soviet region, and what effect did they have there? And what lessons might their efforts have for future mission work in this area? An answer to these questions requires a look at the history of the region.

Historical Background

In the years leading up to 1860, the expanding Russian Empire in the Far East “profited from the desperate plight of China, at war with Great Britain and France, and torn by rebellion.” Russia took a large piece of territory from China and began to establish various settlements in the region. One of the most important of these was the ice-free Pacific port at Vladivostok. This city and region soon became, and remained, a strategic location for Russian, and later Soviet, land and naval forces. In 1863 a drought in Korea led to the first Korean migration into the new Russian territory. Migration continued in the years that followed, boosted by a famine in 1869–70. Japanese expansion in the region led to the subjugation of Korea and its eventual annexation by Japan in 1910. During and after this time the Japanese presence provoked further flight of Koreans from the Japanese zone into the Russian “Maritime Province.”

Koreans moving to Russia. The Far East region was “almost uninhabited” in 1860, when the Russians took it from China. One of the first administrative priorities was to establish a solid presence there with settlers from Europe. Various incentives were offered to ethnic Russians, encouraging them to move east, but though they were favored over the Koreans in the distribution of land, the initial influx was disappointing. Given the difficulties that the Russians had in attracting European settlers, the Koreans provided a useful temporary solution. To some extent they were welcomed by the Russians in lieu of other, more preferred settlers. Depending on the year-to-year success in recruiting eastward Russian resettlement, Koreans formed a very significant proportion of the population of the Maritime Province and, at some times and in some places, even a majority.

Russian growth in the Far East brought their empire into conflict with the expanding Japanese Empire. At times Russia was conciliatory to Japan, trying to balance their mutual interests but also to keep Japan at bay. But the two countries also came to blows: Russia suffered serious naval losses and in 1905 had to make an uncomfortable peace with Japan. Meanwhile, the Korean migrants to the Russian territory tended to be strongly opposed to the Japanese, who had invaded their homeland. To the extent that the Russo-Japanese entente really existed, Tsarist Russia was Japan’s reliable partner in the suppression of the Korean nationalist movement. While many Koreans assimilated to their new Russian homeland, a significant number of these Koreans were agitators for the liberation of Korea. To this end they formed quasi-military armed groups. As a result of this activity and of the ongoing international tensions, they were often pawns in the political maneuvering between Japan and Russia. This fragile status continued after the Soviet period began, as the new government sought to stabilize its hold on territory and its position in the world.

Koreans in the Russian Far East distinguished themselves in various ways. As diligent farmers they established rice growing in the region and later had a similar impact in the places of their Central Asian and Russian exile. Significant numbers of them served in the Russian military during the First World War, and in the civil war that followed they were active sympathizers in support of the Reds, the eventual winners. This support gained them some measure of favor with the Soviet government.

Stalin’s treatment of Koreans. The next dramatic step in the history of the Soviet Koreans involved the brutal dictator Joseph Stalin. His deeds were overshadowed by his contemporary, Adolf Hitler, although in my opinion Stalin was the cause of greater human suffering. Stalin inflicted great pain on the Korean population groups he ruled. They were the first of many people groups to suffer mass exile as a result of specific policy decisions made by the Soviet leader.

During his lifetime, Stalin was considered one of the oracles of Communism, one of the authors of Communism’s scriptures, along with Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Once in power he used secret police and various purges to eliminate the enemies he knew or imagined, and to keep other potential enemies off balance and fearful. But Stalin’s perceived enemies were not only other politicians. He feared any and all groups of people who could possibly coalesce around a common cause or grievance to oppose him. The Korean populations in the Soviet Far East were one such group that came to Stalin’s attention. In order to divide them and to reduce the chance of their becoming a cohesive threat, he enforced a resettlement program that, in a very brief time in 1937, without warning, forced Koreans to move in relatively small groups to Soviet Central Asia and to some of the large cities of the European part of the Soviet Union. The reason given for this decision was that the Koreans were spies for the Japanese. This was a transparent fabrication, and attempts such as those of Chaimun Lee to parallel the Korean case to that of the Volga Germans, while raising important points, ignore obvious differences. The Koreans had clearly supported the Russians and had been active against the Japanese oppressors in their Korean homeland. In contrast, the Volga Germans often cheered for their fellow Germans as they invaded the Soviet Union. To Russian eyes, however, the Koreans appeared Asian, and even though the Koreans largely preserved their own culture, the Russians had trouble distinguishing them from the local Chinese.
and Japanese. They were also often more committed to Korean than to Russian causes, and thus were thought to be unreliable in defending the border areas. So while Russian chauvinism toward Koreans was unfortunate or worse, and though it often led to wrong judgments and painful results, we can understand it, given Russian cultural insensitivity and the difficult political times.

The effectiveness of the Korean exile is clear from the following report after a visit to Khabarovsk by a Korean who worked for the Japanese: “Now all Chinese and Koreans were relocated to Central Asia. So I have no friends there. It made my activities very difficult.”

Stalin’s treatment of Koreans, although a source of great suffering, was not a spontaneous personal vendetta against the Koreans, nor was it unique. The decision to exile them was a carefully planned government action, fully in harmony with years, decades, and even centuries of Tsarist and then Soviet policy in dealing with national minorities. In fact, evidence seems to indicate that their exile was accomplished with a relatively small loss of life, compared with the experience of many other national groups that were exiled soon after the Koreans. This point is made not to minimize the considerable sufferings of the exiles but to focus attention on the process in its context. It is important to prevent exaggerations that are based on reactions to supposed events or abuses that never happened. When dealing with a figure such as Stalin, it is easy to exaggerate his negative actions. Some South Korean researchers have succumbed to the temptation of simplistic reporting. It is interesting to compare actions. Some South Korean researchers have succumbed to the temptation of simplistic reporting. It is interesting to compare actions.

Assimilation and South Korean missionaries. In their new places of exile, as groups with relatively small numbers and under paranoid national leadership, Koreans experienced much stronger forces of assimilation than they had in the Russian Far East, forces almost irresistible over time. Even in the Far East before the 1937 exile, many Koreans accepted Russian citizenship and otherwise assimilated. “Like other ethnic groups they were expected to adopt Soviet values and, eventually, to merge into a Russified society.” Figures suggest that at least half of the Koreans in the Far East had assimilated by the mid-1920s. After the 1937 exile these numbers significantly increased, with the use of Korean rapidly diminishing by the 1970s. Reasons given for this assimilation include increased intermarriage, urbanization, education, professional mobility, lack of a central settlement of ethnic Koreans, lack of recent immigrants from Korea, and remoteness from Korea.

Meanwhile, South Korea was home to a ripening Christian movement, which, emerging from its infancy, began to look for places to send a new wave of missionaries. The Korean diaspora in the Soviet Union was a focus of great interest for Protestant missionaries from South Korea. The freedoms of the perestroika period in the late 1980s and then the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, provided the perfect open door for them.

### The Korean diaspora in the Soviet Union was a focus of great interest for Protestant missionaries from South Korea.

Arriving in the former Soviet region to search for the Korean diaspora, South Korean missionaries found a people with familiar faces but who at their core were part of Russian culture. Many had lost all contact with the Korean language and culture. They looked like Koreans, but they thought and talked like Russians. Not having participated in the revivals that had swept Korea, they were secularized Soviets, well suited to receive missionary attention. These Russianized Koreans were, however, interested in rediscovering their Korean past. Contact with the Korean missionaries was desirable regardless of any spiritual interest. The result of this interaction was quick growth in South Korean evangelism and church-planting work in the former Soviet region.

As missionaries there, the South Koreans showed the diligence, commitment, and self-sacrifice for which they are well known. These characteristics, plus their sense of team cohesion and submission to strong leadership, made them very effective.
workers and teams. But my own observation and comparative study of Korean and Russian cultures suggest that the Russians are a very problematic choice for Korean missionaries, at least from the point of view of cultural distance. What, then, accounts for the early success and rapid growth of Korean mission work in the former Soviet region?

Russians and Koreans Together

Aside from the work ethic and team spirit of the South Koreans, one additional factor stands out decisively in the initial South Korean missionary success in the region. The South Koreans found and worked first with Soviet citizens who were “genetic Koreans” but linguistic and cultural Russians. These Korean missionaries could hardly have been more culturally distant from the Russians they encountered, but the ethnic Koreans welcomed them. The Soviet Koreans who still spoke some Korean were the primary cultural bridge. Others who were even more assimilated to Russian culture became the secondary bridge. The missionaries were so well accepted that often it was not even necessary for them to learn Russian. Many of course did, but I met some who had experienced years of fruitful work without ever learning Russian, even after a decade or more of living in Russian-speaking areas.

In newly independent countries like Kazakhstan another dynamic was also at work. The Kazakh cities of Astana and Alma Ata, for example, saw churches started by Korean missionaries grow quickly and, within a few years, include significant numbers of Kazakh believers. Russian Protestants had worked in these same regions for many decades, but with very little impact among Kazakhs. The difference seems to have been the Korean diaspora. They were a people group who, like the Kazakhs, had been treated by the Russian majority as second class. When members of this diaspora began to be converted, Kazakhs could more easily identify with them than with Russians. It had been hard or impossible for the Kazakhs to distinguish the Russian version of Christianity from Russians as colonizers. The Korean diaspora, also from a victimized group, made Christianity accessible for the first time to significant numbers of Kazakhs.

By the late 1990s, however, the Korean mission in the former Soviet region had largely stopped growing, as reflected in the number of churchgoers and seminary students. What can explain this lack of continued growth?

The reasons seem fairly apparent. From the beginning it was plain that the South Korean Protestant missionaries were culturally very distant from Russians. The cultural baggage tied to their Christian beliefs and practices was very different from what would attract Russians. Initially this cultural distance was not felt, because it was members of the Korean diaspora, culturally Russian, who had the most face-to-face contact with local people and who did most of the personal evangelism. But a significant part of the agenda of Korean missionaries was to re-inculturate the Korean diaspora. They planned, along with sharing their faith, to help these “culturally lost” Koreans to reconnect with their Korean heritage. To the extent that these missionaries were successful in this cultural mandate, however, they diminished or destroyed the cross-cultural effectiveness of the very people who had been largely responsible for their initial missionary success.

One aspect of this Korean cultural baggage is their attitude to leadership, which seems largely to be a holdover from Confucianism. I have personally experienced how Korean missionaries, who might theoretically agree on limits to the authority of a leader or pastor (based on passages such as Acts 4:19, 5:29; Exod. 1:17), can easily revert to what appears to be a blind acceptance of authority (based on other passages such as Heb. 12:9, 13:17; Jas. 4:7; Eph. 5:21, 24; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:18). Their tendency to seemingly blind obedience as a default position is tied more to Confucian tradition than to careful biblical and theological reflection. The ultimate purpose in deferring to authority is to preserve group cohesion and to save face for leaders. This can lead to a tolerance, or even blindness, toward abusive leadership, a sensitive topic for Russians, given their history of dictatorial leaders.

The cultural agenda that Korean missionaries are fulfilling can be a new form of missionary colonialism, often aided and abetted by careless research. Many South Korean publications “are based on what can only be described as ‘blitzkrieg’ field work.” It is nothing short of academic hubris that allows a scholar, with knowledge only of Korean, “to visit say, Uzbekistan, for a mere two or three weeks and then . . . publish a book on the ‘Soviet’ Koreans.” One’s overall impression is that “South Korean academics conduct their research in more or less complete innocence of the many useful publications available in Russian. . . South Koreans have ‘constructed’ a ‘Soviet’ Korean identity and history that differ . . . from the constructions of the Soviet Koreans.” Such publications “serve South Korean interests more than the interests of the ‘Soviet’ Koreans.” To the extent that Korean missionary effort is based on such false pictures of Soviet Korean life, missionaries will be badly informed and inclined to misunderstand both the overall situation and the specific needs of the people they have come to serve.

A complex web of inferiority-superiority and racism is at work to complicate the situation. In several ways Korean missionaries dominated the encounter with Russians and other Soviet peoples. They had South Korean economic power. Baring the Gospel, they were tempted to assume spiritual superiority. Providing higher education also gave them power over others, including over many Russian students. The cultural superiority felt by South Koreans added to the dynamics in relating to Russians. Ethnocentrism has, in fact, been noted as a strong element in Korean culture and behavior.

As my African colleagues in the former Soviet region have told me, racism against blacks is strong there. Other non-Russian ethnic groups, Koreans certainly among them, have also experienced various levels of discrimination by the Russian majority. To complicate matters, Russians move quickly between a sense of superiority and deep feelings of inferiority. Both of these could have been at work in many Russians relating to Korean missionaries. Tied to this is Russian compliance behavior, a well-developed skill from times of totalitarian control. Russians can outwardly appear compliant in order to gain some advantage, while being firmly committed to a different path. They are basically very egalitarian, respecting authority, but not letting themselves be
intimidated.\textsuperscript{37} Having lived with strong leadership for decades, Russians are not very inwardly compliant, and authoritative Korean leadership, while initially effective, could have irritated many, especially over time. With years of experience resisting their own authoritarian leaders, they would not take easily to such leadership from others, especially from a group they have learned to look down upon.\textsuperscript{38}

Russians are very physical in their relationships with one another, using expressive body language and touch; they are often quite loud in public and are comfortable with a much smaller personal space than most other peoples.\textsuperscript{39} Koreans and Russians differ markedly on all of these points. This can hinder relationship building.

**Conclusions**

What are the alternatives and lessons from the work of Koreans in the former Soviet Region? First, the Korean diaspora could be organized in a chain of small, village-based communities that preserve Korean culture and revive an agricultural lifestyle similar to that of the early migrants to the Russian Far East. A related second option is to increase ties to South (or even North) Korea. The third option is essentially to forget about trying to reconnect with Korea and to support the continued flourishing of Korean-Russian or Korean–Central Asian cultural identity.

The first option is similar to earlier Soviet policy with other ethnic groups. Traditional culture was preserved and paraded on special occasions as interesting, what might be called a “boutique culture.” It was not intended or allowed to have everyday significance. This might be criticized as irrelevant or even patronizing, but it can at least serve the purpose of connecting a people to some of their history. It can, of course, also distort their history. Present Korean missionaries need to be aware of the history of this kind of cultural support for ethnic minorities.

The second option, strengthening ties to present-day Korea, requires connecting Korean-Russians to a culture that they have not internalized. The Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan has opted against this approach, choosing instead a closer integration into the new Kazakh state as it develops its own national identity.\textsuperscript{40}

The ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will have to learn a new official language. Perhaps in time they will even abandon their first language, Russian, in favor of Kazakh or Uzbek. Adaptation to these new conditions will be complicated unless the Korean missionaries respect the national sensibilities of these ethnic groups and do what is best for them.\textsuperscript{41}

It is clear that many Koreans in the former Soviet region want to improve their integration into the different societies where they find themselves.\textsuperscript{42} Reconnecting these Koreans to modern South or North Korean culture is thus, for many of them, irrelevant or superficial. What purpose would be served by the attempt? If it succeeds, it could alienate these Korean-Russians from their present home culture, where they need help to adjust as it changes. Exactly this reconnection to South Korean culture, however, has been the agenda of some Korean missionary groups in the region. Logically, such an approach would seek to return these people to Korea. This is highly unlikely, as well as a completely counterproductive approach, given the missionary and church-planting interest that first brought Koreans to the former Soviet region.

The third option, defended by Songmoo Kho, is encouragement and support for Korean-Russians (or Korean–Central Asians) in the cultural settings where they live.\textsuperscript{43} They have various disadvantages as minority peoples, and strong empathy for their sufferings is understandable. But neither reconnection to an idealized agrarian past nor becoming South or North Koreans in exile is going to help. Any solution that separates them from the culture they live in should be seriously questioned. The most realistic and most compassionate strategy clearly seems to be to help them in accepting and coping with daily life in their present physical and cultural environment. For some, the church in fact has been such a support, for, “like other nationalities, the Koreans in Kazakhstan suffer from the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of the USSR.” While they are “concerned about the loss of traditional Korean moral standards,” including a strong work ethic, the missionaries, through teaching Christian faith, “can serve to revive people spiritually,” including helping them “withstand the humiliation of being treated as second-class citizens.”\textsuperscript{44}

Korean missionaries could help the Korean diaspora both to learn their ethnic history and to develop useful links with South Korea in our multinational world. But for both missionary effectiveness and long-term social adjustment, the focus on local culture in the regions where the Korean diaspora lives should be paramount, and Korean culture secondary. Although it might seem counterintuitive to South Korean missionaries, one strategic way to serve their Korean ethnic cousins is to support their projects to learn Kazakh or Uzbek rather than Korean. This will not further a South Korean cultural agenda, which must be largely abandoned. To be effective in their culturally diverse settings, Korean–Central Asians and Korean-Russians will need to deepen rather than weaken their links to their adopted homelands. This should be a goal of their missionary helpers as well.

**Notes**

7. In some border villages, for example, Koreans formed majorities, as in parts of the Vladivostok region.
13. See Kim, “Deportation of 1937.”


16. Russian racism and cultural misunderstanding led to misjudging the Koreans as a threat.

17. This chauvinism affected others as well. Hidemuke Kimura refers to Russian distrust of “Chinese, Koreans, Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews” as all being unreliable in their Far Eastern regions (Kimura, “Korean Minorities in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan,” in *Koreans in the Soviet Union*, ed. Suh, p. 91).


25. One noted researcher gives a figure of 60,000 (German Kim, “Koryo Saram, or Koreans of the Former Soviet Union: In the Past and Present,” *Amerasia Journal* 29, no. 3 [2003–4]: 23).


27. Sources seem to agree on the initial figure of 40,000 taken over with the 1945 annexation of Sakhalin (Kimura, “Korean Minorities,” p. 85), although details of what happened to them subsequently are unclear.


32. An international worker from the region and I could think of only three examples of Russian Protestant churches that have been successful in outreach to ethnic minorities. If others exist, they are rare. The successful exceptions likely improved during Perestroika, when both society and church were open to new ideas.

33. A retired Korean Russian army officer told me that he and his Jewish colleagues knew from experience that they as Soviets, but not ethnic Russians, could never go beyond a certain level in their careers as officers.


38. Cultural teaching to look down on all “others” is so widespread that I take it to be universal. It can be combined with other feelings, such as the Russian ambivalence in feelings of both superiority and inferiority, referred to above.

39. Richmond, *From Nyet to Da*, p. 129.


**Upcoming Conferences**


Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI), will host “Western Medicine in China, 1835–1950,” June 15–16, 2012, a conference aimed to increase understanding of Western medicine in modern China in the pre-Maoist period. Coconveners are William Schneider, IUPUI, and Zhang Daqing, Peking University. For details, contact research associate David Luesink, dluesink@iupui.edu, or go to www.ulib.iupui.edu/wmicproject.

The Andrew Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, U.K., and the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK) are cosponsoring a conference in Liverpool, June 15–17, 2012, on the theme “The Book, Books, and Beyond Books: 300 Years of Christian Publications in and for Asia and Africa.” Contact Daniel Jeyarad, director of the Andrew Walls Centre and an IBMR contributing editor, at jeyarad@hope.ac.uk.

The Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland; Wellcome Trust, London; University of Florida; Alcohol and Drugs History Society; and Shanghai University will cosponsor a conference, “Drugs and Drink in Asia: New Perspectives from History,” June 22–24, 2012, at Baoshan Campus, Shanghai University, China. The centenary of the Hague Opium Convention in 1912 marks one hundred years of development of international controls on the commercial flow of psychoactive substances. For details, contact Yong-an Zhang, zhangyongan@shu.edu.cn; James Mills, jim.mills@strath.ac.uk; or Joseph F. Spillane, spillane@ufl.edu.

The European Center for Research on the Diffusion and Inculturation of Christianity (CREDIC, Centre de Recherche Européen sur la Diffusion et l’Inculturation du Christianisme, credic.blogspot.com) will hold a conference August 28–September 1, 2012, in Montpellier, France, on subjects related to missionaries in film and to missionary use of film. Papers in French on these topics will examine links between mission and video in both documentaries and fiction. For details, go to http://sites.google.com/site/crediconde, or send an e-mail to ca.credic@gmail.com.

To commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of French missionary Eugène Casalis, the National University of Lesotho will hold a symposium on the topic “Missions and Colonialism,” October 29–31, 2012. Symposium organizers Marie-Claude Barbier, mc.barbier.mosimann@orange.fr, and Michel Prum, prum.michel@wanadoo.fr, invite proposals for papers in French and English until May 31, 2012.
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Missions from Korea 2012: Slowdown and Maturation

Steve Sang-Cheol Moon

The Korean missionary movement is slowing down; the growth in the number of foreign missionaries is much reduced. In 2011 a total of 19,373 Korean missionaries were serving in countries outside South Korea. Three years earlier, in 2008, there were 18,035 foreign missionaries, yielding a growth of only 1,338. In years past, it was common to add this many missionaries in a single year.

Since 2008, because of closures, mergers, and inactivity, the number of mission agencies has decreased from 190 to 168. In 2011 these 168 agencies included 119 sending agencies and 49 supporting agencies; 153 of the mission agencies were interdenominational, and only 15 were denominational. Security concerns make it increasingly difficult or unwise to identify the specific countries of service; overall, however, no big changes are evident. Korean missionaries are active in 177 countries.

About half of all Korean foreign missionaries are working in Asia (47.3 percent), and an additional quarter (24.3 percent) in countries that are majority Christian. The major receiving countries are China, United States, Japan, Philippines, Russia, Germany, Thailand, Indonesia, India, and Canada. A large majority of the foreign missionaries (90.7 percent) are pursuing traditional soul-winning ministries, namely, church planting (46.2 percent), discipleship training (23.7 percent), educational ministries (9.5 percent), theological education (5.3 percent), itinerant evangelism (4.2 percent), and Bible translation (1.8 percent). The rest (9.3 percent) are involved in medical service, humanitarian aid, community development, administrative work, or member care.

The following describe a majority of Korean missionaries.

- below age fifty (75.6 percent)
- less than eight years’ experience in cross-cultural ministry (50.5 percent)
- an undergraduate or higher degree (95.5 percent)
- ordained or the spouse of one who is ordained (64.3 percent)
- members of an interdenominational mission agency (53.3 percent)
- members of a Korean (vs. an international) mission agency (78.2 percent)
- full-time career missionaries (75.8 percent)
- involved in cross-cultural ministries (91.8 percent)
- serve in “regular” mission fields, not “frontier” (59.0 percent)

Once we have observed early signs of stagnation—not merely statistically but also empirically, on the ground—we are obliged to reflect on the factors underlying this development. When people are too busy, there is little time for, or interest in, reflection. In preparing and digesting reports such as this one, we have the opportunity to ask deeper questions instead of relying on standard, predictable questions and answers. It seems now that we need to consider at least the following seven questions:

- Question 1: Given the present context of stagnated church growth in Korea, what is an appropriate level of growth to expect in the Korean missionary movement? Many observers have noted that continued numerical growth in missions is not likely when church growth overall has stalled. This conclusion is tied to the observation that the Korean (or any?) missionary movement is a child of church revival. It is important to set and promote realistic goals of missionary recruitment in light of the current level of church growth. (This is not to deny that there may be some value in trying to mobilize existing churches for greater involvement in missions.)

- Question 2: Has numerical goal-setting in mission actually had the effect of undermining growth in the quality of our missionary work? Over the years, many mission agencies have been overly aggressive in seeking to increase the size of their missionary force, raising questions about the qualifications of missionaries sent out and about their performance in the field. Extravagant emphasis on numbers has had the negative effect of inhibiting growth in (1) the quality of missionary work and, long term, (2) the number of mission workers.

- Question 3: What negative fruit have we seen in the aftermath of the rapid growth in Korean missions? Here we could mention insufficient attention being paid to (1) infrastructure development, (2) strategy for field ministries, (3) care of missionary families, (4) leadership development, (5) crisis management, and (6) preparation for missionary retirement. Though the last decade has seen significant progress in all these areas, an increasing number of problems in mission accountability have also been coming to light.

- Question 4: Have we recognized the positive side of missionary crises? For example, the abduction of twenty-three Korean Christians in Afghanistan in 2007 has had positive results, at least for improving crisis management and contingency planning in Korean missions, regardless of its negative impacts. Crisis can be a disguised blessing under God’s sovereignty, which can be interpreted properly only with the advantage of thoughtful hindsight.

- Question 5: In our mission work, do we rely more on “hard power” or on “soft power”? To depend inappropriately on hard power—military, material, financial, organizational, physical, and even mass media forces and equipment—may result in conveying worldviews that are non-Christian. The soft power of Christian love, in contrast, is unconditional, altruistic, nonnumerical, and immeasurable—but it transforms the world fundamentally. Only compassion for specific people motivates mission. Korean missionaries, especially mission leaders, need to check their actual worldviews and, as needed, change them to harness missional soft power. Short-termism, obsession with visible results, and exporting prosperity myths are a few expressions of secular worldviews. Only the practice of incarnational mission can bring about changes at a deep level. There is a growing awareness of the importance of incarnational humility among mission communities and practitioners from Korea.

- Question 6: How can member care for Korean missionaries be optimized so as to strengthen and consolidate Korea’s missionary movement? It is encouraging to observe a number of Christian

Steve Sang-Cheol Moon
psychologists and counselors volunteering and joining hands in the common task of member care. There is growing awareness of the complex needs of missionary families, which has led, for example, to the development of MK hostels and camps. The Korean mission community has been slow in moving beyond stereotypes of the rugged, individualistic missionary or missionary family and truly grasping the significant needs member care addresses. In recent years we have seen impressive progress, especially in care for the children of missionaries, but enormous needs remain.

Question 7: How can we more fully value the place of research in missions? Empirical research itself is not a panacea, but we do need to cultivate an appreciation—and eagerness—for the empirical facts, wisdom, and insight that are available, both for our immediate, particular use and for accumulating and sharing across organizational boundaries and across generations.

Empirical research, although limited, is a useful counterbalance to the activism common in many missional contexts. We constantly need to remove blind spots in our missional research. Evaluative studies, which are desirable in many areas, are best balanced by an attitude of appreciative reflection, not one that rushes to adopt a problem-solving mentality. It is encouraging to note that a few new mission research institutes have been established in recent years.

We possess fairly comprehensive statistics on the Korean missionary scene, which prompt questions such as the seven listed above. Overall, we can say that growth in Korea’s missionary movement is slowing down but that we are seeing a corresponding maturation in reflection on mission. We trust that such reflection will initiate revitalization for further growth.

Korean Missionary Totals as of December 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missionaries</th>
<th>19,373</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission agencies</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sending/supporting</td>
<td>119 / 49</td>
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<tr>
<td>interdenominational/denominational</td>
<td>153 / 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receiving countries</td>
<td>177</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deployment (percentage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>by continent/region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eurasia/former USSR</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
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<td>Hindu</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>by ethnic/linguistic focus</td>
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<td>doctorate (4.9), master’s (27.3), bachelor’s (63.4), high school (4.5)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
1. The total number of missionaries reported by Korean agencies for 2011 is 20,392. Of these, 1,019 are double counts, i.e., missionaries who appeared on the list of more than one agency, leaving a net total of 19,373.
The Second Text: Missionary Publishing and Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress

David N. Dixon

Near the end of the nineteenth century, the interior of Africa was invaded by Europeans. Armies moved in to secure “peace” for settlers. Farmers came to grow coffee on vast plantations. Hunters came to kill big game. Missionaries came to save souls.

The role of the missionaries has sometimes been lumped in with other forces of colonialism that appeared in Africa about the same time. And indeed, the missionaries shared many of the values and attitudes held by the European colonialists. The missionaries, however, had a distinctive ideological approach—a religious ideal—that affected their dealings with the Africans in ways quite different from those of other Europeans. At the center of their efforts was the printing press. For many missions, a printing press was among the first pieces of equipment brought to the work. Translation, printing, and literacy education all had one simple aim: to provide the Bible in the African vernaculars. The effort, however, had the unintended consequence of providing tools that could be put into service by African politicians seeking to create new entities, the nations of Africa.1

When English-speaking missionaries began their work, often the first text translated into the local dialect was the Gospel of Mark, the shortest of the four gospels. But with surprising regularity, the second text that missionaries translated, often even before translation of the Bible itself had been completed, was The Pilgrim’s Progress, the classic allegory by John Bunyan. The missionary character of the book can hardly be overestimated. The front matter for a 1903 edition published by the Religious Tract Society of London noted that the society alone had by that date aided in translating the work into 101 languages in all regions of the world.2 A 1920 report by the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions found that The Pilgrim’s Progress was second only to the Bible in the number of translations made.3

What makes this phenomenon especially remarkable is that The Pilgrim’s Progress was written in the seventeenth century—by the time the missionaries were translating it in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was a 200-year-old book! Something about the book gave it incredible staying power, capturing the imagination of generation after generation of readers and making it a favorite subject for missionary translation. But what caused missionaries to esteem this work so highly?

In asking this question, I seek to add nuance to some of the excellent research on the topic by Isabel Hofmeyr, as collected in her book The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” and other writers who have explored the appropriation of The Pilgrim’s Progress by Africans.4 Specifically, I argue that African readers did not merely subvert the message of the book but actually followed its logic, which missionaries fundamentally supported. While the missionaries did not always approve of the specific applications of the ideas they planted, they nevertheless favored a radical, or at least progressive, social movement that stood against the colonial powers in key ways. Their use of The Pilgrim’s Progress was not an accident; they translated the text not merely because it was in their library but because it embodied the ideology they sought to promote. That is, the missionaries were far more than simply agents of colonialism; they also resisted it, providing a space and a rationale for the later growth of African nationalism, especially in the countries dominated by Great Britain.

Historical Background

John Bunyan lived from 1628 to 1688, one of the most turbulent periods in English history. The era saw the collapse of the monolithic state church; the Civil War, in which Oliver Cromwell ousted the monarchy in the 1640s; and the return of a now-weakened Stuart monarchy in the 1660s. Bunyan himself was a victim of the religious strife, a dissenter who spent twelve years in jail (1660–72) for preaching without government permission. During this time he wrote the first part of The Pilgrim’s Progress.

Stuart Sim and David Walker point out the subversive character of Bunyan’s work, which implied the radical idea that authority resides in the individual reader of Scripture, not in either the political or the religious authorities of society.5 As Sim and Walker note, “Few can claim his long-term influence in encouraging individuals to stand up for their own beliefs in the face of adversity, with The Pilgrim’s Progress alone having attained near-mythic status in this regard.”6 Indeed, the social struggle reflected in the work has made it a subject of study by Marxist scholars, who see Bunyan’s individualism as fundamentally democratic and anti-elitist.7

This nonconformist view placed him in the mainstream

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of the church movement that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would become the Evangelical churches. Evangelicals shared the radical notion of the individual’s ability to interpret and apply Scripture, rather than relying on a central authority to dictate the meaning of the Bible. Furthermore, they emphasized local authority over churches, rather than a strong hierarchy as in both the Catholic and the Anglican churches of the time. Evangelicalism represented a democratization of the church, just as radicalism attempted to democratize politics. From that perspective, the seventeenth-century English and twentieth-century African contexts are perhaps not so distant from each other; readers in each era found in Bunyan a writer who empowered their dissent.

The appeal of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is evident from the simple fact that it is still in print today, after over 300 years. It has been interpreted in music, plays, movies, even comic books. It has even been rewritten in a version composed entirely of one-syllable words. Some literary scholars consider it to be the first English novel; it continues to inspire scholarly research in both literature and history.

**Missionary Background**

*The Pilgrim’s Progress* traveled to Africa with the great missionary movement that coincided with the rise of European colonialism. In 1885 the European nations signed the Congo Basin Treaties in Berlin, dividing up Africa into “spheres of influence” that each would dominate. This date is commonly held as the beginning of the “scramble for Africa,” which led to the colonial powers’ dominating virtually the entire continent. When this process started, only a handful of missionaries worked in Africa. By 1910, just twenty-five years later, Africa had over 10,000 missionaries—6,000 Catholic and 4,000 Protestant. Colonialism provided the political context that fostered missionary activity.

To understand the early missionary movement in Africa, one must understand both the religious motivation for missions and the political motivations for colonialism. The missionaries’ primary concern was to save the souls of Africans by converting them to Christianity. But their activity was also heavily influenced by the antislavery movement and by a sense of social responsibility that flowed both from their religious ideals and from their cultural paternalism.

For its part, colonialism was motivated by a quest for political and economic power. Politically, the European nations sought to develop their own strategic interests and national prestige during the late nineteenth century. The colonies also promised the possibility of new markets for goods and new natural resources to exploit. Colonialism generally failed to produce economic benefits for the European masters, but the prospect of wealth from Africa nevertheless spurred colonization.

The complex motivations of the time are perhaps illustrated best in the period’s most prominent missionary and English explorer, David Livingstone. As a missionary, Livingstone was a profound failure: after thirty years of tramping around Africa, he had only one convert to show for his efforts. But his geographic discoveries in southern and central Africa—including Victoria Falls, Lake Nyasa, and the Lualaba River (the Upper Congo)—made him famous in Europe. From his high-profile position he urged Europeans to save the continent from the slave trade by introducing the three Cs: Christianity, commerce, and civilization. After his death in 1873 a new generation of missionaries was inspired to take Christianity to Africa.

The missionaries’ opposition to slavery colored their relations with the colonial powers, especially in East Africa, where the institution of slavery, though not the slave trade, was still legal. On the one hand, Prime Minister Lord Salisbury used opposition to the slave trade to justify European imperialism, culminating in the 1892 Slave Trade Agreement, which was signed by seventeen countries. On the other hand, by 1888 the Anglican Church Missionary Society station in Rabai, near Mombasa, harbored 900 runaway slaves, with 500 more at other stations nearby, because slavery as an institution still existed legally under the laws of Zanzibar, despite its being a British protectorate. The colonial administrator, Admiral Sir Edmund Freemantle, obtained an agreement by which the Arab slave-owners were compensated so the slaves could be freed peacefully in 1889, but the underlying problem of slavery continued to plague relationships among the Arabs, the British, and the missionaries, usually with the missionaries and Arabs in conflict and the British administrators trying to keep the peace and find compromises.

Missionary perspectives regarding slavery were captured in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, according to Christopher Hill’s critical reading:

With *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, written by a man of the people for the people, English popular prose broke through into world literature. And what is its theme? A man with a burden on his back. The burden is sin, the product of centuries of unequal society. The prospect of getting rid of the burden offered consolation to subordinate classes everywhere: and Bunyan’s pilgrim taught them courage to endure. . . . For Bunyan true humanity was alienated by sin; conversion meant dedicating oneself to a nobler cause than one’s self, meant self-denial. Conversion is miraculous; it comes from the outside, cannot be willed; but it leads to union with God and therefore with humanity.

In essence, the book provided an explicit promise of future hope but also a picture of this present life as an active struggle. Readers could see themselves as not trapped by some inexorable fate but as empowered to take up arms—figuratively or even actually—against the evil Apollyons of the world. In a particularly vivid example, Hofmeyr describes a photo taken for a Kongo-language version of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* from central Africa, in which an African Christian holds a machete over a Portuguese-looking Giant Despair. The photo was ultimately not used in the publication. But the very fact that the photo was created by the Baptist Mission Society, an English mission, suggests that the missionaries were not above critiquing colonialism, especially when it happened to involve a European power other than their own. It suggests that, at the very least, the missionaries sympathized with the Africans under colonial oppression, and arguably they were advocating even more resistance.

**The Missionaries’ Religious Agenda**

The missionaries were not mere social reformers, however. Regardless of their organizational affiliations, they were among the most evangelical of Christians at the time, and they saw their mission primarily as converting Africans to Christianity,
not necessarily conquering or changing the social order. Their motivations, then, were primarily religious, even when tinged by social concerns. Many of them held millenarian views, the belief that Christ would eventually return to directly and personally rule the earth and that the coming of this kingdom was linked to evangelism.

In this vision the missionaries closely followed Bunyan. The need for individual salvation, the struggle in this life, and the eventual triumph of the church in the millennial kingdom were reflected in Bunyan’s writings, including The Pilgrim’s Progress. Theologically, the book has shaped missionaries’ thinking, and so they held it to be an important text to pass on to new converts.

Not surprisingly, Protestant missionaries to Africa emphasized the importance of translating the Bible and other religious texts into the vernacular and teaching the people to read. Roman Catholics, by contrast, learned to speak native languages but did much less translating and printing of texts, since they relied on Latin as a universal language for Scripture and liturgy.

The primary reason for translation was evangelism; as evangelicals, the Protestant missionaries believed that reading the Bible itself was sufficient to convert unbelievers. Education and especially literacy, then, were essential to allow the people to read the text. Other activities the missionaries engaged in, such as medical work or vocational training, served their social agendas or earned them a hearing as they preached the Word of God.

In their work, the missionaries were part of a worldwide effort that emphasized the importance of Bible translation. For instance, at the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions, held in London in 1888, the closing meeting was devoted entirely to the role of Bible translation and literature in mission work. Besides evangelism, delegates saw two important reasons for providing the Bible in the vernacular. First, it was a way of detaching Christianity from its European cultural trappings, at least to some extent; second, it was necessary for establishing self-governing churches.

The missionaries saw The Pilgrim’s Progress as a key tool in their effort. It clearly embodied their conception of the Christian life, its narrative format made it readily translatable, and it was simple enough for beginning readers to understand.

Cross-Cultural Translation

Interestingly, the Bible and The Pilgrim’s Progress were treated differently as they were translated cross-culturally. The Bible was seen as acultural, or at least as detached from Western culture. As R. Wardlaw Thompson of the London Missionary Society expressed it in the late 1880s: “Do what we may to prevent it, our converts are disposed to copy us far too literally and exactly; and this mechanical reproduction of our dress, our isms, and our ideas is a great weakness in the Mission Church. The less we do to encourage or allow our native Christians to lean on us, the more speedily and the more thoroughly we can set them on their own feet, the more wisely and worthily our work be accomplished. But to this end we need from the very outset of our work to make provision by which they may learn for themselves the truth of God.”

In practice, of course, the missionaries had much difficulty distinguishing between Christianity and European culture, and they certainly had difficulty allowing their churches to become self-governing. The language of paternalism echoes in Thompson’s phrase “our native Christians.” Nevertheless, the ideal of a self-governing, culturally appropriate church was present in the mission movement, even in the nineteenth century.

If the Bible was seen as acultural, however, The Pilgrim’s Progress was seen as culturally bound but open to cultural as well as linguistic translation. In fact, translation of the book began before the entire text had even been completed. The book was published originally in two parts, the first part in 1678, which was then translated into several languages by the time the second part appeared in 1684.

The underlying plot crossed cultural bounds, even religious bounds, creating a story that was able to transcend the specific cultural and historical context of its birth. As Roger Sharrock notes, “Bunyan wrote a book to express the views on God, man and salvation of an English seventeenth century Particular Baptist and created a work for the world which has appealed even to those of other religions than Christianity or even of no religion (it played a role for instance among the liberalizing tendencies in Islam in the nineteenth century).” The result was a text that missionaries could transport easily and that—at least to missionary minds—would still contain the essential picture of the Christian life.

Finally, the simplicity of the text appealed to the missionaries’ sense of paternalism. The Pilgrim’s Progress was already in use among evangelicals as a children’s text, appropriate to them because of the supposed simplicity of the English text and the readily understood story line. The missionaries tended to view the Africans especially as childlike, culturally and spiritually immature, and thus The Pilgrim’s Progress seemed appropriate to that audience as well. Just as The Pilgrim’s Progress was used to teach English children how to read and to understand the Bible, so it was used in an effort to teach Africans the same skills.

This again had political significance, because it was not entirely self-serving. In teaching the Africans to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, the missionaries were providing an outside authority that could and would eventually be used to challenge themselves. This effect, however, was not unintentional, but a central part of missionary strategy among Protestants, with the goal of establishing self-governing churches.

A Permanent Church

The first reason for missionaries’ interest in translation was evangelism, based on the belief that the text spoke for itself. But a second reason for translation—especially of the Bible—was to ensure the permanence of the church by establishing a self-governing institution that would stand on its own after the missionaries had left. As R. Wardlaw Thompson explained in the late 1880s, “If we then desire to have lasting work, . . . we shall never be content with the ministry of the spoken message however eloquent; we shall give them that Book which has in the past done such marvelous things for all who have received it humbly and read it prayerfully, that Book which shall abide with them.”

The text was viewed as timeless, thus providing a constant authority for the church. Again, the implication was that mission-
ary work would cease when an established church could govern itself based on the precepts contained in the text. Missionaries themselves clearly shared these views.

While the missionaries found these ideals difficult to live up to, the institutions they formed—churches and schools—became sites at which African participation and leadership were expected. Schools, perhaps more so than churches, became the locus of political struggle between conservative missionaries and Africans anxious to control their own institutions. As such, the schools provided opportunities for Africans to express dissent and exercise control in a more direct manner than was possible relative to the colonial government.

Most of the Protestant missionaries entering Africa came from an evangelical background, an outgrowth of the Nonconformists of Bunyan’s era. They clearly applied Bunyan’s message of the authority of the believer to themselves and saw their own experiences through the character of Christian. What they sometimes missed, however, was how clearly the same message was appropriated by their converts, who recognized the implication that missionary authority was not absolute either. So, for example, bits of The Pilgrim’s Progress story were retold as having happened to Simon Kimbangu, the leader of an independent and reactionary Christian group in the Congo in the 1920s. The implication was that Kimbangu held the same authority as Christian. Outside Africa, the Taiping Christian sect in China adopted The Pilgrim’s Progress as metaphor for their military actions in the mid-1800s. Christopher Hill sums up nicely: “Missionaries carried The Pilgrim’s Progress all over Africa and Asia, where its readers may have appreciated Bunyan’s appeal to the downtrodden and the persecuted better than those who had it translated.”

The missionaries may not have condoned the more radical applications of The Pilgrim’s Progress, but they nevertheless credited it with helping establish churches that could stand on their own without missionary support. In her 1920 study of mission history, Helen Barrett Montgomery claimed that The Pilgrim’s Progress was instrumental in preserving and growing the church in Madagascar after the missionaries were driven out in 1835.

The missionaries, before going, buried their boxes of Bibles, Testaments and The Pilgrim’s Progress, to await their return and the dawn of better days. Well that they did not dream that twenty-six years were to pass before the mission stations could again be opened. . . . The only legacy which the missionaries had been able to leave to their sorely tried converts was the books which they had printed. Since these books were the only ones in the language, they had been read without distraction by all classes of people. On the New Testament and The Pilgrim’s Progress, the Christians were to feed their souls during the black years that followed. . . .

When the missionaries had been driven out, there were about fifteen hundred Christians. When they were allowed to return, there were seven thousand. During the twenty-six years ten thousand people had been sentenced to death or slavery or exile.

Such stories established the mythic status of the book among missionary supporters in Europe and the Americas, whether or not the explanations were factually accurate. But more, they illustrate the difficulty of labeling the missionaries as merely conservative agents of colonialism. Local converts were not simply co-opting the missionaries’ message for their own ends; the message of self-rule was implicit in what the missionaries were about. The Pilgrim’s Progress embodied both the missionaries’ spiritual message and their social message.

Conclusions and Implications

John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress profoundly influenced the specific branches of Protestant Christianity that were most active in missionary work in British-dominated Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They chose it as one of the first subjects for translation in part because of its unique role in their own religious culture but also because of its apparent relevance and usefulness to the task at hand: teaching converts to read, training them in the fundamentals of faith, and establishing self-governing churches.

That the converts learned their lessons too well and at times reacted against the missionaries does not necessarily mean the converts were simply subverting the message for their own ends, as some interpreters would have it. Instead, it reflects the uncomfortable paradox of the missionaries’ ideology, that they were both agents of their own cultures and agents of opposition within those cultures. The oppositional element that led them to struggle against slavery and at times colonialism itself were echoed in their converts, and when the missionaries themselves sometimes acted as oppressors, the texts they had brought authorized resistance.

This finding has some interesting implications for the study of the history of print and for the study of current religious media used by missionaries. In terms of history, it suggests that both the imperialist and the critical interpretations of missionary activity have validity, and that a more nuanced understanding of how the missionaries affected political development in Africa is needed. To simply assign missionaries to the category of imperialists underplays their empowering role, whereas to suggest that they were merely subverted by outside social interests also underplays their empowering role.

History always helps understand the present and suggests directions for the future. The significance of The Pilgrim’s Progress as a second text reveals the particular ideology of the missionaries. They were not just Christians—they were Christians of a particular kind, and their specific ideas still reverberate in Africa today. The worldwide controversy in the Anglican church over homosexuality is just one example, with African church leaders vocally presenting a conservative viewpoint authorized by their own reading of the Bible—just as Bunyan would have suggested.

Over 325 years have passed since Bunyan penned his novel, written “as in a dream.” Amazingly, the effects of the simple English preacher’s book are still felt around the world.

Notes

5. Stuart Sim and David Walker, Bunyan and Authority: The Rhetoric

6. Ibid., p. 217.
8. Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, in Words of One Syllable, with Numerous Illustrations, Designed by Frederick Barnard and Others, and Water-Color Reproductions ([Philadelphia?]: Pilgrim’s Progress Publishing Company, [1895]).

10. Literally hundreds of books have been written on the work and impact of Livingstone; he also looms large in every history of the period. For a concise overview of Livingstone’s life, see Christian History 16, no. 4 (1997).


19. Ibid., p. 6.
25. C. Hill, Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People, p. 375.

A “New Breed of Missionaries”: Assessing Attitudes Toward Western Missions at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology

F. Lionel Young III

As we were passing through the town of Nyeri, our Kikuyu driver turned said something that sounded strange to me, an American pastor spending his sabbatical serving as a missionary professor: “See that hotel. Oldest hotel in Kenya’s Central Province. Built during missionary days.” I peered out the window of our minibus and saw a British-colonial-style guest house partially obscured by a neatly trimmed row of hedges. “When was it built?” I asked. “Not sure. Maybe 1800s—back in missionary days.”

Our Kikuyu guide knew this country well. At every checkpoint on the road through Thika, across the River Tana on our drive to the Aberdare Mountains, he chatted with local police as if they were old pals. His local knowledge made us feel comfortable in the unfamiliar beauty of East Africa. He also knew something that many in the West have yet to learn: to some people, the “missionary days” are ancient history.

During the past century a shift of epic proportions has dramatically altered the landscape of Christianity, giving rise to what Philip Jenkins has called “the Next Christendom.” In his words, “The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning.”

During the 1970s Andrew W. Walls began assembling a coterie of scholars in Scotland at the University of Aberdeen and later the University of Edinburgh for the purpose of studying the growth of Christianity in the non-Western world. Walls has effectively changed the topic of conversation among Christian historians, inspiring new centers for the study of world Christianity around the globe, with presses now churning out a vast body of literature devoted to the study of Christianity in the Majority World.

While historians are finally taking note of these undeniable alterations in the landscape of Christianity, many Western churches and mission agencies remain oblivious to the new realities. In The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World (2005), Joel Carpenter writes, “One of the most important but least examined changes in the world over the past century has been the rapid rise of Christianity in non-Western societies and cultures. In 1900, 80 percent of the world’s professing Christians were Europeans or North American. Today, 60 percent of professing Christians live in the global South and East.”

These “least examined changes” have captured my attention in recent years as both a scholar and a pastor. As the senior pastor of a growing evangelical church in North America that...

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is highly committed to the global missionary enterprise, I have been an observer-participant in numerous important decisions related to sending and supporting missionaries in the Global South. As a scholar who is committed to a greater understanding of what has happened and is happening in the Majority World, I am often intrigued by the lack of communication that exists between scholars who are conducting research in the area of world Christianity and decision makers who are in the forefront of the Christian missionary enterprise. This growing concern led me to spend a sabbatical in 2006 at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, now part of Africa International University, where I taught church history and conducted research on the problem of Western missions in the Global South. This article is a partial distillation of my findings.

My Investigations

The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), a thoroughly African educational institution, has strong ties to mission agencies and churches in North America. The leadership and direction for the institution are in the hands of an African board of directors, while significant contributions come from missionaries supported by Western churches and organizations like Christian Leaders for Africa, a North American funding agency established for the purpose of promoting theological education on the African continent. Plans were first laid for NEGST in the early 1970s under the leadership of Dr. Byang Kato, the first African general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM), later renamed Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA). After Kato’s untimely death in 1975 at the age of thirty-nine, the AEA spearheaded efforts to establish an anglophone school for the purpose of providing postgraduate theological education in Africa. The school began matriculation in 1983 and is now a fully accredited seminary with approximately 325 graduate students enrolled in various degree programs. The seminary has an impressive international faculty, a 40,000-volume library, and a fully accredited Ph.D. program, launched in 2005 with a special focus on theological issues relevant to the African context.

During my sabbatical in Kenya I conducted research on the question of Western missionary activity, particularly the continuation of Western-funded missionaries in African nations that are now largely “missionized.” I interviewed professors, pastors, administrators, NGO directors, and seasoned missionaries, all serving the church in some capacity in Kenya or East Africa. I listened closely to the thirty-five graduate students in my classroom, thirty-two of whom were already serving in churches and parachurch organizations in various leadership capacities. I personally interviewed nearly fifty graduate students. I was able to interview several faculty members and had numerous conversations with the vice-chancellor, Douglas Carew, who serves as the chair of the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA). I spent time in the school library reading theses produced by students of the seminary dealing with some of the problems associated with Western partnerships. In addition, I assigned research papers requiring each of the graduate students in my class to interview three African church leaders outside of the seminary to solicit opinions and thoughts on the question of Western-funded missions in the “Christianized” Global South. I also attended chapel sessions on the campus and weekend worship services in various parts of Kenya, which gave me numerous opportunities to interact with a wide variety of leaders in both urban and rural settings.

Recurring Themes

Three recurring themes emerged from my research. First, a majority of leaders and students at NEGST associated the missionary movement with colonialism, and they viewed the failure of missionaries to train nationals as an expression of colonial rule. At the same time, and with equal fervor, they expressed a strong desire for some type of missionary presence, making it clear that Africa needed “a new breed of missionary.”

Second, a majority of those I interviewed condemned Western society (“Western church” and “Western society” were often used synonymously) for “liberal views” on a variety of issues, while humbly identifying themselves as beneficiaries of Western-missionary labors. They insisted on the need for continued ecclesiastical partnerships with the church in the West whenever possible.

Third, African evangelical leaders and students at NEGST considered evangelistic activity in the African church to be one of their greatest strengths, while readily admitting that one of their greatest weaknesses was the inability of the African church to address the myriad of complex social problems such as poverty, HIV, corruption, illiteracy, and unemployment. Furthermore, though they viewed the West as lagging behind (if not failing) in the area of evangelism, they believed that the church in the West has been endowed with experience and resources that could be used to assist them in addressing some of their social problems.

Our “Ephesians Moment”

In The New Faces of Christianity, Philip Jenkins has pointed out that “we can reasonably ask whether the emerging Christian traditions of the Two-Thirds World have recaptured themes and trends in Christianity that the older churches have forgotten.”

The theme of the church as a body, while often ignored in the Western church, where individualism is more highly prized, was prominent in my discussions with African leaders and students as we talked about Western missions. This was illustrated most vividly during my first dinner on the campus shortly. My family and I were warmly received at the home of vice-chancellor Douglas Carew, a native of Sierra Leone who did his doctoral work in the United States. After enjoying a splendid African meal, we sat out on the veranda and talked about the question of Western missions in the Majority World. Carew began by saying, “The entire question must begin by asking, ‘What is the church?’ Only then can we begin to talk about the relationship between the church in the West and the church in the Majority World.”

In our many conversations he frequently used the expressions “church as a body,” “shared vision,” and “shared mission” as the essential starting point for any discussion of Western missions in the non-Western world.

It is helpful here to recall that the global shift that has occurred in twentieth-century Christianity is not without precedent.
Andrew Walls has referred to the shifting center of Christianity in the first century from Jerusalem to the West as the “Ephesians moment”—that is, “the social coming together of people of two cultures to experience Christ,” an experience that lasted briefly before Christianity became “as overwhelmingly Hellenistic as once it had been overwhelmingly Jewish.” Walls then notes: “In our own day the Ephesians moment has come again, and come in a richer mode than has ever happened since the first century.” The Southern shift is our Ephesians moment. More significantly, as Walls observes, it is in the context of this Ephesians moment that Paul talks about the unity of the church: “The Ephesians metaphors of the temple and of the body show each of the culture-specific segments as necessary to the body but as incomplete in itself. . . . None of us can reach Christ’s completeness on our own. We need each other’s vision to correct, enlarge, and focus our own; only together are we complete in Christ.”

This theme of the church as a body was echoed repeatedly in my discussions with faculty members, leaders, and students at NEGST. In fact, any talk of Western departure or a moratorium on Western missions seemed offensive to leaders and students in the African church. In the words of James Nkansah, chair of the theology department, “We need each other.”

Almost without exception, the withdrawal of personnel and funding by the West was viewed as unbiblical and harmful. African leaders and students complained that Western policy makers often fail to think through the long-term implications of their decisions with input from African church leaders. As one student put it: “The tendency [in recent years] has been that of calling the missionaries to pack up and go back to their home church. Most of these calls come from people who have not thought twice on the matter.” Another student even boldly stated that he “strongly disagreed” with Henry Venn’s long-established Three-Self principle, citing the apostle Paul’s use of the body metaphor as proof that it is completely unbiblical.

The strongest words were reserved for missionaries and mission agencies that established churches or mission schools and then left without adequately training nationals to continue the work. Motives for their decision to leave, move, or cut off funding were viewed with suspicion. One student-pastor from Nairobi cynically commented, “In most cases these missionaries stop financial aid because they are leaving and sort of want to prove that the African cannot actually run and maintain the projects.” Although such a statement may not accurately describe the reality, it does represent perceptions that are very real among African students and leaders.

Listening to the Church in Africa

In order for the Western church to overcome mischaracterizations and effectively work together with the Majority Church for the spread of the Gospel, more will be required than loud protests by the Western church that it has been misunderstood. More important is our need to hear what the church in Africa is saying to the West. My research at NEGST revealed three possible ways the church in the West can work together with the African church in the now-missionized Global South.

First, African leaders and students identified the need for a new kind of missionary, who can help them provide leadership for a church that is embracing the old-fashioned Gospel at a rate of 23,000 new converts a day. One of the most repeated complaints was that the West is not sending its best and brightest to help them in their time of need. The impression, as one student put it, is that “Africa is [the] dumping ground for failures in ministry.”

Complicating missions in East Africa is the history of colonialism. While professors typically espoused more nuanced views, students and leaders I interviewed usually associated the expansion of British imperialism with the work of the Western missionary and the spread of the Gospel. One graduate student brought me a copy of Joe de Graft’s Muntu (1977), a play about the arrival of missionaries on the same ship with Arab slave-traders and European colonists, to help me understand how most university-educated students in Kenya understand their past. Despite efforts to counter what Brian Stanley rightly calls the “propaganda” disseminated by critics of Western imperialism, perception has now become the reality.

Almost without exception, the students and leaders I talked with commended the missionaries for their work in bringing the Gospel to Africa, while condemning the same missionaries for their failures in numerous areas, including the lack of preparation they gave to nationals for the ecclesiastical leadership responsibilities that they were eventually (and often reluctantly) given. Yet nearly everyone I interviewed expressed a strong desire to have some type of missionary presence, while arguing that a new breed of missionaries is needed to help Africa face its complex social problems. Those interviewed repeated the call for trained and seasoned persons with significant ministry experience to be sent as missionaries; they should be “experienced,” “educated,” and have “proven leadership ability,” coupled with a desire to show others how to serve the church more effectively. In other words, African leaders and students want accomplished people who are willing to leave position and status, if necessary, to help them provide better leadership for their church.

There are numerous opportunities for the West to provide much-needed missionary service in the developing world. For example, mission agencies like WorldVenture are making adjustments to their service plans to place a greater emphasis on leadership development and international partnerships. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, which comprises almost two hundred academic institutions worldwide, is currently in the process of developing mechanisms “by which the use of short-term faculty from its regular member schools will be facilitated for the benefit of international affiliate institutions” in the developing countries. NEGST professors and administrators expressed gratitude for the valuable assistance provided by a team from Indianapolis, Indiana, that partnered with the IT department to teach advanced courses in computer technology. The new Western missionary must have proven experience, a skill or ability that can be used to serve the church, and the requisite humility to work alongside and under national leaders.

Second, African leaders and students desire a new kind of partnership. While the professors and students were aware of some of the complexities of partnerships involving people from different cultures, they insisted that not only are there biblical precedents

One of the most repeated complaints was that the West is not sending its best and brightest to help Africa in its time of need.
for partnership, but that it is actually a biblical requirement. They were also very eager to listen to Western church leaders in order to discover possible ways of accomplishing this. One Kenyan-born professor at NEGST observed that sometimes the “issue of partnerships is so difficult that all we can really do right now is talk about it.”23 He was speaking out of personal experience, for his ministry to orphans in Mombasa has a loose partnership with churches and supporters in the West. Questions remained unanswered. How can we promote viable partnerships that are mutually beneficial? How can we have “partnership without patronizing”? How do we develop a relationship where we are “brothers, not benefactors”?24 How do we develop mechanisms for accountability without being misunderstood, especially given the history of colonialism and the perceptions that remain in the minds of many African Christians?

Partnerships will require thoughtful planning in conjunction with national leaders, lest the strategies be ill-conceived, tilted toward Western interests or worse, and misunderstood as neo-colonialism. When Western missionaries and mission agencies build ministries in developing countries that are difficult to maintain and then gradually reduce funding in an effort to promote autonomy, the missionaries and agencies are perceived as either shortsighted or cruel.

Various possibilities need further exploration and evaluation. Churches like the Nairobi Chapel, where our family worshipped on more than one occasion, are already experimenting with staff exchange programs with Western churches, partnering with American churches to send missionaries out to parts of the world where Western missionaries would not be welcomed, and developing homes for orphans funded largely by Western churches but staffed by nationals in the Majority World.25 Working together in educational institutions, with partnerships for providing resources for a new generation of African leaders, was almost always viewed positively. Indeed, almost without exception the students wanted European and American scholars present on campus, and such scholars who were able to be on campus almost always viewed their experiences as positive. More recently, the Langham Partnership International has partnered with African leaders and scholars to produce a commentary on the whole Bible written “by Africans for Africa.”26

Third, African leaders and students believe that a renewed commitment to sharing resources is one of the ways the Western church can assist them in their time of need. While the church in Africa is experiencing rapid growth, it is also facing a myriad of complex social and cultural problems. The AIDS epidemic, widespread poverty, the orphan crisis, tribal conflicts, disease, and illiteracy, as well as the challenges of heretical Christian sects, syncretism, and disunity, were the challenges mentioned most frequently by students. Complicating the problems is the lack of trained Christian leadership (very few pastors in Kenya have even a rudimentary Bible college degree), government corruption, and the lack of resources needed to address the mounting problems. Despite these challenges, many Africans are ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Leaders and students at NEGST do not want the West to solve their problems, but they do want the West to help them.

Perhaps the greatest challenge, as well as the greatest opportunity, for the future of Western missions is in the area of sharing resources. In 1947 Carl F. H. Henry called American evangelicals the “modern day priest and Levite passing by on the other side.”27 In 1974 evangelical leaders at Lausanne finally issued a global call for the “whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world,”28 which was followed in 1982 by a more detailed articulation of the relationship between the Gospel and social responsibility.29

Reversing what historian Timothy L. Smith termed the “Great Reversal” is still a work in progress, not only in the West but in Africa as well, where the impoverished theology that Carl F. H. Henry called into question was imported by missionaries who came with a “single-issue mentality.”30 In the middle of one conversation with a Kenyan professor, I was startled when she suddenly pounded the table with her fist as she explained that in Bible college “we were simply taught to hammer the Gospel.” She was referring to the imbalanced instruction she received at a Bible college in Kenya that had been established by Western missionaries. She further noted that, through the influence of evangelicals like John Stott, progress was slowly being made toward a more holistic ministry.31

The challenge in the West will be to convince evangelicals, who are often more passionate about planting churches than taking care of orphans and widows, that a larger percentage of Western money should be allocated to help their impoverished brothers and sisters in the Majority World.32 If this is accomplished, other questions remain. How can sharing be done without promoting a “dependency syndrome”?33 How do we offer accountability without lording it over those who are recipients of the generosity of Western donors? Mission agencies that are struggling to...
lages. That was a source of great sorrow to the leaders of the clan; but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man’s god would not last.”36

The once “strange faith” has more than lasted in Africa, so that we may now rightly speak of sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of the twenty-first century as a “Christian heartland.”37 Even with this shift, African leaders and students believe that missionary activity can and should continue. But the work of the West should not be a “source of great sorrow to the leaders” of the rapidly expanding African church. Instead, the West must work humbly and wisely, sending out a new kind of missionary, exploring mutually beneficial partnerships, and sharing resources for the good of God’s church and the glory of God’s name.

Notes
3. Paul Heidebrecht, executive director of Christian Leaders for Africa, was of great assistance in helping me understand this important relationship. For information on this group, see http://clafrica.com.
5. For information on NEGST, see www.negst.edu.
6. Countries represented by students in my class were Armenia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, and the United States. In addition, I interviewed professors from Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
7. Examples cited repeatedly were the issues of biblical interpretation, Western attitudes toward homosexuality, unchecked materialism, and divorce. See also Philip Jenkins, The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 1–17.
8. Ibid., p. 179.
12. The students are Aquinas Angoli and Matthew Gonkerwon, who each wrote “An Opinion Paper Exploring the Relationship Between the Western Church and the African Church” (unpublished papers, NEGST, 2006); hereafter, “An Opinion Paper.”
16. See, for example, an article by Mark Shaw, professor of historical studies at NEGST: “Great White Father,” Christian History Magazine, October 1997.
21. Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, “Blueprint for the Future,” www.cccu.org/about/blueprint_for_the_future. I am thankful for the kind assistance of Dwight Jessup, retired provost of Taylor University, for bringing this to my attention. During 2006–7 Jessup served in an administrative position at NEGST and provided helpful insights for exploring educational partnerships.
22. I talked with others who had disappointing experiences coming to Kenya for service opportunities. In each instance, poor planning and a lack of clear purpose on the part of the mission agency or church appeared to be the issue.
23. Interview with Stephen Sesi, head of Missions Department at NEGST, January 22, 2006.
29. Consultation on the relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment, Lausanne occasional papers, no. 21 (Wheaton, Ill: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, 1982).
31. Interview with Christine Mutua, director of undergraduate studies at NEGST, March 2006.
32. For an indictment on the failure of the West to provide generous assistance to the majority world, see Ronald J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997).
33. The phrase “dependency syndrome” was used in many conversations and papers. Those who used this phrase, however, were not arguing for the discontinuation of financial assistance. Instead, they were calling for resources to be shared in a way that does not completely remove the responsibility of the African church.
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My Pilgrimage in Mission

Joseph G. Donders

My mission vocation really started with my grandmother on my father’s side. She had two sons and seven daughters, and in a Catholic region of the Netherlands in those days, it was almost a scandal that no one had had a religious vocation. That is why she had decided to take care that this would not happen to her grandchildren. Born in Tilburg in 1929, I was her first grandson, and at the end of each month she collected all the mission journals she subscribed to for me. As a small boy I read them with the popular missiology then current. I felt a real pity for all those boys and girls who would never hear about Jesus and consequently would remain in the grip of the devil and be eternally lost. So I decided to become a missionary. At about age ten I wrote a letter to those mission journals, and only the journal of the Missionaries of Africa answered my letter. Consequently I decided to join them. In one of my confirmation classes the priest asked who would like to become a missionary, and I raised my hand.

Training as a White Father, 1945–61

The Second World War intervened, and I had to wait until after it was over before I could join my missionary training with the society I had chosen, called in those days the White Fathers. Officially, it was the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, an international missionary society founded by Cardinal Charles Martyr Lavigerie in 1874 in North Africa.

By the time that I joined the formal training, the idea that mission had almost exclusively something to do with the salvation of individual souls—which even nowadays sometimes still seems to predominate—had begun to broaden. In the early 1940s I was at a Catholic primary school, where one of my religious teachers, a religious brother Frater Reginald, introduced me at the age of twelve to the then-developing greater attention to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. In 1943 this development in the Catholic Church was honored by Pius XII’s encyclical On the Mystical Body of Christ.

Even a war experience of those days illustrated in a way this reality. One day I was kneeling as an altar boy at the same communion rail with a soldier who in those days was my enemy in the most literal sense of the word, with whom I would not have been willing to eat together under any other circumstance; I would have considered it to be treason. It was suddenly as if I was confronted with two worlds—the actually divided and warring one, and at the same time a spiritually and sacramentally undivided one. Yet the prevailing view of salvation at the time saw it as mainly an individualistic matter, as it still seems to be in some discussions these days.

My philosophical and theological studies were done in the Catholic world between the Second World War (ended 1945) and Vatican II (1962–65). In a way, all questions seemed to have been dogmatically settled; before our ordination to the diaconate, we were all asked to take the Anti-Modernist Oath, in which we promised that we would never change or reinterpret anything.

We made our studies in an international context, though in those days one that was still Western (and colonial). It meant that seminarians from Britain, Canada, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands were studying together, though some of them had been fighting each other at the war fronts in Europe and Africa. Again the salvation emphasis prevailed.

I spent my last year of studies in Great Britain. In order to get a working permit in those days for a British colonial territory in Africa, one had to have lived for half a year in Britain to be introduced into the British way of life. In 1957 I was ordained a priest in Galashiels, Scotland.

Following Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s death in New York on Easter Day in 1955, his family started to publish writings that he had not been allowed to publish during his lifetime. In one he wrote of some spiritual experiences during the First World War, when he served as a soldier, a stretcher-bearer in the French Army. He wrote how, meditating in front of the face of Jesus, he asked himself the question, “How would Jesus react to this war?” He saw the warring soldiers from countries and colors all over the world forming together the one reality of Jesus Christ. He had a similar experience when he was praying in a French village church at the front lines. He explained it as the ongoing process of our mission in this world.

Appointed to continue my studies for a doctorate at the Gregorian University in Rome, I obtained academic permission to write my doctorate on Teilhard de Chardin. About halfway through my work, however, I was informed that the permission had been withdrawn. Young priests were not allowed to read Teilhard’s work! So instead I wrote my thesis on a pacifist, A. D. Sertillanges, O.P., who had evolutionary ideas more or less in agreement with those of Teilhard.

But then the world and church started to open up. We were entering the 1960s, now considered almost magic years. I joined the funeral procession of Pope Pius XII in Rome and was there when in 1959 Pope John XIII announced the Second Vatican Council. It was meant to be a new beginning for the Catholic Church.

Teaching in the Netherlands, 1962–68

The consequences of the Second Vatican Council were enormous, even in my own life. After my studies in Rome I had started to teach philosophy (as an introduction to the students’ later theological studies) in St. Charles, Esch, Netherlands, in a house where between thirty and thirty-five young men prepared themselves for a spiritual year and for their further theological preparation for the missions in Africa. We were convinced that, under the influence of the Second Vatican Council, zeal for the missions would increase so much that we would need a new house to accommodate them. The Provincial Council in the Netherlands thus decided to build a new house to accommodate them. The new building was constructed—but it was never used, not even for one day! After the Second Vatican Council, with its documents on mission, interreligious dialogue, and religious freedom, the number of candidates, instead of dou-
bling, suddenly reduced to hardly any at all. Practically all over the country the study houses of the many mission congregations first came together and then gradually were closed. It seemed to be the end of a mission period in a small country that, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, had about 10,000 Catholic missionaries “overseas.”

That “end of a mission period” was also used in 1966 by the Dutch missiologist and Islamologist Arend Theodoor van Leeuwen in his book *Het Christendom in de Wereldgeschiedenis*, the Dutch original of *Christianity in World History* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968). This study, which greatly influenced my mission pilgrimage, showed the relation of Judaism, Christianity, Islam (and Marxism) to the one Abrahamic call and vocation: “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Mission reached beyond the salvation of the individual soul. It was global and planetary.

This vision and mission, wider than the one that had made me a missionary, was also documented in *Ad gentes*, the “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity”: “It pleased God to call men to share in his life and not merely singly, without any bond between them, but he formed them into a people, in which his children who had been scattered were gathered together (cf. Jn. 11:52)” (sec. 2).

Twenty-five years later, in 1990, John Paul II defined mission in his encyclical *Redemptoris missio* “in the light of the needs of the contemporary world,” citing Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21 “that they all may be one” (sec. 1).

The conciliar document *Ad gentes* also mentioned several times that Christ sent the Holy Spirit from the Father to inspire “in the hearts of the faithful that same spirit of mission which impelled Christ himself” (sec. 4). Mission is “in obedience to Christ’s command and moved by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit” (sec. 5). These were only some of the renewed insights that needed to be introduced into an older faith context. Carriers of the Holy Spirit, “charged with the Spirit,”1 are we sharing in the *missio Dei*.

It became one of my new tasks to introduce this wider vision and its consequences to diocesan, seminary, and parish meetings all through the Netherlands, and I was asked to participate in the Aggiornamento (“updating”) Chapter of my own International Society of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (1967), an exercise the Second Vatican Council had foreseen. The chapter lasted for over six months, and the resulting “Chapter Documents,” published in 1968, numbered 440 pages!

A year earlier, in 1967, Paul VI published his encyclical *Populorum progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), drawing further conclusions from the renewed mission vision. This vision had already been updated by John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in terris* (Peace on Earth, 1963).

As the new approach—as expressed in the Second Vatican Council documents “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” and “Declaration on Religious Liberty”—as a kind of secularization of their vocation. Some thought that the end of a mission period meant the end of the mission.

**Growth in Nairobi, Kenya, 1968–84**

The opportunity opened up to join the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. The department was headed by the Anglican mission bishop Stephen Neill. He had been asked to draw up a feasibility study for a department of religious studies of what in 1967 formed a University College of the University of East Africa, an institution that covered Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. After complicated discussions with the local religious bodies and University College professors, Neill had come to the conclusion that a department of religious studies would be viable if it could be combined with and sponsored by the study of philosophy. As Neill later noted rather laconically in his autobiography, “Those who did not much like religious studies were prepared to endure them in order to get philosophy in, those who did not care about philosophy were prepared to accept it in order to make sure that religious studies were accepted.”

*Learning an African approach.* The churches and other religious bodies were responsible for the first five years of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies in what a year later became the University of Nairobi. The new/renewed mission ideas and information I had been working and living with met a whole new academic, social, ecumenical, and interreligious world. I gradually began to change my ideas. It made me understand how my contact with other religions showed me again and again that my understanding of religion and Christianity had been only one interpretation, only one approach. Specifically, it was the one the experienced missiologist and East African Catholic missionary Eugene Hillman had called “a European folk one.”

It made me understand why, already in those years, now four decades ago, John Mbiti felt the need to write his book *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), and why David Barrett, then a research fellow of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, wrote *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (1968).

All this was not obvious to me in those first years at the...
My contact with other religions showed me again and again that my understanding of religion and Christianity had been only one approach.

his baptismal name “James” and started his struggle to change the Department of English Literature into the Department of African Literature, while Okot p’Bitek, his Ugandan colleague in the department, wrote his influential book The Song of Lawino, in which an African woman bitterly complains about the Westernization of her husband: “Let no one uproot the pumpkin in the old homestead.”

In the context of the courses on Christianity, next to those on Islam and the religions of African origin, the question often was Jesus himself. Was he not going to be a permanent stranger, an expatriate, a permanent resident alien? How does Christianity relate to the African religious traditions? Or better, how could the African Traditional Religions relate to Jesus?

Such questions led to almost endless discussions. At a service at the Alliance High School, we came to an answer. It was when we analyzed the story in which Jesus walked as an unrecognized stranger with the two friends from Emmaus. Jesus did not reveal himself, did not tell who he was. He took their bread, broke it, and then they recognized him. As I wrote in 1975 in Expatriate Jesus, “Jesus is a stranger, but if you believe in him, it must have been you who recognized something in him. And if this recognition comes from you, how could it be strange to you?” It was an insight that helped not only them but also me. It reminded me of the sermon of St. Leo the Great cited by the Second Vatican Council’s “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity,” when it said, “The Holy Spirit was at work in the world before Christ was glorified” (sec. 4). This presence blesses not only the individual but also all individuals as such. It blesses—though often unrecognized—the whole of humanity.

Communities, not individuals. I remember in this context another lesson I learned in a conversation with a Kenyan theology student on the day that he left the seminary. He told me that missionaries often had missed their chance: “They baptized us as individuals. They should have introduced us much more as communities into the worldwide human/divine fellowship.” This conversation reminded me of my own original mission vocation of merely saving individual souls.

It was not the only way in which positive African values were overlooked in the missionary project. Just before he left, Bishop Neill got involved in a controversy that to a great extent seemed to have been caused by himself, the so-called moratorium on Western missionaries in the Third World. He stated that “for the good of African Christianity a constant flow of foreign missionaries would be necessary.” Some Kenyan church leaders, however, maintained that as long as there were foreigners among them, they would not be able to find their own identity and that therefore, at least for a time, all foreigners should be withdrawn to allow African churches to receive Jesus in an African way, faithful to how they had been hearing God’s Word.

It was a discussion that also had repercussions, in that staff members of the department were involved in the development of a new common Christian religious syllabus for the secondary schools of Kenya. The new approach intended to start “existentially” with the religious experience of the pupils themselves. It was a development that was strengthened by the influence of the American theologian James H. Cone, since 1969 the advocate of black theology, who was present in 1975 at the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in Nairobi, and who addressed the university community in St. Paul’s Chapel. It was in the same year that Paul VI published his apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi (“On Evangelization in the Modern World”), in which he wrote about the double character of a missionary’s faithfulness to God’s work in the world: “This fidelity both to a message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact is the central axis of evangelization” (sec. 4).

It was an issue in the department not only as far as religion was concerned. In philosophy we were facing a similar problem in those days. To offset a merely Western approach the department introduced the students to non-Western Asian and Chinese philosophies. But what about the validity of African thought and practice? It was the Kenyan staff member Henry Odera Oruka who successfully started to develop the study of the wisdom and philosophy of traditional African “sages.”

Seeing the social context of the Gospel. Stephen Neill retired in Britain in 1973, and I was appointed as his successor. Up to that time I had been mainly involved in the philosophy side of the department, but now I represented also the religious studies part of it. It brought me more in contact not only with my colleagues in religious studies but also with the great variety of local Muslim, Eastern, and African religious leaders in Kenya. It was an experience that made me discover as never before that those “others” walked with God. It was an experience we discussed at length in the 1986 meeting of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Rome in the workshop “The Plurality of Religions and the Search of a New Order,” under the direction of Tissa Balasuriya. The workshop proposed: “Religious pluralism was the reason for our original missionary activity. In many cases that missionary experience changed our own exclusivity. We discovered that the other, too, walked with God, an experience that seems to run parallel to a process that took place in Jesus of Nazareth when contacting others.”

It was in the context of my pastoral experience at the Catholic Community Chaplaincy that I realized the need to stress the social context of the Gospel. The student community, especially students organized in the “See, Judge, and Act” context of the Young Christian Students, were increasingly interested in practicing their Christian and Eucharistic experience in their work among the street children of Nairobi and in other public social issues. It brought me also in contact with the local Christian Development Education Services, which developed a consci-
entization program, to a great extent inspired by Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) and Gustavo Gutierrez’s “liberation theology.” This program helped dozens of groups and thousands of participants in their social outreach, injustice, peace, and environmental issues, in what some called “worshipping development.” It was a development that was often stimulated, but also sometimes sabotaged, by pastors who thought it too lay oriented and too secular.

It often led to the formation of “small Christian communities” and to a greater attention to ecumenical, interreligious, justice, peace, and reconciliation initiatives. This development in fact prepared me in a way for my next task.

**Ministry in Washington, D.C., 1984–2010**

I was invited to be the executive director of the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN), based in Washington, D.C., and organized by a large group of mission congregations at work in Africa. The aim of AFJN was to educate and advocate for a transformation of U.S. policies toward Africa, that they be grounded in a commitment to social justice and peace. The issues in those first years were the 1984 famine in Ethiopia, apartheid in South Africa, and the African wars and refugees. In the context of our lobbying efforts we published, in cooperation with the Gaba Pastoral Institute in Eldoret (Kenya), four pamphlets: *Bread Broken* (1985), *Refugees Are People* (1986), *War and Rumors of War* (1987), and *Gathering the Nations* (1988).

In the larger AFJN context of “putting Africa on the map,” I was invited to the Washington Theological Union to give a course entitled “The Relevance of African Christianity to the World Church.” It led to my appointment there as director of a course entitled “The Relevance of African Christianity to the World Church.”10 It led to my appointment there as director of the course entitled “The Relevance of African Christianity to the World Church.”

My childhood missionary vocation has widened, at the same time deepened, but it has not changed in its foundation. There has always been the vision of what Paul called the body of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:16, 12:27). This insight and consequent mission were strengthened by John Paul II’s 1990 mission encyclical *Redemptoris missio*. He too quotes Paul in its first paragraph: “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16), combining that text in the end of that section with Jesus’ words in John 17:21: “that they may all be one.” This text indicates not only that humanity at the moment is scattered but, even more profoundly, that we (with the whole of creation) are one, without realizing that oneness in Jesus Christ and in sharing in God’s triune life. We do not live the reality we are! The first quotation from the Old Testament in John Paul’s document, in section 12, is Genesis 12:3, where we hear how in Abraham “all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Sharing in this mission thrust is the heart and core of mission. “That they may all be one,” Jesus prays, putting it in his own Trinitarian context, “as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, they may also be in us” (John 17:21).

I was recently struck by a remark made by missiologist Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., in a recent interview in the Netherlands on how in the Blessed Eucharist we find this reality about ourselves corporeally expressed in Jesus Christ.11 It made me think about the vision Pierre Teilhard de Chardin had during the First World War.

It made me wonder also whether our discussions today of the issues of church, mission, dialogue, and even salvation do not sometimes risk missing Jesus’ point.

**Notes**

9. In the 1986 Rome meeting of the International Association for Mission Studies, this was Workshop 7, “The Plurality of Religions and the Search for a New Order,” Group 1, “Theology and Religious Pluralism.”


The book has nine chapters, each with tables and figures, as well as “Food for Thought” and “Burning Questions for Today,” which highlight, recapitulate, and illustrate the text. The first five chapters are general in nature; the last four focus on evangelicals. This arrangement tends to overemphasize the evangelical movement and undervalue the ecumenical movement. The book ignores Hendrik Kraemer, W.A. Visser ’t Hooft, and Lesslie Newbigin, missionary statesmen of the World Council of Churches.

The four chapters on evangelicals are the focus of attention. They deal respectively with the evangelical explosion, the “unevangelized,” the future of Christian missions, and the possibility of an evangelized world. Chapter 7, on the “unevangelized,” is the longest and most challenging chapter. Johnstone prefers the term “unevangelized” over “unreached.” However, this term is problematic as well. First, people outside the realm of the church are labeled negatively: un-. Second, how strict is this term? Are only non-Christians “unevangelized”? What about liberal and heretic Christians?

The “future of the global church” needs to be analyzed thoroughly and projected as prophetically as possible. The author’s optimism about Christianity’s future is appealing—but is it also convincing? I also appreciate Johnstone’s comments on Barrett’s encyclopedia. It is now time to carefully study the conceptual, methodological, and terminological agreements and disagreements between the two scholars and to evaluate carefully their shared optimism.

Johnstone has written an excellent work that will be studied all over the world. I have no doubt that many institutions will use it as a textbook. I recommend that a second edition include an index of geographic names; it is now impossible to quickly find data regarding, for example, Namibia, Nepal, or Nicaragua.

Jan A. B. Jongeneel, a contributing editor, is Honorary Professor Emeritus of Missiology at Utrecht University and author of Jesus Christ in World History (Peter Lang, 2009; reprinted in India, 2010).

Constructing China’s Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou.


Many have heard Wenzhou City on China’s southeastern coastline described as “China’s Jerusalem,” a reference to it as a flourishing center of Protestant Christianity. Far removed from the country’s centers of power by the mountainous terrain of rugged Zhejiang Province, the city and its surrounding region have always been both out of step with and one step ahead of the rest of the world. Jan A. B. Jongeneel, a contributing editor, is Honorary Professor Emeritus of Missiology at Utrecht University and author of Jesus Christ in World History (Peter Lang, 2009; reprinted in India, 2010).


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country. Its isolation and the historically freewheeling nature of the population have contributed to rapid economic growth, as well rapid growth of the Protestant church. By some estimates, the Christians in Wenzhou may constitute as much as 15 to 30 percent of the city’s population of 10 million. There may also be as many as 1,800 churches and meeting points, most of them not registered with the government and operating openly outside the official church structures.

In Constructing China’s Jerusalem, Nanlai Cao, who teaches at the University of Hong Kong, provides the first detailed account of the Protestant church in Wenzhou, presenting an ethnographic study of the daily practices of local church members. According to Cao, Christian revival has taken place there because of “a modernizing state, lax local governance, an emerging capitalist consumer economy, and greater spatial mobility among individuals” (p. 11). His study focuses on the dynamic role business and the so-called Boss Christians (laoban jidutu, successful businessmen and church leaders) have played in shaping Christian identity in Wenzhou. His treatment also explores gender roles and the participation of rural migrants in the life of the urban church.

Though at times the author seems to reduce the faith of his subjects to an aspect of their approach to business and a means for getting rich and gaining prestige, this book opens a unique window into daily church life that not only reveals a detailed portrait but also allows readers to hear the voices and stories of many Christians in Wenzhou. Because of its unique location, culture, and circumstances, Wenzhou certainly stands out on China’s Protestant landscape. In fact, though, much of what Cao describes as taking place in “China’s Jerusalem” is also happening in urban churches all around the country.

—Kurt Selles

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A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians.


In taking a biographical case-study approach to the Bible and the Victorians, Timothy Larsen shows how deeply embedded the “One Book” was in the culture and world of nineteenth-century England. At one end of the spectrum, Charles Bradlaugh, the noted atheist, and Annie Besant, later involved in

Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2011 for Mission Studies

In consultation with fifty distinguished scholars from around the world, the editors of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research have selected fifteen books published in 2011 for special recognition of their contribution to mission studies. We commend the authors, editors, and publishers represented here for their contribution to the advancement of scholarship in studies of the Christian mission and world Christianity.

Bays, Daniel H.

A New History of Christianity in China.


Burrows, William R., Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean, eds.

Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls.


Carey, Hilary M.


Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. £60 / $99.

Clark, Anthony E.

China’s Saints: Catholic Martyrdom During the Qing (1644–1911).

Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh Univ. Press. $75.

Cleary, Edward L.

The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America.

Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida. $74.95.

Doğan, Mehmet Ali, and Heather J. Sharkey, eds.

American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters.

Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press. Paperback $50.

Goheen, Michael W.

A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story.


Gornik, Mark R.


Grau, Marion.


Hedlund, Roger E., ed.

The Oxford Encyclopaedia of South Asian Christianity.


Kreider, Alan, and Eleanor Kreider.

Worship and Mission After Christendom.


Stuart, John.

British Missionaries and the End of Empire: East, Central, and Southern Africa, 1939–64.

Theosophy, both engaged with the Bible—the first to disprove it, and the second to articulate her atheism. Thomas Huxley, the original agnostic, frequently used language and imagery from the Bible in his correspondence. While opposing bibilolatry, he saw the Bible as great literature that should be used in schools.

At the other end of the spectrum, Larsen uses Catherine Booth and William Cooke to illustrate the centrality of the Bible for Methodist and Holiness Christians, Elizabeth Fry for Quakers, Josephine Butler for Evangelicals, and Charles Spurgeon for “Orthodox Old Dissent.” There are no surprises here, although in selecting six women overall (Mary Carpenter for Unitarians and Florence Nightingale for Liberal Anglicans are the other two) and six men, Larsen has clearly shown that Bible reading and study was not just a male profession. For Fry, the prison reformer, it is said, as it could be said of many Victorians, “the Bible soaked into her being” (p. 171)—and, one could add, into their life and work.

Edward Pusey represents the Anglo-Catholic Victorians, for whom the church fathers provided the lens for reading the Bible. For Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman the Catholic Church and its tradition gave the context in which the Bible should be read and understood.

Each chapter takes one denomination and uses one of the individuals listed above to illustrate how the Bible impacted them within the context of their lives. Larsen richly blends biographical background with a critique of both their personal and published writings about the Bible. It is a truism that, in order to understand the Victorians, we need to understand how they read and applied the Bible. This is not always readily appreciated by people today for whom the Bible no longer has a place in their lives. Larsen’s book provides a well-researched study of the range of Victorian approaches to the Bible, enabling readers to grasp its centrality in private devotions, family worship, preaching, and public life. —Allan K. Davidson

Allan K. Davidson is Honorary Research Fellow at St. John’s College, Auckland, and the University of Auckland, New Zealand, where he taught church history for many years before retiring in 2009.

Accountability in Missions: Korean and Western Case Studies.


Not surprisingly, some contributors discussed common accountability issues such as patterns of financial and sexual misbehavior, but other issues, less commonly considered, also emerged. For example, while discussing strategic accountability, Min Young Jung contrasted result-based and process-based management styles in regard to the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of missionary strategies and achievements on the field. Hyun Mo Lee also dealt with strategic accountability as he explained the differing perspectives of missionaries from high- and low-context cultures on the importance of mission policies, subjective judgments, and maintenance of relationships. With the huge influx of non-Western missionaries in various mission agencies, Lee’s admonition to those agencies is cogent: “Rules that are comprehensible to all parties must be put in place, and strategies that are acceptable to both Western and non-Western missionaries must be developed” (p. 296).

Various contributors did an excellent job of presenting the supracultural truths of the Bible that are relevant to accountability in missions. The problem comes, however, in applying the biblical truths to the details of mission work. Bahn Seok Lee commented, “I grant that the concept of accountability is universal. We cannot forget, however, that the practice of accountability is inevitably shaped by one’s cultural worldview” (pp. 195–96). Accountability in Missions should be required reading for anyone seeking to understand Korean and Western perspectives on accountability.

Mike Morris is Assistant Professor of Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Christianity and Public Culture in Africa.


This book builds on a tradition of scholarship on religion in Africa that has focused on the political role of Christianity in postcolonial African societies. However, the volume deliberately broadens the earlier focus on politics (as represented, for example, by Paul Gifford, Gerrie ter Haar, and Stephen Ellis) to include an interest in public culture. As Englund explains this shift, “African Christians have constituted, and not merely addressed, domains and categories for moral and political practice and reflection” (p. 3). Englund, who is a reader in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, has brought together a number of renowned scholars of African Christianity such as Birgit Meyer and Barbara Cooper, as well as some upcoming voices. Their backgrounds are in anthropology, sociology, history, literary studies, and religious studies. Theological perspectives are missing; this book seeks to shift the focus from beliefs and doctrines to the acts and discourses through which Christian groups and churches present themselves publicly and shape political, ethnic, and gender identities.

Although the volume includes chapters on the Catholic Church in Zambia and
on the different Christian attitudes to Luo widow inheritance in Kenya, it largely follows the popular academic trend to focus on Pentecostalism. Indeed, several chapters make an important contribution to the understanding of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa. Its crucial, however, to examine how other vibrant forms of Christianity assume public significance, perhaps in ways different from those of Pentecostalism but also in response to Pentecostalism. Notwithstanding this criticism, the book clearly is a valuable resource for everyone with a scholarly interest in Christianity in contemporary Africa.

—Adriaan van Klinken

Adriaan van Klinken, from the Netherlands, is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of the Study of Religions, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Heirs and Joint Heirs: Mission to Church Among the Mennonite Brethren of Andhra Pradesh.


Paul Wiebe narrates the story of the Mennonite Brethren in South India, describing the transformation of a Protestant mission endeavor into a local Indian church in Andhra Pradesh. The story goes beyond an ordinary academic study of Christian missions, because it is intertwined with the author’s family history. Wiebe’s grandparents were among the first Mennonite Brethren missionaries who went to India from the United States around 1900. Wiebe himself grew up and was educated in India, received a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Kansas, and taught at several institutions of higher education in southern India.

The book combines the author’s broad historical and sociological knowledge with the experiences of his own family within the mission community. Part 1 provides an overall description of the social and religious context the Mennonite missionaries encountered upon their arrival in India and traces the history of their mission to the subcontinent. Part 2 explores the social structure of the local congregations. It further discusses controversial issues of leadership and social development brought about by the mission. Reflections on the transition from mission to church lead to part 3, which deals with the formation of an Indian church after the withdrawal of foreign long-term missionaries in the 1970s.

Wiebe’s vast knowledge and experience are evident, and his effort to draw a comprehensive picture of India, the Mennonite Brethren, and Christian mission is very welcome in the highly fragmented field of mission studies. The many diversions from the central theme, however, create the impression of lacking a coherent narrative. It is not clear whether the book aims at a general public outside India or the Mennonite Brethren Church in India. A positive feature of the volume is the detailed maps that illustrate local case studies. Overall, Wiebe offers a rich, insider account of the Mennonite Brethren mission and church in India. It will be particularly interesting for the Mennonite community and for scholars who engage with Protestant missions and churches in Andhra Pradesh.

—Matthias Frenz

Matthias Frenz is an independent researcher in the field of religious studies. He works as a program director at the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes, Bonn, Germany.
American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters.


This is an outstanding volume containing ten contributions, substantial editorial introduction, bibliography, and index. It is organized in two parts: part 1 examines changes in American missions, and part 2 looks particularly at major results of these changes in missionary encounters in the Middle East. The chapters, which come from discussions over two years in the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, D.C., and Boston, deal with areas that were part of the former Ottoman Empire.

Until relatively recently, American interests in the world were not seen to be akin in any real sense to those of Europe. The recent American engagements in the Middle East seem to be contributing to a revision of this view, but this volume shows that, unlike the image of missionaries and mission movements led by Europeans, the American missionaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have generally not been considered imperialistic. This is because the American missionaries, sans the trapping of empire, represented the most benign and culturally and religiously enlightened face of America.

Despite emerging from a single nation and being rooted in the revivals in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, American missions were clearly neither monocultural nor monoddenominational. What afforded them a greater degree of flexibility and ability to be creative was their sense of interior spirituality as opposed to rigid creedal boundaries, greater appreciation of the varied cultural contexts of mission, and the lack of excessive pressure to conform to past traditions.

The examples of change in part 2 paint a complex picture of American missions, which were open to revising their strategy and approach to suit local needs. The broader picture that emerges reveals that, unlike the image of imperialistic. This is because the American missionaries, sans the trapping of empire, represented the most benign and culturally and religiously enlightened face of America.

Two brief examples should suffice. First, Carolyn Goffman’s chapter “From Religious to American Proselytism” shows that Mary Mills Patrick and her American board experienced a change in their aim: from “mass conversion” to “a more idiosyncratic faith in post-imperial nation building” (pp. 84–121). Second, Beth Baron’s chapter “Comparing Missions: Pentecostal and Presbyterian Orphanages on the Nile” shows that two different American missions (Presbyterian and Assemblies of God) working in the same region conceived their mission rather differently (pp. 260–84)—one aiming to equip orphaned girls to become “good wives,” and the other promoting equal-opportunity education for girls at the highest levels.

I highly recommend this fine collection to mission historians and students of Christian history.

—David Emmanuel Singh


This volume collects the biographies of nine prominent Chinese Christians who were social reformer, politician, judge, author, educator, or military general. The seven biographers are three Western scholars (John Barwick, Stacey Bieler, John Lindblom) and four non-Western scholars (Peter Chen-Main Wang, Fuk-tsing Ying, Anne Pang, and Rain Yang Liu), all expert in the history of Christianity in modern China. Editors Carol Lee Hamrin and Stacey Bieler include several well-prepared explanatory lists, figures, a map, and an index, all of which enhance the value of this volume.

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The life stories of these well-known Christians demonstrate a key point in the history of early modern China that Communist historiography has long overlooked, namely, that Christian institutions and leaders played significant roles in promoting social welfare for the Chinese people. Wang discusses the position of Yu Rizhang in the China YMCA and the programs of “character building,” “mass education,” and “citizen training” that he launched to cultivate ideal Chinese citizens. Barwick highlights Wang Liming’s thirty years of service in the WCTU and her commitment to serving women and transforming the traditional family structure. Bieler presents Zhang Fuiliang’s contribution to rural reconstruction in China, which was to offer new ways of living to thousands of people left uprooted by war.

Biography, although generally avoided by Chinese scholars since the early 1980s, is an important form of historical writing. Only by understanding the life experiences of these prominent Christians, including their education, their marriages, and their careers in the context of specific social circumstances, can we understand and sympathize with their social activities. This insight allows us to be more objective and less likely to accept the Communist propaganda that regards them as betrayers of the nation. I predict that, after finishing this excellent volume, the keywords “Christianity,” “nationalism,” and “patriotism” will be echoing in readers’ minds.

—Ellen Xiang-yu Cai

Ellen Xiang-yu Cai is lecturer in Canton Hong Research Centre, Guangzhou University. She is also research associate of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture.


Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism.


Amos Yong and Estreda Y. Alexander are both professors of theology at the Divinity School of Regent University, in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The two books, though published by different presses,
act as companions in one quest: to testify of the untold stories of African American Pentecostalism within the arena of religious history.

Afro-Pentecostalism, a collection of essays, pulls together a variety of academic approaches (ritual studies, missiology, ethics, cultural studies, gender studies, and autobiography). Serving as connecting threads in this tapestry are interaction with James Cone (the founder of black liberation theology in the United States), the influence of Walter Hollenweger (historian of Pentecostalism), and critical engagement with the so-called prosperity gospel. One special note is that Hollenweger focused on the African American roots in Pentecostalism, shifting the attention from Charles F. Parham and the Topeka revival of 1901 to William J. Seymour and the Azusa revival of 1906–9. With Azusa serving as the larger narrative, the story of Pentecostalism has both a missiological focus and an African American identity. In the final essay, Dale Irvin affirms that “a black church was at the center of an emerging global nexus” (p. 238).

Black Fire provides a much-needed narrative that completes, and at times corrects, the general histories of both American Christianity and the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. One of the more significant correctives is to describe the denominational divisions based upon race as being not a mutual agreement, but a reflection of the lack of hospitality toward African Americans (p. 258).

After a lengthy discussion of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street revival, the various denominations are introduced, both Trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals. The presence of blacks in white Pentecostal denominations is noted, while the important role of women in founding and leading denominations and churches is highlighted. The final chapter introduces African American charismatics and neo-Pentecostals. These two final categories are explained, but they might prove confusing to anyone who has read extensively in other historical works on Pentecostalism; in fact, Alexander’s usage of “charismatic” and “neo-Pentecostal” seems to be unique. With an encyclopedic listing of the ancestors and the various branches of the family tree, it proves helpful to have five tables with the information lined up for comparison. A concise bibliography points the way for further reading and research.

These two books stand together in providing missiologists and historians a balanced academic introduction to African American Pentecostalism.

—William Purinton

William Purinton, Assistant Professor of the Humanities at Seoul Theological University, serves as special assignment missionary with One Mission Society (OMS).
the historical, architectural, and spatial development of South Africa’s largest city. Murray’s examination of the influence of real estate capitalism on modern city-building is particularly incisive, especially as it relates to how the private sector has impacted “spatial outcomes similar to those that prevailed under apartheid” (p. 181). Murray shows ways the city has perpetuated varying degrees of social exclusion, where downtown office buildings, designed to be consistent with Western themes, exert symbolic power, while marginalized urban populations struggle for “the right to a sustainable livelihood, decent shelter, and available resources” (p. 170).

Murray sees Johannesburg as a splintered, placeless, and fragmented city, “a makeshift patchwork of different places” (p. 29), a city without an archetypical center, and a city that exemplifies “first world glamour and excess and third world impoverishment and degradation” (p. 3). In a chapter that describes Johannesburg’s suburban sprawl, where real estate developers pander to fears about the “dangerous city” (p. 282), Murray summarizes the sentiments of a post-apartheid middle class who have retreated to “fortified enclaves . . . deliberately designed to protect their residents from the uncertainties of daily existence: falling property values, vandalism and petty theft, random violence, and even chance encounters or unplanned conversations with persons unlike oneself” (p. 287).

Murray’s poignant analysis unpacks Johannesburg’s architectural and spatial complexities, the city’s Eurocentric past, modern public-private partnerships, and divergent ideas about place-making. *City of Extremes* is a significant and helpful resource for the study of cities in an era of globalization and urbanization.

—Travis Vaughn

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**Apostolic Religious Life in America Today: A Response to the Crisis.**


The essays in this volume address the question, “Why have apostolic [i.e., outward-oriented to mission] Catholic religious communities [i.e., men and women taking the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience] lost members and largely failed to recruit new members since the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965?” They do so from a horizon that judges that a fundamental mistake was made by “progressives,” who saw the council as calling for reforms that were in discontinuity with tradition and ended with a “process of transforming religious life to resemble so closely the life of the contemporary world that distinctive religious identity could be harmed rather than renewed or updated” (p. 7).

This hermeneutic of the council has been criticized in recent years as “anticonciliarist” by Pope Benedict XVI, who favors “renewal in continuity” as the key to understanding the council. This review is not the place to go into the major controversy that has erupted in the last few years over what the council stands for in relation to both the past and the future. It is important, rather, to take note of the seriousness with which this book’s authors aim at what they call the “secularization,” “domination by consumerism,” and “bourgeois culture” that they allege many communities have taken. Given the centrality of orders of men and women to Catholic efforts in mission since the beginnings of early modern missions in the fifteenth century, the issues at stake are enormous.

Curiously, although Gribble and most of the authors in the volume belong to orders that have operated missions in the traditional sense for the entire period from 1454 to the present, none of the authors asks what the ramifications of their views are for mission outside the United States. Nevertheless, their arguments are important for anyone trying to understand what is occurring; the orders they criticize are recruiting substantial numbers of men and women into Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and many of these religious are being inserted into parish ministry and innovative “mission” assignments in Europe and North America, as well as being assigned to missions outside their native lands and cultures in the Global South.

In this reviewer’s judgment, the authors are quite accurate in pointing out deficiencies that fostered rapid secularization during the period of writing and gaining approval for updated...
Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine.


The relationship between colonial aspirations of so-called Christian nations and their impact on local Christian communities or Christian missionary endeavors has long been a subject of serious discussion. In Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine, Laura Robson sheds light on this important relationship by focusing on Mandate Palestine, which existed from 1923 to 1948. One of the major objectives of the author is to trace the interaction of the local Christian communities with British authorities. The British mandate of Palestine failed to understand the social, religious, and political dynamics of the Palestinian Christian communities and thereby played a major role in the marginalization of these communities. This result, however, has helped these communities to “re-imagine their religious communities as modern political entities” (p. 11), thus giving them “a viable political identity” (p. 100). Robson explores the roots of violent sectarianism in Mandate Palestine, convincingly arguing that the British mandate itself was a major factor in promoting this sectarianism.

The book combines well-researched historical data with sociopolitical analysis. The first two chapters introduce the reader to the Palestinian Christians in the late Ottoman era up to the British mandate, showing the role of British imperial policy in creating communal politics. Chapters 3 and 5 provide a good analysis of the Arab Orthodox movement and the Arab Episcopalians, and their roles in Palestinian affairs, including the issue of Zionism. Chapter 4 focuses on how Arab Christians “appropriated the colonial idea of sectarian representation” to serve “their own nationalist and anti-Zionist agendas” (p. 103). The book concludes with an up-to-date bibliography and a helpful index. Robson makes good use of Arab sources, including memoirs, published diaries, books, and articles.

This is a must-read book for all who wish to understand the religious, social, and political dynamics that pervade daily life in the Middle East. As an Arab Christian reviewer, I sincerely hope that the West will learn from history and not deliberately neglect the Christian communities of this region (p. 72).

—Riad A. Kassis

Riad A. Kassis is a consultant in theological education and a visiting professor at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Beirut, Lebanon.

The Church as Salt and Light: Path to an African Ecclesiology of Abundant Life.


This collection, presented at a 2007 meeting in Abidjan, commemorates the 1956 publication by African and Caribbean Catholic priests of Des prêtres noirs s’interrogent (Black priests question themselves), which inaugurated self-conscious African theology. The authors—African Catholics born after independence, five priests and one nun—probe the church’s role in pursuing the abundant life motivating African traditional religions and Christianity.

The essays cover diverse topics. Critical of images of Christ in most African theology, Stan Chu Ilo draws upon the gospels to develop a theology suited for Africa, examining gospel episodes with African cultural hermeneutics to argue that Christ brings God to us and thereby offers abundant life. Next, to address Africa’s suffering, Emeka Xris Obiezu utilizes the concept of discipleship in today’s altered mission is not one that can be solved merely by being faithful to traditions and the hierarchy’s desire for loyalty.

—William R. Burrows

William R. Burrows, a contributing editor and managing editor emeritus of Orbis Books, is research professor of missiology at New York Seminary.
the church as the family of God (a metaphor prioritized after the first African Synod in 1994) to unfold a Christian understanding of sustainable development. Joseph Ogbonnaya then discusses the daily life of African Christians, identifying how their communities operate as salt and light, after which Alex Ojacor analyzes the African situation, identifying signs of hope in abiding cultural values, despite dire circumstances.

In an innovative piece, Ebere Amakwe considers the impact of information technology (IT) in Africa, urging that IT be made available to women and girls. In the final chapter, Bekeh Ukelina Utietang suggests that evangelization in Africa ought to be mindful of Africa’s cultures and Christ’s call to love. Ilo’s conclusion considers challenges facing the church today involving accountability, appropriate identity and autonomy, and religious freedom in practices of interreligious dialogue.

These essays present solid empirical evidence, engage ecclesial documents responsibly, and set future theological agendas. At times, though, I felt that exhortation substituted for sustained analysis. In addition, a regrettable number of typographic errors appeared. Nonetheless, this collection valuably reveals young African Catholic theologians reflecting on the challenges facing their church.

—Paul Kollman

Paul Kollman teaches in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana. He is currently studying the history of Catholic evangelization in East Africa.


Recall the last time a trip to the movies took you into traffic central, that room full of video screens where city officials monitor traffic flow. Like most of those cameras, each page in Mark Gornik’s Word Made Global overlooks an intersection of lives, moving in multiple directions to transact the business of families, cities, and, through immigrant communities, nations. The difficulty in traffic central is knowing on which screens to fix your eyes. Gornik directs his readers to focus primarily on three intersections in bustling, global New York City, each cruciform, and each in the shape of a church—in fact, “three churches in two worlds” (p. 87).

After pointing out major arteries of African Christianity in New York—Catholic, missionary Protestant, Pentecostal, and African Independent (and rightly questioning this typology)—Gornik provides a thicker description of the three congregations: Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Harlem, Church of the Lord (Aladura) in the Bronx, and Redeemed Christian Church of God International in Brooklyn. The genius and great service of Word Made Global is Gornik’s exchange of camera lenses between the wide-angled analyses of globalizing theology (with debts to Bediako, Katongole, and Walls) and urban studies (indebted to Saskia Sassen and others) and painstaking, close-up, ethnographic fieldwork in New York City. As part of his doctoral research, supervised by Andrew Walls at the University of Edinburgh, Gornik attended over 250 church gatherings in worship, Bible study, prayer, and healing services, and he conducted over 100 interviews between 2003 and 2008. Especially valuable are his profiles of the formation and work of three pastors: Rev. Yaw Asiedu, Mother Marie Cooper, and Dr. Nimi Wariboko.

A “core theological concern” is “the absolute conviction that theory and practice must walk hand in hand and that this is the only way to expose and experience theology at its best” (p. ix). Theology must not only speak to each context in which Christians find themselves but must actually grow out of these contexts. All theology is held to be context-determined and thus relative.

While accounting for their unique personalities, traditions, and emphases, Gornik describes these “pastoral lives [as] wisdom, developed through practice over time, which serves the ends of human flourishing” (p. 54). Through their preaching, prayer, spiritual direction and healing, cultural intelligence, and institutional leadership, these pastors provide “explanations, predictions and controls” (p. 71) that relate the spiritual and material worlds. Their liturgies orient a way of being a distinctly Christian and African people in the interpenetrating worlds of Scripture, Africa, and New York City, a social embodiment that “diffuses faith” throughout the intersecting traffic of life’s dimensions. Readers in traffic central should not only watch the three intersections Gornik points to but should also pay attention to the intersection that is Mark Gornik, a North American missiological pastoral theologian, who is coming to grips with the changing way of being church in the West.

—Gregory R. Perry

Gregory R. Perry is Director of the City Ministry Initiative, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

Contextual Theology for the Twenty-first Century.


Arising out of a conference on contextual theology held in Sydney, Australia, this book discuss general issues, such as the nature and place of contextual theology and the church’s mission, as well as particular topics, such as theological education, theology influenced by preliterate culture, problems faced by aboriginal peoples in Australia and Oceania, and Latin American liberation theology.

Specifically, most of the authors believe that outrages perpetrated on the rest of the world (mostly) by white men, and the suffering that has resulted, must form the starting point and focus of theology.

Except for one chapter on Christology by James Haire, this book is more about context than theology. God is generally immanent; theology is confined to social ethics, especially prophetic critique and political activism; alleviation of suffering in this world is the goal of mission.

Two chapters on contextual theology by Bevans and the one by Haire were the most helpful to this reader. The editors conclude with a timely call for “construction of a solid, orthodox, and
yet innovative Christology—and other traditional theological themes” (p. 127).

Stephen Bevans is professor of mission and culture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; Katalina Tahaafe-Williams teaches at United Theological College, Paramatta, Australia.

—G. Wright Doyle

G. Wright Doyle is Director of Global China Center, Charlottesville, Virginia, and English editor of the Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity.


This work maintains that one cannot comprehend how a secular political system in India emerged without understanding what Indian Christians contributed to this process. By examining implementation of laws pertaining to religious education, to religious endowments, and to inheritance of family property, Nandini Chatterjee argues that what began under the Company’s Raj and continued under the British Crown generated the formation of official attitudes and procedures and that these have continued to define a special kind of secularism in our own day. Drawing her data from government records, political pamphlets, newspapers, and missionary archives, as well as collections of private papers, she explains how India’s Christians not only shaped their own identity but also evolved into a self-consciously All-India “minority” within an emerging nation. She contends that India’s Christians “played a disproportionately significant role in shaping Indian secularism” (p. 2)—and, indeed, in the very shaping of modernity itself. As India’s peoples contended with conditions of imperial rule, a uniquely Indian secularism emerged.

This secularism, unlike secularism in the West, did not banish religion from public life. Rather, it stressed acceptance, support, and tolerance of various religious traditions as essential for the very survival of any all-embracing political system. Indeed, India’s obsessive preoccupation with its own special kind of secularism is reflected in a ceaseless flow of books and articles. Tolerance essential for holding together such extremely diverse, hierarchical, pluralistic, and segmented structures has always evoked a logic of impartiality and neutrality in matters of religion. The more vast the sway of a regime, the more important was this peculiar logic. This was a logic that emperors from Ashoka to Akbar understood. This is a “secularism” India still requires. Indian Christian communities have long suffered civic disabilities in villages, but they have also long contributed to a vitally important secularity in national consciousness.

—Robert Eric Frykenberg

Robert Eric Frykenberg is Professor Emeritus of History and South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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Ms. Martha Lund Smalley, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut, helps missionaries and church leaders identify, organize, and preserve essential records.

September 24–27
Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story.
Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, Jesuit Beijing Center, Beijing, China, and Ms. Michèle Sigg, Dictionary of African Christian Biography, share skills and techniques for documenting mission and church history.

October 1–5
The Internet and Mission: Getting Started.
Mr. Wilson Thomas, Wilson Thomas Systems, Bedford, New Hampshire, and Dr. Dwight P. Baker, Overseas Ministries Study Center, in a hands-on workshop show how to get the most out of the World Wide Web for mission research.

October 8–11
Nurturing and Educating Transcultural Kids.

October 16
Mission in Acts 16.
Ms. Barbara Hüfner-Kemper, psychotherapist and United Methodist missionary, White Plains, New York, creatively studies the mission encounters recorded in Acts 16 to help participants consider their own understandings of Christian mission in this special one-day seminar. $50.

October 22–25
Themes in Worldwide Christianity: Bible, Theology, Renewal, and Other Religions.
Dr. Michael McClaymond, Saint Louis University, explores concrete examples of how Bible commentaries, theologies, renewal movements, and interreligious relations take shape on a worldwide scale.

October 29–November 1
Dr. Timothy Kiho Park, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, uses the Scriptures and years of experience in instructing about cross-cultural church planting.

November 5–9
Dr. Andrew F. Walls, honorary professor, University of Edinburgh, and former director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, will use material that starts from a Methodist focus and explore developments common to the missions of the period—OMSC’s seventh Distinguished Mission Lectureship series—five lectures with discussions.

November 12–15
Church and Mission in Europe—East and West.
Dr. Peter Kuzmić, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, Massachusetts, and Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia, examines the new context and new roles for churches and mission in a changed Europe, both East and West.

November 26–29
Iranian Shi‘ite Muslims and Christianity.
Dr. Susan Tavassoli, Evangelical Church of Iran, instructs about Shi‘ite Islam as well as some of the ways that contemporary Iranians interact with the Christian faith.

December 3–6
The Gospel of Peace in Dynamic Engagement with the Peace of Islam.
Dr. David W. Shenk, Eastern Mennonite Missions, explores the church’s calling to bear witness to the Gospel of peace in its engagement with Muslims whether in contexts of militancy or in settings of moderation.

December 10–13
Leadership, Fund-raising, and Donor Development for Missions.
Mr. Rob Martin, First Fruit Ministries, Newport Beach, California, outlines steps for building the support base, including foundation funding, for mission.

On select Friday mornings, OMSC residents and other interested participants will attend and debrief open panel discussions led by Yale World Fellows, mid-career leaders in various fields from all over the world. On other select Friday mornings, OMSC residents will lead seminars on topics about which they have special concern, experience, and expertise.

Student Seminars on World Mission

January 7–11, 2013
Missionaries in the Movies.
Dr. Dwight P. Baker, Overseas Ministries Study Center, draws upon both video clips and full-length feature films to examine the way missionaries have been represented in the movies over the past century.

January 14–18
The Drama of God’s Mission.
Dr. Gregory R. Perry, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, will put forward two primary questions as coordinates between which we as God’s people can evaluate our improvisational roles in God’s mission: 1) Are our improvs faithful to the Story of Scripture? and 2) Are our improvs fitting to the Stage on which they are played out?

January 21–25
Culture, Values, and Worldview: Anthropology for Mission Practice.
Dr. Darrell Whiteman, The Mission Society, shows how one’s worldview and theology of culture affect cross-cultural mission.

January 28–February 1
The City in Mission.
Dr. Dale T. Irvin, New York Theological Seminary, considers the city in the mission of God. The seminar includes a day-trip in New York City.

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Book Notes

Bosch, David J.  
Foreword by William R. Burrows; new concluding chapter by Darrell L. Guder and Martin Reppenhagen.  

Emerich, Monica M.  
The Gospel of Sustainability: Media, Market, and LOHAS.  

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck.  
Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America.  

Hendricks, Obery M., Jr.  
The Universe Bends Toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church, and the Body Politic.  

James, David.  
Sixteen Seasons: Stories from a Missionary Family in Tajikistan.  

Keenan, James F., ed.  
Catholic Theological Ethics, Past, Present, and Future: The Trento Conference.  

Largen, Kristin Johnston.  

Lernoux, Penny, with Arthur Jones and Robert Ellsberg.  

Lucking, F. Dean.  
Through Their Eyes: A People’s View of the Global Church.  

Meroff, Deborah.  
Europe: Restoring Hope.  

Middleton, Vern.  

Myers, Bryant L.  
Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development. Rev. and updated ed.  

Snyder, Howard A., with Joel Scandrett.  
Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace; Overcoming the Divorce Between Earth and Heaven.  

In Coming Issues

Da’wa: On the Nature of Mission in Islam  
Albrecht Hauser

Can Christianity Authentically Take Root in China? Some Lessons from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Missions  
Andrew F. Walls

Obtaining Informed Consent in Missiologically Sensitive Contexts  
Johan Mostert and Marvin Gilbert

Ivan Illich and Leo Mahon: Folk Religion and Catechesis in Latin America  
Todd Hartch

The Use of Data in the Missiology of Europe: Methodological Issues  
Stefan Paas

Rediscovering African Roots in Missions: Impact on African-American Churches and Their Premier Seminary, the Interdenominational Theological Center  
Mark Ellingsen

Cultural Past, Symbols, and Images in the Bemba Hymnal, United Church of Zambia  
Kuzipa Nalwamba

In our Series on the Legacy of Outstanding Missionary Figures of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, articles about  
Thomas Barclay  
George Bowen  
Carl Fredrik Hallencrunz  
J. Philip Hogan  
Arthur Walter Hughes  
Thomas Patrick Hughes  
Hannah Kilham  
Lesslie Newbigin  
Constance Padwick  
Peter Parker  
John Coleridge Patteson  
James Howell Pyke  
Pandita Ramabai  
George Augustus Selwyn  
Bakht Singh  
James M. Thoburn  
M. M. Thomas  
Harold W. Turner  
Johannes Verkuyl